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Reporting Period: 10 March – 17 April 2020

**Highlights**

- The first COVID-19 case in Mongolia was confirmed on 10 March 2020. Of the 331 suspected Mongolian cases reported between 6 January and 14 April 2020, 31 cases (9.4 per cent), all imported, have been confirmed, of which five have recovered.

The measures taken to prevent an outbreak of the COVID-19 are having serious impacts on children.

- The closure of all education facilities has directly affected more than 900,000 children under the age of 18 in 2,200 schools and kindergartens with limited alternative care arrangements for the most vulnerable children
- Significant secondary impacts of childcare patterns are being observed, such as protection and safety: in March, reports on physical abuse of children increased by 32.9 percent compared to the previous month, and by 46.8% compared to February 2019 reports, while emotional abuse in February 2020 was 57.6 per cent higher compared with February 2019\*
- The people who are under the poverty line are at risk of slipping into poverty, as the number of registered unemployed people rose in the first quarter of 2020.

In support to the national response, UNICEF strategy and interventions focus on (i) Risk Communication and community engagement (RCCE); (ii) capacity strengthening of health facilities and provision of medical consumables and essential equipment; (iii) WASH and Infection Prevention and Control (IPC) ; (iv) Support to the continuity of services ( Health, Nutrition, continuous learning and child protection services including psychosocial support for mental health ) ; (v) continuous monitoring of the socio-economic impact of the COVID-19 to children and their families.

**Funding overview**

The UNICEF Mongolia response plan is 26 per cent funded: out of the US\$ 5,837,400 currently needed, US\$ 1,513,080 had been received by 16 April 2020. The contribution was received from bilateral donors (Government of Japan and United States Agency for International Development), multilateral donors (Asian Development Bank, Global Partnership for Education) and philanthropists.

\* Authority for Family, Child and Youth Development (AFCYD) Child helpline, 2020

**Mongolia**  
Novel Coronavirus  
(COVID-19)

Situation Report  
No. 1



**Mongolia Situation in Numbers**

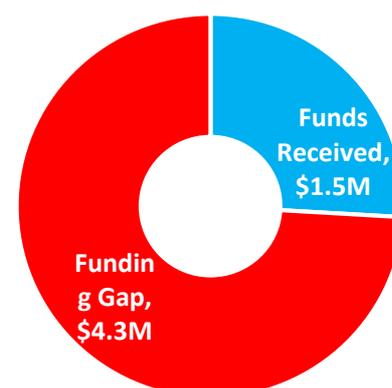
**31**  
Confirmed COVID-19 Cases

**900,000 children**  
Under 18 years in 2,200 schools and kindergartens

**47% increase**  
In domestic violence in Q1 2020 from Q4 2019

**57.6% Increase**  
In emotional violence in Feb 2020 from Feb 2019

**Funding Status (in US\$)**



## Situation Overview and Humanitarian Needs

Mongolia shut its borders with China on 27 January 2020 and closed all schools, kindergartens and public gatherings as preventive measures against the COVID-19 outbreak, which seem to be working so far. The first case of COVID-19 was reported on 10 March and as of 16 April, 31 cases of COVID-19 had been confirmed in Mongolia, all imported. On 14 April, the State Emergency Commission (SEC) announced its decision to further extend the current preventive measures until 1 September 2020. The international borders remain closed and only charter flights repatriating Mongolian citizens who were abroad are allowed to land. Upon arrival, passengers must follow strict protocols, including quarantine for three weeks.

The Government's decision to close all education facilities – including schools, kindergartens, 24-hour kindergartens and school dormitories – has directly affected more than 900,000 children under the age of 18 in 2,200 schools and kindergartens. This has particularly affected the most vulnerable children as there are no alternative care arrangements. Significant secondary impacts on childcare patterns, nutrition, protection and safety are being observed, including effects on household expenses and income because many parents need to stay home to look after their children.

