



MONGOLIA

DELIVERING A WORLD WHERE EVERY PREGNANCY IS WANTED, EVERY CHILDBIRTH IS SAFE AND EVERY YOUNG PERSON'S POTENTIAL IS FULFILLED.

MONTHLY NEWSLETTER

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"IT HAS BEEN DIFFICULT RUNNING THE CENTRE IN THE TIME OF COVID-19"

Ariuntuya Tamjid runs the One-Stop Service Centre in Bayanzurkh district in Ulaanbaatar. She worked for 23 years with the police Child and Family unit, but she came out of retirement to set up one of the integrated centres for domestic violence support. With discrete safe-houses closer to the communities, the centres have helped women and girls access the complex range of services they need to stay safe and recover, even during the pandemic.

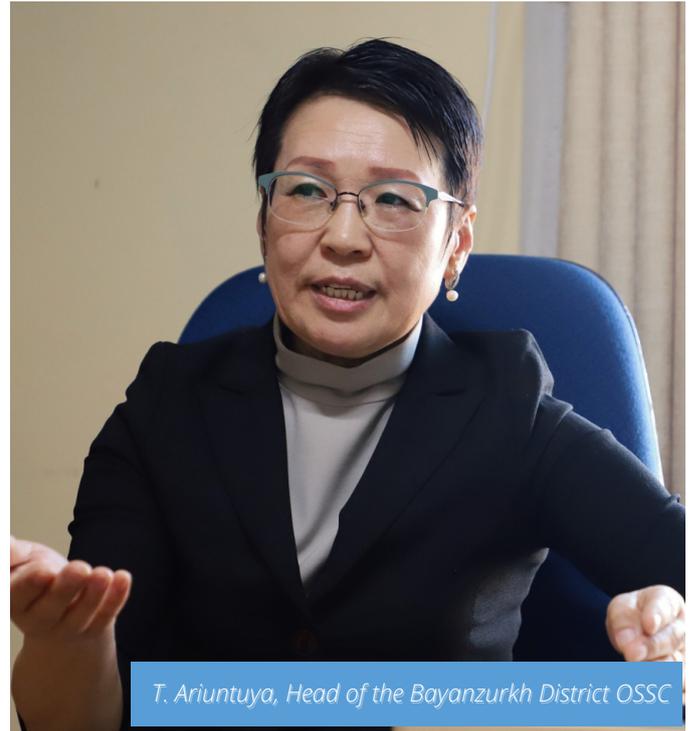
Ariuntuya says before the network of community-based One-Stop Service Centres were established, there were only two shelters in Mongolia - one at the police headquarters and another run by a local NGO called the National Center Against Violence - to cope with domestic violence.

"The capacity of those two facilities was not enough to provide protection services for survivors," she says. "Every day, there were calls and cases of domestic violence. Usually, we would record their data and try to contact their relatives."

She says without a dedicated facility and 24-hour staff equipped to handle these cases, women coming at night would have to wait until morning just to get to speak with a trained officer.

"Sometimes cases could turn up at the police station in the middle of the night, but we had nowhere to accommodate them," she says. "We had to leave them to sleep on chairs, and officers on duty shared their own food with the survivors, then we had to wait until morning before we could register their cases."

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T. Ariuntuya, Head of the Bayanzurkh District OSSC

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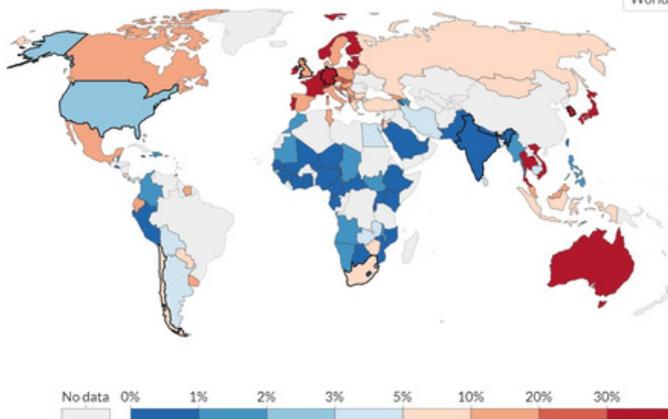
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COVID-19 SITUATION REPORT

