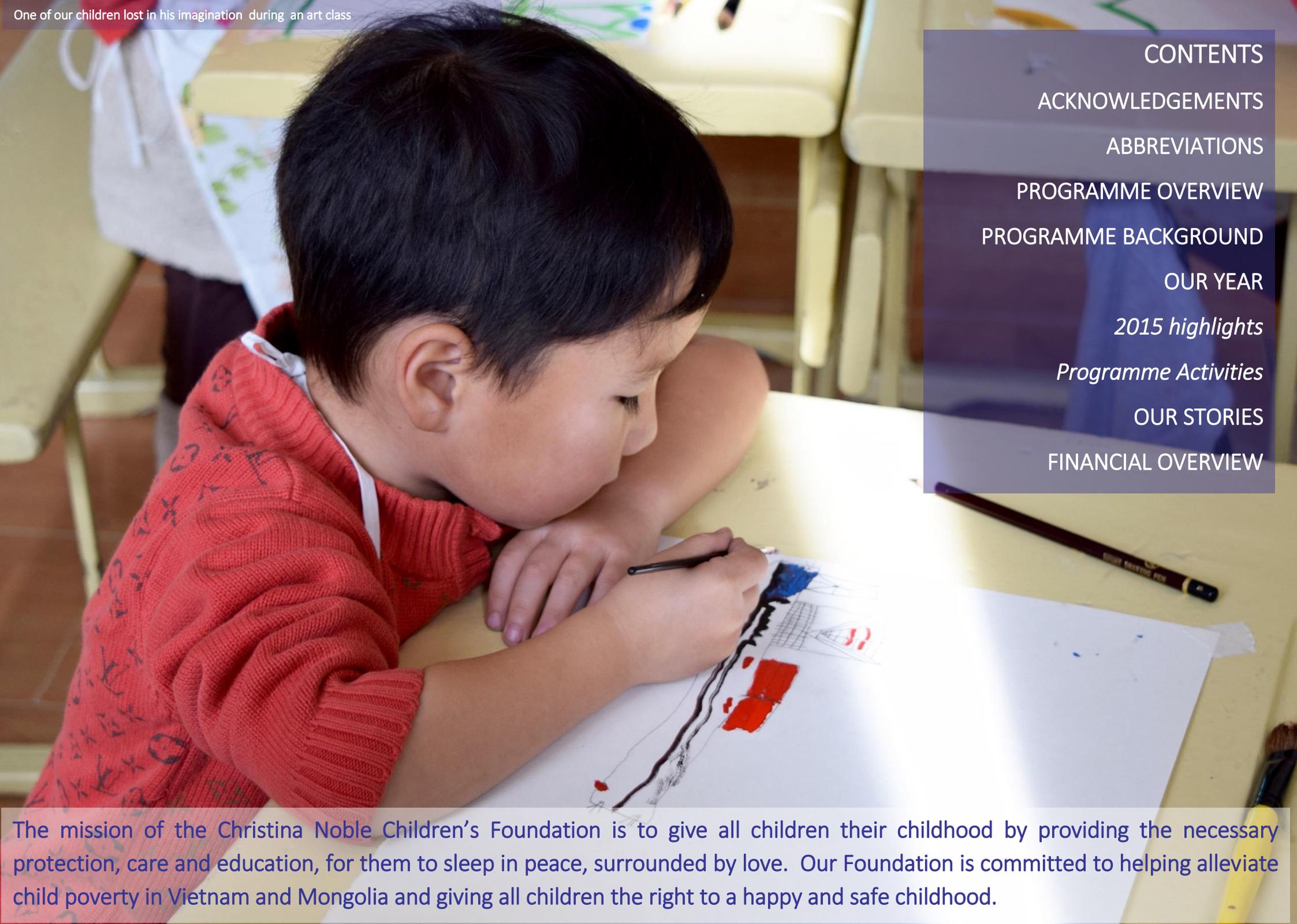




# Boys Skies Arts and Music Programme Annual Report 2015





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The mission of the Christina Noble Children's Foundation is to give all children their childhood by providing the necessary protection, care and education, for them to sleep in peace, surrounded by love. Our Foundation is committed to helping alleviate child poverty in Vietnam and Mongolia and giving all children the right to a happy and safe childhood.



Our little ones had lots of fun making puppets!

## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

It is with thanks to the Sovereign Art Foundation and their truly meaningful sponsorship of the Blue Skies Arts and Music Programme since 2011 that we have been able to realise our founder Christina's mission to give the children within our care an emotionally rich, happy and fulfilled childhood. By exposing our young people to creative experiences, self-expression and personal exploration we help them to build a strong and beautiful platform from which their lives can freely flourish.

We would also like to thank the following for their valued and heartfelt contributions to our children's artistic development during 2015:

Focus on the Family Mongolia for their support in the area of art therapy and helping us to provide this wonderful method of support for our children.

Aim4R Dance studio and Aimar Foundation for their enthusiastic cooperation and desire to help children from disadvantaged backgrounds explore the art of dance.

The Great Khaan Theatre for helping to ignite our children's passion for a variety of different dance genres.

We would also like to say a big thank you to all of our amazing volunteers and visitors who have encouraged and developed our children's creativity with various arts and crafts activities.

