

"IFPIM MONGOLIA" PROGRAM

2024

MOMENTUM

REPORT



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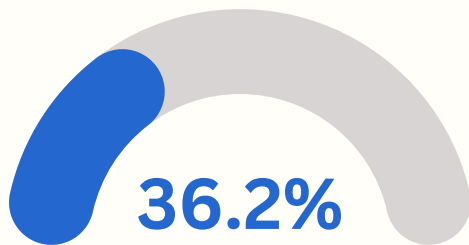
MOMENTUM Summary

WHAT ARE THE HIGHLIGHTS?

6 media outlets proposed total of **218 initiatives** to implement them over the course of **three years**, 2024-2026.

To monitor the success of their strategic plan **63 metrics** are actively tracked.

THE PERFORMANCE



79 of the **218** initiatives has been successfully completed in 2024.

THE GROWTH

+46%

Average **revenue growth** after one year (excluding grant funding)

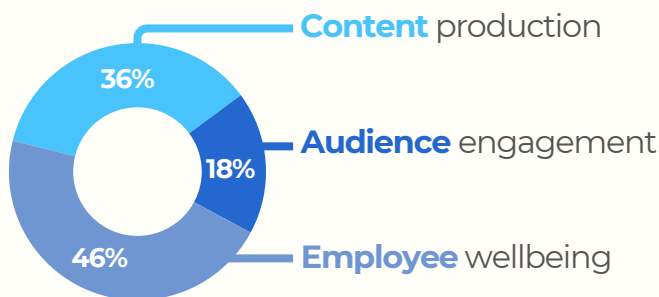
+22%

Average **following growth** after one year (based on social media)

+27%

Average **staff growth** after one year

PROGRAM FUNDING EXPENDITURE AREA (%)



TOP ISSUES ADDRESSED (2024)

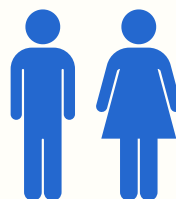
- Financial constraints
 - Limited revenue stream
 - Staff attrition
- Technological deficits
- Lack of strategic planning and competitive edge

ECONOMIC RESILIENCY

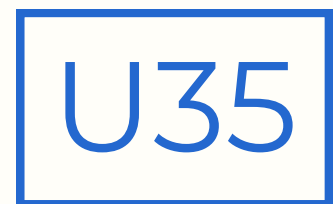


Average Economic Resilience Index of our grantees (out of total score five)

THE AUDIENCE WE SERVE



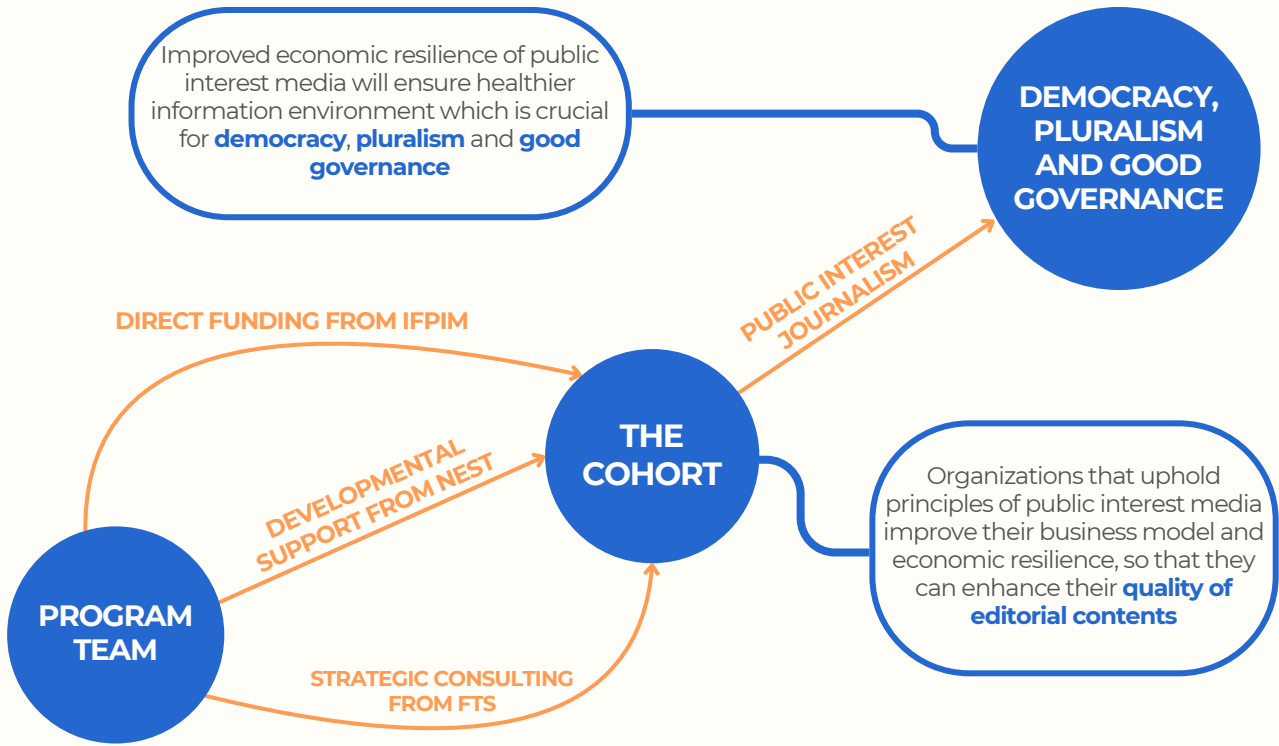
56% of our audience is female (based on social media)



