



NORAD COLLECTED REVIEWS

19/2023

Strengthening Children with Disabilities Project (NLM-Mongolia)

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Mid Term Review
Development Initiative and Policy Research
Center

Norad





Norad

**Strengthening Children with Disabilities Project
(NLM-Mongolia)**

ISBN: 978-82-8369-170-2

ISSN: 1894-518x

Published: 11.08.2023

Cover Photo: Ken Opprann

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**STRENGTHENING CHILDREN WITH DISABILITIES
PROJECT**

MID-TERM EVALUATION REPORT

ULAANBAATAR

2022

Acknowledgment

The project's midterm evaluation was carried out by evaluators from the "Development Initiative and Policy Research Center" and professors from the National University of Mongolia. First of all, we would like to thank the target population and stakeholders who participated in the study to provide primary data for the successful implementation of the evaluation.

We also would like to express our gratitude to the management team and staff of the Association of Parents with Disabled Children (APDC) NGO Khovd and Bayan-Olgii provinces, where the project is being implemented. Moreover, the Development Center for Children with Disabilities employees, as well as the management and staff of local government institutions, for spending their valuable time taking part in the study, offering information and cooperation, and assisting with the evaluation.

We also want to thank the staff of the Strengthening Children with Disability Project for their help and cooperation in putting this midterm evaluation report into action as well as for their valuable suggestions and recommendations.

LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

RDTC	Regional Diagnostic and Treatment Center
ECAD	Education Culture and Art Department
FCYDD	Family, Child, and Youth Development Department
SS	Secondary school
GO	Governor Office
CSO	Civil society organizations
GOM	Government of Mongolia
SPD	Social Policy Department
NLMM	Norwegian Lutheran Mission in Mongolia
PE	Preschool education
NGO	Non-Governmental Organization
CWD	Children with Disabilities
DCWD	Development of Children With Disabilities
APDC	Association of Parents with Disabled children
HESPCWD	Health, Education and Social Protection for Children with Disabilities
DCCWD	Development Center for Children with Disabilities
MAE	Monitoring, Analysis, and Evaluation
MLSP	Ministry of Labour and Social Protection
DIPRC	Development Initiative and Policy Research Center

Based on the mid-term evaluation of the Strengthening Children with Disabilities Project, Norwegian Lutheran Mission in Mongolia, the report was created by the Development Initiative and Policy Research Center.

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ONE. INTRODUCTION

1.1 Basis for mid-term project evaluation

The NLM-Mongolia is carrying out the Strengthening Children with Disabilities project in the provinces of Bayan-Olgii and Khovd from 2020 to 2024. The Association of Parents with Disabled Children, the NLM-Mongolia organization, the Ministry of Labor and Social Security Mongolia, as well as the governors of the target provinces and local branches of the Association of Parents with Disabled Children have all signed memorandums of understanding as part of the project. A preparatory project was implemented in 2018-2019 to successfully carry out the Strengthening Children with Disabilities Project, and prior to the project implementation, needs assessment research was conducted to collect information about children with disabilities. These are undoubtedly the basic conditions for the successful implementation of the project, and the progress evaluation is being carried out as planned this year.

The results of the mid-term evaluation of the project will be important in the final years of the project, thus the project will focus on learning from the evaluation results. According to the work assignment, the project mid-term evaluation will be conducted in 2022 with participation from project staff and partners. The mid-term evaluation on Strengthening Children with Disabilities Project was carried out by a team of teachers and researchers of the Development Initiative and Policy Research Center and National University of Mongolia.

1.2 Goals and objectives of the mid-term evaluation

The main purpose of the project midterm evaluation is to assess project progress and performances from 2020 -2022 towards outcomes, results, effectiveness, benefits of target groups, achievements, and lessons learned in the target areas in ensuring the rights of the children with disabilities and make recommendations for the further project to improve project implementation in Bayan-Ulgii and Khovd aimags.

The following targeted activities have been implemented within the scope of consulting services. It includes:

- Document analysis, quantitative and qualitative data collection
- Evaluation of project implementation, results and effectiveness
- Analyzing problems that cannot be implemented within the scope of the project
- Identify issues and solutions to be considered in the further implementation of the project
- Determining the achievements and lessons learned from local activities in the field of ensuring the rights of children with disabilities and making recommendations

TWO. EVALUATION METHODOLOGY

2.1 Evaluation methods and methodology

A combination of quantitative and qualitative research methods were used to evaluate the project results as indicated in the mid-term evaluation guidelines.

Please see annex 01.

Table 1. Scope and methodology of evaluation work

#	Content, area	Evaluation indicator	Methods
1.	Purpose of the project	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The Association of Parents with Disabilities Children will become an influential organization for the rights of children with disabilities. • Children with disabilities will have more opportunities to access social services equally. • Provincial and local governments will increase their responsibility to ensure the rights of children with disabilities. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Monitoring - Questionnaire - Key Informant Interview and Focus Group Discussion - Document analysis
2.	Scope of assessment	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The mid-term evaluation includes the project implementation years 2020-2022. Implementing the project will cost 3.9 billion MNT over a five-year period, from 2020 to 2024. • The evaluation is a mid-term, external evaluation that includes monitoring the progress of the project implementation and learning objectives of the project stakeholders. The external evaluators worked to ensure that the project team and partners took part in the evaluation. Target provinces for mid-term evaluation include: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Khovd province • Bayan-Olgii province 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Document analysis - Cost and benefit analysis - Empowerment assessment matrix
3.	Project target group	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Children with disabilities aged 0-18 in the target province area • Association of Parents with Disabled Children <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Parents with children with disabilities - The head, members and staff of the Association of Parents with Disabled Children • Employees and managers who work with and provide services to children with disabilities 	Questionnaire, Key Informant Interview A story of real change Empowerment assessment
4.	Scope of results	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Analyze the project indicators and objectives, assess whether the project's mid-term and final objectives are SMART (specific, measurable, realistic, relevant, and time-bound), and if necessary, make specific suggestions and recommendations to improve or change the project objectives and indicators. - As the project is implemented, the contribution to the achievement of the sustainable development goals within the framework of the project results will be evaluated. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Document analysis - Individual interview - Comparative analysis - Questionnaire
5.	Expected results from the project evaluation	Evaluation of criteria for meeting the final objectives of the project, including: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - To evaluate the results achieved according to the Project Results Matrix, to evaluate the results and progress of each of the project's main goals and outputs (components). - Based on the analysis of the successful activities within the project, whether they can be used in the future activities of the project - Identify the factors that contributed to the successful implementation of the project. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Document analysis - Individual interview - Questionnaire - Focus Group Discussion

In the framework of qualitative research, focus group interviews (FGI), key stakeholders' interviews (KSI), document analysis of secondary data (DASD), and quantitative research questionnaires (GRQ) and other methods were used.



Picture 1. Bayan-Ulgii and Khovd provinces; Focus group Discussion

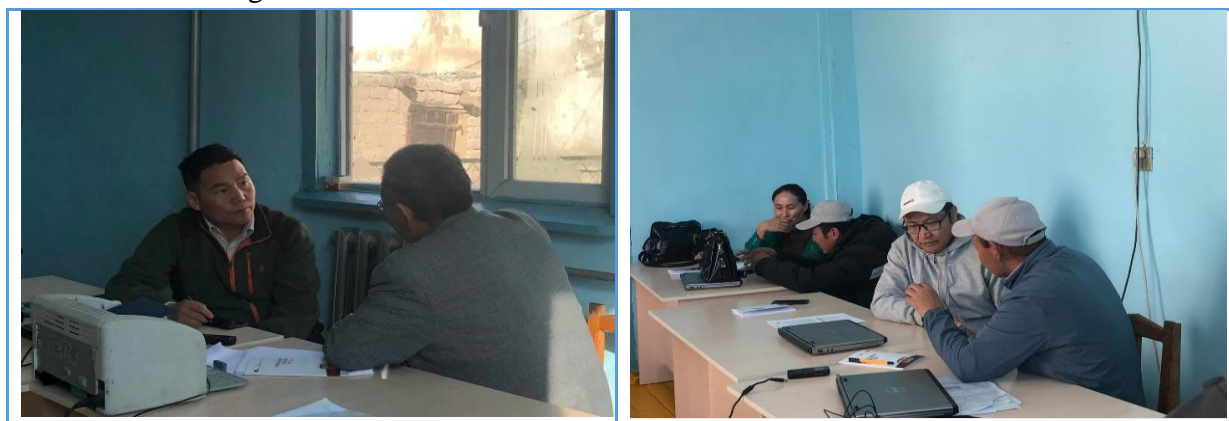
Also, the research team strictly adhered to the rules of ethics for researchers and working with children, performed external evaluations free of conflicts of interest, which is a common selection requirement, and developed [the](#) necessary recommendations for the further operation of the project.

2.2 Data collection method

A combination of document analysis, quantitative and qualitative research methods were used to collect research data for mid-term project implementation evaluation. It includes:

Document analysis. Documents developed during the project implementation period between 2020-2022, annual activity plans, project reports, cooperation agreements, local policy decisions, and other related documents were reviewed and analyzed.

Qualitative research. Individual and group interviews were conducted with project staff, Steering committee's members, target group representatives, other partners and project beneficiaries. In addition, individual interviews were conducted with children with disabilities as part of collecting stories of real change.



Picture 2. Bayan-Ulgii and Khovd provinces; Key Informant Interview

Questionnaire. In order to evaluate the changes in the project beneficiaries' understanding, knowledge, and capabilities as well as the factors influencing them, this evaluation used the

questionnaire method, a major method of quantitative research. Parents of children with disabilities were asked to participate in surveys and a public assessment.

2.3 Sample size

Based on the tasks of the evaluation work, research data was collected from 8 areas within two provinces (the center of Bayan-Olgii and Khovd provinces, together with 3 sums from each province). The project is being carried out Bayan-Olgii province, which has 13 soums, and Khovd province, which has 17 soums/.

Sampling: When selecting samples, the number of people and children with disabilities at target soums, the access requirements during the evaluation site visits, such as the proximity of the road and the availability of access, were discussed with the project implementation team.

Table 1. Sampling of quantitative and qualitative studies

	Parents with disabled children	Public	Focus group interviews	Individual interviews	Total
Center of Bayan-Olgii Province	20	21	12	8	61
Nogoon nuur soum	8	22	5	4	39
Tolbo soum	8	22	6	4	40
Tsengel soum	6	13	5	4	28
Center of Khovd province	19	28	12	8	67
Durgun soum	6	15	5	4	30
Mankhan soum	5	20	5	4	34
Erdeneburen soum	2	19	6	4	31
Ulaanbaatar	---	---	---	2	2
Total	74	152	56	42	324

A total of 226 people participated in quantitative research (74 parents, 152 community representatives), and 98 people participated in qualitative research (56 in focus group interviews, 42 in individual interviews). Together, these participants made up a total of 324 people.

