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Save the Children

**IMPROVING PRIMARY EDUCATION OUTCOMES FOR THE MOST
VULNERABLE CHILDREN IN RURAL MONGOLIA (2012-2016)**

BASELINE SUMMARY REPORT

Amitabh Dabla, PhD

**SAVE THE CHILDREN JAPAN, MONGOLIA PROGRAM
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LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

SCJ-M	Save the Children Japan in Mongolia
GoM	Government of Mongolia
JSDF	Japan Social Development Fund
GDP	Gross domestic product
MDGs	Millennium Development Goals
ECE	Early childhood education
MECS	Ministry of Education, Culture and Science
NFE	Non-formal education
ICT	Information and communication technology
M&E	Monitoring & Evaluation
FGD	Focus group discussion
ADB	Asian Development Bank
JICA	Japan International Cooperation Agency
MoU	Memorandum of understanding
CEC	Community education council
ECD	Education and Culture Department

INTRODUCTION

The Mongolian education system was extended to 12 years in 2008, which now aligns Mongolia's education system with international standards. Therefore, since the 2008-2009 school year, early childhood education (ECE) is for 2-5 year old children followed by 12 years of primary and secondary education. This structural reform has led all schools in Mongolia to lower the primary school entry age to 6 years of age (from the previous age of 8 years old).

These reforms have also brought about a new set of concerns and challenges for nomadic families in rural Mongolia, who make up nearly 30% of the country's total population. Dormitories attached to soum center schools have consistently served as the only way of providing nomadic children with access to education; yet now when it comes to meeting the educational needs of 6-8 year old children, thousands of nomadic herder families have to choose either to

- Send their child to the school dormitory at the age of 6, and be completely or partially separated from their child for 9 months a year
- Have the father herd animals while the wife migrates to the soum center with their 6-8 year old child, so that the child can attend school without staying a dormitory
- Send their child to live with relatives at the soum center to attend school
- Delay their child's school entry until the child is 7-8 or older.

When nomadic herder children leave home at the age of six, this separation from their family negatively affects their psycho-emotional wellbeing. Furthermore, most of these children enroll in primary school without having attended formal ECE, thus increasing chance of them having undetected learning difficulties and poor school performance. According to the Ministry of Education and Science (MES), in 2011, more than 38% of all ECE-aged children in Mongolia (most of who reside in rural areas) entered into primary school without having formal ECE. MES statistics also indicate that 80.5% of all dropout cases of children (aged 6-14) occur in rural areas and that dropout and repetition rates are disproportionately high for primary grade children. Compounding this situation is the fact that the existing non-formal education (NFE) program targets children and individuals between 10-49 years of age, and is not set up to meet the educational needs of lower-primary age children.

The Improving Primary Education Outcomes for the Most Vulnerable Children in Rural Mongolia project thus aims to specifically target the most vulnerable nomadic children aged 5-10, who face very specific challenges in adjusting to school and soum life an adjustment that plays a crucial role in the children's overall development. Ultimately, the project complements and contributes to the efforts of the Mongolian government, the World Bank, the UN and other development partners' initiatives and goals to improve disadvantaged rural children's access to quality education.

INTRODUCTION OF THE PROJECT

Save the Children Japan in Mongolia (SCJ-M) has received a \$2.5 million grant from the World Bank's Japan Social Development Fund (JSDF) to implement the Improving Primary Education Outcomes for the Most Vulnerable Children in Rural Mongolia project (June 2012 to 2016). The project, which will be implemented in 30 rural soums (districts) in four aimags (provinces) across the country, consists of three interlinked components.