The latest statistics from the Ministry of Labour and Social Protection demonstrate increased numbers of child injuries and home accidents, which remains a major concern. The increase is attributed to children often being left alone at home without supervision when parents go out to work. The new joint report by the National Statistical Office of Mongolia and the World Bank, 'Mongolia Poverty Update', provides the latest analysis on poverty trends and population profiles in Mongolia based on the 2018 Household Socioeconomic Survey. The national poverty rate was 28.4 per cent in 2018. A further 15 per cent of the total population is clustered just above the national poverty line, and at risk of slipping into poverty in the event of any unanticipated shocks. Many of the poor, in particular low-skilled wage workers, are missing out on the benefits of recent capital-intensive mining sector-led growth. In February 2020, compared to the same period in 2019, the number of registered unemployed increased by 31,000 from the previous month.

## Government response

The overall Government response is led by the SEC, ensuring coordination of ministries and Government agencies. On 20 March 2020, a decree was issued by the Deputy Prime Minister, who is the Head of SEC, to approve the COVID-19 preparedness and response strategy and plan. The plan set the following goals:

1. To provide effective response to the COVID-19 epidemic
2. To prevent a COVID-19 pandemic, limit community transmission, prevent social disruption and minimize social and economic impacts
3. To ensure community engagement and responsibility in the COVID-19 pandemic response
4. To develop, revise and amend laws and regulations accordingly.

A number of teams from the Ministry of Health (MoH) have been established to record temperatures at health facilities and airports to ensure early detection and timely preventive measures. The teams collect and share information with the National Security Council and SEC, which directs other ministries to take preventive measures and ensure preparedness.

The Ministry of Education, Culture, Science and Sports (MECSS) decided to ensure education is continued by broadcasting lessons on television for preschool, primary and secondary levels based on their respective curricula. These lessons have been ongoing since 3 February. The issue of child protection was raised with the Ministry of Labour and Social Protection, which triggered a directive to the National Chamber of Commerce to provide flexible working arrangements for parents with young children. MoH has set up quarantine sites and prepared health facilities to manage detected COVID-19 cases. A daily press conference is held by MoH and the World Health Organization to keep the population informed on the situation and measures taken at national level, in the capital city and in the provinces.

To reduce the impact of COVID-19 pandemic, at its regular meeting held on 1 April 2020, the Cabinet discussed a stimulus package to be submitted to Parliament to protect citizens' health and income.

## Summary analysis programme response

Given the requests from Government and in close coordination with the HCT/United Nations country team, UNICEF's immediate response plan focuses on the following areas.

### ***ij) Risk communication and community engagement***

MoH and UNICEF have printed eight types of materials with COVID-19 prevention messages and more practical and targeted information. In total, 115,000 posters and 190,000 leaflets were printed to be distributed nationwide. UNICEF mobilized youth volunteers from the Scout Association to spread prevention messages across the capital city, reaching over 200,000 people. Copies of all the materials were shared with the NGO People in Need, which included them in household kits distributed to 800 vulnerable families in the framework of their interventions. Soft versions of the posters were widely distributed on social media, reaching 500,000 people online. In addition, new UNICEF posters were translated into Kazakh language and shared on social media, thus enabling this minority population group to access the information.

Targeted messages for children in the form of 2D animations are being produced and broadcast via digital and traditional media channels nationwide. On 15 April, a new animation on staying home doing fun activities with the family was released. In half a day, it reached 93,000 people on the UNICEF Facebook page alone.

In order to obtain community feedback and response on risk communication activities, a rapid assessment has been conducted through an Android application. A group of 13 youth volunteers was trained to collect data in six districts of Ulaanbaatar by using the application. This pilot assessment revealed that COVID-19-related information has reached urban residents well. For example, 91 per cent of the respondents had received information on COVID-19 prevention and 82 per cent on symptoms of the disease. Handwashing with soap, hand sanitizing and wearing a mask were mentioned as the most important preventive measures (over 90 per cent). Television and social media were identified as the main channels for information. Printed materials such as posters were also well received. Regular assessments will continue, to allow better understanding of communities' access to information and basic services during the COVID-19 alert and to further improve communication activities.

A UNICEF-supported ChatBot with prevention information, live updates, advice and FAQs as well as self-assessment is available through Facebook Messenger on the UNICEF Mongolia, MoH and National Center for Communicable Disease web pages. Over 5,000 users were engaged through 25,000 messages received and 25,000 sent through the platform. In addition, a rapid survey using the ChatBot on the quality of tele-lessons was conducted 6–9 April and the preliminary data is available.