2.4 Data Analysis

- Questionnaire data was processed and analyzed using SPSS-25.0 research software.
- Observations, one-on-one and group interviews, and the content of documents were conducted using methods such as comparison, benchmarking, typology, classification, and matrixing in accordance with qualitative research methods.
- On the basis of the findings from the project's initial research, statistical analysis, and content analysis of the document were performed, and progress and changes were determined.
- Primary and secondary data were analysed using actual evidence. In the analysis of the primary quantitative data, numerical frequency, percent weight, and ratio, compared with the start and mid-term years of the project, are reflected in tables, graphs, matrices, and categories in the report.

2.5 Limitations of the evaluation

The project's mid-term evaluation did not focus on measuring changes in the abilities of children with disabilities. Therefore, the survey was mostly conducted with parents of children with disabilities and was limited to interviews with children with mild disabilities.

2.6 Ethical considerations

Prior consent was obtained from parents or guardians for the study of children with disabilities. Additionally, ethical approval was obtained for the study to maintain confidentiality and record of the research data collection process.

THREE. THE KEY FINDINGS OF THE EVALUATION

This section of the report presents the main findings of the assessment. Project results are evaluated in six key areas: relevance, effectiveness, efficiency, impact and sustainability, and level of empowerment.

3.1 Relevance

The SCD project is consistent with SDG-5 on achieving gender equality and SDG-3-10 on reducing inequality, which are included in the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals, and is consistent with Mongolia's long-term development policy (Vision 2050). This is due to the requirement that the Mongolian government, ministries, other government institutions, universities, academic institutions, local organizations, non-governmental organizations, and citizens are all required to participate in the implementation of SDGs.

Furthermore, since the beginning of the project, the main strategy of strengthening cooperation at the local and national levels has been built, which is in line with the NLM-M organization strategy. For example, it is reflected in the cooperation agreement that the responsibilities of the parties involved in the long-term planning of the project were established with the MLSP at the national level and with the governor of the province at the local level.

The activities implemented within the framework of the project are entirely based on the needs of the target population, the local social, economic and cultural characteristics, and are aimed at empowering and increasing the power of the APDC. As a result, it can be considered that the beginning has been made to ensure the sustainability of the project results by incorporating the best local practices into the national policy.

The goals, planning, and implemented activities of the project are closely aligned with the policies and programs adopted at the national level regarding children with disabilities, especially the policies and directions of the Ministry of Labour and Social Protection and the functions of the Commission for Health, Education and Social Protection of Disabled Children.

Meetings, joint trainings, and organized activities within the framework of the project are aimed at local authorities, governmental and non-governmental organizations working with children with disabilities and parents. In addition, these activities set the goal of empowering the APDC by cooperating with and supporting organizations working in the field of children with disabilities.

In cooperation with the APDC, the active members and staff of the association will undergo capacity building training on organizational development, leadership skills, and human rights approach, and through them, the project aims to improve the knowledge and information of citizens and the public. This is clearly stated in the results section.

According to the interviews of the evaluation participants, it was mentioned that the project approach and the activities implemented within the project are consistent with the local development plan. The project team also said that it is very important to organize the activities to strengthen the capacity of the APDC, to spread good practices in the region, and to compare what is happening in other regions. Participating organizations point out that the activities of SCD project are of great importance in meeting the goals of sustainable development at the local level.

However, the participants of the interview noted that the logical scope of the project was too broad, each of the implemented activities fully achieved their goals, but the activities implemented each year were less coherent with each other.

3.2 Effectiveness

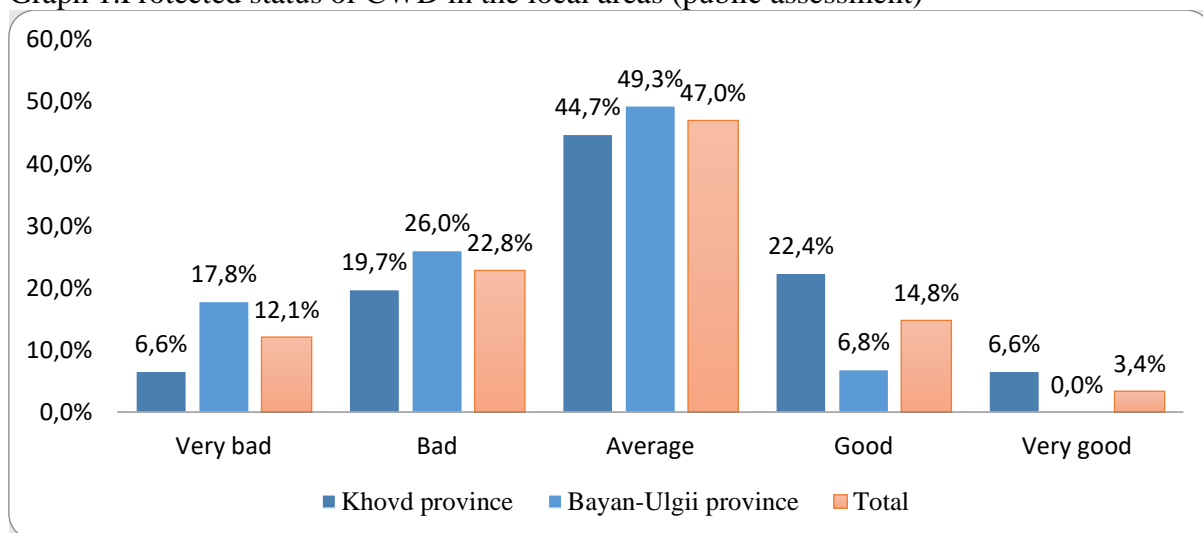
The timing of the project's launch coincided with the curfew of the Covid-19 pandemic, which delayed most of the local activities and the implementation was slow. Within the framework of the project, many activities have been planned and most of the planned activities have been implemented. According to the results of the project, it is possible to achieve the criteria by narrowing down the project goals and scope.

Due to Covid-19 curfew restrictions, the scheduled field trips to soums were delayed and the project operation has temporarily been discontinued, however, this has not been a considered as a potential risk. In some soums, the project unit has yet been reached, thus, the local community are not aware of the project. According to the project objectives, it is important to reach out to all soums, provide information, and promote the organization and the project.

3.2.1 Evaluation effectiveness: change and progress

Local citizens were asked to rate the state of protection of the rights of CWD in their local areas on a 5-point scale, and the average score was 2.74 /SD -0.97/. In Bayan-Olgii province, it is evaluated at the level of below average / Average -2.45 SD-0.87/, while in Khovd province it is evaluated at the level of average / Average -3.03 SD-0.98/.

Graph 1. Protected status of CWD in the local areas (public assessment)



According to the pre-project research, the public awareness on the rights and protection of the rights of children with disabilities was inadequate, and on the other hand, the level of satisfaction was high. Yet, upon the launch of the project, parents have built some knowledge and awareness about disabilities, demanding their rights and being concerned on the rights that are not ensured or protected according to the research results.

There is a difference in the level of satisfaction of citizens, communities and parents of children with disabilities in terms of health, education and social care services for CWD. While parents gave a more positive evaluation of the public services provided to the CWD, the general public responded with a more negative evaluation. The fact that parents are closer to public services and their work and lives are more relevant may have contributed to the positive evaluation. Overall, local residents generally rate these public services for the CWD as relatively good or above average.

Table 2. Evaluation and satisfaction with local health, education and social care services (Parents of CWD and Public Assessment)

		Health Care	Educational Services	Social Welfare
1	Parents and guardians	Average 3.46 /SD=1.196/	Average 3.46 /SD=1.343/	Average 3.5 /SD=1.329/
2	General Public	Average 3.21 /SD=1.131/	Average 3.28 /SD=1.201/	Average 3.07 /SD=1.179/

When comparing the evaluation of parents in two aimags, their evaluation varied /on average/. Parents of Bayan-Ulgii aimag negatively evaluated any government services, while parents living in Khovd aimag give a better evaluation.

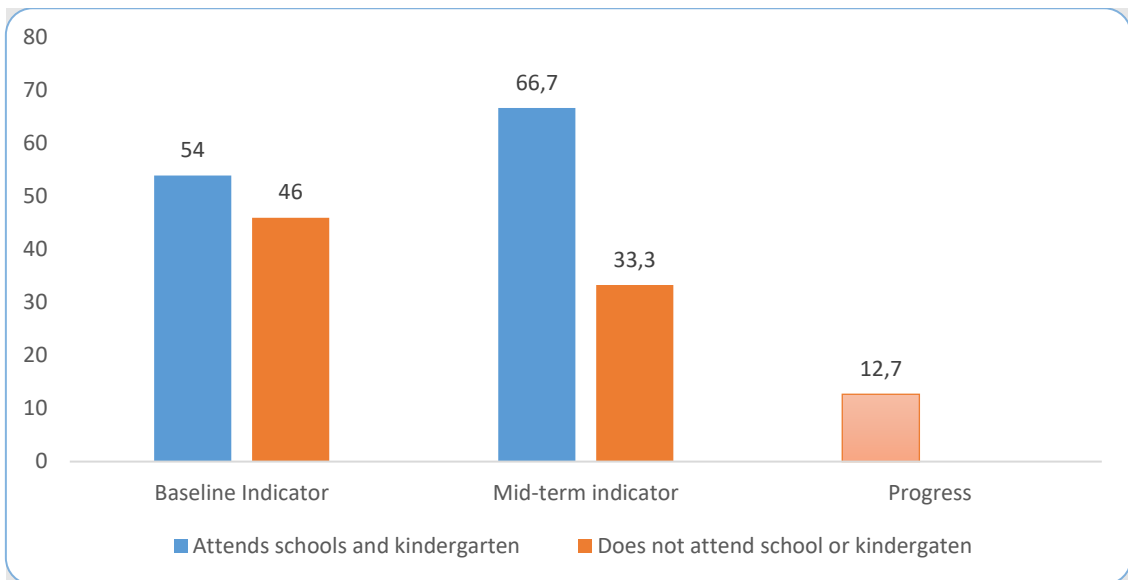
Table 3. Satisfaction of parents and guardians of CWD regarding public services. (by project aimag)

Aimag, soum		Health care	Education	Social protection
Bayan-Ulgii aimag	Average	3.26	3.34	3.17
	Standard deviation	1.308	1.512	1.444
Khovd aimag	Average	3.72	3.60	3.81
	Standard deviation	0.991	1.102	1.108

In particular, the health care and social welfare services in Khovd aimag have been rated highly by the parents. The APDC in Khovd aimag is located within the fenced area of the aimag's general hospital and delivers a wide range of services for parents, building a solid relationships and collaboration with more parents. As a western Regional Diagnostic and Treatment Center, it is apparent their services are diverse and delivered in a larger extent that their service quality and accessibility is expected to be high. Within the framework of the project, investment was made in the Children's Hospital of the western Regional Diagnostic and Treatment Center for children with disabilities, and the room was decorated, which was widely appreciated by the general public. However, it is observed that the parents are not fully informed.

