

# Country Report on Community Learning Centres (CLCs): National Qualifications Frameworks for Lifelong Learning and Skills Development

*Prepared by:  
National Centre for Lifelong Education*

## 1. Information on Community Learning Centres

The first legislation on NFE was an Article incorporated into the “Education Law” in 1991 confirming that the citizens of Mongolia could obtain education in formal and non-formal settings. This was the basis for developing a non-formal education system in Mongolia. A revised “Education Law” adopted in 1995 stated that the Mongolian education system was composed of formal and non-formal education, reinforcing the development of the NFE system within the country.

The first major policy document that provided direction for NFE was the “National Program on NFE Development”, adopted by the Government of Mongolia (GoM) in 1997. This established the legal environment for NFE Enlightenment Centres<sup>1</sup> as a means to serve the educational needs of the people through delivering non-formal training. According to the program, the main goal of local NFE Enlightenment Centres was to improve the quality of life through organizing literacy training for adults, EP training for out-of-school and school drop-out children and youth, lifeskills training oriented towards increasing the household income, training to upgrade educational level, and vocational training.

The “Education Law” of 2002 specified that NFE Enlightenment Centres are responsible for delivering non-formal training at aimag, UB city, soum and district level and for assisting independent learners<sup>2</sup>. Centres could operate either as an independent centre or an affiliate to other educational organizations. This led to a significant expansion of the number of NFE Enlightenment Centres.

When the “National Program on NFE Development” was approved in 1997, 56 centers were established. Between 1998 and 2002 this number grew to 326<sup>3</sup>. In order to ensure more consistency in structure and activities, the “Model Regulation for NFE Enlightenment Centres” was approved by the 169th order of Minister of Education, Culture and Science in 2003. These regulations defined NFE Enlightenment Centres as educational organizations whose goal is to provide non-formal educational services to local communities, to deliver training, to advocate, to distribute information, and to actively participate in community local development activities. It also specified that Centre services should be “open, continuous and sufficient”<sup>4</sup>.

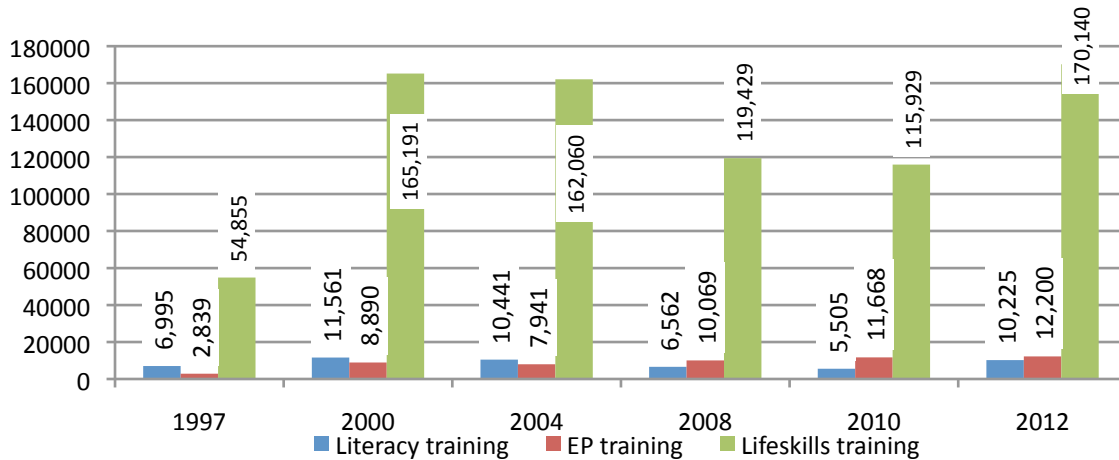
In 2010<sup>5</sup>, this regulation was revised by the 556th order of the Minister of Education, Culture and Science enabling NFE Enlightenment Centres to be established with the status of an affiliate to secondary schools in soums with population of less than 6,000 residents, to be established as an independent center affiliated to the Secretariat of the Soum Governor in towns with a larger population, and to be established independently or as an affiliate to the Secretariat of the district governor in Ulaanbaatar.

