



## **EARLY INTERVENTION SERVICE FOR DEAF AND HARD OF HEARING INFANTS, TODDLERS, AND THEIR FAMILIES AND IMPLEMENTING A BILINGUAL/BICULTURAL APPROACH FOR DEAF EDUCATION IN MONGOLIA**

**AID-438-F-14-00001**

**Funder: USAID**

Grantee: Mongolian Association of Sign Language Interpreters (MASLI)

Period of Performance: September 2014 – August 2016

Total Estimated Cost: \$ 294114

### **FINAL REPORT**

#### **1. Overview**

Mongolian Association of Sign Language Interpreters (MASLI) carried out an innovative project Bilingual Bicultural Approach to Deaf Education in Mongolia from 2014 to 2016. MASLI implemented the project through collaboration with School #29, Kindergarten #186, Education Department of Sukhbaatar District, Ministry of Education, Culture and Science (MECS), Education Research Institute (ERI) and Deaf NGOs such as Sign Language Council of Mongolia, Deaf Education, Association of Parents of Deaf Children. The project addressed the key problems in Deaf education system in Mongolia including lack of early intervention program for children of age 0-3 that causes children's profound language and developmental delays; practice of outdated oral language methodology which uses lip reading, speech, mimicking the mouth shapes and breathing patterns of speech instead of using Sign language within the classroom. The project built the knowledge on the modern bilingual bicultural approach to Deaf education, developed innovative methodology for Deaf education in Mongolia, changed the attitude of education sector policy-makers, professionals, parents of Deaf children, and contributed to reforming of Deaf education system in Mongolia.

MASLI identified and prioritized the following four areas as the main components of the project:

- Increasing participation of Deaf adults in Deaf children's education;
- Establishing Early Intervention Service for Deaf infants and toddlers, and their families.
- Providing bilingual bicultural (bi-bi) education within the Deaf education system
- Strengthening the organizational capacity of local Disabled People's Organizations (DPOs) and enhancing human rights

The project was mainly implemented in Ulaanbaatar, capital city of Mongolia, but it, also, reached out to 4 provinces (Arkhangai, Uvs, Dornod, Darkhan-Uul). The project started in September 2014

and ended in August 2016. The main strategies the project employed were advocacy of decision-makers at policy and institutional levels; capacity building of Deaf educators and Deaf people's organizations, parents, teachers who work with Deaf children; development of new curriculums, methodologies and materials; building and strengthening communication and collaboration linkages that were absent before.

By the two years, the project successfully delivered all the expected results/deliverables:

1. Developed Sign Language teaching and visual aids: 3000 copies of Sign language teaching DVDs and Sign Language Dictionary with over 1000 signs, 1030 Sign language visual aids, 1000 math handouts, 6 storybooks. These teaching and visual aids are the first in Mongolia aids that are developed for early age and school-age Deaf children and their parents.
2. Developed a program on Early Intervention Service (Creative curriculum on Early Intervention, which is developed and adapted by the specialist from Education Research Institute), provided educational service to 13 Deaf and Hard of Hearing (D/HH) children 0-3 years of age and their parents at Kindergarten #186 and. This is the first ever Early Intervention program in Mongolia.
3. Printed two books (Sign Language book and Deaf Education book) that provide information to parents of D/HH children and to the general public. These book are one of the first Mongolian sign-linguistic and bi-bi approach books published in Mongolia.
4. Developed a Sign Language teaching program and trained 6 Deaf education professionals, 33 Deaf educators for teaching at Deaf schools in Ulaanbaatar City and four (4) provinces, and trained 42 D/HH children's parents and family members. Each trainee group had own specific program that met the needs and capacity of each group.
5. Developed a bi-bi Deaf education curriculum for elementary school and educated 12 elementary school children at Experimental group at School #29.
6. Conducted a Kaufman ABC-II Test among 12 pupils of the Experimental group to measure the intellectual development if the children receiving bilingual bicultural education at Experimental group at School #29.
7. Organized 2 public workshops on reforming Deaf education and introducing the bi-bi approach to Deaf education with the total number of participants being 212.
8. Produced a documentary on the bi-bi approach in Deaf education in Mongolia and successfully introduced the approach to the general public.

## **2. Performance results and Achievements**

### **2.1. Increased participation of Deaf adults in Deaf children's education**

#### ***Project results:***

- 7 D/HH teachers attended and successfully graduated from Special Education class of Mongolian University of Education with help of Sign language interpreters. No Sign language interpretation services had been provided to D/HH students. Initially, the project planned to provide interpretation service to 2 students, but 5 additional people expressed an interest to study with Sign language interpretation. All 7 of the graduated students are staff members of Deaf school, kindergarten, Deaf Community Information Center.
- 2 Sign language interpreters developed the capacity of and specialized in Sign language interpretation in academic setting.

