**United Nations Trust Fund for Human Security**

**“Comprehensive Community Services to Improve Human Security**

**for the Rural Disadvantaged Populations in Mongolia” project**

**Ex-post evaluation of the project**

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**Evaluation Report**

**Ulaanbaatar, May 2012**

**Table of contents**

Acronyms and Abbreviations 4

Executive Summary 6

1 Introduction 11

1.1 Background 11

1.2 Project Profile 11

1.3 Structure of the report 12

2 Evaluation approach and methodology 13

2.1 Purpose and objectives of the evaluation 13

2.2 Approach 13

2.3 Methods 14

2.4 Challenges and limitations 16

3 Context 17

4 Project management, ownership & project relevance 19

4.1 Coordination and management 19

4.2 Joint implementation 20

4.3 Ownership & relevance 21

4.4 Monitoring 22

4.5 Specific recommendations 23

5 Improving access to information among rural populations, especially ethnic/linguistic minorities 24

5.1 Objectives, estimated outputs and activities 24

5.2 Effectiveness/outcomes - results 24

5.3 Sustainability and replication 27

5.4 Specific recommendations 28

6 Improving access to and quality of formal and non-formal education in rural areas 30

6.1 Objectives, estimated outputs and activities 30

6.2 Effectiveness/outcomes – results 31

6.3 Sustainability and replication 34

6.4 Specific recommendations 35

7 Improving access to basic healthcare services for rural populations 37

7.1 Objectives, estimated outputs and activities 37

7.2 Effectiveness/outcomes – results 37

7.3 Sustainability and replication 39

7.4 Specific recommendations 39

8 Improving income-generating opportunities and livelihood of rural populations in rural areas 41

8.1 Objectives, estimated outputs and activities 41

8.2 Effectiveness/outcomes – results 41

8.3 Sustainability and replication 44

8.4 Specific recommendations 45

9 Develop Comprehensive Policy Recommendations on Sustainable Rural Development and Improve the Government’s Capacity to Implement such Policies 46

9.1 Objectives, estimated outputs and activities 46

10 Early signs of impact 48

11 Conclusions and recommendations 50

11.1 Main conclusions 50

11.2 Strategic recommendations 51

**Annexes:**

Annex 1: Terms of Reference for the evaluation

Annex 2: List of interviewees and participants in focus group meetings

Annex 3: Terms of reference and members of Project Management Committee

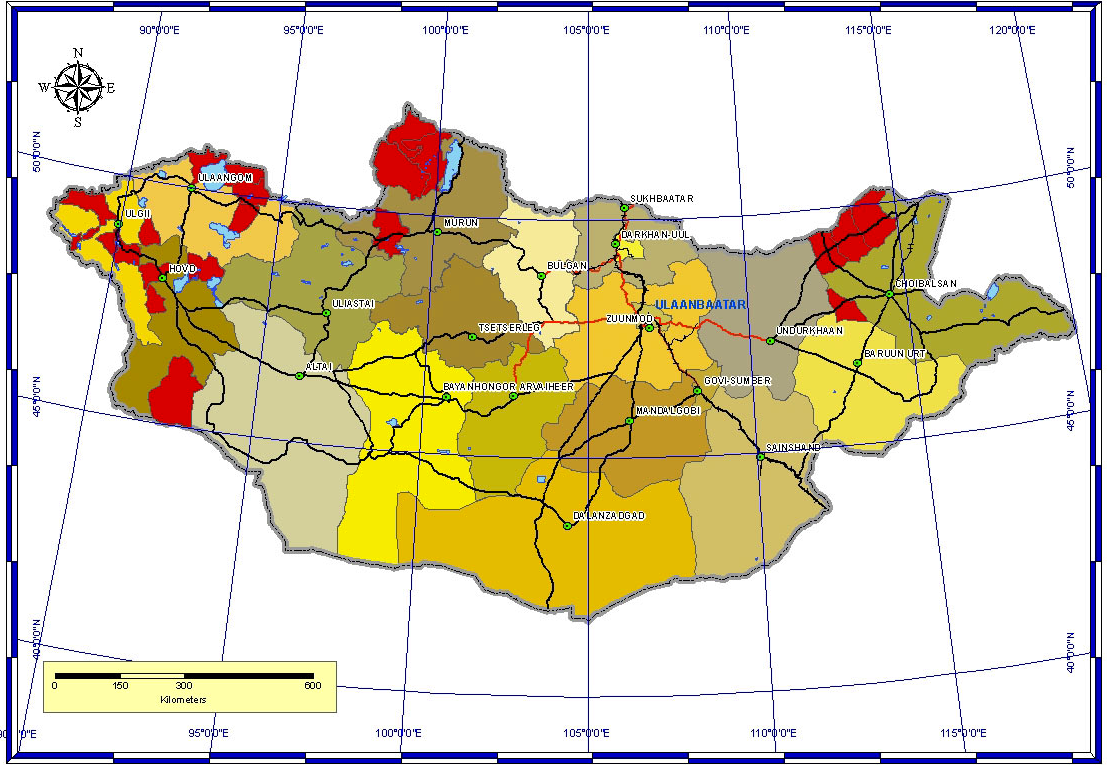
Annex 4: Terms of reference and members of National Technical Working Group

Annex 5: List of project *aimags* and *soums,* including overview of involvement in project goals

# Acronyms and Abbreviations

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| CLC | Community Learning Centre |
| CSD | Centre for Social Development |
| DOH | Department of Health-Government Implementing Agency |
| DPM | Deputy Prime Minister |
| ECD | Early Childhood Development |
| EP | Equivalency Program of Non-Formal Education |
| HQ | Headquarters |
| IEC | Information, Education and Communication |
| MGT | Multi-Grade Teaching |
| MECS | Ministry of Education, Culture and Science |
| MOH | Ministry of Health |
| MNB | Mongolian National Broadcaster |
| MN2 | Second Channel of MNB |
| MNCCI | Mongolian National Chamber of Commerce and Industry |
| MNT | Mongolian Tügrüg – Mongolian currency |
| NCNFDE | National Centre for Non-formal and Distance Education |
| NFE | Non-Formal Education |
| NGO | Non Government Organization |
| NPC | National Project Coordinator |
| PHC | Primary Health Care |
| SPH | School of Public Health |
| TOR | Terms of Reference |
| UNDP | United Nations Development Program |
| UNESCO | United Nationals Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization |
| UNICEF | United Nations Children’s Fund |
| UNRC | United Nations Resident Coordinator |
| UNTFHS | United Nations Trust Fund for Human Security |
| USD | United States Dollars |
| VAT | Value Added Tax |
| WHO | World Health Organization |

**Map of Mongolia and project *soums* (districts) -**Project *soum* marked in red:

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# Executive Summary

The *Comprehensive Community Services to Improve Human Security for the Rural Disadvantaged Populations of Mongolia’* project came into affect in August 2009 with a total budget of USD 2,989,000 provided by the United Nations Trust Fund for Human Security. The project had five mail goals:

1. Improve access to information among rural populations, especially ethnic/linguistic minorities;
2. Improve access to and quality of formal and non-formal education in rural areas
3. Improve access to basic healthcare services for rural populations;
4. Improve income-generating opportunities and livelihood of rural populations in the target aimag;
5. Develop comprehensive policy recommendations on sustainable rural development and improve the Government’s capacity to implement such policies.

Seven specific objectives and 31 outputs guided project implementation over a period of approximately three years (2009-2012)

The overall goal of the Evaluation was to assess to what extent the joint project has implemented its activities, delivered outputs and attainted outcomes. The evaluation should also generate substantive evidence-based knowledge on the project components by identifying best practices and lessons learned emerging from project implementation that are policy relevant.

This report is the main output delivered by the evaluation team contracted by UNESCO, Beijing as the project lead agency. The team included one international consultant with 20 years of t experience working in Mongolia primarily in the field of education and community development with a particular focus on rural Mongolia and one national consultant with three decades of experience working in Mongolian public sector institutions and in development interventions.

The evaluation relied on a combination of qualitative methods including extensive document reviews against structured checklist, interviews and focus group discussions with key stakeholders and beneficiaries and questionnaires for convenient sampling. In accordance with the evaluation’s participatory and appreciative inquiry approach, the initial findings of the evaluation were presented at meetings with heads of UN-agencies and the project National Technical Working as well as at the National Policy and Advocacy workshop.

*Ownership* to project was high. Strong ownership to the project was stated across all levels and sectors. The established management and technical support structure ensured adequate involvement and engagement in decision-making, implementation and monitoring at national, *aimag* and *soum* levels.

The *relevance* of project interventions was clearly high. All stakeholders accepted the five areas of project interventions as relevant and the specific benefits delivered at *soum* levels are appreciated and utilised by the beneficiaries. In cases were new knowledge and changed conditions challenged the relevance of specific and originally planned interventions, adjustments were made adequately.

After a slow start the *efficiency* of the project and the performance of UN-agencies and their respective Mongolian partners improved. The combination of regular PMC meetings, coordination meetings among the UN-agencies, skilful coordination by the project coordinator and joint monitoring visits and efficient monitoring at *aimag* and *soum* levels all played their role in the efficient delivery of the project interventions. Eventually project outputs were delivered according to plan, which is a remarkable achievement considering the relatively short period of time for actual project delivery.

Assessed against stated performance targets the *effectiveness* of the project is satisfactory:

* Disadvantaged populations have increased access to information and culturally relevant programs through community radios, the new second satellite TV channel of Mongolia National Broadcaster, MN2. With a focus on cultural and linguistic diversity community radios and MN2 provide new services to ethnic and linguistic minorities.
* Extensive training programs have provided thousands of illiterate and semi-illiterate children and adults with literacy and life skills.
* Hundreds of children have or are in the process of completing primary, secondary and upper-secondary education.
* The capacity of non-formal education facilitators and citizen’s enlightenment centers is enhanced.
* Capacity to improve early childhood support is increased and hundreds of parents have been involved in early childhood development activities.
* Sanitation and health waste management at *soum* hospitals improved significantly and actions to decrease infectious deceases were undertaken effectively.
* Citizens engaged in improving/cleaning *soum* center environment.
* New communal services and manufacturing cooperatives and business are established and in operation, More than 50 businesses and cooperatives are working and around 200 individuals have directly improved their income-generating possibilities.
* Capacity is enhanced to further promote income-generating activities among rural communities.

Terms of Reference for the evaluation indicate a particular interest in studying the *jointness* of the project implementation. The project was from the outset not designed as a full-scale joint UN project, rather as a project with common target locations but with separate interventions supported through respective UN agencies. Nevertheless, the involved UN-agencies embarked on efforts to coordinate interventions and to continuously engage in experience sharing and joint learning.

Despite UN stated ambitions to ‘deliver as ONE’ difficulties in actually doing so are well-known and the UN-agencies engaged in the project deserve recognition for their commitment and energy to overcome fragmentation in project delivery and to coordinate wherever possible and required. Stakeholders among the UN agencies and their Mongolian partners unanimously accept the efforts and the outcomes achieved in terms of jointness.

As will be argued in this evaluation report the synergies of jointness in project delivery are evident and it is definitely worth considering to engage in full-scale ‘delivery as ONE’ in future joint development interventions in Mongolia.

Long-term *sustainability* of project outcomes is in general satisfactory, however, sustainability varies across the different areas of interventions. The future of community radios widely depends on their ability to generate funds and continuously meet the expectations of their local audiences. Technical maintenance is another potential vulnerable aspect of future community radio operation. MN2 is guaranteed subscription to satellite transmission for the next two years and MNB is committed to overtake all expenditures related to MN2, which is a precondition for MN2 sustainability. Within the other fields of project intervention sustainability is primarily related to lasting application of technical and managerial knowledge and skills and sustainability is perceived satisfactory.

