

ISSN No. 2454-6186 | DOI: 10.47772/IJRISS | Volume IX Issue XI November 2025

Building Safe Futures: Implementation and Impact of Mongolia's Child Protection System

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DOI: https://dx.doi.org/10.47772/IJRISS.2025.91100064

Received: 10 November 2025; Accepted: 20 November 2025; Published: 28 November 2025

ABSTRACT

Mongolia acceded to the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child in 1990 and ratified the additional protocols on child protection. The issue of strengthening the child protection system and ensuring the quality and accessibility of care services for children at risk continues to be a global and national concern. Internationally, child rights and child protection activities are considered comprehensively, and international aid organizations cooperate to ensure child development, provide financial support, pay great attention to improving child development training and knowledge, support and assistance to children in remote areas of Mongolia, and regularly conduct research on the problems facing the implementation of the child protection system. In Mongolia, there are mechanisms and structures for resolving child rights and protection issues at the national, local and primary unit levels, and government agencies, as well as non-governmental organizations, and various projects and activities for children's rights are implemented, but there are still many cases of child rights violations and child protection exclusion in the family, school, kindergarten, social and online environments. The purpose of this study is to study the policy, system and implementation of child protection in Mongolia.

Results: An analysis of international reports, information and research conducted by aid organizations on the issues facing the child protection system and legal regulations in Mongolia shows that although the quality, accessibility and human resources of child protection services are more specialized, human resources are unstable and overloaded. The results of this study indicate that the activities of state institutions in the areas of providing emergency child protection services, protection, rehabilitation and prevention services, joint teams of soum bag khoroos, temporary shelters and preventive protection by the capital and local authorities have improved, and integrated activities have been established. This indicates that the legal policies, regulations and implementation of the law on child protection are effective.

The study data were collected using a pre-prepared questionnaire by sampling method. According to the results of this study, 104 or 70.3% of the respondents are aware of the child protection hotline service 108. In other words, the above 104 children contacted the helpline and received information. This shows that the children who participated in the study know about child protection emergency services, where to go and who to get help from when they are at risk. Also, when asked whether they know how to get child protection services other than emergency services, including the child's guardian, 81 people from the supporting citizens responded that the state's child protection policies and decisions were "good enough" by 20 participants or 26.1%, and 50 participants or 61.7% said that "insufficient". This is a majority of citizens who believe that the state's child protection services and systems are not accessible and do not comply with the policies and decisions adopted. Mongolia is a country with a remote region and administrative units, and this study was conducted by sampling local children and asking 130 children whether their rights had been violated in the past year. 27 participants (28.1%) answered "yes", 86 children (58.5%) answered "no rights have been violated", and 26 children (don't know) answered. When asked where and who to turn to if their rights were violated, 108 children (74%) of the total children who participated in the study said that they would turn to their family when they were in danger, 42 children (28.8%) said they would turn to teachers or schools, and 12 children (8.2%) made other choices. The





majority of children who turn to their family when they were in danger indicate that they have good trust in their guardians and parents, which is the result of changes and implementation in the field of child protection. Also, when 81 citizens, including child guardians and supporters, were surveyed about the adequacy of child protection emergency assistance services, protection, and rehabilitation services, 10 citizens or 12.7% answered "yes" and 55 citizens or 67.9% answered "insufficient." This indicates that the quality of child protection services is inadequate and accessible to child guardians and parents.

Keywords: Child protection system, Emergency child protection services, Protective service, Child helpline /108 hotline, Caregivers and guardians' involvement, Participation and engagement

INTRODUCTION

The protection of children's rights, including the right to protection from any form of discrimination, is a duty of state authorities, and it is strictly prohibited to discriminate against children on the basis of race, ethnicity, sex, language, religion, social origin, or property. [1] (Article 24 of the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights). Protecting children in all settings is a pressing issue not only in Mongolia but also worldwide. According to the World Health Organization (WHO), six out of 10 children under the age of five worldwide are victims of some form of violence. In Mongolia, the child rights hotline receives more than 100,000 calls per year, which is equivalent to the number of calls to the police. The lack of sufficient budget for child protection creates significant difficulties in providing child protection services, child development, and protecting children from risks.

