

***Education of Kazakh children:
A Situation Analysis***

A Report for Save the Children UK

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Abbreviations and Acronyms

ECD	Education and Culture Department
MECS	Ministry of Education, Culture and Science
MEA	Mongolian Education Alliance
ADB	Asian Development Bank
HDR	Human Development Report
LSMS	Living Standards Measurement Survey
EFA	Education for All
UPE	Universal Primary Education
EGSPRG	Economic Growth Strategy and Poverty Reduction Strategy
NFE	Non formal Education
NFEC	Non formal Education Center
CMP	Child Money Program
TBD	To Be Determined
TEDP	Third Education Development Program
TTC	Teacher Training College
ILO	International Labor Organization
NSO	National Statistical Office
IEC	Information, Education and Communication
NAC	National Authority for Children

I. INTRODUCTION

Every person—child, youth and adult—shall be able to benefit from education opportunities designed to meet their basic learning needs.

--World Declaration of Education for All

Education and training is the foundation for long term poverty reduction. It is a heavy weight in the interlocking factors of the downward vicious or upward virtuous development cycle. Education access and opportunities to learn provide on-ramps for accessing other assets and benefits in improved health, participation and income. The passage above from the World Declaration of Education for All highlights a critical aspect of education for all, which is that education opportunities mean far more than just physical and financial access to schooling. Quality education must also ensure that educational services effectively address the learning needs of the children they serve.

Among the challenges faced by the education sector in Mongolia is the lack of access to quality education to certain groups of children, including migrant, rural, poor children and children with disabilities. This study expands that circle of vulnerability and explores the education status, needs, constraints and opportunities of ethnic minority children, particularly Kazaks, and the extent to which the Government of Mongolia has adequately acknowledged or addressed their conditions. In addition to examining the social problems and systemic weaknesses of the education system that also affect Kazaks, this report will pay special attention to the multi-dimensional challenges of language in education that Kazak children face.

Many of the barriers to access and learning experienced by Kazaks are common barriers for all Mongolian children. These result from systemic weaknesses in education delivery caused by the poor condition or lack of facilities, lack of learning materials, poor quality teaching and learning environments, the high formal and informal costs associated with schooling, the corresponding poverty and low standard of living of families. A mismatch between the school and agricultural calendar is an additional constraint to school attendance in rural areas as is the lack of relevance of centrally developed curricula and textbooks to local language, context and culture. In addition to increasing the physical and financial accessibility to education through infrastructure development and subsidies, the quality and relevance must be also improved to give families the incentive to invest in educational opportunities.

First and foremost, however, Kazak children face the unique and significant challenge of language. Whether they are in a minority or majority context there is a whole host of challenges caused by the language barrier for Kazak students entering Mongolian schools or classes. Even children provided with the opportunity to learn in their native language through Kazak classes or schools face multi-dimensional challenges in learning and progressing through the educational system. The development of adequate supports for learning Mongolian as a second language and the development of a systematic approach and adequate learning materials to support bilingual education in Kazak and Mongolian are crucial to upholding Kazak children's rights to education and development.

II. METHODOLOGY AND CONSTRAINTS

This report was commissioned by Save the Children UK (SCUK). Its main purpose is to produce an education situation analysis of Kazak children to inform SCUK's strategic and operational planning in the area of supporting Kazak children's rights to education and development. The findings presented here are intended to be a rapid introduction to key sector specific issues and are not presented as an extensive or exhaustive analysis.

The main objectives of the situation analysis:

- To make an in-depth analysis on the current educational situation of Kazak children, including investigating the causes of the high drop out rate in Bayan-Olgii
- Identify the main factors adversely affecting the education of Kazak children and potential ways of addressing them
- Make recommendations for SCUK on how its program can strategically and operationally address those issues so that the rights of Kazak children to education and development are better met
- Make recommendations on central and local government policy level interventions

The key research questions are: What is the current status of educational opportunities and outcomes for Kazak children? Are the present priorities and policies in education development appropriate for addressing the needs and conditions of Kazak families/children? Are there currently policies in place that expressly target improving the education and development of Kazak children? If not, what are the specific characteristics that need to be addressed in policy formulation? If so, to what degree are the policies being implemented effectively?

This is a qualitative study with research conducted at the central level and in three field sites—Bayan-Olgii aimag, Hovd aimag and Nalaih district of Ulaanbaatar. Information was gathered through a literature review of materials made available in Ulaanbaatar. These data and information were supplemented with meetings with officials of Government ministries and other relevant national and international organizations and agencies including staff of donors and INGOs. Meetings with both Government and international agencies were conducted as semi-structured interviews. Most meetings were conducted in Mongolian with an interpreter although some meetings were conducted in English.

A significant constraint of this research project was rooted in language barriers of the research team. It was difficult for SCUK to identify a Kazak to English translator for the field visits. While the team had such a translator in Hovd aimag, the quality of interpretation was poor. This individual was also responsible for translating a survey provided in Mongolian into Kazak. Subsequent evaluation of the translation revealed many errors and shortcomings. SCUK was unable to enlist a translator for Bayan-Olgii aimag so the SCUK program officer interpreted where informants could speak Mongolian, with double translation occurring in many cases during conversations with parents who only spoke Kazak. These challenges are shared here because they highlight the rarity of finding individuals truly bilingual in Mongolian and Kazak, even though Kazak schools in theory transition students into full Mongolian instruction so they can participate on an equal footing in higher education. They also illustrate the reality that very few Kazak parents are proficient in the Mongolian language, rendering Mongolian language communications, assistance and learning opportunities largely ineffective.

The other important limitation of this study and its findings was the poor availability and quality of data. The little data that were available from different sources were often contradictory, and sometimes this was even true for data reported in the same source or report. More problematic was the general lack of data. Data requests to aimag ECDs, Ulaanbaatar's City Education and Science Department, Nalaih governor's office, and the Ministry's Education for All liaison went largely unfulfilled. Much of the data that were gathered are not comparable across locations. Therefore, findings in this report are mostly described in words. The statistics and numbers used are largely second hand data reported by local officials or other informants, and should be used as illustrations of observations and concerns, or as a starting point for understanding the problem.

III. EDUCATION IN MONGOLIA

The structure of the education system in Mongolia includes preschool and general education, which includes primary, lower and upper secondary. Preschool serves children ages 3-6 (beginning in 2005-2006) and is not compulsory. An 11-year education system was introduced in the 2005-2006 school year with the primary (grades 1-5) and lower secondary (grades 6-9) levels comprising basic education. According to the Constitution basic education is both free and compulsory. Upper secondary is two years, grades 10 and 11. Upper secondary is not compulsory but completion of upper secondary is necessary for a diploma and is a prerequisite for college admission. Public education is under the supervision and authority of the Ministry of Education, Culture and Science (MECS) and each aimag has an Aimag Education and Culture Department (ECD) which operates as the local education authority. (Mongolian Education Alliance/MEA, 2005)

Given the country's low population density and nomadic lifestyle of much of the rural population, one of the crowning achievements of the Socialist period was the establishment of a vast network of schools and preschools, including a boarding school system, which allowed high levels of school attendance and literacy rates with little variation across regions.

The early years of the transition period, by contrast, had striking negative effects on education participation and outcomes. The reduction of state subsidies to kindergartens, privatization of land and buildings and the inadequate resources provided for heating and maintenance of school infrastructure resulted in preschool closures and the massive deterioration of school and dormitory facilities and school quality. These conditions, in addition to privatization of livestock, deepening poverty and increased unemployment, and the reorganization of the education system in 1990 and again in 1992, led to dramatic increases in dropouts and decreases in preschool participation.

Dropouts climbed to over 33,000 in the 1992-1993 school year or 8.8% of school enrolment. Enrollment in the first three years of school fell from 233,000 in 1990 to 187,900 in 1995, while overall enrollment for children aged 8-15 fell from 98.6% in 1990 to 84.3% in 1995.(HDR, 2003) Preschools suffered the greatest blow during the transition with 244 kindergartens closing between 1990 and 2001. (Asian Development Bank/ADB, 2002) Enrollment in kindergarten, which was over 97,000 children in 1990, had declined to under 60,000 by 1993. (ADB, 2003) While both the economy and the education sector began to make a recovery after 1995, by 2004 preschool enrollment, at 82, 674, was still not back to its 1990 level. (ADB, 2005)

Since 1995, Mongolia has been initiating reforms that address education access and quality sectorally and with commendable results. However, a major factor influencing education access and opportunity today is rising poverty. Of particular concern is the widening inequality both between and within rural and urban populations. Rural areas have far less capacity for human capital development in the form of access to information and basic social services. Even within rural areas, economic opportunity and access to services diverge widely between herders and residents of soum or aimag centers. ADB also reports that analyses of 1998 and 2002 Living Standards Measurement Survey (LSMS) data show the negative impact of poverty on the affordability of education in terms of both direct and opportunity costs, and thus, on dropout rates at every level of education. Academic quality and achievement measured by examination results also show that poor soums fare worse than richer soums. This is another crucial issue as

studies have shown that in Mongolia, parental decisions on sending or keeping their children in school are influenced by the perceived quality of teaching and teacher attitudes.

Mongolia's current education priorities are closely linked with its overall development orientation focusing on poverty reduction and sharing equitable benefits of development. Education is seen as an important strategy in the development process, as seen in the Economic Growth Strategy and Poverty Reduction Strategy for Mongolia (EGSPRS). Under Education for All (EFA) goals, Mongolia strives to expand and improve early childhood care and education, to reach youth and adults through non-formal education, and to achieve universal primary education (UPE) by 2015. EFA's goal number six also enumerates several desired criteria of education quality including instructional resources, teaching methodology and articulated learning outcomes. Mongolia's Millennium Development Goals (MDG) matches the EFA target for UPE and sets an additional goal of 100 percent primary cohort survival by 2015. In order to achieve these universal goals, Mongolia must not only strengthen its education system and performance on average, but must target the special learning needs of Kazaks and other ethnic minorities to ensure school readiness and quality teaching and learning for all children in Mongolia.