Finally, at the *impact* level it is noteworthy that the documented benefits of project interventions are complemented by capacities and mechanisms to engage in efficient collaboration and coordination, which have evolved alongside evidence of new self-confidence and self-esteem among disadvantaged rural populations.

Considering the scope of the project the evaluation has found it appropriate to identify a few*strategicrecommendations* only*,* and a larger number of *specific goal-related recommendations*, which in total could contribute to policy development in view of the ongoing efforts to improve human security for Mongolia’s rural disadvantaged populations. The primary responsibility for taking these recommendations forward lies with the Government of Mongolia through its respective ministries and implementing agencies. However, Mongolia’s development partners and the civil society also have a key responsibility in engaging in dialogue with the GoM on how best to sequence further development interventions and prioritize the external funding being made available.

**Strategic recommendations**

1. Establish a high-level entity in charge of ensuring that development interventions are in alignment with national policies and for enhancing human security and livelihoods for Mongolia’s rural populations.
2. Develop policies and mechanisms including funding for further developing rural populations access to national and local relevant information, including analysis of the potentials in promoting civil society participation in development activities through further promotion of community based radio and other media.
3. Develop a comprehensive policy and implementation framework enhancing life long learning taking into account the potentials evolving from the nationwide fiber optic cable network for delivery of diverse and multiple life long learning training programs. A comprehensive framework should provide proper routes for further technical-vocational training subsequent to involvement in various life-skills trainings conducted at the *citizen’s enlightenment centers.*
4. Transform – as part of a comprehensive policy on life long learning - the lessons-learnt from the project interventions for capacity building at *citizen’s enlightenment centers* to national scale.
5. Establish standards for *soum* health facilities/hospitals promoting quality sanitation and health waste management.
6. Transform the lessons-learnt from the project on primary health care and environmental health into nation scale interventions in order to promote cleaner and safer environments in *aimag, soum* and *bagh* centers across the country.
7. Develop a national policy and legal framework for promoting establishment and operation of local businesses/cooperatives, including access to adequate micro-credit and other financing schemes.

**Component/goal related specific recommendations**

*Component/goal # 1 - Improve access to information among rural populations, especially ethnic/linguistic minorities;*

* Pursue the funding mechanisms for the satellite subscription beyond the current three year period and ensure that broadcasting is not interrupted due to lack of funds the subscription, which is imperative to the operation of MN2;
* Ensure adequate training for local journalists, studio placed journalists, anchors and translators to facilitate further development of MN2 programming and broadcasting.
* Support the community radios in ensuring registration as NGOs.
* Support the community radios in developing strategies and proper mechanisms to continuously and more extensively raise funds among their local communities. Community radios also need support to work out annual budgets to guide their fund raising.
* Provide a framework for continuous training and supervision of community radio managers, council members and technicians, if possible within the perceived association of community radios.
* Provide follow-up training on location to the ten *aimag* based printing houses.

*Component/goal # 2 -Improve access to and quality of formal and non-formal education in rural areas:*

* Further develop the *citizens’ enlightenment centers* reflecting the life-long-learning concept – see more under strategic recommendations, p. 52-53)
* Develop an implementation strategy for replication and up scaling of the literacy and life-skills training and other good practices emerged from the project interventions boosting the professional and material capacity of *citizens’ enlightenment centers.* It appears obvious first to roll out the replication to other *soums* in the five project *aimags* utilizing the experiences and capacities existing within those aimagsand next to target other *aimags*. Frameworks for further training of the NFE-facilitators and experience sharing across *aimags* and *soums* should be established.
* Increase the publication, distribution and use of literacy and life-skills training materials in Kazakh language.
* Scale-up the support for training in Mongolian language for the Kazakh-speaking populations with due reference to the national policy on bi-lingualism.
* Replicate the equivalency program modules for out-of-school children and youth in *soums* where relevant.
* Provided financing for mobile *ger* schools is ensured such facilities should be considered to enhance outreach to dropout children as well as literate and semi-illiterate adults.
* NFE facilitators should be provided with options to reach out to herders’ families during the summer season, cf. the activities engaged in Ulaankhus *soum.*
* Reconsider functions of parental counseling centers particularly in terms of increasing outreach to parents.

*Component/goal # 3 - Improve access to basic healthcare services for rural populations:*

* Develop policy and implementation strategy for replication across Mongolia of the project model for improved health facilities at *soum* hospitals, i.e. proper training of doctors and health workers in primary health care and environmental health, focused information to population on health and community involvement in promotion of health care and clean environment, and improved sanitation and health waste management.
* Engage schools more actively as a hub for dissemination of information on primary health care and environmental health.
* Schools are the place in any *soum* or *bagh* where most people interact on a daily basis. Improving pit-latrines and sanitation in general at schools would have effective impact on curtailing spread of infectious deceases.
* Water supply to hospitals is critical to proper hygiene practice. However, considering the investments required for establishment of deep-wells and water pump and pipelines analysis should be conducted of possibilities to also include schools, kindergartens and governor’s office in local water supply infrastructure.

*Component/goal # 4- Improve income-generating opportunities and livelihood of rural populations in the target aimags:*

* Improve the legal frameworks and funding in support of establishing micro-business and cooperatives through easier access to micro-credits and other financial mechanisms.
* Consider ways to support newly established micro-business and cooperatives through e.g. temporary tax and VAT exemptions.
* Establish public and private frameworks and mechanisms for training related to boosting local entrepreneurships and relevant technical-vocational skills and knowledge/skills in business management and development.
* Establish connections between NFE life-skills training and further training for business establishment.

# Introduction

## Background

Human security is defined in the report ofCommission on Human Security *Human Security Now* as protecting the vital core of all human lives in ways that enhance human freedoms and human fulfillment.Human security is far more than the absence of violent conflict. It encompasses human rights, good governance and access to economic opportunity, education and health care. It is a concept that comprehensively addresses both "freedom from fear" and "freedom from want". To attain the goals of human security, the Commission proposes a framework based on the**protection** and **empowerment**of people.

The United Nations Trust Fund for Human Security (UNTFHS), launched by the Government of Japan and the United Nations Secretariat In March 1999, finances projects carried out by organizations in the UN system, and when appropriate, in partnership with non-UN entities, to advance the operational impact of the human security concept. The UNTFHS places priority on promoting multi-sectoral and inter-agency integration based on the comparative advantage of the applying organizations and through their collaboration.

With the support of the UNTFHS, the Government of Mongolia and four UN Agencies - UNDP, UNICEF, WHO and UNESCO, which also served as the lead UN agency, have been implementingthe joint UN project -“Comprehensive Community Services to Improve Human Security for the Rural Disadvantaged Populations in Mongolia” since June 2009.

The national entities involved in the implementation of this UN joint project under the leadership of Deputy Prime Minister’s Office / Cabinet Secretariat of the Government of Mongolia included the following: Ministry of Education, Culture and Science, Ministry of Health, National Development and Innovation Committee, Information, Communication, Technology and Post Authority, Communication Regulatory Commission and Small and Medium Enterprise Agency and a number of other partners including national centers, civil society organizations, research institutions and local governments under the leadership of Deputy Prime Minister’s Office/Cabinet Secretariat of the Government of Mongolia.

## Project Profile

The main goal of the project was to reduce poverty and improve the human security of Mongolia’s rural disadvantaged populations through the provision of comprehensive social services. The total budget of the project was USD $2,989,000. The project focused on the following components:

1. Improve access to information among rural populations, especially ethnic/linguistic minorities;
2. Improve access to and quality of formal and non-formal education in rural areas
3. Improve access to basic healthcare services for rural populations;
4. Improve income-generating opportunities and livelihood of rural populations in the target aimag;
5. Develop comprehensive policy recommendations on sustainable rural development and improve the Government’s capacity to implement such policies.

The project covered 20 districts (*soums*) in Bayan-Ulgii, Khuvsgul, Khovd, Uvs and Dornod provinces (*aimags*), where a large percentage of the ethnic/linguistic minorities reside. The project was planned for implementation over a period of three years (2009-2012). To achieve the main goal, the project has been implemented to deliver thirty-one outputs within five goals and seven objectives.

## Structure of the report

The report is structured as follows:

* Chapter 2 describes the approach and methods used by the evaluation.
* Chapter 3 is a brief overview of context in which the project interventions have unfolded.
* Chapter 4 addresses key issues of project management, ownership and relevance, including questions related to the joint-ness in project implementation.
* Chapters 5-9 describe the objectives, activities, outputs/results, sustainability, replication and specific recommendations related to the five project goals/intervention areas.
* Chapter 10 aims to discuss early signs of impact that go beyond the immediate observed outputs and results of the project interventions.
* Chapter 11 presents the evaluation’s overall conclusion and its strategic recommendations.

# Evaluation approach and methodology

## Purpose and objectives of the evaluation

As outlined in the Terms of Reference (see Annex 1) for the evaluation, the overall goal was to assess to what extent the joint project had implemented its activities, delivered outputs and attainted outcomes. The evaluation should also generate substantive evidence-based knowledge on the project components by identifying best practices and lessons learned emerging from project implementation that are policy relevant.

The findings, conclusions and recommendations generated by the evaluation should be presented at National Advocacy and Policy Workshop to be organized 7-8 May 2012 in Ulaanbaatar.

The unit of analysis for the evaluation was the joint project, understood as the set of components, outputs and activities and inputs that were detailed in the project document.

In addition the evaluation had the following *specific objectives:*

1. To assess the degree of implementation, efficiency and quality delivered on outputs and outcomes against what was originally planned;
2. To measure to what extent the joint project has attained development results for the targeted population, beneficiaries, participants including individuals, communities and institutions using the Results Framework;
3. To assess the joint project’s contribution to the objectives set in the Comprehensive National Development Strategy based on MDGs at national and local levels;
4. To assess the extent to which the project implementation structures and processes facilitated ‘joint-ness’ among the participating UN agencies and draw lessons/implications for future joint UN projects; and
5. To identify substantive lessons learned and good practices as a result of the project implementation within the various project components with the aim to support the sustainability of the joint project or some of its components.

Further, the Terms of Reference provided the evaluation with a total of 34 questions related to project design, relevance, efficiency and effectiveness to guide the evaluation focus.

## Approach

The evaluation was an *ex-post evaluation* applying an *objectives-based evaluation method* with due attention to the Results Based Management Framework.

The evaluation aimed to determine how successful the project had been at achieving its goals, delivering stated outputs and producing results that go beyond the purpose of specific project activities, i.e. improving human security for disadvantaged populations in rural Mongolia.

Recognizing the project’s intervention logic of seeking synergy through coordinated implementation, the evaluation also sought to highlight good practices and lessons learnt of particular importance to future cross-sectoral interventions. The evaluation further examined strengths and potential weaknesses of sustainability.

Recalling the evaluation questions listed in the Terms of Reference the evaluation further sought to identify end-beneficiaries’ perception of the project interventions and outcomes.

The evaluation was conducted in four phases:

*One*, desk-study review of documents prior to the arrival of the international consultant in Mongolia on April 12, 2012.

