



GENDER AWARENESS THROUGH THEATER: A MULTI-NATIONAL PARTNERSHIP FOR SUSTAINABLE GENDER INCLUSIVITY IN MONGOLIA

Uniterra is a Canadian volunteer cooperation and international development program that is jointly operated by WUSC (World University Service of Canada) and CECI (the Centre for International Studies and Cooperation). The program supports inclusive economic development to benefit women and youth in 14 countries across Africa, Asia, and the Americas. Uniterra works with key private, public, and civil society partners to facilitate growth and change in markets that have the greatest impact on the marginalized.

Introduction

The education sector in Mongolia is largely influenced by gender bias and stereotypes. Men are thought to be more capable of making a living regardless of education and thus receive much less support, leading to a reverse gender gap – an unusual situation where school enrolments are lower among boys and men.

However, though women are more likely to attain higher education, they are also more likely to be unemployed upon graduation. Gender roles encourage women to stay home to care for their families and men to take on the role of primary breadwinners in the family.

The problem: Segregation of men and women in trades

Gender stereotypes do not start in employment but are encouraged early in school, though many efforts on the part of the government and civil society have focused on the closing of the gender gap and the advancement of equal economic opportunities for women and men.

Program:
Volunteer Cooperation
Program 2015-2020

Country:
Mongolia

Implementing partner:
3 TVET institutions

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Key themes of the story:
gender, youth, gender
inclusivity

Mongolian technical vocational education and training (TVET) centres in particular specialize in trades that are often male or female dominated, such as construction or sewing. Gender stereotypes are thus further normalized and cause significant barriers for students who are the minority sex in their class.

It was stories told by young women studying in TVET schools that provided the spark for the present project. To reflect realities of gender bias and discrimination in the classroom, focus groups were held with students and teachers in three TVET institutions. Anecdotes such as, “*I would never ask a girl to do a big physical task and I would never ask a boy to do something meticulous because they are each better at different things. But now boys are becoming strange. [...] Sometimes I scold them: ‘Be a man!’*” demonstrate that gender inclusivity remains a significant challenge in the technical and vocational education sector.

Solution: 0% participants, 100% agents of change

Students and teachers presented their own skits to reflect, recognize, and transform classroom scenarios of discrimination into examples of inclusivity --- to “treat everyone as human,” as one teacher summarized.

In March 2017, the European Union approached the Uniterra Program looking to fund gender-oriented initiatives and accepted volunteer Emilie Maclsaac’s proposal featuring Gender Awareness through Theatre.

To ensure project sustainability and local partners’ capacity building, Uniterra collaborated closely with the Vocational Education and Training Partnership (VETP), a Mongolian non-profit organization created in 2013 to coordinate the development of the Mongolian vocational education and training sector.

Results

- 152 direct beneficiaries (90 students and 52 teachers)
- 6,558 indirect beneficiaries (608 family members of above, 4,460 students and teachers from 5 TVET schools, and 1,500 community people reached)
- 4 volunteers involved
- 25 number of tools (13 posts published on 3 social media (Facebook / VETP website and newsletter / Flickr, and 6 videos produced)

A successful pilot during the spring and summer of 2017 involved 90 students and 52 teachers — 44% of which were women — from five TVET centres in three Mongolian cities, attracting support from the German international development organization GIZ in October and further sponsorship from the EU.

With the new funding and training support from Uniterra, VETP independently expanded the program to new schools and regions in November and 2018 winter, transferring resources to educators for incorporation into regular school curriculum.

“Other students who watched the skits were so motivated. They visited my office and asked if they could join the skits next time, inspired by their own ideas on the scenarios.” *Erdenechimeg, Social Worker at the Mongolian-Korean Polytechnic College*

The results of this project contribute to SDG: 4- Quality Education, 5- Gender Equality, 10- Reduced Inequalities.

Scale-up, Replication, Sustainability and Innovation

Implemented and documented *by* youth and *for* youth with a mission of empowerment at its core, the project not only involves, but is run by, youth of both genders, with theatre students as trainers and multimedia students as documentation officers.

This program brought together all the TVET stakeholders, national and international, to focus on making TVET more inclusive. Since the volunteer’s departure a second phase has been successfully conducted and a third phase has been underway since November 2018. The number of participating TVET schools has increased to eight and additional handouts and materials are being distributed to enable the schools to lead this project on their own and continue the dialogue.



Émilie Maclsaac

Volunteer Gender and Youth Inclusion Advisor for the Uniterra Program, Émilie worked closely with Garamkhand Surendeleg of the Vocational Education and Training Partnership (VETP) and with the support of fellows: Baiglamaa Gankhu, Enkhjargalan Gantumur, Vivian Chui, Daniel Caramori, Andrea Scheske and Hayley Toll. Her work was instrumental in developing, implementing and securing complimentary funding for the Gender Awareness through Theatre (GATT) program.