

Human Rights, Democracy and Development in Mongolia

A preliminary evaluation of the implementation of
the UNESCO/DANIDA Programme on Human Rights
in six Aimags in Mongolia

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1. Introduction

The UNESCO/DANIDA project in Mongolia used an integrated perspective which linked the realization of human rights, the improvement of local democracy and the promotion of social and economic development. It was a unique pilot project that was undertaken at the grassroots level to raise the consciousness and practice of human rights, develop participatory democracy within existing political and administrative structures and, through the identification of local needs by the people living in remote communities, improve the quality of life of these communities. Conceived and developed within the framework of the Mongolian Governance and Economic Transition Programme (GET), raising the consciousness and practice of human rights was therefore intimately linked to improving social and economic conditions. This involved the development of a methodology which included training in human rights, the subsequent design and implementation of micro-projects, which in turn reinforced the key aspects of the human rights training, and the development of a participatory evaluation process which extended the democratic principles of the project into the evaluation process itself. The right to democratic participation was the key to making the link between the human rights theory and the improvement of the quality of life through the implementation of the micro-projects.

As an ex-Soviet state, the concept of democracy was relatively new in Mongolia but there were structures in place which had their roots in pre-Soviet history, which the Soviets had adapted for reaching into and controlling the rural areas of the country, and which provided an opportunity for increasing participatory democratic practice at the local level. Moribund institutions at the local level, such as the Bag Hural (or community assembly), had been used by the old regime to transfer information and instructions to the local level, through the Bag Governor. The same institutions offered new possibilities - that communities could articulate their needs, identify ways of satisfying them, and press demands upwards rather than receive commands from above. The main aim of the project was that, through this process, human rights practice, local democracy and the quality of life would be enhanced.

The project developed a methodology which was used in UNESCO/DANIDA projects in other parts of the world. It is adaptable to different national and international contexts and circumstances. It is a methodology that has been developed in the context of a wider programme of human rights promotion to which UNESCO and DANIDA have been dedicated. It therefore has a theoretical framework that focuses on the relationship between human rights and development, which eases its transferability between countries and continents. Nevertheless, it has also been developed in specific historical circumstances, which implies that it cannot be uncritically transferred to other situations without adaptation to reflect local realities. In addition, the methodology has not been without its difficulties during the implementation process in Mongolia. As a result, lessons have been learned which are worth disseminating to a wider audience.

This paper will therefore seek to explain the methodology in the context of the UNESCO/DANIDA Programme on Human Rights and in the context of Mongolia's painful transition from an ex-Soviet state to a fledgling democracy with a free-market economic philosophy. It will discuss the project methodology in terms of the processes which were followed and the products which resulted. In particular, it will focus on the transfer of knowledge about human rights, participatory democracy and the design and

development of micro-projects, before considering the importance of the micro-project outputs and the lessons to be learned, which could inform project design if the project is to be replicated in Mongolia or in other locations.

The paper is not a formal evaluation of the project. The monitoring and evaluation of the experience in Mongolia has been an extremely important integral part of the whole project, the results of which reinforce and extend the contents of the present paper, but this will be published separately. Rather, this paper offers a reflection on a process of change in a transitional economy and, as a piece of participatory action research, offers insights which can perhaps inform similar projects in other parts of the world.

The next section sets the project in the context of the UNESCO/DANIDA Programme on Human rights and this is followed by a brief exploration of the politico-administrative context in Mongolia. Reflections on the methodology and philosophy of the project then set the scene for a discussion of the role of micro-projects in the process. Lessons to be learned are drawn from the experience, before discussing the complexities of the issue of 'best practice' through the analysis of four micro-project case studies. The future potential for promoting an integrated approach to human rights, democracy and development at the grassroots level across Mongolia is assessed before, finally, addressing the question of the replicability of the methodology elsewhere.

2. The UNESCO/DANIDA Approach to Human Rights, Democracy and Development.

The common feature of all projects of the UNESCO/DANIDA Human Rights programme is an integrated approach to human rights and development, focusing on local and community perspectives. Human rights capacity-building is not perceived as an isolated field of technical assistance. It is rather seen as an innovative entry-point to two key areas of current development co-operation, that is, governance and social development. Thus, from a methodological point of view, one of the key questions addressed by the project is: "What added-value does a human rights perspective bring to participatory development planning and action?" The answer is complex, as it relates to the various components of what can be referred to as a "human rights culture", including individual and collective behavioural changes. These changes involve institutional reforms towards more open and participatory decision-making and concrete improvement in the realization of human rights, including better delivery of social services and higher living standards, in particular for the most vulnerable groups. The UNESCO/DANIDA project in Mongolia developed a methodology which links these interrelated elements of the human rights culture.

Within this framework, the three general objectives of the Programme were to:

- Provide support for strengthening the institutions of civil society and assist in opening up channels for dialogue between public authorities and representatives of civil society, paying particular attention to the participation of indigenous people, women and young people.
- Provide advisory services and technical assistance to promote democratic values and knowledge of the functioning of democracy among citizens.

- Contribute to strengthening the rule of law and democratic institutions within civil society (UNESCO, 1996).

It is in this programme context that the project on ‘Human Rights, Local Democracy and Development at the Bag Level in Mongolia’ was set. The primary focus of the UNESCO/DANIDA project was to provide the opportunity for local governance institutions and citizens at the grass roots level to work together, using a participatory and practical approach, to improve local democratic governance as well as knowledge and practice of civil, political, economic and cultural rights (UNESCO/DANIDA, Project Document). However, it was also clearly located within the framework of the Decentralisation Support Component (DSP) of the Management Development programme (MDP), initiated by the Government of Mongolia with the assistance of UNDP. The overall objective of the DSP was to build institutional capacity in the local units and to enable citizens to become involved in the governance process. Stressing the relationship between the theoretical and practical dimensions of human rights and democracy, the project’s training activities and the subsequent design of micro-projects focused on issues of direct relevance to people at the bag level in Mongolia. Using a participatory methodology involving both local authorities and local people, communities designed, developed and implemented micro-projects which focused on human rights and which met the needs which they themselves had identified. From early training to the implementation of the micro-projects, the relationship between the realisation of human rights and improving the quality of life was highlighted and this was reinforced by a methodology which at the same time strengthened democratic practice.

The broad aims of the project were expressed in the four objectives of the UNESCO/DANIDA Project:

- To promote, generate and disseminate knowledge and practice of democratic governance and democratic culture at bag level in the six Aimags selected.
- To promote, generate and disseminate knowledge and practices of civic, political, economic, social and cultural rights at bag level in the six Aimags selected.
- To enhance the capabilities of the bag Governor and his office, and of the Public Hural, to assist citizens groups in planning and managing human development programmes for their own benefit.
- To provide an alternative source of financial assistance for the development of micro-projects in 36 bags, addressing human rights issues which are relevant at this level.

These objectives of the project were to support the decentralisation process in Mongolia by reinforcing human rights and democratic practice and knowledge at bag level. It was intended that they should have the following impacts:

1. To increase citizens’ knowledge of human rights and to enhance the awareness of their active role in the concrete implementation of these rights at bag level.

2. To achieve effective decentralisation in the sense of political and technical empowerment of authorities and citizens at the bag level.
3. To enhance citizen participation in the Public Hurals, by increasing access to, and influence on, important decision-making as well as transparency and accountability in Bag administration.
4. To strengthen democratic practice at the bag level, by means of improving the executive, technical and management functions and initiatives of Bag Governors and Public Hurals and the consolidation of an environment wherein the communities are enabled to work together with local authorities to directly plan, manage and monitor local development projects.
5. To achieve human development by means of improving the quality of life in rural parts of Mongolia where the project will be implemented.

As indicated above, the concept of human rights which was applied in the project included not only political and civil rights, but also socio-economic rights. A fundamental assumption was that economic development cannot lead to a better and happier life for all without regard to civil and political rights and that the corollary is also true, namely, that civil and political rights cannot be realised without access to fundamental social and economic standards such as access to education, health, employment and a decent quality of life. Human rights are conceived in their totality, in the sense that the programme equally addressed and promoted civil, political, cultural, economic, political and social rights.

The project used those basic human rights which are enshrined in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UN, 1948) but extended this framework to include the international human rights standards which have been developed over the past 50 years, including those which are targeted at specific groups such as women, children, the disabled and other vulnerable groups. The civil and political rights include: the right to life, no torture or forced labour, the rights relating to criminal procedures and justice, the right to privacy, the right to own property both as individuals and communities, freedom of thought and religion, freedom of peaceful assembly and association, the right to free movement, and the right to democratic participation in public life. The social, economic and cultural rights include: the right to work, the right to social security (including medical care, sickness benefit, maternity benefit, old age benefits, invalidity benefits, employment injury benefits, unemployment benefits, family benefits), the right to leisure, the right to an adequate standard of living, the right to family life including rights of mother and child and the protection of the family, the right to adequate standards of health, the right to education, and the right to participate in cultural life. To these were added a more modern concern: the right to a decent environment. All of these rights are universal in that there should be no discrimination based on race, gender, religion, political belief, nationality, social class or age; but they also come with an obligation to the community within which the rights are exercised.

The Constitution of Mongolia is the country's primary legal source protecting human rights. The new Constitution, adopted in 1992, is democratic and significantly different from the previous constitutions which existed during the Communist era. Although the communist constitutions formally recognised the basic rights of Mongolian citizens, these

rights were determined by those at the upper levels of the power structure. Human rights organisations were not recognised by the government unless they were set up by the government itself, voluntary human rights activities were prohibited, and any activities outside the state-sponsored system was classified as criminal behaviour. The new Constitution is fully consistent with international instruments relating to human rights and Mongolia is party to 29 human rights international treaties, including the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights, the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination, the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women and the Convention on the Rights of the Child (United Nations, 1998).