## ABBREVIATIONS

CNCF	Christina Noble Children's Foundation
CIS	Chinese International School
CSP	Child Sponsorship Programme
SAF	Sovereign Arts Foundation

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## PROGRAMME OVERVIEW

<b>Established</b>	2008
<b>Location</b>	<i>Blue Skies Ger Village</i> , Songino Khairkhan District, Ulaanbaatar The 411th Brigade Boys' Prison
<b>Objectives</b>	To use the transformative power of the arts in enabling disadvantaged children to build self-esteem, confidence, social skills, and develop into happy, fulfilled and expressive young adults by allowing them to explore their imagination and creativity in a safe, supportive and loving environment.
<b>Programme Components</b>	Classes and workshops in the following: Music; Dance; Visual Art; Art Therapy
<b>Beneficiaries</b>	Children from the Blue Skies Village, Child Sponsorship Programme and the Ulaanbaatar Boys' Prison
<b>Local Partners</b>	Focus On The Family Mongolia (Art Therapy) and Aim4r Dance studio and Aimar Foundation (Dance), Great Khaan Theatre (Dance)
<b>CNCF Involvement</b>	Fully responsible for funding and programme management, monitoring and evaluation.
<b>CNCF Staff</b>	Mr. Tom Minter, Director of Operations, CNCF Mongolia, and Ms. Lucy Morris, Programme Manager, Blue Skies Arts and Music Programme, CNCF
<b>Monitoring and Evaluation</b>	As CNCF is directly responsible for the funding and programme management, regular monitoring and evaluation activities are conducted. Monitoring visits during programme activities are conducted by the manager of the programme. Weekly internal meetings are conducted for CNCF staff to discuss programme related issues and updates. A monthly report is completed by the project leader and an annual report is sent to all stakeholders. Most importantly, the progress the children are making is displayed in various platforms such as talent shows and performances that are held at least once a quarter.
<b>2015 Actual Costs</b>	USD 20,056
<b>Future Plans</b>	The future plan of our programme is to continue to provide the creative activities that currently support our children's social, psychological and artistic development. Our objectives are to maintain the current curriculum whilst working to enrich our young people's creative experience by seeking out new avenues for self-expression and learning, such as trips to art galleries, craft workshops and volunteer visits from professional musicians, artists and dancers.
<b>Reporting Period</b>	January-December 2015

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## PROGRAMME BACKGROUND

Our Founder, Christina Noble, and the Christina Noble Children's Foundation began operations in Mongolia in 1997.

In 2007, to mark the 10th anniversary of our Foundation in Mongolia, a celebration was held at the *Blue Skies Ger Village* in Ulaanbaatar. The highlight of the celebration was a concert staged by the children from the Village and from the Child Sponsorship Programme. Christina Noble's daughter, Helenita Pistolas, was so impressed with the singing and dancing talents of the children that she proposed that a full time Music and Dance Programme should be initiated. This has since broadened to an Arts and Music Programme.

Our Foundation strongly believes in the transformative power of the arts in enabling disadvantaged children to build their self-esteem and develop into happy, fulfilled and expressive young adults. We believe that an education without exposure to the arts is not an education. It is just schooling.

Poverty in childhood is often the platform for a lifetime of challenges. Children raised in poverty are faced daily with overwhelming challenges that affluent children never have to confront. These children experience more stress due to loneliness, aggression, isolation, and deviance in their peer relationships, and they are more likely to describe feeling deprived, embarrassed, picked on, or bullied. As a result, children more often face future struggles in marital and other relationships.<sup>1</sup> There has also been research to show that poverty and its related stresses result in lower academic performance and neural function in children. Art and music play a crucial role in the social, intellectual, cognitive and emotional growth and development of all children.

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<sup>1</sup> Eric Jensen "Teaching With Poverty in Mind: What Being Poor Does To Kids' Brains And What Schools Can Do About It" ASCD, 2009



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According to a paper published by the National Endowment for the Arts (USA),<sup>2</sup> several studies have revealed positive associations between music and arts activities and developing social skills, like sharing, caring, empathy and a sense of camaraderie. Studies also showed that music and arts help children regulate their emotions, a critical skill for all children, especially those who have been raised in poverty and experience daily emotional stress, like all of the children our Foundation works with. Children are able to express themselves more freely through creativity and develop self-confidence and self-awareness.

Research has shown that an arts education can enhance critical thinking and develop creativity in children<sup>3</sup>. During the school years there is a tremendous opportunity to turn around the negative impacts of poverty. A recent study<sup>4</sup> provides direct evidence that there is a significant measurable improvement of neural function for children who participate in music lessons over a period of time.

According to the study's main author, children with around two years of training showed significant improvement in the neural function relating to language and mathematics cognition; the more exposure to music the child received, the greater the neural function improvement.

Our Blue Skies Arts and Music Programme offers classes suitable for all our children, whether they are new to studying art and music and are just learning the basics, or they have a talent and want to deepen their studies and appreciation.

Through the Arts and Music Programme we have been able to provide our children with a diverse range of creative activities, allocating them the space to explore their active imaginations in a structured and supportive environment. The aim of our programme is to nurture our young people's innate creativity by introducing them to various avenues of artistic expression, and in doing so facilitate the manifestation of their imaginative landscapes, helping them to effectively communicate their thoughts, feelings and emotions.

The Art and Music Programme's main emphasis is on freedom of expression; providing our young people with the space to express themselves openly and without fear of judgment. For all of the children under our care, who have come from backgrounds characterised by emotional pain, loneliness and suffering, this dedicated time for self-exploration is invaluable and plays an essential role in helping them heal from past trauma.