*Two*, interviews and focus group meetings with key respondents of the Mongolian government, UN agencies and technical working groups (11-13 April), and field visit (14-22 April) to Uvs *aimag* and Khyargaas and Zuungovi *soums* including participation in the Experience Sharing Workshop for the western target *aimags* (Bayan-Ulgii, Khovd and Uvs) followed by visit to Bayan-Ulgii *aimag* and Bayannuur and Ulaankhus *soums.*

*Three*, analysis of field based data against initial findings of the document review, presentation of overall initial findings and recommendations to heads of UN-agencies (26 April), national technical working group (1 May) and the National Advocacy and Policy Workshop (7-8 May) in Ulaanbaatar.

*Four,* completion of the evaluation report with due incorporation of feedback from abovementioned meetings and follow-up interviews with key stakeholders.

## Methods

The evaluation matrixlaid out in the Inception Report guided the applied evaluation methodology. The matrix identified the relationships between issues and questions stated in TOR and presented the specific sources of data and methods applying to the respective questions.

By matching questions to sources of data from the framework table/matrix, respondents and documents, the evaluation team used semi-structured interview guides for individual interviews and for focus group meetings, bringing together topics from across the framework.

The evaluation methodology comprised a mix of site visits and observations, face-to-face interviews, focus group meetings, desk-based document review of existing reports and other available documents. The methods applied are all proven tools using standardized formats:

**Document review against structured checklist**were used to analyze the content of key documents such as project document, baseline survey, mission reports, progress reports, national policy documents. The checklist helped to ensure comprehensive coverage against the evaluation questions and a consistent approach to document review. An overview of reviewed documents is attached as Annex 2.

**Topic-list semi-structured interviews**ensured systematic coverage of questions and issues. The topics were developed around the evaluation questions, but grouped and targeted according to the organization, group or individual being interviewed. The evaluation team interviewed and had focus-group meetings with a total of 86 respondents. For a full list of interviewees and participants in focus-group meetings please see Annex 2.

**Appreciative inquiry:**The AI approach was applied to explore successes and positive experiences in dialogue with individuals and groups of people in order to strengthen understanding of why something worked well, and how success might be replicated.

**RACI** matrix: RACI (Responsible, Accountable, Consulted and Informed) was used as an analytical tool to summarize the different roles held by specific individuals and organizations.

**Questionnaires for convenient sampling**were used during the fieldtrip to give voice to a broader spectrum of participants in training and to end-beneficiaries to the project and provided the evaluation with data further qualifying *triangulation*of data collected.

*Document reviews* primarily served as sources for assessing the argued relevance of the project and its specific interventions, to what extent planned outputs where actually achieved, reported implementation difficulties, lessons learnt and ideas for further revised and/or further action.

*Interviews* with individuals and *focus group meetings*sought primarily to collect experiences and viewpoints related to investigating the perceived or experienced ownership to and relevance of the project interventions, the quality of activities/services provided and to what extent the interventions influenced the situation compared to that prior to the project. Further, interviews and focus group meetings addressed issues of synergy & joint-ness and sustainability as well as ideas for policy recommendation.

During interviews with key informants of national and local government, UN agencies, implementation teams and technical working groups particular attention were given to topics related to the experienced/perceived advantages/disadvantages of the joint approach to project implementation and to lessons learnt of importance for national policy development.

The use of *questionnaires*provided the evaluation with a broader spectrum of voices from the end-beneficiaries to the project’s four main intervention areas. Respondents to the questionnaires were identified on the basis of convenient sampling upon arrival in the four *soums* covered by the evaluation fieldtrip. Questionnaires were collected prior to departure. Collecting experiences and ideas from the end-beneficiaries qualified the triangulation of data in the final analysis of project outcomes and results.

Questionnaires were distributed and collected as follows:

|  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **Component/**  **intervention area** | **Number of questionnaires per soum**  Numbers in *italics* show number of distributed questionnaires/numbers in **bold** show actual number of respondents | | | |
| **Khyargas** | **Zuungovi** | **Bayannuur** | **Ulaankhus** |
| C1: Community  Radio | *n/a* | *3/***3** | *5*/**5** | *4*/**4** |
| C2: Non-formal  Education | *15/****14*** | *4/****4*** | *10/****9*** | *15/****11*** |
| C3: Basic Healthcare Services | *15/****12*** | *10/****8*** | *10/****9*** | *21/****21*** |
| C4: Income-generating  opportunities | *10/****8*** | *n/a* | *n/a* | *n/a* |

## Challenges and limitations

The evaluation team was given open and unlimited access to all documents, reports, training materials etc. requested for the evaluation as well as access to conduct interviews and focus-group meetings with any stakeholder or beneficiary to the project. Further, the evaluation team had opportunities within the time frame given for the fieldtrip to undertake on-site visits to e.g. *soum* hospitals, community learning centers and established private businesses, business clusters and cooperatives.

Due to the relatively short time (effectively less than four days) given for visits to target *soums* the evaluation team could not conduct individual interviews or hold focus-group meetings with end-beneficiaries. However, using questionnaires for convenient sampling the evaluation team collected individual responses to the project interventions particularly in the field of life skills training and literacy training.

The evaluation did not attempt to verify through quantitative methods to what extend all project outputs were delivered as reported. However, during visits to selected target *soums* the evaluation team could observe the presence and proper use of equipment, training and other materials distributed within the related project goals/components, e.g. community radio equipment, waste management equipment and sanitation installations for *soum* hospitals, life-skills and literacy training materials and equipment for community learning centers, and equipment provided for establishment of private businesses.

Based on observations and critical scrutiny of available reporting on delivery of project outputs the evaluation team found no reasons to question the accuracy of the reported project outputs, nor did we identify statements questioning general the relevance and quality of project deliveries.

The evaluation did not in detail address financial efficiency of the project. However, it was recognized that relevant UN-agency standard procedures for procurements were adopted consistently, whenever applicable. The project fund of 3 million USD benefited directly or indirectly a total population of approximately 72,000 people (total population of 20 *soums)*, i.e. approximately 42 USD/person.

# Context

The following brief review of conditions constituting rural life in Mongolia as well as the socio-economic changes experienced over the last two decades serves as an effort to place the project interventions in a broader context, and thus elucidate the project achievements against this background.

In the wake of transition from socialist economy to capitalist market economy starting 1990, rural communities across Mongolia were hit hardest by the collapse of existing socio-economic infrastructures and services.

The dismantling of state owned and collective agricultural entities*(negdel)*, the collapse of industrial complexes in *aimag* (province) centers and the general economic crisis left rural populations with heavily diminished access to and quality of social, health, educational and cultural services. Thousands of previously existing paid jobs disappeared, the value of savings, salaries and pensions dropped or disappeared virtually overnight. Widespread poverty, social disorientation under the new conditions, and privatization of livestock with new demands for labor drove nearly a quarter of school-aged children out of schools and thus left many of a whole generation illiterate or semi-illiterate.

From 1990 to 1995 Mongolia’s real gross income per capita halved. In the mid 90s around 50% of Mongolia’s rural populations were estimated to live under the officially established poverty line. Only from 1996 Mongolia experiencedslow economic recovery, which eventually showed significant growth from 2007 onwards, primarily due to a booming mining sector. Despite a steep increase in real gross per capita income over the last 5 to 7 years, Mongolia’s rural disadvantaged populations have gained little from the positive macro-economic developments.

*Zuuds* (a combination of poor conditions for livestock breeding during summer and autumn, extreme winter conditions and insufficient emergency capacity) in 2000/2001 and 2001/2002, and again in 2009/2010, had disastrous impact on many rural communities. During the 2009/2010*zuud* 22% of the livestock died.

Under market economy conditions with the absence of previous forms of state ensured socio-economic infrastructure and state-subsidies the full range of *‘tyranny of geography’*[[1]](#footnote-2) applies. Mongolia, a landlocked country with an area of approximately 1,5 million square kilometres and only 2,8 million people, is one of the most sparsely populated countries in the world. With around 63% of the population residing in and around Mongolia’s few urban centres there is limited scope for exploiting economies of scale in rural areas. Extreme climatic conditions with long winters and average winter temperatures often below minus 30 degrees add to the challenges of establishing and/or maintaining a wide range of social services as well as micro- and small-scale businesses.

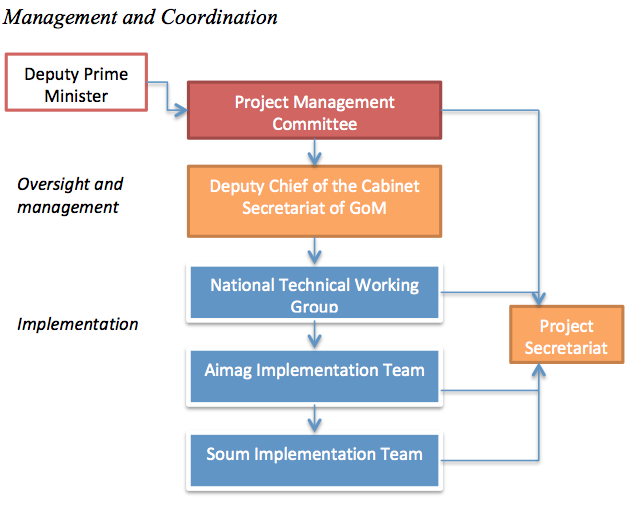
The 20 *soums*targeted by project interventions represent a total population of approximately 72,000 people only. The main source of livelihood for the majority of the populations was and remains herding livestock. Only few people have access to regular and paid jobs in the local administration or in schools/kindergarten and at the local hospital. Most of the *soums* are located far from their respective *aimag* centers, not to mention the primary city markets of Mongolia. The distance from the *soum* centers to Ulaanbaatar (urban market) ranges from around 800 to 1600 kilometres.

It is against this background, that project activities unfolded and, as will demonstrated in the following chapters, within which it has successfully addressed a number ofissues critical to improving human security.

# Project management, ownership &project relevance

## Coordination and management

In pursuit of the project’s effort to apply a coordinated and comprehensive implementation strategy across its various, interconnected goals, objectives and outputs, a corresponding government-UN agency management system was established.



The project steering committee was, however, by decision of the Mongolian government in 2010 not established. Instead, focus and emphasis was given to strengthen the Project Management Committee and the other management and implementation structures and organizations of the project. Thus, PMC de facto undertook the oversight-role envisaged for the Steering Committee. The PMC was chaired by the Deputy Chief of the Cabinet of Secretariat and co-chaired by UNESCO Beijing and also included key government partners and representatives of the participating UN agencies. PMC played a key role in bridging between the Mongolian government and the UN agencies.

Composition, terms of reference and model guideline for the project management committee and the aimag and soum project implementation teams were established by DPM order No. 88, November 2009 – see Annex 3.

The National Technical Working Group had tasks to bridge between PMC and the *aimag* implementation teams and to provide technical backstopping to PMC, *aimags* and *soums* respectively. Terms of reference and composition of the NTWG was established by DPM order No. 26, May 2010 – see Annex 4.

A project launch workshopwas held in Bayan-Ulgii in March 2010 with high-level representatives of PMC, *aimag* and *soum* governors of the target *aimags* and *soums* of Bayan-Ulgii, Khovd, Khuvsgul and Uvs, project participating Mongolian organizations and the contributing UN agencies.

All stakeholders interviewed by the evaluation team expressed satisfaction with the role played by the PMC and its active engagement in project monitoring, which also provided a sound foundation for adjustments of the project design and implementation strategy identified on the basis of additional needs assessment and accumulated experiences.

The DPM order No. 88, November 2009 together with the key role undertaken by the Deputy Chief of the Cabinet of Secretariat combined with the project coordination conducted by UNESCO as the lead UN-agency proved instrumental in effective project coordination and implementation at national, *aimag* and *soum* levels.

