



**BROKEN  
CHALK**

Submission to the Universal Periodic Review of the United  
Nations Human Rights Council 4<sup>th</sup> Cycle – 50<sup>th</sup> Session

## **Right to Education**

### **Country Review: Mongolia**

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**Submitting Organization: BROKEN CHALK**

**April 2025**

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**Broken Chalk** is an Amsterdam-based NGO established in 2020 that monitors and minimises worldwide human rights violations in education. We aim to promote universal and equal access to education for all.

We encourage and support achieving societal peace with our international sponsors and partners by advocating for intercultural tolerance, preventing radicalism and polarisation, and tackling educational inequalities.

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## I. Introduction

1. Broken Chalk has drafted this report as a stakeholder contribution to the fourth cycle of the Universal Periodic Review (UPR) for Mongolia. As Broken Chalk's focus is on combating human rights violations within the educational sphere, the contents of this report and the following recommendations will primarily focus on the Right to Education.
2. The Mongolian school system consists of a 12-year structure, including primary, secondary and tertiary (higher) education. Primary school, mandatory for all children, begins at the age of 6 and consists of grades 1 through 5. Secondary education is divided into lower secondary and upper secondary education: the first, covering grades 6 through 9, is mandatory, whereas upper secondary education is optional. The latter spans from grades 10 to 12 and prepares students for higher education, while also including a vocational track.<sup>i</sup>
3. Enrolment rates in primary schools in Mongolia stand at 97%. Additionally, access to early childhood care and education (ECCE services) for children aged 3 to 5 stands at 83%, demonstrating Mongolia's commitment to prioritising education. Nevertheless, the number of students decreases in upper secondary schools, with 5.1% of girls and 13.4% of boys reportedly dropping out. This reveals a concerning disparity between genders, indicating broader socioeconomic issues or a lack of vocational education.<sup>ii</sup>
4. In recent years, Mongolia has made significant progress in raising enrolment rates and digitalising education systems. However, due to the pandemic and a lack of infrastructure, many children remain vulnerable. The PISA 2022 results demonstrate a significant lack of reading skills and provide insight into the challenges affecting primary education. Most importantly, one in three children in Mongolia lack the necessary reading and math skills, while youths often lack access to extracurricular activities.<sup>iii</sup>
5. In 2024, Mongolia continued to work on digitalisation and teacher training in collaboration with UNICEF and the GIGA initiative. The government has pursued additional grants and scholarships to students enrolled in higher education, aiming to make universities and vocational training institutions more accessible.<sup>iv v</sup>

## II. Brief overview of the last UN-UPR cycle

6. In the last UPR cycle 2020, Mongolia received 190 recommendations. It supported 170 recommendations at the adoption, marking a 13.33% increase compared to the second cycle. Out of these recommendations, 7% were related to the 4th goal of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDG), which aims to ensure inclusive and equitable quality education and promote lifelong learning opportunities for all.<sup>vi</sup>
7. Among the most prevalent topics addressed in the recommendations were ensuring equal access to education for all children, with particular attention to children in vulnerable and marginalised situations, those with disabilities, and access to schools in remote areas.<sup>vii</sup>
8. Since 2018, Mongolia has made notable efforts to support inclusive education for children with disabilities. As part of the "Promoting Social Participation of People with Disabilities in Ulaanbaatar City" project, 41 national trainers were prepared to lead the groundbreaking "Training on Disability and Equality." What sets these sessions apart is that all trainers are individuals with disabilities, drawing on their personal experiences to deliver impactful lessons. Over 300 sessions have been conducted, reaching more than 10,200 participants and fostering greater awareness and positive attitudes toward disability.<sup>viii</sup>

9. According to the National Statistics Office (NSO) report, of 10,663 children with disabilities aged 0-18, 6,518 attended general secondary schools, while 1,076 pre-school children were enrolled in kindergartens during 2019–2020. The nearly finalised Education Sector Master Plan (2021–2030) prioritises equitable education for children with disabilities, in line with the 2019 regulation on inclusive school enrollment, and includes ongoing recommendations for implementation.<sup>ix</sup>
10. To support inclusive education, Mongolia has embraced digital transformation as a key strategy for achieving Sustainable Development Goal 4 (SDG4) by 2030. Mongolia initiated the GIGA program in collaboration with UNICEF to connect all schools to the internet, facilitating real-time monitoring of connectivity and ensuring equitable digital access. Initiatives such as "Girls' Code" promote digital literacy and address gender disparities. At the same time, game-based learning and audio lessons provide educational opportunities for marginalised children, including those from herder families and socio-economically disadvantaged backgrounds. These efforts aim to foster a digitally inclusive society and improve educational outcomes for all.<sup>x</sup>
11. One significant achievement is the play-based and digitally supported learning pilot for children in grades 3-5, which improved Mongolian language proficiency from 64% to 81% and boosted learning satisfaction from 78% to 89%. The "Teacher with Tablet" program has further extended educational services to remote rural areas, training 3,000 teachers and reaching 11,000 children and their families across 13 provinces. This initiative not only expands access to education but also promotes early digital literacy, fostering essential skills for the future.<sup>xi</sup>
12. UNICEF and the Ministry of Education are piloting the "One Bagh - One School" initiative, which aims to establish schools in remote areas to provide children, including those from herder communities and those with disabilities, with education closer to home. This initiative aligns with the "Good School Near Me" concept and seeks to reduce dependence on dormitories that often lack adequate facilities and accessibility for children with disabilities. Additionally, the strategy emphasises attracting skilled educators by improving salaries, career development opportunities, and working conditions to ensure high-quality education and foster community development.<sup>xixiii</sup>