---

<sup>1</sup> The term “ NFE Enlightenment Centre” will be used throughout the report to represent CLCs in Mongolia  
<sup>2</sup> Mongolian parliament. ( 2002) Mongolian law: Education law, 17.2, UB  
<sup>3</sup> NCNFDE (2005), Implementation report of national program on NFE development(1997-2004), pg 8, UB  
<sup>4</sup> MECS (2003) Minister’s 169th decree on Model regulation of NFE Enlightenment Center, UB  
<sup>5</sup> MECS (2010) Minister’s 556th decree on Model regulation of NFE’s Enlightenment Center, UB

NFE Enlightenment Centre training services are delivered in response to local community needs, and fall into three main areas: literacy; elementary, lower and upper secondary EP; and life skills training. A fourth responsibility for centres is to mobilize local people in development activities for their communities. Finally, these centres are expected to serve all residents of a community, which in practice will mean a main population and a number of target groups.

Chart 1: Number of learners enrolled in NFE training



Source: NFE data base (2012)

In principle every resident is served by the local NFE Enlightenment Centre. In practice the population served by each centre falls into either the main or special target groups, defined by the type of services received.

The main target group consists of those receiving literacy and EP training. This includes school drop-outs, out-of-school children, adolescents, illiterate and semi-literate adults. The special target group are learners participating in other types of training, and includes those who wish to increase their household income with additional skills, unemployed people, women working at home, parents and guardians of young children, disabled citizens, returned emigrants and other community members<sup>6</sup>.

NFE Enlightenment Centres were first established in Mongolia in 1997 as part of the “National program on NFE development”. NFE Enlightenment Centres were intended to provide educational and training services for remote communities which lacked access to other educational services, and initially concentrated on providing literacy training for adults and educational re-training for out-of-school children.

Between 1997 and 2001, NFE Enlightenment Centres were established in all soums<sup>7</sup> of the country directly under each local governor, with the human and material resources provided by the “Learning for Life” project supported by UNESCO. The project played a key role in introducing the concept of CLCs to the country, but ensuring sustainability after the completion of the project was an issue. When the project was completed in 2001, more than 50 NFE Enlightenment Centres closed and<sup>8</sup> the contracts of more than 100 NFE facilitators were discontinued due to the cut in financial investment. Also, soum administrative

<sup>6</sup> NCNFDE and UNESCO (2009) Non-formal education sector analysis pg 52, UB.

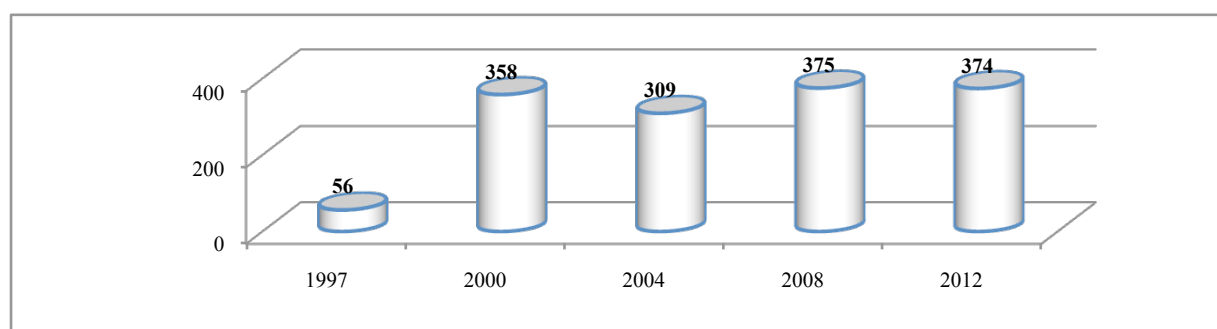
<sup>7</sup> Soum is an administrative unit or sub-district within aimag or province

<sup>8</sup> NCNFDE (2005)Implementation report of national program on NFE development (1997-2004), pg 9, UB

authorities changed with each election, making it impossible for NFE Enlightenment Centres to operate directly under the local soum governor. Starting in 2003, NFE Enlightenment Centres have mainly operated under local secondary schools and this arrangement has contributed to improved sustainability of the Centres.

