



SheVotes: Mongolia

**UNDERSTANDING BARRIERS TO WOMEN
AND YOUTH POLITICAL PARTICIPATION**

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ABBREVIATIONS AND ACRONYMS

CSO	Civil Society Organization
CWGP	Civil Will–Green Party
DP	Democratic Party
Election Laws	The Law of Mongolia on Parliamentary Election and the Law of Mongolia on Aimag, Capital City, Soum and District Citizen’s Representative’s Khural
FGD	Focus Group Discussion
GEC	General Election Commission of Mongolia
IDI	In-depth Interview
IRI	International Republican Institute
Local Election Law	The Law of Mongolia on Aimag, Capital City, Soum and District Citizen’s Representative’s Khural
MP	Member of Parliament
MPP	Mongolian People's Party
NGO	Non-governmental Organization
NLP	National Labor Party
NSO	National Statistics Office of Mongolia
Parliament	The State Great Khural
Parliamentary Election Law	The Law of Mongolia on Parliamentary Election
Political Parties Law	The Law of Mongolia on Political Parties
PWD	Person with Disability
SDG	Sustainable Development Goals
The Constitution	The Constitution of Mongolia
UNDP	United Nations Development Program

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

This research provides analysis and recommendations on the most common barriers faced by women (half of the population), and youth (1/3 of the population), in actively and equitably participating in Mongolia's political and electoral processes.

This study has utilized the "SheVotes" methodology, developed by the International Republican Institute (IRI) and its Women's Democracy Network (WDN), which identifies barriers to political participation across the following framework:

1. Governmental (legal and institutional)

2. Socio-cultural

3. Individual aspects.

From the findings of this report, it will be evident that the governmental barriers are the largest hurdles for Mongolian women and youth to actively and equally participate in the political and electoral processes.

Based on the SheVotes assessment data, which was obtained through multiple sources, including an online survey, Focus Group Discussions (FGDs) and In-Depth Interviews (IDIs), Mongolian women and youth face a complex array of barriers to active and equal electoral and political participation. Entrenched structures that range from financial barriers to political parties lacking systemic support system for the women and young members remain key obstacles to women and youth participation. Moreover, despite some progress in advancing women's representation through such reforms as gender quotas, these measures have only resulted in partial gains, with political parties minimally complying in practice and often struggling in many parts of the country to meet

the bare requirements. As a result, although the Law on Promoting Gender Equality contains an article that is meant to secure a threshold or a minimum quota (20%) for a gender amongst the total number of candidates, in reality, for women politicians/candidates in political parties, even ones with large membership pools, this quota is treated more as a "ceiling" or maximum quota, with parties not going beyond the bare minimum requirement for nominating women. Further compounding the problem, when parties do meet the gender quota and women do make it into the candidate list, very often they are placed into the most competitive districts with lesser chances of winning. Fixing this issue will require that the relevant legislative provisions be fortified further by adoption of more specific regulations.

In terms of the societal barriers, although Mongolian women are relatively independent, highly educated, and actively represented across civil society, long-standing gender norms and expectations that women spend time with household duties and childcare continue to prevent women from broader civic engagement opportunities and pursuing political careers. These barriers are even more prevalent in rural areas and even women who may already be politically engaged or just starting are often judged harshly by the public and even portrayed in the media in mostly negative lights or based on their looks and private life status, rather than on the merit or experience of the individual. In addition to stereotypes such as women only being capable of assuming responsibility for small-scale "household-like" matters and being excellent executors but not adequate decision-makers, negative stereotypes of youth being

immature and lacking experience, all lead to the direct and indirect limitations on women and youth participation in the political decision-making.

As for the individual barriers, most of these are related to individual time and lifestyle constraints that challenge persistent participation naturally required for those pursuing political careers that require much patience and sacrifice as well as financial, time, skills and education resources and commitments. In order to tackle the barriers identified through the SheVotes assessment this report outlines a set of recommendations geared toward addressing those issues and further bolstering women and youth political participation. The recommendations include rolling out a targeted nationwide program on voter education targeted at specific age groups, gender and professions under the leadership of the General Election Commission (GEC) on a regular basis and not just in election periods; parliament and cabinet members making amendments to the certain provisions in the Election Law (i.e., increasing the 20% gender quota for women); empowering media and civil society to advocate for the necessary amendments in the Election Laws; and preparing and publishing content to change negative stereotypes limiting and negatively impacting women and youth political participation.

Based on data obtained through multiple sources, including an online survey, FGDs and IDIs the SheVotes assessment has identified the following key findings.

Key Findings

Finding 1: The "quota system" for women running in elections falls short in practice

Despite some progress in women's political representation following introduction of the

gender quota for political party candidate lists, in practice this quota falls short, as it is seen as the "ceiling" for female candidates, rather than a "floor", i.e., being a minimum requirement.

Finding 2: The high costs of campaigns present a significant financial barrier to political entry for many women and youth

The high costs of election campaigns and the expectation for candidates to self-fund presents a significant barrier to women and youth political engagement.

Finding 3: Permanent residency requirements and the civil registration process is one big reason for youth not being able to vote

Rural youth temporarily residing in Ulaanbaatar for either work or studies usually do not change their permanent addresses and are hence unable to cast their votes at their temporary addresses. Meanwhile, Mongolian youth living abroad are required to vote at the embassy premises, instead of online or mail voting. Such rigid requirements negatively affect the youth participation in the elections.

Finding 4: Conventional gender roles and social expectations impede women's political participation

Women who participate in politics are often unfairly judged as being "ambitious", which is mostly seen in a negative light. Further they are unduly subjected to harassment and negative comments which oftentimes pressures women trying to enter politics to quit. Also, due to traditional yet still existing gender norms women are expected to prioritize domestic responsibilities rather than a public life of politics.

