

Facilitating children's participation: Save the Children UK Mongolia Programme experience

Save the Children UK Mongolia Programme
Bangkok, March 2008



Save the Children UK Mongolia Programme

- Started working in 1994
- Ulaanbaatar office, branch in Dornod Province
- Main programme areas:
 1. **EDUCATION** and
 2. **CHILD PROTECTION**



- **Education programme** works towards providing vulnerable children of Mongolia, particularly from poor nomadic families, of ethnic minority and children with disabilities, with quality education in a protective environment



Save the Children UK, Mongolia Programme

- **Child protection programme** works towards protecting vulnerable children from violence, abuse, neglect and exploitation through developing the foundation of a national child protection system, community based child protection mechanisms, and improved social attitudes towards the rights of children

Save the Children UK, Mongolia Programme

- **National level advocacy** - policy change (amendment to Education Law, national child protection system, etc.), public awareness raising and capacity building for various stakeholders
- **Direct services** - service models including mobile kindergartens, ger teacher initiative, centre for street children, community based child protection and development centres, rehabilitation centre for disabled children
- **CHILD PARTICIPATION** – we thrive to involve children at all levels



CHILDREN'S PARTICIPATION

- SC recognizes the need to create a favorable environment to involve children in developing and strengthening its policies, programmes and services. E.g.
- SC direct service centres (7) have Children's Councils to consult the programming of the centres' activities
- Children from these centres initiated a meeting with SC management and staff which shall be organized once in a quarter.
- HO in London has initiated and established “Global Children’s Panel” and Mongolian child is a member and is taking part in a meeting with the top management in Mar 2008

CHILDREN'S PARTICIPATION

- Recently, there has been a great progress in child participation in advocacy actions. Children have started actively advocating for themselves. Particularly:
- Mongolia made a progress towards banning corporal punishment of children in 2006: it is now illegal in schools and process of legal reform for prohibition at home has started in 2007.
- Children participated in the legal reform process (Education Law) and are even more empowered and active now.

Participation of children in Education Programme

Education Law campaign - mostly adults advocated on behalf of children, however there was some involvement of children:

- children took part in TV and radio discussions
- nationwide essay competition “In my school...” (over 180 children) and published winning essays

Non SC led work:

- protest of children with disabilities on discrimination, sexual abuse, harassment and corporal punishment (we still don't know which triggered what, but the occasion has a significant impact on raising awareness)

Participation of children in Education Programme

Implementation of the law – children are more empowered through our direct services and more active in 2007-2008:

- Children wrote an appeal protesting an incident of corporal punishment of two girls by a teacher for not doing homework (collected 500 signatures) (Oct 07)
- Children held a press conference on violence, physical and emotional abuse at schools (Nov 07)
- Appeal published on three daily newspapers and shared with media at the press conference
- Children requested to meet with Minister of Education

Participation of children in the Child Protection Programme

Children express their views on emotional and physical abuse, etc. through photos and radio plays:

- SC is supporting children's participation through its black and white photo project "Focus on Kids" which develops children's creativity and ability of self expression and confidence since 2004 (40 children)
- SC implemented a radio project "Safe home, Happy home" in 2006 where children broadcasted their radio spots and programs on children's rights, particularly corporal punishment at home



Children's participation in the Child Protection Programme

First child led research in Mongolia “**Children living in difficult circumstances**” in 2006:

- 13 young researchers with institutional care centre and street life experiences undertook the study
- Focusing on children without parental care including orphans, street children and reunified children
- Concluded that violence including CoP by parents and domestic violence are the main reasons children run away from home
- Children presented their research findings to the public and media in Nov 2006
- Children were inspired, confident and eager to take further actions



Children's participation in the Child Protection Programme

Global Day of Action to End All Violence against Children (2007)

Child researchers, children from “Focus on kids” photo project and “A happy and safe family” radio project children organized a meeting and photo exhibition on Oct 19, 2007.

The exhibition was attended by media and some officials including Senior officials from the Ministry of Social Welfare and Labor, National Authority for Children, UNICEF and NGOs



During the photo exhibition children launched their new book **“We want a happy and safe family...”**.

Young researchers wrote a letter to “big bosses” to end violence against children and given to the adults.

Children's participation in the Child Protection Programme

Children's meetings with “big bosses”

- Young researchers and other children then met with Mr. S. Lambaa, MP and Head of the Parliamentary “Lobby Group on Children’s Development and Protection” and also submitted their letter (Dec 2007)
- They discussed about violence against children, media, obligation of parents, leisure facilities and need to consult children when developing laws and regulations
- Mr. Lambaa forwarded their letter and the study report to all 76 MPs urging them to take actions (unfortunately no reply yet)



Children's participation in the Child Protection Programme

Children's meetings with “big bosses”

- Children also met with Mr. G. Bayasgalan, the State Secretary of the Ministry of Justice and Home Affairs, the head of the Family Law revision working group
- They challenged the State Secretary regarding the implementation of laws, including the Education law and “informed” him that laws do not reach the public and “advised” to disseminate laws
- They raised the issue of importance of listening to children when formulating laws. It was agreed that the government working group on Family Law will consult the draft law with children (need to be followed up, its foreseen that the law will be read by the parliament in the fall of 2008)

Children's participation in the Child Protection Programme

Global Day of Action to End All Violence against Children (2007)

- About 70 children wrote about violence, emotional and physical abuse against children and discrimination in schools, attitudes of adults towards children and how children feel when punished on a newspaper corner “One day of a child”.
- The newspaper corner was published on “Daily News” newspaper twice a week for three months.

(Children’s words are sincere and very powerful, better than any journalist’s!)