According to parents surveyed, 66.7% of CWD attend school and kindergarten while 33.3% or one out of three children is not enrolled. Of the children enrolled, 18.9% attend pre-school education, 66.0% attend secondary education, 13.2% attend lifelong education, and 1.9% attend vocational education. 46% or almost half of the CWD surveyed for the project base line research could not attend school or kindergarten.

Graph 2. Attendance of CWD in schools and kindergartens



From the review on the mid-term evaluation data, the enrollment in schools and kindergartens of CWD has increased by **12.7** percent. This has been confirmed with the results of interviews conducted with the key stakeholders of the project that the CWD access to education has increased since the project launch, and the quantitative data as well.

In soums and local areas, there is an urgent need for regular surveillance for possible delays and disabilities, and to pursue early referral for intervention. Moreover, the services and competence of health care institutions and professionals are inadequate along with a lack of leisure facilities and professional development of teachers.



Picture 2. Khovd aimag. Focus group discussion with parents

Having been involved in this center, we have been informed on many households with disabled children in our aimag. I feel happy that there are parents like us who would collectively raise their voice for their children's right to education. We have realized that when we collectively act, we can resolve many problems. We were even thinking about moving to the city to settle down for our child's treatment and education. Yet, in this context, it was not easy to think about the employment opportunities there and the relatives who would support us. Since the launch of the project, we have involved our child in the activities of the Development Center for CWD through which the diagnosis of children was made by the commission.

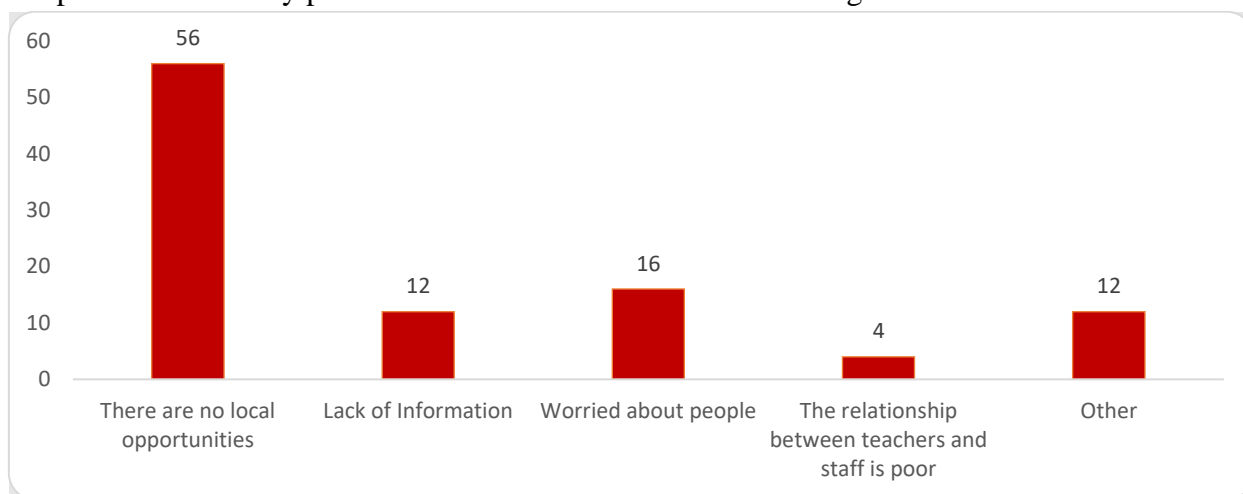
As a result, our child is enrolled in a provincial school. My child is also enrolled in teacher training in addition to the development training of this center.

It is the realization that the only thorough knowledge and awareness of parents can be the only support for their children. Many issues can be addressed if many parents can be trained and informed in this work. One of our advantages is that well-informed and trained parents pass on training information to other parents. Well-informed person can help or support others suffering from the same problem by information exchange. It is not the case that only the government or social workers should respond to the problems of children. This should be realized for the community.

Focus group discussion with parents involved in APDC Center in Khovd aimag

Throughout the focus group discussion, parents emphasized that there are real opportunities and many advantages through collaborative efforts. The reasons why children with disabilities (33.3%) cannot attend kindergartens and schools are mentioned by parents as follows. For example, 56.0% or more than half of the parents denoted the lack of opportunities for CWD to attend schools and kindergartens in rural areas while 4.0% mentioned external factors beyond their capacity, such as poor communication and attitude of teachers and staff and more on. Of the parents surveyed, 12.0% revealed they lack information and knowledge and 16.0% responded that it is their personal qualities such as anxiety.

Graph 3. Reasons why parents cannot enroll their CWD in kindergartens and schools



In Bayan-Ulgii and Khovd- project target aimags, the enrollment of CWD in schools and kindergartens is increasing which is appreciative thanks to the fact that within the framework of the "Inclusive Education" program, children with disabilities are specially supported by the Aimag's Department for Education and Science, local authorities, school management and teachers.

When examining the level of satisfaction with the basic social services of the parents of CWD surveyed, the average is slightly lower than the level of the project's basic research .

Table 5. Parents' satisfaction with school management and teachers' performance /2019-2022/

№	Question	Average	Standard Deviation
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		2019	2022	2019	2022
1	How satisfied are you with the communication and attitude of the management of your child's school/kindergarten?	3.8	3.7	1.02	1.24
2	How satisfied are you with the relationship and attitude of your child's teachers?	3.88	3.81	1.02	1.28
3	How satisfied are you with the skills/competence of your child's teachers?	3.86	3.67	1.21	1.23

The difference in the average level of satisfaction shown in Table 5 is a representation of the characteristics of the sampled areas/soums, the differences of parents, and how parents approach problems more critically and intelligently by demanding their children's rights and evaluating the implementation as they are well-informed and aware of the disabilities. Also, it can be related to project results.

An important result of the project is that not only parents, but also workers/officers from schools, health and social service organizations operating in soums, and local community are concerned about children with disabilities, put forward ideas to change their environment, and are committed to help.

... In recent years, the concept of Inclusive Education has been central to discussion to a larger extent. At school, classmates with children with disabilities, who were not often approached before, are now seen helping the child to climb the stairs. Different people are living together. I think it is a positive development that today's children realize that people will support each other. Unless they study together with CWD, they won't understand everything.

School Manager of the Secondary School of Nagoon nuur soum

I am head of the soum center bag. There are 2 children with disabilities- one child is in kindergarten. One caretaker takes that child. Also, because the child cannot attend full time, the caretaker has to immediately take the child as soon as the teacher calls. A herder family may not be able to act this way. As a bagh head, we are surveyed as well. In the soum center, the situation of CWD is not easy, and neither are their parents. The employment opportunities are limited in the soum, but we do understand that the mother leaves her job to take care of the child. As the bagh heads conduct a new study and report the numbers, we are aware of the persons and children with disabilities. I also understand how they suffer. They head to the aimag and the capital city twice a year to treat their children which prevents their working opportunity. However, we feel helpless in rural areas doing nothing.

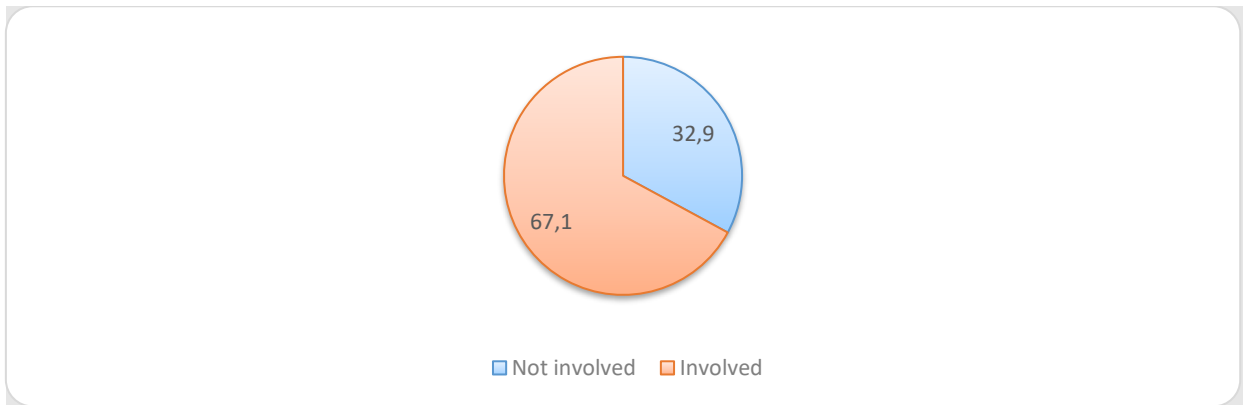
Interview with Bagh Heads

From the aforementioned interview, there is a need to increase access to education, health, and social services aimed at CWD and their parents residing in rural communities.

3.2.2 Evaluation of parents of children with disabilities on project activities

67.1 percent of the parents of CWD surveyed participated some activities of the SCD project /Graph-4/ and they evaluated the project's activities as relatively good (average 3.97 /SD 0.91/).

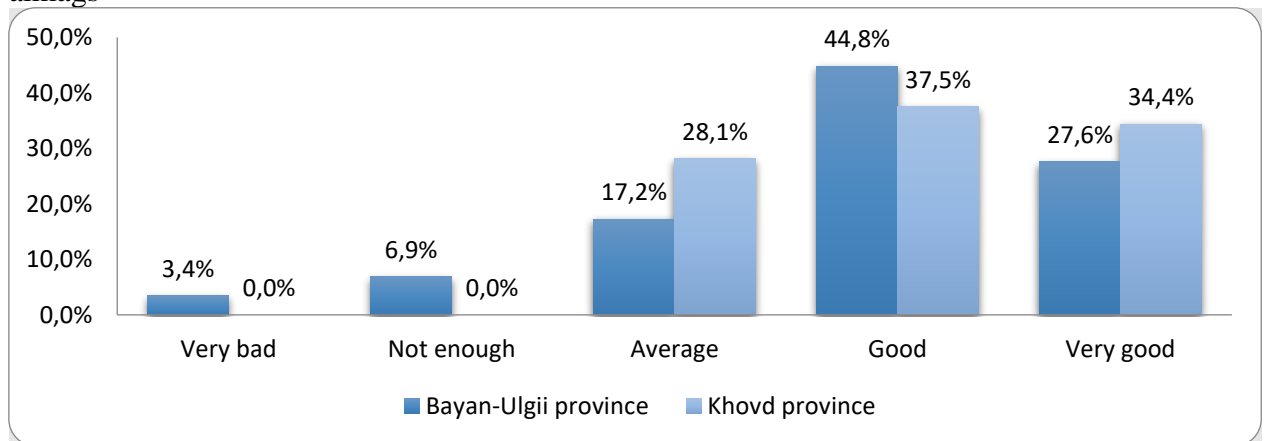
Graph 4. The percentage of parents involved in the SCD



According to the responses of the parents, it is necessary to focus on the fact that one out of every three parents (32.9%) did not participate in the SCD and the project activities should target the parents of CWD. This is because the local implementation of the project has been delayed due to the Covid-19 pandemic, as illustrated in the mid-term project implementation assessment.

