SITUATION OVERVIEW

Mongolia has reported no death due to COVID-19 and it is considered by WHO as a country that has sporadic cases. As of August 31, 2020, the country has 301 cases of COVID-19 with 289 treated and recovered, and with 9 patients in the National Center for Communicable Diseases. There were 3,562 people in quarantine by the end of August, 2020.

Mongolia has experienced an increase in maternal deaths from January 1, 2020 till the end of August, 2020. There have already been 19 reported maternal death cases by the end of August 2020 whereas a total number of the reported cases in the entire year of 2019 was 18.

Not counted as maternal deaths, there are an unprecedented five cases of incidental deaths of pregnant women from causes including violence and suicide. Although it’s not confirmed that the increase of maternal death is a consequence of COVID-19 pandemic, there is possibility that it can be a reflection of the increased GBV/DV and stress as reported in the COVID-19 SitRep #2 by UNFPA Mongolia.

FUNDING OVERVIEW

UNFPA Mongolia CO’s estimated funds required for COVID-19 response for 2020 is $2,000,000. To date, the Country Office has successfully mobilized a total of $1,575,901 from core and non-core resources for COVID-19 response.

Funds from non-core resources include funding from the Luxembourg Cooperation ($392,491), Rio Tinto LLC ($602,000), the Government of Japan (as part of the agreement between UNFPA and UNICEF: $80,000), UN Multi-Partner Trust Fund ($100,000), the Swiss Development Cooperation ($10,000). Reprogrammed funding for COVID-19 responses is from regular resources ($73,945), the Swiss Development Cooperation ($238,000) and private sector ($79,000).
In order to protect the maternal health, especially during the time of global pandemic, the country needs to strengthen the preparedness in maternity hospitals and health care services for a possible outbreak.

HUMANITARIAN NEEDS

In the first 7 months of 2020, 44,341 mothers gave birth. In comparison with the same period of last year, the number of births is reduced by 619 or by 1.4%. 73.7% of women who gave birth did attend the pre-natal care six or more times.

26.4% of women who gave birth in the first 7 months of 2020 delivered through cesarean surgery, and 32.0 % had some complications. There were 44,684 newborns which is lower by 624 babies compared to the same period in 2019. 51.0% (or 22,784) of all newborn babies are boys and 49.0% (or 21,900) are girls. At the national level, in the first seven months of 2020, there are 19 maternal death cases, almost doubling the maternal mortality ratio of 2019. In addition, the advisory board to MOH on forensic medicine reported 5 cases of incidental maternal deaths due to violence and suicide, that were not counted as maternal deaths as per maternal death definition in Mongolia.

In the previous years, deaths due to violence or suicide of pregnant women and girls were reported only sporadically. In order to protect the maternal health, especially during the time of global pandemic, the country needs to strengthen the preparedness in maternity hospitals and health care services for a possible outbreak.

GOVERNMENT, UNITED NATIONS AND STAKEHOLDERS’ RESPONSE

In response to the rising maternal mortality, the Ministry of Health (MOH) has organized the annual national SRH conference on maternal health and COVID-19. With support from UNFPA, 2 two-day events were organized with 150 participants including heads of Ulaanbaatar City and the provincial health departments, the heads of divisions for medical services of the health departments, directors of the maternity hospitals, chief obstetricians and gynecologists, and heads of maternity wards and representatives from the professional NGOs. The main theme of the meeting was COVID-19 and the status of maternal health. The cases of maternal deaths occurring in the country as of the end of August, 2020 were thoroughly analyzed. The participants learned from the experiences of the National Center for Communicable Diseases in dealing with COVID-19-suspected and positive cases.
With funding from UNFPA, the National Center for Maternal and Child Health is currently conducting the “Why did Mothers Die?” study for the maternal deaths that occurred in Mongolia from 2016 through the first half of 2020. The study uses the methodology of the confidential inquiry into maternal deaths, which is designed to improve the health and health care by collecting data, identifying any shortfalls in the care provided, and devising recommendations to improve future care. They are confidential in the sense that the details of the patient/hospital/involved clinicians remain anonymous to those conducting the inquiry.

UNFPA PROGRAMME RESPONSE

Continuity of sexual and reproductive health services and interventions, including protection of the health workforce

As part of the project “Enhancing the capacity of the maternal health services to respond to COVID-19 pandemic in Mongolia, and protecting the safety and dignity of women and girls, including those in the quarantine”, funded by Luxembourg Cooperation, the UNFPA Mongolia Country Office has procured and supplied 2,490 dignity kits to the Ministry of Health and the National Emergency Management Agency. As part of the project “Enhancing the capacity of the maternal health services to respond to COVID-19 pandemic in Mongolia, and protecting the safety and dignity of women and girls, including those in the quarantine”, funded by Luxembourg Cooperation, the UNFPA Mongolia Country Office has procured and supplied 2,490 dignity kits to the MOH and the NEMA. These kits are intended for the women and people with disability who are in the quarantine as well as for female health and emergency workers that work in quarantine facilities. Mr. Ya. Sodbaatar, Deputy Prime Minister of Mongolia, the Chair of the State Emergency Commission, Dr. T. Munkhsaikhan, the Minister for Health, the Brigadier-General G. Ariunbuyan, Tapan Mishra, the UN Resident Coordinator in Mongolia, Kaori Ishikawa, Head of UNFPA Mongolia and Iliza Azyei, the Deputy Representative of UNFPA Mongolia attended the handover ceremony of the dignity kits and the launch of the project held in the Parliament House of Mongolia.
UNFPA has started the procurement process of personal protective equipment (PPE) and respiratory ventilators for the maternity services in hospitals in provinces with the highest cross border traffic and maternity hospitals in Ulaanbaatar (UB) for COVID-19 prevention.