The share of COVID-19 tests that are positive, Mar 31, 2022

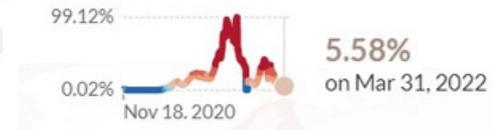
7-day rolling average. Comparisons across countries are affected by differences in testing policies and reporting methods.



Source: Official data collated by Our World in Data - Last updated 18 April 2022, 16:00 (London time)
OurWorldInData.org/coronavirus • CC BY

Our World
in Data

Share of COVID-19 tests that are positive across countries, Mongolia



Total COVID-19 deaths:

As of the end of March, 2,108 deaths caused by COVID-19 have been reported in the country since the pandemic started. In March, seven new COVID-19-related deaths were reported. However, there were no COVID-19-related deaths reported in the last 14 days of March, which shows the positive impact of high vaccination coverage, especially among target groups (over 92.2%), as of 14 March 2022. As reported by Johns Hopkins University data, the case fatality rate in Mongolia remains at 0.24%, the same as a month ago.

Immunisation status:

Almost 67% of Mongolia's entire population has received two COVID-19 vaccination doses, 31.7% have received the third dose, while 3.7% have received a voluntary fourth dose as of 30 March. Since the start of vaccination, 459,679 (8% of) vaccinated people have been infected with the coronavirus.

Maternal health:

Compared with February, COVID-19 infection among pregnant women has continued to decline in March, with 14 pregnant women receiving hospital treatment as of 30 March. No maternal near misses and mortality were registered in March. However, COVID-19 vaccination among pregnant women is below 40%. UNFPA's field mission in March revealed that service providers' lack of proper counselling skills of health care professionals and persistence of vaccine hesitancy among pregnant and breastfeeding mothers are the main obstacles causing low vaccination rates.

Therefore, service providers needed an evidence-based counselling guide on the vaccine effectiveness that utilises international resources.

Total confirmed cases:

According to the Ministry of Health, the total confirmed cases in Mongolia reached 468,223, with 4,012 cases confirmed in March. However, since the Ministry of Health reports only PCR confirmed cases, this number is different from the figures reported by the National Statistical Office situation report (918,867), which includes cases detected by rapid Ag tests.

The number of new cases continued to decline during the reporting period, with around 80 cases reported each day on average. Weekly new cases have decreased by 75.7%, from 1,663 in the first week of March to 404 in the last week of March.

Testing capacity:

Since the country has shifted the emergency level to "Yellow", PCR testing decreased from 8,284 per day in early March to 2,700 (a 67.4% decrease) by late March. The average number of PCR tests administered per day ranges between 2,000 to 4,000 nationwide, depending on the testing capacity of health care centres. With the decreased testing in the country, confirmed cases can be lower than the actual number of cases. However, the positive test rate decreased from 15.6% at the beginning of March to 6.7% on 28 March, confirming the infection spread is slowing down in the country.