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<sup>2</sup> The Arts in Early Education: Social and Emotional Benefits of Arts Participation, NEA Office of Research and Analysis, December 2015 <https://www.arts.gov/sites/default/files/arts-in-early-childhood-dec2015-rev.pdf>

<sup>3</sup> RJ Deasy "Critical Links: Learning in the Arts and Student Academic and Social Development" as published on [www.aep-arts.org](http://www.aep-arts.org)

<sup>4</sup> Journal of Neuroscience: "Music Enrichment Programs Improve the Neural Encoding of Speech in At-Risk Children as published on [www.jneurosci.org](http://www.jneurosci.org)

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Painting on canvas

The pursuits open to our children operate on both an individual and self-reflective level as well as aiming to encourage the values of group work, community and togetherness. This is achieved by offering a range of activities, some of which have a more introspective focus where the children are encouraged to work independently, and others where the exercise involves group coordination, the sharing of ideas and working together to finish the task at hand.

Through supporting these children with lessons in the arts we are able to build up their feelings of self-worth by introducing them to an alternative way of learning, often more suitable to their individual needs and cognitive development. Unlike in the mainstream education system where differences are often punished and rejected, art both allows for and celebrates individuality; it encourages diversity.



Ger village dance group

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## OUR YEAR

### 2015 Highlights

Our Arts and Music Programme operates across three of our Foundation's Projects: *Blue Skies Ger Village*, Sponsorship Programme and the Boys' Prison. During 2015 our programme included lessons in visual art, dance and music, benefiting 52 children from our *Blue Skies Ger Village*, 115 children on our Child Sponsorship Programme and 28 teenagers at Ulaanbaatar's Boys' Prison. We also provided art therapy sessions for all children living at the ger village. In addition to this the children participated in an exciting and enriching range of events, performances and workshops.

Programme	Schedule of classes	Beneficiaries
<b>Blue Skies Ger Village</b>		
Art	Art: Classes took place on Sunday lasting between 2- 3 hours depending on the activity.	50 children
Art Therapy	Art Therapy: April - December sessions were held with the children on a weekly basis by our full time psychotherapist.	56 children
Dance	Dance: January - May lessons were held at the ger village once a week. June - August classes were held 3 times a week lasting 1 ½ hours each. September – December the children attended 1 x 3hour class every Saturday in Ulaanbaatar.	35 children
Music	Music: May – October lessons took place from 10am- 6pm Monday, Thursday and Saturday. November – December Lessons took place on Monday, Tuesday, Wednesday Thursday and Friday from 10am – 6 pm and from 10am - 2pm on Saturday. Lessons were held throughout the day for the children to attend in between their school schedule.	41 children
<b>Sponsorship Programme</b>		
Art Workshops	Art workshops: August – December art workshops took place once a month lasting 3 – 4 hours each.	85 children
Dance	Dance: October – December children attended 1 x 3 hour class per week.	15 children
<b>Boys' Prison</b>		
Art	Art: January – May classes took place 2 times a week lasting 2 hours each. August – December classes took place 2 times a week lasting 3 hours each.	28 children
	<b>Total participations:</b>	<b>310</b>
	<b>Total number of children</b>	<b>184</b>



# BLUE SKIES ARTS AND MUSIC PROGRAMME 2015 HIGHLIGHTS

**184** children participate in music and/or arts classes  
**310** participations children including those who take part in more than one class



children from the Blue Skies Ger Village, Sponsorship Programme and the Boys Prison.

**169** children attend art classes  
Blue Skies Ger Village art and art therapy - 56  
Sponsorship Programme - 85  
Boys' Prison - 28

**41** children attend music classes  
**50** children attend dance classes

Classes at the Blue Skies Ger Village

Classes for children in the Child Sponsorship Programme and the Blue Skies Ger Village

**Blue Skies Ger Village**      **Sponsorship Programme**      **Boys' Prison**

**56**      **100**      **28**

**10+** special events, performances, workshops



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Our children loved creating Autumn themed works of art using the fallen leaves

## PROGRAMME ACTIVITIES

### Art

Our art classes are intended to be a fun exploration and an introduction to art styles and techniques. Our children have the opportunity to express their creativity through visual art and learn and create through a variety of crafts, drawing, and painting. Our children love creating art; vibrant colours and imaginative imagery flow out of them with ease, transforming blank canvases into exciting and captivating pieces of work.

### *Blue Skies Ger Village- Visual Art*

The Arts and Music Programme at our *Blue Skies Ger Village* seeks to engage all of our children by offering a variety of activities mindfully arranged to appeal to both sexes and to children across all age groups.

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The children always look forward to Sunday's art lesson, which has been running most weekends since the beginning of March 2015. The sessions are open to all of our young people and despite being an optional extra-curricular activity we are always delighted see so many animated faces, beaming with smiles and keen to get creating. During the lessons our children experiment with a variety of different media, colours and techniques, exploring ideas and having fun with the tactile, sensory experience of creating art. There is no fixed duration for the class, we simply go with the flow and finish when everyone is ready to put their paintbrushes down. Lessons generally start with an introduction to what they will be doing followed by a visual demonstration of any new techniques and examples of other artists' work.

At the beginning of some lessons we incorporate games in order to build our children's confidence and help them to feel relaxed and at ease letting go and flowing with their creativity. One game our children at the *Blue Skies Ger Village* particularly enjoy is 'Connect the Picture', where each child takes it in turn to shout out an item of their choice to the rest of the class. Words like "Rocket!" "Dinosaur!" and "Fairy!" bounce from wall to wall and everyone works quickly to sketch them down. Once all of the children have had a go they work frantically to bring their scribbles to life with bright coloured pencils and a short story connecting the images together. When we first started playing this game many of the children were reluctant to share their story with the class and it would generally be the same few children volunteering each time. Now things couldn't be more different and as soon as their pencils go down a flurry of children rush towards the front of the room, impatient to share their work with their peers.