- Strengthening school preparation programs for new school entrants (5-6 years of age)
- Introducing extracurricular after-school programs in schools for vulnerable children (6-10 years of age) living away from home
- Pilot compensatory education programs for lower primary out of school children (6-9 years of age)

METHODOLOGY

The baseline survey conducted for the project had the following goals,

- To provide a current overview of the pre-operational conditions in the 30 target soums where the project will be implemented
- To gather data on the current situation of project's outcome indicators
- To gather data on the current situation of the project's output indicators, which will emanate from the project's three components
- To discuss potential issues concerning the project's implementation & to provide practical suggestions and recommendations
- To train and build capacity of the SCJ-M field staff in conducting the baseline and the M&E of the project

- To enable the baseline survey results to be compared with the conditions of the project outcome and output indicators at the mid-point and the end of the project

The consultant visited Mongolia from February 16 to March 14, 2013 and led the SCJ-M project team and the field office teams in finalizing the baseline methodology, pilot testing the baseline instruments and conducting the baseline survey in six soums. After training each of the three field office teams, the field teams then went on to conduct the baseline survey in the remaining 24 soums of the project.

DATA COLLECTION METHODS

The following data-collection methods were employed for the baseline

Document review

The consultant reviewed all pertinent project and GoM documents.

Government & School Data

Government and school data on the following topics was collected and compiled for the 30 target soums

- Demographic
- Primary school students numbers and living arrangements (grades 1-5)
- Primary school students having formal, alternative or no ECE (grades 1-5)
- Dropout and risk of dropout numbers (ages 6-10)
- Re-enrollment numbers (ages 6-10)
- Non-enrollment numbers (ages 6-10)
- Primary school registration lists for grades 1-4

Pertinent education data was also obtained from the four aimag Education and Culture Departments overseeing the 30 project soums. SCJ-M collected all this data during the course of the baseline.

Meetings with Key Officials

The consultant held meetings in Ulaanbaatar with the following officials,

- The SCJ-M chief of party and the project team

- The Task Team Leader (Human Development Operations Officer), World Bank Mongolia
- Head of Division, Primary and Pre-School Education, MES
- Child Development Specialist, Primary and Pre-School Education, MES
- Non Formal Education Specialist, National Center for Lifelong Learning

Interviews

Face to face interviews were conducted with the following in all the 30 project soums.

- Soum governors, deputy governor, pertinent soum government officials
- In total 61 government officials were interviewed including 26 soums governors and 6 deputy soum governors
- School director, primary education manager
- In total 25 school directors and 24 primary education managers were interviewed
- For the seven soums that had a second school in a distant bagh, phone interviews were conducted with their school director, primary school manager.

Focus Group Discussion (FGD)

Three sets of FGDs were conducted with the following groups of people in the 30 project soums

- Primary, kindergarten and

dormitory teachers; school social workers and NFE specialists (in total 403 people participated in these FGDs)

- Community members including bagh governors, doctors, nurses, soum librarians, retirees and general community members etc (in total 331 people participated in these FGDs)
- Parents and relatives of target children (in total 287 people participated in these FGDs)

Checklists

Three checklists were administered to determine the condition of the following in all of the 30 project soums

- School dormitory
- School library
- Soum library

The school dormitory and school library checklists were administered over the phone with the school director/primary school manager for the bagh school in the seven soums.

Surveys

Two psycho-emotional surveys were designed by the consultant & administered and tested in six soums.

- A psycho-emotional wellbeing survey for target children in grades 2, 3 & 4
- A teachers' survey including questions about the target children's psycho-emotional wellbeing (filled out by the teachers who teach the target students taking the student psycho-emotional surveys in grades 2, 3 & 4)

Three level of performance surveys (including questions in the subjects of Math and Mongolian) for out of school children (ages 6-9 for component III of the project) & for control students (in grades 1-3 in primary schools) were designed by the SCJ-M project team after getting inputs from the four aimag Education and Culture Departments. However, these surveys were not administered, as potential target out of school children could not be located during the baseline.

