



WHITE PAPER

EARLY CHILDHOOD EDUCATION AND CARE

ULAANBAATAR, MONGOLIA - 2019



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In Mongolia, Lorinet foundation is primarily focused on supporting communities in ‘ger’ districts of the capital city Ulaanbaatar. Nearly 50% of total 3.2 million population of the country lives in Ulaanbaatar, of which 55% live in ‘ger’ districts, large un-planned settlements with lack of access to infrastructure and public services including early childhood education service provisions.

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ABOUT THE PAPER

Lorinet Foundation conducted this white paper study on Early Childhood Education and Care (ECEC) with a primary purpose of identifying key gaps and opportunities to further support an equitable and quality ECEC for young children living in the ger districts of Ulaanbaatar city. In addition, the study has served the purpose of understanding the early childhood policy and programming landscape as well as discovering trends influencing ECEC sector in Mongolia.

This paper primarily examines and explores:

- ECEC landscape of the Ulaanbaatar city
- ECEC service provisions for the children aged 2-5
- Preschool system as a main service provision

The content disseminated through this study is a synthesis of findings from multiple sources gathered through engagements with several sectoral experts and stakeholders, as well as desk review of international and local research papers, publications, thematic studies, policy documents, and sectoral statistics. Research, data collection, and all associated activities of the study were performed between Mar-Aug 2019.

Authors believe that the findings of this study will be beneficial to all who seek to understand early childhood ecosystem in Ulaanbaatar, Mongolia and improve identified gaps through short, mid, or long-term initiatives and solutions.

ABBREVIATION

| | |
|--------------------------|---|
| Childcare service | Government subsidized private childcare centers |
| CPD | Continuous professional development |
| ECE | Early Childhood Education |
| ECEC | Early Childhood Education and Care |
| ECD | Early Childhood Development |
| ECED | Early Childhood Education and Development |
| Ger districts | Informal urban residential settlements that lack basic infrastructure and access to public services |
| INGO | International Non-Governmental Organizations |
| ITPD | Institute for Teacher's Professional development |
| KG | Kindergarten |
| Khoroo | Sub-district |
| MECSS | Ministry of Education, Culture, Science and Sport |
| MLSP | Ministry of Labor and Social Protection |
| UB | Ulaanbaatar city |

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KEY FINDINGS

- Early Childhood Education and Care landscape of the capital city of Mongolia, Ulaanbaatar is mainly represented by two formal service provisions - preschool education and government subsidized private childcare service. Both provisions cover young children aged 2-5, meaning that children aged 0 and up to 2 do not have access to formal ECEC services.
- Access to formal preschool education service provision for young children living in Ulaanbaatar has been increasing significantly in the last two decades. Mongolian government's continuous policy efforts and budgetary commitments in expanding access to service provision are notable.
- Despite access expansion efforts such as construction of new kindergartens and introduction of alternative provisions directed at children from herder families in rural parts of the country, rather high preschool enrollment rates in overpopulated capital city Ulaanbaatar is mostly achieved through doubling number of children per class.

- Preschool enrollment rates are still low among children from economically and socially disadvantaged families including children with disabilities and those from migrant families living in remote ger areas of Ulaanbaatar. Moreover, out of service provision children are not benefiting from the state spending allocated for preschool system.
- Existence of gaps in key components that ensure quality of preschool education, including quality of environment, teaching, learning and its assurance mechanism, is evident and vary depending on the context. Disparities in a quality of the services as well as children's learning outcomes between public and private kindergartens and those that serve children from ger, and non-ger areas were observed through this study.
- It's also important to mention that preschool education system is expected to face serious challenges with the supply of qualified teaching workforce. Such factors as high workload, classroom congestion, low wages are all contributing to the decreasing popularity of preschool education teaching profession among Mongolian youth. Lack of centralized workforce and human resource planning systems is also one of the key contributing factors to the issue of workforce shortage.

- Subsidized private childcare service provision covers very small number of young children and offers limited access. Low enrollment rates in private and cooperative childcare centers as well as this service provision's underdevelopment are primarily linked with low popularity among the parents due to poor quality and conditions of the services, including caregiving qualifications of workforce that operate childcare centers. Moreover, promotion and regulatory support directed at childcare service provision is inadequate and inconsistent, and often de-prioritized by the government. As a result, this early childhood care provision is not continuously developed and seen as not trustworthy option by parents.
- Parents and caregivers play a critical role in their children's early formative years. Their level of responsive caregiving and engagement in age-appropriate early stimulation activities are crucial to young child's learning and development outcomes. This applies to all families, but even more important for vulnerable families that often lack access to services and resources. Therefore, our findings around Mongolian parents and caregivers generally lacking the knowledge and skills on responsive caregiving and age-appropriate early childhood education, makes the importance of prioritization parents' role even more critical.
- As mentioned in this section, Mongolian government has made significant policy and budgetary efforts in expanding access to ECE. Government's recent policy efforts focused on formalizing early childhood care service provision and other frameworks directed at improving quality of workforce, show its willingness towards addressing quality gaps existent in the system. However, various stakeholders and experts engaged during this study have shared common concerns towards effectiveness and consistency of policy planning and implementation as well as public spending efficiency.

- Compared to other education sub-sectors, relatively small number of development partners, international and local NGOs are active and have long-term strategic priority of supporting ECEC system. Existing efforts undertaken by these ecosystem players are either partially adopted by the government and not applied to system in full or not scaled and sustained owing to lack of availability of resources. The use of innovative technology solutions in ECEC space of Mongolia is in rather nascent stage and yet to be developed. Existing solutions such as websites and blogs are primarily serving information sharing functions.
- Accessing quality and free or affordable ECEC service provisions is not only beneficial to young children, but also directly impacts quality of life of their families. Lack of access to ECEC services impacts household's income stability, sustainable employment of parents, especially mothers, and limits their ability to participate in training, education. This is particularly critical for the families living in the remote ger areas of Ulaanbaatar.
- In coming years, access to ECEC in Ulaanbaatar is expected to remain as a challenge due to increased number of outdated kindergartens, population growth and continuous rural-to-urban migration. Therefore, its critical for ecosystem players, particularly government to continue expanding access balanced with due consideration on quality and further develop ECEC service provisions to become accessible, affordable, and available.



POLICY & REGULATIONS



- PRIMARY GOAL SET BY THE MONGOLIAN GOVERNMENT IS TO PROVIDE ACCESS TO CENTER-BASED PRESCHOOL EDUCATION FOR ALL YOUNG CHILDREN AGED 2-5.
- THROUGH RECENT ADOPTION OF CHILDCARE SERVICE LAW WHICH ALSO COVERS 2-5 AGE GROUP, GOVERNMENT AIMS TO FORMALIZE AND DEVELOP EARLY CHILDHOOD CARE SERVICE PROVISION.

Mongolian ECEC policy and provision is a shared responsibility of several departments of the government. The main regulatory actors are Ministry of Education, Culture, Science and Sport, Ministry of Labor and Social Protection and City/Province Level Education Departments.

Key policies regulating ECEC system:

Preschool Education Law, 2008

Regulates kindergarten service provision and covers 2-5 age group. Aims to support children in development of their minds, bodies and personalities by providing an educational environment conducive to development of their talents, abilities and life skills.

Childcare Service Law, 2017

Regulates childcare service provision with focus on health and safety environment aspects of the provision, but not an education component.

Preschool Core Curriculum, 2015

Areas of key learning include motor, social emotional, language and early numeracy skills. Curriculum serves as a core document, based on which kindergarten should be developing delivery concepts.

Promotion of Teacher's Development Law, 2018

Regulates improvement of labor conditions, increasing salaries and social welfare programs, providing continuous professional development opportunities.



- PUBLIC PRESCHOOL EDUCATION IS **FREE**.
- GOVERNMENT **SUBSIDIES** FOR CHILDCARE SERVICES ARE ALSO AVAILABLE.
- OUT OF ECEC SERVICE PROVISION CHILDREN **DO NOT BENEFIT** FROM PUBLIC SPENDING.

20-24%

The state budget funding for pre-school education accounts for a consistent 20-24% of the total education budget.