In regions such as Asia, Africa, and North America, 50% of children are exposed to serious levels of violence [2]. (Global status report on preventing violence against children, (2020). 36.3 percent of Mongolia's total population is 1.3 million children aged 0-17, 51.4 percent are male and 48.6 percent are female. There are a total of 21,277 twins nationwide, of which 20,852 are twins, 402 are triplets, and 23 are quadruplets or more. The total number of children born in 2023 is 66,234, of which 34,057 are males and 32,177 are females, 44,939 are in urban areas, and 21,295 are in rural areas. The current system for ensuring children's rights cannot meet the needs of child development and child protection. The number of children receiving child protection services is 31.7 thousand, of which 3,262 are involved in crime. Child victims of domestic violence account for 0.1% of all children, and divorce is 4.8 thousand. Every child has the right to protection and preventive care. According to the child protection legal regulation, child protection services provide assistance to children when risks and dangers arise, assess psychological characteristics and problems in the given situation, provide state services, and cooperate with social workers responsible for children in the given area and joint teams. [3] (www.1212.mn, LSGD database, CGD database 2024). In Mongolia, compared to 2023, domestic violence crimes (Article 11.7 of the Criminal Code) increased from 98 to 126, crimes against children increased by 25.9%, and cases related to incest (Article 16.9 of the Criminal Code) increased by 33.3%. The crimes of abandoning and leaving children homeless (Article 16.3 of the Criminal Code) doubled. [4] Crime statistics 2023.

The Child Protection Law stipulates that child protection facilities, temporary child protection facilities, child protection care facilities, socialization facilities, self-help organizations, child counseling centers, facilities for children, local children's centers, and local child protection departments shall operate to improve education for the protection and health of children, but there is a lack of specialists, technical equipment, training materials, reliable information sources, health, psychological services, and counseling. It is commendable that the number of family and child protection social workers has been increased in the capital and aimags, soums, districts, bags, and khoroos, but there are not enough social workers specialized in crimes against children, domestic violence, and child protection services. There are 1,863 employees working in the field of child protection throughout Mongolia. [5] General Department of Child, Family Development, and Protection Database 2024. State supervision, protection of children from crimes, and legal support are provided by the State Inspectorate of Child Supervision, with only 46 people working in the capital, which indicates that the child protection system requires qualified human resources. Mongolia receives an average of 100-150 thousand calls per year to the emergency hotline for child protection, the 108 child protection hotline, in response to emergency measures. Between 10 pm and 2 am, domestic violence calls increase dramatically, and about 40-60 percent of the calls received daily are about child abuse. [6]. (108 Child Protection Hotline Service Center 2024). Calls to the hotline are dominated by calls in which children are afraid, panicked, and do not explain the reason for the call. This indicates the need





for professional assistance to provide psychological services to children. Mongolia lives in a country with a diverse geography, geographical location, and climate, and in all four seasons of the year, children living in rural areas, remote areas, and children studying in cities and settlements far from their parents and guardians are often affected by the situation.

LITERATURE REVIEW

This section examines Mongolia's state child protection policy, its system, child protection services, emergency services, human resources, budget and finances, and the experiences of child protection systems in some countries.

Child protection system

A child protection system is "the set of laws, policies, regulations and services needed across all social sectors especially social welfare, education, health, security and justice to support prevention and response to protection-related risks." This definition emphasizes a holistic, cross-sectoral approach that goes beyond emergency response to include prevention, family support, and social inclusion (UNICEF).

The origins of today's child protection efforts trace back to the late 1800s. One pivotal moment was in 1874, when a young girl named Mary Ellen Wilson was rescued from abuse in New York. Interestingly, her case was first taken up by an animal welfare group—the Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals because no formal child protection body existed at the time. This incident sparked the founding of the New York Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Children (NYSPCC), marking the beginning of organized child protection work. Regarding child protection, domestic violence, psychological trauma, and resilience, [7] Herman, J. L. (1992). Trauma and recovery: The aftermath of violence—from domestic abuse to political terror. Basic Books. emphasized that children's resilience is formed through the interaction of the individual and the environment. The results of research on the profound impact of domestic violence on children's behavior and psychological development are important for the development of child protection policies and interventions. Therefore, improving the child protection environment and raising them in a safe and positive environment are identified as the main goals of protection policies. [8] David Finkelhor (2009) called for increased efforts to develop child protection methods, especially those that promote child health and safety. The child's environment, family upbringing, and psychology are among the issues that affect child development. Child protection social workers are responsible for providing primary care, guidance, and psychological counseling to children at risk before they become at risk. The work of a team of public officials and social workers, who are empowered to provide services, and the knowledge and skills of children, can have a positive impact on children. [9] Gupta-Kagan, J. (2022). The legal system for child protection has been subject to change in response to recent reforms. Two main criticisms have been cited. Legal indeterminacy: Child protection laws do not specify when and under what circumstances government agencies should intervene in families. This gives child protection agencies and family courts a wide margin of discretion. Bias: This margin of discretion allows race, class, gender, and other factors to influence decisions, particularly affecting low-income families and families of color. It has also been noted that governments spend a great deal of money on family separations but do not spend an equal amount of money on family preservation. [10] Josh Gupta-Kagan argues that the child protection system is a system that limits family power and separates children from their families, and that government action must protect families and children equally. The quality of child protection responses and the quality of services provided by the government vary depending on the geographical location and population, and the implementation of policies and decisions that reach children varies, but the multi-tiered and time-consuming nature of child protection services requires the development of human resources, child shelter services, psychologists, and social workers.

