

ITC Third Follow-up Project: Seminar on “Urban Planning and Living Environment Improvement (LEI) with Community Participation”
Ulaanbaatar, Mongolia
3-5 May 2007

Mongolia has experienced rapid urbanization. However, very little new housing has been built since the end of the socialist era, resulting in a critical shortage of adequate housing and a rapid expansion of unserviced *ger* housing areas (low-income settlements) surrounding the cities. In the *ger* area, residents’ access to urban infrastructure and services are limited, which makes the living environment unsanitary and poor. Given the ongoing expansion of the *ger* areas, the entire living environment of the urban area will face further deterioration if this problem remains untackled. Against this background, UNCRD started a follow-up project in Mongolia as a part of its International Training Course in Regional Development (ITC) to help former participants disseminate what they learned during the ITC, and to technically support the implementation of their action plans.

Under this project, UNCRD organized the third follow-up seminar on “Urban Planning and Living Environment Improvement (LEI) with Community Participation” in Ulaanbaatar, Mongolia, in collaboration with the National Center for Construction, Urban Development, and Public Utilities (NCCUDPU), Government of Mongolia and the Urban Development Resource Center (UDRC) from 3 to 5 May in 2007, with the purpose of providing additional support to three former ITC participants, Ms. Zorig Tuya, Ms. Tsend-Auysh Baldandorj Borjigon, and Ms. Enkhbayar Tsendendorj. Since 2004, they have promoted *ger*-area improvement with increased community participation through a repeated trial-and-error process. Following UNCRD’s recommendations, they have accomplished a number of achievements such as the set-up of an NGO called UDRC and community-based organizations (CBOs), both of which have become vital stakeholders. In addition, some active CBOs have formed savings groups for gaining access to funding by themselves, which has led to living environment improvement and income generation. Under these circumstances, Ms. Tuya, the most recent participant, thought it was time to disseminate their accumulated know-how and experiences of community-based *ger* area improvement and came up with an action plan, “Capacity Building Activity for the Community Empowerment,” as an output of ITC.

The seminar, which was attended by forty participants, including officials of the Ministry of Construction and Urban Development, Ministry of Finance, and local governments, those involved in LEI projects, CBO representatives, university professors, and urban planning experts, consisted of three parts: (a) lecture and discussion sessions; (b) field visit to the *ger* area of Dari Ekh in Ulaanbaatar City; and (c) workshop to discuss and formulate action plans. The lecture sessions were delivered by these former participants as well as UNCRD resource persons on regional development in Japan, urban planning and living environment, and community participation. This seminar differed from previous seminars in terms of seminar content. Parts (b) and (c) were newly added at the suggestion of Ms. Tuya. In part (b), participants went to Dari Ekh in Ulaanbaatar City for a field survey and in part (c), they were divided into two groups to discuss and formulate action plans taking into consideration the actual case of Zuunmod City. Lastly, the workshop was successfully completed with the remarkable outputs of two group action plans. These action plans will also be presented before the residents of the *ger* area of Zuunmod City. The residents are expected to select one of them for actual implementation.

At the end of the seminar, UNCRD pointed out the high feasibility of initiating a land readjustment project in Ulaanbaatar City and introducing compost toilets in the *ger* area. In particular, with three former participants, UNCRD also recommended that they should establish a network of emerging savings groups in Mongolia and also an international network together with the Community Organization Development Institute in Thailand and other organizations abroad. UNCRD will continue to follow-up on their activities and the progress of implementation of their action plans.