GOVERNMENT READINESS AND KEY RESPONSE ACTIONS:

In March, no significant policy actions against COVID-19 were taken since the country shifted to a "Yellow" level of readiness. However, the following updates were made in relation to travel and border crossing:

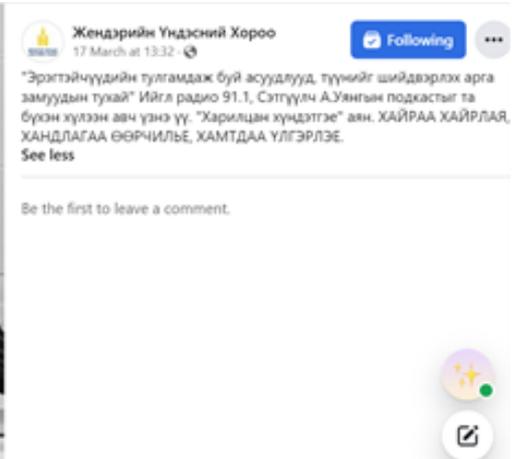
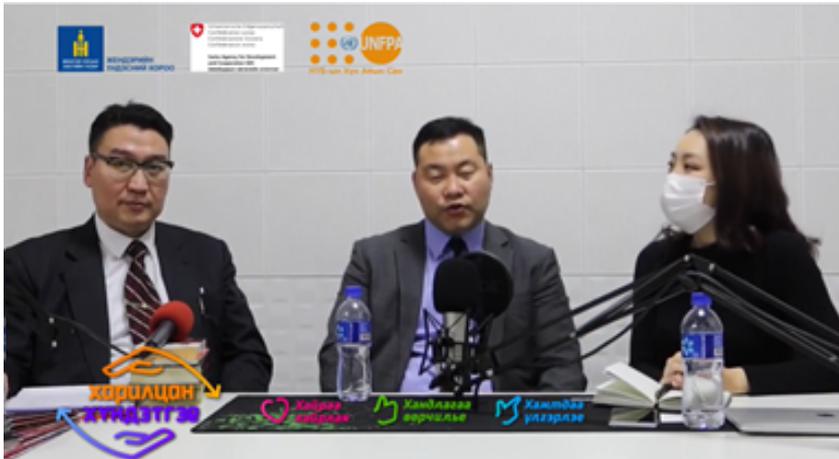
- **Travel requirements:** On 14 March 2022, the Government of Mongolia updated its entry requirements for foreign travellers with the new rules coming to effect from that date. According to this update, all travellers (regardless of age, vaccination status, or country of departure) no longer have to take a PCR or rapid test to enter Mongolia, nor will they be required to take a test upon arrival or go into quarantine or self-isolation.
- **Mongolian and Russian border crossings opened:** On 29 March 2022, the Government of the Russian Federation adopted Resolution No. 5656, opening the movement of citizens through all Mongolia-Russia border crossings. The Russian Embassy in Ulaanbaatar has announced that Mongolian citizens travelling to Russia will be allowed to cross the border with a negative PCR test result (which must be taken within 48 hours).
- **Genome sequencing is made available in Mongolia:** The Australian Embassy and WHO handed over high-capacity lab equipment to diagnose the genome sequence of the coronavirus to the Mongolian National Cancer Centre. This laboratory is essential for detecting new strains of COVID-19 and provides timely results for infection control.



UNFPA RESPONSE:

- With the technical support of UNFPA, the Advisory Board at the Ministry of Health finalised a vaccine conversation guide for service providers. This guide was approved by the Ministry of Health and distributed to all provinces and professional NGO networks.
- UNFPA Quality Assurance Department approved technical specifications of PCR lab equipment with a note of full compliance. Based on this approval, the local bid will be announced in early April 2022 for the procurement of PCR lab equipment.
- To support the post-pandemic recovery of sexual and reproductive/ maternal health services in rural areas, UNFPA organised a joint mission to Khuvsgul Province in March, where maternal mortality and near misses haven't decreased for the last two years. The mission resulted in the development of a provincial action plan to reduce preventable maternal mortalities and morbidities with improved local crisis responses and quality coordination in health care settings.