In 1998, the Government signed a Memorandum of Understanding with the United Nations which aims to:

- Reaffirm joint efforts of the Government of Mongolia and the UN Country Team to support human rights
- Provide more cohesive support by the UN Country Team to the promotion of human rights in Mongolia around the common goals of advancing democracy and socio-economic progress
- Promote a better public understanding of the full range of human rights issues within the overall development process of the country

The commitment of the UN to enhancing human rights is articulated in terms of the common goals of advancing democracy and socio-economic progress. In terms of democracy, support is given to the government in building up civil society, strengthening the press and reforming the prison system. In the area of socio-economic progress, the UN addresses human rights issues through support for poverty alleviation, the provision of basic social services, with a special focus on disadvantaged groups such as women and vulnerable children (United Nations, 1998)

The UNESCO/DANIDA contribution to this process is in both the consolidation of democracy and the support for socio-economic progress. However, it has to be recognized that in the transition period there have been conflicting and contradictory pressures with respect to human rights. While the advent of democracy has ensured that there has been a clear improvement with respect to political and civil rights and the work of the United Nations in the fields of democracy has assisted in this, the recent record with respect to social, economic and cultural rights has been less than impressive. As Ginzburg and Ganzorig point out, 'while democratization has minimized governmental abuse of civil and political human rights, the economic collapse associated with the end of Soviet aid has weakened the social safety net and jeopardized positive rights such as food, clothing and education' (Ginzburg and Ganzorig, 1996, 146). At the time of the project, there was clear evidence that, over the previous ten years, Mongolia's experience had been retrogressive. The impact of the 'shock' in the first five years of the 1990s was devastating for the delivery of health and education services, employment, social security, and income levels (Bruun and Odgaard, 1996; World Bank, 1996; Thayer, 1997). There had been some positive improvements over the second half of the decade, but the transition to the market economy continued to have serious implications for these basic human rights.

In the field of health, a rapid increase in mortality rates, for women and children in particular, improved in the second part of the decade, but access to health services and medicines among the poor, the nomadic and those living in remote areas was far worse than it was during Soviet times (World Bank, 1999). The quality of health care had deteriorated, there was a shortage of medical equipment, and the incidence of some illnesses, such as heart disease, cancer, brucellosis, tuberculosis and sexually transmitted diseases were increasing (World Bank, 1996; UNDP/Government of Mongolia, 2000).

In education, a lack of investment in school buildings, heating and equipment were having a serious impact on the positive legacy of the Soviet era, which left the country with a 95% literacy rate in 1989. Mongolia's unique system of residential schools for the children of nomadic communities was breaking down, enrolment ratios had fallen from 100% to 86%, the literacy rate was falling, pre-school attendance rates had fallen dramatically, access by the poor was limited and declining, and technical and vocational training needs had been neglected. (UNDP/Government of Mongolia, 2000). Increasing costs of education and the deterioration of school environments were deterring parents from sending children to school (World Bank, 1996 and 1999).

Unemployment, which was unknown in the past, was officially affecting 20% of the economically active population but even this underestimated the true extent of the problem. While the government and foreign experts celebrated the growth of the informal sector as evidence of entrepreneurship, the fact that 40% of the working population in Ulaanbaatar worked in this sector at the turn of the Millennium can be taken as evidence of growing insecurity and impoverishment of the urban population. Immigrants from the countryside continued to swell these numbers and to exacerbate urban poverty (World Bank 1996).

The growth of the livestock herds in the rural areas was also seen in positive terms by some, in that it is seen as evidence of the growth of private wealth, as providing rural employment and as a safety net for the poor and unemployed outside the capital, but it also had a negative impact on the environment (United Nations, 1999; UNDP/Government of Mongolia, 2000). Despite the vast natural resources that are available, 70% of pastures had been degraded. Rural to rural migration had resulted in nomads seeking pastures closer to the markets, thereby creating hotspots of degradation in the area around the capital and in places close to railway links to Ulaanbaatar. Local technical knowledge which maintained a balance between livestock numbers and the capacity of pastures to support them over hundreds of years was overridden by market forces, with the result that weakened livestock were decimated by the severe winter of 1999-2000 (Levy and Scott-Clark, 2000). On the positive side, household vegetable production increased by 40%, but deforestation goes unchecked, as does pollution from mining, which is the mainstay of the export economy.

With respect to social protection, the dramatic decline in the value of Soviet pensions has been addressed by a pension scheme that was set up in 1995, but this does not cover everyone (World Bank, 1999; UNDP/Government of Mongolia, 2000). A Social Assistance scheme, which was instituted the following year, did nothing to curb the rise in street children. By the end of the 1990s, there were almost a million people, 36% of the population, living below the poverty level and despite the introduction of a Poverty Alleviation Programme, the number of poor continued to rise, with single mothers,

children under 16 and the elderly accounting for half of all poor (UNDP/Government of Mongolia, 2000).

The human rights balance sheet at the end of ten years of transition, therefore, was positive with respect to the introduction of democratic and civil rights, but negative with respect to social and economic rights. The view of the project was that by further extending democratic rights to the grassroots level, some of the most acute socio-economic problems could be addressed. While concepts such as popular sovereignty, political freedom and majority rule never had a place in Mongolia in the past, a pre-existing administrative structure contained the seeds of an opportunity to extend democracy beyond that which was found elsewhere in transitional and developing economies and to address some of these broader human rights issues.

The UNESCO/DANIDA contribution to improving democracy and socio-economic progress focused on strengthening civil society through increasing public awareness of human rights, encouraging participation at the grassroots level and enhancing public participation, particularly of women. Human rights awareness was promoted through training on democratic governance for governors, local civil servants and community representatives. Increased participation at the grassroots level was achieved through capacity building for participatory planning and management of micro-projects, and the promotion of women's participation in local decision-making was achieved through the involvement of women in the human development activities associated with these micro-projects. The micro-projects, therefore, became a major vehicle for raising public awareness of human rights and increasing participation in human development activities at the grassroots level. Before turning to the methodology in more detail, however, it is necessary to explain the local government structures that made the incorporation of grassroots activities possible.

3. The Politico-administrative Context for the Promotion of Human Rights.

The regional and local administrative structure in Mongolia is based on the Manchurian structure of 4 Aimags (or provinces) and around 125 Hochuu, the name given to the geo-political unit below the aimag. The right to use land was given by the head of the Hochuu (or 'banner') rather than the smaller divisions within it such as the sum or the bag to which herdsmen were assigned (Sneath, 1999, 220). During the Manchu administration of the early 18th Century, 'the old tradition, under which the khan was the sole ruler of his aimag, was dropped and in its place aimag assemblies were established, whose chairmen and deputy chairmen were appointed by Beijing' (Batbayar, 1999, 93). The Russians modified this to create 18 Aimags, a district level of Sums, and a community level of Bags (brigades of 50-350 families). Throughout the Soviet period, 'the administration was carefully controlled by the Communist Party' (Enkhbat and Odgaard, 1996, 167). Outside of the capital, at the time of the implementation of the UNESCO/DANIDA project there were 21 Aimags, 336 Sums and around 1600 Bags (ibid., 168). There have since been further modifications to this, with some bags combining to form larger units. Nineteen of the Aimags are classified as rural and two as urban.

These aimags and sums are territorial and administrative units which have been given substantial responsibilities and functions in recent years, albeit without commensurate technical or administrative preparation or adequate financial resources to carry out their tasks. After 1990, 'key areas such as privatisation, land use administration, infrastructure,

health' education and development planning [were] delegated to local authorities', but 'much of the power had been concentrated with the governors' and 'popular participation had been circumvented' (Enkhbat and Odgaard, 1996, 165). The Aimags are funded by 80% central government transfer and the Sums by 95% transfer. These transfers are dependent on the exportation of copper and are therefore vulnerable to fluctuations in world copper prices. These prices collapsed in 1998 (World Bank, 1999) and funds for local government were squeezed considerably.

At each level of local administration, a governor is appointed and local self-governing assemblies (Hurals) have been established. Members of the Sum and Aimag Hurals used to be indirectly elected from the membership of the lower bodies. Since July 1996, when the local administration law was emended by the Parliament, members to these bodies are directly elected.

Bags remain the smallest structure of local administration in Mongolia. In each of these administrative units there is a Governor and an assembly, which is open to participation by all citizens (the Public Hural). Constitutionally, the Governor is proposed by the Hural, but is only appointed upon confirmation from the Governor at the next higher level. S/he is selected by a process in which three names are proposed to the Sum Governor, who chooses one. Through Soviet times and into the present, the Bag Governors have been seen as representing the central administration.

Bags have no geographical identity - no official boundaries. In the north of the country, they are nevertheless geographically compact but in the south the families are widely dispersed. The Governors are the links between the Sum and the people. They register births and deaths, collect statistics for government, carry back news of changes in the law, and inform people about Hural meetings. They do this by travelling around on motorbike or horseback. According to law, the Public Hurals meet every quarter and the quorum is one in three households. As Bag Governors are responsible for calling these meetings and fixing their agendas, they play a central role in the relationship between rural communities and the other higher levels of government. They could also have a more positive role in articulating the specific needs of the local community than they do at present.

The Bag Hurals offer potential for improved governance. The inertia effect of the former command economy is such that the bag administrations still remain reactive entities that await superior level instructions before acting, and then, almost exclusively to undertake programmes mandated by the higher levels. The Public Hurals are passive bodies, as they rarely exert any influence on the decisions proposed by the Governors. Local civil society is also passive, as generally no response is given to the initiatives the Governors may undertake. Furthermore, as indicated above, community health, education and communication infrastructures have deteriorated and economic development is stagnant or deteriorating in many areas. This situation strikes particularly such disadvantaged groups as women (especially single women, heads of households), children and people living in the remotest parts of the Bags. It was the potential for improved governance which the Bag Hurals offered which the UNESCO/DANIDA project addressed.

4. The Project Methodology.

The methodology adopted by the project involved a transfer of knowledge which would lead to a change in behaviour and, from the point of view of the participants, positive practical outcomes. In the course of the transfer of knowledge, information was disseminated about human rights, participatory democratic methods and the design and implementation of micro-projects. To the extent that this training was successful, the project will have achieved part of the first three broad aims of the UNESCO/DANIDA project: the promotion, generation and dissemination of knowledge about democratic governance and human rights at the bag level, and the enhancement of local capacity for planning and managing human development programmes. The micro-project outputs are the most visible results at the end of the project period, but it is important to recognise that the less quantifiable processes which relate to the raising of consciousness about human rights at all levels of the local government structure and the introduction of a participatory democratic practices were more important outputs for the project. Both process and product outputs are important but the most significant outcomes are the transfer of knowledge in the fields of human rights, participatory methods and micro-project design and implementation. An analysis of the micro-projects themselves, as material outputs, provides us with insight into the successes and difficulties encountered in the processes.