2nd HIGHEST

Mongolia is a country with second highest rates of budget allocation to preschool education sector after Turkmenistan. Globally average in 2017 was 6.6%

1% - LEARNIG MATERIALS

Preschool state budget prioritizes expenditure categories of salaries, meals, utilities and capital expenditures, which leaves extremely low budget to cover costs for learning materials and environment , including, school supplies, extracurricular activities and teacher training.

SUBSIDIES FOR PRIVATE CHILDCARE

In addition to free public preschool system, government also provides subsidies to private childcare service operators.



UPCOMING INFRASTRUCTURE DEVELOPMENT

Between 2019-2020, government is taking efforts to expand the access to preschool education through construction of new public kindergartens and expects to increase the total capacity for additional 12,105 children and grow the enrollment rate by 5%.



of additional teaching workforce needed ≈ 800



land availability is a major challenge

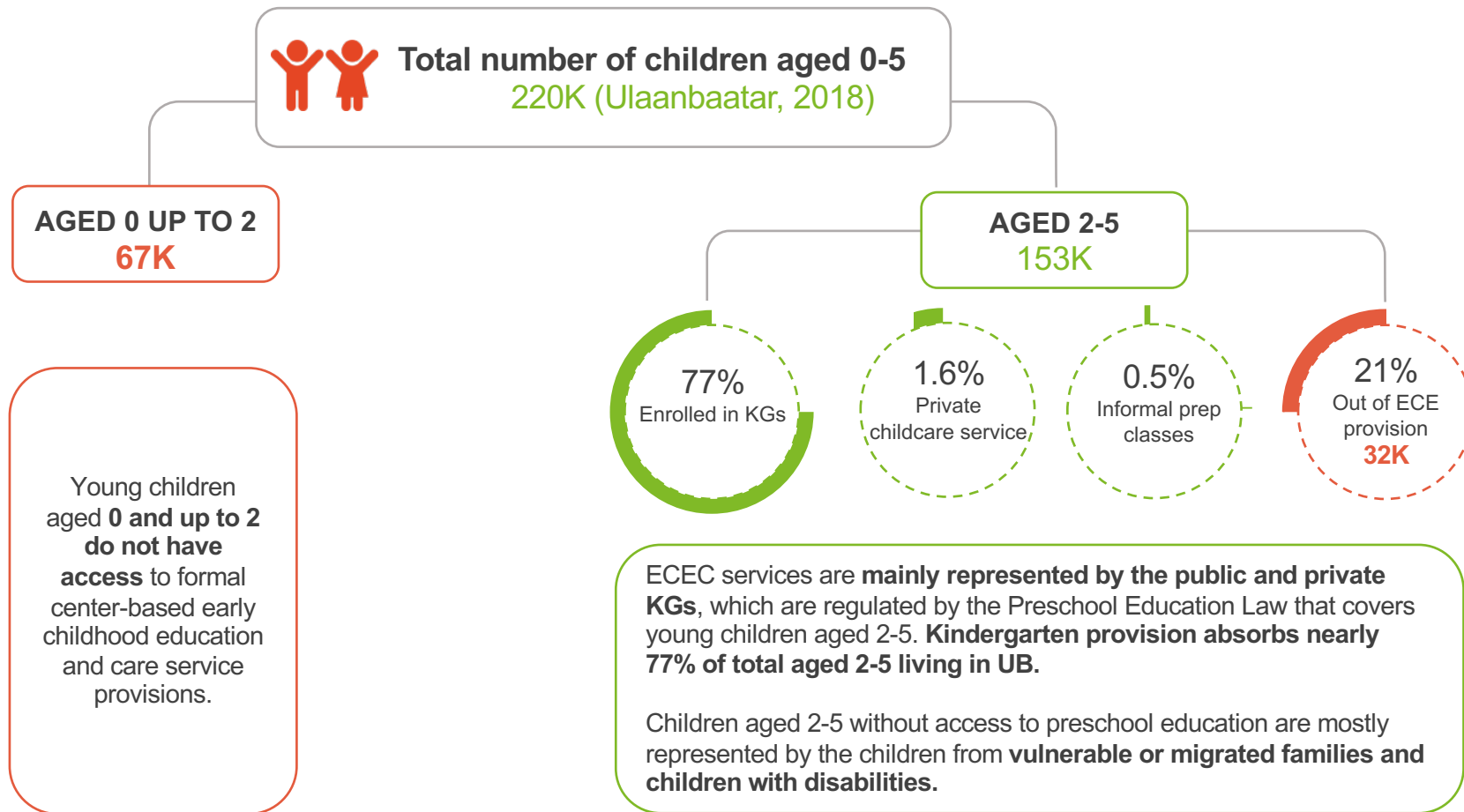
Compared to other regional countries or countries with similar level of GDP, Mongolia spends relatively high on preschool education. The deficit of the state budget is mostly compensated through long-term repayable loans provided by development partners.

With adoption of long-term policies-oriented at enabling access to pre-primary education and commitments for increased budget allocations for this education sub-sector, Mongolia has received an international recognition and was ranked as one of the 'high-performers' in UNICEF's - A World Ready to Learn Prioritizing Quality Early Childhood Education Report in 2019.

Recently adopted national policies oriented at improving quality of workforce and teaching, show government's willingness to address quality gaps existing in the system.

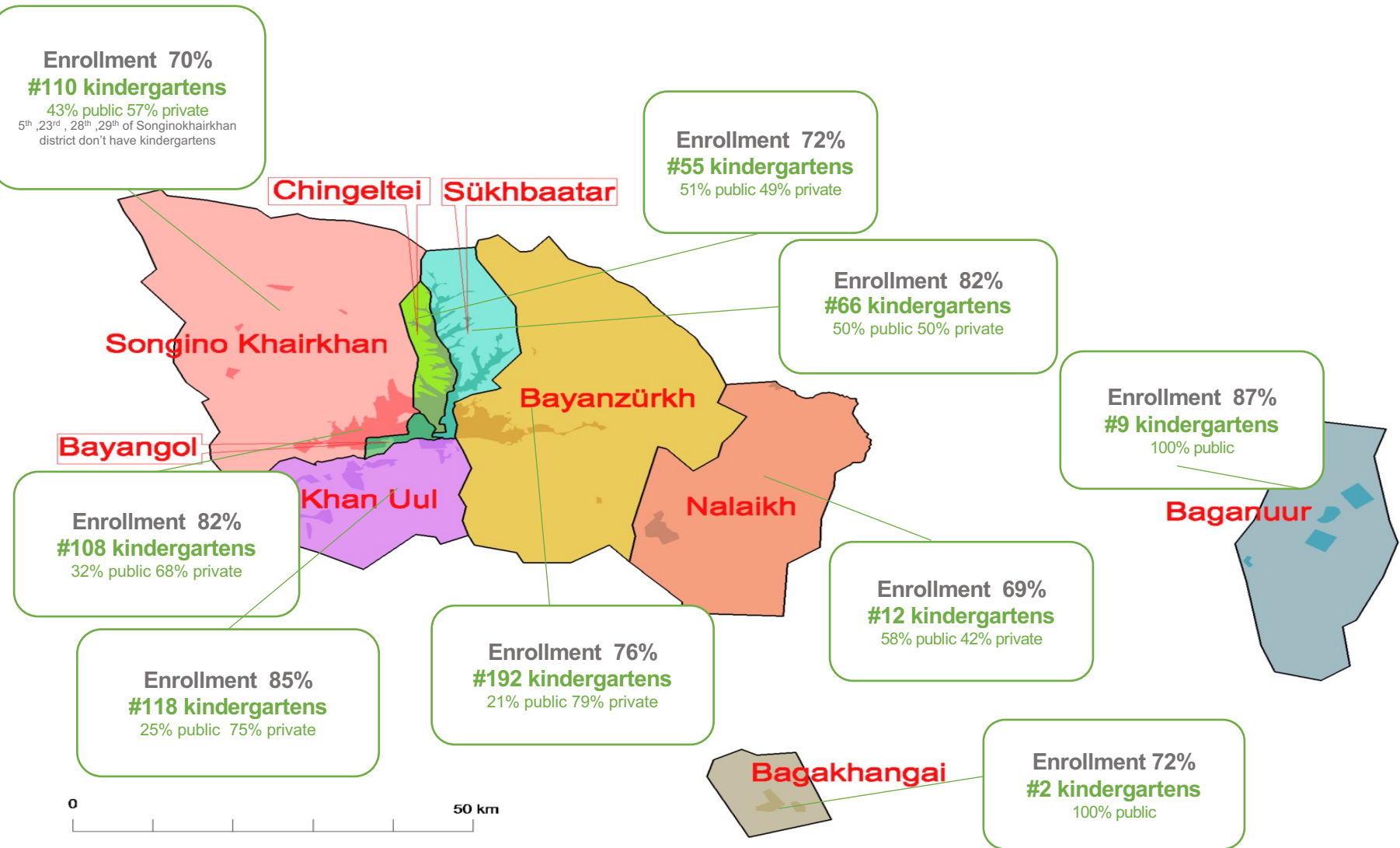


ECOSYSTEM & ACCESS





ACCESS – ENROLLMENT DISTRIBUTION IN 9 UB DISTRICTS





**ENROLLED
IN 672 KINDERGARTENS**
(34% / 66% public/private)

73%

in 231 **PUBLIC** KGs

While public KGs are free, parents make contributions for the learning materials and extracurricular activity costs