The overall evaluation by the parents with CWD involved in the project is positive.

Graph 5. Overall evaluation of the project activities for the parents with CWD in the project target aimags



From the calculation of the average of the responses, the project implemented in Khovd aimag /average 4.06/ was evaluated more highly than the evaluation of the parents of Bayan-Ulgii aimag /average 3.86/.

Empowering the APDC is of the main project indicators, gaining the support of parents, developing their cooperation and empowering them. In this, positive comments and support of parents about the project are the most important. The general evaluation is analyzed in-depth extending the effectiveness and results of the project as evaluated by 13 indicators.

Table 6. Parents' evaluation on project activities

№		Evaluation from negative to positive on a scale of 1-5					Average and standard deviation
		1	2	3	4	5	
1.	The project is timely and very important	—	2.7%	4.1%	31.1%	48.6%	M=4.45 S= .733

2.	Project activities are oriented towards the needs of the beneficiaries	1.4%	2.7%	12.2 %	43.2%	24.3%	M=4.03 S= .849
3.	The project clearly hypothesized the context	1.4%	5.4%	12.2 %	39.2%	28.4%	M=4.02 S= .943
4.	The project was able to reach the target group- CWD	8.1%	9.5%	13.5 %	28.4%	28.4%	M=3.68 S=1.288
5.	The project met its targets	6.8%	5.4%	13.5 %	32.4%	23%	M=3.73 S=1.191
6.	Potential implementation of the project independently	1.4%	2.7%	13.5 %	33.8%	31.1%	M=4.10 S= .907
7.	Project and program have developed cooperation with counterparts	2.7%	4.1%	13.5 %	35.1%	21.6%	M=3.89 S= .994
8.	Project developed relations and cooperation with local authorities, organizations and officers	—	2.7%	18.9 %	36.5%	18.9%	M=3.93 S= .799
9.	The project met local needs and interests	2.7%	1.4%	14.9 %	36.5%	23%	M=3.97 S= .936
10.	It has had a positive impact on the lives of local community	6.8%	4.1%	13.5 %	32.4%	23%	M=3.76 S=1.179
11.	The project results have resulted in positive changes in the local child protection	6.8%	4.1%	13.5 %	31.1%	25.7%	M=3.80 S=1.190
12.	It has brought a change in people's attitudes and traditional thinking	4.1%	2.7%	17.6 %	33.8%	23%	M=3.85 S=1.039
13.	The project overall contributed to the development of cooperation between organizations working for the protection of children with disabilities and public well-being.	2.7%	5.4%	12.2 %	27%	31.1%	M=4.00 S=1.076

From the assessment above, the highest evaluation was given on an indicator- the project was timely and became an important work /average 4.45/ followed by other indicators- the project can be implemented independently /average 4.1/, the project activities meet the needs of the beneficiaries /average 4.03/, the project clearly hypothesized the local context /average 4.02/, and the project overall contributed to the development of cooperation between organizations working for the protection of children with disabilities and public well-being /average 4.0/.

From this evidence, the results of the project depend not only on the project workplace and funding, but also on the transparency, human resources, relations and cooperation of the management of the APDC implementing the project.



Picture 3. Bayan-Ulgii aimag. APDC Office

- Building the story of the real change that happened to children with disability involved in the project with their participation

Clarifications were made from the parents and children on the impact that have occurred in children with disabilities from the APDC's child development centers and child development activities implemented within the framework of the project. According to qualitative research data from parents and children, progressive changes were made in health and rehabilitation, relationships and socialization, and talent development.

Rehabilitation

Diagnosed with muscle stiffness and other combined aspects. Finger movement and mobility have improved after taking to Itgel center. Speech development improved.

Representative of parents in Jargalant soum, Khovd aimag

In winter, having cold was frequent. Walking was only within close proximity. Now, physical health is quite strengthened. Plus, some music education is gained. The distance is lengthened thanks to movement therapy. Dental treatment was received.

Representative of parents in Jargalant soum, Khovd aimag

Relationships and socialization

No socialization before, only played alone. No ability to use pen/pencil and speaking is poor. Later there has been some relationships built with regular children, improving vocabulary and speech as well as writing skills.

Representative of parents in Jargalant soum, Khovd aimag

The barrier to move and be involved in the project is the key challenge. I used to go to the rehabilitation center and enjoyed to have friends there. There is one friend with whom I would share toys. Last Spring, it was exciting to play in the river bank during the Children's Day. Further, I have a plan to be involved in some development activities such as basketball and football. I love watching classmates to play around.

Representative of CWD in Erdeneburen soum, Khovd aimag

2 years ago, I was a passive and unconfident "crybaby" whose arms and legs were poorly moving. But now, I am now far more sociable, agile and open-minded to express myself easily. I am trying to develop my talent. I do have a sense of aesthetics and love my school. I have been involved in Itgel center when I was 5. Now I am 9. The major barrier is that mom is busy with work and I cannot go alone. With the project involvement, I have my friends and a teacher.

Representative of CWD in Altai soum, Khovd aimag

I used to be anti-social who is so mean and had only one friend. Plus, I hated to attend the events by the center. With continued involvement, I have felt good. I used to be shy. I was involved in summer trainings, Children's Day and New Year events. I play around and attend contests/games. Since my involvement in Itgelt center, I have become more social. Everyone in the neighborhood of the residential apartment#48 knows me. I have made many friends, built some confident to speak in public and learnt many poems and songs. I think I have become socialized well.

Representative of CWD in Jargalant soum, Khovd aimag

Talent development

My child feels happy when involved in a drawing session and drawing with a good set of supplies. He/she used to draw creatively with all his fingers and is really passionate about drawing. He/she loves to draw with a good and fancy set of appliances. Many changes have occurred in him/her.

Representative of parents in Jargalant soum, Khovd aimag

Previously, even though he/she loves drawing, there was no one to teach or support his/her interest and make some paperwork. Upon the involvement with this center, child's creative thinking is developed with better drawing and feel aspired to create more. The center has been influential and has lots to learn from.

Representative of parents in Ulgii soum, Bayan-Ulgii aimag

These advances are important outcomes for the project's beneficiaries, based on stories of real change based on the participation of children with disabilities and their parents.

3.2.3 Evaluation and cooperation of project implementors and stakeholders

This section analyzes and evaluates the position and current situation of project stakeholders regarding cooperation. During the mid-term project evaluation, the project units, government organizations (GO), and the management of the APDC- the project co-implementor expressed their opinions and participated in the evaluation.

Table 7. Stakeholders' evaluation on project activities

	Khovd aimag			Bayan-Ulgii aimag			Average
	PoM	GO	APDC	PoM	GO	APDC	
Management, organization	4	5	4	4	5	5	4.50
Action planning	5	4	4	4	5	4	4.33
Finance	5	5	5	5	4	5	4.83
Project monitoring and evaluation system	3	4	4	5	5	5	4.33
Project reporting	4	5	5	4	5	5	4.67
Communication	4	5	5	5	5	5	4.83
Transparency	5	5	5	5	5	5	5.00
Cooperation	4	5	5	3	5	5	4.50
Average	4.25	4.75	4.63	4.38	4.88	4.88	4.63
Percentage	85	95	92.5	87.5	97.5	97.5	92.5

Resource: Key-informant interview outcome of project stakeholders

According to the above assessment, project management, organization, operation, financing, project monitoring and evaluation system, reporting and communication were evaluated closely and averaged 92.5%.

According to the implementers of the SCD project, the evaluation for monitoring and evaluation system of the project in Khovd aimag was as moderate-3, and the cooperation of the organizations implementing the project in Bayan-Ulgii aimag was as moderate-3.

3.3 Efficiency

For project management, cost-efficiency analysis is aimed at providing information for more effective planning and implementation of activities in the future for project management. Based on the cost-efficiency analysis based on the financial facts in the evaluation framework, it can be seen that the budget was spent efficiently in the implementation of the project activities.

As part of the cost-efficiency analysis, the investment value of the project was determined, and the costs, project outputs and benefits of the project (not measured in money) were evaluated and ranked. The total budget of the project's operation was 174 million in 2020, 310 million in 2021, which increased by 1.78 times from the previous year, and 277.8 million in 2022, which decreased by 0.9 times.

Table 8. Project budget/2020-2022/

	NLM PROJECT	LOCAL TERRITORY	Bayan-Olgii	Khovd	TOTAL
The year 2020	174,625,000.00	12,200,000.00	6,200,000.00	6,000,000.00	186,825,000.00
The year 2021	310,825,492.00	72,321,300.00	5,000,000.00	67,321,300.00	383,146,792.00
The year 2022	277,800,000.00	77,000,000.00	23,300,000.00	53,700,000.00	354,800,000.00
TOTAL	763,250,492.00	161,521,300.00	34,500,000.00	127,021,300.00	₮ 924,771,792.00

During that period, the budget of the local partner organization was 12.2 million MNT in 2020 and increased 5.9 times to 72.3 million in 2021, which is a major achievement. As of 2022, the amount of funding for partner organizations has increased to 77.0 million. The cost-efficiency analysis of the project was carried out in the following 5 stages. First, the compatibility of the project's goals and objectives with the pressing problems, policies, and strategic directions of the sector; secondly, whether the total cost of the project was calculated according to the relevant methodology and was able to be adjusted to the activities to achieve the target; third, economic return indicators; fourth, the calculation of economical efficiency of the project; fifth, the coordination, assessment, and ranking of the costs and economic returns of the project.