Finding 5: The notion that politics is dirty makes women and the youth disinclined to enter politics

Politicians being often connoted as being corrupt, involved in making “political patronage” has led to widespread images among the youth that politics is dirty.

Finding 6: Political party internal structures fail to provide sufficient support for women and youth recruitment and leadership development

Incumbent parties do have women and youth quota, however there is no specific career development or mentorship system in place, which means women and youth must spend much time to become acquainted with the institution, the alliances and the system, as a whole. Yet, women and youth have competing priorities, particularly to provide care to their families, both their own families and children and their parents; and thus, are hesitant to devote their time to be socially and/or politically active and engaged.

Finding 7: A lack of systematic support for voter education has significantly hindered the political participation of women and youth

Pervasive gaps in voter education efforts remains a significant contributing factor to addressing and overcoming existing barriers to women and youth participation. The majority of existing voters’ education campaigns occur (if ever) only

right before elections and therefore falls short the need to provide continuous and comprehensive voter education to the public.

The findings will be presented in more details, with supporting evidence and quotes further in the report.



OVERVIEW



Approach

The main objective of the study was to assess barriers to women’s political participation in Mongolia, with an added focus on youth civic and political engagement. The study sought to address the following key research questions:

1. What are the main barriers to women and youth political participation?
2. What institutional, socio-cultural and individual factors contribute to those barriers; and
3. What recommendations can be made about steps that can be taken to address those barriers.

Methodology

This research partially relies on an online survey we conducted among 744 people based on the “SheVotes” methodology.

Further, we conducted qualitative research involving a total of 58 participants, including 15 semi-structured IDIs and eight FGDs with a variety of participants with diverse experience in all levels of politics and political decision making. These included politicians, political researchers, political campaign managers and representatives of the Civil Society Organizations (CSOs). In addition, as part of this study’s desk research component, we also reviewed and analyzed relevant legislation and various research reports. As shown in the research participants’ background information below, we aimed to include many types of participants in the survey in order to take account of a number of important factors, such as the location of residency (urban versus rural), the level of education, disability and social vulnerability statuses.

In order to ensure diversity, we also considered the interviewees' age and gender, party affiliations and party representation balance, and political career stage when selecting participants for the IDIs and FGDs. As common

with qualitative research, findings from this study do not necessarily represent the views of Mongolian women or youth in general.

RESEARCH PARTICIPANTS' PROFILE

Focus group discussion participants (43 participants)

FGD number	Gender(s) of participants	Group name	Number of Participants	Criteria
1	Female	Young politicians female	5	40 years old and younger
2	Female	Female politicians	5	Has worked at the decision-making levels as elected or appointed
3	Female and Male	Young politicians	5	40 years old and younger
4	Female and Male	Rural politicians	7	40 years old and younger
5	Female and Male	Political researchers	5	Academia/researcher representation
6	Female and Male	Election observers	4	Civil society representatives
7	Female and Male	Election organizers	6	Organizers of elections at khoroo, bagh elections as well as elections organized abroad
8	Female and Male	Citizens living abroad	6	Living abroad

In-depth interview participants (15 participants)

IDI number	Gender	Occupation	Affiliation
1	Female	Political analyst	Academia
2	Female	Political analyst	Academia
3	Male	Young politician	Party member (NLP)
4	Female	Young politician	Party member (MPP)
5	Male	Political campaign organizer	Nonparty
6	Male	Political analyst	Nonparty, CSO
7	Male	Young politician	Party member (MPP)
8	Male	Young politician	Party member (DP)
9	Male	Young politician	Party member (DP)
10	Female	Young politician	Nonparty, CSO

11	Male	Political analyst	Nonparty, CSO
12	Female	Political analyst	Academia
13	Male	Political analyst	Nonparty, CSO
14	Male	Social activist	Party member (DP)
15	Female	Seasoned politician, former Minister	Party member (CWGP)

Demographics of survey participants (744 participants)

Gender		Occupation	
Female	67%	Pupil	0.5%
Male	33%	Student	16.8%
Age		Full-time employed	51.9%
18-25	25%	Self-employed	13.7%
26-30	13%	Unemployed	5.0%
31-35	19%	Retired	3.4%
36-40	18%	Herder	0.7%
41-50	18%	Recipient of social welfare benefits due to disability	7.8%
51-60	6%	Other	0.2%
61+	1%		
Education		Locality	
No formal education	0.7%	Ulaanbaatar	66%
Elementary	0.5%	Ger District	12%
Middle School	1.6%	Apartment District	54%
High school	15.7%	Outside Ulaanbaatar	32%
Technical/vocational	2.7%	Province (aimag)	20%
University	78%	Soum	12%
No answer	0.8%	Abroad	2%

CONTEXT

Governmental barriers

Through this SheVotes assessment, numerous barriers to women and youth political engagement were captured. Many significant challenges facing women and youth can be attributed to legal and institutional factors, which primarily include electoral systems, political party practices and the overall operating environment, all which fall under the governmental barriers category. Most of these issues constitute deeply engrained structural barriers that have been entrenched in Mongolia's political system for years, while others may be more recent developments. Moreover, despite some progress in advancing women's representation through reforms such as gender quota, these measures have only resulted in partial gains, with political parties minimally complying in practice and often struggling in many parts of the country to meet the bare requirements. As a result, although the Law of Mongolia on Promoting Gender Equality contains an article that is meant to secure a threshold or a minimum quota (20 percent for a gender amongst the total number of candidates, in reality, for women politicians and political party (even for parties with large membership pools), this quota is treated more as a "ceiling" or maximum quota, with parties not going beyond the bare minimum requirement. Further compounding the problem, when parties do meet the gender quota and women do make it into the candidate list, very often they are placed into the most competitive districts with lesser chance of winning. Fixing this issue will require that the relevant legislative provisions be fortified further by adoption of more specific regulations.