47% of our audience is under 35 (based on social media)

“IFPIM MONGOLIA” Abouts

THE ENGINE BEHIND



To safeguard and reinforce the resilience of independent journalism in Mongolia, the **International Fund for Public Interest Media** has partnered with the **Nest Center for Journalism Innovation and Development**, an Ulaanbaatar based NGO, and **FT Strategies**, the digital growth consultancy of the Financial Times, to support the Mongolian media industry.



At the end of 2023, **Six trusted news organizations** have been selected based on their editorial standards and the diverse audiences they serve to join a **three-year cohort program** that aims to provide them with the necessary tools to continue creating **impactful journalism**. In order to secure their long term success, grantees have received both **funding** and **strategic support**.



Participating organizations will receive financial and developmental support from the International Fund, Nest, and FTS over the course of three years, as they work to deliver against their strategic plans.



All organizations participated in a **four-day strategic planning workshop**, jointly led by the Nest Center and FTS, during which they articulated a strategic plan and identified key milestones.

The COHORT

WHO ARE THE CATALYZERS?



Graph.mn

Founded: 2021.01.28

Digital media platform that delivers independent news and stories with eye-catching visuals and user friendly design



iToim.mn

Founded: 2021.01.28

Online news platform dedicated for analytical and investigative reporting



Lemon Press

Founded: 2020.09.22

Young and ambitious publication focused on financial news with Mongolia's most subscribed newsletter



