

UNFPA MONGOLIA

Situation Report #5 on COVID-19 response



SITUATION OVERVIEW

On 11 November 2020, Mongolia reported its first case of local transmission of COVID-19. As of November 15 2020, the country had reported a cumulative number of 428 cases since the beginning of the outbreak in January 2020. The State Emergency Commission (SEC) has identified three clusters: in the capital city of Ulaanbaatar (UB) originating from a truck driver; at the National Center for Communicable Diseases (NCCD) (one case); and among health personnel at COVID-19 quarantine facilities. The confirmed positive cases among health workers is of concern because it may lead to a shortage of health personnel and the disruption of health services.

Repatriates, who are isolated upon arrival to Mongolia, continue to be tested and quarantined and treated at the NCCD if tests return positive.

Due to the lockdown of UB city, many citizens have raised concerns about the food supply and economic shocks. The demand for meat significantly increased when the lockdown began. The government has been reassuring the public about the adequacy of resources and supplies, but when the distribution of reserve meat – which is usually cheaper than fresh meat – started on 15 November, infection, prevention and control (IPC) measures, including physical distancing, were not observed due to long queues.

The number of domestic violence calls decreased when the lockdown started, which may be in part due to the ban on alcohol sales.

SITUATION IN NUMBERS

 **428** confirmed COVID-19 cases

 **142** females infected

 **286** males infected

 **328** recovered cases

 **95** patients being treated

5 patients returned to their home country

73 patients with light symptoms

20 patients with moderate symptoms

2 patients in critical condition

0 deaths

FUNDING OVERVIEW

Funds required: \$2,015,777.5

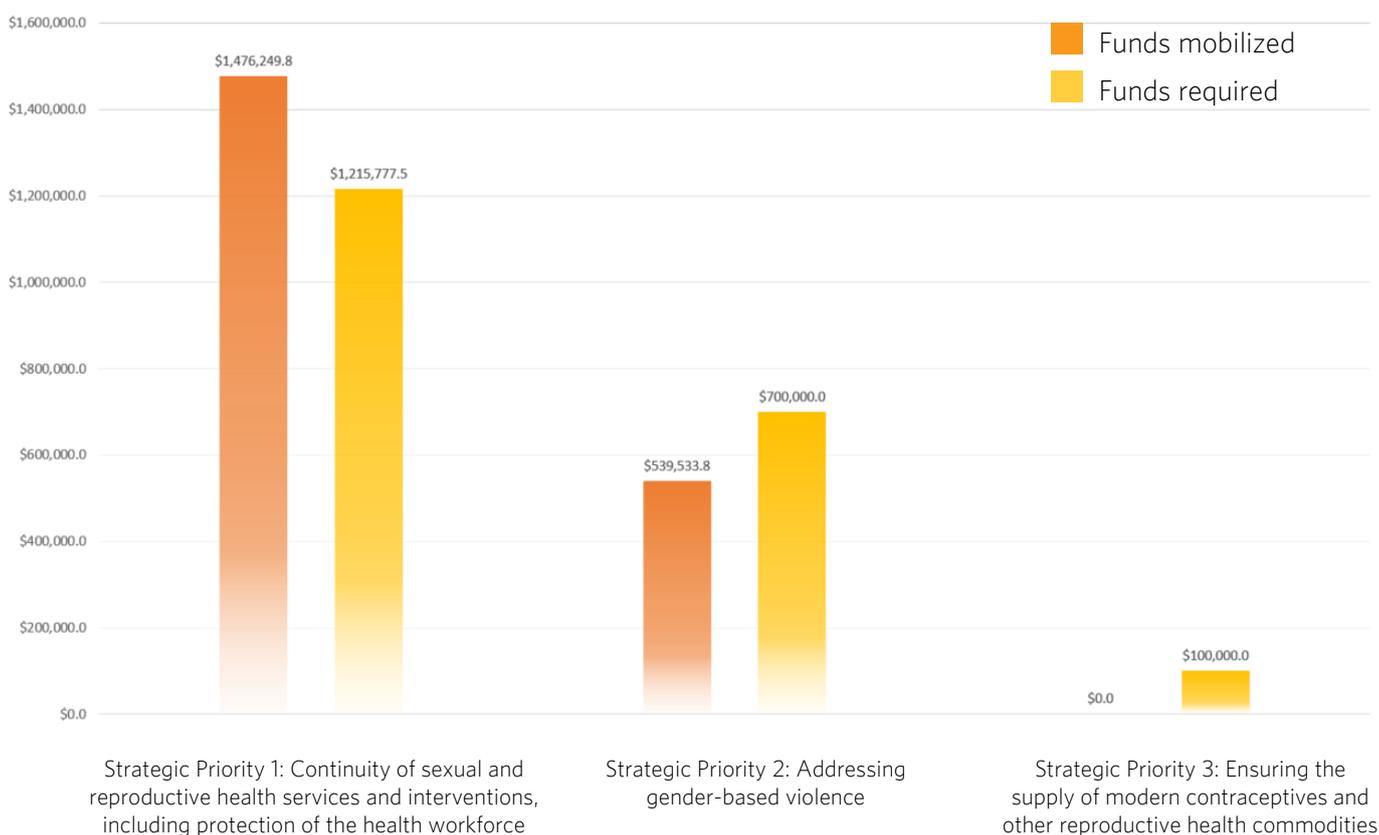
Funds mobilized: \$2,015,777.5

Funding gap: \$0

