

UNFPA MONGOLIA

Situation Report #4 on COVID-19 response



SITUATION OVERVIEW

As of October 31, 2020, the country has 346 cases of COVID-19 with 313 treated and recovered, and with 33 patients in the National Center for Communicable Diseases. There are 3,212 people in mandatory quarantine, total number of tests that have been carried out since the outbreak of COVID-19 are 89,325.



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 is \$2,015,777.5. To date, the CO has successfully mobilized a total of \$2,015,777.5 from core and non-core resources for the COVID-19 response and there is no funding gap for 2020. 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), and UNFPA Regular Resources (\$60,000). Reprogrammed funding for the COVID-19 response includes funding from UNFPA Regular Resources (\$92,231.29), from the private sector (\$79,465), from Gobi Oyu Development Support Fund (\$10,000), and from the Swiss Development Cooperation (\$499,533.75).

SITUATION IN NUMBERS

 **346** confirmed COVID-19 cases

 **107** females infected

 **239** males infected

 **313** recovered cases

 **33** patients being treated

GOVERNMENT, UNITED NATIONS AND STAKEHOLDERS' RESPONSE

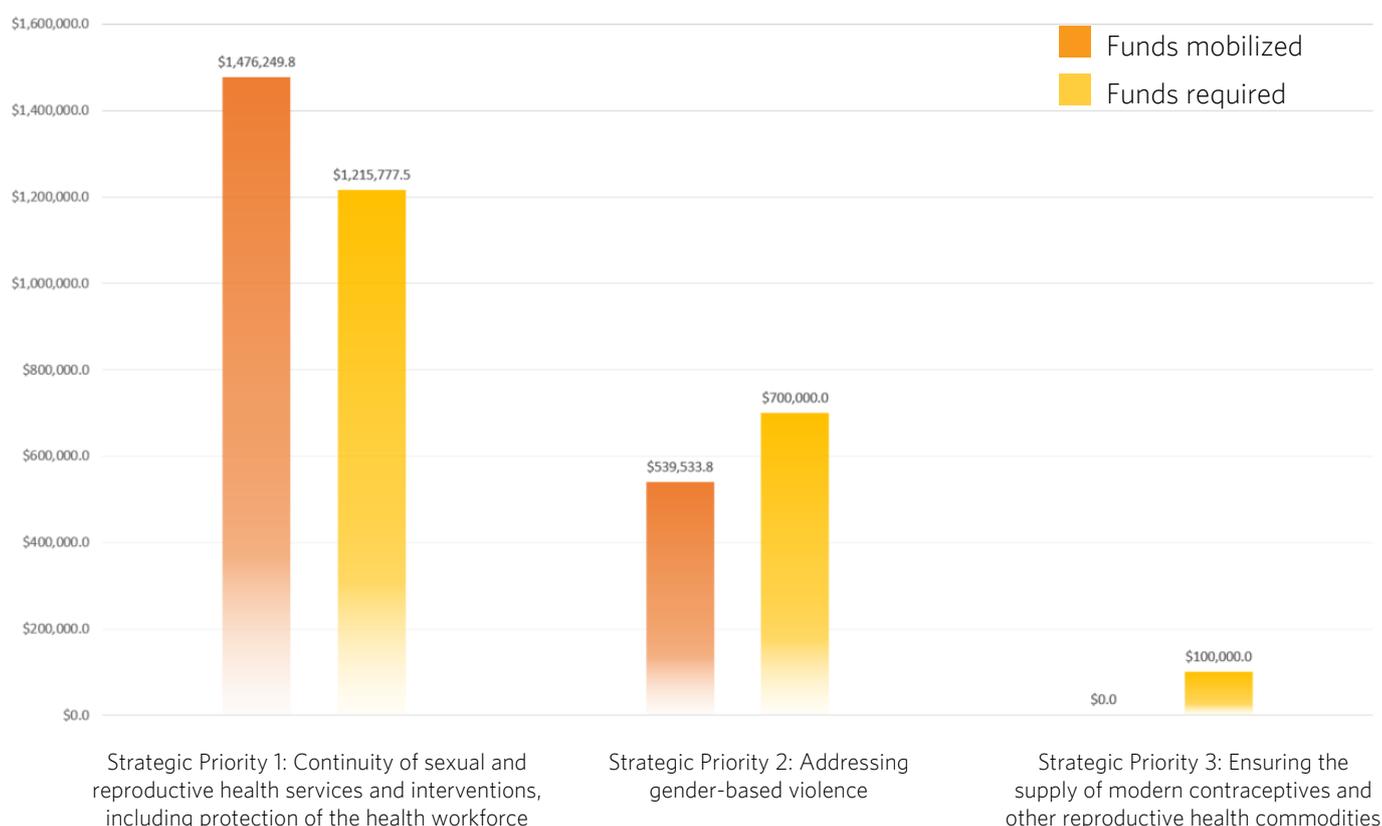
Since 28 January 2020, the Mongolian Government has repatriated 26,335 citizens from 81 countries around the world. Some 19,754 have been flown in by 100 repatriation charter flights and 6,581 have come overland. On 28 October, the Mongolian Government issued the following directives:

- to extend the partial undertaking of high-alert preparedness through December 31, 2020
- to temporarily suspend entry of all passengers through all border checkpoints of Mongolia until December 31, 2020

On 30 October, the Cabinet called for an irregular meeting and decided to close two border checkpoints with the Russian Federation – Borshoo in Uvs province and Tsagaanuur in Bayan-Ulgii province – for 21 days, starting from 2 November. The increasing number of COVID-19 positive cases among freight truck drivers, which has currently reached 30, who arrive through these border checkpoints from the Russian Federation informed this decision. These border checkpoints are used for freight transportation of staple foods, petroleum products and animal fodder.

Parliament has set up a Standing Committee on Innovation and ICT to support the Government Digital transformation initiative as part of the COVID-19 response.

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



UNFPA PROGRAMME RESPONSE

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

Through a partnership with UNICEF, UNFPA is supporting the assessment and capacity building of maternal health services to respond to COVID-19 at:

- provincial health facilities in border areas
- health facilities in Ulaanbaatar (UB), including the National Center for Maternal and Child Health (NCMCH), Khan-Uul and Bayangol District health centers

- major private hospitals that provide maternity services in UB city

The review of “Why did mother die?”, which is investigating 112 maternal deaths that took place between 2016 and the first six months of 2020, is progressing as planned. The review will provide comprehensive insights into the causes of maternal deaths and the potential impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic.



UNFPA Mongolia Country Office team and the representatives of local government and hospitals where new PCR laboratories are being established during the experience sharing visit to the PCR laboratories in Selenge and Darkhan-Uul provinces.

Between 27 to 29 October, the UNFPA CO organized an experience sharing study tour for representatives from local government and health organizations in Dornogobi and Umnugobi provinces and the NCMCH to the PCR laboratories for COVID-19 testing in Selenge and Darkhan-Uul provinces. Participants from the study tour will be in charge of setting up PCR

laboratories in their local setting as part of the Rio Tinto LLC, Oyu Tolgoi LLC and UNFPA Mongolia CO joint project. The visits have provided many valuable and practical lessons and recommendations and left the visitors with a great motivation and confidence that they can set up the PCR laboratories in their hospitals.

On 28 to 29 October, PPE procured through the Luxembourg Cooperation Grant was handed over to the general hospitals in Selenge and Darkhan-Uul provinces.

In Umnugobi province, the medical team from the NCCD, together with local Department of Health officers, conducted the second round of comprehensive supportive monitoring of the sexually transmitted infections (STI) surveillance system. The STI surveillance system includes screening for STIs and gynaecological conditions as part of sexual and reproductive health services.

During the monitoring the NCCD team provided hands-on training for local health workers.



UNFPA Mongolia handed over PPE including face masks, goggles, disposable coveralls and hand sanitizers to the General hospital of Selenge and Darkhan-Uul provinces.

Supporting youth development and youth engagement

Online platforms for Adolescents Cabinets are now available on Facebook and provide counselling around SRH, family planning and mental health in the COVID-19 context. Some 20,168 adolescents and youth have accessed these platforms and received the needed counselling.

The Youth Development Centres (YDC) continue to provide life skills training, counselling, the facilitation of support groups, and organize referral services through online systems.