4.1 The Transfer of Knowledge.

Human Rights:

From the initial training of the Aimag Governors, Sum Officers, Bag Governors and Public Hural Chairmen, through to the implementation of the micro-projects by the people at the bag level, human rights were discussed in the abstract and in terms of practical implementation. At the beginning of the project in 1997, Bag Governors and Hural Chairmen participated in human rights training in Ulaanbaatar. This was important for getting the support of the local authorities in the areas where the project was to be implemented and these community leaders introduced human rights issues to the Bag Hurals when they returned. As the project progressed, these issues were subsequently discussed at every Hural meeting.

Knowledge about social development, participatory methods and the design and development of micro-projects was cascaded down from national and international trainers to United Nations Volunteers (UNVs), who in turn trained those involved in micro-project design in the participating bags. At the same time, it was generally the case that the Bag Governors passed on information about the rights and responsibilities of the Bag people in the micro-project formulation and implementation, encouraging them to see it as their project and emphasising the need to participate from the beginning. Three day workshops on human rights and micro-project design led to up to 20 people in each Bag having an understanding of the relationship between human rights and development at the local level. After these people had developed drafts of micro-project proposals, they were taken to the Bag Hurals for discussion with the whole community, and this knowledge was passed on to the communities as they discussed the importance of human rights for the project funders, UNESCO/DANIDA. Those who attended the training were able to articulate the meaning of human rights and, through discussion of the micro-projects, this understanding was passed on.

In the design phase of the micro-projects, therefore, the issue of human rights was thoroughly discussed, but particularly when they were discussing the ‘purpose’ of a micro-project and elaborating its aims and objectives. When offering broad descriptions of the micro-projects, these were elaborated around human rights issues. In selecting micro-projects for funding, prioritising projects revolved around whether the projects were important for the development of the Bag and important for human rights in particular.

The decisions about which project would be funded were made by a technical committee (the Ad Hoc Committee), for whom meeting the human rights criteria was a fundamental issue. On returning to the Bags, the UNVs had to explain why certain projects were not funded and once again there was considerable discussion of the importance of human rights, how this was linked to Bag development and why, in particular, private enterprise projects were not funded. Some UNVs also carried out capacity building for NGOs operating in participating Aimags, thereby training another section of civil society who would in turn offer training to members of their organisations.

The dissemination of information about human rights has clearly been one of the most important results from the project. A booklet on human rights, which was used for the initial training, was developed into a more user-friendly form, suitable for training in the rural areas. Three thousand copies were delivered to the bags which participated in the project and other communities, delegates to conferences, students of human rights in the university and NGOs in the field. On a number of occasions during a later evaluation of the impact of the project, people who have been associated with the project confirmed that prior to the UNESCO/DANIDA intervention there was little understanding of the meaning of human rights. The above activities succeeded in promoting, generating and disseminating “knowledge and practices of civic, political, economic social and cultural rights at the bag level in six aimags”. What is not known yet, of course, is the extent to which these activities have been effective in raising the general consciousness and changing practice with respect to human rights, but we shall return to this in a moment.

Participatory Methods

The transfer of knowledge about participatory methods was linked to the development of democratic practice and to the realisation of the priority needs of local communities, as identified by them. In the period of transition from a command system to a democratic society, local democratic institutions were still undeveloped. At the start of the project, the Bag Hurals, which should have met every three months were, in most cases, moribund. The evidence from the project evaluation was that this changed dramatically. As passive recipients of information in the previous period, the bag communities had been encouraged “to receive” from above, rather than “to do” for themselves. During the project, attendance at meetings increased, as did the number of meetings which were called. The re-invigoration of the Bag Hurals as democratic institutions has, from all accounts, led to a realisation on the part of these communities that with a little support, they are capable of participating in democratic decision-making which results in improvements in the quality of their lives.

The people of the Bags were provided with training which taught them how to design, develop and implement micro-projects. As a result, they listed their problems, identified their needs, prioritised these needs, elaborated purposeful aims and objectives for micro-projects, identified outputs in a number of human rights and development dimensions, worked out budgets, and developed time-scales for their programmes of work. This participation left the Bag communities with new knowledge and their participation in decision-making in this way was an entirely new approach for the people of the Bags who took part. When micro-projects were not supported, either by the communities themselves or by the Ad Hoc Committee, there was full and frank discussion of the reasons at the bag community meetings and, by and large, an acceptance of the outcomes.

For the most part, Sum and Aimag Governors and officials supported this development of participatory democracy. Some Sum Governors originally felt that they should have been given the funding, that their ideas of what the Bags and Sums needed should have been accepted, and that therefore their pet projects should have been implemented; but this only occurred in a small minority of cases and in the end this initial resistance appears to have given way to a situation whereby the Sum authorities support the initiatives and the processes.

Micro-project design and implementation

The transmission of knowledge about micro-project design and implementation has its own rewards. Not only did it result in projects on the ground in all but one of the bags that participated, but also it encouraged a number of bags and sums to use the methodology to obtain funding from other sources. Several bags immediately produced and presented micro-projects to other international donors and were successful. As we shall see later, in Tsagaar Uul Sum, in Hovsgul, for example, the installation of a computer and printing facilities in the offices of a bag governor led to the development of five new micro-projects, two of which were funded. In Uulaan Uul Sum, in the same Aimag, a micro-project, which was rejected by the Ad Hoc committee as being unsuitable for the UNESCO/DANIDA Project, was reformulated with a more realistic budget and funded by the national Poverty Alleviation Programme.

Through the transmission of the above types of knowledge, the project had a major impact at a number of levels. Clearly there had been capacity building at the local level, both for the project teams who were most directly involved in the design and implementation of the micro-projects and for those who attended the Bag Hurals. In addition, there were cases such as the schoolteacher who went on to train 10 other teachers in her school, who in turn taught their classes about human rights and micro-project formulation as important aspects of their futures. However, the project also offered capacity building for Bag Governors and Chairs of Sum Hurals, who were instrumental in encouraging other Sum and Bag Governors in their Aimags to replicate their experience. In addition, the Swedish International Development Agency (SIDA) reported that in their project on self-governance training for Sum Governors, they encountered Governors who had participated in the UNESCO/DANIDA project who displayed considerable knowledge about human rights, participation and democratic governance and who discussed the impact of the project in these respects.

The transmission of these types of knowledge is therefore important for the well-being of Bag and Sum communities in Mongolia. However, as we shall return to discuss later, if it does not attract government support in the form of a commitment to use the knowledge for the future, it may lead to a dependency culture which is counterproductive. That is, if it were only used for the attraction of international donor funding this would be unfortunate. The project argued that what was required at the next stage of development was for the Government of Mongolia to ensure that the knowledge was supported by budget lines which would ensure that the energies of the Bag people were harnessed in the same way as in the UNESCO /DANIDA Project.

Finally, the national consultants (the Consulting Unit) and the UNVs who had participated in the project are left with a legacy of experience and knowledge which was uncommon. Their application of this knowledge to local conditions in support of people at the bag level ought to have been encouraged in the future, in other parts of the country.

4.2 Changes in Democratic Practice

Of the expected impacts of the project on democratic processes, there were three which were particularly important:

- To achieve effective decentralisation in the sense of political and technical empowerment of authorities and citizens at the bag level.
- To enhance citizen participation in the Public Hurals, by increasing access to, and influence on, important decision-making as well as transparency and accountability in Bag administration.
- To strengthen democratic practice at the bag level, by means of improving the executive, technical and management functions and initiatives of Bag Governors and Public Hurals and the consolidation of an environment wherein the communities are enabled to work together with local authorities to directly plan, manage and monitor local development projects.

In the section above, we have argued that there has been a transfer of knowledge about participatory methods which was linked to an extension of democratic practice and improving the quality of local life. In the processes for delivering these impacts, the role of the workshops for the dissemination of knowledge was crucial. Throughout the project, there was a cascading of information and knowledge which enhanced the technical capacity of local communities, increased participation and strengthened local democratic practice in the above terms.

The first Inter-Aimag Workshop which discussed the training material and the strategy for the project was extremely important for advising authorities about the nature of the project and bringing them on board. The workshop had the effect of obtaining the commitment of the provincial and district authorities to the process of empowerment at the bag level. This three-day workshop, involving human rights specialists and officials from central and local government, discussed and agreed the nature of the human rights and governance training materials which were to be developed for the project.

Following the production of a brochure on human rights, a second set of workshops was conducted on human rights and local governance in the six participating aimags. In these workshops, the strategy developed by the Inter-Aimag meeting was implemented through the training of between 56 and 62 people (bag authorities, civil servants and community representatives) in each aimag. For the first time, bag communities discussed the role of the state in protecting human rights and they came to understand the link between political/civil rights and the right to good health, education, a decent environment, employment, and information. Bag leaders and authorities reflected for the first time on the idea that local democracy should mean that every bag citizen is entitled to participate in the development of the local community.

The trainers reported that those who attended these sessions were highly motivated, as were the local trainers themselves, for they later confirmed that all of these ideas were new to Mongolia. Local enthusiasm was such that they conducted additional sessions about basic human rights, democracy and economic and social development for people who had not been invited to the original sessions.

In the second stage of the project, training-the-trainers sessions were carried out for the UNVs, who in turn organised 36 workshops in the bags to help local people to design micro-projects which would meet their most pressing needs. These sessions trained the UNVs in the techniques and methods of micro-project formulation, how to communicate these ideas to the grassroots members of local communities, and how to help them to formulate project ideas. In a preparatory five-day session, the content was based on a project management training curriculum developed by the Consulting Unit, a PRA methodology designed by the Centre for Social Development, and materials developed specifically for the project by the consultant on micro-projects. This training session provided the UNVs with the theoretical and methodological skills for helping bag communities to design and develop micro-project ideas through the use of participatory methods. It therefore prepared them with a methodology to support the enhancement of democratic practice in the bags for which they were responsible. They were also, however, trained to enable them to encourage the communities to place these ideas in the context of a set of UNESCO/DANIDA criteria for micro-project formulation, which also has implications for the improvement of democratic practice, to which we shall return in a moment.

In the 3-day workshops in the Bags, local participants were trained on human rights issues and introduced to the result of the survey in order to provide a framework for the design of micro-projects. They were divided into different groups according to their interests. Many of the projects which emerged were small firm development projects which would not meet the UNESCO/DANIDA criteria. The UNVs were encouraged to stress that the micro-projects should contribute to maximising participation, provide an opportunity for the bag authorities and the people to work together, improve local democracy, and enhance human rights. In these respects, therefore, this training programme on micro-projects was different from those which focus purely on economic or social development needs. However, it did not stop a number of micro-projects coming forward which were purely about enterprise-generation and which were therefore out of scope.