NTV Television

Founded: 2006.11.01

Established TV broadcaster with a reputation for holding power to account



UB.Life

Founded: 2016.02.07

Digital news and lifestyle platform focused on reaching younger audiences



ЗУУНЫ МЭДЭЭ Иргэдэд өмнөд бичиг

Zuunii Medee Newspaper

Founded: 1999.01.05

Mongolia's second-oldest private print newspaper

MEDIA TYPE OF THE GRANTEEES

Digital

TV

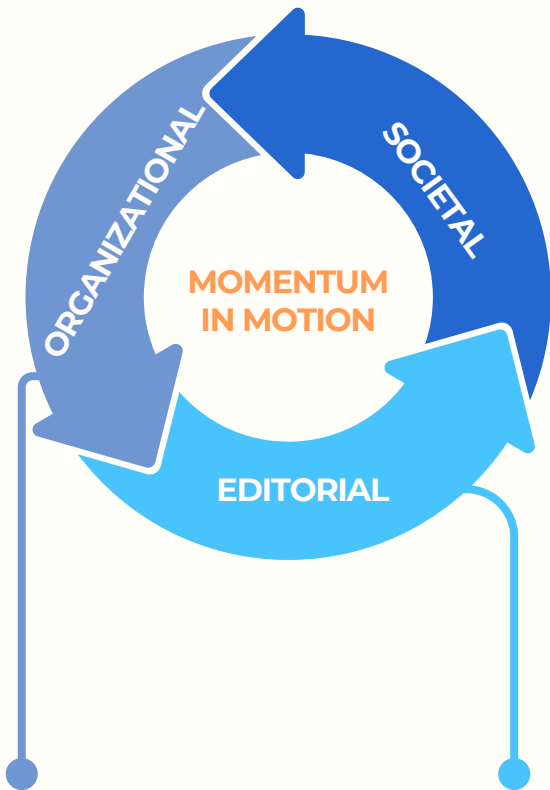
Print



MOMENTUM

HOW WE BUILD IT?

FROM ORGANIZATIONAL STRENGTH TO SOCIETAL CHANGE



To build **sustainable business models** and establish **lasting momentum**, our grantees have developed **three-year strategic plans** using the **North Star Strategy framework**, guided directly by **Financial Times Strategies (FTS)** in **November 2023**. To bring these strategies to life, **IFPIM provides grants, FTS delivers monthly strategic consulting, and NEST leads coordination, local expertise counseling, and training**. Each of the three stakeholders plays a critical role in ensuring progress at every stage.

We categorize the momentum generated by our grantees into **three interconnected levels: Organizational Momentum, Editorial Momentum, and Societal Momentum**. These levels build upon each other, forming a structured path toward a stronger, more resilient media landscape.

ORGANIZATIONAL MOMENTUM: STRENGTHENING THE CORE

To **control the waves of change and ensure stability**, grantees have prioritized strategic planning to **fortify their organizations**. This foundational step is essential—before media can **create editorial and societal momentum, they must first establish organizational resilience**. Our **grant funding** lays the groundwork for this transformation.

To **track organizational momentum**, we continuously monitor **financial health, human resources, and strategic plan execution**. These indicators ensure that grantees are not just surviving but **adapting, evolving, and leading** within Mongolia's shifting media landscape.

EDITORIAL MOMENTUM: ELEVATING JOURNALISM

Through **local expertise counseling** and specialized training, we work closely with grantees to **elevate journalistic standards** and **enhance newsroom capabilities**. As organizations **solidify their foundations**, they become **more resilient to external pressures**—allowing them to **expand their coverage, improve content quality, and reinforce ethical reporting practices**.

The stronger the editorial momentum, the greater the ability of media organizations to serve public interest, expose wrongdoing, and bring critical issues to light—laying the groundwork for societal momentum.

SOCIETAL MOMENTUM: EMPOWERING CHANGE

Our **core mission** is to support **public-interest media** in their role as **watchdogs of democracy**, ensuring that the public stays informed and engaged. Each media outlet, through its strategic plan, has proposed **initiatives designed to connect with and serve their audiences**, further amplifying **societal momentum**.