IV. RECENT LEGAL AND POLICY FRAMEWORK

The following section outlines the chief Government of Mongolia education and social welfare interventions which were intended to reach the poor and marginalized populations in different ways. It does not intend to be exhaustive, but introduces some of the major programs intended to remove financial barriers to schooling, to reach out of school populations, to increase incentives for participation in education and to improve the quality of teaching and relevance of education.

1995 Basic Principles of Education and Education Law

- "Education shall be accessible to the citizen regardless of nationality, language, color of skin, age, sex, social and property status, work and official position, religion, and opinions; the citizen shall be provided with conditions to learn in his/her native language."
- Set budget allocation of not less than 20% to education sector
- Provided subsidies for boarding school students to return home twice a year and public transportation concessions for school travel

1997 National Non-Formal Education Program

NFE as it is commonly called, is composed of two programs: the first program developed and launched in 1997 was "The National Program of Non-Formal Education Development." The second national program called "National Program for Distance Education" was developed in January, 2002. Non-Formal Education was seen as a way to address the soaring dropouts and unemployment that occurred as a result of the transition period and is formally recognized as an alternate method to receive basic education. NFE is administered through Enlightenment Centers located at the soum level, and is supported by materials developed and distributed centrally by the Non-Formal Education Center.

2000 Education Supplies Subsidy

- Joint resolution #34/31 by Minister of Education and Minister of Finance granting education supplies for school aged needy children in the amount of 16,000 Tugriks each year.
- For vulnerable social groups or families with four or more children simultaneously enrolled in school.
- In order to receive the subsidy parents of eligible children must submit their requests and proof documents to the local authorities by May each year to receive supplies in September.
- School supplies were delivered to 56,700 children in 2002, and to 64,000 children in 2003.

2000 Removal of Meat Allocation

Policy change removing cost sharing for dormitory meals, returning to pre-1996 policy where dormitories were fully subsidized by the State.

2001-2003 Special programs to increase teacher supply at rural secondary schools

- Loan forgiveness for teachers working in rural schools (loan forgiveness from State Student Fund if 2 years in soum and 5 years in aimag school--2003; last two years of university--2001). More than 200 teachers have made agreement so far with aimags and soums.
- Students are selected in grade 8 in soums with teacher shortages and offered teacher courses and given boarding school spots in aimag center to study in groups. 449 teachers are in this program in 13 aimags (2002).
- Bonus salary incentives for teachers going to work in certain fields in certain aimags (300,000T); increasing training in alternate subjects.

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- Bayan-Olgii and Hovd both have very low teacher shortage numbers (14 and 6 respectively) so have not actively utilized these benefits.

2002 Action Plan on Preschool

- No special preschool subsidies, but proposing increased alternate forms of preschool including ger and mobile kindergartens and private preschools.
- Charity Kindergartens established locally
- In summer 2003, 14, 261 children of herder families benefited from mobile preschool programs.

2003 Policy change removing registration fee for Ulaanbaatar in-migrants

The fees associated with registering as official residents of Ulaanbaatar, as a process required to access basic social services, was prohibitively expensive for most migrant families and constituted a major barrier in enrolling children in school.

2005 Child Money Program

- Following June 2004 elections, this flagship social assistance program was instituted through the Ministry of Social Welfare and Labor for poor families, who receive 3,000T per month per child contingent on school enrollment.
- In 2005, 560,000 children from 127,000 poor families received this benefit.

2004-2005 Kazak textbook translation

The ministry has included the translation and printing of school textbooks in the Kazak language in its recent planning. Translation schedule began in 2004.

2005-2006 New Education Standards

The curriculum previously implemented in 1997-98 introduced the idea of local flexibility but was still a content based syllabus, with 70-75% of classroom hours structured. The new education standards implemented in 2005-2006 define a competency framework so schools can modify and develop local content. After this year's transition to an 11-year school system, which is highly structured, each school, under the new standards can in theory contextualize content locally with ECD support. The new standards also emphasize new instructional methodologies that emphasize child-centered, activity based learning.

2005 Textbook vouchers

- Following implementation of cost sharing for new textbooks, vulnerable groups will be eligible for textbook vouchers.
- According to MECS, of 557,700 children, an estimated 28% will be eligible for exemptions.

Quota system for college admissions

MECS is considering changing its quota system for college admissions. Currently students are admitted based on geographic distribution, but in the future, candidates will have to compete nationally for spaces higher education.

V. GENERAL CONDITION OF KAZAKS IN MONGOLIA

The focus of this report is on education opportunities and conditions for Kazak's as the largest minority group and one with the greatest cultural and linguistic distinction from the Mongolian majority. Bayan-Olgii, where most Kazaks in Mongolia live and which is nearly all Kazak, performs poorly on basic indicators of education access and efficiency. These warranted a closer examination to see if there were barriers in the current education delivery system that uniquely disadvantage Kazaks or other ethnic minorities. Because of the lack of available demographic and educational data disaggregated by ethnic group in Mongolia, this is largely a qualitative study focusing on field sites where the Kazaks are the majority or are part of a mixed community.

A. *A picture of the population*

Population

Outside of the majority Khalkh, Kazak's are the largest ethnic group in Mongolia and make up 4.4% of the population as a whole and account for around 5% of all children aged 0-14. According to the 2000 Population and Housing Census, there were 102,983 Kazak's living in Mongolia at the time out of a total population of 2,365,269. Kazaks mainly live in the far West, with Bayan-Olgii aimag, at a population of 99,112 people, almost entirely Kazak. Kazaks also comprise over 10% of the population in neighboring Hovd aimag, living primarily in the aimag center, in Hovd soum where they are a dominant majority, in Buyant soum where they comprise about one-third of the population, and as a smaller minority in a couple other soums. (see Box 1 for profile of field sites) The field research also included Nalaih district outside of Ulaanbaatar, a mining community from the 1930s and 40s which originally attracted migrants from Bayan-Olgii to work the mines. Contrary to the hypothesis raised in the Terms of Reference, the Kazak community in Nalaih is not a new or growing migrant community but has been quite stable over generations and accounts for about 30% of the district population.

Profile of field sites

Hovd aimag: Population 91,770 (10% Kazak)
Buyant soum: Population 3,200 (30% Kazak; 10% Tuva and Uzbek; school - 55% Kazak)
Hovd soum: Population 4,917 (95% Kazak)
Jargalant soum/Aimag Center: Population 32,332 (18% Kazak; School #2 - 55% Kazak)
Munkhkhairkhan soum: Population 2,529 (98% Orianghai)
Urdenebuuren soum: Population 3,363 (96% Uuld; 4% Kazak)

Bayan-Olgii aimag: Population 99,112 (90% Kazak)
Altai soum: Population 4,010 (60% Kazak; 40% Orianghai)
Buyant soum: Population 3,127 (49% Kazak)
Olgii Center: Population 29,210 (98% Kazak; School #5 (100% Kazak)
Tsengel soum: Population 8,298 (80% Kazak; 20% Tuva)
Ulaanhus soum: Population 9,075 (100% Kazak)

Ulaanbaatar/Nalaih district: Population 23,620 (estimate 30% Kazak)
Nalaih Khoroo #4: Population 4,519 (over 90% Kazak)

Migration

There are no data available to indicate the degree to which Kazaks are represented in the current high level of internal rural-urban migration in Mongolia. Both in Bayan-Olgii and Hovd, Kazaks appear to be participating to some extent in the migration into aimag centers and suffering some of the consequences described in recent studies of migrant children. However, Kazak migration out of both aimags appears to be to Kazakhstan rather than to Ulaanbaatar and has seen a renewed upswing since 2004. It is possible that this out migration, with poor tracking of student transfers, has contributed to the higher dropout numbers in Bayan-Olgii.

Data from Bayan-Olgii show that in 1990, 10,000 families moved to Kazakhstan. Bayan-Olgii's aimag Governor estimates that between 1990 and 1994, nearly 70,000 people migrated to Kazakhstan. While this stopped in the late 1990s, 86 families moved again in 2002 and in 2004, this migration increased dramatically to 1,294 families. While the common wisdom at the central level is that large numbers of these migrants return to Mongolia, the Governor estimates that no more than 5,000 of the original 70,000 migrants returned. For example, in 2004, 28 families returned from Kazakhstan.

Poverty

Available data also indicate that the Western region, which is more remote and isolated from the capital, and where most ethnic minorities live, is more likely to be disadvantaged by other vulnerabilities. Poverty, for example, is highest in the Western region at 51% compared to 36% nationally, according to 2000 Census data. Comparing just the aimags we visited, in 2005, Bayan-Olgii's poverty rate is 46% compared to 35% in Hovd aimag and 36% nationally. Poverty is also deeper in the Kazak aimag, with 53% of poor families who are extremely poor, compared to 35% of poor families in Hovd who are extremely poor.

In the peri-urban area around Ulaanbaatar, the Kazak community is concentrated in Nalaih District, khoroo #4, which is also disproportionately disadvantaged by poverty and other vulnerabilities. Khoroo #4 is 90% Kazak and has the greatest rate of poor and extremely poor families among the district's six khoros. Over three-quarters of families here are poor. While Khoroo #4 residents make up only 19% of the population in Nalaih District, they are overrepresented among both the district's poor families and poor children under the age of five, at 37% and 30% respectively. It also has the greatest rate of poor and extremely poor female headed households and households with more than four children. All of these are correlated with lower education attainment.