- 22 Deaf teachers in Ulaanbaatar and 35 Deaf people in 4 provinces attended a specially designed training program that helped them to acquire knowledge and skills to become Sign language trainers. The Sign language trainers, who completed the project-run training on teaching Sign Language, received certificates from the Project team and are prepared to conduct Sign language training (for Deaf children and adults, for local officials). They are equipped with manuals, handout materials, visual aids and they were trained on how to use these materials when they teach classes.
- For the first ever time in Mongolia, Deaf teachers, involved in the Bi-Bi project, worked as lead teachers in Deaf education and demonstrated that Deaf teachers are the best teachers for D/HH children.
- Capacity of the Deaf teachers involved in the project activities strengthened and they are equipped with knowledge, skills and self-confidence to promote the Bi-Bi approach to Deaf Education in Mongolia at local and national levels
- Deaf teachers' commitment to promotion of bilingual bicultural approach has been established

***Project achievements:***

- ❖ New practice in Deaf education in Mongolia was set showing that Deaf teachers not only can work as teachers, but are most suitable teachers for educating Deaf children
- ❖ Deaf School #29 changed its hired Deaf teachers. 4 Deaf teachers started working at School #29 as assistant teachers
- ❖ New approach to higher education of Deaf people has been introduced to the stakeholders through provision of sign language interpretation service in a higher education institution.

**2.2. Establishing Early Intervention Service for Deaf infants and toddlers, and their families**

***Project results:***

- Early Intervention Program of the Bi-Bi project is the first ever program in Mongolia that targets D/HH children of age 0-3 and the project at Kindergarten #186 has become a model for early intervention in kindergarten for children with special needs (not only for D/HH children).
- Education Department of Sukhbaatar District approved the Creative curriculum of Early Intervention Program, which is based on the development standards of Mongolia for children of 0-6 years and on the American Creative Program of Early Intervention for Deaf children. This curriculum was developed in close collaboration of the key specialists in pre-school education from Kindergarten #186, Education Research Institute, Ministry of Education and Bi-Bi Project team.
- Kindergarten #186 has developed the organizational structure, has a fully equipped and furnished classroom, teaching materials and aids, trained and experienced teachers to run EI program oriented for children of age 0-3.
- The Bi-Bi Project built the awareness of the key state organization, Central Committee for Protection of Health of Disabled Children, on a need to start Early Detection service in Mongolia.
- 15 parents of D/HH children, enrolled in EI Program at Kindergarten #186 built the knowledge of Sign language and are able to communicate with their children.
- 23 teachers and assistant teachers from Kindergarten #186 built the knowledge of Sign language and are able to provide D/HH children with education services in their primary language.
- 13 D/HH children of age 0-3 years of age, who attended the EI Program at Kindergarten #186, showed good development progress, including language and cognitive development, that will prevent D/HH children from becoming delayed in education system

***Project achievements:***

- ❖ The EI Program of Bi-Bi project was integrated in the core program of preschool education for D/HH children and, through Creative Program of Early Intervention, this program is, now, available and can be replicated **nationwide**.
- ❖ The Creative Curriculum of Early Intervention Program is the first early intervention program the state provides to children with disabilities, and among children with disabilities, D/HH are the first to receive this service. It means, in future, children with autism, down syndrome, language development delays, children with mental disabilities have got an opportunity to attend this Creative Program of Early Intervention for D/HH children.
- ❖ The EI Program has attracted attention of public officials to the need to establish early detection service in Mongolia. Recently, Ministry of Population Development and Social Protection has signed an agreement with a foreign aid organization to implement a big project on establishing early service in Mongolia during 2016-2018 (2 year project)