Pilot Testing

The consultant designed the interviews, FGDs and checklists instruments (with questions) and the project team translated them. The consultant and the project M&E specialist then pilot tested all these instrument in the first two soums the consultant visited (Burd soum in Uvurkhangai and Khairkhan soum in Arkhangai). Based on the pilot testing results, changes were made to the baseline instruments. The final translated interviews, FGDs, checklist instruments were provided to the project field teams to enable them to carry out their baseline work.

Data Entry Forms

The consultant prepared excel data entry forms for the following,

- Demographic and education data for the 30 project soums
- Interviews
- FGDs
- Checklists

All the data collected was inputted into the predesigned Excel file formats by the

field teams and sent to the project team to be translated before being provided to the consultant.

Training of SCJ-M Field Staff

The consultant visited six soums in three aimags (two soums in each aimag). In each aimag, one field team accompanied the consultant and the project M&E Specialist for the interviews and FGDs for the administering of the checklists and the psycho-emotional surveys. Through this method, the three field teams observed the consultant conducting the baseline. At the end of the visit to each aimag, the consultant and the M&E Specialist sat down with each field team and went over the methods and scope of the baseline. The topics covered in these meetings included

- Providing an overview of the baseline indicators, data collection methods etc
- How to administer the interviews, FGDs and checklists
- The demographic and education data needed
- How to conduct data entry
- How to administer the surveys in the future

A workshop was also held on March 13, 2013 in Ulaanbaatar to enable the three field teams to discuss the baseline work they had completed to clarify issues and further plan for the soums they still had to conduct the baseline in. Hence, through accompanying and observing the consultant while he carried out the baseline, holding meetings in the aimags and from the workshop in Ulaanbaatar the three field teams built their capacity to conduct the baseline in 24 project soums.

Time Requirements

Each soum visit required one whole day that included a visit to the soum school and to the soum government offices to conduct the interviews and FGDs & to administer the checklists. However, as the distances to reach the soums were vast, an overnight stay was required to complete the baseline in each soum. Further, each interview took 45 minutes to one hour and each FGD took between 50-70 minutes.

Data Analysis

Quantitative and qualitative data was collected as part of the baseline. The quantitative data included demographic and education data for the 30 project soums. The qualitative data (collected from interviews, FGDs, checklists, meetings etc) included more detailed, holistic and nuanced information (also adding context to the quantitative data). All the collected data was examined and analyzed by the consultant and limitations in the baseline were noted.

EDUCATION DATA

The baseline compiled education data for all the 30 soums in the following categories:

- Number of students in primary school (by grade 1-5)
- Number of primary students living in dormitories and with relatives (by grade 1-5)
- Early childhood education (ECE) coverage of primary students including those that have attended formal ECE, alternate ECE or have no ECE (by grade 1-5)
- Number of dropouts in primary school (ages 6-10) and reasons for dropping out
- Primary school students at risk of dropping out (ages 6-10) and reasons for them being at risk of dropping out
- Number of students names removed from primary school registration lists (by grade 1-5) and the reasons for this
- Number of re-enrollment in primary school (ages 6-10) and the reasons for this
- Number of non-enrollment in primary school (ages 6-10) and the reasons for this

This detailed education data is critical for the project as,

- The ECE coverage data is a determining factor in planning programs and activities for component I of the project

- The numbers of target children living in dormitories and with relatives is a determining factor in planning programs and activities for component II of the project
- Non-enrollment numbers are a determining factor in planning programs and activities for component III of the project
- The dropout and re-enrollment data serves as the baseline for two of the project outcome indicators
- Taking into account the reasons provided for dropouts/risk of dropping out, re-enrolling and non-enrolling; the project will have to align its activities, programs and strategies so that, as far as possible, it is addressing these reasons.

The dropout, non-enrollment and re-enrollment data obtained for the baseline from school directors, primary school managers from all the 30 project soums also has certain limitations. First, the baseline has no mechanisms to verify whether any errors were made in compiling this data & if the data received by the schools from the bagh governors is completely accurate. Second, the education data provided by these sources also does not take into account issues of long-term absenteeism & what happens to migrating children. Third, the dropout and non-enrollment numbers obtained from the school directors/primary education managers were combined for two school years (2011-2013), hence the baseline was not able to breakdown these numbers for any one of the two years.