One. The type and expenditure of project activity costs are compatible with the main goals and objectives of the project. Also, within the framework of the 3 main objectives, the activities planned and the stakeholders, the problems of the sector, policies, and strategies are in line with the directions, and currently, there is no spending that deviates significantly from the main goals of the project. However, there is a need to focus on enriching the activities within the scope of the project's objectives and conducting multifaceted activities enriched by the initiatives of the stakeholders. For example, it can be a comprehensive work that complements the goals and objectives of a multi-faceted project, such as international best practices, parent and community initiatives, stakeholder planning, and actions. Based on the experience of the past 3 years, only a few existing training programs of the APDC constitute the main amount of expenses. For example, the cost of 4 trainings implemented by the APDC, namely "Organizational Management, Financial Development, Leadership Skills", Gender Equality, Human Rights-Based Approach", "Household Development Plan", and "Child Development Methodology" is 83 million 200 thousand MNT.

First of all, there is a tradition of realistic and accurate reporting of project cost figures, activity news, and information, which is helpful in monitoring the progress of the goals and activities. The budgeted costs and expenses of the activities and investments implemented within the project are fully calculated. However, it can be enriched with annual action planning and regularly discussed and approved in a friendly manner to the beneficiaries of the project.

Based on the suggestions of the project participants, the problem is solved by group discussion, discussion with stakeholders, incorporating the opinion of external consultants, discussing it at the board meeting, and taking the suggestions of the donor organization, but in reality, in the context of each goal, which activities are more effective in the future determined and monitored regularly. This is a basic requirement for project operations and financial planning. A comparison of annual project costs by objective:

Table 9. Project objectives and budget

		TOTAL COST		TOTAL BUDGET
		From the project	From a partner	
2020	Objective 1	109,725,000.00	5,200,000.00	114,925,000.00
	Objective 2	31,800,000.00	2,300,000.00	34,100,000.00
	Objective 3	27,100,000.00	4,700,000.00	31,800,000.00
2021	Objective 1	160,025,492.00	13,221,300.00	173,246,792.00
	Objective 2	43,800,000.00	2,100,000.00	45,900,000.00
	Objective 3	107,000,000.00	57,000,000.00	164,000,000.00
2022	Objective 1	135,000,000.00	35,300,000.00	170,300,000.00
	Objective 2	39,800,000.00	2,900,000.00	42,700,000.00
	Objective 3	102,400,000.00	38,800,000.00	141,200,000.00
TOTAL		756,650,492.00	161,521,300.00	918,171,792.00

Two. When the total cost of the project is calculated according to the relevant methodology, there is a distribution compatible with the activities to achieve the target. When planning any activity, the activity is carried out in detail within the framework of activities approved as planned for the year, based on the program plan approved by the project leader and the management of the participant or implementing party. It is implemented in accordance with already approved programs and plans and indicates the need to coordinate with financial activities, to plan quarterly rather than annually, and to be flexible. In addition to ensuring coordination between the internal activities of each goal, annual activities should also be coordinated and planned for the next level depending on the results of the previous year's work and quality assessment. It is important to work out the next level of planning based on the evaluation of each activity.

Three. In evaluating the indicators of economic return, depending on the main goal of the project and the results to be achieved, indicators that can be measured and expressed in one type of unit are included. However, when these are considered in terms of annual funding, the organized activities are poorly coordinated, in one word, "incoherent". Here, in particular, it is possible to develop criteria and detailed indicators to measure the evaluation of training.

Four. When evaluating economical efficiency, each sub-criterion was evaluated and converted into 1-3 points.

Table 10. Activities of project objectives and benefit assessment

	Project objectives	2020		2021		2022	
		Number of activities	Assessment	Number of activities	Assessment	Number of activities	Assessment
1	Objective -1.1	10	2	13	2	13	2
2	Objective -1.2	2	2	3	2	3	3
3	Objective -2.1	3	3	4+2	2	4	2
4	Objective -2.2	3	3	3	3	3	3
5	Objective -3.1	3	2	3	2	3	2

6	Objective -3.2	1	2	4	1	4	3
	Mean		2.33		2.0		2.5
	The amount expressed as a percentage		77.7		66.7		83.3

Note: (Evaluation of project benefits 1-poor, 2-satisfactory, 3-good)

In the general evaluation of the economical efficiency of the project, its arithmetic mean score is good enough, or 2.5. Expressing these as a percentage, the financial cost and operating efficiency in 2020 were 2.33 points or 77.7%, while the cost efficiency of the project decreased to 66.7% in 2021 with Covid-19 curfew and increased again to 83.3% in 2022.

Five. In order to generate economic returns, project activities need to be prioritized and refined in line with the costs incurred. However, currently, when considering each project activity, it can be observed that the funds are allocated equally in each province. In other words, in terms of funding, local characteristics, needs of project activities, initiatives of target groups, characteristics of local culture, and different conditions of costs and benefits of implementing project activities have not been taken into account. According to the analysis of financial costs and benefits, it can be seen that up to three themes of training received funding of up to 2-6 million MNT every year. Although the prioritization of project activities is important, the activities implemented each year (e.g. multiple outreaches, capacity building, and development training) need to be coordinated. For example, if the training conducted last year was only for imparting knowledge and skills, it is important to plan how to organize the "practice and discipline" training in the future based on the evaluation of the progress of the training. Project funding should be organized and directed according to a detailed plan in accordance with the logical framework of the project, rather than the training offered by other organizations, or training that seems interesting.

3.4 Impact

Impact reflects the long-term direct and indirect impact of the project (DIGNI). As the implementation of the project has not yet been completed, it is not possible to fully assess the many positive and negative impacts on the protection of the rights of CWDs and the local community. However, field research data shows that the scope of the project's objectives is broad and that significant benefits and changes are evident. Activities and interventions aimed at bringing about the expected results of the project indicate that they are on the right track and do not deviate significantly from the main goal. In the future, it is expected that real results will be achieved when the project is completed.

There is an increased awareness and knowledge about the rights of people with disabilities and children in the local community which is the key project impact. This is the major project goal. On the other hand, the local authorities of Bayan-Ulgii and Khovd aimags generally support the activities of the project team which is essential in sustaining the project and achieving its objectives. The support by local authorities in Khovd aimag has been strong while it is not the same in Bayan-Ulgii aimag resulting in different outcomes, yet the project is fully viable to accomplish its goal and objectives.

The local authorities of Bayan-Ulgii and Khovd aimags in collaboration with the SCD project annually hold an event "Accessible Environment for people with disabilities" for the international day of persons with disabilities and urge the local organizations to address the outdoor environment accessible and friendly for people with disabilities. This has been of greater appreciation. The SCD project concluded a memorandum of understanding with the local authorities and in this regard, several policy documents have locally been developed in association with the project goal and activities. As a clear illustration, the funding for the APDC and the Development Center for Children with Disabilities (that operates under the APDC) is presented to the local Citizens' Representative Meeting (CRM) for approval and reflected further in a local annual budget and in recent years the funding amount has been increased. As a result, the local development strategic framework and the agenda of the local governor include some targets to enable the environment for persons and children with disabilities.

It shows the impact of the project on people other than the intended beneficiaries. The participants of the focus group interviews said that only mothers were seen in the diagnostic examination of CWD, but today the participation of fathers has increased in carrying and caring for the child, and gender-balanced participation is increasing. According to a physical visit to the field, the representation of parents and guardians at the meeting at the APDC Office in the Khovd and Bayan-Ulgii regions was equal in terms of gender, which shows the positive effect of the program.

In terms of effectiveness, one of the interesting results of this evaluation was that the cooperation between the government and NGOs, and the project team contributed to a common vision of the problem of CWD and a positive approach to solving the problem. When comparing the results of the research on the condition of the CWD before the implementation of this project with the condition at the time of the evaluation, many changes have been observed.

Parents with CWD participating in educational services rated their children's school and kindergarten management, teachers' relationships, attitudes, and competence in working with children from excellent to very poor (on a scale of 1-5) to express their satisfaction.

Table 11. Parents' satisfaction with school management and teachers, 2019-2022 (by each rating)

№	Question	Year	Satisfaction				
			Very poor	Low	Medium	High	Excellent
1	How satisfied are you with the communication and attitude of the management of your child's school?	2022	8.1%	6.8%	23%	25.7%	32.4%
		2019	4.3%	5.8%	20.3%	44.9%	24.6
2	How satisfied are you with the relationship and attitude of your child's teachers?	2022	6.8%	10.8%	13.5%	24.3%	37.8%
		2019	4.4%	4.4%	16.2%	42.6%	32.4%
3	How satisfied are you with your child's teacher's skills/competence?	2022	8.1%	6.8%	23%	27%	29.7%
		2019	6.0%	1.5%	13.4%	47.8%	31.3%

When rating the level of satisfaction of parents regarding school management and teachers, the average satisfaction regarding teacher skills increased whereas the teacher-management relationship as excellent increased (5.4-7.8%), and the response as high decreased (18.3-19.2%).

According to the survey results that were transferred to five evaluation points to calculate the average, it was 3 points for the average of parents' satisfaction, 3.70 / SD 1.24/ for the satisfaction average of the relationship and attitude of the school and kindergarten management, 3.81 /SD 1.28/ for the average rating of the teacher's relationship and attitude and 3.67 /SD 1.23/ for the average rating of teachers' skills.

One of the major challenges faced by CWD is the barrier to accessing health services. In particular, access to health care and services such as diagnosis, treatment, and rehabilitation is essential for CWD. Here, parents' satisfaction with healthcare services is compared with the results of the survey conducted at the beginning of the project.

Table 12. Parents' satisfaction with the relations and attitude of the health practitioners /2019-2022/

Questions	Year	Responses	
		Average value	Standard deviation
How satisfied are you with the relations and attitudes of hospital staff and management?	2022	3.35	1.25
	2019	3.65	1.06
How satisfied are you with the skills of health practitioners working with CWD?	2022	3.45	1.25
	2019	3.41	1.21

According to the quantitative data presented in the table, in comparison, the satisfaction index of the attitude of medical staff and management decreased slightly /0.3%/, and the skills of medical staff working with CWD were almost the same /0.05%/. When comparing the average level of parents' satisfaction by project target aimags, the level of satisfaction of parents in Bayan-Ulgii aimag is high /mean=3.26, SD=1.30/, and the satisfaction of parents in Khovd aimag is also high /mean=3.72, SD=1.19/, the indicator of Khovd aimag is significantly higher than that of other aimag.

According to the key-informant interviews conducted as part of the qualitative research, it is evident that there is a need to build capacity for doctors and medical staff in rural areas, centered on regional diagnostic and treatment centers of the aimag.

