



LEGISLATIVE AND  
POLICY REVIEW ON  
**THE IMPACT  
OF COVID-19  
ON YOUTH IN  
MONGOLIA**



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# Abbreviations and acronyms

<b>APDA</b>	The Asian Population and Development Association
<b>AFCYD</b>	Authority for Family, Child and Youth Development
<b>ANC</b>	Antenatal Care
<b>CO</b>	Country Office (UNFPA)
<b>GBV</b>	Gender-based Violence
<b>MLSP</b>	Ministry of Labour and Social Protection
<b>MNT</b>	Mongolian currency “Tugrug”
<b>MOH</b>	Ministry of Health
<b>MOES</b>	Ministry of Education and Sciences
<b>NGO</b>	Non-governmental Organization
<b>OSSC</b>	One-Stop-Service Center
<b>PPE</b>	Personal Protective Equipment
<b>SEC</b>	State Emergency Commission
<b>SME</b>	Small and Medium Enterprise
<b>UNFPA</b>	United Nations Population Fund
<b>WHO</b>	World Health Organization
<b>YDC</b>	Youth Development Center

# 1. INTRODUCTION

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## 1.1 Purpose of the review

The purpose of this review is to map and assess the legal and policy impacts of COVID-19 on youth in Mongolia. The review has the following objectives:

- Determine policies in response to COVID-19 that were adopted by the National Parliament in order to protect younger persons.
- Upon the establishment of the policies, examine the current condition/situation of young persons in relation to COVID-19. This includes a situation analysis of the implementation of the policies and if possible, an analysis of their impacts.
- Recommendations regarding policies adopted in response to COVID-19.

## 1.2 Scope of the legislative and policy review

The review undertakes (i) an assessment and overview of policies and legislation relating to youth during the COVID-19 pandemic period, and (ii) an analysis of the extent to which these policies, plans and legislation address youth, youth development, youth protection and youth participation.



## 1.3 Legislative and policy review process/methodology

The primary components of this review were research and desk reviews, drawing on national analyses of policies and laws in Mongolia. A total of nine interviews were held with relevant stakeholders. Please refer to the Annex for a list of the respondents interviewed.

The majority of the consultations were online interviews, with four conducted as face-to-face interviews. The review was based on published official statistics, data from UNFPA in Mongolia, and information received from relevant government agencies and non-governmental organizations (NGOs), as well as a desk review of the existing regulatory framework.