Child protection system in Mongolia: emergency response to include prevention, family support, and social inclusion

The main task of the child protection system is to provide protection services to children. Child protection services are emergency assistance services, protection, rehabilitation and prevention services provided by the child protection system stakeholders to ensure the child's right to protection. [11] The Mongolian Law on Child Protection clearly states how child protection services are delivered and how they are to be prevented. Article





6 of the above law classifies child protection services as emergency assistance services; protection, rehabilitation and prevention services. Protection and rehabilitation services are classified into two types:-family and -out-of-family services.

Within the framework of protection and rehabilitation services, the following services are provided to children: social work services, psychological counseling, training and activities appropriate to the child's developmental characteristics and needs for the purpose of learning, development and talent development, improvement of living conditions, assistance to families, reunification services for children who have received protection and rehabilitation services in a separate environment from the family, and protection and rehabilitation services for children in a separate environment from the family. These include:

- alternative child care services,
- referral to kinship families and care institutions,
- measures to keep children with siblings and monitor them [12].

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

A descriptive analysis of primary and secondary data was conducted using quantitative research methods, and a survey was conducted on children about child protection emergency services. It was considered effective to survey the implementation of the Child Protection Law in Mongolia from children's guardians and supporters. Therefore, a questionnaire was developed using quantitative research methods and sent to 360 children, parents, and guardians, using a sample of children aged 6-18. The collected sample was calculated and a descriptive statistical analysis was performed using SPSS. The research framework is illustrated in Figure 1.

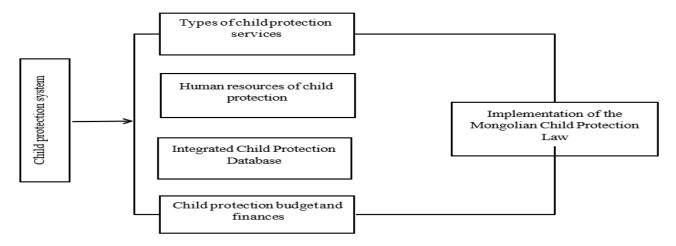


Figure 1. Research framework

RESULT

The following analysis was conducted on the child protection emergency assistance service, child protection and rehabilitation services, targeted prevention services, integrated database, human resources, monitoring and evaluation, and the implementation of the law on human resources protection and child protection.

Child Protection Emergency Assistance Service

In Mongolia, the child protection emergency assistance service operates 24 hours a day, free of charge, through the "108" special number center. It is a national service that provides a prompt response when children's rights are violated, abused, or are in a risky situation. The "108" Child Helpline Center receives children's opinions and thoughts by phone, chat, or text message, provides advice and information, receives information on crimes, violence, and violations against children, provides emergency assistance, mediates with temporary shelters, and connects them to the next level of child protection services.





Table 1. Child protection emergency services

No	Indicator	2022	2023	2024	First half of 2025
1	Number of children provided with emergency services	14,207	15,905	10,068	15,314

Source: National statistics office of Mongolia (www.1212.mn)

Across Mongolia, 14,207 children received emergency child care services in 2022, 15,905 in 2023, 10,068 in 2024, and 15,314 in the first half of 2025. This shows that the number of children receiving emergency care services increased by 1,698 in 2022-2023. In 2024-2025, there was an increase of 5,246 compared to the previous year.

