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Surch Amidarya: Learning for Life Non-formal Basic Distance Education in Mongolia Impact Evaluation

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UNESCO

Surch Amidarya
Learning for Life

Non-formal
Basic Distance
Education
in Mongolia



An Evaluation of its Impact



October 2003

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Surch Amidarya: Learning for Life Non-formal Basic Distance Education in Mongolia Project 510/Mon/11

An evaluation of its impact

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Executive Summary

The Learning for Life project (LfL) took place over five years from 1997 to 2001 with cooperation between UNESCO and the government of Mongolia and with the financial support of US\$1.7m from DANIDA. Its aims were to provide learning opportunities through non-formal distance education to youth and adults, with a focus on skills that could be used to improve their quality of life.

Mongolia is a vast country with a highly dispersed population, with semi-nomadic herders making up a high proportion of the rural population. During the early 1990s the economic and social system was in crisis and this resulted in falling school enrolment, high unemployment, deteriorating infrastructure, the collapse of investment and financial hardship for families and individuals. Responding to the transition to a market economy and to the resulting economic dislocation and changes in employment patterns, in educational opportunity, and in business and income-generating possibilities, the project focused on enabling learners to develop new ways of making living, whether by finding a job or through self-employment.

This evaluation took place eighteen months after the end of the project and focused on its impact on participants' and their lives, on national and local capacity in non-formal and distance education, and on the wider policy environment. The evaluation was conducted by an external lead evaluator and a Mongolian co-evaluator, in close collaboration with the Mongolian National Centre for Non-formal and Distance Education, external and internal consultants to the project, and the former project team. The field phase of the evaluation took place in June and July 2003, with visits to 11 aimags and the capital city.

Non-formal and distance education for youth and adults was relatively new in Mongolia. The Gobi Women's Project (GWP) had provided a valuable testing-ground for work of this nature in six aimags of the country. LfL built on these experiences, and applied the lessons learnt to expansion to a national scale. The LfL delivery system was an integrated approach using radio, print materials, learning/resource centres, direct learner support and learner interaction, together with initial and in-service training for all project staff at each level. A particular feature in the Mongolian context was the use of core families, as a way of structuring learning communities in a widely scattered population and modelling the learning process to others.

The project was made up of two components: the Youth Business Programme, and the Family Learning Programme. The Youth Business programme reached the planned 6000 learners of 16 – 25 years in urban and semi-urban environments, while the Family learning programme reached about 40,000 families, exceeding the planned target of 37,000 families.

A tracer study in Ulaan Baatar and data gathered in other aimags showed that the **Youth Business Programme** resulted in three sorts of opportunities: formal employment (mostly in Ulaan Baatar), trades and small businesses, further training. Most small businesses were in the service sector (e.g. hairdressing, tailoring, cooking/restaurant), cottage industry (e.g. shoe-making, blacksmith/welder), or in growing vegetables. This programme included specific instruction in how to set up and run a business.

The economic impact of the **Family Learning Programme** was threefold: obtaining paid employment, saving costs through self-production, generating income from sale of produce or products. The most frequent areas of **income generation** were: making wool products, making leather products (particularly shoes and boots), making hats, sewing/tailoring, baking/bread products, carpentry. Growth in habits of independent learning, increased self-confidence, revival of crafts and trades, and knowledge of how a market economy works have all led to greater self-reliance and

initiative with the result that the project has stimulated the rural economy and pointed many families in new and more hopeful directions. Many individual experiences indicated the positive economic impact of the project.

The Family Learning Programme also aimed to improve other aspects of life. Instruction in **health** issues, child development and pre-school care led to improved personal and family circumstances and to a certain extent filled the gap left by the collapse of services previously available under the socialist regime. Impact on **gender relations** has been mixed. While the programme consistently attracted more female learners than male, and even though women enjoy considerable autonomy within family groupings, there remains a gender gap in terms of the participation of women in leadership positions and decision-making roles. One of the learning modules addresses civics and **governance**, but the evaluation was unable to determine what impact the project may have had in terms of changing governance patterns, structures and participation, beyond offering information.

Mongolia reached almost 100% **literacy** under the socialist regime, a figure that slipped back during the transition years. Although still up around 97%, the government is concerned to tackle literacy, realising also that the quality and use of literacy skills may be an issue. While not part of the aims of LfL, literacy issues emerged as some learners had difficulty in using the self-study books. The NFE methodologists have responsibility for improving literacy levels, conducting surveys to establish the true extent of the problem and organising classes for both school dropouts and adult learners. LfL left in place a better trained corps of methodologists who can now adapt and upgrade their skills to address literacy.

LfL raised the profile of **education and learning** and gave opportunity to participants to develop new study skills. It also emphasised the care and development of children, with the result that mothers began to try out new activities with their young children. The project also set new expectations for learning – it is not merely a matter of attending school but goes on throughout life. The evaluation was unable to determine the part the project played in increasing school enrolment – many other factors also contributed to this renewed trend.

The project's impact on **educational policy** in Mongolia is undoubted, in three particular ways. First, it gave non-formal and distance education a high national profile, raising awareness of its potential and its benefits. Second, it demonstrated that NFDE can work in the Mongolian context and how it might be structured. Third, it put in place a national network of trained personnel and learning centres. These factors led to new policy initiatives in 2002 and 2003, strengthening government commitment to NFDE. The upgraded national NFDE centre is a key element of future policy implementation.

One of the objectives of the project was to put in place **functional capacity for NFDE**. The evaluation looked at capacity in terms of trained personnel, materials development, training, infrastructure and management. In terms of personnel, the project produced trained visiting teachers, methodologists at aimag, soum and (to some extent) bag level, and a national project team. The methodologists remain active and are formally employed by the government in that role. In most aimags visiting teachers are now inactive, with some exceptions, while the expertise of the national team is largely dispersed to other projects or responsibilities. All these personnel must be harnessed if NFDE is to be of maximum impact in the country.

LfL developed both print and radio **materials**, producing 29 self-study texts with related radio programmes. Training in material development was given at national and aimag levels, with the involvement of subject specialists and local knowledge-makers. This resulted in local production of supplementary materials, often reflecting local traditions and techniques.

The project put in place a network of **learning centres** at aimag and soum levels, as resources for learning and training. Managed by NFE methodologists, they were frequently located in schools and administrative offices, offering services and materials to learners and the community at large. They represent a huge capacity as a base for ongoing NFDE and a centre for the promotion of local culture and knowledge. LfL used eight **radio stations** in addition to the central Mongol Radio, investing in equipment and setting up at least two brand-new stations. Radio staff were trained in the production of educational programmes, but production stopped with the end of the project because of lack of funding.

Management functions were adequately carried out at aimag and national levels, with a special emphasis on awareness-raising and liaison with political and administrative authorities. The project director created a pro-active and open management style which resulted in good teamwork. Monitoring was close and effective, although capacity for formal evaluation, with adequate data capture, was limited.

Partnership with UNESCO was effective and gave a good profile to NFDE nationwide; problems arose with respect to the expeditious transfer of funds, decision-making processes and communication at a distance. Involvement in the project represented an appropriate role for UNESCO since it part of policy re-orientation and educational development in the country. The project's national-level partnerships were limited, largely owing the newness of NFDE and lack of time to invest in them; local-level partnerships developed effectively according to operational need.

Relevance, effectiveness, sustainability and replicability were four issues which the evaluation specifically addressed. The project's approach was highly relevant to the scattered nature of rural populations, with appropriate differences in approach in urban environments. Learning content was geared to real life issues with encouragement to apply new knowledge and skills directly in practical ways. Content was made more relevant through the production of additional local materials in aimags and soums – a particularly creative aspect. Particular criteria for the selection of staff and learners contributed in a major way to the **effectiveness** of the project – management control was thus maintained and pressures to expand in an uncoordinated way resisted. The project was cost-effective, with the average cost per learner per phase in the lower range for such projects, about US\$7.50.

Sustainability was assessed by observing what elements of the project were maintained in the eighteen months since it finished formally. The picture was mixed, but NFE (though not distance education) continued in all aimags in some way. Evidence suggests that methodologists at aimag and soum levels have continued to invest effort and respond to learner demand. At national level government provision is limited to a guideline amount of 1% of the educational budget, and the national NFDE centre has no resources to produce new NFDE materials (print or radio). A balance sheet of sustainability details the 'credits' and 'debits' of the situation engendered by the project. **Replicability** is assessed by examining outgrowths from LfL, noting a number of limited follow-on initiatives. Four key risks are identified: political change resulting in disruptive movement of personnel, lack of training of new personnel, weak information-gathering and processing, long-term funding difficulties.

Lessons learnt included: close attention to context, the critical importance of government support, the experience provided by the preceding project (GWP), and the availability of timely and appropriate consultant input.

Constraints on the impact of the project included: the relative newness of the concept of NFDE, the lack of awareness of adult learning and its value, the

movement of personnel, and the institutional arrangements which meant that the project was not fully institutionalised at national level.

Four major and **high-level conclusions** may be drawn: LfL impacted educational policy and firmly established non-formal and distance education for youth and adults as part of Mongolian educational strategy; significant numbers of people (upwards of 82 000) accessed new learning and productive opportunities; LfL took the right approach at an economically and socially critical moment; LfL put in place a functioning network of trained personnel and resource centres.

In order to make the most of the LfL investment, the evaluation recommends strengthening capacity in order to make NFDE sustainable in all its aspects and at all levels: professional NFDE capacity, radio programming, print material development, management and supervision, evaluation and research, advocacy and training. In designing **further investment**, the aim will be to orient all the elements towards building sustainable capacity. It should include implementation activities, but these should all be conceived from the point of view of building the capacity of actors and institutions at each level. It will build on current structures, institutions and networks, and will not seek to set up new or parallel ones. In preparing further investment, a number of **recommendations** are made:

- A project design process/needs assessment should be undertaken, clarifying what elements of the system need strengthening, identifying relevant institutions and stakeholders and including them in the design process. The design process should also include an examination of advances in technology, the changing conditions and circumstances in the country, and the current status and initiatives in distance education should also be part of this study;
- The differences between the needs of urban and rural areas must be taken fully into account. It will be important to identify differences in the learner profiles. In terms of literacy, vocational skills, economic opportunities, patterns of learning and of monitoring, the rural and urban environments may call for differing approaches, or adjustments in emphasis. These will touch on the content as well as on the mode of delivery of any further programmes;
- The 'project' should build in indicators of progress from the start, and include a mid-term review in order to ensure that sustainable capacity is in fact being built and to address any obstacles that may have been thrown up along the way. This review and the final evaluation will also be designed as capacity-building processes;
- Any further investment should be planned as an integral part of the programmes supervised by the national NFDE Centre, as the key institution for implementing such work in Mongolia, and that such an investment should include strengthening the capacity of the Centre;
- MOSTEC and the national NFDE Centre should develop a proposal along these lines for further investment in NFDE in partnership with international donors and agencies;
- UNESCO should assist in the planning and design process and in the search for external funding.

Abbreviations and Glossary

ABBREVIATIONS

ADRA	Adventist Development and Relief Agency International	NGO	Non-governmental organization
DANIDA	Danish International Development Assistance	TOT	Training of trainers
DE	Distance education	UK	United Kingdom
EFA	Education for All	UN	United Nations
GWP	Gobi Women's Project	UNDP	United Nations Development Programme
LAMP	Literacy Assessment and Monitoring Programme	UNESCO	United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organisation
LfL	Learning for Life	UNFPA	United Nations Population Fund
MOSTEC	Ministry of Science, Technology, Education and Culture	UNICEF	United Nations Children's Fund
MRTV	Mongol Radio and Television	UNIFEM	United Nations Development Fund for Women
NFDE	Non-formal distance education	US	United States of America
NFE	Non-formal education	WHO	World Health Organisation

GLOSSARY

aimag	highest level administrative unit, equivalent to a province; there are 21 aimags, each with their own governor.
bag	lowest level administrative unit, under the soum, equivalent to a village; bags have a governor.
ger	dwelling of rural nomadic herders, made of wood and felt.
methodologist	a term borrowed from Russian usage, indicating a specialist, in this case in non-formal education.
soum	middle level administrative unit, under the aimag, equivalent to a county; soums have a governor.
tugrig	Mongolian currency unit (2003: approx. 1100 tugrigs = US\$1)

1 Introduction

Times of transition are unsettling – but they can also be times of innovation and growth. Mongolia's transition to a democratic society and market economy was one such occasion. Government, communities and individual citizens had to do things differently, to take risks, to innovate, to face radical change. The 'Surch Amidarya – Learning for Life' project was an innovation in such a context – a bold initiative to bring new kinds of educational opportunity to adolescents and adults. Almost seven years since it began and nearly two years since it ended, this report presents and analyses the impact the project had on the life of Mongolia's educational system, on educational personnel, and on families and learners across the country.

After describing the shape of the project, the report presents the rationale of this evaluation. It then moves on to focus on the impact which the project had on the quality of life, on policy, capacity and partnerships. Following that, four key issues receive particular attention: relevance, effectiveness, sustainability and replicability. The concluding sections identify factors of major import, sketch possible future scenarios and make recommendations for further action.

2 Project description

2.1 Context

The Learning for Life (LfL) project ran for almost five years from February 1997 until the end of 2001. UNESCO was a major partner, both in the design and implementation of the project, and located funds in the amount of US\$ 1.7m from DANIDA as external financing for the project. When LfL started, Mongolia was beginning to emerge from the most difficult phase of its transition to a democratic society and a market economy. All economic and social indicators had shown a downward trend since the abrupt transition in 1990 from a socialist regime and a command economy. The large subsidies and investments made by the former Soviet Union in previous years disappeared, with a resulting deterioration of infrastructure and services.

The economy contracted 0.3% over the decade 1990 – 2000, and GDP per capita fell back 16% from the 1989 value (purchasing power parity at constant rates – UNDP 2002). Housing, state enterprises and trading/markets were privatised and liberalised. Thus many state-owned enterprises contracted or collapsed, throwing many out of employment. In addition, unfamiliarity with the a market economy meant that many were unable to adapt, or adapt quickly enough, to cope with the new situation. People used to state provision of most goods and services found themselves having to rely on their own resources, initiative and competences. Herders in the rural population, which makes up about 43% of the total population, not only had to manage their herds in terms of economic viability, but also had to purchase the veterinary and other services they required. New patterns of labour emerged, both in rural and urban areas.

The transition led eventually to a migration from rural to urban areas, as people moved in search of new employment opportunities. In addition, two severe winters in the late 1990s, known as the 'dzud' or winter disaster, led to the decimation of herds over large parts of the country. Finding themselves without viable numbers of livestock, people moved to the aimag centres and to Ulaan Baatar. In spite of government efforts, backed by international support, to re-stock herds, the disaster has put an increased strain on the labour market.

In education, a dropout problem developed as a result of the transition, whereas there had previously been almost 100% enrolment. This was due to the need for

family labour to work with the privatised herds of animals, as well as to the disruption of the dormitory system for nomadic herders' children. It affected mainly boys. In 2000 enrolment in compulsory education (8 years, from age 8 to 15/16) was just over 86%, although it had improved from lower figures in the early 1990s. This improvement continued in 2001-2002 when enrolment increased to 89.7%. Certain aimags have lower percentages.

It is important to note the nature of the professional context regarding non-formal and distance education. Until the 1990s Mongolia had no programme and no infrastructure in non-formal and distance education. The Gobi Women's Project (GWP), which ran from 1992 to 1996 in six aimags of the Gobi region, was the first initiative of this kind and was thus a precursor to the LfL project. The GWP was a non-formal distance education project and aimed to enhance the quality of life of rural women in that region by facilitating the acquisition of useful skills and practices and thus improve their quality of life and help them generate income. It forms part of the context of the LfL project in two ways particularly:

- Methodologies developed during the GWP were adopted, with modifications based on lessons learned, in the LfL project. These included, for example, the kind of administrative structure needed for programme delivery, the design and production of radio programmes and their integration with accompanying print materials, and the system of visiting teachers and local learning centres. The GWP provided a crucible for developing for non-formal and distance learning methods in Mongolia.
- The GWP trained personnel and developed infrastructure in six aimags which were put to use in the LfL project, providing a basis from which to go to scale nationally.

Two projects focused on in-service teacher training using distance education methods, both starting in 1994 and sponsored respectively by DANIDA and by UNICEF. In a country of such size, face-to-face training had become prohibitively expensive, and distance education offered the possibility of delivering training more efficiently at a time when teachers were faced with demands of new curriculum and textbooks as well as new teaching methods. Using used print, radio, audio-cassettes and video materials together with local teachers' groups and regional meetings, the purpose of the UNICEF project was to support changes in the curriculum and to encourage child-centred approaches to education and multi-grade teaching. DANIDA also supported a distance education approach in a smaller educational project aiming at curriculum reform, working with primary and secondary teachers. Two initiatives in higher education between 1996 and 1999 experimented with the delivery of courses using distance education as a component. These projects created growing awareness of the potential of distance education and began to lay the groundwork for developing capacity to design and deliver it.

In terms of educational policy, the Mongolian government approved a programme of non-formal education for the first time in May 1997, just after the start of the LfL project. As part of this, an autonomous national Non-formal Education Centre was established, and a legal basis for NFE structures and positions throughout the country was provided (MOSTEC 2003a). The development and implementation of this policy built on the experience of the GWP, but has proceeded in parallel with the LfL project. The impact of the project on current policy is assessed later in the report.

The LfL project offered new learning opportunities at a critical time. With a deliberate emphasis on introducing learners to the mechanisms of a market economy, and a focus on productive skills, the project drew learners into a new way of thinking about their own capacity for production and their engagement in the market economy. By the time of this evaluation, the worst of the transition period appeared to be over,

with economic and educational indicators on the rise. The contribution of the LfL project to economic development is assessed later in this report.

2.2 Goals

The overall development objective, as stated in the project proposal document, is as follows:

This project will, based on the experiences gained from the GWP, further develop national and regional capacities in the field of non-formal basic distance education in Mongolia. It will also provide different learners normally based in a family environment with their needs for basic educational and informative material. (UNESCO-DANIDA 1997: 9)

This was broken down into two main components: the Youth Business Programme and the Family Learning Programme.

The goals of the Youth Business Programme were to increase the educational levels and employment opportunities of youth between the ages of 16 and 25 with an emphasis on equipping them with the skills to make a living in the market economy. The aim was to reach a total of 6 000 learners: 3 000 from Ulaan Baatar, 500 each from the two towns of Darkhan-Uul and Erdenet and 100 each in all 21 aimag centres. These are all urban or semi-urban environments.

The Family Learning Programme was planned to be implemented nation-wide, and to use the family unit as a learning unit. Families are understood to be a unit which lives together, sometimes under the same roof, sometimes in adjoining accommodation, such as two *gers*; the numbers of people in each family unit varies between 2 and about 10. It is composed normally of two generations (parents and children), though may include a member of the previous generation. It does not however include what is usually understood as extended family, such as uncles/aunts or cousins, etc. The aims of this component were to upgrade the educational level of the rural population, disseminate information and equip learners with skills to improve their quality of life. The target was to reach 37 000 families nationwide, with the expectation that 2 – 3 learners per family would be involved.

The project document specified that the learning should include basic knowledge in the following:

- Income-generating skills
- Health
- Literacy
- Civics
- Environment
- How to teach dropout pupils and educating pre-school children (UNESCO – DANIDA 1997: 9)

A further objective aimed 'to strengthen the planning, monitoring and co-ordination capacity in the field of distance education with the Ministry of Science, Technology, Education and Culture' (UNESCO – DANIDA 1997: 10). This was to be materialised by the establishment of a distance education centre to 'carry out relevant training in the fields of management, research and evaluation, production of DE material and teacher training' (ibid).

As part of the assessment of impact, the report will examine how far these goals were met.

The report will also indicate that the project had an impact on government policy, even though this was not an explicit goal. This may, however, be considered to have

been an implicit goal, linked to the building of national capacity. Policy development is clearly influenced by practice and the extent to which new ideas and approaches are both feasible and desirable. The relative newness of NFDE and the absence, hitherto, of a well-developed policy in this area meant work in the NFDE field would provide valuable insights for articulating a policy framework. The effectiveness of LfL led the government to build on its experience in designing forward-looking policies in NFDE.

2.3 Structure

Distance education was relatively new to Mongolia in 1997, with little conception of what was involved and virtually no capacity to implement a programme. A parallel project by DANIDA on *Curriculum Reform and Teacher Training*, had a distance education component, providing training for materials developers, teacher trainers, curriculum developers, headteachers and distance education planners. Plans were also in hand at this time for the development of an open learning centre at the National University's School for Economic studies and for the development of a distance learning programme in accountancy. However, the only experience available was that achieved through the Gobi Women's Project, in selected southern aimags. Through the work of consultants (primarily Professor Bernadette Robinson who also gave some training input into the Gobi Women's Project and evaluated it) the Learning for Life team worked to put in place a structure for the delivery of distance education nation-wide. The structure functioned as follows:

At the level of learners:

Learners were selected locally according to agreed criteria (see Section 5.2 below), and registered as a learner within a particular family. This family was supported in its learning by a 'core family' which would look after up to ten families. Learners received the textbooks and used them in conjunction with the corresponding radio programmes (listened to directly or on tape). Visiting teachers gave support to learners by visiting them in their homes, focusing both on the self-study process and issues of learning content. Learners also received support through regular learner meetings, the frequency of which depended on local distances and circumstances (eg ease of transportation). Resources and materials were available at the soum Learning Centre, both for learners and for visiting teachers; the local NFE methodologist maintained the Centre. It should be noted that the number of registered learners was limited by the design of the programme (target numbers, criteria of selection, and resources available for materials). However, this did not prevent others seeking to participate in the programme. These became known as 'following learners' who accessed the radio programmes and often borrowed the self-study books or texts from registered families. They were not included in statistics and there is only a general indication at local level how many 'following learners' there were. However, there is some informal evidence that the numbers were significant.

At the support level:

Visiting teachers received support and training from soum NFE methodologists, who in turn were supported by aimag NFE methodologists, based at and running an aimag Learning Centre. The central (national) team gave training and support to aimag methodologists and also made monitoring visits to aimags and soums, thus encouraging the specialists in their work.

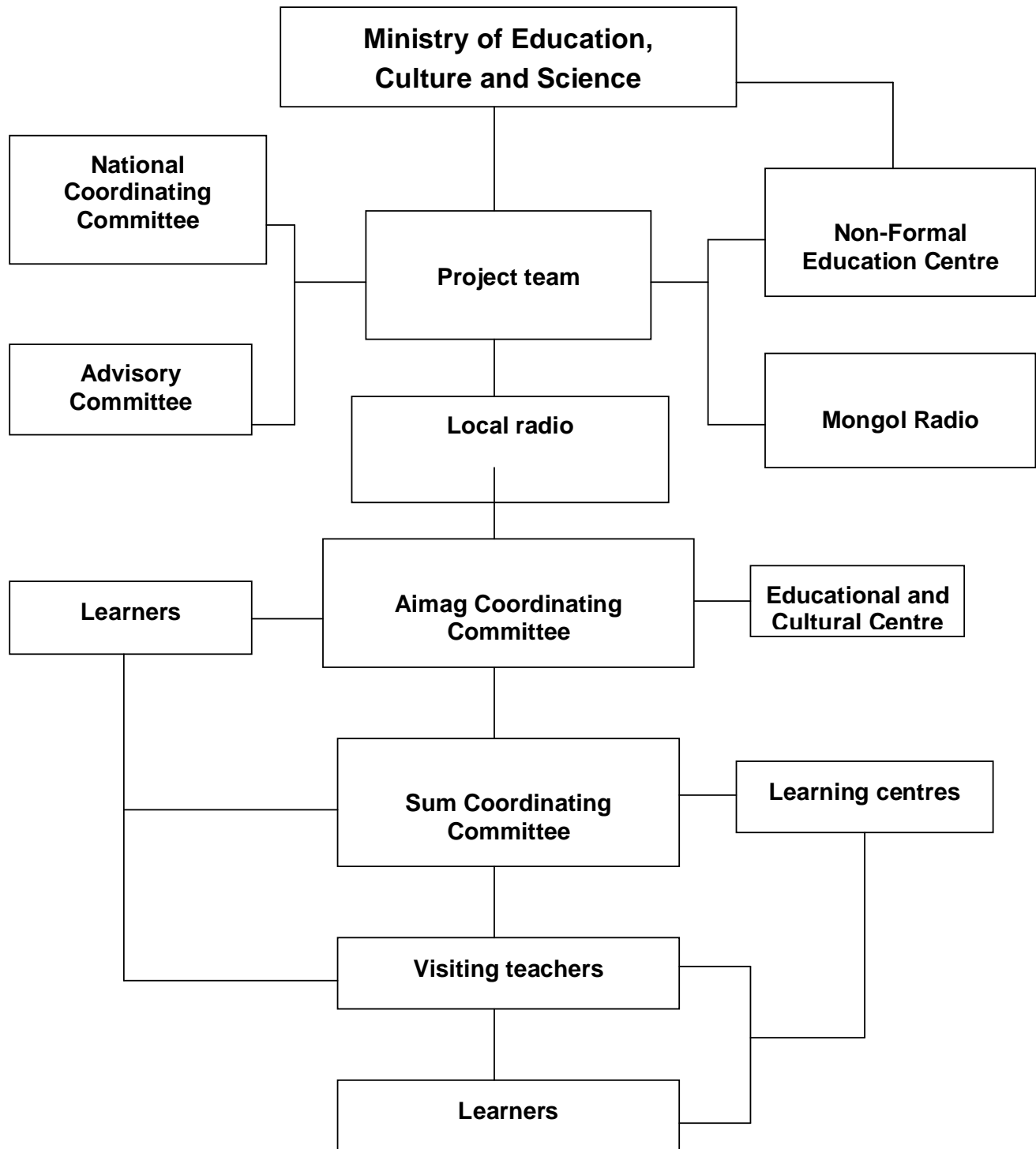
NFE methodologists are a particular feature of LfL. The term 'methodologist' is based on Russian usage and indicates a specialist in a particular area, in this case non-formal education. Their role is to facilitate non-formal and distance learning – they are not instructors or teachers. They organise training for lower-level methodologists and visiting teachers, stimulate the production of local supplementary materials and

produce them themselves, managing the resource/learning centre, keep records of all personnel and learners involved, liaise with other government departments and with NGOs, and supervise the implementation of the whole programme by making visits and giving input. They received training through LfL, introducing them to adult education and distance education principles for the first time. At aimag and soum levels (as well as in a limited number of bags) they are key actors in the maintenance and development of non-formal and distance education and of adult learning in Mongolia.