For the specific purpose of this project, SCJ-M is also collecting data (the CECs in each soum will aid in this task) on each target child in the 30 project soums and plans to set up a database of all the target children. This database will include, for example, their age, sex, level of ECE, grade level and whether they dropped out, re-enrolled, not enrolled, migrated etc and for what reasons.

TARGET 4 AIMAGS AND 30 SOUMS

The 30 project soums were selected through a three-step process. Statistical information from the MES, national level data and other sources were analyzed to select the soums in the country that have high numbers of 5-10 aged children, the lowest formal ECE enrollment rates, high numbers of poor families, higher than the national average school dropout rates (especially in primary classes), soum's not already receiving any international organization support and so forth.

ARKHANGAI AIMAG

Arkhangai has 19 soums, which are further divided into 99 baghs. The population in the aimag is approximately 84,000. Ten soums were chosen for the project in Arkhangai and four of these soums had two schools (one located in a distant bagh of the soum).

- Erdenemandal and Ondor-Ulaan are the most populated soums and also have the most number of children aged 6-10.
- Erdenemandal, Undurkhaan, Khairhan and Tsetserleg have the highest number of target children who living in the dormitories and with relatives of all the ten soums in the aimag.
- Erdenemandal and Khotont soums have very high numbers of students who have no preschool education.
- Khotont soum's Undursant bagh, Tariat and Jargalant have highest number of dropouts.
- Khotont soum's Undursant bagh and Erdenemandal have the highest

number of students currently at risk of dropping out.

UVURKHANGAI AIMAG

Uvurkhangai has 19 soums, which are divided into 105 baghs. The population in the aimag is approximately 100,000. Ten soums were chosen for the project in Uvurkhangai and two of these soums had two schools (one located in a distant bagh of the soum).

- Uyanga and Bogd are the most populated soums and also have the most number of children aged 6-10.
- Bogd, Sant and Bayan-Undur soums have the highest number of target children (living in the dormitories and with relatives) of all the ten soums in the aimag.
- Uyanga and Bogd soums have very high number of students with no preschool education.
- Uyanga, Bogd and Zuunbayan-Ulaan have the highest number of dropouts.
- Bogd has the highest number of students currently at risk of dropping out.

DORNOD AIMAG

Dornod has 14 soums, which are divided into 58 baghs. The population in the aimag is approximately 68,000. Five soums in Dornod were chosen for the project and one of these soums has two schools (one located in a distant bagh of the soum).

- Tsagaan-Ovoo is the most populated soum and also has the most number of children aged 6-10.
- Choibalsan soum has the highest number of target children (living in the dormitories and with relatives) of all the five soums in the aimag.
- Matad soum has the highest number of children with no preschool education.
- Khalkhgol has the highest number of dropouts.
- Khalkhgol’s Yalalt bagh has the highest number of students currently at risk of dropping out.

the aimag is approximately 54,000. Five soums were chosen for the project in Sukhbaatar and none of these soums had more than one school.

- Erdenetsagaan is the most populated soum and has the most children aged 6-10 of all the five soums.
- Erdenetsagaan and Bayandelger soums have the highest number of target children (who live in the dormitories and with relatives) of all the five soums in the aimag.
- Erdenetsagaan soum has very high number of students with no preschool education.
- Erdenetsagaan has a high number of dropouts and double the amount of students who are at risk of dropping out.

SUKHBAATAR AIMAG

Sukhbaatar has 13 soums, which are divided into 67 baghs. The population in

The 30 soums chosen for the project are listed under their aimags in Table 1 below.