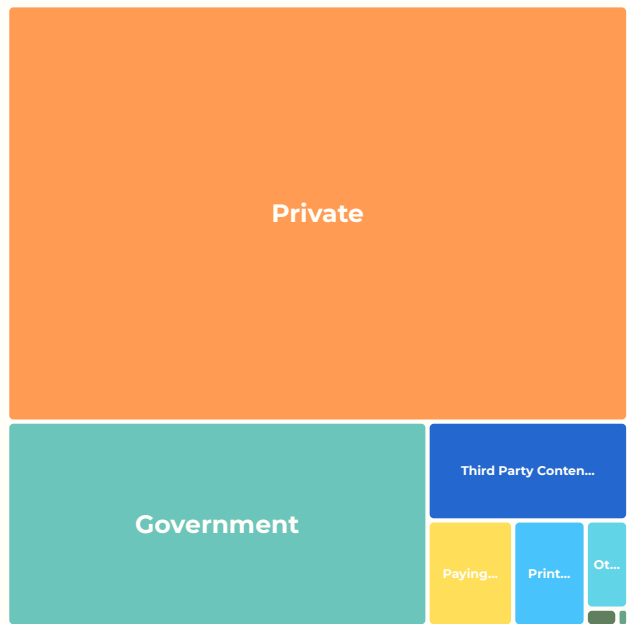
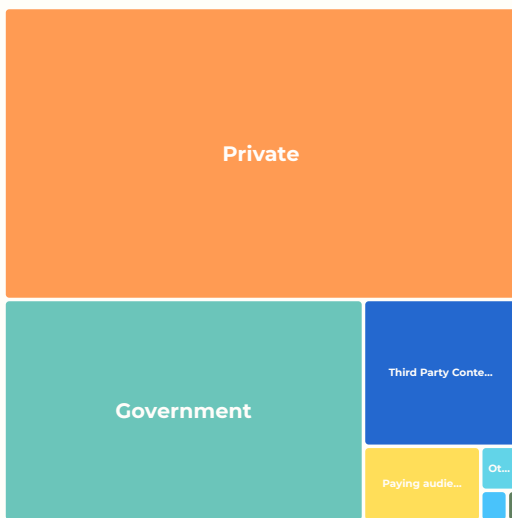
Through **organizational resilience, editorial excellence, and societal engagement**, we are shaping a **more robust and sustainable future for journalism in Mongolia**—one where media organizations can thrive, inform, and empower.

MOMENTUM

Organizational

STRENGTHENING THE CORE

SHIFTING REVENUE STREAMS (%) - COHORT PROGRESS 2023 VS 2024 (EXCLUDING PROGRAM GRANT)



The **cohort-wide revenue distribution** for 2023 and 2024 demonstrates notable shift in revenue sources, reflecting the **strategic impact** of the **IFPIM Mongolia program**. With the average revenue growth **46%**, signs of **diversification of revenue streams** clearly shown.

- Share of revenue from private sector surged by nearly **24%**
- The reduction in reliance on share of revenue from government sources indicate that the grantees independence has improved
- Print circulation revenue rose, reflecting renewed efforts to strengthen traditional media formats while adapting to new monetization strategies.
- Share of revenue from third-party content production dropped by **2%**, which might suggest a shift away from external content contracts toward more in-house editorial production and monetization
- Share of revenue from **“Other”** sources grew, indicating exploration of alternative income streams.

The changes in revenue diversity reflect the strategic direction encouraged by our program.

Through financial sustainability training, strategic planning, and business model innovation, grantees reduced their reliance on traditional funding sources while exploring new revenue models.

Our program’s contributions to this shift include:

- **Business model innovation guidance**
Encouraged revenue diversification strategies, reflected in the rise of private funding and print revenue.
- **Strategic financial mentoring (FTS)**
Helped grantees strengthen independence, reducing government funding reliance.
- **Editorial independence & sustainability**
Pushed organizations to shift away from outsourced third-party content production toward self-sustained revenue models.

Moving forward, the focus should be on further strengthening **direct audience monetization** and digital revenue models, ensuring **long-term sustainability**.

MOMENTUM

Organizational

STRENGTHENING THE CORE

Since the program launched, IFPIM is calculating the **Economic Resiliency Index** of country cohort each half-year.



The ERI is a new metric that uses grantee data to provide a resiliency score based on 7 key factors that identify the current state of a publisher's business and its future trajectory.

The IFPIM Mongolia Program has driven significant growth across financial sustainability, audience reach, and newsroom capacity among its grantees.

Over the past year, the cohort's average revenue increased by **46%**, with a median growth of **44.5%**, reflecting the success of business model diversification efforts and the program's strategic financial mentoring.

Simultaneously, audience engagement expanded by an average of **22%**, with a median growth of **20%**, demonstrating the impact of enhanced editorial strategies, digital transformation, and data-driven content approaches.

Notably, staffing levels grew by **27%** on average, though the median increase was **10%**, suggesting that some organizations scaled their teams significantly while others focused on operational efficiency.

These trends highlight a clear trajectory of momentum, strengthening both the financial viability and public reach of independent media in Mongolia.