Commissions (or coordinating committees) were established at aimag and soum level to give overall coordination to the project and receive reports. This ensured the engagement of local political, administrative and professional leadership and fostered their input and support. Chief among their duties at the start of the project was the selection of methodologists at each level and of visiting teachers at soum level.

The central project team built partnerships with others for the production of materials. Mongol Radio and TV (MRTV) was the principal partner in designing and producing radio programmes, while a number of specialists in various fields, including regional input, cooperated in writing the self-study texts. While these were referred to locally as 'textbooks', they were produced for self-study and differed markedly in their approach from traditional textbooks, such as might be found in schools. The project team ensured that there was coordination between radio and textbook production, and with the design of training programmes. Figure 1 shows the overall structure of the programme.

Figure 1: PROJECT ORGANISATIONAL CHART



[Source: MOSTEC 2002]

This system comprised all the components necessary for the effective implementation of distance education:

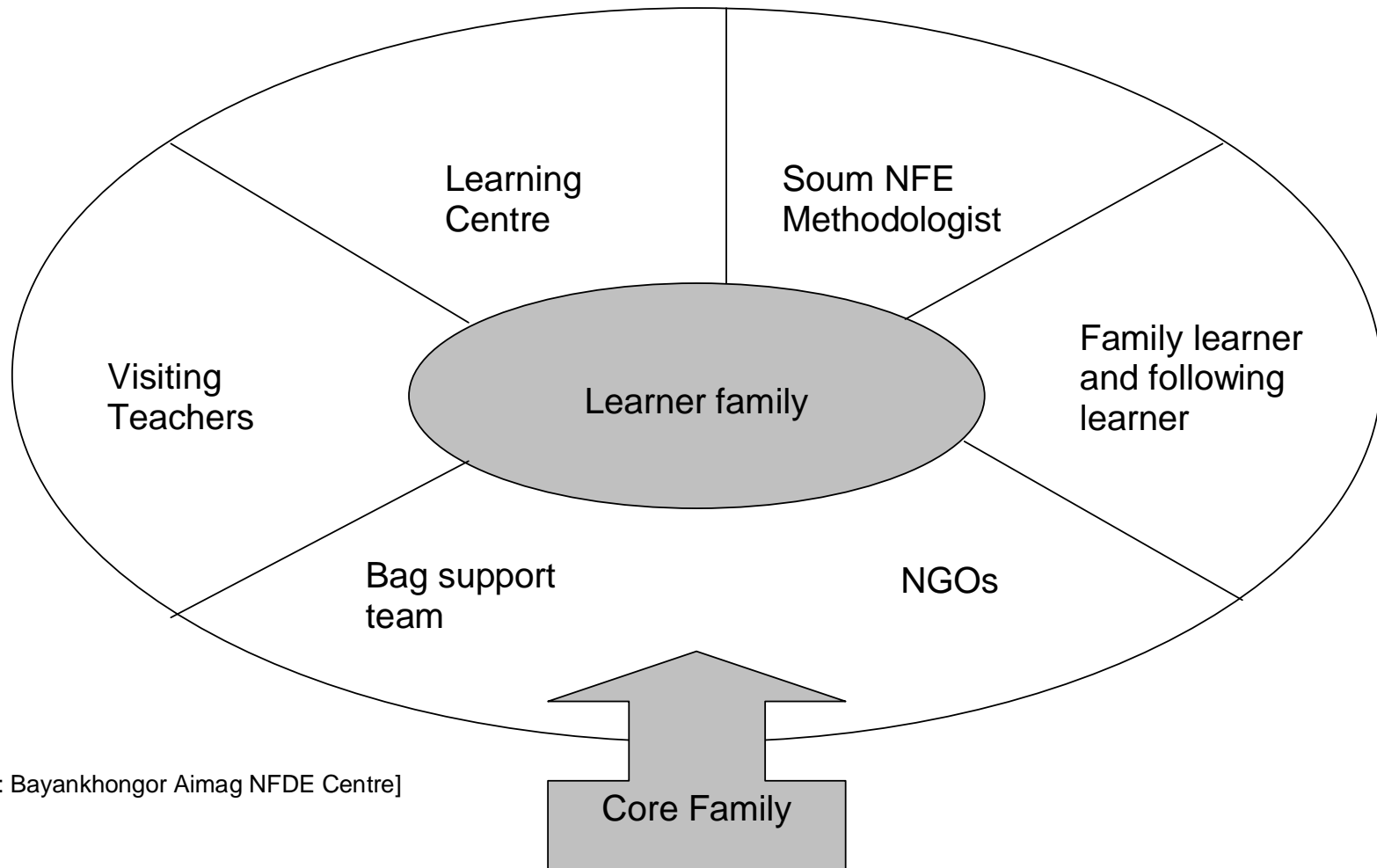
- Delivery of material at a distance
- Written materials for learners
- Direct, face-to-face learner support
- Collective learner exchange and peer support
- Resource centres
- Supervision and monitoring at central and local levels
- Ongoing professional support and training
- Political and administrative backing
- Competent project management
- An effective working system which integrated these elements into a functioning whole.

In addition, in the Mongolian context, the component of 'core families' was added, as a way of structuring learning communities among the widely scattered population in rural areas. Their role was to sensitise other families in the community to learning and the opportunities offered by the project and to give support to other registered families. Their selection was based on the following criteria:

- To be eager to participate in the learning program and upgrade their education
- To have a higher educational level and more life skills than the others
- To be respected among others and be able to influence them
- To have the potential to organise other families, inspire and apply newly learned knowledge in day-to-day life
- To be well known in the community and relatively well-off
- To monitor learner-families, assist them and develop a good relationship with facilitators according to guidance given by visiting teachers

While the overall project structure had strong vertical integration, it was designed to put the learner at the centre, as the following graphic from the project shows:

Figure 2 : Family-centred learning



[Source: Bayankhongor Aimag NFDE Centre]

3 Evaluation Purpose

The project document proposed that ‘a systematic evaluation will be carried out upon completion of the learning year 2000’ (UNESCO – DANIDA 1997: 17). In practice, the end of the project was in December 2001, and so the original proposal foresaw a project evaluation at that point or slightly later. However, as the terms of reference for the evaluation indicate, a decision was taken to undertake an impact evaluation after a certain lapse of time. Thus the present evaluation took place 18 months after the end of the project, and was designed to examine a number of dimensions of the impact of the project, including impact on:

- The beneficiary population, with regard to the acquisition and use of new skills
- The gender perspective, particularly looking at opportunities for income generation and use
- Government policies on non-formal, distance and adult learning
- National, regional and local capacities to carry out such work
- The sustainability of such work
- The ownership of NFDE and commitment to lifelong learning

Assessing the impact of a project or programme is very different from assessing its outputs or outcomes. It involves looking outside the project itself to assess what has happened as a result of it in people’s lives, in institutions, or in particular sections of society. It involves assessing how far the project has contributed to broader change, as one factor among many others. Methods of data collection and interpretation must be designed in order to give a reading of what the links are between the project and observable change, and thus how far the project may be said to have contributed to this change. In this evaluation, data collection focused on the wide range of stakeholders involved in the project, in order to obtain a view of its impact through ‘triangulation’, seeking to understand the links, similarities, differences and parallels between the involvement and perceptions of stakeholders, as well as between their respective ongoing engagement with the outcomes of the project.

In simplified form, the following chart gives examples of the kind of phenomena which are part of different aspects of the project, putting impact issues in the context of inputs, activities, outputs, and outcomes. The chart serves only to illustrate the relationships and differing nature of these aspects, not to list them exhaustively:

Table 1: Sample aspects of the project

Inputs ○	Activities ○	Outputs ○	Outcomes ○	Impact
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • people • expertise • funds • other resources 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • learning centres • broadcasts • training • materialsdevelopment 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • numbers of learners • materials produced • broadcasts transmitted 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • enhanced skills, • new information • the learning habit 	<div style="display: flex; align-items: center;"> <div style="margin-right: 10px;"><i>Non-project factors</i></div> <div style="text-align: center;">○</div> </div> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • higher income • better health • better relationships • new policies • enhanced capacity • ...

Impacts are of different kinds:

- Tangible impacts: the effect in people's lives measured in terms of the difference the project has made to things like income, health, employment, access to information or to education.
- Process impacts: the effect of the process of the project on the capacity of institutions, policies of government, sustainability of similar work, relationships between government and people, or between institutions, ...

In addition, there are intended and unintended, positive and negative impacts. While an impact assessment will naturally search for intended and positive impacts, it is important through observation and interaction to note any unintended or negative impacts. Important lessons may thus be revealed.

3.1 Evaluation Process

The evaluation took place in Mongolia during a four-week period, from 22 June to 17 July 2003. The evaluation team consisted of the following people (all from Mongolia unless otherwise indicated):

Lead evaluator	Dr Clinton Robinson (UK)
Co-evaluator	Ms Chultem Otgonbayar
Resource persons	Professor Bernadette Robinson (UK), Ms K. Suvdaa
Local Consultant	Ms A. Losolmaa
Interpreters	Ms G. Saranchimeg, Ms Ganzukh
Drivers	Mr G. Tumurbaatar, Mr Ganzorig

This team received valuable assistance from the UNESCO National Commission, particularly Mr Urtnasan, Secretary General, who accompanied the evaluation team for four days of the first field trip. The logistics of the visit were handled by the National Centre for Non-formal and Distance Education, former members of the Learning for Life team and the local consultant. Particular mention must be made of the assistance given by Ms Ts. Undrakh, former Director of the Learning for Life project. The evaluation team is very grateful for all the help given – it made the process of the evaluation much easier. Although a number of actions were matters of last-minute decision, the evaluation benefited from good organisation and excellent practical support.

The evaluation consisted of the following elements:

May/June	Examine background documents; planning and preliminary consultations
23 – 24 June	Orientation and initial meetings in Ulaan Baatar
25 June	Visit to Tuv Aimag (Central Mongolia)
26 June	Visits and meetings in Ulaan Baatar
27 June – 5 July	Field trip to Western Mongolia (five aimags)
6 July	Orientation of co-evaluator
7 – 9 July	Field trip to Northern Mongolia (two aimags)
7 – 12 July	Field trip (co-evaluator) to Eastern Mongolia (two aimags)

10 – 16 July	Meetings, consultations and feedback seminar in Ulaan Baatar
14 – 16 July	Field trip (co-evaluator) to Southern Mongolia (Dornogovi Aimag)
July/August/ September	Data analysis and report writing

The geographical scope of the evaluation was national as follows (alphabetical order):

Table 2: Aimags and soums visited

Aimag	Soum	Aimag	Soum
Arkhangai	Erdenbulgan (aimag centre)	Khentii	Batnorov
	Tariat		Bayanhutag
Bayankhongor	Bayankhongor Centre	Orkhon	Berh
	Bumbugur		Norovlin
	Buntsagaan		Ondorkhan (aimag centre)
	Khureemaral		Erdenet (aimag centre)
	Shargaljuut (Bag)		Zuunmod (aimag centre)
Darkhan-Uul	Ulziit	Tuv	Erdene
	Darkhan (aimag centre)		Lans (Bag)
	Khongor		Ulaan Baatar
Dornod	Bayandun	Uvurkhangai	National services
	Choilbalsan (aimag centre)		Songino-Khairkhan
	Dashbalbar		Arvaikheer (aimag centre)
Dornogovi	Sainshand (aimag centre)	Zavkhan	Bayanuul (Bag)
			Khairkhandulaan
Govi Altai	Esenbulag (aimag centre)	Zavkhan	Ider
	Delger		Ikh-Uul
	Taishir		Shiluustei
			Uliastai (aimag centre)

The LfL project was nationwide and covered all 21 aimags of the country, as well as Ulaan Baatar. As shown above, this evaluation covered 11 aimags and the capital city (50% of the total number of aimags), at least 35 Soums/Bags (10% of national total), interviewed well over 100 people, plus had contact with approximately 70 learners. In Ulaan Baatar meetings were held with former project staff, the NF and DE Centre, MOSTEC, the UNESCO National Commission and others.

During the field trips, meetings were arranged ahead of time in each location with one or more of the following people:

- Aimag, Soum or Bag governors

- Directors of Cultural and Education Centre
- Radio station directors and producers
- Aimag and Soum NFE methodologists
- Visiting teachers
- Core family/learners
- Registered learners

The pattern of almost all the meetings consisted of the following:

- A brief explanation in Mongolian of the purpose of the evaluation by the local consultant
- An introduction to the project by the director or methodologist, including the facts and figures of local implementation
- Questions from the evaluators and discussion of issues of concern and interest
- Where learners were also present, their representatives made presentations and answered further questions
- An inspection of learners' products, followed by refreshments.

On a few occasions the initial presentations risked leaving no time for questions and so had to be interrupted. However, all involved cooperated willingly in the evaluation process. We were grateful for the opportunity on numerous occasions to visit learners' in their homes and thus better understand the personal and family circumstances in which they applied their learning.

The evaluation process generated large amounts of data on the particular aimags and soums which we visited. The report presents the patterns observed in those data, while recognising that other places may have yielded different patterns. Nevertheless, we are confident that the data show consistent patterns, and we have noted contrary patterns where these occur. Data from specific aimags and soums serve as illustrations of these patterns. It is impossible to present the data gathered in their entirety.

4 Impact of the project

4.1 Project delivery

Before assessing the qualitative impact of the project, this section presents the results in terms of the numbers of learners involved in each component and the print and radio materials produced.

The targets and achievements of the Youth Business Programme, delivered in phases in Ulaan Baatar, the towns of Darkhan and Erdenet, and then the remaining aimag centres were as follows for learner numbers:

Table 3: Learner numbers in Youth Business Programme

Place	Target	Achievement
Ulaan Baatar	3000	3000
Darkhan / Erdenet	500 / 500	567 / 500
Aimag centres	100 each in 20 centres	± 2000 in 19 centres

The programme was implemented on time, and the results are outlined in Section 4.2.1.1.

The Family Learning component was conducted in four phases, with topics and self-study texts designed for each phase. The overall target was 37 000 families over the whole country, starting with 40 families per soum in the first phase. The number was limited initially because the approach, and even the concept of distance and non-formal education, was new, and capacity needed to be built up. There was also a financial constraint – although the Learning for Life project was national in scope, it had a smaller budget than that for the six Gobi aimags in the GWP.

In each family there was one registered learner, with the expectation that they would bring other family members into the learning process. In seeking to assess now far the project reached its overall target over the four phases, it became clear that there was a difficulty in interpreting statistical data collected by the project, particularly with regard to numbers of participants in the project, both families and learners. Every methodologist kept records of the individuals enrolled in each phase of the project. However, in the majority of cases, and as far could be ascertained, total numbers of participants in all four phases were cumulative, i.e. totals of registrations. Thus a family or individual was counted three times if they participated in any three phases of the project. At central level, the project team was aware of this problem, but had only the data submitted from the aimags. It is not therefore possible to establish an accurate figure for the total number of families or individuals who participated in the family learning component of the project. The figures in the following table are drawn from the reports of each phase, thus indicating the absolute number of families involved in each phase. It is not possible to ascertain from these figures whether particular families are included in several phases or not. They indicate clearly that the target number was exceeded by the fourth phase of the project.

Table 4: Numbers in the Family Learning Programme

Phase	No of families/ registered learners	Estimated total no of learners
First phase (March – July 2000)	14737	36229
Second phase (October 2000 – February 2001) (including following learner families)	28950	40424
Third phase (April – July 2001)	34000	70058 (of which 5950 are following learners)
Fourth phase (October – December 2001) (includes following learner families)	38800	76580

With the inclusion of unregistered participating families, the number rises to 40,000 families. The impact of this component on the lives of families is examined in Section 4.2.1.2.

The following table lists the print and radio materials of the LfL project. They were produced in Ulaan Baatar by the central project team, with a local edition of the Youth Business Programme materials being produced for Darkhan and Erdenet, and the local aimag centres. On average, in the Family Learning Programme, each self-

study text was used by one to six families, depending on context. In some places, materials were on loan to learners and re-circulated by the local centre, in others learners/families kept particular texts or even a whole set.

Table 5: Print and radio materials of Learning for Life

No	Self-study texts or booklets	Date	No of copies	No of centrally produced radio program-mes
1	Business skills	March 98	3300	10
2	First step to business	April 99	3000	10
3	Human rights and local self-governance	June 99	8000	3
4	Alcohol prevention	May 99	1000	2
5	Vegetable growing	Dec 99	15000	3
6	Recycling old materials	Dec 99	15000	2
7	Family and child	Dec 99	15000	13
8	Livestock herding	Dec 99	15000	3
9	Civics	Dec 99	15000	2
10	Let's use natural resources	June 00	10000	2
11	Think, try and create	July 00	10000	4
12	Children's health	Aug 00	15000	6
13	Child development	Aug 00	15000	4
14	Traditional meat products	Sept 00	10000	3
15	Traditional leather processing	Sept 00	10000	2
16	Pre-school children	Oct 00	15000	5
17	Mongolian traditional clothes	Oct 00	20000	5
18	Fire prevention	Dec 00	15000	2
19	Traditional medicine	Dec 00	15000	2
20	Super 5S	Dec 00	1000	
21	Land	Feb 01	10100	3
22	Traditional milk products	Jan 01	10100	3
23	Technology 1	Feb 01	10100	3
24	Veterinary book	March 01	11100	3
25	Women's health	June 01	11100	12
26	Your kitchen	June 01	11100	5
27	Water book	July 01	11100	3
28	Technology 2	July 01	11100	3
29	Soft toy making	July 01	11100	3
30	Child development and the family			

4.2 Quality of life

Many definitions of development include reference to improvement in the quality of life of the people involved. This phrase covers a wide range of possible changes and leaves it to the local context to define what that quality consists of – Amartya Sen defines this development objective as the pursuit of ‘the kind of life people have reason to value’ (Sen 1999). The project proposal listed six aspects of the quality of life: income-generation, health, literacy, civics, environment, and reaching dropout children/education pre-school children. The next sections examine the impact of the project in each of these areas.

4.2.1 Economic

One of the key objectives of the project was to improve the quality of life of youth and adult learners, and an essential element of this is the generation of additional income for families and individuals, in the context of new conditions created by the transition to a market economy. The evaluation sought to establish how much economic difference the project had made by questioning learners at all the sites visited about the use they were making of the skills acquired and observing learners at work and the products of their skills. The results of the youth business programme and the family learning programme are presented separately.

4.2.1.1 Youth business programme

Six months after the end of the programme the project team conducted a tracer study on 500 learners (16% of total; 268 female, 232 male) in Ulaan Baatar to assess the impact of their learning; the results were as follows:

219 learners subsequently attended in vocational training, including:

Hairdresser	41	Electrician	11
Tailor	56	Welder	12
Baker	54	Beautician	12
Cook	42	Blacksmith	10
Carpenter	4	Accountant	6
Shoe maker	15	Repairman	4
Photographer	2		

Learners were active in the following ways, although more than 50% were still unemployed at the time of the study (there is some overlap between categories):

Running small business	67
Entered colleges and universities	21
Obtained a loan, and running business	5
Employed	202
Unemployed	288

One consistent finding was the increase in confidence and sociability of the young people taking part in the project.

Tracer studies were not conducted systematically in the other places. Data were available for Gobi Altai aimag, where 104 young people took part (data available for 100):

Table 6: Gobi Altai Youth Business Programme: what learners did afterwards

Activity	Number of learners
Moved into further training	37
Started own business	21
Driver	5
Cook/start restaurant	4
Employed at social services	6
Employed in hospital	2
Growing vegetables	21
Unemployed	4
Total	100

The LfL internal evaluation documents indicate what happened to those learners in the aimag centres who continued from the basic business training into vocational training. The total number of learners in each aimag was 100 (or in some cases a few more), and the results in 13 aimags were as in the following chart. The data were collected for the internal evaluation (MOSTEC 2002) and are reproduced here without modification; they appear to be indicative rather than complete:

Table 7: Outcomes and benefits gained from Youth Business programme

Aimag	Learners involved in vocat'l training	Received loans	Started a small business	Employment/ other
Arkhangai	45			8 learners entered colleges and universities
Bayan-Ulgii	53		1 small entrepreneur ship	4 hairdresser, 12 employed
Bulgan	35		1 bakery shop	3 tailor
Dornogovi	45	10 from Poverty Alleviation Loans		15 employed, 15 employed in sewing factories in Ulaan Baatar
Dundgovi	100	Aimag Governor's office paid tuition fee of 50 learners to study in vocational	2 corporations with 12 people, 13 started their own business	6 employed, 12 families got radio with discount

training			
Govi-Altai	49		about 20 employed 14 employed
Govisumber	42	10 from Poverty Alleviation Loans	2 participated in vocational training, 10 attended in computer training not paying tuition fee
Khovd	75		some people started business 20 employed
Khubsgul	54		approximately 20 started small business 18 employed
Selenge	64		20 found job, 2 hairdresser, 2 tailor, 3 waitresses, 6 entered colleges and universities
Sukhbaatar	35	9 from Poverty Alleviation Loans, 3 were allowed to study with no payment	6 entered colleges and universities, 16 employed
Tuv	51		over 20 started small business 20 attended computer training with no tuition fee
Uvs			15 started small business, 3 received professional certificates

NB The separate data from Gobi Altai indicate that 37 went into further training, while this chart shows 49 going into vocational training. The discrepancy is probably explained by a difference in what was counted as 'further' and 'vocational' training.

Mr. Gankhuyag, a learner in the business youth program of Sainshand soum of Dornogobi aimag, noted that Gobi people were not aware of the vegetable growing concept at all and furthermore they did not eat the vegetables distributed by the socialist government unit, but let them spoil and gave them to their livestock. Through being involved in this project, he learnt how to grow and preserve vegetables. During the harvest period, he is able to provide for his family needs and sell extra vegetables to earn some money. He remarked proudly that he is contributing to the process of the Gobi forestry campaign which aims to prevent the Gobi region from desertification.

Learning by doing

The Youth Business Programme in Erdenbulgan Soum, Arkhangai Aimag

Besides the twice-a-week business theory lessons, learners undertook a business pilot project together. They each put in a sum of 2000 tugrigs (about US\$2) and established a small business group. This involved baking, carpentry and felt shoes. They also organised a cultural event which people paid to come and see.

Over the six weeks of the experiment, a total of 56 000 tugrigs was invested, for a return of 630 000 tugrigs. These profits were shared out and an outing was organised for the learners.

Now many of the learners are running their own businesses – for example, a beauty salon, carpentry shop, selling in the market.

This group was awarded the national prize for their business programme which was featured on the radio.

4.2.1.2 Family Learning Programme

There has been no systematic follow-up study of the use to which learners put their new knowledge and skills acquired through the family learning programme, such as the tracer study for the Youth Business Programme. The reason for this is that the Youth Business Programme was completed during the overall project, and so the tracer study could form an integral part of LfL. Any tracer study in the Family Learning Programme would have had to be conducted after the LfL project, by which time funds and expertise were no longer available. However, data are available from aimag reports and from direct questioning of methodologists and learners. Both sources provided valuable insights into the nature and scope of the programme's impact, and conclusions are drawn from a combination of the two sources. Aimag reports were based on the regular reports from soums over the life of the project, and these were available for inspection by the evaluators. In addition some personal histories and testimonies shed light on the economic impact of the programme.