Most of the micro-projects that were generated contained elements which would strengthen local democracy and improve human rights, as well as contribute to bag social and economic development. The participants in the workshops formulated over 100 micro-projects and these were taken to the Bag Hurals where they were further discussed. At these community meetings, the micro-projects were prioritised before being sent to the Ad Hoc Committee for consideration.

As a result of this democratic process, the relevant aims of the national Decentralisation Project were achieved in the sense that the authorities and citizens at the bag level were empowered to take control over what they identified to be key aspects of their lives. The changes in democratic practice were expressed in an increase in public participation in the Public Hurals. As pointed out above, the Hurals were re-invigorated by participation in the project: the number of meetings increased and the numbers attending each meeting also grew (Chavez, 1998). The decisions which were taken by the governors and the project management groups were scrutinised by the community meetings, thereby increasing transparency and accountability in bag administrations.

Democratic practice at the bag level was strengthened through improving the executive, technical and management functions and initiatives of Bag Governors and Public Hurals, and there is little doubt that there has been the consolidation of an environment wherein the communities are enabled to work together with local authorities to directly plan, manage and monitor local development projects. This part of the project, however, was not without its problems. The major issues were concerned with the constraints which the project methodology itself placed on the enhancement of democratic practice and there was an issue of timing which will be important to remember for the future.

Firstly, as suggested above, it has to be recognised that all of this took place within the parameters set by the project and that there was no guarantee of the continuity of outcomes. The project had clearly improved capacity at the local level, but it was argued that its continuity depended on a commitment from Government to continue the process after the project was completed. The importance of the role of the international agencies in setting boundaries for the wishes and needs of the local communities became evident in the work of the Ad Hoc Committee. As paymasters with a set of programme and project objectives, which do not necessarily express the priority needs of local communities, they present a constraint on democracy and participation. They have organisational needs which must be met, not the least of which are financial, and which impose themselves on democratic decision-making in a variety of ways.

Secondly, an issue also arose for the validity of the participatory method. Ideally, the Bag Hurals should have selected the participants of the training sessions from amongst their numbers, after wide dissemination of information about the project and encouragement for remote households, women, the disabled and other minority interests to attend. In fact, the Bag Governors and the UNVs generally selected the participants and the lists of names were presented to the Hurals for confirmation. Nevertheless, while it would have been preferable to have used a methodology which would have used self-selection and confirmation by the Hural meeting, the method which was adopted did attempt to involve young people, females, the elderly, the unemployed, people with different educational levels, the disabled, and citizens from remote areas.

Thirdly, at this stage some of the emphasis on human rights appears to have been diminished. The micro-project application form had been designed to re-enforce human rights issues and, although it was used as a framework for the training on micro-projects, the emphasis appears to have been on the social and economic dimensions. Despite the continuous exhortation to maintain the link between these dimensions and human rights practice, it appears that this relationship was de-emphasised in some of these training sessions. This was to become evident in the nature of a number of the micro-projects which were eventually submitted to the Ad Hoc Committee, particularly those which were seeking funding for private sector micro-enterprises.

Fourthly, there was also a problem of timing for these bag workshops. The dates for the workshops coincided with the period in which the local herders are involved in the counting of livestock, which takes place in December. During this period, bag households work intensively with the bag governors to produce statistics for the national report of livestock numbers. As a result, a few weeks were lost.

Despite these difficulties, there is little doubt that democratic practice was enhanced through increased participation in Bag Hural meetings and through the participatory methodology which is at the heart of the project. In terms of practical development outputs, the result was the formulation of over 100 micro-projects which the communities thought would enhance the well-being of their members. These micro-projects were presented to a technical committee (the Ad Hoc Committee for the Selection of Micro-projects) which met in Ulaanbaatar to decide which of them should be funded.

5. Product Outputs: The Micro-projects.

For the Ad Hoc Committee, the programme and project objectives were the key elements of the guidelines which were to be used in deciding the value of different micro-projects. Before the Ad Hoc Committee met, however, the Consultant on Micro-projects met with the UNVs and discussed each project in turn, with a view to eliminating those which were completely out of scope. As suggested previously, most of these were purely private sector enterprise development projects which would not contribute to community betterment in the terms of the UNESCO/DANIDA project. The UNVs defended all their micro-projects in these meetings, but the number for consideration by the Committee was reduced to 68.

Guidelines which were prepared for the Ad Hoc Committee for the Selection of Micro-projects were based on the same principles which guided the design of the application forms and they stressed the fact that the content of the projects should reflect both the nature of the 'Human Rights and Democracy' component of the UNESCO/DANIDA Programme and the needs identified by the community. Projects would therefore be approved if they were development projects which have a clear human rights element and contribute to the strengthening of local democracy. They would be based on needs that had been identified through participatory activities at the bag level and successful micro-project proposals would have been formulated in the course of bag-wide participation, including women and people in remote locations.

Projects which involved the community in their implementation and which strengthened participatory democracy through this process were to be given priority. Successful micro-projects would also provide evidence that the benefits would be long lasting and that

there would be no unmanageable costs associated with the future outcomes of the project. They needed to be sustainable in the longer term.

The basic criteria for selection of micro-projects for funding were therefore that they should be:

- Participatory
- Feasible
- Sustainable
- Replicable

They should also have:

- Clarity of outputs
- Other community benefits
- A local resource contribution
- A realistic time-scale for implementation

The successful micro-projects were designed to improve some aspect of local social, economic, political or cultural life. They were about empowerment, enabling people to take control of their lives and to make a positive contribution to improving their circumstances. It was important therefore that there should be the widest possible **participation** during the identification and formulation stages. This was to be a major criterion for selection for funding. The micro-project would also be implementable, not only in terms of the internal logic of the project and the resources required to complete it, but also in its political dimension. That is, although it would be participatory, it would also have the support of local community leadership.

The micro-project had to be **sustainable**, in the sense that it would not collapse after the initial funding ran out. If it did require resources in the future, where would these resources come from?

A micro-project can be **replicable** in the sense that it can be copied locally or nationally and therefore the outputs and benefits could be attained elsewhere. However, since this project has had a major focus on processes, replicability was considered to be relevant to more than the micro-project outputs. It was thought that the processes discussed above had the potential for generating a local culture and institutional structure, which could then be used to support other micro-projects. Micro-projects that strengthened community capacity for the implementation of similar types of projects in the future were, therefore, also supported.

The micro-projects would clearly identify short-term and long-term benefits. These would include **measurable project outputs** and anticipated long-term benefits. A good project would demonstrate cumulative outcomes for the community. These could include:

- a. Confidence building
- b. Skill training for individuals and groups
- c. Institution building in community

In addition to the external resource component, micro-projects that had a **local non-financial resource component**, involving for example project management, labour or materials, were viewed favourably. Linkage to other programmes with resources were also considered positively, but duplication was to be avoided.

It was recognised that the **time-scale** for the micro-projects was limited, not only by the constraints imposed by the UNESCO/DANIDA project itself, but also by the climate in Mongolia and, in particular, the severity and length of the winter. The Ad Hoc Committee were advised that the programme of work should reflect this and that milestones for micro-project outputs should be set out schematically.

In line with the main aims of the UNESCO/DANIDA Project, the Ad Hoc Committee were asked to consider the answers to a number of questions in the application form which asked how the micro-project would:

- Improve human rights implementation in the Bags;
- Create employment or income earning opportunities;
- Increase respect for civil rights and freedoms;
- Increase democratic participation;
- Improve communications within the Bag and with the outside world;
- Improve children's access to or participation in education;
- Develop new skills in the community;
- Lead to improved physical and mental health in the community;
- Have an impact on environmental quality.

In order to provide evidence of local commitment to the micro-project, the Committee was asked to favour projects with a **local resource component**. It was understood that this would not be a financial commitment, given the impoverished state of these communities, but could involve project management inputs, labour and materials. The amount requested needed to be justified in terms of local costs, the amount of work to be undertaken and the promised outputs. On the other hand, the budget needed to be enough to carry the micro-project to successful completion. If there were other financial resources which were being made available to the Bag which would complement the UNESCO/DANIDA investment, this could be viewed positively, but it was made clear that there should be no duplication of funding. The programme of work should be clear and logical and the proposed stages should be realistic. The timetable should confirm the feasibility of the micro-project and there ought to be coherence between the timetable and the budget.

Through their deliberations, the Ad Hoc Committee, decided to fund 29 micro-projects without further consideration (referred to as the A-list). For some of these, budgets were reduced or aspects of the proposals were not granted funding. A number of proposals were referred for feasibility studies (the B-list) and 13 of these were subsequently funded, bringing the total to 42. Others were thought to be more relevant to other funding agencies (the C-list). Some micro-projects were rejected outright for a variety of reasons, including being outside the scope of the project, unsustainable, or purely private enterprise projects which would have difficulty in finding alternative funding. Feasible and sustainable community enterprise projects were, however, funded

A formal mid-term evaluation of the project indicated that the average number of beneficiaries per micro-project was 597 people, which accounts for almost 60% of the total population of the bags involved. The types of projects which were funded can be categorised as in Table 1. However, it has to be stressed that many of the micro-projects were multi-dimensional. New or refurbished Bag Centres often supported health or

veterinary services within them, or provided a location for the dissemination of information – supporting the local doctor with space for seeing patients, for example; carrying local and national newspapers which could be consulted by bag citizens; or providing televisions and other media equipment.

The full list of micro-projects in the six Aimags, along with the funding provided by UNESCO/DANIDA, can be found in Appendix 1. This list demonstrates the importance of the physical assets which the communities asked for and which will be left for them to manage in the future – Bag centres, information centres, kindergartens, primary school buildings, printing equipment, a television station, tools and machinery for community production enterprises, etc. All of them are important in one way or another for supporting different dimensions of human rights, democracy and development.

Table 1. Types of Micro-projects.