## 1.4 Structure of the review

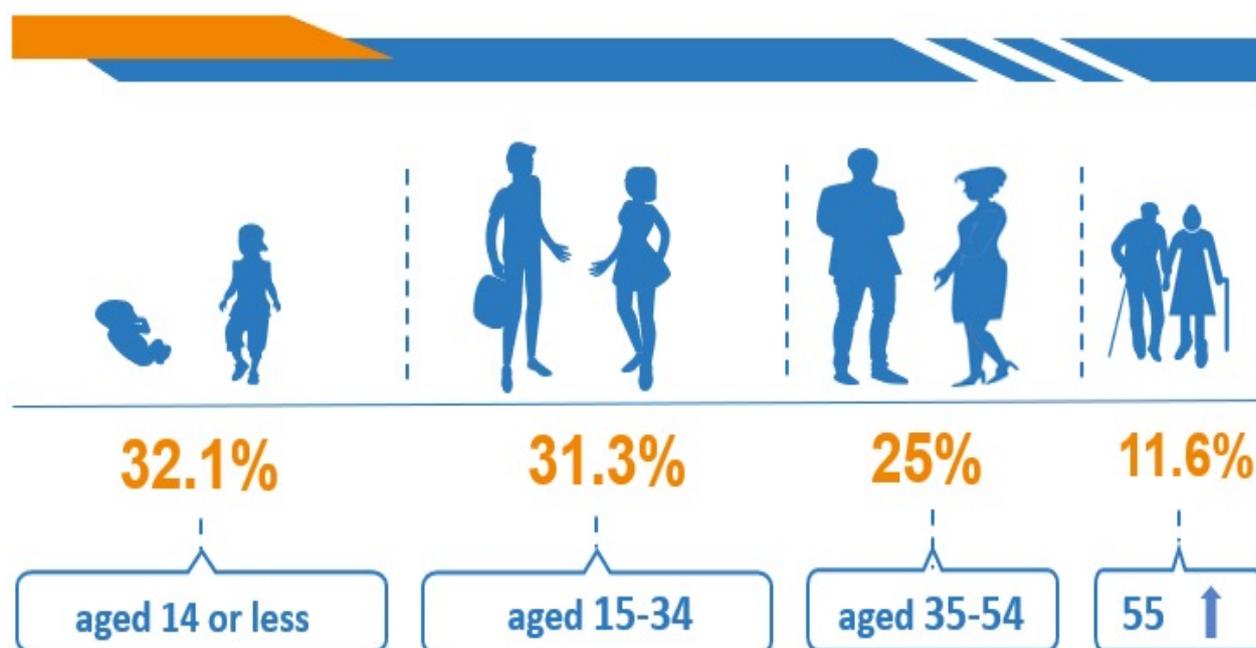
This review has ten parts. Following this part 1: Introduction, part 2 provides an overview of youth in Mongolia, including youth education and employment, and the key laws and policies on youth development. Part 3 highlights the current situation of COVID-19 in Mongolia and part 4 looks at legislation and policy reform. The impact of COVID-19 and responses to the pandemic are reviewed and analysed in parts 5 through 7. Part 8 reviews youth engagement in efforts to protect against the COVID-19 pandemic. Lessons learned and conclusions are provided in part 9, and recommendations that may be considered by the Government of Mongolia to better address young people's needs during the COVID-19 pandemic are presented in part 10.



## 2. STATISTIC ON YOUTH IN MONGOLIA

### 2.1 Some statistics on youth

According to the 2020 national census, the population of Mongolia is 3,296,866, and the number of households is 897,427. The population is still young, with 32.1 per cent of the overall population aged under 14 years, 56.3 per cent aged from 15- 54 years, and 11.6 per cent aged 55 years and over. The median age of the population of Mongolia is 27.9 years. This suggests that half of the population is under 27.9 years old.



Women make up 50.8 per cent of the population, and men make up 49.2 per cent. The sex ratio in 2020 was 96.6, which is a decrease by 1.5 points since the 2010 census. The sex ratio tends to decrease in the age group of people aged 30 years and older due to the relatively higher mortality rate among men.

Of the total population, 3.7 per cent, or 122,300 persons, have been living abroad for six months or more.<sup>2</sup>



The 2020 census also indicated that the number of individuals who have attained a Master's degree has reached 51,700, an increase of 21,000 or 68.4 per cent from the previous 2010 census. If these percentages are disaggregated by gender, it reflects 39.4 per cent men and 60.6 per cent women in the 2010 census, and 34.2 per cent men and 65.8 per cent women in the 2020 census. In the recent decade, 2010 to 2020,

<sup>1</sup> NSO Mongolia, 2020 Population and housing census of Mongolia /summary/, Retrieved from National Statistical Office of Mongolia website: [BookLibraryDownload.ashx \(1212.mn\)](#).

<sup>2</sup> NSO Mongolia, 2020 Population and housing census of Mongolia /summary/, Retrieved from National Statistical Office of Mongolia website: [BookLibraryDownload.ashx \(1212.mn\)](#).

women have been more likely to continue studying than men to obtain a higher education degree. The population with a Master's degree disaggregated by age is as follows: 17.3 per cent are 20-29 years old, 42.2 per cent are 30-39 years old, 24.9 per cent are 40-49 years old, 11.0 per cent are 50-59 years old, and 4.6 per cent are 60 years and older.