For parents with CWD, access to medical services is a priority. There are many problems if raised. Parents and the community may assume that the doctors are working, and doctors would serve as part of their duties. However, there is much to concern. For example, our provincial general hospital is considered as a diagnostic and treatment center, but their capacity is poor at diagnosing a range of specific types of disabilities. It took longer to diagnose our child. There is a commission, but its specialist doctors are not able to diagnose it. Thus, we went to Ulaanbaatar and made the diagnosis with much cost. Having struggled to seek the diagnosis, I have witnessed and experienced many problems. We need to train and develop our doctors and specialists. In addition to the doctors, there should be many specialists, such as caregivers, nurses, and hospital social workers who would work as a team.

Key-informant interview with a father of CWD

...Thanks to the project implementation, we are addressing this context which is good. However, those in charge of this issue and relevant officers and workers should be committed accordingly. Yet, they only hold an annual event for the International Day of Persons with Disabilities and that's it. This problem should be subject to the regular discussion. If parents, teachers, and doctors collectively raise their voices, the authorities would understand and be concerned. We have heard that there is an ongoing construction project -the palace for people with disabilities. The APDC should be involved there, otherwise the current

office is cold and located within the fenced area of the general hospital. Just a few children are present here and attend their events occasionally.

Focus group discussion with parents of CWD in Khovd aimag

This reveals that it is more effective to reflect and implement targeted activities aimed at people with disabilities and protecting their rights in the daily public services, rather than carrying out certain tasks and measures within the project framework. The position of the parents regarding the relationship and attitude of the hospital staff is identified and compared with the baseline research indicators expressed as a percentage. According to the Table, the indicator of low satisfaction in terms of attitudes and skills of medical staff and management increased (4.6-5.9%), while the indicator of high satisfaction decreased (4.2-17.6%).

Table 13. Parents' satisfaction with the relations and attitude of the health care staff, 2019-2022 (by each rating)

Question	Year	Satisfaction				
		Very poor	Low	Average	High	Excellent
How satisfied are you with the relations and attitudes of hospital staff and management?	2022	10.8%	12.2%	27%	27%	20.3%
	2019	6.3%	6.3%	23.2%	44.6%	19.6%
How satisfied are you with the skills of health care workers in working with CWD?	2022	9.5%	13.5%	17.6%	35.1%	20.3%
	2019	11.6%	8.9%	23.2%	39.3%	17.0%

Within the framework of the project, the development of the cooperation between the APDC and the management and staff responsible for provincial and local issues will help to continue working for the target group even after the project is completed. During the focus group discussion, it was emphasized that the parents will support the APDC in any case, and although they are criticizing it, in the future, it was emphasized that the main progress is that we come together, know each other, and see our common goals.

...It is good that APDC operates with its office. However, if only the head of the association is concerned to involve us in this center and association on a larger extent, we have intention to participate more actively. We have the capacity to fund and be committed. Unfortunately, with limited participation, we are not informed on what actions are required on what aspects of issues or what actions are ongoing. We used to be proactive, however, with this much limitation we are discouraged and no longer be present. If we are involved upon the training, I am ready to volunteer as I am unemployed and sit at home doing nothing. For any work task, I think I can learn anything.

Focus group discussion with the members of the APDC in Bayan-Ulgii aimag

...Yet, our parents should proactively be involved. Only a few appear for events held. I often take my child to this center and accompany him/her whole day. There is rehabilitation equipment. Also, these 2 girls operate the center and keep the office open. Once parents visit here, there is nothing that discriminates or excludes them. People's opinions are different, there is no way to please everyone. In any case, it's good that it doesn't run out of heating and does not close its door. I heard that because of this project, they are

providing training and services, and they are paying for these 2 girls. Anyway, the head is managing the center. This center has reasonable space. Because it is spacy, heating is probably not easy to afford. We will support any work.

Focus group discussion with the members of the APDC in Bayan-Ulgii aimag

The participants emphasized that by becoming a member of the APDC, there has been progress, they have discussed their problems together, found mechanisms to participate in other activities, and helped parents and many people who work on the issues of the CWD to get to know each other.

"Before, we didn't know each other and there was no social communication platform. However, thanks to the project, we started to talk to each other, discuss common problems and challenges, and together create solutions for a better future for ourselves and society."

Focus group discussion in Khovd province

It is important progress that the operation of the Development Center for Children with Disabilities in the target provinces is being evaluated as a criterion for measuring the results of the work of the management and experts of the government organizations operating in this regard. This shows that they have the conditions to work carefully in this regard. However, the number of free time activities that children with disabilities can participate in has increased.

It has been observed that the members of local commission on Health, Education and Social Protection for Children with Disabilities have increased their responsibilities in terms of ensuring children's rights, and the effect on the expansion of inter-sectoral cooperation in the local area has not been sufficient.

3.5 Sustainability

Project sustainability refers to the prospective measurement of the likelihood and extent of the continuation of the intervention or its benefits after the withdrawal of external funding. Considering that the project still has about two years to go, the evaluation focused on elements that could affect sustainability. To this end, this evaluation framework evaluates evidence of sustainability in five areas: participation and community-acquired knowledge and skills, cooperation with stakeholders, technical feasibility, financial sustainability, and capacity of the APDC. There is a need to carefully examine these areas of sustainability, and regardless of the project's current ability to achieve sustainability, it is important that it continues to meet its objectives.

According to the results of the evaluation, the participants are confident that the results achieved will continue, and it is possible to improve sustainability throughout the project management and financing activity cycle.

Community participation/contribution, socio-cultural impact, technical and financial capacity of the intervention, and institutional coherence were also considered.

Participation and community-acquired knowledge and skills

The sustainability of the project's performance and its further progress depend primarily on the level of participation of local communities in various aspects of the project's management

and operation cycle. Community involvement in projects primarily leads to capacity building, which in turn allows for greater effectiveness in the process of defining, implementing, monitoring and evaluating program activities. Community participation in program design, implementation, and monitoring allows local communities to define their own values and priorities and act on their own decisions.

In this regard, during the assessment process, the participation of the target community in project planning, implementation, and monitoring was weak, and the partnership between the local community and the parents of CWD was not good in the 2 years prior to the implementation. The internal and external cooperation of "APDC" NGO is relatively good. In the case of Bayan-Ulgii province, there was a need to pay attention to increasing the capacity of internal cooperation and teamwork of the leading members of parents.

However, in both provinces, a partnership has been established between the local administration and the expert staff of the government organization operating in this regard, which is another goal of the project. Project activities are not fully inclusive of the public, which affects the sustainability of the project and may further increase the level of risk. The results of the project activities currently depend on the cooperation and partnership of the project team and the local management of the APDC, and the staff of government agencies, in which the development of local community support and participation is a key measure of sustainability.

Therefore, it is necessary to take into account the opinions and preferences of community groups (parents of CWD, caregivers, women, children, teachers, doctors, etc.)

Cooperation with stakeholders

Evidence from the evaluation shows that cooperation with government stakeholders, in particular, is a strategic factor in sustainability. The project is working closely with the Deputy Governor of the Province in charge of Social Policy, the Department of Social Policy, Aimag's Department for Education and Science, and the Health Center, and has signed cooperation and partnership agreements with these stakeholders. However, there is a risk that the top management will be replaced according to the management of these organizations and the administrative functions of the public service. The managers of these organizations are represented in the project management board and participate in the discussion and approval of the project budget and are not always involved in the implementation and monitoring of the project.

At any stage of the implementation of the project, it is possible to sustain and increase the involvement of the government administration, school administration, health center staff, parents, and the community empowered by the project during the remaining period, which can be an initiative that can be implemented at the national level. One of the key areas of special focus going forward is guiding the beneficiaries of the project. Provincial government officials can play an important role in collecting basic data, setting target criteria, and nominating beneficiaries for each activity. In general, the project team aims to implement most of the project activities in cooperation with the government and other organizations.

The main thing is to pay attention to increasing the participation of citizens and parents if they have worked well in cooperation with government organizations and experts. Although the functional linkages created between the APDC, project units, and local government institutions are a promising mechanism for institutional sustainability, multifaceted support for capacity building is essential to maximize benefits.

The need to strengthen the capacity of government stakeholders as a sustainability strategy and handing over control and support to government partners is an area of improvement that requires advocacy. In addition, little attention has been paid to the empowering human resources of human resources and personnel capacity, which is one of the main issues in ensuring the stability of the project.

Technical viability

During the field data collection, the evaluation team notes that all project actions were in line with the wishes and goals of the community. A closer look at the data collected for the evaluation shows that the local people are well aware of the project's activities and implementation methods. Capacity-building trainings for target communities were instrumental in creating a shared understanding of the project and building local capacity to manage and sustain the effort.

Dissemination knowledge and skills to target beneficiaries and local communities is one of the key sustainability factors. Through capacity building, the project aims to expand the knowledge and skills of the project's target beneficiaries on various activities (social service participation of CWD, family capacity, cooperation, etc.). According to the evaluation data, by participating in the project, the target groups are learning how to manage their lives with regard to the issues of CWD, in addition to everyday issues. More than material assistance, capacity-building efforts have made significant progress in improving the capacity of target groups to utilize the resources available to them.

In conclusion, all the measures implemented by the project were compatible with the culture, knowledge, skills, and practices of the target group. In other words, the project's intervention is important for ensuring the sustainability of the project as it is based on traditional knowledge and supports the suggestions and initiatives of local communities. The project has the advantage of transferring technology that improves the current situation, is suitable, as well as locally adaptable. Also, this project creates a sense of learning and cooperation among the target group.

As one of the key factors of sustainability, as stated in the project document, the project is working well to implement activities that are compatible with the culture and lifestyle of the local people, and to use the existing knowledge and capacities of the local people.

Financial sustainability

As clearly stated in the project document, the project has made good progress by developing partnerships with local institutions, using culturally acceptable approaches, and respectfully using local people's knowledge. Emphasis on local contributions, labour, materials and even financial contributions to the project, greatly increased the sense of local participation, as the evaluation team noticed during the site visits.

However, when the operation of the project is stopped, the capacity of the APDC to maintain the results of the current activities in a financially independent manner is not met. It is a commendable aspect that the project and the local government organization jointly provide funding, but it is important for the APDC to create and establish its own independent permanent income and support system.

Existing activities can be managed by communities and local stakeholders using local resources. Moreover, the project needs to develop local leadership in the area of multi-stakeholder participation. In short, there is much work to be done in scaling up activities using local resources

and in adopting and replicating good practices. Another important challenge is the dependence of local communities on free material aid and adaptation to it. Local resource mobilization is therefore an important sustainability strategy.

The capacity of the APDC

In the two provinces where the project is being implemented, the APDCs are established locally, and the current leaders have experience. The leadership of the central organization of the APDC in the capital has no problem supporting and cooperating. However, it is necessary to pay attention to increasing the equal participation of all parents in any activity of the APDC. According to the meeting of the leading members of the APDC in Bayan-Olgii, there were internal misunderstandings and conflicts. This indicates that the information of the current management is not open, and there is a lack of transparency and resolution of problems in the middle. In the future, it is important for the project team to work carefully in this regard, provide information about the project's activities and financing, and discuss in detail, and have parent representatives and leading members present.

