

THE FRIENDSHIP PROJECT CONNECTING DARKHAN TO EUROPE



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ДАРХАН-УУЛ АЙМГИЙН
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Network of Associations of
Local Authorities of South-East Europe



FRIENDSHIP
FOR INNOVATION
PROSPERITY
AND GREENING

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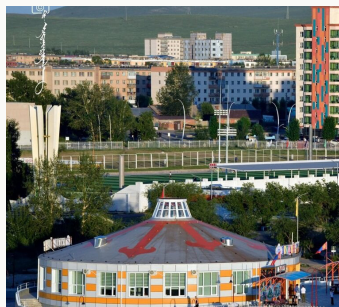
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Six projects implemented with over MNT 700 million in investment



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Editor's Note

City of Darkhan: An inspiration to other provinces



Bekhbayar Damdindorj
Editor-in-chief

A remarkable project funded by the European Union is drawing to a close in Darkhan. It is indeed exceptional, not only because of its content and results, but because this marks the first time such a project has been implemented in an Asian city. It was made possible thanks to the commitment and vision of local scholars and experts who successfully secured funding from the European Union.

This project, centered on public awareness and knowledge-sharing, brought together theory and practice, connecting Darkhan to the experiences of vibrant cities across Europe. It redefined the idea of what a forum could be elevating it to a new level and served as a model of multi-stakeholder cooperation, uniting local government, international organizations, academia, and the private sector.

The project in question is the Friendship Project, implemented over three years in Darkhan with a €3 million co-financing grant from the European Union.

It was brought to Darkhan by Dr. Mend-Amgalan P., a professor at the Agroecology Business School of the Mongolian University of Life Sciences in Darkhan-Uul Province. With the support of the provincial government, this project was brought to Darkhan, despite the fact that such initiatives typically target countries in Africa. Competing globally, this effort stood out as the first of its kind in Asia, a true source of local pride.

Throughout its implementation, the

project yielded meaningful results and generated a wide range of impactful activities, which are featured in this issue.

Most importantly, this experience demonstrates that international projects of this scale and vision are within reach for other provinces, provided they are driven by passion, intellect, and initiative. It is my hope that Darkhan will share its knowledge and experience with other regions of Mongolia. Through this project, Darkhan has forged partnerships with three European cities, participated in knowledge exchanges, and gained hands-on insights abroad.

As Dr. Mend-Amgalan P., project coordinator and Director of the EU–Darkhan Innovation and Entrepreneurship Hub, emphasized: “City of Darkhan is now a world city. Now it’s time to collaborate with other provinces and grow together.” The project was aptly named “Friendship” to reflect his vision of making Darkhan, nicknamed City of Friendship, a city of international solidarity. Khurelchuluun O., Head of the Darkhan-Uul Provincial Governor’s Office, put it simply: “Friendship is a first-of-its-kind project in Mongolia”.

The Friendship Project has powerfully demonstrated how public institutions and scientific communities can come together to create something transformative. It is a compelling model, one that I hope to see replicated across all 21 provinces of Mongolia. For that, we need visionary, proactive leadership at the local level. ■

Feature article

The “Friendship” Project Connecting Darkhan to Europe



Often regarded as Mongolia’s second capital, Darkhan is emerging as a flourishing urban center. The city embodies the tranquility, cleanliness, and generosity that many people seek, alongside the patient and composed demeanor so characteristic of Mongolian culture. One rarely encounters aggressive drivers or urban chaos here. Darkhan evokes the notion that it must avoid repeating the missteps of Ulaanbaatar.

Compared to Ulaanbaatar and Erdenet, Darkhan offers a lower cost of living, abundant employment opportunities, cleaner air, and sufficient access to schools and kindergartens. The city also boasts solid infrastructure, including telecommunications, overpasses, railways, and roads. Furthermore, Darkhan has become a hub for many international development projects, the most notable of which is the “Friendship” Project, a pioneering initiative financed with a €3 million grant from the European Union. Among Central Asian cities, Darkhan is the

As a result, Darkhan-Uul Province has seen significant advancements in digital governance, citizen engagement in policymaking, and the quality and accessibility of public services.

only one to have received such funding from the EU, and this distinction has allowed it to host high-level forums typically reserved for capital cities, including collaborative events with European cities.

Launched in 2022, the “Friendship” Project is a collaborative effort between the Governor’s Office of Darkhan-Uul Province, the School of Agroecology and Business of the Mongolian University of Life Science in Darkhan-Uul, and the Network of Associations of Local Authorities of South-East Europe (NALAS). Initiated by professors at the school and supported by local government leaders, the project aims to strengthen Mongolia-Europe relations, enhance civic participation through e-governance, promote innovation-driven entrepreneurship, and establish an inclusive, sustainable green economic ecosystem. A series of pilot programs has been implemented to realize these goals.

Among the project’s key achievements are ►

► the establishment of the Inter-Regional Darkhan-EU Forum and the EU-Darkhan Innovation and Entrepreneurship Hub. Besides, initiatives for smart water, waste, and energy use, green urban development, and social-tech entrepreneurship were implemented. Notably, this is the first time a large-scale development initiative of such scope has been locally implemented through civil society collaboration, rather than intergovernmental negotiation, a milestone in Mongolia's regional development.

As a result, Darkhan-Uul Province has seen significant advancements in digital governance, citizen engagement in policymaking, and the quality and accessibility of public services. Numerous training programs and forums have been organised to enhance the capacities of civil servants and local officials. The project has also provided targeted support for green and smart innovation: ten enterprises each received €20,000 in funding. Perhaps the most remarkable outcome is that Darkhan-Uul Province has established formal partnership agreements with three European municipalities and joined international networks, laying the foundation for becoming a global city.

Named "Friendship" to symbolize its vision of long-term collaboration between local and European cities, the project aims to elevate the City of Darkhan's international presence. It reflects the European philosophy that "a strong nation is built on strong local governments", a principle now taking root in Darkhan. ■

FRIENDSHIP PROJECT COMMITMENT TO DARKHAN-UUL PROVINCE MUNICIPALITY

NETWORK BUILDING

- Inter-Regional Darkhan-EU Forum (IDEF) Network Meetings 6
- IDEF Best Practice Forums 12
- Study Visits, Exchange Programmes 4

PARTICIPATORY GOVERNANCE

- Capacity building of Darkhan city officials 6
- Darkhan City Forum (DCF) meetings between citizens and city officials 10
- E-governance tools to promote transparency and accountability 1
- DCF Awareness and sensitization campaign 3

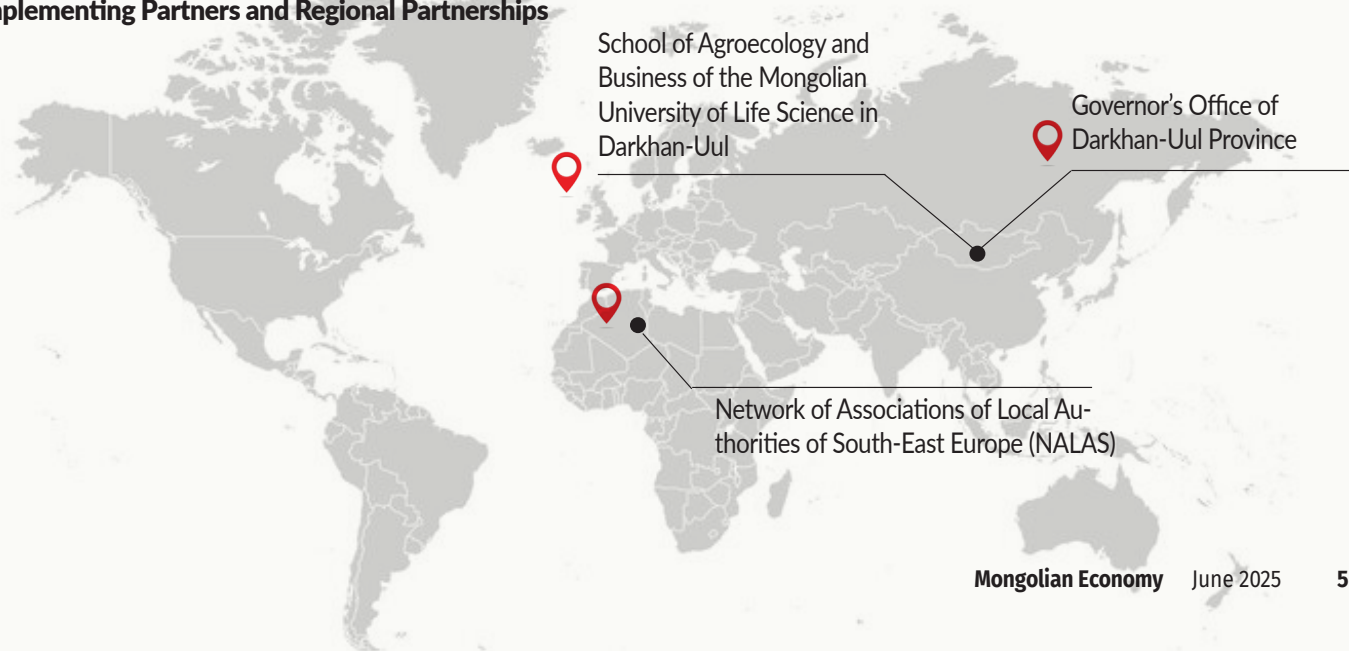
EU-DARKHAN INNOVATION AND ENTREPRENEURSHIP HUB (EU-DIEH)

- Support and training of potential social and tech entrepreneurs 10
- Financing and seed capital and technical support 10
- Awards for best Entrepreneurs 1
- Development of Website and Marketing platform 1
- Entrepreneurs' Business visits to EU 2

PILOT PROJECTS

- Undertake pilot projects for municipal services water, sanitation, energy (participatory e-governance and infrastructure provisions) 3
- Social/ IT Entrepreneurship pilot projects through a call for competition 3

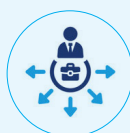
Implementing Partners and Regional Partnerships



Key statistics



The project led to the creation of **41 full-time** and **48 part-time** jobs in Darkhan-Uul Province.



Of the **12** best practice forums, **6** were held in Mongolia and **6** in Europe.



The project supported over **10** startup businesses with a total investment of **₮700** million

Investment



Total investment of **€3 million** is projected to generate a **€10** million economic expansion.

Project



The project implemented **6** pilot projects with a total investment of **₮700** million.

Project

A total of **36,894** citizens have directly or indirectly benefited from the six Pilot project implemented under the "Friendship" Project.

Pillar 1:

Best Practice Forums:

Twelve forums were held with a total of **1,981** participants, of whom **723** were women and **216** were youth under **35**. The forums welcomed **133** international speakers and guests from **17** countries.

Pillar 2:

Capacity Building for Civil Servants:

Through a ten-module training series, **422** civil servants from Darkhan-Uul Province, including local government officials, representatives of the Citizens' Representative Khural, and specialists at the provincial, soum, and bagh levels received training. Among them, **312** were women and **205** were youth under **35**.

Pillar 3:

Social and Technological Entrepreneurship Training:

A total of **659** participants completed general and capacity-building training programs, including **374** women and **103** young people under the age of **35**.

Pillar 1:

Darkhan-Uul Province signed Memorandum of Understanding (MoUs) with three European cities: Bar (Montenegro), Rijeka (Croatia), and Ajdovščina (Slovenia). In addition, MoUs were signed with **20** other EU partner organizations.

Source: "Friendship" Project

Photos



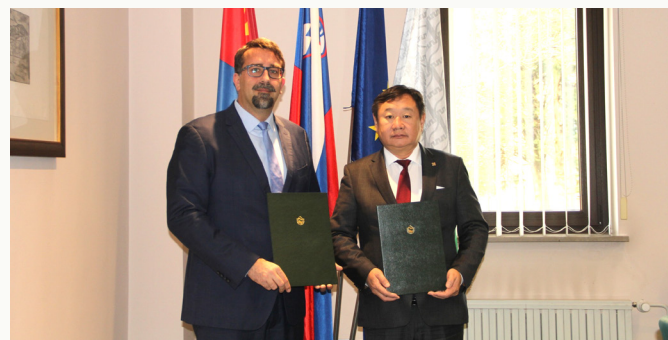
"Friendship" Project staffs with project consultant Kamlesh Kumar Pathak. Nov 5, 2022. Istanbul city.



Participants of the "City-to-City Cooperation Between Europe and Mongolia" Best Practice Forum organized by the Friendship project Feb 18, 2025. Brussels city.



Delegation led by Khurelchuluun O., Head of the governor's office of Darkhan-Uul Province after the IDEF Network meeting. Oct 04, 2023. Istanbul city.



During the memorandum of understanding signing ceremony, between Darkhan-Uul Province and city of Ajdovščina, Slovenia. Nov 24, 2023. Ajdovščina city.



A delegation, led by Nasanbat S., Chairman of the Meeting of Citizens' Representatives of Darkhan-Uul Province, visited a military and scientific drone manufacturing facility. Nov 24, 2023. Ajdovščina city.



As part of the study visit, the Red Cross Committee of Darkhan-Uul Province hosted officers from the Italian Red Cross and other delegation members of the European Union. Nov 27, 2024. Darkhan city.



