

Country report on COMMUNITY LEARNING CENTRES (Mongolia)

1. Background and overview on CLCs

Located on the territory of 1565 thousand square km, Mongolia, one of the developing countries has a population of 2.6 million people, and population density is 1.6 persons per sq.km. 48.3 % of the population works in agriculture and most of them are herds who nomad year around. 32.7 % of whole population is youth under the age of 15; 63.7 % is 15-64 year old people; 3.6 % is over the age of 65. Moreover, 32.1 % of herdsmen is the youth between the age of 16-35.

For many decades, from 1921 until 1990, Mongolia remained a single-party state closely allied to the former Soviet Union. The pursuit of socialism until 1990 resulted in many impressive gains, including improvements in education and health, gender equality, social protection and human security. From a human development perspective, the most significant achievements of the socialist era were in the field of health, education and social security. By 1990, life expectancy had increased from 46.7 years in 1960 to 63.7 years, and adult literacy had risen to 97.8 percent.

1990 to 1995 was a pick time of the transition period. Since 1995, GDP growth has been positive if not substantial, inflation was under control, and private sector performance had shown improvement. Primary school enrolments, which fell dramatically after 1990 had begun to be raisin, showing signs of improvement.

The recent economic revival has led to positive growth in GDP of 4.0 percent in 2002. In spite of this, the foundations of the Mongolian economy still remain weak. Close to 35.6 percent of the population was below the income poverty line in 1998-marginally lower than the 36.2 percent recorded for 1995.

The sharp fall in average income that marked the economic crises triggered a drop in the rate of births as women exercised their choice not to take on the financial burden of more children. In 1989 the population was growing at 2.7 percent. However, in 2002 growth rate was 1.3 percent. the growth rate had fallen to 1.4 percent per year. The birth rate declined by nearly 52.0 percent from 1989-1999 as people opted to have fewer children, or have them less frequently in order to avoid becoming more economically vulnerable. Factors contributing to the decline in the birth rate included a drop in the marriage rate by nearly 40.0 percent over the same period, greater use of contraceptives to prevent pregnancy, and longer interval between births. Urban areas experienced greater decline because they have better access to information. The government seeks to create conditions for population growth of no less than 1.8 percent.

About the educational background of the population, the persons who have only primary education is quite a big /20%/ and the persons who have a low secondary education occupy also certain percentage. Literacy levels had reached 98.0 percent by 2000-98.5 percent among men and 97.5 percent among women. School enrolment indicates an unusual “reverse gender gap”, with more girls enrolled than boys and this applies to every aimag across the country.

As stated in the laws of Education that Mongolian Education Structure will be the combined structure of Formal and Non-Formal Education, it has broadened its area of service and provided the growing needs of population, as well as has legalized the environment of factors influencing on society development.

The CLC project in Mongolia has been implemented by the Information Training and Research Centre (ITRC), an NGO, with the support of the National Commission for UNESCO. It started to be implemented from 1999 to 2001 and within these 3 years, 16 CLCs were established in 4 aimags: Uvurkhangai, Bulgan, Gobi-Altai and Zavkhan.

Under this joint project, the pilot CLCs are implementing literacy, income generation, community development and health education programmes. The CLC in Ulaanbaatar was closed and its facilities were moved into Uvurkhangai CLC. Thus all CLCs are located in rural areas (Figure 1).

