

Bimonthly Newsletter

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COVID-19 SITUATION



July and August 2021 have been devastating months in Mongolia, with the number of confirmed COVID-19 cases nearly doubling from 122,339 cases on 1 July to 213,820 cases as of 31 August 2021. The number of COVID-19 deaths rose from 592 in July 1 to 937 by August 31. In this period, the spread of the more infectious and deadly Delta variant of COVID-19 has been underscored by health authorities.

77.4% of deaths caused by the augmentation of chronic diseases by the COVID-19 infection, and 22.6% are caused by COVID-19 complications with the overall case-fatality rate of 0.06% (Ministry of Health).

Vaccination coverage: During this period the vaccination of adults has continued with the vaccination of pregnant women and children aged between 12 to 18 years ramping up ahead of the start of the new school year. Mongolia had fully vaccinated 2.09 million people as of August 31, representing around a third of the country's total population.

As of August 31, full dosage of vaccination coverage reached 64.2 % of the general population, including pregnant women (15.6%) and children aged 12-17 (74.2%).

COVID-19 SITUATION

Booster dose: Due to the widespread of the Delta variant (34.7% of current positives), the government decided to start the Booster shot with Pfizer vaccine on voluntary basis. With this decision, health care workers and frontline workers in the red zones and older people above 65 years old will receive the Booster dose administration step by step.

No nationwide lockdown has been enforced, but the National Naadam Festival, which takes place from 11 to 13 July, was cancelled due to economic and public health concerns linked with COVID-19.

Maternal mortality due to COVID-19: With the high spread of the Delta variant in the community, the number of pregnant women infected with COVID-19 rose in July and August months. During the reporting period, 40 maternal deaths were registered in Mongolia, increasing maternal mortality rate to 86.3 per 100,000 live births, which is three times higher compared to 2019, where 23.3 per 100,000 live births (before the pandemic). 28 maternal deaths were caused by COVID -19 complications. Leading causes of this high number of maternal mortality is related to difficulties in early diagnosis, lack of preparedness to the infection management due to disparities in health care delivery, lack of public awareness and poor coverage of vaccine among pregnant women, etc.

As a response to this high mortality due to COVID-19 infection, the Ministry of Health in collaboration with Maternal Newborn Surveillance System started to conduct an in depth review of each maternal death and identify main causes and contributing factors to deaths and make detailed recommendation for further prevention of maternal death.

GOVERNMENT RESPONSES

The orange level regulation: Based on the risk assessment of the current situation and domestic transmission of the Delta variant, the government decided to extend the Orange level of regulation (regime of heightened readiness) until December 31, 2021. In connection with the decision, the current restrictions for all border checkpoints except for the Chinggis Khaan air border crossing point have been extended until the end of the year.

Schools reopen: The government decided to open schools, kindergartens, and universities from 1 September. With the opening of the new school year, the ministers of health and education issued a joint decree on the introduction of 5/9 and 4/10 principles to prevent COVID-19 infection in schools. Also, the government introduced a safety guideline and testing strategy within the school environment for COVID-19 using the Sampling approach. Under the safety guideline, a number of preventive measures and requirements will be followed by every school: **1.** The number of children in each classroom should not be exceeded 20; **2.** Rotated learning for schools: 5 days in classroom and 9 days online regimen; **3.** Due to restrictions on the number of children, kindergartens will receive children aged 4-5 only.

Policy guides: With the technical assistance of UNFPA, two essential policy guides were approved by the health minister's decree during the reporting period: **1.** "Temporary guide on the COVID-19 reporting and statistics flow" (A/463) and **2.** "Revision of diagnostics and treatment of the COVID 19 infection" (A/ 549).

UNFPA RESPONSE

Public awareness: Within the UNFPA response actions, the COVID-19 communication products developed by the UNFPA's Asia-Pacific Regional Office team were adapted into the Mongolian language and prepared for printing and social network dissemination. These four series of posters are on Pregnancy and Delivery during COVID-19, Vaccination during pregnancy and breastfeeding, and Health care workers' safety during COVID-19.

Resource mobilization: The COVID-19 interim project "Mitigating the effect of COVID-19 pandemic on good health and well-being of women and adolescents in Mongolia" was approved by the Government of Luxembourg.