The leaders of the "Friendship" Project attended the forum "Cities and Regions for International Partnerships: Localizing the Global Gateway". Nov 29, 2023. Brussels city.



European delegation for study visit of "Friendship" Project. May 29, 2024. Darkhan city.

Main interview

Mend-Amgalan P. : City of Darkhan is now a world city



The EU-funded “Friendship” Project (3 million euros) is nearing completion after three years of implementation in Darkhan-Uul Province. The project was developed by Mend-Amgalan P., a PhD at the School of Agroecology and Business of the Mongolian University of Life Science in Darkhan-Uul, who successfully competed on the international stage to bring the initiative to the province.

According to Mend-Amgalan P., who also serves as the Project Coordinator and Director of the Europe-Darkhan Innovation and Entrepreneurship Hub, the project has not only shifted public perception but also incubated and funded 10 startup businesses while catalyzing the launch of numerous other initiatives. “This project has demonstrated that large-scale collaborations between government and scientific institutions can be initiated locally. There is great potential for expanding this model by forming alliances with other provinces,” she emphasized.

– Your life and career have been closely connected to the School of Agroecology and Business of the Mongolian University of Life Science in Darkhan-

Uul Province. Shall we begin with that story?

– I graduated with honors in 1990 from the secondary school in Tosontsengel, Zavkhan Province. After graduation, I spent a year herding 350 sheep in a national assignment program. In 1991, I enrolled in the former Institute of Foreign Languages, now the University of the Humanities, where I studied to become a teacher of English and Russian.

From a young age, I dreamed of studying languages. Russian language teachers were the most admired people in rural areas. At that time, admissions to language schools were extremely competitive. In my final year of secondary school, I lost my admission certificate to the local political party leaders son, so I spent a year herding livestock. But a year later, I was accepted into the school I had aimed for and earned my English and Russian language teaching degree.

After graduating in 1995, I began to work as an English teacher at the Mongolian University of Life Science in Darkhan-Uul Province. In 1999, I completed a master’s degree in comparative linguistics. After five years of teaching English, I established the Department of Humanities at the university in 2000 and served as its head. In 2003, I was appointed Vice Director for Academic Affairs and worked for 10 years. In 2016, I returned to be a student to update myself.

– Where and in what field did you study? Did that experience open a new chapter in your life?

– Absolutely. Although I was a language teacher, I spent many years working on agricultural and environmental education projects, which naturally deepened my interest in the field. I then pursued doctoral studies at Incheon National University in South Korea, under the Department of Climate and International Cooperation. I completed my Ph.D degree in waste management, Environmental studies.

While the doctoral programs in Korea typically require 36 credits, I completed 60 credits before graduating. My dissertation work focused on waste management. When I returned to Mongolia in 2020, I found that our university students number had decreased to around 400 students. ►

Many perceive “The Inter-Regional Darkhan-EU Forum” as a one-time conference or event. But in fact, we are institutionalizing it as a permanent social body.

► I wanted to support the research and international cooperation efforts, so during the COVID-19 lockdown, I developed five project proposals. Countries that are signatories to the Paris Agreement have committed to mitigating climate change and implementing the 17 Sustainable Development Goals. However, these policies have not been localized in Mongolia. Many people think that implementing the Sustainable Development Goals is solely the responsibility of the government and has nothing to do with them. Some aren't even aware of what these goals are. Only now are local governments beginning to understand their importance. All of the projects I developed have been geared toward addressing these challenges.

–Was that the beginning of the “Friendship” Project?

–Yes. The European Union’s “Partnerships for Sustainable Cities” project primarily supported countries in Latin America and Africa. They announced a grant competition offering funding from €200,000 to €3 million.

During the COVID-19 lockdown in 2020, I co-organized a series of international online conferences with my professor from Incheon National University, as well as experts from Pakistan, Egypt, and India. After one of these conferences, I notified the director of an Indian Greenworks consulting company, who had co-hosted the event, that the European Union had announced a new project funding opportunity. I asked if he’d be interested in collaborating on a proposal. We agreed, and that’s how the idea for the “Friendship” Project was born.

Initially, I had been seeking funding for a waste management project, but this opportunity aligned more with city partnerships, so we shifted focus and developed the “Friendship” Project. That’s how it all started.

– The “Friendship” Project has several pillars. What are the main focus areas of the project?

– The project has four very important pillars. The first is to strengthen multilateral cooperation between Europe and Mongolia. As part of this, the Inter-Regional Darkhan Europe forum /IDEF/ was established in Darkhan city. Many perceive IDEF as a one-time conference or event. But in fact, we are institutionalizing it as a permanent social body.

In other words, we’re creating a forum that includes representatives from our European partner organizations, experts from the Asia-Pacific region, and local stakeholders from the Darkhan region to enable ongoing collaboration. The forum is structured with five

After the Darkhan Forum was established, we organized 10 forums during the project period to help cultivate this culture at the local level.

subcommittees. Its purpose is to identify and discuss issues in Darkhan, learn from European best practices, and implement projects based on those solutions.

The most recent forum was held in Belgium. We chose to hold it in the heart of Europe because that’s where all the major funding organizations are based. We invited leaders from institutions such as GCoM, UTM, and CEMR to participate. Staff from the Mongolian Embassy in Belgium were amazed, saying, “How were you able to organize a forum at such a high level and bring together all these important people? That’s no easy task.”

When I was writing the project proposal, I kept one idea in my mind: In Mongolia, once projects are completed, they often vanish without a trace. So I made sure to include long-term sustainability as a core policy objective of the project.

The second pillar is to support participatory governance. In developed countries, cities often have their forums, social institutions that bring together all relevant parties to openly discuss the city’s most pressing issues. These include decision-makers, policymakers, researchers, civil society organizations, and ordinary citizens. Together, they focus on a specific issue, identify viable solutions, and incorporate those into local policies and implementation plans. This is a classic model for ensuring public participation in decision-making.

After the Darkhan Forum was established, we organized 10 forums during the project period to help cultivate this culture at the local level. Each forum had a budget of 5 million MNT. At first, we approached the Citizens' representative khural of the province and soum governors to co-organize the forums, but they were hesitant. Still, every forum we organized produced tangible outcomes. Since decision-makers at both the provincial and soum levels participated in the discussions, we were able to move things forward effectively.

Most recently, after a forum on social well-being, a unified network of psychologists and social workers was established in Darkhan city.

We also carried out capacity-building initiatives for civil servants. In Mongolia, the only institution currently responsible for training civil servants is the National Academy of Governance. There is a UN-issued manual that outlines the attitudes, skills, and policy approaches civil servants should adopt to effectively implement the Sustainable Development Goals. We translated that manual and adapted it to the Mongolian context, then ►

- ▶ developed a comprehensive training program consisting of 10 modules. Through this program, we provided training to approximately 400 public officials.

In addition, we successfully developed the Smart City concept and implemented the E-Health system to promote equitable access to primary healthcare and integrate IT solutions by connecting local clinics and general hospitals.

– **Within the framework of the project, you are collaborating with NALAS, the Network of Associations of Local Authorities of South-East Europe. What best practices are you adopting from this organization?**

– NALAS is a regional network that unites over 9,000 municipalities across 14 countries in South-East Europe. It serves as a major platform for cities to collaborate and grow together. To localize this experience in Mongolia, we established the Network of Associations of Local Authorities of Mongolia (NALAM). The Governor of Darkhan soum, Mr. T. Tulgaa, currently serves as its head. Through this initiative, Darkhan-Uul Province is now working in partnership with other provinces to pursue shared opportunities for urban and regional development.

In collaboration with the Global Covenant of Mayors for Climate & Energy (GCoM), we are planning to conduct a training session on June 4–6 for members of the NALAM. The session will focus on methodologies for developing climate action plans for climate change mitigation and adaptation. If prepared per international standards, such a plan can serve as a core policy document that enables cities to attract climate-related investments.

To access funding, cities and provinces need to align their efforts with the 17 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) and contribute to the implementation of Mongolia's Nationally Determined Contributions. Project proposals that address these two areas are more likely to receive funding. Therefore, other provinces and cities must become well-informed on this subject.

– **What outcomes has the “Friendship” Project achieved during its three years of implementation?**

– There are many outcomes to mention, too many to count. For example, Darkhan city has joined several major international coalitions, including the Global Covenant of Mayors for Climate & Energy (GCoM), the Urban Transitions Mission (UTM), and the East Asian Cities Network (ICLEA). These memberships have opened the door for Darkhan city to develop

To access funding, cities and provinces need to align their efforts with the 17 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) and contribute to the implementation of Mongolia's Nationally Determined Contributions.

alongside cities across the world.

By joining these networks, local government leaders commit to aligning their policies with climate change mitigation and the localization of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). In line with this, the city started phasing out coal-burn boilers, reducing the number of chimneys, and using electric public transportations..

We also developed a Smart City concept. A smart city, as we've come to understand, can identify its problems and map out clear solutions. It should be green, environmentally and citizen-friendly, ensure the well-being and safety of its citizens, and provide equitable access to education, healthcare, and public services, while also producing the lowest possible greenhouse gas emissions. Of course, this is no simple task, but Darkhan-Uul Province is steadily working toward becoming a model smart province.

As part of our effort to support startups, we also helped create 41 full-time and 48 part-time jobs in Darkhan-Uul Province.

– **Tell us more about these 10 startups. How are those businesses doing now?**

– That initiative was part of the third pillar of our project. Our university is the author of the project. One of the main reasons businesses don't scale up and research institutions struggle to build capacity in Mongolia is the lack of integration between Academia and Private sector. Countries that foster strong collaboration between government, academia, and the private sector tend to achieve more rapid and sustained progress.

That's why we're working to build an innovation and startup ecosystem in Darkhan-Uul Province.

As part of this, we established the Europe-Darkhan Innovation and Entrepreneurship Hub at our university. The center is currently incubating 10 startups. There's a common assumption that startups must always be tech-based, but we're focusing on developing advanced, sector-specific startups.

Among the startups, for example, there's a business that produces biochar, packages it into soil pots, which dramatically improves plant vitality. An eggplant uses chicken manure efficiently, aligning with the principles of a circular economy. The “Nairamdal Mushroom” smart greenhouse startup was also launched. Another startup is a smart storage cellar equipped with fully an automated control system that regulates storage conditions. ▶



► Then there's "Ikher Dul", which developed a smokeless stove, an outstanding product. In fact, Yokozuna Harumafuji's dairy farm uses this stove for heating. That stove business is now preparing to receive second investment.

We also established a Science Cafe at our university, where people can not only enjoy coffee, but also participate in scientific experiments, whether with classmates, coworkers, or family members. The startup offering affordable, energy-efficient housing also deserves recognition.

At the beginning, many of our clients didn't understand the difference between traditional and startup businesses. They didn't know how to develop business proposals, lacked understanding of corporate governance, and weren't familiar with business planning. So we organized capacity-building training for these entrepreneurs. We taught them how to develop project proposals, helped them refine their ideas, and selected the top 10 businesses.

Each selected startup received a grant of 70 million MNT and incubation services. We also organized international exposure trips for them to Turkey, Slovenia, Korea, China, Croatia, and Brussels.

Additionally, we brought in seasoned mentors from Europe, people who had launched major businesses in Asia, Europe, and Africa, to train our entrepreneurs. We also invited well-regarded Mongolian experts to deliver courses and included our participants in accelerator programs. Even though the project has concluded, this center will continue to operate.

- **The "Friendship" Project aimed to enhance public service delivery through IT innovation, promote green development, and implement**

This is no simple task, but Darkhan-Uul Province is steadily working toward becoming a model smart province.

technology-driven solutions in Darkhan Province. What specific achievements have been made in these areas?

—Under the project's fourth pillar, we implemented three pilot projects in urban infrastructure and another three in social infrastructure, totaling six targeted projects with an over 700 million MNT budget.

These include the "Model District" project for waste separation at the source, a smart water kiosk, ger district redevelopment, the "Home Center" project to improve homeowner association management, and the D-CAMP project, which developed a climate action plan for Darkhan-Uul Province.

- **What has been the European Union's assessment of the project's implementation and overall impact?**

—Throughout the implementation, the project underwent annual internal audits as well as EU audits. In addition, an independent evaluation was conducted once by the EU, and we received very positive scores. There were no issues as long as we adhered to the project plan.

While an investment of €3 million was allocated to Darkhan-Uul Province, the project was designed to generate a broader impact valued at approximately €10 million. To advance this objective, eight project proposals were developed and submitted to various international organizations for potential funding and partnership.

In addition to the initiatives already mentioned, another project is scheduled to launch this year: it aims to secure the first investment from the carbon market. This will be a highly important project, both for our province and for Mongolia. ■

The benefits of “Friendship” Project

City of Darkhan joins 9,000 cities across 14 countries



The “Friendship” Project has not only paved the way for Darkhan-Uul Province to collaborate with cities across the European Union, but also laid the groundwork for partnerships with numerous international organizations. Notably, Darkhan has formally joined the Global Covenant of Mayors for Climate & Energy (GCoM), the Urban Transitions Mission (UTM), and the East Asian Cities Alliance. These affiliations mark a significant step toward integrating Darkhan into the global cities.

