

FEATURED

ISP IN UMNUGOBI



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COVID-19 SITUATION



During the reporting period, the number of COVID-19 confirmed cases increased from 213,820 on 1 September to 360,317 as of 31 October 2021. The number of COVID-19 deaths also rose from 944 on September 1 to 1,745 by October 31. The arrival of the more contagious Delta variant during this period saw a sharp increase with almost 90% of cases detected.

By the end of October, the government-led vaccination drive and safety protocols in place saw the number of new confirmed cases decrease by 20%. However, the number of death did not decline. This means that Mongolia still has a high level of infection driven by community transmission. Since the Ministry of Health only reports cases confirmed by PCR tests, the total cases of COVID-19 tend to be under-reported with the exclusion of cases detected by the rapid tests under family group practitioners.

Between July to August, the case fatality rate increased from 0.06% to 0.4% as of October 25, 2021. The augmentation of chronic diseases caused 77.3% of deaths by the COVID-19 infection, and 22.7% are caused by COVID-19 complications, and around 13.6 % of all hospitalized cases are patients in severe to critical conditions.

As of October 22, 2021, 7,801 cases (2.2% of all confirmed cases) of coronavirus infection were reported among health care workers, and 63.9 % of them were infected in hospital settings while performing the duties.

COVID-19 SITUATION

Maternal mortality due to COVID 19: As of October 31, 42 maternal deaths were reported nationwide due to the coronavirus infection. The vaccination coverage among pregnant women increased 15 % to 26% as of October 25, 2021. This reiterates UNFPA's strategic role in advocacy and support to ensure continuity of essential life-saving SRHR and maternal-child health services during the COVID-19 pandemic.

Immunization status: As of 31 October 2021, the coverage of 1st dose was 95.6% (2,254,553), 2nd dose – 90.7% (2,137,756) in the target population. Overall vaccination coverage with full dosage reached 65.7%, and 465,213 people vaccinated 3rd dose of AstraZeneca and Pfizer vaccine in Ulaanbaatar city and 21 provinces. As a part of the COVAX initiative, Mongolia's Government received additional vaccine donations from the USA, specifically 899,730 Pfizer vaccines.

GOVERNMENT RESPONSE ACTIONS:

- The pandemic alert Level II extended nationwide until December 31, 2021, and restrictions for public services including demonstrations, competitions, gatherings; weddings, funeral meals, receptions; exhibitions, video game centers, training centers, art, and culture; cinema and theatre; recreational centers e.g., religious ceremonies, temples, shrines, churches; all sports training activities except Olympic and international competition preparation (10+ people indoors) are valid until October 31, 2021.
- **School and kindergarten:** With the start of the new academic year, the government introduced the temporary regulations: The 2021-2022 academic year was organized according to a 5/9 regimen (5 days physical and nine days virtual). The government is implementing active surveillance among children, and random 5- 10 individual children will be picked for each grade testing. Rapid response team with three members working in each school and kindergartens. The regulation states that if any infection is confirmed in a classroom, the entire class will attend virtual lessons for two weeks. For classes with children aged 4-5, classroom attendance will be capped at 20 (plus or minus 5).
- **PCR testing and syndromic approach:** Within the government response, the Ministry of Health introduced new regulations on PCR testing and syndromic management approach.
- PCR testing is not required for the people who have contact with the person confirmed and has symptoms and positive COVID-19 Ag test, start medication straight away. FGP is responsible for monitoring those patients with mild symptoms and provides the COVID-19 treatment package.
- The hospital bed shortage is a challenge, and more than 30 percent of infected people are hospitalized in Mongolia, and worldwide, it is about 2 percent. Therefore, to ensure the efficient utilization of hospital beds and reduce the high mortalities, the Ministry of Health introduced a new guideline on hospital bed coordination jointly with the UB health department.
- The shortage of essential medicine and supply is also getting challenged and the government is taking urgent action to bring the necessary medication and medical equipment through MIAT operating flights. A total of 40,617 kg of essential medicines and medical devices were brought on a MIAT flight OM 7304 in route Seoul-Ulaanbaatar by the end of October 2021.
- The Ministry of Health recommends universal indoor making.