The economic benefits were of three kinds:

- Obtaining paid employment on the basis of the skills acquired
- Costs saved by being able to produce for themselves, rather than buying from others
- Income generated by sale of produce and products, either through markets and other commercial outlets, or by filling orders from individuals.

As far as employment is concerned, data from Tuv Aimag (Central Mongolia) showed that the percentage of learners in employment rose from 13.8% at the start of the project to 21.2% at the end of it. Further, the proportion of participating families whose incomes lay above the poverty line rose from 35.3% to 48.5%. Poverty is defined in three categories in Mongolia, according to monthly income: very poor (16 000 tugrigs or less = about US\$15), poor (over 16 000 and up to 25 000 tugrigs), and above the poverty line (over 25 000 tugrigs). Data on employment were not available as such for other aimags or regions; however, some of the personal histories below indicate that some learners gained employment. As state-owned enterprises closed down, formal employment opportunities were reduced, especially in aimag centres. The majority derived economic benefit in other ways, primarily by operating in self-employed mode.

Further data from Bayankhongor aimag showed that there was a significant decrease in the number of participating families in the very poor category, between

the first and fourth phases of the project. In the first phase 38% of families were very poor, but this reduced to 22% by the time of the fourth phase. However, there are no figures to ascertain how comparable these figures may be to families who did not participate in the project.

In terms of cost savings and income generation, both kinds of benefits are significant. For example, shoes and boots were generally available and inexpensive to buy under the socialist regime. After its demise, such products became scarce and correspondingly expensive, so that making one's own footwear became an attractive proposition. Also, a market developed for locally produced footwear which individuals could cater to. Some economic benefit also accrued from providing for themselves services that had become commercial, such as animal veterinary services. When these services were provided by the state, there had been no need either to purchase them or to acquire the relevant knowledge themselves. When they disappeared, it was a matter either of improving their own knowledge, or buying in services from specialists who became increasingly scarce in rural areas. The project enabled herders to raise their level of knowledge to the extent that they can handle some animal health problems themselves and provide better preventive care.

The list of textbooks indicates the areas in which learners could acquire economically productive skills. The following areas were mentioned repeatedly by learners:

- Vegetable growing
- Livestock herding and animal health
- Using natural resources
- Processing meat and milk products
- Leather-working
- Making clothes

By far the most popular topic was vegetable growing, based on the number of spontaneous mentions and as first mention when asked about popularity. This is largely because it has enabled learners to improve their diet, adding variety and healthy supplements to the traditional meat and milk-based diet. Only a few learners indicated that they sold vegetables, and then only when their own needs were taken care of adequately.

It should be noted that many of the food-processing and manufacturing skills already existed in the communities, but had fallen into disuse or been forgotten, as one of the learner testimonies from Tuv aimag shows (see below). It was therefore a matter of reviving these skills and bringing them to a larger number of people. In the process, local experts were identified who often wrote materials supplementary to the national self-study booklets, giving local variations and traditions, or introducing further techniques.

The following skills and processes were used equally to meet learners' own needs and to generate income:

- Making wool products: felt slippers and shoes, felt mats, hangings and covers; fleeces; weaving carpets, rugs and saddle cloths.
- Making leather products: particularly shoes and boots, and harnesses and straps for animals.
- Making hats, both traditional and other.
- Sewing: making traditional dresses and baby clothing, tailoring, embroidery, soft toys.

- Baking: including making flour from grains not frequently used any more, making bread products and cakes.
- Making milk products and preserving vegetables;
- Carpentry: particularly making the wooden parts of the *ger*, *ger* furniture and carving..

Other areas of income generation mentioned:

- Chicken breeding
- Making of musical instruments
- Making fuel bricks from dung and coal dust
- Repairing shoes
- Welding
- Rope-making

A remarkable instance of how a number of these skills benefit a family was observed in Ikh-Uul soum (Zavkhan aimag). Within the compound of a core family, the mother had developed skills in making buriad boots, producing the finest leather tooling we had seen. She worked with two other people who were also acquiring these skills. Good quality buriad boots are high-value items which may cost up to US\$90, with a 10-15% profit margin. She had also set up a greenhouse to produce vegetables which need that kind of environment. One of the young men had become a skilled carpenter, making the wooden parts of the *ger*, with orders from a tourist camp for seven complete sets at the time of our visit. He now employs two other men. In a neighbouring compound, a woman had set up a carpet and saddle-blanket weaving business which generated income as she was able to give time to it alongside her household duties.

In Gobi Altai aimag statistics were available on the post-project activities of the registered learners (one per family). A total of 2880 families took part in the project, of which 1984 (69%) were later generating income through the following activities:

Table 8: Learner occupations in Gobi Altai aimag

Activity	Number of learners
Sewing	398
Shoe making	188
Farming, growing vegetables	262
Cooking	704
Baking	216
Trades and small business	144
Other	72
Total	1984

Throughout the visits to the regions of Mongolia, many learners recounted how they put their new skills to work. The following is a selection of examples:

Arkhangai aimag:

- A woman who participated in the first three phases of the programme now makes an income from carving traditional wooden milk skimming tools and making felt shoes.
- A woman embroiders and sells purses, snuff bottle holders and seat covers. She now provides for the financial needs of her family and bought a motor-cycle for her husband.
- A mother with a deaf son grows vegetables on her own land, producing one tonne and winning a harvest competition. She involved her son in the programme – he now makes and markets cheese moulds and other wooden equipment.

Bayankhongor aimag:

- A woman who already made shoes and clothes learnt new techniques from the textbooks and improved her skills; her husband carves beds. They took a loan of 200 000 tugrigs – now paid back.
- A woman learnt how to card and spin wool, and make it into felt (bags, shoes). With the help of her children she is launching out into making felt covers for *ger* doorways.
- A redundant government employee (male) remarked that his 'life had improved' when he learnt how to make buriad boots. He can now make 10 pairs of shoes per month at a profit of 9000 tugrigs per pair. A monthly income of 90 000 tugrigs exceeds his previous salary. He has one worker, and his boots are well-known in the aimag.

Darkhan-Uul aimag:

- A 70-year old woman learnt how to make soft toys and children's jackets – she is now working to provide these for her 34 grandchildren!

Dornod aimag:

- Three learners together established a restaurant.

Gobi Altai aimag:

- A woman went on after the programme to do another course in the aimag centre, developing her baking and cheese-making skills. She sells the products and also teaches others.
- A woman makes and repairs shoes, and her husband became interested in learning as a 'following learner'.

Khentii aimag:

- Two women learners earn US\$100 – 200 every month by making traditional 'deel' dresses to order.

Tuv aimag:

- A 17-year old boy who finished compulsory education makes felt slippers for sale, providing income for the family.
- A core family where the registered learner is an older woman mobilised other learners to develop a collective vegetable garden.

Uvurkhangai aimag:

- A learner family developed a large vegetable garden and installed an irrigation system.

Zavkhan aimag:

- A man grows and sells vegetables and makes furniture.
- A woman has obtained employment as a hotel cook, and established a business sewing group with three workers.
- A recent school-leaver (boy) of 17 years makes model *gers* and used the business textbook to develop his market.
- A woman, who said she had belonged to the poor section of the population, learnt baking, used the business textbook and set up her own shop. Her story was featured in the national newspaper.
- A man learnt tailoring and set up a tailoring business and clothing shop in 2000, which now employs his wife and two others.

To summarise, the economic impact of LfL should not be underestimated; the project:

- Included training in skills which could be directly turned into income-generating activities;
- Provided orientation and training in understanding the market economy and how to operate within it;
- Resulted in new and sustainable income-generating opportunities, replacing paid employment which has shrunk since the transition to a market economy;
- Showed the way for the development of private enterprise at the micro level, and local examples have led to further expansion of such initiatives;
- Led to increased income for individuals and families, plus savings from being able to provide for their own needs.

Learner testimonies from Tuv aimag

Tuv aimag in central Mongolia produced a booklet of testimonies of learners in the family learning programme entitled 'Thank you, UNESCO!' The following are two extracts:

Ms Tsetsegmaa (Sergelen Soum)

The implementation and activities of the NFDE 'Learning for Life' project were really appropriate for the situation of a rural area, and the learning programme content greatly met the people's need and interest. That is why there is great interest and participation of the community in the learning programme, and there are many people who want to be involved in the programme.

Through being involved in this project, I learnt and now use the following knowledge and skills in my life:

- Making various clothes (Mongolian traditional "deel" dress, buriad boots)
- Felt processing and making robes and other products
- Growing vegetables and the technology of how to preserve them
- Animal care, technology of processing raw products from animals, animal health
- Health care, women's health
- Basic knowledge about the market economy, etc

The textbooks were written in simple and understandable language, of high quality. They were very useful.

We really appreciate all of you for the great job!

Ms B. Enkhjargal (Jargalant Soum)

I live with my husband and four children. I am a hearing-impaired person and my husband is unemployed. My eldest daughter is a student and my three younger children study at secondary school.

As I have a hearing problem, I can't listen to the radio. But I learnt many useful things through studying the series of textbooks and sharing my learning with my family members and using it in my daily life. Many of my acquaintances are asking me to help them to get enrolled in this programme.

We now have a small garden where we grow different kinds of vegetables (32 kinds) and use them for our meals. The textbook on cooking was very useful and I am now able to prepare different salads and meals.

As a human being's learning needs never end, I am learning many things through the books that you prepared, even though we are isolated from each other. The book content is really great because it is restoring many of the technologies on making traditional dress ("deel"), processing raw products from animals and milk product processing, etc. which are almost being forgotten. It is given in simple language that is easy to understand. Generally, the teaching process and methodology is very good.

Thank you very much for the great intellectual investment.

4.2.2 Health

The LfL project included several topics on health issues: alcohol prevention, family and child, children's health and development, traditional medicine, women's health.

The consultant who helped compile the textbook on women's health remarked that the book was new in two ways:

- First, it adopted a pedagogical approach which used easily understandable language and shunned medical jargon. It also used pictures and included practical exercises.
- Second, it included topics which had not previously been considered as central health issues: gender issues, violence, mental health, family planning, menopause, and unwanted teenage pregnancy.

Beyond the recognition that the topic was relevant and useful, there was little reference to health issues in the description of the programme by methodologists or visiting teachers. One exception to this was a visiting teacher of Khureemarl soum who was a retired (barefoot) doctor. She focused in her visits to learners on health issues, offering advice on the material in the textbooks and on traditional medicines, and seeing families growing more confident in administering traditional treatments.

The LfL material on nutrition and cooking/baking, including the very popular vegetable-growing textbook, have probably had an indirect positive impact on health. As indicated earlier, many learners took up vegetable growing, largely in order to supplement or improve their own diet. Given the restricted nature of diets, almost entirely meat and milk products particularly in rural areas, the addition of vegetables adds vitamins and minerals which would otherwise be absent.

According to learner reactions, these were among the most useful books for their personal lives. One man remarked that the textbook on women's health had been the most helpful to him, as it enabled him to understand better his wife's health concerns, as well as those of his daughters when they gave birth. Many women also referred to the value of these topics. We can conclude that there is an ongoing positive impact on the health of individuals and their families, although other factors undoubtedly play a role, such as lifestyle, environment and the ability to pay for medicines and treatment.

4.2.3 Gender

Although the constitution of Mongolia and other related laws state that every citizen has a right to participate in the democratic process of nation building and management, there is less participation of women than men at the political or decision-making level. According to the Mongolian Foundation for the Empowerment of Rural Women, during the transition years women's participation at political and administrative levels has decreased considerable compared to the previous political system. The statistics below are provided by the Foundation.

The National Program on Advancement of Women was approved in 1996 to eliminate this disparity and set a target whereby women would be represented by at least 20% at national and local administrative levels by the year 2000, but this goal is not being met to date. As of 2000, the participation of women is as follows:

- 11.8% of Parliament members
- 4.5% of head of aimag and city's elected councils
- 12.9% of aimag and city's elected council representatives
- 13% of head of soum elected councils

- 25% of soum council representatives

There is no female government member, or aimag and city governor. 2% of vice ministers, 16% of head of ministry departments and 3.3% of sum or district governors are female. These figures are from the Foundation for the Empowerment of Rural Women.

In the educational sphere the bias is reversed, with more women and girls engaged in education than men and boys. This is noticeable particularly with school dropouts, where about 60% are boys. At the tertiary level, the ratio of women to men has been 3:1 since the 1990s, according to an official of MOSTEC. In terms of literacy, official statistics indicate slightly higher literacy rates for men. However, evidence of adult literacy courses conducted by the learning centres we visited shows that the prevailing pattern is either almost equal numbers of men and women, or a slightly higher number of men who have enrolled. Thus the gender proportion of learners involved in the literacy or educational equivalency training is fairly balanced with 2 – 3% more male participants. This is an indication of the desire of men to catch up on their basic education.

In terms of education generally, both schooling and adult learning, men and boys have been the disadvantaged group. This situation developed during the 1990s and school systems deteriorated, particularly for herder families, and as more male labour was required to look after family herds, both men and boys. In the early 1990s, the perception of herders was that wealth lay in increasing animal herds, so school was unnecessary for boys particularly. The devastation of some families' herds by dzud has changed this outlook. With the gradual restoration of the school system and generally the more hopeful future outlook, parents are once again giving high value to the education of their children and the gender balance is being addressed.

In terms of the LfL project, this evaluation showed that over 60% of all learners were female, with little variation for different parts of the country. This is an indication of the great concern of women to gain competencies and skills which can be of direct and practical benefit to them and their families. There seems also to be a greater sense of organisation and communal action/activity among women as compared to men. This leads more women to be involved in the project as part of the group dynamic. In order to encourage greater participation by men, Bayankhongor aimag organised a meeting for five men from each soum, with lectures on the dangers of tobacco and alcohol, as well as a museum visit and concert.

On the whole, the availability of data was patchy for the purposes of disaggregating certain aspects of the LfL project by gender. Data were not available, for instance, for income generation by gender, and the evaluation team worked on the basis of observation, questioning and discussion. As a result, it was clear that women were assiduous in applying their learning in order first to meet the needs of their families (improved diet, clothing and shoes, etc) and then to generate income. Some of the individual and collective examples presented in this report indicate the extent to which LfL was a factor in improving women's lives.

There is therefore a discrepancy between the participation of women and girls in education and their participation in decision-making. Traditional patterns of male domination in society mean that women are vastly under-represented in leadership positions of all kinds, both absolutely and when compared to their educational and professional level. As more women than men are progressing to higher education and further qualifications, there will increasingly be a gap between competence and position unless more women are recruited into leadership. They are not fully utilised and remain thus far a largely untapped resource.

Nevertheless, it is worth noting that within the sphere of non-formal and distance education, not only was the LfL project director a woman, but women currently head the national NFDE Centre and the MOSTEC NFDE office. In addition, there are many women’s organisations and pressure groups at work.

Overall the impact on gender was the following:

- new opportunities for women to provide for the needs of their families through learning new skills and self-made products, and through income generation;
- greater self-confidence in learning and taking initiative, for instance in running a micro enterprise;
- providing the basis for a more equitable distribution of income-generating work between women and men.

4.2.4 Governance

Two topics on governance issues were included in the project, with textbooks on ‘Human rights and local self-governance’ and ‘Civics’. These were accompanied by three and two radio broadcasts respectively. Virtually no mention was made of these topics by methodologists or learners in their presentations to the evaluators or in subsequent discussion. It seems that the topic was received as information, rather than as something which required action. One reason for this is that the books have quickly gone out of date as the laws have changed since they were written. However, the way the project was structured provided opportunity for developing governance practices, and in one aimag the topic of human rights was further developed.

As indicated earlier in Figure 1, LfL set up coordinating committees at national, aimag, soum and bag level, more frequently known as commissions. These began to function early in the project and brought together the political, administrative and professional/technical leadership of the entity, typically as follows:

Aimag	Soum	Bag
Governor	Governor	Governor
Education Centre Director	Leaders/representatives of elected councils	Leaders/representatives of elected councils
Head of Social Policy Dept	NGO representatives	School Director
Head of Health Dept	NFE methodologist	Kindergarten Director
Head of Labour Service	Other soum departments	NFE methodologist
NFE methodologist		
Financial officer		
NGO representatives		

Commissions were composed of five to nine members and had the following functions, depending on the level:

- Sensitising leadership at their own and lower levels, and organising support
- Planning and discussing subsequent phases
- Receiving reports and monitoring progress

- Making financial support available
- Selecting personnel (methodologists, visiting teachers) and learner families.

In Bayankhongor each member of the aimag commission had responsibility for the work in three soums. Training for aimag commission members was held in Ulaan Baatar, and for lower levels in the region concerned. Commissions set their own pattern of work and meetings.

In the Darkhan-Uul aimag the methodologist placed special emphasis on the human rights aspect of education by organising training on the ethical role of teachers for the directors of primary schools. While this was not a direct result of the LfL project, it reinforced the perception of the value of education as something to which everyone has a right.

It was not possible to assess how far the governance structures of the LfL project, or the limited human rights initiative had an impact on the development of democratic participation or processes. Apart from increasing cooperation across services and leaders at each level through the commissions, existing patterns of governance have evolved on the basis of broader political processes, leading, for instance, to the introduction of decentralised systems. Of course, this begs the larger question of how governance in Mongolia should change. At this point, the contribution of LfL has been to inform and sensitise people to some of the issues involved.

4.2.5 Literacy

According to the population census of 2000, 97.8% of the Mongolian population are literate – 98% of men and 97.5% of women. A rather precise number of 34,011 illiterates over the age of 15 was given at that time. It is estimated that three times as many people may be illiterate in rural areas as in urban areas. Mongolia's literacy data are self-reported and use four categories: illiterate, semi-literate, literate and functionally literate. These are based on self-declaration and are not defined by objective criteria. A more recent survey in 2002 among soldiers established that as many as 37% are illiterate (MOSTEC 2003b). One of the key issues to address is the definition of what it means to be literate, and Mongolia will participate in the Literacy Assessment and Monitoring Programme (LAMP) in its pilot phase.

Literacy was listed among the objectives of the project in the proposal as one of the areas in which learners would acquire basic knowledge. In the planning and implementation of the project, however, literacy acquisition was not part of the instructional aims. On the contrary, basic levels of literacy were assumed and were in fact a pre-condition for participation in basic distance learning through the LfL project. The registered learners, both in core families and in learner families, were to be those whose educational level was higher than other family members. In the case of core families, the member with the highest level of education was generally selected as the registered learner. Thus registered learners would model commitment to education and its benefits.

At the time of the start of the project there was little recognition in official circles that literacy might be a problem, although the project team was aware that this was the case. Since the problem had emerged during the transition period, there were almost no data available on the real situation. The team took literacy issues into account in selecting topics for the self-study texts and in designing their methodology and content, seeking to assess how far they would affect the implementation of the project.

Literacy issues surfaced in the LfL project in at least two ways:

- Some learners had difficulty using the textbooks – in most cases this was a problem of the use of literacy, particularly for learning purposes, as

commented on, for example, by one of the Ulaan Baatar district methodologists. In other words, most learners experiencing difficulties had acquired literacy at some point through schooling, but were not in the habit of using it. There were also problems with learners who had not progressed beyond Grade 4 schooling, so their general educational levels were not sufficient for participating in self-study and the programme. As a result a report on literacy was commissioned, but was not available to the evaluators.

- Some of the self-study booklets were developed specially for readers with low levels of literacy. At first the team debated creating a two-level set of materials, on the same topics but for different levels of readers, but this was unrealistic in terms of time and money available.
- Literacy was a concern of the NFE methodologists involved in the programme. It was in fact part of their role (strictly speaking outside of the LfL project) to assess literacy levels among the population and to organise literacy instruction for those who needed it. Thus literacy was a natural part of their promotion of adult learning.

Towards the end and since the end of the LfL project, literacy attracted more attention from the government, as part of its engagement with the UN Literacy Decade and as evidence grew that there was a real problem of illiteracy to be faced. It should not be forgotten that Mongolia took the lead in presenting the relevant resolution to the UN General Assembly. Literacy surveys were carried out in a number of locations in 2002, for example in Uvurkhangai and Bayankhongor aimags and Tariat soum (Arkhangai aimag) by NFE methodologists:

- In Uvurkhangai aimag the soums did a survey in connection with the Literacy Decade and found a total of 1300 illiterate people (58% male and 42% female). The aimag education department did another in 2003 and found 1900 illiterates, using a different counting method.
- In Bayankhongor aimag 945 illiterate adults were inventoried (60% male) and plans made to give them literacy instruction during 2003 (459 people) and 2004 (the remainder). This will include reading and writing Mongolian, maths, literature and nature studies over a 45-day period for 250 – 310 hours. The programme will use school textbooks.
- In Tariat soum the NFE methodologist (now retired) established the following data, based on population registration data and his own investigations. He established the category 'low level of literacy' by carrying out testing himself:

Table 9: Literacy survey in Tariat soum (2002)

Category	Number of people
Total population of soum	5607
With higher education	62
Completed vocational training	95
Completed 10 years' schooling	482
Completed compulsory ed (8 years)	1036
Completed primary education	1993
Low level of literacy	514
Illiterate	134
Aged 0 – 7	1228
Total for which data available	5544

It is clear from this table that proxy indicators of levels of schooling have been used for the largest part of the population. This is problematic at least for those with only primary schooling, and may be also for those with compulsory education. Participation in the LAMP pilot phase should address these ambiguities by looking at actual literacy use.

What was the impact of the LfL project on literacy?

- LfL was not set up to address basic literacy and so had no systematic way of tackling it. There was also a lack of information in Mongolia about its own literacy levels. Having said that, lack of literacy skills was not a major obstacle in the Mongolian situation. Where the problem was one of learning habits or study skills, visiting teachers worked with learners to improve them.
- LfL showed up the lack of literacy **use**, but in fact gave people to chance to increase their literacy use by providing books and developing self-learning with the support of radio. The amount of reading materials, including newspapers, available to rural families diminished in the mid to late 1990s. Sometimes the Learning for Life materials were the main source of reading materials for some families.
- The network of methodologists, trained in the principles of adult learning, is now available for the literacy instruction which the NFDE Centre organises in summer schools, using a new literacy and numeracy textbook designed for adults, funded in part by UNESCO. Similarly the network of learning centres enables learners to access written resources and to continue learning beyond basic literacy.

Mongolia has now instituted summer literacy campaigns, using the national network of NFE learning centres and instructors trained through the LfL project (methodologists or visiting teachers) or primary school teachers. Not all the methodologists have been trained in literacy development and facilitation, and some former teachers use similar methods to those used in schools. Through a further small UNESCO project, the NFDE Centre has published in 2003 a new literacy and numeracy textbook, replacing a less well designed pocket primer. In addition, Orkhon NFE Centre produced a small alphabet book, and a Korean NGO developed a literacy primer. The summer campaigns aim to reach all non-literate adults and school dropouts over two to three years (2003 – 2005).

In comparison with other developing countries, Mongolia has only a small literacy problem which the government appears determined to tackle. As in all countries, developed and developing, the question of literacy use is an ongoing one – further investment in adult learning is a way to promote this.

4.2.6 Schooling

The project proposal document foresaw the acquisition of basic knowledge on ‘how to teach dropout pupils and educate pre-school children’. Such knowledge should be used in a family learning environment to give new opportunities for school dropouts and pre-school children. In both cases the reasons for the problem were linked to the dislocation of education system caused by the socio-political transition. As mentioned earlier, in 2002 10.3% of children were not enrolled in school, most of whom were dropouts. As far as pre-school children are concerned, Mongolia consistently increased its pre-school provision under the socialist regime, but in the transition period pre-school institutions faced financial problems and some had to close. In 1990, 1993 and 2002 the situation was as follows:

Table 10: Evolution of pre-school enrolment in Mongolia

	1990	1993	2002
Number of kindergartens	909	723	665
Number of children enrolled in pre-school	97 200	59 900	83 600

While the situation is now improving, the figures show that it is with the consequence of larger groups/classes. It is not clear what percentage of the pre-school population is currently enrolled.

In examining the LfL project, it was important to understand how far it met the objective originally established and, more broadly, to assess what impact it had on education as a whole. This could be observed both through the activities associated with the project and through the attitudes of learners and other stakeholders.

The LfL approach to pre-school education was a holistic one, based on the role of the family in bringing up children. The family learning programme included five topics on child development and care:

- Family and child (textbook and 13 radio programmes)
- Children’s health (textbook and 6 radio programmes)
- Child development (textbook and 4 radio programmes)
- Pre-school children (textbook and 5 radio programmes)
- Child development (textbook only)

According to learners in various locations, parents, particularly mothers, have begun to try out new activities with their pre-school children, and in some areas the methodologists have facilitated cooperative arrangements among parents. In Erdenesant (Tuv aimag) 250 children are registered in such a scheme.