UNFPA CELEBRATED INTERNATIONAL WOMEN'S DAY AND MONGOLIAN SOLDIER'S DAY



The nationwide campaign under the theme "Equal Respect" with the message "Respect our love, Refresh our attitude, Respond Together" ran from 1 to 31 March 2022. It was organised on the occasion of International Women's Day (8 March) and Mongolian Soldier's/Men's Day (18 March) to encourage people to respect each other equally without discrimination and call on the public to respond to each others' needs. This campaign aims to promote equal rights and opportunities for both men and women, challenging the harmful gender stereotypes present in society. The campaign envisions that everyone would benefit from gender equality, allowing men and women equally to participate, contribute, and benefit from the development of the family, community, and country.

The campaign was led by the National Committee on Gender Equality and contributed by the implementing partners such as the Coordination Council on Crime Prevention, National Police Agency and National Center Against Violence with the financial support of the Swiss Agency for Development and Cooperation (SDC) and technical support of UNFPA. Also, provincial and district gender sub-committees and sub-councils were actively engaged in disseminating the main messages and contents to the public and called on the communities to join the campaign. The campaign started with a launch conference and continued with the distribution of traditional media content, including online discussions, TV interviews, TV programmes, podcasts, videos, posters, and other visual content. All contents conveyed vital themes and messages of the campaign and promoted equal treatment at the individual, family and community levels.



"Respectful Family" TV show, produced jointly with the Mongolian National Broadcaster (MNB), featured three different families from three generations. The show had the families and a professional psychiatrist openly discuss gender beliefs and social norms and portrayed how these norms have changed from generation to generation, and how love and mutual respect positively address these differences in their beliefs and social norms. Furthermore, together with Eagle TV, a live discussion was produced on men's leadership and challenges with guest speakers, including a doctor, a single father, a family researcher and a well-known actor. The speakers talked about men's positive attitude, participation, well-being and experiences. Two podcasts were produced and disseminated on issues of women's participation in decision-making and challenges faced by men today through MGL Radio 88.3 and Eagle Radio 91.1, respectively.



During the campaign, Dr. Stefani Burri, Head of Cooperation of SDC, participated in the "Sightline" interview segment of MNB World to discuss gender-based violence issues, SDC's contribution through the "Combating Gender-based Violence in Mongolia" project with the Government of Mongolia and UNFPA. She also highlighted the importance of supporting and funding these interventions to ensure the sustainability of the mechanisms and services in preventing and responding to gender-based violence. The campaign reached over 1 million people/times across the country throughout its month-long run, not including live television stream audiences.

DARKHAN-UUL PROVINCE'S OSSC TO EXPAND SERVICES



UNFPA Mongolia Gender team conducted a mission to the Darkhan-Uul province from March 30 to 1 April 2022. The OSSC in Darkhan-Uul province operates under the leadership of the Family Children and Youth Department (FCYDA) of the province and is one of the top facilities that provide international level services for survivors of violence. It is the recipient of the small grant to expand the services.

The Project on Combating Gender-Based Violence (CGBV) is one of the first and most comprehensive multi-stakeholder initiatives to address gender-based violence by strengthening the national capacity for prevention and response. Its first phase was implemented from 2016 to 2020, and the second phase started in mid-2020 and will end in mid-2023.

One of the critical interventions of the second phase of the CGBV project is to expand the services of the One-Stop Service Centres (OSSCs) and shelters for survivors of the violence with women's economic empowerment initiatives and to improve the facilities favourable to the people with disabilities. UNFPA selected six OSSCs and shelters in five provinces and one district of Ulaanbaatar through competitive selection. In addition, it provided small grants to expand their services and facilities, focusing on improving survivor reintegration and accessibility.

The purpose of the mission was to monitor the activities of service expansion for the survivors on improving the economic empowerment of the survivors to reintegrate their families and continue their lives independently by breaking the cycle of violence. Also, the mission team provided technical assistance to the staff of the OSSC and recommendations to local authorities on ensuring the sustainability of this initiative after the project ended.

The OSSC in Darkhan-Uul province has a comprehensive plan to improve the economic capacity of the survivors staying at the centre and after release from the centre with various types of skill-building interventions such as sewing, knitting, cooking, horticulture, manicure, pedicure, makeup, computer literacy, proposal writing and further supporting them by linking with existing job openings, resource mobilisation and selling, marketing opportunities within the province and outside the area.

