

Research, Network and Support Facility (RNSF)

“Support to enhance livelihoods per people dependent on informal economy
and improve social inclusion of marginalised and vulnerable persons”

Good Practices and Lessons Learned

RESEARCH QUESTION	4-Innovative approaches to enhance livelihoods, equity and inclusion of people dependent on the informal economy
SUB-TOPICS (Research matrix)	<u>Social inclusion promotion (awareness raising on social inclusion in IE) (4.3)</u>
REGION - COUNTRY OF IMPLEMENTATION	Central Asia - Mongolia
RESUME OF GOOD PRACTICES	<p>This Action sought to empower and motivate the extremely poor and unemployed through seasonal work, vocational training and being part of the small business start-up groups thereby seeking to increase their resilience and reduce reliance on materials aid.</p> <p>Another key aspect was the importance of volunteer selection, a solid training programme and continuous investment in volunteers' capacity.</p> <p>According to the evaluation of the Action, its main contribution to the field of social care was that it had successfully demonstrated an effective model for community based social care services by volunteers by delivering tailor-made services to the target groups, something that cannot be offered by the Government.</p>
PROJECT NAME	<i>Comprehensive socio-economic development in rural Mongolia</i>
YEAR	2012 - 2015
FUNDING AGENCY	European Commission
IMPLEMENTING AGENCY	Finnish Red Cross, Mongolian Red Cross Society
KEY TARGET GROUPS	Migrants, Elderly and bedridden, other marginalized groups.
SUMMARY OF THE ACTION	<p>The project was aimed at improving access to and quality of social care services and also at increasing employment opportunities in the participating rural communities. It specifically targets the most vulnerable community members, for example children, people with disabilities, domestic migrants, elders, homeless families, single parents and the unemployed. Since its start in September 2012, the project has reached thousands of people through various forms of support. Among them, vocational training, seasonal work campaigns and grants for small business start-ups have an important role.</p>

GOOD PRACTICES

According to the Project Final Report, the Action built on the experiences, best practices and learnings from the previous Action implemented in January 2009-January 2013. The Action strengthened the significance of Mongolian Red Cross Society (MRCS)' Social Care Programme as a priority programme for national government, and further consolidated programme's content and methodological base. While MRCS Social Centre Policy was developed during the previous Social Care (SC) programmes, there are a couple of new important learnings adapted by MRCS through this Action. In previous years, MRCS has been delivering relief materials and food assistance to the most vulnerable in the form of hand-outs. This Action sought to also empower and motivate the extremely poor and unemployed through seasonal work, vocational training and being part of the small business start-up groups thereby seeking to increase their resilience and reduce reliance on materials aid.

Resource mobilisation and income generation activities are not activities that the Red Cross in general is familiar with and this requires a better up-front training and closer monitoring.

Another key aspect was the importance of volunteer selection, a solid training programme and continuous investment in volunteers' capacity. The volunteers were the back-bone and the key element of success for any SC programme and its sustainability. The value of the volunteers was also clearly demonstrated in the external final evaluation, in which the beneficiaries assessed volunteers in terms of their skills, preparedness, communication skills and accessibility, and more than 90 percent of them evaluated as 'excellent'. On the other hand, MRCS recognised the need to support the volunteers not only in technical matters but also to help them cope with the sometimes difficult situations they may face. The "Caring for Volunteers" tool adapted and translated into Mongolian will come to good use.

For both Finnish Red Cross (FRC) and MRCS, one of the main learning experiences has been the success of how the SC concept has been taken by the beneficiaries, volunteers and authorities and contributed to the community-based approach which is integral to the Red Cross work, irrespective of the programme sector. Addressing the community needs comes first. Building on its success, MRCS has adapted social care activities as one of the minimum standards for all its Medium Level Bodies (MLBs) and the learning gained through this Action will be widely applied. FRC is actively disseminating the methodology, approach and evidence based results from the Action and applying the same learning in other SC programmes supported by FRC in other countries.

According to the evaluation of the Action, its main contribution to the field of social care was that it had successfully demonstrated an effective model for community based social care services by volunteers by delivering tailor-made services to the target groups, something that cannot be offered by the Government. In addition to establishing a functional model for SC services, it also concluded that although the financial support has ceased, home visits, psychosocial support and health and life skills trainings through SCC and volunteers can be continued further: Mongolian state and authorities are by law required to provide its citizens with social care. They are looking for knowledgeable partners (NGOs, other entities) who can be subcontracted these services. The model where trained volunteers provide quality care with a low cost is cost-efficient and have proven to be beneficial to the authorities.

