SECTOR ASSESSMENT (SUMMARY): EDUCATION

Sector Road Map

1. Sector Performance, Problems, and Opportunities

1. Mongolia has made significant progress in ensuring access to education. In the 2010s, the primary-level net enrollment ratio (NER) has been maintained above 95%, the junior secondary level NER above 90%, and the literacy rate for ages 15–24 above 98.5%. However, not all students reach the last grade of primary (grade 5) and junior secondary education (grade 9) (Table 1), despite the stipulation in the Education Law of Mongolia that all school age children receive 9 years of free compulsory education.

Table 1: Promotion, Repetition, and Dropout Rates
(School Year 2012/13–2013/14)

	Grade								
Item	**1**	**2**	**3**	**4**	**5**	**6**	**7**	**8**	**9**
Promotion rate	97.90	98.70	99.0	99.20	96.70	99.10	98.70	99.0	96.30
Repetition rate	0.14	0.07	0.03	0.02	0.02	0.02	0.00	0.02	0.00
Dropout rate	2.00	1.20	0.90	0.80	3.30	0.90	1.30	1.00	3.70

Source: Ministry of Education, Culture, and Science.

2. Moreover, there are significant disparities in the grade 1 net intake rate, NER, and the primary education completion rate across regions and *aimags* (provinces) (Table 2).

Table 2: Selected Primary Education Indicators by Region and *Aimag*

Region/*Aimag*	Net Intake Rate in Grade 1, 2014[a]	NER in Primary Education, 2012[b]	Primary Completion Rate, 2012[b]
National	**90.5**	**95.2**	**94.5**
Western Region	**85.4**	**101.1**	**86.1**
Bayan-Ulgii	61.8	96.2	86.0
Govi-Altai	89.2	96.9	86.2
Zavkhan	94.6	99.2	87.7
Uvs	85.8	114	86.3
Khovd	95.6	98.7	84.9
Highlands Region	**90.0**	**96.5**	**92.1**
Arkhangai	81.1	95.1	89.3
Bayankhongor	93.1	98.8	88.6
Bulgan	66.7	86.9	96.4
Orkhon	108.7	94.7	89.4
Uvurkhangai	95.1	98.8	94.4
Khuvsgul	76.2	100.6	97.6
Central Region	**86.8**	**97.6**	**97.2**
Govisumber	93.6	97.7	97.1
Darkhan-Uul	98.1	89.5	87.2
Dornogovi	87.2	98.2	106.3
Dundgovi	84.7	94.4	100.7
Umnugovi	89.9	88.5	96.2
Selenge	87.1	114.9	94.7
Tuv	66.9	99.5	103.6
Eastern Region	**85.5**	**97.0**	**92.1**
Dornod	93.1	101.1	93.7
Sukhbaatar	93.9	97.9	92.7
Khentii	69.9	92.7	90.4
Ulaanbaatar	**97.3**	**91.1**	**100.2**

NER = net enrollment rate.
Note: Some figures may be inaccurate.
Sources: [a] Ministry of Education, Culture, and Science; [b] National Statistical Office of Mongolia.

3. The disparities may be explained by the country's unique context—a low population density, with 26.1% of the economically active population engaging in semi-nomadic herding in 2014. Regions and *aimags* with a high proportion of herders making up the economically active population, and a large proportion of primary students in dormitories generally had lower grade 1 net intake rates and primary completion rates (Tables 2 and 3).

Table 3: Proportions of Herders in the Economically Active Population, Students from Herder Families in Dormitories, and Primary Students Staying in Dormitories, by Region and *Aimag*, 2014

Region/*Aimag*	Herders as a % of Economically Active Population[a]	No. Primary Students in Dormitories[b]	% Students from Herder Families in Dormitories[b]	Primary Students in Dormitories as % of Primary Enrollment[b]	Number of Dormitories/ Schools[b]
National	**26.1**	**11,276**	**77.6**	**4.5**	**486/755**
Western Region	**44.9**	**4,506**	**85.4**	**11.4**	**146/155**
Bayan-Ulgii	43.7	1,822	84.9	20.0	46/42
Govi-Altai	51.5	465	83.2	8.9	25/28
Zavkhan	40.5	338	77.0	5.1	26/30
Uvs	42.6	1,178	89.5	14.5	32/31
Khovd	49.7	703	92.6	8.6	17/24
Highlands Region	**46.5**	**3,599**	**71.7**	**7.5**	**139/167**
Arkhangai	60.1	645	87.5	8.4	28/32
Bayankhongor	53.2	481	87.2	6.5	27/29
Bulgan	53.9	527	81.3	12.0	23/22
Orkhon	3.3	18	19.7	0.2	3/20
Ovorkhangai	57.0	764	65.6	7.7	17/29
Khovsgol	48.6	1,164	89.1	10.0	41/35
Central Region	**29.1**	**2,107**	**59.9**	**5.3**	**122/156**
Govisumber	19.2	61	40.4	4.0	3/5
Darkhan-Uul	5.8	176	43.4	2.0	6/27
Dornogovi	24.9	324	33.5	5.6	18/21
Dundgovi	53.2	254	71.5	6.9	18/18
Omnogovi	41.4	214	86.1	4.1	29/19
Selenge	20.6	435	74.6	5.1	19/35
Tuv	43.4	643	69.9	9.5	29/31
Eastern Region	**39.2**	**794**	**65.6**	**4.5**	**61/66**
Dornod	28.4	250	49.0	3.8	18/25
Sukhbaatar	56.7	222	74.4	4.7	18/15
Khentii	35.2	322	73.5	5.1	25/26
Ulaanbaatar	**0.8**	**273**	**28.4**	**0.3**	**16/207**

