



Blue Skies Day Care Annual Report 2016



CONTENTS

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS.....	2
MONGOLIA OVERVIEW.....	4
PROGRAMME BACKGROUND.....	9
PROGRAMME OVERVIEW.....	10
OUR YEAR.....	12
Beneficiaries.....	12
2016 Highlights.....	14
Daily Routine.....	17
Education.....	18
Kindermusik.....	20
Healthcare.....	23
SPECIAL EVENTS AND ACTIVITIES.....	24
OUR STORIES.....	25
FINANCIAL OVERVIEW.....	32

The Christina Noble Children's Foundation is dedicated to serving the physical, medical, educational and emotional needs of vulnerable children in Vietnam and Mongolia. We believe that every child deserves love, respect and freedom from all forms of abuse and exploitation.

We establish long-term relationships with the children we support and empower them to live happy, emotionally rich, and independent lives.





One of our little ones during a snowball fight!

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

By funding our *Blue Skies Day Care* you are helping to create a safe, caring and educational environment for young children from extremely disadvantaged backgrounds.

By providing this much needed support the children's parents can go out to work happy and confident in the knowledge that their children are receiving a good preschool education, are eating nutritious meals, have access to proper healthcare, and are being loved, encouraged and cared for in a way that gives them the best possible start in life.

With effectively no state welfare system many parents who have young children to care for often face the difficult choice of either staying at home with their young ones and not having the opportunity to work and generate income, or going out to work and leaving their young children alone at home all day. Leaving young children alone and unsupervised is culturally-acceptable in Mongolia; very often young children and toddlers are locked inside their gers all day while their parents are out. Not surprisingly – especially with a burning hot stove in the middle of the ger during winter – ger fires, accidents, and child deaths are not uncommon.

Alternatively, children sometimes accompany their parents to work assisting them in jobs such as collecting rubbish from the streets or scouring through the local dumpsite for reusable and recyclable goods that can be sold. These working environments are dangerous and appalling for anyone but for a young and vulnerable child they are even more hazardous. Many precious little children are therefore frequently exposed to severe risk of disease, violence, and exploitation.

The Christina Noble Children's Foundation *Blue Skies Day Care* enables children from these disadvantaged communities the opportunity to go to school and receive the education that all children deserve, so that their chances of growing up and breaking the cycle of poverty are significantly increased. Without you this would not be possible.

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PROGRAMME OVERVIEW

Established	2000
Location	<i>Blue Skies Ger Village</i> , Songino Khairkhan district, Ulaanbaatar
Objectives	To create a secure and happy environment where disadvantaged children can develop socially and emotionally while learning the necessary basic literacy and numeracy skills to prepare them for a successful entry to primary school, in addition to cultivating healthy life habits, confidence and self-esteem, and the ability to think creatively. By providing a supportive and nurturing environment for their children, parents can go out to work feeling reassured that their young ones are safe, loved, and receiving high quality nutritious meals and healthcare – giving them the best possible start to life.
Programme Components	The provision of academic and holistic education, healthcare, emotional support, wholesome nutrition, and essential items such as warm clothes and educational supplies.
Beneficiaries	Children under primary school age who are resident at the <i>Blue Skies Ger Village</i> , and those living in poverty-stricken circumstances in the surrounding Songino Khairkhan district area.
Local Partners	National Authority for Children, Ministry of Education, Songino Khairkhan Family & Child Development Agency
CNCF Involvement	Fully responsible for funding and programme management, monitoring, and evaluation.
CNCF Staff	Head Teacher: Davaasuren Tserennorov, Assistant Teacher: Deedentsetseg Chuluunbaatar
Monitoring and Evaluation	Regular meetings are held between the day care staff and the ger village management and psychosocial teams. Visits are conducted by the Director of Operations to observe the running of the programme and discuss any challenges and progress with the staff. All children meet regularly with the Foundation's doctor in order to monitor their health. Government inspections are conducted by the National Authority for Children and the National Inspection Agency, as well as health and fire safety inspections by the local district authorities. A monthly report is completed by the programme leader and an annual report is sent to all stakeholders.
2016 Actual Costs	\$31,429.06 USD
Reporting Period	January-December 2016

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MONGOLIA OVERVIEW

Mongolia was a satellite state of the Soviet Union between the years of 1924 and 1990, governed from Moscow by the communist party. The relationship brought many benefits to Mongolia yet also many tragedies.

In the 1930s at least one third of the male population of Mongolia was executed by order of the party. Religious figures, intellectuals, and anyone who might be considered a threat to communist ideals was killed or exiled to Siberia, and much of Mongolia's cultural heritage was destroyed; the fierce independence and self-determination of the Mongols was broken, and an entire cultural heritage was stripped within the space of a generation.

On the other hand, however, Soviet administration also brought significant economic, political, and military support along with extensive improvements to Mongolia's infrastructure. Roads, railways, running water and sewage systems, communications networks and power stations were all constructed. Industry flourished as a result, as did civil services such as state education and healthcare.

Many Mongolians were sent to Russia to receive educations in scientific, engineering, and medical professions while a large number of herders who had previously lived the traditional nomadic way of life were given new administrative jobs in settlements designed to create a more geographically fixed population.



It is not uncommon to find families of up to twelve people living inside the same small ger.