Both the youth business component and the family learning component were designed to offer opportunities to school dropouts, particularly those squeezed out of the system during the transition period. Methodologists in almost all aimags and soums had statistics on school dropouts and used them to identify and seek to include potential learners. As the survey in Tariat soum shows (see Table 9 above), attempts were made to document the educational status of the population. Even where such surveys were not carried out, methodologists kept records of the educational status of the learners, although those data have not been collated at

national level. The direct impact of LfL on school dropouts was to offer them new (or renewed) learning opportunities, resulting in the kinds of productive activity detailed above.

Many NFE learning centres provided literacy instruction, and this enabled some dropouts were able to re-enter formal education and finish their basic education. This is a central concern and core function of the learning centres, although not an integral part of the LfL project. Nevertheless, as mentioned earlier with regard to literacy, the training and capacity-building undertaken in LfL has also enhanced the quality of literacy provision. Darkhan-Uul aimag reported that 90 dropouts had re-entered school after literacy training, and in Erdene soum (Tuv aimag) LfL picked up school dropouts, eight of whom have since completed secondary school. Alongside literacy instruction, learners were simultaneously able to access training using the LfL topics and textbooks. In this way they acquired new skills and gained confidence in their ability to learn (see box below).

The LfL project has had a less tangible but nevertheless real impact on attitudes to education in Mongolia. It has demonstrated that education is for everyone, whatever their age, and that it is lifelong process. Previously education was considered to be a matter of school, for children. NFE methodologists mentioned repeatedly how adult learning, based on self-study, was a new concept. It took time to take hold, and learners needed to acquire new tools for learning. Because LfL was nationwide and available over the radio, the impact has been felt widely, even among those not directly involved in the project.

It is much more difficult, however, to assess the impact of the LfL project on school enrolment. Has the increased value given to education as a result of the project led to the observed improvement in school enrolments? While it may be one factor, there are many others. An important factor is the stronger development of the market economy, with a range of new employment opportunities opening up. As parents observe these trends, they are more likely to send their children to school to obtain the qualifications which employers require.

In summary, the LfL project supported schooling by:

- Strengthening early childhood care and education, thus improving children's readiness for school
- Enabling a significant number of dropouts to return to school to complete the compulsory education cycle
- Giving opportunities for dropouts to raise their levels of learning and develop new learning habits, in lieu of the schooling they missed;
- Contributing to raising the value of education for all in the eyes of parents and communities, thus strengthening the current trend of rising enrolment.

Back into school...

In Arvaikheer soum (Uvurkhangai aimag) the NFE methodologist, Ms Badamgerel, introduced the evaluators to two teenage girls who had dropped out of school. One, who had dropped out of 6th grade, had had an accident in the family, with her brother requiring expensive treatment. With her father making a small living as a welder and her mother without any income, this meant a drain on family resources, with no money for shoes and other school necessities. In addition, the girl was needed to help look after younger members of the family at this difficult time.

The second girl dropped out of 5th grade because she found it too difficult to attend school away from her family. Her parents lived in the countryside and she lodged with another family in town, but the separation and circumstances were too hard for her. Her family has since moved into the aimag centre.

These girls were drawn back into learning through the NFE learning centre and they were able to learn embroidery and make bags. With renewed confidence in their own abilities and the encouragement of the methodologist, they have now re-entered school and expect to complete the full 10 years of formal schooling.

4.3 Policy

“The LfL project has left Mongolia in a different place with regard to non-formal and distance education” – these were the words of Mr Mishigjav, State Secretary of MOSTEC. This sums up the impact of the project on the government’s policy towards NFDE. As indicated earlier, the first policy was adopted only in 1997, based on the experiences of the GWP, but without the benefit of a national NFDE programme. The LfL project came at a time when policy formulation was in its initial stages and before full decisions about implementation had been taken.

As part of the 1997 policy, the National Non-Formal Education Centre was established, and it immediately developed a multi-year national non-formal education programme (1997- 2004). This focused on upstream objectives, such as establishing a structure, developing content and strategy, putting in place trained human resources. The scope was national, and the educational objectives included raising the adult literacy rate, giving opportunity for individuals to improve their educational level, as well as to re-train for productive work and poverty alleviation through vocational education. Developing habits of self-learning and creativity also figured among the objectives.

It should be noted that the LfL project does not appear as part of the national non-formal education programme and is not mentioned in the relevant document. This is because the project lay outside the structure of the Non-Formal Education Centre, for reasons that were felt to be compelling at the time and were partly due to the newness of the Centre at the time the project was being planned and implemented. Nevertheless, the document emphasises cooperation with other agencies, including UNESCO.

In spite of structural separation, the LfL project was de facto the vehicle for the implementation of the national policy between 1997 and 2001. This is the import of the State Secretary’s words cited above. This impacted the policy debate in three crucial ways:

- It gave non-formal and distance education a national profile, raising awareness of its potential and of how a programme might be structured. Building on the experience of the GWP, it particularly demonstrated the relevance of distance education for Mongolia. This enabled the policy debate

to take place at all levels, broadening it to include the educational professionals involved in the project and the political and administrative leaders in the various places of implementation.

- It gave opportunity for direct input to policy-makers through policy workshops on distance education held in Mongolia and Bangkok, backed up by discussions with the project's director and consultant.
- In implementing government policy in non-formal education, in a distance education mode, it showed that such a programme was feasible and demonstrated how such a system, with its various parts, would work. Since the project was effective in its aims, it raised the confidence of policy-makers to back further efforts.
- It put in place a national network of trained personnel and of learning centres, thus enabling policy-makers to be confident that any policies which might be promulgated had a good chance of being implemented in a professional way.

Parallel to the influence of the LfL project, the EFA movement became stronger, both internationally and in Mongolia. Some of the Dakar goals became priority for the Mongolian government, including the literacy and gender equality targets, as far as adult learning is concerned. Thus policy development reflects these new and greater EFA commitments.

All these factors led to new policy commitments in 2002 and 2003. In 2002 the national Non-Formal Education Centre became the national Non-Formal and Distance Education Centre, recognising structurally the value and the effectiveness of distance education as implemented through the LfL project. This led to the development of national distance education programme (2002 – 2010) – a comprehensive approach looking at the possibilities of distance education for learners of all ages, and using a range of delivery mechanisms. It includes, for example, examination of distance learning opportunities for formal and non-formal settings, for teachers, using radio, TV, computer-based or other means. This goes beyond the scope of the LfL project and would provide an over-arching framework for any further investment in adult non-formal basic distance education.

In 2003, NFDE policy was further specified in the shape of a ministerial order defining the statute of learning centres and the job descriptions of non-formal education methodologists and teachers. Thus the legal basis is firmly established for the 350+ learning centres which now exist and for the staff working in them. This consolidates the structures and roles which the LfL project promoted and equipped.

The city governor's office of Ulaan Baatar reported that the Youth Business Programme had a positive impact on policy development, because the programme offered a good structure, worked in partnership with NGOs and coordinated efforts with social workers. Motivation for education increased, partly as a result of the high investment in visiting learners and their families and mobilising people in the community. As a result of these positive experiences, the city developed an action plan (2001 – 2004) for non-formal education as an integral part of city-wide and district level planning.

Are these policies backed up with funds from the national budget? Currently the government funds the salaries of the NFE methodologists in about 380 soums/districts, and there is a general guideline that 1% of educational budgets at each level (national, aimag, soum, etc) should be devoted to non-formal education. This is currently not a legal requirement, and, as indicated in Section 5.3, is not universally applied, though sometimes exceeded. Local budgets and partnerships with NGOs are further sources of funding. Future plans at MOSTEC include adding

to the NFDE national budget the costs of teachers, of their transportation and of programme expenses.

There is today a positive policy framework for NFDE in Mongolia, backed by the structures, personnel and networks which can make the policy work. Political commitment on the part of the MOSTEC is strong, with NFDE being seen as one of the key elements for the realisation of EFA in the country. Budget allocations remain low, but are nevertheless integrated into ongoing educational provision and may increase somewhat. In view of the demonstrated usefulness and effectiveness of NFDE in the Mongolian context, the government's policy and implementation efforts deserve further international support.

4.4 Capacity

Until the advent of the LfL project, Mongolia had developed capacity in non-formal and distance education through a number of specialised projects, including the GWP, a DANIDA teacher education project, and a UNICEF-sponsored project for primary teachers. LfL was the first nation-wide project which gave opportunity for developing more systematic capacity in those fields. Thus LfL specifically aimed at the development of capacity, as a means of building sustainability in distance and non-formal education in Mongolia. The project proposal document stated that the project would 'create functional capacities' in:

- Distance education planning
- The pedagogical design of distance education materials using combinations of various media
- Production of materials for distance education in a creative and skilled manner
- Evaluation of distance education interventions
- System design and management

It is pertinent therefore, as part of an impact evaluation, to ask how far these capacities are now in place. They are grouped here under five headings: adult education personnel, materials development, training, infrastructure, and management.

4.4.1 NFDE personnel

The trained NFDE personnel represent the backbone of the LfL project and the key to its sustainable impact. Visiting teachers, NFE methodologists and the central project team make up the bulk of human resources available during and after the project.

Visiting teachers: there are no national statistics for the number of visiting teachers who operated during the LfL project, however the internal evaluation report gives a figure of 775, active in 16 aimags in the second phase of the family learning programme. The lowest number was 7 (in Baganuur district) and the highest 115 (in Bayankhongor aimag). Trained by soum or bag NFE methodologists, visiting teachers were largely unpaid volunteers, working part-time, or as the workload demanded. They are often the professionals of the soum – doctors, accountants, teachers, for example. They represent a resource to facilitate adult learning on the ground and have gained valuable experience. Since the end of the project, they have been largely lost, since the learning programme is no longer proceeding in a systematic manner nationwide. Some aimags reported that a percentage of visiting teachers is still at work, while Uvurkhongor aimag reported that all are still working, with further training for them being planned.

NFE methodologists: it is one of the key achievements of the LfL project that trained NFE methodologists are in place in every aimag centre (21 plus Ulaan Baatar), every soum (350) and some bags. These methodologists were not in place in 1997 at the start of the project, except in the GWP aimags. The government is now committed to funding these as specific and permanent posts. Most, but not all methodologists are full-time.

They come from a variety of backgrounds, with many having been teachers at some point. The aimag methodologists were trained at national workshops and they in turn trained soum-level personnel. Through this training, the project succeeded to a large extent to move methodologists into an adult educator mode, assisting in self-directed learning and providing resources, rather than direct teaching.

Besides the training of visiting teachers, their duties include managing the learning centre and its use by the community, facilitating the production of local learning materials by learners, visiting teachers or local experts, keeping records and monitoring the programme, visiting learner families, promoting the programme with local leadership, and liaising with the national NFDE Centre.

Profile of a methodologist

About 30 years old, the NFE methodologist of Arvaikheer soum in Uvurkhangai aimag was previously a teacher. She studied at the State Pedagogical University and taught history and society in a secondary school for one year. She also studied at the Institute of Administration in Ulaan Baatar. She has been a methodologist for four years.

Why did she choose to do this work? She likes the breadth of subjects and lifeskills which are involved, and enjoys networking with a large number of people.

Having said earlier that every soum has a trained methodologist, that was the case at the end of the project. However, since then, changes of government have resulted in turnover in personnel, and a number of new methodologists have been appointed who did not benefit from LfL input. If non-formal education, let alone distance learning, is to continue to thrive throughout Mongolia, as is the government's policy and intention, the issue of the training of new methodologists must be urgently addressed. The momentum created by LfL may otherwise be lost in certain regions.

Central project team: the central project team consisted of nine people, as follows:

- Project director
- Two Learning support officers
- Coordinator
- Radio coordinator
- Editor
- Layout designer
- Accountant
- Driver

Most were new to non-formal and distance education, and to adult learning, at the start of the project, except for four who had participated regionally in the GWP. In addition a UNESCO Associate Expert joined the team for part of the life of the project, and a regular NFDE staff member worked part-time with the project. Although not formally a member of the team, the role of Professor Bernadette

Robinson was crucial to the building of the capacity of the team. Visiting several times a year and giving input through workshops, she laid the basis for a consistent professional approach. Other consultants also gave workshop input, such as a radio specialist. As indicated with reference to the methodologists, the key to the capacity of the team was a thorough understanding of how non-formal and distance education functions, what its components are and how the whole can be managed. Professor Robinson's input was crucial, apposite and well received – she was recognised for her contribution by the award of a Mongolian national medal of honour. Her own assessment of the capacity of the central project team is that they moved a long way in their learning, both technically and in the management of the project. They also learnt to work to high standards, for instance in the quality of production of materials. She considered the team to be one of the most capable and committed of any project she had worked on across many countries, and the project director, Ms Ts. Undrakh, to be highly effective.

Among the members of the team there now exists, therefore, a pool of expertise in the various aspects of NFDE. How is this currently being used and what further expertise exists? The members of the project team are currently employed as follows:

Table 11: Current roles of Learning for Life project team members

Team member	Current role	Currently active in NFDE/adult learning?
Director	Representative, UNIFEM Mongolia	No
Learning support officer 1	Directing UNESCO adolescent NFDE project	Yes
Learning support officer 2	Developing regional NGO in NFE, plus part-time work	Yes, but minimally
Coordinator	Coordinator in UNESCO adolescent NFDE project	Yes
Radio coordinator	Providing radio programmes for the UNESCO adolescent project and for the NFE Centre	Yes
Editor	Contract work for UNESCO adolescent NFDE project, other editorial work	Yes, part-time
Layout designer	Family responsibilities	No
Accountant	Accountant to UNESCO adolescent NFDE project	Yes
Driver	Driver for National NFDE Centre	Yes

About half of the professional staff are still involved in NFDE in some way, largely through the UNESCO project on distance learning for adolescents (see Section 5.4). However, this project will come to an end in early 2004, posing further question marks over the future of these trained personnel. In addition, the national NFDE Centre has some trained personnel, in non-formal education, and in the preparation of distance learning TV programmes though they have not received as much training as members of the project team.

The LfL project made a significant contribution to developing human resources in NFDE. There is a real danger that this capacity will be lost if not harnessed again soon for further investment in NFDE and adult learning.

4.4.2 Materials development

As a distance learning project, LfL needed to develop both print and radio materials. Apart from those trained in the GWP, there was no expertise at the start of the project in the design and production of distance learning materials. In terms of the process of designing the 29 texts and the accompanying radio programmes, a number of new skills were required: conception of the materials for distance learning and self-study specifically, high-quality production in both print and radio, integration of print with radio, and the development of materials which were centrally produced but had local relevance. This capacity was built at national level and involved a number of different groups of people. As a result, the capacity of the following groups was enhanced in the following ways:

- Technical subject-matter experts: for each topic LfL called on subject-matter specialists who worked more or less closely with the central project team. Some merely provided technical information as input. Those who worked in close cooperation and participated in workshops run by Professor Bernadette Robinson became familiar with the structure and the educational approach of distance learning materials. Those interviewed for this evaluation listed the following aspects: how to deliver content in a simple way, the use of practical exercises and illustrations, emphasising learning outcomes and their assessment, an appropriate approach for self-study as opposed to classroom use. The materials introduced a more learner-centred approach than was usual in Mongolian textbooks and aimed to generate active learning, guiding learners in applying the new knowledge they learned.
- Staff of the national and regional radio stations: at national level five staff of the Mongol Radio and TV (MRTV) were assigned to the project and collaborated closely in designing, producing and delivering the radio programmes. A training workshop was held for each phase of the project, covering five to seven topics at a time and deciding on the structure of programming for each one. Once again, there was no previous capacity in this field, so many aspects required the acquisition of new skills. Chief among these was the move from a lecture type of broadcast to a more lively, interesting, yet simple and straightforward style and the introduction of a magazine format, field interviews and programmes made outside the studio on location. This involved learning how to use drama and interview and how to approach the programme from the adult learner's point of view. To this end, surveys among listeners, as well as unsolicited feedback from them in the form of listeners' letters, provided input and a monitoring tool.

Radio staff from the regional level also attended national workshops and developed local programmes for the various topics (see Table 12 below). Where local capacity to make radio programmes exists, it is as a result of the LfL project. The LfL internal evaluation report lists ten trained 'programme developers' in eight regional radio stations. The amount of broadcasting provided by local radio stations was limited only by the regulations of Mongol Radio and by financial constraints. Local radio is still an underused resource as a consequence of these two constraints.

At a local level NFE methodologists received training on material design and production, as one component of the courses they attended. This resulted in locally produced booklets, leaflets and other materials by the methodologists themselves,

by learners and others. However, these were produced on a small scale (see section 5.1) and were of limited distribution though with high local relevance. Since the end of the project, this capacity has largely lain dormant, with very little activity in local production, partly because of financial constraints, partly because of the reduction in non-formal education activities. This speaks of the need further to develop this capacity if it is to become sustainable.

4.4.3 Training

In terms of overall project impact, the important question is whether there is now adequate capacity in Mongolia to continue training at all levels and in all aspects of NFDE and adult learning. The availability of trainers of trainers (TOT) will be essential to long-term sustainability. At this stage, it appears that sufficient expertise exists to train methodologists in their duties, to train writers of materials and makers of radio programmes. There is also the capacity to build awareness through workshops and sensitisation events for the political and administrative leadership.

On the other hand, it is less clear that there are adequate trainers of trainers. This is partly due to the fact that some of the expertise has now dispersed. A further factor is the relatively little attention given during the LfL project to further professional development, in terms of equipping project team members with higher qualifications, and enabling them to participate in international debates in conferences and other fora. Any further investment in NFDE should include a clear plan to build further training (TOT) capacity, in the context of the now restructured national NFDE Centre.

Meanwhile, some training continues at various levels, as aimag and soum methodologists are able to find resources to organise it, for example:

- National level: training session for aimag methodologists in May 2003.
- Darkhan-Uul aimag: local training three times/year, regional training twice/year.
- Uvurkhangaï aimag: four training courses for visiting teachers (but not possible to organise at soum level).
- Bayankhongor aimag: training of methodologists in literacy instruction.

However, the paucity of information is an indication that many training activities did not continue after the end of the project because of lack of funding. The national NFDE Centre has included human resource development and capacity-building in its central actions but it lacks sufficient funds to do much of this. It is likely that some external input will be required to reach a sustainable level of TOT, and this should be included in any further investment in the sector.

4.4.4 Infrastructure

Part of the capacity to deliver non-formal distance education lies in the infrastructure, such as learning centres and radio stations.

Learning Centres: LfL set up these resource centres in every aimag and soum, with the encouragement to establish them also at bag level. In every location visited as part of the evaluation we visited the learning centre. They function in the following ways:

- As a repository and library of NFE, DE and other adult learning resources, which are available to learners. Some centres have computer, video and TV facilities.
- As a reference point for learners where they can consult the methodologist on learning issues.

- As a production centre, where methodologists, visiting teachers, learners, local experts and others can work on new publications. Aimag centres are generally equipped with document processing and reproduction facilities.
- As an archive, where data on NFDE are collected, collated, stored and displayed.
- As a display and information centre, where charts, maps, lists, principles and maxims, photographs and other records are publicly displayed for visitors to look at.
- As a seminar, workshop and meeting centre for training and sensitisation events, and for face-to-face meetings for learners.

The centres are managed by the NFE methodologists who see it as their principal place of work. Centres are located mostly in schools and administrative buildings and give NFDE a presence in the community. School directors in Bumbugur soum and Secondary School no.3 in the aimag centre (both Bayankhongor aimag) saw advantages to having the centre located in the school:

- It builds community participation in the school.
- Children see their parents learning and the products they have made.
- Children use the centre, thus providing a link between formal and non-formal education.
- Adults become more connected with the education of their children.
- It provided a community venue for the product fair organised twice during each phase of the family learning programme.

In Erdenet (Orkhon aimag) there is an autonomous Non-formal Education Centre, the only one of its kind in Mongolia, established in December 2000. It has a director and nine teachers and coordinates the work of a further five learning centres over the urban area of Erdenet. The existence of such a centre clearly gives a higher profile to NF(D)E and the question arises whether this should serve as a model for other parts of the country. It may be that this kind of structure is more suited to the less geographically spread nature of an urban area, rather than to rural areas. The national NFDE Centre should take up this question as part of its ongoing strategy development.

The existing network of learning centres (and the administrative structures supporting them) represents a huge capacity – as base from which to plan the local implementation and further development of NFDE. They have the potential to become even more of a community resource where local culture and knowledge are celebrated, documented and shared. If coupled with further training for methodologists, as indicated above, and linked closely with local radio stations, they could serve as the base sustaining local NFDE and as a relay point for national initiatives.

Radio stations: besides Mongol Radio broadcasting from Ulaan Baatar, LfL used eight regional radio stations, five of which we visited during this evaluation. The following table gives details and indicates in what ways the stations have continued to produce educational programmes after the end of the LfL project:

Table12: Role of five regional radio stations

Radio station (aimag)	Coverage	Local programmes made in LfL	Current status
Darkhan-Uul	FM, local urban/peri-urban area	125 programmes	making some ed programmes with NFE methodologist
Dornod	30 soums of Dornod, Sukhbaatar and Khentii aimags, plus Altanemeel in China	44 programmes on 13 topics	making a few programmes on health/AIDS issues
Dornogobi	10 out of 14 soums in aimag	66 programmes	making regular ed programmes
Gobi Altai	AM, 5 western aimags (60 soums)	85 programmes	regular health advocacy programme; 6-month coop with USAID
Orkhon	FM, up to 50 km, 16 bags	100+ programmes	drawing on LfL materials to make some new ed programmes

LfL set up the Darkhan-Uul and Orkhon stations and contributed equipment to the others. This equipment is still in use in all locations. The status of the stations is quite diverse. For example, the Gobi Altai station is basically a re-transmission station for Mongol Radio, with only two hours local programming per day. The more urban Darkhan-Uul and Orkhon stations only broadcast local material and are part of the aimag education department. The Dornod station has been privatised. While the government has adopted a policy of liberalising radio, there is still quite some difficulty to obtain the necessary permissions and cooperation; this created problems for LfL in the beginning, as did the very late arrival of the radio equipment in Darkhan-Uul and Orkhon.

Currently, the Orkhon station claimed that 40% of its current programming is educational, but this is unlikely as it was only 60% at the height of the LfL project. Most of the stations make heavy use of music and all of them offer local news programmes. Educational programmes (see table above) are made by the station personnel, with the assistance of the local NFE methodologist, and sometimes in cooperation with other organisations.

In terms of sustainable radio capacity NFDE, the current situation is mixed:

- The radio **hardware** provided by LfL is still in use and provides the essential equipment for the stations to continue to broadcast. Some of this equipment is now dated and showing signs of age, being difficult to maintain and supply with spare parts. Only the Darkhan-Uul station had invested in upgraded equipment – a computer-link system to pipe radio lessons into all schools and kindergartens of the aimag.
- The radio **personnel** trained in NFDE programming by LfL is still largely in place and available for making educational programmes. This may change over time, and some re-training and updating would be necessary to maximise their potential.
- The systematic **educational programming** instituted by the LfL project has come to a stop and been replaced by ad hoc creation of programmes which

are neither linked to a national programme nor related to each other. Nowhere were the LfL programmes continuing to be broadcast, although the child development series was re-broadcast in Orkhon in 2002.

There is in effect no coherent use of radio for distance learning currently. Although the national NFDE Centre has a radio studio (and indeed also a video studio), it does not currently have the funding or the necessary personnel to mount a national distance education initiative which would use radio. Cooperation with the Mongol Radio team trained by LfL is a possibility, but neither institution has the budget to make programmes, let alone coordinate them with new print materials and the other necessary elements of NFDE. The Mongol Radio team created by LfL is unique in Mongolia; all of the members have earned national awards for the quality of their work. They have also developed good teamwork and are highly creative. They are a sadly under-used resource at present. LfL has left the various component parts in place, most crucially the human resources; these cannot be used to good advantage without adequate financial backing.

4.4.5 Management

Establishing management capacity was an explicit aim of LfL as a key strategy in building sustainability beyond the life of the project. How far did this happen? The key management functions were exercised at national and aimag levels, although that is not to deny the management role of methodologists at soum level also.

At the aimag level, the NFE methodologists managed the learning centres, the soum methodologists, training, monitoring and links with the radio stations. In addition, a key management function was to liaise with administrative and political authorities in order to raise their awareness and understanding of NFDE and solicit their support. While the style and quality of management differed from place to place, it is clear that the management processes were effective in establishing the networks, structures, relationships and support for the effective implementation of LfL throughout the country. The central project team was instrumental in developing such an effective administrative system and gave consistent support to the aimags. Feedback from methodologists at aimag and soum levels showed that they appreciated the support given by the central team whose visits were occasions of review, planning and learning. As far as the evaluators could tell, there was a harmonious and mutually supportive relationship between the centre and aimags/soums, where plenty of space was given – indeed encouraged – for local creativity and resourcefulness.

