Country Report on Community Learning Centres (CLCs):  
Lifelong Learning for All through CLCs

Prepared by Khantulga.T  
Specialist, NFDE, Mongolia

1. Background

At the beginning of the transition period from a centrally planned economy to a market-driven one, from late 1980’s to early 1990’s, many pressing issues emerged in the education sector in Mongolia. A relatively high level of educational attainment achieved in the pre-transition period suffered from the decrease in investment in the sector and, the school drop out rate reached soaring 8.8 percent during the academic year 1992-1993, but this decreased constantly to reach 3.8 percent by the year 1996-1997. Although this decrease in school drop out rate is related to the economic recovery and the education system reform efforts, it was highly possible for drop out children during the earlier time to have grown to be illiterate and undereducated adults. Therefore, a necessity to meet the needs and demands of education for both children and adults outside the formal sector emerged. Subsequently, a new concept of Community Learning Centres, popularly known as CLCs, was introduced in Mongolia in late 1990’s.

CLCs have been established in many countries in order to respond to the needs of non-formal education (NFE) and life-long learning. The purpose of the CLC is to promote human development by providing opportunities for lifelong learning to all people in the local community. CLCs support empowerment, social transformation and improvement of the quality of life of the people. Such CLCs, named as Non-formal Education (NFE) Enlightenment Centres, known as Gegeerel Centres in Mongolia, have been set up since 1997 in Mongolia and currently, there are 370 active NFE Enlightenment Centres throughout the nation. In the past time, NFE Enlightenment Centres served mainly to provide literacy and EP training on primary and basic education for out-of-school and dropout children and youths who came up during socio-economic transition period. Today, new needs and demands for training and activities for adults have risen while the challenges school drop-outs and illiterate populations were better addressed through the EP and literacy training in recent years. Furthermore, the needs to improve quality of life of adults living in rural areas, especially nomad people who herd in remote area at four-seasoned rotation, to provide them with socio-cultural services and to help them participate in local development have been increasingly recognized. It is considered that NFE Enlightenment Centres can play an important role to satisfy the aforementioned needs and demands.

2. Efficient literacy programmes in country

2.1. Basic information of the programme

“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.

1 The term “ NFE Enlightenment Centre” will be used throughout the report to represent CLCs in Mongolia
As with starting of “National programme on NFE development” implementation in 1997, establishment of NFE Enlightenment Centres also begun in Mongolia. At first, NFE Enlightenment Centres, whose general aim is to provide educational and training service oriented towards remotely located communities who live far away from any educational services, had largely concentrated on providing literacy trainings for adults and educational re-training for out-of-school children.

Also, 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.

NFE Enlightenment Centres promote literacy education through its equivalency programme (EP) which provides out of school children, school drop-out children and youth, an opportunity to obtain primary, secondary and upper secondary education. Over the years, number of participants of EP as well as school age learners has been increasing, indicating the expansion of NFE coverage for its target population. In 2011, 12024 children and youths were enrolled in EP training. 5642 of them involved in primary education while 1472 learners (12.2 percent) obtained a lower secondary education certificate and 815 learners (6.7 percent) acquired an upper-secondary education certificate. Moreover, NFE Enlightenment Centres attempt to reach out and provide educational services to the children of ethnic minority or those from remote rural areas. For example, number of school age Kazakh (ethnic minority group) children of Bayan-Ulgii aimag, enrolled in EP, increased from 79 in 2007-2008 to 450 in 2008-2009, demonstrating improved access to the programme.

NFE Enlightenment Centres organize life-skills trainings based on the need of local community, especially to help youth and adults improve their livelihood and expand income generation opportunities. All NFE Enlightenment Centre programmes, except EP and literacy training, are included in life skills trainings. These programmes include upgrading educational level of population, life-skills, livelihood, health, ecology and legislation. The trainings are organized mostly on short term. For instance, in 2007, 152,600 people enrolled in the training to upgrade educational level while 12774 people participated in vocational oriented trainings.

Improving adult literacy has been one of the main activities of NFE Enlightenment Centre since its establishment. The number of participants in literacy trainings increased from 6995 learners in 1997 to 10441 learners in 2004, and then started declining. This decline in number of participants of literacy training over the last few years is assumed to be related to the decreasing number of illiterates in overall. According to the Population and Housing Census of 2010, 159726 or 7.45 per cent of population over the age 10 are uneducated people (who are literate but have no primary education level) and 36519 or 22.8 per cent of them were determined illiterate. Increasing number of 2508 illiterate individuals when compared to the Population and Housing Census of 2000 (34011 illiterates have been registered in 2000) is not a regression; rather it is a progress considering the population growth. Specifically, population grew by 380 thousands since 2000 where uneducated people accommodated 11.6 per cent of total population, but this rate decreased to 7.5 per cent by 2010. In 2000, literacy rate was 97.8 percent of population over the age of 15, but this rate increased to 98.3 per cent in 2010. In other words, illiteracy rate was 2.2 per

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2 MECS (2012) Education statistical data base, UB
3 NCNFDE (2010) Analysis on the provision of equivalency programme of basic education, pg 36, UB
cent of population over the age 15, but it decreased to 1.7 per cent in 2010\textsuperscript{5}. In 2011, 5684 people were enrolled in literacy training and 2047 (36 percent) of them acquired neo-literacy skills and 3423 (60 percent) increased their literacy level\textsuperscript{6}. Although, literacy rate and educational level of population had increased as shown above, now it is necessary to take a look into its quality issues.