Societal barriers

Socio-cultural factors also hinder the political careers of women and youth and constitute some of the most deeply entrenched barriers identified in the SheVotes assessment. Although Mongolian women are relatively independent, highly educated, and actively represented across civil society, long-standing gender norms and expectations that women spend time with household duties and childcare continue to pose obstacles that prevent from civic engagement opportunities and pursuing political careers. Participants in this research highlighted the particularly negative impact of social stereotypes that impede women and youth ability to compete in the political area and reach proportionate representation at decision making levels. Notably contributing to existing barriers are traditional gender roles, which associate men with leadership and women with household and child-rearing duties. Finally, widespread lack of family support and the notion that politics is "dirty" also serve as impediments to both women and youth political participation.

Individual barriers

In addition to institutional, and socio-cultural factors that prevent women and youth from actively participating in politics, there are also individual aspects worthy of consideration. Research participants noted that just as most professions require a certain level of education and skills to advance to a certain position, success in political career requires perseverance, leadership, organization, courage, skills, time, and financial and other resources from an individual. Particularly, long-standing financial

barriers, such as the high costs of campaigns and expectations for candidates to self-fund campaigns has presented both structural and individual barriers to women and youth electoral participation. Overall, the major factors affecting young individuals, include a lack of financial stability as well as lack of adequate levels of civic education and general political “know how,” which also has the compounded effect of making this voting demographic vulnerable to negative influences such as vote-buying. Also, similar to the barriers faced by women in the socio-cultural sub-section, without the strong support of family, youth are also prevented from political engagement. As such, family support for engaging in politics seems to be a critical factor as well as perseverance to not quit politics because of negative pressure from the public.



FINDINGS AND ANALYSIS

Finding 1: The "quota system" for women running in elections falls short in practice

Gender quotas for election candidates were first introduced in 2005's Law on Elections, not put in place until 2011, constituted a major step toward increasing women's political participation. However, since then the quota threshold has been changed prior to each election (Table 1) and the gender quota has resulted in only partial gains for women's political participation due in part to limitations in implementation. For example, in 2019, Article 30.22 of the election law reduced women's candidacy quota down from 30 percent by providing that "at least 20 percent of the total number of candidates nominated by parties and coalitions shall be of one gender." This reduction of the threshold of women's quota has presented a step back in further addressing gender parity in political representation. Furthermore, in practice, political parties have treated the minimum gender threshold as a "ceiling" rather than "floor."

The inadequacies of gender quotas also extend to the decision-making levels of political parties. For example, both parties have quota systems in place for women and youth to include them in political decision-making. In the case of the MPP: "At least 30% of the MPP shall be women" and with the DP: "a quarter of members shall be women and "youth" under the age of 39".

One FGD participant who is also a member of the Parliament said "I wish for the quota to become the lower limit for women's participation, not the upper limit. The pattern is such that when a new woman enters political competition, another one is often pushed to leave. But men don't have that problem. This is why in practice quotas become like a ceiling. The women's wings of the parties

and international organizations should speak out about it. I think if we increase the quota from 20 percent to 25 percent and then 30 percent, women will become more active participants in politics with or without quotas."

Research participants also noted that women are nominated by their parties to meet the quota but are assigned to the most competitive districts where they are oftentimes not elected.

Table 1: Changes in gender quotas in the Law on Parliamentary Elections

Year of change	2005*	2011	2015	2016/05/05**	2019
Women's quota	30%	20%	30%	20%	20%

Source:GEC

* Cancelled in 2007.

** Revised before 2016 election.

"Some districts become "women's districts," where all candidates are women and, therefore, only one can win. Sometimes parties run their women candidates, who worked hard to be included in the party quota, to the most difficult-to-win districts. As a result, very few women are elected." FGD participant.

Finding 2: The high costs of campaigns present a significant financial barrier to political entry for many women and youth

The high costs of election campaigns and the expectation for candidates to self-fund presents a significant barrier to women and youth political engagement. Participants reported that oftentimes candidates have to pay "deposit" to their party to be allowed to run for office, and that candidates have had to cover their own campaign expenses, if they failed to collect public donations for election campaign. A young politician in FGD

reported “I have been in the party apparatus for a long time (ten years) and I have been involved in the election campaigns of many people. So, I was able to organize my election campaign very efficiently using donations from people who I helped earlier. Still, I spent a lot of money that I did not have. I used my credit card at the time. The fact that I ran in local elections, but did not in national election, is due to my situation whereby I was not financially ready for national competitions.” Due to the high costs of campaigns, the ability to self-fund a campaign can often trump other considerations, such as a potential candidate’s experience. One young politician reported “When I asked to run for office, the local party leader first asked me if I could pay for it myself. I realized that education and experience come after finances.”