At national level, information from the project team showed that clear management structures were put in place and professional processes were established. The project director showed herself to be a learner and a good manager of people. This led to a pro-active style of leadership based on communication, the promotion of teamwork and the building of mutually supportive relationships. This applied not only to the small central team, but also to the larger team of aimag and soum methodologists. Over the five years of the project, the director visited about 290 of the 350 soums in Mongolia, with a further staff member doing almost the same. This face-to-face contact meant that supervision was effective, problems came to light quickly and easily and were dealt with. The central team responded particularly to those aimags and soums where problems arose or where progress was difficult or slow. The project director made it her aim to reach the national project targets and to build national potential as she did so. The project newspaper provided a means of reporting on aimag progress and of recognising the achievements of different places and people.

In the initial stages much of the planning took place during the workshops facilitated by Professor Bernadette Robinson. Designing the content of books and radio programmes, planning the various components and phases, planning how to

manage the whole – workshops not only provided content but also modelled approaches of teamwork and communication which could be used in subsequent planning.

A key element in the management of the project was the collection and use of project data. This evaluation showed that every methodologist kept records of participants, with personal data such as educational level, occupation, socio-economic status. They also recorded the numbers of families and learners involved in each phase and documented events, such as learner competitions and shows. Learning centre methodologists knew who the learners were, what they did, where the visiting teachers went and how often, and so on. However, some of this record-keeping was not consistent, with counting of families and learners being done in different ways, either cumulatively or discretely. This meant that aimag and national statistics could not be compiled systematically. Thus, while monitoring of personnel and of the quality of the programme reached high standards, the quantitative assessment did not provide a stable basis for evaluation.

Although the aim was to develop evaluation and research capacity, the project gave limited attention to this. This is understandable as sustained energy had to be put into setting up a national NFDE system more or less from scratch, and it would have been impossible to undertake research or evaluation when the concepts and practices of NFDE were themselves so new. The project carried out some ongoing monitoring, but did not turn this into systematic research findings. Areas monitored during the project included:

- Learning materials, according to a set of criteria, and revising them on the basis of their findings.
- Radio programmes in terms of numbers of listeners, quality of transmission, use by learners and feedback from listeners' letters.
- Tracer study of the first cohort of learners from the business programme.
- The methodologists evaluated the visiting teachers and what learners were learning, through visits and discussions with families.
- The regular reports provided by the aimags and centres to the central project team were used for monitoring and evaluation purposes, and as a management tool.

These processes formed an important part of the ongoing learning in the project and enabled the project team to keep track of developments and improve the management of the project. Research and evaluation are part of the unfinished agenda of the project. It would now be appropriate, in the context and with the support of the national NFDE Centre, to invest further in research and evaluation capacity as a key resource for sustainability.

4.4.6 The importance of capacity

The role of the LfL project in developing the capacity mentioned above is extremely important. Sustained work in non-formal education, with or without a distance component, for youth and adults (see section 5.3) is based fully on the capacity which LfL was able to build. While recognising the need for ongoing capacity-building, this capacity is well structured and bodes well for future work, as follows:

- Capacity was built in all the areas needed to design and implement a non-formal distance learning programme;
- Capacity was built at all levels: bag/soum, aimag and national levels;
- The combination of infrastructure (learning centres) and personnel (methodologists) provides a professional focal point on the ground, able to

network with other social actors (professionals, communities, organisations and government departments);

- The capacity exists for further investment and the implementation of further, and if need be larger, NF(D)E programmes; future funders have in Mongolia a basis for high-quality professional work in this area.

4.5 Partnerships

Any project of the scale and importance of LfL must necessarily connect with a variety of partners if it is to achieve its aims and to have maximum social impact. In particular, LfL developed partnerships at national and local levels, as well as the external partnership with UNESCO.

4.5.1 Partnership with UNESCO

The LfL project was developed in cooperation with UNESCO after the successful partnership in the GWP. LfL was a way to carry the lessons of the GWP forward and take them to scale at national level. UNESCO found and channelled funds from DANIDA to finance LfL, as well as being involved in ongoing aspects of the project, such as: identifying consultants and external expertise, planning, decision-making about investments (particularly equipment), monitoring progress through visits, arranging this evaluation. Two major questions are pertinent:

- How successful and effective was this partnership from the point of view of Mongolia and the project team?
- How effective and how appropriate was the partnership from the point of view of UNESCO structures and strategies?

The successful implementation of the LfL project, as documented in this report, is a testimony to the effectiveness of UNESCO's partnership in an overall sense, and Mongolian circles pay tribute to UNESCO for this achievement. MOSTEC officials, the national NFDE Centre, project team members, methodologists and others all spoke warmly of UNESCO's contribution, with thanks for the two initiatives of the GWP and LfL. The LfL project was branded as a UNESCO project, with the organisation's name and logo prominent on publications, reports, equipment, locales, notices, posters, and on stickers to be found wherever aspects of the project were implemented. Such branding was visible in all the locations we visited. The fact that it was publicly known as a UNESCO project undoubtedly enhanced its image and prestige. Interestingly, the profile of DANIDA, from whom the funds ultimately came, was very low, although officials and project team members in Ulaan Baatar were aware of DANIDA's role.

The assignment of an associate expert to the project played the role of direct liaison with UNESCO, since the person in effect took on the work of relay and communication with UNESCO Paris. She also provided a useful international perspective and input into the project and strengthened local capacity. Her contribution was much appreciated, and the local project leadership had hoped for her help in obtaining funds for the next phase of NFDE in Mongolia, had her contract been extended.

Nevertheless, in a project of this scope it was inevitable that a number of difficulties arose. We record here the perspective of the Mongolian team and we have not had opportunity, in the context of this evaluation, to put these comments to UNESCO or to obtain their perspective on these issues. These matters are to be understood, therefore, in terms of perceptions which may need to be balanced by other perceptions unavailable to the evaluators. Input from the project director and the team revealed three areas of difficulty: transfer of funds, decision-making, and communication.

- **Transfer of funds:** DANIDA funds channelled to the project by and through UNESCO almost always arrived late and sometimes very late. This not only made administrative difficulties and created more work for the project team, but it also meant late payment of salaries, with the discouragement and demotivating effect which that brings.
- **Decision-making:** it appears that some decisions were made in Paris when they would better have been made in Mongolia. The most egregious instance was the decision to set up radio stations in Darkhan-Uul and Orkhon, against the wishes of the project team and even though other radio stations already existed there. This was complicated by the ambiguous status and dubious functionality of these radio stations once they were established. The principle of local decision-making, after consultation with UNESCO in Paris, – rather than the other way round – would have been a more satisfactory approach. In the day-to-day running of the project, this principle was of course applied.
- **Communication:** the LfL project was administered directly by UNESCO in Paris, rather than by an Asian UNESCO office. Although LfL reported informally to the UNESCO office in Beijing (responsible for Mongolia where there is no UNESCO office), this was not part of the formal reporting relationship. UNESCO Beijing personnel visited the project on several occasions, but on an informal basis. The regional UNESCO office in Bangkok was not at all involved.

The project team were happy with the visits by UNESCO staff from Paris, for purposes of monitoring and keeping communication lines open. However, on the whole the feeling was that communication with Paris was too indirect and remote, in spite of the role of the associate expert in this regard. This was exacerbated in the late stages of the project by personnel changes in Paris, which meant that collective memory about the project in Paris was lost. In spite of a visit to UNESCO in Paris by the project director, with her consultant and on her own initiative, there was no follow-up or response from UNESCO to the Mongolian proposal for a further project. The project director concluded that it would be much more effective, in any further cooperation, to administer the project from within Asia.

The second major question addresses the appropriateness of such a partnership for UNESCO, or, put in other terms, was this kind of engagement in NFDE an area where UNESCO demonstrated a comparative advantage? NFDE is at the heart of EFA; the LfL project worked towards all six Dakar goals, directly or indirectly. In the early planning stages, the input of UNESCO staff was essential and started a process of capacity-building which took Mongolia into new areas of educational strategy. As documented in this report, the impact has been felt not only in terms of direct benefits to learners, but also in terms of establishing and integrating new policies on non-formal, distance and adult learning, along with the strategies and, crucially, the capacity to deliver those policies. UNESCO's mandate calls for the organisation to work with its member governments to develop relevant policies, to engage in the upstream work of structuring the environment so that EFA goals can be more vigorously and strategically pursued. While the bulk of the work was naturally undertaken by Mongolians themselves, with strong and increasing support from government, the role of UNESCO was significant in adding a whole policy dimension – that of adult learning and non-formal education – to educational planning in Mongolia. The project (and indirectly UNESCO) played a large role in the development of distance education policy in Mongolia.

It should be noted that this policy work depended on demonstrating the practical feasibility of NFDE in Mongolia. In other words, meetings and seminars about policy

directions and development would not, by themselves, have had the same effect. Policies are now in place because Mongolians have seen and experienced how to implement NFDE and what its benefits are. It seems, therefore, an entirely appropriate aspect of UNESCO's mandate for the organisation to exercise a leadership role in stimulating policy development through partnership in the implementation of a project such as this.

4.5.2 National-level partnerships

For reasons of clarity and efficiency, MOSTEC set the LfL project up as a distinct entity, rather than as a department of another institution. Practically, LfL was housed in the same building as the national NFE Centre (as it was at the time) and enjoyed a cooperative working relationship. The strongest manifestation of this was the de facto involvement in LfL of one of the centre's staff. Nevertheless, the project was administratively and financially separate. Beyond this practical working relationship, LfL did not develop broad partnerships at national level. Partnerships with international NGOs were not well developed, for lack of time, according to the project director. Cooperation with other UN agencies present in Ulaan Baatar was limited to joint work with UNICEF and UNFPA respectively on two textbooks. The UNDP Poverty Alleviation Programme provided some loans to learners from the Youth Business Programme – these were accessed directly, not through LfL.

It is interesting to note that the effectiveness of LfL did not seem to be constrained by this relative lack of partnerships at national level. Considering the number of domains and topics (health, nutrition, environment, ...) included in the project, it could have been helpful to create links with the ministries and departments responsible for those areas. Indeed, at the start of the project, a number of consultative meetings took place and collaboration was invited, if appropriate activities could be identified. The answer to this puzzle would appear to lie in the newness of the concept of NFDE in Mongolia. Other ministries and departments had never used NFDE as part of their strategies, nor was there provision for educational components aimed at adults. From the point of view of the project, there was very little that partnerships with other departments could have brought to the table at that stage by way of input or enhancement. It is perhaps now, as NFDE has gained a national profile through LfL, that cooperation could be usefully expanded.

In early 2003 MOSTEC organised a meeting of NGOs around NFE in an effort to start a dialogue. A total of 41 NGOs were involved and will be invited to a further meeting (on adult literacy) in September 2003. While this initiative is not a direct result of LfL, the increased profile and activity in NFE created by the project gives both government and NGOs a stronger basis for dialogue and for planning future cooperation.

4.5.3 Local-level partnerships

Partnerships at local level – aimag and soum – were stronger and more diverse than at national level. Aimag methodologists reported cooperation with ADRA, World Vision, Children in Difficult Circumstances, a Korean community NGO, Peacewind, as well as with local NGOs, particularly youth and women's organisations. In Darkhan-Uul, NGOs cooperate with the aimag learning centre in financing some non-formal learning publications and activities.

In general the local NGO sector is still developing as civil society initiatives grow – there were no such initiatives under the socialist regime, so this kind of activity is new, both for local communities and for government. Some international NGOs are beginning to model cooperation with government, particularly cooperating on standards and materials, while reaching out to particular target groups on their own

initiative. For instance, ADRA targets particularly very poor families in its literacy and NFE work.

In future, it will be important to plan strategically together with NGOs and civil society organisations so that the comparative advantage of each partner is recognised and used. This will require sensitisation and capacity-building with methodologists at all levels on the role of civil society and the negotiation of partnerships.

5 Key issues

This evaluation focuses on the impact of the LfL project. However, the terms of reference included four further key issues as central to the scope of the project. These are: relevance, effectiveness, sustainability and replicability. These issues are addressed here – they are of course also part of the impact of the project.

5.1 Relevance

Relevance is a key principle of adult learning – ensuring that the mode and content of learning are relevant to learners' aspirations, needs and circumstances. In the case of a national project such as LfL, it is pertinent to ask how far the approach was relevant to the context, and how relevant the content was to learners.

5.1.1 Relevance of approach

The decision to adopt an approach using non-formal distance education took into consideration geographical and socio-cultural factors.

Mongolia is large and sparsely populated country. There are huge distances between population centres, and in rural areas people live in family groupings at some distance from each other in groups of one to six *gers*. The need for pasture for their livestock means that *ger* groups are spread out across the plains, making maximum use of grass. Search for the best pasture at different times of year means that most rural families are nomadic, moving location anything from two to six times a year. In general, the distance that a family moves at such times is not great, most frequently remaining within the same aimag. Some rural families move for part of the year to the aimag or soum centre, either because of livelihood considerations, or to enable their children to attend school without using the dormitory facilities (where these exist).

In the light of these conditions, it made sense to adopt a distance learning approach, bringing learning to the most remote *ger* group by means of radio. This depended of course on people having a radio and batteries to operate it. This was a problem for some families, although often they had access to a neighbour's radio, or they could listen to tapes of the broadcasts either privately or at the soum learning centre. Tapes were copied and made available on loan from most learning centres. Use of radio also depended on good reception – there are a few remote areas which cannot receive Mongol radio, although this was not mentioned as a significant problem by methodologists or the central team.

Even if remote and scattered populations can be reached by radio, the support systems of visiting teachers and learning centres were integral components of the system. These supports were also designed in the light of the geographical context. Instead of learners being dependent on a learning centre at a fixed location for resources and learning support, the system of core families and visiting teachers was put in place so that learners would receive support where they live or in close proximity. Core families had the responsibility to look after up to ten further families, often recruiting them into the programme, maintaining contact throughout each phase, talking over difficulties, and, in some cases, organising collective projects such as a vegetable garden. Visiting teachers travelled extensively – the visiting

teacher in Ikh-Uul visited her most remote families – 70 km away – twice during each phase, coordinating her travel with other services. Typically such a visit would include answering questions on material the learner did not understand, checking over the learner's notes, and discussing study habits and other issues. These systems worked well and were consistent across the aimags visited during the evaluation. This speaks well of the relevant approach of the project.

It is worth noting the difference between rural and urban environments. The system was basically the same, but in urban settings the learner had more contact with the learning centre, since distances were not great. Even so, one urban methodologist observed how important it was to visit learners in their homes in order to attract them to the programme and keep them in it. The Youth Business Programme was confined to urban areas in a deliberate attempt to tackle the problem of youth unemployment and under-employment, in the light of continuing migration to the towns. Numbers were limited, and, at least in Ulaan Baatar, the programme could not take all those who wanted to enrol. For young people in an urban environment the learning centre assumes a somewhat different role, not only providing resources, but also a venue where they can share with each other and obtain input into their learning and vocational plans.

In summary, the model of non-formal and distance learning adopted by LfL was:

- technologically appropriate.
- culturally appropriate, reflecting the life-styles of learners and their supporters and administrators.
- affordable within the project and used funds effectively to reach the maximum number of learners.
- responsive to learner needs at the local level.

5.1.2 Relevance of content

The learning content of the project was determined on the basis of needs assessment surveys and feedback. Topics fell broadly into three categories:

- Personal and family life (including health, child development, ...)
- Productive skills (processing natural products, animal care, business practice, ...)
- Social and environmental context (civics and human rights, land, water, fire prevention, ...)

LfL used experts in the various areas to define the content of the respective texts and radio programmes. However, it was recognised from the start that centrally produced material could not satisfy all the different regions of the country. Provision for local adaptation and production was therefore built into the project. The wisdom of this strategy was confirmed by local methodologists who pointed out the specific characteristics and concerns of their region, remarking that centrally produced books on their own did not meet local needs.

In Darkhan-Uul and Erdenet a local adaptation of the textbook for the Youth Business Programme was published, along with locally produced radio programmes (although these were relatively few since the radio station was delayed in being set up). In the Family Learning Programme methodologists gave considerable emphasis to the production of local materials and collected it together in the learning centres. Learners, local experts, methodologists and visiting teachers all wrote material – some of it was photocopied and distributed to all soums in the aimag, and some was limited to one handwritten copy. Mongolians also have a keen artistic sense and

produce attractive materials, often hand-written or hand-drawn. This is evident in schools too.

Many local materials dealt with variations in processing natural products – ways of working leather, preparing food, local herbs and medicinal plants and practices, traditional rituals. In Uliastai (Zavkhan aimag) a local newspaper was written by local staff during the project, and it continued since on the broader theme of continuing education. In the same aimag a total of 56 local booklets were produced. In Bayankhongor aimag they produced a book on the informal mining of gold which is undertaken by individuals in the area; it became the basis for a certificate leading to permission to engage in this activity. In Altai (Gobi Altai aimag) the methodologist produced two booklets for the Youth Business Programme, highlighting local business opportunities; he also produced two publications for teachers and learners in the Family Learning Programme and distributed them to the 18 soums of the aimag. In addition, it is estimated that two to nine additional publications were produced in each soum in Gobi Altai. Other regions were similarly productive. The central team played a role in distributing more widely some of the materials produced in different aimags. The project newspaper and radio were vehicles for this, as well as the incorporation of some local materials into the centrally produced booklets.

The level of local production is impressive and demonstrates a number of characteristics which are frequently absent from adult learning programmes:

- A strong emphasis on writing and self-expression, rather than merely consuming text which others have produced. High levels of literacy that existed throughout the country facilitated this.
- The validation of local knowledge and experience; too often it is centrally generated knowledge which predominates or is imposed.
- An emphasis on creativity, not merely passive learning or the acquisition of skills.

It is a very positive feature of the LfL project that it was able to communicate these messages and provide the space for local expression. This is a model for other places and other regions of the world where local, culturally based production of text is a rare phenomenon.

We indicated earlier how LfL has had an impact on the revival of traditional skills which are used to generate income. This was especially relevant to the context in two ways:

- People now have the capacity to make better use of their local environment, harnessing the potential of what they have already got. They can add value to natural products on the spot, and earn an income without migrating to the town or seeking scarce employment opportunities in the formal economy.
- There is a bigger and more integrated local market, as more products become available from local sources and the volume of local trading increases. This reduces dependence on outside sources, while also stimulating the local economy and obviating the need, for some, to migrate to the towns. In a few cases, LfL learners have become employers of labour

. These impacts have strengthened rural economies, although the economic effect of the winter disaster (when thousands of animals were lost) was devastating. Indeed, the skills obtained through LfL have enabled some who lost their livestock to generate income in new ways. Although Mongolia continues to go through many changes as a result of economic transition and globalisation, the LfL project played a part in enabling traditional crafts, skills and practices to find a place and have renewed value in the current context.

5.2 Effectiveness

Much of the effectiveness of the LfL project is visible above in the description of its impact. In this section we will look at learner motivation and retention, regional differences in project output and assess briefly the cost-effectiveness of the project.

What was the dropout rate among learners in the Family Learning Programme? Methodologists did not raise this issue spontaneously during the evaluation, which made the evaluators curious. When the question was put to the methodologist of Bayankhongor aimag, he responded that the criteria for selection of registered learners largely ruled that possibility out. These criteria were repeatedly emphasised by methodologists in most locations. The LfL project was not open to anyone who might be interested, in the way that many adult learning programmes (literacy, vocational skills, continuing and leisure learning) are in most parts of the world. Learners were selected on the basis of the following criteria (reproduced from MOSTEC 2002: 29):

- To have an appropriate education
- To have an inspiration to participate in the learning program and is able to study on their own
- To realise the ideas and goals of the project and agree with the content of the learning program
- To be eager to improve their lives through education
- Population in remote areas and less access to information
- To have an ability and skills to teach others what they have learnt and influence
- To have the ability to apply all the learned lessons to day-to-day life
- To be considered as having lower-income and being vulnerable

The first criterion was probably the most significant as it meant in practice that the most highly educated member of the family was selected as the registered learner. This was especially true of core families for whom the selection criteria were (ibid):

- To be eager to participate in the learning program and upgrade their education
- To have a higher educational level and more lifeskills than the others
- To be respected among others and able to influence them
- To have potential to organise other families, inspire and apply newly learned knowledge in day-to-day life
- To be respected in the community and relatively well-off
- To monitor learner-families, assist them and develop a good relationship with facilitators according to the guidance given by visiting teachers

Setting these criteria could be considered an exclusive approach. However, in practice it seems that others were not excluded, but joined as 'following learners' who took part informally. This informal expansion of the project continued since its closure, and any further investment in NFDE should set up a strategy to permit phased expansion, according to demand. The criteria played a role in ensuring consistently high quality in the processes of the project, not only because motivated learners and families were recruited in the first place, but also because it enabled the project to remain manageable and in the control of methodologists at aimag and soum level and of the central team.

In addition, many aimags drew up a contract between learners and visiting teachers, spelling out the responsibilities and commitments of each. An example of such a contract from Arkhangai aimag is reproduced below.

Following a well established pattern in educational institutions and life in general in Mongolia, LfL ran competitions and contests at all levels – for learners, learning centres, visiting teachers, and methodologists. These took place at each level as special events to celebrate the project and recognise those who had achieved best results. Winners at bag level went on to compete at soum, then aimag and national level. This produced a ‘Best Learner’, ‘Best Methodologist’ and so on, at each level. In the local context, these events were significant for mobilising interest on the part of the population and support from local leaders. They were also a chance to give a public profile to the project and, more importantly, to the opportunities offered by non-formal distance learning.

There were observable differences in the quality and quantity of output in the different regions visited. These related to the enthusiasm of learners, the imagination and commitment of the methodologist, the range and quality of learner products. The learning centres where methodologists had only recently been appointed or replaced represented a special case – the need for the training of new staff was highlighted earlier in the report. Until that is accomplished, there will be lower levels of activity and output in those cases.

A further achievement in terms of effectiveness was the establishment of a well-functioning national distance learning system – no mean achievement in the context of Mongolia’s geography, climate, population dispersal and weak communications infrastructure.

**An summary assessment of the *Learning for Life* Project
by the Director of Education, Arkhangai aimag**

- It gave young people the chance to acquire training after leaving school
- Non-formal education opens education to everybody
- Methodologists increased the awareness of ongoing learning
- NFE is individually effective
- Both learners and methodologists learnt new topics, eg how to look after children, how to prepare different meals
- The tendency to cooperate with each other increased during the project
- Government cooperation has increased
- People without access to education obtained it
- LfL was supported at the highest level

In terms of cost effectiveness, the evaluation did not undertake the kind of analysis of costs, budgets and spending which a project completion evaluation might have done though the financial records kept by the project accountant were of a high quality and subject to audit.¹ Comments here are limited to observations collected

¹ A summary final financial report is presented in Appendix 8.4

from stakeholders. The project value was US\$1.7 million, in terms of the cash injected from outside. However, that by no means represents the total investment. Of particular note is the financial contribution made by the government by supporting NFE methodologists. As stated earlier, very few of these were in place in 1997 at the start of LfL. The project persuaded aimags and soums to assign people to this role, first using part-time people who had other jobs. Gradually the post was accepted and the government began to pay some full-time. Thus the salary costs of methodologists did not come from the project budget. At an average cost of 750 000 tugrigs per methodologist per year, the annual cost of these personnel by the end of the project was approaching US\$300 000. Also, many gave their time free, again a legacy of Mongolia's communist experience. Some of the visiting teachers paid their own travel costs to visit learners and some learning centre tutors contributed their own funds to the purchase of teaching materials. Some in-kind costs, largely provision of rooms and offices, were borne by schools and aimag/soum administrations. The cost per learner is difficult to establish, given the ambiguity of figures mentioned earlier. However, the cost per learner/registration over the life of the project was about US\$7.50, in terms of the external cash input. This lies in the low band of costs associated with adult learning, such as adult literacy programmes.

There was some feeling that the project provided too many cash incentives, for instance for attending training courses, as this is not sustainable locally. This has to be set against the low levels of income available to personnel, and the costs paid by other projects. In future, policy on payments to the various personnel involved, such as attendance allowances or compensation to visiting teachers, should be determined according to practice that will be sustainable in the long term and accords with general custom in the country. Overall, the Learning for Life was cost-effective and represented good value for the money invested.

Contract for family learning program

Goal of the learning program:

Help to people to live happy and healthy lives through making intellectual investment for improving their life level

Content of the learning program:

You (learners) will have the following radio lessons for the 4th phase of family learning program:

Cooking delicious food /3 new lessons with repetition of each lesson/

Animal health /10 new lessons with repetition of each lesson/

Women's health /3 new lessons with repetition of each lesson/

Soft toy /3 new lessons with repetition of each lesson/

Water usage /3 new lessons with repetition of each lesson/

Technology book /3 new lessons with repetition of each lesson/

New radio lessons will be broadcast at 16:40 on every Monday and 07:40 on every Thursday from September to December. Repetition of those lessons will be broadcast 08:40 on every Tuesday and 16:40 on every Thursday in the same months.