	%
Construction and Refurbishment of Bag Centres	31
Information Centres	15
Health Issues	14
Community Enterprises	19
Education (Kindergarten and Primary)	12
Environment and ‘other’	5

6. Lessons to be Learned.

Once funding was agreed, a number of difficulties arose for the project, from which there are lessons to be learned. These included:

1. Delay in providing finance.
2. The intervention of the winter.
3. Increases in the prices of materials.
4. Omission of items from budgets
5. Issues of Sustainability
6. Local Authority Reorganisation
7. Participation in Remote Bags
8. The Quality of the UNVs
9. Ownership of assets

6.1 Delays in Providing Finance.

These delays provided important lessons both for UNESCO as an organisation within the United Nations (and they may also therefore be relevant for UNDP and the World Bank) and for the management of future projects in Mongolia. There were two main reasons for the delay. The first was that, after the Ad Hoc Committee made its decisions in March 1998, further information and assessment was needed before 13 micro-projects could be added to the list of 29 successful projects. This involved correspondence between Mongolia and Paris, during holiday periods, before final decisions could be reached. This

therefore created uncertainty about the budget until these micro-projects were assessed. Secondly, the system of disbursement of the funds to the various bag projects across Mongolia was new to the organisation. It therefore required negotiation with financial controllers in UNESCO, which took time. International organisations have strict financial rules and we should, in future, anticipate delays of this type if there is no precedent for the support of micro-projects – or if new disbursement mechanisms have to be put in place in order to ensure that there is no leakage of funds. Financing a large number of micro-projects is not as easy as funding one major project from the point of view of donors and, although the method which was used in the projects was both innovative and secure, the time it took to negotiate an agreement meant, firstly, that the micro-projects could not be funded before the onset of winter and, secondly, that there was an impact on the price of materials.

6.2 The intervention of the winter created further delays in implementation. This was particularly important for agricultural and construction micro-projects. After the decision to fund some agricultural micro-projects in March, some project teams borrowed money to buy and sow seed in the short Mongolian Spring. For these micro-projects, the UNESCO/DANIDA funding which arrived in December was used to pay the debts which had accrued. Other vegetable growing projects, however, had to wait until spring 1999 before they could sow, a delay of one year after they were told they had obtained the money. Construction work in the harsh Mongolian winter is also extremely difficult. To the credit of some of the communities, they built their Bag Centres in spite of the extreme conditions. However, subjecting people to this type of hardship should be avoided in future and the timetable for the allocation of finance needs to be created and adhered to, in order to ensure that this is the case.

6.3 Increases in the prices of materials were partly due to the delays but also because of lack of familiarity with prices. In highly inflationary circumstances and where there was a constantly declining exchange rate, the delay in providing the funding meant that the local prices of materials for construction, and other goods, had increased considerably. The national coordinator of the project was able to offset this to some extent by negotiating bulk prices with suppliers. In some cases, the local sum authorities made up the shortfall. This in itself was a positive outcome, in the sense that it demonstrated a commitment by these authorities to the project objectives and outcomes. However, the delay created circumstances which could have led to a drop in the quality of the structure of the buildings or of their finishings. In future, funding should be allocated in dollars and only converted to local currencies at the point of purchase.

The rise in costs that resulted from the delays was compounded by the fact that bag residents were not familiar with the prices of the goods they were asking for. This was particularly true of modern electronic, audio-visual, and information technology, but the problem did not exclusively refer to these types of inputs. In some cases, the prices that had been written into budgets were higher than the actual costs. However, where the anticipated prices were less than actual costs, this created problems that had to be resolved by negotiations between the National Coordinator and Paris. This is a difficulty which could be overcome in future by the National Coordinator checking prices locally, but this is a time-consuming activity which was not possible in this case. Over 100 micro-project budgets would have needed to be thoroughly checked and there were not sufficient human resources for this. In addition, the Ad Hoc Committee was not in a position to make judgements about the accuracy of prices, except in a few cases where

budgets were clearly inflated or, in a small number of others, where they were clearly inadequate for the intended purpose.

6.4 Omission of items from the budget: Not all items which were required to complete the micro-projects were included in the budgets. This usually happened where outside labour or machinery had to be contracted by the community. In the construction of one bag centre, for example, local materials and labour were to be used, but no account was taken for the need to transport the materials from local hillsides to the construction site. In another case, where a video-player and television are being transported around the summer stations of the herders, the cost of the petrol for the motorbike was forgotten about. These types of omissions are inevitable and in future it would be wise to include allowances for them in a contingency fund within the budget. However, while every effort was made at the meeting of the Ad Hoc Committee to test and confirm the sustainability of projects, some important expenditures were missed.

One such oversight, which should have been picked up, was the cost of replacement batteries for radio sets. This has been a recurring feature of development projects across the world for many years. Radios which run on dry batteries are bought, the batteries run out, and the poor, who cannot afford to replace them, cannot use the radios. In the communities of rural Mongolia, where barter is more important than money and where isolation is a fact of life, even those herders who have a stock of wealth do not always have cash to buy batteries and they are also cut off from sources of supply. Fortunately, the project was able to buy a second supply of batteries, but the long-term solution to the problem is currently in the hands of the local community and there is no certain outcome. There is the possibility that the people whose communication needs are the most acute, the poorest and most isolated, are precisely those who will continue to be marginalised. However, advances in solar and wind-up technologies may alleviate some of these problems.

6.5 Issues of Sustainability: In some cases, the assurances that the Ad Hoc Committee was given about the sustainability of projects did not materialise. This was not due to lack of willingness on the part of communities to try to ensure that the micro-projects were sustainable. Rather, their enthusiasm could not be sustained by local economic reality. This was mainly for two reasons relating to the setting up of revolving funds. Firstly, in the case of medical and veterinary services, drugs were bought which the doctor and the vet intended to sell on, thereby replenishing the fund for future purposes. In a cash economy, there is no reason why this should not have worked. In a barter economy, people expect to pay for services by offering livestock. They have very little use for cash and in the course of their normal lives they expect, as a matter of tradition, to pay in kind. When we asked what happened to the livestock which the doctor and veterinarian received, we were told that they were taken to market, a solution which would have helped restore the fund. However, these revolving funds were diminishing. In these cases there were, nevertheless, positive outcomes, even if the funds ran out after a couple of years as expected. The health and welfare of people and animals will have been improved over a two-year period. In addition, in both cases, the community had acquired structures and other materials for clinics, which did not exist before.

Another case was the setting up of information centres which depended on subscriptions from people in the community for the creation of a revolving fund. In these cases, which

were in located in two bags in the same sum centre, the problem was poverty. For a small subscription of 1,500T per month, families received up to twenty newspapers and magazines, any one of which could cost 200T or 300T per day. The poorest families received the newspapers free and the magazines included educational journals which local children found useful for their schoolwork. The benefits of these schemes were undeniable and clearly expressed by families who continued to use them at the time of the field visits in June 1999. However, by this time a number of families had dropped out, in large part due to the fact that they were not receiving regular salaries and that even 1,500T was beyond their means. There is a possibility that the communities, which were to be combined with another in the same Sum Centre to make one new Bag, could save the micro-projects by combining the two information centres, but a reduction of the number of newspapers and a reorganisation of delivery mechanisms was also needed.

6.6 Local authority reorganisation: The above 'Information Centre' projects were overtaken by the re-organisation of the local bags. By the agreement of Bag Hurals, bags can merge with each other, creating larger administrative units. There is uncertainty as to just how many of the micro-projects will be affected by this and how local democratic processes will be affected. In this case, a bag was created which held more than 700 families, which we were told is as large as some Sums. In future, this may make the type of training programme we carried out more remote from the people and may require an adaptation of the methods used.

6.7 Participation in remote Bags: Despite the efforts made to involve remote families in the training and in the design and implementation of micro-projects, in some Aimags this proved difficult. This was particularly true at the beginning of the process in bags where the Public Hurals were not functioning effectively. Dungovi is an Aimag where the remoteness of the Area and the further remoteness of families within the Aimag made initial participation difficult. This was also affected by a UNV who had a strong personal view about what was needed in these bags. The participatory process was compromised and, therefore, there is some uncertainty about the impact of the project on human rights. In addition, the UNV had undue influence on the distribution of the material benefits of the project. Democratic decision-making was not what it should have been. Nevertheless, the physical outputs of the micro-projects were positive. Bag Centres were built or renovated in all bags, innovative energy technologies such as windmills were introduced, and transport was provided for governors, doctors and other bag officials. In addition, attendance at Bag Hurals also improved as a result of the project. There is no doubt, however, that despite more success in other remote regions, such as Huvsgul, it is more difficult to engage the people and implement participatory projects in these isolated areas.

6.8 The Quality of the UNVs: While there is no doubt that the UNVs in five of the six Aimags worked hard for the successful implementation of the project and that the quality of these UNVs was very high, there was some difficulty with the management of the micro-projects in Hovd. The original UNV left the project after a few months for some unknown reason. Someone who had therefore missed the original training sessions and who, at the time of the Ad Hoc Committee meeting apparently did not grasp the philosophy behind the project nor its aims and objectives, replaced her. As a result, there were difficulties in funding the micro-projects which had been proposed, and most of those which were within the parameters of the UNESCO/DANIDA Project and the Human Rights Programme had to be returned for further information and assurances.

There were further problems because of the immersion of the UNV in local politics and there was interference in the process by the Aimag Governor. Subsequently, some of the funds went missing. These funds were recovered and a new UNV was put in place. The new UNV saved the Project in this Aimag and the final outcomes for the micro-projects were much more satisfactory than was anticipated. There are two lessons from this experience which are important: firstly, if new project managers have to be appointed, they need to be full trained in the philosophy and practice of the project and, secondly, the independence of the UNVs from local party politics is essential for the success of projects such as this.

6.9 Ownership of assets: In Mongolian Law, Bags do not own assets. Ownership resides with the Sum or the Aimag. The property, equipment and other materials that were provided to the Bag communities therefore did not legally belong to them. During the life of the project this was not a problem, since they belonged to the project. The intention at the end of the project was to hand them over to the communities who had designed and implemented the projects. In most cases there was no issue made of this. However there were three types of cases where there were some difficulties.

The first was where community-based economic enterprises were formed. In Tuv, a bakery was set up and was operating successfully. It employed five people, who wished to pay back the original funds to the bag, thereby privatising the enterprise. The bag Hural did not agree and wished the community to retain ownership. We were asked to adjudicate. Our response was that in the spirit of the project, the final say about what happened to the property was a matter for the democratic decision of the Bag Hural.

The second case was where the Bag Hural and workers in a community-based enterprise making furniture for *gers*, the traditional Mongolian tents which the nomads transport from pasture to pasture. It was agreed to set up a co-operative with twenty members, but this community enterprise in an isolated rural area did not generate enough funds to fully support the five people who worked in it. However, it did offer a diversification of the income base for the participants, who were mainly herders. They had found an imaginative solution to the problem of ownership and if they were assisted with marketing, they could convert this into a successful enterprise.