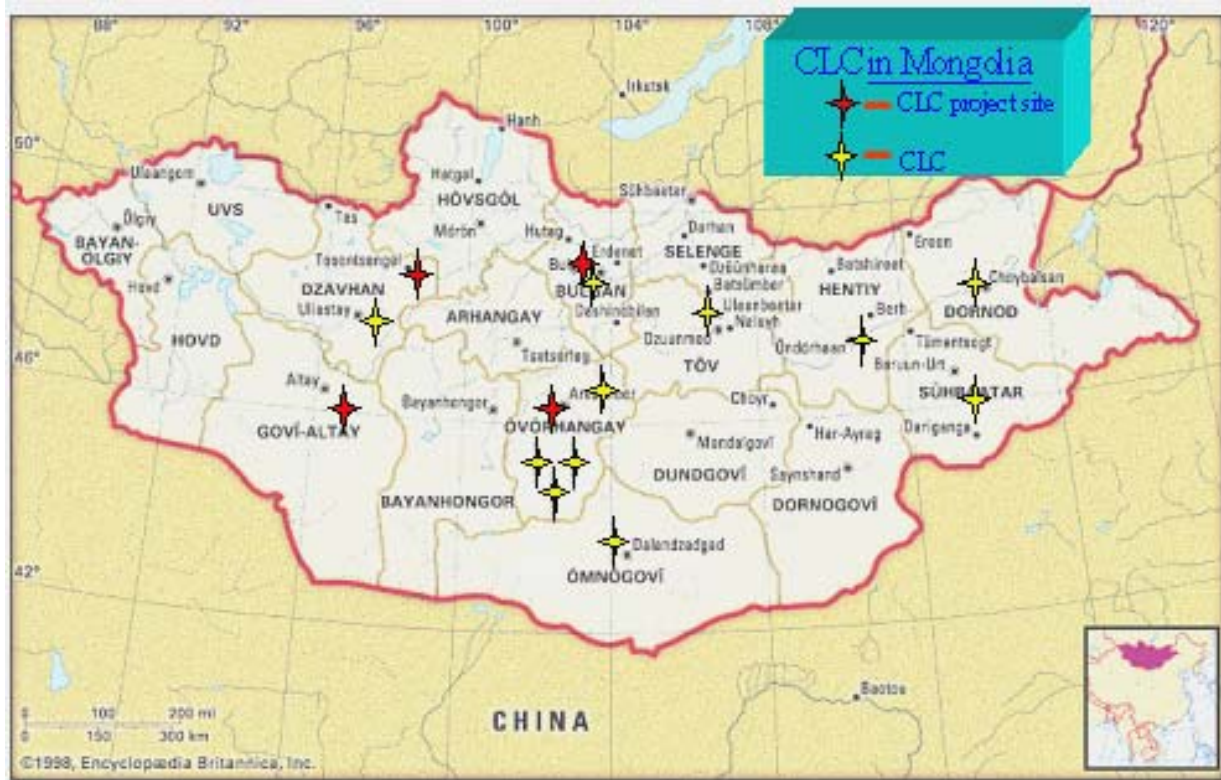


Figure 1. CLCs in Mongolia

According to the regional project outline, the primary objective of the project, as determined by UNESCO PROAP, was: “To empower individuals and promote community development through life-long education for all people in the community”. In more specific terms, this pronouncement calls for a project based on a progressive plan to develop community-based learning centres capable of providing flexible NFE opportunities to all members of the community regardless of age, gender or creed. Unlike former NFE programmes that relied on centralized planning, the CLC model strives to empower local communities to take control of their own education and determine for themselves the relevant programmes and activities.

Respecting the basic tenets of the regional CLC plan, ITRC incorporated information gathered from consultation and research carried out in cooperation with other Mongolian NFE NGOs, Natcom, and MOSTEC in its formulation of the Mongolian project objectives. The result was a set of objectives focused on development in four key areas, including:

| Objectives | Objective Details |
|---------------------------|--|
| NFE Training Programmes | The provision of flexible, community need based NFE in the general areas of life skills, health care, income generation, vocational training, educational equivalency courses, and gender equality |
| Information Dissemination | Establishing local point for dissemination of relevant local, national, and international news and information |
| Community Development | Conducting income generating activities through the use of inclusive community meetings, participatory teaching /learning, debates, cultural/entertainment events, and with the provision of local education facilities run for and by the community |
| Networking | The creation of mutually supportive partnerships between the CLCs with local schools, international organizations, NGOs and GOs. Networking in the context of the CLC project refers to inter-project co-operation between the individual project sites. |

2. Policy and Legislation for CLCs

There are two different understandings on CLCs. First one is, the name of CLC is used as if it has the same meaning as Non-Formal Education Centres in grassroots level or soum level. Second one is, a UNESCO supported CLC.

UNESCO supported CLCs do not have any government level policy and legislation documentation since this was a pilot project. However, concerning the Non-Formal Education Centres at the grassroots level, there are legal requirements. In the Minister's Committee of MOSTEC on 24th of April 2003 the following legal requirements were approved:

- The aimag, capital, soum, district Non Formal Learning Centre's (NFEC) statute,
- NFE methodologist's duty definition,
- NFE teacher's and facilitator's duty definition

In order to stabilize legal and financial environment of non-formal education, 750.000 Tg (about 700 USD) for each soum in local areas is allocated per year beginning in 2003 and at country level total of 274.798.700 Tg were allocated for non-Formal Education last year. On the other hand, the Mongolian government approved the National Programme on Non-Formal Education in 1997 and the National Programme on Distance Education in 2002. The approval and the implementation of the Programmes is one of the activities of the government to achieve the goals set by the World Education Forum, Dakar.