\subsection{2.2. Innovative points of the programme, particularly linking to lifelong learning}
Approval of “Equivalency training programme for primary, lower and upper secondary education” by 358th decree of Minister of Education, Culture and Science in 2005 have gave opportunity to expand the NFE Enlightenment Centres’ re-educational service activities and to provide second chance to the people who were not able to obtain education at their school age. Then, the approval of “Regulations of equivalency training programme for primary, lower and upper secondary education” by 362th decree of Minister of Education, Culture and Science in 2005 have became the backbone for article 8.2 and 40.2 of “Educational law”, revised in 2006 and starting with academic year of 2007-2008, the variable expenditures for the learners of this programme were financed from the state budget.

\subsection{2.3. Challenge Lesson learnt from the programme}
Features of life skills trainings are that there are no certain standards and is mostly organized for short term basis, therefore it is not possible to evaluate and summarize its activities like that of institutes that meet the certain standards of long term education. Therefore, it is very common to determine the quality and outcome of life skills training through number of learners, their acquired knowledge and satisfaction. The quality of the NFE needs to be improved especially in the direction of providing the education for all population and diversifying its activity framework. Currently the learners from the Equivalency programme training take the exams in the formal education system to transfer to formal schooling. Further we need to assessment and monitoring system to evaluate the learning achievement of all our programmes.

 Provision of the learning materials to NFE Enlightenment centres are not sufficient and there is also need to supply the centres with necessary equipment to organize the training.

 Though financing of NFE was solved to certain extent, it still needs more clarification and solution. Currently the budget allocated for NFE is spent mostly for maintenance, and the activity cost relies upon the international and donor organizations’ projects and aids. Except for the allocation of normative expenditure per learner from Equivalency programme no any other programmes get financing.

\section{3. New trends and Innovations to reduce poverty in your country}

\subsection{3.1. Innovations and new approaches through CLC to reduce poverty}
Except all above programmes, one of innovative is 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\textsuperscript{7}. In twenty soums in remote areas of the five project Aimags

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\textsuperscript{5} National Statistical Office of Mongolia (2011), Population and housing census 2010, UB
\textsuperscript{6} NCNFEDE (2011) Non-formal education data base, UB
\textsuperscript{7} The project focused on four main components, one related to education, to address learning needs of disadvantaged rural populations through the NFE Enlightenment Centres, supported jointly by UNESCO and UNICEF, three others related to communication, health and small business development, supported by UNESCO, WHO and UNDP, respectively. The national
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where a large percentage of the ethnic/linguistic minorities and herders reside, twenty “model” NFE Enlightenment Centres were established or rehabilitated with their capacity significantly reinforced, and the project introduced new and strengthened approaches to literacy and life-skills training and management of such activities. The project, which was being implemented at the time and there is much that other NFE Enlightenment Centres can learn from the rich experience of the project.

One of the strengths of the activities undertaken by the NFE Enlightenment Centres under the project relates to the fact that they benefitted from the 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 what the NFE Enlightenment Centres can offer. For example under the component related to communication of the project, community run radios were established which were housed in the same buildings as the Enlightenment Centres and helped announce training information; the soums hospitals supported under the health component sometimes used the Enlightenment Centres to sensitize community people on health related issues; the Enlightenment Centres benefitted from the training and small business opportunities supported by the National Chamber of Commerce.

The project overall raised renewed interests in the Enlightenment Centres for adult learners and succeeded in wide-spread community engagement. They became recognized to serve as “hubs for socializing, sharing experiences and ideas” and 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 its evaluation report.

Therefore, a “National Curriculum on Life skills based Literacy Training” was developed and approved by the Minister in 2010 within the project framework. This is the first official literacy training curriculum to follow at nationwide for adult’s literacy training.

Those are important steps for innovations and new approaches through CLC to reduce poverty in local areas.

4. New Contents of Life Skills/Skill Development in your country

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

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counterpart for the education component was the Mongolian Ministry of Education, Culture and Science, with the NCNFDE as the implementing partner.

8 Baltzersen, J. and Bumkhorol, T. (2012)
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. Also, according to the census of 2000, 2.2 percent or 34011 of adults (over 15 years of age) were illiterate 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.

**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 1st to 4th 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.

*Number of learners enrolled in NFE trainings*

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9 NCNFEDE (2005), Implementation report of national programme on NFE development, pg 17, UB
I have studied for 3 years for EP training of NFE’s Enlightenment center and received secondary education diploma upon completion. Last year, I graduated from “Gegee” college in Orkhon aimag and currently i am studying at correspondence college in political science, expecting to graduate in 2012. As a result of life skills training, now I am running my own cafeteria, barber shop, beauty salon to increase my household income. I have also participated in tailoring training and started to rent the dresses I sew for 8000-10000 tugrugs during new year festival and other holidays. By participating in NFE’s life skills training, many positive changes have been made in my life and my household income have been increasing so I am ever grateful for the NFE. Our cafeteria’s own ‘Suulen khu’ food have won an award from aimag’s food exhibition.

N. Narantungalag, female, Lun soum, Tuv aimag

**Other activities:** One of the main goals of NFE Enlightenment Centres is to mobilize and increase the participation of community members in developmental activities of their local community. It is essential for NFE Enlightenment Centres to continuously emphasize on mobilizing the community members, assessing their needs, and planing and implement its programme based on this information and to evaluate the outcome accordingly with the general concepts of “Local Community Development Center”. 