Effect + : Ger District SDG Warriors
Tsengelmaa Nyamdorj ‘25 | Smith College | Mongolia | May - July, 2023

Abstract
In the outskirts of Ulaanbaatar, Mongolia, slums of portable dwellings house 61% of the capital’s population, also known as the ger district¹. Due to an improper infrastructure and substantial inflow of migration, ger district is known for its lack of adequate heating, sewage, water, and education system. Without proper government support, ger district continues to be the main source and victim of the capital's air, water, and soil pollution. We wish to mitigate that inequality and low living standards by providing ger district youths with opportunities to learn and implement the United Nations’ Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) in their neighborhood.

Project Description
Kids in the ger district are at the forefront of vulnerability to pollution, inequality, and poverty. In perspective, the ger district’s kids are 9% less educated in Information and Communications Technology subjects² and have 40% lower lung functionality than those living in the apartment complexes of Ulaanbaatar and rural areas³. While there are initiatives focused on engaging youth in understanding and addressing these issues through SDG-related programming, participation in those programs tends to be exclusive to kids from mid to high-income families who can afford the time, financial commitment and speak English. As a result, the most vulnerable citizens are not included in these programs.

AFS Mongolia is a non-profit organization that provides intercultural learning opportunities to help people develop the knowledge, skills and understanding needed to create a more just and peaceful world. In the past, AFS Mongolia has organized various educational programs for the youth, including Effect+ trainers program, a SDG training course. Last year, it was successfully conducted to a total of 12 youths from ages 16 to 24 with topics in becoming changemakers and global citizens. However, due to limited funding, AFS Mongolia has not been able to involve youths of the ger district. Particularly, all Effect+ materials are provided in English⁴, a skill that is disproportionately learnt extensively by upper class youths. Despite AFS Mongolia’s effort in practicing holistic admissions process, the percentage of lower income youths still remain low as most either never heard of the opportunity or became discouraged by program criterias and financial circumstances as the target audience is those who have the English skills and time/wealth privilege to spend two weeks attending a program in the city center.

Hence, the objective of my program is to organize a more equitable Effect+ pilot program to demonstrate the importance of making this program accessible to kids in the ger district in order to attract funding from AFS International, the headquarter of all AFS branches. At the moment, AFS Mongolia has limited funding as it’s a newly chartered branch, however, in the past three years, they successfully arranged more funding for its Summer Internship program because of the program’s alignment with AFS goals and contribution to its bigger public exposure. Demonstrating the success of Effect+ in achieving both of those goals will make the case to the international board for additional funding to support expansion to the ger district. I have high confidence that thorough research on the impact of the Effect+ pilot program on the ger district will prove essential for attaining extra funds. In other words, the project will heavily focus on capacity building for Effect+ through research on the pilot program. The three main goals of the program are:

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¹ Engel, David. "Ulaanbaatar’s ger district issues: Changes and attitudes." (2015), ii
² Unicef Mongolia. “Mongolia Education Fact Sheets 2020” (2021), 31-35
³ Unicef. “Mongolia’s Air Pollution Crisis: A Call to Action to Protect Children’s Health.” (2018), 14-16
1. Translate materials from English to Mongolian,
2. Make the program desirable by reducing time and financial burdens, which includes providing stationary materials, a classroom near the ger district area, and funding for personal team projects,
3. Encourage more ger district youths by utilizing in-person marketing in underserved areas.

I will assist AFS Mongolia in achieving those goals by providing translation services and suggestions on improving accessibility in the ger district. Moreover, to display the impact of the program's expansion, research on the project will be conducted simultaneously during the Effect+ program. The research can take many forms, including, but not limited to, surveys from participants, their parents, Effect+ trainers, and observations of the Effect+ development through the success of team projects and the ger district community’s impression of the program.

My experience working at AFS Mongolia for two years and knowledge in writing proposals on projects like developing the working study of Northampton Resilience Hub under the Jandon student committee and chartering the Food Rescue Network at Smith will be beneficial in writing the report. Additionally, my knowledge in Mathematical Statistics will help me conduct apt research of the project. All tasks in institutionalizing a more accessible Effect+ program through a trial run will be overseen by me to ensure AFS Mongolia will have the means to continue the project on a stable, long-term basis.

AFS Mongolia will organize a total of 5 sessions on SDGs with the help of 10 Effect+ trainers, volunteers, and staff. We’re seeking one full classroom of students (30 to 45, depending on the size of the classroom), but if there’s more interest in the program, double the number of participants to ensure we provide opportunity to all. Teams of 5 students will implement their own project on improving SDGs indicators in the ger district. To not limit the imaginative freedom of the participants, we will not provide any topics for the project, but Effect+ trainers will guide each team during the program to help implement their idea in a realistic and impactful way. Expenses essential for the employment of the project will be covered by AFS Mongolia, or in this case, by funds from Project for Peace.

Projected Activities and Timeline

| Week 1-3 | Logistics of program: Enable Effect+ trainers, teaching materials; find physical location, recording equipments; decide/ improve on outreach practices and schedules |
| Week 4 | Outreach of the program, practice teaching session, onboarding for Effect+ trainers |
| Week 5-7 | Program execution - various classes, workshops offered to reserved students, and help implement projects designed by students |
| Week 8-9 | Offboarding, graduation ceremony, present results of the pilot program to AFS board and advice for future Effect+ programs |

Impacts and Sustainability

The short-term goal of the project is to ensure funding from AFS International and organize this program for the near future through our research on capacity building. On the contrary, the long-term goal is to eradicate the need for such a program so that ger district youths can participate in any other highly competitive SDG training and events without language, social or financial barriers. Regardless of the individual team project’s success, we anticipate the opportunity to boost interest in SDGs for the participants and other kids in the area. At last, I hope to introduce SDGs to many youths in the ger district and inspire them to tackle issues in their neighborhoods, which will ultimately increase their visibility on various fields of interest to SDGs and provide a gateway for youths to become agents of change in their respective communities and Mongolia, at large.