Membership in such alliances signifies a commitment by city leadership to align local policies with global frameworks, particularly in climate change mitigation and the localization of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). As part of this effort, Darkhan has begun taking tangible steps such as dismantling outdated heating boilers, reducing the number of chimneys in ger districts, and transitioning public transport to electric power. In parallel, the city has also begun developing a smart city concept.

The essence of a smart city lies in its ability to identify key issues and propose effective, sustainable solutions. According to project implementers, a truly smart city should be green, environmentally and socially inclusive, ensure the health and safety of its citizens, and provide equitable access to education, healthcare, and public services, all while minimizing greenhouse

gas emissions. Although achieving this vision is no easy feat, Darkhan-Uul Province is resolutely working to become a model smart province in Mongolia.

The transformative impact of the project is already evident: more than 2,000 individuals, including local government officials, civil servants, and entrepreneurs have participated in capacity-building programs, exchange initiatives, and business delegations. These efforts have played a crucial role in fostering innovation, strengthening governance, and driving inclusive development.

The “Friendship” Project’s most significant partner is the Network of Associations of Local Authorities of South-East Europe (NALAS), an influential consortium comprising over 9,000 municipalities from 14 countries. NALAS serves as a powerful platform for cities to collaborate and grow together. Inspired by this model, Mongolia has established its own national consortium, the Network of Local Authorities of Mongolia (NALAM), also known as the Mongolian Cities Association. This new alliance aims to adapt international best practices to the Mongolian context.

Leading this national network is Mr. Tulgaa T., the Governor of Darkhan soum. Darkhan-Uul province is actively working with other provinces to create new opportunities for regional development and to strengthen inter-provincial cooperation. ■



A Mongolian delegation led by Darkhan-Uul Province Governor Azjargal B. was received by the Mayor of Rijeka, Croatia, Mr. Marko Filipovic. Nov 02, 2022. Darkhan City.



During the memorandum of understanding signing ceremony, between the Governor's Office of Darkhan-Uul Province, the Agroecology Business School of MULS and Incheon Innovation Cluster. Nov 02, 2023.

PROJECT PARTNERS, BENEFICIARIES

INTERNATIONAL			
1	Association of Municipalities and Towns of Slovenia	53	Go care LLC
2	Union of Municipalities of Montenegro	54	Octo etwan LLC
3	CEMR Council of European Municipalities and Regions	55	Educated enterprise LLC
4	Marmara Municipalities Union	56	Technoj incubator LLC
5	City of Ajdovscina, Slovenia	57	healthy little citizens NGO
6	City of Rijeka, Croatia	58	Mongolian Institute of Certified Public Accountants (MonICPA)
7	City of Bar, Montenegro	59	Civil open education NGO
8	"Countries with which experience has been exchanged: Slovenia, Croatia, Montenegro, Serbia, Turkey, Italy, Spain, Japan, China, South Korea, India, Greece, Finland, Norway, Denmark, Netherlands, Belgium, Bulgaria, North Macedonia, "	60	Education initiatives NGO
9	Incheon Innovation Cluster	61	Noyon capital LLC
10	ICLEI- Local Governments for Sustainability	62	Toyoko inn hotel
11	GCoM- Global Covenant of Mayors	63	Bisoft international LLC
12	UTM- Urban Transition Mission	64	Sanko marketing mongolia LLC
13	BeFlat service company	65	Munkhbat-Orshikhui LLC
14	World Trade Link company	66	Modon zavi LLC
15	Oy DME Solutions Ltd	67	Agile project management center NGO
16	Greenworks Consulting Co.,Ltd	68	Mongolian Economy magazine
MONGOLIA		DARKHAN-UUL PROVINCE	
17	Members of Parliament, Mongolia	69	Citizens' representatives khural of Darkhan-Uul province
18	Cabinet Secretariat of Government of Mongolia	70	Citizens' representatives khural of Darkhan soum, Darkhan-Uul province
19	Ministry of Environment and Climate change	71	Governor's Office of Darkhan soum, Darkhan-Uul province
20	Ministry of Economy and Development of Mongolia	72	Governor's Office of Sharyn Gol soum, Darkhan-Uul province
21	Ministry of Finance	73	Governor's Office of Khongor soum, Darkhan-Uul province
22	Ministry of Foreign Affairs	74	Governor's Office of Orkhon soum, Darkhan-Uul province
23	Ministry of Digital Development, Innovation and Communication	75	Disaster Prevention Planning and Preparedness State of Darkhan-Uul Province
24	Ministry of Food, Agriculture and Light Industry	76	Police Station of Darkhan-Uul Province
25	Tuv province municipality	77	Division of Investment and Development Policy
26	Selenge province municipality	78	Division of Social Policy of the Office of the Governor of Darkhan Uul Province.
27	Uvurkhangai province municipality	79	Division of Finance and Treasury
28	National Institute of Regional Development	80	Department of Public Administration and Management
29	Startup marketing space LLC	81	Department of Culture and Art
30	Mongolian academy of sciences	82	Department of Education and Science
31	Mongolian University of Science and Technology	83	Department of Family, Children and Youth Development
32	University of Finance & Economics	84	Department of Physical Education and Sports
33	National University of Mongolia, School of Engineer and technology	85	Department of Food and Agriculture
34	Jijuu orgil LLC	86	Department of Environment
35	Uram undar LLC	87	Department of Labor, Welfare Service
36	Air market LLC	88	Land management Construction and Urban Development Department of Darkhan-Uul province
37	Mobicom LLC	89	Department of Darkhan urbanization and construction order
38	Fly sound LLC	90	Head of Cultural and recreation center of Darkhan city
39	Save the Future NGO	91	Local Property Department of Darkhan-Uul province
40	Impact Pro LLC	92	Darkhan City Landscaping Service Department
41	Fund to support young researchers NGO	93	Darkhan Redevelopment Authority of Darkhan-Uul Province
42	Mongolian guide tour LLC	94	Information technology department of Darkhan-Uul Province
43	Initiatives to support technology innovation NGO	95	Darkhan General Hospital
44	ICT LLC	96	Secondary school# 12, 31, 9
45	Khangain sonor LLC	97	Kindergarten # 4, 7
46	Sapiogen LLC	98	Small, Medium Entrepreneur Supporting Center
47	Oriental savor LLC	99	Chamber of Commerce and Industry
48	Metaforce LLC	100	University of Science and Technology in Darkhan
49	KEI DI LLC		
50	Ugudul, shinjilgee, zagvarchlalin tuv NGO		
51	Top spare parts LLC		
52	Sarlagiin buh LLC		
		101	Mongolian Ntaional University of Medical Sciences in Darkhan
		102	Mongolian University of Life Sciences in Darkhan
		103	University of Humanities, Humanity school
		104	Darkhan Polytechnic college
		105	Red Cross Society Darkhan-Uul Province
		106	Darkhan Metallurgical Plant
		107	Darkhan Thermal Power Plant
		108	Oyeg guril LLC
		109	Hero huder LLC
		110	Batburen tolgoi LLC
		111	Saturn Extreme Mongolia LLC
		112	Gerelt ganz uzeg NGO
		113	BSB electronics LLC
		114	Darkhan city electron LLC
		115	Chingis Haan bank, darkhan 01 branch
		116	Duldurvu huchten LLC
		117	Suran tsagaan LLC
		118	Artger media group LLC
		119	Ikh Morig LLC
		120	Ikher Dul LLC
		121	Ikh Khaan Buguivch LLC
		122	Team coaching Mongolia LLC
		123	Green wood craft LLC
		124	Hos Anar LLC
		125	Munhhyazgaragui LLC
		126	Sain Orshikh LLC
		127	Munkh tenger studio LLC
		128	Har halbagat LLC
		129	Bat enerel sonдор LLC
		130	Tokhi complex LLC
		131	Nomads hospitality LLC
		132	Hairaas uvluh khair NGO
		133	Mongolian National Recycling Assosiation NGO
		134	Woman in Science Mongolia NGO
		135	Jargalantiin khavchig LLC
		136	Shar zam ireedui cooperative
		137	Nomin trade LLC
		138	Gazar Buudai LLC
		139	Grand Yak LLC
		140	MONBZ production
		141	Saran-Elit LLC
		142	Khos-Dog LLC
		143	Darkhan Basu LLC
		144	Nairamdal muug cooperative
		145	Smart cellar project
		146	Tes orgil LLC
		147	ACT4 Darkhan project
		148	Darkhan Focus NGO
		149	Darkhan waste free future NGO
		150	Danda solution LLC
		151	Gerelt erdem tsatsrah NGO
		152	New Tour Safaris LLC
		153	Bayalag aj uul LLC
		154	Agaruutiin okhin LLC
		155	Gerelt amjiltiin tulkhuur LLC
		156	Batkhanjargalant LLC

Consultant

Kamlesh Kumar Pathak: Darkhan is acting as tunnel of hope and bridge of cooperation of Global Gateway of European Commission



We spoke with Mr. Kamlesh Kumar Pathak, Founder and Director of Greenworks Consulting, “Friendship” Project’s IDEF Executive committee member.

-How did you become connected with Mongolia, particularly with Darkhan-Uul Province?

-My connection with Mongolia is a unique friendship based on my desire to contribute to the prosperity, happiness, and capacity of people and countries by removing barriers. My approach is not commercial; I utilize my knowledge, capacity, and network to support institutions and individuals. I met Hon’ble Professor Ms. Mend-Amgalan Puntsagnamjil, Head of International Affairs of Darkhan Campus of Mongolian University of Life Science, in Songdo. I was invited to speak at Incheon National University, Songdo in South Korea on Clean Technology and Innovation in Urban Transformation in our countries. In my follow-up. I

consistently offered opportunities to develop project, programme and schemes for transformational impact in Darkhan and Mongolia. One such opportunity was a call for applications from the European Commission. While supporting applications in other countries, I chose to work with Darkhan-Uul Province in Mongolia, aligning with the aspirations of Hon’ble Professor and the Provincial administration of Darkhan-Uul. My relationship with Mongolia is continually strengthened by the great friendship, respect, and dignity provided by everyone in Darkhan and Mongolia, including the Government. It gives me great satisfaction and peace when I introduce the contribution I have made in terms of providing jobs, economic opportunities, strengthening the institutions and also providing access to government officials and elected representatives with a new perspective to be a change-maker and to make a difference. It’s feeling of great flux of emotion and happiness, when my Mongolian Friend come forward and greet me with great joy on their face on what we are continually achieving

-You have played a significant role in the creation and implementation of the “Friendship” project. What is the main reason and objective behind your involvement and dedication to this project?

-As I said in my earlier response, my motivation of engagement based on the value of oneness, universality and spirit of FRIENDSHIP, wherein we think about others success, and we want to widen that “Circle of Friendship and Success”. My commitment to engage and intervene

in a project and programme is based on the values of collective prosperity and philosophy of “Each for All and All for Each”. I have envisioned this project for my friends in Darkhan Campus of Mongolian University of Life Sciences, Darkhan-Uul Province Municipality and many friendly citizens of Darkhan and Mongolia. The main reason behind my involvement and dedication is my firm commitment to my own values drawn from rich Indian civilization and my parents, wherein doing good is purpose of life.

I consider this as my duty, responsibility and accountability to ensure and work with colleagues and partners in Mongolia, Asia and Europe as bridge and gateway of collaboration, partnership and prosperity. I am glad to again confirm, working together with my colleagues in Darkhan, I have been able to bring to project to 21 Aimags of Mongolia and 4 Soums Darkhan-Uul and 3 Provinces of Central Regions.

Moreover, this project has opened the gateways to significant number of European Cities, Municipalities & Region to get into city-to-city cooperation with Darkhan. Beyond this, the number of universities, businesses & enterprises and actors of innovation ecosystem, including European citizens, are beneficiary of this project. I bring all organizations from Mongolia and Europe together and set this partnership for application, and am really indebted to them for exemplary support in seamless technical and financial management.

I firmly believe in the spirit of partnership, collaboration, consensus and shared prosperity as instruments of peace, solidarity than an environment of conflict ►

► and fragility. I want to see with European Co-funding for 6 pilot projects and 10 startups in Darkhan, we expand them into many more pilots and startups with bankable investment project with European and other partners.

-How do you view the goals, vision, and outcomes of this project, as well as the scope of cooperation and development between the European Union, Mongolia, and Darkhan-Uul Province?

I view long-term roadmap of policy and action among institutional actors of European Union, Mongolia, and Darkhan-Uul Province. The FRIENDSHIP Project provides a firm, solid foundation with implementable interregional cooperation framework to unleash the power of decentralised cooperation between Mongolia and European Union with Darkhan acting as tunnel of hope and bridge of cooperation of Global Gateway of European Commission.

FRIENDSHIP Project by engaging with various cities, municipalities and region of European countries has set a new agenda on opportunity and approach of engagement in bilateral cooperation between Mongolian and European Countries of Slovenia, Croatia and Montenegro with Municipality of Ajdovščina, Rijeka and Bar and include other countries and cities too. This will be further expanded into other countries and cities of Europe to provide opportunities for Mongolian local authorities beyond Darkhan-Uul. FRIENDSHIP Project has identified strategic outcome from its' Interregional Darkhan Europe Forum Network Meeting and Interregional Darkhan Europe Forum Best Practice Forum to bring the relationship to new level in terms of policy, project, economy and trade cooperation without compromising people to people contacts assisted by municipalities.