Note: Some figures may be inaccurate.
Sources: [a] National Statistical Office of Mongolia; [b] Ministry of Education, Culture, and Science.

4. Interviews with school staff and herder families conducted as part of the social and poverty analysis indicated that families who reside in remote rural areas are reluctant to send children to school dormitories if (i) the school dormitory environment is poor; (ii) children are too young (in particular, 6 years old); and (iii) there are no older siblings staying in dormitories to take care of younger children. Children from herder families, therefore, tend to start school later than the official school age of 6. Concerns with the dormitory environment often result in mothers moving closer to the school to live with young children, placing an additional burden on herder families. Children are sometimes left with their relatives who live closer to the school, or with other children in a *ger* (traditional tent) set up closer to school, with no adult caregiver. The interviews as well as a national assessment indicated students who stay in dormitories, with relatives, or with other children in *gers* have lower academic performance; the same is true for students who start school later than the official school age of 6.[1]

[1] Education Evaluation Center of Mongolia. 2008. *Mongolian National Assessment of Primary Education Mathematics and Reading*. Ulaanbaatar.

5. The school dormitory system in Mongolia was developed in the 1970s and 1980s against this background to ensure access to education, especially for children from herder families. However, it now requires comprehensive reforms, in line with ongoing education sector reforms that aim to enhance equity of access to quality education. Reforms need to address the following major constraints on the school dormitory system.

6. **Poor physical environment**. The majority of school dormitories were built in the 1970s and 1980s and have become unfit to accommodate students because of chronically low levels of capital investment. The small annual budget allocations to schools (about MNT2.0 million per school) for repair and maintenance works preclude fundamental upgrading. Schools usually prioritize work on school buildings and facilities rather than dormitories, because school budgets for repair and maintenance do not distinguish work on dormitories. Obtaining additional funding from the Ministry of Education, Culture, and Science (MECS) or the Local Development Fund for fundamental upgrading is difficult and slow. During 2013–2014, the number of dormitories decreased from 511 to 486, of which 81 (17%) did not meet building standards set by the government. Dormitories are often found to lack safe drinking water, adequate sanitation facilities, heating systems, and protection from precipitation and wind. The situation surrounding water, sanitation, and hygiene (WASH) facilities in dormitories is further complicated by the lack of basic infrastructure (water, wastewater, heating) in rural remote areas. The cost of upgrading works is higher in rural remote areas than in urban areas, because they lack connections with paved roads, which increases the cost of transporting labor, equipment, and materials. The quality of civil works also tends to be lower (proper supervision is difficult in rural remote areas).

7. **Poor school dormitory services**. Although the ongoing education sector reforms place emphasis on child-centered approaches, school dormitory services have yet to be child-centered. The current per-student funding formula for dormitory meals does not take into account the age and differing nutritional requirements of students. Moreover, rising commodity prices have made the budget for dormitory meals insufficient to meet the dietary needs of students. Student–teacher ratios in dormitories are generally high (42–87), and students engage in little study, reading, and extracurricular activities in dormitories. There is often inadequate support from dormitory teachers and staff, and space and materials for study, reading, and extracurricular activities. Although dormitory teachers are required to have teacher certifications, about 30% do not meet the requirements. Dormitory teachers are considered non-teaching staff, and have lower salaries than teaching staff, complicating the recruitment and retention of qualified dormitory teachers. In 2014, the Mongolian State University of Education developed a pre-service training program for dormitory teachers, and a similar training program for in-service dormitory teachers and staff is needed. Many dormitory teachers, as well as guards who stay with students in dormitories at night, lack the skills to work and communicate with children, and require training. Students in early grades in particular need special care and support, as they frequently encounter difficulties in making a smooth transition from home to school and dormitory. In addition, teachers and school management have yet to find ways to involve parents of students in dormitories to support their children's learning.