A third case was where the Sum Governor imposed his authority and argued that the equipment belonged to the Sum. A formal agreement was reached between the Sum and the Bag, so that that the Bag could continue to use the equipment as intended. This was the least successful resolution, since the Sum authorities could change this decision at any time and take the equipment away.

In order to resolve this issue, the setting up of a co-operative which is controlled by the Bag Hural is one possibility. Where this is not possible, in such cases where the property is not part of an enterprise but is a location for cultural activities, such as a Bag Centre for example, the solution would have to be different. There is a consensus in Central Government that the property should ideally remain with the Bag, but if the law is not changed the Sum will have legal ownership. In this case, its use and function should be the responsibility of the Sum Hural, not the executive. Bag representatives would have the responsibility to report on the use of the equipment to the Sum representative Hural, who would then ensure that the property was being used for its intended purpose.

7. The Issue of Best Practice.

The question of best practice is difficult to deal with, since it can lead to a distorted impression of the results of the project. Firstly, it has to be noted that the process outcomes were very similar in all cases, since a common methodology was followed. Where there were divergences, they have been discussed above. Secondly, because there was a common process, we are left to focus on the micro-project outcomes. However, many of the micro-projects were multi-faceted and even where there were difficulties, as discussed in the previous section, there were also some positive outcomes. Thirdly, given the large number of micro-projects which set up Bag Centres or other community facilities, it is difficult to say that one was better than another. The methodologies for establishing these were similar, and the outcomes only varied in detail. All 42 micro-projects had to overcome difficulties, some of them substantial, and they were all successful to a greater or lesser degree due to the hard work which the communities and the UNVs put into them. This section therefore highlights micro-projects which either express the general high quality of the micro-projects or are sufficiently different to warrant a comment. It includes projects where there have been difficulties and which have been mentioned previously. Through a qualitative evaluation of a selection of the projects, this section therefore provides a flavour of the types of outcomes, both positive and negative, which resulted from the project.

7.1 Bag Centres (Bayangol Bag, Manhan Sum, Hovd Aimag)

As noted above, some 46% of the micro-projects involved the building or refurbishment of community facilities such as Bag Centres or information centres. In Bayangol Bag in Hovd Aimag, for example, it was agreed to fund the re-building of the Bag centre, to a value of \$3,500. This was the Aimag in which there were problems with the UNV who had missed the original training on Human Rights and democratic participation. In the original set of proposals that were considered by the Ad Hoc Committee, there was also a separate proposal from Bayangol Bag to set up a shoe repair business. This was valued at \$2,600 but, since it was seen as a private enterprise project rather than something that would clearly contribute to Bag development, it was rejected on the grounds that it did not meet the criteria laid down for the project.

Included in the funding for the rebuilding of the Bag Centre was the purchase of a generator. The generator provided electricity for the Bag Centre, which allowed them to watch TV, which they could not do before. The Bag community, however, considered the shoe repair business to be sufficiently important for them to agree that the person who wanted to set it up should be able to use the generator to drive a small turning wheel. 55,000 Tugrics were spent on the generator and its use in this way created an income-earning opportunity for one woman who would be otherwise unemployed. The woman was paid in money and in kind. Of the profit, 20-30% was returned to the Bag for further reconstruction work. The woman said it was sustainable, she would need no further support, and that other bags would copy what she was doing. They therefore solved one of their problems with the shoe repair enterprise. Previously, the herdsmen had to go to the sum centre to buy new boots when the old ones fell into disrepair, but now they can get their old boots repaired. By June 1999, she had repaired 20 pairs of boots.

Part of the rationale for the rebuilding of the Bag Centre was to provide support for veterinary and medical services. In an interview with the vet, he pointed out that the animals have many diseases. In the Transition period, the veterinary service was forgotten in the Sum. Only the wealthy could afford to have their animals treated and there were not enough funds to build a place for him to work from. There were around 45,000 livestock in the Bag, with an average of around 250 per herder household. In the year to June 1999, the vet has treated 3,000 animals, with payment being made in both cash and kind.

The issue of sustainability arose for this micro-project, since part of the payment was in livestock. When the vet was paid in cash, the money went into a revolving fund to buy new drugs (from 300 livestock he received 15,000 Tugrics). When payment was in livestock, the animals could be sold to restock the drugs but there was a question as to whether this was happening or not. The evidence suggested that it was not and the revolving fund appeared to be in decline. Nevertheless, the micro-project offered a service for a large number of herders and their cattle, which would not otherwise been available, even if the drugs could not be replaced over the long term. In addition, it has to be remembered that it also provided premises for the vet, which did not exist previously. At the time, it was thought that it was highly likely that the service would be privatised and he was interested in setting up an enterprise. If this were to happen, the Bag would generate some income from the rent of the premises.

The refurbished Bag Centre also provided premises for the doctor, who was now able to treat patients in his surgery, rather than his home, and to provide a bed for those who are ill and who would have difficulty travelling to the local hospital. The UNESCO/DANIDA project also provided the bag doctor with 750,000 Tugrics to buy medicines. The doctor, whose salary is paid by the state, had been re-selling them and at the time of the evaluation in 1999, the revolving fund had 190,000T. Before the micro-project was set up, his allocation for drugs was only 20,000T, which was not nearly enough to meet demand. He said that previously he could only serve 4 or 5 families but now he could provide a service for the whole bag. Before, when people needed overnight treatment he had to send them to the sum centre, but now they could be helped in the Bag Centre where there was a bed and equipment. Between January and May of 1999 he had visited 92 families, providing a range of new and different types of medical service. He also provided them free of charge to the elderly. In addition he provided, in the refurbished Bag Centre, three training sessions about the prevention of disease. These were concerned with women's diseases, infectious diseases and children's diseases.

An output from the micro-project was that he could reach patients on time, with the necessary medicine. He also bought books which help with his training. From the books which he bought, he and his wife prepared materials by themselves for the training, and he distributed them to the families of the bag. His wife, who is also a doctor, said that they had focused the training on women in particular. He pointed out that the Sum hospital had an annual budget of 22 million Tugrics, which was not enough, and that by treating patients in the new Bag clinic he was saving the Sum money. The room in the Bag Centre also allowed the nomadic families of those who were ill to visit. He could help patients survive the winter and, in summer, both he and his wife travel out to the families of herders as they move around. As a result, they argued that they were now in a position to 'provide a medical service in a professional manner'.

This micro-project also suffered from the rise in the cost of materials. However, following the award of the project, the Sum authorities agreed to provide a budget to buy cement, thus providing additional funds to make up the shortfall in the budget due to rising prices.

All of these activities have taken place in one bag centre which had to overcome considerable difficulties (including a UNV who had to be replaced, price rises because of delay in receiving the funds, and a severe winter) and whose sustainability may be suspect because of the social welfare orientation of the doctor (he does not charge the poor for his services) and because of the nature of the local economy (payment is often made in kind rather than in cash). On balance, however, it is an excellent example of what can be done with \$3,500.

In other cases where there were process difficulties, there were also important micro-project outcomes. In Naran Bag in Dugovi Aimag, for example, there was another case of a renovation of a Bag Centre, one of five such micro-projects in this Aimag, where the participation of the community was not what was hoped for and where there were some questions as to how the beneficiaries of the project were selected. There were, however, still positive material outcomes. Whilst this is not perhaps a case of best practice in terms of the overall objectives of the project, it was innovative in a number of respects and the community has nevertheless benefited. In the remote Naran Bag, an unused building was refurbished, Bag Hural meetings take place in the building, attendance at these meetings had increased, new energy supplies and means of transport had been provided, and information was made available to the herders in the Centre.

The community received 10 windmills for the generation of electricity and a motorbike which helps communication and emergency services in this remote bag. The windmills served 10 houses and a further 23 batteries could be charged by connecting them to it. These wind driven generators therefore benefited 33 households by delivering power to them. This extends their working day and they can keep in touch with local national and world events because they can listen to the radio and watch television, which was not available to them before.

The Motorbike is mainly used by the Bag Governor, helping him to carry out his administrative responsibilities, but it is also used for vaccinations, medical emergencies and providing market information about the state of the market for local production. This was also one of the cases where there was dispute over the ownership of the property which was provided by the project. The situation was resolved by the Governor 'taking responsibility' for the bike and there was a formal agreement with the Sum for its use.

One of the questions which the Ad Hoc Committee deliberated was whether there was local expertise to repair the equipment if it broke down and we were assured that there was. There were no technical problems with the setting up of the windmills but there was, however, minor damage to one while it was in use. As we were advised would be the case, local professionals came and repaired it.

7.2 Vegetable Growing (Aylant Bag, Batsumber Sum, Tuv Aimag).

In Batsumber Sum, where the three bags have become one, with a new Governor, one of the former bag governors was a micro-project leader of a community-based vegetable growing project. In what was previously Aylant Bag, twenty hectares of turnips were planted, creating 23 permanent jobs, plus employment for 76 in planting and harvesting. The initial investment was 2.23 million Tugric. A number of difficulties had to be overcome in this micro-project and it is a good example of how a local community responded positively to circumstances which might have caused the project to collapse.

Initially, there were financial difficulties because of the delay in providing the funds. After finding out that they were to be funded, the community obtained credit from the local authority and individuals. Unfortunately, there was not enough funding in the budget to treat the soil properly. They could not afford to buy the pesticides they needed. By the October harvest in 1998, the participants had nevertheless produced between 5 and 9 tons of turnips per hectare.

In the same month, they had to confront another problem. The market was saturated with turnips. The price dropped to between one half and one third of previous levels. However, the community showed some ingenuity and some knowledge of how the market works. Households held back part of their production until the spring of 1999 to market it at a higher price. A further setback was that the winter was extremely cold and some of the production was damaged by the frost. This produced two responses. First, they used the damaged turnips as animal fodder. Second, the families built underground storage cellars for their turnips, to protect them from the cold.

Despite the difficulties, the micro-project generated 1.8mT and contributed to a Bag Development Fund. They made a surplus which allowed them to buy a video camera (400,000T) and they spent a further 300,000T on bag development. The balance of the profit in the first year, 1.1mT, was reinvested into expanding the project. They sowed an additional 12.4 hectares in 1999 and created 18 new jobs.