Assessment of stakeholder sustainability within the framework of the evaluation

The project leader, project officer in Khovd and Bayan-Ulgii, the representatives of the APDC, and of the government organizations serving in the project steering committee are involved in the evaluation of financial, socio-economic, institutional, and environmental risks. Other areas of evaluation include the competence and capacity to work with the APDC, the non-vacant council for ensuring the rights of people with disabilities under the aimag's governor's office, and the Commission for Health, Education and Social Protection for CWD.

Table 14. Key stakeholders' assessment on project sustainability

		PoM (Khovd)	PoM (BU)	APDC	NGO	Average
1	Financial risk affecting sustainability	4	1	4	4	3.25
2	Socio-economic risks affecting sustainability	4	2	3	4	3.25
3	Institutional and governance risks affecting sustainability	3	2	4	5	3.50
4	Environmental risks affecting sustainability	1	3	4	5	3.25
	Average	3	2	3.75	4.5	3.31
	Percentage	60	40	75	90	66.25

The risk of affecting the project sustainability was evaluated by the Likert scale from 1 to 5, and the average was calculated and expressed as a percentage, 66.25. According to the key stakeholders- the project implementors, the risks that may contribute to the project sustainability can be the following main areas:

Financial risk:

The financial risk that would affect the sustainability of the project is relatively low as funding is based on grants, and the total project cost for five years from 2020 to 2024 was approved to be 3.9 billion MNT. The SCD project funding is planned on an annual basis.

The biggest risk for the APDC to ensure the project sustainability with the current structure is the financial risk. This is due to the fact that they have not yet ensured with full financial resources. Plus, the lack of finance prevents the implementation of the inclusive education model in educational institutes. Namely, it is required to promote the best practice and project outcomes of the secondary school#2 to all other schools.

Socio-economic risk:

There are certain social and economic risks affecting the sustainability of the project. Therefore, continuous financial and economic support is necessary to sustain the results of the project. On the other hand, in order to sustainably operate the support group for improving the protection of CWD, capacity building is required in a soum and rural areas where such groups can make a big difference through their stable operation. It is expensive to visit rural families with CWD, or to bring children from the countryside to the provincial center. Even with the project outreach program and upon the project completion the commission has tried to run the support groups effectively and sustainably, but their efforts could not be sustained. Empowering through specific incentives the local branch commissions, volunteers, and people working in rural areas is expected to affect the sustainability of the project.

The context reveals how project ownership fails unless project activities and measures ensure community participation and are aligned with the local decision-making through the collaboration between local government and non-government organization.

As reflected in the project document, sustainability aspects were considered as a priority, so the focus was entirely on empowering parents and families, building the capacity of service providers, and building community awareness and attitudes, rather than immediate services delivery to CWD. On the other hand, it is mandatory to increase and consistently continue to advocate for decision-makers at the local and national levels.

Institutional and governance risk:

The impact of institutions and governance on the project sustainability is not evaluated at the level of risk in both the project target provinces. For example, for the group of parents with CWD, the active support of the soum's governor's office and other authorized persons is very important. In the long term, changes in governance due to election results, the appointment of new officials not informed about the project, perspectives to view the project in the context of saving financial costs of public services, frequent replacement of members of the APDC, and excessive dependence on one person may lead to project failures. In each case, the support, cooperation, and leadership of the project management board is essential.

Environmental risk:

Environmental risks to project sustainability are relatively low. However, the lack of facilities of the APDC and the ignorance of other government organizations, or the social environment, may negatively affect not only their activities but also the project's overall results.

3.6 Level of Empowerment

Level of Empowerment

The main objective of the evaluation is to assess the level of empowerment of the target group and the impact of the project. Capacity is the ability to make important life choices, and the ability to see and experience that ability. Empowering people is an important factor in solving life's limitations and creating a better life for everyone. The team realized that the target groups identified for the implementation of various project interventions are socially, economically and culturally disadvantaged community groups. Therefore, one of the main objectives of this research and evaluation was to assess the extent to which the project contributed to the empowerment of local communities.

To assess the degree and level of empowerment achieved as a result of project participation, the evaluation team used an empowerment assessment tool recommended by Digni. The tool looks at three dimensions of capacity: resources, agency, and achievements. In the next section, the evaluation team discusses the evaluation results of how the project contributed to the three dimensions of capacity. A participatory approach was used to assess the level of empowerment, using questionnaires, in-depth interviews, observations, focus group interviews, and site visits.

Resources are at the heart of any program of engagement aimed at empowering vulnerable groups in society. Resources allow people to make choices, and if there are no resources, other life choices cannot be made. According to the respondents, the project provided them with several tangible and intangible resources. This includes assisting in the provision of accommodation for the APDC, regular salaries for specialists, rooms for children with disabilities at regional diagnostic and treatment centers, school environment, and teacher development, as well as training and capacity building for various beneficiary groups. Similarly, it helped to develop the beneficiaries into groups and communities that could be considered social resources.

Access to resources is the first step in empowerment, and the ability and willingness used to make decisions about using available resources determine the individual's agency. Thus, people's right to choose can be measured in terms of self-confidence/self-esteem, decision-making ability, and community participation. However, the team conducted in-depth interviews to assess household and community assessments of the agency to see how the empowerment of vulnerable groups changed as a result of the intervention.

Project participation has had a significant impact on the empowerment of target beneficiaries. There are many signs of improved people's empowerment, which was evident in the focus group discussions and in-depth interviews. In particular, the data obtained from the field observations show that the scope of empowerment has been improved. The activities of the APDC have improved much more than before, the activities of the Development Center for Children with Disabilities have been smoothed, and its experts are learning and developing. Local teachers not only receive training, but also use what they have learned, the number of children with disabilities in school studying with other children is increasing, and they are solving real daily problems together.

Based on the project's proposal and rationale, according to Digni's methodology, indicators were considered in the following five thematic areas. It was evaluated in five thematic areas: strengthening local civil society (community-based organizations), good health, peaceful relations, quality education, and gender equality.

Table 15. Empowerment assessment table

		DEGREE AND LEVEL OF EMPOWERMENT				
THEMATIC AREAS OF RESULT		Level 1: Output	Level 2: Output	Level 3: Outcome	Level 4: Outcome	Level 5: Impact
		Individual or community	Individual or community	Individual or Community	Community and/or Society	Community/ Society/ Structural
	Civil society		X			
	Good health			X		
	Peaceful relations			X		
	Quality education			X		
Gender equality			X			
Overall evaluation of the project				X		

As shown in the table, although the level of capacity achieved in Khovd, Bayan-Ulgii provinces, and soums, where the project is implemented, the framework of civil society strengthening results is at level 2, and all other results are at "level 3 empowerment scale /shkal". Based on the data of the field research, a brief basis for the evaluation of empowerment during the evaluation process is reflected in the report's conclusion and recommendations.

The capacity of civil society /APDC/

Within the framework of the 1st objective of the project, the output of the main activity is being carried out as planned. It is planned to achieve the following results within the scope of objective 1: " The Association of Parents with Different-Abled children is a stronger actor for Children with disabilities' rights".

	INDICATOR	NUMERICAL INDICATIONS, PERCENTAGE PERFORMANCE		NUMERICAL INDICATIONS, PERCENTAGE PERFORMANCE		NUMERICAL INDICATIONS, PERCENTAGE PERFORMANCE	
		2020 objective	2020 reached level	2021 objective	2021 reached level	2022 objective	2022 reached level
Expected results 1.1	Empowered human resources of local Association of Parents with Different-Abled children.						
Indicator 1.1.a	The number of members and staff of the APDC participated in the capacity building training.	17	42	22	52	26	63
Indicator 1.1.b	The number of activities initiated and organized by the members of the APDC	4	6	6	6	10	3
Indicator 1.1.c	The number of households that are the members of the APDC that have learned and implemented the method of developing a Household Development Plan.	30	30	60	54	80	67

The objective within the scope of the work

	INDICATOR	NUMERICAL INDICATIONS		NUMERICAL INDICATIONS		NUMERICAL INDICATIONS	
		2020 objective	2020 reached level	2021 objective	2021 reached level	2022 objective	2022 reached level
Objective 1	The Association of Parents with Different-Abled Children is a stronger actor for Children with disabilities' rights.						
Indicator 1.a	Number of active members of the APDC	177	173	207	185	237	230
Indicator 1.b	Number of advocacy activities.	12	9	14	15	19	22
Indicator 1.c	The number of services provided by Development Center for Children with Disabilities to children with disabilities.	4	6	5	8	7	10
Indicator 1.d	The number of volunteer helpers and peer educators participating in the activities of the APDC	8	18	80	44	140	133

The evaluators concluded that the capacity of human resources, financial strengthening, advocacy influence, regularization of activities of the Development Center for Children with Disabilities, support and cooperation of parents are still dependent on the activities of the project and are within the scope of the project's activity output. In the future, it is important to maintain and improve this result, and to use the knowledge and skills acquired through training and apply it.

Good health

Activities such as the establishment and furnishing of a cabinet for the Child Development Assessment of children with disabilities at the western Regional Diagnostic and Treatment Center, training of doctors, and child rights cases for the service of the local commission on Health, Education and Social Protection for Children with Disabilities are being financed by the project. The project also provided children with hospital services and kindergarten enrollment, training of teachers, and providing information, manuals, and other tools. Based on field observations, doctors and teachers use their training knowledge about working with CWD in their daily lives, and the conditions of coexistence, communication, and support among CWD peers are relatively improved, it was concluded that this framework is at level 3.

Peaceful relations

This indicator was evaluated as the state of children's rights in the local community where the project is implemented. The evaluators assessed that the conditions for the fulfillment of children's rights are relatively improving, but the results of the project are not at the community and/or social level, but they are at level 3 which is the individual or community level.

In this context, it is important that the amount of local funding spent on increasing access to social services for children with disabilities is regularly budgeted and the budgeted amount has been increasing. Also, based on the fact that the local government supports the action plan of the project and provides cooperation for its uninterrupted implementation, as well as the cooperation of governmental and non-governmental organizations and parents for the rights of children, the capacity level of this framework was evaluated as 3. All of this is important for ensuring children's rights.

Quality Education

The project, which can improve access to education for the target population, not only educates children with disabilities, and parents, but also teachers, and doctors as well as specialists from the APDC. It also provided material and financial support to improve the learning conditions of school students. The criterion of the project, the number of children with disabilities continuously participating in education, increased from 20 children in 2020 to 63 in 2021 and to 109 in 2022. In this framework, the self-confidence of the benefiting students will increase, school dropouts will decrease, home education services will be provided to children with disabilities, and flexible management of their study time will be created. In this way, the project contributed to the beginning of the creation of flexible educational services.