UNFPA RESPONSE:

- **Public awareness:** As part of the UNFPA response to government needs, COVID-19 communication products were translated into the local language were printed out and disseminated nationwide.
- The UNFPA COVID-19 Response project funded by Luxembourg has been approved and will start in November 2021 and be implemented for a seven-month period.

COMBATING GENDER-BASED VIOLENCE PROGRAMME

Leave No One Behind initiative

UNFPA took part in the UN-wide Leave No One Behind initiative led by UN RCO. In line with UN Mongolia's Common Country Analysis that informed the formulation of the UN's new Sustainable Development Cooperation Framework. UNFPA conducted interviews and focus group discussions with key stakeholders, specifically GBV survivors, including those with intersectional vulnerabilities (migrants, ethnic minorities, PWDs, etc.) and GBV service providers - to identify unmet needs to inform tailored response services and interventions.

UNFPA Leadership in Thematic Areas

The UNDAF Evaluation team held meetings with Outcome 3 and UN Gender Thematic Group in September. UNFPA, as the lead agency in these areas, played an active leadership role in these meetings and provided comprehensive inputs in the work of collective work of the UN System in Mongolia

UNFPA had a chance to be interviewed by the EU Country Gender Assessment Expert and provided comprehensive information regarding the UNFPA Work in the area of gender and GBV.

Behavioral Communication Change (BCC) Model

As part of the Combatting Gender-Based Violence Programme, a Behavioral Communication Change (BCC) Model is planned to be developed and piloted in Mongolia during 2021-2022. It is expected to be replicated in 4 more sites during 2023. UNFPA Country Office selected the consortium of NGOs which will develop the model: People In Need Mongolia, MONFEMNET, and Men and Healthy Family NGO. This model aims to hasten the long process of changing social norms and mindsets at the community level to prevent gender-based violence in the future. The model will have three major components:

1. **School-based interventions** focus on educating the youth on gender equality, women's empowerment, and GBV prevention from an early age to ensure more equitable social norms in the future
2. **Community-based interventions** focus on engaging communities to change social norms toward GBV prevention.
3. **Media-based interventions** focus on raising awareness and sensitizing the general public on GBV issues and reinforcing the gender-equitable messages being received by the selected communities in other activities.

Gender Equality and Women's Empowerment Forum



UNFPA's Gender Equality and Women Empowerment Programme team actively supported and participated in UNESCO's Gender Equality and Women's Empowerment Forum in October. The team attended the workshop and the achievements of the UNFPA GBV prevention and response area support were presented by its implementing partners. UNFPA also participated as a panelist in relation to the involvement of international organizations and development partners in combating gender-based violence in Mongolia.

UNFPA's Ms. Oyun Banzragch, Gender Equality and Women Empowerment Programme Specialist in Mongolia, recalled that "fighting against violence requires multifaceted, comprehensive and sustainable long term efforts", and that many struggles still remain as it is a social change process, even after decades of collaboration between UNFPA and the Government of Mongolia. She mentioned, in particular, the challenges around public awareness on gender issues, GBV and its root causes, the difficulty for sustainable funding and commitment, and the application of Leaving No One Behind Principles.

She also asked all stakeholders, government institutions, private sector, CSOs, and international organizations to work truly together, to build on each other's strengths and expertise to provide the multi-sectoral response that the fight against GBV requires.

SEXUAL AND REPRODUCTIVE HEALTH AND RIGHTS

Competency-based Family Planning Training in Eastern Provinces in response to unmet need for Family planning



With the technical and financial support of UNFPA, the Ministry of Health conducted competency-based Family Planning training in Eastern provinces, Khentii, Dornod and Sukhbaatar, from 5 to 10 September 2021. The training module was designed for midwives working at primary health care with emphasis on hands-on skill-transfer on the provision of long-acting reversible contraceptives such as intrauterine devices and contraceptive implants.