Open discussion, analysis and the sharing of ideas are always welcomed during lesson time and encouraged as an important part of the artistic process. Through communicating their work to the group and listening to other people's feedback, our children build feelings of pride, self-esteem and develop confidence in expressing their emotions to others.



A fun session doing emotional portraits and expressing emotions through colour and line

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Another one of our children's favourite activities this year was based on the theme of identity. The children were each asked to design a cap that conveyed something to the world about who they were on the inside. After creating an initial design on paper they set to work painting their hats whilst sitting outside in the beautiful summer sunshine. The finished articles were both striking and imaginative and the children couldn't wait for them to dry before putting them on and proudly showing their pieces off to the staff at the ger village.

As in the majority of our classes the children were encouraged to discuss the inspiration behind their designs and what they were trying to convey about themselves through their choices of colours, patterns and imagery. One of our younger boys explained how he had used different coloured shapes to represent the different parts of him and his life. He told the class: 'the big yellow section is the happy part of me but next to it I have drawn the same shape in black as sometimes I can get angry and feel frustrated.'

It is always fascinating to listen to our children talk about the meanings behind their work, as through their descriptions it is clear to see the value art plays in helping our children to explore their internal landscape and address any challenges. By encouraging our children to express themselves creatively in this way we help them to learn about who they are and how to deal with their emotions in a healthy, positive and rewarding way.

Two of our siblings wearing their imaginatively hand painted caps



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### *Blue Skies Ger Village- Art Therapy*

During 2015 we also incorporated regular art therapy sessions into our work with the children, helping to improve their mental and emotional well-being and further building a therapeutic community at the *Blue Skies Ger Village*. Sessions are conducted by our full-time psychologist Nomin-Erdene who uses this creative method as her primary tool to connect with, understand and interpret our children's internal landscape.

As children are naturally creative, asking them to draw a picture as opposed to answering a question directly, offers a non-threatening avenue to open up and work through difficult issues. Through talking to our children about their drawings and paintings and discussing the underlying reasons that inspired their art, Nomin-Erdene has been able to gain a deeper understanding of our children and work with them closely to resolve any emotional blockages. All 46 children who reside permanently at the ger village have received art therapy sessions as well as ten children who came to stay on a temporary basis. Although Nomin-Erdene works with all of the children at the village, after their initial analysis she now predominantly focuses on fourteen of the children who she considers to be suffering from the most trauma. Since beginning her work with these children it has been clear to see the improvements that are continually taking place. Through the creative process itself and by talking about their artwork, our young people have been able to work with her to explore their feelings, resolve emotional conflicts, foster self-awareness, manage their behaviour, develop social skills, reduce anxiety, and increase self-esteem.



Art therapy has played a highly effective role in ensuring the healthy psychological development of our children. We therefore wish to continue sessions during 2016.



In December four of our most troubled children living at the ger village were chosen by our psychologist to attend a seven-week art therapy course. The course was organized through an organization called 'Focus on the Family' and was conducted by a specialist art therapist visiting from America. The children attended the course once a week and participated in activities such as 'draw your saddest memory', 'paint the music' and 'draw your dream'. The children were then encouraged to talk about their work and an analysis was made on each of them at the end of the course.

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### *Boys' Prison<sup>5</sup>*

A total of 28 students participated in the boys' prison art club during 2015 and the following report has been written by the Boys' Prison Head Instructor Tungalag Damdinsuren.

The art club seeks to provide students with an arts education that leads to positive influence and improved manual skills. Through art, the lessons allow students to have an appropriate and effective outlet, uncover their talents, and gain a working knowledge of fine arts and aesthetic education. Furthermore, art has the value of influencing personal development and granting an enlightened worldview. From the students participating in the art club, it was believed that seven students had exceptional artistic skill, creativity, and solution to reach the level of creative works. Their works were displayed at a school exhibition, where students voiced their excitement and desire to participate in the art club again.

At the onset, students had a tendency to use crude language and lacked interest in their own lives. Through their participation in the art club, they are able to obtain an art education. Art can greatly influence a person's creativity, compassion, and kindness for the better. In particular, learning how to draw gives students not only the chance to improve their skills but also gives the advantages to express themselves to others, gain faith to lead their lives, establish a sense of self-confidence, increase creativity, obtain a sense of aesthetics, and improve relations between students.

The creations the boys display are a clear reminder that within each troubled youth lies the heart of a pure and innocent child. Through art and creative self-expression we are able to rekindle this part of them that has very often been lost in a troubled childhood.

When students are questioned on their approach to art classes, a common response is, "I may be imprisoned, but when I paint – I feel free." The art programme grants students the gift of enjoying an innate sense of freedom that all creatures are born with.

With a sense of freedom and calmness, the students are able to interact more freely and become closely acquainted with each other. They develop a tendency for polite interactions and a serious yet thoughtful approach.