B. Context of education participation and performance

Lower literacy

According to ADB, none of Mongolia's over 16 clans and ethnic groups is so "distinct from the dominant or mainstream society that it makes them especially vulnerable to being disadvantaged in the process of development." Yet ADB also notes that lower literacy rates can be observed among groups that reside in remote areas where educational services are hardest to reach. These groups are often ethnic minorities. For example, while the Khalkh or Mongolian majority over age 7 has an average illiteracy rate of 4.6%, for Kazaks it is 50 percent higher at 6.8%. Two other ethnic groups the Darkhad and Khoton have even higher illiteracy rates of 8.4 and 9.8%, respectively. Another feature of note is that while enrollment and literacy rates in Mongolia tend to favor females, Kazak females are less literate than their male counterparts. (2000 Census)

Higher dropouts

In addition to lower literacy rates, Bayan-Olgii, the only aimag that is predominantly Kazak, is also reported to have the highest dropout rates in the country, raising particular concern about whether Kazak children are being provided with equal educational quality and equal opportunity to learn. Children in Bayan-Olgii are three times more likely to dropout of school compared to their classmates across Mongolia. The overall school dropout rate in Bayan-Olgii is 6.2% compared to 1.9% nationally, and while Kazaks account for about 5% of the child and adolescent population in Mongolia and 4% of the total student population at the beginning of 2003-2004 school year, Bayan-Olgii's share of dropouts reported for the same year is 13-16% according to different sources.

Who are dropouts? How bad is the problem?

According to some estimates, some 200,000 children have dropped out of school since 1990, when Mongolia began its transition toward a market economy. (MEA) However, data on dropouts are inconsistent from source to source and tend to fluctuate widely from year to year as well. In the case of this study, dropout data for Hovd aimag varies from 219 reported by MECS and in some aimag statistics, to 691 in other ECD reporting. This is due to the lack of a consistent definition of dropouts and the inclusion or exclusion of certain categories of children such as those with disabilities or those that are unregistered. In some cases, students who participate in a two-week non-formal learning activity are excluded. In other cases, school officials define dropouts as those children out of school.

In general, dropouts are calculated by the simple computation of subtracting the number enrolled at the end of the school year from that enrolled at the beginning of the school year. However, this method does not track individual students, so that five students transferring into a school in the middle of the year will cancel out five students that have dropped out. This method also misses those students who may finish one school year but not return to enroll the following fall. In addition, because schools are currently funded on a per pupil formula based on enrollments, there is danger of a perverse incentive to hide dropouts and keep enrollment numbers and funding high. This is especially true in rural areas or areas of high out migration.

Greater delayed entry

Delayed entry to school, a factor in higher dropouts and lower achievement, is also highest in the Western and Hangay regions, with over 16% of new intakes age 9 or over in 2000. In one study, 90% of school drop outs entered school when they were age 9 or 10, and most of the dropouts who participated in the study did not have preschool education. (Peri-Urban) Previous to this year, children officially began compulsory education in grade one at the age of 8. The transition to an 11-year system in 2005-2006 included the change to age seven as the official age to start school. However, since 1999, the Education Law permitted children age 6-7 to enter grade one based on local discretion and capacity and schools saw an increasing proportion of age 7 and under intakes. But while starting primary education at a younger age has been demonstrated to have positive effects on student learning achievement, the Western region also performs poorly in the proportion of pupils who start school by age 7. In 2000, with 15% of children 7 or younger among new intakes in the Western region, this was only about half of the national average and the lowest in country compared to 16% to 27% in other regions and 42% in Ulaanbaatar.

In 2004-2005 in Hovd aimag, 45% of children starting grade one were age 7 and under. Yet in

Bayan-Olgii this year, after enactment of the policy to start compulsory education at age 7, only about one-quarter of children starting grade one this year met that standard. Altai soum reported that out of three grade one classes this year, two were seven year-olds and one was for eight year-olds and older. In a more rural bagh school in Altai soum, only 10 of 27 children completing grade 5 in the bagh school continued in soum center school. The school director explained that this was because most children in this bagh enter school much later, with most students completing grade 5 between the ages of 14 and 18.

Lower preschool participation

While there is no government preschool policy or program that targets Kazak children, Bayan-Olgii is a focus aimag for trainings by the Preschool Education Center. It was identified because of the aimag's particularly low preschool enrollment rates and because of its distance and isolation from Ulaanbaatar.

The importance of preschool

Recent MECS studies on preschool education and on Monitoring Learning Achievement in grades 4 and 8 found that pupils who spent more years in the kindergarten show better results in grade 4 compared with the pupils who spent fewer years in kindergarten. These benefits to learning were found to last throughout a child's schooling, with grade 8 graduates who attended preschool also scoring higher on exams than their classmates without preschool. (MECS, Preschool Report) Additional MECS findings include higher dropout rates linked to non-participation in preschool. (ADB 2002)

Participation: Bayan-Olgii has one of the lowest kindergarten enrollment rates in the country, at less than 20% compared to 33% nationally. Attention through the National Preschool Program 2 has helped increase preschool participation dramatically. In 2001, the aimag had only 7% kindergarten enrollment and 5% enrolled in alternate services. By 2004, kindergarten enrollment had more than doubled to 17.5% and participation in other preschool services had increased more than three-fold to 17.5% for a total preschool rate of 35%. In the last year, formal kindergarten enrollment in Bayan-Olgii has increased another 2.4% to 19.9%, although limited funding has caused alternate services to fall to 15.4%, so total participation has remained at the same level.

Hovd aimag reported that it does not collect preschool participation data by ethnicity. However, a few findings are of note. Hovd soum, the Kazak soum, was reported as the only soum center without a kindergarten (it closed down during the transition in 1993) until it reopened in 1996. While formal kindergarten enrollment for the aimag as a whole is 25%, in Hovd soum it hovers between 9-13% depending on seasonal fluctuation due to the farming cycle. And although the aimag reports that most of its kindergartens cannot meet the demand for preschool, Hovd soum's Kazak kindergarten and the kindergarten serving the Kazak micro-district in Hovd center/Jargalant soum, are both under enrolled. Buyant soum in Hovd likewise does not report education data by ethnicity. However, they reported anecdotally that while the soum was meeting success in its focus to boost preschool enrollment to increase school readiness—nearly 40% of children now attend some preschool—Kazaks are underrepresented, particularly those coming from Hovd soum.

Preschool participation across field sites

Hovd aimag	45% total preschool	25% kindergarten	over 20% alternate
Buyant soum	40% total preschool		
Hovd soum	30% total preschool	9-13% kindergarten	17% alternate
Aimag center	45% total preschool	24% kindergarten	21% alternate
School #2	20% total preschool		
Munkhairkhan soum	42% total preschool		
Urdenebuuren soum	30% total preschool		
Bayan-Olgii aimag	35% total preschool	20% kindergarten	15% alternate
Altai soum	30% total preschool	11% kindergarten	19% alternate
Buyant soum	19% total preschool	14% kindergarten	5% alternate
Olgii center	44% total preschool	33% kindergarten	11% alternate
School #5	10-20% preschool		
Tsengel soum	15% total preschool	11% kindergarten	4% alternate
Ulaanhus soum:	25% total preschool	7% kindergarten	18% alternate
Ulaanbaatar	34% total preschool	34% kindergarten	<1% alternate
Nalaih District	29% total preschool	25% kindergarten	4% alternate
Nalaih Khoroo #4	---		

GoM strategies for increasing participation: Implemented in 2002, the National Program on Preschool 2 set a preschool participation goal of 62% by 2007, with a 41% enrollment target in formal kindergarten and a 21% enrollment target in informal preschool services. Another goal for expanding preschool activity was that of training 35% of rural children at home through distance learning and parental guidebooks for preschool services.

In addition to expanding kindergarten facilities and physical capacity, the program goals include the development and promotion of alternate and private kindergarten services. Of Mongolia's 687 kindergartens in 2004-2005, 25, or 3.6% are private institutions. The primary model of alternate preschool uses ger or mobile kindergartens. These ger kindergartens follow herders to reach more children, generally traveling to different baghs throughout the summer conducting 2-3 week sessions. Nearly half of preschool participants in Bayan-Olgii receive services through this shortened model and in some soums alternate preschool accounts for the vast majority of preschool services.

A further benefit of the ger kindergarten model is that during the school year, the ger remains on the kindergarten grounds and can offer half-day sessions where parents do not pay for a meal, as a form of Charity kindergarten. Some aimag or soum governments also support "Charity Classes". In Bayan-Olgii, this type of program previously supported as many as 250 children's food costs, but we were informed that the current aimag government has discontinued this social welfare funding.

VI. POLICY FORMULATION FAILS TO TARGET KAZAK CHILDREN

There is a notable absence of education policies targeted toward Kazak children, especially a clear policy on mother tongue or bilingual language approach. This is primarily because of a pronounced lack of consciousness at the central level about issues of ethnicity. Most informants in MECS and related education agencies had not given the condition or needs of ethnic minorities in general or Kazaks in particular much thought. The translation of textbooks under the new education standards into Kazak, which began last year, is the only action directly recognizing a special learning need.

A. Lack of central level agreement on the problem

The lack of political tension or conflict among different ethnicities has caused a complacent attitude by the majority toward their rights. Key education and social sector reports also reinforce this outlook. ADB's education sector review asserts "the equality of educational participation and achievement among Mongolia's over 16 recognized clans and ethnic groups", citing unequal—but not unacceptably unequal—literacy rates as evidence. In addition to the genuine belief that there is no problem, a combination of poor understanding of local conditions, negative stereotypes of Kazaks and a narrow view of egalitarianism contributes to the reluctance to examine the rather complex question of whether Kazak children's rights to education and learning are being adequately met. As a result, many members of MECS and other central level education agencies see the attention on ethnic minorities as an external, internationally driven focus without legitimate grounds.