UNFPA Mongolia Country Office’s (CO) estimated funds required for the COVID-19 response for 2020 total \$2,015,777.5. To date, the CO has successfully mobilized \$2,015,777,5 from core and non-core resources. Funds from non-core resources include funding from the Luxembourg Cooperation (\$392,547.47), Rio Tinto LLC (\$602,000), the Government of Japan (as part of the agreement between UNFPA and UNICEF: \$80,000), the UN Multi-Partner Trust Fund (\$100,000), the Swiss Development Cooperation (\$100,000), UNFPA regular resources (\$60,000), and UNESCO (10,000) for the adaptation of the AMAZE videos in Mongolia. Reprogrammed funding for the COVID-19 response include UNFPA regular resources (\$92,231.29); the private sector (\$79,465); Gobi Oyu Development Support Fund (\$10,000); and the Swiss Development Cooperation (\$499,533.75).

Given the recently reported local transmission of COVID-19, and stringent measures that are being taken by the Government of Mongolia, UNFPA CO recognizes the need to mobilize additional funding to support the continuity of essential services for pregnant women, young people, survivors of gender-based violence (GBV), and the older population. Within the first seven days of the reported community transmission of COVID-19, UNFPA CO received a number of requests from the Government of Mongolia, including the State Emergency Commission (SEC), to provide personal protection equipment (PPE). UNFPA CO is therefore appealing to partners to work together to ensure that maternal deaths do not increase and that the rights of young people and survivors of GBV are protected.

UNFPA Mongolia Country Office funding needs and resource mobilization by priority areas



HUMANITARIAN NEEDS

Students who live in dormitories in UB city, most of whom are from the provinces, are among the vulnerable groups who need food and PPE. The Ministry of Education and Science has undertaken detailed research of students living in university dormitories and has estimated the costs of daily meals. According to Ministry of Education and Science data, there are 48 state-owned and private universities nationwide, with 71 dormitories and 11,359 students. Immediate needs include personal and hygiene items, including sanitary pads, soap, toilet paper, hand sanitizers, and masks. The government has provided financial support to procure food supplies (3,500 MNT per day) for students from the funds saved from the kindergarten meals and school lunches. There are 199 Technical and Vocational Education and Training (TVET) students staying in TVET dorms in UB city, but as yet the government has not provided financial support to these students.

