



What we do in Mongolia

- We've helped 2,593 poor, nomadic, minority ethnic and disabled children go to school
- We've provided services for 4,500 marginalised children
- We've given shelter, help and advice to 113 street children
- We're enabling children to express their views and play an active role in society



During its socialist period between 1921 and 1990, the Mongolian state provided free education, healthcare and housing for all. It offered job security and extensive benefits for women and children. But this system collapsed when the Soviet Union withdrew its large subsidies in 1990. The changeover to a liberalised economy left many Mongolians unemployed. The provision of quality basic services – especially healthcare and education – nosedived.

Today, every third child in Mongolia is poor. Fewer children than before enrol in school and more drop out early. Many simply can't afford to study. Thousands of children work to support their families, competing with adults for petty work. Thousands of street children are the result of homelessness and family breakdown. The economy has recently started to recover, leaving the government under increasing public pressure to reduce unemployment and poverty.

Save the Children in Mongolia

We started working in Mongolia in 1994. Our projects and the areas we cover expanded rapidly in response to the urgent needs of many vulnerable children. Since then we've built up our expertise and developed strong and positive relationships with Mongolia's education and social welfare agencies.

Today, our work focuses on making sure that all children are protected and given a good-quality basic education, and that they can express their views.

Key areas of work

We're helping children get a good education

Two out of every three Mongolian children miss out on a preschool education. We've set up preschools and trained teachers in Mongolia for more than ten years. We're also promoting children's rights and providing teachers, parents and children with training materials and books. Last year we helped to improve the quality of education for 12,125 pre- and primary school children by training 485 preschool teachers in child-centred teaching methods. We also provided management training for 30 staff from local education departments.

Mongolia's schools have often excluded particular groups of children. Last year, we enabled 2,593 poor, nomadic, minority ethnic and disabled children to go to pre- and primary school by setting up kindergartens and providing mobile teachers. Working with a local partner, we provided direct services for 709 disabled children. And more than 2,000 disabled children benefited from training and information we gave to their parents and carers. Overall, more disabled children are now enrolling in Mongolia's schools and kindergartens.

As a result of our advocacy work, the government has introduced bilingual teaching for children from minority ethnic groups and we also drafted the first ever law for preschool education with the Ministry of Education, Culture and Science.

We've established pilot projects to support children's self-governance at two schools in Dornod province. Students formed a club called 'We can do it ourselves', and met with local government officials to raise their concerns about the school environment. Also in Dornod province, we helped 161 children enrol in or continue their education. We organised sessions in photography for 28 children. Six of them are now working with a professional photographic and media agency and five are studying photography at university.

We're protecting children from harm

Mongolia's harsh economic climate is forcing more and more children into homelessness and work to survive. We're working to protect these children, especially those vulnerable to abuse, violence, exploitation and neglect. We're also working to change the common tendency to blame or punish these children for their situation.

We've continued working with the most marginalised children, including street children, working children, disabled children and children without adequate parental care. We provided social work, family reunification, recreation and counselling services for 4,500 children last

year. We also provided physiotherapy, massage, play and exercises for 48 disabled children and their families.

Homeless and working children often live in extremely poor conditions. They're at constant risk of becoming ill or being injured through dangerous work, and often become victims of gang violence and contract sexually transmitted infections. In 1999, we set up shelters for street children in Ulaanbaatar and Choibalsan city. Since 2004, we've transformed four of these into community-based child protection and development centres. Around 50 children use each centre daily, learning new skills in subjects such as photography, radio and languages. The centres' social workers support children who have experienced violence and abuse, help vulnerable families get healthcare and education, and provide information about violence, abuse, neglect and exploitation of children. Last year parents were supported through positive childrearing programmes and support groups.

We've also set up a drop-in centre for street children in Ulaanbaatar. They can wash their clothes, have a shower and get a hot meal, as well as get medical help and information on how to protect themselves. Last year, the centre helped 113 street children, including girls who are particularly vulnerable. Eight girls who had been sexually abused received counselling that helped them stop blaming themselves. Our ultimate goal is always to reunite children with their families. Last year we helped 18 return to their families.

We worked with several organisations on a campaign to promote children's right to protection, which led to local NGOs forming the National Child Protection Network. Major political parties have now accepted that children's rights and child protection are important policy issues and will include developing a national child protection system in their election platforms.

We're helping children get their voices heard

A cornerstone of all our work is enabling children to express their views and play an active role in society. Children are becoming more confident about expressing their views and demanding their right to be free of violence and abuse. They know they have an important role to play and that together they can achieve change. Children are generally becoming much more confident about expressing their views and, with our support, have organised press conferences and photo exhibitions, and taken part in a policy debate on the TV. W

Children are involved in planning, implementing, monitoring and evaluating our activities, particularly our community-based centres. They were key partners in our advocacy campaign to develop a national child protection system. Three children took part in a TV debate, where they expressed the view that children should be involved in decisions that affect their lives.

Ensuring the meaningful participation of vulnerable and socially excluded children, such as street children and children with disabilities, has been challenging. But children have learned

that their voices count and that people do listen to them. For example, eight children with disabilities performed a drama how they're discriminated against during our Day of Action to End Violence against Children on 19 October 2007. Children are generally becoming much more confident about expressing their views and, with our support, have organised press conferences and photo exhibitions.



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