### **2.3. Providing bilingual bicultural (bi-bi) education within the Deaf education system**

#### ***Project results:***

- Mongolian Language and Sign Language curriculum for elementary school, based on Bilingual Bicultural approach in Deaf education, was successfully tested in Experimental Class of School #92
- The first ever Mongolian Language and Sign Language curriculum based on Bilingual Bicultural approach in Deaf education was approved by MECS as the official curriculum to be used in Deaf education **nationwide**.
- 12 Deaf children enrolled in the Experimental Group of School #29, who received education through bilingual bicultural methodology and used Sign language as the primary education language, show higher self-confidence, better communication and social skills, and stronger knowledge.
- First ever visual aids for Deaf children with hearing disability attending elementary school were produced in Mongolia. 6 storybooks, 500 math handouts, 1030 visual aids, 200 exercise handbooks as well as additional 18 sets of visual aids for class teaching were produced and handed over to School #29.
- Teachers and defectologists at School #29 are recognizing Bilingual and Bicultural approach as more progressive methodology in Deaf education than Oral methodology
- Teachers and methodologists, in particular, young professionals from School #29, increasingly accept Sign Language as the primary language to teach Deaf children
- Close collaboration with School #29 and Kindergarten #186, where these two institutions agreed to involve their teachers in Sign language trainings, is a big step in advocacy for reforming education system in those two places and promoting Bilingual bicultural approach.
- Children's development and learning have intensified once the parents acquired sign language, through attending the sign language training, and increased their participation in their children's education.
- 14 parents/family members of the children from the Experimental group at School #29 attended the Sign language training offered by the Bi-Bi project and strengthened their capacity to communicate with own children. The academic results were higher for those children, whose parents actively attended Sign language trainings and increased their involvement in education of their children
- 22 parents of the children from other classes of School #29 expressed interest and attended Sign language training offered by the Bi-Bi project. This demand demonstrated

- that parents, once aware of their children's needs, are willing to build their Sign language capacity
- The bilingual bicultural approach has been included in the activities of the teachers, parents and children from School #29

***Project achievements:***

- ❖ Policy-makers of the ES education at Ministry level accepted the concept of Bilingual Bicultural approach in Deaf education as the most appropriate teaching methodology to provide D/HH children with elementary school education meeting the standards of General Education Core curriculum in Elementary schools of Mongolia.
- ❖ Strong foundation for integration of the Sign language methodology in the primary education of D/HH children was established in Mongolia with the approval of the Sign language and Mongolian (written) language teaching program by MECS and its official handover to School #29.
- ❖ School #29 is making the initial steps to reform its methodology and switch from Oral approach to Bilingual Bicultural approach in Deaf education.
- ❖ Children, who finished the EI Program with bilingual bicultural methodology, have got an opportunity to continue their education under the curriculum on Bilingual Bicultural Approach to Deaf primary education.

**2.4. Strengthening the organizational capacity of local Disabled People's Organizations (DPOs) and enhancing human rights**

***Project results:***

- 40 DPOs participated in the implementation of the Bi-Bi Project and increased their understanding, knowledge and capacity on Sign language and their commitment to protection and promotion of D/HH children has increased
- Institutional capacity and organizational development of the 3 key partner DPOS (Mongolia Sign Language Council, Deaf Education, Association of Parents of Deaf Children) strengthened
- Collaboration of DPOs was strengthened on Deaf education and, in overall, recognized the power of collective action
- DPOs have played an integral part in the campaign advocating for establishing a Council on Disabled Children's Education at MECS (this is on-going campaign)
- DPOs recognized the importance of Deaf education in protection and promotion of human rights of Deaf persons
- In 4 provinces, 180 public officials and service providers who closely work with Deaf persons (social welfare workers, family clinic doctors, police personnel, local administration officials, employers) developed basic Sign language knowledge.
- In 4 provinces, 150 public officials and service providers established understanding of UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities and developed a shared understanding on Accessibility of State Services.

***Project achievements:***

- ❖ Visibility and strengthened advocacy of DPOs on the issue of Deaf education
- ❖ Collaboration of the DPOs played an important role in including Sign language as the primary language of Deaf persons in the Law on Rights of Persons with Disability

- (approved on February 5, 2016)
- ❖ DPOs have increased their presence in networks that work on the issue of disabled children's education and increased the importance of the issue of Deaf education