At the beginning of the “National program on NFE development” in 1997, there were 56 active NFE Enlightenment Centres, which grew to 358 in 2000. With the end of the investment from the “Learning for Life” project in 2001 the number decreased to 309. Since 2008, the number of active NFE Enlightenment Centres has increased and as of 2012, there are 374 Enlightenment Centres in operation.

Chart 2. Total number of NFE Enlightenment Centres



Sources: NCFDE and UNESCO (2009); NFE data base (2012)

These NFE Enlightenment Centres are geographically distributed so that one Centre exists in each soum of the aimags<sup>9</sup> and two or more Centres in cities and aimag Centres with higher populations, as shown in Table 1.

Table 1: Geographical distribution and categories of NFE Enlightenment Centres

No	Provinces/city	NFE Enlightenment Center (all Government)			Total
		Under secondary school	Under other organizations	Independent	
1	Arkhangai	19			19
2	Bayan-Ulgii	15			15
3	Bayankhongor	25			25
4	Bulgan	16	1		17
5	Gobi-Altai	17	2		19
6	Gobisumber	4			4
7	Darkhan-Uul	15			15
8	Dornogobi	15			15
9	Dornod	18			18
10	Dundgobi	13			13
11	Zavkhan	23	1		24
12	Orkhon	1		1	2
13	Uvurkhangai	14	5		19
14	Umnugobi	14	2		16

<sup>9</sup>

Aimag is an administrative unit equivalent to province

15	Sukhbaatar	13			13
16	Selenge	14	6		20
17	Tuv	27			27
18	Uvs	18	2		20
19	Khovd	15	2		17
20	Khuvsgul	24			24
21	Khentii	24			24
22	Ulaanbaatar			8	8
	<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>344</b>	<b>21</b>	<b>9</b>	<b>374</b>

Source: NFE data base (2012)

## 2. National Qualifications Frameworks

The first Master Plan to Develop Education Sector in Mongolia was developed in 1993 by the Mongolian government. While the 1993 Master Plan determined the goal, objectives, priority areas, structure and role and responsibilities of NFE, the 2006 clarified the activity directions and focus areas as access, quality and management. The *“Master Plan to Develop Education of Mongolia in 2006-2015”* also included “Non-formal and Adult Education” as an independent chapter with same importance as with other four fields of “pre-school, primary & secondary”, “vocational” and “higher education” The following three main goals related to NFE were presented in the mid-term Action Plan, 2006-2010 of the Master Plan to Develop Education of Mongolia.

1. Provide continuous educational services in conformity with needs of the learners and improve access of the NFE and adult learning
2. Improve the learning environment and quality of education and strengthen the human resource
3. Improve policy and strategy of NFE and establish information and financing system

In order to implement the above goals it sets the following objectives:

- To achieve literacy rate to 97.7-99.0 percent by 2008
- To enroll 40 percent of dropouts from formal school in non-formal and multigrade teaching programmes and provide compensatory education
- To increase the financing of the NFDE and soum and district NFE Enlightenment centres by 8.0 percent each year
- To allocate budget for NFE teacher training and finance it
- Establish Information and monitoring system for NFE

The quality, outcomes and level of customer satisfaction for NFE Enlightenment Centre services helps determine the potential for future expansion. Outcomes can be divided into *direct* and *indirect* outcomes. Direct outcomes are measured by the number of learners enrolled in each type of training, the knowledge and skills gained and whether the learners were satisfied with the training. Indirect outcomes can be assessed on the basis of changes individuals experience after participating in the training, such as improved demean or, behaviour, communication skills, socialization, impact on others, and increases in household income.

The quality and outcomes of EP training is measured in terms of meeting educational standards. Specifically, learners should be able to transfer to the corresponding grade at a formal system school or continue in EP to complete primary and secondary education certification. Of all the learners enrolled in EP from 2006/07 to 2008/09, 15.4 per cent transferred to the corresponding grades of secondary schools<sup>10</sup>.