## Joint implementation

Unlike other joint (UN) projects this project was built on a more loose form of jointness in terms of financial and administrative matters. As can be clearly observed in the project document, separate agreements were made between the participating UN-agencies and the donor and each UN-agency received funds for their respective project contributions. Nevertheless, the project achieved a remarkable level of collaboration, coordination and, not least, joint-learning between the participating UN-agencies.

According to consistent statements made by all UN partners to the project, this achievement was made possible through a combination of focused and skillful coordination by UNESCO as the leading agency, by complementary coordination provided by the UNRC and readiness and ability to engage in dialogue and collaboration demonstrated by heads and involved staff from all participating UN agencies.

The UN agencies involved in the project have unanimously stated their interest and readiness to pursue possibilities for similar joint and coordinated interventions in Mongolia in the future.

It is clear from interviews with key respondents from the UN agencies, from meetings with representatives from all UN agencies present and from document reviews, that joint monitoring visits to target *aimags* and *soums* played an important role in facilitating common understanding not only of the respective interventions but, and more importantly, common recognition of the potential synergies in coordinated project implementation.

The synergies of joint and coordinated interventions were evident and repeatedly recognized at various levels of project implementation:

Like in many other countries cross-sectoral development interventions, especially in collaboration with international partners, are not everyday-phenomena in Mongolia.

The joint and coordinated interventions were highly appreciated in interviews and focus group meetings with Cabinet Secretariat, *aimag* and *soum* implementation teams and with technical working groups. As was the case across the UN-agencies the joint and coordinated interventions demonstrated that close collaboration adds value, efficiency and effectiveness to development activities at the national *aimag* and *soum levels.*

The collaboration, joint learning and the synergy dimensions were experienced and recognized and evident also on the ground, i.e. in target *soums*, where e.g. community radios collaborated continuously with *soum* hospitals and community learning centers and vice-versa.

As UN-agencies stated their interests and readiness to pursue further possibilities for joint and coordinated development interventions, so did key stakeholders at national, *aimag* and *soum* levels.

## Ownership & relevance

According to the *Paris Declaration on Aid Effectiveness* ownership to internationally financed development projects and programs mean that ‘*partner countries exercise effective leadership over their development policies, and strategies and co-ordinate development actions’* and ‘*exercise leadership in developing and implementing their national development strategies through broad consultative processes*’. Further it is stated that partner countries should ‘*lead the coordination of aid at all levels in conjunction with other development resources in dialogue with donors and encouraging the participation of civil society and the private sector*’. Donors are committed to respect partner country leadership and help strengthen their capacity to exercise it.

As stated above the established management structure placed the Mongolian government in a leading position to facilitate effective project coordination. The DPM order No. 88, November 2009 played a crucial role in the coordination of the project implementation at national, *aimag* and *soum* levels. The Mongolian government together with the UN-agencies embarked on a broad consultative process and ensured participation of civil society organizations as well as representatives of the private sector.

In addition to the establishment of the PMC, the *aimag* and *soum* implementation teams, and the composition of the National Technical Working Group and component related working groups demonstrate the joint government-donor commitment to engage a broad and relevant participation of various stakeholders, including national agencies and civil society organizations.

Subject to particular recognition was the involvement of Mongolian civil society organizations like Global International (needs assessment and establishment of community radio), Mongolian Association of Publishers and Printing Houses (capacity building of target *aimag* printing facilities) and Mongolian Chamber of Commerce and Industry (needs analysis and support for establishing small-scale businesses, business clusters and cooperatives). It is also noteworthy that the Baseline Survey undertaken to further qualify project implementation was conducted by a private Mongolian consultancy firm, CSD Consulting LLC.

Document reviews and interviews with key national, *aimag* and *soum* respondents demonstrated that the project *relevance*was high and in compliance with national policies and development strategies, e.g.: ‘Millenium Development Goals-Based Comprehensive National Development Strategy of Mongolia, Ulaanbaatar 2008’; ‘Government Action Plan for 2008-2012’; and relevant legislation in the fields of Public TV and Radio, Health, Education, and Culture.

At *aimag* and *soum* levels during the fieldtrip the evaluation team was introduced to local policy documents, development strategies and annual work plans reflecting the current and long-term incorporation of project goals and objectives.

In addition to the project’s alignment with national and local policies and development strategies, project relevance was clearly enhanced through the Baseline Survey and complementary needs assessments within e.g. the fields of life-skills and literacy training, *aimag* printing facilities and establishment of businesses at *soum* level.

The National Policy and Advocacy workshop organized in May 2012 with participation of the Deputy Prime Minister was a clear demonstration of the level of project achievements, national ownership, project relevance, and coordination and joint-ness capacities. Extensive discussions unfolded on policy recommendations for future interventions supporting disadvantaged rural populations. Policy recommendations would be presented to the Cabinet of the Mongolian Government soon after the completion of the workshop.

## Monitoring

Project monitoring was organized against project outputs, implementation activities and modalities in accordance with the guidelines established by the DPM orders # 88 and # 26 for the Project Management Committee and the National Technical Working Groups respectively. At the overall project level project monitoring was primarily conducted through regular joint missions to selected project target *aimags* and *soums*(joint, i.e. representatives of participating UN-agencies and component related technical working groups)*.* At the *aimag* levels the *aimag* implementation teams overlooked and reported on project progress in their respective *soums.*Monitoring reports in Mongolian and English were subsequently compiled into semi-annual and annual progress reports. A total of four joint-monitoring reports and five semi-annual and annual progress reports were produced.

As demonstrated through adequate adjustments of project component goals and objectives and the sense and practices of joint implementation, project monitoring was widely efficient.

Despite the generally effective monitoring of project activities and achievements the evaluation team was missing a clear overall as well as component related semi-annual and annual overview of achievements against stated outputs. Progress reports give good presentations of activities and achievements within the particular reporting period; however, accumulated overviews out achievements against stated outputs would have made analysis of project progress flows more comprehensible.

## Specific recommendations

As demonstrated above the project widely owes its successful implementation and achievements to the efficient management structures established; structures that ensured high level of national ownership and relevance.

Further, the emerging joint-ness among the supporting UN-agencies also proved to provide added value in terms of efficiency, effectiveness and joint learning.

Against this background it is recommended to:

* Opt for similar management structures for future development interventions;
* Establish from the outset joint planning and management on the side of supporting UN agencies, an approach that would be in full accordance with the UN ambition of ‘delivering as ONE’ as well as the principles laid out in the *Paris Declaration on Aid Effectiveness.*

# Improving access to information among rural populations, especially ethnic/linguistic minorities

## Objectives, estimated outputs and activities

‘Improving access to information among rural populations, especially ethnic/linguistic minorities’ known as ‘goal 1’ of the project was supported by UNESCO with an originallyestimated total amount of USD 520,000.Specific Mongolian partners engaged in implementing this component were:Mongolian National Broadcaster, Communications Regulatory Commission of Mongolia, Radio and Television Broadcasting Network, Globe International, Mongolian Printers Association,

The objectives of this project intervention as outlined in the project document were to:

* Build-up the broadcasting capacity of minorities
* Boost intellectual development and cultural awareness through readership among minorities in their languages.

The activities under this component aimed to

* Replace the TV-transmitter in Bayan-Ulgii *aimag*
* Establish 10 community radio stations and conduct training for 20 local journalists and 10 local technicians
* Upgrade printing capacity of a printing house to produce materials in minority languages.

## Effectiveness/outcomes - results

The actual outcomes of this part of the project represent remarkable examples of the joint government-UN agency ability and readiness to adjust project intervention in accordance with joint learning about the complexity of the situation on the ground in project target areas.

**TV-Channel**

Inspired by the Baseline Survey (March 2010) completed after the government-UN agency joint approval of the project document (August 2009), the plan to replace the TV transmitter in Bayan-Ulgii was reconsidered.

Following a high level visit from UNESCO headquarters in September 2010, upon invitation from the Mongolian government, it was decided to support Mongolian National Broadcasting’s (MNB) plan to establish a second TV channel for satellite transmission dedicated to serve ethnic/linguistic minorities. A letter from UNESCO director-general was sent to the Mongolian government urging it to earmark a second TV channel free-of-charge for the stated purpose.

Government of Mongolia responded positively to the request,and the donor approved reallocation of funds to support the establishment of MN2. UNESCO mobilized an additional USD 35,000 from its regular budget to support the built-up of MN2. The supplementary donation was spent primarily on capacity building of local *aimag* based correspondents and a study-tour to Special Service Broadcasting, Australia for two MN2 staff.

The launch of MN2 took place on 11 July 2011 with the presence of UNESCO director general and the deputy chief, Cabinet Secretariat of Government of Mongolia.

At the time of project evaluation MN2 was broadcasting 6 hours daily, from 6 pm to 12 pm. Broadcasting includes evening news in Kazakh and Tuvaa languages and in Buryat-Mongolian dialect as well as in Mongolian. Cultural programs in the Kazakh and Tuvaa languages and in Buryat Mongolian dialect have prominence and are each aired once a week.

A handbook for producers and journalist on how to work with minorities and disadvantaged populations in general are to be published in 500 copies are about to be published.

The evaluation team had the opportunity to see MN2 staff in focused operation during the visit to Uvs *aimag.*During interviews with key respondents and focus group meetings in Bayan-Ulgii and Uvs the work of MN2 was repeatedly recognized.

**Community radios**

Community radios (in Mongolian: *nutgiin radio)*were established in ten selected *soums*(see Annex 5)and a total of 70 people from the respective *soums* were involved in training on radio management, journalism, programming and technical operation and maintenance. Additional training was provided for community radio board members on the concept and functions of community radio. Each board consists of 10-15 members.

The Australian company ‘Innovation-in-Box Company’ provided the FM radio kits in August 2010 according to UNESCO procurement rules and procedures.

Subsequent to a modified strategy developed through GoM-UNESCO consultation three Mongolian organizations were assigned to undertake the further implementation: The Mongolian NGO *Globe International* conducted preparation of community involvement and the establishment of local community radio councils; *MNB* undertook journalistic training and training for programming; and *Radio Television Network Company* implemented training of local technicians and provided technical maintenance. A separate contract for a one-year technical support and maintenance was entered with RTNC.

According to monitoring visits and progress reports all ten community radios are in operation, radio councils elected, radio managers and council members, radio manager, local journalists and technicians trained as per the plan. A total 70 people have been trained.

MNB had provided the community radios with 400 hours of music and jingles to form a first basis for supporting programming. Via satellite connections the community radios also transmit daily programs from Mongolian national public radio.

The evaluation team had the opportunity to visit three community radios (Bayannuur and Ulaankhus *soums* in Bayan-Ulgii, and Zuungovi *soum* in Uvs) and interview council heads, radio managers and local technicians.

In all three cases the radio-equipment was installed in proper premises provided by the *soum* governor and the radio stations had clear weekly program. The weekly programs included regular broadcasting of news and other inputs from e.g. *soum* hospital, governor, school and from the community learning center. Thus, effective collaboration was established between the community radio and other components of the project. *Soum* hospital doctors and health workers talked on radio about primary and environmental health care and used the materials and training provided through the project. The community-learning center collaborated with the radio to disseminate information and training emerging from the life-skills and literacy training materials provided by the project.

The community radios have established good contact with the local populations. The three radio stations visited during the evaluation field trip reported frequent calls and specific requests for broadcasting from the population. Calls represented a variety of requests, like locally relevant news, information on legal issues and supplementary life-skills and literacy training.

In principle, the community radios are established as *community* radios and not as public radio stations, implying that work and funding is done on a voluntary basis and that the community radios should be registered as NGOs in order to ensure there independency and their role as primarily serving local communities.