### **3. Main strategies**

#### **Strong cooperation with policy-makers**

- The Project disseminated to policy-makers information about the lack of early intervention program and disadvantages of the Oral education approach. Policy-makers commonly accepted the current approach to Deaf education contributes to further deepening of the gap between the education for Deaf children and education for hearing children.
- The Project involved officials from the MECS in the process of development of the Bilingual Bicultural curriculum for Deaf education from the beginning and they attended main discussion meetings. Thus, the curriculum incorporated their recommendations and clarifications. Moreover, these specialists and officials became advocates of Bilingual Bicultural Elementary School Curriculum.
- The Project was able to win the support of MECS, and MECS supported the dissemination of the project. For instance, MECS sent an official letter to the Sukhbaatar District Education Department ordering to collaborate with MASLI for approval and implementation of the curriculums in the partner kindergarten and Deaf school, and support the project activities. Prior to visiting the rural provinces and conducting trainings, the Project team obtained official support from Ministry of Population Development and Social Welfare (MDPSW) and the Ministries sent official letters to affiliated state organizations and departments in the target rural areas and ordered them to assist the Project Team in its rural activities.
- On November 18, 2015, MECS officially handed over the Bi-Bi ES curriculum to School #29 in Sukhbaatar District during a ceremony organized at School #29
- The Project collaborated with Central Committee for Protection of Health of Disabled Children, a state agency that provides policy and service guidance to health sector organizations on changes and modifications of health services to disabled children. The Project collaborated with this agency on establishing early detection service in Mongolia. Currently, this agency is a part of MDPSW, and the Ministry has taken over the lead role in establishing early detection service in Mongolia.

#### **Partnership with education specialists**

- The curriculum of Early Intervention Program was developed by close collaboration of the key specialists in pre-school education from Kindergarten #186, Education Research Institute, Ministry of Education and Bi-Bi Project team.
- Recognized education specialists as well as officials from the Ministry of Education were involved in the process of development of the Bilingual Bicultural curriculum for Deaf education at School #29.
- The management of School #29 and Kindergarten #186 was an ally of the Bi-Bi project. The Bi-Bi Project Team specifically targeted the Principal and Manager of School #29 to educate them on the advantages of Bi-Bi approach to Deaf education and the need to reform the Deaf education methodology.

#### **Partnership with parents**

- The partnership with parents of Deaf children was identified as a key part in Deaf education and the Project worked closely with the parents of children enrolled in the Experimental group of

School #29 and the EI Program group at Kindergarten #186 and involved them in teaching, supporting and evaluating of their children's education. The evaluation by parents shows that, in overall, the parents observe their children and see the improvement

- The Project worked with parents, by offering Sign language classes, to create Sign language communication environment at home and enable children to use Sign language in everyday life. Parents acknowledged that children's expression of their emotions and intentions has increased and, most importantly, parents are able to respond and communicate.

### **Piloting new approach**

- The main specific of the Bilingual Bicultural curriculum for Deaf education is that it connects Sign language and Mongolian written language, enabling Deaf children become proficient in both Mongolian written language and Sign language and, thus, become bilingual.
- The Bi-Bi approach to Deaf education was thoroughly tested and verified at the Experimental Class of ES Program and EI Program was tested and verified at Kindergarten #186. This pilot testing helped to demonstrate the advantages of these programs to Ministry and other officials as well as make necessary revisions to the programs based on the results of this verification.
- The final ES curriculum is has instructions on how to use the curriculum. And, the EI program is accompanied with recommendations and manuals for teachers.

### **Leading role of Deaf adults**

Representatives of Deaf community of Mongolia were involved in capacity building, public awareness and advocacy activities of the project and their voices on the needs of Deaf children and the need for Bilingual bicultural approach in Deaf education were delivered to education specialists, policy-makers and public. And, Deaf adults connected the need to develop Deaf education in Mongolia to the protection of human rights. For instance, the leaders of Deaf Community, supported by this project, delivered the recommendations to Ministry of Education in April, 2015. Association of Parents of Deaf Children NGO played a leading role in working with parents of D/HH children. Deaf Education NGO was the key partner in developing education materials, visual aids and DVDs. Mongolian Sign Language Development Council NGO played a leading role in developing Sign language training programs, Sign language dictionary. In overall, 60% of the Project Team consisted of D/HH people and 90% of sub-contracted organizations and individuals (development of DVD, drawings for the storybooks, etc.) were from Deaf community.

### **Capacity building**

- Sign Language Training program has been successfully and organized for 6 groups (75 people): Deaf teachers, teachers of School #29, teachers and employees of Kindergarten #186, parents of children from Experimental Group at School #29, Parents of Deaf children from Kindergarten, parents of children from other groups at School #29. The Project Team developed different training programs for 6 groups, each tailored to the interests and needs of particular group.
- The training program gives not only knowledge of Sign language, but understanding of Deaf culture, specifics of working with Deaf children, rights of Deaf people. In other words, the training program was designed to develop new approach to understanding of Deaf children and their education. The training program is designed so that participants build awareness of Bilingual bicultural approach to education of Deaf children.