Table 1: List of the 30 Project Soums

Arkhangai Aimag		Uvurkhangai Aimag		Dornod Aimag		Sukhbaatar Aimag	
1	Khashaat	11	Bayan-Undur	21	Tsagaan-Ovoo	26	Munkhkhaan
2	Khotont **	12	Bayangol	22	Sergelen	27	Uulbayan
	Urdursant Bagh	13	Zuunbayan-Ulaan	23	Matad	28	Ongon
3	Khangai	14	Uyanga**	24	Choibalsan	29	Bayandelger
4	Tariat **		Jargaland Bagh	25	Khalkhgol** Yalalt Bagh	30	Erdenetsagaan
	Murun Bagh	15	Taragt**				
5	Undur-Ulaan**		Tuya Bagh				
	Khanui Bagh	16	Bogd				
6	Tsetserleg	17	Khairkhandu-Iaan				
7	Jargalant **	18	Burd				
	Khoolt Bagh	19	Yosonzuil				
8	Ulziit	20	Sant				
9	Khairkhan						
10	Erdenemandal						

** denotes that the soum has two schools

3 COMPONENTS

The project consists of three interlinked components.

COMPONENT I

This chapter discusses the pre-operational conditions pertaining to the outputs that the project aims to achieve through its first component, which will strengthen school preparation programs for new school entrants (5-6 years of age) in the 30 target soums. The project output indicators for component I include;

- Training modules and materials on school readiness developed for parents, school administrators, kindergarten and primary teachers, and dormitory staff
- Learning resource materials on school preparation produced for 10,000 children, families
- 30 Toy and Equipment Libraries set up at 30 target kindergartens/schools
- 40 soum governors and local government officials trained on school readiness/preparation
- 30 community education councils formed at soum level and conduct regular operations
- Capacity of at least 210 kindergarten/primary/dormitory teachers on school preparation built through training
- Up to 30 CECs provided with community block grants to promote the program delivery and reach
- At least 3,600 parents/relatives contacted to share knowledge

and skills on caring for 5-6 year old children's psychosocial and development needs

Based on the data gathered from the 30 soums the baseline has reached the following conclusions for the current state for the eight outputs of component I;

- None of the 30 soums primary schools currently have any training modules or learning resource materials on school readiness and preparation that can be used by parents, school administrators, kindergarten and primary teachers and dormitory staff.
- None of the 30 soums currently have any learning resource materials on school readiness and preparation for children and their families.
- All the 30 soums have school and soum libraries, but no Toy and Equipment libraries currently exist in any of the 30 soums.
- None of the 30 soums governors, deputy governors and government officials currently have any training in the area of school readiness and preparation.
- None of the 30 soums currently have any type of community based education councils, groups or associations.
- None of the 30 soums currently have any training programs or activities to build the capacity of kindergarten, primary and dormitory teachers in the area of

school readiness and preparation.

- There are currently no grants being allocated to specifically address issues related to school readiness and preparation in any of the 30 soums.
- There are currently no programs or activities to contact parents or relatives to provide them information, knowledge and skills on how to care for children's (5-6 years) psychosocial, psychological and development needs in any of the 30 soums.

Some other issues regarding this component that the project should consider include;

- Primary school teachers should be appraised on the topics and methods that are being used in the soum kindergartens, so that they can build their capacity to deal with new school entrants who have limited or no ECE. Further, trainings should be held where kindergarten teachers inform primary teachers about how and what children learn in kindergarten and also provide them strategies on how to teach children who enter school with limited or no ECE. It will also be beneficial for primary teachers to visit the kindergarten to see the kindergarten teachers interacting with the children.
- Materials and resources that are used in the kindergarten should be made available for children in grade 1 who enter school with limited or no ECE.
- All children who enter grade 1 should take a simple test that

judges their ability. Based on this testing their teacher can have a better idea as to what challenging issues the children face and can then determine what resources/materials are needed to help them overcome their learning difficulties.