The Teacher Training Institute, with support from the Ministry of Education and Science, organized training for 23 health education teachers on the development of e-learning platforms for health education. The health education platform includes Comprehensive Sexuality Education (CSE).

UNFPA's support to youth entrepreneurs during the COVID-19 pandemic

UNFPA is supporting the start-up business support project, which aims to help young herder entrepreneurs in herder communities in Khanbogd soum to increase their economic productivity. A few of the stories of the entrepreneurs are shared below.

Khan Khyarguur (Khan Cutter)

Ten young herders from Jargalan bagh in Khanbogd soum have set up a business called "Khan Khyarguur" (Khan Cutter), where they cut local herder's camel wool using both electrical and traditional wool cutting techniques. They are also providing other services to herdsmen including training camels and horses for riding and transportation, and castrating livestock, and intend to demonstrate some of these traditional practices to tourists and visitors who visit their soum.

Organic Yogurt

T.Tsogtbaatar, a local herder from Gaviluud bagh of Khanbogd soum, has been producing dairy products at home since 2010. As a project beneficiary, he has been able to purchase additional machines and tools to expand his production. He has now become one of the most successful entrepreneurs in his soum and sells organic dairy products made of fresh cows' milk through his start-up business "Organic Yogurt" in Khanbogd soum centre.

Needlecraft

S. Ganbat, a herder from Javkhlant bagh of Khanbogd soum, has launched a start-up business called "Needlecraft" – turning his passion for making things into a sustainable commercial venture.

Addressing gender-based violence



UNFPA and UNICEF, with financial support from the Government of Japan, are working to ensure the continuation of essential maternal and child health and gender-based violence (GBV) prevention and response services as part of COVID-19 response efforts.

On 20 October – under the partnership – Dignity Kits, containing basic hygiene and sanitation items, were handed over to One Stop Service Centres (OSSCs) in Bayanzurkh and Khan-Uul Districts and to the National Trauma and Orthopedic Research Center and UB City Police Agency. The OSSCs have reported an increase in GBV since the onset of the pandemic.

On 29 October, the first Steering Committee Meeting of Phase 2 of the “Combating Gender-Based Violence in Mongolia” project took place. Members of the Steering Committee elected Ms. A. Ariunzaya, Minister for Labour and Social Protection, as co-chair along with the UNFPA Head of Office. The project is co-funded by the Swiss Cooperation Office, the Government of Mongolia and UNFPA. Members of the Steering Committee include the Deputy Ministers for Justice and Home Affairs, Education and Science, Health, and management from the National Policy Office, the National Statistics Office, the National Committee on Gender Equality, and the Coordination Council for Crime Prevention. The Steering Committee meeting has approved the Q4, 2020 Work Plan for the second phase of the Combating GBV Project, which includes COVID-19 response interventions.

Project activities for Q4 include:

- support to operate 24/7 helplines for GBV survivors
- managing GBV response in emergencies TOT training for NEMA and OSSC/shelter staff
- the provision of PPE for 6 UB-based OSSC and 2 shelters where the most clients are present,
- the provision of PPE in OSSCs/shelters in 6 border areas

Ensuring the supply of modern contraceptives and other reproductive health commodities

The Mongolia CO has verified with the MOH and the Parliamentary Standing Committee on Social Policy that funding for contraceptives will be included in the budget of primary health centres for 2021. Funding is included in the 2021 budget proposal, which will be reviewed and approved by Parliament by 20 November 2020.

Building partnership to unite in the fight against COVID-19

On 1 October, the Mongolia CO team, together with Rio Tinto LLC, launched a joint project to strengthen diagnostic capacity in the health system and increase access to health services amid the COVID-19 pandemic. The launch event was attended by Members of Parliament, representatives of the Minister for Health, Mr. Worrall, CEO and Country Manager, Rinto Tinto LLC, Mr. Tapan Mishra, UN Resident Coordinator, Head of the UNFPA Mongolia office, representatives from local government and health organizations of Umnugobi province, NCCD, MCMCH, UB City Health Department and Songinokhairkhan district.