Throughout the year, the members of the project reported regularly to the Hural and they placed information on the notice boards, both about the progress of the project and about the state of the market. The main outcomes of the micro-project was the creation of jobs and ensuring the right to work. However, they also ran two workshops on human rights for children and others. They increased household incomes and generated sufficient income to expand the project in 2000. The local community cited a number of Human Rights issues which the micro-project had enhanced: these related to education and training, choosing a profession, obtaining a salary, participation in political and economic activities, acquiring information, and the use of information for the benefit of the community.

The families involved in the micro-project demonstrated how they can be successful if they are provided with a small amount of capital investment – in this case to buy the seeds in the first instance. They produced a film with the video camera, in which the participants in the micro-project discuss their experience:

- A woman head of household who was a member of the micro-project since the beginning, from design to implementation, explains how she produced five

tons of turnips from one hectare of land. Two tons were saved for seed for the next year and three tons were marketed. The project increased her income. She agreed that the project should be expanded to improve people's lives and suggests that others watching the film should be active and participate in different projects.

- A man from a very poor family also produced 5 tons from his hectare: two for seed, three for the market and personal use. He built storage facilities and had been selling them since the spring. He was getting a higher price than he did in the autumn and he would continue to market the turnips until July.
- One man managed to produce 9 tons from one hectare. Two of these were saved for seeding and 7 tons were used for other purposes. He still had some in storage. This man was otherwise unemployed and during the summer he spent a lot of time on his land. When the market price fell, he stored some of the output. He was very happy about the result but said they should think more about potential markets in the future.

Although the micro-project was expanding, not all the participants were continuing to be members of it. This is to be expected, but it also raises a question about the future ability of the most vulnerable groups to sustain their initial activity:

- A woman, who was a single head of household with eight children, worked with three of her children to produce 6 tons of turnip. She was unemployed before the project. Four tons were marketed. The price fell. Some were used as animal fodder and she was pleased that she managed to feed her cows over the winter. However, she had withdrawn from the project for the following year. She said she has learned how to grow turnips and had decided to grow this year's crop in her yard. The land which was used by the micro-project was located a considerable distance from her home (17 km) and it was too far for her to travel.

7.3 Television Station (Tugul Bag, Ulaan Uul Sum, Huvsgul Aimag).

The people of Tugul Bag in Huvsgul Aimag designed a micro-project for setting up a local television station to provide people with local programmes with information about cultural events. The Bag is located in Ulaan Uul Sum, which is in the far north of Mongolia on the Russian border, some 840 kilometres from the Capital and 172 kilometres from the Aimag centre, Moron. Eighty five per cent of the population of the bag live in the Sum centre. Of the 260 families in the bag, 150 had a television, 30 of which were colour TVs.

In the survey carried out by the project, almost 80% of respondents said that their access to information was restricted. In response to this, the bag proposed the setting up of the television station. When the proposal came to the Ad Hoc Committee, it was met with a great deal of scepticism. There was a concern that a television station could not be set up with a budget of \$4,000 dollars. When Mongolian members of the Committee suggested that it might be possible, because of the communications network set up in Soviet times, the micro-project was placed on List B and a feasibility study was carried out. The result of this study was positive, the project was technically feasible, and the money was

allocated. The finance was used to buy a video camera, a VCR, microphones, and a PA system. A Television studio was set up as proposed.

The station employed three people – a cameraman/technician, a presenter and a station director. Initially there was a problem with a lack of the necessary skill to run the station, but the local Aimag Television Station helped by providing training for the three employees. The budget of the micro-project paid for the salaries of the three people and we were told that in the future this would be paid from the local budget. The local officials expressed a feeling that they were ‘able to look forward to the new century’ but at the same time they were able to provide young people with knowledge about their local history and culture.

By the time of the visit to Huvsgul in June 1999, nine television programmes had been shown and another was being prepared. They had transmitted information about human rights, as well as news about local administration, cultural and sporting events, legal information from the state and new laws. The latest programme was re-run during the visit, and it was watched in a house in the Bag with the owner’s family and some neighbours. The owner of the house said that when the television programme was on, four or five families came to watch.

In one of the broadcasts, there was an item about a sports centre in the Bag which was being funded by the national Poverty Alleviation Programme (PAPO). This, in fact, was a micro-project which was designed for the UNESCO/DANIDA Project but which was not funded by the Ad Hoc Committee. The Community had increased the budget, to make it more realistic, and presented it to PAPO, who agreed to finance it. The sports centre was by then almost completed. Another part of programme concerned PAPO funding for a local road repair project. There was information about the UNESCO/DANIDA Project, pointing out how it had increased access to information, how this had increased human rights, how the community had learned about their legal rights through the Project, and how it related to Mongolian Law. There was also film about a local horse racing, breaking in horses, a competition for the most beautiful horse, and a wrestling event. An excerpt from a popular video cassette, ‘I am a Mongolian Woman’, was also shown, bringing a famous national opera singer into the homes of this remote settlement. The station was therefore bringing to the people a mixture of local news and national culture.

The main problem which the television station had to deal with was the irregularity of the electricity supply, particularly in the summer. During this season, electricity is only available between 9pm and 11pm. In the winter it is available from 5pm to 11pm. The micro-project budget paid for the electricity that was needed to transmit the programmes. However, it ran out after 8 transmissions and the Sum Governor’s office stepped in to pay for the 9th transmission. When it was developed by the Bag, the other bags in the Sum were impressed and they also benefit from the transmissions. The Sum was offering to take over responsibility for funding the TV station in future. It was to be discussed at the Bag Hural in July 1999 and if the community meeting agreed, the Sum authority would write a new budget line for the TV station to cover the costs of staffing and materials. This would then go to the Aimag Government for approval.

7.4 Printing Equipment (Jargalant Bag, Tsagaan Uul Sum, Huvsgul Aimag).

This micro-project was originally planned for the local school of Tsagaan Uul Sum, which at the time did not even have a typewriter. The 700 pupils of the school, which had 38 teachers, could not afford text books, the school did not have a budget to buy them, and the teachers had to work long hours to prepare materials to compensate. The printing and copying equipment which was sought was to help ease the situation. The bag was looking for US\$ 2,437 to buy a computer, printer and photocopier. The micro-project was essentially a Sum project, rather than one which would only benefit the Bag, but the Ad Hoc Committee felt that the equipment should be located out of the school in a place where it would get more public use and the Public Hural decided to locate it in the Bag Governor's office, which is in the building which houses the Sum authorities. It was also intended that the equipment should be used to reproduce human rights and other materials.

The Bag Hural decided who would be employed to use the equipment. Six people were short-listed for selection, and then one person was chosen to operate it. The Bag Hural set up a special committee of 4 people who made the final decision as to who would be employed. The equipment was received in December and the person was employed from February. He trained for two weeks in the regional capital, Moron.

The equipment was being used for educational purposes, as intended. The secondary school used it for the production of teaching materials. It was used for official business, but it was also available for the local community. The community mainly used it for making photocopies, but herders came to see how it is used and some times they played games on the computer. Through these games, the project provides these nomads with a connection to the modern world of computers. The community usually used the equipment free of charge. However, the local private sector also use it to produce marketing materials, using desk top publishing and producing letters of high quality. These businesses pay for the use of the computer, thereby generating a small income stream.

The Sum is also using the computer to train students who are about to go to university in Ulaanbaatar. This training was due to take place over two weeks in July, with a view to ensuring that when the students arrive at university they are not at a disadvantage compared to other students from the capital. They are also using it for teaching basic English to the students, some of whom will also need these language skills. The use of the new equipment is therefore not restricted to the residents of the Bag. It is used to produce CVs for officials and teachers, material about health for the hospital, and information about dental hygiene. A work plan for the Bag has been produced and the computer is used to hold and analyse local economic and population statistics.

The most important use to which the computer has been put, however, is the production of new micro-projects. Immediately after the equipment became available, new micro-projects were designed and submitted for funding, two of which were successful.

1. Refurbishment of Secondary School Sports Hall. This was approved by PAPO and was being implemented.
2. Refurbishment of the Sum Hospital. This proposal had been sent to the Asian Foundation. They came to see the hospital. The Sum authorities

A total of five micro-projects had been designed using the UNESCO/DANIDA methodology and the donated equipment. These also included an environmental project concerned with cleaning the forest which would involve unemployed people. Another, concerned with preparing wood for winter fuel, had been sent to the Aimag authority for funding.

The micro-project was supported by the Sum authority, which would have to take over the responsibility for the employee after the project is finished. At the time of the evaluation, they had a bank account to receive the money from the sales of materials, which paid the salary. An accountant from the Chancellor's office of the Sum helped when necessary. Already they were paying for replacement ink cartridges, which are extremely expensive in local terms. There had also been a problem with the availability of electricity, particularly during the summer, but this had been overcome to some extent by the use of a generator. In winter they have electricity, but from 15 April to 15 October there is no electricity in the Sum and they had to hire a generator. The cost of this was not in the budget. This is one of the darkest and coldest places in Mongolia. The Sum had one large generator but ordinary people cannot pay for electricity because five hours of electricity cost a family 8000T per day. For the previous two years, the people had not been using it. They were using natural light only. Only private enterprises and a few families could afford electricity. The poverty and hardship in this community, particularly in the long winters, were increasingly severe.

Despite these difficulties, the outputs from the micro-project were the following:

1. Human Rights information and other materials that have been distributed to families. Knowledge about Human Rights has increased and, as a leader of the community says, 'they know how to defend themselves'.
2. Statistics for the Bag/Sum.
3. One new job.
4. Training on computers for secondary school students.
5. Materials for secondary school teachers.
6. Distribution of materials to students, supporting their right to education.
7. Sum authority involvement, helping to support the micro-project and using materials prepared by it, for which they pay.

This micro-project, in common with other across the country, was innovative in difficult circumstances, where people's priorities are about survival. Despite the hardship and the poverty, the communities have shown that, with a little support, they can be innovative in an extremely difficult context. The nature of these proposals demonstrates an important dimension of the success of the Project. We see here the practical realisation of the Human Rights discourse.

There is little doubt that the processes adopted by the UNESCO/DANIDA Project have met their main objectives with respect to human rights, participation and democracy, at least in the short term. It is encouraging that the methodology was to be adapted for non-human rights development issues by the UNDP and the Government of Mongolia and that many of the processes relating to the design and implementation of micro-projects

were to be incorporated into a new venture for the UNDP's Local Democracy Fund. This was indeed an important aspect for consideration when discussing the sustainability and replicability of the UNESCO/DANIDA Project.