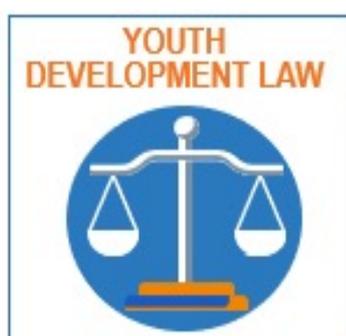
The literacy rate in 2020 was 98.7 per cent of the population, which shows an increase compared to the 2010 census, which had a literacy rate of 93.3 per cent.



Almost 11 per cent of economically active youth are unemployed. When the number of young people who are not actively looking for permanent jobs is considered, this percentage increases to 16 per cent. According to the 2018 Poverty Survey, 28.4 per cent of Mongolia's population are already at poverty level, whereas 14.9 per cent are at risk of poverty. However, despite being a country with a relatively young population, there are no reliable data or research results on youth poverty and vulnerability. The most significant change in Mongolia's population during recent years has been the internal rural-to-urban migration and migration out of the country. About 36 per cent of

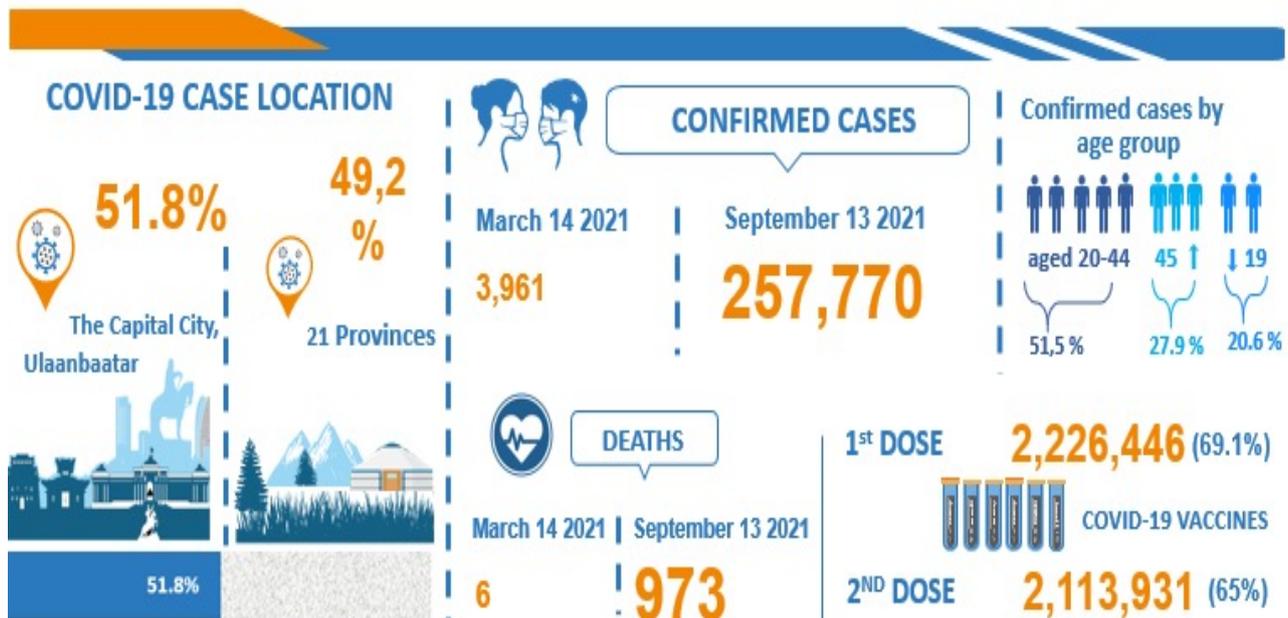
young people live in rural remote areas, and have a low level of education and low-paid, high-risk jobs in the informal sector. These jobs do not require technical skills, and are not covered by social security.

In terms of youth migrating to urban areas, young adults aged 25-39 years and children under ten years old comprise the majority of the population in migrant households. Looking at gender differences, females aged 20-24 years are more likely to be migrants than their male counterparts within the same age category, reflecting the internal migration of female university students and young mothers moving with their slightly older spouses.