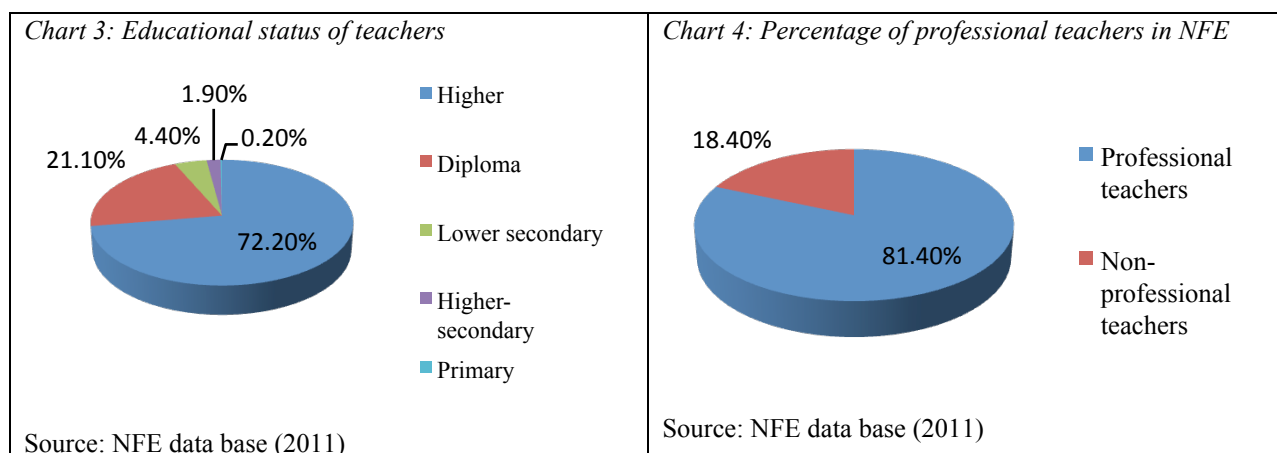
<sup>10</sup> NCNFDE (2010) Analysis on the provision of equivalency program of basic education, pg. 46, UB

This indicates that the EP training provided by NFE Enlightenment Centres play an important role in ensuring every Mongolian citizen's right to education.

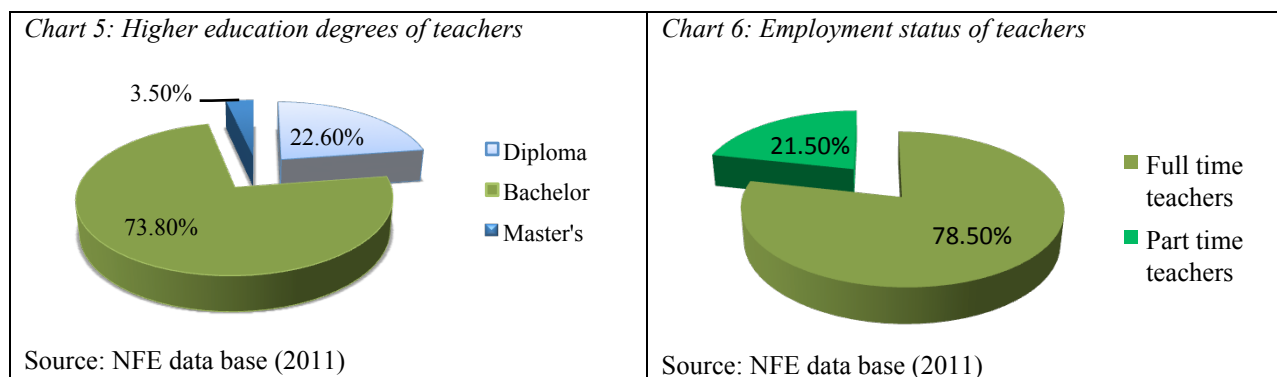
There is no comparable common measure for the quality and outcome of life skills training, which is mostly delivered on a short term basis. The quality and outcomes of life skills training are usually measured by the number of learners, and their assessment of their satisfaction and knowledge acquisition.

For the human resources, as of 2012 there are 492 teachers working at NFE Enlightenment Centres but only 364 of them are recorded in the non-formal education database. The human resource information presented here is based on the information in the database.

Most teachers are female: 282(77.4per cent), while only82 (22.6percent) are male. Most teachers have completed higher education with only 6.5% having completed lower secondary or lower levels. Of the 340 teachers who had completed either higher education or a diploma, 277 (81.4 per cent) had majored in teaching and the remaining63 per cent had completed other majors such as translation, law, finance, educational social work, psychology, engineering or journalism.