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The “Russian Years” are remembered with great fondness by those Mongolians who were fortunate enough to share in its benefits, yet by 1990 the Soviet Union was in irreversible decline. With the Russian military having been withdrawn a year earlier Mongolia underwent a peaceful revolution resulting in the nation’s first democratic election since the time of the great Mongol empire. The collapse of the communist system brought about many changes, the two most significant of which were the end of Mongolia’s massive Soviet support including much funding for development, and the transition to a market economy.

Unprepared and ill-equipped for such significant changes, Mongolia went into a deep economic recession resulting in triple-digit inflation, large-scale unemployment, shortages of basic goods, and food rationing. The fledgling national economists struggled to adapt to the new market economy, and an over-allocation of bank credit led to a collapse of the financial system in 1995.

Mongolia was plunged into crisis and the nation suffered; many people froze to death. In the coldest capital city in the world with no food, no homes, no jobs, and no foreign aid, the future of Mongolia and its children looked increasingly hopeless and desperately bleak.

It was in the depths of this crisis that Christina Noble first came to Mongolia.



A view of Mongolia’s capital city, Ulaanbaatar.

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Many families have no choice but to live in the tiny, dark and unhealthy basements and stairwells of city apartment block buildings.

MONGOLIA TODAY

The first external poverty assessment of Mongolia was conducted in 1996, a year before our founder Christina Noble first arrived. It was reported by the World Bank that 36% of Mongolia's population lived below the weighted poverty line of US\$17 per month.¹

Since then Mongolia has gone through periods of incredibly fast development driven primarily by large foreign investments into the mining industry. In 2001 the world's second largest ever deposit of copper-gold ore was discovered in the Gobi desert, fuelling what many have labelled the "Mining Boom".²

After peaking in 2007 Mongolia was then affected greatly by the global economic downturn as the price of metals fell rapidly – especially copper, which decreased by 65% between July 2008 and February 2009.³

Mongolia has been in recovery since 2010 but the economy continues to face challenges due to the low levels of global demand for minerals. Economic growth slowed to just 2.4% in 2015 and the downward trend continued this year, settling at a lowly 1.0%.⁴

¹ World Bank (1996), *Mongolia: Poverty Assessment in a Transition Economy*, Report number: 15723 [online] http://www-wds.worldbank.org/external/default/WDSContentServer/WDSP/IB/1996/06/27/000009265_3961214164741/Rendered/PDF/multi0page.pdf [accessed 21/12/15]

² BBC (2013), *Mongolia's Mining Boom*, Radio 4: Crossing Continents, 1 April 2013, <http://www.bbc.co.uk/programmes/b01rgm9q>

³ World Bank (2009), *Mongolia Quarterly*, February 2009, <http://siteresources.worldbank.org/INTMONGOLIA/Resources/MongoliaQuarterlyFebruary2009English.pdf> [accessed 16/01/15]

⁴ Trading Economics (2017), *Mongolia GDP Annual Growth Rate*, <http://www.tradingeconomics.com/mongolia/gdp-growth-annual> [accessed 12/02/17]

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In spite of the economic slowdown in recent years, on the whole – between 2001 and the present day – there is no doubt that Mongolia has developed rapidly and the standard of living has improved for a significant percentage of the population, including the establishment of a middle class.⁵ Official figures show the poverty rate declining from 27.4% in 2012 to 21.6% in 2014.⁶

However, despite apparent progress on a national level many of the poorest families have been left behind. As is so often the case in rapidly developing countries there is a widening chasm between the rich and the poor. Due to the massive price inflation stimulated by the mining boom (inflation peaked at an incredible 31.9% in July 2008⁷) many families are now unable to afford basic living provisions such as adequate food and heating, and there is effectively no social welfare available to support them. Despite the prices of commodities increasing rapidly over the past fifteen years, the income of these families has increased at a comparably meagre rate.

Still 61% of Ulaanbaatar's population resides in the city's ger districts, with many having no access to running water or a sewage system; of these 736,000 ger district residents, 60% are unemployed.⁸ This is to a large extent due to the incredibly high levels of migration from the countryside to the city over the past ten years; with the rapid nationwide increases in the prices of goods, the traditional nomadic way of life quickly became uneconomical and insufficient for many herders.



Parents often have no choice but to leave their tiny children at home on their own for hours on end while they go out to work.

⁵ Asian Development Bank (2010), *The Rise of Asia's Middle Class*, <http://www.adb.org/sites/default/files/publication/27726/ki2010-special-chapter.pdf> [accesses 07/10/16]

⁶ World Bank (2016), *Mongolia Overview*, 12 April 2016, <http://www.worldbank.org/en/country/mongolia/overview>, [accessed 19/04/16]

⁷ Trading Economics (2016), *Mongolia Inflation Rate*, <http://www.tradingeconomics.com/mongolia/inflation-cpi> [accessed 12/01/16]

⁸ Engel, David (2015), *Ulaanbaatar's Ger District Issues: Changes and Attitudes*, SIT Graduate Institute, http://digitalcollections.sit.edu/cgi/viewcontent.cgi?article=3109&context=isp_collection [accessed 12/01/16]

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The majority of children who attend our day care come from extremely disadvantaged backgrounds. We work to give these little ones a happy and enriching childhood experience by providing nutritious food, healthcare, education and love.