In the last two decades, the Government of Mongolia has enacted a number of laws, regulations and policy documents to support youth. These include the National Policy on Youth, 2005; the National Program on Affordable Housing, Trust Money and Cash allowance to support young families and newborns, 2006; the National Program on Youth Development, 2017; and the Law on Promotion of Youth Development, 2017. The adoption of the Law on Promotion of Youth Development created the legal framework for development, participation and engagement of young people aged 15-34 years old, who make up 33 per cent of the whole population and 46 per cent of the working-age population, as well as forming the pillars to build the national system of youth development.

### 3. THE COVID-19 SITUATION IN MONGOLIA



A total of 257,770 cases of COVID-19 infection were registered and confirmed in Mongolia from March 2020 until 13 September 2021. Out of this total number of cases, by age group, 51.5 per cent of the individuals infected were aged 20–44 years, 27.9 per cent were aged 45 years and over, and 20.6 per cent were aged 0–19 years. The overwhelming majority of all confirmed COVID-19 cases (51.8 per cent) were registered in the capital city of Ulaanbaatar, where the half of the country’s population lives.

<sup>3</sup> COVID-19 data, retrieved from Ministry of Health, Retrieved from (mohs.mn).

## 4. LEGISLATION AND POLICY REFORMS DURING THE COVID-19 PANDEMIC

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### 4.1 A new law on combating COVID-19 adopted and enacted

The Law on Prevention and Response to the COVID-19 Pandemic and Reducing the Adverse Effects on Society and the Economy (COVID-19 Mitigation Law) was adopted and enacted as a matter of urgency by the Parliament of Mongolia on 29 April 2020. The main purpose of this law is to prevent and combat the COVID-19 pandemic, to impose specific health-related restrictions on public rights to protect people, to prompt decision-making for this protection, and to reduce the negative social and economic impacts of the virus.<sup>4</sup>

In December 2020, the COVID-19 Mitigation Law was amended<sup>5</sup> and extended based on the analysis of implementation of the decisions made by the Government of Mongolia, the National Emergency Commission and other relevant organizations, considering the measures undertaken by other countries during the pandemic, their practice and lessons learned; and the challenges and difficulties faced by Mongolia in relation to the pandemic situation. The COVID-19 Mitigation Law includes the following specific provisions related to youth:

- To organize measures to shift on-site classroom training activities and lessons of all levels of educational institutions, irrespective of the form of ownership, to TV-sessions and online-lessons for a certain period of time, and to approve regulations to reduce tuition and dormitory fees and postpone these payments (Article 7.1.8);
- In case of postponement or restrictions to the on-site classroom activities of educational institutions at all levels, to provide quality and accessible online or other forms of distance learning, to improve the participation of both teachers and students, and institute effective monitoring. (Article 7.1.9);
- To protect public health and prevent infection, and provide health care services, medicine and medical supplies to be kept in specialized care facilities, as well as in special restrictive facilities such as sobering, custody, arrest and detention centres, or any other places where the freedom of the movement is restricted (Article 7.1.13);
- To enhance and strengthen measures to prevent domestic violence; invest in victim and survivor services, temporary shelters and joint team activities; and provide necessary funding to operate the 24-hour help phone line (Article 7.1.20);
- To undertake measures during the pandemic in order to reduce the negative impact on children and the elderly, persons with the chronic diseases and/or requiring regular health care, and disabled persons and pregnant women; and to provide financial support to vulnerable population groups (Article 7.1.22).

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<sup>4</sup> [www.Legalinfo.mn](http://www.Legalinfo.mn).

<sup>5</sup> <http://nema.gov.mn/n/110410>.