The mission of the National Programme on Distance Education is formulated as follows:

- To increase the efficiency, quality and sufficiency of Formal and Non-Formal Education, to provide the population with continuing education, to support the strengthening of their life skills and to form and develop a National Non-Formal Education structure.

The National Programme on Non-Formal Education formulated has the following mission:

- To establish and develop the educational structure that enable each citizen to continue his or her learning process in an appropriate form and time

Within its framework, there have been set 6 directions as shown below:

1. Improving the literacy education of the population
2. Improving the general educational level of population
3. Providing the re-training for population
4. Providing the vocational training, professional skill learning and promoting professional and educational level of employees
5. Supporting the creative initiatives
6. Helping the population in enhancing self-learning

Including NFE centers at grassroots level the nationwide network has been established in Mongolia. This net includes:

1. At a national level, the National Center for Non-Formal and Distance Education, under the authority of the Ministry of Education, Culture and Science and its officers responsible for 5 regions
2. At province and capital city level, the Non-Formal Education Commissions, headed by the governors and directors of the Education and Cultural Centres, the Non-Formal Education Divisions and methodologists who are responsible for the National Programme implementation and the non-formal education development
3. At the grassroots level, NFE teachers and facilitators are responsible for the Programme implementation.

3. Main activities of CLCs

In the “Project Proposal on Community Learning Centres in Mongolia” defined the project’s target groups as:

- Rural nomads
- School dropouts
- Unemployed rural and urban youths
- Rural women

Although these four groups continue to be the central focus of the project, the list was expanded, through input from project site communities, to include the elderly, traditional craftsmen and small business people. The CLC project was centered around the community, and as such aims to reach all community members on some level, either through NFE programming, community development activities (dances, cultural events, etc.) or access to pertinent news and information. Unfortunately for Mongolia and the other regional players that fall under the APPEAL CLC project, community-programming demands often outstrip the CLC’s capacity in terms of financial, human and material resources. CLCs in Mongolia and elsewhere have had to make

tough decisions concerning resource allocation within the community, most often in terms of those admitted to the NFE programming and training. The result has been the development of target groups and the adoption of a “triage” system that gives NFE programming priority to disadvantaged groups and those individuals most in need of CLC services.

Main activities of CLCs are the Life Skills, Income generation programmes, and courses for Youth and Women. All these activities are implemented through the trainings and short term courses. The followings are the some courses conducted in CLCs:

| | Target Groups | Courses |
|-------------------|--|---|
| Life Skills | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Rural nomads • Rural women • School dropouts • Unemployed people • Family units | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Food preparation and baking • Growing and preserving vegetables • Animal husbandry • General health care and sanitation, • Legal and civic education • Handicrafts (sewing, leather work, knitting) • Environmental education • Adult literacy |
| Income generation | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Craftsmen and women • Established and potential small business owners • Unemployed youths and adults | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Marketing • Business proposal writing • Acquisition and management of loans • Small-scale enterprise courses • Vocational training courses |
| Youth courses | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • School dropouts • School leavers | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • School equivalency courses (grade school through high school) • Vocational training courses • Pre-literacy/kindergarten and daycare programmes |
| Women’s courses | Coverage for all community women | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Gender equality training • Child care training • Child health courses |

4. Effective implementation of CLCs

Through the implementation of UNESCO supported CLC project the human, material and financial recourses have been created in the pilot areas.

After three years of project implementation, there is an established contingent of CLC facilitators who have been playing very active roles in CLC development. Although there was no occupational bias in the committee and staff selection process, most of the staff that participated in the questionnaire survey (43%) were teachers, while the rest comprised assorted professionals in the fields of law, accounting, engineering, social work and government administration. The gender composition of the CLCs’ personnel was well balanced with women constituting 51 per cent of all staff and facilitators surveyed. The CLCs supplemented their permanent ranks with lawyers, accountants, health care workers, craftsmen and business people who volunteered their services to conduct specific training in their given areas of expertise. Sixty-six per cent had received a college education.

The project has benefited greatly from the preexisting set of UNESCO *Learning for Life* (LFL) manuals, developed for use in the Mongolian Learning for Life programme and introduced throughout the country by the national government Non-Formal Education Centre (NFEC). In addition, other governmental and non-governmental organizations have also supplied training materials that have been used in the four project *aimags*.