Average class size

44 children

27%

in 441 **Private** KGs

Parents pay \$30-300 per child/per month cost depending on the location of the KG

Average class size

21 children

Public kindergarten enrollment rate for the UB city is steadily increasing. 73% of total children enrolled in preschool education are attending free public kindergartens with overcrowded classrooms.

Alternative provisions of the public preschool system, accounts for only 0.3% of total enrolled children in UB and are mainly implemented in a form of shift groups.

On paper, the class size is set at 25 children, but in practice, average class size in public kindergartens is 44 children, with some reaching 50.



ENROLLED IN 672 KINDERGARTENS

(34% / 66% public/private)

73%
in 231 **Public** KGs

While public KGs are free, parents make contributions for the learning environment, materials and extracurricular activity costs

Average class size
44 children

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Parents pay \$30-300 per child/per month depending on the location of the KG

Average class size
21 children

Private kindergarten is playing a role in improving supply of places and accounts for 27% of total children enrolled in preschool education

Private kindergartens in non-ger areas of UB, serve population with higher socio-economic markers (parents' level of education, mean wealth index etc.) in comparison to public kindergartens in the same areas.

Difference in quality was observed between private kindergartens in ger and non-ger areas of UB.

Private kindergartens see a significantly higher staff turnover than in public kindergartens.



1.6%
CHILDREN
AGED 2-5

ENROLLED IN PRIVATE CHILDCARE SERVICES

1 individual, after attending pre-service training and obtaining a license, is eligible to set-up a center enrolling up-to 5 children with mixed age of 2-5 aged.

3 individuals can jointly co-operate 1 center and enroll up to 15 children.

The state provides **subsidies** to childcare service operators covering around half of per child expenses with remaining co-paid by parents

Private childcare centers were formalized in 2015 with adoption of Childcare Service Law.

Requirements for the service provider and infrastructure are rather basic and significantly lower compared to kindergartens.

This service provision is underdeveloped and accounts only for 1.6% of children enrolled in ECE services.

Low enrollment rates are primarily linked with low popularity among the parents due to poor quality and conditions of the services, including workforce that operate childcare services.

ENROLLED IN SCHOOL PREP CLASSES



0.5%
CHILDREN AGED
2-5

To ensure school readiness of children aged 5 without access to formal formal preschool education, some NGOs deliver short-term school prep programs.

These programs run for 3 weeks – 3 months and delivered either at community centers or in partnership with public primary schools.

Due to lack of regulatory and financial support, these programs only cover 0.5% of pre-school aged children living in UB.



99k

**total # of children aged 0-5
staying at home without access
to center-based ECEC in UB**

of which

67k

aged 0-2

Formal ECEC service provisions regulated by the government are not available for the children of this age group.

32k

aged 2-5

The hardest-to-reach groups, especially children with disabilities, socio-economically disadvantaged children, children from migrant families are underserved by the public and private system and waiting for policy solutions and targeted interventions.

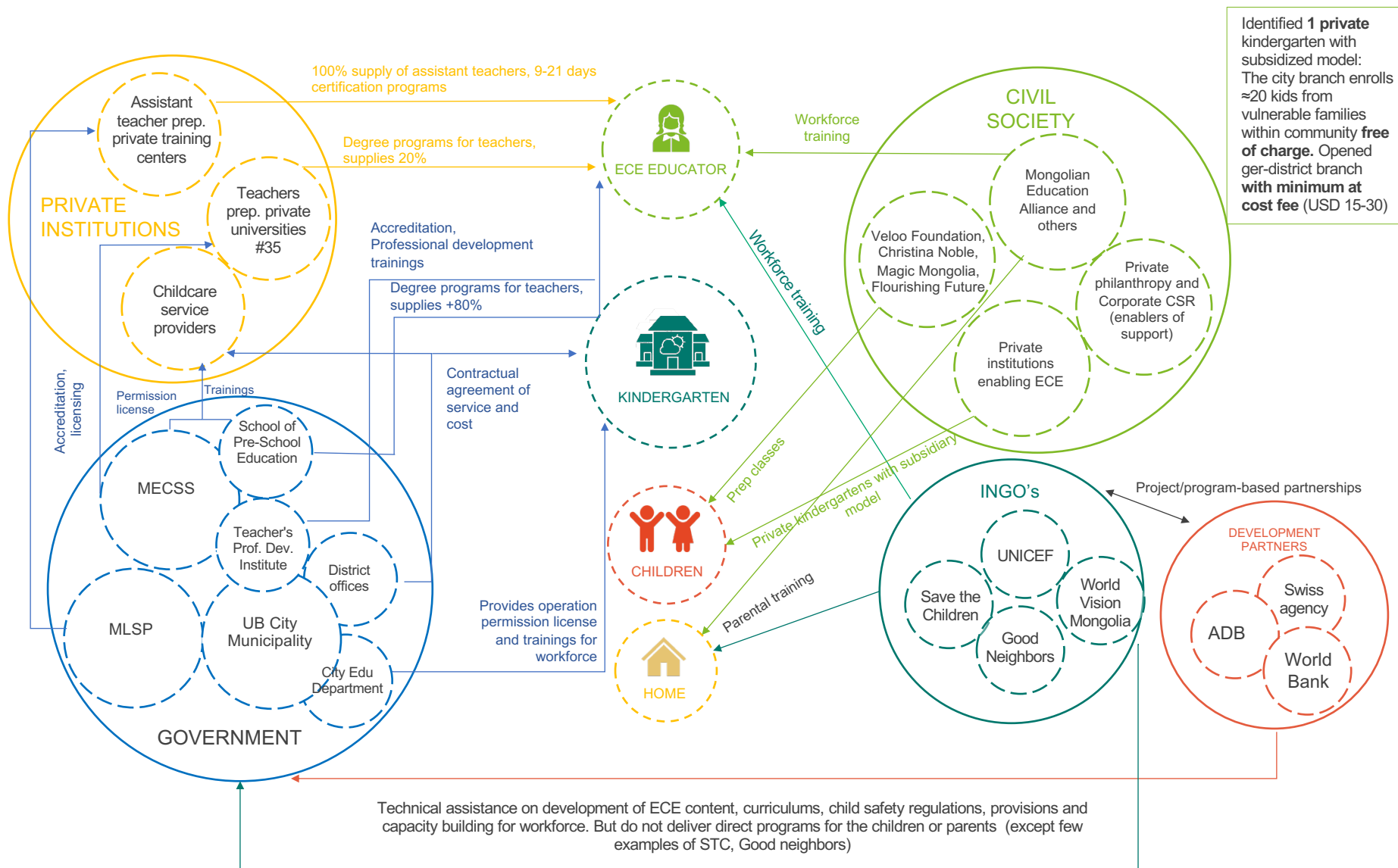
Some hard-to-reach sub-districts (khorooos) like 12th of Sukhbaatar district or 5th, 23rd, 28th, 29th of Songinokhairkhan district still don't have kindergartens.