As a result, within the six months since they received funding from the project, eight women were trained in different skills, received job offers, sold their products to generate income, and one woman even attended and won the hairdressing competition. This initiative empowers women economically and mentally while serving as an effective psychological treatment tool to overcome the crisis and manage their stress.

Darkhan-Uul local authorities, including the local Governor's Office, Local Citizen's Representatives Office, and Darkhan soum authorities, are working together to prevent and respond to GBV/DV in the province effectively and ensure the sustainability of the OSSC for survivors of the violence.

NEW GUIDELINE ON MATERNAL AND PERINATAL DEATH SURVEILLANCE AND RESPONSE WILL BE IMPLEMENTED



In 2021, WHO released an updated operational guideline on "Maternal and Perinatal Death Surveillance and Response" (MPDSR), with technical support from relevant agencies, including UNFPA. The UNFPA support involved in-depth qualitative investigations of the causes and circumstances surrounding maternal and perinatal deaths. This process is an integral part of the quality of care improvement efforts to reduce maternal deaths, preventable stillbirths, and neonatal deaths.

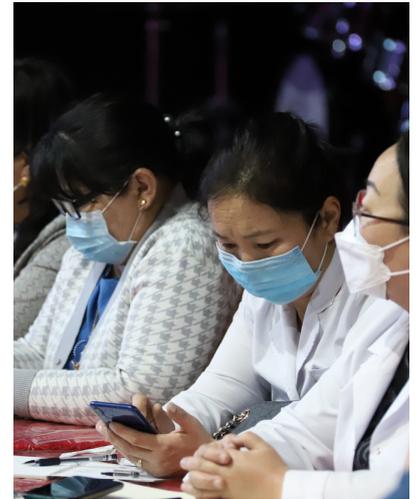
The last revision of the Maternal Death Registration, Reporting, and Review Guideline was approved by the Health Minister's order in 2017.

With advice from its regional office, UNFPA Mongolia supported the translation of the new guideline, which will be presented to the Advisory Board on Obstetrics and Gynecology of the Ministry of Health to further adapt the MDPSR according to the international standards.

MINIMUM INITIAL SERVICE PACKAGE IS SET IN THE PROVINCIAL CONTINGENCY PLAN

Following the training of health and emergency agency officers on the implementation of Minimum Initial Service Package guidelines approved by the Health Ministry Order in 2021, Zavkhan province became the first province to include maternal, and sexual and reproductive health services during the local health emergency response and crisis management plan with a budget line.

"EMERGENCY OBSTETRIC AND NEWBORN CARE" TRAINING FOR HEALTH CARE PROFESSIONALS TAKES PLACE IN KHUVSGUL PROVINCE



With the financial and technical support of UNFPA Mongolia, the Parliamentary Standing Committee on Social Policy organised the "Emergency Obstetric and Newborn Care" training for maternal and newborn health care professionals in Murun, Khuvsgul province, on 1 and 2 March 2022. The training was attended by officials from the Khuvsgul Province Governor's Office, Province Health Department, Provincial General Hospital, midwives and doctors from 24 soums. During the opening of the training, UNFPA Mongolia Officer-in-Charge and Assistant Representative L.Oyunaa said, "UNFPA enjoys longstanding fruitful collaboration with Khuvsgul province health care sector since 2002. The capacity building through medical equipment and training of healthcare providers, carried out under the 12-year Telemedicine Support for Maternal and Newborn Health Project, has made significant contributions to strengthening Khuvsgul province's maternal health services and safe motherhood."

Advisor to the Parliamentary Secretariat M.Otgon said, "The Vision 2050 policy document approved by the Parliament of Mongolia aims to improve the safety and quality of health services. Furthermore, within the Sustainable Development Goals, we are working to reduce the factors contributing to child and maternal mortality through supporting reproductive health services."