## 4.2 The Task Force Team of the State Emergency Commission established

In connection with the first confirmed case of COVID-19 in Mongolia, the State Emergency Commission (SEC) Operational Focal Group under the National Emergency Management Agency was established by Order Number 3 of the Chief of the SEC on 12 March 2020. The main function of this focal group is to coordinate the implementation of Government and SEC decisions regarding the COVID-19 pandemic and to provide effective joint management in implementation. All public administrative authorities, local administrations, international organizations, and the public shall comply with and act in accordance with the regulations given by this body to implement response activities in order to ensure preparedness and prevent the spread of COVID-19.<sup>6</sup>

### ***An extensive 10 trillion MNT plan to protect public health and recover the economy was approved on 19 February 2021***

In 2019, Mongolia's economic growth was 5.2 per cent. However, the economy sharply declined by about 6 per cent in 2020 due to COVID-19. In line with this decline, in the third quarter of 2020, the number of employees in more than 46,000 business entities decreased by 70,000 employees. Taking this situation into account, the Government decided to implement a policy plan with the aim of protecting public health and recovering the economy until 2023.

With the implementation of the plan, economic indicators are expected to reach the levels of 2019, which was before the COVID-19 pandemic. The main measures in this plan include:

- Two trillion MNT loan for small and medium enterprise (SME) owners and service providers with an annual interest rate of 3 per cent and a three-year term.
- Five hundred billion MNT to provide 5,000 **youth** with training programmes, including acquiring professional skills, health education and active life habits; the participants in this programme will receive a 1 million MNT scholarship.
- Three trillion MNT will be allocated for the project **Youth I, II and III**, in which districts will be built in Ulaanbaatar at the first stage, including land acquisition, construction of unified design apartments and the offering of soft mortgage loans.
- Two trillion MNT to implement strategically important programmes and projects.
- Five hundred billion MNT to support agriculture production and herders' livelihoods.
- The Bank of Mongolia's repurchase agreement funding of 1 trillion MNT will be increased to 2 trillion MNT (the 300 million MNT given for SMEs will be increased up to MNT 500 million, and the 1 billion MNT given to non-mining export enterprises will increase up to 3 billion MNT)

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<sup>6</sup> Retrieved from [nobg.nema.gov.mn/?p=88804](http://nobg.nema.gov.mn/?p=88804).

## ***Enhanced (heightened) level readiness and public emergency readiness regimes are being enforced at the right time***

From the outset of COVID-19, as early as January 2020, Mongolia has taken urgent, stringent action to prevent the spread of infection, including closing the border with China, suspending all international flights, and closing schools and kindergartens. From 13 February 2020, the Government endorsed by **resolution the Enhanced (heightened) partial readiness level** to existing administrative units, territorial units, state and local administrative organizations, and legal entities, having extended it 10 times since. From 11 November 2020, this level of emergency was upgraded to the **Public Emergency Readiness level** and was extended three times since. However, Mongolia is facing challenges and difficulties in the implementation of some decisions due to the country's socio-economic capacity, current budget and financial issues. If the COVID-19 pandemic continues for a long time, it will have a negative impact on Mongolia's national security, especially public health, and social and economic stability, and it might bring the country to the level of an economic crisis.

Due to community or local transmission of COVID-19, the Public Emergency Readiness level was imposed on 11 November 2020, and the restriction of movement or lockdown was put in place twice since then. The most recent decision of the SEC to endorse the Public Emergency Partial Readiness level in the capital city from 11 February 2021 until 23 February 2021 was approved by the Government of Mongolia. During this lockdown, public movement was limited up to 90 per cent in connection with the Mongolian "Tsagaan Sar" or Lunar New Year, and the "One door-one test" campaign was organized to stop the spread of the COVID-19 pandemic, reduce the number of outbreaks, and locate and isolate direct and indirect contacts.<sup>7</sup> During this measure, PCR tests were administered to one member of every household in Ulaanbaatar city.