GOVERNMENT, UNITED NATIONS AND STAKEHOLDERS' RESPONSE

The government has taken swift action to respond to the community transmission of COVID-19, including contact tracing, testing, isolation of close contacts, and the imposition of a strict nationwide lockdown.

On 11 November, the government and SEC issued several important resolutions to contain the transmission:

- SEC issued resolution N 12 to temporarily suspend public and personal transportation from UB city; domestic flights and passenger trains were suspended from 2am on 11 November until 11 pm on 13 November. The resolution also requested that the Ministry of Education and Science and the Ministry of Labor and Social Welfare close all education institutions and training centres in UB city from 11 November till 14 November. All public gatherings, training, sports events, competitions, cultural events, cinemas, playgrounds and internet places are also prohibited/closed.
- Government resolution N 172 required the closure of the Altanbulag border entry point with Russia and the cessation of all transportation through the crossing point from 16 November to 18 December.
- Government resolution N 178 activated the All-Out preparedness level, which began at 6am on 12 November and will be in place until 6am on 17 November.
- The Chair of the SEC issued Order N 20 to approve the guideline on response actions to be implemented during the All-Out preparedness level. This is to be followed by SEC members, the National Emergency Management Agency (NEMA), chairs of local emergency commissions, and the management of legal entities.
- The government held an ad-hoc meeting on 14 November where it was decided to provide incentives to employees and officers who are working in the high-risk epicenters of UB city, Selenge and Darkhan-Uul provinces. These include professionals from the health sector, emergency and inspection agencies, and officers from intelligence, police and border protection services. These public servants will be given an amount equal to one month's salary.

In addition, the budget for incentives for 1,362 resident medical doctors working in quarantine settings and 1,450 military cadets patrolling the streets was approved. It was also agreed to provide winter clothes for 520 inspectors from the General Agency of Specialized Inspection (GASI).

On 15 November, the All-Out preparedness level was extended until 6am on 1 December 2020 by government decision N 181.

The SEC holds regular meetings every day and updates the public with the number of confirmed cases and its decisions through selected media channels.

UNFPA PROGRAMME RESPONSE

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

In-depth analysis of maternal mortality and morbidity at the national level, including in western provinces

As a response to a high number of maternal deaths (five mothers died in 2020) in one of the most isolated western provinces of Mongolia (over 1,700 kms from UB City), the UNFPA team conducted a two-day mission in early November 2020. The mission identified the following issues. After examining the potential causes behind these deaths, the mission team identified several factors unique to this province – in addition to common pregnancy complications such as infection and high blood pressure including:

- Cultural factors: Diet and domestic work burdens of women/brides.
- COVID-19 pandemic related factors: Hospital avoidance due to fears around virus transmission and quarantine and a lack of family support for pregnant women to access hospital care.
- Service-related: Poor capacity of the local hospital and family group practitioners to manage high - risk pregnancies during the crisis.
- Access and supply: A lack of contraception and frequent interruption of supplies including life-saving maternal health medicines (oxytocin and magnesium sulphate etc.).
- Domestic violence: This is reported in each of the maternal death cases and requires urgent action from policy and decision-makers.

During the mission the UNFPA team handed over five (5) types of PPE including gowns, goggles, N95 and surgical masks, and hand sanitizer, worth 14.9 million MNT.

On 10 November, the UNFPA CO handed over 1,000 pieces of N95 masks, 3,050 disposable masks, 340 goggles, 320 gowns, and 252 sanitizers to the General Agency of Specialized Inspection (GASI) to protect the health and safety of frontline workers and to ensure the continuity of services. Some 1,000 pieces of N95 masks were also handed over to Selenge and Darkhan-Uul provinces on 9 November and 14 November respectfully.



Supporting youth development and youth engagement

As Mongolia enters the lockdown, classes are now taught through tele-education. To ensure the continuity of learning, the Education and Science Minister released decree No A/151, allocating tele-sessions for all subjects from Grade 1 through to Grade 12. The tele-sessions are broadcast through TV stations; this started on 17 November 2020. The Ministry of Education had already prepared tele-sessions on key subjects prior to 1 September 2020; health education is included in the list of key subjects.