Final evaluation of the project was carried out by the Independent Research Institute of Mongolia (IRIM) that organized a representative survey of 300 beneficiaries, focus groups with project staff, and key informant interviews with key stakeholders. According to the Final Evaluation Report prepared by IRIM the following best practices and new solutions were highlighted by the evaluation survey participants:

- Uvurkhangai Medium level body organizes vocational training in collaboration with the aimagLabor Department
- Erdenet volunteers in Orkhon Medium level body deliver psychological support to vulnerable group without any incentive,
- Khuvs gulaimag Medium level body collaborates with Social Welfare Department for allocating incentive for volunteers and with Water and Sewerage Authority for enabling its 50 beneficiaries to have free shower once a quarter,
- Khuvs gul Medium level body got approval on its “Humanitarian Program” for including it in the Aimag Governor’s Action Plan.
- In Govi-Altai the volunteers acquired vitamins that were donated by the local pharmacy to be distributed among beneficiaries.
- Uvurkhangai the nurse volunteers organised a campaign to have systematic health check-ups for the the children aged 6 months to 5 years in the area
- In Uvurkhangai aimag, the local Medium level body organised with the local trade and agricultural department five-day training on more efficient vegetable cultivation methods for the summer time.

Furthermore, benefits and challenges of the project activities identified by the evaluation survey participants included the following:

Benefits: Beneficiary-specific outreach services, Regular home visits and psychological support, Local residents and volunteers got trained, Increased opportunity to get various information and knowledge, Established network of Volunteers.

Challenges: Due to limited funding, participation number is restricted, Office spaces are small to organize activities, Material support increased dependent mentality, Training and activities are not regular, Long-term beneficiaries, a lack of work aimed at increasing the economic potential, Volunteers’ safety.

Medium level bodies are experienced in delivering social care services to vulnerable groups. The most highly appreciated initiative towards target group was referral services aimed at helping elders, disabled, migrants and extreme vulnerable people to obtain civil registration documents, receive health service, and involve in pension and welfare allowance. It opened gate for enjoying rights to benefit from social welfare services. SCC visitors’ social engagement is strengthened, and gained more positive attitude towards family and society as a result of psychosocial support.

The Project created good practices on implementing human resource and social care activities. For instance, Project activity were reflected in *aimag* governor action plan, training conducted in cooperation with vocational centres, collaborative services delivered to vulnerable group with related organizations, and allowing volunteers to work with *heseg* leader.

Although financial support is ceased, home visits, psychosocial support and health and life skills trainings through SCC and volunteers can be continued further. Many good practices were recorded which can be used sustaining Project activities on basis of partnership and resource. Local authorities are also thinking about maintaining the project results sustainably in long term.

LESSONS LEARNED

A general drawback of the project was related to certain over-ambitiousness in terms of the scope of activities. Based on the previous experiences, the project designers appreciated the need for active approaches, such as providing the beneficiaries with training and start-up support rather than just passive distribution of material

	<p>aid in the form of various handouts and services. Putting the beneficiaries in the position of passive recipients of aid increases their dependence, passive mentality and undermines the sustainability of effects. Therefore, the project adopted an integrated approach that combined social services and material aid with activation components, such as vocational training and assistance with business start-ups. However, the implementing agencies (Red Cross Centres) and their staff (mainly volunteers) had little experience with providing support for income generating activities, training and entrepreneurial start-ups.</p> <p>Therefore, the overall impression is that the implementing agencies were much more effective in delivering social care services and support (Component 1) than in income generating activities and entrepreneurial support (component 2). It would have been desirable to cooperate with institutions that have experience with income generating activities, e.g. in microfinance, start-ups, entrepreneurship training, identification of economically viable opportunities, etc.</p> <p>In general it is advisable to adopt more comprehensive integrated approaches that tackle several interlinked problems. However, broader integrated approaches should be delivered in partnership and cooperation with agencies and institutions that have the appropriate expertise. Otherwise the good effort can be wasted (e.g. if social care agency tries to deliver entrepreneurial support, the identified business options may not be economically viable, etc.).</p>
<p>CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS</p>	<p>The project offers a valuable experience in the area of extending the social care services to the most vulnerable groups, notably those in the informal sector (bedridden, poor, migrant ex-herders, etc.). The main focus of the activities was on direct action at the community level.</p> <p>Good practice included pulling people from informal sector into formal sector by helping them to gain formal registration, which generated eligibility to health services and social benefits.</p> <p>Another good practice was related to the positive behavioural change when training people to become volunteers supported their skills in helping the poor and needy members of the community, which helped to build up and uphold the community morale, values and feeling of belonging. These “soft” skills and features represented the largest assets that seem to be sustainable after the funding has stopped. These assets are recognized by the local institutions and authorities that build upon them and embed them into formal development programs and plans.</p>
<p>FURTHER TAGS</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Social protection (4.4) ▪ Entrepreneurship: Capacity strengthening on starting, improving, growing economic activities (3.2) ▪ Promotion of social norms supportive of enhancing opportunities for those dependent on the informal economy (4.3) ▪ Leadership, life skills, empowerment training, literacy/numeracy (3.4)
<p>SOURCE</p>	<p>RNSF Research Volume 4.3: https://europa.eu/capacity4dev/iesf/documents/rnsf-research-volume-43-gp-ll-15-ec-funded-projects</p>
<p>REFERENCE(s)</p>	<p>EuropeAid project page: https://ec.europa.eu/europeaid/projects/comprehensive-socio-economic-development-rural-mongolia_en</p>



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