Every adult learner in the family should be involved in the family learning program, study the learning packages and is responsible for fulfilling the following tasks:

Every learner has to study a textbook and have a note on their study

Every learner has to fulfil the tasks given in the textbooks

Every learner has to practice their learning and make real products on technology content, for instance, preparing and making food, making soft toys, making burriad shoes etc.

Every learner has to fulfil the tasks given by visiting teacher and responsible to attend in face to face meetings, trade fairs and other community meetings.

Duties of the teacher

Enrol every learner

Orient learners on the learning program content, distribute radio lesson schedule and learning materials on time.

Support learners in their study process and provide necessary advice and answers

Organize regular face-to-face meeting

Organize trade fair of products made by learners at the end of every learning phase

To have learners establish family information board

Visiting teachers have to teach lessons on the above mentioned topics and total of the taught lessons must be 25 lessons from 24 September 2001 to 27 December 2001.

Every teacher and learner is responsible to fulfil the tasks stated in this contract for the effective implementation of the learning program.

Family learner: signature

Visiting teacher: signature

5.3 Sustainability

Ensuring sustainability is key to the impact of NFDE in society. If the processes of NFDE become locally sustainable, then they will not only continue to make an impact as currently, but the capacity will be there also for further transformation in the light of changing circumstances. Planning for sustainability should therefore be at the heart of any innovation or investment in change.

Undertaking an impact evaluation 18 months after the end of the project provides a natural and direct way to assess sustainability, namely by observing what is still happening. Thus this evaluation placed a special emphasis on discovering what activities continue to be implemented, what has stopped and what plans there may be for the future. In addition we sought to determine how far resources are now available – and where from – to support NFDE. This section will therefore give some examples of sustainable and sustained activity and then assess what the prospects are.

In general terms, the personnel trained and put in place through the LfL project are still working, implementing a range of non-formal education activities. These include training and learner sessions modelled on LfL, as well as aspects of non-LfL work, such as adult literacy and catch-up education for school dropouts. What has ceased is the distance education component – no radio programmes are being made, no new associated print materials being developed, and the visiting teacher system, as mentioned earlier in the report, functions in a patchy manner. Material production has not quite stopped at local level, but at national level no new NFDE materials are being produced, except in the context of the UNESCO adolescent project (see next section). The reason for lack of sustainability in these areas is twofold: first, the necessary expertise is now dispersed and otherwise engaged, and second, there are not adequate funds available from local sources to mount the kind of national programme which LfL was able to deliver.

5.3.1 Sustained work in the aimags

We present here the ways and means which the aimags we visited have found to continue offering adult learning opportunities. An example is given for each aimag.

- Learners continue to express a desire for NFDE activities in **Arkhangai** aimag and regularly visit the learning centre. Tapes of the LfL radio programmes and the textbooks are passed round from family to family. The aimag administration contributes to the NFE budget, but funds are no longer available to remunerate visiting teachers, who have ceased to operate. In this aimag, activities appear to be largely a response to learner demand, with little organised initiative.
- Since the end of LfL, the NFE personnel at aimag level in **Bayankhongor** aimag has decreased from four to one. However, systematic planning for NFE activities – without the distance/radio component – continues, with an action plan in place for 2002 – 2003. Fifty percent of the visiting teachers are still operating, and literacy activities have increased with the advent of the UN Literacy Decade. It is expected that NFE will receive 1% of the aimag educational budget, as government guidelines suggest. The methodologist remarked that, as far as learners are concerned, 'people do not think the project has finished'.
- At the soum level, sustainable activity depends to a large extent on the vision and capacity of the NFE methodologist. In Darkhan soum (**Darkhan Uul** aimag) the methodologist continues to follow a weekly programme of non-formal education and support to schoolchildren and their parents. As an

example of what has continued since the formal end of the LfL project, the programme demonstrates the commitment and enthusiasm observed in many places during the evaluation:

Table 14: Darkhan soum weekly NFE programme (hours per day)

	<i>Mon</i>	<i>Tues</i>	<i>Weds</i>	<i>Thurs</i>	<i>Fri</i>
Literacy for adults	2	2			2
Child study support lessons (with World Vision)			2		
Pre-school consulting for parents and children (sample activities)		1			
Skills/technical training		2			
Reproductive health for adolescents	1				
Internal work (preparation)	1				
Visiting learners		2			3
Open house					2
NFE for dropout children	2½	2½	2½	2½	2½

-
- In **Dornod** aimag NFE and DE plans have been approved by the NFE aimag committee which is entirely new. The aimag methodologist is also recently appointed and is working to build on the LfL heritage. The aimag governor has allocated 0.2% of his education budget to NFE in order not to lose all the momentum of LfL, while certain soums of the aimag have allocated the full 1%. This aimag demonstrates commitment, but appears to lack adequate resources to implement plans.
- **Dornogobi** aimag methodologists all work part-time and now emphasise literacy, school equivalency, foreign language, computer, and technology training on wool processing, supported by a 1% allocation from aimag funds. A UNFPA sponsored project “Improving the economic status of the population” will be implemented on the basis of the NFDE principles of the LfL project. The radio station, whose staff were trained under LfL, continue to produce some educational programmes.
- In Taishir soum (**Gobi Altai** aimag) the methodologist drew up a workplan including a workshop on planting vegetables and business methods for 20 families. Health and hygiene training is part of cooperation with the local hospital. Families who were not part of LfL now use the textbooks; visiting teachers visit learners once every three months, and some cultural events and competitions are held, though less than previously. Local youth and women’s organizations cooperate in such events. Thus the continuing activities are those which use available resources and can attract local support. NFDE as a learning system is no longer operative.
- In **Khentii** aimag ongoing activities are focused on the learning centres at each level, supported by a 1% allocation from the aimag educational budget. With no systematic NFDE programme, learning centres seek to respond to learner demand by maintaining up-to-date information and resources.

The ‘Fifth Phase’ of Zavkhan aimag

The LfL project consisted of four phases, with phases being implemented successively and having a different set of topics. Project activities as such ceased with the end of the funding. However, in Zavkhan aimag the Director of the Education Centre and the aimag NFE methodologist set in motion a fifth phase, in order to maintain the momentum of adult learning in the area. According to the Education Centre Director, the project was very popular and enabled thousands of people in the aimag to improve their educational levels and quality of life. He pointed out that both uneducated and educated people could take advantage of LfL since it provided personal outcomes, such as variety in cooking, making clothes.

In the fifth phase, there is activity in all 24 soums of the aimag, focusing on child development – the topic of the final textbook produced by LfL.

Table 13: Zavkhan’s ‘Fifth Phase’ in selected soums

Soums	Numbers in fifth phase		Additional details
	families	learners	
Ider	109		aim to reach 15-20% of families (now at 14.1%); cooperating with kindergartens (76 families) and with ADRA (17 very poor families)
Ikh-Uul	>57		numbers increasing, operating in every bag
Shiluustai	27	50	working with herder families close to Soum centre
Uliastai	100		

Since the end of the project itself there have been no further printed materials available, only the stocks provided during the project life. In order to alleviate this problem the methodologist of Ikh-Uul Soum instituted a library system operating in all the bags of the soum, with cards for each borrower. In all four soums the methodologists, visiting teachers and learners produced additional materials, mostly handwritten, and these are available at the learning centres. There is no government financial support for this phase, although that may change if the aimag follows the 1% guideline in coming years. Existing resources are used for organising training for the visiting teachers.

- The Erdenet NFE Centre (**Orkhon** aimag) regularly receives requests from learners from all social groups to participate in NFE activities, but the centre does not have the resources (eg textbooks) to respond adequately. In this urban area, ongoing activities are based on courses offered at the centre, and its nine teaching staff function as NFE teachers, rather than as visiting teachers. Support comes from the 1% allocation from the aimag educational budget (education represents 42% of the total aimag budget), as well as from cooperation with NGOs and learner fees.
- Ongoing NFE activity in **Tuv** aimag is based on the structures and resources made available during the LfL project – learning centres, trained visiting teachers, textbooks and methodologists. Some training continues to be

organised. One soum of the aimag has succeeded in accessing Japanese funding for new income-generating projects. Once again, it is clear that considerable momentum remains from LfL, but that new and systematic initiatives lack funding and guidance.

- The Songino-Khairkhan district of **Ulaan Baatar** implemented the Youth Business Programme and continues to use its tapes and materials. The learning centre director feels a strong need for new materials, including video and online. She would also like to respond to learner demand for English and computer training. For the latter, there are teachers but no computer facilities. The learning centre has benefited from some NGO funding for basic equipment.
- In **Uvurkhangai** aimag the governor remains strongly supportive of non-formal education and allocates aimag funds to it. The NFE structures – commission, learning centre – are well established and continue to plan and monitor NFE initiatives. In this aimag all the visiting teachers are still working, with recent training (June 2003) conducted at aimag level. Some local material production continues, though not as much as during the project. Strong leadership from the aimag centre has enabled the system to continue to support activities, although at a lower level.

The picture in the aimags visited reveals a pattern of ongoing but reduced activity, where some key elements of sustainability are missing. This may lead to a number of different scenarios in the future, which are presented in Section 6.3 below. However, it is also clear that significant capacity and potential capacity exist in the aimags, and that different aimags have worked at NFE in a variety of ways. This speaks of the effective decentralisation of decision-making and the corresponding empowerment of NFE personnel at aimag and soum level. Decentralisation is an essential feature of adult learning programmes, since they must respond to local circumstances and needs if they are to be effective. Aimags and soums have demonstrated considerable creativity and autonomy in the decisions they have made on continuing to implement NFE, and this provides a strong basis for further investment in decentralised capacity and expertise. As indicated in the recommendations, the sustainable and effective implementation of NFE will depend as much on investment at aimag/soum level, as on developing the capacity at national level.

5.3.2 Sustainability at national level

The earlier sections of this report on capacity and policy have indicated how far LfL had an impact on the national framework for sustaining NFDE. Three further aspects must be mentioned: the national NFDE Centre, the current NFDE programmes, and government budgetary provisions:

- The national NFDE Centre has its present shape as a result of the LfL project, now including distance education in its core mandate and title. It is equipped with radio and video studio facilities to make DE programmes, but lacks the full complement of human and financial resources to do so. The Centre is in a position now to have an overview of NFDE efforts and works closely with MOSTEC to bring new stakeholders, such as civil society organisations on board. All NFDE projects now relate to the Centre, and any further investment following LfL should be integrated into this structure. Such investment in a national programme should serve further to strengthen the Centre's capacity, as it is a key element in the sustainability and professional depth of NFDE in Mongolia.
- The Centre has initiated two national programmes for developing the sector: one in non-formal education and one in distance education. These spell out

the role of the Centre in providing a facilitating environment in these two fields, building professional capacity and stimulating innovative practice, for example in examining the role of the new technologies. These programmes are broad enough to allow for further cooperative work along the lines of LfL and to include a wide range of stakeholders. Insofar as current resources permit, these two programmes are being implemented in a phased way.

- Government budgetary provision: there is a current non-binding guideline that 1% of the educational budget at each level should be devoted to non-formal education. The government funds the methodologist posts down to soum level, which, as far as could be ascertained, is not considered part of the 1% amount. However, there seemed to be different views on that in different places. At MOSTEC the office responsible for NFDE is seeking to include increased amounts for NFDE in forward budget planning, an indication that it is on the agenda and that some in the ministry are seeking to improve the situation. As indicated elsewhere in this report, at aimag level there are some cases where the 1% is exceeded, and others where less is allocated. Since the percentage would need to rise considerably to sustain the level of activity which prevailed during LfL, there is a need for external financial support, at least for a time, in order to build the impact of LfL into a sustainable government-funded NFDE programme. It should be noted that there are strong competing demands on a strained education budget in the country, with the fabric of schools in dire straits in many places, and the forthcoming addition of an eleventh school year (this will be accomplished by a lowering of the school starting age from 7/8 to 6/7 years of age.) It is therefore difficult to see how more funds can be given to non-formal education until the country's economy improves or external resources are provided.

5.3.3 Sustainability – a balance sheet

The sustainability of innovative projects depends on a number of factors, conditions and circumstances. With regard to the internal functioning of the project and its impacts, five principles are important (cf Robinson 1998):

- Vision and commitment: an understanding of the role and nature of the project and a commitment to pursue its benefits.
- Relationships and connections: a network of relationships between stakeholders fostering common ownership and cooperation.
- Skills and technical competence: collective technical resources and competence to carry out the project and train others to do so.
- Organisation and institutional development: a institutionalised structure with the functions necessary for the project and the capacity to mobilise others.
- Funding and financial viability: adequate funds, from local or external sources, to put the work into operation.

Where does NFDE in Mongolia stand with regard to these principles? The following summarises the situation in the form of a balance sheet:

Table 15: A sustainability balance sheet

Sustainability principle	“Credits”	“Debits”
Vision and commitment	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • positive policy framework • committed personnel 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • need for further awareness-raising among national and local leadership
Relationships and connections	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • strong NFDE professional network • good connections with MRTV and local radio 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • need stronger links with NGOs • build more links with other sectors
Skills and technical competence	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • basic cadre of trained people in place • national NFDE Centre provides for leadership 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • need for more trainers of trainers • enhance training of new staff • need for ongoing professional development
Organisation and institutional development	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • national NFDE Centre functioning • NFDE structures in place in aimags and soums 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • strengthen technical capacity of national NFDE Centre
Funding and financial viability	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • NFDE funding in regular budget • guideline to use 1% of education budget for NFDE 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • budgetary provision inadequate • external funding support not yet in pipeline despite the provision of proposals by the Mongolian side.

5.4 Replicability

Non-formal distance education requires a complex and interlocking system of elements. The complexity of the LfL project in Mongolia was neither greater nor lesser than anywhere else, although its implementation was more challenging than in many other countries because of the geographical nature of the country, the climate, the population dispersal and the weak communications infrastructure. As this report has shown, a national system was developed and put in place which suited the geographical and socio-cultural realities of the context. As such the system reflected NFDE programmes more widely, as well as manifesting certain features peculiar to the context, such as the concept of core families. This section will look at ways in which LfL has led to replications in Mongolia, and at some risks which would need to be taken into account in any further replication.

5.4.1 Towards replication

We noted above how the work of LfL has been partially sustained through the national network of methodologists and learning centres now in place. There are, however, two initiatives which have followed LfL and which build on some of its principles. They are the small-scale project entitled “Improving the outlook for Girls/Boys in Mongolia”, known as the UNESCO Adolescent Project, and an initiative to create an NGO in Bayankhongor.

The UNESCO adolescent project: this aims “to increase the knowledge, awareness and promotion of child rights among adolescents and their families by the provision of out-of-school learning opportunities”. It is being implemented in three aimags and Ulaan Baatar from 2001 – 2004. It uses a distance education strategy, combining radio and self-study materials. Since it started in the last year of the LfL project, it lists LfL as one of its cooperating partners. It also works with UNDP, UNFPA, WHO, as well as UNESCO and MOSTEC and is coordinated by a small team working within the national NFDE Centre. The team includes three people who also worked with the LfL project. According to the project manager, she could not have undertaken to lead this project without the background and training of the LfL project. It replicates the distance learning approach pioneered by LfL, although it is much smaller in scope and more limited in its target audience and subject matter.

The Bayankhongor NGO: One of the two learning support officers of LfL comes from Bayankhongor and worked there as the first NFE methodologist, prior to and during the GWP. She then worked with LfL, eventually joining the central team in Ulaan Baatar. Following the end of the project she has returned to Bayankhongor and has founded an NGO to promote NFE. Its main goal is to create an independent resource and information centre on human development through non-formal and distance education. Activities are intended to include adult learning needs assessment and surveys, training for adults, and advising/consulting with others working with adult learners. Thus this initiative puts into practice the principles which the founder learnt and the skills she honed while with LfL. Recognising the inability of government on its own to invest adequately in adult learning, this NGO, which is in its initial stages only, represents an attempt to mobilise civil society and new sources of funding to promote NFDE in a human development perspective. While this NGO has the potential to replicate certain aspects of LfL, it suffers from the weakness and isolation which afflicts local civil society initiatives in Mongolia currently.

5.4.2 Assessing the risks

In assessing the outcomes, impact and processes of the LfL project, we would like to highlight four major risks which must be taken into consideration and which could undermine any attempt to build on or replicate the LfL experience. There are a large number of risks in a project so large, complex and ambitious; we have, however, chosen to present those that seem to represent the greatest dangers. It should be noted that what follows is an assessment of risk for the future, not a description of what happened in the LfL project:

Political change resulting in disruptive movement of personnel: it is not clear how far political change, such as a change of regime, would trigger a change in the professional personnel in NFDE, whether at the centre, or in the aimags and soums. It is thus a risk which is difficult to quantify and even more difficult to forestall. In the light of the investment in a strong network of personnel who are committed to the NFDE approaches embodied in the LfL project, and recognising the disruptive effect of the abrupt movement of personnel already visible since LfL, any major change of personnel would represent a significant threat to the replication of the work. There is little that can be done to avoid this risk, except to recommend strongly that professional staff should not be subject to the vicissitudes of political change.

Lack of training of new personnel and of investment in professional development: independently of any political change, there will always be some movement of personnel and appointment of new people. Experience since the end of the project shows that adequate training in the principles and practices advocated and used by LfL is essential to make the most of what LfL has left in place. This applies in the national NFDE Centre, as well as in the aimags and soums. Inadequately trained staff will be a factor in neglecting aspects of the NFDE system

and reducing the effectiveness of its impact. Feedback from existing staff at national and aimag/soum levels indicates that there is both a need and a strong desire to upgrade skills and benefit from further training. While some training is being conducted, there should be a priority programme of training new staff before, or as soon as, they are appointed. In the longer term, only an adequate investment in ongoing professional development will ensure sustainable innovation and a dynamic NFDE system.

Weak information-gathering and processing: the report noted the strong record-keeping habits of methodologists at soum and bag levels. We also noted the collection and use of data by the central project team in ongoing management during the project. However, it was also clear that there were gaps in the collection and processing of data, which had implications for assessing the impact of the project. Weak processes of this kind risk leaving planners without adequate information of what is happening on the ground, how the investments are being used, what the trends are and what kinds of impact are being achieved. The way to avoid this risk is to identify clearly what the information needs are and to design a collection and processing system which is as simple and easy to operate as possible. Emphasis should be placed on gathering relevant information which can be turned into useful and useable knowledge for planning, rather than on collecting as much information as possible. Once the system is designed, training must be given so that standard approaches are implemented throughout the country.

Long-term funding difficulties: the cessation of the LfL funding left the project without adequate resources to continue with all aspects of NFDE, but did not lead to the closure of all NFDE work. Current funding levels will enable some NFE (though not DE) activities to continue for a foreseeable future at a fairly low level. If such low levels persist for another two to three years, it is likely that activities will further decrease and the effectiveness of the systems in place will be under threat (see also Section 6.3 for various possible scenarios). A further investment soon would avoid the risk of the deterioration of the system and would in fact give it a greater chance of sustainability in the long term. Such investment is all the more necessary as Mongolia struggles to put its economy on a firmer footing since the transition to a market system. In addition to the ongoing needs of national development, there is need for investment in enabling people to function well in a market economy, both as producers and consumers. NFDE has made and can continue to make a significant difference, but requires resources which, for the foreseeable future, are beyond the capacity of Mongolia's national economy. External funding would ensure that the benefits of what has been established are further developed and multiplied.

6 Lessons Learnt

We have sought to indicate throughout the report what the lessons are of the various aspects of LfL. Nevertheless, it is important to highlight the factors contributing to the effectiveness and positive impact of the project, and point to factors which impeded or constrained its impact. This section will also present some major conclusions with respect to the overall impact of LfL.

6.1 Factors underlying project impact

Any number of factors in the circumstances and conditions surrounding the project could be adduced as contributing to its impact. However, it is most useful to isolate those factors in the design of the project which had the biggest influence on moving it in the right direction. These factors will provide the best and most helpful lessons for designing further educational interventions. Five factors emerge as being of critical importance:

- **Attention to context:** the LfL project took full account of the context in which it operated, seeking to design an approach which not only met learners' needs but also fit into the institutional and educational patterns in Mongolia. In other words, LfL did not come with a blueprint solution, nor seek to replicate successful programmes elsewhere, but matched the elements necessary for a non-formal basic distance education programme to the local environment. Specifically this meant that:
 - î LfL addressed the particular socio-economic conditions of Mongolia.
 - î The distance education strategy was adapted to the social and geographical realities (core families, visiting teachers).
 - î Existing government structures provided the operational units (aimags, soums, bags) enabling personnel to work within established institutional frameworks.
 - î The content was based on learner needs assessed through surveys and monitored by feedback.
 - î Local knowledge was used and validated through the project.
- **Government support:** when LfL started there had been no previous national non-formal education programme, whether using distance education or otherwise. The government had no previous experience of designing, organising, staffing or implementing such work on a national level. Nevertheless, it gave its full support to implementing LfL, in terms of ministerial support at the centre and administrative support at aimag, soum and bag levels. LfL aimed at institutional change in the educational sphere in Mongolia and it could not have done so, had the government itself not been eager to explore new directions and be ready, ultimately, to consider and adopt the policy implications of the project.
- **The GWP experience:** although LfL was the first nationwide effort in NFDE, the GWP had provided valuable experience and lessons in designing it in the Mongolian context. Restricted geographically (to the Gobi aimags) and socially (to women), it nevertheless gave an opportunity to try out an NFDE system and to experiment with all its component parts. It was a very well known project and generated demand across Mongolia for a similar national project. Furthermore, it meant that at least some experienced people were available to assist in implementing LfL in their regions, such as the methodologists. The success of the GWP gave government and professionals the confidence to take the approach to scale in LfL.
- **Effective management:** the consistent and high-quality leadership of the project director was an essential element of the project's success, together with the resulting spirit of teamwork which she generated among project staff, at national and aimag/soum level. Methodologists scattered throughout the country saw themselves as part of this wider team.
- **Timely and appropriate consultant input:** at the start of the LfL project Mongolia had only the expertise developed during the GWP, and the project team had not been involved in the implementation of the GWP. A comprehensive and efficient way of building capacity was necessary. This was provided through a number of visiting consultants, particularly Professor Bernadette Robinson. It emerged clearly from the central project team that she enabled them to acquire the necessary knowledge, skills and attitudes for NFDE in ways that were quickly grasped and straightforwardly applied. Other consultants brought their expertise, for instance in radio for DE.

Without such input the central team could not have carried the vision and skills out into training sessions in the aimags and soums.

6.2 Constraints on project impact

Again, many factors have emerged in the report which created difficulties or caused the project not to proceed as satisfactorily as it otherwise would have done.

However, we list here four areas which constrain the present impact of the project.

- **Newness of NFDE:** NFDE is still a relatively new concept in Mongolia and so is not well known in some circles. While the policy framework is now in place, its precise shape and provisions are still being elaborated. In particular, it is not yet integrated into the thinking and planning of sectors outside of education, such as health, agriculture and animal husbandry, environmental protection and so on. At a local level, there was ad hoc cooperation during LfL, as well as at central level as the project team drew in experts to help with material preparation. However, adult learning should be a feature of the educational components of each sector, so that technical interventions are backed up by awareness-raising, preventative education and mobilisation. NFDE would have a larger impact if there were greater cooperation among sectors, and NFDE methods and processes could shape educational efforts across broad economic, social and environmental sectors. It is perhaps a matter of time and of alliance building before this happens.
- **Lack of awareness:** linked with the previous constraint, there is still work to do to raise the levels of awareness of the role and value of adult learning in general and NFDE in particular on the part of national and regional administrators. Their support is crucial, both in assigning personnel and funds, and in giving moral support and backing. However, this was much improved by the end of the project, as the central project team realised they needed to invest in awareness-raising and the mobilisation of political and administrative support. Further investment in NFDE should not neglect the importance of awareness-raising and the negotiation of supportive partnerships. Skills to promote these aspects should become part of the training programmes for methodologists at every level.
- **Movement of personnel:** we have already made reference to this issue as a risk for the future, in terms of possible political change (see 5.4.2 above). However, the impact of movement of personnel is already being felt. Such movement is a normal part of administration, and so is inevitable and must be planned for. In particular, since the end of the project as such, there has been no system for initiating new personnel into the methods of the project or the processes of NFDE more generally. This has been felt particularly at aimag and soum level, where methodologists are responsible not only for managing NFDE, but also for training visiting teachers and other facilitators. This is a structural problem and does not reflect on the competence or commitment of those recently appointed to methodologist posts – in fact, many continue to implement aspects of the LfL project in spite of inadequate input.
- **Institutional arrangements:** The project had as one of its goals to strengthen national capacity in NFDE. In this respect, the impact was constrained by the fact that the project was set up as an entity operating on its own. While the reasons for this may be understandable, it means that the expertise which the project developed has not been fully available to follow it up. Since the project personnel were not an integral part of the NFDE structures, some (though not all) have dispersed to other jobs or

responsibilities. This removed people from NFDE who could, because of their experience, train trainers and further build capacity. At aimag, soum and bag levels, the integration of methodologists as government-employed personnel means that most of the expertise at those levels is still available.