2007 ойд Их Бодлогын Хүүхдийн Илалт Сан-ийг зурван Сүдэгбүтэрийн хамтран “Хүүхдийн нэг өдөр” сэдэвт зургаат хуудас гаргасан юм. Тус зургаат хуудасны төлөөр хүүхдэд өөрсдийн үзэл бодлыг хамгаалах бөгөөд ямар нэгэн өөрчлөлт, найруулгагүйгээр тогтоожуу байна. Хүүхдийн илалт сангаас гарсан санаа нь бусад хүрч, хүүхдэд бусад аргаар ч ямар талбайн оршин амьдрах хүсэл бэлтгэх болгой. Үүний төлөө төлөгчид бид өөрсдийн дурлагч жин, хөнгөн амьтныг гадаргт илгээ байна.



Бид хүүхдээ бие даасан, өөртөө итгэлтэй, амжилтаар дүүрэн, зөв хүн болоосой гэж хүсдэг. Энэ бол бидний ХОЛЫН ХҮСЭЛ. Яг одоо бид хүүхдээ хичээлээ дагтаасай, гэрээ цэвэрлээсэй, үгэнд ороосой гэж хүч байна. Энэ бол бидний ОЙРЫН ЗОРИЛГО. Ойрын зорилго биелээгүй тул бид хүүхдээ эзэмлэж, гар хүрч холын зорилгоо үгүйсгэдэг. ХҮҮХЭД ХҮМҮҮЖҮҮЛЭХ ҮЕД ТЭВЧЭЭР БАРАГДААГ Ч ХОЛЫН ХҮСЛЭЭ БАЙНГА САНААРАЙ.



Манийгаа нэг сайн өшиглөөд өг! өвгөн! Багаасаа зодуулж ажил хийсээр байгаад сурчихсан юмаа хв!
Хүүхдийг зовоож, гэрчлээд, дандаа зодоот хүүхдүүд зурладаг. Авч ээж нь гэрээсээ хөөж, ажил хийлгэж хичээлд нь суулгадаггүй. Тиймээс том болоод компани захиран болно гэж боддог хүүхдүүд олон бий. Тэгээд тэр хүүхдүүд том болж байгаад эцгээсээ өшөөгөө авна гэж боддог гэсэн. Хүүхдийг зарим хүмүүс ер тоологгүй. Хүний эрх дархыг хамгаалдагтай адил хүүхдийг эрх дархыг адилхан хамгаалах хэрэгтэй. Монголчууд юмны утга учрыг лавоон цохон хийж, биш эв зүйгээр ярилцан олдог. Зарим хүмүүс юу ч ойлгоогүй байж хорүүлж чиндэг. Хүүхдийг зодож занчиж болохгүй. Зодлоо гээд юуг ч өөрчилж чадахгүй.
(Н, 12 настай, эмэгтэй)

Хүний эрх гэж байдгаас, хүүхдийн эрх гэж байдаггүй юм за! Бандиа!
Миний бодлоор зарим аав, ээж ах эгч нар хүүхдийг үргэлж зодож загнаж дээрэлхэж байдаг. Надад энэ явдал тохиолдож байсан. Нэлээд хэдэн удаа ах минь согтуугаар намайг зодож, загнаж, үсдэж, үргэлж дээрэлхдэг байсан. Нэг удаа би хичээлээ тарчихаад хүүхдийн хичээлийг зааж өгөөд орой оройтож гэртээ очсон юм. Гэтэл намайг битгий худлаа яриад бай гэж миний зурх уруу цохиж би ухаан алдаж байсан юм. Хүүхэд бүр эрхтэй. Хүүхэд бүр хуультай. Энэ байдал битгий гарч байгаасай.
(Э, 13 настай, эмэгтэй)

Children's participation in the Child Protection Programme

Global Day of Action to End All Violence against Children (2007)

About 80 children from suburban districts of capital city including street children, children with disabilities gathered together to share their views and experience of violence through drama plays. The theme of the play was “What difficulties children face and why?” and “When children are most happy and why?”



Children's participation in the Child Protection Programme

Global Day of Action to End All Violence against Children (2007)

- “I want to go home”, a documentary movie about the life of two street children on how they left home and do not want to go back because of emotional and physical abuse was broadcast by six TV channels.
- There were some activities done by children in the rural province as well. For instance, ...

Children's participation in the Dornod Province

Global Day of Action to End All Violence against Children (2007)

- In Dornod province, 20 minutes' TV talk show “Children learn from life” and a TV programme on positive discipline focusing on Education Law was broadcasted by local TV.



- Children's representatives met with the head of the Department of Social Policy in Dornod Province and presented an appeal developed by children - “Listen to children – Today is the Global Day to End Violence against Children!”

Children's participation in the Child Protection Programme

- The drama plays, the documentary, newspaper corners, children's books, photo exhibitions, etc. are all ways to listen to the children and voice up their views to the wider public
- On the other hand, SC empowers children through skills building activities like arts and circus, focus discussions with peers and adults, research, etc. Also, we provide children with necessary information on child rights, child protection, etc.. E.g. in 2007 “Safe You and Safe Me” was translated into Mongolian.

Challenges and problems in Child participation

- Role and ethics of media (identification and confidentiality of children)
- Understanding and acceptance of adults (pressure from school director and teachers for a child that participated in a press conference – the child had to change the school!)
- Child-friendly information and materials (still lack of these)
- Expertise on ensuring effective child participation (we're learning by doing, trying to get external volunteers and experts to help us and our partners)
- Follow-up and reaction to children's initiatives (need to influence the “big bosses”, etc.)



Thank You!

Special thanks to SC Sweden in providing continuous support and guidance, plus funding to enable Mongolian children to enjoy their participation rights!

Thank You, all!