On top of the program features, we facilitated **cross-organizational collaboration**, where grantees learned from each other's **best practices in content production, revenue models, and audience engagement**.

This peer-learning aspect encouraged innovation, motivating organizations to experiment with subscription models, sponsored content, and community-funded journalism.

The program's emphasis on **human capital investment** also led to staff retention improvements and new hires, ensuring that organizations are better equipped with the right talent to sustain their growth.

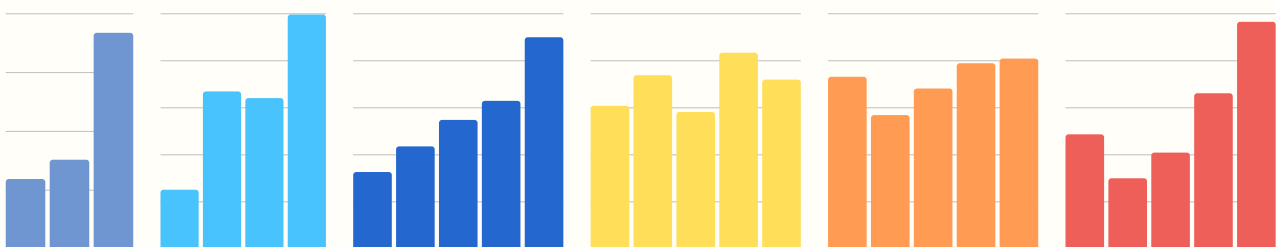
"Before, we lacked financial discipline; now, we have a clear revenue strategy that allows us to plan for long-term sustainability."

-Tegshjargal Jamiyan-Ochir, CEO of "Gereg & UB.Life" LLC

The combination of financial stability, workforce expansion, and operational efficiency improvements has set **a new industry standard** for independent Mongolian media organizations.

The program has shifted the mindset from **survival mode to proactive growth**, ensuring that these organizations are **not just financially viable but also strategically positioned to maintain their momentum in the coming years**.

ANNUAL REVENUE GROWTH TRAJECTORY OF EACH GRANTEE
(EXCLUDING PROGRAM GRANT) (LAST COLUMN OF EACH CHART IS FOR 2024)



MEMO2024: "IFPIM MONGOLIA"
PROGRAM LAUNCH
2024.11.21



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Editorial

ELEVATING JOURNALISM

Before the program, grantees faced **significant editorial challenges**, including a **lack of structured newsroom strategies, outdated workflows, and insufficient resources to conduct in-depth investigative journalism**. The program's support in **training, workflow structuring, and newsroom independence** has enabled these organizations to **develop stronger editorial standards, expand investigative capabilities, and create impactful content that informs and empowers audiences**.

Strengthened Investigative Journalism & In-Depth Reporting

- Grantees expanded investigative output, focusing on policy accountability, governance, and public interest issues:
 - **iToim** increased the number of their Analytic contents **trifold**. To work for their audience interest, they are actively monitoring the reader's requests came through their **Whistleblower column**.
 - **Graph.mn** introduced social platform based **news and live broadcasts** delivering essential news to their readers in more direct format. To link it with their audience demand, they opened an Instagram channel and established a **more engaged relationship** with their readers.
 - **UB.Life** increased social media content production, particularly **short-form videos**, to engage younger demographics. They are actively working on enriching their contents with topics such as **governance, gender equality** and **media literacy**.
 - While **Lemon Press** have niche target audience for those in economical and financial sectors, during key-events, such as during 2024 Mongolia Elections, they **expand their editorial policy** to deliver essential news to their audience.

Fortifying Editorial Capacity to Focus on More Impactful Stories

- **Zuunii Medee** is holding a **half yearly contest** among their investigative reporters to incentivize their efforts, and actively including other **media organizations, university professors and students** in their judge panel setting a **new practice** in the industry.
- **NTV** with their news automatization technology, focuses more on impactful stories and letting their reporters work on pre-set topics to cause **societal change**.