The participants also shared information about open and covert vote-buying during the election campaign. Therefore, elections and politics require a lot of financial resources from candidates and sometimes those who are capable to participate meaningfully in politics are left out because they do not have money. One IDI participant who has organized campaigns in the past said “In the three to four months before the election the party develops its election strategy. The party goes through and studies a list of almost everyone in the electoral district. For example, they choose people who have large families and many relatives as canvassers. It is a form of buying votes in accordance with the law — canvassers are paid 420,000 MNT (US\$147.46) and make a deal to have at least ten people from their families to vote for a particular candidate. Politics itself incurs a lot of costs and requires activities and tactics. This arrangement regarding canvassers is only a small part of a much larger and more expensive operation.” According to an organizer of political campaigns

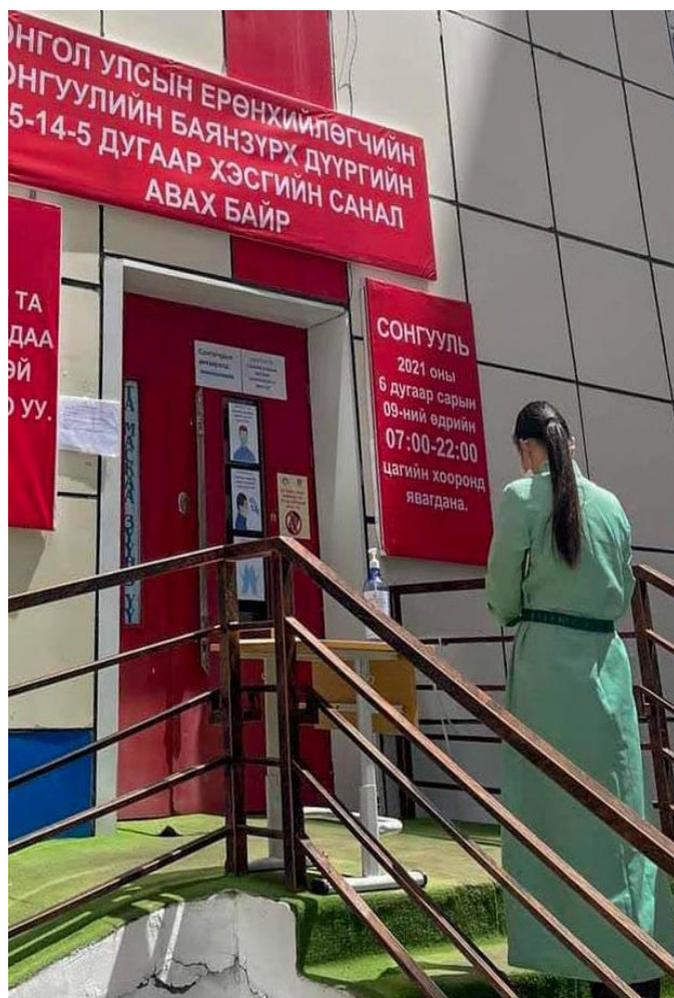
in an IDI, members of the parliament elected in the 2020 election spent an average of MNT 363 million (US\$ 129,367) per candidate, 3.6 times more than losing candidates. Given that the average monthly salary as documented by the National Statistics Office of Mongolia is MNT 1.32 million (US\$ 465.8), an average Mongolian citizen would have to save their salary for 23 years without spending any of it to have enough funds to compete. This amount of money likely appears most distant to young people and women, who are less likely to have their own businesses.

Finding 3: Permanent residency or requirements and the civil registration process is one big reason for youth not being able to vote

Research participants pointed out that despite the adoption of electronic systems by government agencies in recent years, there are still complaints from citizens about issues related to the voter registration system, particularly around confusion and an overall lack of transparency with respect to voter registration. According to the Article 25.1 of the Law on Parliamentary Elections, voters cannot update their registration starting from February 15, which is typically months before the Election Day. Meanwhile, this same prohibition applies 60 days before local elections and effects many voters’ ability to cast a ballot. A young politician in an FGD stated “People who are preoccupied with putting food on the table tend not to keep up to date on this type of information.

A voter survey conducted amongst 1,400 people in 2021 found that the most common reason for not voting was residential address conflict (S. Boldsaikhan, 2021). For instance, 32 percent of survey respondents who did not vote in the parliamentary election and 18 percent of those who did not vote in local elections said that they

could not vote, because they live somewhere other than the official address on their ID card (S. Boldsaikhan, 2021). This is an issue that disproportionately affects young voters, particularly college-age students who often study in a location different from where they are registered. “Mongolia’s Urban Migrant Vulnerability Study” concluded that changing accommodation and not having permanent address *inter alia* creates hindrances with regards to access to social welfare, voting during elections, inability to access information and that most important need of the urban migrants is to secure legal residency permit and have better access to services which other city residents are unable to access equally fully (IOM, 2018).



Finding 4: Conventional gender roles and social expectations impede women’s political participation

Mongolian women are comparatively more independent than women in many other Asian countries. However, through generations, women have been in charge of house chores and men handled external affairs; the household is named or addressed after the man’s name. These traditions created a situation where men make decisions on behalf of the families and are positioned better in social relationships. The research participants have reported that socio-cultural and traditional norms continue to lead to insufficient representation of women and youth in decision-making. As a result, deeply engrained gender roles and stereotypes impede women and youth’s ability to compete fairly and freely in political decision making. The prevailing gender stereotype that women should be responsible for household chores and raising children also negatively affects women’s political activism.

Throughout the research, respondents mentioned several times that the stereotypical gender roles as well as social expectations and pressures negatively affect women and youth political participation. Although there have been some positive changes occurring in society with regards to female politicians, it appears as though female politicians must still balance between being 1) womanly enough by not abandoning household and family duties yet 2) sufficiently capable of engaging in discussions beyond children, welfare, and healthcare.

When women who actively participate in politics have children, they often take a career break. However, when they return back to work, their male peers have gone up the career ladder while women basically have to start over. So, when this repeats every time female politicians give birth, they become disheartened about politics.

However, even when women enter politics, the assumption is for them to take on more administrative rather than leadership or executive positions. One young politician reported, women are generally more responsible and, therefore, handle almost 70 percent of the executive functions in political parties as well as election organizing. Yet, they are almost non-existent at decision-making levels. This may have to do with the common image that women typically handle administrative duties and men take leadership roles.