-How do you assess the implementation of the project's main policies, digitalization and green development, during the project period?

I consider this as my duty, responsibility and accountability to ensure and work with colleagues and partners in Mongolia, Asia and Europe as bridge and gateway of collaboration, partnership and prosperity.

As I reiterated, FRIENDSHIP project was envisioned on interregional cooperation among European and Darkhan municipality, the project itself provided a model approach to consider regional development with focus on good governance, social inclusion, resilience & greening and prosperity & innovation. Just to mention, in FRIENDSHIP Project, we have gone much beyond the policies of digitalization and green development alone! We have institutionalized 1 Steering, 1 Executive and 6 thematic Sub-committees to address the different dimensions of sustainable cities. In this short span of 3-years, we have taken the topic of green development, smart cities and digitalisation and sustainable & green finance, affordable housing, Localisation of SDGs, city-to-city cooperation and resilience cities. I must say with great responsibility and conviction, we are moving on the right path and each of our action and priorities are on advance and medium stage of maturity in terms of providing Darkhan and other provinces of Mongolia huge support in terms of capacity, technical assistance and financing.

The "Friendship" project supported startups that promote innovative, green, and sustainable development policies. We also heard that you played a major role in securing further funding for some of these projects. How do you plan to continue working within the framework of this project and in collaboration with Mongolia? Do you have any plans in this regard?

Thank you for your questions. Over the past three years, I have collaborated extensively with colleagues in Darkhan and Mongolia. Their openness, friendliness, and commitment to economic improvement

are remarkable. Mongolia is experiencing significant changes and there is growing patriotism among politicians dedicated to economic growth. Mongolia aims to enter a new phase of development.

As I mentioned before, I again reiterate, I want to see with European Co-funding for 6 pilot projects and 10 startups in Darkhan, we want to expand them into many more pilots and startups with bankable investment projects with European and other partners. In this regard, we are considering new project development based on the various funding and investment instruments available from the European Commission. More importantly, we are looking at Paris Agreement, Green Climate Fund and Nationally Determined Contributions as catalyst for accessing funding sources and making them available for local authorities, businesses and CSOs of Darkhan and Mongolia.

Just to mention, we are scoping the funds available for investment and technical assistance for local authorities and private sectors and we will continue to support the FRIENDSHIP Project. We have also created 2 new institutional platform, National Association of Local Authorities of Mongolia (NALAM) and FRIENDSHIP Science Hub (FSH), I will keep working with them to make next phase of transformational impact. Regarding new project with secured funds, indeed we are on the right path and looking forward to confirming injection of new trench of funds through private sector and carbon market to start new project with significant impact over climate change, innovation and economic output. We are working on clean heating programme, affordable and green house, afforestation, reforestation, regenerative agriculture and many such idea and they are going to include our initiatives from FRIENDSHIP Project.

I express my sincere gratitude and best wishes to Mongolian Economy magazine for covering story of FRIENDSHIP Project and would encourage the magazine to continually support this transformation. ■

Collaboration



Darkhan-Uul Province sets the standard for international cooperation among provinces

Within the scope of Pillar 1 of the “Friendship” Project, to expand and strengthen international cooperation, twelve Best Practice Forum

forums and study visits have been successfully organized, along with the implementation of exchange programs. The “Sustainable, Green, and Model

Housing” forum was the only event held independently, whereas all other forums were conducted in conjunction with international study tours.

1st Best Practice Forum

July 1–2, 2022

The inaugural Best Practice Forum of the “Friendship” Project was held in Darkhan, bringing together representatives from Europe through the support of the Network of Associations of Local Authorities of South-East Europe (NALAS), one of the project’s main partners. The forum supported the Government of Mongolia’s decentralization and regional development policy, focusing on policies and implementation related to regional economic growth, sustainable tourism, agriculture, leather and textile industries, food production, and the product improvement of small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs).

“Smart and Green City” study visit

October 30 – November 12, 2022

A 15-member delegation from Darkhan-Uul Province, including the Governor, senior officials of the Governor’s office, project staff, IDEF members, and local entrepreneurs conducted an 11-day study visit to Turkey, Croatia, and Slovenia under the theme “Smart and Green Cities” from October 30 to November 12. The visit aimed to enhance the technical knowledge of executive and sectoral leaders and allowed them to study innovative urban development models and policies. ►

► EU “Partnerships for Sustainable Cities” Global Meeting

March 7–9, 2023

A delegation representing the “Friendship” Project, including Javkhlan B, Deputy Governor of Darkhan-Uul Province, Mend-Amgalan P., the Project Coordinator, and the Director of the EU-Darkhan Innovation and Entrepreneurship Hub, and Kamlesh Pathak, the Project Advisor, participated in the first global meeting organized by the EU’s Partnerships for Sustainable Cities initiative. For three consecutive days, delegates convened to exchange views, organize discussions, share best practices, and establish strategic communication approaches aimed at comprehensively outlining outcomes for implementing the global agenda for future urban development.

“City of Tomorrow: Smart Darkhan and Sustainable Green Finance” visit

June 26 – July 1, 2023

The “City of Tomorrow” forum addressed urban challenges and facilitated dialogue on solutions and joint development strategies. It also laid the groundwork for major investment projects in Darkhan-Uul Province. Domestic investors signed partnership agreements, including memoranda of understanding with foreign partners to cooperate on certain projects.

Meeting on SDG Localization, Good Governance and Social Inclusion

November 19–22, 2023

Held in Bar, Kotor, Cetinje, and Danilovgrad of Montenegro, this meeting addressed supporting entrepreneurship based on good governance and inclusive participation, citizen-centric public service delivery, and the advancement of public digital services. Darkhan-Uul Province and Bar Municipality signed an MoU to collaborate in sustainable tourism, transportation, public-private partnerships, higher education, culture, and sports.

November 20–25, 2023

The Best Practice Forum was held in Montenegro and Slovenia. These forums assessed how Darkhan-Uul Province is implementing socially inclusive policies, good governance practices, and the localization of the Sustainable Development Goals. Participants engaged in open discussions on the province’s initiatives in child protection, social welfare services, and support for

small and medium-sized enterprises, evaluating both achievements and challenges, as well as the strategies employed to overcome them. The forum also provided an opportunity for mutual exchange of experiences and best practices with European cities.

November 23–25, 2023

Within the framework of policies supporting small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs), representatives from Darkhan-Uul Province engaged in an exchange of experiences with the cities of Ajdovščina and Ljubljana in Slovenia. The discussions focused on initiatives such as annually selecting 3–4 types of local products for branding, promoting the integrated development of SMEs and traditional crafts in connection with tourism and major companies, and establishing a unified regional platform for tourism, trade, and service providers.

“Cities and Regions for International Partnerships: Localizing the Global Gateway” forum

November 29 – December 1, 2023

INTPA CoR (Global Gateway)

“Cities and Regions for International Partnerships: Localizing the Global Gateway” forum, organized by the European Commission’s Directorate-General for International Partnerships (INTPA) and the European Committee of the Regions (CoR), was held in Brussels, Belgium. Darkhan-Uul Province was represented by Governor Azjargal B., Project Coordinator Mend-Amgalan P., and Advisor Kamlesh Pathak. ►



Delegates from the EU and the “Friendship” Project team



Memorandum of Understanding signing ceremony between the Governor's Office of Darkhan-Uul Province, the School of Agroecology and Business of the Mongolian University of Life Science in Darkhan-Uul, Greenworks Consulting, and BeFlat Service LLC. March 1, 2024, Darkhan.

► December 3–9, 2023

Governor of Darkhan-Uul Province, Azjargal B., Project Coordinator Mend-Amgalan P. and Project Advisor Mr. Kamlesh Pathak participated in the 28th Conference of the Parties to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (COP28), held in Dubai, United Arab Emirates. During the conference, they conducted a series of meetings aimed at promoting the province's international cooperation efforts and raising awareness of the "Friendship" Project, thereby strengthening external partnerships.

Forestry Investment Project

March 1, 2024

Within the framework of the "Friendship" Project, co-funded by the European Union, the Governor's Office of Darkhan-Uul Province, BeFlat Service LLC, Greenworks Consulting, and the School of Agroecology and Business of the Mongolian University of Life Science in Darkhan-Uul have agreed to implement a Forestry investment Project. The project will be carried out in phases, with the first phase focusing on 1,000 hectares of forest land in the soums of Darkhan, Khongor, Orkhon, and Sharyn Gol.

Sustainable, Green, and Affordable Housing Forum

April 18, 2024

The forum aimed to support the long-term vision of transforming Darkhan into a "smart, green city," enhance urban sustainability and livability to develop into a national model city, and develop comprehensive, cost-

effective housing solutions through mutual experience sharing among stakeholders. It also sought to establish an ecosystem for model ger districts.

Science-Based Development Partnership Forum

May 30, 2024

To address pressing challenges facing Darkhan-Uul Province and the Central Region, it is essential to establish a collaborative platform uniting the government, the private sector, universities, and research institutions to co-develop innovative solutions. The forum was attended by representatives from Turkey, Montenegro, Croatia, Greece, North Macedonia, China, and the Republic of Korea.

"Central Region Development Forum – Resilient Cities" New Standard International Forum

November 28, 2024

The "Central Region Development Forum – Resilient Cities" New Standard International Forum was held in Darkhan-Uul Province. The event featured four keynote speeches, two main plenary sessions, five parallel sessions, a concluding session, presentations on Central region development plans and projects, a memorandum signing ceremony, B2B meetings, an exhibition, and a virtual tour of the Central region.

Forum on City-City Partnerships between Europe and Mongolian Cities

February 17-21, 2025

A Best Practice Forum forum titled "Cooperation Between European and Mongolian Cities" was held in Brussels, Belgium, from February 17 to 21, 2025. The visit aimed to strengthen ties between Mongolian and European cities by promoting collaboration in urban planning, resilience, and innovation.

"Smart City Marketplace cooperation between Europe and Mongolia" Best Practice Forum

April 21, 2025

The city of Albacete has successfully implemented several projects as part of its smart city initiative, enhancing the quality of life and upgrading infrastructure. During the forum, the delegation from Darkhan studied international best practices for developing inclusive, green, and human-centered smart cities. The visit provided valuable insights for future policy development.

Official's insight

Khurelchuluun O.: “Friendship” is a first-of-its-kind project in Mongolia

We spoke with Mr. Khurelchuluun O., Head of the Governor's Office of Darkhan-Uul Province.

– The EU-funded “Friendship” Project is nearing completion in Darkhan-Uul Province. How was the local government involved in the project, and how would you assess its overall impact?

– Before discussing the outcomes of the “Friendship” Project, I’d like to briefly touch on how it came to be implemented. Our scholars proposed a partnership with the local government to implement the project with funding from the EU. Naturally, our provincial leadership expressed strong support and commitment to collaborate. The project was implemented by three parties, one of which is the Network of Associations of Local Authorities of South-East Europe (NALAS), which played a key role as an implementing partner.

The local government also had a responsibility in the project, contributing 5% of the total project funding to ensure joint implementation. Now, after three years of operation, the project is entering its completion phase. I want to say that it has been tremendously beneficial for our province.

A clear example is that it opened the door for formal cooperation between Darkhan-Uul Province and cities in three EU countries, leading to the signing of Memorandum of Understanding. In addition, a series of capacity-building training programs were successfully conducted for civil servants. One major achievement was the development of a tailored training curriculum for civil servants. In collaboration with academic institutions and training organizations, we delivered step-by-step training programs that helped strengthen the capacities, attitudes, and ethical standards of over 400 civil servants.

Furthermore, under the “Friendship” Project, 10 start-up businesses received non-refundable grants of MNT 70 million each. This directly contributed to job creation. While this is a summary, there were, in fact, many other impactful activities. For example, we organized at least three best practice forum between EU and Mongolia, bringing together public and private sector stakeholders and creating new opportunities for cooperation. Study visits for civil servants were also arranged to examine international best practices in governance.

– The “Friendship” Project has demonstrated a high level of stakeholder engagement, knowledge exchange, and new opportunities for collaboration with European cities. What prospects have emerged from this initiative?

The “Friendship” Project promotes multi-sectoral collaboration across four main areas: enhancing public sector productivity,



supporting innovation-driven economic growth, addressing environmental degradation and waste management, and fostering smart city development.

Our province has joined the Global Covenant of Mayors for Climate & Energy and signed a cooperation agreement on the carbon market. As part of this effort, we are set to implement a major afforestation initiative to plant 20 million trees.

What makes this project unique is that it doesn’t end with a single construction or activity; instead, it continues to unlock further potential and pathways for development.

Recently, we visited Brussels, Belgium, where we held meetings with EU project coordinators and city mayors to explore the best possible solutions and avenues for local and national-level investment opportunities.

In alignment with the Mongolian Government’s Regional Development Policy, we invited two neighboring provinces, Tuv and Selenge, to join these dialogues. It should also be noted that the process of enrolling the provinces in the Global Covenant of Mayors for Climate & Energy.