At the time of writing this evaluation report eight community radios have obtained registration as NGOs. Others are still struggling with the registration. Private media occupies the Mongolian media landscape outside the existing public broadcasting organizations and against this background the state agency *aimag* offices in charge of legal registration of new entities tend to consider the community radios as private and profit-making businesses. However, the project stakeholders including Globe International are well aware of the situation and actions are taken to clarify the misunderstandings.

As the community radios are to be funded on a voluntary basis, funding is indeed a critical issue for all ten radio stations. A variety of funding patterns emerge, including contributions from *soum* governor, fees for *soum* agencies airing specific news and information, and individual contributions.

**Printing facilities**

Subsequent to the joint government-UNESCO review of the project ‘goal 1’ it was decided to provide assistance to enhancing printing facilities in all five target *aimags* rather than establishing one printing facility in Bayan-Ulgii, where a printing house was already in operation. The market in Bayan-Ulgii was considered insufficient to carry two major printing outputs.

The *Mongolian Printing Association* was contracted to undertake a situational analysis in summer 2011 of printing facilities in the five target *aimag* centers. Based on the findings training was provided for managers, designers and typesetters of 10 small printing houses in the five project *aimags*. Trainees were provided with updated software for design and layout. The training organized in Ulaanbaatar included trainees’ exposure to the facilities and procedures at larger printing houses in the capital.

As a direct outcome of the training 620 copies of 8 books were produced by the trainees, primarily in minority languages.

**Internet connections in two *soums***

Following the revision of the communication and information component (goal 1) of the project and in order to ensure a fair distribution to involved aimagsof benefits to this component, UNESCO supported from its regular budget (USD 12,480) the establishment of Internet connections in two project *soums* in Dornod *aimag.* Dornod governor’s office made a complementary contribution facilitating training in computer and Internet use for members of the two respective *soum* communities.

## Sustainability and replication

**MN2 – TV channel**

MN2 is an integrated part of MNB and the recurrent operation costs are covered under MNB regular budget.

An agreement with the satellite channel provider has been reached to stretch the one-year subscription covered by UNESCO to a period of up to three years. MNB has stated its readiness to include the subscription fee in its regular budget after termination of the current three-year period.

Currently, there is a shortage of journalists, anchors and translators speaking minority languages. A shortage, which may make quality broadcasting in minority languages vulnerable and curtail the further development of MN2.

No replication issue applies to the MN2.

**Community radios**

While the community status of the 10 radios by definition carries focus and potential to provide relevant news and other programs for the respective communities, the community/voluntary basis of the radio stations also represent the main risk to sustainability. The radios are established in areas with disadvantaged populations where the capacity to raise funding for the operation of the radios is limited. Currently, no annual budget estimations for the proper operation of radios are available.

In addition to the need for fund-raising and further capacity building in journalism and programming the technical maintenance of radio equipment represents a particular sustainability risk. For the time being RTNC is contracted for a year under project funding to conduct maintenance and technical supervision. According to RTNC an annual subscription for maintenance and technical supervision would amount to approximately 1,000,000 MNT(approx. 760 USD), a considerable amount for any disadvantaged community.

Obviously, proper and timely maintenance and repair when needed is imperative to smooth operation of the radio stations and disruptions in such services will have a negative impact on the operational capacity of the radios and eventually undermine their attraction to the local population.

The voluntary staffing and the limited provision and further access to training represents another sustainability risk. As seen in most new innovative interventions the start-up phase benefit from enthusiasm and energies. Enthusiasm and energy that may be difficult to retain in the long-term without adequate organizational and management structures, regular funding and access to required training, not least when volunteers, including techniciansneed replacement.

Spearheaded by Globe International, initiatives - including external financial support – are underwayto establish a national association of community radios. Such an association may be able to provide further assistance to the 10 community radios in terms of training and experience-sharing for fundraising, journalism and technical maintenance and thus facilitate overcoming the perceived sustainability risks.

Provided sound solutions are found to overcome the above mentioned sustainability issues for the 10 community radios their future sustainability level is in general assessed to be fairly good.

Whether the community radio concept carries significant replication potential is, however, more difficult to asses at this stage. While other communities across Mongolia could benefit from radio stations broadcasting locally relevant news, information and culture programs as is the case with the established 10 community radios under the joint UN-project it would be important to carefully examine the overall capacity to fund and support a larger number of community radios before going to scale.

Establishing a community radio is cost-intensive and requires funding that is unlikely to be generated within the respective community. Thus, external funding is considered to be a pre-requisite. Operation of a larger number of community radios requires not only significant capacity to train a great number of volunteers (council members, managers, journalists, technicians) but also nation-wide capacity to provide technical maintenance and support services.

**Printing facilities**

Managers, designers and printers of ten smaller *aimag* based printing houses were trained and new design software was provided and production, which all together supports higher sustainability of those printing houses’ capacity to improve their future productions. Eventually, their sustainability is closely related to ability to provide materials in demand and the availability of a market for their products.

The Mongolian Printing Association developed its contact with and knowledge about printing/publishing facilities in the five *aimags* and conducted on this basis relevant training and capacity building of the involved *aimag* printing facilities. This new knowledge/capacity could – provided funding is ensured through participant fees or other sources - be used for further enhancing capacities of similar printing facilities in all *aimags* in Mongolia. It also worth noticing that the involved *aimag* printing houses appreciate the newly established network/collaboration with printing houses in Ulaanbaatar, which extends their range operations.

## Specific recommendations

It is recommended to:

* Pursue the funding mechanisms for the satellite subscription beyond the current three year period and ensure that broadcasting is not interrupted due to lack of funds the subscription, which is imperative to the operation of MN2;
* Ensure adequate training for local journalists, studio placed journalists, anchors and translators to facilitate further development of MN2 programming and broadcasting.
* Support the community radios in ensuring registration as NGOs.
* Support the community radios in developing strategies and proper mechanisms to continuously and more extensively raise funds among their local communities. Community radios also need support to work out annual budgets to guide their fund raising.
* Provide a framework for continuous training and supervision of community radio managers, council members and technicians, if possible within the perceived association of community radios.
* Provide follow-up training on location to the ten *aimag* based printing houses.

# Improving access to and quality of formal and non-formal education in rural areas

## Objectives, estimated outputs and activities

Improving access to and quality of formal and non-formal education in rural areas’ known as ‘goal 2’ of the project was supported by UNESCO and UNICEF with an originally estimated total budget of USD 780,000; output related specification given below.Specific Mongolian partners in implementing this component were: Ministry of Education, Culture and Science, Institute of Education, National Center for Non-formal and Distance Education/MECS, Education and Culture Departments of the five *aimags, aimag* and *soum* implementation teams,

The objectives of this project intervention as outlined in the project document were to:

* Improve rural populations’ access to non-formal education and other information services through community learning centers, and reduce their [rural populations’] illiteracy rate.
* Support school drop-out children to return to the formal education system through equivalency programs.
* Improve access of young children from herder families to alternate forms of early childhood development programs.

Activities under this component aimed to:

* Increase by 50% the number of culturally and linguistically appropriate materials for rural illiterates and semi-literates (UNESCO – USD 135,000)
* Train 2 NFE-facilitators per *soum* to improve their skills in non-formal education (UNESCO – USD 15,480)
* Establish and make operational 20 community learning centers providing training to a total of 2,000 people (UNESCO – USD 264,500)
* Develop culturally and linguistically appropriate curricula and materials (UNICEF – USD 25,000)
* Enroll 60% of school drop-out children in non-formal education and 50% of them complete primary education (UNICEF – USD 200,200)
* Provide training for 20 NFE facilitators annually (UNICEF – USD 19,800)
* Develop culturally and linguistically appropriate materials for rural parents (UNICEF - USD 30,000)
* Provide training annually for at least 30 parents from the 15 most disadvantaged communities making them able to provide necessary support in early childhood development (UNICEF – USD 40,000)
* Establish parental counseling centers in Dornod, Khuvsgul and Bayan-Ulgii *aimags* (UNICEF – USD 50,000)

## Effectiveness/outcomes – results

**Culturally and linguistically appropriate materials, NFE facilitator training and community learning centers**

With due reference to the Baseline Survey and national statistics on illiteracy and referring to the established needs for enhanced life-skills among disadvantaged populations the project, with UNESCO as the implementing agency, embarked on renewing and strengthening approaches to literacy and life-skills training.

A new national ‘literacy training curriculum based on life skills’ was developed and approved by the Ministry of Education, Culture and Science in December 2010. The curriculum was published in Mongolian and Kazakh languages, distributed and put to use for literacy classes and life-skills training in the 20 target *soums*. The curriculum will, however, also be used on a national scale.

New literacy-training materials in print and audio-visual form were produced and distributed to the *soums.* Materials included a newly translated textbook for literacy training as well as supplementary materials to be used by NFE facilitators.

NFE methodologists and NFE facilitators of the five *aimags* and the 20 *soums* were trained. Community learning centers were established or rehabilitated and their capacity improved significantly. In addition to print and audio-visual training materials the community learning centers were equipped with equipment and tools to support life-skills training in e.g. wool processing, sewing and baking.

By the end of the project cycle a total of 4,700 herders have been enrolled in literacy and life-skills training of 30 hours and 60 hours, respectively. This achievement is impressive against the stated project output of 2,000 herders.

During the fieldtrip the evaluation team had the opportunity to visit four community learning centers (Bayannuur and Ulaankhus *soums* in Bayan-Ulgii *aimag,* and Khyrgas and Zuungovi *soums* in Uvs *aimag*) and conduct interviews NFE facilitators, observe training activities, and collect questionnaires from people engaged in literacy/life-skills training.

In all four cases community learning centers were either in their own premises provided by the *soum* governor or (in one case) operating within the *soum* school premises but having a separate entrance. The community learning centers were well equipped and operating very effectively. The work being done by NFE facilitators is truly impressive and is highly appreciated by people involved in the training activities.

Some NFE facilitators take their activities beyond the physical space of the community-learning center and thus enhance the operations of the centers. In Ulaankhus *soum*/Bayan-Ulgii *aimag*, for example, the NFE facilitator utilizes the summer period (June-August) to go around to the herders on his motorbike and conduct training on location so to say. When possible the *mobile gers* provided for reaching out to school dropouts serve as venue for training of herders.

NFE facilitators have also established close collaboration with the community radios announcing training and airing literacy and life-skills training information. When required NFE facilitators invite other members of the local community with particular skills in demand to conduct training, e.g. people knowledgeable of producing halters and reins (from locally available leather material) for horses, or people with specific knowledge about legal issues.

The capacity building of NFE trainers in multi-grade teaching and the provision of equivalency training program as well as the actual enrolment of dropout children in equivalency training and the completion rates of primary, secondary and upper-secondary education are indeed recognizable. The provision of *mobile gers* have proved effective in enhancing outreach not only to dropout children but also to herders requesting engagement in literacy and life-skills training.

In some cases trainees have used new skills to establish their own income-generating activities, selling wool products, halters/reins and embroidered textiles.

In addition to providing local population with literacy and new life-skills the community learning centers add new dimensions to a sense of community. The community centers are hubs for socializing, sharing experiences and ideas and support the development of self-esteem, self-confidence and hope for the future among the rural disadvantaged populations.

Community centers of the kind enhanced under the project are a new phenomenon in Mongolia but have within a short period of time proved their relevance and capacity to enhance literacy and life-skills of disadvantaged populations. It should be noticed that in most *soums* local stakeholders decided to rename the community learning centers to e.g. *citizens’ enlightenment center*(in Mongolian: *irgediin gegeerel tuv)*. The preference to *citizen* over *community* is related to the absence of a term in the Mongolian language resembling the underlying concept of *community* in the English language/Western understanding.

