

1. SUMMARY

1.1. DESCRIPTION OF THE PROJECT AND EVALUATION CONTEXT

Project Socioeconomic stabilization of geographically and socially isolated communities 2008 – 2010 (MN/1/08/MPSV) was implemented in 2008 – 2011. Funding for 2008 - 2010 was provided by the Czech Development Cooperation, for 2011 by the implementer Caritas CZ. The initial purpose of the project was to contribute to socioeconomic stabilization and development of rural, geographically and socially isolated communities of Bulgan aimak. Additional purpose was decreasing the incidence of social pathological behaviour resulting from inadequate contact of small children with their families and subsequent weakening of traditional family ties. Ultimately, the project was aiming at decreasing the contrast between traditional and “modern” way of life, while preserving and strengthening the specific characteristics of the Mongolian society.

After the commencement of the project, following a request of the Mongolian partners, the target group for mobile education has been modified; instead of primary school children class 1-2, the project focussed on children in pre-school age, as well as on children who were handicapped or did not complete basic schooling. This change necessitated adjustment of indicators, risks and assumption in the Logical Framework Analysis. Such adjustments were not introduced; revision of the Logical Framework Analysis was completed by the evaluation team (section 3.2).

The principal purpose of this evaluation was to obtain information that will guide the Czech Ministry of Foreign Affairs and the Czech Development Agency in decision-making on upcoming interventions of Czech development cooperation in the social and related sectors in Mongolia.

The evaluation approach was comparative, non-experimental comparing the intervention areas and beneficiaries before and after the project. Baseline information was compared with information after the project completion. This approach does not allow convincing demonstration of causality between project interventions and the result, but in the absence of a reference group, it is the only approach possible. In theory, it could have been possible to compare groups participating in the project with groups outside the project bearing identical characteristic. This possibility, however, was excluded due to shortage of time and information required for the identification of such groups. Project impacts were therefore assessed on the basis of data before and after intervention.

Evaluation methodology took into consideration the evaluation objectives and client's expectations; conclusions and recommendation are evidence-based. The evaluation matrix including evaluation questions (Annex J) has been consulted with and accepted by the Reference Group. The evaluation approach was participatory, involving key stakeholders and other informants and information sources from both the public and the private sector including target groups.

Evaluation was implemented at three stages: (i) Preparatory phase (before field work) aiming at the consolidation of and consensus on the evaluation questions and gathering information from available secondary data and interviews in the Czech Republic. (ii) Field investigations where additional information was gathered to test hypothesis formed during the preparatory phase. This phase included preliminary analysis of findings related to the evaluation questions as well as of factors influencing the project's successes and failures. (iii) During the final phase, information gathered during the preparatory and field phases was analysed, assessed and synthesized in relation to the evaluation questions. This phase included: Analysis and synthesis of findings, preparation of the evaluation report and presentation of major findings and recommendations to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs (Client) and the Reference Group.

1.2. MAJOR FINDINGS AND CONCLUSIONS

Below is a summary of evaluation conclusions according to the evaluation criteria.

Evaluation criterion		Pre-school education	Other social and educational services	Total for project
Relevance		High	High	High
Effectiveness		High	Rather low	Rather high
Efficiency		Rather high	Low	Rather high
Sustainability		Rather low	Low	Rather low
Impact		High	Low	Rather high
Cross cutting principles	Good governance	Rather high	Rather high	Rather high
	Human rights and gender	High	High	High
	Environment and climate	Rather high	n.a.	Rather high
Visibility of Czech Development Cooperation ¹		Rather high	Low	Rather high

Relevance

The evaluated project was in line with the Program of Development Cooperation between the Czech Republic and Mongolia for the period 2006-2010; the Program includes development of education and social services as one of its priorities. The target group was adjusted and project locations selected according to needs and priorities of Mongolian partners. Available information indicates complementarity with similar projects and interventions of the Mongolian government and other donors. Education and other social infrastructure and services remain among key priorities whereby close coordination of activities with relevant ministries and other donors is necessary. Overall, both main components of the project (pre-school mobile as well as other social/educational services) can be rated as **highly relevant**.

Effectiveness

The project succeeded in making year-round pre-school education accessible to children in selected communities of Bulgan aimak in their natural environment. According to statistics of the Aimak Educational Department and Caritas CZ, it reached 85% of children of pre-school age (805 of the 4,202 children of pre-school age registered in Bulgan aimak in 2010 attended the project mobile kindergartens). Teaching methodology and year-round access were viewed as more effective than the short-term kindergartens operating in the project area. Remote communities without the option of sending children to soum kindergarten could be included thanks to teacher's visiting children in their homes; the project thus contributed to some extent to the stabilization of remote communities. Social support services were provided according to estimates by Caritas CZ to some 1,035 persons. Classes in summer school were attended by 33 children – primary school drop outs; 22 parents of handicapped children benefitted from training. Without follow up, however, effect of social support services component remained limited. Internships increased employability of the students (a side-effect of the project). The overall rating of effectiveness is **rather high**.

Efficiency

On the basis of available information, project expenses are considered as necessary with some exceptions: (i) Investment in radio communication per kindergarten were relatively high in view of the fact that parts of the equipment were unsuitable and had to be replaced. (ii) Cost of internships in Bulgan was relatively high because students received per diem that exceeded actual expenses. Project experienced delays which, however, did not influence its results delivery. Project management was professional and participatory with close involvement of key stakeholders (detailed list in Annex C). Embassy of the Czech Republic was limited in its monitoring function by lack of access to periodic reports including financial reports. The Logical Framework Analysis has not been revised and the majority of indicators remained unchanged; this also limited possibilities for project monitoring. The overall rating of efficiency is **rather high** considering the effort to minimize expenses and the overall contribution of mobile kindergartens to pre-school education.

