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THE DECENTRALIZATION OF
THE NATIONAL PROGRAMME OF ACTION:
THE EXPERIENCE OF MONGOLIA

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This paper forms part of the background documentation for an ICDC study on "The Decentralization of the National Programmes of Action", under the direction of Carlos Castillo.

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The views expressed in this paper are those of the authors and do not necessarily represent the views of the UNICEF International Child Development Centre.

The implementation and decentralization of the Mongolian National Programme of Action for the Development of Children in the 1990s (NPA) have been actively promoted and undertaken by a number of Government organizations, including the *Great Hural* (parliament), the Ministry of Population Policy and Labour, the Ministry of Foreign Relations, the National Development Board, the Ministry of Finance, the Ministry of Health, the Ministry of Science and Education, and the State Statistics Office. Numerous national-level nongovernmental organizations and private sector entities have been willingly cooperating in NPA decentralization. The *aimag* (provincial) governors are highly committed to the implementation of the local programmes of action.

UNICEF has been very supportive of the Government in the development of decentralization policy and has been providing methodological, technical and financial assistance in NPA implementation.

This paper is based on published and unpublished sources of information, including reports of workshops, seminars and consultations connected with the preparation and decentralization of the NPA.

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Like other countries of the former Soviet Bloc, Mongolia is undergoing a painful transition from the political monopoly of one party to a multiparty political system and from a centrally planned command economy to a free market economy. Wide-ranging political and economic reforms have generated drastic changes in Mongolian society. The transition is deeply fraught with economic problems, particularly because of the collapse of the Soviet Union, the country's main trading partner and source of aid.

Nonetheless, though the economic situation continues to present many difficulties, the country has succeeded in dismantling the one-party monopoly on power, and an overall process of decentralization has created conditions which are favourable to the implementation of a National Programme of Action (NPA).

This paper details the Mongolian experience and the problems and challenges encountered in the decentralization of the NPA implementation process.

Expressing its commitment to children's rights, the Mongolian Government has developed the NPA in keeping with the World Declaration and Plan of Action, which was adopted at the World Summit for Children at the United Nations in 1990. The NPA is the product of a successful endeavour to generate the necessary political determination throughout the highest levels of the Government. Immediately following the signature of the NPA document by the president in May 1993, the work of spreading the word about the NPA goals and mobilizing the public, as well as Government organizations (under the guidance of the intersectoral Working Committee), was begun. The newly established National Centre for Children has been charged with the task of coordinating the efforts of the various agencies, as well as the public, in NPA implementation.

The formulation of the NPA has had a very positive influence on the definition of national priorities and objectives and the initiatives of Governmental and foreign organizations. The further step of translating the national plan into provincial subplans has been taken. Within one year of the adoption of the NPA, 12 of the 18 *aimag* (provinces) had prepared Provincial Programmes of Action (PPAs). While in some instances the PPAs do not yet reflect real needs and conditions, the process of PPA formulation has enhanced public awareness, helped mobilize society behind the NPA and fostered new and fruitful linkages among Government agencies.

The fact that the NPA has been conceived at the highest levels of Government and reflects a top-down approach has had both negative and positive consequences. On the positive side, the Government has proven itself efficient in gathering together the available resources and stimulating the necessary institutional commitment. Existing infrastructures have been used to establish the mechanisms for the implementation of the NPA. On the negative side, local support for the NPA is still weak. This demonstrates the need to counterbalance the top-down approach with more social mobilization and local capacity-building.

The emphasis in the Mongolian NPA on sectoral and regional initiatives is evident. This has been dictated by the requirement to be as cost effective as possible in employing scarce resources. In order to accomplish this, the country has been divided into five "zones". Meanwhile, the sectoral approach has permitted the targeting of more specific goals, especially in health care and education.

The financial constraints caused by the current economic crisis represent the main stumbling block in NPA implementation. Without exception, all the *aimag* are having difficulty filling the gap created by the cutoff in central Government financing. The success of the NPA implementation process will be determined by the ability of the Government to mobilize society and raise more resources in order to carry out NPA activities.

The drastic socioeconomic changes which are now occurring in Mongolia demand fresh ways of thinking and new techniques. Though local governments have been given more power in decision-making and the allocation of funds, they are not used to this new power and are meeting problems in employing it. Having no experience in democratic self-governance, people tend to wait for instructions from the centre, rather than "initiate" on their own. Here, too, the need for greater capacity-building and social mobilization is obvious. A lack of capabilities in assessment and project development and management is common.

The decentralization of the NPA in Mongolia may represent an informative example for other countries at grips with the shift from authoritarian modes of governance to more open and democratic social structures.

I. INTRODUCTION

Until recently Mongolia was associated mainly with the names of Genghis Khan, Kublai Khan and the Gobi desert. Land-locked between its two huge neighbours, China and Russia, Mongolia had remained isolated for more than seven decades.

Then in the spring of 1990, encouraged by the success of democratic movements in Eastern Europe and by perestroika in Russia, thousands of people in the capital, Ulan Bator, took part in demonstrations and rallies, demanding immediate political and economic reforms. The only official party, the Mongolian People's Revolutionary Party, which had held all political power until then, was forced to permit the formation of opposition parties. The first multiparty election was held in June. The resulting coalition Government, repudiating Communism, pledged itself to the creation of a market economy and to further strides toward democracy and the protection of human rights. In September the newly constituted parliament, the *Mongolian Great Hural*, elected the country's first president.

From a highly controlled socialist state, historically bound to the Soviet sphere, Mongolia has emerged as a fully independent and increasingly democratic member of the international community. It has taken decisive steps to ensure fundamental human rights and to adopt the reforms necessary for the establishment of a free market economy.

However, despite some recent positive signs, the country's economy remains deeply fraught with crisis. Previously dependent on the Soviet Union and other members of the Council for Mutual Economic Assistance for aid equivalent to 30 percent of its annual GDP, Mongolia has no alternative means of supplying the shortfall now that these supports have been withdrawn.

Despite the hardships, the Government, for the transition from a centrally planned economic system to a market economy, has introduced a strategy of decentralization and deconcentration. This strategy is being carried out through an ambitious programme of privatization by which most state-owned assets will pass into private ownership. Local governments are being given more freedom and power in allocating their resources and budgets. They are also being encouraged to exercise more initiative in undertaking projects and developing trade and economic relations with both domestic and foreign counterparts.

Though this approach has created the basic conditions for the decentralized implementation of the National Programme of Action in Mongolia, the lack of experience and systematic policies, combined with insufficient funding, has become the main obstacle hindering the process.

II. THE NATIONAL CONTEXT

Mongolia is a land-locked country occupying more than 1.5 million square kilometres (over 600,000 square miles) on the northern part of the Central Asian Plateau. The country is divided into three geographical zones: the mountain ranges in the northwest reaching altitudes up to 4,000 metres (about 13,000 feet), the vast stretches of steppes in the central region and the semi-desert areas of the Gobi in the south. The average altitude is around 1,600 metres (slightly less than one mile) above sea level.

Though the area of Mongolia is about two-thirds that of Western Europe, the population is only 2.2 million, or less than 1.4 persons per square kilometre. Growing at an annual rate of 2.6 percent, the population is considered rather young, with 47 percent of the inhabitants under 18 years old. About one-half of the population lives in the four major cities and provincial centres. The remainder is widely spread out in rural areas and follows nomadic or semi-nomadic ways of life.

The basis of Mongolia's economy is animal husbandry. The livestock population is 25 million: over ten times the country's human population. Mining is another major sector of the economy, providing almost 60 percent of all export revenues.

Mongolia's climate has strong continental features, with sharp temperature variations not only from one season to the next, but also during the course of a typical day. Other characteristics are low humidity and long, cold winters (October to April). The harsh climate and vast distances are the main barriers in the delivery of social services.

The country is divided into 22 administrative units: 18 *aimag* (provinces) and four municipalities with provincial status (Choir, Darhan, Erdenet and Ulan Bator). There are also 310 *suman* (districts), which are smaller units.

III. POLITICAL AND SOCIOECONOMIC DEVELOPMENTS

Mongolia has been undergoing profound political and socioeconomic change ever since the upheavals of 1990 gave impetus to reform. The country is striving to dismantle the socialist centrally planned economy and introduce a free market.

A new Constitution was ratified in January 1992. It provides for the establishment of a parliamentary democracy and guarantees basic human rights, including the right to a safe

environment, health and medical care, and education. The formation of opposing political parties is permitted.

