

**Promoting Peace Through Music: Music is the Language of Magic**  
Ulaanbaatar, Mongolia  
Luther College | Project Leader: Temuulen Erdenebulgan | Summer 2020

*“Music is a fantastic peacekeeper of the world, it is integral to harmony, and it is a required fundamental of human emotion” - Xun Zi (Confucian Philosopher, 310 BC)*

### 1) Introduction to the Issue

There is massive socio-economic inequality in Ulaanbaatar, the capital city of Mongolia. According to the World Bank<sup>1</sup>, Mongolia had a poverty rate of 28.4%; in 2018, it was almost three times higher than the global poverty rate of about 10%. Lower-income families are forced to live in the northern outskirts of the city, leaving many families economically segregated due to lack of affordable housing. In the low-income districts, public institutions such as schools and libraries are severely underfunded, alcohol abuse is common, and child development issues are mostly neglected. As a result, children are the most adversely affected. Some of these effects on children are poor education, the formation of bad habits, and abuse. First, due to the lack of funding, certain students do not get the same standard of education as others. Teachers are overworked, textbooks and supplies are understocked, and in some cases, students are forced to learn in hazardous environments. These issues increase the rate of school dropouts and discourage interest in higher learning. Second, it is common for parents or caretakers living in underserved areas to work long hours or abuse alcohol. Consequently, a lot of children do not receive the parental supervision they require. They are then left vulnerable to develop bad habits or become delinquents. Third, poverty leads to an increase in child abuse. The Mongolian parliament<sup>2</sup> states that out of 1670 reported domestic abuse cases in 2018, 81.9% of victims included children under the age of 18. Although these numbers are high, there are good reasons to suspect that it is higher than reported due to the fear of reaching out for help and the lack of resources that they can rely on<sup>3</sup>. Children from low-income areas in Ulaanbaatar lack adequate access to crucial education, guidance, and security.

### 2) Project Philosophy

With this project, we are going to partner with an NGO to create a space where children in the outskirts of Ulaanbaatar can learn to play musical instruments. We strongly believe that teaching music lessons will provide the following opportunities<sup>4</sup> and bring peace: **a)** Learning music builds a sense of community and security; **b)** Learning music can heal scars and deal with stress and difficulties; and **c)** Most importantly, learning music can help cooperate with others and maintain a peaceful life. In the long run, we hope to live in a place where every child has access to the basics: security, education, and love.

### 3) Solution

We have decided to partner with Lantuu Dohio NGO, whose mission is to eradicate human trafficking and protect children from violence, neglect, abuse and exploitation in Mongolia and around the world. In 2017, Lantuu Dohio started a project called “Magic Mongolia 1”, where they constructed a building dedicated to helping children of abuse in Ulaanbaatar. Recently, in December 2019, they finished their second building location “Magic Mongolia 2” in one of the poorest areas of Ulaanbaatar. Here, hundreds of volunteers are fighting to end abuse, poverty, and human trafficking in Ulaanbaatar. Also, since “Magic Mongolia 2” has a library, kindergarten, and a cozy children-friendly environment, children from ages 8 - 14 often come here to study, socialize and spend their time together away from abuse, poverty, and poor education. Therefore, we’ve decided to partner with Lantuu Dohio to further its holistic approach to help children. They have agreed to let us utilize one of their Magic Mongolia 2 rooms for our music project.

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<sup>1</sup> “Mongolia’s 2018 Poverty Rate Estimated at 28.4 Percent.” *World Bank*. <https://www.worldbank.org/en/news/press-release/2019/06/21/mongolias-2018-poverty-rate-estimated-at-284-percent>

<sup>2</sup> “Huuhtiin erh, huuhed hamgaalal, huuhdiin esreg huchirhilliin asuudlaar Erunhii hynaltig songolt zohion baiguullaa” *Parliament*. <http://www.parliament.mn/n/9gyo>

<sup>3</sup> O’Grady, Robin L, and Nicole Matthews-Creech. “Why Children Don’t Tell | Lacasa Center.” Accessed January 7, 2020. <https://lacasacenter.org/why-child-abuse-victims-dont-tell/>.