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<sup>5</sup> written by the Boys' Prison Head Instructor Tungalag Damdinsuren



Collaborative workshop with students from Chinese International School, Hong Kong and our boys from the boys' Prison

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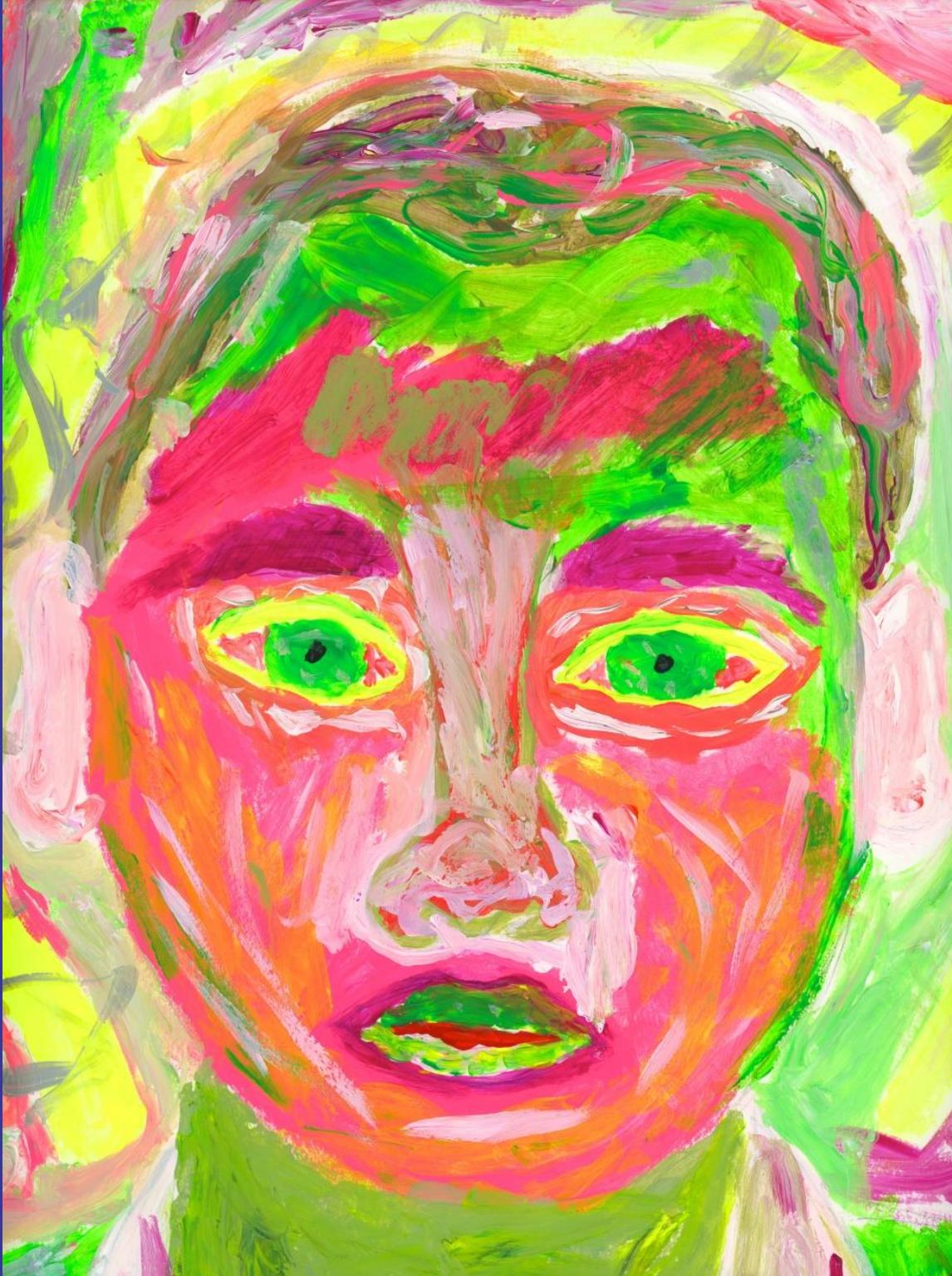
The art club also improves the students' attention span and allows for a more dedicated approach to learning. There's a noticeable increase in polite interactions, respect towards others and self, improved perspective of society, and a more positive approach to life throughout the academic year.

Where there is laughter, there is happiness. When students first join the art programme, they are unconfident in their abilities. However, art has an enchanting quality of drawing students in and providing them with happiness, especially when students step back to look at the fruits of their labour. They become involved and enthusiastic about homework assignments and what subjects they would like to create art of.

The students spoke of the first time they held a pencil and recalled incidents where family or friends either dismissed their artistic skills, spoke negatively of their artwork, or offered only criticism. Thanks to the art programme, they have truly discovered their artistic talent and found joy through creation.



It was beautiful to watch how through art our boys in prison and the students from CIS were able to bond and make friends



Students participating in the 2015 art club learned to value their own efforts, understand the importance of even a single stroke of the brush, and approach their work in a meaningful way, as evidenced by their love and care toward their artworks.

The art club seeks to shape students' creativity and promote positive personal development through suitable extracurricular activities, fine arts, and a beginner level understanding of art aesthetic. The class methodology is applicable to all students in the boys' prison rather than only those with demonstrated drawing skills. The art club teacher adheres to the principle that each student has a certain level of creativity and creative skills. It's especially important to encourage students who've never held a pencil before and tell them, "You can do it." The teacher is dedicated to recognizing and respecting each student's unique traits when interacting with them.

Due to the differing sentence lengths for students at the Boys' Prison, providing the same level of education for all students is unfeasible and depends on their circumstances. For example: From mid-August to the beginning of November, classes were held for one group of students. However, due to the Amnesty Law coming into effect on November 6<sup>th</sup>, 2015, a majority of the students in the class were released and a new group of students was established. Art club teacher Ts.Tsendpurev has taken this situation into her consideration and has prioritized making each lesson interesting and useful for the students.