COMBATING GENDER-BASED VIOLENCE PROGRAMME

High-level visit to Darkhan-Uul and Bulgan provinces as part of the Combating Gender-based Violence Project

UNFPA, the Swiss Cooperation Office and Consular Agency in Mongolia (SDC) and the Ministry of Labour and Social Protection jointly organized a high-level field monitoring visit to Darkhan-Uul and Bulgan Provinces from 2 to 3 August 2021 to renew their commitment to supporting the provincial government to prevent and respond to gender-based violence. The need for a multi-sectoral response and cooperation between public services, local and national authorities, and international organizations were highlighted during discussions, to ensure that the delivery of life-saving and essential services to protect and support gender-based violence survivors are institutionalized and sustained. Some 50 Dignity Kits, which contain personal hygiene items that help to prevent gender-based violence and sexual exploitation, were also handed over to local authorities in both provinces as part of project activities.



Gender-based violence situation brief for Generation Equality Forum, Paris 2021

The Generation Equality Forum 2021 took place in Paris from 29 June to 1 July 2021. UNFPA Mongolia submitted a situation brief on gender-based violence in Mongolia well as drafted the opening remarks of the Minister of Foreign Affairs of Mongolia for the occasion.



Courtesy meetings with the National Commission on Gender Equality and Coordination Council for Crime Prevention



On 16 and 17 August, UNFPA Mongolia's Head of Office held courtesy meetings with the leadership of the National Commission on Gender Equality (NCGE) and the Coordination Council for Crime Prevention, respectively, to discuss her departure and changes to UNFPA's management and staffing structure, and to reflect on past and future collaboration. During both meetings, Ms. Kaori Ishikawa highlighted the efforts of each institution to implement the Combating Gender-Based Violence in Mongolia Project, and encouraged them to maintain their commitment to ending gender-based violence in Mongolia. Both organizations expressed their gratitude to Ms. Kaori Ishikawa for her contributions to women and girls' empowerment and equality efforts in Mongolia.

Organization of UN prevention of sexual exploitation and abuse network meeting

UNFPA Mongolia, as the lead and coordinating agency for UN Mongolia's efforts for the prevention of sexual exploitation and abuse (PSEA), organized and facilitated a meeting for the UN PSEA Network on 5 August 2021. At the meeting, UN agencies discussed the PSEA Network Action Plan 2021-2022, and shared their previous, current and planned activities to prevent and respond to sexual exploitation and abuse allegations involving UN staff, implementing partners and suppliers.

UN position paper on virginity testing

UNFPA led the development of a paper on the UN's position in relation to virginity testing in Mongolia, which was presented to the National Human Rights Committee (NHRC). The paper reiterates the commitment by the UN and Government of Mongolia to eliminate gender-based violence and all other harmful practices against women and girls, including virginity testing. The testing, which involves a physical examination of the hymen of women and girls to determine whether they have had sexual intercourse, is a violation of women and girls' rights which can have far-reaching psychological impacts. The position paper also includes recommendations for the Ministry of Health, which will be included in the NHRC's Guidelines for School Re-Openings that will be shared with school administrations.

SEXUAL AND REPRODUCTIVE HEALTH AND RIGHTS

Commemoration of World Humanitarian Day 2021



As part of commemorations to celebrate World Humanitarian Day on 19 August, the UN team, led by Mr. Tapan Mishra, UN Resident Coordinator; the National Emergency Management Agency, represented by Colonel B. Unenbaatar; and Uvs Governor's Office, led by Governor Ch. Chimed, visited the site of the helicopter crash in Malchin soum, Uvs Province, where nine people tragically lost their lives 20 years ago on 14 January 2021 as they were undertaking a Dzud assessment.

They were:

- Mr. Sh.Otgonbileg – Member of Parliament (Mongolian)
- Ms. Sabine Metzner-Strack – United Nations Disaster Assessment and Coordination (UNDAC) team leader, Head, Asia/Pacific Desk, Disaster Response Branch, OCHA – Geneva (German)
- Mr. Gerard Le Claire – UNDAC team member, Director, Environmental Services, State of Jersey, Planning & Environmental Department, UK, (British)
- Mr. Matthew Girvin – Programme Officer, UNICEF Mongolia, (American)
- Ms. B.Bayarmaa – Programme Officer, UNFPA Mongolia, (Mongolian)
- Mr. Ts.Batzorig – Photographer from "Gamma" agency (Mongolian)
- Mr. D.Otgon – Technician of the helicopter (Mongolian)
- Mr. Takahiro Kato – NHK TV reporter (Japanese)
- Mr. Minoru Masaki – NHK TV cameraman (Japanese)

The frequency and intensity of Dzuds in Mongolia are increasing due to droughts and desertification, as highlighted on World Humanitarian Day this year, which called for world leaders to take meaningful climate action for the world's most vulnerable people.