### **Public awareness raising**

The Project organized the series of public awareness raising events to bring attention to the issue of Deaf education and its reforming. In particular, the Conference on Deaf Education was of particular significance:

- First ever Conference on Deaf Education was organized in Mongolia. The Conference was able to bring together all different stakeholders that work on Deaf education from different perspectives or different issues and provide a space to express their opinions, exchange information on their work on Deaf education for children, discuss needs and challenges and develop recommendations.
- One of the immediate results of the Conference is that Mongolian National University of Education administrators decided to include sign language lessons in the Special Need Teacher Training. Another immediate result of the Conference organizers presented the recommendations derived from the Conference to the Government of Mongolia.
- The Conference influenced and changed positively the society viewpoint regarding Deaf people, sign language and Deaf culture, and increased the visibility of Deaf community and highlighted the importance of their participation in matters that affect their lives.

### **Connection with existing structures**

#### ES Curriculum:

- The main concept for development of the ES curriculum was to prepare a curriculum in accordance with the Primary School Core Curriculum of Mongolia (approved in 2014), but at the same time to ensure it meets the needs of pupils who went through Bilingual Bicultural program in kindergarten and support their continues learning.
- The project guided the process of development of the Bilingual Bicultural curriculum for Deaf Children by this concept and the goal was to design and structure it in compliance with this core curriculum.
- That's why, Bilingual Bicultural curriculum for Deaf education is closely connected to the Core Curriculum for Elementary School of the Ministry of Education and Science and its purpose is to provide Deaf children with level of education that meets the requirements for elementary school, regardless of hearing ability of pupils.
- The ES Curriculum is, therefore, based on General Education Core curriculum of elementary/primary schools. In other words, Primary School Core Curriculum is based on Mongolian education system, but provides new methodology for teaching of D/HH children.

#### Creative Curriculum:

- The project led and coordinated development of the EI Creative Curriculum for Deaf children based on two materials - American Creative curriculum for Early Intervention for Deaf Children and Mongolian Child's Development Standards for children from 0-6 years of age (developed in 2008-2012).
- The EI Creative Curriculum was developed for children 0-2 years of age. This age range was selected because Preschool Education Core Curriculum covers children of age 2-6. And, since this core curriculum already covers children of age 2-6, the project covers children of age 0-12 months and 13-24 months.
- The curriculum, therefore, is based on the development standards of young children used in Mongolia and on international practices of early intervention.

### **Building collaboration**

Whenever possible, the Project organized activities in a way that several stakeholders were involved and collaborated:

- The curriculums were developed with participation of the officials from MECS, academic/scholars from Education Research Institute, practitioners from School #29 and Kindergarten #186.
- Public workshops and forums were organized in partnership with Deaf School #29, Mongolian National Federation of the Deaf, Mongolian Association of the Deaf, Mongolian Association of Parents with Deaf Children. Participants were Deaf school teachers, parents of Deaf and Hard of hearing children, Teachers and administrators of the Mongolian National Education University of Mongolia, Deaf/Hard of hearing educators, Civil society organization and public.
- 5 organizations collaborated for organizing and conducting Sign language trainings
- Sign language trainings involved meetings of parents and teachers to discuss bilingual bicultural approach to Deaf education and their collaboration for children's education and development.

#### **4. Main challenges**

- School #29 has a long history of using old Oral approach and have medical attitude to special education. The defectologists of School #29 use the old Oral method that teaches D/HH children to speak. Thus, the main challenge of Bi-Bi project was to introduce new bilingual bicultural methodology to School #29, change the existing attitude of defectologists and teachers of School #29 and face their resistance on daily basis. (The resistance of the defectologists and teachers of School #29 strengthened during the 2nd semester in 2015 and they officially demanded from the Principal of School #29 to remove the Bi-Bi project from School #29).
- Teachers of School #29 are hearing teachers. The international practice of Deaf education emphasizes that Deaf teachers, who are excellent signers, are best educators for Deaf and Hard of hearing children. However, because of the existing practice and methodology in School #29, the defectologists and teachers openly questioned the capacity of the Deaf teachers of the Bi-Bi project. Thus, the challenge was to introduce the new approach that puts Deaf teachers as the main educators in Deaf education. (The attitude that degrades Deaf people in Mongolia was demonstrated during this Conference when some representatives of School #29 claimed that hearing people prepared presentations given by Deaf participants during the Conference).
- The main challenge was that Sign language linguistic research and study in Mongolia is still not developed. The Sign language is a rich language and there is a vast space for Deaf interpreters and sign-linguists to study Mongolian Sign Language. This activity opened a new area for future attention that is to study the existing Sign language in Mongolia.

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