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MONGOLIA



Chief of Party with the judges of the Bayankhongor Aimag Court
Photo by JRP

BACKGROUND:

In 2000, Mongolia passed a *Strategic Plan for the Justice System of Mongolia* and USAID/Mongolia designed the Judicial Reform Project (JRP) to help with plan implementation. The National Center for State Courts was retained to carry out the work. JRP is scheduled to run from 2001-2008.

PROJECT ACTIVITIES:

JRP's main area of concentration is the judicial sector, including the courts and related agencies and organizations. It focuses on six major tasks:

1. Improving Judicial Independence

JRP works to improve transparency and efficiency in court administration by helping the General Council of Courts put workable procedures in place. The project also works to ensure that local court administrators are trained to carry out national policies. With assistance from the project, Mongolia has automated all 61 of its courts. In each, it has automated case management procedures and records; initiated automated random assignment of cases; created public information areas; and put in place more efficient records management processes. This has significantly improved transparency and efficiency, and reduced opportunities for system manipulation. Public access terminals in each court make case information available to lawyers, litigants, and the public. In 2006 a central database will be created and case information will become available on the internet.

2. Building the Capacity of Legal Institutions

JRP is strengthening the General Council of Courts by improving its budgeting expertise and creation a national case information database. It will also help improve the management capacity of the Office of the Prosecutor General, and help the Mongolian Advocates Association become a Bar Association capable of monitoring ethics and improving member skills. JRP comments on key legislation and Supreme Court interpretations, and is develo-

ping a joint procedural manual for court prosecutors and investigators to provide uniform implementation of key provisions, ensure compliance with international standards for human rights, and enhance coordination among justice sector institutions.

3. Training and Continuing Legal Education

JRP helped create and build management capacity in the National Legal Center (NLC), which has the mandate to provide ongoing trainings for legal professionals. Together with the GTZ, the project has also developed a group of skilled trainers who now form the core of NLC instructors. JRP continues to develop new courses in areas such as ethics and domestic violence, and is improving the skills of trainers and bringing new courses to judges and other legal professionals in the countryside.

4. Establishing Legal Professional Qualifications

JRP has helped the Ministry of Justice and Home Affairs to administer the first qualification exam for legal professionals—fairly and transparently. It has also helped develop amendments to the law that will ensure administration of better-prepared and more impartial exams.

5. Ethics in the Legal Profession

JRP works in several ways to strengthen justice sector integrity. A U.S. prosecutor with experience investigating and prosecuting corruption worked with the Prosecutor General's Special Investigation Unit, which is charged with investigating crimes by justice sector officials, and JRP provided equipment and training to the new office. The project has also assisted the new Judicial Disciplinary Committee with equipment and training, and has provided advice on the new Judicial Ethics Code and the draft Law on Courts to create an improved disciplinary mechanism for judges.

6. Public Education

In conjunction with GTZ and PACT, JRP has created the highly rated and award winning program "Legal Hour", which uses dramatizations to educate the public on its rights under the Criminal Procedure Code. An award winning radio drama with the same aim was produced for rural residents. JRP has trained journalists on how to report on legal issues and continues to train the public affairs officers of justice sector agencies. The project produces a "Rule of Law" newsletter to assist donor coordination and inform NGOs and the public of justice sector reform activities. It also sponsors regular columns on legal issues by justice sector agencies, and has produced posters on a wide variety of legal issues.

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JUDICIAL REFORM PROJECT