– The Inter-Regional Darkhan-EU Forum has been established. Can you clarify whether this initiative will continue beyond the “Friendship” Project?

– There has not yet been a formal decision on whether the forum will continue after the project concludes. However, we certainly do not intend to end all cooperation with the conclusion of this project. We are committed to continuing collaboration with the European Union, as well as with our academic and expert partners.

Forums engaging entrepreneurs under the project were particularly meaningful. To be honest, “Friendship” is a first-of-its-kind project in Mongolia. It is the first time a project in our country has successfully secured EU funding at this scale. On behalf of the local government, I would like to express our deep appreciation to the academic and project implementation team who made this project a reality. ■

Unlocking Potential

The Inter-Regional Darkhan–EU Forum was officially established



The primary objective of the “Friendship” Project is to strengthen multi-sectoral cooperation between Mongolia and the European Union. Within the framework of this goal, the Inter-Regional Darkhan–EU Forum (IDEF) was established, not merely as a one-time conference or symposium, but as a lasting institutional mechanism functioning at the level of a social development institution.

The IDEF is designed to guide the regional development of Darkhan-Uul Province, support decentralization, and promote coherent, regionally integrated policy implementation. It is mandated to operate on a long-term, sustainable basis, fostering cooperation across multiple sectors. The Forum brings together representatives of European partner organizations, Asian regional experts, and local stakeholders from Darkhan to implement this cooperative vision.

IDEF is structured around five subcommittees,

The Forum brings together representatives of European partner organizations, Asian regional experts, and local stakeholders from Darkhan to implement this cooperative vision.

which focus on addressing key regional challenges in Darkhan by drawing from successful European experiences. These subcommittees aim to promote the implementation of externally funded projects that can help address pressing development needs.

IDEF Network Meeting I

Rijeka, Republic of Croatia – November 4, 2022

The inaugural meeting of the IDEF Executive Committee took place in Rijeka, Croatia, on November 4, 2022. Key topics discussed included support for innovation, green urban development, entrepreneurship, and inclusive, sustainable, and innovation-led growth, particularly about fostering start-up businesses. Supported by international experts, the meeting created a platform for dialogue on policy, business, and investment between the European Union and Mongolia. ►

► IDEF Network Meeting II

Darkhan-Uul Province, Mongolia – June 21, 2023

The second Executive Committee meeting of IDEF was held in Darkhan City on June 21, 2023, under the theme "Smart Cities." The forum emphasized establishing working groups and exploring opportunities for governance, strategic planning, implementation, and financial support through international programs. Discussions also included integrating Darkhan into exchange programs, smart city capacity-building modules under the "Friendship" Project. Participants included representatives from the Citizens' Representative Khural of Darkhan-Uul Province, the Network of Associations of Local Authorities of South-East Europe (NALAS), the IDEF Executive Committee, and all five subcommittees, attending both in-person and online.



IDEF Network Meeting III

Istanbul, Republic of Turkey – October 6, 2023

The third meeting of the IDEF Executive Committee was held at the Istanbul Congress Center in Turkey on October 6, 2023, under the theme "Creating Climate-Resilient, Disaster-Prepared, and Sustainable Cities." Participants included members of the Citizens' Representatives Khural of Darkhan-Uul Province, the provincial emergency commission, NALAS representatives, and IDEF's Executive Committee and its five subcommittees.

The meeting focused on cooperation and the exchange of experiences in disaster preparedness, early warning systems, and joint responses to both natural and man-made disasters, involving the Republic of Türkiye, Mongolia, and Darkhan-Uul Province.

IDEF Network Meeting IV

Ljubljana, Republic of Slovenia – November 25, 2023

The fourth Executive Committee meeting of IDEF was convened in Ljubljana, Slovenia, on

November 25, 2023, with the theme "Localizing the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), Promoting Social Inclusion, and Ensuring Good Governance."

Attendees included representatives from the Darkhan-Uul province, NALAS, the IDEF Executive Committee, and all five subcommittees. Discussions focused on enhancing participation among executive and subcommittee members and identifying viable projects and programs to be implemented across Darkhan-Uul province and the broader region.

IDEF Network Meeting V

Darkhan-Uul Province, Mongolia – May 29, 2024

The fifth Executive Committee meeting was held in Darkhan-Uul Province on May 29, 2024, under the theme "Science-Based Development Partnerships." The event brought together representatives from Darkhan-Uul Province, NALAS, and the IDEF Executive Committee, and all five subcommittees, both in-person and virtually. Guest speaker Dr. S. Galbadrakh, Associate Professor at the National Academy of Governance, delivered a presentation titled "Feasibility and Research for Establishing Industrial and Technology Parks." Mr. Boran Ivanoski, Program Specialist at NALAS, gave a talk on "Sustainable Smart Cities and Their Contribution to Social Cohesion."

IDEF Network Meeting VI

Brussels, Kingdom of Belgium – February 17, 2025

The sixth cooperation meeting of the Inter-Regional Darkhan-EU Forum took place in Brussels, Belgium, on February 17, 2025. The meeting reviewed the achievements, outcomes, and lessons learned from the implementation of the Friendship Project. In addition, discussions were held on the structure and programming of European regional governance organizations and their respective initiatives. ■

Civil servant

Role model in every sense



One of my key ambitions is to introduce modern urban governance systems in Darkhan.

Darkhan-Uul Province is emerging as a promising model for Mongolia's future as a smart city. The reasons are manifold, not only is the province blessed with a peaceful population, clean air, and safe water, but it also offers innovations and developments not yet seen in the capital, Ulaanbaatar. Among these, the "Friendship" project, co-funded by the European Union, stands out. This is the first initiative to be implemented in Asia. For me, initially, it seemed like just another funding mechanism or investment program. However, upon visiting the province and meeting with project coordinators, local officials, and entrepreneurs, this assumption was quickly overturned.

Dr. Mend-Amgalan P., a professor and teacher at the School of Agroecology and Business of the Mongolian University of Life Sciences in Darkhan-Uul, noted, "The project has transformed the attitudes of many people. There are now many so-called 'good students' who have supported the project closely since the beginning. One of them is the Governor of Darkhan soum, Mr. Tulgaa T. He often says, 'I feel embarrassed by the things I used to talk about before this project began. Now my eyes have been opened.' If you visit his office, you'll see how innovatively he approaches his work."

Taking this advice, our reporting team visited him

early the next morning. From the outside, the soum administration building appeared to be the typical old administrative structure. But stepping inside, we were greeted by a surprisingly modern and elegantly designed workspace. The walls featured built-in water fountains, and everything from the furniture to the room layout reflected contemporary design principles. Most astonishing of all was the restroom: beyond its smart toilet features, it included a salon-style hair washing station, vanity table, and even a pharmacy corner, amenities never before seen in any government building we've visited. There was even a designated children's room. It was clear that a truly eco-friendly and employee-centered working environment had been established.

Governor Tulgaa T. arrived, and our conversation began. A professional artist by training, he later earned a Master's degree in public administration and has since devoted himself to public service. Now in his early forties, he shared: "I don't view my role as a position of power, but rather as an opportunity to make a difference. That's why I dedicate myself to learning and doing my best. In the past, I served as the Chair of the Citizens' Representative Khural, and I'm now serving my second term as Governor."

When asked how the Friendship project has impacted his work and public service in general, Tulgaa T. responded: "It was Dr. Mend-Amgalan P. who first proposed the idea that there was a real opportunity to attract investment from the global market, acquire and share knowledge, and build important partnerships. With support from both local and international advisors, we initiated the groundwork and research for what would become the Friendship project. After successfully passing three stages of evaluation by the European Union, the project was officially launched in February 2022 in Darkhan.

I was appointed as the head of the project unit and have served as the government's lead representative throughout its implementation. I believe this project has had a tremendously positive impact. Every country is responsible for contributing to the achievement of the 17 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), and as a young city built on industry, Darkhan is no exception. ►

- Our city has become one of the key accelerator projects in promoting global sustainable urban development.

As someone in a leadership position, the project has broadened my perspective, especially in terms of how a city should approach development and policy planning. I may very well be the person who has learned the most from this project. I'm here not to hold a title, but to get real work done. One of my key ambitions is to introduce modern urban governance systems in Darkhan. At the same time, I got to know that we can take very tangible, actionable steps in response to climate change. It's through this understanding that Darkhan has officially joined the global coalition of cities committed to climate action.

Globally, cities are voluntarily forming alliances and working together. That's exactly what we had been looking to do. Learning from peer cities that share similar characteristics is invaluable. Thanks to our active work over the past two years, we've now established the Network Association of Local Authorities of Mongolia. The association aims to unite all urban centers in Mongolia with populations over 10,000. In 2024, we officially registered the organization as a non-governmental entity, and we are now working on updating its charter and operational framework."

Governor Tulgaa's T. vision for Darkhan is bold and inspiring. He dreams of transforming the city into a vibrant, well-planned urban center with a population of half a million, an economically diversified, eco-conscious, smart, and entertainment-rich city. A place where residents are employed, financially secure, and deeply satisfied with their quality of life; a city that would one day rank among Asia's highest in happiness indexes.

"I have great faith in the future," he says. "And I'm incredibly proud of the team at the Governor's Office of Darkhan soum. I'm the oldest among them. Most of my colleagues were born in the 1990s and early 2000s. I grow alongside them, and I learn from them every day. They inspire me, they bring energy and enthusiasm to the workplace. I genuinely strive to lead not through fear, but through understanding and collaboration."

He goes on to note the growing number of talented young professionals who have returned from abroad with fresh ideas and global perspectives. "Their productivity is remarkable," he says. "We must believe

in the future. Good times are coming. I'm putting everything I have into ensuring that young people don't become disheartened or disengaged from work. Instead, I want them to feel encouraged, empowered, and motivated to innovate. I want to create a space where people can think creatively and are inspired to share those ideas with others."

The Darkhan soum is actively implementing a wide range of projects and initiatives. For example, a labor exchange specifically for senior citizens has been established, successfully enabling 126 elderly individuals with employment opportunities. A new children's development initiative called the "Amin Zurkh" has also been launched to support the well-being and growth of children.

In addition, the soum has set up departments dedicated to culture, recreation, public landscaping, and waste collection. The soum plans to operate independently without government subsidies, reflecting a bold and effective approach to public sector management.

Darkhan has also become the first and only soum in Mongolia to introduce an ERP system in public administration. These efforts, big and small, highlight a growing collection of successful practices that are steadily transforming Darkhan into a model soum for innovation, inclusion, and efficiency. ■

Globally, cities are voluntarily forming alliances and working together. That's exactly what we had been looking to do.



Citizen-Centered Governance

The City of Tomorrow



As part of Pillar II of the “Friendship” Project, efforts have been directed toward strengthening participatory governance. A key achievement under this objective has been the establishment of the Darkhan Forum. In developed countries there is a platform that promotes inclusive decision-making, bringing together policymakers, researchers, civil society actors, and local citizens to collaboratively identify solutions to local challenges. According to Dr. Mend-Amgalan P., this model reflects a global best practice in fostering citizen engagement in policy development and implementation. Since its inception, ten community forums have been convened under the Darkhan Forum to cultivate this

This model reflects a global best practice in fostering citizen engagement in policy development and implementation.

culture of participatory governance at the local level.

In parallel, a series of capacity building activities have been implemented for civil servants. A comprehensive 10-module training program, adapted from United Nations guidelines on public sector contributions to the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), was translated and contextualized for Mongolia. Over 400 public officials have completed this program.

Additionally, the “Friendship” Project supported the development of a Smart City Concept and facilitated the implementation of E-Health systems to improve equitable access to primary healthcare at family clinics and hospitals and IT technology. ►

CONSULTATIVE FORUMS OF THE DARKHAN FORUM

“Let’s Build a Clean Darkhan Together”

Forum Date: February 15, 2023



The inaugural session of the Darkhan Forum was held under the theme “Let’s Build a Clean Darkhan Together.” Over 100 participants, including policymakers, technical experts, researchers, representatives of professional institutions, businesses, NGOs, youth, and elderly citizens, joined to discuss waste management strategies.

“Healthy Peer Relationships – Positive Environment”

Forum Date: May 4, 2023



The second forum attracted more than 180 stakeholders, including the Governor of the Darkhan-Uul Province, policymakers, professional organizations, school directors, social workers, parents, students, and civil society representatives, who explored approaches to creating safe and inclusive learning spaces.

“Local Budget and Citizen Participation”

Forum Date: November 5, 2023

This forum explored mechanisms to increase transparency and citizen engagement throughout the local budgeting process, from proposal development



to approval, allocation, and oversight. Participants discussed barriers to participation and proposed solutions for more accountable and transparent budget management.

“Quality and Accessibility of Primary Health Services – Challenges and Solutions”

Date: January 16, 2024



In support of Sustainable Development Goal 3 – Good Health and Well-being by 2030, which aims to “ensure access to quality health care services for all, including financial risk protection, access to essential, safe, effective, and affordable medicines and vaccines,” the “Friendship” Project facilitated a forum to advance these priorities at the local level.