Like the other countries of the former Soviet Bloc undergoing simultaneous political, economic and social restructuring, Mongolia is now experiencing a difficult and critical period. The situation has been aggravated by profound economic difficulties. The collapse of the Soviet Union has affected the economy so negatively because of the close dependence of Mongolia on Soviet aid, which represented one-third of the country's GDP. Without the cheap supplies of essential goods, fuel, spare parts and development assistance furnished by the USSR, which was the country's main trading partner, accounting for 80 percent of Mongolia's foreign trade, the Mongolian economy has been plunged into deep crisis.

GDP per capita has dropped by 25 percent over the last three years. Production in many critical sectors has fallen off dramatically. Most factories have been obliged to shut down, compelling thousands of workers out of their jobs. Unemployment has reached 16 percent of the labour force. Over a period of two years the Government had to introduce the rationing of basic foodstuffs in an effort to offset the declining imports from Russia.

Diminishing real incomes, high inflation rates and the rapid rise in unemployment have forced a large number of people into poverty. According to the Ministry of Population Policy and Labour, 28.4 percent of the population is now living below the poverty line.

These negative trends have had the most serious and adverse effects upon women and children. Dropping incomes have put most imported items, such as children's clothing, well beyond the reach of most families. Economic hardships have also exacerbated family problems such as alcoholism, divorce and child abuse and neglect. For the first time, the problem of "street children" has been encountered in Mongolia. Though no precise data are available on this problem, it has been estimated that approximately 5,000 children have left home at a very young age over the last few years. Cases of child prostitution and exploitation have been registered as well.

The privatization of the economy has also had a negative impact on children. Because of the privatization of 90 percent of the 25 million head of livestock in the country, families which rely on animal raising for their incomes are being constrained to keep their children at home to look after the herds rather than send them away to (boarding) school. The school dropout rate has reached 20 percent of all school-age children.

The influence of these developments on the nutrition and health status of children and women is not fully understood due to the lack of adequate research and data collection.

Information on birthweights and anthropometric surveys among under-5-year-olds suggest that malnutrition is on the rise among both children and women, especially in poor families.

The economic crisis has also adversely affected the social sector. Government expenditure on health care, education and other social services has been cut back severely over the past three years because of budgetary constraints. In most suman (districts), boarding schools and maternity "rest houses" have been closed due to lack of funding.

The Government has attempted to stabilize the economic decline by implementing a structural adjustment programme supported by the International Monetary Fund. Nonetheless, civil servants, the elderly, families with many children and low-income households are still experiencing hardships. The economic problems and the precarious situation in food security are causing great concern within both the Government and the international community. Thus, in June 1994 the Poverty Alleviation Programme was initiated with the support of the UN Development Programme and donor countries. It is designed to ease the burden of the transition on the vulnerable in Mongolian society.

IV. THE DECENTRALIZATION PROCESS

The decentralization process in Mongolia is similar to that being undertaken in other former socialist countries, in which, until recently, political and economic power was typically concentrated in the hands of a small group of functionaries of the Communist Party. Decentralization has become the only way to lighten the load on public institutions and attempt to provide quality services. The command economy, the shortcomings of which were further aggravated by the sluggish bureaucracy of centralized institutions, was clearly ineffective in maintaining satisfactory living standards among the people.

Inspired by Mikhail Gorbachev in the mid-1980s, perestroika was the last attempt to save the crumbling totalitarian system. The top-down approach to economic restructuring had failed. Mongolia, the second country to chose socialism (1921) after Russia and a close satellite of the USSR, was also caught up in these trends. The efforts of the late 1980s to solve the pressing economic problems were fruitless, and the withdrawal of Soviet loans and aid in 1991 generated an immediate crisis.

Economic decentralization, together with a fresh recognition of human rights, has become the only alternative. The new leaders of the country are aware of this imperative.

Since 1991 they have been undertaking a wide-ranging programme of privatization. Over the last three years the majority of services and small state enterprises have passed into private hands through public auctions. In rural areas 90 percent of all livestock was privatized.

Likewise, the Government, in striving to reduce the budget deficit, has taken bold steps toward encouraging regional self-reliance and self-governance. The principle of the centralized allocation of the Government budget through the sectoral ministries has been supplanted. Now the state budget is drawn up on the basis of the requests of the local governments, which exercise authority over their own budgets and revenues.

Government institutions have also become subject to decentralization. As the result of organizational changes, the number of ministries and specialized Government agencies has been slimmed and the number of public employees reduced drastically. The sectoral ministries which are still playing an important role in implementing Government policy have been shifting their attention toward policy formulation as the centralized allocation of funding has diminished.

At the same time, the Great Hural (parliament) has passed a series of laws aimed at promoting self-governance among the aimag (provinces). By liberalizing registration procedures and the regulatory environment, the Law on Administrative Units and the Law on Business Entities have provided local governments and individuals with a legal framework which is more conducive to the establishment of small enterprises and businesses.

The decentralization of government administration and the economy has also fostered a more favourable climate for the realization of the goals adopted at the World Summit for Children, which was held at the United Nations in September 1990 and in which the Mongolian Government took part. Now the process of the decentralization of the Mongolian National Programme of Action is underway in order to reach the decade and mid-decade goals for the survival, protection and development of children, in line with the Convention on the Rights of the Child approved by the UN General Assembly in November 1989.

V. DECENTRALIZATION AND THE NATIONAL PROGRAMME OF ACTION

Though the process of decentralization of government and the economy in Mongolia possesses many similarities to that in other former socialist countries, it also has several rather distinctive features.

1. The decentralization process in Mongolia is *comprehensive and exhaustive*. The fact that the population speaks a single language (Khalkha Mongolian) and is mostly homogeneous—with the various ethnic groups which are distinct from the majority representing only a tiny portion (the Kazakh being the principal such group)—and that Government institutions are well established in all the provinces and throughout the national territory has encouraged this approach. Initiated at the centre of Government, the decentralization process has involved all the administrative divisions, from aimag to suman and from municipalities to urban districts.

Centralized institutions have been "deconcentrated" through manpower cuts and the reorganization of functions. However, this has also been carried out at the aimag and municipal levels. The Government has consistently followed this policy by offering local authorities more autonomy and by creating a suitable political and socioeconomic environment. A clear trend now exists toward the development of more horizontal linkages among the aimag and the regions and away from control by central institutions.

In order to increase local revenues, the Government has promoted more local, crossborder trade by opening up the borders with China and Russia at several additional points. The procedures for obtaining border permits have been rendered more flexible, so that remote aimag can now cover their needs in essential goods through trade with Mongolia's neighbours instead of waiting for supplies to be shipped from depots in cities in the interior.

The deconcentration within the structures of Government has gone hand-in-hand with the dismantling and deregulation of the centrally planned economy. In the course of the privatization programme, most state-owned enterprises and factories have been transformed into joint-venture holding companies. Although certain sectors of the economy, such as communications, transportation and energy, have remained state owned, local governments are being encouraged to develop their own businesses and infrastructures. The Great Hural has recently introduced amendments to the Law on Administrative Units that provide supplementary powers to cities and towns in determining their own economic affairs. Special attention is being paid to training of human resources that is adapted to the conditions of the market economy.

2. In the decentralization process, the emphasis has been on the *sectoral approach*, which is considered more appropriate to the efficient resolution of specific problems. Thus, the Mongolian National Programme of Action for achieving the year 2000 goals adopted at the World Summit for Children has been taken into consideration within the general framework

for the identification of the mid- and long-term priorities and tasks of the sectoral ministries. During the last two years a number of significant sectoral programmes has been developed in cooperation with UNICEF and other international organizations and foundations. For example, the Ministry of Health has developed separate programmes for child immunization, the prevention of diarrhoea and acute respiratory infections, and maternal health and child nutrition. The Government has approved these programmes and renders all the necessary financial support with the help of international agencies and foreign donors.

Mongolia is also implementing projects in collaboration with UNICEF that are designed to improve child health care. These projects focus on immunization and the control of diarrhoeal diseases and acute respiratory infections, maternal health and nutrition, baby food and breastfeeding and the elimination of iodine deficiency disorders, as well as support for the National Programme of Action.

Other steps include the design of projects aimed at providing basic education to school dropouts through nonformal education schemes. Through these projects, primary school teachers are given additional training, physically disabled children are offered rehabilitation assistance, and local communities supply adequate childcare for children who would not otherwise receive it.

Despite manpower constraints, the Juvenile Department of the Mongolian National Police plays an active role in helping street children and children in especially difficult circumstances. For instance, the department has prepared a special winter 1994-5 programme to address the problem of street children.

3. A definite *regional emphasis* is the third distinctive feature of the decentralization process in Mongolia. The Government has embraced a policy of "economic zoning" that is designed to assist the aimag in joining their financial and human resources in order to tackle common difficulties.