The training was organized within the midwifery reform supported by the UNFPA and contributed to the implementation of the revised job description of midwives, and the introduction of midwifery-led clinical practices in the country. According to the new job description, midwives can provide most SRH services, including family planning services at the primary health care level, if they are empowered, educated, and trained.

Thirty-five midwives were trained on implant and IUD insertion/removal using clinical anatomical and “chicken thigh” models. The pre and post-test results showed that the knowledge of participants increased from 63% to 87%.

Follow-up actions: The training protocol will be institutionalized at the National Center for Maternal and Child Health as a component of continuous medical education of service providers, including obstetricians/gynecologists and midwives, as part of capacity building on midwife-led service nationwide.

Update on the UNJP “Extending Social Protection of Herders with Enhanced Shock Responsiveness” in Zavkhan province



UNFPA Country Office conducted a mission to Zavkhan province to monitor the status of startup businesses of herders under the UN Joint Project “Extending Social Protection of Herders with Enhanced Shock Responsiveness”. During the mission trilateral contracts between local government, herders’ entity, and the Development Solutions, NGO and implementing partner of UNFPA, were signed.

Twelve out of four herder entities supported by the project have shown visible results of their startups. For instance, in the past 3 months, the productivity of wool, felt and animal skin processing has increased by at least 60% in Durvuljin, Tes, Otgon, and Ider soums compared to the traditional methods that have been used by these herders before the project. Local authorities expressed their commitment to support the startups for sustainability and making their products local brand goods.

UNFPA is committed to working together with the local government and Development Solutions NGO to enhance their production capacity with the support of the Ministry of Labour and Social Protection by providing experience-sharing opportunities and technology training based on the needs identified during the field visit. The MLSP is also keen to learn more about the startup incubation approach applied by UNFPA with support of Development Solutions NGO.



Keeping pregnancy safe during COVID-19



The video, which is also supported by Australia DFAT, emphasizes explains that essential services need to be provided by skilled health workers, even during the pandemic. It also explains that antenatal care can be provided in alternative ways such as over the phone. The video has been posted at UNFPA website and will be broadcasted through media with the support of UNICEF.

The 4th Annual Conference “Supporting the National Programme of Maternal, child and Reproductive Health”



On 29 October, the 4th Annual Conference on Sexual Reproductive Health was convened with a special focus on the theme “Supporting the National Action Plan for Maternal, Child and Reproductive Health”. The conference was attended by more than 170 virtual and “in-person” participants from UB and 21 provinces. It was successfully organized by the Ministry of Health and the Mongolian Federation of Obstetricians and Gynecologists with UNFPA funding support. Mr. M.Battuvshin, Deputy Minister for Health, and other health authorities attended the conference and lead the discussions. Ms. L. Oyunaa, Assistant Representative, in the opening remarks emphasized the development of the next National Action Plan on MCRH will become an important guide to UNFPA’s 7th Country Programme which will be starting in 2023.

During the conference, the participants have discussed the findings of the evaluation of the previous Country Programme, and the way forwards considering the COVID-19 impact on maternal, child, and reproductive health of women and adolescents.

This is the fourth year that UNFPA is supporting the Ministry of Health organize the annual conference in the area of Maternal and Reproductive health at the national level.

Social media cards on pregnancy and COVID-19

With funding from Australia DFAT, UNFPA has developed a series of posters with clear messages targeting pregnant women and their families and also health workers with messages on COVID-19 and pregnancy. Moreover, the recommendations for pregnant women to receive COVID-19 vaccines, in accordance with national guidelines, have been added. The posters have been distributed to more than 190 Ulaanbaatar city health facilities including 9 Ulaanbaatar district health centers and 160 family health centers in sub-districts. The provincial health departments of all 21 provinces have also received them through post offices for further distribution to provincial health facilities.