“For instance, when I was attending a party meeting, there were only two women—me and the secretary. When the secretary was asked to go on the stage, she asked me if I could take meeting notes. I responded “Why me? There are many other people.” She must have held the stereotype that not men, but women are to execute administrative tasks, such as taking notes.” Young politician, FGD.

Moreover, rural communities having more traditional attitude results in support for women and youth at the low and middle levels of decision-making, but rural voters do not entrust them positions in a higher level.

A total of 63 women were elected as members of parliament in the past seven parliamentary elections. Location-wise, a disproportionate majority of those women, 61.9% (39), were elected from Ulaanbaatar. Although the number of electoral districts in the capital is twice as few as in rural areas, city districts are more friendly to women (Table 2).

The table shows that 11 aimags or half of Mongolia's 21 aimags have never even elected a female parliamentarian. In some aimags, such as Bayan-Ulgii and Uvs, a female candidate has never run.

Table 2: Locations, where female members of the parliament were elected

Location	Number of elected female officials
Ulaanbaatar	39*
Zavkhan	6
Khentii	4
Selenge	4
Umnugobi	3
Bayankhongor	2
Dornod, Gobisumber	2
Tuv	1
Dornod	1
Sukhbaatar	1
Total	63

Source: GEC, *Added women from the 2012 list to UB

Respondents' explanation to why women's political participation in rural areas is weak can be summarized from the following quotes.

“At the soum level, it is very difficult to reach the 20% quota. There are very few female individuals that will run for office at their own will. So, we literally have to beg the women, who takes good care of their families and are employed, to run for elections as a party candidate.” A young Politician, FGD.

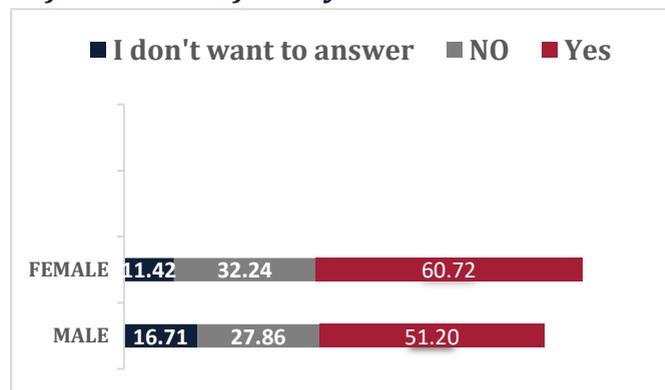
“In the soum, the husbands of prominent women also tend to be socially active. Therefore, [the women often decide] that “why both be involved in politics, one has to stay behind and take care of the household.” In general, women over 40 are involved in politics in the soum, not young women.” A young politician, FGD.

Finding 5: The notion that politics is dirty makes women and the youth disinclined to enter politics.

The widespread notion that politics is dirty leaves many women and youth disenchanted from political engagement. An FGD participant, who is a young politician, reported "Women and youth seem to be reluctant to get involved in politics because of the negative public attitude." Another interviewee described, "At the local level, party polarization is significant. Ruling parties take over the few existing jobs and make all the decisions. These decisions are often not fair and lead the public to see politics as dirty. I have observed threats about taking away food vouchers if one does not vote for certain party members. Even if someone is deserving of social welfare assistance, if he/she voted for the other party, the assistance could stop. I have also seen people, who are gainfully employed, own nice cars, and do not need social welfare at all, become recipients of social welfare, because they support a particular party" A young politician, FGD.

Among the 744 survey respondents that participated in our research, 57,5% (428) agreed when asked "Do you think politics is dirty and unfavorable for youth and women?" When we compared the gender cross tabs of the respondents, approximately 10% more women responded "yes" than men (Graph 1).

Graph 1: Do you think politics is dirty and unfavorable for youth and women?



Due to the notion that politics is dirty and lack of access to functional networks, many are disinclined from entering politics. According to many research participants another significant barrier to women and youth political participation is the lack of access equal opportunity and professional networks. In a large sense, the current political system is based on acquaintances and the power of one's network, rather than personal experience or performance standards. Therefore, even in cases where capable women and youth may compete equally for political engagement opportunities based on merit or experience, they often lack access to functional networks that could otherwise allow them to develop and reach decision-making levels. One FGD participant described how Mongolia's political patronage system influences hiring and professional networking, "In our soun, for example, the other party won and I "resigned from" my job. When my position became open and was advertised for competitive recruiting, it did not attract skilled young applicants. My experience as a good performer who lost their job led many to conclude that in public service regardless of performance, the job is unstable if one's party loses.

Finding 6: Political party internal structures fail to provide sufficient support for women and the youth recruitment and leadership development

Incumbent parties do have women and youth quota, however there is no specific career development or mentorship system in place. Despite parties' potential for serving as avenues of political recruitment and leadership development, research participants pointed out that political parties serve more as a gatekeeper in practice. Upon investigation, political party internal structures and operations lack clear policy and practice of promoting open and fair competition and subsequent promotion within its ranks and thus hinders more active participation of women and the youth.

As structured organizations, political party operations function with the central headquarters providing guidance to its network of branches throughout the country. Mongolia's two major political parties, the ruling MPP and opposition DP both have affiliated youth and women's associations, which are registered NGOs that play an important role in attracting and retaining party members in theory.

Although political parties and their women and youth recruits would mutually benefit from internal promotion or leadership development programs, in practice such opportunities and initiatives are non-existent. A young woman politician explained, "When I first joined the party, I thought it had a major human resources policy and a mentorship program for women. But in reality, there was no such thing, so it took a long time for me to understand the system."