Between thirty and forty thousand people flock to Ulaanbaatar each year with hopes and dreams of steady employment and a prosperous life;⁹ unfortunately however, this is not the case for the vast majority of the new arrivals and Mongolia now faces a situation where its capital has 1.4 million people living in a city that was originally engineered to support a mere 400,000.¹⁰

This immense overpopulation and its subsequent large-scale unemployment are at the root of many systemic and often incredibly complex societal dysfunctions. Alcoholism, domestic violence, child abuse and neglect, and families living in extreme destitution are just some of the saddening and desperate realities that many residents of the ger district communities face every day, as they struggle to survive with very little support and scarce opportunities.

Unfortunately, as is often the case in communities blighted by these social conditions, it is the children who suffer the most. Growing up in dire circumstances without security, guidance, or protection has meant that many Mongolian children are exposed to a significantly higher risk of exploitation from unsavoury adults, organised gangs and, sadly, also from their own families.

⁹ National Statistical Office of Mongolia (2010), *Population and Housing Census 2010*, Population and Housing Census Bureau, <http://catalog.ihsn.org/index.php/catalog/4572> [accessed 24/04/16]

¹⁰ Forrest, Brett (2013), *James Passin, The American Who Bought Mongolia*, Bloomberg, <http://www.bloomberg.com/news/articles/2013-05-16/james-passin-the-american-who-bought-mongolia> [accessed 04/02/16]

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PROGRAMME BACKGROUND

The Christina Noble Children's Foundation (CNCF) was established in 1989 in Ho Chi Minh City, Vietnam, by Irishwoman Christina Noble. In 1997 Christina extended the work of her Foundation into Mongolia and set up the *Blue Skies Ger Village* – a residential care facility for children



Christina Noble with one of our *Blue Skies Ger Village* children.

who share in a childhood experience that has been shaped by poverty, abuse and extreme neglect. The village was formed following an investigative visit Christina made to Mongolia's capital city Ulaanbaatar, where she was shocked to discover thousands of sick and destitute children and families living in horrendous conditions throughout the city, many of whom were struggling to survive.

The *Blue Skies Day Care* was subsequently established in 2000 in order to support the educational and emotional development of preschool children aged between one- and six-years-old living at the Foundation's ger village. Originally operating out of two adjacent gers, there were just thirteen children attending the day care with two teachers and one British volunteer in charge of the project.

However, as the population of the surrounding area quickly grew due to the large annual influx of migrants from the countryside, it soon became apparent that the programme needed to expand its reach; a new building was constructed in 2002 and was then extended in 2005. With this larger and more efficient space the day care was able to support vulnerable and disadvantaged children living in the local area.



PROGRAMME OVERVIEW

Our *Blue Skies Day Care* is open from 9am to 5pm every weekday, and is responsible for supporting the educational, physical and emotional development of preschool children living at the *Blue Skies Ger Village* and in the surrounding ger district area. Young children who may be temporarily staying at the village also attend the day care while they wait to be relocated to another children's shelter or reunited with their family. To date the project has nurtured and educated close to eight hundred little ones, helping them to build a strong and happy base for future learning.

Most children who attend our day care live in the 7th sub-district of Songino Khaikhan, where unemployment rates are high and living conditions generally are extremely poor. Most often the children are from single parent families who are struggling to survive in the most desperate of circumstances and without any available financial or social support.

The *Blue Skies Day Care* is the only free-of-charge day care in the entire local district and is therefore an indispensable lifeline for these children and their families. Without the Foundation's support, many of these parents would have no choice but to go out to work and leave their tiny children at home on their own, often locked inside their ger in unsafe, unstimulating, and deprived conditions for what could be hours on end.

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As a result of our day care programme, struggling parents are able to go out to work happy and confident in the knowledge that their children are eating good nutritious meals, have access to proper healthcare, and are being loved, encouraged and cared for in a way that gives them the best possible start to life.

To ensure that the programme benefits those most in need, an initial household visit and family assessment is conducted as part of the application process. The home visits allow our staff to gain a deeper understanding of the families' challenges, and we will also – if necessary – include them in the Foundation's other programmes.

Our children are taught in alignment with the national preschool curriculum, with the children assigned to one of three age-specific groups each with their own education programme.

In addition, the children also receive extracurricular *Kindermusik* lessons. Kindermusik is a research-based music-and-movement method, originally developed in Germany, that is creatively designed to enhance children's cognitive, language, physical, creative, and social-emotional development.

The Foundation also provides the opportunity for the children's parents and guardians to attend personal development and life skills workshops, including programmes on health and hygiene. Food and clothing is also distributed to the most in need families twice a year, during national holidays.



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OUR YEAR

Beneficiaries

A total of seventy-seven children benefitted from our day care programme this year.