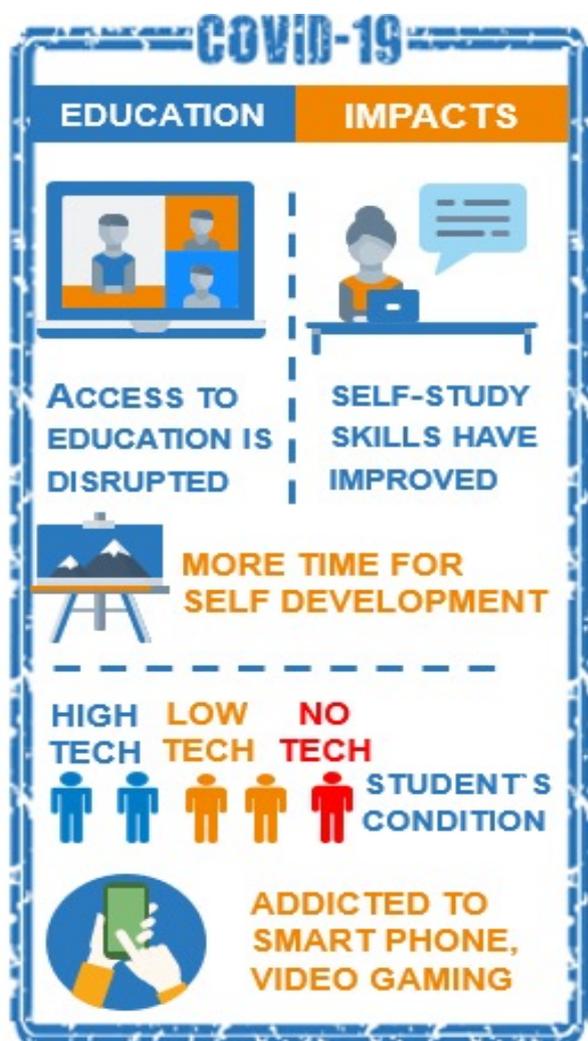
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<sup>7</sup> Бүх нийтийн бэлэн байдлын үед авч хэрэгжүүлэх арга хэмжээг танилцуулав (zasag.mn).

# 5. HOW HAS COVID-19 AFFECTED YOUTH?

## 5.1 Effect of COVID-19 on youth's education



As a measure to prevent the spread of COVID-19 infections, a restriction on movement (lockdown) was imposed, and from 3 February 2020, students at all levels of educational institutions were shifted to non-classroom training activities such as TV lessons and online learning. This became a novel and serious challenge for both education system workers and for students.<sup>8</sup>

There are over 147,300 students who are enrolled and studying at 88 state-owned and private universities. These students now participate in their study curriculum via online lessons, which have flexible schedules. As a result, students have more free time (no need for commuting and other everyday routines), and they can spend the time gained on disease prevention, personal hygiene, and self-development. Their self-study skills have also improved.<sup>9</sup>

On the other hand, young people are acquiring some negative habits as well, such as spending long hours staring at the TV, computer and smartphone screens; and playing video games. As a result, they are gaining weight from an abundance of time to eat and lack of exercise, suffering from unregulated or shifted sleep schedules, and higher stress.<sup>10</sup>

Students themselves have requested the reduction of tuition fees on the grounds that all lessons are online, not classroom based; the lessons hours are reduced; and there are no practical lessons or seminars. However, the schools and universities still demand 100 per cent payment of tuition fees. Most students are facing difficulties in paying the tuition fees because in the current situation, they cannot work part-time, and most of their parents and guardians have lost income as well.

<sup>8</sup> Mongolian Institute of Educational Research, Retrieved from [Боловсролын хүрээлэн \(mier.mn\)](#).

<sup>9</sup> Report of "Covid-19 impact on youth education, lifestyle, and psychology", Youth Activity Survey II.

