

Background Information

Chuluun Horoot is a small town located on Mongolia's eastern steppe, just at the border with Russia, in the far north of Dornod Aimag. It is primarily a herding community at present, but this was not always the case. The town was originally planned around a central (and now defunct) coal-burning power station, built and run by Russian engineers and technicians. This power station was the primary employer and source of income for Cholon Horoot from the time of the town's founding; and until 1990 -- and the collapse of the Soviet Union -- this power station was the economic heart of the town. The collapse of the Soviet Union and the subsequent closing of the factory caused a sharp decline in the economy, a sharp rise in unemployment, and a massive population exodus: In 1990, the population of Cholon Horoot was roughly 3500 people, with an unemployment rate of 18-35 year old adults at 12%, and an average family income of \$35 per month. By 2000, the population had dropped to 1600, with an unemployment rate of 18-35 year-olds at 78%, and the average household income of \$20 per month. Running water and electricity are no longer available in this once-booming town. Many families reverted to herding as their ancestors had done since time immemorial, and many just took to drink -- to be blunt, alcoholism has become rampant. And this is only one of many social ills, unemployment and poverty have brought to Cholon Horoot. For the year 2000, nearly 40% of all children were born to unmarried women, and between the years 1992 and 2000, the rate of graduating middle school children who have entered university or professional school (there is only one school aside from the kindergarten, it is called "middle school"), has wavered between 40-50%. Needless to say, the majority of children in town do not go on to pursue promising future careers -- and because of the steady decline in most aspects of the town, their hope diminishes with each passing year.

This is the reason, the CHMSTA has chosen to purchase, with my assistance, a computer for the townspeople, especially the school kids: it confirms that opportunities for progress and development are possible and that they can actively and successfully pursue the skills necessary for this development. It would be a useful tool for development and a tangible symbol of the resuscitation of the town.

By the middle of June, electricity will return to Cholon Horoot and this has laid the foundation for the possibility of running computer education classes, with the hopes of motivating children and teaching adults and kids useful computer skills which can be a great organizational tool for the existing offices and great educational tool for the kids heading to college or professional school -- most of which, (located in the bigger cities in of Mongolia), are now using computers. The Cholon Horoot Middle School Teacher's Association formed in 1992 as an informal agency aimed at keeping the kids educated with newest and best books and materials, with the firm notion that education and the state of the town were closely linked. They decided, for the reasons stated above, that a computer is the best way to keep-pace with the rest of the country (and as much as possible) the rest of the world. This is why I helped our teachers write this proposal for Partner assistance in the purchase of a computer.