For example, a young politician in an FGD reported, "In general, the Student Associations appear to be only active when organizing sports and arts competitions. Similarly, the Youth Association seems to come alive only to organize

the New Year's parties and the Women's Association to organize event around March 8th (i.e., International Women's Day). The parties also do not provide funding to the associations." Also, it is very "expensive" to run for office and actively participate in politics. There are few women and young people who can afford it. On top of such expected financial and time commitment, without clear party support, both women and youth find it challenging to secure their family support when they choose to pursue political career. This is supported by the IRI survey (2020) and the UNDP discussion (2014) results included in this report: 69 percent of the respondents of the IRI survey in 2020 replied that youth lack support from the political parties they belong is a major reason why people under 40 are not politically engaged.

Finding 7: A lack of systematic support for voter education has significantly hindered the political participation of women and youth

Almost all interviewees and group discussants that participated in this study pointed out that the government's lack of attention to voter education around elections and civics has left large swathes of the public, particularly women and youth, under-engaged in the political process. Despite voter registration in Mongolia being automatic or compulsory, a proper systematic framework of voter and civic education is not in place. An election organizer stated, "When children obtain the right to vote at the age of 18, they do not understand why it is important to vote and do not have enough information to adequately partake in the process."

According to MP Ts. Munkhtsetseg, "The biggest mistake the Mongolian state made in the last 29 years is not paying attention to voter education. Only a few researchers and scholars have done a

little work in the field of voter education. The state has done nothing in this regard. The state needs to work to improve the education of young voters who are about to make a new choice.”¹

Therefore, one of the key solutions to improving women and youth political engagement is through systematic and sustained voter and civic education campaigns that are adequately funded and supported by the Government. A young politician mentioned in an FGD, “Citizens seem to be less involved in politics due to lack of access to information. Therefore, their participation would increase if they are provided with information and education.”

“Although the online environment is developing, access to information is poor in rural areas. Say, a decision has been made in an organization. There is a lack of information dissemination to the public in the countryside, so I had to go in and get information myself. Therefore, I competed in the local Citizen’s Representatives Khural and became a representative.” A young politician, FGD.

The voter education programs should be more comprehensive than simply promoting the youth and the citizens to be actively participating in elections. They should be more substantial in content such as on voting with gender sensitivity and voting for gender equality and social inclusivity.



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¹ From the speech of MP Ts. Munkhtsetseg, 2019.11.25, <http://www.zaluucom.mn/read/3h5be9894>

RECOMMENDATIONS

To overcome barriers to women and youth political participation, this SheVotes assessment has developed recommendations for the GEC, political parties, the Mongolian government, civil society, the media and voters.

Parties	Measures to take (Recommendations)
GEC	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • To develop a comprehensive voter education program, tailored for different age groups such as children, young adults and elders, and disseminate them during both election and non-election years; improve the quality of the national program by conducting an evaluation on the program and the participants' satisfaction and apply necessary changes as needed. • To develop the infrastructure to enable online voting for the Mongolians living abroad and to provide necessary conditions to enable the citizens, particularly the youth, who are unable to vote at the addresses of their permanent residency (i.e., while studying/working either in Ulaanbaatar or in the countryside), to vote at the addresses of their stay. • To take necessary measurements to provide more comfortable and inclusive environment for the PWD, women with young children and the elders to allow them to exercise their voting rights.
Political parties (particularly incumbents)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • To develop and finance, human resources policy that implement innovative and hands-on programs such as mentorship programs and leadership development, within their parties, to support the women and youth participation and assess the impact accordingly for utmost effectiveness. • To promote equal women participation in decision-making processes and to advocate for an inclusive culture which denies exclusive practices like boys' club meetings when only men gather during non-working hours and make work-related deals and decisions. • To treat their members in Ulaanbaatar and the rural areas equally with regards to training and human resources development. For instance, to implement special programs for the members from the rural areas, to match members from the rural areas with those from Ulaanbaatar and hold the group mentoring sessions. • To institute gender quotas within political party by-laws, including quotas that go beyond the current minimum requirements.

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • To provide sufficient resources and funding to political party youth and women’s associations and empower these entities to play a more functional role for party recruitment and decision making. • To get rid of candidate “pledge” money needed to get placed on candidate lists. • To place particular attention on recruiting new women and youth members and make the process of joining and participating in party activities clearer.
<p>Members of the Parliament and the Cabinet</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • To work on and advocate for making necessary amendments and/or adding new articles on accountability to the laws and legislations (For instance, provisions on the gender quota, enabling online voting for the Mongolian living abroad, eliminating or easing of the candidate “pledge” money by the political parties). • To amend relevant parliamentary and Cabinet rules to mandate diversity and a greater share of key decision-making positions. For example, Cabinet member, standing committee and sub-standing committee heads. • To initiate and implement long-term sustainable programs responsive to women and youth issues and needs in their constituencies rather than apolitical non-policy related activities such as tournaments etc. • To formalize the parliamentary Women’s Caucus and have it served as an effective platform for women parliamentarians, regardless of their party affiliations, to carry out important legislative work and policy priorities.
<p>CSO representatives, international organizations & media</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • To conduct activities to increase gender sensitivity not only among the general public, but also decision-makers as well as media personnel and social influencers. • To collaborate and partner on conducting quality and comprehensive studies and research, with real examples and cases, on both the envisaged and immediate results and positive impact of increased women and youth participation in the political process and communicate the results to the public. For instance, to prepare and publish regular content on voter education in their “Politics” section in addition to the currently dominant political sensations and major decisions. • To work actively against the information misrepresentation (e.g., to lift up the professionalism as high as possible and to improve the information quality), and to make concerted efforts to enhance the understanding of the gender sensitivity among all staff, namely the