The need for such a policy has been dictated by the varying geographical and socioeconomic conditions and population densities among the aimag and regions. For example, industry is more developed in the East, with Dornod aimag leading in the production of industrial goods. In the West, dairy farming and wool production form the basis of local economies.

There are also differences in terms of the major challenges faced by the aimag. Thus, relatively more mentally handicapped children live in Dornod aimag, while in the northern mountains the problem of iodine deficiency is acute.

Finally, the aimag and the municipalities have not always been able to achieve financial self-sufficiency because they are overly dependent on other parts of the country for trade and services that used to be coordinated by the central Government, or because local infrastructures are underdeveloped.

The aimag have therefore found that they can solve their problems more readily if they formulate regional development programmes which allow available resources to be concentrated and used more efficiently. For this purpose, the 18 aimag and four municipalities have joined together into five main zones: the Western, Middle and Central Zones, each of which consists of five aimag; the Eastern Zone, which has three aimag, and the four municipalities (Choir, Darhan, Erdenet and Ulan Bator), which have formed a single, separate zone because of their unique problems (Figure 1).

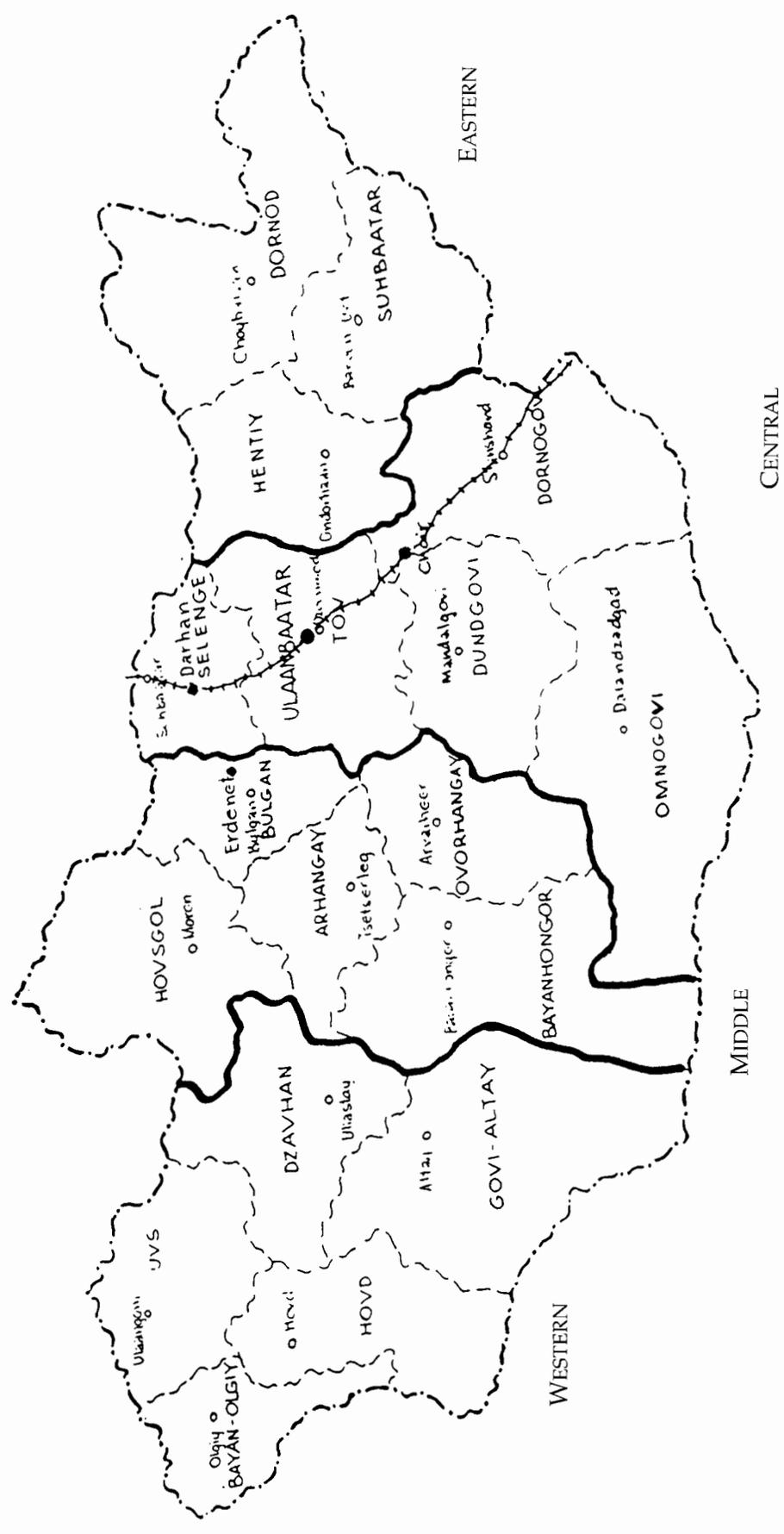
Remarkably, the formation of the economic zones was originally an initiative at the local level. The Government acknowledged the trend early on and supported it by smoothing the way. Now that the zones have received official recognition, they are establishing regional councils and developing consolidated programmes of development. The Government takes these programmes into consideration in the allocation of financial resources.

This zonal, or regional, approach is very conducive to the implementation of the National Programme of Action (NPA), Provincial Programmes of Action (PPAs) and Local Programmes of Action (LPAs). After serious deliberation, the National Centre for Children decided to adopt this approach and began elaborating parallel strategies and plans for regional training and coordination.

Given the current situation in which the economic potential of the country is weak and the available financial resources are inadequate for the implementation of the NPA, a method for selecting particular regions for development and as pilot areas for experiences to be eventually followed elsewhere is being introduced.

Regional councils responsible for the implementation of the NPA are presently being formed. Each council will be headed by the chairman of the local centre for children or of a working committee for one of the PPAs in the region. The councils will be composed of educators, experts in health care, social workers and lawyers selected on the basis of their competence and popularity. Actual membership will be determined by the regions themselves depending on their specific needs and goals. Representatives of the National Centre for Children and the sectoral ministries will work with the councils from time to time for the purpose of offering advice and guidance.

Figure 1: AIMAG, MUNICIPALITIES AND "ECONOMIC ZONING" IN MONGOLIA



Source: Developed by the National Working Committee on the NPA.

----- international boundary; - - - - aimag boundary; ——— zone boundary; • municipalities with provincial status; o aimag capitals.

The regional councils will expedite the generation of the financial and organizational resources required for NPA implementation. They will identify suitable methodologies and gather together the human resources necessary to address urgent problems. The development of regional cooperative mechanisms will allow available resources to be used more efficiently and also to be adapted in accordance with the special demands of each region.

The PPA working committee in each of the aimag and municipalities, together with the regional council, will define a local strategy for community mobilization. The media can probably be employed as a most powerful tool to spread awareness of NPA and LPA activities and goals. Past experience has shown that the media is very effective in handling the task of explaining specific projects, such as, for example, the importance of vaccination during an immunization campaign.

The sectoral ministries have already embraced the regional approach as the best way to deal with issues like iodine deficiency or the establishment of local industries for the production or processing of clothing and food for children. However, sources of financing have not been found for the activities of the regional institutions, and precise budgets can therefore not yet be drawn up. Likewise, though all those involved agree that the "zoning" method is most suitable given the conditions in Mongolia, the approach has not been employed on a large scale because no clear strategies and policies have yet been worked out. In most cases, the aimag are applying the method and moving ahead by trial and error. Thus, methodological guidelines need to be developed with the assistance of experts, so that surveys and evaluations can be carried out to gauge the effectiveness of the approach. For these reasons, the experiences and methodological approaches used in other countries are clearly of great interest to the relevant organizations in Mongolia.

VI. THE LEGAL ASPECTS OF THE NPA

Under socialism, Mongolia was deeply devoted to protecting the rights and well-being of children. Filatova Tsedenbal, the wife of the then head-of-state and general secretary of the Mongolian People's Revolutionary Party, was the chief advocate for child issues in the country. Her vigorous involvement was invaluable in projects designed to improve the quality of childcare and in the creation of a network of summer camps and other special facilities for children. By the same token, an extensive system of social benefits, such as paid

maternity leave for working mothers until the age of 1½ of the child and allowances and entitlements for mothers with many children, was established by law. Nonetheless, there was no clearly defined official policy on child protection and development.

In May 1990 Mongolia ratified the Convention on the Rights of the Child. Since, according to the Mongolian Constitution, international treaties which have been ratified come into force on the same footing with national laws, the Convention quickly became an important milestone in the country and laid the groundwork for legislation protecting the rights of children. The ratification of the Convention thus confirmed Mongolia's new identity as a free and forward-looking nation, as well as its commitment to the rights of children.