Here is a breakdown by the numbers:

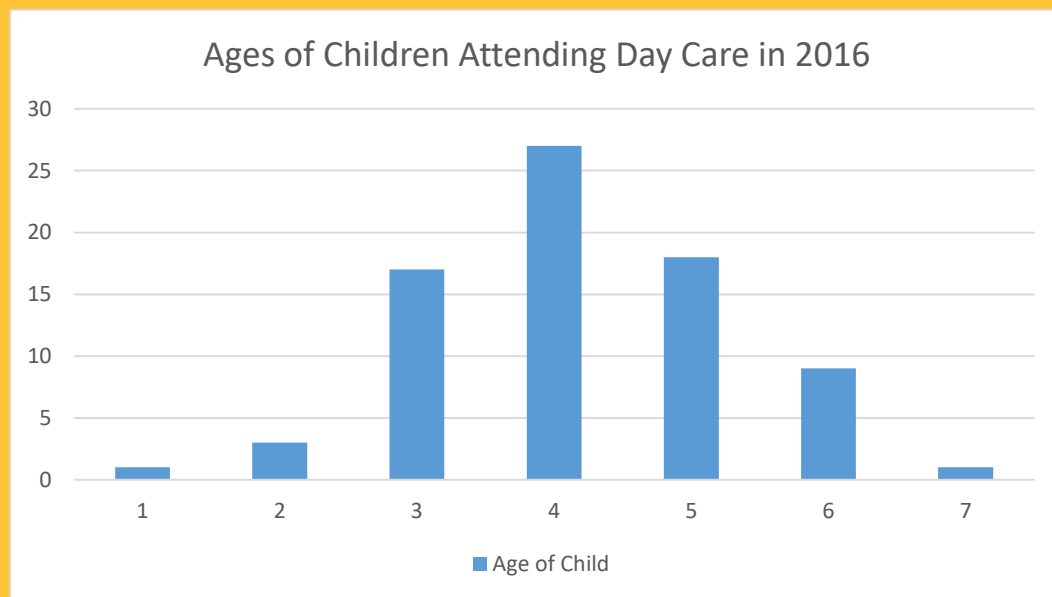
- Forty-six children attended our day care between January and June of the 2015-16 academic year.
- Twenty-six of these children re-enrolled for the 2016-17 school year, which began in September.
- Between September and the end of December, nineteen new children joined the group making a total class size of forty-five.
- Therefore, sixty-five children received full-time daycare during 2016.
- Throughout the year twelve children attended the day care on a short-term basis. This included some children who were temporarily in residence at the ger village, children of CNCF staff, or siblings of our existing day care children who needed temporary care from time-to-time.



Our day care team teach our children about how to care for themselves and each other, this includes washing their hands, brushing their hair, and cleaning their faces.

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- Of the seventy-seven students, there were forty-one boys and thirty-six girls.
- Fourteen children were living at the *Blue Skies Ger Village*, either permanently or temporarily.
- Breakdown by age:



* The one-year-old was a CNCF staff member's child who received temporary day care when his wife was ill and could not look after the baby.

** The seven-year-old was a child who came to the ger village having received no previous education; she therefore attended day care for a year to prepare for primary school, as well as working with our ger village teachers.



BLUE SKIES DAY CARE 2016 HIGHLIGHTS

77 children benefited from the project



41
boys



36
girls

65 children received full-time day care

12 children attended on a temporary basis

46 children were enrolled on our programme during the 2015/2016 academic year

45 children are enrolled on our programme during the 2016/2017 academic year

14 children from the *Blue Skies Ger Village*

63 children living in poverty from the surrounding ger district area

All children receive an education, healthcare and nutritious meals

All children receive essential items such as warm clothing and stationery

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2016 Highlights

2016 has been a busy year for our *Blue Skies Day Care*. We have had many highlights and developments within the programme that will benefit our children both now and for many more years to come. Here is an overview of our main highlights and activities:

- The music and movement English language learning programme *Kindermusik* was introduced to our children's weekly timetable. The programme is a fun and effective way for our children to learn English and develop their motor skills, rhythm and coordination.
- Our two teachers attended a series of government-run professional development trainings where they learnt the most up-to-date teaching methods and national curriculum requirements. Based on these learnings our head teacher created three age-specific syllabuses in alignment with the revised standards for the 2016-2017 academic year.
- The day care building underwent major renovations work, including structural improvements to the roof and the installation of a new heating, plumbing, and fire alarm system. Additional work included refurbishing the bathroom, fitting bright new closets, and installing security cameras.

An initial home visit is made to all children who apply to our day care centre; this enables us to learn about their living conditions and choose those who are most in need of support.



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- With thanks to the support of the artists at ArtiCour Gallery, a magical scene of animals, letters, numbers, rainbows and more was painted onto the wall of our day care centre. Our children love the bright and beautiful mural which was designed to spark our children's imaginations and support their learning.
- Our staff organised an enriching range of field trips for the children. These included going to the countryside to learn about nature, and visiting the Shangri-La hotel's new Adventure Zone play area where they spent a magical day climbing across rope bridges, battling in ball pits and bravely taking on the big slides. This was a dream come true for our children, who had never experienced anything like it before.
- High-speed Internet was installed in the centre. This now allows our team to access learning materials and download educational resources much more quickly and conveniently. The teachers can also stream nursery rhymes, songs and educational videos directly into the day care, creating a more engaging learning experience for the children.
- An academic festival was organised at the end of the 2015-16 academic year. During the event our children showcased what they had been learning throughout the year to their parents and relatives. The children put on a heartwarming show of songs, poems and dance routines, leaving everyone extremely proud of what special young people they are.



Our little ones wrapped up warm in their new winter clothes.