Head of the Social Policy Department of the Khuvsgul Province Governor's Office Ch.Ganbaatar highlighted that the provincial government is focusing on digitalisation to improve health care, especially the utilisation of modern technological solutions in reproductive health services. He stressed that they provided funding from the provincial budget for air transfer of mothers in critical condition, which saved their lives.

UNFPA Mongolia's Coordinator for COVID-19 B.Tsedmaa presented on the COVID-19 impact on maternal health and critical findings from the "Why did mother die?" study. In addition, she spoke in detail about the reform in the job description of midwives, new global trends in the prevention of maternal complications due to COVID-19, and the current UNFPA initiatives in the area of sexual and reproductive health.

The training combined theoretical and practical sessions based on real cases. The training was facilitated by leading national specialists such as Associate Professor Dr. D.Munkhtsetseg and Dr. T.Amartuvshin from the Mongolian National University of Medical Sciences, Dr. B.Chinzorig from the National Centre for Maternal and Child Health, and Dr. S.Enkhtuya from Amgalan Maternity Home.

MINISTRY OF EDUCATION AND SCIENCE LAUNCHES NATIONAL ANTI-BULLYING IN SCHOOL SETTINGS CAMPAIGN WITH UNFPA SUPPORT



UNFPA Mongolia supports the Ministry of Education and Science (MoES)'s efforts against bullying, discrimination, and gender-based violence in school settings. The MoES is taking action to address the root cause of this concerning issue.

On 14 March, with the support of UNFPA, the MoES organised a large forum on anti-school bullying, gathering over 400 participants, including teachers, social workers, parents, schoolchildren, and civil society organisations representatives, to discuss a range of critical issues, including peer bullying and discrimination among schoolchildren, on 14 March 2022.

Attendants to the forum included the Chairwoman of the Working Group on Anti-bullying MP Ts.Munkhtsetseg, Minister of Education and Science L.Enkh-Amgalan.

PARTNERSHIP WITH UNITEL LLC TO EXPAND

UNFPA made a partnership agreement with Unitel LLC, a major telecommunication company in the country, in 2021 to support the Mandukhai project. As part of the partnership, jointly with the National Centre for Maternal and Child Health, UNFPA plans to disseminate the targeted messages to adolescents and young people during the "Adolescent's week", the first week of April, to introduce Mandukhai and promote activities of adolescent cabinets.

Furthermore, the project team discussed the potential collaboration to implement the "E-Library" project in Umnugobi province under the Family, Children and Youth Development Department with the support of the Unitel LLC company.

UNFPA IS LEADING THE UN YOUTH WORKING GROUP



As the Chair of the UN Youth Working Group for 2022, UNFPA is leading the efforts to synergise the youth-related activities undertaken by UN agencies. In this regard, UNFPA is working closely with the UN agencies and the UN Youth Advisory Panel to develop a plan for 2022 for increased effectiveness and efficiency of the youth-related interventions by the agencies by making sure that the interventions are aligned with avoiding duplication of efforts.

As part of this effort, UN agencies plan to undertake capacity building and awareness-raising interventions at the Youth Development Centres nationwide. The topics will cover gender-based violence, family planning, counter-trafficking, and health and target Youth Development Centres staff and youth nationwide.



UNFPA HOLDS STRATEGIC WORKSHOP WITH PARTNERS TO DISCUSS NEW COUNTRY PROGRAMME (2023-2027)



UNFPA Mongolia Country Office organised a Strategic Workshop in a hybrid format with partners, colleagues and stakeholders to introduce and discuss UNFPA's new 7th Country Programme for Mongolia (2023-2027) on 29 March 2022.

During the opening of the workshop, UNFPA Mongolia Head of Office Dr. Khalid Sharifi said, "UNFPA is committed to leading the areas of youth development, gender equality, women empowerment, sexual and reproductive health and reproductive rights, addressing the need of people with disabilities and creating awareness of the demographic transition as a crucial area for the United Nations system."