Of the 340 teachers completing higher education or diploma, 251 (73.8per cent)have a bachelor's degree, 77 have a diploma and 12 have a master's degree.



Two hundred and eighty-six (78.5 per cent) of all 364 teachers work full time at NFE Enlightenment Centres and 78 teachers work there in addition to their main jobs. Of the teachers with other jobs, the majority are teachers (primary and speciality courses) and other professions associated with education (librarian, school manager etc.) while 18 (23 per cent) work in other professions.

### 3. Recognizing and Validating Lifelong Learning through NQFs

“National Programme on Lower Secondary Education for All” (1995-2005) promoted the NFE as an alternative to formal education for obtaining lower secondary education, however, the second document, entitled “National Programme on NFE Development” (1997-2004) was the main policy document by the Government. Objective of the programme was to improve the literacy education of population. The program states as its mission the establishment and development an educational structure that enables each citizen to continue the learning process throughout their lives. According to the program, following 6 main directions were set up to promote the NFE: 1) to provide literacy education, 2) to provide retraining, 3) to improve general knowledge in different areas like legal, health, ecology education etc., 4) to provide vocational education, 5) to assist people to enhance the creative activities and life skills, 6) to help people to learn independently.

- Several policy documents are developed to support NFE activities and its structure as “National Programme on Distance Education” (2002-2012), “National Programme on Literacy Education” (2004-2012) which support open and flexible learning as well as implementation of the Goals of UN Literacy Decade
- There are about 20 national programmes that indirectly promote the coverage of NFE as “National Programme on English Language” (2002-2005), “Ecology Education for All” (1998-2005) etc.
- Government Action Plans to include NFE are also considered as legal documents to support its activities. Some of the articles included in the Plans are: Promoting in-service training, and evaluation and monitoring job-duties of NFE teachers by 2014 (Government Action Plan 2012-2016);
- Legal documents at the Ministry of Education, Culture and Science are as below: “Job description of NFE teacher/facilitator” (2003 and 2010), “Statute of NFE Enlightenment centre” (2003 and 2010); and “Regulation to organize Equivalency programme training on primary, lower secondary and upper secondary education” (2007).
- Also the programmes as “National Programme on Reproductive Health” (2002-2006), and “National Programme on Child Care and Development” (2002-2010) can be cited as the legal documents that contribute to the promotion of NFE.

Another important goal for the “National Program on NFE Development” was to re-educate the children, adolescents and adults who had never enrolled in school or had dropped out of school in the 1990s. This target group was defined by the “Population and Housing Census” of 2000 as “literate but uneducated” and accounted for 3.2 per cent of the total adult population. In addition to the adult population, in 1999 there were 40,500 out-of-school children aged from 8 to 15. Of these, one third (13,300) had dropped out of school between the 1st and 4th grade.

To meet the needs of out-of-school youth and the adult uneducated population, NFE Enlightenment Centres began delivering primary and secondary education training in 1997. In 2001, the Minister of Education, Culture and Science approved the “Equivalency Program for Primary Education” (159th decree) and the “Equivalency Program for Secondary Education” (283rd decree). These policies established NFE Enlightenment Centres’ responsibility for providing equivalency programs for out-of-school youth and adults. From 2,839 enrolled in 1997, this stream has grown steadily and by 2012 there were twice as many learners in EP as in literacy programs, at 12,200 for that year, as shown in Chart 1. The policy basis for equivalency programs has continued to develop, with two decrees by the Minister of Education, Culture and Science in 2005: “Equivalency Training Program for Primary, Lower and Upper Secondary Education” (358th decree) and “Regulations of Equivalency Training Program for Primary,

Lower and Upper Secondary Education” (362th decree). These in turn formed the basis of articles 8.2<sup>11</sup> and 40.2<sup>12</sup> of the “Education Law” revision of 2006 which specified that variable expenditures for the learners of EP would be financed from the state budget, starting with the academic year 2007/08.

Improved budget support for EP training has supported growth in this area. Overall, this budget support has increased the amount of training to over 10,000 learners annually since 2007/08<sup>13</sup>. Between 1997 and 2012 close to 120,000 learners participated in EP.