In November 1991 President Ochirbat signed the World Declaration on the Survival, Protection and Development of Children that had been adopted at the World Summit for Children. The Government thereby demonstrated its genuine concern and sense of responsibility for the children of Mongolia.

That same year Government policies on children and youth were formulated for the first time and adopted by presidential decree. The decree listed education, child labour and the protection of the health of children as priority issues. The provision of social security and other assistance for the vulnerable within society was also covered. These fresh policies were reflected in a Plan of Action which the Government prepared in 1991. The Plan of Action had two main objectives related to children: first, the drafting and implementation of a National Programme of Action for the Development of Children and, second, the protection of the vulnerable and of children in especially difficult circumstances.

However, obstacles remained to the effective realization of these policies. Thus, though the Convention on the Rights of the Child was ratified, the obligations this imposed on the Government were not fully understood at the time. Likewise, not all the relevant articles and provisions of the Convention were embodied in existing national laws.

The adoption of the new Constitution in January 1992 and the passage of fresh legislation on education, health insurance and social benefits, as well as a Family Code, has helped to fill the gap by defining more specifically the policies and responsibilities of the Government and its agencies and the rights and duties of citizens.

Even so, a common perception continues to exist among experts in childcare institutions that, in addition to the Convention, there should be a unified legal document which protects those rights of children that are now recognized and regulated by various, separate laws.

Since autumn 1993 the Standing Committee on Population, Health, Labour and Social Security of the Great Hural has therefore been working actively to prepare a bill on children's rights to be submitted for discussion to the full legislature this year. Experts in many fields and representatives from numerous organizations, including nongovernmental ones, have been involved in this process. The bill is expected to address the diverse aspects of the issue of child rights within a single, comprehensive legal document.

VII. THE FINANCIAL ASPECTS OF THE NPA

In its efforts to foster the conditions necessary for local administrative units to achieve economic autonomy, the Government of Mongolia has been guided by the principle of decentralization in the allocation of budgetary resources. The Great Hural has already passed laws creating a legal framework for decentralization in this area. Thus, the Law on Administrative Units, adopted in 1993, has decentralized fiscal authority by giving local governments more power in the allocation of the funds received from the national level. The law spells out the rights and duties of local governments within this new regime.

In principle the Government welcomes the "Manila Consensus", the view expressed at the Ministerial Consultation on Goals for Children and Development in the 1990s—a meeting of ministers of countries in the East Asia and Pacific region that was held in September 1993—that the mid-decade goals for the survival, protection and development of children are attainable. However, because of the current economic crisis in the country, the Government has not been able to develop on its own the financial resources for the implementation of the NPA. The programme is therefore being financed in two stages: 1992 to 1994 and 1995 to 2000.

The overall resource needs for the NPA are being assessed during the initial stage. The Government also hopes to attract timely aid from foreign donors in order to cover the cost of reaching the mid-decade goals identified in the NPA and solve the most pressing problems among children in Mongolia. The NPA plan was distributed at a meeting of representatives of donor countries held in Tokyo in mid-1992 and was received very positively. Currently, possible avenues for more technical and financial assistance from foreign donors and international agencies are being explored.

The actual implementation of the NPA will be undertaken during the second stage.

The resources for this stage will be provided through central Government and local budgets, in conjunction with the support of foreign technical and financial assistance. Hopefully, by that time, the economic situation will have improved enough so that fund-raising can be carried out locally.

Preliminary estimates of the Ministry of Finance based on an examination of the requests from local governments and the projections of the National Development Board show that, aside from around 2.2 billion tögrög in local funds, approximately \$200 million will be required to realize the decade and mid-decade goals of the NPA.

According to the Budget Law, the implementation of the NPA is to be financed through a combination of sources. The central Government budget is to cover those NPA expenditures which arise within the framework of the maintenance of general health care and education services as reflected in the Government Plan of Action. Other expenditures are to be funded through local government budgets.

In the course of drawing up its LPA, each local government must make an assessment of local needs and develop initiatives aimed at meeting local goals. The proposed LPA is then submitted to the relevant agencies. In turn, the sectoral ministries and the National Centre for Children make their recommendations to the Government. As appropriate, the Government then integrates the various recommendations and proposals into the annual budget. Once an annual budget has been approved by the Great Hural, funds are allocated directly to the aimag or municipalities for inclusion in their respective budgets.

The overall task of monitoring programme implementation and the expenditure of funds is the responsibility of the sectoral ministries. The performance of the aimag and the municipalities is evaluated on the basis of quarterly and annual statistical comparisons. The Ministry of Finance is responsible for monitoring the expenditure of domestic resources, while the National Development Board is responsible for monitoring the distribution of foreign investments, loans and aid. In order to coordinate foreign aid flows and the expenditure of other funds and to render them more efficient, the National Development Board has recently requested that all Government agencies and organizations submit brief descriptions of those projects which have been realized in cooperation with international and foreign organizations.

Local governments are also currently facing very serious financial constraints due to the economic crisis and, in most cases, are unable to raise sufficient resources for local programmes. Moreover, because they have become used to the centralized system for the

allocation of financial and other resources that was employed in the past, most local governments lack experience in resource mobilization. The limited revenues coming from local taxes and trade must usually cover more immediate and pressing necessities and are not normally available for the achievement of LPA goals. Nonetheless, the responsibility for drafting LPAs is encouraging local governments to become more adept at identifying the needs of communities and therefore more effective in designing programmes and estimating financial requirements.

VIII. THE NPA AND INTERNATIONAL AND FOREIGN ORGANIZATIONS

As a result of the open foreign policy pursued over the last few years, Mongolia has been establishing closer ties with international agencies and foreign institutions. For example, Mongolian organizations involved in child-related issues are now participating actively in regional and subregional cooperative schemes with similar organizations in other countries in East and Southeast Asia.

Such links have taken on special meaning, given Mongolia's present economic difficulties and its lack of experience in facing the sorts of problems that are arising from the drastically changing socioeconomic situation. Thus, because the economic crisis has put severe limitations on its ability to find the financial resources necessary for NPA implementation, the Government is seeking both technical and financial support from foreign and international organizations during the transition to the market economy.

One of the major steps toward this goal has been the circulation of information on the NPA to foreign donor organizations and selected UN specialized agencies, as well as to Mongolian diplomatic missions abroad for further distribution. However, though the representatives of donor countries gathered together at a meeting in Tokyo in mid-1992 expressed interest in the programme, no substantial donor aid has been targeted specifically at child-related problems in Mongolia. The task of finding additional sources of financing from both external and internal sources therefore remains an urgent one.

On the other hand, cooperation between Mongolia and UNICEF has been expanding, especially since the opening of the UNICEF permanent office for Mongolia in Ulan Bator in 1992. So far, joint projects have been developed and undertaken in the areas of immunization and the prevention of diarrhoeal diseases and acute respiratory infections, maternal health

and nutrition, baby food and breastfeeding, and the elimination of iodine deficiency disorders. UNICEF technical support has also been forthcoming for the NPA. This cooperation has proved to be most useful in terms of the provision of expertise and the wider distribution of information.

Cooperative agreements have also been reached with the Save the Children Fund (UK) and the Japanese Foundation for the Support of Mongolia's Development for the implementation of several projects designed to facilitate the achievement of the goals of the NPA. For example, a review of preschool education is currently in progress with the Save the Children Fund. The review can be expected to lead to activities which support the country's troubled preschool system by emphasizing cost-effectiveness, quality access and community participation.

Other steps have been taken to design projects to provide basic education to school dropouts through nonformal schemes, promote community support for rehabilitation services for physically disabled children and improve the protection of children who are now uncared for. A cooperation agreement covering these and other areas is just now being undertaken between the Ministry of Science and Education and the Danish International Development Agency (Danida).

Though the small scale of joint projects does not permit all the needs of the country to be covered, this assistance has been critically important in helping to solve many pressing problems and in furnishing general guidance and the training of personnel able to operate under the new conditions.

IX. THE NATIONAL PROGRAMME OF ACTION

The Government welcomes and supports the vigorous initiatives being realized by the world community and the UN for the well-being of the children of Mongolia. The ratification by Mongolia of the Convention on the Rights of the Child in May 1990 and the signing by President Ochirbat in November 1991 of the Declaration on the Survival, Protection and Development of Children adopted at the World Summit for Children have laid the bases for NPA formulation in the country. The media coverage of these events and the opening of the UNICEF office in Ulan Bator have prompted wide public interest in child rights issues.