UNFPA successfully mobilized resources to enhance the diagnostic capacity in UB and in two border provinces, and to deliver medical outreach services for persons who require regular medical check-ups including pregnant women in two provinces and one district of UB.

The latter will help pregnant and postpartum mothers to avoid crowded outpatient services in case of a community outbreak of COVID-19. This project of strengthening diagnostic capacity for COVID-19 in four target hospitals and creating medical outreach services is funded by Rio Tinto Mongolia LLC. UNFPA conducted assessments on the target health facilities to establish molecular diagnostic laboratories for COVID-19 which can be also used for diagnosis of other infectious diseases. The technical assessment was conducted by the COVID-19 Coordinator at UNFPA Mongolia together with the leading laboratory specialists from the health sector of Mongolia.

Together with the Ministry of Education and Science, the UNFPA CO team is in the process of developing interactive TV lessons on health education, including comprehensive sexuality education. These TV lessons will be integrated into the national e-learning curriculum which will be used during potential closures of schools due to COVID-19 outbreak.

Per request from the MOH, UNFPA has provided support on training for COVID preparedness of health services for 372 health professionals working 5 out of 21 provinces and two out of six metropolitan districts of Ulaanbaatar city and three private hospitals in Ulaanbaatar.

As a result of strong advocacy efforts from UNFPA CO, the Ministry of Education and Science decided to include the health education subject into the list of priority subjects to cover in the period of September 2020. Only priority subjects will be taught in September to remind students of the topics from the second half of last school year which ran through TV.
Continuity of youth development and participation activities

As August 12th marks the International Youth Day, UNFPA Mongolia Country Office ran a week-long social media campaign. We featured stories about how young Mongolians are coping with the COVID-19 pandemic in terms of their mental health, education, and reproductive health on social media and through local news outlets including UB.LIFE and UNREAD.

The National Youth forum under the theme “Let’s listen to our youth: The youth in the pandemic” was held with 70 in-person participants as well as online participants to discuss how the youth are being affected by the pandemic in terms of health, education, employability, and social participation. The forum was widely covered by all major national media outlets with a follow-up of extensive social media coverage. The forum produced a set of recommendations for the decision-makers regarding the youth during and after the pandemic. 20% of the participants were from rural areas and 20% represented the groups with disability.

UNFPA CO’s Youth development program supported the start-up initiatives of 42 young herders. The program also organized e-training for the medical workers of the Adolescents’ health cabinets at the local hospitals on issues related to adolescents’ health and youth-friendly health services.

The local Youth Development Centers (YDC) organized many activities, using an online setting amidst the COVID-19. These activities include online counseling for youth on issues related to SRH and mental health, online training on life skills, dissemination of health information on the COVID-19, and referral to other local government’s services. The YDCs provided support services to 183 youth, age groups between 15 to 34, which also included the marginalized youth, such as unemployed, out-of-schools, disabled, and staying at home young mothers. Over 100 Youth Volunteers were actively engaged with their local communities and were involved in the dissemination of health information on the COVID-19.

Addressing gender-based violence

UNFPA, UNICEF and ILO collaborated in developing a proposal for the UN Multi-Partner Trust Fund on COVID-19 Response and Recovery. The proposal seeks to contribute to combating DV/VAC in Mongolia in the context of COVID-19 response and recovery by expanding access to essential and lifesaving DV/VAC response services while also tackling DV/VAC prevention through community-level economic empowerment initiatives.
UNFPA participated in the “Protection, Gender and Inclusion” training (August 18-19, 2020) for all staff and volunteers of the Mongolian Red Cross Society (MRCS) by giving a talk on gender-based violence (GBV) and GBV during COVID-19.

**Ensuring the supply of modern contraceptives and other reproductive health commodities**

UNFPA CO is monitoring the availability of contraceptives procured by the government at service delivery points. 46 adolescents and youth have been provided with contraceptives through the Adolescents’ Cabinets that are located at general hospitals.

**Building partnership to unite in the fight against COVID-19**

UNFPA Mongolia is partnering with Rio Tinto Mongolia LLC to support the Government of Mongolia in the fight against COVID-19. With financial support from Rio Tinto Mongolia LLC, UNFPA is setting up real-time PCR laboratories in border provinces of Mongolia and in Ulaanbaatar to strengthen the preparedness and response to the COVID-19 pandemic.

UNFPA Mongolia CO has partnered with WHO and UNICEF in the organization of the training for the COVID-19 preparedness to the health workers at the provinces and districts’ levels.

**Coordination**

- Participating in inter-agency coordination mechanisms.
- Leading inter-agency GBV coordination mechanisms
- UNFPA co-chairs the UN PSEA network along with RC

**STAFFING**

UNFPA Mongolia Office is in the recruitment process of hiring Monitoring and Evaluation Analyst, and Finance Assistant.

**EXTERNAL COMMUNICATION**

- Luxembourg Cooperation, UNFPA join to promote health, the dignity of Mongolian people amid pandemic - https://montsame.mn/en/read/234298
- UNFPA will support the maternal health service and ensure the health and dignity of girls and women with the support of 1.1 billion MNT from Luxembourg - https://ikon.mn/n/1ytm
- Youth National Forum was held with the title “Let’s listen to youth: COVID-19 impacts on our lives” - https://montsame.mn/mn/read/234487
- VIDEO: Luxembourg Cooperation and UNFPA join to promote health, the dignity of Mongolian people during COVID-19 - https://www.facebook.com/watch/?v=744225953038308&extid=LBjFFinihDuyHjOz

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FOR UPDATES OF COVID19 IN MONGOLIA, PLEASE VISIT:

**The Ministry of Health's Daily reporting**

**The State Emergency Committee’s decision**
https://nema.gov.mn/c/resolution