Mondernizing the court system has led to efficiency and accountability for citizens

Helping Mongolia to Reform Judicial Sector Challenge

In 1990, Mongolia abandoned its 70-year-old Soviet-style one-party state and started its transition to democracy and a free market economy. The justice system in Mongolia faces significant challenges - chronic underfunding, traditionally centralized decision-making and power structures, and limited mechanisms to demonstrate accountability and transparency.

Photo: MJRP/Ganbat Chalkhaa

Chief Judge of the Dornod Aimag court at his office working on this computer through a local area network.

Mongolia automated 85% of caseloads including twenty-seven individual courts serving 166 judges, and approximately 150 judicial staff.

Initiative

USAID is working with the National Center for State Courts to help Mongolia reform its judicial sector, and develop a functional and modern system that strengthens democratic governance and supports a free market economy. The Mongolian government identified priority areas to be addressed initially by the program - case management, court management and administration, training and continuing education of legal professionals, ethics for the legal profession, and the establishment of a professional bar system. The program also helped the Mongolian government in the review of the organization, structure, jurisdiction and responsibilities of all courts and other justice system components.

To ensure that the courts reap the full benefits of automation, USAID helped to create judicial training facilities and conduct post-installation computer training on use of case management software. The Mongolian government modernized case management and filing practices by automating 85% of caseloads including twenty-seven individual courts serving 166 judges, and approximately 150 judicial staff. Those courts were provided with 780 computers, 160 printers, and thirty-five copiers.

Results

Mongoalia's new system has increased citizen access to, and accountability within, the courts. The automation system, implemented to handle cases in both the courts and select prosecutors offices, has greatly improved transparency, sped up case processing, and reduced opportunities to manipulate the judicial system. Judges have now become accountable for handling and processing cases in a timely manner. Public access terminals in each court make information available to both lawyers and the public about their cases. In a recent survey of Mongolian judges and prosecutors conducted by the program, 85% of the respondents highly praised the automation and said that "It provides them with opportunities to use law databases and to work more effectively."

Case Study