B. Poor understanding of local situation and needs

There are only a few groups in Mongolia, such as the Kazaks and the Tuvas, who retain and practice a distinct culture, religion and language, and to some extent live and marry separately from the rest of Mongolian society. Due to Bayan-Olgii's distance and isolation from the center, and to the more insular nature of Kazak culture and Kazak migration to Kazakhstan, there is a false assumption that Bayan-Olgii does not need or want attention and assistance from the capital. On the lack of attention at the central level on the Kazak population, officials from the Institute of Education explained this was because Bayan-Olgii receives support from Kazakhstan, so Kazaks are doing well and do not need additional assistance. The same view was expressed by MECS' ADB project coordinator, who admitted he had never been to Bayan-Olgii.

There was also confusion over when Kazak schools were first established in the aimag. More than one central level source affirmed that Mongolian was the primary language in schools and society until the transition period, during which the 1992 Constitution granted the right of minorities to be educated in their native languages. Education authorities and the aimag governor in Bayan-Olgii explained that in fact Kazak schools have been in place since the 1940s, although in 1978 the central government issued a resolution asserting Mongolian as the official language. The 1992 Constitution and 1995 Education Law consolidated the legal framework for Kazak instruction, but did not change existing practice in Bayan-Olgii. What did change is that what little assistance Bayan-Olgii received from Kazakhstan in the form of textbook support ended as did the local presence of central level agencies such as the Institute of Education, so the urgency of the need for educational supports has increased.

C. Stereotypes of Kazaks help rationalize their isolation and condition

All ethnic groups are granted full citizenship under the Constitution and there is no evidence of institutional discrimination against any ethnic groups. However, in conversations with Mongolians about the nature of Kazak culture and communities or Kazak participation in the education system, certain negative attitudes and stereotypes surfaced. Prominent among these is the view that Kazak isolation in Bayan-Olgii and their tradition not to intermarry with other groups explains the faulty assumption that Kazaks have no desire to learn Mongolian or mix with Mongolians. In fact, in mixed Bayan-Olgii soums that have Mongolian classes, an increasing number of Kazak families place their children in those Mongolian classes. In Hovd soum in Hovd aimag, the Kazak school opened a Mongolian class in response to parent demand, and over 100 children attend Mongolian school in neighboring Buyant soum.

Another assumption is that Kazaks value education less than Mongolians or are unwilling to make the effort to improve their situation. Along this line, a National Authority for Children (NAC) official remarked that the ECD staff in Bayan-Olgii was all Kazak and had been stable for a long time, but their traditional attitudes meant there have been few new initiatives in the aimag. She commented that in her observations of mixed language classes, Kazak children make little effort to speak Mongolian while Mongolian children make the effort to learn Kazak. There was widespread disdain for Mongolian spoken with a Kazak accent. In Nalaih, school officials cited as an example of parental negligence toward education how both parents in Kazak families often worked long hours in the mines so did not look after their children.

Deeper tensions between groups were found in Nalaih district where the citizen's group in khoroo #2, a Mongolian khoroo, charged that Kazaks hide their wealth and lie about poverty in order to receive greater external assistance. The citizen's group pointed to the new kindergarten built in khoroo #4 as an example of this, without noting that khoroo #4 was the last of the six khoros to have a kindergarten. According to this group, which included the khoroo governor, Kazak conditions are in reality better than in the Mongolian khoros. The data show the Kazak khoroo (#4) to have over three times the proportion of poor families as khoroo #2. Although in theory this could be a sham, the data also indicate that compared to khoroo #2, khoroo #4 has nearly twice the number of female headed households and over six times the number of families with greater than four children. (Nalaih district statistical agency, 2004) A recent study on the living conditions of children in peri-urban areas also describes cases of Mongolian-Kazak conflicts between children. In the study, one khoroo neighboring khoroo #4 expressed the desire for a community center for children, but separate from Kazak children. (Peri-Urban)

D. Adherence to narrow position of legal egalitarianism limits development goals

Officials focused on a definition of equity as impartial treatment, or the non-discrimination against and non-restriction of particular groups, rather than as meeting special needs to ensure equitable opportunities to learn or equitable learning outcomes. There was a distinct reluctance to acknowledge special vulnerabilities or disadvantages that might require targeted assistance, perhaps arising from an apprehension that distinguishing between ethnic groups in any way may imply or lead to divisiveness. Even in Buyant soum in Hovd aimag, where a local Hural representative had just clearly described the special difficulties Kazak students faced because of language barriers, the response to the question of whether there were special strategies used to assist struggling second language learners, such as extra time after class, was a defensive: "No, we treat all equally and do not distinguish by ethnicity".

The Ulaanbaatar City Education and Science Department director espoused similar views, declaring: “I can’t tell you about special needs [Kazaks] might have, but I can tell you that our policies are applied to all the same and do not restrict any group.” This Soviet style legal egalitarianism emphasizing equal delivery and policies treating all people and groups of children exactly the same is not in line with the rhetoric and paradigm of the new education standards which focus on a child-centered approach, addressing individual learning needs, and using an open curriculum to flexibly develop instructional program appropriate to local conditions. Giving all children the same thing is the very system of education that Mongolia is in theory trying to move away from, as it does not ensure that children are provided with instructional resources responsive to their needs.

E. Lack of measurement and data to monitor performance and progress

Kazaks are already disadvantaged in their education opportunities and learning because of the lack of attention to their specific language learning and communication needs. Kazaks also face many challenges and constraints in accessing quality education that are common across the education system, especially in poor, rural and remote areas. What is not clear but demands better disaggregated data and further study is whether Kazaks are disproportionately represented among the poor, herders, migrants or other disadvantaged groups which might call for more focused targeting of socioeconomic development policies and supports by ethnicity. The Concluding Observations of the Committee on the Rights of the Child’s makes similar observations on the inadequacy of data disaggregation, strongly noting the fact that this precluded the Committee from assessing Mongolia’s compliance to the Convention.

What is the health status of Kazaks?

Another set of vulnerabilities for which there are limited data on Kazaks is related to health status. The interconnected status of health and education means that limited education contributes to poor health and hygiene practices as much as poor health contributes to poor school attendance and ability to learn. Malnutrition is a growing concern with important consequences on children’s physical and educational development. In particular, iodine deficiency is a main cause of learning difficulties, developmental delay or premature ending of growth process, influencing brain structure and mental development. (UNICEF 2000)

The National Program of Action for the Development and Protection of Children, introduced in 2002, reports that Mongolian children suffer from many indications of malnutrition. Of children under the age of five, 13% are underweight, nearly a quarter are stunted in growth, and over 40% have anemia. For those children over 5, including adolescents, 16% have stunted growth and more than one in five suffer from iodine deficiency. Poor sources of drinking water and lack of proper sanitation also lead to greater cases of illness that can lead to malnutrition. By a recent report, 40% of the population does not have access to safe drinking water. (On the Move) Reports of sanitation problems and dormitory food lacking in calories and nutrition also raise significant concern. While we know the consumption of iodized salt is three times lower in the western regions than in the central regions, (UNICEF 2000) these data are not readily available by aimag, soum or ethnic group to allow a better understanding of Kazak conditions and needs.

Anecdotal evidence also points to larger family size among Kazaks which contributes to greater poverty and inability to meet the costs of education. Large family size and dependent ratio also means greater food scarcity and burden for health care and other expenses. The fertility rate and number of households with four or more children is falling for Mongolia overall. But while we know that fertility is higher for rural women than for urban woman, we do not know the status for Kazak women and families.

Greater collection and reporting of data by ethnic group would allow for more accurate analysis and identification of education conditions and needs for particular groups. This is important not only in the education sector but for related sectors like health, poverty and employment, among others, which are related factors in influencing education access and learning.

VII. COMMON CHALLENGES AND CONSTRAINTS TO ACCESS, QUALITY, RELEVANCE AND EQUITY

In spite of the absence of direct policies that address Kazak needs, there are still some general education programs that reach Kazak children, as many of the barriers to schooling and weaknesses of the education system that Kazak children face are common across Mongolia. The flexibility to adapt curriculum locally, education subsidies to vulnerable children, tuition waivers and other incentives for teachers, are programs that are meant to address education quality, access and relevance for all children. Yet, gaps putting policy into practice result in insufficient and ineffective initiatives and continued challenges in education access, quality, relevance and equity.

A fair learning environment is one that provides equitable and sufficient conditions within the school and classroom to promote learning for all students to their fullest potential. The disadvantages of language discussed in a later section reveal how Kazak students have different immediate and ongoing instructional needs which are not being met, and which affect their ability to absorb and assimilate new knowledge. This section addresses several other challenges and constraints to quality, relevance and equity in the education system. While these problems are common to schools in poor or rural communities, these are important factors affecting children's right and opportunity to learn and often have greater adverse effects for Kazak families. And as even an effective mother tongue or bilingual instruction model cannot compensate for a fundamentally dysfunctional education system, these are issues that must be addressed to ensure the rights of Kazak children to quality education and development.

A. Challenge of meeting the costs and opportunity costs of education

According to the Mongolia Education Sector Review in 2005, "poverty is the single most important factor in determining whether a child is enrolled in school or not." Children needing to work or needed to help with herding or in the home are also among the top reasons cited for dropouts. Household expenditures on education have increased nearly 5 times between 1995 and 1998, with education's share of non-food expenditures increasing 9.3 percentage points. (EGSPRS) Despite free tuition, a policy providing textbook vouchers for the poor, and other education subsidies and cash transfers to poor families, many other formal and informal costs conspire to make education unaffordable to poor families. Currently there are no special subsidies to help families meet their share of preschool meal costs.

Ultimately, the cost of education may simply outweigh the benefits, especially if the quality of teaching and facilities is low and textbooks and other learning materials are in short supply. In the case of Kazaks, where students either do not speak the language used in the school system or where students receive instruction in a language that is different than the curriculum and textbooks, the barriers to learning further diminish the value and relevance of attending school.