### III. Access to education

13. The right to education includes principles of non-discrimination and universal accessibility (ICESCR Article 13, CRC Articles 28-29). Equitable access to education is a significant challenge in Mongolia, particularly for vulnerable groups. The likelihood of children attending school is considerably lower in poor, rural communities, particularly in the Khangai and Western regions.<sup>xiv</sup> Many Mongolians live nomadic lifestyles, which makes it difficult for them to attend school regularly. Some children live kilometres away from the nearest school.<sup>xv</sup>
14. Marginalised populations are disproportionately affected by the physical inaccessibility of schools, with over 15,000 students not attending school due to their nomadic lifestyles and the lack of adequate rural infrastructure. This violates the right to free and compulsory primary education. There are no alternative schooling models, such as mobile schools, that can adapt to the mobility of nomadic families.<sup>xvi</sup>
15. Less than 20 percent of children with disabilities can attend school, despite laws guaranteeing them an education. This is due to inadequate accommodations in public schools, a lack of

specialised schools for students with special needs, and insufficient teacher training.<sup>xvii</sup> This violates Article 24 of the CRPD, which prohibits discrimination in education.

16. Furthermore, children from indigenous communities and other ethnic minorities experience discrimination as well as insufficient language and curriculum resources. For example, the largest minority group, Kazakh students, frequently do not have access to textbooks in their mother tongue.<sup>xviii</sup> The right to an education that respects minority identities is undermined by a lack of Kazakh-language resources and culturally insensitive courses (CRC Article 29, UNDRIP Article 14).

## VI. Quality of education

17. According to CRC Article 29, countries must guarantee that education is relevant, culturally appropriate, and aligned with human dignity to uphold the right to education. Mongolia faces several challenges to its quality of education. Firstly, the curriculum is of poor quality, and there are issues with teacher training and materials.<sup>xix</sup> ICESCR Article 13 requires “minimum educational standards,” which are not met by poor-quality materials and inadequate teacher training. This hinders students' ability to develop critical thinking skills.
18. Furthermore, the knowledge and skills that graduates possess and what the labour market demands differ significantly. For example, just 12.5 percent of students are enrolled in engineering programs, while the government estimates a need for 37,000 engineers and technicians for upcoming projects.<sup>xx</sup> This violates the right to relevant education. According to Article 29, education must equip students for “active participation in a free society”. The lack of technical and vocational training in Mongolia limits economic opportunities and feeds poverty cycles.
19. Additionally, innovation and academic advancement are constrained by the fact that universities are still primarily seen as educational institutions rather than research centres.<sup>xxi</sup> The right to “enjoy benefits of scientific progress” (ICESCR Article 15) cannot be fulfilled by underfunded universities, which limits academic freedom and societal development.

## V. Financing and infrastructure

20. According to UNESCO's 2015 Incheon Declaration, states must prioritise funding for education and ensure inclusive, safe environments. Infrastructure problems and financial limitations present significant challenges. Tuition fees account for approximately 90 percent of the annual budget of public higher education institutions, with limited government support.<sup>xxii</sup> The principle of free primary education is compromised by the high costs of higher education, which also disadvantages low-income families.
21. Moreover, low-quality learning environments and conditions are an issue.<sup>xxiii</sup> Mongolia's education budget accounts for only 4.6 percent of its GDP, which is less than the UNESCO-recommended 6 percent, thereby undermining systemic reforms aimed at achieving quality and equity. For Mongolian universities to remain competitive globally, significant investments are required to enhance the quality of education and learning environments.<sup>xxiv</sup>
22. Finally, due to Mongolia's harsh winter climate, which can reach -40 degrees Celsius, it is difficult or impossible to attend school for several months of the year, even in the suburbs of Ulaanbaatar.<sup>xxv</sup> Children are denied the opportunity to receive an education in a secure and comfortable setting due to dilapidated schools in rural areas and insufficient heating systems during harsh winters.

23. These challenges underscore the need for ongoing initiatives to enhance and reform Mongolia's educational system, ensuring every citizen's right to education. Through several policy initiatives and international collaborations, such as the Education Policy Review conducted in partnership with UNESCO, the government has demonstrated its commitment to addressing these issues.<sup>xxvi</sup>

## IV. Recommendations

24. Broken Chalk urges the Mongolian government to establish and support alternative education models, such as mobile and boarding schools, to accommodate children from nomadic families and ensure their right to compulsory primary education.
25. Broken Chalk recommends the adoption of inclusive measures for students with disabilities, including adequate teacher training, infrastructure improvements, and special education programs, in compliance with Article 24 of the CRPD.
26. Broken Chalk promotes the development of educational resources and culturally relevant curricula for ethnic minority groups, including the increased production of textbooks and materials in the Kazakh language, to uphold their educational rights under the CRC and UNDRIP.
27. Broken Chalk calls on the government to reform teacher training programs and invest in the production of quality educational materials to meet ICESCR standards for education and foster critical thinking skills.
28. Broken Chalk advocates for the expansion of technical and vocational education to bridge the skills gap and align graduates' competencies with labour market demands.
29. Broken Chalk recommends increased funding and policies that promote innovation and research within higher education institutions to fulfil the right to scientific progress and societal development under Article 15 of the ICESCR.
30. Broken Chalk recommends allocating at least 6% of GDP to the education sector, in line with UNESCO guidelines, to address equity issues, enhance infrastructure, and ensure safe learning environments.
31. Broken Chalk calls for government support in reducing tuition dependence for public higher education institutions by providing adequate financial resources.
32. Broken Chalk advocates for investments in climate-resilient infrastructure, including well-insulated classrooms and efficient heating systems, to ensure students can access education even during Mongolia's harsh winter months.

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