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- In October warm winter garments such as gloves, hats, scarves, coats and jumpers were distributed to all of our children; lighter summer clothes were also given in May. This additional support is vital for the children, who would otherwise be unable to afford these essential items.
- Our teachers attended a variety of training sessions in order to support their ongoing professional development. These included monthly workshops with our ger village psychotherapist designed to help improve their knowledge of child psychology, develop their communication skills with children, and manage any workplace stress; they also attended a mission and values workshop led by CNCF Director of Operations Thomas Minter.
- In addition to internal trainings, our team joined sessions organised by the Preschool Education School of the Mongolian State University of Education, where they developed and expanded on their knowledge of childcare and preschool education, and acquired further information about how to support parents and educate them on child protection policies.
- Our little ones also performed in special events and celebrations throughout the year, including Children's Day, Christmas and New Year parties, and concerts to our ger village visitors. This is always a fun and enjoyable experience for our young people, which helps them to build confidence and self-belief.

Enjoying their Children's Day celebrations!



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Daily Routine

Time	Activity	Details
09.00 – 09.30	Morning reception	Greetings and discussion Health activities (washing hands, cleaning face and brushing teeth)
09.30 – 09.50	Class circle	Creating a pleasant atmosphere for the day Discuss the day's activities and generate motivation Give the children a chance to express their thoughts
09.50 – 10.00	Morning exercises	Warm-ups and exercise
10.00 – 10.20	Breakfast	Set up and eat breakfast
10.20 – 11.00	Organised activities	Development activities under specific topics (nature, culture, health, speech, music, art, etc.) Play
11.00 – 11.40	Outside time (when it's not too cold!)	Preparation Activities Play
11.40 – 12.40	Lunch	Wash hands Prepare and eat lunch
12.40 – 15.00	Naptime	Independent activity (making the bed, putting on pyjamas) Storytelling, listening to music Sleep Independent activity (making the bed, getting dressed, washing hands, brushing hair)
15.00 – 15.30	Afternoon meal	Prepare and eat afternoon meal
15.30 – 16.00	Free activity	Entertaining activities (play, outside time, music, etc.)
16.00 – 17.00	Home time (parents can collect their children any time between 4pm and 5pm)	Independent activity (play, reading, drawing, talking to each other) Discussion with parents about the day's events

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Education

When children are young they are absorbing information at an incredibly fast rate. Every new experience, every word they learn and every behaviour they adopt is an investment in their future; a positive early childhood education is an opportunity to form beneficial beliefs and habits that will guide the children for the rest of their lives. For children growing up in extreme poverty or for those who have come from backgrounds shaped by neglect and abuse, attending a good quality day care is particularly important in helping to create new life perspectives, greater self-belief, and an excitement for learning and growth. We are therefore always looking for ways to improve our

programme and give our little ones the best possible start to life.

In our ongoing commitment to continuous development and improvement, our two day care teachers participated in a series of professional and psychological training workshops to create a revised and specialised preschool syllabus for the 2016-2017 academic year.

The new syllabus is designed to recognise each child's individual needs, unique personalities and learning requirements, and focuses on developing positive character traits such as self-confidence, patience, resilience, and problem solving.

The syllabus also focuses on specific topics, for example Mongolian culture, the seasons and nature, as well as incorporating art, music, sport, play and group discussion to facilitate our

We work to create a fun and supportive environment where our children develop a joy for learning.



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children's holistic development. Activities are designed to develop language skills, listening, teamwork, muscle development, memory, and creativity.

Our activities include:

- Musical circle, where our children sit together to sing and play instruments
- Storytelling and story creation, often with finger puppet characters
- Team games
- Group discussions and idea sharing
- Creative arts such as painting, origami, crafts, and sculpting with playdough
- Science experiments
- Physical exercises, including health and fitness education
- Information Technology (IT) education
- Theatre arts, including preparing performances for special events and celebrations



Our children enjoying art time!

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Kindermusik

This year we were excited to introduce the English language music and movement programme *Kindermusik* to our day care programme. Kindermusik classes promote an incredibly dynamic and engaging learning experience and are led by Khulan Tsogbayar, who is an internationally trained and certified Kindermusik educator. A one-month introductory course was held at our centre in May, and was then introduced permanently from September.

“ABC English & Me” classes are held once a week for two different age groups, with each class lasting forty-five minutes. The music and movement activities are carefully and creatively designed to enhance the children’s cognitive, English language, physical, creative, and social-emotional development.

The curriculum also introduces a range of musical concepts, genres, and styles to help foster a lifelong appreciation for the music itself. The children love the fun and upbeat lessons, which have helped them to learn basic English words and develop in confidence, patience, rhythm and self-esteem.

The course is designed to incorporate the following elements and teaching techniques:

Movement: Movement is essential to children’s learning and an integral part of every Kindermusik lesson; movement develops fitness and the sensory components of balance, coordination, spatial awareness, directionality, and visual literacy. During the lessons the children have ‘rolled like a pig’, tiptoed, pointed at their different body parts, walked, waddled, galloped, jumped, and wiggled. In each activity Khulan speaks in English to describe the actions and encourages the children to repeat after her.



Our little ones enjoyed performing what they had learnt in their Kindermusik classes to visitors from the Noble Challenge.

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Pretend play: During the classes the children have fun roleplaying as different animals and characters such as cows, pigs, horses, ducks and roosters – imitating their sounds and performing the movements. They also play at pretending to be cars, motorbikes and aeroplanes, waving their arms and driving around on their hands and knees. Other games include playing ‘Peekaboo’ with scarves, ‘I spy’, and playing with puppets. During all of these activities English words are repeated and reinforced.