Equivalency program learners may subsequently transfer to formal school, although the majority remain in the EP stream. Of a total of 31,566 EP learners enrolled from 2006/07 to 2008/09, 84.5 per cent continued to enroll in EP. The majority of those transferring to the formal system, 2,639 (8.3 per cent of all learners) went into primary grades; 1,366 (5.9 per cent) into lower secondary level grades, and 380 (1.2 per cent) into upper secondary level<sup>14</sup>.

#### 4. Skills Development

Current contents of trainings and activities of NFE Enlightenment Centre, organized in reconciliation with local community needs, can be divided into 1) literacy, 2) elementary, lower and upper secondary EP and 3) life skills training.

*Literacy training:* One of the main orientations of “National programme on NFE development” approved in 1997 was to improve the literacy education level of the population through NFE Enlightenment Centres whose responsibilities was to organize non-formal trainings among local communities. During the socio-economic transition period, early 1990’s, in our country the main livelihood of our population at the time was cattle husbandry. With its privatization, it was very common for children, especially the males, not to enter schools in order to help their household livelihood by herding their private cattles. By 1999, there were total of 40,5 thousand out-of-school children aged from 8 to 15 years of age and 8.7 thousand or 21.5 percent of them had never entered primary level schools<sup>15</sup>. Also, according to the census of 2010, 1.7 percent or 32402 of adults (over 15 years of age) were illiterate<sup>16</sup> and therefore it was necessary to organize these literacy training programmes.

NFE Enlightenment Centres have been organizing trainings based on needs of literacy education at 2 levels, primary and re-training level. Training curriculum and its materials are also developed and based on these 2 categories. As for type and frequency of literacy training, school age children’s literacy training was organized at schools while adult literacy trainings were usually organized during summer for period of 14 to 20 days. Although, it is not enough time for learners to become literate, this training scheme suits their free time, work load and financial ability.

---

<sup>11</sup> “it is possible to acquire primary and secondary education through non-formal education’s equivalency program in order to receive or self learn the education of certain time periods and contents of this program and regulations for its training activities would be approved by a government member in charge of educational issues”

<sup>12</sup> “fixed expenditure for government property schools at all levels and gross budget for dormitories of formal secondary schools, vocational-industrial educational centers and part of children garden’s meal budget and normative expenditure for each students enrolled in formal and non-formal educational trainings of children’s garden and secondary education regardless of its property type should be allocated from the state budget”

<sup>13</sup> MECS statistical pamphlet 2008, 2009, 2010, UB

<sup>14</sup> NCNFDE (2010) Analysis on the provision of equivalency program of basic education, pg. 45- 46, UB

<sup>15</sup> NCNFDE (2005), Implementation report of national programme on NFE development, pg 17, UB

<sup>16</sup> Population and housing census 2011, UB



Equivalency Programme Training: One of the main goals for “National Programme on NFE development” was to re-educate the children, adolescents and adults who did not enroll in school at all or dropped out of school during 1990’s, the early stage of socio-economic transitions. Moreover, according to “Population and housing census” of 2000, 3.2 percent of all adult population was “literate but uneducated”, thus it has become necessary to organize activities to provide these adults with primary and secondary education. As of 1999, there were 40, 5 thousand out-of-school children aged from 8 to 15 and 13.3 thousand or 32.8 percent of them had dropped out of school between 1<sup>st</sup> to 4<sup>th</sup> grade.

Due to above mentioned needs, NFE Enlightenment Centres have started to organize primary and secondary education’s re-training activities for out-of-school and school-drop-out children and adolescents.

Life-skills training: Life skills training is one of the trainings which were offered from NFE Enlightenment Centres since its establishment. Life skills trainings include trainings and activities of contents and approach other than that of literacy and EP trainings, such as trainings aimed to increase general educational level of the population, livelihood supporting trainings oriented towards increasing household income and trainings to help develop individuals’ socio-psychological skills. In details, the content of this trainings are divided into groups; *promotion of general educational level* in the field of economy, ecology, jurisdiction and health, *household income increasing* in field of bakery, hairdressing, beauty, carpentry, felt ware, and *promoting and developing individual skills* in field of self-confidence, time and schedule planning, decision making etc. Life skills trainings have various different contents and types according to needs, interests, features and teacher availability of local communities and is usually organized in short-term setting.

