

Comprehensive literacy and life-skills and livelihood-skills training through non-formal and distance learning for the ethnic/linguistic minorities in Mongolia



UN Trust Fund for Human Security



Fast Facts

Country: Mongolia

Duration: June 2009 to May 2012

Implementing UN Agencies: UNESCO; UNICEF; UNDP; WHO

Other Implementing Partners: National Ministries; Mongolian National Chamber of Commerce and Industry; National Centre for Non-formal and Distance Learning

Budget: \$3,072,804

Key Words: Rural communities; poverty reduction; access to education; access to health care; support to entrepreneurship; minorities

BACKGROUND

Mongolia's political transition and integration into the global economy opened the way for economic growth and rapid social change during the 1990s. However, as a vast landlocked country with large segments of its population scattered across isolated rural areas, the dividends of transition were slow to reach vulnerable rural communities. The interrelated threats of persistent poverty and recurring droughts, coupled with the lack of access to basic services such as health and education, continued to undermine the well-being of isolated communities. At the same time, being

ethnic and linguistic minorities with nomadic lifestyles, rural communities were unable to access necessary economic and financial opportunities. Despite successive efforts by the Government to provide essential services in rural areas, a context-specific and comprehensive strategy that could simultaneously address the geographic isolation and the specific needs of rural and ethnic minorities was needed in order to ensure their inclusion in the country's social, political and economic transition.

PROGRAMME OVERVIEW

GOALS AND OBJECTIVES

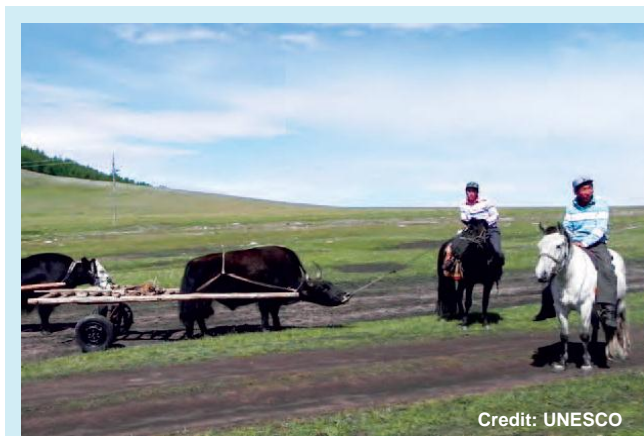
To address the interconnected threats to human security faced by vulnerable rural communities in their daily lives, the project aimed to promote sustainable political, social and economic development while fostering dialogue between different ethnic and linguistic groups. To this end, the project worked towards the following objectives: (i) enhance access to information with special attention given to ethnic and

linguistic minorities; (ii) improve access to and quality of both formal and non-formal education; (iii) improve access to basic health care services; (iv) increase opportunities for income generation and improved livelihoods; and (v) formulate comprehensive policy recommendations and provide capacity building for sustainable rural development.

BENEFICIARIES

The project reached approximately 72,000 people in 20 districts across the five regions of Bayan-Ulgii, Khuvsgul, Khovd, Uvs and Dornod. The districts were

selected based on the predominance of ethnic minority groups, poverty levels, illiteracy and school dropout rates.



NOTABLE ACHIEVEMENTS

(i) To deliver essential public information to isolated rural areas, a second television station by the 'Mongolian National Broadcaster' as well as community radio stations and training for journalists were established. As the only public station to specifically target ethnic and linguistic minorities in Mongolia, the station provided up-to-date information on healthy lifestyles, food safety, water hygiene and sanitation, all of which were previously unavailable to these communities. In addition, the station provided isolated ethnic and linguistic minorities with access to distance education programs on Mongolian language and other life skills.

(ii) A new training curriculum and materials on literacy and life skills were developed for out-of-school youth and adults from ethnic and linguistic minority groups. These were widely used in 20 Community Learning Centres that were newly established or rehabilitated under the project. Participants in the trainings noted that their self-

confidence had improved and that they felt empowered to apply their skills and engage in new opportunities in order to improve their livelihoods. Moreover, these were the first non-formal training curriculum and materials to be endorsed by the Ministry of Education, Culture and Science, and were utilized in other regions of Mongolia.

(iii) Based on the findings of the baseline surveys, the needs and the available capacities of the targeted communities were identified and trainings were provided on business development and vocational skills, utilizing locally available resources. These training sessions and advisory services empowered local business groups and entrepreneurs, increased their solidarity and highlighted the importance of collective decision-making and partnerships. As such, 21 co-operatives involving 300 people were established to deliver new services and products to the local communities.

LESSONS LEARNED

Under the umbrella of human security, four United Nations agencies along with national and local Governments and civil society organizations combined their expertise and resources in order to devise a comprehensive strategy that could simultaneously address the specific geographic and social needs of Mongolia's isolated rural communities. Implementing multi-agency projects in remote rural areas can often be challenging. However, in Mongolia, the United Nations Country Team demonstrated that integrated joint programmes can be effective, even in the most remote regions, and developed a comprehensive approach to rural development by

simultaneously addressing access to information, education, health care and income generation needs of these communities. At the same time, through consultations with local communities, the project was able to adapt to the specificities of these isolated rural areas and to tailor the projects activities to the ethnic and linguistic differences of the region, as well as the varying geographic constraints. Accordingly, the involvement of community members from the very beginning not only contributed to their empowerment but also enhanced local ownership, impact and sustainability of the project.