### ***ii) Provision of critical medical and WASH supplies/services and improving Infection prevention and control (IPC)***

Procurement of personal protective equipment for health workers (N95 masks, gowns) and essential commodities for treatment of COVID-19 patients (stationary ventilators, clinical infrared thermometers, antiviral medicines) is ongoing. UNICEF provided financial support for local procurement of essential hygiene supplies (soaps, hand sanitizers and disinfectants) for health-care facilities, schools and early childhood development centres in 21 provinces and nine districts through the Mongolian Red Cross Society and MECSS. To boost children's immune systems, UNICEF provided essential nutritional supplies including zinc and high-dose vitamin A supplements for 351,000 children aged 6–59 months.

UNICEF supported the IPC self-assessment checklist and guidance note for health, education and child protection facilities. Over 500 health-care workers in UNICEF programme provinces (four geographic focus areas) were trained on IPC, case detection and clinical management of COVID-19, in close coordination with MoH, the World Health Organization and the Asian Development Bank, which supported the same training sessions for rest of the country. The UNICEF country office is now in discussion with partners to support IPC trainings for non-health sector workers who will be mobilized/ deployed in isolation sites in the event of a community outbreak.

UNICEF is supporting the nationwide hygiene campaign in partnership with the National Center for Public Health and NGO partners. Ongoing nationwide handwashing messages (posters, videos, television announcements, etc.) to improve preventive practices among children and the public have reached over 1.8 million people.

UNICEF is also supporting the coordination mechanism on WASH emergency preparedness and response (primarily focusing on Hygiene subgroup members) while leading the HCT WASH cluster's preparedness and response plan for COVID-19. With Asian Development Bank, Government of Japan and United States Agency for International Development support, and in close coordination with the World Health Organization, UNICEF has procured hygiene products and protection equipment for front-line health workers.

### ***iii) Continuity of health and nutrition services***

As per a recently established agreement, UNICEF is providing financial support to the United Nations Population

Fund for a joint effort to adapt and provide training on clinical guidelines for pregnant women and newborns, and to assess and enhance facility preparedness for maternal, newborn and child health services (at both national and provincial levels), as well as to review and monitor maternal and neonatal mortality during the COVID-19 pandemic. In continuation of nutrition services, screening of acute malnutrition is ongoing in UNICEF's geographic focus areas.

#### ***iv) Access to continuous education, social protection, child protection and GBV services***

##### **Education**

Tele-lessons were supported to ensure all children have access to continuous learning during school closures, including 19,000 children from ethnic minorities. An assessment of the impact of school/ kindergarten closures on learning, including assessment of online/distance education services, is now ongoing. This assessment will help the Government generate evidence on the effectiveness of tele-lessons as a distance learning modality, document lessons learned from the current practice and draw recommendations for further improvement of distance learning in case of a similar situation in the future.

UNICEF Mongolia supported the Government (MECSS) in updating the Safe School Operation Guidance for the re-opening of 820 schools/kindergartens. This guidance was developed in collaboration with UNICEF headquarters/regional office. Draft versions of both the contingency plan and the school guidance are currently under review.

##### **Child protection**

Weekly monitoring of the situation of children and families during school and kindergarten closure is ongoing, covering the following areas: child mortality, incidence of flu, children's injuries/accidents, rates of crimes that involve children (children as victims or offenders), trends of domestic violence, trends of calls to the child helpline, the number of children on the move due to school closures, and flexi work arrangements/options for employees in both the public and private sectors. Key findings from the latest weekly reports show that there is significant cause for concern regarding the increase in cases of domestic violence where a child is either a victim or a witness.

To address the risk that children are left unattended at home, UNICEF has advocated for application of flexible working arrangements for working parents with young children. 'Guidance for employers on flexible work arrangements and good workplace practices in the context of COVID-19' has been contextualized. The Ministry of Labour and Social Protection/Authority for Family, Child and Youth Development further shared the guidance widely. To support the guidance and boost its implementation, two television spots on flexible working arrangements and good practices of family-friendly policies were produced and disseminated on the social media platforms of UNICEF and partners. Two video spots to further explain the concepts have been produced by UNICEF. An increasing number of public and private sector employers are implementing teleworking to support families and their children. It was reported that 648 organizations are applying options of shorter work hours and paid leave.