Opening of the Building the Capacity for COVID-19 Diagnosis and Service Delivery for the Most Vulnerable in Mongolia amidst Pandemic project on October 1, 2020

Stories from the frontline

COVID-19 testing at the General Hospitals of Selenge and Darkhan-Uul provinces

Testing for COVID-19 among repatriates and long-haul truck drivers who pass through the border check point at Altanbulag, Selenge province, has been taking place at the molecular biology laboratories of the General Hospitals in Selenge and Darkhan-Uul provinces. The molecular biology laboratory often called the PCR laboratory since it uses a real-time PCR machines to detect COVID-19 virus.

The PCR laboratories at these provinces were visited by the study tour participants from Dornogobi and Umnugobi provinces, and the National Center for Maternal and Child Health. The participants of the study tour, who will be responsible for setting up PCR laboratories in their localities, were able to see COVID-19 testing first-hand and hear about some of the lessons learned and good practices on-the-ground.

Dr. B. Elbegzaya, PCR laboratory doctor at the Selenge province's General Hospital, was delighted to share her personal experience of conducting COVID-19 tests. She is young and yet, very confident health professional, who has been working in the laboratory for past few months. She thoroughly guided the visitors through her laboratory and was very strict with following the biosafety regulations in the laboratory. The participants from Dornogobi and Umnugobi provinces were quite impressed with her professionalism and felt inspired by her presentation.



At Darkhan province, the study participants had an opportunity to learn about some of the challenges that the health professionals have faced since the start-up of COVID-19 testing in April 2020 and visit PCR laboratory as well.

Testing at the laboratory is carried out using a real-time PCR machine, with the testing results shared to the community Facebook page of Darkhan-Uul province residents. The initial public reaction, however, was not positive. In fact, even colleagues were very negative, medical doctors and members of the team told study participants. Questions raised on the page included why the PCR laboratory had been set up in the middle of the city (the General Hospital is located in the centre of Darkhan city) with Facebook group members also arguing against repatriates being quarantined in the city. The emergency management team has taken this all in their stride and the small team of health professionals that has been set up at the hospital to respond to misperceptions around COVID-19. The team members regularly monitor the Facebook conversations, quickly responding to address misperceptions. It has also allowed them to gain insights about people's attitudes towards COVID-19 and the response.



Dr. Byamba-Erdene is another young laboratory doctor, in charge of the PCR laboratory at the General Hospital at Darkhan province and oversees all testing. During the study tour, she admitted her job can at times be stressful. "When I run 1,000 tests and they all negative, I get worried. I wonder whether I have run the tests correctly and followed the testing protocols. But then test 1,001 comes up positive and I feel mixed emotions," she says.

Mixed because Dr. Byamba-Erdene knows she is testing the samples effectively, but also that someone has just tested positive for the virus. She had a message of support – and advice – for her colleagues from Umnugobi and Dornogobi provinces: “Don’t be scared, you can do COVID-19 testing in your localities. Just be prepared and be ready. You will be working without much rest, you will be scarcely seeing your family and loved ones. You have to do it and you can do it!”

Coordination

- Participating in interagency coordination mechanisms
- Leading interagency GBV coordination mechanisms
- Co-chairing the UN PSEA network with the RC

EXTERNAL COMMUNICATION AND ADVOCACY

4 PCR laboratory will be established - <https://montsame.mn/mn/read/238211?fbclid=IwAR2O2iXdWpLiWMomMbOfuBuw68NYawUkQhgjXp1-7nT26YolKv5wCVUPPY4>

Project to strengthen COVID-19 preparedness launches - <https://www.montsame.mn/en/read/238257>

Rio Tinto, Oyu Tolgoi granted 1.7 bln MNT to UNFPA for responded against COVID-19 - <http://bloombergtv.mn/covid-19-%D0%B8%D0%B9%D0%BD-%D1%8D%D1%81%D1%80%D1%8D%D0%B3-%D0%B0%D1%80%D0%B3%D0%B0->

Rio Tinto and Oyu Tolgoi grant 1.7 billion MNT for COVID-19 response - <http://www.mongolianminingjournal.com/a/71193>

Project to strengthen the capacity of diagnosis and telemedicine launches - <https://www.facebook.com/montsame.agency/videos/957997821349467/>

Rio Tinto and Oyu Tolgoi grant 1.7 billion MNT for COVID-19 response in Mongolia - <http://www.asiamining.mn/view/449>

Dignity kits handed over to OSSCs - <https://montsame.mn/en/read/240179>

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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>