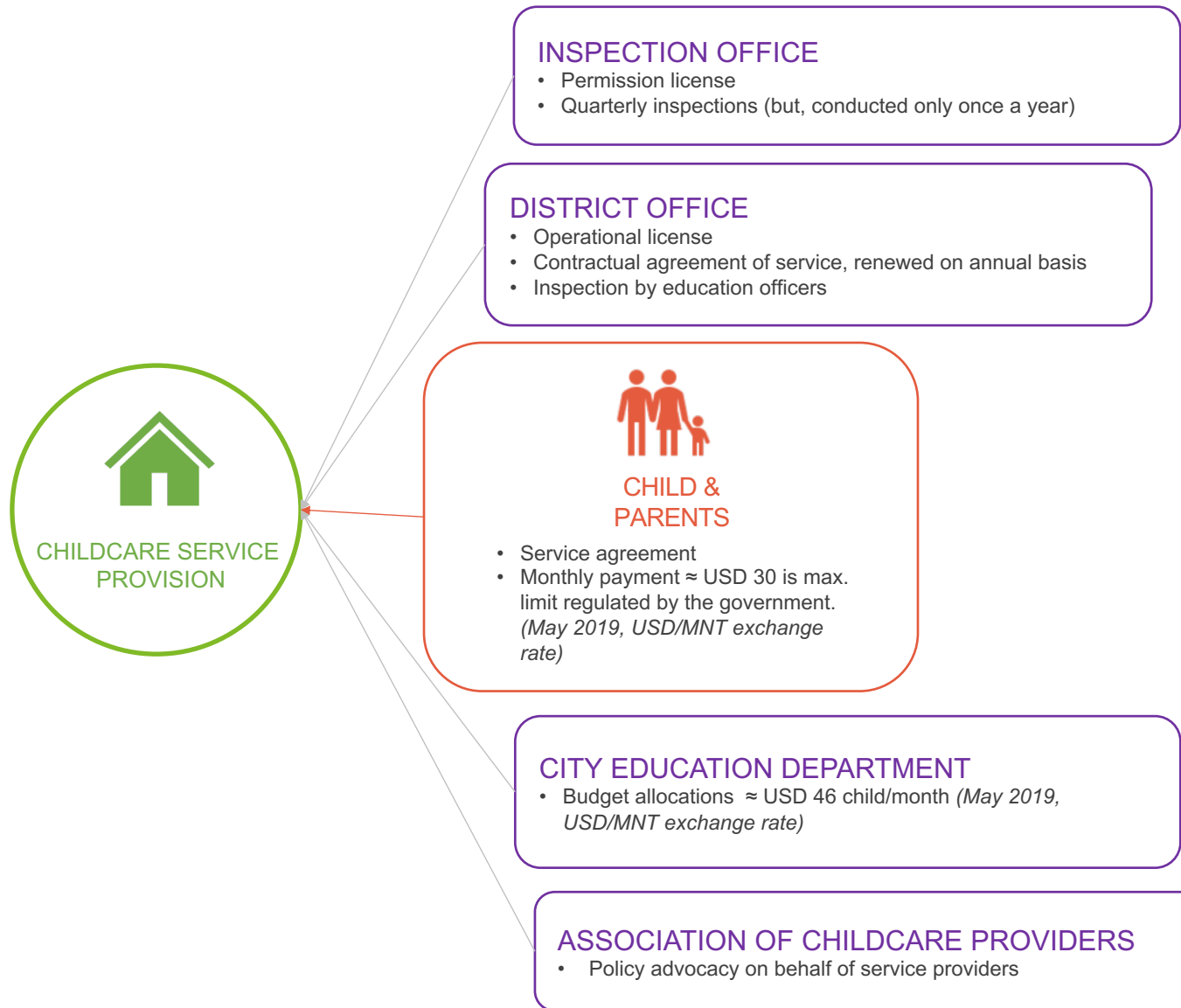
Household wealth is a key determinant in preschool enrollment, children from poorest quantile of wealth are almost 40% point less likely to enroll in preschool.

For poor and vulnerable families, voluntary contributions for learning materials and extra curricular activities collected from parents as well as need in purchasing seasonal clothes for children were identified as key barriers inhibiting kindergarten attendance.

Due to lack of qualified teachers, appropriate learning environment, materials and most importantly infrastructure accessibility issues most kindergartens are unwilling to enroll children with disabilities. Some parents, to avoid social stigma, are not willing to send their children to kindergarten.

Insufficient ECE places affect household income stability and sustainable employment of parents (especially mothers) and limits their ability to participate in training, education or employment.





Source: National standard on Childcare Service Provision, 2016

Source: Guideline on Providing Financial Support for Childcare Service Provision, 2015

Source: Guideline on Setting-up and Ensuring Quality Assurance for Childcare Service, 2018



WORKFORCE



12,205

**total # of workforce
working in KGs in
UB**

of which

32%

teaching staff

(class teachers,
methodologists)

68%

non - teaching staff

(principals, doctors,
assistant teachers,
kitchen staff etc.)

employed in

33%

private KGs

67%

public KGs

90 / 10

teacher supply

90% of all class teacher graduates are supplied by the Public School of Pre-school Education and remaining 10% supplied by 20+ private universities.

50%

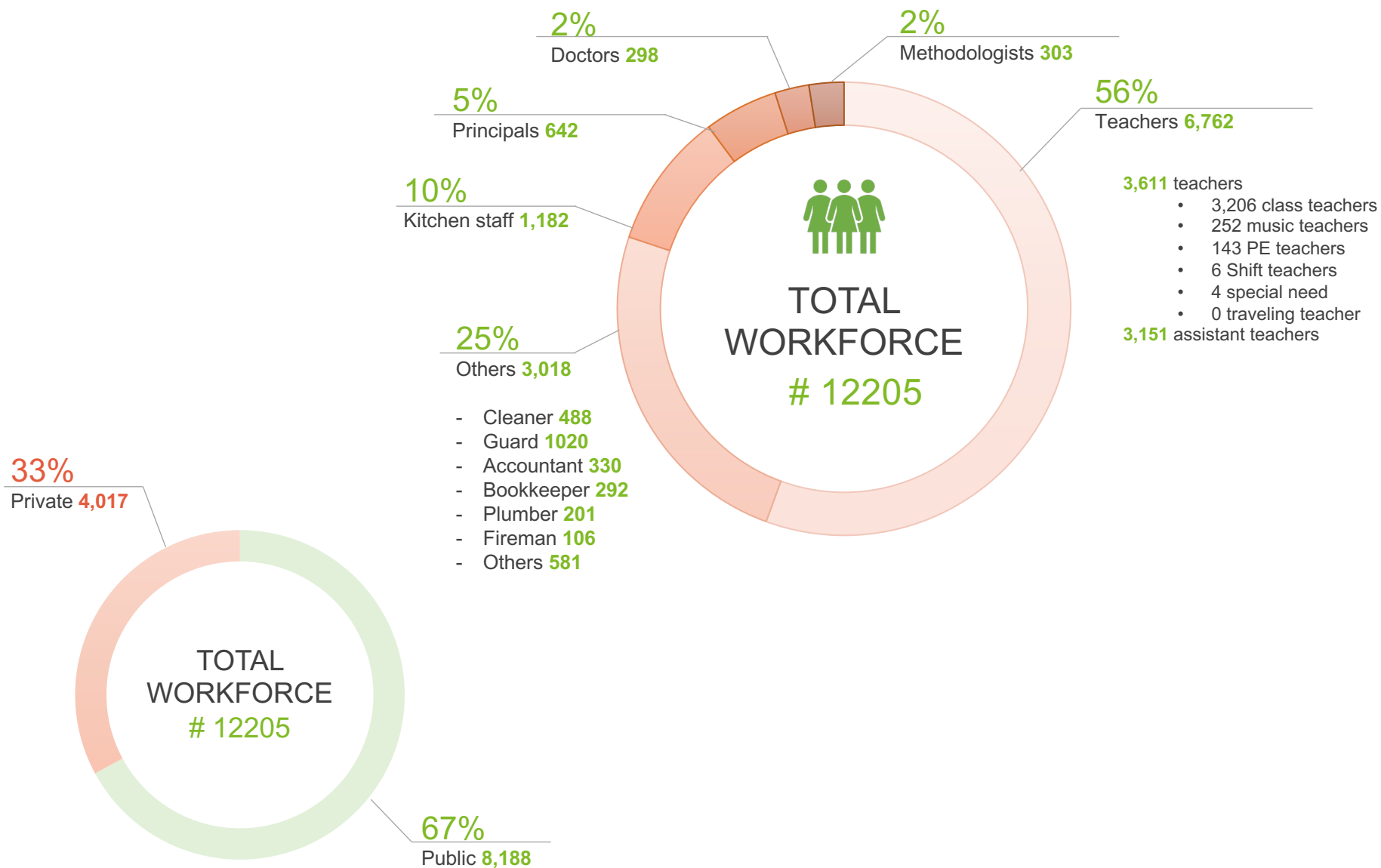
decrease in enrollment rates

Number of students enrolled at School of Preschool Education, has continuously decreased in the last 5 years from 550 in 2014 to 274 students in 2018. Same tendency can also be observed from graduation rates.