Table 2. Information on the care services provided by the 108 Child Protection Hotline

Child protection emergency services	Quetions	Frequency
Do you know about the 108 child protection hotline?	Yes	104 (70.4%)
	No	8 (5.4%)
	Yes	27 (18.4)
Have your rights been violated in the last year?	I don't know	26 (19.7%)
	No	86 (58.5%)
	My family	108 (74%)
Where and who should I turn to when I encounter any risk?	My friends	28 (19.2%)
	My teacher	42 (28.8%)
	Other	12 (8.2%)

Within the framework of the implementation of the Child Protection Law, a sample of 147 children was surveyed to find out how well they know about the 108 child protection hotline. 70.4% of the children who participated in the survey answered "yes" about the 108 child protection hotline, while 5.4% of 8 children answered "no". This indicates that children have good information about where and who to turn to when they are in danger or at risk. Also, when asked if children have had their rights violated in the past year, 26 children (19.7%) answered "don't know". 86 children (58.5%) answered

"yes". Where to turn to when there is a risk? 108 children answered "I will turn to my family", 28 children (19.2%) answered "friends", 42 children (28.8%) answered "teachers", and the remaining 12 children (8.2%) answered "other".

Child protection and rehabilitation services

Child protection services are provided nationwide, including counseling, social work services, psychological services, and developmental support services. They provide mandatory training on the impact of domestic violence on parents, guardians, and caregivers, as well as voluntary programs, and provide protection and reintegration of children in a separate environment from their families.





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No	Protective rehabilitation services	2022	2023	Half of 2024	Half of 2025
1	In protection and restoration services	15,931	15,609	4549	6279
	In family environment	11084	11535	3190	5166
	In an environment separate from the family	4847	4074	1359	1113

Source: National statistics office of Mongolia (www.1212.mn)

The number of children receiving child protection and rehabilitation services in Mongolia increased by 112,100 in 2023 compared to 2022. However, comparing the first half of 2024 with the first half of 2025, there was a decrease of 23,413 in 2025.

Child protection preventive services

Child protection preventive services are provided by state administrative and local organizations responsible for child and family development, joint teams, child and family social workers, case management, and evidence-based preventive programs and plans, implemented in stages, and evaluated (Article 14, Clause 14.1 of the Mongolian Law on Child Protection). Preventive services are called targeted preventive services, and they are implemented as impact measures.

Table 4. Targeted preventive services for child protection

№	Targeted preventive services	2023	Half of 2024	Half of 2025
1	Impactful service	431,000	43,242	20,011

Source: National statistics office of Mongolia (www.1212.mn)

The number of children receiving targeted preventive services was 431,000 in 2023. In the first half of 2024, 43,242 children received intervention services, but this number decreased to 20,011 in the first half of 2025.

Table 5. Results of the survey on child protection and preventive services

№	Child protection and prevention services	Question	Prefuency/%
1	Are preventive services in the field of child protection working adequately?	Yes	10 (12.7%)
		Хангалтгүй	55 (67.9%)
2	Have you ever received child protection services?	yes	3 (3,7%)
		No	64 (79%)
3	How well do you know about the child protection services in your area?	I know	16 (19.2)
		I don't know	49 (60.5)

Table 5 presents the results of the survey on the status of child protection and prevention services, as well as the knowledge, attitudes, and participation of caregivers and supporters. Out of a total of 81 citizens (caregivers and supporters) who participated in child protection and prevention services, 70 citizens responded to the survey. According to the survey results, only 10 citizens considered that preventive services in the field of child protection





were working adequately, while 55 citizens responded that they were insufficient. However, 3 citizens had previously participated in such services, and 64 had never participated at all. Also, 16 citizens "know" about the organization that provides child protection services in their area of residence, while 49 responded that they "do not know at all," indicating that information about the services is insufficient.

Child Protection Policy and System

In terms of child protection management and organization, the child protection policy and system in Mongolia consists of the Government, the State Administrative Central Organization for Child and Family Development, state administrative and local organizations for child and family development, soum and khoroo child and family social workers, national and local councils for children, local self- government organizations, governors at all levels, children's rights legal committees, and joint teams. The joint child protection team consists of the governor of the soum, bag, khoroo, soum, khoroo social worker, representatives of the police, health centers, family doctors, school and kindergarten representatives, welfare and employment workers, non-governmental organizations, citizen representatives, and community workers. The functions of the joint team are to identify children at risk, implement regular activities, stop violence against children, provide emergency assistance if a child is in a dangerous situation, jointly organize public training and awareness-raising activities on preventing children from being in a dangerous situation, connect children with education, health, social welfare, and other necessary services, and register child protection services in the database.