MOMENTUM

Editorial

ELEVATING JOURNALISM



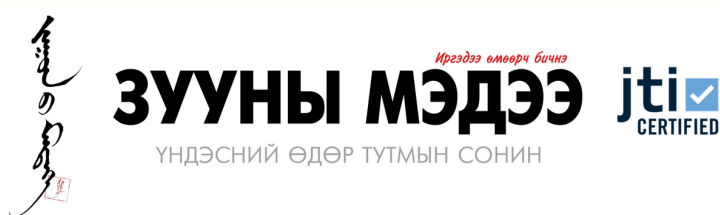
Data-Driven Editorial Strategies:

iToim credits the program for introducing a structured editorial planning process, enabling them to align content with measurable audience engagement goals. They adopted an Agile workflow management system, improving editorial efficiency. They further improved this by including performance incentives on top their journalists salary.



Technology-Driven Interactive Journalism:

Graph.mn increased visual storytelling and live broadcasts, a critical factor in engaging digital audiences and combating disinformation.



Transparent Journalism for the Audience:

Zuunii Medee adopted structured editorial analytics, helping prioritize high-impact content based on audience engagement metrics. They do a bi-weekly meetings on content performance to shift their short term editorial vision.



Zuunii Medee also became the first Mongolian media outlet to obtain **JTI (Journalism Trust Initiative) certification**, setting new transparency benchmarks.

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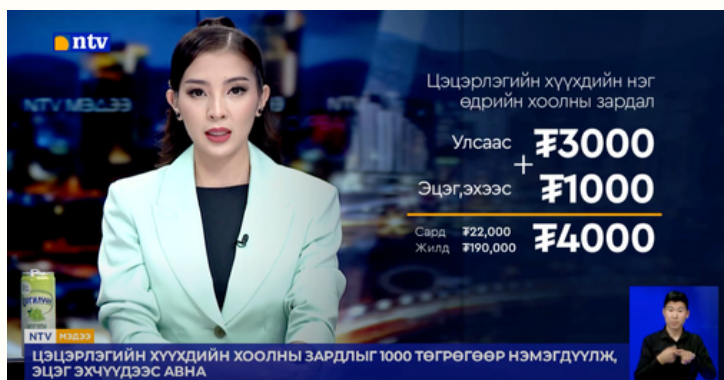
Societal

EMPOWERING CHANGE

The program's impact extends beyond media organizations— **it influences public discourse, strengthens civic participation, and informs policymaking.** By improving investigative reporting and digital audience engagement, grantees have **mobilized public conversations, influenced policy discussions, and increased readership trust.**

NTV's kindergarten meal funding investigation resulted in a government budget increase, doubling kindergarten meal support.

Since 2019, the budget for kindergarten children's meals ranged from 2,475 to 3,600 MNT. However, the government decided to increase meal funding, and parents were required to contribute a certain percentage of the meal costs.



As a result, the **nutritional quality of children's meals has improved** compared to previous years. By the end of 2024, the meal budget per child in kindergarten is expected to be between 4,000 and 5,100 MNT. This improvement **will benefit 264,818 children** in kindergarten.



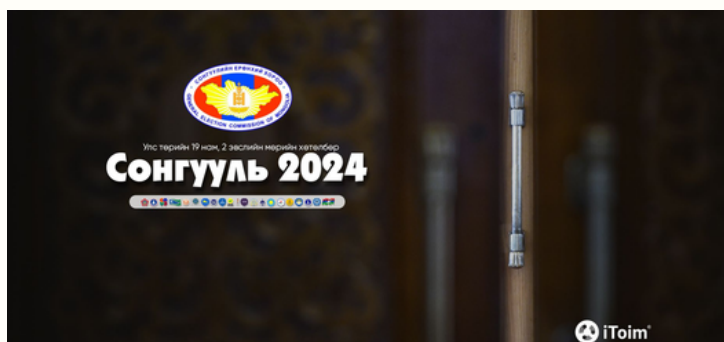
A lack of transparency in dividend announcements has long been a concern for investors in Mongolia.

To address this issue, **Lemon Press launched a campaign** with the Ulaanbaatar Stock Exchange (UBX) advocating for clear and timely disclosure of dividend payment dates by publicly traded companies.