On January 16, 2024, the Darkhan Forum convened a “Challenges and Solutions” forum, which sought to amplify citizen voices within the process, strengthen multi-stakeholder collaboration, and collectively address key issues affecting the accessibility and quality of primary health care in Darkhan-Uul Province. The forum brought together approximately 180 participants.

“Public–Private Partnership - Networking for Food Producers”

Forum Date: January 24, 2024

This forum supported local food producers by providing training and information, promoting partnerships ►



- ▶ between public agencies and private enterprises to boost the sales, and hosting a product exhibition to facilitate market access and business development.

“Current Status, Challenges, and Solutions of Preschool Education Institutions in Darkhan-Uul Province”

Forum Date: March 11, 2024

Organized in collaboration with the Social Policy Division of the Governor’s Office of the Darkhan-Uul Province, this forum examined the condition of pre-school education providers and discussed key issues affecting service delivery and child development outcomes in the province.

“Let’s Grow Together” Forum

Date: October 30, 2024



In line with the Friendship Project’s second pillar of strengthening participatory governance, this forum focused on identifying and addressing barriers to inclusive education for children with disabilities. Participants assessed the current situation and proposed practical actions for improving accessibility and equity in education.

“60 Years of sports development: participation of disabled people in sports” Forum

Date: November 2, 2024

In line with the “Friendship” Project’s commitment to inclusive governance, the Darkhan Forum organized a thematic session titled “Participation of Persons with



Disabilities” on November 2, 2024. The forum aimed to ensure the voices and contributions of persons with disabilities are meaningfully included in Darkhan Forum’s activities, to strengthen multi-stakeholder collaboration, and to identify shared solutions to the challenges they face. In addition, the forum promoted awareness of Paralympic sports disciplines and supported the identification and development of athletes capable of representing Mongolia in international competitions.

As an outcome of the forum, official recommendations were submitted to local and provincial authorities calling for greater institutional support for inclusive sports. These included proposals to expand the range of accessible sports disciplines, establish dedicated provincial-level teams, and support high-potential athletes with disabilities.

“MindScape 2025: Positive Reflection” Forum

Date: April 8, 2025



As part of Pillar II of the “Friendship” Project, which focuses on promoting participatory governance, the ninth session of the Darkhan Forum was held under the theme “Positive Reflection.”

A total of 168 participants took part in the forum, including 157 women and 110 youth under the age of 35. The objective of the forum was to raise awareness about the growing challenges related to psychosocial well-being and mental health, to foster early prevention, and to strengthen the cooperation and coordination among social workers and mental health professionals operating in the region.

Quotes

We bring you selected quotes from speakers and participants at the FRIENDSHIP Best Practice Forum:

Bold L.:

Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary of Mongolia to the Kingdom of Belgium



The FRIENDSHIP project implemented in Darkhan-Uul Province holds exceptional significance in the 35-year history of Mongolia–Europe relations. This is not a project that ends upon completion, rather, it lays the groundwork for genuine cooperation, real investment, and future development programs. We are fully committed to supporting and collaborating in every possible way.

Dušan Raičević:

President of NALAS and Mayor of Bar, Montenegro



From the very beginning, the FRIENDSHIP project, co-financed by the European Union, has served as a vital bridge linking Darkhan and Europe. It has created space for mutual learning and exchange of best practices through a wide range of initiatives. One of the most visible outcomes is the strengthening of local government capacities, which has led to real change. I'd like to emphasize that the Network of Associations of Local Authorities of South-East Europe (NALAS) is open and ready to continue collaborating with the FRIENDSHIP project and Darkhan-Uul Province.

Pier Roberto Remitti :

Executive Director, Global Covenant of Mayors for Climate & Energy



If we look at today's reality, existing financing mechanisms are not enough to combat climate change, and additional funding is urgently needed. But this challenge can be overcome through collaboration and collective effort. The FRIENDSHIP project has proven itself as an excellent connector, enabling that kind of cooperation.

The very first and most critical step in addressing climate change is equipping every citizen with knowledge and tools. That's why we are always ready to work with Darkhan and other cities in Mongolia on climate-related actions.

Uribold B.:

Head of Division for Technology, Innovation, and Accelerated Development Studies, Ministry of Education and Science



Darkhan-Uul Province is steadily building a startup ecosystem, and I see great potential for it to become a green and center of green technology city led by young people.

Undram Ch.:

Member of Parliament, Chair of the Standing Committee on Education, Culture, Science, and Sports



From the European Union's perspective, the development of a country or region is largely determined by the capacity of its local areas. That's an important insight for Mongolia as well, as we need to focus more on empowering our regions and supporting regional development policies.

Javkhlan B.:

Minister of Finance, Mongolia



The FRIENDSHIP project being implemented in Darkhan-Uul Province is strongly aligned with the Government of Mongolia's 'Smart Province' initiative. This project plays a key role in improving the province's business competitiveness, creating jobs, and opening up new opportunities for business growth."

Erdenebayar D.:

Executive Director, National Institute of Regional Development



Darkhan-Uul Province meets all the top criteria required for attracting investment, which is something not many regions can claim.

Tapan Mishra:

Former UN Resident Coordinator in Mongolia



During my time as the UN Resident Coordinator in Mongolia, I often said: the time for simply talking about the Sustainable Development Goals under the pledge of 'leaving no one behind' is over; now is the time for action. Mongolia has already made its promises for Vision 2050; now we must act on them.

We need inclusive, equitable participation from every sector of society. It's time for all of us, including individuals, communities, institutions, to move forward together and make those goals a reality.

Azjargal B.:

Governor of Darkhan-Uul Province, Head of the Steering Committee of IDEF, Friendship project



What sets the FRIENDSHIP project apart is how Darkhan-Uul is not only focused on local administrative goals, like the Governor's action plan. We are working to match the pace of the world, taking on the same responsibilities as global cities, participating in international projects, and striving to grow alongside them.

The EU-Darkhan Innovation and Entrepreneurship Hub Team



MEND-AMGALAN P.
Ph.D. Project Manager,
Director of EU-DIEH



GANKHUYAG P.
Ph.D. Entrepreneurship
Coordinator



GANZUL D.
Office Manager



GANTULGA BV.
Startup Coordinator



BATBOLOR E.
Business Development
Specialist



ENKHKHUSLEN N.
Documentation Specialist



ENKHJARGAL P.
Project Assistant

Innovation

The EU-Darkhan Innovation and Entrepreneurship Hub develops 10 startups

As part of Pillar III of the Friendship Project, the EU-Darkhan Innovation and Entrepreneurship Hub (EU-DIEH) was established under the School of Agroecology and Business of the Mongolian University of Life Science in Darkhan-Uul. The initiative was launched to foster environmentally sustainable, green and competitive startups aligned with sustainable development goals.

The hub is designed to serve as a regional platform that nurtures an innovation-driven entrepreneurial culture. It delivers targeted support through business development training, startup incubation and acceleration programs, and access to seed funding.

Aligned with the Friendship Project's focus on twelve priority areas of sustainable development, the center also supports innovation across education, research, and technology transfer. Its core mission is to provide a reliable data platform for entrepreneurs, startups, SMEs, and companies that are operate in or are seeking to transition toward green and sustainable business models. In doing so, it helps cultivate a favorable local ecosystem rooted in environmental and economic sustainability.

Currently, EU-DIEH is incubating ten startups across various sectors that employ cutting-edge technologies. Each selected startup has received a non-refundable grant of MNT 70 million, along with access to incubation and acceleration services. The program has also facilitated international exposure visits to Turkey, Slovenia, Croatia, and Brussels, allowing entrepreneurs to explore global best practices and deepen their sector-specific expertise. The hub has invited international mentors from



Each startup has received MNT 70 million, along with access to incubation and acceleration services.

Europe with experience in building successful enterprises across Asia, Europe. In parallel, national experts with proven reputations in relevant sectors were engaged to deliver mentorship to participating entrepreneurs.

Currently Incubated Startups at EU-DIEH:

- Quail Model Farm (poultry farming)
- Shimt Mushroom (mushroom cultivation)
- Charakha children's shoes (footwear production)
- Mongol Syrok (dairy products)
- Tsegts leather shoes (footwear production)
- Borgil soaps (Handmade soap made out from animal fat)
- Ikher Dul stove (smokeless, double-combustion stove)
- Cloth Diapers (diapers) ▶

- Plastic Recycling Facility (Plastic Recycling)
- Ulemj Honey (honey production)
- Nairamdal Mushroom (mushroom cultivation)
- Soil Pot Nursery (tree planting and soil-pot production)
- Science Cafe

Start Up Empowerment Training- I

The intensive capacity-building training to identify innovative startup initiatives that address pressing local environmental, social, and economic challenges, and to transform them into competitive and scalable businesses that can sustain long-term growth was organized on September 9–10 and 16–17, 2022 in Darkhan-Uul Province.

A total of 56 hours of training were delivered, comprising eight in-person sessions (30 hours) and online modules (14 hours). The curriculum was designed around 27 key topics, including Starting a business from scratch, Green business, Differences between traditional and next-generation business, Innovative ideas and international investment, What is innovation, and Who is a businessperson and entrepreneur.

Start Up Empowerment Training- II

From September 29 to November 16, 2022, the Friendship Project organized a specialized training aimed at equipping aspiring entrepreneurs and enterprises with the knowledge and mindset needed to develop environmentally friendly startups grounded in innovation and technology. The program supported the development of new ideas, products, and services with a sustainability focus.

The training consisted of 58 total hours, including 14 hours of in-person instruction on the following key topics: Business innovation, Innovation in thinking: entrepreneurial mindset, Business model canvas, Foundations of marketing innovation, Strategy and planning, Resource allocation innovation, Financial management, and Team building. Additionally, 28 hours of coursework covering six topics were delivered.

Smart agriculture agripreneurship Training – III

This training introduced participants to modern technological approaches for increasing the efficiency and profitability of agricultural production which is aligned with the goals of green and sustainable development. The sessions were held from December 12–16, 2022, and on January 31, 2023.

Sustainable Tourism Training – IV

From April 6 to 8, 2023, a capacity-building program on sustainable tourism was conducted for tourism entrepreneurs, service providers, and sector professionals.

The training promoted sustainable and responsible tourism practices based on environmentally-friendly management strategies and aimed to advance Mongolia's circular economy within the tourism sector, conserve natural resources, strengthen stakeholder capacity through collaboration, increase knowledge, facilitate the implementation of target projects and provide technical assistance for tourism enterprises.

Social Entrepreneurship Training – V

On September 9–10, 2023, the Friendship Project organized a training program for 56 participants,



Top 3 Demo Day projects with the judges



Members of the winning teams with the judges

- including social entrepreneurs, researchers, university faculty, and early-stage startup teams who aimed to create social impact, innovation and value-based enterprises.

This program contained other training that included the Entrepreneur–Researcher Program, Erdem Ideathon, and Social entrepreneurship which were conducted from May 29 to September 10, 2023.

Civic tech and Gov tech Training – VI

The first in-person training of the “Supporting Digital Participation through Government and Civic Technology” training program was held on October 12, 2023, at the Governor’s Office of Darkhan-Uul Province. Designed to strengthen citizen and civil servants skills, the course continued weekly through online platforms and concluded on November 13, 2023, with 50 participants receiving certification as peer trainers.

Environmental Climate tech Training – VII

On November 9, 2023, the Friendship Project, in collaboration with the Climate Change Research and Cooperation Center and the Environmental and Tourism Department of Darkhan-Uul Province, conducted the first session of the Environmentally friendly Technology Training. A total of 38 participants took part in this program.

The training aimed to build foundational knowledge and technical skills related to transitioning from fossil-fuel-based energy sources, including petroleum, gas, and coal, to renewable alternatives including wind and solar energy. The curriculum also introduced participants to methodologies for calculating and reducing carbon dioxide emissions by up to 1.5 metric tons per year.

Food safety training for meal service providers for school environment Training – VIII

On April 7–8, 2024, the EU–Darkhan Innovation and Entrepreneurship Hub of the Friendship Project, in partnership with the Beyond Nutrition project and the Social Policy Division of Darkhan-Uul Province, organized a training titled “Food Safety and Capacity-Building for School Cooks and Service Providers.”

The training was held at the Culinary training

room of the Polytechnic College, the Youth Theatre, and involved 12 schools of the province.

Start Up Empowerment Training– IX

On November 22–23, 2024, the Friendship Project's EU–Darkhan Innovation and Entrepreneurship Hub conducted its latest Startup Capacity-Building Training, led by mentor Angel Manuel from Spain. This training module focused on enhancing participants’ understanding of European business concepts, operational environments, and ecosystem dynamics. ■

We bring you reflections of the participants of the training organized by EU–Darkhan Innovation and Entrepreneurship Hub.



Chadraabal D.

Director, Polytechnic College of Mining and Energy:

This program gave us practical knowledge on securing investment and protecting product innovations. A very impactful two-day course.



Munkh-Erdene B.

Manager, Hydro Buds LLC:

As a participant in the Entrepreneur–Researcher Program, I attended weekly online classes every Wednesday. I gained valuable insights into becoming an entrepreneur, attracting investment, developing technology, copyright protection, market entry strategies, and marketing frameworks, all in one place.”



Boldbaatar B.