6.3 Major Conclusions

As an overall summary of our conclusions we present here five major, high-level conclusions with regard to the impact of LfL on Mongolia as a country

- The LfL project was a significant investment in education in Mongolia, changing the way education is viewed. Education is now seen as both formal and non-formal, both for children and adults, and is understood in a lifelong learning perspective. The advantages of distance education have been demonstrated. This has resulted in new and clear policies to institutionalise NFDE in the country.
- The project brought new learning opportunities and prospects of new productive activity to at least 82 000 youth and adult learners (Family Learning and Youth Business Programmes combined), which represents just over 5% of the adult population (over 15 years).
- The project contributed, directly and indirectly, to the achievement of the six EFA goals in basic education, equipping Mongolia with new strategies and capacities to pursue them.
- The project took the right approach at the right time, offering learning leading to income-generating opportunities at a time of economic downturn and transition to a market system.
- The project put in place a national network of professionals and resource centres, tied into existing institutional arrangements, thus constituting a new educational resource for Mongolia into the future.

In terms of the impact of the project on EFA goals, the direct or indirect contribution to each of the six goals may be summarised as follows:

- Early childhood care and education: LfL included materials to raise awareness of parents of the social and educational needs of young children, it provided training in strategies of care and early educational activities for families, and facilitated cooperative approaches among families in communities for the care and stimulation of young children.
- Universal primary schooling: the LfL project enabled a significant number of dropouts to return to school to complete the compulsory education cycle; it also contributed to raising the value of education for all in the eyes of parents and communities, thus strengthening the current trend of rising enrolment.
- Learning needs of young people and adults: both the youth business and family learning components were conceived with these needs in mind and directly provided new and relevant learning opportunities.
- Adult literacy: although literacy provision was not an explicit aim of the LfL project, it contributed to this goal in two ways: first, it strengthened the use of literacy skills for learning by the way the project was organised, and second, it served to identify areas of need in the provision of adult literacy, which learning centres are currently addressing.
- Gender parity/equality: the family learning programme gave emphasis to opportunities for women and men equally, and more women than men enrolled in it.

- Quality education: LfL introduced distance education at national level in ways which emphasised quality in the delivery system; it provided high-quality learning that was of direct use and application in people's lives.

Beyond the relevance of the project itself, the socio-economic situation of Mongolia argues for the value of developing of human resources through education. With 50% of the population living on US\$2 a day, and 13.9% on US\$1 a day (UNDP 2003), investment in skills and in income-generating capacity remains a high priority. While economic indicators are now rising gradually after more than a decade of decline, large numbers of individuals and families are looking for new productive opportunities in the framework of a liberal market economy. It is the prospect of such opportunities that is fuelling renewed interest in education, on the part of parents for their children, and on the part of adults for their own development.

Meanwhile, Mongolia is also aware of the potential of the new technologies and the need to develop these across the educational system: currently only 17 people in every thousand use the internet (330 in the UK – UNDP 2003), and aimag centres have only one or possibly two internet connections. Non-formal distance education can make use of new modes of delivery using these new technologies, as well as being a prime site for promoting and popularising their use. In a situation of rapid social change and under the pressure of globalising forces, there is a danger that valuable and worthwhile aspects of local life and culture are eroded. The collective learning and re-learning of traditional skills, with the prospect of turning them into productive assets, enables local culture to find its place as part of change, and underpins the enterprise of maintaining the particularities of Mongolian rural lifestyle in its diversity and richness.

Regarding the future of NFDE, our conclusions may be summarised in three different possible scenarios:

- Scenario 1 – 'Static/optimistic': The system continues to provide non-formal learning opportunities, maintaining a self-study approach with learner interaction and support. However, the distance component disappears, and it takes on the characteristic of 'open learning'. Most parts of the LfL structure remain operative – with visiting teachers giving support to learners, methodologists supporting visiting teachers and actively running the learning centres. Local production of materials continues to a reduced extent, with some central production. Government funds are supplemented by funds from local budgets, learner fees, NGO participation. Training and capacity-building continues in aimags and soums, with some national support.
- Scenario 2 – 'Static/pessimistic': The system continues to offer non-formal learning, but is unable to provide support for self-study. Visiting teachers no longer function, and the system defaults to small groups where the methodologist becomes a 'teacher'. Local production of materials ceases, with little central production. Learning centres use the resources they already have and serve as venues for adult 'classes'. Funding is limited to the government's 1% guideline or less. Training and capacity-building sink to a low level.

The seeds of both scenarios 1 and 2 are already visible in different places and to a varying extent.

- Scenario 3 – 'Dynamic/optimistic': Non-formal distance education is re-invigorated, enabling learners to continue in self-study with a good level of support from visiting teachers and methodologists. The programme uses radio and possibly other media, developing local programmes and accompanying materials. Learning centres continue to resource local

learning, also using computer-based resources such as collections of materials on CD-ROM. An ongoing programme of sustained radio programme and material production is in place at national level, with accompanying monitoring and research activities. Training is reinforced at all levels (materials production, training of trainers, ...), with a special emphasis on capacity at the local level to produce materials with local content (radio and print). Government funding is increased and external support is available.

The third scenario would clearly offer the best opportunity to put in place a dynamic and sustainable system of NFDE in Mongolia. The following section presents recommendations with that in view.

7 Recommendations

In the light of the impact of LfL, and the relevance of a non-formal distance education strategy for the nomadic populations of the rural and semi-rural areas, as well as for unemployed youth and adults in urban zones, the question arises as to how such work should continue. As the report indicates, a number of the aspects of the project have proved sustainable, with activities continuing, albeit in very varied ways. There is no doubt that there is a need for continued implementation of distance and non-formal education, and there is equally no doubt that

- The government is committed to such educational strategies.
- The professional network is in place and functioning.
- There is a synergy between national and aimag/soum structures, with decentralisation of programme management.
- There is ongoing demand from actual and potential learners.
- The approach is relevant, feasible and appropriate in the Mongolian context.
- There are currently other developments in distance education which have relevance for any future NFE project.

The question arises, therefore, whether any further external investment is necessary and appropriate, and what shape such an investment might take. The answer to this question lies in identifying those areas which are currently not sustainable without further input, but which might become sustainable with a further investment. These areas are the following:

- Radio programming: although structures are in place centrally and in some aimags, there are currently no funds for producing radio programmes, nor for further building of this capacity. The number of local radio stations is also limited.
- Print materials: existing materials are still in use, but further investment is required to
 - î build capacity to design and produce new and revised materials
 - î build capacity to facilitate the design and production of materials at aimag and soum levels.
- Strengthen professional capacity in non-formal and distance education, at the centre and at aimag/soum levels, through in-service training and particularly through the development of a cadre of trainers and experts in each aspect. The aim is to ensure that new personnel are properly trained and that this can be sustained.

- Strengthen the institutional framework by increasing the resources of the national NFDE Centre, both personnel and financial, emphasising further development of its expertise in aspects of open and distance education, such as planning and management, materials design, use of technologies, evaluation and research.
- Strengthen the decentralised infrastructure for NFDE, particularly the learning centres at aimag and soum levels, as resources for locally appropriate learning, creativity and cultural development, and as places of broader networking and exchange among learners.
- Strengthen capacity in management and supervision, particularly with regard to improved monitoring and data capture processes, at all levels. At local level, management of learning centres and of visiting teachers (and other personnel) would benefit from further in-service training.
- Build greater political commitment and public awareness through targeted seminars and advocacy events, using them to build capacity in ongoing advocacy, professional relations and networking.
- Build the capacity to undertake evaluation, research and documentation of non-formal and distance education work, to learn and disseminate lessons, and to participate actively in the international professional debates.
- Introduce greater elements of ICT to reflect developments elsewhere in the world and the changes taking place in higher education and formal education in Mongolia.

These areas all require further investment, a large part of which will have to come from external sources. The good beginnings made in the Learning for Life project are likely to be lost without a further injection of external funding. Given the project's track record, such investment promises to be money well spent and will capitalise on the foundations laid by the project. In designing such an investment, the aim will be to orient all the elements towards building sustainable capacity. It should include implementation activities, but these should all be conceived from the point of view of building the capacity of actors and institutions at each level. It will build on current structures, institutions and networks, and will not seek to set up new or parallel ones. Structural change (apart from politically driven ones which cannot be foreseen) will derive from the needs of the work and should be a matter of debate and agreement among the professionals.

We therefore recommend that:

- Before any further investment is made, a project design process/needs assessment should be undertaken, clarifying what elements of the system need strengthening, identifying relevant institutions and stakeholders and including them in the design process. The design process should also include an examination of advances in technology (for instance in radio broadcasting or in the use of new technologies) relevant to distance education. It should also address; the changing conditions and circumstances in the country over the last few years, paying particular attention to the communications infrastructure, ICT development and the regulatory framework for radio as a factor affecting the amount of local broadcasting possible. The current status and initiatives in distance education should also be part of this study;
- In designing further investment in non-formal and distance education the differences between the needs of urban and rural areas must be taken fully into account. It will be important to identify differences in the learner profiles (age, gender, educational background, socio-economic status). In terms of

literacy, vocational skills, economic opportunities, patterns of learning and of monitoring, the rural and urban environments may call for differing approaches, or adjustments in emphasis. These will touch on the content as well as on the mode of delivery of any further programmes;

- The 'project' should build in indicators of progress from the start, and include a mid-term review in order to ensure that sustainable capacity is in fact being built and to address any obstacles that may have been thrown up along the way. This review and the final evaluation will also be designed as capacity-building processes;
- Any further investment be planned as an integral part of the programmes supervised by the national NFDE Centre, as the key institution for implementing such work in Mongolia, and that such an investment should include strengthening the capacity of the Centre;
- MOSTEC and the national NFDE Centre should develop a proposal along these lines for further investment in NFDE in partnership with international donors and agencies;
- UNESCO should assist in the planning and design process and in the search for external funding.

8 Appendices

8.1 People consulted in Ulaan Baatar, Western, Northern and Central Regions

Place/organisation (alphabetical order)	Name (alphabetical order within place/organisation)	Position
Arkhangai Aimag	Bat-Oyun, Ms	NFE Methodologist, Erdenebulgan Soum
	Dari, Ms	Learner, Erdenebulgan Soum
	Dorjgotov B., Mr	former NFE Methodologist, Tariat Soum
	Enebish, Ms	Learner, Erdenebulgan Soum
	Erdenechimeg, Ms	Learner, Erdenebulgan Soum
	Lkhamjav, Ms	Director of Aimag Education Centre
	Shalalai, Mr	Aimag NFE Methodologist
	Tsoijil, Ms	Youth Business Programme teacher, Erdenebulgan Soum
Bayankhongor Aimag	Bat-Orshikh, Mr	Aimag NFE methodologist
	Dorj, Mr	NFE methodologist, Bumbugur Soum
	Ganbold, Mr	Aimag educational department, former social policy staff
	Gantumur, Mr	Learner, Ulziit Soum
	Lkhavgasuren, Ms	NFE methodologist, Shargaljuut Bag
	Munkhjargal, Mr	Governor, Buutsagaan Soum
	Purevee, Ms	NFE methodologist, Ulziit Soum
	Tsevelmaa, Mr	Director, Bumbugur Secondary School
	Saikhansetseg D., Ms	Director of Educational Sector, Aimag Policy and Strategy Regulation Department
	Unenbuyan S., Mr	Deputy Aimag Governor
Darkhan-Uul Aimag	Amgalan, Mr	Director, Aimag Education Centre
	Munkhuu A., Mr	Director, Darkhan Education Centre Radio station
	Navchaa, Ms	NFE methodologist, Darkhan Soum
	Purevdorj, Mr	Headmaster, Khongor Secondary School
	Tsagaan, Ms	Aimag NFE methodologist
	Sarangerel, Ms	NFE methodologist, Khongor Soum

Gobi Altai Aimag	Altantuya, Ms	Learner, Taishir Soum
	Baatardagva, Mr	Director, Delger Secondary School
	Bolormaa, Ms	NFE methodologist, Taishir Soum
	Chinbat, Mr	Leader of elected council, Delger Soum
	Dashdorj B., Mr	NFE methodologist, Khureemara Soum
	Dembee, Ms	NFE methodologist, Esenbulag Soum
	Dolgor, Ms	Visiting teacher, Khureemara Soum
	Erdene, Mr	Director of Aimag Education Centre
	Janchivdorj, Mr	Director, Aimag radio station
	Jigjee B., Mr	Governor, Esunbulag Soum
	Puredash, Mr	Governor, Taishir Soum
Learning for Life Project	Purev S., Mr	NFE methodologist, Delger Soum
	Sukhbaatar, Mr Zorigt, Mr	Aimag NFE methodologist Husband of learner, Taishir Soum
Learning for Life Project	Enkhbat B., Mr	Former project Textbook Editor
	Losolmaa A., Ms	Former project Learning Support Officer, consultant to this evaluation
	Undrakh Ts., Ms	Former project Director, currently UNIFEM Gender Specialist
Ministry of Health	Bayarmaa B., Ms	Reproductive health specialist, writer in LfL project
Ministry of Science, Technology, Education and Culture (MOSTEC)	Orgilmaa, Ms	Officer in charge of NFE
	Mishigjav, Mr	State Secretary of MOSTEC
Mongol Radio and TV	Bilgee, Ms	Announcer in LfL project
	Burged, Mr	Producer in LfL project
	Chuluunbat, Mr	Announcer in LfL project
	Erdenechuluun, Mr	Head of project radio team
	Myagmarsuren, Ms	Correspondent in LfL project
NFE and DE Centre	Batchuluun Y., Ms	Director of NFDE National Centre
	Enkhsaikan R., Ms	<i>Improving the Outlook for Girls/Boys in Mongolia</i> Project Accountant, former Learning for Life project Accountant
	Gansukh, Ms	Researcher, interpreter for this evaluation
	Oyunchimeg D., Ms	<i>Improving the Outlook for</i>

	Saranchimeg G., Ms	<i>Girls/Boys in Mongolia' Project Manager</i> <i>Improving the Outlook for Girls/Boys in Mongolia' Project Coordinator, interpreter for this evaluation</i>
Orkhon Aimag	Airunaa, Ms	Director of Aimag Education Centre
	Khurelbaatar, Mr	NFE Centre Director
	Munkhjargal, Mr	Producer, Erdenet Education Centre Radio
Tuv Aimag	Binderya, Mr	Assistant NFE Methodologist, Erdene Soum
	Gonchigsuren, Mr	former Head of Social Policy Department
	Laijinkhand, Ms	NFE Methodologist
	Munkhjargal, Ms	NFE Methodologist, Bayanchandmani Soum
	Munkhjargal, Ms	NFE Methodologist, Erdene Soum
	Munkhtseren, Ms	NFE Methodologist, Erdensant Soum
	Oyunbold, Mr	Learner, Erdene Soum
	Oyungerel, Ms	NFE Methodologist, Altan Bulag Soum
Ulaan Baatar	Batsuren B., Ms	Director, Songinokhairkhan District NFE Centre
	Nyamdavaa, Mr	Researcher, National Institute of Educational Studies, former Director of NFDE Centre
UNESCO National Commission	Ochirkhuyag, Mr	Head, Education
	Urtnasan N., Mr	Secretary General
Uvurkhangai Aimag	Badamgerel, Ms	NFE methodologist, Arvaikheer Soum
	Chimba, Mr	Aimag Deputy Governor
	Enkhjargal, Ms	Aimag NFE methodologist
	Gansukh, Mr	NFE methodologist, Khaikhandulaan Soum
	Munkhjargal, Mr	Director of Aimag Education Centre
	Tsedendamba L., Mr	Governor of Arvaikheer Soum
	Tsogtgerel, Mr	Visiting teacher, Ikh-Uul and Yagaan Tolgoi Bag
Zavkhan Aimag	Bazardargia, Ms	Aimag NFE methodologist
	Chuluunbaatar, Mr	Director of Aimag Education Centre
	Dolgorsuren, Ms	NFE methodologist, Shiluustei Soum

Enkhtuya, Ms	School Director, Shiluustei Soum
Luvsanvandan, Mr	Head of Aimag NFE Sector
Nyamjantsan, Mr	NFE methodologist, Ikh-Uul Soum
Oyuntsetseg, Ms	Visiting teacher, Ikh-Uul Soum
Sainbayar, Mr	NFE methodologist, Ider Soum

8.2 People consulted in Eastern and Southern Regions

Aimag/Soum	Name	Position
Dornod aimag	L. Erdene	Head of Education Department
	Ts. Sandmaa	NFE methodologist of Education Department
	S. Narandavaa	Director of school no 11 of Kherlen soum
	Ch. Tumor	Visiting teacher, school no 11 of Kherlen soum
	Ts. Tsegmed	Former methodologist of learning center no 4
	Ch. Bolor-Erdene	Learner and head of core family
	G. Tungalag	Project learner of learning center no 2
	B. Tsetsenchimeg	Former NFE methodologist of learning center of Dashbalbar soum, current NFE methodologist of learning center no 4 of Kherlen soum
Kherlen soum	B. Enkhtuya	NFE methodologist of learning center no 2
	S. Unurdulam	Primary education teacher of secondary school no 2 of Kherlen soum and literacy teacher
	L. Bayarjargal	Learner of core family
	B. Naranbayar	Methodologist of Information center of “Khan Uul” complex school
	N. Naranchimeg	NFE methodologist
	Z. Munkhtuya	Visiting teacher, teacher of the “Khan Uul” complex school
	B. Oyuntsetseg	Summer literacy course teacher
	B. Budtuya	Director of “Khan-Uul” complex school
	N. Tugsjargal	Journalist of “Kherlen” cable TV, announcer of radio program
	B. Enkhjargal	Local radio studio correspondent
S. Erdenetsogt	Former NFE methodologist of the aimag and now teacher of school no 5 of Kherlen soum	
Dashbalbar soum	L. Amarjargal	NFE methodologist of learning center
	Sh. Dorj	Former visiting teacher
	Sh. Tsegmed	Former visiting teacher, doctor
	G. Tsetsegmaa	Head master of secondary school
	A. Tsengelmaa	Technology teacher of felt making, visiting teacher
	Kh. Altantsetseg	Former visiting teacher
Bayandun soum	T. Batdulam	Worked as a NFE methodologist of learning center of Bayandun soum for 5 years

	S.Olzvoi	Kinder garden teacher, learner of 3 rd phase of family learning program
	J. Badrakh	Learner of family learning program, driver of tractor
	R. Sumya	Learner of family learning program, Russian language teacher
	Ts. Boldtumur	Governor of Bayandun soum, head of soum commission
	J. Dorjkhand	Head of core family, work in the soum school
	B. Batzorig	Member of soum NFE commission, social worker
	B. Sergelenbaatar	Soum doctor, member of soum commission, former visiting teacher
Khentii aimag, Norovlin soum	L. Chimeddorj	NFE methodologist of learning center of Norovlin soum, who worked in the 3 rd and 4 th phases of the family learning program
	B. Ganbat	Governor of Norovlin soum and head of NFE soum commission
	B. Erdenejargal	Soum school director, secretary of NFE commission
	J. Tumurtogoo	Head of soum Governor's House and member of NFE commission
	S. Narantsetseg	Family learner, unemployed
	Kh. Oyuntuya	Family learner, self-employee
	M. Olzbayar	Family learner, unemployed
	S. Yumjirdulam	Family learner, unemployed
	J. Zulsuren	Family learner, unemployed
	Ts. Idermaa	Family learner, unemployed
Batnorov soum	D. Jambaa	Governor of Batnorov soum, head of soum NFE commission
	E. Erdenebileg	Visiting teacher of Idermeg bag
	T. Dagva	Family learner-old person
	S. Dolgorsuren	Former visiting teacher of family learning program, now a teacher of physics
	B. Baasanjav	Former visiting teacher of family learning program, now a teacher of mongolian language
	T. Delgermaa	Former school director and was working as a visiting teacher during project implementation
	Ts. Delgerlham	Family learner
	J. Purevjav	Family learner
Bayankhutag soum	G. Banzragch	School director of Bayankhutag soum, member of soum NFE commission
	P. Purevdolgor	Family learner, teacher of music
	Yu. Oyuntsetseg	Family learner, unemployed
	Kh. Enkhkhuyag	Governor of Bayankhutag soum, head of soum NFE commission
	B. Otgonbat	Staff of soum Social Policy Department, member of soum NFE commission

	S. Narantsetseg	Family learner, unemployed
	J. Erdenetsetseg	Family learner, unemployed
Undurkhaan soum, Kherlen soum	L. Nyamaa	Aimag NFE methodologist
	B. Doljin	Head of Educational Department, vice director of aimag NFE commission
	Ts. Nergui	Visiting teacher of family learning program
	B. Batbold	Learner of business program
	D. Dulamsuren	Family learner
	Ts. Sukhbat	Head of core family
	Ts. Tungalag	Learner of business program
	S. Ulziikhishig	Family learner
Dornogobi aimag, Sainshand soum	Ts. Choibaatar	Head of Educational Department, head of aimag NFE commission
	D. Gankhuyag	Aimag NFE methodologist (also methodologist of Mongolian language)
	Ch. Duuren	Director of radio and TV studio of the aimag
	L. Delgerbat	Director of vocational training school of the aimag and director of NFE learning center
	S. Ganzorig	Correspondent of radio and TV studio, was working during project implementation
	B. Tumennast	NFE methodologist and vice director of vocational training school
	B. Tsagaanderem	Teacher of vocational training school, visiting teacher
	S. Tungalag	Visiting teacher of monastery
	T. Baatar	Monastery lama, family learner
	B. Ganbaatar	Learner of business program, grows vegetable
	S. Bayasgalan	Family learner

8.3 Itinerary

8.3.1 For Clinton Robinson, Lead evaluator

Date	Time	Event/Activity
22 June	08.55	Depart London via Moscow for Ulaan Baatar
23 June	07.30	Arrive Ulaan Baatar
	14.00	Meet with UNESCO National Commission
	14.30	Initial meeting with former LfL staff and NFE Centre personnel
	17.30	Initial examination of project materials and files
	19.00	Return to hotel
	20.00	Consultations with Bernadette Robinson
24 June	09.30	Discussions about logistics and second evaluator
	10.00	Interview with possible second evaluator
	11.00	Meeting with NFE Centre staff on current NFE activities
	12.00	Meeting with LfL radio team from Mongol Radio and Television

	14.00	Meeting with staff, learners and managers of LfL Youth Business Programme
	18.00	Consultations with B Robinson
25 June	09.00	Leave Ulaan Baatar for Zuunmod (Tuv Aimag) (45km)
	09.45	Arrive Zuunmod, meet with aimag officials
	10.30	Visit NFE Learning Centre, presentation by NFE aimag methodologist
	12.00	Visit Lans bag NFE Learning Centre, presentation by sum NFE methodologists, teachers, learners
	13.30	Lunch with aimag staff
	14.30	Travel to Erdene (90km)
	16.30	Visit Erdene sum NFE Learning Centre, presentations by teachers, methodologists, learners
	18.45	Visit learner family – presentations, discussions, reception
	21.00	Travel to Ulaan Baatar (100km)
26 June	09.30	Meeting with editor of health textbook
	11.15	Meeting at Ministry of Science, Technology, Education and Culture
	15.00	Visit to Songinokhairkhan district Learning Centre, Ulaan Baatar
	17.30	Interview with Learning for Life Director
	18.30	Interview with Learning for Life Learning Support Officer
	20.15	Return to hotel
27 June (500 km)	07.15	Depart Ulaan Baatar for Tsetserleg
	20.20	Arrive Tsetserleg
	20.30	Meeting with Aimag Director of Education and Culture and NFE methodologist
	21.45	Meeting with Erdenbulgan Soum NFE methodologist and learners
28 June (350 km)	09.00	Departure from Tsetserleg to Tariat
	13.10	Arrive Tariat Soum
	14.05	Meeting with former Soum NFE methodologist
	16.00	Depart Tariat
	20.00	Arrive Ikh-Uul Soum, visit core family
	22.00	Meeting with Methodologist
29 June (290 km)	08.00	Depart Ikh-Uul for Ider
	12.45	Arrive Ider, meeting with Soum NFE methodologist
	16.00	Depart Ider for Uliastai
	17.50	Arrive Uliastai, meeting with Zavkhan Aimag NFE methodologist
	19.45	Visit Uliastai Centre Soum Learning Centre
30 June (250 km)	09.00	Depart Uliastai for Shiluustei Soum
	13.45	Arrive Shiluustei, meeting with Soum NFE methodologist and learners
	16.00	Depart Shiluustei for Taishir
	17.45	Arrive Taishir Soum, visit learner families
	18.45	Visit Soum Learning Centre: NFE methodologist and Soum governor