The event was organized by UNFPA Mongolia, led by its Head Ms. Kaori Ishikawa, and Assistant Representative L. Oyunaa, with support from the Governors' Offices of Uvs Province and Malchin soum.

Special invitees included the family of Ms. B.Bayarmaa, Programme Officer, UNFPA, who lost her life in the helicopter crash. Ms. Speciose Hakizimana, Deputy Representative of UNICEF Mongolia, also took part in the commemorations to pay tribute to the memory of Mr. Matthew Girvin – Programme Officer, UNICEF-Mongolia and a USA national who also lost his life in the crash.



Mr. Mishra, UN Resident Coordinator said, "Mongolia has great potential to contribute to the reduction of greenhouse gas emissions by reducing the use of fossil fuels and shifting towards the production of renewable energy sources, and introducing new forms of animal husbandry moving from numbers towards quality."

Ms. Ishikawa, UNFPA, said that in any kind of disaster, women and girls are among the most affected. UNFPA will continue raising awareness and advocating for the health, safety and dignity of women and girls affected during natural and manmade disasters, including the COVID-19 pandemic.

ADOLESCENTS & YOUTH PROGRAMME

On 12 August 2021, UNFPA, together with the Ministry of Labour and Social Population and the UN Resident Coordinator, commemorated International Youth Day.

Since 1999, when the UN General Assembly adopted a special resolution to mark 12 August as International Youth Day, we have been celebrating the day every year in Mongolia, in addition to the Mongolian Youth Day on August 25.



International Youth Day

Transforming Food Systems: Youth Innovation for Human and Planetary Health

Youth are at the heart of everything UNFPA does in Mongolia. We work with and for them, recognizing the vital role that young women and men have to play as drivers of positive and inclusive change in the country. We continuously advocate for greater investments so that youth can realize their full potential, and for policies and programmes to address the unique challenges they face.

This year, UNFPA, with other UN Agencies, urged the government, civil society and private sector, to invest in young people, including in their education, health, and actively engage them in sustainable development efforts in Mongolia.



ХӨДӨЛМӨР,
НИЙТИЙН ХАМГААЛЛЫН ЯМ



National Youth Development 7th Forum: 25 August 2021

Acknowledging the tremendous power of youth for positive social change and as catalysts for sustainable and inclusive development in Mongolia, Kaori Ishikawa, UNFPA Head of Office, called for the development of platforms to give youth a meaningful voice. She also emphasized the importance of investing more in young people including expanding access to youth-friendly sexual and reproductive health services, comprehensive sexuality education, and life skills so that they have increased agency and ability to protect themselves from gender-based violence.

UNFPA, with the Ministry of Labour and Social Protection, the Department of Family, Children and Youth Development and the Youth Development Council, organized the 7th National Youth Development Forum.

Relevant ministries, government agencies and non-governmental organizations held discussions with youth representatives on their unique needs and challenges, including in education, health, employment, and social participation.

Participation of youth mechanism in Mongolia

During the forum, UNFPA presented good practices on youth participation mechanisms, including the provincial youth council mechanism and the activities of the Youth Development Center.



Promotion of the Law on Youth Development

With technical and financial support from UNFPA, the Government of Mongolia developed and approved its first-ever Youth Development Law in 2017 laying the foundation for a more robust youth development system in Mongolia. The law aims to establish a legal framework that supports youth development by regulating relations around the definition of youth participation in social development and associated rights and duties.



Furthermore, with the support of UNFPA and the Ministry of Labour and Social Protection, a series of videos on the implementation of the Youth Development Law have been developed in 2021.

“Монгол Улс ба НҮБ” гар зургийн болон зохион бичлэгийн уралдаан

19 August 2021



Mongolia celebrates 60 years as a UN member

As the United Nations in Mongolia turns 60, UNFPA has announced an essay and drawing competition for adolescents and youth.

Integrated support for women and young people's health in Umnugobi Province

UNFPA high-level mission to Umnugobi Province

UNFPA Mongolia organized a mission to Umnugobi Province to discuss and gain the commitment of the Ministry of Labour and Social Protection (MoLSP) and the Government of Umnugobi Province for the implementation of the next phase of the Integrated Support Programme (ISP). A series of meetings took place in Dalanzadgad with provincial authorities, including the Governor, Mr R.Seddorj, Chairman of the Citizen's Representative, Khural Mr B.Badraa, and Mr Erdene-Bat, CEO of the Gobi Oyu Development Support Fund.