1,732

teachers required

If the current average class size of 44 children is used as a basis for the estimation, total of 1,732 teachers will be required till 2030

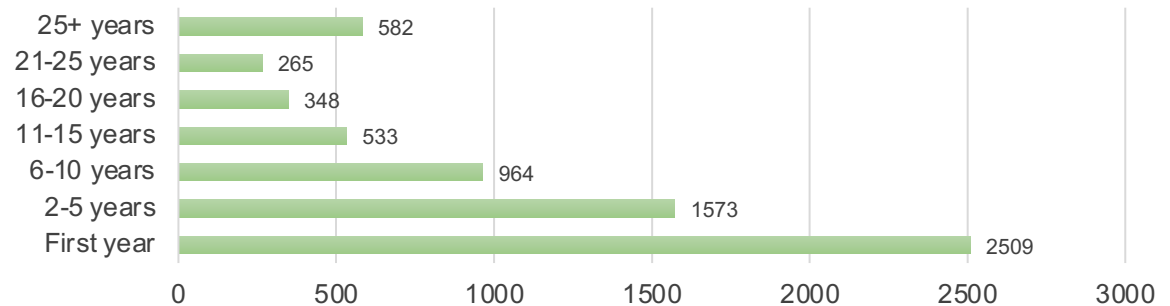




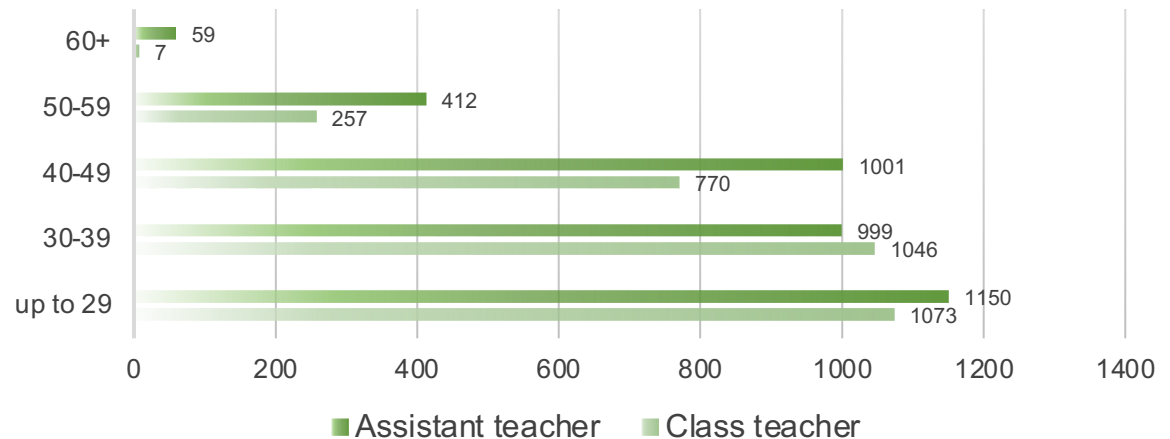
TEACHERS

1 PhD
252 Master degree
3,787 Bachelor degree
2,203 Others (assistant teachers)

WORK EXPERIENCE – CLASS & ASSISTANT TEACHERS



AGE





70% of teachers report high workload

Excessive paperwork, classroom congestion and non-teaching/administrative tasks identified as key 3 factors having greatest impact on workload.

Teachers working in UB, work 10-12 hours a day or 50 hours a week. This affects their time spent with family and on-the-job professional development opportunities.

32%

lower than national average salary

While salary accounts for 55-60% of monthly payments, additional supplements for professional ranking, skills enhancement and performance incentives account for remaining portion of remuneration. 40% of teachers believe that current incentive system is unfair and doubtful.

1 / 44

teacher-student ratio

Teacher-student ratio is a key indicator for the quality of the preschool education service provision that directly influences the quality of teaching and learning.

Average class size in public kindergarten is 44 children. In contrary, this ratio for private kindergartens is 1/21.

According to the regulations, one class should be guided by 1 class teacher and 1 assistant teacher with nursing responsibilities. However, there is less than 1 assistant teacher at both public and private kindergartens.



Preschool workforce

class teachers

Employment at kindergarten is possible upon graduation of a 2-4-year Bachelor's degree in Education from preschool teacher training instructions.

Public Institute of Teachers' Professional Development (ITPD) organizes centralized compulsory training for class teachers in the 1st, 5th and 10th year of service after the graduation. ITPD also delivers on-demand specialized and optional trainings.

assistant teachers

Only required pre-service training for assistant teachers is basic nursing 9-21 days programs provided by private training centers.

There is no professional development and level upgrading training system in place. Methodologists and principals also have limited professional development opportunities, except once-a-year compulsory training provided by ITPD.

Childcare workforce

Compared to preschool education provision, requirements for the childcare service providers are rather basic and lower than for the kindergarten teacher. Individual with good health aged 18-65 with postsecondary and above level of education is eligible to run childcare services.

Prior to obtaining operational permission, service providers are required to enroll in a short-term training course and receive a certificate upon completion. These courses are primary focused on nursing and do not include pedagogical or teaching methodology modules.

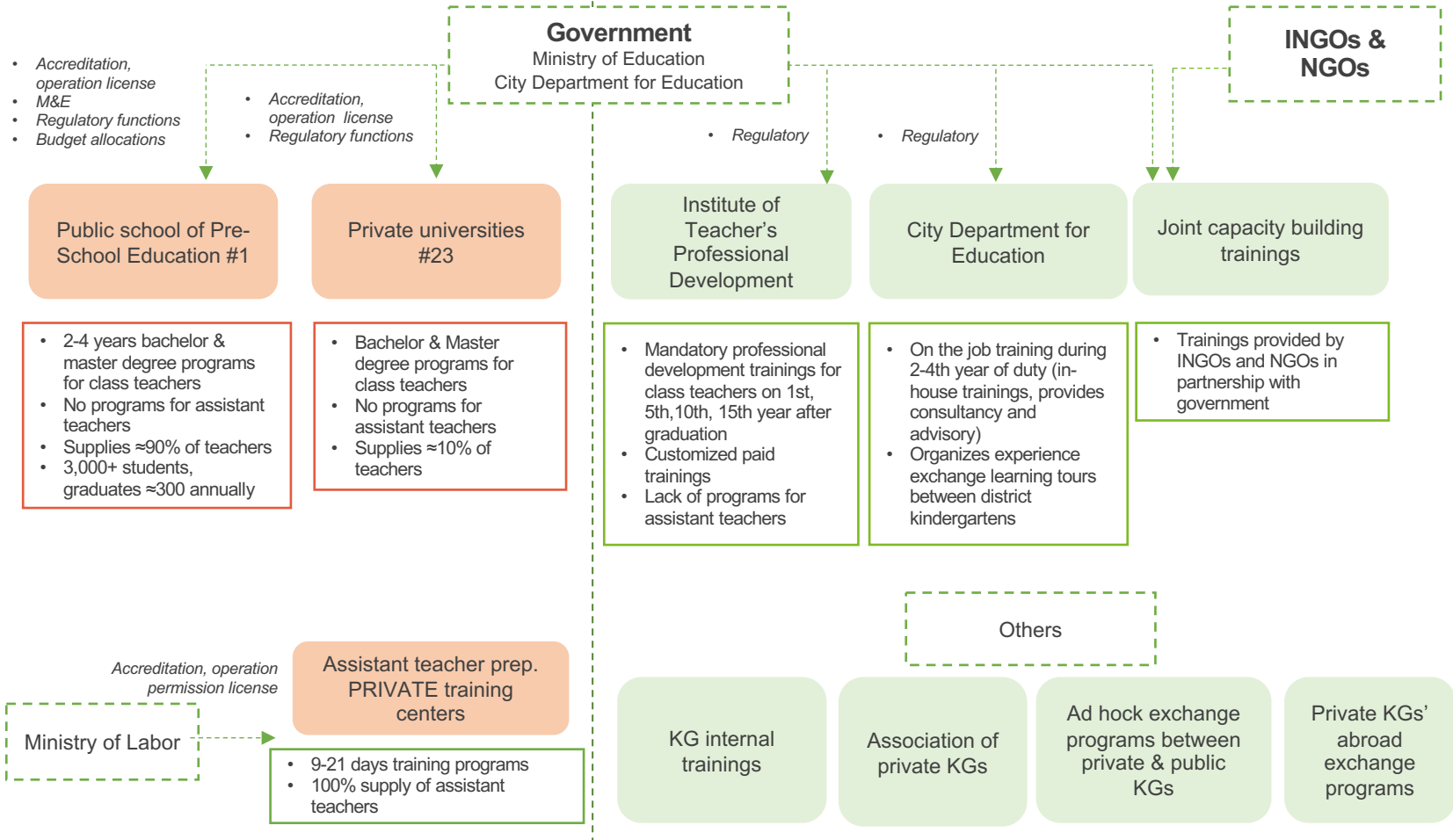
In-service or on the job professional development trainings are both not required and available for service providers.