**Support for school dropouts**

Despite limited resources for high quality translation from Mongolian to Kazakh language 20 existing *equivalency program* training modules were translated and published in 250 copies each, for use in four target *soums* of Bayan-Ulgii *aimag.*  In addition Mongolian language student’s book was published in 700 copies complemented by teacher’s book with CD in 60 copies.

The materials include life-skills components and they support a broader knowledge of and respect for cultural diversity. The Mongolian agreed to take over further publication and up scaling of the materials in order to make them available to children and schools beyond the project target *soums.*

The provision of materials in both Mongolian and Kazakh languages is considered an adequate materialization of Mongolia’s effort to implement a balanced bi-lingual approach in education for the Kazakh speaking population of Mongolia.

In order to enhance the outreach to dropout children of herders’ families 20 *mobile gers* were provided under additional support by UNICEF totaling approximately 91,5 million MNT (approximately USD 70,000). As stated earlier the *mobile gers* also provided adult literacy and life-skills training with enhanced outreach to herders.

NFE facilitators were trained annually in providing the equivalency program and multi-grade teaching and convergence was achieved between NFE facilitators’ knowledge and skills for adult literacy and life-skills training and that required for working with dropout children and youth.

The equivalency program consisted of six modules with a total of 180 days teaching in reading, writing, and mathematics and communication skills. Student progress was monitored closely according to established and well-tested methods.

The equivalency program conducted within the project enrolled a total of 1,368 students of a registered 1776 dropouts by January 2010. Enrolment thus represents 77% of the registered dropout children/youth in the target *soums* (against an estimated output of 60%). Indeed a remarkable achievement.

Out of the enrolled students (unduplicated) 338 completed primary education, 148 completed secondary education and 40 completed upper-secondary education.

There were 559 children with disabilities attending primary equivalency program training. Despite a few successful cases there is almost no opportunities form them to enroll in mainstream primary education.

Due to the limited period of time in the field (effectively four days only in *soums)* the evaluation team had no opportunities to meet with children or youth enrolled in the equivalency program. The use of questionnaires for this group of beneficiaries was considered impracticable. The above evaluation findings are thus based on document reviews and interviews and focus group meetings with technical working groups, UN-agencies and NFE-facilitators only.

**Support for rural parents in early childhood development**

Training materials consisting of video CD, alternate training curriculum, handbook for parental counseling center staff and ‘communication within the family’ were developed. The materials were also translated into Kazakh language.

A total of 330 parents from nine*soums* of Bayan-Ulgii, Khuvsgul and Dornod aimags (against projected 30 parents from 15 soums) were engaged in training based on *‘the communication within the family’*handbook.

Three parental counseling centers were established under the *aimag* Education and Culture Departments of Bayan-Ulgii, Dornod and Khuvsgul *aimags.* The centers were provided with furniture, computers, digital and video cameras and various toolkits and other training materials. The basic idea behind the counseling centers is to provide opportunities for parents seeking advice related to early childhood development. A reported 89 parents have made use of the centers counseling services, and 402 parents and early childhood development professionals participated in training provided by the counseling centers.

Though the real outcome of training for/information about *‘communication with the family’* can only be assessed over time the provision of this training is recognized. Unfortunately, due to very limited time in the field, the evaluation team had no opportunities to meet with parents engaged in this training.

According to monitoring reports the centers havein total provided counseling services to 89 parents only, some with children enrolled in kindergartens. It could be considered, whether advice to parents with kindergarten children could be delivered more efficiently and effectively through adequate training of kindergarten principals and teachers who have regular contact with children and their parents.

In addition to wider information activities on early childhood development, the counseling centers are supposed to provide services to parents that seek individual supervision on early childhood development. It is impossible to assess whether the 89 parents that have actually approached the counseling centers for advice are representative for the actual interest/need in seeking such advice.

Recognizing the need for proper information and guidance on early childhood development, particularly in the field of strengthening communication within the family, it should be considered to direct the functions and capacity of the counseling centers to be more pro-active in seeking contact and collaboration with parents. This could be done through scaling-up the dissemination of proper information materials, parent meetings organized at kindergartens and at the schools (also at soum and *bagh* levels) and through utilization of the mobile *ger* schools. The latter would enhance the outreach particularly to herders’ families for whom the need is considered most pressing for intensifying communication with children as a core element of early childhood development.

## Sustainability and replication

**Materials for literacy/life-skills training and community learning centers**

The development and approval of a new national ‘literacy training curriculum based on life skills’ represents was undoubtedly crucial in facilitating the successful outcome of project interventions within this field. To what extend the literacy level of people involved in literacy-training in *sustainable* will widely depend on their regular use of newly achieved literacy skills and thus on their access to reading materials and their need for practicing writing skills. The access to reading materials in rural areas is limited and this may negatively influence the retention and particularly the further development of literacy skills.

The immediate outcomes of the practical implementation of the new national curriculum on literacy training demonstrate a potential high level of *replication*, which, though, will widely depend on the capacity to properly identify and train NFE-facilitators across the country. While training is considered one key aspect of successful replication the adequate establishment/enhancement and equipping of community learning centers should not be underestimated. There is no doubt that the focused support for the community learning centers covered by this project intervention carries significant importance to the successes of literacy and life-skills training. Without similar support to community learning centers in a scaling-up intervention across Mongolia effectiveness corresponding to that of the project intervention may not materialize.

The provision of instructional materials in Kazakh language proved to be very relevant and useful in terms of attracting illiterate and semi-illiterate people of the Kazakh-speaking population and is definitely adequate for *replication* in other Kazakh-speaking communities.

**Support for school dropouts**

The effective delivery of the equivalency program argues in favor of *sustainability* of the achievements as well as *replication* to other *soums.* Again, scaling-up will require adequate training of professionals delivering the equivalency program, including the careful screening of out-of-school children and youth prior to enrolment in the program. Further, a wider scale implementation of the equivalency program will require provision of the relevant instructional materials, including additional copies of materials in Kazakh language for the respective Kazakh-speaking target groups.

The provision of mobile *ger* schools enhanced the outreach to dropout children from herder families as well as to adults interested in literacy and life-skills training. It should be noticed, however, that future operation of mobile *ger* schoolsdepends on allocation of funds from the respective *soum* governors’ budget.

A scaled up *replication* of the *ger* school model will require extensive funding for procurement and recurrent costs.

**Parental counseling**

While refurbishing, equipment and materials were funded by the project, recurrent costs are to be covered by the regular *aimag* budget and thus *sustainability* of the three existing centers depends on funds for staffing and operational costs.

*Replication* would only be possible through provision of extensive additional funding for center establishment and future daily operation, publishing of information materials, staffing and outreach activities.

## Specific recommendations

It is recommended to:

* Further develop the *citizens’ enlightenment centers* reflecting the life-long-learning concept – see more under strategic recommendations, p. 51-52)
* Develop an implementation strategy for replication and up scaling of the literacy and life-skills training and other good practices emerged from the project interventions boosting the professional and material capacity of *citizens’ enlightenment centers.* It appears obvious first to roll out the replication to other *soums* in the five project *aimags*utilizing the experiences and capacities existing within those aimagsand next to target other *aimags*. Frameworks for further training of the NFE-facilitators and experience sharing across *aimags* and *soums* should be established.
* Increase the publication, distribution and use of literacy and life-skills training materials in Kazakh language.
* Scale-up the support for training in Mongolian language for the Kazakh-speaking populations with due reference to the national policy on bi-lingualism.
* Replicate the equivalency program modules for out-of-school children and youth in *soums* where relevant.
* Provided financing for mobile *ger* schools is ensured such facilities should be considered to enhance outreach to dropout children as well as literate and semi-illiterate adults.
* NFE facilitators should be provided with options to reach out to herders’ families during the summer season, cf. the activities engaged in Ulaankhus *soum.*
* Reconsider functions of parental counseling centers particularly in terms of increasing outreach to parents.

# Improving access to basic healthcare services for rural populations

## Objectives, estimated outputs and activities

Improving access to basic healthcare services for rural populations known as ‘goal 3’ of the project was supported by WHO with an originally estimated total amount of USD 530,000. Mongolian partners engaged in implementing this component were: Ministry of Health, Department of Health/Government Implementation Agency, Public Health Institute, and School of Public Health.

The objectives of this project intervention as outlined in the project document were to:

* Enhance knowledge and skills of health workers on integrated primary health care.
* Improve knowledge on health among ethnic minorities and marginalized populations through specific information, education and communication (IEC) materials and health intervention activities.
* Improve water, sanitation and health care waste management in selected *soum* health facilities.

The activities/outputs under this component aimed to

* Develop and apply curriculum and training modules appropriate to ethnic minorities and marginalized populations in project areas.
* Train a total of 40 medical workers in the five project *aimags* on Integrated Primary Health Care.
* Outreach to 2000 households with specific IEC materials and health intervention activities.
* Improve water and sanitation conditions of 25-30% of the project *soum* health facilities.
* Provide 20 *soum* health facilities with basic supplies for collecting, storage and disposal of health care wastes.

## Effectiveness/outcomes – results

**Curriculum and training materials & improvement of knowledge on health among local populations**

An integrated package consisting of booklets and DVDs on primary health care interventions for *bagh* and *soum* health workers was developed and published.

A total of 90 health workers were engaged in three 5-days sessions of training. The participants included doctors and nurses, midwifes and *bagh* feldshers from the 20 *soum* hospitals and *aimag* health departments as well as from the family group practices in the five project *aimags.*

Training materials for *health care volunteers* were developed.

The WHO Basic Training Manual on ‘health care waste management’ was translated into Mongolian language and utilized for training of trainers and health workers of the 20 project *soums* as well as for health workers in Ulaanbaatar hospitals.

Behavior Change Communication (BCC) materials were developed and widely used. Documentaries on water, sanitation and food safety were broadcasted by national Education TV channel and MN2.

During the field visit to four project *soums* in Bayan-Ulgii and Uvs *aimags* the evaluation team noticed high appreciation of the training materials and the training conducted. Interviews, focus group meetings and questionnaires confirmed recognition of the relevance and quality of the materials and trainings conducted.

The evaluation team also found that new knowledge and skills were disseminated through close collaboration with the community radio and the local school facilitating outreach to the local populations. Doctors and other health workers disseminate their new knowledge through interviews given over the radio and supervise teachers and principals of the local schools.

The primary health care interventions with a particular focus on environmental health issues have also facilitated initiation of small community based projects aiming to e.g. improve community waste management, plant trees and grow vegetables to improve hospital nutrition and to improve vegetable consumption among the local population.

Increased community awareness about environmental health was evident during the evaluation team’s field visit. In all four *soums* visited the *soum* administration in collaboration with the local population was engaged in cleaning the *soum* centers for waste typically dumped randomly in the streets. In one *soum* 18 truck loads of waste had been collected and dumped at new earmarked site outside the *soum* center. The initiative was followed by new means and practices to ensure a generally cleaner environment. Similar initiatives are reported from many of the other project *soums.*

According to monitoring reports 3,500 households were involved in various health interventions, behavior change, environment and primary health.

**Improving water, sanitation and hygiene conditions and health care waste management**

Due to the harsh climate conditions in Mongolia access to running and clean water is a major concern in most *soum* health facilities. At the beginning of the project 15 of 20 *soum* hospitals were without safe water supply. With financial and technical support from the project water supply problems were solved in six *soums;* in three cases deep wells have been drilled and pump/pipelines, and in the remaining hospitals pipeline/pump were repaired and extended as required.