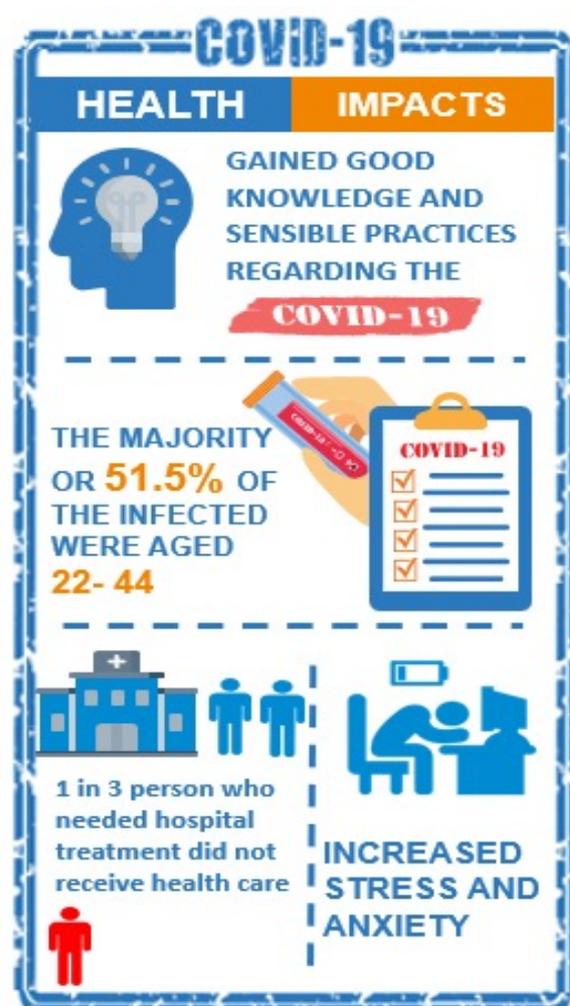
<sup>10</sup> Report of "Covid-19 impact on youth education, lifestyle, and psychology", Youth Activity Survey II.

There are 680,000 students who study in 839 state-owned and private secondary schools in Mongolia.<sup>11</sup> Of the 365 days of the year, 165 are school days, and due to restrictions imposed during the pandemic, more than 100 days out of these 165 days were home-based distance learning through TV-sessions and online learning. However, more than a quarter of students (25.5 per cent or 174,000 students) are without access to the Internet or necessary equipment. This includes school-age children in remote herder families, from low-income families or from other types of vulnerable families who cannot access e-learning.<sup>12</sup>

Only three out of five students were able to regularly attend their TV lessons, and 15 per cent could not attend their lessons at all due to being occupied with chores at home, the lack of TV or Internet access, or having a disability. Most students were able to participate in their TV lessons on their own, however only 18 per cent did it well or at a satisfactory level. The other household members, especially children's parents, should support their children in their e-learning and homework to make the study process effective. At the same time, there is a lack of special programmes and tools for children with special needs to participate successfully in the TV lessons and distance learning.<sup>13</sup>

### 5.1.1 Measures undertaken by the Government or Ministry of Education and Science

In cooperation with the Mongolian Television Association and their member TV channels, a total of 170 TV lessons for all subjects from Grade 1 through to Grade 12 were filmed and prepared, and a total of 4,800 hours of TV sessions with sign-language support were broadcast on 15 different TV channels. TV lesson sessions for special needs, health, non-formal and lifelong education, as well as TV lessons for high school graduates for the General Admission Test (GAT) were also prepared and broadcast. The Ministry of Education and Science also developed content on Mongolian culture, traditions, customs and everyday life with the aim of further developing students' knowledge and skills. The student participation rate ranged from 70 to 74 per cent.<sup>14</sup>



<sup>11</sup> Education data 2020, the National Statistics Office, retrieved from Education (1212.mn).

<sup>12</sup> Jargal DeFacto, Interview with the Mr. Enkh-Amgalan, Minister of Education, 11 February 2021.

<sup>13</sup> The Save the Children, Rapid needs Assessment on the effects of COVID-19 pandemic, 2020.

<sup>14</sup> Interview with Mrs. Tsedevsuren, the Ex-Minister of Education "The e-learning, its content and technology is going to be legalized first time" Daily News, December 31, 2020.