During the workshop, UNFPA introduced the new 7th Country Programme framework to participants and received inputs from stakeholders, which will align with UNFPA's global effort to end preventable maternal deaths, end the unmet need for family planning, and end gender-based violence and harmful practices.

The first comprehensive Country Programme between the Government of Mongolia and UNFPA officially started in 1992. It focused on delivering family planning services and information and promoting the usage of population data to support government development policies and programmes.

UNFPA's 6th Country Programme in Mongolia, covering five years, was launched in 2017, focusing on youth participation, realising youth's sexual and reproductive health and rights, and ensuring gender equality and women's participation, as well as ending gender-based violence. The Country Programme supports Mongolia to achieve the SDGs and is closely aligned with the United Nations Development Assistance Framework.

The Strategic Workshop on UNFPA's 7th Country Programme in Mongolia was attended by representatives of the Parliamentary Standing Committee on Social Policy, Ministry of Education and Science, Ministry of Labour and Social Protection, Ministry of Health, government agencies, health and education organisations, UN agencies, international development organisations, and civil society.

Continued from Page 1

The centre in Bayanzurkh is one of the 17 centres that have been set up across the country since 2019. Since they have been operating, there has been an increase in reported cases of gender-based violence. Ariuntuya says that this is a sign that the centres are effective.

"Reporting has increased, and the response has improved," she says. "Reports of domestic violence have been increasing, but we are working more closely with communities to give people information about how to speak out."

According to the data, the centre Ariuntuya runs is located in the most dangerous part of Mongolia for women. Bayanzurkh district is home to more than 31% of domestic violence cases in Ulaanbaatar in 2020 and more than 16% of cases in the whole country.

"These centres have trained staff with specialised professional services," she says. "That is what makes the centre special."

Ariuntuya says 50% of the clients who come to the centre have no job. "Many of them have a below-average education, and the financial situation from COVID-19 can cause family stress and relationship issues, and that can lead to domestic violence."

Ariuntuya says the pandemic has made everything even harder.

"It has not been easy running the centre in the time of COVID-19," she says. "The number of cases is increasing, and we've had strict lockdowns introduced by the government."

Ariuntuya says the pandemic has made it harder to be open to all clients without the testing steps. They needed to find ways to test women and girls for the virus before they were welcomed into the centre.

"In the past, we accepted every client," she says. "Because of the pandemic, it becomes harder, not just for the clients but also for the centre's staff."

Ariuntuya says they needed more information and protection. "The first thing we did was increase our knowledge about how we can be protected," she says. "We did sessions with staff about how to keep ourselves safe. Then, we provided all the protection, tools, including thermometers, masks, hand sanitiser, and soap."

Ariuntuya and her team got onsite rapid testing for the coronavirus, so women in distress do not need to go lineup at the hospital before getting support for domestic violence. They also set up emergency stations with supplies if there was a positive case in the centre.

Ariuntuya says the testing costs, personal protective equipment and additional supplies have added financial burdens to their already stretched budget. However, she says UNFPA supplies like Dignity Kits and personal protective equipment were able to support them through the crisis. UNFPA, through its Combating Gender-Based Violence Project in Mongolia, co-funded by the Swiss Agency for Development and Cooperation, also provided documents advising on safety protocols during the pandemic.

Ariuntuya says they had to handle a very challenging case in the middle of the crisis. A young woman came to the centre with two infant children.

"The brother of her husband was beating her," she says. "Her mental health situation was not good. She was badly injured, and her children were malnourished."

As the woman gradually stabilised, they realised she had nowhere to go. She stayed in the centre for 26 days, where she received medical treatment and comprehensive psychological testing and counselling. Ariuntuya worked with the community to help her get on her feet in a donated yurt and helped her access monthly child support from the government.