Ventilated improved pit latrines (4 seats and 4 hand washbasins) were built in eight *soum* hospitals. The ventilated improved pit latrines also serve as models for other *soums*.

The new and more hygienic ventilated pit latrines also served as model and inspiration for community households to replace their old latrines with this more hygienic facility. Although no verified data exist on the total number of households also replacing their old latrines with the new ventilated pit latrines, the evaluation team could notice that in old four *soums* such a process is indeed underway and several concrete examples were given. According to monitoring reports 60 households in one *soum* had already by November 2011 established improved pit latrines.

The new ventilated pit latrines are assumed to significantly decrease cases of infectious deceases. Obviously, decreasing spread of infectious deceases within hospital premises is a very good starting point and expanding the use of improved pit latrines to households will undoubtedly strengthen the interventions against infectious deceases. According to statements by *soum* hospital doctors collected during the evaluation fieldtrip, there are early signs of impact, although it is too early to establish statistical evidence.

All 20 *soum* health facilities/hospitals were provided with basic supplies for safe management and disposal of health waste. The supplies include autoclave disinfection technology replacing the previously used waste incineration practice. Safe waste handling and disposal procedures are established and waste is dumped in specifically allocated and marked dumping areas.

During the fieldtrip the evaluation team observed the proper installment and use of the waste management facilities in the visited *soum* hospitals.

## Sustainability and replication

Sustainability in terms of human resource development and community involvement is considered high. A significant number of doctors and other health workers have been adequately trained and they are obviously applying their acquired new knowledge and skills to their professional work and engage in disseminating new knowledge and skills to their respective communities.

Engagement of local communities in primary health care and environmental health has proved effective and new more healthy and environmental friendly practices are well underway, including the wider installation of ventilated improved pit latrines and community engagement in keeping *soum* centers clean.

Sustainability of newly established sanitation and health waste management/disinfection equipment widely depends on the availability of funding and expertise.

The combined approach of adequate professional training, improved sanitation and health waste management, and engagement of local communities proved efficient and effective and is obvious for *replication* across Mongolia. Replication in large scale will though require significant funding for training and upgrading of sanitation facilities, and instalment of health waste management equipment.

## Specific recommendations

* Develop policy and implementation strategy for replication across Mongolia of the project model for improved health facilities at *soum* hospitals, i.e. proper training of doctors and health workers in primary health care and environmental health, focused information to population on health and community involvement in promotion of health care and clean environment, and improved sanitation and health waste management.
* Engage schools more actively as a hub for dissemination of information on primary health care and environmental health.
* Schools are the place in any *soum* or *bagh* where most people interact on a daily basis. Improving pit-latrines and sanitation in general at schools would have effective impact on curtailing spread of infectious deceases.
* Water supply to hospitals is critical to proper hygiene practice. However, considering the investments required for establishment of deep-wells and water pump and pipelines analysis should be conducted of possibilities to also include schools, kindergartens and governor’s office in local water supply infrastructure.

# Improving income-generating opportunities and livelihood of rural populations in rural areas

## Objectives, estimated outputs and activities

Improving income-generating opportunities and livelihood of rural populations, also known as ‘goal 4’ of the project was supported by UNDP with an estimated total budget of USD 158,658. Mongolian partner in implementing this component was Mongolian National Chamber of Commerce and Industry:

The objectives of this project intervention as outlined in the project document were to:

* Enhance the capacity of the selected micro and small entrepreneurs/producers in the target *aimags* to be engaged in income-generating activities and/or start their own business.
* Improve the quality of locally available business support services for business management, marketing, information dissemination, and referral services.
* Improve the local coordination among existing business development/support service providers in the target *aimags*.

Activities/outputs under this component aimed to:

* Strengthen capacity of local staff in providing quality technical assistance, advisory and referral services to community members.
* Improve knowledge of local implementation partners on business development.
* Collect and systematize information on local business environment and development.
* Establish partnership/coordination arrangements with Community Learning Centers, MN2 and other communication facilities to disseminate information on business opportunities and development.
* Facilitate information sharing across the project intervention areas and with microfinance institutions.

## Effectiveness/outcomes – results

The interventions under this component were primarily targeting project *soums* of two of the five project *aimags,* namely Khovd and Uvs (8 *soums* in total). Due to harsh winter conditions 2009-2010 activities under this project component began in May 2011 only.

The intervention was the first of its kind for UNDP, Mongolia to support development of income-generating activities through a national Mongolian NGO, i.e. Mongolian National Chamber of Commerce and Industry (MNCCI). For MNCCI this was also a first experience working on developing business and income-generating activities in remote *soums* of disadvantaged rural populations in Mongolia. Although MNCCI has branch offices in the two target *aimags* there was hardly any local experience or capacity in supporting business development at *soum* level.

With due reference to the Baseline Survey MNCCI embarked on a more detailed local needs and situation analysis providing adequate information about locally available materials for production, demands for products and services, corresponding training needs as well as local interests and readiness to be involved in business development activities.

Based on the needs assessments and situational analyses a comprehensive and extensive range of training activities were conducted for local chamber representatives and interested people from the eight target *soums.*Trainings were complemented with follow-up consultations with business starters in the respective soums.

Training sessions focussed on:

* Business start-up and establishment of cooperatives
* Advanced business development and management
* Product development, market analysis and access, tax and insurance issues
* Milk processing
* Vegetable pickling
* Wool and cashmere processing
* Bakery
* Food safety
* Felt production
* Fruits and vegetable processing technology
* Shoe making
* Mobile phone repair
* Barber/hair dressing

More than 500 people from the eight target *soums* participated in the trainings.

Supporting the start-up of local business corresponding equipment and tools were purchased and distributed to the eight target *soums*.

A variety of materials as reference sources were developed and distributed. Materials include e.g. handbooks for business establishment and management, handbooks on relevant equipment for small sale businesses and materials related to the specific trainings. Handbooks are available to the public at the community learning centres of the target *soums.*

MNCCI focussed on developing *aimag* based capacity to support enhancement of local business development. Members of Khovd and Uvs MNCCI branches were engaged in business development trainings and a Business Incubation Center was established in Khovd*aimag.*

At the end of the project 20 new co-operatives (12 in Khovd *aimag* and eight in Uvs *aimag)*. In total 56 micro and small-scale businesses are in operation. 145 people are directly involved of whom 72% are women.

The established businesses reflect a combination of needs for communal services;and locally available raw materials and availability of adequate technical skills in processing and production.

*Communal services* include: mobile phone repair, barbershop/hairdresser, tailoring and clothes repair, and shoe repair.

*Processing and production* include: bakery, wool processing, felt making, vegetable growing and processing, wood workshop, boot and shoe making.

*Examples:*

|  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **Aimag** | **Soum** | **Production/service** | **Number of members** | **Women’s participation** |
| Khovd | Altai | Bakery | 5 | 100% |
| Khovd | Altai | Wool processing and felt making | 3 | 100% |
| Khovd | Altai | Hairdresser | 2 | 100% |
| Khovd | Khovd | Wool processing | 4 | 100% |
| Khovd | Durgun | Wool processing | 3 | 100% |
| Khovd | Durgun | Barber | 2 | 100% |
| Khovd | Durgun | Agriculture | 5 | 60% |
| Khovd | Duut | Bakery | 6 | 100% |
| Khovd | Duut | Wool processing | 8 | 100% |
| Uvs | Davst | Wool processing | 12 | 100% |
| Uvs | Davst | Wool processing | 8 | 100% |
| Uvs | Davst | Wooden products | 5 | 20% |
| Uvs | Davst | Barber | 1 | 100% |
| Uvs | Davst | Bakery | 4 | 100% |
| Uvs | Zuungovi | Bakery | 6 | 100% |
| Uvs | Zuungovi | Wool processing and manufacturing wool products | 4 | 100% |
| Uvs | Zuungovi | Sewing, repairing | 3 | 100% |
| Uvs | Khyrgas | Wool processing | 5 | 100% |
| Uvs | Khyrgas | Shoe/boot making, sewing, repairing | 9 | 100% |
| Uvs | Tes | Wool processing | 4 | 100% |

In November 2010 and again in November 2011 MNCCI organized the *Ethnic Festival*. Selected project beneficiaries were invited to display their products in order to reach out to potential markets beyond their respective local communities. There are currently no available data on the follow-up outcomes of these efforts.

The establishment of private businesses and cooperatives has, as data demonstrates, increased the income-generating opportunities in the target *soums.* Furthermore, the local communities have access to a variety communal services (e.g. barber, mobile phone repair) and locally manufactured products that in many cases are cheaper and considered of higher quality than similar products normally ‘imported’ from Ulaanbaatar or the *aimag* center (e.g. bakery, preserved fruit and vegetables, felt products for *ger* and boots/shoes).

During the fieldtrip to Uvs *aimag* the evaluation team met with the local branch of the Mongolian Chamber of Commerce and Industry and with several of the newly established businesses and cooperatives in Khyrgas and Zuungovi *soums.* All reported businesses and cooperatives were in operation and the outcomes so far are truly impressive. For example, established bakeries provide the local community with freshly made products and produce on demand. In addition to the owners’ income three extra workplaces with regular salaries are provided. The bakeries deliver products to the local schools’ mandatory tea breaks. The bakery in Zuungovi soum had already expanded its activities to a nearby *soum* and had plans for further expansion.

People appreciated that they no longer had to travel long distances for having their mobile phone repaired, going to the hairdresser/barber or having clothes repaired or tailored.Avoiding travelling long distances for this kind of services is not only a matter of saving time but also money, as travel costs adds to the very price of the service required.

In Khyrgas*soum* the local production of traditional as well as modern boots and shoes was in high demand, more or less excluding other similar products entering the local market. Not only was the products considered of a higher quality, they were also cheaper. Although the locally produced cotton-cover for the *ger* was 20% higher than competing products from Ulaanbaatar people seemed to prefer the local produce. Many stated that they found it more attractive to support local production, even when they had to pay a little extra. However, in most cases, as with the local manufacturing of wool and felt and boots, the fact that transportation costs are reduced or eliminated favors local products in terms of price.

During the field visit to Bayannuur *soum* in Bayan-Ulgii *aimag* it was encouraging to see how the ideas of promoting local produce was put into practice, although Bayannuur *soum* was not included in the income-generating activities supported by the project. In other words, good practices from project interventions in one place were replicated elsewhere. Bayannuur used to be a main provider of vegetables for preservation in facilities in Ölgii (the *aimag* center). Inspired by the business promoting activities in Khovd and Uvs under project support, entrepreneurial members of the Bayannuur community had embarked on local preservation of the vegetables, finding markets for their products in Bayannuur and in Ölgii.

## Sustainability and replication

Two closely interconnected factors speak in favour of high sustainability of this project intervention: One, MNCCI and its local branches have developed significant capacity in analysing conditions for and subsequently supporting local business development in rural Mongolia. Two, local businesses/cooperatives are in operation and proving their ability to manufacture and/or provide services according to demands in their local markets. With continued proper monitoring and analysis of further developments a sound foundation is laid for expanding and replicating the services of MNCCI to other *aimags* and *soums* across Mongolia.

There are, however, also some factors that may curtail primarily the replication of the successful outcomes of this project component. First, the access to micro-credit and other loan-schemes for business start-up are limited and require loan-guarantees that are not easy to provide in disadvantaged communities. Second, costs related to establishment and registration of business/co-operative as well as requirements for quarterly financial statements and related tax payments provides additional expenditures, which newly established small-scale businesses find it very difficult to meet at the early stage of their operation. Third, although the capacity to conduct training is available, funding for the necessary training in business development and management is limited. During the project implementation more people than actually involved in training were interested, however they could not engage due to shortage of funding.