WORKFORCE – TRAINING (PRESCHOOL)

PRE-SERVICE TRAINING

IN-SERVICE PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT





QUALITY ASSURANCE



Monitoring and quality assurance of ECEC services is essential to children's wellbeing and their development and learning. In Mongolia, while quality standards for structure, process and key areas of learning exist and their assurance mechanisms were developed.

However, there is no mechanism to systematically and centrally monitor compliance or assess the quality of the services, especially regarding inputs that directly impact learning and development of the children.

Existing quality standards, include

Structure:

- physical space, lighting, furniture, equipment
- health, sanitation, safety, nutrition
- characteristics of educators and caregivers (pre-, in-service training, experience etc.)
- characteristics of children (age, class size, teacher-to-children ratio)

Process:

- Elements associated with children's daily experience, learning and development, that are delivered through implementation of curriculum (frequency, types, quality of interactions for children-to-caregiver, children-to-children, teachers-to-parents)

Key areas of learning

- motor, social emotional, language, early numeracy skills
- interaction with nature, art and music

Existing assurance mechanisms

External/independent quality controls of kindergartens: social policy department (SPD), education, culture and art department (ECAD), specialized inspection agency (SIA)

Internal evaluation system: headmasters, methodologists, kindergarten board and internal evaluation team, parental and public oversight



A methodology for child development

evaluation, accompanies the Core curriculum, which includes 1) evaluation of children, 2) evaluation of core curriculum for improvement. Evaluation is primarily based on observation methods, and progress of each child is documented using the Detailed Structured Observation Sheet, and the personality and character traits of an individual by observations.



Compared to preschool education service provision, quality standards and assurance mechanisms for childcare service are rather basic and primarily focus on the structure aspects that are related to health, safety, sanitation and nutrition.

Process related aspects of standards such as early childhood education and development are not existent in childcare service provision.

Standards for childcare service

- Physical space:
 - minimum space per child: 2.5 m²
 - provider's property, rental space or ger
 - space to be used for childcare service purpose only
 - to have resting, playing, sleeping, eating, hand washing areas
 - kitchen area should be separated
- 8 working hours daily, 4 meals per day
- Staff to be medically checked regularly
- Quality assurance mechanism of the childcare service provision consist of **internal** (parental) monitoring and **external** (inspection agency, local authorities responsible for education as well as child and family wellbeing).
- There are no mechanisms in place for assessment of the developmental outcomes of the children.



THE DATA ON 5 YEARS OLD CHILDREN ASSESSED BY WORLD BANK (2017) SHOWED:

Ger area kindergartens

Children enrolled in private kindergartens in ger areas of UB lag behind those in non-ger areas in all 5 domains (cognitive, language, social-emotional, executive function and fine motor skills).

Household economic status

Among children in public kindergartens, measures of household socioeconomic status and parents' level of education were significant predictors of all outcomes.

Longer exposure to preschool

associated with better outcomes in the numeracy, language and social-emotional skills domains.

Increasing intensity of family engagement

with children on activities at home was associated with higher outcomes in numeracy and language as well as marginally on social-emotional skills.



GAPS

Access

Quality

Parental involvement

Safety and nutrition

Policy and regulations



Despite the rapid growth in preschool enrollment in the last two decades, which was realized by infrastructure expansion, class size increase and private kindergarten surge **inequities in access still exist**.

In addition, insufficient ECE places and inhibitor to access **affect household income** stability and sustainable employment of parents (especially mothers) and limits their ability to participate in training, education or employment.

Insufficient supply of ECE places, further amplified through inhibitors to access

Unequal kindergarten enrollment rates prevail across the UB city. Key inhibitors include geographical location and family living standards.

Enrollment rates are lowest among children with disabilities, socioeconomically disadvantaged children and children from migrant families.

While there are public subsidies for ECE spaces, it is largely benefiting the population with means.

To fill the access gap, an estimation of 160 additional kindergartens are needed in UB, which is difficult to achieve in coming years and unlikely to solve the issue of classroom congestion and shortage of qualified workforce.

Population growth

The urban population in UB city is growing at an average rate of 6% per year due to increased migration to the city, thus following are not expected to ease in coming years:

- increase in number of preschool children
- classroom congestion
- need for more physical infrastructure/kindergartens

Childcare service is most likely to be de-escalated

Government and parents indicate poor quality of conditions, services and workforce at existing centers as major concerns to dissolve this provision. While government is considering to stop budget allocations, some industry experts consider childcare service as a model with potential for scale-up.



Enrolling children in kindergartens at **existing levels of quality is not enough** and requires more systemic prioritization. Not receiving quality preschool education during their most active years of development increases the risk of low educational achievement in primary grades, higher risk of learning difficulties and higher drop-out rates in senior grades for children.

ECE providers, workforce, officials, experts engaged during mapping exercise describe the following key factors as causing the quality gap:

Lack of mechanism to systematically and centrally monitor the compliance or assess the quality of the services, especially regarding inputs that directly impact learning and development of the children.

- Public and private kindergartens are inspected annually to be primarily checked for compliance with physical infrastructure standards and safety requirements.
- No regular monitoring to ensure that learning environment needs are indeed met, for example, whether or not the kindergarten is supplying print, art and play materials, or that the teaching practice and methods are of adequate quality.
- Benchmarking system performance on learning outcomes is not possible as Mongolia does not participate in any large-scale international assessments. Existing performance and quality assessment mechanisms are not conducted on regular-systemic basis.

Limited facilities and materials to learn, play and develop is a common issue across public kindergartens.

- According to the statistics, one in three kindergartens doesn't have sufficient space for indoor play activities. And only half have adequate gross motor play equipment.
- The state budget allocates very little for learning materials, including school supplies, teaching materials, extracurricular activities. This leads to significant difference in quality, availability and variety of learning materials and the range of classroom activities offered across kindergartens.
- Disparity between kindergarten conditions and standards were validated through engagement with ECE providers and sight visits.



Disparity between kindergartens in workforce distribution is one of the reasons causing a learning gap.

- graduates from different institutions have different levels of professional capacity.
- there are only 303 methodologists, 252 music teachers, 143 PE teachers and 298 doctors available for total of 672 kindergartens.
- it was common for some private kindergartens to employ teachers without professional qualifications.

High workload of class teachers and classroom congestion makes it difficult to deliver child-centered teaching for teachers.

- Classroom congestion decreases frequency types and quality of interactions between children and teachers, as well as teachers and parents. Average size for UB city public kindergarten is 44.4 child per class. Some kindergartens located in overpopulated sub-districts of ger area enroll up to 55 children per class.
- On average teachers work 2-3 extra hours daily, leading to a full working day of 10-12 hours,
- Teachers indicate external and internal inspection are particularly stressful, and child development assessment is the most time-consuming work.

Under trained and unqualified staff is mostly represented by assistant teachers.