- The school director and the primary education manager also need to be trained along with the teachers and the kindergarten manager should interact with them to inform them of the formal kindergarten's methods and approaches.
- The location of the Toy and Equipment library will be a crucial factor in its operation and use and it would be optimal to base this library in the soum library (as long as the soum library is physically able to do so). A schedule can then be worked out where the ger kindergarten can use the Toy and Equipment library resources/materials in the summer and the kindergarten, primary school and dormitory can use them on a rotating basis over the course of the school year.
- The reason to avoid basing the Toy and Equipment library in the kindergarten, school or dormitory is that placing it in either of these venues will give the officials (of these venues) ownership of the library and they will then be in a dominant position to decide who uses its resources/materials and when. By placing the Toy and Equipment library in the soum library the soum government will have oversight of it and there should not be a bias towards any group.

- Nomadic herder parents that come to the soum center to receive their monthly allowance from the government (which is meant for helping the families take care of their children) should be systematically targeted for trainings and dissemination of educational materials and resources. Further, when nomadic herder parents that come to drop off their children in the dormitory they should also be systematically targeted. The project should also determine which herder children live with their single mothers in the soum center (while the father remains with the animals) and these single mothers should then also be systematically targeted.
 - Herder parents and relatives need to be trained on school preparation and readiness and each soum will have to work out the optimal schedule for the trainings. However, the project should consider the seasonal calendar for Arkhangai and Uvurkhangai to determine the best times to hold training sessions and other related activities for herder parents.
1. A school guidance manual on after-school programs developed and 30 soum schools (5 teachers per school, including primary and dormitory teachers and school social workers) receive relevant training
 2. At least 60 target children regularly attend and benefit from the after-school programs per school each year during the second year to the fourth year
 3. At least 5 community members are identified, trained and act as after school program facilitators at each school
 4. 500 copies of an "After-School Program Best Practices Manual" developed and circulated to all schools in Mongolia
 5. Up to 30 CECs provided with community block grants to promote the program delivery and reach
 6. 30 school dormitories supported with basic equipment and renovation

Based on the data gathered from the 30 soums the baseline has reached the following conclusions for the current state for the six outputs of component II,

- Extracurricular after-school programs and activities exist in schools for primary students, but currently there are no extracurricular after-school programs or activities that specifically target children living in dormitories or with relatives in the 30 project soums.
- There are community members in the 30 project soums who have the skills and knowledge to run extracurricular after school

COMPONENT II

This chapter discusses the pre-operational conditions pertaining to the outputs that the project aims to achieve through its second component, which will introduce extracurricular after-school programs in schools for children (6-10 years of age) living in dormitories or with relatives. The output indicators for component II include;

activities for target children living in dormitories or with relatives, but they are currently not doing so due to a lack of existence of any such programs.

- No national, aimag or soum level extracurricular after-school programs manual (aimed at the target children) currently exists in Mongolia.
- All the 30 project soums schools currently have dormitories that host primary and secondary school students.

Some other issues regarding this component that the project should consider include;

- An assessment of the target children should be undertaken to find out what activities they would like to participate in after-school program.
- There are three categories of school children who are away from home. These include children living in dormitories, children with relatives and children living with their mothers (while their father stays with the animals). Thus, programs and activities should also ensure to include the children living with their mothers.
- Extracurricular academic after-school activities should be designed keeping in mind that target children in the same grades do not have identical learning levels.
- Older children in the dormitory (in secondary school) can be utilized as volunteers in the after-school activities and can also lead sports activities.

- Having only teachers lead the after-school activities might not be conducive as the target children will then see the program as a continuation of school. Further, after-school programs must be structured in such a manner that they are different from classes taught in the school.