Although art club activities are flexible, the teacher prioritizes the completed result of students' work to gauge improvements in attention span, completion rate, and patience. In order to improve students' creativity, classes follow the method of free drawing rather than copy drawing, proven to be more effective in fine arts education. According to the arts curriculum, the teacher held classes under the topics of Basics of Design, Basics of Colour, Autumn, Family, Friendship, Winter, and Mongolian Calligraphy.

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### *Child Sponsorship Programme*

Our Child Sponsorship Programme seeks to provide support for children and their families who live in extreme poverty and hardship. Our programme is a lifeline for many families, offering them the financial means to eat, keep warm and for the children to go to school. In addition to this financial help our social worker team works closely with each and every family, supporting them emotionally and offering opportunities such as workshops and seminars to encourage their personal development.

The art workshops form part of this additional yet valuable support by offering children with no access to artistic materials the opportunity to express themselves creatively. By exposing these children to the process of making art we allow them to experience an important aspect of childhood that in their everyday life is overlooked.

In 2015 we offered six art workshops to the children on our sponsorship programme. The sessions were a wonderful opportunity for our children to make friends, explore their creativity as well as let loose with some light-hearted fun!

Children who took part in the workshops learnt how to use a range of media such as acrylic, water colour, and gouache. They were also introduced to the work of various artists and genres, deepening their understanding and appreciation of art as a powerful form of expression and valuable tool in the communication of ideas.



Art workshop with some of our younger children in the sponsorship programme

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Sponsorship art workshop based on the topic of Naadam

The workshops were advertised to our children on sponsorship distribution days and were open to anyone who had an interest in art or who simply wanted to have a fun day out and make some new friends. On average twenty children attended each class with ages ranging from five to seventeen.

The creatively inspired sessions lasted for up to four hours each, during which our young artists created works inspired by themes such as Autumn, the national holiday Naadam and Mongolian culture.

In all art workshops our children were encouraged to talk about their pieces of art and reflect upon their reasons for choosing certain colours and imagery. Group discussion about how the varying pieces of work evoked different feelings and emotional responses was also a central part of the sessions. Experiencing art in this way was a brand new concept to many of the children, as visual arts do not traditionally play a central role in Mongolia culture.

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## Music

Music has the unique ability to connect with, and to heal, aspects of the soul. It fuels and inspires the mind, stirs emotions, relieves anxieties and creates memories that we will carry with us through life. The magical and reviving capabilities of music is a belief that Christina Noble herself shares, describing many lonely and desperate times as a child where music and singing were her only forms of escape and connection to a world beyond her own horrific daily reality.



Guitar performance at a birthday party at our *Blue Skies Ger Village*

During 2015 we worked hard to revitalize the music programme with a more modern feel. After redecorating the music room in 2014 and buying a selection of contemporary instruments the children were excited to start their lessons.

Music lessons in Mongolia are not seen as being an important part of a child's education and therefore are only part of the National Curriculum until year four. In these lessons children learn to sing traditional Mongolian songs and read sheet music. Instruments are not taught and there is little to no emphasis on self-expression, creativity and fun. If children do want to learn to play an instrument at school some traditional ones are available to play in extra curricula classes but the equipment is limited, and contemporary instruments are not an option. Therefore, when the children were told they were going to be able to learn to play the drums, keyboard and guitar they were full of enthusiasm.

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As professional musicians and artists are difficult to find in Mongolia due to it being a relatively new and underdeveloped sector, we were unable to find a suitable teacher until May 2015. Once we found the right person classes started straight away and were held two-and-a-half days a week on Mondays, Thursdays and Saturday mornings until midday.

Twenty-eight children attended the classes at different times depending on their school timetable. The children loved learning to play all three different instruments and quickly developed their skills with regular practice. It was clear to see their progression at our birthday parties and other celebratory events when the children would show off what they had learnt with pride and confidence.

The children have continued to learn the guitar, drums and keyboard as well as traditional Mongolian instruments such as the 'Morin Khuur', also known as the horsehead fiddle and the 'Yatag', the Mongolian half tube zither. By incorporating these traditional instruments into the music programme we have helped to maintain and support our young people's cultural identity and heritage connections: a fundamental part of the Christina Noble Children's Foundation's philosophy.



Our older ger village girls playing the Mongolian Yatag

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## Dance

At the Christina Noble Children's Foundation we strongly believe in the power of dance and the wide-reaching benefits it can have for our young people. Dance offers an invaluable means to explore and communicate emotions, increase self-confidence and enhance social skills. It is also highly physical and provides a fun and effective way for our children to improve their overall health and fitness.

At the beginning of 2015 classes were held at the ger village on Saturdays and Sundays and were conducted by student teacher Dainchaa. The lessons were focused mainly on traditional Mongolian dance, helping our children to maintain their cultural awareness and identity whilst keeping fit and having fun. Following the end of Dainchaa's contract with CNCF in June, the dance programme was re-evaluated and developed in line with the children's requests. For a number of years our children have expressed a keen interest in learning street dance however despite our best efforts finding a suitable teacher has been difficult. Fortunately in 2015 we were able to fulfill our children's wishes after building a partnership with one of Mongolia's most prestigious Hip Hop dancers, Tuuguu – Saruultugs. Since the beginning of their summer holiday in June, ten of our children have attended regular dance classes at Tuuguu's professional street dance studio in the centre of Ulaanbaatar.