B. Insufficient and poor targeting of resources

School authorities and parents pointed to cash transfers such as the Child Money Program as an important source of additional income and an incentive to keep children in school. Direct education subsidies in the form of textbook vouchers and school supplies were also seen as important supports, especially in families with several children simultaneously enrolled in

school. However, there was widespread agreement that government funding is not enough to cover all families who qualify so benefits must be prioritized or rotated through families, often by the bagh or soum governors with the assistance of the school director. Some communities reported that less than half of those who are eligible receive assistance, and assistance does not always reach the target group. A World Bank study of the leakage in the Child Money Fund estimates that 49% of recipients of the CMF are non-poor families. (ADB 2005) Families also pointed to corruption on the part of soum or bagh officials in charge of identifying beneficiaries, describing a “back door” system where those with relationships or other connections received benefits first.

School funding was roundly criticized for being generally insufficient to meet either capital or instructional need and for its simplistic per pupil expenditure funding formula. The current per pupil funding system also does not appear to be appropriate for such a dispersed population that relies on rural education to reach a large proportion of children. A Soros Foundation study on school financing found the current funding formula disadvantages small rural schools and is instead ideal for a minimum school size of 2,000. Thus, the current funding formula not only disadvantages rural and remote areas, such as the Western region where the majority of Kazaks live, but also does not take into consideration any special needs or costs associated with location, poverty, children with disabilities or in the case of ethnic minorities, language learning needs.

C. Poor teacher training and instructional quality

Kazak children also experience other fundamental weaknesses in teacher and instructional quality that plague the general education system as a result of inadequate and ineffective teacher training. For example, there are no common standards for teacher knowledge and competencies, including Mongolian language ability, and no common exit exam for teacher preparation programs, resulting in widely variable expectations and variable quality of graduates. Although there have been no studies conducted to support these claims, school authorities in Bayan-Olgii commonly stated that Bayan-Olgii and Kazakstan graduates were of lower quality.

Under the new education standards implemented this year, teachers are not only required to update their skills and knowledge but to totally transform their role as a teacher. Although central level trainings on the new standards and methodologies have been delivered since 2002, teachers have not been adequately prepared for the paradigm shift in terms of adopting an entirely new instructional approach. Both their philosophical understanding of the new standards and their technical knowledge of how to implement them fall short. Ministry sources disagree on whether in-service training is adequately funded. However, Bayan-Olgii ECD shared that funding was so short that teachers could only attend an essential workshop for primary school teachers last year on the new education standards if they paid out of pocket to attend. In addition, the director of Hovd University’s teacher training program added that teacher training institutions have not been included in central level trainings on the new education standards, making them ill-prepared to convey necessary information and skills to the next generation of teachers.

Moreover, there is currently no monitoring system on teacher quality or follow up training to provide support and feedback. Pedagogical supervision at the schools is primarily the responsibility of the ECD, but most soum school reported that ECD methodologists conducted only one or two visits—and not necessarily trainings—each year. At the school and classroom level, teachers receive little guidance on improving or changing their methodology and practice. Teachers have few opportunities to work together on common instructional problems or benefit from the expertise of more experienced colleagues.

D. Mismatch of calendar, curriculum and learning materials

In the Mongolian countryside, the school schedule is poorly matched to the local agricultural calendar and the labor needs of households. Nationally, the school calendar runs from September to June, overlapping with key agricultural periods in the spring and autumn. Children of herder and farming families play an important role in their family's livelihoods and often leave school or start as much as a month or two late into the fall. Teachers and school officials in mixed soums of Hovd aimag noted that Kazak children tend to be more absent from school during key agricultural periods. Buyant soum's school observed that while both Kazak and Mongolian children miss school during harvest time, Kazak children have greater difficulties catching up in class because of their additional language barriers to learning.

In addition to the school calendar being poorly suited to rural needs, the centrally developed curriculum and accompanying learning materials also lack relevance to the local context, especially so for Kazak children. Starting in 2004-2005, MECS took an important step and began translation of new textbooks into Kazak. However, a direct translation will not contain examples, illustrations and vocabulary that reference Kazak culture and daily lives or build on the prior knowledge of Kazak children. In addition, only textbooks are slated for translation and not supplementary teaching or learning materials. Preschool and non-formal education materials and media programs are also only developed and disseminated in the Mongolian language. This mismatch surpasses merely poor relevance and is a serious handicap to education quality and student learning.

One other area which is rather poorly matched to support learning is the teaching staff at mixed ethnicity Mongolian schools. These invariably have very few Kazak staff either to lend linguistic or social support to Kazak students or to provide successful role models for them. In School #2 in Hovd center, which has 55% Kazak enrollment, only two of 76 teachers are Kazak. Similarly, in Hovd University Teacher Training College, where nearly a third of new intakes are Kazak, only three of 109 instructors are Kazak.

E. Insufficient and poor condition of school and dormitory facilities

Since the transition period, insufficient budgeting for preventative maintenance has resulted in deteriorating quality and conditions that have decreased incentives for school participation. Mongolia is largely dependent on donor support in rehabilitating school infrastructure. The state's share in facilities development between 2000 and 2003 was USD 14.8 million compared to USD 29 million by donor agencies. (ADB, TEDP) Many buildings have been declared uninhabitable and even some that are still in use in the field sites for this research seemed like unhealthy and unsafe environments for children. With school enrollment in 2004-2005 at 525,507, or 62% above the building capacity of 325,279 students, the situation is quite urgent. Overcrowding is not only occurring in urban areas and aimag centers, as implied by recent studies on rural-urban migration. Even quite remote soum schools are experiencing overcrowding and are running double shifts because of families moving in from the baghs.

The lack of dormitory space or housing availability, or poor dormitory conditions was frequently cited as one of the top three reasons for children not being in school. In their recent study of best practice solutions to educating nomadic populations, Steiner-Khamsi and Stolpe make the case that the Socialist era boarding school system in Mongolia was an effective system that reached children of varying income levels and helped Mongolia achieve universal basic education in the 1960s. In the decade following the withdrawal of Soviet and COMECON aid boarding school facilities deteriorated from lack of funding and those buildings that were not closed down remain

poorly heated, with poor hygienic and safety conditions and serving inadequate meals. In 1990, 14.5% of students stayed in dormitories compared to only 4.1% by 1996 (EFA 2000). Since 2000, more attention has been placed on renovating dormitory facilities. In 2004-2005, 7% of all students were living in the dormitories, but they have become socially stratified institutions that predominantly serve the poorest children. Studies on learning achievement have shown that children living in dormitories perform at lower levels than children living at home while other studies on dropouts have also pointed to reasons such as excessive cold and hunger for driving children out of school.

Overcrowding remains a serious problem in most of the soums visited in this study as do the living conditions for dorm students. Due to lack of heating or building deterioration in some sections or floors, many students must share beds in the remaining areas. In Bayan-Olgii, Altai soum center, nearly one-third of 1,000 families are herders. 90 herder children were turned away from the dormitory this fall because of lack of space. School officials were not yet sure how many found housing with relatives and continue to attend school.

F. Insufficient kindergartens

At least in Bayan-Olgii aimag center, demand for kindergarten spaces far exceeds supply. One kindergarten director reported that of 385 preschool age children in its sub-district, 210 children came to register for kindergarten and only 108 were accepted. At some other kindergartens, only 100 of 500 children were accepted. The aimag ECD reported that it has requested MECS support for more buildings or classroom extensions, but that so far, no new kindergartens are being planned or built. While national data show that between 2002 and 2003 there was an increase from 655 to 687 kindergartens (there were 653 kindergartens in 2000), further inspection reveals that this expansion favored Ulaanbaatar, which saw an increase from 151 to 181 kindergarten facilities. In Bayan-Olgii, there were 24 kindergartens in 2002 and the number has remained the same through 2005, although the number of children enrolled has increased from 2,269 to 2,586. (Statistical Handbook, 2004)

Massive preschool closures across Mongolia during the transition period contributed to the diminished capacity of kindergarten facilities today. In Kazak areas, the large scale migration to Kazakhstan during the early transition period meant an even greater drop in enrollments and loss of human and financial capital. In Bayan-Olgii center alone, the number of kindergartens dropped from 12 to 7 during the early 1990s. In Hovd soum of Hovd aimag, the only Kazak kindergarten in the aimag closed in 1993 and did not reopen until 1996.

The director of the World Vision branch office in Nalaih explained that one of the reasons preschool rates were low in the district was because khoroo #4, where most Kazak's of the district reside and which is 90% Kazak, did not have a kindergarten between 1992, when the kindergarten closed due to privatization of the building, and 2004, when a kindergarten opened through World Vision's support. Even after this kindergarten opening, Nalaih still has the lowest formal preschool enrollment in Ulaanbaatar, although it has closed the gap and is now even with one other district at the bottom.

G. Lack of adequate and appropriate learning materials

Regardless of the location and ethnic make up of schools visited for this research, there was a severe shortage of textbooks. In the best situation, three of four students might share one book

while in some schools for some subjects such as upper secondary mathematics there may be only one book per classroom. Most schools did not have a library where students could read or borrow additional reading materials. In addition to the issue of textbooks in the Kazak language which will be discussed later, Kazak school officials and teachers in both Bayan-Olgii aimag and Hovd soum have also noted the absence of supporting learning materials and resources, such as an adequate ABC book or a Kazak-Mongolian pocket dictionary. In addition to these basic tools to support Kazak learning, the Mongolian Education Alliance, which works with Bayan-Olgii on preschool and teacher training projects, reported an increasing demand from Kazak parents to have resources to start Mongolian literacy training in the home.

H. Poor NFE supports for Kazak children

Non-formal education (NFE) is supposed to be the primary means for reaching children who do not enroll in or drop out of school, and to combat illiteracy in youth and adults. Re-educational activities at the primary education level have the basic stated objective of giving NFE students the skills to speak freely and express themselves in their native language. However, the textbooks, radio and video lessons and training developed by the government's Non-Formal Education Center (NFEC) are produced and delivered in Mongolian only. Even in all Kazak areas where teachers can translate the material, a two or three-week NFE program will have limited effectiveness if the materials are not in a language the students understand. In Mongolian majority communities, it may be even harder for Kazak children to benefit from these activities.