Training Manager, Darkhan Polytechnic College:

We participated in an excellent program on intellectual property, the commercialization of new ideas and innovations and collaboration between the public and private sector, co-organized by the University of Finance and Economics and the Mongolian Academy of Sciences. The training helped us position our project for future growth and access the next level of opportunities.

Quotes

We bring you highlights from mentors and trainers of the FRIENDSHIP project's capacity-building workshops:

Solongo B.:

Director of "Team Coaching" Company



The civil servants who attended the workshop came from different workplaces and held different positions, so we had a very mixed group. Each team worked through real-life case studies using a team coaching approach, focusing on key ideas such as diversity, inclusion, pluralism, gender balance, and intergenerational understanding. The goal is for the participants to take what they've learned here and apply it back at their workplaces by sharing knowledge, showing leadership, and multiplying the impact.

Batkhuu J.:

Ph.D., Vice President of Graduate School, University of Finance and Economics



The biggest risks startup founders often take are product development. A common mistake is creating a product or service that doesn't actually match market demand. They invest in it, launch it, and then the business collapses. Through our training, we try to help participants reduce that risk as much as possible by making smarter decisions early on.

Buyanbadrakh B.:

Tourism Consultant



Events are evolving into full-fledged industries on their own. Darkhan has a competitive advantage with its transportation, hotels, and restaurants, making it an ideal place for hosting different types of events. The first step is to clearly define the purpose, expected outcomes, scale, planning process, and staffing needs. Major events are usually announced and prepared anywhere from 2 to 48 months in advance. Organizers should always put themselves in the shoes of guests and tourists to design better experiences.

Enkhtuya L.:

Member of Organic Development NGO



Darkhan-Uul province is one of Mongolia's main agricultural zones. For local farmers, developing small-scale organic farms makes a lot of sense. Since they're already running family-based farms, it's more beneficial, both environmentally and economically, to focus on healthy, eco-friendly practices. Linking organic farming with food safety is a sustainable way to preserve and responsibly use natural resources.

Jana Apil:

Director of Operations, GoodPlace Tourism Company, Slovenia



The true meaning of travel lies in creating memories and listening to stories. Tourism helps people realize their dreams. Why? Because if you can make or grow something, do it with heart. Raise your bees, grow your vegetables, bake your bread. Tourism will take care of the rest.

There's only one country in the world that has the word 'love' in its name and that's Slovenia.

Enkhzul O.:

Head of Secretariat, National Committee on Government Productivity



In order for citizens, businesses, and different social groups to meaningfully engage in policy-making, from planning and implementation to monitoring and improvement, they need digital skills. That's why we must empower both sides: civil servants on one side, and citizens on the other. Everyone involved in the process needs to be included and equipped, otherwise we can't expect real, sustainable results.

Dulguundusal T.:

Program Director, Education Initiatives NGO



When solving problems, using design thinking gives you a real edge. It helps you develop better, more effective solutions. I think the FRIENDSHIP project is a great example of this in action. Over the past three years, they've taken the time to really understand what problems exist in Darkhan-Uul Province, and how they might be solved. Because of that, the project has reached the right people, its true target audience, in a way that's both productive and beneficial.

Oyungerel G.:

CEO of HappyPack LLC and Equal Development Initiative NGO



Creative thinking doesn't mean you have all the answers. It means you believe wholeheartedly that answers can be found. When you view a problem from multiple angles, that's when true creativity starts to emerge.

Altanbadralt Sh.:

Head of Agriculture and Technology Department, M Agro LLC



Mongolia's current agricultural system doesn't really align with the realities of global warming and environmental change. We're still following a model rooted in traditional and socialist-era development concepts. But now that we're facing rapidly changing climate conditions, it's essential to upgrade how we manage agriculture. We need to modernize the entire management system to be more adaptive and responsive.

Buyan D.:

Swiss-certified professional chef and culinary trainer



Good health starts in the kitchen, not the pharmacy. One of the most common mistakes we make is misusing tougher cuts of meat, like the thigh, shank, flank, or neck. These are high in collagen and gelatin, so they're perfect for soups or stews that simmer over time, breaking down the nutrients so our bodies can absorb them. But instead, we use thigh meat for dishes like tsuivan, which ends up throwing away all those valuable nutrients.

Angel Prieto Sotos:

Founder, VTL LLC (Spain)



Before starting a business, ask yourself this: Can I think outside the box? How does my idea challenge outdated habits or standard expectations? And more importantly, what kind of impact could my business have on society? I always encourage people to reflect on those questions, and answer them, step by step.

Soil Pods

Creator of the “Soil Pots”

The “Soil Pot” initiative is an innovative green solution aimed at boosting reforestation and soil regeneration by manufacturing biodegradable soil pots enriched with biochar. Specifically, Ikh Morig LLC runs an eco-friendly operation by using chicken manure from its poultry farm to produce biochar, fertilizer, and soil pots. We spoke with Badrakhmaa B., Director of Ikh Morig LLC and the project’s lead, about their latest innovation.

-Can you start by introducing your company?

-Certainly. Our company was established in 2011 with a focus on poultry farming and egg production. We also operate a modern greenhouse facility. Currently, we supply around 40% of the eggs consumed in Darkhan-Uul province, along with a share of its leafy greens and vegetables. Over time, we’ve built a brand called “Darkhan Egg.” We’re proud to say our vegetables are thriving, we’ve already harvested our first batch of crops this season.

-How did you first get involved with the “Friendship” Project?



We were selected in 2023, but before that, we went through three months of intensive training under the “Friendship” project. These trainings were incredibly helpful.

-We noticed that our poultry farm was generating large amounts of chicken manure, which was being discarded without any real use. But chicken manure is actually rich in nutrients and can be converted into valuable fertilizer or even ammonia. That got us thinking, how could we turn this waste into a resource?

Around that time, the “Friendship” project, co-funded by the European Union and based at the School of Agroecology and Business of the Mongolian University of Life Sciences in Darkhan-Uul, announced a startup competition. We proposed a project to convert our poultry waste into biochar, and then use that to manufacture biodegradable soil pods.

To give you a better idea about it, we first take the poultry waste then naturally dry and compress it. Then we burn it in a controlled environment to produce biochar. That biochar is mixed with fertile soil, humic substances, binders, and plant nutrients. We then compress the mixture into pod-shaped units using a press. This is something that hasn’t been done in Mongolia before, it’s a local innovation. My older brother, Prof. Munkhbat, specializes in biochar and has already done research and obtained a patent in this area. We built the project around his intellectual work and submitted it to the “Friendship” project, where we won the Grand Prize.

-Your company received €20,000 in funding. How has the project progressed since then?

-We were selected in 2023, but before that, we went through three months of intensive training under the “Friendship” project. These trainings were incredibly helpful. We learned how to write a



► solid business project proposal, understand business models, and structure our implementation strategy.

With the €20,000 grant, we launched the project. We dry and compress the chicken manure, then burn it in a furnace to produce biochar. Why is biochar useful? Because it makes high-quality fertilizer. It can be used in greenhouses, and agricultural companies consider it essential for improving soil structure, increasing aeration, and helping the soil retain moisture for longer.

After the biochar is produced, we mix it with other materials and shape it into pods. These soil pods have a central cavity where tree seeds are planted. One of the key advantages is that trees grown from these pods develop deep taproots, rather than shallow, spreading roots. That makes them much more resilient and faster-growing.

In fact, trees that typically take three years to grow can now mature in just six months using our soil pots. The biochar retains moisture and keeps the soil loose and breathable, ideal conditions for young trees. We've tested a variety of tree species, including larch, elm, wild cherry, almond, maple, and planted a total of 5,000 pots. The growth results have been very promising since we started planting in summer 2024.

-Scaling up must require major investment.

What are your next steps?

-You're right. At the moment, we're still using a small experimental furnace. To scale, we need a furnace capable of burning four tons of manure at a time.

The "Friendship" Project didn't just give us funding; it offered a full growth roadmap. They helped us explore partnerships, plan next steps, and even arranged overseas exposure trips to Korea, Europe, and Turkey, where we observed similar production models. That global perspective has been a huge intellectual investment in itself.

Kamlesh Kumar Pathak, Founder of Greenworks consulting company, has shown great interest in our work. What we're doing, which is recycling chicken manure into a product, is highly relevant to global green development. We're now exploring ways to diversify beyond poultry waste. We're currently looking for ways to repurpose livestock manure and tree bark, which will be the core focus of our next funding proposal. ■

Honey

Zolzaya Kh.: The "Friendship" Project has encouraged entrepreneurs to adopt a new way of thinking



We spoke with Zolzaya Kh., Director of Tes-Orgil LLC, about her experience with the co-funded by the European Union "Friendship" Project.

– How did you first get involved with the "Friendship" Project, and how did you become one of its distinguished participants?

-I started a small-scale family business back in 2012. By 2017, it had expanded into a cooperative, and we began producing our honey brand, Ulemj. From the beginning, our goal was to offer high-quality, all-natural honey that reflects Mongolia's unique flavor, free from any processing or additives.

After joining the "Friendship" Project, I began to think beyond just honey. I started exploring how we could incorporate innovation into new products. ►

► At first, the head of the Citizens' Representative Khural of Darkhan soum told me about the project. I didn't pay much attention at first, since I'd come across many project announcements before. But when a local social welfare officer mentioned it again, I decided to look into it. That's when I realized this was a project which is co-funded by the European Union aimed at supporting green economic development in Darkhan-Uul province.

I attended their training sessions and was selected as a top participant in the first phase. Later, my project was chosen as one of the best startup business projects in the second round.

As part of the project, we launched the Ulemj Mongolian Pure Honey Facebook page and website (ulemjhoney.com) to bring our products and information closer to consumers. The website clearly explains our full product range, and customers can place orders for delivery. We're also preparing training programs for those interested in starting their beekeeping businesses.

-In your view, what makes the "Friendship Project" different from other initiatives, and what kind of impact has it had on your business?

-Compared to other projects, which often involve just a single training session or a lot of paperwork, the Friendship Project has made a real impact on

Friendship Project has made a real impact on small and medium-sized enterprises.

small and medium-sized enterprises. I believe it has encouraged entrepreneurs to adopt a new way of thinking. Instead of focusing solely on profit, we began to think more about our role in society: how can we contribute to the community? How can we collaborate with others, generate income together, and share the benefits? The project brought in mentors and specialists from Ulaanbaatar with expertise in various industries.

Before the project, we had around 40 bee colonies. After it was completed, that number doubled to 90. Previously, we packed our products by hand, but thanks to funding from the project, we were able to purchase new equipment.

Since Darkhan is a small market, I believe we should protect and strengthen it. I'd like to see government agencies prioritize purchases from local businesses and promote events that support collaboration among entrepreneurs.

-Do you have any plans to export your products internationally?

-Yes. Of course, we're still operating on a small scale, but under a program at the School of Agroecology & Business, the Mongolian University of Life Science, we sent a sample of our honey to Japan. If the results are good, it could open the door to small-scale exports. ■



Mushroom

Alimantuya B.: I came across the Friendship Project just when I was about to give up

We spoke with Alimantuya B., Director of Nairamdal Muug LLC.

– Your company shares the same name as the “Friendship” Project. How did you get funding from it?

–The name is actually an interesting coincidence. I started a mushroom-growing cooperative in 2021, believing that Darkhan-Uul Province, being an agricultural zone, had the ideal conditions for cultivating mushrooms. It was a passion-driven decision to enter this sector.

–While studying in China, I regularly ate mushrooms and noticed how light and healthy I felt afterward. When I returned to Mongolia and tried to buy mushrooms, all I found were darkened, possibly days-old ones sitting on shelves. I began to wonder: where can I find fresh mushrooms?

–I had heard that some locals were experimenting with mushroom cultivation, so I decided to start my own cooperative, aiming to create jobs and contribute to local development. But we faced many challenges, cooperatives couldn’t access loans, and we didn’t have funds for additional financing. As a young person full of hope for doing something meaningful in my hometown and entering a relatively new field, I soon began to feel disheartened.

It was during this low point that I came across the Friendship Project. Through it, I gained access to all the basic knowledge and training I needed, including startup business, products and services, packaging standards, and even how to write a proper business proposal. I started to truly understand how to run a startup. We placed fourth in the initial round because only the top three startups were meant to be selected. But in 2023, I resubmitted my business proposal and won in the Smart Greenhouse category.

–We heard you had the opportunity to visit China as part of this project.

–Yes, our cooperative team participated in a training program in China, learning to cultivate 12 different types of mushrooms. It was an incredibly informative experience. We’re now in the process



The Friendship Project is led by people with genuinely good hearts. They stay in touch with us, provide guidance, and monitor our progress. Their support has been a huge source of motivation, and they've played a major role in helping our company grow.

of building our four-season smart greenhouse. Previously, we were operating in a rented one.

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One of our proudest achievements is evolving from a cooperative into a company. We’re now applying for an SME loan using our new greenhouse as collateral, which will allow us to expand further. The Friendship Project laid the groundwork for us to be eligible for this kind of financing.

I consider myself lucky. In fact, I believe everyone who was accepted into this project is lucky. I’m extremely grateful to have joined the training, received funding, built a business, and now benefit from it. The project leaders are deeply committed to nurturing successful startups and making sure their impact reaches the wider community. They’ve even responded to late-night calls to help us solve urgent problems. When I mentioned our interest in developing a mushroom mini-cluster, they provided detailed guidance on how to do that. They brought in experts from Ulaanbaatar to offer consultations and training.