A dance class at the beautiful new studio in Ulaanbaatar

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In October we selected fifteen children from our Sponsorship Programme to join the dance lesson. This has enhanced the energy of the class and provided a wonderful opportunity for our children from both projects to make friends, learn from one another and increase their social skills and confidence.

The children love their weekly lesson, which has quickly become one of their favorite hobbies. Not only has it been an effective way for the children to maintain their health and fitness, it has also been instrumental in helping them to develop a positive mind-body connection and in teaching them how to use their bodies to express emotions in a constructive, non-aggressive and therapeutic way.

As the classes are now held outside the ger village at a studio in the city, they have also helped our children to become more independent and familiar with urban life. Generally the children are required to find their own transport to the city and ensure that they manage their time in such a way that they are always punctual and prepared for their lesson. In order for the Foundation to fulfill our responsibility of care to the children, providing opportunities such as this are essential and help to prepare our young people for independent adult life. We wish to continue lessons in 2016 and are excited to watch the children develop their skills and grow in confidence. We also intend to improve the dance programme by having a teacher come out to our ger village to teach the younger children who are unable to attend lessons in the city. At the beginning of 2015 classes were held at the ger village on Saturdays and Sundays and were conducted by student teacher Dainchaa (from the Great Khann Theatre)



The children love their weekly dance lesson.

MAKE THE WORLD A BETTER PLACE



Our children in the new dance studio with their teacher.



Seven students from the Boys' Prison art club displayed their works at a school exhibition in which family, friends, CNCF staff and government officials were invited to attend. The boys were proud to show off their pieces which they had been working on throughout the previous months. Having the confidence to display something so personal, especially from boys who often feel they have a hard-faced exterior to uphold amongst their peers, is incredibly meaningful and reflects the value art plays in helping our boys to open up and comfortably express themselves.



**Collaborative Art Workshop at the Boys' Prison:** Every year, a group of students from the Chinese International School (CIS) in Hong Kong, visit the Boys' Prison in Ulaanbaatar. This annual event is co-organized by CNCF and CIS. The event is dedicated to promote friendship and kinship between teenagers from Mongolia and Hong Kong. This year, we introduced a new element to the event schedule, which was a collaborative art workshop. Teenagers were invited to participate in the group art workshop and create under the topic of "friendship". How do you define "friendship"? What is "friendship"? A total of 13 students, and one member of CIS staff, were divided into mixed groups and asked to illustrate the concept of "friendship". After an initial brainstorming amongst the groups, the students started to draw together on one sheet of paper. Although they had only met an hour earlier, spoke different languages and knew very little about each other, the teenagers began to communicate through lines, forms and colour. The art session was an incredibly valuable exchange for both groups of teenagers, who despite coming from completely different backgrounds were able to find common ground as human beings and connect to one another through creativity, self-expression and universal symbolism.



**Christmas Art Competition:** 30 children from our Blue Skies Ger Village, 15 children from our Child Sponsorship Programme and 10 boys from the Boys' Prison participated in a Christmas art competition to win the chance for their picture to be chosen as CNCF's 2015 Christmas card design. The children were all very excited to participate in this competition and painted their pieces with great focus and attention to detail, inspired by the opportunity to have their card sent around the world. The finished artwork was beautiful and combined the essence of a western Christmas with aspects of Mongolian culture. In total five designs were chosen and each child was given a special certificate and prize to congratulate them on their achievement.



During the summer eight of our older children from the ger village were specially selected to perform at six children's summer camps on the outskirts of Ulaanbaatar. They were joined by two other groups of children from local shelters. The tour lasted a week and was a wonderful opportunity for our children to build their confidence performing in front of others as well as making friends, having fun and developing their musical and dance talents.



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Our children from the ger village were formally invited to perform at Ulaanbaatar's 370th anniversary celebration event. After successfully getting through each stage of the audition process our children were over-the-moon to be chosen to participate alongside other talented children at the prestigious occasion. Nine of our children took part to perform their newly learnt street dance routine for the very first time in front of a crowd. The event was a huge success and our children left brimming with confidence and excited to tell everyone about their accomplishment.



In May, 18 of our children from the ger village took part in Ulaanbaatar's talent show alongside children from eighteen other children's organizations. Our children performed seven different acts such as dance, music, poetry reading and taekwondo. This was a great opportunity for our children to build their confidence and develop a sense of team spirit at the ger village. When preparing for the event, the children showed impressive commitment and self-discipline, practicing regularly during the prior weeks. We were all very proud of our children and are looking forward to participating in the 2016 show.

One person **CAN** make a difference. **YOU** can make a difference.

## OUR STORIES

When we see 13-year-old Altan (name changed for child protection) now all we see is a young, confident and happy teenager full of life and with big dreams. Sadly however, behind his big cheeky smile is a story of loneliness, pain and suffering that no child should ever have to go through.

Altan can't remember his biological parents; they abandoned him as a newborn baby and he hasn't seen them since. With no relatives to take care of him he spent the first few years of his life growing up in one of the national orphanages.

At 5-years-old Altan's whole world changed when he was adopted by a couple unable to have children of their own. Things started off well and Altan was happy; he finally had a mother and father.

After about two years the family's situation took an unexpected turn when his adoptive mother found out she was pregnant. The couple quickly lost interest in Altan and began to see him as a burden on their new family.