28 professional stakeholders supported the initiative, highlighting its significance. **Six publicly listed companies (JSCs) complied, setting a new precedent for corporate transparency.** This campaign empowered investors with better financial planning tools and set the stage for further policy improvements in 2025. We continue to monitor and report on this initiative to ensure sustained impact.

A total of 19 parties and 2 coalitions participated in the 2024 Parliamentary Elections in Mongolia.

Political parties and coalitions are required to submit their election agenda for review by the National Audit Office, and as of June 10, 2024, these platforms have been made publicly available.



To **support informed decision-making, iToim** has compiled and presented a **comparative overview of the election agendas** of all participating parties and coalitions in a clear and accessible format, allowing voters to evaluate their policies in one place.

MOMENTUM

Societal

EMPOWERING CHANGE

Монголд зөвхөн агаарын бохирдлоос болж жилд 7139 хүн нас барж байна гэнэ үү

Graph
2024-09-20



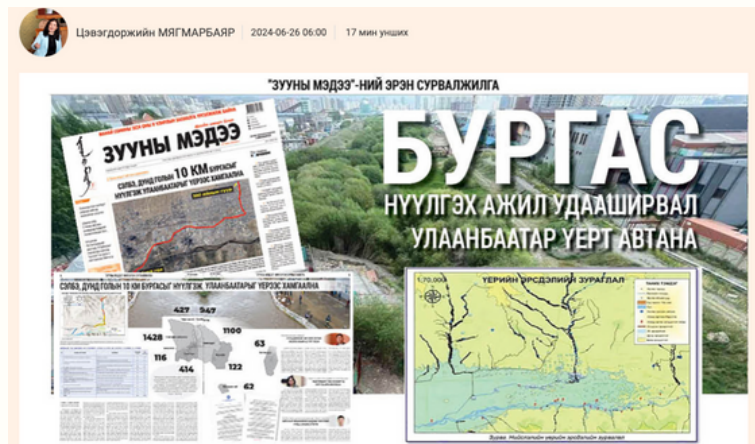
In Ulaanbaatar, air pollution is one of the most pressing issues during the winter season. To highlight this issue, **Graph produced a series of articles and branded content**. The most impactful of these was a photo series titled “A Morning in Ulaanbaatar”, which visually depicted the severity of air pollution in just a few images.

This series gained significant traction, reaching 617,000 people on Instagram alone, with 4,300 shares and over 3,000 likes and comments. Beyond their coverage, **many other media organizations also reported on air pollution**, contributing to the many key outcomes by the government.

While Graph. cannot claim that their content alone led to these decisions, we believe that their work **effectively engaged young audiences and helped build support** for these policy changes.

Zuunii Medee’s investigative piece titled "Ulaanbaatar will be protected from floods by removing 10 km of willows from Selbe and Dund rivers" was published on April 10. After the article, this issue was **discussed among the public** and although it was slow it was circulating towards the authority.

Therefore, in the issue of June 26, an investigative article with the title "Ulaanbaatar will be flooded if the removal of willows is delayed" was written again.



Since then, the willow removal work has been intensified. This article, one of all the 24 investigative articles published by Zuunii Medee, was appraised by many industry experts. At the end of 2024, Zuunii Medee was awarded with **“Newspaper of the Year”** by Mongolian Confederation of Journalists.

"Баавгай болохсон" киног Оскарын шалгаруултад нэр дэвшүүлэхээр болжээ

О.АНХЗАЯА 2024.09.27



The Oscar selection controversy regarding Mongolia’s submission was first brought to public attention by P. Zoljargal, director of "Baavgai Bolokhsun".

Following her statement, **UB.Life** conducted interviews and published a series of reports, exposing concerns about the lack of transparency in the selection process.

Not only Ub.life, but multiple media outlets extensively covered the issue, leading to a revision of the selection decision by the Ministry of Culture within 2-3 weeks. Afterward, the film director personally visited UB.Life to **express her appreciation**, acknowledging the **impact of media in driving accountability and change**.



**“IFPIM MONGOLIA” PROGRAM 2024 MOMENTUM REPORT BY:
NEST CENTER FOR JOURNALISM INNOVATION AND DEVELOPMENT NGO**

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