Given that Bayan-Olgii has the highest dropout rate in Mongolia, not producing or translating relevant materials into Kazak seems an ill-advised decision. The NFEC noted, however, that the International Labor Organization (ILO) supported the development of seven textbooks for school dropouts and funded the translation of three of the seven into Kazak. In addition to lacking language appropriate materials, Bayan-Olgii has only 9 Enlightenment centers serving its 14 soums (including the aimag center). Each center must therefore serve a population two to three times larger than the centers in other aimags, even though higher dropout rates in Bayan-Olgii indicate a greater need for non-formal education services.

VIII. LANGUAGE DIMENSIONS OF KAZAK OPPORTUNITY TO LEARN

Many dropout studies reviewed in this research discuss the lack of interest in learning, falling behind or relevance of curriculum, but they do not ask about language and communication barriers that might affect all of those conditions. Yet the principal concern associated with learning opportunities for Kazak children revealed in this research is the language and communication barrier and the lack of appropriate learning materials and methodology for native language, bilingual or Mongolian second language learning. These are influential factors affecting student performance, engagement and instructional quality. The lack of access to schooling, equity of opportunity to learn, and relevance and quality of schooling are all tied into issues of language, in both Kazak and Mongolian schools. Not only will problems of language contribute directly to dropouts due to poor quality teaching and learning, but diminished quality, interest or relevance as a result of language barriers in combination with poverty or already poor physical conditions will greatly lower its perceived value and benefits.

Unlike many other countries where national policy requires the national language as the language of instruction and discourages the use of ethnic languages in schools, the Mongolian Constitution and Education Law assert the right to learn in native languages. Throughout Bayan-Olgii aimag and in Hovd soum, children indeed attend Kazak schools. Yet, while teaching in a language the child understands is an important step toward supporting cognitive access, using mother tongue instruction alone is not sufficient for providing quality education. The central government and ministry appear to take the position that they have fulfilled their obligation under the law by permitting native language instruction. They do not extend that responsibility to conducting national and international research to learn the best methods and approaches for multilingual learning and Mongolian language acquisition. Nor have they fulfilled their responsibility of providing adequate supports in teacher training and appropriate and aligned learning materials to support quality education in Kazak language schools.

Approaches to language of instruction

Kazak schools in Bayan-Olgii: Most Kazak schools in Bayan-Olgii aimag follow the same approach and structure. The language of instruction for all subjects in grade one is Kazak. Before the transition to 11-year schooling, students began Mongolian Language as a subject in grade three. With the shift to 11-year schooling, students now begin Mongolian in grade two. Students continue to take Mongolian as a subject through grade 8, after which they transition into Mongolian as the primary language of instruction for all subjects in grades 9 and 10. Before the shift to 11-year schooling, this transition happened in grade 8. After the transition into Mongolian as the language of instruction, students continue to take Kazak as a subject.

Kazak school in Hovd Soum, Hovd Aimag: While there are some schools and soums in Hovd Aimag with mixed ethnic populations, only one soum has an entirely Kazak population. Hovd soum is over 95% Kazak and has the only Kazak school in the aimag. Here, the structure is slightly different than in Bayan-Olgii Aimag, with the transition to Mongolian as the primary language of instruction set for grade 5, or at the end of primary school.

Mixed schools in Bayan-Olgii: Where communities have mixed populations of Kazaks, Mongolians or other ethnic groups, classes are generally separated by ethnicity. For example, the grade one intake in one soum school may have three classes, with two Kazak classes and one Mongolian class. The Kazak class would follow the structure described above for Kazak schools while the Mongolian class would learn in Mongolian. These classes are in theory mixed once students reach the upper secondary level where all instruction is in Mongolian. In theory, Kazak families and children can elect to start school in a Mongolian class.

Mongolian schools and mixed schools in Hovd aimag and Nalaih: Mongolian schools, including one school in Bayan-Olgii center, conduct all classes and instruction in Mongolian. Outside of Bayan-Olgii aimag, schools with mixed student populations are also considered Mongolian schools and conduct all instruction in Mongolian. In most cases, few of the teachers are Kazak or can speak Kazak and there are few supports in place to accelerate learning Mongolian. Also of note is that in these schools, Kazak language is not offered as a subject.

A. *Kazak school language issues*

Mismatch in language of instruction and learning materials/curriculum

While children are technically granted the right to learn in their native language, there are several interlinked barriers to instructional quality and learning in Kazak schools. First among these is the lack of adequate learning materials in the Kazak language and the lack of alignment to a standard curriculum. Textbooks were found to be in short supply across all schools visited. However, in Kazak schools there is the additional problem of the textbooks not matching the language of instruction or the curriculum framework. Previously, Kazak schools had received textbooks as aid from Kazakhstan. More recently, customs problems have made the cost of importing these books prohibitive. Also, the textbooks from Kazakhstan emphasized different content and had a more Russian orientation, so are not aligned to the Mongolian curriculum and standards.

The New Education Standards to be implemented in 2005, including preschool standards, have not been translated into Kazak, although as part of the MECS's introduction of the New Education Standards and textbooks, there is now a plan to gradually translate at least primary level textbooks into Kazak, following the scheduled roll out of new textbooks. However, during the field research for this study, few of the sites had received the textbooks introduced this year even in Mongolian and none had received newly translated Kazak textbooks. In the meantime, most classrooms even in grades one and two are being taught in Kazak but using Mongolian textbooks, interfering with Kazak children's learning of not only foundational literacy skills in one language, but also other subject matter. Additionally, there is no plan in place to translate preschool books and materials into Kazak. This is also true of home preschool education books, reference materials and handouts distributed by the National Program on Preschool for preparing herder children for school.

The MECS plan includes only textbooks, with no further plans to translate teaching and learning aids, teaching guides or important educational tools such as an education glossary or Kazak-Mongolian two-way pocket dictionary. Aside from direct instructional materials there is also a shortage Kazak language or bilingual reading materials.

No attention to second language acquisition

A more fundamental issue that undermines quality instruction and learning for Kazak children is the lack of attention given to the teaching or learning of Mongolian as a Second Language.

There are no special training courses, materials or methods to prepare teachers, and no research or studies conducted in this area by linguists or literacy specialists. Pre-service preparation is the same for Mongolian Language teachers whether they will teach Mongolian children who already speak the language, or Kazak children who do not. Thus, there are no tools or special methods being developed and used to help build communication skills and to build on native language literacy to accelerate second language learning. In fact, when Kazak students first take Mongolian as a subject, it is for only one hour a week. Especially in all Kazak communities where there is little environment to use or even hear Mongolian outside of the classroom, this is hardly enough preparation for proficiency to learn in an all Mongolian environment.

Teacher language deficiency

There are at least two fundamental ways in which this lack of teacher competency in the Mongolian language impacts student learning. First is the ability with which teachers can effectively deliver instruction in the Mongolian language and help foster high level communication skills and learning among students, both of Mongolian and in other subject areas. Second is the ability with which teachers can effectively improve their own skills, knowledge and methods through available training and materials. Most teachers in Kazak schools are Kazaks who themselves graduated from Kazak schools and live in communities where there is little opportunity to use Mongolian. While many primary level teachers are trained in Arhanghai or Ulaanbaatar where the program is conducted in Mongolian, others are trained in Bayan-Olgii Teacher's College, where instruction is in theory Mongolian, but where instructors continue to help accommodate students who need support in Kazak. Some teachers are trained in Kazakhstan and return to teach in Mongolia. By their own account, to many of them, Mongolian remains a second or even a foreign language. There is no common standard or exit exam for teacher training institutions. Each sets its coursework requirements for graduation, including for Mongolian language, and the quality and standards can vary widely from institution to institution.

Although some school officials are quick to emphasize that the language barriers is a student issue only, many informants in this study indicated that the teacher issue exacerbates the student learning problem. One school manager at a mixed language school noted that the intern teachers they received from Bayan-Olgii Teacher's College struggled to practice teach the Mongolian classes due to poor language skills. Other teachers, school administrators and NGO staff have noted the need for interpreters when delivering training to Kazak teachers in Mongolian, or the lack of effective learning of Kazak teachers attending workshops in Ulaanbaatar due to the difficulty of both understanding and expressing themselves in Mongolian. The Mongolian Education Alliance team also noted that in their experience with educators across Mongolia, Bayan-Olgii teachers stood out as using particularly old methods and practices, in part because of their isolation but also because of language barriers limiting the effectiveness of trainings.

Unclear bilingual strategy

Under the current system, Kazak children are disadvantaged in a Mongolian learning environment. In Bayan-Olgii, the late transition into full Mongolian instruction and the lack of adequate learning materials in Kazak in the earlier grades contributes to a situation where students have half a foot in each language but may not be sufficiently proficient in either one. The lack of kindergarten materials in Kazak further undercuts the development of strong early literacy and school readiness skills. Some school officials tried to spin the use of Mongolian textbooks in the early grades as a positive thing, exposing Kazak children earlier to Mongolian language learning. But in fact, without a consistent plan for Mongolian language acquisition and for shifting instruction from Kazak to Mongolian, the result is likely to be more confusion.

The current system is more like a sudden—and late—switch between two monolingual approaches,

rather than a systematic one that gradually develops proficiency in a second language until the second language assumes the primary role or both languages develop equal proficiency. The decision to transition into full Mongolian instruction is to develop proficiency in the national language and to better prepare students for graduation examinations and the college entrance exam. However, most parents and teachers encountered in this study agree that the transition in grade 9 is too late and disadvantages Kazak children in higher education and in future economic opportunities. According to teachers, most Kazak children do not become proficient in Mongolian and need extra instructional support in Kazak all the way through graduation.