Table 6. Number of children receiving services from the Child Protection Joint Team

№	Indicator	2023	2024	Half of 2025
1	Children participating in joint team services	6233	8323	4591
2	Child at risk	15,905	13,219	14,100
3	Children who received temporary shelter and one-stop services	3308	2456	1027
4	A child who worked on opening a case	3850	4995	2268
	Resolved case	3750	4709	2268

Source: National statistics office of Mongolia (www.1212.mn)

The number of children receiving services from the joint child protection team in Mongolia increased by 33.6% from 6,233 in 2023 to 8,323 in 2024, but decreased by 44.8% to 4,591 in the first half of 2025. The number of children at risk was 15,905 in 2023, decreased by 16.9% to 13,219 in 2024, and increased by 6.7% to 14,100 in the first half of 2025. The number of children receiving temporary shelter services decreased by 25.8% to 2,456 in 2024, and decreased by 58.2% to 1,027 in the first half of 2025. Also, the number of children who opened cases increased by 29.7% from 3,850 in 2023 to 4,995 in 2024, but decreased by 54.6% to 2,268 in the first half of 2025. The number of resolved cases increased by 25.6% from 3,750 in 2023 to 4,709 in 2024, and decreased by 51.8% to 2,268 in the first half of 2025, indicating instability and change.

Integrated Child Protection Database, Monitoring and Evaluation

In Mongolia, there were 21,783 children registered in the risk program as of the first half of 2024, and in 2024, 1,113 new children were registered in the risk program, and the child and his family were provided with the necessary services in accordance with the Child Protection Service Provision Procedures, thereby reducing the risk. In addition, 147 unsupervised children were identified in 21 aimags and 9 districts, registered in the risk program, ensured safety, and provided the necessary protection services. According to good practices in other countries around the world, the purpose of effectively implementing services for children at risk through child protection monitoring and evaluation is to effectively manage case management. The system allows service providers, decision-makers, and policymakers to obtain real-time and reliable information about child protection





cases, thereby facilitating information management and ensuring continuity, coordination, and sequencing of care and services. In the area of management systems, advanced information systems are being used in the Philippines, Namibia, Nepal, Kenya and Bangladesh. In these countries, CPIMS has been successfully adapted to meet the needs of child protection and has enabled more effective management of child case information. The use of CPIMS provides a centralized and secure management of child protection case information, reducing duplication of information. For example, where multiple agencies may need to enter information on a single case, this system stores all information in one place.

As an example, Kenya has implemented the CPIMS system nationwide in phases since 2015. 70% of violence against children has been registered, and access to child protection services has increased 1.8 times. In Mongolia, there is a lack of financial support for implementing the management system, lack of knowledge and skills for social workers to work in an online environment, and lack of a legal framework.

Child Protection Budget and Finance /Mongolia/

The child protection budget consists of the state budget, local budgets, national and state projects and programs, donations and assistance from domestic and foreign legal entities, international organizations and individuals (Article 52 of the Mongolian Law on Child Protection).

Table 7. Child Protection Budget (2023-2025)

№	Child Protection Budget	2023 он	2024	2025
1	Approved budget	8 billion tugriks (MNT)	14 billion tugriks (MNT)	20.6 billion Tugriks(mnt)

Budgetary and financial arrangements for child protection in Mongolia are increasing for the period 2023-2025. There is a lack of information on the funding implemented in the field of child protection. Also, in terms of funding from international organizations, several international organizations, such as the World Vision Mongolia International Organization (WVO), the Japan Children's Fund, the Norwegian Relief Organization, and Good Neighbors, are the organizations that allocate the largest amount of funding to child protection and child development in Mongolia. For example, in the last 3 years, the World Vision Mongolia WVO has spent 2-3 million US dollars annually, or an average of almost 6.5 billion tugriks per year, on child protection, and 9 billion tugriks on child sponsorship programs. This is almost twice the total state budget spent on child protection.

Implementation and Results of the Child Protection Law

The purpose of this study was to study the child protection system and its implementation in Mongolia, and to collect data from child guardians and supporters on the implementation of the law and the activities of government agencies.