- Only required pre-service training for assistant teachers is basic nursing 9-21 days programs provided by unqualified private training centers.
- Assistant teachers with no specialized pre-service education, actively participate and support class teachers with children's learning activities.



Insufficient supply of qualified workforce vis a vis demand.

Lack of centralized workforce planning and social welfare policies have led to decrease in enrollment at teacher training institutions. Upcoming kindergartens will have some serious issues associated with shortage of qualified teaching workforce. In general, kindergarten teacher as a profession is decreasing in popularity among youth, due to low wages, hard working conditions, and lack of career development opportunities.

Outdated pre-service training programs.

- Due to decrease in enrollment rates, some universities tend to lower the entry requirements for class teachers and only assessing the general admission test scores without considerations around individuals' motivation for becoming a teacher or personal competencies.
- Bachelor degree programs are outdated and mostly based on theory. Various experts shared lack of practical experience as one of the key issues with the professional capacity of recent graduates.
- There is no integrated training program and curriculum for kindergarten teachers across private teacher training institutions.
- There is no curriculum for assistant teachers, and no alignment between assistant teacher and class teacher training system.

Insufficiency of in-service professional development and capacity training for the workforce.

- Existing professional development training provided by public institutes are insufficient, short in duration, use outdated lecture models, and do not provide interactive “learn – test – advise”, mentoring or in-house training modules.
- New generation of workforce is interested in continuous professional development, but high workload, lack of financial support and paid leaves do not allow them to receive proper on-the-job trainings.
- As experts and workforce indicated, lack of online and digital training components within existing programs is another area that needs attention.



Parents are the primary caregivers in the early years of development for children. Improving parents' responsive caregiving and stimulation practices with their children lead to better ECE outcomes.

This is highly relevant for low-income communities in ger districts. In our engagements with principals, teachers and other sectoral stakeholders, we did not find any specific reference to **concentrated efforts to improve parents' engagements** through parental programmes for parents with children enrolled in kindergartens.

Common concerns towards parents described by various stakeholders (teachers, principals, experts)

- Lack of basic understanding about age appropriate ECED and responsive caregiving
- Low level of engagement in children's development at home and lack of tools for home-based learning.
- Non-collaborative attitude towards teachers and kindergartens.

Corporal punishment still exists in a family environment. 2018 national statistics show that 28% - 49% of families use violent discipline, with both alcoholism and lack of knowledge were identified as primary causes for this.

Pre-primary education core curriculum emphasizes family and community engagement, however, there are no specific standards for community or parents' engagement detailed in guidelines/standards laid out by the government for kindergartens.



While this study is primarily aimed at understanding the education and early learning aspects of ECEC provisions, our engagements with stakeholder and experts have indicated following **gaps associated with safety and nutrition** existent in service provisions.

Various level of child abuse cases/capital punishment

- Cases of different level of child abuse (psychological, emotional and physical) are registered in both public and private kindergartens as well as childcare service provision.
- Due to early age of the children, it is difficult to assess in detail the overall situation. Some experts express the need in adding psychological educational components in pre-service trainings or adding psychological assessment in the job requirement criteria.
- ECEC workforce is in general lacking awareness and knowledge about child rights and are not familiar with specific regulatory documents such as “Regulation on preventing child abuse in educational organizations”.

Inadequate health and safety conditions

A 2017 inspection of 100+ metropolitan kindergartens, including both public and private kindergartens, found that:

- Space per child in 66.6% of kindergartens was 1.5-2.2 times less than the established hygiene norms;
- 25.0% did not possess standard washing/sanitation facilities;
- Food nutrition levels did not meet all regulations, though the level of calories per day did meet the standard;
- 25.0% of mechanical ventilation systems in cafeterias did not function properly;
- 41.6% of food storage spaces did not meet hygiene standards;
- Increased respiratory diseases among children in urban areas.

Kindergarten meals

- Budget allocations approved for the cost of meals for children is unable to cover the necessary calorie norms and standards.



Despite the policy efforts to promote equitable access to preschool education, progress towards **reaching most disadvantaged and hard-to-reach children** residing in outskirts of UB city has been slow.

Various stakeholders and experts shared common **concerns towards effective policy planning and implementation**, rather than lack of quality regulations.

Planning and implementation

- Considering political and budget pressures, government officials tend to focus on expanding access, without due consideration of quality and equity of services.
- Inconsistent policy planning and implementation is also associated with constant change in government structures and high turnover of officials.
- Government's efforts to deliver alternative ECE services mostly target children from rural herder families. Hard-to-reach children living in Ulaanbaatar, especially those in remote ger areas, don't have access to formal alternative provisions.
- Some successful pilots funded by development partners and donors are not sustainable and do not get a chance to be scaled-up or applied to the system in full.
- Promotion of and regulatory support directed at childcare service provision is inadequate and inconsistent. As a result, this early childhood care provision is not continuously developed and often de-prioritized due to change in government's agenda.
- While upcoming infrastructure projects may increase access, classroom congestion is not being addressed. Besides, there are still no structured ways of equipping newly constructed kindergartens with qualified workforce.



Examination of the spending patterns and budget allocations by the donor organizations, revealed **weaknesses with spending efficiency**. System exhibits efficiency losses due to shortcomings in the planning of recurrent and capital investments. Issue of inefficiency in public spending is rather systemic. 2018 World Economic Forum report on “Efficiency of Government Spending” ranked Mongolia at 124 out of total 136 countries

Budget spending

- Out of ECE provision, young children can not benefit from the state budget spent on pre-school education.
- In ger areas, location of new kindergarten projects is often not aligned with actual needs, leading to excess capacity in some areas while overcrowding persists in others.
- Uneven quality of infrastructure in kindergartens, with too much being spent on new construction in some places with little regard to maintenance in others.
- Expenditures on budget items such as learning and teaching materials as well environment renovation is very low.
- Budget allocations and subsidies for childcare services are inconsistent.
- Lack of analytical works in ECE sector, limiting the generation of information to enable design of targeted interventions to improve equity of public investments.



EXISTING EFFORTS



- This section presents an overview of efforts undertaken by the government, development partners, international and local NGOs directed at addressing various gaps identified through this study. Presented list of efforts is not exhaustive and requires further research and analysis.
- Compared to other education sub-sectors, only few development partners and donors, such as UNICEF, Save The Children and World Bank, have long-term strategic focus on supporting early childhood system in Mongolia. Best practices and successful pilots developed with the support from the development partners tend to be partially inherited by the government and integrated into the system. This is mostly due to lack of continuous public funding or change in policy priorities.
- Similar situation can be observed at community level efforts. ECEC is a core priority of only handful of organizations such as World Vision Mongolia, Christina Noble Children's Foundation, Magic Mongolia, Veloo Foundation and Mongolian Education Alliance. While local NGOs have been piloting programs funded by some development partners, these are small scale and short-lived owing to lack of continuous access to resources or changing priorities of donors.
- Technology based solutions enabling ECEC for children, parents and workforce are rather in nascent stage and limited. Existing solutions are primarily represented by few information sharing websites and blogs.



Access - infrastructure development

Government is planning to increase the current 78% enrollment rate of UB city by 5% between 2019-2020, through construction of 50+ new kindergarten buildings and 20+ space renovation projects.

Developing partners like ADB and UNICEF are providing a portion of the funding for infrastructure projects, but most of the investment is coming from state budget.

NGOs like Veloo Foundation, Magic Mongolia and Christina Noble Children's Foundation are contributing through establishment of additional kindergarten spaces in remote ger districts.

Access - alternative provisions

Usage of spare seats at private kindergartens - UB City Department of Education is providing operational and daily meal costs for extra seats available at private kindergartens to enroll additional children.

Shift classes at fixed kindergarten - shortened day classes for children without access and living nearer to ECE facilities (alternative model approved by the government).

School preparation classes - organizations like Mongolian Education Alliance, Good Neighbors and Flourishing Future are conducting short-term school prep. classes for children aged 4-5, who have not been enrolled in kindergarten.

Ger kindergartens - UNICEF, ADB, World Vision Mongolia have previously worked on enabling ger kindergarten models in both rural and urban context.

Mobile solutions - Save the Children, UNICEF and the government made efforts to enable mobile teachers and traveling summer kindergartens. Such efforts are primarily directed at hard-to-reach children in rural areas.