In September 1991 a national committee composed of representatives of the National

Centre for Children, the Great Hural and the Ministries of Finance, Health, and Science and Education was created to review the National Plan for the Improvement of Maternal and Child Health to the Year 2000, which had been adopted in 1988, and develop a more comprehensive national plan of action.

The issue of child rights was somewhat overshadowed by the heated constitutional debate during the following months. However, politicians and legislators were unanimous in their desire to see the rights of children reflected in the new document. In Article 16, Chapter Two—on Human Rights and Freedoms—the right of the people to a healthy, safe environment, health and medical care, and free basic education is clearly recognized.

Adopted on 13 January 1992, the new Constitution commits the Government to assign high priority to the welfare of children and women in social policy. The Standing Committee on Population, Health, Labour and Social Security of the Great Hural, together with the Ministry of Population Policy and Labour, has been given the task of formulating and implementing Government policy for children, youth and women.

The idealism generated during the debates leading up to the adoption of the new Constitution and the growing support among senior officials, including the president, represented a significant impetus for the preparation of the NPA. Because of the consensus that the needs of children should transcend politics, the elections for the Great Hural in June 1992 and the major institutional reorganization undertaken by a new cabinet of ministers have not altered the Government's commitment.

The new prime minister, Puntsagiyn Jasrai, confirmed the Government's position by supporting an enhanced role for the National Centre for Children, which was elevated to department status within the newly organized Ministry of Population Policy and Labour. The head of the centre was made a deputy minister.

Although the preparation of the NPA was begun soon after the president signed the Declaration of the World Summit for Children, in November 1991, the political developments intervened, and work on NPA formulation was postponed until May 1992. Nonetheless, during that period a draft "Plan of Action for the Survival, Protection and Development of Children" using baseline indicators was prepared with the active involvement of the Ministry of Health, the Ministry of Science and Education and the National Centre for Children. At this stage, the Ministries of Justice and Finance also began participating directly in the process. In order to coordinate the efforts of the various Government agencies during NPA formulation, the National Working Committee on the NPA was appointed in June 1992.

The data and analyses of the State Statistical Office regarding children and the information obtained through surveys conducted in cooperation with UNICEF, as well as reports developed by other interested Government agencies and relevant documents dealing with development issues in the country, were employed extensively at this juncture. However, despite the motivation of the participants, almost another year passed before the final revisions in the plan were completed. UNICEF experts collaborated in this effort.

In May 1993 the NPA was submitted for Government approval, and the NPA document was signed by Prime Minister Jasrai.

The NPA document, which was made public at that time, states that the NPA "is essentially an indicative set of planning guidelines. It is intended to provide direction in the formulation of sectoral programmes..." (GOM 1993, page v).

The document demonstrates a recognition of the importance of generating emergency and longer term assistance through the international donor community to offset the critical shortages which are due directly to the severe economic crisis and which are evident in basic social services aimed at vulnerable groups, especially children and women.

The seven major goals and most of the supporting, sectoral goals and other recommendations contained in the Plan of Action adopted by the World Summit for Children have been translated in the NPA document into mid- and long-term targets which are considered crucial, yet feasible, given the prevailing conditions in Mongolia. While appropriate adjustments in line with these goals have been carried out in Government programmes for the health care and education of children, certain other goals identified in the Plan of Action are not relevant to the situation in Mongolia and have been excluded from the NPA. For example, guinea-worm disease (dracunculiasis) and malaria do not exist in Mongolia and are therefore not addressed in the NPA. On the other hand, child health and nutrition, education, physically disabled children, children in especially difficult circumstances, women's welfare, and safe drinking water and sanitation are viewed in the NPA as priorities, and the NPA includes interventions in all these areas.

As soon as the NPA document had been signed, active steps were taken to spread awareness of the NPA goals among the public. Thus, within one week a national seminar, "Mobilizing Resources for Children", was held. It brought together representatives of the National Development Board, the Ministries of Science and Education, Food and Agriculture, Health, Justice, and Finance, the Juvenile Department of the Mongolian National Police, the State Statistical Office, the Nutrition Research Centre, the Boy Scouts and Girl Scouts and

other organizations for children and young people, and the Mongolian Women's Federation. The participating organizations were encouraged at the seminar to develop their own programmes of action. The Ministry of Health, the Ministry of Food and Agriculture, the State Statistical Office and the Mongolian Women's Federation have since done so.

The Government has acted quickly and decisively to transform into national policy the principles of the Declaration and the Plan of Action of the World Summit for Children, as well as those of the Convention on the Rights of the Child. The main goals of the NPA are reflected in national and local socioeconomic development guidelines and are to be implemented through sectoral directives and plans. The formulation of the NPA has also represented an important means for mobilizing Government agencies, religious and charitable organizations and private enterprises in the cause of children. The NPA is now a key instrument in the definition of the steps to be taken for the benefit of children at the national level. Likewise, it is serving as a guide in the formulation of local programmes.

X. MAJOR INSTITUTIONAL ACTORS

As the transition is made to the market economy, the form of government in Mongolia is also being restructured from a one-party to a democratic, multiparty system. Institutions such as the Great Hural, the Constitutional Court and the National Development Board have been created or reorganized, and the role of other Government agencies is being examined and redefined to adapt them to new tasks and socioeconomic conditions.

The main Government structures are the Great Hural, the Office of the President, the Government administration, the sectoral ministries and the independent judicial system.

The Mongolian Great Hural, the single-chamber parliament, was reconstituted in June 1992 as the result of direct elections. The Mongolian People's Revolutionary Party secured 71 of the 76 available seats, thus becoming the ruling party. The Great Hural is the highest legislative body in the land. It recognizes the president upon his (or her) election and appoints the prime minister and the members of the cabinet.

The president is elected by free and universal adult suffrage. According to the Constitution, he is the head-of-state and the symbol of the unity of the people. However, unlike the presidents in many other systems of government, the president in Mongolia does not exercise executive powers. On the other hand, he has certain prerogatives in dealing with

the Great Hural and in other Government affairs.

The cabinet of ministers appointed by the Great Hural is composed of a prime minister, two deputy prime ministers and the sectoral ministers.

The National Centre for Children and the intersectoral National Working Committee on the NPA are responsible for organizing and guiding the implementation of the NPA and for NPA coordination, mobilization and monitoring at the national level (Figure 2). Branches of the Working Committee established by a decree of the aimag and municipal governors are responsible for local-level implementation. The Working Committee includes representatives from all those Government agencies involved in the NPA. The minister of population policy and labour chairs the committee, which meets twice a year to review progress and make any necessary recommendations. The committee reports directly to the Government. In the near future, the composition of the committee is going to be expanded to include representatives of nongovernmental organizations and parents and other community members.

The National Centre for Children is a Government institution. It is responsible for the formulation and implementation of Government policy on children at the national level and for the coordination and monitoring of the day-to-day activities of the local branches of the centre in each aimag and municipality. It also has representatives in the suman. The centre performs the main role in coordinating NPA activities among the ministries and monitoring the performance of local institutions. Moreover, it serves as the key entity for the creation and realization of training programmes and is in charge of the preparation of information packages and the maintenance of links with nongovernmental organizations and the media.