Reproductive Rights are Human Rights, a handbook for National Human Rights Institutions



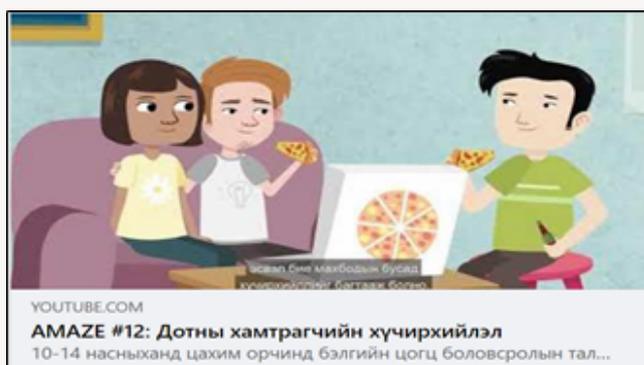
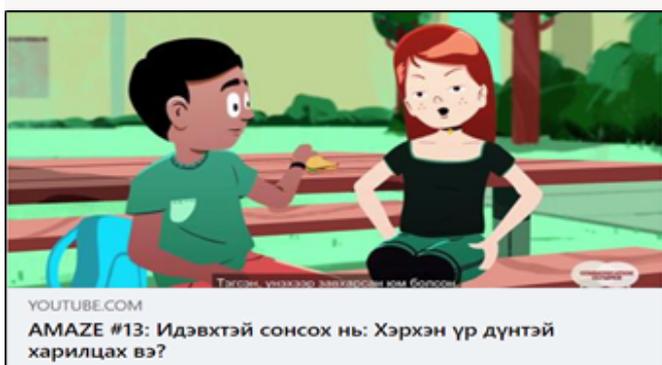
With respect to human rights and gender equality, UNFPA promotes the rights of people to access sexual and reproductive health services as well as the strengthening of national protection systems for advancing reproductive rights, promoting gender equality, and non-discrimination. UNFPA is working in the context of its strategic plan to develop the capacities of National Human Rights Institutions to monitor and protect reproductive rights.

The National Human Rights Commission of Mongolia, with UNFPA funding support, has adapted the handbook, a joint publication of UNFPA, OHCHR, and the Danish Institute for Human Rights, and disseminated it nationwide through its local branches followed by a series of capacity building training for the legal and health officers.

ADOLESCENTS & YOUTH PROGRAMME

AMAZE videos for adolescents

UNFPA is developing 22 factual and age-appropriate AMAZE videos for adolescents, in close collaboration with Together with the Advocates for Youth NGO. Previously developed videos for children and adolescents have been promoted extensively through social media platforms of UNFPA and partners. The AMAZE videos are available on the Ministry of Education's e-learning platform www.medle.mn.



Joint mission

Jointly with the Ministry of Labour and Social Protection, UNFPA conducted the mission to eastern provinces (Dornod, Sukhbaatar and Khentii) and assessed the Youth Development Center operationalization and benefits as per the guidelines and standards. Moreover, the mission team analyzed the financing landscape of the youth programs at a local level, organized consultations with local stakeholders, and developed local-level solutions to create integrated financing solutions for youth development priorities.

Promotion of the Law on Youth Development

For the first time in Mongolia's history, a Law on Youth Development was passed by Parliament in 2017. This historic milestone was through UNFPA's Youth Development Programme implemented by the Government of Mongolia and UNFPA, with funding from the Swiss Agency for Development and Cooperation, the Government of Luxembourg, UNFPA, and Oyu Tolgoi. Furthermore, jointly with the Ministry of Labour and Social Protection, UNFPA developed video series on promoting a safe development and living environment for young people, youth education, culture, arts, sports, and science, protecting young people's health in accordance with the Youth Development Law. The videos were widely disseminated during the commemoration of Student Month in September 2021.

International Day of the Girl 2021

Mandukhai project was highlighted in the statement delivered by UNFPA Executive Director on the International Day of the Girl.