To ensure the continuity of information sharing on sexual and reproductive health (SRH) in the context of COVID-19, UNFPA CO is developing a chat-bot system. The basic dataset development process has been completed, which includes 12,130 responses related to SRH/family planning based on questions collected from adolescents and youth including peer educators; general education school students; dormitory students; marginalized youth and adolescents; youth from herder families; youth from the UN Advisory group; youth visiting Adolescent Cabinets and Youth Development Centres; and school doctors and adolescent social workers.

Support for students, including TVET students, staying at dormitories who are not able to leave to their home provinces will be discussed with the Ministry of Education and Science and the Ministry of Labour and Social Protection shortly.

UNESCO and UNFPA CO have signed an agreement to work on the adaptation of the AMAZE videos in Mongolia. The videos – developed by AMAZE Consortium – contain comprehensive, age-appropriate, and accurate sexual and reproductive health information for adolescents. Through the partnership, access to quality content on comprehensive sexuality e-education for youth aged 10 to 14 in Mongolia will be increased. The videos will be included as an online resource in the e-learning platform for education that UNFPA CO has established as part of the on-going UN Multi-Partner Trust Fund Programme as well as the online Mandukhai family planning counselling for the nomadic adolescent girls project.

Addressing gender-based violence

UNFPA CO is leading the joint annual national 16 days' campaign against violence (25 November to 10 December 2020), which includes a number of advocacy campaigns – adapted for the lockdown context – in collaboration with national authorities, UN agencies, international and national civil society organizations (CSOs), embassies and the private sector. This year's national campaign's theme is No More: End Gender Violence at Home, in the Workplace, and in Public Spaces.

With data in Mongolia and around the world indicating that the COVID-19 pandemic is increasing women and girls' vulnerability to GBV – as well as the challenges in accessing support during lockdown – UNFPA is prioritizing efforts to ensure that survivors can continue to safely access essential and lifesaving services.

Within the first two days of the lockdown, UNFPA officially requested SEC to ensure that One Stop Service Centres (OSSCs) and shelters across Mongolia remain open and operational. The SEC responded quickly issuing guidelines to the local governments of Ulaanbaatar and 10 provinces to allow the work-related movements of staff at OSSC and shelters. UNFPA continues to work with SEC to refine these declarations to ensure that OSSC and shelter staff, as well as multidisciplinary teams, are able to continue providing services to GBV survivors.

In addition, by the third day of the lockdown, UNFPA redistributed the “Guidelines for One Stop Service Centre (OSSC) and Shelter Staff on Safe Service Delivery during COVID-19” as well as the “Guidelines for COVID-19 Front-Liners on GBV Detection and Referral” to government authorities and CSOs nationwide. These guidelines were initially distributed in the summer to 20 provinces and Ulaanbaatar, but have been redistributed in light of the most recent lockdown.



UNFPA also distributed 1,500 masks and 1,700 pieces of sanitizer gel to seven (7) OSSCs (National Trauma and Orthopaedic Research Center; Forensic Hospital; Sukhbaatar District Health Centre; Bayanzurkh District; Khan-Uul District; Chingeltei District; and Sukhbaatar District) and two shelters (National Centre Against Violence and Ulaanbaatar Police Shelter) in Ulaanbaatar.

Ensuring the supply of modern contraceptives and other reproductive health commodities

UNFPA Mongolia CO is closely monitoring the situation and has started to gather data on the continuity of family planning services which will inform CO action.

Coordination

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

FOR MORE INFORMATION, PLEASE CONTACT:

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FOR UPDATES OF COVID-19 IN MONGOLIA, PLEASE VISIT:

The Ministry of Health's Daily reporting
<https://covid19.mohs.mn/p/cat/post/57/?page=2>

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