Within the project implementation period following learning materials were developed and distributed:

| Title | Number of Publications |
|--|------------------------|
| • How to Establish and Manage a Community Learning Center in Our Village, 1999 | 1,000 |
| • A Manual for the Development of Community Learning Centers, 1999 | 1,000 |
| • Handbook for Trainers, Volume 1 | 2,500 |
| • Handbook for Trainers, Volume 2 | 2,500 |
| • Training Manual for Small-Scale Enterprise, 2001 | 700 |
| • Training Manual for Small-Scale Enterprise, 2001 | 500 |
| • A Catalogue of Marketing Ideas, 2001 | 2,500 |
| • Choosing a Business, 2001 | 2,500 |
| • Simple Marketing Skills, 2001 | 2,500 |
| • CLC Concepts, Implementation and Development, 2001 | 2,500 |
| • Development of Community Learning Centers | 350 |

A regular monitoring and evaluation schedule was designed by UNESCO PROAP and carried out by ITRC over the duration of the three-year implementation. In total, ITRC filed nine reports with UNESCO PROAP (two progress reports and one final report for each phase of the project). The report findings were based on regular visits to the project sites, giving ITRC representatives a chance to collect input on project development from interviews conducted with the CLC staff and participants. The reports also benefited from ITRC's phone communications with project coordinators throughout the three-year implementation period.

Another crucial part of the national project evaluation process was the organization of the two national project review meetings held in September 2000 and October 2001. These meetings were important as internal self-evaluation tools, allowing the CLCs to share their individual experiences and thoughts on project development, and thus add to the collective knowledge of the national project. The results of the 2000 review meeting are documented in the UNESCO PROAP Mongolian Mission Report filed by UNESCO literacy specialist Kiichi Oyasu.

As of April 30, 2002, the Mongolian CLC project had received a total budget of US\$79,323 under contractual agreement with UNESCO PROAP. Matching the three-phased project plan, financing was divided into three annual installments. UNESCO PROAP's allocation of funding to ITRC was conditionally granted on the basis of ITRC's fulfillment of the contract terms stipulated in each of the three phase contracts. As part of the contract terms ITRC was also required to file scheduled progress reports for each phase, with the inclusion of detailed financial statements.

While UNESCO's financial support created a solid foundation for the project, it should be noted that the success garnered by three out of four project sites (i.e., Uvurkhangai, Rashaant and Bulgan CLCs) would not have been possible without substantial contributions from ITRC and outside benefactors. ITRC alone gave a certain amount of financial assistance to the project over the course of its three-year implementation. The most important contributions though have come in the form of kind and financial support extended to the individual project sites by a host of national and international non-profit organizations. Government project support was limited to consultancy and resource support in the first project phase and then tapered off dramatically in the subsequent two phases. The exception to the rule is the Uvurkhangai project sites, where the *aimag* government fully subsidizes the project costs and demand for facilities.

The evaluation team reviewed the use of funds by ITRC in relation to the contract terms and found that all three installments were properly managed and that all expenditures made were justified. Furthermore, review of ITRC's financial statements revealed that the distribution of the UNESCO funds to the four project sites was fair and equitable.

Section 5. Strengths and Future challenges

The Mongolian government has elaborated and approved a Mid-Term National Action Plan for EFA in order to reach the goals issued from Dakar Framework for Action. As a result of successful implementation of CLC project in Mongolia, an efficient system has been established through CLCs to reach the objectives of the Mid-term National Action Plan for EFA as well as UN Literacy Decade Action Plan.

In order to reach the above mentioned plans 'goals and to increase the efficiency of education in rural areas, the activities of CLCs could be a good linkage, especially to organize the training courses of literacy education, life-skills and income generation for marginalized group such as illiterate adults, school drop-outs, housewives etc.

As the implementation of an international non-formal education project, the development of CLCs in Mongolia has demonstrated very impressive progress. In summarizing the evaluation results, we can see that there have been a number of significant results from CLC implementation. Through conducting various activities, and supplied with library books, newspapers television and video, the CLC is not only a literacy learning and technical training centre, but also a source of information and culture for the community. Community members are attracted to the learning centre and gradually cultivate a feeling of ownership.

Another manifestation of local participation is the substantial number of volunteers working actively at the CLC sites. The forms of volunteer support and the sectors of the community from which it came often varied. Some community members volunteered to help with the maintenance and upkeep of the CLC facilities, while others helped organize and set up community events, like dances and national holiday parties.