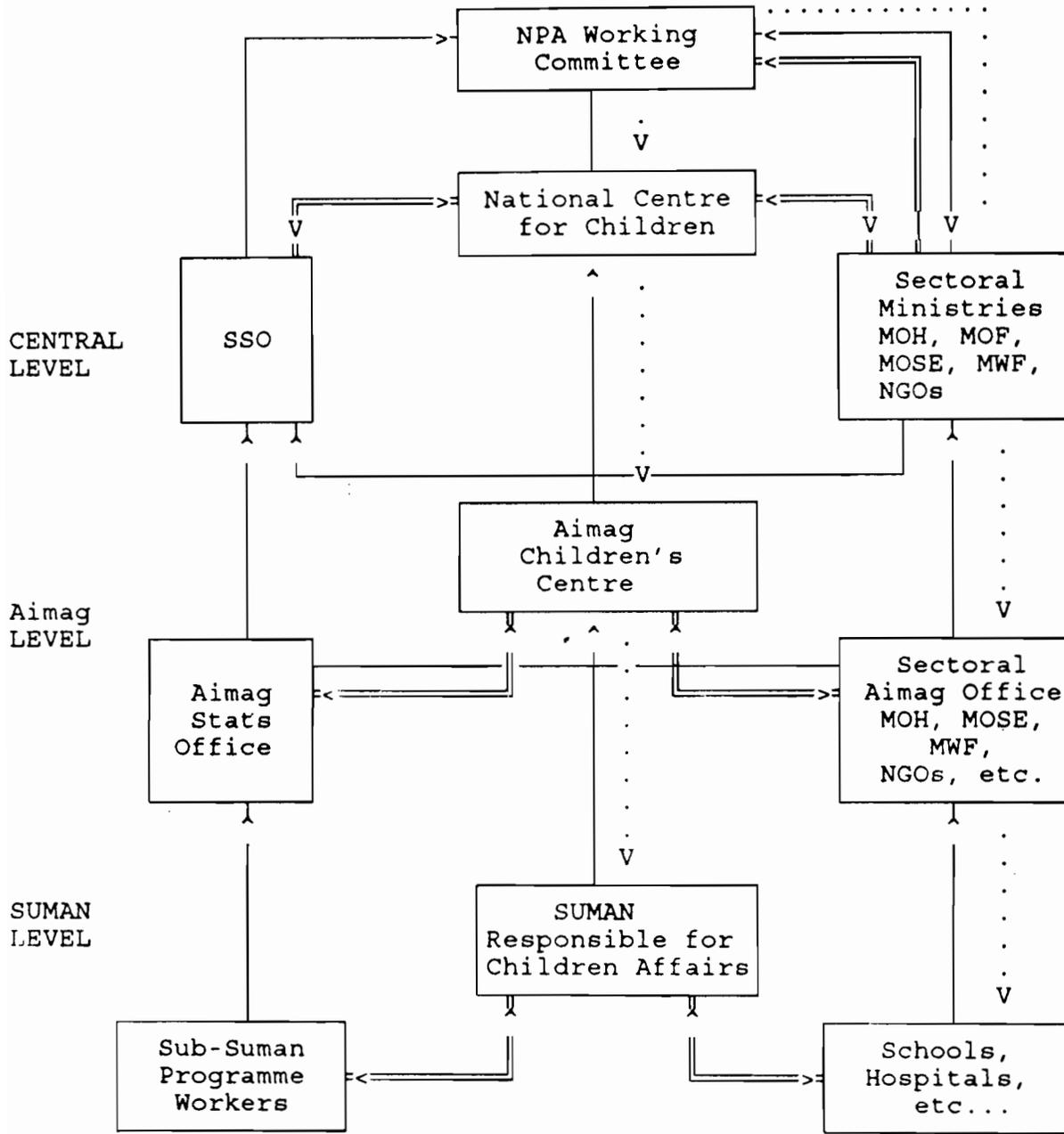
The National Development Board is responsible for the integration of the NPA within national socioeconomic development policy and for the development of policy guidelines. In prospective plans for national development over the next 15 years, sectoral programmes play a key function. Such programmes are at the core of the NPA, which therefore is part and parcel of the long-term socioeconomic development of the country.

The National Development Board and the Ministry of Population Policy and Labour are responsible for coordinating the NPA, the Government Plan of Action for 1992-5 and the National Development Guidelines.

Various ministries and other bodies will be responsible for NPA activities, through their respective branches, as follows (GOM 1993):

- The National Development Board: the generation of data on economic indicators and

Figure 2: MONITORING FLOW CHART FOR THE NATIONAL PROGRAMME OF ACTION



Source: GOM (1993).

financial allocations for the programme and the coordination of foreign investments and the loans and assistance of donor countries, so as to render them as effective as possible.

- The Ministry of Population Policy and Labour: the generation of data on identifiable components in the welfare of children, women and vulnerable groups and the formulation of policy guidelines for enhancing the effect of these components; the implementation of surveys and evaluations of health, living standards and education among girls and women, including mothers; the implementation of surveys on food supplies.

- The State Statistical Office: the consolidation of the data developed by participating agencies and the drafting of reports to the Government on these data.

- The Ministry of Health: in cooperation with other agencies, the generation of data and reports on health indicators, especially data related to infant mortality and immunization.

- The Ministry of Science and Education: the generation of data on indicators of primary and basic education and adult literacy, especially female literacy; the generation of data on indicators regarding children in difficult circumstances.

- The Ministry of Finance: the preparation of data on budgetary allocations for NPA programmes and the realization of any budget adjustments; the monitoring of expenditures.

The Mongolian Women's Federation, the Youth Organization, the Association of Pensioners, and other, similar organizations are expected to take a lead in efforts at community involvement and to participate in initiatives aimed at improving child welfare. Likewise, it is anticipated that the Volunteer Association for the Protection of Children will become very active in NPA projects. Founded in 1991 and consisting of volunteers from the private sector, this association seeks to mobilize the resources needed to finance various projects designed to help people in need.

Though in the implementation of the NPA and the PPAs due consideration is being given to the mobilization of nongovernmental and public organizations, as well as the private sector, the issue of "social communication" for the NPA has yet to be fully explored.

XI. NPA DECENTRALIZATION IN ACTION

In the one-and-one-half years since the NPA was approved by the Government and signed by the prime minister, the objective has been to spread awareness of the NPA goals and the

importance of the programme. During this time surveys have been carried out to gauge the possibility of implementing the programme at the local level and of mobilizing individuals, communities and national and foreign organizations for this purpose. The main task in this endeavour has been the formulation of LPAs and the creation of mechanisms for NPA implementation and monitoring.

To achieve these aims, seminars and workshops were held during the summer and autumn of 1993 for staff in the branches of the National Centre for Children in the suman and aimag. These seminars and workshops focused on orientation and training in LPA formulation methods and techniques.

Because of the vital role the heads of local governments can play in the achievement of NPA goals at the local level and in order to create favourable conditions for the programme, a special emphasis has been placed on nurturing the appropriate political determination in the aimag and municipalities. In collaboration with the central Government, a seminar for aimag and municipal governors was therefore held in November 1993 on the World Summit Goals for Children and Development in the 1990s, the significance of the NPA and the approach being employed in NPA implementation.

A survey conducted at the seminar revealed that all the participants were seriously concerned about problems in health care and education, school dropout rates and growing crime. The governors were unanimous in their support for the development of local initiatives in order to address these issues as part of the NPA.

The seminar served as a clear catalyst for the process of NPA decentralization. The seminar participants drafted a joint memorandum recommending that the following steps be taken in order to facilitate the successful implementation of the NPA at the local level.

- The formulation of LPAs in every aimag and municipality.
- Annual reviews of progress in implementing the NPA and LPAs and the organization of biennial national meetings for the exchange of views and experiences.
- The assignment of priority to meeting the needs and solving the urgent problems of children and, in collaboration with relevant organizations, parents and communities, the mobilization of the efforts of all sectors of society to this end.
- The provision of rehabilitation and education services for children in especially difficult circumstances through the establishment of clinics, health care units and suitable schools at the municipal, aimag and regional levels. The seminar recognized that it may be

advantageous to combine the relevant resources on a regional basis.

- Enhancement of the structure and management of Government institutions dealing with children and the mobilization of public-sector organizations for the cause of children; the development of additional training schemes for people working in these organizations.

- The memorandum also called on public-sector organizations to devote at least 20 percent of their local budgets and on the private sector to contribute part of their profits to social development programmes and the well-being of children on the basis of the Manila Consensus (see earlier).

Following the seminar, the Government issued a directive to all aimag and municipal governments instructing them to formulate LPAs in accordance with the methods and approaches already identified. The directive urged each government to establish an appropriate LPA working committee under the supervision of the governor and to include the LPA in annual development programmes. It also recommended that officials be appointed to be in charge of programme implementation and coordination at the subdistrict, suman and aimag levels. Further proposals and suggestions on ways to improve interagency coordination were requested as well.

Such resolute steps from the Government, combined with the political support offered by the governors themselves, resulted in the establishment of LPA working committees in all the aimag and municipalities within a short time. These committees are each chaired by the local governor or another top-ranking official, usually from the Office of the Governor or the Department of Social Policy. The committees are composed of people involved in health care, education, social security, the police, women's organizations, statistics offices, financing and other relevant areas in the aimag or municipality. The working committees meet regularly to review progress in the implementation of the LPAs.

For each LPA, the centre for children in the aimag or municipality is responsible for day-to-day operations and the coordination of activities among relevant agencies. The centres also furnish training and guidance on methodologies to field officers.