"Every case has its own uniqueness," she says. "That's why we do situation analysis and provide the necessary services within our capacity. We refer to the relevant agencies if it's beyond our capacity."

Referrals also needed to be handled differently during the pandemic as movement restrictions and fear of the virus complicated everything. While the pandemic continues, albeit at a decreased rate, in Mongolia and elsewhere, Ariuntuya says she feels they have the right tools and training to stay safe and help women get the support they need.

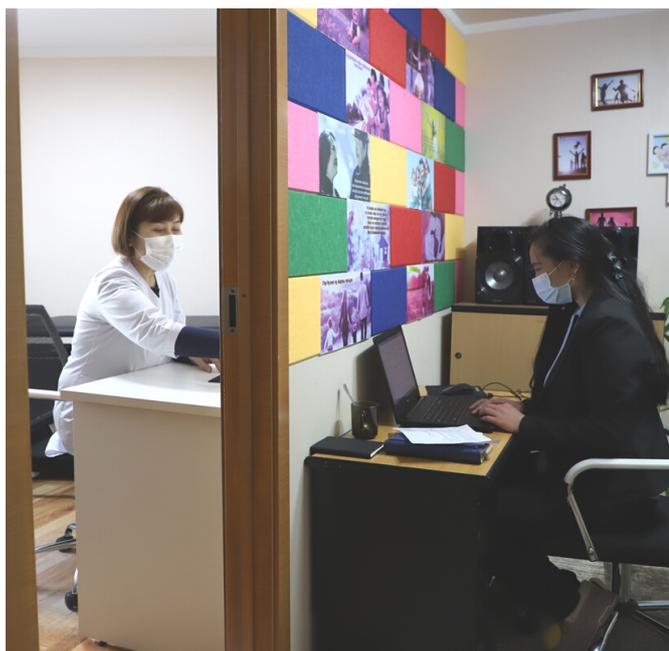
Through good communication with the government, the centres were classified as "essential" services. As a result, Ariuntuya received authorisation to go out and get supplies for the women in the centre at the height of the COVID-19 lockdowns in Mongolia, which saw roads blocked, all "non-essential" businesses and organisations shut down, and residents compelled to stay at home. "I was given a code that the police can scan if I get stopped," she says. "I had to go out to get groceries for the women staying with us."

Ariuntuya says that there is an invisible danger from the virus, but the women at her centre also face the threat of very real violence outside the walls, and they need support.

"The women cannot go outside, not just because of the virus, but because sometimes they are at risk from their partners. We are here to give them refuge, and we must keep them safe."

Ariuntuya explained that the centre's location and staff identity are not disclosed to ensure the safety of clients and staff. But this confidentiality also affects the centre's accessibility to those who need their services. "Women and children who ran away from their abuser could be harassed at the centre, or women seen going to OSSC could face backlash if their abusers, often intimate partners, find out that they did so. On the other hand, many of those who need OSSC services have difficulty reaching them directly."

According to Ariuntuya, the most pressing problem the centre has is the size of the premises. The entire facility, with eight staff, is a small plot of land with a 90 square metre detached building. Just one room with four beds is provided for clients seeking shelter despite Bayazurkh district having the country's highest DV/GBV rate. Ariuntuya explains that although the centre tries to help everyone that reaches out to them, they're not able to do so due to a lack of human resources and premises capacity.



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**FOR UPDATES ON COVID-19 IN
MONGOLIA, PLEASE VISIT:**

Ministry of Health daily report on COVID-19:
<https://covid19.mohs.mn/p/cat/post/57/?page=2>.

The State Emergency Committee's decisions:
<https://nema.gov.mn/c/resolution>.

**FOR MORE INFORMATION,
PLEASE CONTACT:**

Khash-Erdene BAYARSAIKHAN
Media and Communications Analyst
UNFPA Mongolia
Email: bayarsaikhan@unfpa.org.