*We must not tolerate a digital world that reinforces inequality. Instead, let's use these tools to close the gender power gap for girls. We can do this through projects like **Mandukhai**, a new chatbot developed by UNFPA to reach Mongolian adolescents with accurate sexual and reproductive health information. Let's apply these technologies to help girls achieve their rights and secure their bodily autonomy. This is what happened when a young woman in India used the information provided by a UNFPA-supported mobile 'edutainment' service to save a friend from child marriage. Girls aren't just using these tools; they are creating them. Let's support them. UNFPA has teamed up with private sector partners in a number of countries to provide the mentorship and resources girls need to design innovative digital solutions for a more equal future.*

UNFPA Executive Director Dr. Natalia Kanem

"Private talk" articles on the importance of sexuality education

The Youth team produced a series of "Private talk" articles to promote the importance of sexuality education and sexual reproductive health information. It reached more than 20,000 adolescents and young people through different media channels. The publication of articles was followed by an essay writing competition in which young people aged 13 to 19 were encouraged to share their stories about the challenges they or their peers face regarding sexual reproductive health information and their views about the possible ways to address their specific SRHR issues.



60th-anniversary of Mongolia's membership in the UN



The UNFPA Country Office announced the essay and drawing competitions among adolescents and youth to commemorate the 60th anniversary of Mongolia's membership in the UN. Over 200 submissions were received, and on 26 October, the winners received the awards at the MOFA from the UN Resident Coordinator Mr. Tapan Mishra, Mrs. D. Gerelmaa, Director of Multilateral Cooperation, MOFA, and Dr. L.Oyunaa, Assistant Representative of UNFPA Mongolia.



Launching the Mandukhai project in Umnugobi province

The UNSCDF Common Country Assessment reiterated the lack of access to family planning is a real challenge for young people aged 15-24 years in rural areas, especially within the Mongolian nomadic lifestyle, as shows the increase in the unmet need for family planning. With mobile phones and social media being widespread in the country, even within nomadic populations, an artificial intelligence-based virtual family planning coach, Mandukhai, was developed by UNFPA to provide up-to-date information on family planning and referral services to semi-nomadic Generation Z members. As a result, nomadic adolescents are supported 24/7 by virtual coaches to make informed decisions on family planning, access free contraceptives, and prevent unwanted pregnancies, unsafe abortions, and STIs.

On the International Day of the Girl 2021, UNFPA celebrated girls of the digital generation, calling for their empowerment in digital spaces alongside combating inequalities and widening power gaps they face as we navigate a changing world. Jointly with Unitel company, UNFPA launched the Mandukhai chatbot in Umnugobi province on 11 October, International Day of Girl. Over 137,000 adolescents were reached through Mandukhai since its launch.



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

Technical Working Group meeting

The Technical Working Group meeting of the Integrated Support Programme for women and young people's health in Umnugobi was successfully convened in Ulaanbaatar. The meeting validated and disseminated the findings of the end evaluation of the ISP for women and young people's health in Umnugobi province were presented and discussed for validation by national, local stakeholders and partners.



The meeting participants also consulted on the logical framework of the second phase of the ISP programme and agreed on the next steps forward. This evaluation is critical evidence to the UNSDCF CCA and new Country Programme design,

Peer educators in Umnugobi province expand reach



The Umnugobi Family, Children and Youth Development Department conducted Y-Peer training of trainers in Gurvantes soum of Umnugobi province, and as a result of the training of trainers, 50 youth became peer educator trainers. With Adolescent Cabinet, Y-Peers will conduct peer-to-peer outreach and education on SRH, including family planning, STI/HIV prevention, reproductive rights, and communication skills.



Y-Peer training was conducted for 100 Polytechnic college students in Gurvantes and Sevrei soum of Umnugobi province and provided information about peer-to-peer outreach, counseling, and health education activities. The Youth Development Center and the Adolescent Cabinet jointly promote the peer education approach as they work together to support young people in the soum.

Youth Development Centers in Umnugobi province

UNFPA has launched the Youth Development Center in Gurvantes soum of Umnugobi province as part of the Youth Development Month campaign. As a result, 6 Youth Development Centers operate in Umnugobi province. The Youth Development Centers offer young people a safe and fun space to access support groups, youth participation activities, regular life skills classes, and counselling.

Leveraging High-level discussions to solidify strategic engagement for greater impact

In October, UNFPA Mongolia Assistant Representative Dr. L.Oyunaa met with Mr. Dave Preston, First Secretary of the Australian Embassy in Mongolia to discuss the main achievements of the Integrated Support Programme, lessons learned, and strengthening of coordination to facilitate greater impact of the joint collaboration. During the discussion, First Secretary expressed Australia's commitment to supporting the second phase of the Integrated Support Programme through capacity development, international expertise, and volunteerism.