It is noticed that according to information gathered from the Mongolian Government Implementing Agency for Small and Medium Sized Enterprises a review is underway of the current regulations and procedures for micro-credit and other business start-up schemes.

## Specific recommendations

It is recommended to:

* Improve the legal frameworks and funding in support of establishing micro-business and cooperatives through easier access to micro-credits and other financial mechanisms.
* Consider ways to support newly established micro-business and cooperatives through e.g. temporary tax and VAT exemptions/VAT credits.
* Establish public and private frameworks and mechanisms for training related to boosting local entrepreneurships and relevant technical-vocational skills and knowledge/skills in business management and development.
* Establish connections between NFE life-skills training and further training for business establishment.

# Develop Comprehensive Policy Recommendations on Sustainable Rural Development and Improve the Government’s Capacity to Implement such Policies

## Objectives, estimated outputs and activities

This component, also known as ‘goal 5’ of the project originally included a number of objectives to be support by all four involved UN-agencies. The objectives focussed on studies of existing policies on sustainable development for marginalized rural populations, exposure to other countries’ policies and practices on ethnic minorities, the organization of national advocacy workshops, training workshops for policy makers and the development of policy recommendations.

However, in June 2011 the component was revised in consultation between the Mongolian government and the UN-agencies and the revision approved by the donor. Subsequent to the revision apply only the organisation of study tours to neighbouring countries and the National Policy and Advocacy Workshop held in Ulaanbaatar 7-8 May 2012. Thus, the evaluation report addresses only these two interventions and discussions on sustainability and specific recommendations are not considered relevant.

**Study tours**

Two study tours were organized, one to Vietnam and another to Thailand. The study tours were arranged in close collaboration with relevant and UN partners in the respective countries. The study tours aimed to provide exposure to the two countries’ policies and practices supporting disadvantaged and minority populations. Participants in the study tours represented all levels involved in the project implementation. Reports from the study tours including presentations given at the ‘national policy and advocacy workshop’ demonstrated very useful exposure to policy as well as management and practical implementation of development interventions.

**National Policy and Advocacy Workshop**

A two-day *national policy and advocacy workshop* was organized in Ulaanbaatar 7-8 May 2012. Approximately 100 participants joined extensive and very well structured representations and discussions on the overall outcomes and lessons-learnt from the project and shared recommendations for further sustainability, replication and policy recommendations.

The participants represented the Mongolian government including the Deputy Prime Minister, the Project Management Committee, heads and key staff of the involved UN-agencies, the national technical working group, *aimag* implementation teams, selected representatives from the project *soums,* Mongolian NGO-partners and representatives of other donors to Mongolia.

The workshop compiled an extensive list of policy recommendations that will be further analyzed and prioritized prior to presentation at an already scheduled meeting at the Cabinet Secretariat.

# Early signs of impact

*Impact* is understood as ‘the primary and secondary, positive and negative, intended and unintended long-term effects of an activity, project or program’. Being an *ex-post evaluation* conducted a the point of completion of the project it is too early to reliably asses the long-term effects. However, the evaluation team finds it appropriate to identify some early signs of impact, i.e. results that reach beyond the immediate outcomes of the project and that, when synthesized, influence the sustainability of the project interventions.

**Communication, cooperation, coordination and the common**

Mongolia’s nomadic heritage represents a sophisticated practice of communication, cooperation and coordination as a precondition for adequate management of the common pastures. The socialist era had its own particular political and socio-economic structures facilitating coordination of usage of pastures and provision of social services. From 1990 onwards vast and precipitous privatization and introduction of market driven socio-economic structures and mechanisms overruled previous patterns of cooperation and coordination. Over the last two decades multiple development interventions with international assistance have been implemented without significant cooperation and coordination.

The project under evaluation widely represents revitalization, and renewal under current conditions, of cooperation and coordination among governing bodies at all levels, between government and international donors and among citizens in rural areas.

During the evaluation, recognition was stated over and again and at all levels of the added value and the enhanced efficiency and effectiveness emerging from the jointness applied to project management and implementation.

Evidence of this impact is found in the documented collaboration across the involved sectors, the collaboration between community radios, citizens’ enlightenment centers and *soums* hospitals as well as the widespread engagement of rural populations in, for example, health and environment related activities. The establishment of cooperatives and the voluntarily sharing of newly acquired knowledge and skills represent another dimension to the evolving cooperative spirit.

Considering the challenges emerging from the previously mentioned ‘tyranny of geography’ the revitalised understanding of cooperation and coordination and the renewed capacity to cooperate and coordinate effectively is an impact of the project reaching beyond its immediate results.

**Provision of communal services and utilization of local resources**

While urban centers at large, e.g. Ulaanbaatar, were relatively swift, though not without immense difficulties and skyrocketing social problems, to adapt to conditions of the market economy most rural communities struggled unsuccessfully to come to terms with the new mechanisms constituting market economy. Exclusion from proper funding and counselling for establishing and running new income-generating activities added severely to this struggle.

Through its well-founded support to enhance income-generating activities in disadvantaged rural communities, the project, in addition to very concrete outcomes, offered exposure to thousands of rural citizens to what can be done and achieved in fields of communal services and local production. New experiences and capacities have developed to analyse local conditions for income-generating activities and to provide adequate support.

**Self-confidence and self-esteem revitalised**

The Mongolia Human Development Report 2011 (page 12) quotes Amartya Sen: “Certainly, people have ‘needs’, but they also have values, and, in particular, they cherish their ability to reason, appraise, act and participate. Seeing people in terms only of their needs may give us a rather meager view of humanity.”[[2]](#footnote-3)

The evaluation team found that one of the possibly most important impacts of the project interventions is the evolving self-confidence and self-esteem in the rural communities engaged in the project.

During the field visit and at the National Policy and Advocacy Workshop the evaluation team noticed not only strong commitment to sustain the project outcomes but also pride in what has been achieved. Recalling Amartya Sen’s emphasis on the importance of people’s ability to act and participate,the self-confidence and self-esteem evolving from project participation should not be under-estimated as key factors in sustaining project outcomes and engaging and initiating future activities to improve conditions for the communities’ and their populations.

# Conclusions and recommendations

## Main conclusions

*Ownership* to project was high. The established management and technical support structure for the project ensured adequate involvement and engagement in decision-making, implementation and monitoring. Strong ownership to the project was stated across all levels and sectors.

The *relevance* of project interventions was clearly high. All stakeholders accept the five areas of project interventions as relevant and the specific benefits delivered at *soum* levels are appreciated and utilised by the beneficiaries. In cases were new knowledge and changed conditions challenged the relevance of specific and originally planned interventions, adjustments were made adequately.

After a slow start the *efficiency* of the project and the performance of UN-agencies and their respective Mongolian partners improved. The combination of regular PMC meetings, coordination meetings among the UN-agencies, skilful coordination by the project coordinator and joint monitoring visits and efficient monitoring at *aimag* and *soum* levels all played their role in the efficient delivery of the project interventions. Eventually project outputs were delivered according to plan, which is a remarkable achievement considering the relatively short period of time for actual project delivery.

Assessed against stated performance targets the *effectiveness* of the project is satisfactory. Disadvantaged populations have increased access to relevant locally information and cultural programs through community radios, MN2 and improved printing capacity. With a focus on cultural and linguistic diversity community radios and MN2 provide new services to ethnic and linguistic minorities. Extensive training programs have provided thousands of illiterate and semi-illiterate children and adults with literacy and life skills. Hundreds of children have or are in the process of completing primary, secondary and upper-secondary education. The capacity of non-formal education facilitators and citizen’s enlightenment centers is enhanced. Capacity to improve early childhood support is increased and hundreds of parents have been involved in early childhood development activities. Sanitation and health waste management at *soum* hospitals improved significantly and actions to decrease infectious deceases were undertaken effectively. Citizens engaged in improving/cleaning *soum* center environment. New communal services and manufacturing cooperatives and business are established and in operation. Capacity is enhanced to further promote income-generating activities among rural communities.

Terms of Reference for the evaluation indicate a particular interest in studying the *jointness* of the project implementation. The project was from the outset not designed as a full-scale joint UN project, rather as a project with common target locations but with separate interventions supported through respective UN agencies. Nevertheless, the involved UN-agencies embarked on efforts to coordinate interventions and to continuously engage in experience sharing and joint learning.

Despite UN stated ambitions to ‘deliver as ONE’ difficulties in actually doing so are well-known and the UN-agencies engaged in the project deserve recognition for their commitment and energy to overcome fragmentation in project delivery and to coordinate wherever possible and required. Stakeholders among the UN agencies and their Mongolian partners unanimously accept the efforts and the outcomes achieved in terms of jointness.

As argued in this evaluation report the synergies of jointness in project delivery are evident and it is definitely worth considering to engage in full-scale ‘delivery as ONE’ in future joint development interventions in Mongolia.

Long-term *sustainability* of project outcomes is in general satisfactory, however, sustainability varies across the different areas of interventions. The future of community radios widely depends on their ability to generate funds and continuously meet the expectations of their local audiences. Technical maintenance is another potential vulnerable aspect of future community radio operation. MN2 is guaranteed subscription to satellite transmission for the next two years and MNB is committed to overtake all expenditures related to MN2, which is a precondition for MN2 sustainability. Within the other fields of project intervention sustainability is primarily related to lasting application of technical and managerial knowledge and skills and sustainability is perceived satisfactory.

Finally, at the *impact* level it is noteworthy that the documented benefits of project interventions are complemented by capacities and mechanisms to engage in efficient collaboration and coordination, which have evolved alongside evidence of new self-confidence and self-esteem among disadvantaged rural populations.

## Strategic recommendations

Considering the scope of the project the evaluation has found it appropriate to identify a few*strategicrecommendations* only*.* The *specific goal-related recommendations* are listed in the above sections dealing with findings of the respective component focused evaluation.

1. Establish a high-level entity in charge of ensuring that development interventions are in alignment with national policies and for enhancing human security and livelihoods for Mongolia’s rural populations.
2. Develop policies and mechanisms including funding for further developing rural populations access to national and local relevant information, including analysis of the potentials in promoting civil society participation in development activities through further promotion of community based radio and other media.
3. Develop a comprehensive policy and implementation framework enhancing life long learning taking into account the potentials evolving from the nationwide fiber optic cable network for delivery of diverse and multiple life long learning training programs. A comprehensive framework should provide proper routes for further technical-vocational training subsequent to involvement in various life-skills trainings conducted at the *citizen’s enlightenment centers.*
4. Transform – as part of a comprehensive policy on life long learning - the lessons-learnt from the project interventions for capacity building at *citizen’s enlightenment centers* to national scale.
5. Establish standards for *soum* health facilities/hospitals promoting quality sanitation and health waste management.
6. Transform the lessons-learnt from the project on primary health care and environmental health into nation scale interventions in order to promote cleaner and safer environments in *aimag, soum* and *bagh* centers across the country.
7. Reinforce the national policy and legal framework for promoting establishment and operation of local businesses/cooperatives, including access to adequate micro-credit and other financing schemes.

1. UNDP 2011: *Mongolia Human Development Report 2011.* UNDP, Ulaanbaatar. [↑](#footnote-ref-2)
2. UNDP 2011: *Mongolia Human Development Report 2011.* UNDP, Ulaanbaatar. [↑](#footnote-ref-3)