Table 8. Implementation and Results of the Child Protection Law System

№	Implementation of the Child Protection Law and Access to Government Services	Answer	Frequency/percent
1	Do you have access to sufficient information about child protection services?	Good	45 (45.2)
		Bad	23 (27.2)
2	How would you evaluate the government's policy on child protection?	Enough	20(26.1)
		Insufficient	50(61.7)
3	How do you evaluate the results of child protection	Enough	32(17,3)





ISSN No. 2454-6186 | DOI: 10.47772/IJRISS | Volume IX Issue XI November 2025

	activities?	Insufficient	45(50.6)
4	Have you ever received child protection services?	Yes	15 (18.5)
		No	35 (43.2)
5	In your opinion, are preventive services in the field of child protection working sufficiently?	Enough	57(69.1)
	procession working controllery.	Insufficient	19 (20 .9)
6	Do you think children in Mongolia have the opportunity to grow up healthy and safe?	Enough	19 (23.4)
	grow ap mensury and sure	Insufficient	34 (42)

This questionnaire was administered through a sample survey to parents, guardians, and caregivers in the capital and local areas, and a total of 72 citizens responded to the questionnaire. 66 citizens or 91.7% said the results of child protection activities were good, and 7 citizens or 9.7% said they were bad. 57 citizens or 78.2% said the results of the state's child protection policy were good, and 15 citizens or 20.8% said they were bad. 41 citizens or 75.9% said the results of child protection services were good, and 15 citizens or 27.8% said they were bad. 57 citizens answered yes to the results of child protection preventive services that are working sufficiently, and 19 citizens answered no to the results. 19 citizens answered yes to the results of children growing up and developing healthily and safely in Mongolia, and 34 citizens answered no to the results of children's health and safety in Mongolia.

CONCLUSION

This study analyzes the legal environment for child protection in Mongolia and assesses the policy, system, implementation, and results of child protection. The Mongolian Law on Child Protection (2024) has been amended six times in total. It was determined that the above amendments are aimed at strengthening the implementation of children's rights and increasing the quality and accessibility of protection services. The study examined the implementation of child protection legal regulations using sources such as amendments to relevant policies and regulations, statistical data, opinions of survey participants, and organizational activity reports as the basis for the analysis. The study shows that it is necessary to pay attention to the adequacy of child protection services, human resource capacity, and public information and coordination. The survey was conducted through a random sampling method among children, guardians, and supportive citizens. 70.3% of the children surveyed knew about the 108 child protection hotline and received information when necessary, indicating that children are increasing their awareness of protecting their rights. 61.7% of guardians and supporters rated the government's policies and services as "inadequate," indicating poor service delivery. 28.1% of children surveyed reported that their rights had been violated, and 74% of children whose rights were violated turned to their families, demonstrating the importance of family involvement and communication. 67.9% of guardians rated emergency assistance, protection, and rehabilitation services as "inadequate," indicating poor service quality and accessibility. The analysis of the survey results revealed that although the legal framework for child protection is being reformed, the implementation of policies and decisions, the quality of services, and the system for protecting children from risks are inadequate.

SUGGESTIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The following suggestions are made within the framework of the research work. These include:

Regarding psychological protection and rehabilitation services for children

Researchers such as David Finkelhor and Judith Herman have emphasized the importance of child abuse, psychological trauma, and rehabilitation services. Their research emphasizes that protecting children's rights is not limited to physical protection, but also the importance of psychological care and rehabilitation services. Therefore, it is necessary to make information accessible to guardians and caregivers about the protection,





prevention, and rehabilitation services for children who have been psychologically harmed, and to improve training for children in remote areas and to include clear regulations on how protection services are provided.

- Mongolia is characterized by a vast territory, a dispersed population, 21 aimags, 330 soums, and 1,575 baags, so it is important to increase the availability of child protection services in remote areas. Therefore, in remote areas, it is necessary to protect children from risks such as crime, violence, attacks, and natural disasters.
- It is necessary to empower the activities of state administrative authorities implementing policies to improve the quality and accessibility of services.
- It is necessary to create conditions for the operation to be carried out at a stable and professional level, taking into account the incompleteness of the child protection system throughout Mongolia and the lack of preventive measures of the Joint Child Protection Team.
- There is a need to increase the quality and accessibility of child protection services, prepare child and family social workers and other relevant staff at an appropriate level, and provide regular training and support.

List of Abbreviations

CFYDA – Child and Family and Youth Development Agency MES – Ministry of Education and Science

MLSP – Ministry of Labor and Social Protection MOH – Ministry of Health

MOJHA – Ministry of Justice and Home Affairs UNICEF – United Nations Children's Fund

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