Once the working committees had been set up, the next task was to arm them with the knowledge and skills necessary to assess local needs and develop programmes accordingly. For this purpose, seven regional seminars and workshops were held in 1993-4, each one targeting those responsible for various aspects of the local programmes (Figure 3). Three of these seminars brought together local government officials in charge of health care,

Figure 3: PARTICIPATION IN NPA-RELATED SEMINARS AND WORKSHOPS
(June 1993-May 1994)

	National Seminar 2-3 June 1993	Seminar for ACC* Workers 4-5 June 1993	West Regional Workshop 21-23 October 1993	Local Seminar 1993-4	Municipal Seminar 2-3 November 1993	Governors' Meeting 5-6 November 1993	Training the Trainers 3-7 May 1994	Eastern Regional Seminar 17-19 May 1994
<i>Aimags</i>								
Arhangay	▲	★				▲	●	
Bayanhongor	▲	★				▲	●	
Bayan-ölgii	▲	★	◆			▲	●	
Bulgan	▲	★				▲	●	
Dornod	▲	★				▲	●	◆
Dornogovi	▲	★				▲	●	
Dundgovi	▲	★		◆		▲	●	
Dzavhan	▲	★	◆			▲	●	
Govi-altay	▲	★	◆			▲	●	
Hentiy	▲	★				▲	●	◆
Hovd	▲	★	◆			▲	●	
Hövsgöl	▲	★				▲	●	
Ömnögovi	▲	★				▲	●	
Övörhangay	▲	★		◆		▲	●	
Selenge	▲	★				▲	●	
Sühbaatar	▲	★				▲	●	◆
Töv	▲	★		◆		▲	●	
Uvs	▲	★	◆			▲	●	
<i>Municipalities</i>								
Choir	▲	★				▲	●	
Darhan	▲	★				▲	●	
Erdenet	▲	★				▲	●	
Ulan Bator	▲	★			◆	▲	●	

Source: Developed by UNICEF-Ulan Bator.

* Aimag or municipal centres for children.

Symbols: ▲ = top-level officials; ★ = officials at the grassroots level; ● = working committee members; ◆ = others.

education, or social services, as well as staff from the local centres for children. The officials and staff were briefed on the Convention on the Rights of the Child, the World Summit Goals for Children and Development in the 1990s, the goals of the Mongolian NPA, and the basic methodologies and techniques for the assessment of local needs and LPA formulation

that had been developed by officials of the National Centre for Children. The seminars also focused on monitoring techniques and social mobilization skills.

As result of these seminars, local organizations have begun assessing the situation in the field through surveys designed to measure actual local needs and suggest possible strategies for addressing them. Based on such research, 12 of the 18 aimag and two of the four municipalities have completed the preparation of LPAs (Figure 4).

XII. PROVINCIAL PROGRAMMES OF ACTION

The 22 basic administrative units of Mongolia—the 18 aimag and four municipalities with provincial status—enjoy autonomy in respect of economic and social affairs. Each aimag has an average population of 50,000 to 100,000 people and is divided further into about 20 *suman*. The 310 *suman* form the second administrative level. Each *suman* has about 10 *bag*, the next smaller administrative unit. There are an average of 60 families in each *bag*.

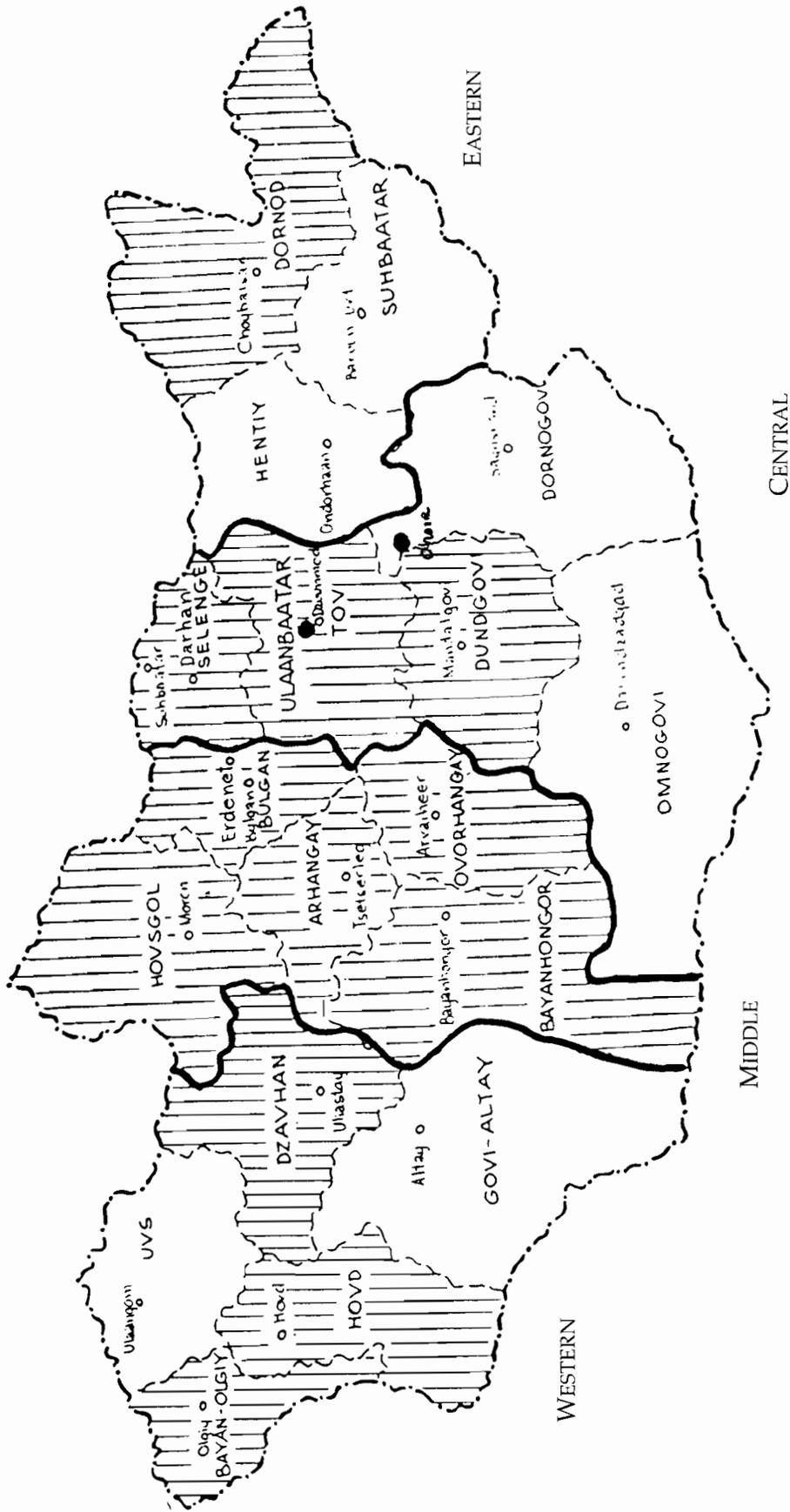
The chief administrators in the aimag and municipalities are, respectively, the governors and the mayors, who are appointed directly by the Government. In turn, the aimag governors appoint the heads of the *suman*.

Given the relatively weak tradition of self-governance within the aimag, the governors are able to play a relatively more important role in the administrative reform movement during the transition from the heavily centralized one-party system to a system which permits more local autonomy. Therefore, though the governors are responsible directly to the central Government, they tend to exercise a great deal more power in deciding local affairs. In effect, the authority of central Government agencies has been limited essentially to an advisory status. These agencies issue general guidelines and closely monitor the implementation of economic and social policies.

The reinforcement of a separate mechanism, the Councils of People's Representatives, has helped balance the power of governors and that of local communities. The members of these nonpermanent institutions are selected through public elections. The councils meet regularly to discuss issues and problems. Though the councils have no explicit power, their influence on public opinion tends to make governors heed their recommendations.

In order to enhance and strengthen local autonomy, installations and services which used to be under the regulatory authority of the various ministries, such as schools, hospitals

Figure 4: THE STATUS OF LPA FORMULATION IN AIMAG AND MUNICIPALITIES*



Source: Developed by UNICEF-Ulan Bator.

* The aimag (◐) and municipalities (●) which have completed the preparation of LPAs.

and production plants, but excluding facilities involved in transportation, energy and communications, have been placed under local government jurisdiction. Annual budget allocations going for these infrastructures are now handled directly through local budgets, and local governments are entitled to oversee the relevant expenditures.

The governors are playing a crucial part in the implementation of the PPAs. Thus, the chancelleries of the governors have acted quickly to carry out the directive of the central Government concerning the establishment of local working committees, and working committees have been created in all 22 aimag and municipalities. These committees are usually headed by high-ranking local officials, typically the governor or deputy governor. The working committees have been joined by representatives of various local organizations in the elaboration of the PPAs.

A review of the initial draft PPAs received from nine aimag and municipalities revealed that, unfortunately, only three aimag had developed their programmes on the basis of precise analyses of actual local conditions among children. Accordingly, the goals of these three programmes have been viewed as more genuine, since such detailed assessments are considered essential if local governments are to understand the problems they must address and the funds they will require.