Unclear decision making on language learning

There was some confusion as to who makes the decision of when to transition from native to Mongolian language instruction. Especially in Bayan-Olgii where there is little external environment to support Mongolian language use and learning, this is a critical decision. Parents and school officials expressed a certain powerlessness to challenge or change the status quo. Parents and teachers in many soums expressed the belief that children could benefit from earlier transition into Mongolian but felt that the policy was already set by the Ministry. Given a choice, they stated their desire to transition at the end of primary school. The MEA team reported that schools might move toward transitioning in Grade 5, but there was no indication of this at the aimag, soum or school level. Bayannuur soum school director reported transitioning at grade 7, unlike the rest of the aimag. School #5 in Bayan-Olgii center said that it started to transition some subject matter classes into Mongolian earlier in grade 6 to help ease the language transition, but that it has received complaints about this from parents. This issue needs to be settled by more than ad hoc decisions and must consider both what is best educationally as well as parental and children's views.

B. Mixed schools language and learning issues

The language challenge has different dimension in schools with mixed ethnic populations. In Bayan-Olgii, a school with both Kazak and Mongolian or other ethnic groups will put Kazak children in separate classes following the structure of Kazak school instruction while other students learn in Mongolian from grade one. Students there face the same difficulties as in Kazak schools discussed above in terms of having limited learning materials in Kazak, limited textbooks in a language different than the language of instruction and the lack of supports for Mongolian as a second language and bilingual language development.

The segregation of Kazak and Mongolian children until the upper secondary level raises some concerns. Depending on the messages and environment created outside the classroom, this separation may not cultivate the healthiest social development between ethnic groups. In addition, this further limits the Mongolian language environment available to Kazak students, allowing them to default to using Kazak. Finally, segregating students may make it easier for teachers, by intention or inadvertently, to apply different and unequal learning standards for the two groups.

Other inequities tend to arise as a result of class size. Because there are fewer Mongolian children, Mongolian classes may have only 10-15 students in each class compared to 30 or 40 students in the Kazak classes, thus using a greater proportion of teacher resources. Another way class size disadvantages Kazaks is when small class sizes cause school authorities to combine Kazak and Mongolian classes. In these cases, Mongolian is used as the language of instruction and parents report that the sudden switch causes Kazak students to fall behind and sometimes dropout. Unfortunately, in mixed communities outside of Bayan-Olgii, school officials report

that Kazaks are less likely than others to attend preschool and thus arrive at school with no preparation in basic literacy and communication, and also no exposure to Mongolian.

C. Mongolian school language issues

Lack of second language learner training and supports

In other geographic areas where Kazaks are the minority, and even in some cases where they are the majority, Kazak students are mixed in regular classrooms and Mongolian is the only language of instruction. Like in the Kazak schools, Mongolian school teachers do not have any special training in teaching Mongolian as a Second Language and thus, teachers and school officials complain about the additional burden of having to teach mixed language classrooms. While they describe Kazak children as hard working and good with learning, primary teachers also note the pressure they face, saying that many teachers do not like to have Kazak students because they are difficult to teach.

In general, schools do not provide special classes for accelerating Mongolian language acquisition nor do they use mother tongue supports to facilitate learning. Buyant soum school in Hovd aimag noted that its language of instruction is Mongolian even though over half of its students are Kazak and only Kazaks living in the soum center speak Mongolian before entering school. When asked whether there were special strategies for assisting in second language learning, school officials replied “we treat all students equally and do not make distinctions by ethnicity.” This emphasis on equal delivery—giving everyone the same thing—over ensuring equal opportunity to learn or equal learning outcomes has been discussed earlier. Sticking to this narrow definition of equity, without consideration of special learning needs such as language barriers, will significantly limit Mongolia’s ability to fulfill the spirit and stated objectives of Education for All.

Unequal standards and expectations

One of the great dangers of teaching children with special learning needs is the tendency to lower expectations or standards for learning, rather than providing the necessary supports to help children reach common standards. Teachers and education officials in both Hovd and Bayan-Olgii revealed on going local debates about whether or not to set lower standards for Kazak children in Mongolian schools. Doing so would be allowing the classic injustice of taking those who need more, and giving them less.

No mother tongue learning

The Education Law states that students have a right to learn in their native language. While the law may have a limited interpretation of learning Kazak as a subject, even this right is not always granted. In many mixed population Mongolian schools, whether in Bayan-Olgii (where Kazaks are 70% of students), Hovd (where Kazaks are 55% and 59% of students in School #2 and Buyant soum, respectively) or Nalaih (which is 30% Kazak), Kazak is not offered as a subject. In these cases, it is not entirely clear who has made the decision of whether or not to offer any native language learning.

In some cases, however, it did not appear that parents’ wishes were consulted or taken into consideration. In Hovd aimag center in particular, the parents at School #2 serving the Kazaks micro-district, while clearly valuing Mongolian instruction for the broader opportunities it afforded, vocally expressed their desire for Kazak to be offered as a subject at the school, if only for an hour a week. The ECD director, however, seemed to be just as strongly opposed to the idea. He responded definitively that the aimag would not teach Kazak in Mongolian schools, declaring that while minorities have the right to use their own languages, the Constitution says

that the official national language is Mongolian. Furthermore, even in Kazak schools such as School #5 in Bayan-Olgii, school officials maintained that there are no special provisions in curriculum hours for teaching Kazak language and literature so those hours must be borrowed from other subjects on the common curriculum framework. This suggested little central or local level policy support for providing native language instruction.

Poor teacher attitude and discrimination

This research uncovered cases and anecdotal evidence of teacher discrimination against Kazak children who do not speak Mongolian who try to enroll in aimag center schools. In a recent drop out study, a social worker in Hovd aimag center reported that some teachers refused to accept children from the countryside, claiming they did not meet arbitrary criteria on how to read and write. (MEA) Similar discrimination due to poor language skills or slow learning was reported in a study on migrant children and the educational challenges they face after moving. In the field research for this study, Kazak parents in a mixed Mongolian and Kazak school in Hovd center relayed stories of how Kazak children were denied entry to preschool because they did not speak Mongolian. While the kindergarten director serving the Kazak micro-district denied that such policy or practice could even exist, it is likely that individual cases may happen and lead to Kazak and other children being excluded from school. Parents in Buyant soum in Bayan-Olgii also reported fear of discrimination by teachers toward Kazak children in Mongolian classes for slow learning caused by language difficulties.

D. Difficulties with information and communication

Language barriers not only limit student learning but can also adversely affect Kazak access to information and communication. The NAC cited recent studies that show Kazak youth get information late, for example, knowledge of reproductive health. Yet, most information, education and communications (IEC) materials are developed and distributed in Mongolian and even while the official we spoke to recognized that Kazakh language IEC materials and trainings are needed, she also said that NAC does not produce any Kazakh language information because there is no budget for local materials development. Likewise, an official from the Preschool Education Center explained that its awareness building efforts in Bayan-Olgii were hampered by language barriers, which caused difficulties communicating with parents. She further explained that despite these barriers, due to limited funding, the Center would be unable to produce either preschool learning materials or parental information or education materials in the Kazak language.

Even in Hovd aimag, which is 10% Kazak and has not only an all-Kazak soum with a Kazak school but also Mongolian schools with a majority Kazak enrollment, there is little effort by aimag education authorities to produce Kazak IEC material. In fact, when SCUK tried to have a parent questionnaire translated into Kazak, we found that no one, including the ECD office, had Kazak fonts installed on their computers, indicating that no one had previously tried to produce Kazak language materials locally. Mongolian teachers and school officials in Buyant soum reported that their efforts to increase preschool enrollment were less effective with Kazak families, especially those from Hovd soum. Further probing revealed that the school had invited parents to attend meetings at the school by sending letters home with students. These letters were in Mongolian and the meetings were also conducted in Mongolian.

In the same way Kazak communities have failed to access information and communication in the education sector, they may also be missing important benefits or entitlements in other sectors which could benefit education participation and performance through improving knowledge and practices in health, nutrition, agriculture, or business development.

IX. CONCLUSION

Both Bayan-Olgii's physical remoteness and its cultural and linguistic differences from the rest of Mongolia have contributed to Kazak conditions being far from central level consideration. But the data paint a very clear picture of special educational needs. Bayan-Olgii aimag, which is 90% Kazak and where over 90% of all Kazaks in Mongolia live, has a poverty rate of 46% compared to 36% nationally. The poverty in Bayan-Olgii is deep, with over half of the poor being classified as extremely poor. Children in this aimag drop out at over three times the national rate—the highest dropout rate in the country—and they attend formal preschool at less than two-thirds of the national average—the lowest preschool participation rate in the country. School visits and dozens of interviews with educators, parents and community leaders in Bayan-Olgii and Hovd aimags also shaped and confirmed a picture of educational disadvantage.

In many important ways Kazak children are not being afforded the same opportunities to learn as other children in Mongolia. In addition to the poor teacher quality, insufficient supply of school facilities or learning materials, or geographic and social relevance of curriculum content that may be shared to some extent by children in other poor and rural areas, a critical instructional issue that is a compounding disadvantage for Kazak children is the language of teaching and learning. Kazaks are not only disadvantaged in a Mongolian learning environment. There are also serious weaknesses in current Kazak schools which are significant barriers to quality learning and to progressing successfully through the education system. The particularly low preschool participation rates in the Kazak province and the lack of either Kazak language preschool materials or Mongolian as a second language instructional strategies mean Kazak children start school lagging behind in language and literacy skills and may not gain a sound footing in either Mongolian or Kazak.

Mongolia's overall enrollment rate for 8-15 year olds was at its peak in 1990 at 98.6%; it dropped to 84.3% by 1995 but by 2002 had recovered appreciably to 96.6%. Still, by the most conservative definitions, over 10,000 students dropped out of school last year, with the most students, nearly 20%, dropping out in the first grade and nearly three quarters of all dropouts leaving in the primary grades. These indicators point to the importance of increasing preschool participation, school quality and school retention. Addressing the particular learning needs of Kazak children toward these ends is an immediate necessity to ensure their right to a quality education and in order to meet the education priorities of Mongolia's Millennium Development Goals (MDG)—to achieve universal primary education and 100 percent primary cohort survival by 2015.