8. **Model school dormitory physical environment and services**. The physical environment and services of school dormitories varies considerably depending on school management and *aimag* education departments. There are some locally recognized models that have a good physical dormitory environment and services (in Uvs *aimag*, for example). However, these need to be captured and examined in the light of international and national good practices. Physical dormitory environments and services have been poorly regulated to date, and require comprehensive standards and sufficient financing to enforce them, possibly with greater involvement of local governments and other stakeholders.

9. **Importance of the sector development to inclusive growth.** Improving the school dormitory environment will help increase the equity of access to quality education, which is expected to have poverty reduction impacts, because education is a determinant of individual life chances in terms of wages and employment opportunities. Moreover, a better educated population is essential to enhance the country's competitiveness.

2. Government's Sector Strategy

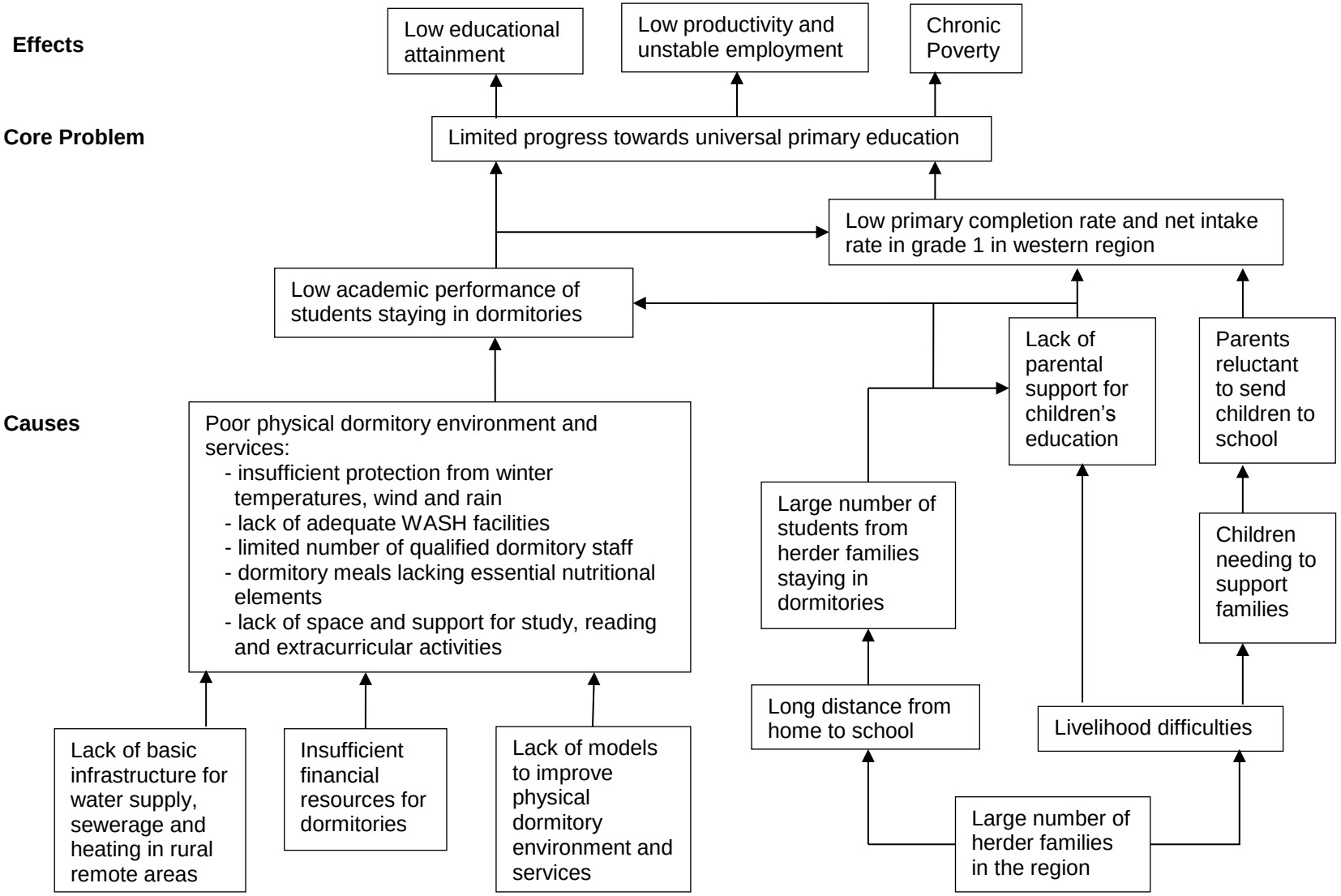
10. The MECS has been implementing an education sector reform policy framework, 2012–2016 since 2012 that introduces child-centered approaches to enhance equity of access to quality education. The framework identifies 11 areas of reforms, and includes the school dormitory system as part of the overall learning environment. In 2015, the MECS drafted amendments to the Education Law that specify improved qualifications for dormitory teachers and the role of local governments in financing dormitory services. In collaboration with the Ministry of Health and development partners, the MECS also developed minimum requirements for WASH in schools and dormitories. The MECS plans to further develop comprehensive standards for school dormitories, and a national strategy and financing policy to improve the dormitory environment, with a focus on schools in rural remote areas, and with greater involvement by local governments. Policy and financial sustainability are crucial to reform, and may be challenging, given the frequent turnover of school management and education administrators at the national and local levels, and Mongolia's economic dependence on international natural resource markets. Although capital expenditures in the education sector have increased steadily, reaching 20.6% of total expenditures in 2014 after decades of low (around 3%) investment, a significant drop is expected in 2015 and 2016 because of slower economic growth. In addition, skills and understanding about new child-centered approaches vary among teachers and school management, which will likely affect reform processes.