	journalists, operators and producers and consequently to portray women politicians not based on the social stereotypes but on professionalism, gender sensitivity and objectivity.
Public	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> To break with common stereotypes and generalization about women, youth, politics and elections and to approach these matters on a case-by-case basis and to become more mature voters who question information accuracy and make decisions based on more informed analysis and share opinions more responsibly.
Female and young politicians	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> To avoid shaping ones' own views about themselves based on entrenched social stereotypes and aim to be more self-confident in their capacity for civic engagement, be equal to anyone else and self-inculcate the necessary "mental immunity" within themselves to be consistent in their political career pursuit to ultimately bring in the impact they desire for the society. To make sure to create a righteous inner circle of personal and professional networks, who can provide the necessary support and motivation for yourselves; to create/join the team who have the same values as yourselves and can execute the teamwork for your desired positive changes and impact.
Young voters	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> To fully realize that the outcome of every election shapes your future and hence learn to treat each election/voting with the utmost care and responsibility and avoid being deceived and/or manipulated by monetary and/or non-monetary forms of influences such as bribery, gifts etc.

APPENDICES

Appendix 1: Voters' survey on women and the youth's political participation

Purpose of the questions	Questions
<p>General demographic</p>	<p>1. Gender:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> a. Female b. Male c. Other
	<p>2. Age:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> a. 18-25 b. 26-30 c. 31-35 d. 36-40 e. 41-50 f. 51-60 g. 61+
	<p>3. Education:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> a. No formal schooling b. Primary c. Partial secondary d. Full secondary e. Vocational f. College / University g. Refused to answer
	<p>4. Occupation:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> a. Pupil b. Student c. Employed d. Self-employed e. Unemployed f. Retired g. Herder h. Recipient of social welfare benefits due to disability i. Other
	<p>5. Official address:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> a. Ulaanbaatar b. Outside of Ulaanbaatar

	<p>c. Foreign country</p> <p>6. Type of accommodation:</p> <p>a. Ger (ger district)</p> <p>b. Ger (rural areas)</p> <p>c. Private house (ger district)</p> <p>d. Private house (other)</p> <p>e. Apartment complex</p> <p>f. Dormitory</p> <p>g. Other</p>
General attitude	<p>7. Do you think politics is corrupt and not friendly toward women and the youth?</p> <p>a. Yes</p> <p>b. No</p> <p>c. I don't want to answer</p>
	<p>8. Have you experienced any problems because of your age, gender or disability when voting?</p> <p>a. No</p> <p>b. Yes _____</p>
	<p>9. If there are two candidates running for office and they have the same qualifications aside from the fact that one is a person above 40 years old and one is a person aged between 18-40 years old, which candidate are you more likely to support?</p> <p>a. Older one</p> <p>b. Younger one</p> <p>c. It doesn't matter</p> <p>d. Don't know</p>
	<p>10. On the whole, people above 40 years old make better political leaders than the youth do.</p> <p>a. Agree</p> <p>b. Disagree</p> <p>c. Don't know</p>

Gathering information for elections	<p>11. In your opinion, which of the following campaigns seemed effective at engaging the youth?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> a. Voter education campaigns b. Political parties' and candidates' election campaign c. Both d. Don't know
	<p>12. Did you consider yourself sufficiently informed to vote in the most recent election?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> a. Yes b. No c. Don't know
	<p>13. If not, what kind of information did you lack the most? (an open-ended question)</p>
	<p>14. If the country lacks informed citizens, people in power will benefit.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> a. Yes, it will. b. No, it doesn't matter c. don't know
Participation formalization for elections	<p>15. What specific one to two barriers do you think needs to be resolved to encourage young people to vote?</p> <p>_____</p>
Decision making for elections	<p>16. Did anyone—either from your family, closed circle or beyond—try to influence your vote in the last elections?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> a. Yes b. Somewhat agree c. No, I made my decision myself d. I don't want to answer
	<p>17. In the most recent election, how did you decide who to vote for?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> a. Go to the election poll office and choose someone randomly b. Do some research and choose the best candidates from the options c. Do some research and discuss findings with people I respect and made the decision before going to the poll. d. I did not vote

	<p>18. Have you ever been asked to move to a location other than your place of residence to vote for a particular candidate?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> a. Yes, I moved b. Yes, but I ignored to move c. No, it never happened to me
<p>Election day</p>	<p>19. What did you find difficult when you tried to go out and vote in the most recent election? (open-ended)</p> <p>_____</p>
	<p>20. Has anyone ever attempted to buy your vote?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> a. Yes b. No
<p>Results/Analysis/ Accountability</p>	<p>21. If you disagreed with elected officials on their decisions, what actions did you take?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> a. Did nothing b. Protested on social media c. Sent petition letters to the officials d. Participated in a public demonstration e. Other: please specify
	<p>22. Have you ever kept track of elected officials' campaign promise implementation?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> a. Always b. Sometimes c. Rarely d. Never
	<p>23. For those who answered c or d, why did you not keep track of election officials' campaign promise implementation?</p>