Instruments: The children use rhythm sticks, egg shakers, bells, whistles, the triangle, xylophone, and drums to create songs and play along with the beat of different pieces of music. Instrument play enables the children to develop a steady-beat awareness and also helps to strengthen their small muscles.

The children also enjoy walking, dancing and clapping to the beat of the drum and triangle. Khulan frequently praises the children on their creativity and encourages them to do the same for their peers. Congratulating the children plays an important role in motivating them and helping our little ones build feelings of pride and self-esteem.

The children experiment with different instruments to create songs and play along to the beat of music.



Songs: The children sing songs such as ‘Wheels on the Bus’ while having fun performing the different motions. Songs and rhymes are a great way for the children to learn and memorise new vocabulary, and are therefore regularly used during lesson time.

Storytime: Storytime enhances our children’s listening ability, inspires their imaginations, and develops their attention spans. Khulan uses beautifully illustrated storybooks such as *Ten in the Bed*, *Eensy Weensy Spider*, and *Cows in the Kitchen*.

Regular practice: To reinforce what the children learn during their Kindermusik lessons, our day care teachers receive a list of activities and vocabulary to practice with them throughout the week. Khulan has also given our teachers lots of ideas and advice about how they can use music and movement throughout the regular curriculum to promote an even higher level of engagement and learning retention.

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"The children in the Blue Skies Day Care are learning many valuable life skills including acquiring a second language through the Kindermusik programme. I can tell by their energy and enthusiasm that they love attending my class."

I remember how much the children enjoyed our first lesson together and I still see the same excitement and interest in them today. I listen to the children and ask about how they are doing; they love to talk to me about their families and share stories about their siblings. It is always nice to see the progress they are making each time I visit.

One little boy in particular stood out to me. At the beginning of the course he couldn't sit still and found it extremely difficult to focus. I saw him hitting, fighting and disturbing the other students most days. So I worked closely with him and continually explained about how the other person would feel when he behaved like that. I helped him to learn new positive ways to express himself through music, play and movement that didn't involve him hurting the other children.

Over time I began to see his attitude changing and now he is one of the best behaved students in my class. He is focused, calm and supportive of the other children. He loves learning new words and singing songs. The most rewarding thing is that he is very proud of his new behaviour and even tells the other little ones to behave more like him(!). There is no doubt that Kindermusik is benefiting and will continue to benefit him and all of the other children."

– Khulan Tsogbayar, Kindermusik Teacher

Khulan teaching a Kindermusik class in our day care centre.



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Healthcare

Fundamental to our Foundation's philosophy is the belief that all children, without exception, should be entitled to good quality healthcare. Helping our children to build strong healthy bodies is central to giving them the best possible start to life and is therefore something we take very seriously. This means lots of healthy meals, physical activity and regular checkups at our ger village infirmary.

Upon enrolling on our programme all children are examined by our Foundation doctor. Their details are recorded for future monitoring and treatments are given for any existing medical conditions. If a condition cannot be resolved on site, the child is referred to a specialist hospital for further support. All children receive eyesight, hearing, dental, and ear, nose and throat (ENT) examinations during the year.

As most of our day care children come from backgrounds of extreme poverty, a common concern affecting many of them is malnutrition, which often results in stunted growth. Providing wholesome and nutritious meals is therefore a priority at our *Blue Skies Day Care*; the children receive three healthy meals a day, plus snacks. These include lots of fresh fruits and vegetables which are grown in our ger village greenhouses wherever possible, as this ensures the best quality. Any children who are severely deficient in vitamins are provided with supplements year-round by our doctor, and every child receives vitamins in the cold winter months to help strengthen their immune systems.

Our children are also taught the importance of healthful habits such as regular morning exercise and good personal hygiene. The children learn to sanitise their hands before eating and after using the bathroom, brush their teeth correctly, wash and dry their face, blow their nose, and properly use the toilet.

Through teaching our children these basic skills they have learnt how to prevent against many common ger district illnesses, and have developed an understanding of the importance of good personal hygiene and self-respect.



All of the children received dental examinations and follow-up treatments where necessary.

SPECIAL EVENTS AND ACTIVITIES



Mural: With thanks to the support of the artists at ArtiCour Gallery, a magical scene of animals, letters, numbers, rainbows and more was painted onto the wall of our day care centre. We love the bright and beautiful mural which will spark our children's imaginations and support their learning for many years to come.



Children's Day: To celebrate this special occasion our children enjoyed a fun-packed day of games, delicious foods, and gifts. They also performed songs and poems for their parents, who watched with happiness and pride.



Noble Challenge Visit: In September twenty-four visitors taking part in the Noble Challenge arrived at our ger village. During their visit they enjoyed a special concert by children from many of the Foundation's programmes, including our day care children. Our little ones had lots of fun singing some of their newly learnt English songs for the visitors, who were left heart-warmed by the beautiful little people we support.



Visitors: The children had lots of fun playing with different visitors from around the world. These visits are always very beneficially for our children who as a result learn about different nationalities and develop confidence interacting with new people.



Toy Donations: This year our children were happy to receive a variety of new and exciting toys from the Khuree Rotary Club of Ulaanbaatar, and oversees donations from the Mongolian community of San Francisco.