Strengthening the capacity of Youth Development Centers staff

An "Experience-Sharing Workshop" on YDC activities was organized in collaboration with the Family, Children and Youth Development Department which brought together 10 YDC staff from Khanbogd, Tsogttsetsii, Nomgon, Bulgan, and Gurvantes soum of Umnugobi at Dalanzadgad soum. The workshop provided an opportunity for participants to share their experiences and best practices, discuss challenges and identify solutions.



Capacity building activities Multidisciplinary teams

A one-day training for staff of One Stop Shop Center and social workers of Multidisciplinary teams of soums on the implementation of the Essential Services Package for Women and Girls subject to violence, preventing and responding to GBV survivors, and providing health services to survivors of DV case management, referral services were held in Dalanzadgad, Umnugobi province. The training aimed to equip social workers with the necessary knowledge and skills to provide physiological support to victims of violence.



Youth month campaign in Umnugobi province

UNFPA launched a month-long "Youth Month campaign" and continued for a month, with the support of ISP, jointly with Umnugobi Governor's Office. The campaign consisted of a series of activities, intending to urge the local government and other partners to increase their investments in health, especially sexual and reproductive health, sexuality education, development, meaningful participation, and protection from the violence for young people in Umnugobi province.

"Healthy consumption – Healthy Herder" initiative



Within the implementation of the Integrated Support Programme, jointly with local government, UNFPA is implementing the "Healthy consumption – Healthy Herder" initiative in selected soums of Umnugobi province. As a result, three young herder families from Bulgan, Sevrei, and Khanhongor soums have voluntarily joined the initiative to change their consumption to eliminate plastic rods, choose eco-friendly and adopt healthy habits.

MEET THE STAFF OF UNFPA MONGOLIA



How would you describe UNFPA Mongolia in 3 words?

For Mongolian people.

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

UNFPA is an organization for the people. Whether there are 30, 3 million or 300 million people, everyone must be reached. Therefore, as long as there are people, this organization must exist. As long as there are issues of family planning, reproductive health, gender equality, population dynamics, UNFPA must operate in these areas. It doesn't matter what the size of the population is, UNFPA Mongolia's existence benefits the Mongolian people. Whether UNFPA Mongolia helps 3 people or 30 families, addresses 3 reproductive rights issues, prevents 3 gender based violence cases, it must continue to perform its duties.

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 interviewed Sh. Bayartsogt, senior driver at UNFPA Mongolia. With 25 years of continuous service at UNFPA Mongolia, Sh. Bayartsogt lived and witnessed the history of the organization. As senior driver at UNFPA Mongolia, he has travelled to all corners of Mongolia on field missions, safely transporting his colleagues to their destinations across the most treacherous and often dangerous roads in order to reach those most left behind and isolated, to amplify voices against GBV, support SRHR protection, and support youth empowerment efforts in Mongolia. He is admired by colleagues for his wide array of knowledge and the many and wonderful stories he shares during the long journeys of field missions.

MEET THE STAFF OF UNFPA MONGOLIA



There is no greater privilege to serve under the blue banner, which is the only one in the world.

What made you join UNFPA?

This was a very unexpected choice. Of course, some twenty years ago, (UNFPA) was the peak and the most prestigious organization. The UN is an amazing organization that is vastly huge, has the best environment and the most meaningful mandate. There is no greater privilege to serve under the blue banner, which is the only one in the world. A very fortuitous circumstance happened. In addition, it was also of great importance that I honor that this opportunity. During this time, I have served unreservedly and to the best of my abilities.

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

The most beautiful time was perhaps the beginning; the time when I didn't know anything and serving the very first UNFPA Mongolia representative. The greatest part of my job for me is each and every day; to lock the car and head home knowing that you have completed a good work day. This is the greatest part of my job. To say to yourself, "It was a good day today," and to hurry to work in the morning, and hurry back home in the evening is the best.

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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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