Youth Development Centres



UNFPA opened two Youth Development Centres in two soums of Umnugobi Province as part of the Youth Development Month campaign, bringing the number of centres operating in Umnugobi Province to five. The centres offer young people a safe and fun space to access support groups, activities, regular life skills classes, and counselling.

Youth participation mechanism

The first provincial Youth Council meeting of 2021 took place with the participation of its new members, as part of activities under the ISP. As the Head of the Council, the Umnugobi Governor has restructured the body and invited young representatives from all sectors, including business, education, arts and culture, and young politicians to join.

There are now 17 members, the majority of whom are below the age of 35 years. A video on the youth participation mechanism in Umnugobi Province was presented at the National Youth Development Forum on 25 August.

Handing over the last batch of medical equipment to Health department and the Regional Diagnosis and Treatment Center



Under the ISP, significant investments have been made in medical equipment to improve the quality of service delivery at provincial and soum level health centres in Umnugobi Province. Equipment, including medical beds, drying ovens, laboratory refrigerators, autoclaves, haematology analyzers, and coagulation analyzers totaling 330 MNT (approximately \$115k) has been handed over to the Regional Diagnoses and Treatment Centre and relevant soum health centres.

Youth Month Campaign launched

The Youth Month Campaign was successfully launched in at the Yol Theatre in Umnugobi by Dr Bayarjargal, Deputy Governor. Musical performances from the event were broadcast live nationwide, reaching more than 13,000 viewers. The campaign highlights the importance of youth participation at all levels of planning and decision-making. The campaign is being implemented under the ISP.



MEET THE STAFF OF UNFPA MONGOLIA



UNFPA Mongolia is able to carry out its mandate thanks to the tireless dedication and hard work of its staff. In this section, we feature the wonderful people that make up UNFPA Mongolia, and the vision they bring to the country office.

In this issue, we meet **Kaori Ishikawa**, former Head of Office at UNFPA Mongolia. Kaori Ishikawa joined UNFPA Mongolia in 2018. Since then, she has played a critical role in expanding UNFPA's scope of activities in Mongolia, amplifying voices against GBV, supporting SRHR protection, and supporting youth empowerment efforts in Mongolia.

The UNFPA Mongolia CO team would like to thank Kaori Ishikawa for her service and wish her success in all her future endeavors.

How would you describe UNFPA Mongolia in 3 words?

Inspiring, dynamic, and innovative.

In your opinion, why is UNFPA's existence important?

Mongolia has made significant achievement in advancing ICPD, particularly reduction of maternal deaths in the last 20 years. There are still a number of unfinished business such as GBV, youth empowerment and adolescent SRHR. Due to on-going COVID-19 pandemic, Mongolia is also facing new challenges to keep up with success made in the area of maternal health. UNFPA has built up good reputation in the country and is a trusted partner of the government, parliament and civil society organizations. Recently, UNFPA is also expanding its partnerships with private sectors. UNFPA is an organization which can make a difference in the lives of women, girls and young people. This is why, UNFPA's existence in Mongolia is important.

What made you join UNFPA ?

Coming from Japan, where there are strong gender norms and roles, promotion of gender equality was very close to my heart. UNFPA's work to promote sexual and reproductive health and rights is a concrete way to promote gender equality. And promotion of gender equality and women's empowerment is a key ingredient for achieving sexual and reproductive health and rights. As a mother and woman, I wanted to contribute UNFPA's mandate to stop women dying from giving lives. UNFPA's mandate is close to our lives and touches upon intimate part of our lives. This is why, I enjoy working with UNFPA.

Can you share with us a great memory you have from your time at UNFPA Mongolia?

...As a mother and woman, I wanted to contribute UNFPA's mandate to stop women dying from giving lives...

I have many great memories with UNFPA Mongolia. Staff is so engaged and committed and full of new ideas. I had the great honour to conduct field missions to all around Mongolia to monitor initiatives undertaken by UNFPA Mongolia during the current programme and previously. It was wonderful to see that some of initiatives started by my senior colleagues (former reps) are still running with local funding and initiatives. As you know, Mongolia is a vast country, therefore it sometimes took 2 to 3 days for us to get to the destination. Seeing the views, talking to beneficiaries and catching up with colleagues in the car and learning about Mongolian culture remains as special memory for me.



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

**Ministry of Health daily report on COVID-19
in Mongolia:**

[https://covid19.mohs.mn/p/cat/post/57/?page=2.](https://covid19.mohs.mn/p/cat/post/57/?page=2)

The State Emergency Committee's decisions:

[https://nema.gov.mn/c/resolution.](https://nema.gov.mn/c/resolution)

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