In collaboration with the National Centre for Mental Health on providing training for trainers on mental health and psychosocial support, UNICEF produced online training modules and adapted the materials to meet the different needs of children.

A case management reference group has been established, comprising social work faculty members, UNICEF, Save the Children and Authority for Family, Child and Youth Development child protection staff to provide remote training, support and supervision on case management for over 100 subnational social workers. To date, 400 children without parental or family care due to COVID-19 have been provided with appropriate alternative care arrangements as a result of UNICEF support.

##### **Social Protection**

Social protection related interventions are based on the evidence from existing Shock Responsive social protection (SRSP) pilot, that tops up the "Child Money Programme" for immediate response support which demonstrated that cash transfer has significant impacts on multiple outcomes for children including better access of the families to health care, food and nutrition. In this vein, UNICEF Mongolia's response plan targets approximately 45,000 most vulnerable households (200,000 children) to address the children's needs cash assistance through CMP infrastructure while the Country Office conducts advocacy initiatives to strengthening national social protection system to Support families to cover their basic needs and care for their children.

### v) Data collection and analysis

A rapid social impact assessment is under way in collaboration with the National Statistical Office and a national research firm, the Research Institute. A final report is expected by the end of May. UNICEF is planning a Multiple Indicator Cluster Survey plus to better understand the socioeconomic impacts of COVID-19 on children and families.

A rapid risk assessment was conducted for some 2,400 children aged 2–5 years who attend 24-hour kindergartens, to identify their immediate needs including protection, safety and nutrition during the current school closure. Based on the findings, UNICEF undertook active advocacy with relevant ministries to set up alternative support mechanisms for these children while kindergartens are closed. A total of 5,000 children under age 5 from the most vulnerable households have received food packages.

## Humanitarian Leadership, Coordination and Strategy

### State Emergency Commission

The national response plan is developed and coordinated by the Deputy Prime Minister of Mongolia, who leads SEC. The SEC Emergency Operations headquarters is overseeing implementation of the interventions laid out within the response plan, and provides technical leadership. Heads of disaster protection services at all levels were given an order to develop plans for province, city, *soum* and district levels in accordance with the COVID-19 pandemic response plan. The Minister of Health and Chair of the National Emergency Management Authority coordinate with the relevant organizations and sectors detailed in the COVID-19 pandemic response strategy and plan, and oversee implementation of health-related interventions.

### Humanitarian Country Team

In Mongolia, the Humanitarian Country Team (HCT) is composed of United Nations agencies, Government entities, NGOs and development partners under the co-leadership of the United Nations Resident Coordinator and the National Emergency Management Agency. The latter is supporting the Government of Mongolia to fulfil its primary responsibility for disaster risk management in the country. The HCT guides, advises and makes strategic decisions in relation to cluster coordination and interventions, while specific cluster interventions involving different member agencies are coordinated through the lead agency for each cluster.

Seven clusters – Health; water, sanitation and hygiene (WASH); Protection (gender-based violence and child protection); Education; Nutrition; Early Recovery; and Food were activated as part of the COVID-19 response. The COVID-19 response plan is being consolidated while HCT members continue to implement urgent individual and cluster plans. UNICEF is leading or co-leading three clusters (WASH, Nutrition, Education) and the subcluster on Child Protection. UNICEF is working closely with line ministries on risk communication related to COVID-19 preventive measures.

A full-fledged education sector contingency plan for the pandemic as well as safe school guidance have been finalized and approved by MECSS. The child protection emergency preparedness and response plan for COVID-19 was finalized in close collaboration with the Ministry of Labour and Social Protection, with the objective to minimize the consequences of the outbreak on children by ensuring their protection and safety, preventing risks and providing the necessary assistance and services for children in Mongolia.

## External Communication

UNICEF has aligned with global campaigns on COVID-19 and has been disseminating information through its social network (*Website: [unicef.mn](http://unicef.mn) ; Facebook: [UNICEF Mongolia](https://www.facebook.com/UNICEFMongolia) Twitter: [@UNICEF\\_Mongolia](https://twitter.com/UNICEF_Mongolia)*)

**Next SitRep : 30 April 2020**

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