<sup>4</sup> Gonsalves, E. (2020). 7 Powerful Benefits of Music Education for Kids - Thrive Global. [online] Thriveglobal.com. Available at: <https://thriveglobal.com/stories/7-powerful-benefits-of-music-education-for-kids/>.

#### 4) Procedure

We decided to divide our procedure into 4 phases.

##### **Phase 1) Preparing and Recruiting:** *Mid May till the beginning of June (3 weeks)*

- In the first week, we will install the musical instruments in “Magic Mongolia 2” as well as decorate the room to make it ready for children and the teachers. To assist our teachers, we will recruit 5 high school or college volunteers as assistants to the teachers. Teachers from the local Mongolian Children’s Palace agreed to teach in “Magic Mongolia 2” during the summer. Mentor Ms. Munguntsetseg Mendbayar, the piano teacher at Mongolian Children’s Palace will mentor us throughout our project.
- In the next second week, we will start workshops for assistant teachers and staff members of “Magic Mongolia 2” about how to effectively teach music, build an effective team, take care of the instruments, make educational videos, and create syllabi. There will be a total of 6 workshops, 3 days a week (2 hours/day). At the end of this time, we will be ready to welcome our children in “Magic Mongolia 2”.

##### **Phase 2) Launching, Teaching, and Bonding:** *Beginning of June until Mid August (9 weeks)*

We will start teaching the basics for around 20 children, between ages 8-14 who have no music background. There will be a total of 27 lessons, 3 days a week (3 hours/day). Each teacher will teach each instrument and record their teachings as a file 5 times throughout the nine weeks. In addition to the regular sessions, we will have bonding events with our children, such as watching movies and concerts, making short videos of playing musical instruments, inviting guest speakers for inspiration, and having fun events every Saturday.

##### **Phase 3) Final Performance:** *Mid August (1 day)*

After teaching musical instruments for nine weeks, we will perform our final performance in Magic Mongolia 2. We will invite our donors, Magic Mongolia teams, friends, and families for our performance. Although the final performance might be scary for our children, we will provide a safe and secure environment for the event. As a result of the last performance, our children should become more confident, harmonized, and inspired.

**Phase 4) Sustaining:** Our summer project needs to continue growing. Even though I will be back in the U.S, a team consisting of members from my personal network and project partners, Nyamjav Altangerel and Bilguun Erdene will stay in Mongolia to take care of the project. We will keep in touch with “Magic Mongolia 2” and create an open fund called “Magic Music for Peace”. The fund will be used for finding more volunteers and connecting students to high quality music schools in Ulaanbaatar. These people will be recruited from Music and Dance School of Ulaanbaatar<sup>5</sup>, Mongolian Children’s Palace<sup>6</sup>, and anyone interested in teaching music. We strongly believe that this program will bring music internship opportunities and sustain our music classes. Also, instructional videos from Phase 2 will be available for children to watch anytime. We hope that this project will attract more and more people around the world to invest in these children and make the world a better place.

#### 5) Expected Outcomes

By the end of this project, we hope to have accomplished three things: (1) Leveraging the “Magic Mongolia 2” community through music education, (2) Initiating students’ interests in learning musical instruments, and (3) Inspiring students to become more confident and motivated. By establishing a place to practice musical instruments in Magic Mongolia 2, we create an opportunity for children to practice their favorite instruments together anytime and help each other learn. Eventually, practicing their instruments and helping one another will develop leadership in the community; helping one another promotes peace. Furthermore, by creating a music community, we will not only attract more children to our project but will also create social awareness in Ulaanbaatar. Since music is a universal language, more Mongolians and people around the world can understand and help these children. In the long run, we are hoping that these children will grow up to be good people and become world-renowned musicians.

#### 6) About the Project Coordinator

I am a Junior at Luther College, majoring in Computer Science. I have been playing piano for 13 years. Because music taught me teamwork, patience, kindness, and sensibility, me and my best friends believe it’s one of the best skills everyone should acquire. To conclude, everyone has magic inside them, magic to make the world a better place.

<sup>5</sup> “Хөгжим Бүжигийн Коллеж.” Хөгжим Бүжигийн Коллеж, <http://k12.msc.edu.mn/>.

<sup>6</sup> “Монголын Хүүхдийн Ордон.” Монголын Хүүхдийн Ордон, <http://mxo.ub.gov.mn/>.