The *Sant Soum* CLC in *Uvurkhangai Aimag* is the most highly developed CLC and has become the model CLC for the whole project implementation in Mongolia. The level of community

participation is particularly high as is the number of community members who volunteer their time at the CLC.

One of the important impacts of the CLC project is the cooperation initiated between CLC sites and government offices especially in case of *Uvukhangai Aimag*. The governor was convinced by the idea of CLCs and provided a great support as well as five staff members. He and other officials considered the participation of community people in management as very important for services based on need and demand. Starting with a single CLC initiated by one NGO, the project has expanded to 17 districts out of 19, with strong government support (Figure 2).

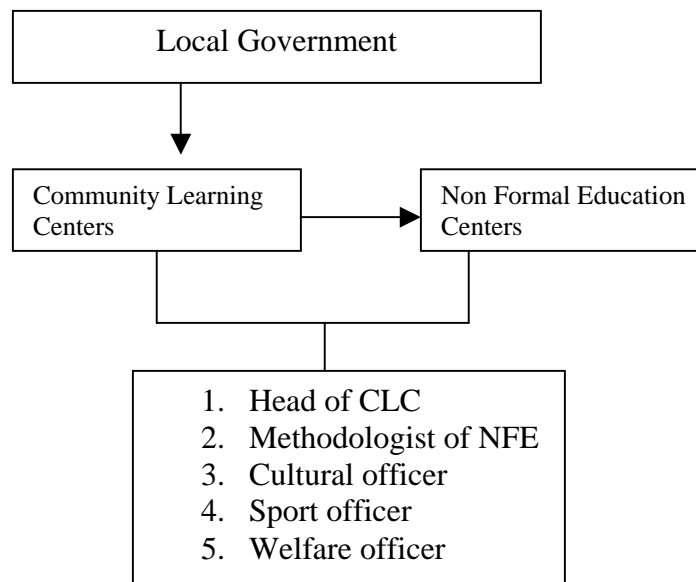


Figure 2. Organizational structure of CLC in Uvukhangai Aimag.

Unfortunately, the good impact of the project can not be seen in all CLC implementation sites. For example CLC project implementation in Gobi-Altai province was not satisfactory due to the lack of government concern or action for CLC implementation, as well as because of the lack of skilled leadership and also difficulties with communication and transportation.

The government intervention, particularly in the form of support from education administrative sectors, plays a very important role in the development of education activities. The attitude of local governments is a crucial factor that will lead to the success of CLCs development.

One of the weaknesses of CLCs is the lack of collaboration with the local government and educational organizations at the management level. There's also some activity duplications with NFEC. So these are the factors which challenges, in some way, to reach the CLCs objectives and could make insufficient the implementation of EFA and UNLD Action plans.

To overcome the mentioned challenges we consider that the government of Mongolia should be involved as much as possible to link with NFECs activities in order to avoid the duplications and to support CLCs activities, especially to prepare and sustain the efficient CLC staff, to provide with necessary learning materials etc. In order to link the CLCs activities with the strategies and goals of EFA and UNLD Action plans, we should seek assistance from educational organizations at the local level and encourage this kind collaboration.

In order to strengthen CLCs in grassroots level we're planning to organize a workshop for the NFE facilitators nationwide for the 7 regions. The expected outcome of the workshop is the capacity building of NFECs. Thus, we can contribute to the implementation of EFA National strategy and UNLD action plan.

The CLC project in Mongolia has been successfully implemented as a pilot project. In this base we would suggest UNESCO, other UN agencies to support the second phase of the project, which should be implemented nationwide this time, not as a pilot project. If this idea is supported, the government participation is necessary as a major actor and it would be very useful for a country such as Mongolia with nomad life-styled and sparsely located population.

Annexes

1. List of country report team members:

Ms. Gansukh Sukhbaatar-Research officer of National Centre NFDE
Mr. Ochirhyuag Ganhyaug –Officer, Nat Com for UNESCO
Mr. Boldbaatar.Bat-Amgalan – member of the ITRC Board Director
Ms. Batchuluun Yembuu-Director, Nat Centre NFDE
Ms. Hulan-Officer, Nat Com UNESCO

2. List of reference materials

- National Programme on NFE Development, UB., 1997
- John Logsdon, Qi Zhiyong. Final Evaluation Report on Community Learning Centres in Mongolia, UB., 2002
- Report of the first phase of the National Programme on NFE Development, UB., 2000
- Mid -Term Action plan for EFA, UB., 2001
- Human Development Report, UB., 2004