	19.30	Depart Taishir for Gobi Altai
	21.30	Arrive Gobi Altai
	22.00	Team meeting and feedback
1 July (170 km)	09.00	Meeting with Gobi Altai Aimag Director of Education and Culture
	10.00	Meeting with Gobi Altai Aimag NFE methodologist
	11.00	Meeting with Esenbulag Soum governor and NFE methodologist
	12.05	Visit Esenbulag Soum Learning Centre
	12.45	Visit Gobi Altai Aimag Radio Station
	13.30	Lunch/reception
	15.30	Depart Altai for Khureemara via Delger
	18.30	Arrive Delger Soum, meeting with head of citizen's council, school director and NFE methodologist at Soum Learning Centre
	22.00	Depart for Khureemara
	23.30	Arrive Khureemara
2 July (270 km)	09.00	Visit Soum Learning Centre, meeting with NFE methodologist
	10.45	Meeting with Visiting Teacher
	12.00	Depart Khureemara for Bumbugur
	15.00	Meeting (open air) en route with NFE methodologist and learner from Buntsagaan Soum
	17.30	Arrive Bumbugur, visit Learning Centre and meeting with Soum NFE methodologist
	18.30	Guests of Soum governor at naadam celebrations
	22.00	Depart Bumbugur for Bayankhongor
	01.15	Arrive Bayankhongor
3 July (60 km)	10.00	Meeting with Governor of Bayankhongor Aimag and Director of Education and Culture
	10.45	Visit Aimag Learning Centre, meeting with NFE methodologist
	13.40	Visit Learning Centre in Secondary School No. 3
	16.00	Depart Bayankhongor for Shargaljuut
	18.30	Arrive Shargaljuut, visit Bag Learning Centre
	19.30	Visit two learner families
	21.00	Visit Shargaljuut hot springs
4 July (230 km)	11.00	Depart Shargaljuut for Arkhaiveer via Khairkhandulaan
	12.35	Meeting (in ger) en route with Ulziit Soum NFE methodologist and learner
	17.45	Visit Khairkhandulaan Soum Learning Centre and learner family
	21.30	Arrive Arkhaiveer
5 July (450 km)	09.45	Meeting with Uvurkhangai Aimag Director of Education and Culture and NFE methodologist
	12.50	Visit Arkhaiveer Soum Learning Centre, meet with NFE methodologist
	13.45	Meeting with Soum governor

	15.15	Visit Arkhaiveer Bag No. 6 Learning Centre, meet with Visiting Teacher (also Bag governor)
	16.30	Depart for Ulaan Baatar
6 July	03.00	Arrive Ulaan Baatar
	14.00	Orientation and consultations with second evaluator
	17.30	Return to hotel
7 July (250 km)	09.00	Administrative matters at UNDP, Russian visa application, etc
	15.00	Depart Ulaan Baatar for Darkhan
	18.10	Arrive Darkhan
	18.20	Visit Khongor Soum Learning Centre, meet with NFE methodologist and learners
	20.00	Meet with Aimag NFE methodologist
	22.10	Visit Darkhan Soum Learning Centre, meet with NFE methodologist and learners
	23.15	Visit Darkhan educational FM Radio Station, meet with director
8 July (150 km)	09.30	Depart Darkhan for Erdenet
	11.35	Arrive Erdenet
	11.40	Visit Erdenet educational FM Radio Station, meet with producer
	12.50	Meet with Erdenet NFE Centre Director, visit small business group
	14.55	Meet with Orkhon Aimag Director of Education Centre
	16.00	Visit Darkhan copper mine
	20.00	Visit local monument and mountain
	22.00	Return to hotel
9 July (400 km)	08.15	Depart Erdenet for Ulaan Baatar
	17.00	Arrive Ulaan Baatar, return to hotel
10 July	09.00	Meet with national NFE Centre Director
	11.00	Meet with former Learning for Life project director
	15.00	Return to hotel, organise data
	19.00	Attend Naadam concert
11 July		Naadam – national festival and holiday; visit cultural and sporting events
12 July		Work on data
13 July		Work on data
	16.00	Consult with co-evaluator
	19.30	Meet with former Learning for Life project director
14 July	09.15	Meet with local consultant (former Learning for Life Learning Support Officer)
	11.00	Meet with former Learning for Life textbook editor
	12.00	Meet with former Learning for Life accountant
	14.00	Work on data
	16.00	Visit cashmere factory
15 July	11.00	Meet with MOSTEC NFDE/EFA officer

	14.00	Prepare feedback seminar
16 July	10.00	Feedback seminar for NFE Centre staff and former project staff
17 July	08.30	Depart Ulaan Baatar for London, via Moscow
	19.00	Arrive London

8.3.2 For Chultem Otgonbayar, Co-evaluator

Date	Time	Places
07 July	07:00	Left for Dornod aimag from UB
	15:40-16:00	Passed by Undurkhaan city (Khentii aimag)
08 July	16:00-04:00	Arrived at Choibalsan city of Dornod aimag
	04:30-11:30	Stayed at the hotel “Kherlen” of Choibalsan sum
	14:00-14:30	Meeting with Mr. Erdene, head of Educational Department of Dornod aimag
	15:00-17:30	Meeting with methodologist and visiting teacher at the learning center of school no 11 of Kherlen sum
	17:30-19:00	Meeting with learners at the learning center no 2 of the railway
	19:30-22:30	Meeting with learners, teacher and methodologist at the learning center no 1 of Khan-uul school complex
09 July	00:00-01:30	Meeting at the local radio studio staffs and got acquainted with their work
	01:40-02:30	Meeting with the Mr. Erdenee, head of Educational Department
	02:30-03:00	Meeting with Ms. Tsetsenchimeg, former methodologist of Dashbalbar sum
	03:00-04:00	Meeting with Mr. Erdenetsogt, aimag NFE methodologist and got acquainted with the implementation process of family learning programs in details and evaluated his work
	From 09:30	Left for Dashbalbar sum from Choibalsan sum
	14:00-17:30	Got acquainted with the implementation process of family learning program of Dashbalbar sum
	19:30-23:50	Left for Bayandun sum from Dashbalbar sum
	24:00-08:30	Overnight in Bayandun sum
10 July	09:30-14:00	Meeting with learners and got acquainted with the implementation process of family learning program
	15:15-21:30	Arrived at Norovlin sum of Khentii aimag from Bayandun sum of Dornod aimag
	22:30-08:30	Spending overnight in Norovlin sum
	09:00-13:00	Meeting with learners and got acquainted with the implementation process of family learning program
	14:00-16:20	Arrived at Batnorov sum from Norovlin sum
	16:20-17:00	Meeting with Mr. Jambaa, Batnorov sum governor and 3 representatives of the learners
	17:20-18:00	Arrived at Berkh sum from Batnorov sum
	18:30-21:00	Meeting with teacher Ms. Dolgorsuren and Baasanjav, who worked during the family learning program implementation and some representatives of the learners

	22:10-01:20	Arriving at Undurkhaan sum (Khentii) from Berkh sum
12 July	01:30-09:30	Stayed overnight in “Jargalan” hotel of Undurkhaan
	10:00-11:00	Arrived at Bayankutag sum of Khentii aimag from Undurkhaan
	11:30-15:00	Meeting with sum governor, administrator and learners of family learning program
	15:00-16:00	Arrived at Undurkhaan from Bayankhutag sum
	16:00-17:30	Meeting with director of Educational Department, NFE methodologist and representatives of the learners of business and family learning programs
	18:30-05:25	Arrived at Ulaanbaatar from Undurkhaan
	16:00-18:30	Meeting with UNESCO consultants in the project office and reported about the trip result to eastern parts of Mongolia
14 July	From 16:00	Train to Sainshand sum of Dornogobi aimag
15 July	05:30	Arrived at Sainshand sum
	09:00-10:00	Meeting with Mr. Choibaatar, head of aimag Educational Department and aimag NFE commission secretary
	10:00-11:00	Meeting with Mr. Gankhuyag, aimag NFE methodologist
	11:00-11:40	Meeting with Mr. Duuren, director of aimag radio and TV center, Mr. Ganzorig, radio correspondent
	11:50-13:00	Meeting with Mr. Delgerbat, director of the aimag vocational training center, and Tumennast, headmaster of the school
	14:00-15:00	Left for a monastery “Khamriin khiid”
	15:00-15:30	Meeting with Mr. Tsagaanderem, teacher of training technology
	15:30-16:30	Meeting with Ms. Tungalag, visiting teacher
	16:30-17:00	Meeting with learners, Mr. Baatar and Bayasgalan
	17:00-18:00	Returned from a monastery to aimag center
	18:00-19:00	Meeting with learners representatives of business and family learning program
	21:00	Returned to UB from Sainshand
16 July	08:35	Arrived UB
	10:00-12:30	Participated in the final evaluation-reporting meeting

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8.4 Summary financial report

UNESCO / MANINA						
Project: SICHMIDII						
NON-FORMAL BASIC DISTANCE EDUCATION IN MI						
Financial Status Report as 15 December 2003						
Total Budget Approved: 1,746,549,00 US\$						
INCOME:	FUNDS RECEIVED		INTEREST RECEIVED		TOTAL INCOME	US\$
	12/2001 06/2003	US\$				
Total		1,613,441,21			0,00	1,613,441,21
Budget components and budget lines	Type of Expenditure	Approved Budget by Budget component	Prior Years expenditure	Current year expenditure	Total expenditure	Obligations
11.00	International experts		67.611,79	0,00	67.611,79	0,00
11.50	Consultants		1.395,27	0,00	1.395,27	0,00
14	Mission costs		59.463,98	0,00	59.463,98	0,00
17	National professionals		35.829,78	0,00	35.829,78	0,00
Sub Total	10 Project personnel	218.900,80	164.410,74	0,00	164.410,74	0,00
21	Sub-contracts		318.267,22	0,00	318.267,22	0,00
Sub Total	20 Sub-contracts	387.660,80	318.267,22	0,00	318.267,22	0,00
32	Other trainings and seminars/meetings		372.575,86	0,00	372.575,86	0,00
Sub Total	30 Training and seminars	388.914,80	372.575,86	0,00	372.575,86	0,00
45	Equipment and maintenance		436.458,25	0,00	436.458,25	0,00
Sub Total	40 Equipment and maintenance	436.579,80	436.458,25	0,00	436.458,25	0,00
51	Maintenance veh/eqp		68.129,96	0,00	68.129,96	0,00
53	Travel expenditure		87.395,21	0,00	87.395,21	0,00
Sub Total	50 Miscellaneous	175.775,00	155.425,17	0,00	155.425,17	0,00
TOTAL		1.544.909,80	1.447.136,44	0,00	1.447.136,44	0,00
99	Support costs		166.304,77	0,00	166.304,77	0,00
Sub Total	90 Support costs	166.613,00	166.304,77	0,00	166.304,77	0,00
TOTAL		1.746.549,00	1.613.441,21	0,00	1.613.441,21	0,00
Funds received as 15 December 2003						0,00

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9.1.2 Relating to the project

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9.2 Terms of Reference

TERMS OF REFERENCE FOR
EVALUATION OF PROJECT 510/MON/11
NON-FORMAL BASIC DISTANCE EDUCATION IN MONGOLIA
SURCH AMIDARYA: LEARNING FOR LIFE

I . Background information

The Jomtien Declaration and the Framework of Action, emphasizing the need to provide sustained long term support for national and regional actions, states that *“Upon governments’ request, multilateral and bilateral agencies should focus on supporting priority actions, particularly at the country level, in areas such as:Programmes designed to meet the basic learning needs of disadvantaged groups, out-of-school youth, and adults with little or no access to basic learning opportunities.”* Paragraph 45 d.

The Non-Formal Basic Distance Education project undertaken in Mongolia with extra-budgetary funding from DANIDA, reflected UNESCO’s approved programme and budget 28 C/5 (1996-97) paragraph 01102 *“a special emphasis is placed on developing low cost and flexible delivery systems – both formal and non-formal – adapted to the particular needs and circumstances of different categories of learner groups un-reached or underserved by the existing systems. These include, in particular, girls and women, especially in rural areas, and the disadvantaged groups (e.g. school drop-outs and unemployed youth, street and working children, and minority groups and populations living in remote area). Throughout the programme, efforts focus on improving the quality, relevance and usefulness of the education and training provided’.*

The present 31 C/5 (2002/2003) includes the activity *“ Education at a distance as a development tools”.* This activity is based on the finding that *“over the forthcoming 30 years, almost 98% of global population growth is going to occur in the developing world, in impoverished countries where many of the youngest inhabitants are deprived of education and at great risk. Provision must therefore be made for distance non-formal education programmes in order to reach those who are unreached and especially those who are under the greatest risk of being left out of the knowledge revolution: the rural youth, the urban poor, the illiterate and the marginalized.”*

From 1924 to 1990, Mongolia had a centrally planned economy with close ties to the USSR and heavy economic dependence on the latter. Education received a large share of government expenditure (11.3% of GDP). As a consequence the country had a correspondingly high level of educational development with a

literacy rate of 90%. The formal school system reached out to everybody with the help of an expensive boarding school system. The end of the support from the Soviet Union and the transition to democracy and market driven economy that followed, had as one of its consequences the break up of parts of the formal education system, particularly the boarding schools. Financial constraints leading to lack of repair and maintenance of school buildings, difficulties for heating during winter, need for the boys' manpower at home added to the lack of relevant curriculum were the main reasons for this deterioration. The need for reform and alternative models became a must. It was in this context that a Distance Education project was designed to assist families (mothers, fathers, sisters, brothers and other relatives) to catch up with basic education

A Non-Formal Distance Education project for women in the Gobi desert was initiated in 1995: The UNESCO/DANIDA Gobi Women's project (510/MON/10). This project terminated in December 1996 and was very well received in Mongolia. Not only did the target group react favourably by displaying high interest in the learning activities, but also people not formally enrolled in the project both in the Gobi desert and other areas of Mongolia expressed their desire to participate in similar learning programmes.

Based on the significant impact of the Gobi Women's project, the Mongolian Government asked UNESCO to assist in expanding the same to cover the Mongol population on a national scale with a family based education and to further develop the capacities in non-formal and distance education. This project particularly addressed marginalized (out-of-school and out-of-work) youth in urban and rural areas.

The four-year project initially called, 'Non-Formal Basic Distance Education in Mongolia' (510/MON/11), had a budget of US\$ 1,775,600, which was funded by DANIDA. The global national government budget for the project was 112,392,000 tugriks (USD1 = 650 tugriks). Its implementation was undertaken by UNESCO and the Government of Mongolia. The function of UNESCO was to provide technical assistance. The Ministry of Science, Technology, Education and Culture (MOSTEC) in Mongolia was responsible for the establishment of the administrative structures and production centres.

The project started in 1997 with a needs assessment, followed by a phase of material preparation. The first phase, which aimed at urban youth, was launched in 1999 for 3,700 learners, and was followed in the year 2000 by a larger family-based programme with a rural focus reaching 37,000 learners. The content and the aims of the two programmes were different as were the structures. The figure of 37,000 includes 4,100 urban dwellers (3,100 from Ulaanbaatar and 500 each from Darkhan and Erdenet)

Development Objective:

Based on the experiences of the Gobi Women's project, the current project aimed at further developing national and regional capacities in the field of non-formal basic distance education in Mongolia. It also aimed at providing different learners normally based in family environments with their needs for basic educational and informative material.

Immediate objectives:

1. to provide 37,000 family-students (including unemployed youth and school drop-out children) throughout the country with basic knowledge in
 - a. Income Generating Skills with special attention to out of-school youth
 - b. Health
 - c. Literacy
 - d. Civics
 - e. Environment
 - f. How to reach drop-out pupils and educating pre-school children

This was to be achieved with the help of distance education learning material (print and radio) covering the above mentioned topics as well as setting up of approximately 24 community centres where intensive learning courses were offered for the family students.

2. To strengthen the planning, monitoring and co-ordination capacity in the field of Distance Education within the Ministry of Science, Technology, Education and Culture.

This was to be achieved with the establishment of a distance education centre within the National Institute for Educational Studies and relevant training in the fields of management, research and evaluation, production of Distance Education material and teacher training.

Expected Results:

1. Establishment of production centres both centrally and locally, able to produce Non-formal Distance Education packages (print and radio) covering a wide range of topics. 24 multi-purpose community centres established with an additional offer of educational and social activities.
2. Creation of functional capacities of the MOSTEC in:
 - a. Distance Education planning
 - b. The pedagogical design of distance education materials using combinations of various media
 - c. Production of materials for distance education in a creative and skilled manner
 - d. Evaluation of distance education interventions
 - e. System design and management.
3. 37,000 family members taking part in learning activities of relevance to their needs which facilitate their search for employment and improve their life skills.

II. Purpose of Evaluation

The evaluation was foreseen at the outset of the project and is reflected in the paragraph 10.2 of the Project Document:

'A systematic evaluation will be carried out upon the completion of the learning year 2000.'

The project came to an end in 2001. In order to have a realistic view of its impact, it was considered important to allow for a certain lapse of time before undertaking an evaluation.

As stated in the project document, UNESCO shall undertake an end-of-project evaluation which will focus on:

- 2.1 The impact of the project on the beneficiary population with special emphasis laid on:
 - 2.1.1 The basic and new skills and learning processes acquired by the beneficiaries as a result of the project in the fields of livelihoods, health, literacy, civics, environment and reintegration of drop-out children into basic education schemes. The evaluation will also look into the impact of these skills on the quality of life and on employment.
 - 2.1.1 Gender perspective: The income-generating activities and revival of traditional Mongolian craft (felt, clothes, boots, etc.) should be analysed from a gender perspective: Who did what? Did one or the other sex's workload go up disproportionately? What happened to the income earned (if any)? Who in the family decided how to spend the money?

The impact of the project on

- 2.1.2 The Government Education Policies
 - 2.1.3 The local capacities in distance education planning, in design and production of distance education materials, in evaluation of distance education interventions, and in system design and management
- 2.2 The sustainability of the project from the following points of view:
 - 2.2.1 Financial and material viability of the activities undertaken

- 2.2.2 Ownership of the project by the local communities with special emphasis on their participation in the design of the project, in the definition of the contents of the radio programmes and the learning material and their continued involvement in the project displayed by proposing whatever changes that may have been necessary to the initial design
- 2.2.3 Life-long learning i.e. the capacity of the project and its beneficiaries to evolve and re-adapt the project in response to new learning needs of the people by the people.

The main stakeholders of this evaluation are the beneficiaries of the project in Mongolia, the Ministry of Science, Technology, Education and Culture (MOSTEC) in Mongolia, UNESCO's Education Sector and the participating field office of Beijing.

III. Evaluation Scope

The scope of this evaluation will cover the following five categories of issues:

Relevance

- Relevance of the project to the needs of the country, taking into consideration the country's urban and rural settings, and, in particular, the nomadic culture of the latter.
- Appropriateness of the strategy in focussing on the family as a learning center rather than schools or other outside institutions and any links between formal and non-formal education made through project activities. .
- Relevance of such projects aiming at reviving traditional trades and economic systems in a country in transition from a centrally planned command economy to a market driven one.

Effectiveness

- Effectiveness of the project strategy and activities undertaken in achieving the given objectives
- Efficiency of programme planning and management including the coordination with the relevant stakeholders, in particular, with MOSTEC. Special emphasis will be laid on the Ministry's relationship with the project in terms of policy, status, structures, its importance within the basic education and NFE landscape as a whole in Mongolia
- Inputs made and outputs delivered in a timely manner and with a quality as originally planned.
- Cost-effectiveness of the project

Impact

- Impact on the government's education policies
- Impact on the enhancement of the local capacities in such areas as distance education planning, design, production of distance education materials, evaluation, and system design and management.
- Impact on the beneficiary population: knowledge and basic skills acquired by the beneficiaries as a result of the project in the fields of livelihoods, health, literacy, civics, and environment (increased living standards), disaggregated by sex.
- Impact of acquisition of knowledge and skills on the reintegration of drop-out children and youth into formal basic education schemes and employment/self-employment.
- Impact of the project beneficiaries and their communities in terms of participation in management and decision-making at the individual, family and community levels, disaggregated by sex.

- Impact on the beneficiary population in terms of change in gender relations, gender equality.

Sustainability

- Efforts undertaken by the Ministry and the Distance Learning Centers to maintain project activities after external funding has ended. Their capacity to maintain these efforts in the future.
- Capacity of the beneficiaries to develop and adapt the project to the new learning needs, as evidenced, for example, by the participation of the local communities in the design of the project, definition of the contents of the radio programmes and other learning materials and to engage in a life-long learning process

Replicability

- In which way can distance non-formal education projects be best planned and implemented to achieve the greatest results, what actions needs to be reinforced, and what needs to be avoided. This concerns both project content and management issues.
- Non-formal Distance Education as an educational strategy and its appropriateness in the specific context of Mongolia. This should be looked upon as an area of comparative advantage for UNESCO.
- The analysis will include risks involved and means and actions needed to counter those risks. It will also provide guidelines for overall policy formulation in this area.

Timeframe

The timeframe for this evaluation will cover the entire project period and 18 months that followed its completion.

Geographical coverage: National with Aymags selected from each of the four regions.

East region	West region	North region	South region
Aymags <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Hentii • Dornod • Sukhbaatar • East Gobi • Gobisumber 	Aymags <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Khovd • Uvs • Ulgii • Altai • Zavkhan 	Aymags <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Darkhan • Erdenet • Bulgan • Arkhangai • Huvsgol • Selenge 	Aymags <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Middle Gobi • South Gobi • Overhangai • Bayanhongor • Tov

The evaluators should bear in mind that:

- Recommendations should focus on implementation modalities/mechanisms (including decentralisation and HQ/FOs interaction);
- Recommendations should be practical, operational and measurable;
- Recommendations should be outcome-oriented and relevant to UNESCO's decision making, overall policy and mandate with a particular focus on EFA.

Timeline of evaluation

The timeline for this evaluation has been detailed in point 6 of the current document.

The evaluation team will carry out two weeks of desk studies and research, four weeks of field visits to the selected Aymags and three weeks of report writing.

The final venues for the evaluation study are as follows:

- Desk work at the usual workplace of the consultants.
- Preparatory meeting in Paris
- Four weeks field study in Mongolia
- Report writing at the usual workplace of the consultants

IV. Evaluation Methods

Evaluation methods will include:

- Document review (see list in Annex 1)
- Field visits
- Semi-structured interviews of beneficiaries and members of the implementation teams as well as national representatives (in particular of the NFE Department)
- Observation
- Participatory techniques
- Involvement of resource persons providing background information
- The ED Sector and IOS shall provide comments on the draft evaluation report, to be taken into consideration for the final report.

V. Evaluation Team

This evaluation will be carried out by two external evaluators and one resource person. This team is composed of:

1. Mr. Clinton Robinson, expert in literacy and non-formal education (lead evaluator)
2. Evaluator 2, expert in basic non-formal education and evaluation
3. Ms. Bernadette Robinson, Expert in Distance Education and resource person on Mongolia to provide background information to the evaluators

This evaluation team will be accompanied by a representative of UNESCO Beijing for one week at the end of the evaluation, if health conditions (SARS) permit.

UNESCO Beijing's role will mainly be to discuss future collaboration in the area of NFE and distance education, based on the recommendations of the evaluators during the debriefing session with the national authorities.

Furthermore, the team will be accompanied by the former national project officer, if available, to assist the team locally. The former national project team will mainly assist with the logistical organisation of the evaluation.

VI. Evaluation Report Outline

1. Executive Summary (maximum 4 pages)
2. Programme Description
3. Evaluation Purpose
4. Major Findings
5. Lessons Learnt (from both positive and negative experiences)
6. Constraints that impacted Programme Delivery
7. Recommendations

VII. Planning and Implementation Arrangements

The planning for the evaluation is as follows:

.	February	March	April	May	June	July	August	September/ October
What?	Draft TOR	Finalisation of TOR	Hiring of external evaluator and drafting of evaluation methodology with evaluators Preparation of the mission with the Government	Planning meeting with the evaluators in Paris or London	Mission to Mongolia Field visits	Report writing	Validation of final report	Submission of report to UNESCO and donor
Who?	ED/BAS/LIT, IOS	ED/BAS/LIT, IOS	ED/BAS/LIT, IOS ED/EO/EXB, evaluators	ED/BAS/LIT, ED/EO/EXB IOS ; evaluators	Evaluation team UNESCO Beijing	Evaluation team	Evaluation team, ED/BAS/LIT, ED/EO/EXB, IOS	ED/BAS/LIT ED/EO/EXB IOS