Since some aimag have yet to complete the formulation of PPAs and since many of the draft PPAs which have been submitted have been judged inadequate, a need for further training has been recognized, particularly in respect of the appropriate methodologies for project assessment and development. Thus, because of the notably slow progress in three aimag in the Eastern Zone, a special training course has been conducted there in order to provide the people involved in NPA formulation with more direct technical assistance.

For the preparation of LPAs within the suman, top-level suman officials have also participated in meetings and become conversant with programme methodologies in the following areas.

- Data collection, analysis and evaluation.
- The identification of the actual needs and problems of children.
- The definition and prioritization of goals and objectives.
- The development of strategies, methods and techniques.
- The formulation of draft programmes.
- Programme implementation and the mobilization of financial and human resources.

- Programme monitoring, evaluation and adaptation.

During the initial stage of PPA formulation, two main problems were identified as serious obstacles in the implementation of the NPA: financial constraints and the lack of qualified staff.

The central Government outlays which used to represent the main source of project financing are no longer forthcoming because of the economic crisis and the growing Government budget deficits. By the same token, the crisis has also affected local economies, and the aimag and municipalities have only limited sources of revenue. According to aimag officials, the most difficult aspect of PPA implementation is the funding. For example, because of budget deficits and poor economic performance, the financial situation in Dornod is so tight that the aimag has been able to raise only about 0.5 percent of the funds necessary for the implementation of the PPA in areas other than health care and education, which are covered by the central Government budget.

Meanwhile, especially in the east and south, the aimag are facing acute difficulties in sanitation and the provision of safe drinking water. In some parts of the east, only eight litres of water are available per person per day for all purposes except drinking, for which the water tends to be unsuitable. In Sühbaatar, safe drinking water can be obtained only from wells which are at least 200 metres deep. This obviously represents a serious barrier. Likewise, the condition of latrines and toilets in rural areas is extremely poor.

Since inadequate sanitation and the consumption of unsafe water are so directly tied in with the spread of diarrhoeal diseases and acute respiratory infections, especially among children, it is imperative to find ways and means to overcome these problems in rural areas.

Sanitation and the supply of safe drinking water are therefore among the issues which should be confronted vigorously in the NPA and the PPAs. However, this is probably not going to be possible given the financial constraints and the lack of technical expertise.

Having very limited sources of revenue and receiving almost no Government budget allocations for such purposes, some aimag are seeking the assistance of international agencies and foreign donor organizations to cover their most pressing needs. Thus, for instance, because it is anticipated that UNICEF will help the Government deal with many of the most serious problems affecting children in Mongolia as reflected in the NPA, ways are now being sought to decentralize the allocation of UNICEF funding.

Nonetheless, despite the UNICEF commitment, it will be impossible to address all the

problems without further outside support. For this reason, safe drinking water and sanitation, among other issues, have not been reflected among the NPA mid-decade goals. No projects will be implemented in these areas by UNICEF in the country programme cycle until 1997, and no Government agency is currently dealing in a decisive fashion with these issues.

To obtain more funds for the PPAs, it is therefore important not only to create a mechanism for the cost-effective utilization of the available UNICEF project resources, but also to undertake to raise more funds locally and internationally. In addition, an energetic effort must be made to attract the interest of the private sector in the cause of children. Finally, charitable contributions must be encouraged. This could be accomplished through the introduction of tax exemptions or other incentives for business and individual donations.

The other main problem which has been encountered in the implementation of LPAs and PPAs is the lack of qualified personnel. Because the quick pace of the reform movement embraces almost all spheres of society, local officials and social workers are finding it difficult to adjust to completely new circumstances. Used to the constant flow of instructions and control from the centre, they often feel now that they must either cope with new and unfamiliar problems on their own, or wait for some sort of guidance from outside.

This is putting a serious strain on Government institutions in NPA implementation in the subdistricts, suman, municipalities and aimag. The National Centre for Children has therefore developed training schemes which include short- and mid-term seminars and workshops designed to assist the field workers in charge of the implementation of the NPA at the local level by demonstrating effective management techniques. UNICEF and other international organizations which have already accumulated wide experience in dealing with similar problems have been actively assisting in carrying out these training initiatives.

One of the highest current priorities in the implementation of the NPA at the local level is the maintenance of training programmes for local organizations, particularly those in the suman. In these training programmes, a strong emphasis is being placed on skills in project development, community mobilization, monitoring and follow-up activities.

XIII. NEW WAYS AND NEW PROBLEMS

Since the beginning of the 1990s Mongolia has been at grips with a wide-ranging process of decentralization that involves legal, administrative, political and fiscal reforms. The

introduction of a multiparty system and the adoption of a new Constitution which guarantees basic human rights have been very important steps in this process and have formed the groundwork for the transfer of much administrative and fiscal authority from the centre to the other levels of government. The strategy employed in this transfer has been to focus on the decentralization of state functions and the creation of conditions favourable to greater individual freedom, more local autonomy and development which results from the constructive and effective endeavours of communities.

A similar strategy is being followed in the decentralization of the Mongolian NPA, which is being carried out in line with the policies of the Government and enjoys full support and assistance at every level.

Fresh laws on the administrative divisions of government, the status of public employees, education and health insurance have created a general legal framework for economic deconcentration based on the transfer of certain powers to the aimag. The appointment of the aimag governors has become an effective institutional tool to support the decentralization process by fulfilling a dual function: the governors act both as representatives of the central Government and as independent decision-makers who possess certain prerogatives over local expenditures and revenues.

However, obstacles exist in the decentralization process. The most serious one is the limited revenue-raising capacity of local governments. The fact that development plans are no longer drafted by the central Government or supported through Government budget allocations has put the aimag and municipalities in a difficult predicament. The flow of funds from the capital has slowed to a trickle, and the aimag and municipalities must now seek other sources of revenue to sustain economic development.

Moreover, because of the profound economic crisis, which has affected local economies the most, aimag governors are tending to use the available resources for the economic sector rather than the social sector. In all the aimag, without exception, the problem of the maintenance of health care, education and basic social services is an acute one. It is therefore very difficult to finance those NPA activities that are not directly supported by the central Government.

The transfer of administrative and fiscal authority to local governments has become a major challenge, since local officials typically lack experience in both independent decision-making and the exercise of their new powers. In the past they were never asked to develop plans or to raise revenue on their own. Accustomed to a centralized structure of government

and to receive instructions issued from the capital, local officials still tend all too often to wait passively for orders and directives rather than undertake their own initiatives.

The situation is similar in many communities. When attempts to involve communities in the decision-making process have failed, it is frequently either because the populations are too widely dispersed for effective common actions, or because they lack a tradition of democratic self-governance. Initiatives undertaken by nongovernmental organizations are rare in rural Mongolia. Though local communities have begun some projects, in most cases people simply wait for the plans, the approval and the money to arrive from somewhere higher up.

The problem of social mobilization is a very serious one in the implementation of the NPA at the subnational and district levels, since community participation and support are crucial for the success of the programme. The need for training and guidance in capacity-building and community mobilization is great. This applies to the local institutions responsible for NPA implementation as well, since these institutions have no experience in project development, management and monitoring.

On the other hand, because of the shortage of qualified personnel, the fact that the documentation on the NPA has already been drawn up means that it has become an important model among local authorities for the formulation of their respective programmes and offers them guidelines in the definition of the goals and strategies they must adopt for the benefit of children.

The Mongolian NPA has been formulated in the capital by the National Working Committee on the NPA in cooperation with the sectoral ministries. This centralized approach toward formulation seems to be having both negative and positive effects. On the one hand, the policies of the sectoral ministries do not necessarily reflect the situation at the local level, and the evaluations of the ministries tend to be too general. Thus, the goals set forth in the NPA are not always in line with actual conditions, and the analysis of requirements does not mirror the financial and manpower needs of particular communities. This means that overall NPA goals must be adapted to local development policies and that the mobilization of local resources must be tailored to the capacities of communities. However, central Government agencies have sometimes thrust onto communities policies which have little to do with local requirements, or, at the other extreme, the decentralization approach has sometimes been applied carelessly, without regard to the ability of communities to exercise the newfound authority in any effective manner. All these mistakes have created difficulties.

On the other hand, despite the numerous obstacles which are hindering the process

of NPA decentralization, the Government and the newly established administrative and political organizations in the country are thoroughly behind the efforts to achieve the NPA goals. This, combined with the clearly defined methodologies and initiatives to be employed within the NPA, represents a solid foundation for the successful implementation of the Mongolian National Programme of Action.

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