COMPONENT III

This chapter discusses the pre-operational conditions pertaining to the outputs that the project aims to achieve through its third component, which will pilot compensatory education programs for lower primary out of school children (6-9 years of age). The output indicators for component III include,

1. Alternative lower-primary, home-based learning education curricula (grades 1-3) and their corresponding teaching and learning materials (including a series of self-learning video programs) developed and piloted
2. At least 1,000 teaching and learning resource materials developed, produced, and disseminated
3. Training for at least 140 teachers, community volunteers and mentor parents trained on individual teaching/coaching/monitoring techniques and program delivery
4. At least 300 children enrolled in the alternative lower-primary education equivalency programs
5. Capacity of 34 soum/aimag schools or enlightenment centers to deliver program activities improved (e.g., setting up of resource libraries)

6. Up to 30 CECs provided with community block grants to promote the program delivery and reach
7. Project-produced teaching and learning resource materials uploaded onto NCLE's website for wider circulation and use

As component III of the project will pilot compensatory education programs, there are currently no such programs in existence in any of the 30 project soums, hence there was no baseline data to be gathered on the component's outputs. Further, it should also be noted that the 30 project soums primary schools have no official role or involvement in targeting out of school children. However, when a school identifies an out of school child, it will send a letter to the parents asking them to re-enroll the child. The bagh governors will also talk to the parents and ask them why their child is not attending school.

Some other issues regarding this component that the project should consider include;

- It will have to be determined which soums have the target children and families to pilot programs for this component (the non-enrollment data in the baseline will aid in this task). Once the soums have been selected, the project (and/or the CECs) will have to conduct an assessment as to how to optimally target the children and their families based on their ICT infrastructure and what the optimal

ICT content dissemination, retrieval and evaluation methods will be.

- The project should consider conducting a thorough global mapping exercise on this topic, which will provide information and insights on how similar projects in similar/different contexts in developing and developed countries have worked. This exercise will also help in pointing out who the main players in this area are; what types of technologies and content have been used and the issues with them, what resources are available for free etc. Based on the results of this mapping exercise the project will have a much clearer idea to move forward to pilot programs.
- ICTs are tools and the ICT content, no matter how well made, will not serve its purpose unless it fits with the local context. Hence, it is more important to get a fit between the target children and parents and the right type of ICT content rather than having the most high end ICT content. The only way this can be done is to do a needs assessment and to test the ICT content before piloting the programs.
- NFE officials in each soum should be asked to provide a list of people in the soum who are enrolled in the NFE program. These people can then be targeted for the programs of this component.
- Supporting mechanisms have to be put into place for out of school children and herder families to get something more from the ICT

content than just viewing it. This will include, at a minimum, some trainings, additional resources and materials (not ICT based) and a feedback method to evaluate what kind of learning is taking place.

- Schools and soum libraries have ICTs equipment and the project should strategize how these venues can be used to show ICT content to various target audiences in the soum center.

COMMUNITY EDUCATION COUNCILS

The project aims to set up innovate CECs in each of the project soums, which will oversee the programs and activities of each of the three components and also be responsible for distributing community block grants to attain the aims of each component. CEC members should be all the stakeholders of the project encompassing soum government officials, bagh governors, school officials, teachers, parents and active community members.

As community-based education organizations are a new concept, the project will have provide additional support in the initial stages to get the CECs operational. Another way forward might be to pilot the CECs in some soums to see how they function before making them operational in all the project soums. Further, after the formation of each CEC, it would be beneficial if the body does some sort of an assessment exercise. This will help the CEC plan and strategize its roles and actions, thereby ensuring that the programs and activities of the three components of the project are implemented based on the needs of each soum.

The baseline report has clearly shown that there is an acute need for each of the three components of the Improving Primary Education Outcomes for the Most Vulnerable Children in Rural Mongolia project in the 30 target soums. As the project is implemented, it is expected that the target children will improve their learning outcomes and psycho-emotional wellbeing; the capacity of teachers, parents and the community will be built; and the quality of education will improve. The project has all the ingredients to become a model for the primary education system in Mongolia in the future and this baseline exercise is a crucial step in that direction.