Not only the enrollment of children with disabilities in school but also the culture of acceptance of differences and mutual respect is established between children and teachers in the school environment. A culture of mutual respect and helpfulness is the most important value and is the 3rd level of the empowerment scale regarding education, cultural values, and norms.

Gender equality

In addition to mothers and women, men and fathers of children with disabilities participate in the activities implemented within the project without any barriers. There are no gender barriers to participation, but in practice, women's participation tends to predominate in terms of numbers. There were no gender differences in the assessment of the satisfaction of children with disabilities and their parents with regard to access to social services. The assessment of this framework was evaluated as the 3rd level at the level of individuals and communities.

3.7 Analysis of strengths and weaknesses of project stakeholders

The issues, challenges, and conditions are analyzed to strengthen the capacity of the branches in Bayan-Ulgii and Khovd aimags of the APDC which is one of the main objectives of the project.

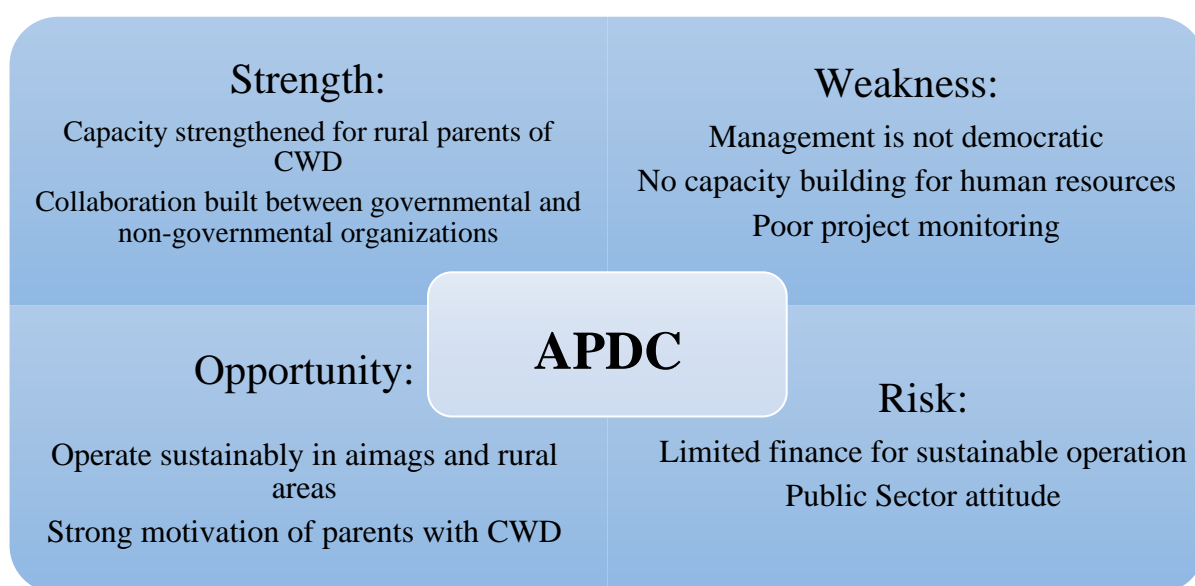


Figure 5. SWOT analysis in Bayan-Ulgii aimag

In Bayan-Ulgii aimag, there are weaknesses such as non-democratic management, human resources not strengthened and poor project monitoring and evaluation. Depending on this, problems related to financial transparency and the distribution of powers and operations may create risks for future sustainable operations. Therefore, it is important to strengthen the capacity of local parents with CWD by expanding the cooperation between government and non-government organizations, which have been established in the aimag for a long time and based on the high active participation of parents. In this extent, it is required to involve proactive member parents of the APDC, to create membership, and to make the management activities transparent and democratic, not dependent on one person.

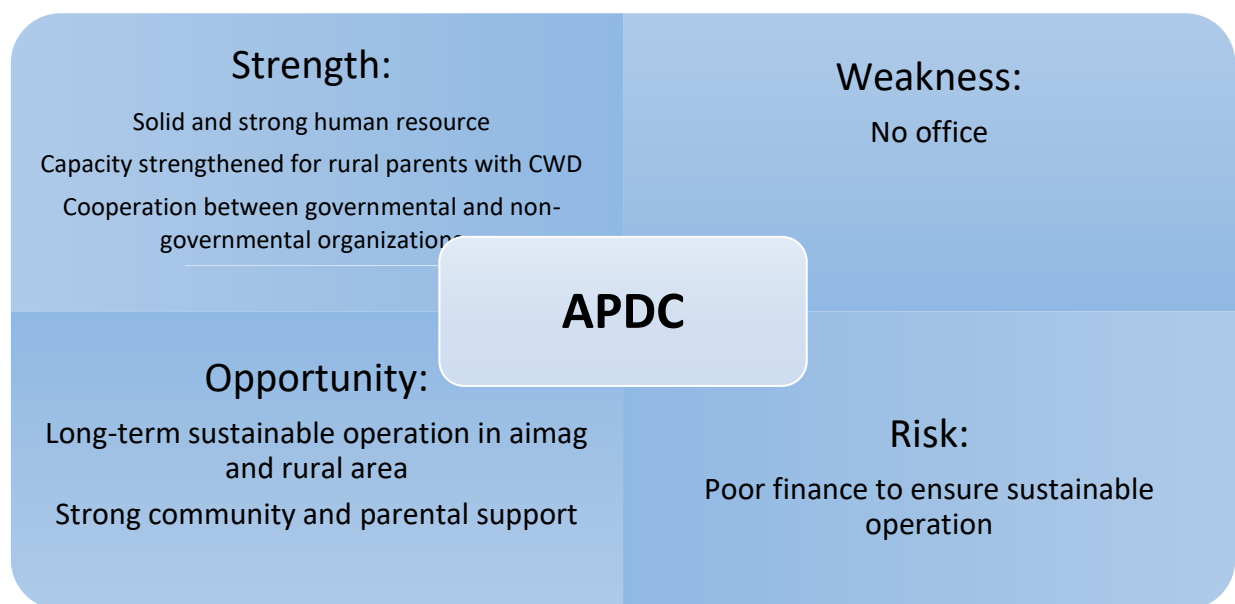


Figure 6. SWOT analysis in Khovd aimag

The main weakness of the Khovd province is that it does not have its own office/premise. In general, the lack of financial resources for the APDC may pose a risk to sustainable operations. For the APDC branch, its long-term sustainable operation in the aimag and rural setting, and the high level of support by parents creates the opportunity to carry out further activities. In addition, strong human resources, transparency in governance, awareness of the rights of parents with disabilities that has improved to a certain extent, strengthened capacity and cooperation between government and non-government organizations are expected to have a positive effect on the organization's sustainable operations.

FOUR. CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATION

Based on the quantitative and qualitative data, document analysis results and evidence of the mid-level implementation evaluation, the following conclusions were made. It includes:

- As local communities and parents become more aware of disability, they are committed to a human rights-based approach. Also, management and employees of government institutions have discussed the issue of ensuring the rights of children with disabilities. It is concluded that the project is being implemented within the scope of its main purpose, as the project activities have had an appropriate impact on it.
- As part of parents and staff empowerment activities of the APDC, they have been able to build partnerships with parents and local government and non-government organizations. Therefore, the first goal of the project to strengthen the partnership is being implemented without deviation.
- The most important thing is that certain resources, opportunities and capacities have already been created within the framework of the implementation of the project.
- The project units are working with local organizations to ensure coordination of work. However, sustainability indicators are not yet sufficient and some impacts and risks remain.
- The project was planned to reach all soums in the target province, but due to factors such as curfew, it was not possible to reach all soums and baghs.
- The provincial centers and soums involved in the study have limited budgets and funding for children with disabilities, but the active participation of the community and parents is steadily increasing. Local authorities have reflected the problem of disabled children in their work and decisions. These contribute to the increase of opportunities for children with disabilities to have equal access to social services.
- Provincial and local governments are making progress in increasing their responsibility to ensure the rights of children with disabilities. The indicators of project objective 3 are "Number of issues reflected in the aimag Governor's action plan related to Children with disabilities" and "Number of public documents supporting the rights of Children with disabilities developed by local authorities." that it is necessary to review the fact that it is not dependent on the project unit and has become a difficult target.
- In order to increase the responsibility of decision-makers, they are involved in the implementation of the project, but due to the lack of local legal documentation, more attention should be paid to the rest of the project duration.
- Children with disabilities now study in clubs with other children in their free time. It is believed to be the result of project support and initiative.
- The local target group, CWD, and senior officials of government organizations, project management, and project beneficiaries concluded that all measures implemented in the local area within the framework of the project are timely, thoughtfully designed training for disabled children and parents and were helpful support.

Based on the results and conclusions of the project, the following recommendations are offered. It includes:

To the NLM-Mongolia and the SCD project

- Involve the community members and public, who participated actively in the training activities in the project's first stage.
- Learn Norwegian good practices and success stories through training, study, and localizing good practices
- Pay attention to encouraging and supporting the implementation of initiatives taken by community members in the local area
- Organize joint activities of APDC and the project involving the participation of children and parents in a cost-effective manner.
- Work-based on good practices of the project and develop project proposal writing further.
- Focus on parents and families more, make them to work volunteering, increase participation and empower them
- Review the evaluation indicators for the 3rd objective of the project, taking into account the fact that it is not possible to evaluate the project's activities,

To the APDC

- Use the influence and cooperation resources of the central APDC to empower the branches, and to implement the optimal management and structure.
- In the province where the project is implemented, besides increasing the number of active parents as well as community members and most importantly, having a parent council that provides qualitative and practical support.
- Dissemination and introduction of good practices of local branches of APDC to the national level.
- To expand the active members and parents at the APDC branches, conduct professional activities such as "support groups" and "self-help groups".
- Build upon our existing trained parents and increase volunteers and expand volunteering activities.

To local authorities and other partners

- Note that the role and participation of decision-makers at the local and national level is not as desired, and advertise and disseminate local good practices and lessons learned from the project implementation in other localities as well as promoting national level.
- To ensure the sustainability of the project at the local level, organize advertising activities of the project results to the community.
- Introduce good practices and activities created in the local area into the system in order to ensure the sustainability of the project.
- Performance evaluation work at the project management level is relatively good, and attention should be paid to use and adopt as good practice in domestic projects.

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Attachments

1. Terms of Reference for Mid-Term Evaluation of SCD Project
2. Curriculum Vitae for the evaluation team