Shangri-La's Adventure Zone: Our little ones spent a magical day out at Shangri-La's new Adventure Zone. There were lots of big happy smiles as our children raced around the magnificent play area, climbing across rope bridges, battling in ball pits and bravely taking on the big slides.



New Year Celebration: The New Year party is an annual tradition. We collectively reflect on the year, and the children perform a special concert of what they have been learning to their parents. This year we had a special visit from the Mongolian Father Christmas who distributed presents to our very excited children.



Distribution of School Supplies: Our children received a variety of rucksacks, stationery and books to prepare them for entering primary school.

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OUR STORIES

Enerel's Story

We first met Enerel in 2015 when her mother Tsendee came to us in desperate need of support. After visiting the family's home and learning about their challenging living conditions we knew that they would greatly benefit from our programme and immediately allocated a place to Enerel in our day care centre.

Tsendee was a young mother of two who had married her husband at eighteen-years-old. The family had never had their own home and lived their lives moving between the gers of various relatives. Unfortunately, as is so often the case with those living in extreme poverty, Tsendee's husband began drinking and would often become physically and psychologically abusive to the family. He was unable to hold down steady employment and there seemed to be little hope that their living conditions would improve.

No longer able to cope with her husband's unpredictable and increasingly violent temper, Tsendee had no choice but to take Enerel and her eleven-year-old brother out of the destructive situation and move into a relative's small shed. The space was dark, cramped and unhealthy but at least offered an escape from her previously violent life.

Tsendee is a strong woman who desperately wanted to find work to buy their own home and create a better life for her family. However, with two young children to care for she was unable to find steady employment and the family struggled to survive on a small government allowance.



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Occasionally Tsendee would find casual jobs selling coal and wood in the winter or collecting pine nuts to sell at the roadside. This meant that Tsendee's eleven-year-old son would often have to take care of Enerel, and as a result would have to miss school.

The family were only just making ends meet when their relative decided that he wanted to sell his shed and that they would have to leave. With nowhere else to go the family were at risk of becoming homeless. It was during this time that Tsendee approached the Foundation for help.

After speaking with our social workers, Enerel was enrolled at our *Blue Skies Day Care* in October 2015. As a result Tsendee was able to find full-time employment as a cleaner in a bottled water factory, confident in the knowledge that her little child was being cared for in a safe, nurturing and happy environment. Since then she has been promoted to the sales department and is now receiving a competitive salary. Her son no longer has to miss school to take care of his little sister and is achieving good grades in his subjects. Enerel has also shown significant improvements since beginning at our day care; she is enjoying learning new things and playing with all of her friends.

Furthermore, as a result of receiving a consistent salary Tsendee was able to save up and the family now have their very own ger. It is the first time that they have ever had the security of their own home and are finally able to enjoy a safe and happy life together. Without the *Blue Skies Day Care* this family's situation would be very different – they now have a bright and happy future to look forward to.





Gunzorig and Pagma when they first arrived at the ger village.

Gunzorig and Pagma's Story

For many of the children who come to live at our *Blue Skies Ger Village* this will be their first experience of a world where they have rights. A world where they can smile, laugh and play as children in an environment where the adults are there to support and protect them. This can be a new and bewildering experience for children who have spent the most vulnerable years of their lives in fear of a cruel and unpredictable adult world, where time and time again they are let down, abused and have their innocence exploited.

Before arriving at our ger village, brother and sister Gunzorig and Pagma had grown used to fending for themselves. They are just four- and five-years-old. In their young lives they had known nothing but alcoholism, violence, and not being cared for by anyone. They were exposed to situations and circumstances that no human being should ever have to face.

The fiercely independent little duo had grown up with their abusive and alcoholic mother on the city streets of Ulaanbaatar. Their father had left one summer's day, saying that he was going to collect pine nuts from the forest for them to sell on the roadside. Sadly, he never returned.

The children had never had a home of their own and instead spent their time on the move, seeking out temporary shelter wherever they could.

During the summers the mother and her two children would often sleep on empty building sites or in one of the city's parks. However, during the harsh winter months daily life became much more of a struggle as the

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family had to fight to stay alive in temperatures regularly reaching below -30 °C.

In order to keep warm the family would often stay with the mother's friends, moving in-between their different gers and rundown apartments. Although this provided some form of protection against the bitter cold conditions it was still a far cry from being the safe and nurturing home the two children longed for.

Every day their mother and her friends would drink cheap vodka and get increasingly drunk, unpleasant and abusive. As is too often the case, it was the children who fell victim to their alcohol-fuelled violence and cruel psychological abuse.



Gunzorig and Pagma playing in our day care centre.

Unsurprisingly, the two young siblings soon discovered that life was much safer on their own, and Gunzorig would often wait for his mother to pass out before taking his little sister off in search of somewhere they could just be together.

It was during one of their runaways that the two children were spotted by the local Child Development Authority (CDA) and brought in off the streets for further inquiry. As their heart-breaking story of extreme abuse, neglect and suffering unravelled the CDA immediately took action, contacting our Ger Village Manager and asking that they were rehomed at our centre.

When the children arrived at the village their dirty clothes, scratched faces and bruised little bodies told their story far better than words ever could. They stood tightly together, clutching each other's hands as their eyes wandered the village, taking in their new home for the first time.

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Despite being brought to us from an environment characterised by emotional and physical cruelty, it was an incredible thing to see the loving, kind and mutually supportive relationship between these two special little souls. It was clear to see that it had always been them together against the world.