Quality of learning

International and local NGOs are providing learning materials and tools to the kindergartens of their target districts. Public kindergartens have fundraising initiatives through collecting contributions from parents to purchase learning materials, organize extracurricular activities and enable space renovation.

Quality of teaching

Workload and wage - government is considering having 2 shift class teachers to reduce the workload of an average 10 working hours (additional 7,000 teachers needed). Also, starting from 2019, class and assistant teacher's salary has increased up to 20% and 8% respectively. The government is planning to initiate cost cover for medical check-ups of teachers on an annual basis.

Professional Development - according to the government's 2019 resolution on "Promoting Teacher's Development", it is planning to provide computers to all class teachers of the fixed public kindergartens and set-up teacher's development centers/cabinets at all level of educational organizations.

Quality of workforce

Various teacher development trainings are jointly provided by the Save the Children, UNICEF, JICA, Mongolian Education Alliance, Good Neighbors and other local NGOs mostly for their target districts.



Parents' capacity and involvement

Parents corner at public kindergartens – some public kindergartens are setting-up parents' corner within existing space.

Child Friendly Kindergarten Project - parental training was one of the components of this program delivered by Save The Children.

Home-based Learning Project - Save the Children in partnership with the government delivered home-based program combined with mobile teacher and parental training components aimed at ensuring school readiness of 5-year-old children from herders' families.

Distance learning project - UNICEF developed various parental training and awareness raising content for TV programs, learning materials and teaching manuals for parents.



Safety and nutrition

Advocacy and public campaigns educating public on child rights and protection are initiated by INGOs (World Vision Mongolia, UNICEF, SCJ, Good Neighbors etc.) and jointly run with government agencies.

Policy on Ensuring Child Protection in the Kindergarten Environment focuses on educating ECE workforce on child's rights and protection is being developed by the UB City Department for Education and Agency for Family, Child and Youth.

Abuse Free Kindergarten Environment Program – (Women's Foundation of Mongolia NGO), this project is aiming to add child's right and protection modules into degree programs of School of Education and/or Institute of Teacher's Professional Development.

Child Friendly Kindergarten Project - Save the Children's work on upgrading sanitation conditions by renovating kindergarten toilets was one of the program components.

Monitoring and assessment - the government is considering imposing a requirement on public and private kindergartens to install CCTV cameras.



EXISTING PLATFORMS FOR WORKFORCE & PARENTS

WEBSITES

CIVIL SOCIETY

WWW.KHUUKHED-KHUGJI.MN (Eng. - child development)

- Established: 2017
- Target audience : **WORKFORCE AND PARENTS**
- Initiated and operated by: voluntarily by Mrs. Bolormaa – ECE expert, officer at City Department for Education

Platform traffic:
of total hits this year: 429,369 times
of total hits last month: 58,949 times
of total hits last week: 12,882 times

WWW.DAVALGAA.MN (Eng. - wave)

- Established: 2009
- Target audience : **WORKFORCE AND PARENTS**
- Initiated and operated by: "Education Wave" NGO
- Similar content and function to above

Platform traffic:
of total hits this year: 5,6 mln times
of total hits last month: 38,583 times
of total hits last week: 3,542 times

WWW.BUUVEI.MN (Eng. - lullaby)

- Established: 2013
- Target audience : **WORKFORCE AND PARENTS**
- Initiated by: initiated by Ministry of Edu and got funding until 2014, currently operated by ECE expert voluntarily

Platform traffic:
of total hits: 4,3 mln times
of registered users: 1,239
of total publications: 372

Functions:

1. Sectoral newsletters
2. Information and experience sharing, pedagogy related content for parents and workforce
3. Update on policy and regulations
4. Enrollment registration

GOVERNMENT

WWW.ESIS.EDU.MN (Education Sector Information System)

- Established: 2013 (ongoing development), pre-school education system component was developed and applied in 2018
- Users: **PROVIDERS, WORKFORCE, PARENTS**
- Initiated and operated by: Ministry of Edu

PURPOSE:

- Creation and development of integrated platform for education sector participants
- To apply to all level of educational organization (Pre-School, Secondary school and Universities)
- To provide opportunity for research and planning by providing realistic and reliable information to users

FUNCTIONS:

- Sector Infographic, info, statistics distribution
- Update on policy and regulations
- Child evaluation platform for methodologists and class teachers
- School enrollment registration tool (testing)

SUB-PLATFORM FOR PARENTS

WWW.PARENTS.ESIS.EDU.MN

Introduced in : 2018

For registered parents it provides following opportunities:

- Communication tool for teachers and parents
- To receive child improvement info evaluated by class teacher on a daily basis
- To learn about daily tasks/homework
- To learn about other public activities, trainings organized by teacher and kindergarten

OF REGISTERED USERS ON PRE-SCHOOL SYSTEM COMPONENT

of kindergartens: 1435
of workforce: 27,214
of children :248,654

PRIVATE

WWW.MAAMUU.MN (Eng. - child)

- Established: 2017
- Target audience : **PARENTS**
- Initiated and operated by: initiated jointly by UNICEF and Mongol Content – largest local media and content agency. 30% of set-up cost funded by UNICEF
- Content: 0-6 years old child educational and development content for parents. Sections:
 - Education
 - Nurture
 - Health
 - Nutrition
- Managed by Mongol Content + team of experts (doctors, psychologists, nutritionists etc.)
- Platform traffic:

Platform traffic:
Average monthly hits: ≈ 100kc

SOCIAL MEDIA

["TEACHERS OF PRE-SCHOOL EDUCATION"](#)

PUBLIC FACEBOOK GROUP

- 10,000+ members
- Initiated and operated by: teachers – individuals
- Functions:
 - Job vacancy postings
 - Sales advertisement for training and learning materials
 - Experience sharing

TV CONTENT

["HOME TEACHER" PAID IPTV CONTENT](#)

EDUCATIONAL CONTENT FOR PRE-SCHOOL AND SCHOOL AGE CHILDREN

PROVIDER: UNIVISION (SUBSIDIARY OF MCS GROUP)

STARTED IN: 2019

FEE: 9,7 USD/month (May 2019, USD/MNT exchange rate))



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| ORGANIZATION TYPE | ORGANIZATION | NAME - POSITION |
|--|--|--|
| DEVELOPMENT PARTNERS, DONORS, INGOs | Swiss Agency for Cooperation and Development | Zayasaikhan D. – Senior program officer |
| | ADB Mongolia Resident Mission | Itgel L. – Senior social sector officer |
| | World Bank Mongolia | Pagma G. – Operations officer |
| | UNICEF Mongolia | Tsendsuren T. – ECD consultant |
| | The Asia Foundation Mongolia | Mark K. – Country Representative |
| | Good Neighbors | Bolormaa G. – Education officer |
| | World Vision Mongolia | Tsolmon B. – Area program lead |
| | Save the Children Japan | Tsolmon G. – Project coordinator |
| | Christina Noble Children's Foundation | Amaraa B. – Operations manager |
| NGOs | Mongolian Education Alliance | Batjargal B. – Executive director |
| | Veloo Foundation | Julie V. - Founder |
| | Magic Mongolia | Misheel O. – Head of Id Shidiin Oron 1 |
| | Flourishing Futures | Benjamin - Executive director |
| | Mongolian Women's Fund | Erdenechimeg B. – Executive director |
| GOVERNMENT | MECSS | Bolormaa S. – Preschool education department officer |
| | Agency for Family, Child and Youth Development | Ariungerel - Officer |
| | City Department for Education | Munkhzaya B. – Preschool education department officer |
| | District education offices | Songinokhairkhan, Sukhbaatar, Bayanzurkh district officers |
| ECEC PROVIDERS | Public kindergartens | Songinokhairkhan, Sukhbaatar district public kindergartens |
| | American School of Ulaanbaatar | Ariun Z. - Counselor |
| | Private chain kindergartens with subsidiary models | Ariuntuya - Founder of Bright world private kindergarten |
| WORKFORCE TRAINING INSTITUTIONS | Public School of Preschool Education | Gantsetseg L. – Executive director |
| | Institute of Teacher's Professional Development | Surenchimeg D. – Executive director |
| PRIVATE SECTOR | Mongol Content LLC | Odonchimeg G. – Senior marketing specialist |



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