For me, it’s not just about growing mushrooms and making money on my own. My goal is to create ►



► jobs, reduce mushroom imports by boosting domestic supply, and help develop the mushroom industry as a whole.

– If you receive the SME loan, how do you plan to grow your business?

– We plan to use the loan to establish a soil

production facility, an essential part of scaling mushroom cultivation. We'll conduct research and training on proper soil use and mushroom farming. Currently, our products are sold in 10 stores in Darkhan soum, but our production is still limited. With the help of the Friendship Project, we're completing our greenhouse. Once the soil facility is operational, we'll scale up production and aim to build a key local brand.

Mongolians eat meat year-round. Despite its wealth of natural resources, poverty remains widespread in Mongolia. So I ask myself: what can I contribute? The answer is to use what I know: teach, share, and collaborate with others.

Mushrooms are known to support the immune system, are rich in B vitamins, and aid digestion and fatigue recovery. I often recommend mixing mushrooms with meat, as it improves overall digestion. ■

Smokeless stove

Baatar E.: The “Ikher Dul” stove carbonizes coal internally, thus producing less smoke

We spoke with E. Baatar, founder and director of Ikher Dul LLC, the creator of a low-emission, double-combustion stove designed for solid fuel.

– When did you design the stove, and what makes it unique?

– I first developed the prototype for the Ikher Dul stove in 2015. I'm a coking furnace machinist and thermal technician by profession. After several years of testing and research, I began small-scale household production of the stove in 2019. It was through the Friendship Project that I received training, officially registered my company, and began full-fledged operations. Our product received the grant in the startup category from the project. Today, our stoves are used in 20 provinces across Mongolia and work particularly well with the improved coal briquettes.

The stove's uniqueness lies in its dual combustion system. It burns fuel from the top down, then processes and re-burns the coal from the bottom up. This two-phase combustion reduces emissions



significantly, up to 80% less smoke. Normally, when coal burns from the bottom up, chemical compounds rise with the smoke. But when it burns from the top down, those compounds evaporate under the flame and are later fully combusted at the bottom, resulting in a cleaner burn. In a way, it carbonizes the coal internally before the second burn. You can think of it like getting double the heat output from a single sack ►

► of coal. It conserves coal and retains heat longer; our stoves maintain warmth for at least 12 hours, and in some cases, up to 36 hours.

In buildings that previously consumed 80 tons of coal using traditional stoves, ours reduces that to 30–50 tons. The larger the facility, the more significant the savings. With this technology, we see strong potential for upgrading steam boilers across the country to improve fuel efficiency. It's completely feasible.

– You developed the stove in 2015. Did you try to promote it to the public or government back then?

–Yes, during the 2016 and 2020 parliamentary elections, I invited candidates to my workshop to showcase the stove. I worked hard to get the attention of higher-level decision-makers. Eventually, I approached Member of Parliament from Darkhan, and asked him for 1 million MNT to make two stoves and demonstrate their performance. He agreed, and after seeing the results, he was impressed.

That led me to apply for funding through the Darkhan soum development fund, where I received 10 million MNT. In the beginning, I was working out of my yard with just my wife and one assistant, carrying water through the snow, everything started from scratch. Thanks to persistent effort, the Ikher Dul stove, also known as the “Darkhan black stove,” became well known. Our customer satisfaction rate is over 95%.

I believe if we could reduce two chimneys to one, it would be a huge leap forward. The Governor of Darkhan-Uul Province, Azjargal B., proposed a pilot project: choose one street, install Ikher Dul stoves in every home, and if it proves effective, allocate state budget funding for a broader rollout. I've already submitted the project proposal to the provincial administration.

– You mentioned that the “Friendship” Project helped you start your company. What did you learn from the project?

–I took part in every training session on business management, market entry, and more. I also had the chance to visit South Korea and Belgium for firsthand learning.

Dr. Mend-Amgalan P., who leads the project, is a deeply knowledgeable and highly educated person. I truly respect him as a genuine intellectual. Before joining the Friendship Project, I had the idea, but I was missing the guidance. The project not only nurtures people's skills but also turns ideas into

Our stoves maintain warmth for at least 12 hours, and in some cases, up to 36 hours.

viable businesses. The gap between where I was before joining the project and where I am now is enormous. There's great growth potential. It's rare to see a research-based organization develop a project like this and attract this level of investment. I believe the government should be more involved.

In Belgium, I observed how they value interpersonal communication and collaboration. The public and private sectors work closely together with research institutions. If we could show international stakeholders that we have this kind of synergy, the Friendship Project could become Mongolia's flagship development program.

–Your company is reportedly awaiting investment to build a production facility. What are your plans going forward?

–Through the Friendship Project, “Green Work Consulting” LLC created a tailored investment proposal for our business. Consultant Kamlesh Kumar Pathak identified strong potential in our product and developed a startup growth plan, securing funding on our behalf. While the final investment amount is yet to be confirmed, I estimate a capital requirement of 736 million MNT.

The local government has already allocated 1,130 square meter land for our production. Once the investment is secured, we plan to hire workers, particularly those aged 35 and above, and begin manufacturing at scale. At the moment, we can only produce about 20 stoves per month. With additional funding, we could double that capacity. ■



Science Cafe

Sip coffee, spark curiosity: The “Science Cafe”



Under the umbrella of the "Friendship" Project, the Europe-Darkhan Innovation and Entrepreneurship Hub has fostered several promising startups, with SapioGen LLC stands out. Selected as one of the top startups during the “Startup Project Competition” DEMO DAY event, SapioGen signed a contract to receive up to €20,000 in financial and technical support. With this milestone, it officially became an incubator at the hub. The “Science Cafe” goes far beyond serving drinks. It seeks to cultivate scientific interest among children and youth by regularly organizing engaging science-themed events and educational activities. Here, they don’t just sip coffee, they explore the wonders of physics, chemistry, biology, and more.

Inspired by international standards, the Science Cafe aims to create a dedicated space where scientists, researchers, engineers, and other experts can gather, Exchange, and build knowledge. By offering an open and interactive platform, the cafe contributes to both formal and informal science

education in Mongolia. The cafe provides an inclusive, collaborative environment where students and learners of all ages can experiment, create, and acquire practical skills. Whether it’s assembling a DIY kit or conducting a real scientific experiment, the experience is designed to make science tangible and exciting.

The direct beneficiaries of the Science Cafe are scientists and engineers eager to share their knowledge, as well as young students, curious adults, and lifelong learners who seek to explore science in a welcoming, informal setting. Indirectly, the project also benefits the wider public by promoting a culture of inquiry and curiosity. Moreover, through its Bridging Program, the project connects children with real-world scientific environments, including labs, research centers, science-focused companies, and factories, offering excursions that allow them to witness firsthand what a career in science, research, or engineering looks like. ■



Let's bring change together

Six pilot project implemented with over **MNT 700 million** in investment

Within the framework of the Friendship Project, a series of innovation-driven, green, and citizen-oriented initiatives were implemented in Darkhan City. These efforts focused on delivering inclusive and efficient public services through advanced digital technology while promoting green development and local innovation. In total, six pilot and infrastructure-oriented projects

were implemented with investment exceeding MNT 700 million. These included the “Model District” project for source-level waste classification, the Installation of Smart devices at Water kiosk project, the Ger District Redevelopment Project, the “Home Center” project to improve condominium association management, D-CAMP, a climate-focused investment initiative and VR Science Museum.

Unified implementation of direction and consumer connection layout of underground service project at the 5 and 8 bagh of the Darkhan Soum of the Darkhan-Uul Province

This project developed comprehensive engineering layouts for connecting 591 households in the 5th and 8th baghs of Darkhan Soum, including Khunsni Ar area of Bagh 5 and Narantolgoi and Mankhantolgoi of Bagh 8, to public utility networks. The project addressed a previously unfeasible challenge due to residents' limited financial capacity and lack of prior technical assessments.

As a result of the completed design work, it is now possible to install district heating pipelines in these areas. Once connected, the number of traditional chimneys in ger areas will be reduced, thereby lowering emissions of greenhouse gases and contributing to improved air quality in Darkhan.



“Model District” Project



This social enterprise initiative serves as a catalyst for the 2022–2032 Waste Management Master Plan of Darkhan-Uul Province. The project began with a comprehensive baseline study of household waste generated in residential districts, with the goal of offering policy recommendations to provincial authorities. Another objective of the project is to replace outdated waste bins in a 260-household residential area with modern, waste-sorting infrastructure, enabling more efficient collection and recycling of segregated waste. Through this, the project seeks to integrate recyclable materials into the local circular economy.

During the implementation period of the project, a series of structured training and awareness-raising activities were organized. These activities aimed to build the capacity of civil society organization staff to enhance volunteer management, to train trainers and volunteers to educate the public, including beneficiaries at all levels, educational institutions and the general population, on waste management.

As a direct outcome of the project, a paper recycling facility and a glass reuse workshop were successfully established in the province, marking one of the project's most tangible achievements.

Installation of smart devices at water kiosks Project

The implementation of the “Installation of Smart Devices at Water kiosk” project has played a significant role in improving the accessibility and quality of water supply services for residents of ger areas in Darkhan City, while also introducing advanced technologies.

As part of the project, 42 public water kiosks located in baghs 1, 3, 5, 6, 7, and 8 of Darkhan Soum were upgraded with smart technology, enabling 24-hour operation. As a result, residents now have more reliable, safer, and more accessible access to drinking water, one of their most essential needs.



“Home Center” Project

The “Home Center” project was designed to ensure the efficient and sustainable operation of condominium associations by developing and introducing a digital application based on an Enterprise Resource Planning system. The goal is to enhance service quality and transparency while ensuring greater participation and oversight by residents. The platform creates many advantages, such as enabling residents to check condominium association operations, submit feedback related to payments and service quality, and engage in collaborative decision-making processes.

With the establishment of the Home Center, residents now can easily make payments through an integrated system and monitor the activities of their condominium associations through a mobile application. This contributes to a more convenient and transparent living environment, ultimately increasing the value and livability of their residential spaces.

Virtual Science Museum



The Darkhan-Uul Province Virtual Science Museum is a VR-based social enterprise project designed to promote scientific literacy, inspire

curiosity across all age groups, and offer an engaging, educational space for learning and leisure. The initiative aims to nurture scientific thinking and creativity, especially among youth, by introducing them to interactive and immersive science experiences.

As part of the project, a training program was delivered to students of the Koosen Program at the School of Agroecology and Business of the Mongolian University of Life Science in Darkhan-Uul. The program focused on developing foundational knowledge in artificial intelligence, practical skills in using emerging technologies, product creation using graphic and code-based tools, as well as project management in IT and AL.

Additionally, 23 VR science content modules were showcased free of charge to students from Schools No. 30, 31, and 9, as well as students from the Darkhan Polytechnic College. Feedback was collected through satisfaction surveys.

Darkhan Carbon Market Program (D-CAMP)

The D-CAMP Project, developed in partnership with BeFlat Services and Greenworks Consulting companies, were selected as a top proposal under the 2024 regional competition for infrastructure and sustainability-focused projects in the areas of water, waste, and energy. Through this initiative, a cooperation agreement was signed to provide financial and technical support of up to MNT 100 million.

The project seeks to reduce greenhouse gas emissions through activities such as afforestation, affordable eco-housing, and improved solid waste management. Additionally, it aims to enhance the province’s capacity to attract investment from voluntary carbon markets and make a substantial contribution to regional sustainable development. ■

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The infographic displays the 17 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) arranged in a circular pattern around a central cluster of themes. The central themes include:

- SMES CLUSTER DEVELOPMENT COOPERATION
- URBAN SUSTAINABLE ECONOMY
- EMPLOYMENT
- REGION TO REGION
- DEMOCRATIC DECENTRALIZATION
- HUMANITARIAN RESPONSE
- CITY-TO-CITY
- CLIMATE ALIGNED
- INTER-REGIONAL PROJECT COOPERATION
- RESEARCH TECHNOLOGY
- INNOVATION POLICY LEARNING
- GOOD GOVERNANCE EDUCATION

The 17 SDGs are represented by colored squares with icons and numbers:

- 01 NO POVERTY
- 02 ZERO HUNGER
- 03 GOOD HEALTH AND WELL-BEING
- 04 QUALITY EDUCATION
- 05 GENDER EQUALITY
- 06 CLEAN WATER AND SANITATION
- 07 AFFORDABLE AND CLEAN ENERGY
- 08 DECENT WORK AND ECONOMIC GROWTH
- 09 INDUSTRY, INNOVATION AND INFRASTRUCTURE
- 10 REDUCED INEQUALITIES
- 11 SUSTAINABLE CITIES AND COMMUNITIES
- 12 RESPONSIBLE CONSUMPTION AND PRODUCTION
- 13 CLIMATE ACTION
- 14 LIFE BELOW WATER
- 15 LIFE ON LAND
- 16 PEACE, JUSTICE AND STRONG INSTITUTIONS
- 17 PARTNERSHIPS FOR THE GOALS