Since arriving at the ger village the children have been attending our *Blue Skies Day Care*. Our dedicated day care teachers and ger village psychosocial team have been working closely with them, helping to rebuild their confidence, trust, and joy in life; it has been a long process requiring patience, unconditional love, kindness and understanding. Over time we have seen huge changes in their attitudes and behaviour. At the beginning the children would only play and talk to each other. They didn't interact with the other children and staff, keeping themselves separate and in their own little world. It was clear to see the trauma they had suffered during such precious and vulnerable years, and the coping mechanisms they had adopted in order to protect themselves from abuse and emotional pain.

Our day care teachers would gently encourage them to mix with the other children, providing praise and support at all times in order to help them feel safe and build self-esteem. They monitored the children's behaviour closely and reported their progress and any challenges to our ger village psychotherapist for her to address in individual sessions with the children outside of day care hours. As the children began to feel more secure and trusting in the staff



Pagma enjoying her first ever birthday party with her day care friends.

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and their environment, their behaviour soon began to change. They started smiling, laughing and being more open and expressive in their interactions. It was beautiful to watch these changes take place, as the children finally were able to experience a real childhood where they were loved, supported and treated with respect and dignity.

The children now love going to day care; they are the life and soul of the class, always participating in activities with enthusiasm and happiness. They love our new Kindermusik classes and are quickly picking up a range of English vocabulary, which they love showing off to our other ger village staff. They also enjoy creative activities such as art and music and are always eager to express themselves through painting, crafts, and playing instruments.

It is because of our *Blue Skies Day Care* staff that these beautiful siblings are now healing from the horrific experiences they endured as tiny children. Without the love and care that the Christina Noble Children's Foundation provides to these children, and the many others like them, they would most likely still be living a life in fear, exposed and vulnerable to abuse and exploitation. They are now able to build a strong and happy platform from which their future lives can flourish.

Through supporting our Blue Skies Day Care programme we can together play our parts in ensuring that these beautiful and precious children are not forgotten. Working together, we can support them with a childhood that nurtures, loves and respects all that they are, protects their innocence, cultivates their souls, and inspires their dreams.

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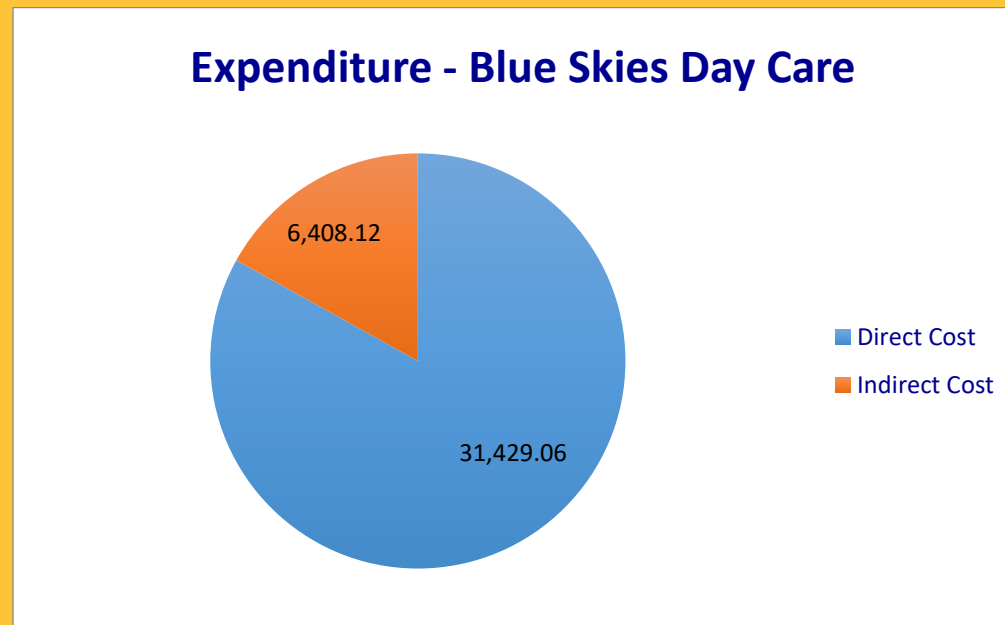
FINANCIAL OVERVIEW

The total **direct cost** of the *Blue Skies Day Care* in 2016 was \$31,429.06 USD.

This includes all expenditure that is specific and dedicated to the running and operation of the programme such as teachers' salaries, school equipment and supplies, hot nutritious foods, educational resources, and coal and firewood during the cold winter.

The **indirect cost** of supporting the programme was \$6,408.12 USD. This includes the salaries of CNCF Mongolia management and administration staff, office rent and utilities, stationery and supplies, communications, staff training, professional consultancy, and travel. This expenditure was paid for from the Foundation's administration budget.

The *Blue Skies Day Care* programme is funded by individual, corporate, and institutional donors. Our 2016 accounts are available upon request.





“Childhood is the foundation of life. Help us make it a good one!” – Christina Noble

Each of us is only one person. But by joining all the ones together, we can accomplish greatness. If you or your organisation is interested in supporting us in 2017/2018 please contact our Foundation. It is only through the love, care and generosity of others that we are able to continue our work with some of the world's most vulnerable children.

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