The Mongolian Government and UN joint project “Comprehensive Community Services to Improve Human Security for the Rural Disadvantaged Populations in Mongolia” (2009–2012) improving access to and quality of non-formal education in rural areas is one of the goals of this three year project, coordinated by UNESCO with the Government of Mongolia, implemented together with three other participating UN agencies (UNICEF, WHO and UNDP) and local partners<sup>17</sup>. In twenty soums in remote areas of the five project aimags (Bayan-Ulgii, Dornod, Uvs, Khovd, and Khuvsgul) where a large percentage of ethnic/linguistic minorities and herders reside, twenty NFE Enlightenment Centres were established or rehabilitated. The project introduced new and strengthened approaches to literacy and life-skills training and management of these services, thus significantly enhancing the centres’ capacity. The project addressed a number of issues discussed here, and there is much that other NFE Enlightenment Centres can learn from this rich experience. Some of the key elements are discussed below.

**Synergies with other sectors:** One of the strengths of the activities undertaken by the NFE Enlightenment Centres under the project stems from their close collaboration and synergies with other sectors. The project employed a multi-sectoral approach, covering four sectors, education, communication, health and local business development. The synergies created between these different sectors helped widen the scope and improve the quality and relevance of the NFE Enlightenment Centre offerings. For example, under the component related to communication, community-run radios were established and housed in the same buildings as the NFE Enlightenment Centres. These community radios helped disseminate information on training and other activities held at the centres. The soums’ hospitals in the project used the centres to sensitize community people on health related issues and the centres and

---

<sup>17</sup> The project focused on four main components. The one related to education addressed learning needs of disadvantaged rural populations through the NFE Enlightenment Centres, supported jointly by UNESCO and UNICEF. The other three components related to communication, health and small business development, supported by UNESCO, WHO and UNDP, respectively. The national counterpart for the education component was the Mongolian Ministry of Education, Culture and Science, with the NCFDE as the implementing partner.



the National Chamber of Commerce collaborated to improve small business training and enhance business opportunities.

**Local government's commitment and support:** Another positive feature for NFE Enlightenment Centres was the active involvement of the local government in particular the soum governor's office and the mechanisms set up to support and monitor the activities of the centres. Under the project, the NFE Enlightenment Centre no longer operated in isolation but was recognized for its value by the community leaders and various stakeholders who supported their activities. It became evident that NFE Enlightenment Centres were particularly successful where the local governments recognized the value of non-formal education for community development and were actively involved in promotion of the centres' activities.

**Enhancing the capacity of NFE teachers:** In the target soums, all in remote areas, there was usually only one NFE teacher in each centre. Centres were still expected to provide a wide range of services, Equivalency Programs, literacy and life skills training. The project emphasized development of the NFE teachers through training and technical backstopping by the NCNFDE and the aimag education departments. The NFE teachers were trained and equipped with materials and tools to deliver new life skills training that better responded to community needs. Teachers were also given training to help them to improve their management of the centres. These capacity development activities, together with enhanced recognition of the role of NFE teachers by the local government and the community, have contributed significantly to improving the confidence and professionalism of the teachers. The project fostered the emergence of new initiatives and model teachers. For example, some NFE teachers took the initiative during the summer time to travel out to those living in remote areas and to conduct literacy and life skills training for herders and their drop-out children.

**Responding to adult learners needs:** To facilitate access for adult learners, NFE Enlightenment Centres were set up in new premises provided by the soum governments outside schools, or where centres continued in schools, separate entrances were created. NFE teachers responded to the diverse learning needs of adults by identifying and mobilizing other members of the local community to conduct training in specific skills, acting as learning coordinators as well as teachers.

Overall, the project raised renewed interest in the NFE Enlightenment Centres among adult learners and succeeded in mobilizing widespread community engagement. They became recognized as "hubs for socializing, sharing experiences and ideas" and for being able to "support the development of self-esteem, self-confidence and hope for the future among the rural disadvantaged populations" as the external evaluator of the project noted in the evaluation report<sup>18</sup>.

---

<sup>18</sup> Baltzersen, J. and Bumkhorol, T. (2012)