However, there were also other local impacts in this regard. For example, much of the training had been extended beyond the initial workshops formally set up by the projects. Additional training on the key elements of the project - human rights, democracy and development - were carried out by the Consulting Unit, by the UNVs and by participants of the workshops. Training sessions were extended to include people who did not formally participate in the workshops; the UNVs trained NGOs and others; and some of the participants, such as school teachers, trained other teachers, who, in turn, taught children in their classes. Some have taken the concepts of participation, co-operation, transparency and accountability and transferred them into their professional lives, promoting open discussion between teachers and students in educational matters. Discussion groups on human rights were set up and the techniques of micro-project formulation were disseminated beyond the initial groups.

These process outcomes are not always easy to quantify. They do not have a physical presence that we can see and can take photographs of and it is difficult to measure accurately the added value which derives from them. They are, however, what drives the physical, social and economic outputs which can be seen and measured - the micro-project outputs - and there is no doubt that the approach, despite the problems, did have the capacity to achieve the objectives of the 'Human Rights and Democracy' component of the UNESCO/DANIDA Programme on Human Rights.

8. The Dissemination of the Methodology in Mongolia.

A report prepared for UNDP in 1998 (Watt, 1998) argued that 'attention should be given to transfer of experience to non-participating Aimags'. Watt proposed that this responsibility should not be deferred until near the end of the project and he suggested that dissemination techniques such as workshops, exchange of personnel and formal training should be used. This would reinforce the earlier proposal that:

“The Public Administration Management Department of the Cabinet Secretariat should delineate a strategy for what decentralisation measures will be undertaken in the remaining aimags during the two year period of the experimental decentralisation in six aimags. On the basis of this it should be determined what aspects of the external co-operation projects that principally target the six aimags might be utilised to support this strategy and by what mechanisms”. (Government of Mongolia, 1996)

The decentralisation measures undertaken by the UNESCO/DANIDA project were the most advanced in the country's Decentralisation Programme and the project argued that they ought to be the basis for initial activities aimed at extending experience into other Aimags. In this regard, it was proposed that the Government of Mongolia should set up training programmes on Human rights and micro-project formulation in all Aimags who wish to participate, using the UNESCO/DANIDA model. The UNESCO/DANIDA Programme had created a cadre of trained national personnel whose experience and knowledge should have been used by national and local authorities to enhance

understanding about the relationship between Human Rights and development, increase local democratic participation in the identification of priority needs at the bag level, and encourage local ownership of micro-projects through their design, development, implementation and monitoring phases.

This would be consistent with Watt's proposal that appropriate training should be developed and delivered to all bag governors. However, Watt's conception of the role of bag governors was top-down. He said:

They are responsible for informing citizens about policies about policies and requirements being considered or enacted by government at higher levels and soliciting opinions and reporting them to sum authorities. Many are also responsible for the delivery of basic services (Watt, 1998, para.10).

Watt goes on to argue that through training, Bag Governors should understand government organisation and management, be skilled in organising citizens to develop proposals for community betterment, and be able to manage approved bag development project implementation. The report suggests that UNDP should assist bag governors to develop proposals for the use of the Local Democracy Fund, citing the UNESCO micro-project experience as a model. While we strongly agreed with the spirit of the Watt recommendation, we also argued that it was important to recognise that the UNESCO model does not depend on the bag governors developing proposals. The critical feature of the methodology was that the micro-project proposals were developed by the bag communities, including and with the support of the bag governors. The Public Hural is the critical organisation in the overall process and the project implementation teams reported directly to these community public meetings.

We would argue that the experience of the UNESCO/DANIDA project suggests an alternative view of the role for the bag governors. Firstly, community participation projects require them to face in the opposite direction and to do more than listen to the opinions of their communities. Since it was the representatives of the communities who developed the proposals for community betterment, this skill is now deeply embedded in these communities. Management of the micro-projects was also in the hands of project implementation groups, of which the bag governor was a member, but not normally the leader. These groups, including the governor, reported directly to the public hurals of the bag.

Secondly, we should recognise that bag governors are elected politicians who, in the unstable political situation of Mongolia, may be in power for no more than one electoral period. Following the elections after the end of the project, many of those governors who participated in the project may no longer have been in office. Knowledge about government, both rights and responsibilities, is certainly needed by the bag governors; but this knowledge, along with the skills for micro-project design and management need to be more deeply embedded than was proposed. In the transition from a command to a democratic system, the role of the governor should also be developing: from a conveyor of information and instructions from above to a voice which conveys the prioritised demands for basic rights which are articulated by his or her community. The UNESCO/DANIDA methodology provided a means to ensure that local democracy is developed and that local knowledge for development is more deeply embedded in the local population.

Watt proposed that the UNDP should develop simple guidelines and criteria for proposals in collaboration with bag and other local authorities, for approval by the National Advisory Group. Since Human Rights is not a primary consideration of UNDP, we would agree that the methodology could be adapted to address a set of criteria which seek to improve the delivery of public services at the bag level or which 'help to bridge the communications gap resulting from the widespread dispersal of bag communities' (Para. 12). When asking communities to prioritise their needs, it is necessary to set some parameters and to be clear about what the local budget limits will be. The parameters could indeed be defined by the services which the local authorities are expected to deliver but which they cannot because of the present budget crisis.

This, however, raised the question of the commitment of the Mongolian Government to the process, as distinct from the practical outcomes which will derive from the UNDP funds. It is understandable that the central and local authorities should be pleased to accept further funding from the United Nations or the World Bank, particularly in a time of economic hardship when local authorities are unable to deliver even the most basic services such as water and electricity. However, unless there is a commitment on the part of the Government to match the United Nations money, there is a danger that we may be merely creating and supporting a culture of dependency, rather than stimulating local self-sufficiency which the UNESCO/DANIDA project has done at the bag level. Replacing the government services with UNDP or World Bank finance for micro-project funding for one year without such a commitment, as appears to be currently happening, will pose serious questions about the sustainability of the process.

We argued that, if in the future there were to be additional international funding available for an extension of the present programme in Mongolia, funders should be careful not to merely replicate what had already been done. The new investment should be linked to an extension in scope, such that the Government of Mongolia shows a commitment to the process by investing resources in it. In designing and implementing the micro-projects, local people were able to identify local resource inputs that were to be contributed to the micro-projects, and they were able to quantify the value of these inputs. Any extension of the UNESCO/DANIDA project in Mongolia should ask the Government to make the same type of commitment to the overall project.

The effective management of any programme that extends the project to other Aimags may require that it be delivered to separate groups of Aimags. The training should be modified to include the participation of the Aimag, Sum and Bag Governors who have already benefited from the UNESCO/DANIDA experience, so that the new participants can benefit from their experience. Given that the teaching materials and the training strategy have already been developed, the basic elements of the strategy for replication would be to:

- Organise two inter-Aimag participatory workshops to discuss the teaching material and agree a training strategy for selected Bags (There may only be funds for one demonstration bag in each Aimag unless the Government matches the funds available for micro-projects)
- Organise and implement workshops in each of the selected bags to train communities, governors and civil servants on human rights, democratic governance and micro-project design and development.

- Organise the Ad Hoc committee to choose the micro-projects for funding.
- Implement and monitor

In choosing the Bags, we need to make a conscious choice of either remote or sum-centre bags. The sum-centre bags are easier to deal with, since the Bag Hural are better attended and the centres are accessible for most of the people of the bag. However, the remoteness of some bags is precisely what we should be tackling. In these bags, it is more difficult to engage the people, organise meetings and sustain implementation activities. To replicate the project in these bags is particularly challenging, but the evidence from, for example, Huvsgul is that this can be done successfully.

Part of the work of the extension of the project should be to explore how Government commitment can be further extended in future years so that the methodology for democratic participation and development becomes an integral part of their development strategy.

9. Replicability

From the experience of this project, there are six major criteria which emerge as important features of the Mongolian situation and which ought to be looked for elsewhere if the approach is to be used. Not all of these criteria need exist to the extent that they were present in Mongolia, but they represent an ‘ideal type’ of circumstances which will facilitate the implementation of a similar project. These criteria are Government support; pre-existing government structures that are consistent with the objectives of the programme; independent local teams of workers in the field; a supportive local culture; a society in which the pursuit of equality and the eradication of poverty are valued as societal goals; and a relatively high level of education.

9.1 Government Support:

The project was facilitated by central and local governments which, despite differences in their political complexion, were committed to:

- a. Decentralisation of power;
- b. Democratic processes which supported the use of participatory methods and the empowerment of local communities;
- c. The improvement of Human Rights;
- d. Improving the welfare of disadvantaged sections of the population.

9.2 Government Structures:

The fact that there were three levels of local government, the Aimag, Sum and Bag levels, which linked local communities to district, regional and central authorities was important. At the Bag level, the community meetings of the Bag Hural tended to be moribund and the project contributed to their revival. Their existence, irrespective of their vitality, provided structured access to local communities.

9.3 Independent Local Teams:

The availability and selection of local teams who can be trained and can train others in the programme and project objectives was an extremely important element of the project. In this case it included a local management training consultancy which was not of the classical mould, a series of project co-ordinators who were competent to do the job, and a team of UNVs, the best of whom were personally independent of local political processes but able to work with political leaders in each of the project sites.

9.4 A Supportive Local Culture:

Another important feature in Mongolia was a local culture which had some resonance with community-based activities. The project may not be so successful in societies where the family is more much important than the community, or even where the nuclear family is much more important than the extended family; or where there are powerful local clan or tribal leaders whose legitimacy does not depend on democratic structures.

9.5 Equality and Poverty Eradication as a Societal Goal:

Although most societies are male dominated, and Mongolia is no exception, if women are to benefit from the process, there must be some semblance of equality and an attachment to reducing the social exclusion of women and improving the rights of women and others who may be living in poverty or isolation. Where the eradication of inequalities and the alleviation of poverty are valued as societal goals, it is easier to implement such a project.

5.6 High Levels of Education:

The fact that in Soviet times the literacy levels in rural areas of Mongolia were around 85% was of considerable significance. This gave communities the capacity to actively participate in the Human Rights training and in the micro-project design. Other participatory methods which have been developed for societies with lower levels of education and literacy could have been adapted for the project, but the objectives would have been more difficult to achieve.

All of these criteria for success may not be necessary in every situation for the replicability of the project methodology, but if there are strong countervailing forces in any instance, the successful application of the model elsewhere may be difficult.

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