Sustainability

Efforts of Caritas CZ and local stakeholders to hand the project over to the Ministry of Education, Culture and Science (MECS) and to secure its sustainability failed. Commitment of the MECS set in the Memorandum of Understanding between Caritas CZ and the Ministry signed in May 2010 has not been observed. The Department of Pre-school, Primary and Secondary Education of MECS, Education Department in Bulgan province, Heads of Soum administration, soum kindergartens and home teachers could not secure funding

¹ Visibility was added as an additional criterion

for the operation of the mobile kindergartens due to the lack of qualifications of the home teachers. The Embassy of the Czech Republic intervened before the project completion personally with the Governor of the Bulgan aimag and the relevant Department and sent a *Note Verbale* to MECS, without success. At the time of evaluation (and reportedly since fall 2011) none of the 38 kindergartens was functional. Only a few home teachers continued visiting children in their homes on a voluntary basis, using travel subsidy from the soum kindergartens. Methodology approved by the MECS and books, however, continue to be used. Department of Pre-school, primary and Secondary Education expressed interest in continuation of the mobile kindergartens and offered co-funding; follow up requires further discussions. Other activities were one-off and without consideration for their sustainability which can only be rated as low. Overall, sustainability is rated as **rather low**.

Impacts

Pre-school education in mobile kindergartens was very beneficial for increasing knowledge and skills of the children as well as for developing their attitude. Parents benefitted by gaining more time for work, improving their skills in children upbringing and changing attitude to pre-school education. Home teachers gained pre-school teaching methodology and skills; moreover, their incomes increased. This increased their self-confidence and motivation to continue working in the education sector. There is not much information on the impact of the other project components; Internships were rated by the trainees as very beneficial due to enhanced employability. This, however, is unrelated to the project objectives. Overall, taking into consideration contribution to mobile re-school education, impact is rated as **rather high**. Nevertheless, long-term impacts will be reduced due to the low sustainability of achieved results.

Good governance

Caritas CZ involved relevant stakeholders (MECS, parents, teachers, local authorities) in all phases and aspects of the project including planning, implementation, as well as in (failed) attempts to hand over operations of the mobile kindergartens. Periodic reports on pre-school education were shared with all participating institutions. Some information, however, was not included, such as detailed assessment of progress- and financial indicators. This negatively influenced the quality of monitoring in particular by the Embassy of the Czech Republic. The final project report was submitted to relevant stakeholders in English and in Mongolian which contributed to increased level of knowledge about the project. Good governance can be rated as **rather high**.

Human rights and gender

Women benefited from the project at least as much as men. Benefits were similar for both genders. The project promoted right to education and supported development of personality as well as the right of parents to choose suitable education for their children. Field social work aimed at supporting the rights of the underprivileged. The overall rating of human rights and gender is **high**.

Environment and climate

Contribution to environmental protection was marginal. No negative impacts were identified. Using radio communication powered by solar energy is considered environmentally sound in comparison to more frequent travels. Disposal of the equipment parts of which are hazardous wastes after the expiry of its lifetime remains unclear. The project did not have any consequences for climate change. Project's contribution to environmental protection is rated as **rather high**.

Visibility of Czech Development Cooperation

Limited visibility of Czech Development Cooperation and its logo pointed out by the Embassy of the Czech Republic in Ulaanbaatar was remedied – the evaluation team found information about the project and logos on the transferred equipment as well as on exhibits and information panels in the soum kindergarten buildings. Pre-school education was publicized on the internet, in newspapers, in the soum administration as well as in the office of Caritas CZ. The final report with logo of the Czech Development Cooperation has been widely distributed. Nevertheless, visibility of the other social and educational services was minimal; the majority of stakeholders were not aware of the project activities. Placing a logo in the context of these “non-tangible” activities was not feasible. Visibility is therefore rated as **rather high**.

1.3. RECOMMENDATIONS

Recommendations related to project and continuation of the Czech Development Cooperation

Recommendation	Main addressee	Degree of importance
Take up with the MECS the possibility of resumed funding and re-vitalization of the mobile kindergartens in particular where there is no appropriate option for pre-school education (such as mobile kindergartens of the Asian Development Bank)	Caritas CZ (possible assistance from the Embassy of the Czech Republic)	1
Preparing Inception Report that would include changes and modification in the institutional framework, completed baseline, updated theory of change with assumptions and risks to the sustainability and utilization of results. Inception Report should be prepared within 3 months from the project commencement.	CZDA ²	1
Focus on formulating national sector strategy, preparing sector program, building of institutional capacities, enabling legislative framework, increasing awareness and support to practical education.	CZDA	2

Recommendations to processes and mechanism

Recommendation	Main addressee	Degree of importance
Debriefing of key stakeholders by the evaluation team	MFA CZ ³	1
English as the language of project documentation and evaluation reports	MFA CZ, CZDA	1
Continuous project external financial monitoring	CZDA	1
Detailed phasing out and handing over plan	CZDA	1
Evaluation budgets to be at least 3% of the project budgets	MFA CZ	2
The possibility of transferring unspent project funds in the course of its implementation	CZDA	2

² CZDA = Czech Development Agency

³ MFA CZ = Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Czech Republic