When the baby was born things only got worse for young Altan, who started getting physically and mentally abused by the two people he believed loved him the most. After a while his adoptive parents decided they no longer wanted him and took him back to the orphanage.

Altan was hurt, confused, and suffering extreme trauma from the abuse and neglect he had experienced at such a young and vulnerable age.

Fortunately his adoptive grandmother, who he adores, still wanted to be part of his life and so for the next couple of years Altan lived between her home and the orphanage. In time the responsibility of being actively involved in her young grandson's life became too much and she began to spend less and less time looking after him.

It was at this point that Altan came into our full-time care at the Blue Skies Ger Village. When he arrived it was clear to see that the traumatic upbringing he had experienced had left deep-rooted and painful wounds. His slumped shoulders, hanging head and



When Altan first started art therapy he would use lots of black, grey and other dark colours in his pictures. He now uses bright shades of yellow, blue, red and orange; his drawings feel much happier. We see yellow, smiling suns instead of gloomy heavy clouds. He has made new friends at school and is noticeably calmer and more at peace.

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inability to look you in the eyes were clear signs of low self-esteem, insecurity and desire to self-protect.

For a while Altan was withdrawn, angry and didn't trust anyone. The only way he knew how to deal with his emotions was either by blocking them out or becoming aggressive and shouting. When our new psychologist, Nomin-Erdene arrived at the village she believed that one of the most effective methods to help Altan heal would be through art therapy - she was right.

Through art he has been able to communicate painful emotions in a way that he couldn't do through words. It has helped him to process and understand his experiences, expressing them in a positive and healing manner.

Since his first session with Nomin we have watched Altan open up and grow from a troubled, shy, and pained little boy into a happy and outgoing teenager. His attitude, behaviour and outlook on life have improved significantly and it is clear to see from his overall demeanour that he has started to enjoy his childhood.

He now dreams of becoming a chef so that he can make people happy with delicious food. Art therapy has helped him to discover this passion and see life beyond his previous pain. We are all so proud of Altan, who with each passing day becomes more positive and trusting in life.

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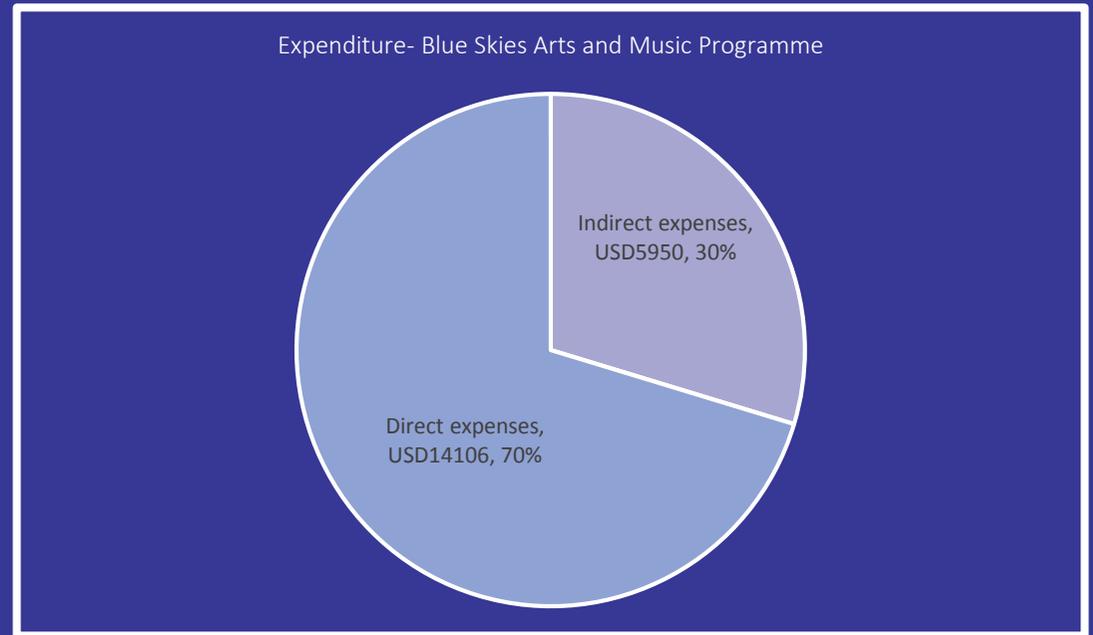
## FINANCIAL OVERVIEW

The operational cost of the Blue Skies Arts and Music Programme is USD 20,056.

The direct costs include project staff salaries, supplies, musical instruments and equipment, room rental, and competition prizes. The indirect costs of the programme include office rent and utilities, administration staff salaries and various other resources shared by multiple projects.

The project has been funded by the Sovereign Art Foundation since 2011.

Our 2015 audits are currently pending and will be available for distribution in Quarter 4 of 2016.



It is with thanks to the Sovereign Art Foundation and their truly meaningful sponsorship of the Arts and Music Programme that we have been able to realise Christina's mission of giving the children within our care an emotionally rich, happy and fulfilled childhood. By exposing our young people to creative experiences, self-expression and personal exploration we help them to build a strong and beautiful platform from which their lives can freely flourish.



*"Childhood is the foundation of life. Help us make it a good one." - Christina Noble*

Each of us is only one person. But by joining all the ones together, we can accomplish greatness.

If you or your organisation are interested in supporting us in 2016/2017 please contact our Foundation. It is only through the kind generosity of others that we are able to continue our work with some of the world's most vulnerable children.

Christina Noble Children's Foundation - Mongolia  
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