3. ADB Sector Experience and Assistance Program

11. Support for school dormitories by ADB and other development partners has been focused at the school level, but experience indicates the need for reform of the school dormitory system through comprehensive improvement of financial, human, and physical resources. Several WASH facility models were tested and applied in schools and dormitories by development partners in the 2010s. However, more knowledge should be generated to identify and select sustainable WASH facility models, taking into account the lack of infrastructure for basic services (i.e., water supply, wastewater sewers, heating) in rural remote areas, and operation and maintenance costs, especially under harsh climatic conditions.

12. ADB's education sector operations plan emphasizes promotion of equity in education, reform of education financing, and provision of cross-sectoral knowledge solutions. Through loan and grant operations, ADB has been engaging in policy dialogue with the government and supporting major education sector reforms, including the ongoing education sector reform policy framework. In accordance with the country's changing priorities and challenges in the sector, ADB's interim country partnership strategy for Mongolia, 2014–2016 has shifted its focus from technical and vocational education and training and higher education to basic education.

Problem Tree for Education



Sector Results Framework (Education, 2014–2016)

Country Sector Outcomes		Country Sector Outputs		ADB Sector Operations	
Sector Outcomes with ADB Contributions	**Indicators with Targets and Baselines**	**Outputs with ADB Contribution**	**Indicators with Incremental Targets**	**Planned and Ongoing ADB Interventions**	**Main Outputs Expected from ADB Interventions**
Improved educational attainment and improved quality, access, efficiency, and relevance in all levels of education	Employment rates of graduates from TVET in priority sectors increased from 54% in 2013 to 57% by 2016 Percentage of higher education graduates employed in fields in which they received training after graduation increased from 40% in 2013 to 50% by 2016[a] Gross enrollment ratios increased to close to 100% (optimal level) by 2016 from their 2012 levels of 85.8% (pre-primary education), 116.7% (primary education), and 103.5% (secondary education)	Access to quality education improved at all levels	Competency standards and competency-based curricula and assessment criteria for 15 key occupations in priority sectors developed by 2016 Percentage of HEIs that have national institutional accreditation increased from 40% in 2013 to 45% by 2016 Reviews of policy and regulatory frameworks for school dormitories conducted by 2016	**Planned subsector targets** Pre-primary, basic, and upper secondary education subsectors (100%) **Pipeline projects with estimated amounts** Improving School Dormitory Environment for Primary Students in Western Region ($3 million) Education Sector Development ($30 million) **Ongoing projects with approved amounts** Higher Education Reform Project ($20 million) Skills for Employment Project ($25 million)	**Planned target subsectors** National standardized learning assessments conducted annually for 5th, 9th, and 12th grade students **Pipeline projects** 100% of school dormitory staff trained to provide improved dormitory services in Govi-Altai, Uvs, and Zavkhan *aimags* (provinces) Evaluation and assessment systems established for pre-primary, basic, and upper secondary levels **Ongoing projects** Three programs in priority disciplines receive international accreditation TVET programs and courses for 15 key occupations in priority sectors upgraded in partnerships with industry

ADB = Asian Development Bank, HEI = higher education institution, TVET = technical and vocational education and training.

[a] Outcome indicators are national-level indicators. Outcome indicators are based on United Nations Educational, Scientific, and Cultural Organization estimates, and are not the government's targets, as the latter are not available.

Source: Asian Development Bank estimates.