X. RECOMMENDATIONS: WHERE DO WE START?

The following recommendations are intended to establish a framework for advancing Mongolia's efforts to develop an equitable, responsive, high quality educational system that serves the needs of all of its children. They reflect two broad areas and some core themes that in concert will support strengthened research, policy and practice in the area of ethnic minority education. The first area focuses on providing equal educational opportunity for Kazak children through improving core elements of teaching and learning, while the second area focuses on strengthening some systemic weaknesses in the planning and implementation of policies and programs targeting ethnic minorities.

Area 1: Remove barriers to education access, quality and relevance

A. *Address the language learning needs of Kazak children.* The first step to overcoming obstacles to participation and increasing learning opportunities and retention for Kazak children is addressing the problems of language and its impact on instructional quality and perceived accessibility and relevance of school services. To accomplish this, a number of key elements are needed:

- policy and legal framework for second language learning (bilingual and immersion models) and its effective implementation
- teacher training and development framework for bilingual and immersion teaching
- implementation of the New Education Standards
- culturally and linguistically relevant curriculum content, materials and books

A clear and appropriate policy and legal framework on bilingual and second language teaching is needed to clarify and protect the educational rights and entitlements of ethnic minority children. Creating an unambiguous legal base and enabling policy supports for effective and innovative methods of bilingual and mother tongue instruction can greatly enhance the quality and relevance of education for ethnic minorities. At the most basic level, this legal and policy base should specify the conditions under which native language or bilingual instruction—for example, for Kazak schools or where Kazak is offered as a subject—is allowed or ensured by law, and the minimum instructional supports that are guaranteed to second language learners in Mongolian schools. Policies on bilingual and second language learning should also define the expected student learning outcomes and language proficiency standards in both native and national language. These proficiency standards should be agreed upon by all stakeholders and be set at a level ensuring that Kazak children will not be disadvantaged by language barriers when competing in higher education and the workplace.

To support the effective implementation of bilingual and second language instruction and to achieve articulated learning and language proficiency standards, there also needs to be *policies defining necessary time, material and human resource supports*. These supports should explicitly address instructional time in the curriculum framework, special staffing requirements at Kazak schools or Mongolian schools with mixed ethnic enrolment, and competency standards for teacher in bilingual teaching methods or in teaching Mongolian as a second language. Other important minimum requirements are regarding the provision of language appropriate books and learning materials, special class size considerations and mechanisms for adequate funding. To better distribute State funding based on the costs associated with delivering services, a **compensatory**

funding formula for per pupil expenditures (PPE) is needed that adds per pupil weights based on such factors as school location, school size, poverty rate, disabilities and, critically, bilingual and second language learning.

There is also a need for a teacher training and development framework to meet the demands of a good bilingual teaching system as well as an effective Mongolian as a second language program and transitional language strategy for Kazak children attending Mongolian schools. While a sound legal and policy framework can create the legal basis and enabling environment for strengthened teaching and learning for Kazak children, Mongolia does not yet have a common and effective approach or model for how to do this right. Current practice in Kazak school largely consists of using the centrally developed national curriculum and textbooks, with teachers translating lessons into Kazak. Kazak children in Mongolian schools receive no systematic literacy or transitional supports. Further study and piloting are necessary to evaluate a range of mother tongue instruction, bilingual instruction and transitional models to identify most appropriate solutions for different Kazak contexts across Mongolia. To help Kazak students overcome the language learning barrier and to ensure they are not further disadvantaged in learning content in other subjects, Mongolia must test and formalize an instructional approach and transitional model, and develop accompanying learning materials and training programs to equip teachers to deliver appropriate methods and strategies.

In addition to specialized methodologies for language learning, *teachers would be more effective at addressing Kazak learning issues if they better understood and were able to implement the new paradigm of Mongolia's New Education Standards.* In theory, the New Education Standards move decidedly away from a fixed content based curriculum and provide flexibility for teachers to contextualize and modify the curriculum locally. In practice, however, teachers have received little training and preparation to put that theory into action. More thorough training and continued local support networks on implementing the new standards would not only improve instructional quality overall, but would also result in far greater curriculum relevance to Kazak culture and life.

Localizing the content and materials of schooling is essential to improving its relevance and quality. Any program supporting Kazak learning opportunities must tackle the serious lack of materials, resources and books available in the Kazak language. Although MECS has initiated a plan to translate textbooks into Kazak, that schedule must be stepped up and the initiative expanded to include other teaching and learning materials, non-formal education books and materials, and preschool books and materials. Another much needed resource for Kazak students is the development of a Kazak-Mongolian dictionary.

As mentioned above on the implementation of the New Education Standards, local curriculum development and modification will also contribute significantly to making content relevant to local context and culture. In addition to having textbooks and reading materials available in the Kazak language, familiar references and content that build on the prior knowledge of Kazak children will also improve their learning opportunities. An engagement of local resources and knowledge in developing learning materials would also provide the additional benefit of increased community investment in schooling that can boost school participation.

B. *Expand preschool preparation for Kazak children.* Both internationally and in Mongolia, participation in kindergarten or other forms of early childhood development have been demonstrated to improve school readiness, cognitive development, and subsequent school performance and retention. Increasing the current low preschool participation level in Bayan-

Olgii and other Kazak communities is an obvious strategy that can reap huge payoffs in Kazak participation and persistence in school.

Early language and literacy development is particularly important for Kazak children who have to face bilingual or immersion language learning environments. For children entering Mongolian schools, a focused Mongolian language preparation program in preschool can provide the difference needed for whether a child makes it through grade 1 and continues his or her schooling. Strong early language and literacy development in Kazak is equally important as literacy and language acquisition skills have been found to translate across second languages.

To accomplish this, Mongolia must seek ways to *expand access to formal preschool for Kazak children*. Prioritizing Bayan-Olgii for preschool development funds as well as developing targeted subsidies that support families in paying preschool fees are some first steps. Currently, there is a huge reliance on informal preschool services in Bayan-Olgii. While *promoting innovative alternate preschool models* such as the mobile ger kindergartens is an important step towards widening access to preschool services, there is a need to *ensure comparability of services* in the long run. While a three-week summer preschool program is an important means of introducing early childhood care and development to families who would otherwise not be able to access any services, it is still a long way from a continuous nine-month preschool program. Thus, innovations in parental or community based models which do not rely on an official school ger or formal teachers should be explored. These could offer year round services to children and could lay foundations for formalizing training and services.

Area 2: Improve mechanisms for appropriate and effective policy and program planning and implementation

A. *Enhance coordination of education stakeholders*. In order to improve effective planning and development of education policies for ethnic minorities and to ensure comprehensive and integrated measures across sectors, *networks and alliances* between GOM agencies, national and international organizations working with ethnic minorities and on key education programs are needed. Education must not be considered a sectoral issue but one that intersects many sectors. The Government of Mongolia must ensure that not only the MECS, but also the Ministry of Health, Social Welfare, Food and Agriculture and others contribute in both policy and financial support. Well-nourished, healthy students will be better learners. Children who do not have to contribute to their family income and livelihoods will be able to focus on their studies.

Establishing an Ethnic Minority Working Group with membership across government agencies, local organizations and NGOs and international donors and NGOs could offer a forum for discussing concerns and strategies as well as sharing learning. Members of the group can coordinate funding support for research as well coordinate assistance by subsectors or by location and ethnic group. The working group could efficiently collect and share community-based solutions to expanding preschool activities and locally developed curriculum, learning materials and teaching aids. This type of coordination would also be beneficial to education sector work in general, as many national reports as well as local education officials have remarked on the general lack of coordination and cooperation either between international organizations and the government or across international organizations.

In addition to partnerships across agencies working in education development, developing partnerships with research institutions such as the Institute for Education, the Soros Open Society

Forum or Mongolian National University could cultivate the local research capacity and develop a local appetite for data and research on ethnic minority education. Creative partnerships on the program implementation side might include mosques in public information dissemination campaigns in Kazak communities or use mosque space for alternate preschool.

B. A very simple step in broadening participation and improving effective communication in Kazak communities is to use the Kazak language. In ethnic minority communities, language is a barrier in not only student learning but also in community communication and participation. Where parents and communities are not provided with information in a language they understand or training opportunities or materials that they can effectively use, public outreach, training programs and other social welfare benefits will fall short of their intended mark. Both teacher and parent trainings may have more appeal and more lasting effects if the content and delivery are culturally and linguistically accessible. IEC and other outreach materials such as those promoting the importance of preschool participation will be understood and shared if they are produced and disseminated in Kazak. Using the local language is also a demonstration of the desire for genuine community engagement and participation in the Kazak context.

C. In order to measure the problem and support better policy and program planning, there needs to be improved monitoring and evaluation to capture data pertinent to the special needs of Kazak children and to evaluating equity. First and foremost is requiring the collection and reporting of data disaggregated by ethnicity for monitoring education performance and other related socioeconomic indicators. Another important step is to work with MECS and the National Statistics Office on upcoming surveys for the Census, Living Standards Measurement Survey and other survey questionnaires to ensure there are consistent measures or questions relevant to ethnic minority conditions and progress. Finally, there must be more careful attention to what new learning is important to effectively guide new policy or the implementation of new solutions. For example, there needs to be a closer examination of what Kazak parents, communities and children want in terms of language of instruction. There are also schools already using different transition grades from Kazak to Mongolian instruction; a close inspection of the different approaches may help inform the selection of best practice for different community contexts. In addition to studying different existing scenarios within Mongolia, educators and policy makers would also benefit from studying bilingual and native language policies in neighboring countries and from visiting sites demonstrating a range of instructional models/solutions.

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