Appendix 2: In-depth interview questions

I. Representation

1. In your opinion, how do election campaigns address issues that are important to women and the youth? Such as candidate messages, political party platforms, etc.,
 - a. How do women and the youth get involved in the process of developing a political party's campaign promises? *Mandatory question
2. What are the positive and negative consequences of involving women and the youth in the decision-making process of political parties?
 - a. How are women and youth recruited for meaningful higher positions? What does that look like?
 - b. As a proportion of "meaningful and higher positions within the party," how many are women compared to men?
3. Do parties have active, meaningful women's and youth's wings? How are they integrated into other party efforts/activities?
 - a. What are the particular powers or influences that women's and youth's wings have on party decision making?
 - b. What are the limits of their authority and agency?
4. How are women given or prevented fair opportunity to run for internal positions within political parties?
5. How do political parties encourage or support women and youth to run for elected positions outside of the party (for example, SGH, CRK or governor elections)?
 - a. Are there differences among/between the parties? Why or why not?
 - b. What sorts of recruitment plans, if any, exist for women and youth to be selected to run for elected positions?
 - c. Do internal party quotas exist for parties to include women and youth on candidate lists?
 - d. How is placement on the candidate list determined (top, bottom, etc.)?
 - e. Do parties provide material support to their candidates (financial, human resources)? Do they provide it equally to candidates of all gender and age?
 - f. Why has not Mongolia had a woman capital city or provincial governor yet?
6. How is the composition of the political party leadership is determined? What factors contribute the most on who gets to be in the party leadership?

II. Society and Media

Thank you for those insights. Next, I'd like to ask you some questions about how women's and youth's electoral participation is perceived in Mongolia in society and the media.

1. Generally speaking, how easy is it for women and the youth to:
 - a. Join a political party
 - b. Run for office
 - c. Rise through the ranks of political institutions
 - d. Get appointed to a political decision-making office
2. What challenges or barriers do you think women and the youth face in participating in the political process?
 - a. What sorts of challenges or barriers do they face when voting?
 - b. What sorts of challenges or barriers do they face when running for elected office?
 - c. What sorts of challenges or barriers do they face when attempting to join a political party?
3. Have you witnessed or heard of any intimidation on women running for office, working on an election campaign, or going out to vote on an election day?
 - a. If so, how might it impact women's participation in your view?
 - b. Do you believe that women were specifically targeted?
4. Has the media allowed women in politics equal access to media coverage in your view?
 - a. If no, could you explain?
5. How has the media portrayed women candidates, generally speaking?
 - a. Are there any examples of either flattering or unflattering coverage of women candidates that come to mind?
6. Do you think the media adequately covers barriers or milestones pertaining to women and youth political participation at the decision-making level?
 - a. Why or why not?
7. Does the media tend to associate women politicians with topics related to traditional gender roles?

III. Election Administration and Legal Framework

That's very helpful, thank you. Finally, I'd like to ask you some questions about how laws and regulations affect women's and youth' electoral participation in Mongolia.

1. In your view, has the electoral laws and relevant guidelines, including those passed during the COVID-19 pandemic, generated an inclusive process for all citizens? Why or why not?



2. Based on your experience, are legal provisions on electoral and political processes implemented consistently across the country? If not, does it negatively influence women's and youth participation in elections and politics?
3. Do you know if there are laws or regulations about women's and the youth's representation in the administration of elections (roles on Election Day, with the election management bodies, etc.)?
 - a. How is the composition of the election commission determined? Does this vary at the national level vs. the local levels?
 - b. What about the staffing of polling stations? How are the staff for polling stations selected?

IV. Wrap-Up

Thank you very much for those responses. Is there anything else that you'd like me to know about women's and the youth's political participation in the electoral process?

Appendix 3: Focus group discussion questions

Activity/Questions	Duration/ Facilitator Notes
<p>Ice Breaker (Depending on the composition of the group, this may or may not be necessary.)</p>	<p>15 mins</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Introduce moderator(s) ● Explain research objectives and confidentiality ● Discuss “ground rules” ● Ask participants to introduce themselves and conduct short ice breaker activity
<p>General Opinion/Accessibility of Electoral Processes</p>	
<p>How do you feel about your ability to participate in electoral processes in Mongolia? This could include voting, running for office, or anything else related to elections in Mongolia. Do you feel that your ability to participate in electoral processes in Mongolia has changed in recent years? Why or why not?</p>	<p>20 mins</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Warm-up question ● Encourage all participants to share and answer questions
<p>Accessibility/Types of Participation</p>	
<p>What are some ways that you have participated in electoral processes or that you have seen other women and youth in Mongolia participate in electoral processes? Again, this could be participation via voting, running for elected office, or anything else related to the electoral system.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Can you provide specific examples of positive and negative experiences related to your or others’ participation in the electoral process? ● What do you think caused the experience to become positive or negative? 	<p>20 mins</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Ensure that all participants understand and know the question. If not, explain briefly. ● State that positive and negative experience does not have to be the participants’ own. ● Clarify that the last follow-up question requires participants to provide detailed information.
<p>Barriers to Participation</p>	
<p>Thinking back to the positive or negative experiences of participation we just discussed, what could have been done differently to make the experience better? Even if it was a positive one, what would have made it even better?</p>	<p>20 mins</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Highlight specific experiences mentioned by participants, when asking questions and lead

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Can you share specific examples of this? 	for more open discussion.
Support to Participate	
<p>In your opinion, what do the institutions and stakeholders in Mongolia do to support and encourage women and youth to participate in the political process?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What else could be done by these stakeholders to encourage and promote the participation of women and youth in the electoral process? • How about marginalized communities, such as people in ger districts, herders, people with disability, ethnic minorities or voters residing outside of their official hometowns? 	<p>20 mins</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Clarify that stakeholders could include, but are not limited to, government, electoral management bodies, political parties, civil society, and the media.
Motivation to Participate	
<p>Why do you think women and youth choose to participate, or not, in the electoral processes in Mongolia?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Do you think those reasons are different for men and older people? Why or why not? 	<p>20 mins</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Summary
Conclusion	
End Focus Group Discussion	<p>5 mins</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Thank participants for their time • Reiterate research objectives and confidentiality and consent.