## 5.2 Effects of COVID-19 on youth's physical and mental health

Although youth and healthy individuals typically have a stronger immune systems than older people, the Government of Mongolia has encouraged everyone, including youth, to take extra precautions to avoid infection and transmission of COVID-19: keep physically distant, maintain hand hygiene, keep rooms well ventilated, clean and disinfect surfaces, and stay home when sick. Youth in Mongolia have a relatively good level of knowledge about COVID-19 and prevention measures as a result of regular public information, advocacy and publicity on COVID-19 organized nationwide. According to a survey, almost everyone knows and follows measures to prevent infection, such as washing hands (94 per cent), wearing face masks (93 per cent), avoiding handshakes (97 per cent), and avoiding public gatherings and events (96 per cent).<sup>15</sup>

Access to health services was disrupted during the Public Emergency Readiness regime or lockdown. One in three persons who needed hospital treatment did not receive health care, mostly due to the risk of being infected at hospitals and the restrictions on leaving one's home.<sup>16</sup> There were some cases in which patients could not obtain medical care on time, even with the result of death because of this delay in seeking treatment. Due to the comparatively higher incidence of infection in Ulaanbaatar, entry and exit from the city was restricted or suspended, and hospital visits required the patients to have positive PCR results before entering the facilities. In addition, there was poor coordination between emergency services and medical facilities.

Amidst the coronavirus pandemic, mental health issues such as anxiety, worry, hypersensitivity, depression and anger became common. Twenty-three per cent of adolescents reported insomnia, 28 per cent reported depressive symptoms, and 23 per cent reported anxiety.<sup>17</sup> Further, sleep changes and anxiety were prevalent among people who were hospitalized with COVID-19. Adolescents' inability to spend quality time with friends and peers, extremely important at this age, led to stress, depression and weakened communication skills.<sup>18</sup>

Due to the fact that young girls have to spend most of their time at home during restriction or lockdowns, they are facing more household responsibilities than before. Girls from herder families, in particular, used to (before COVID-19) live in dormitories and were able to focus on their studies, but when they have no option but to study from home, they must help their younger siblings in completing their homework, herding sheep and cleaning their homes. Parents have expressed concern that children and adolescents are being isolated from society and have limited access to education. Adolescents are also agitated as they are no longer able to participate in extracurricular activities or clubs for self-development.

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<sup>15</sup> Mongolia COVID-19 household response phone survey (HRPS). Retrieved from website Mongolian National Statistical Office, OS Team Meeting (1212.mn).

<sup>16</sup> Mongolia COVID-19 household response phone survey (HRPS). Retrieved from website Mongolian National Statistical Office, OS Team Meeting (1212.mn).

<sup>17</sup> National Center for Mental Health, COVID-19 Mental illness, 2020.

<sup>18</sup> В.Баярмаа: Цар тахлын улмаас хүмүүс нойргүйдэл, сэтгэл гутралд өртөж байна (eagle.mn).

## 5.2.1 Measures undertaken by the Government or Ministry of Health

The Government of Mongolia made significant effort to provide the public with regular recommendations, suggestions on COVID-19 prevention, and prompt information on new cases, spread of the virus and actions taken in a comprehensive, fact-based and timely manner. Since January 2020, following a Government decision, the Ministry of Health has been organizing a “COVID-19 situation” press conference every day to provide the latest information to the public. In addition, a 24-hour hotline was set up at the Task Force team of SEC to provide advice and guidance on the pandemic, and to receive comments and complaints from the public.<sup>19</sup> A total of 694,040 calls have been received by this hotline since the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic. In addition, the establishment of a separate psychological counselling hotline during the pandemic has made it possible for the public to receive professional mental health counselling.

The Ministry of Health has also encouraged the public to participate in voluntary testing and organized PCR sample collection points both at designated locations and through mobile facilities. To date, a total of 2,024,274 PCR tests have been performed nationwide and citizens can access the test results online by entering their individual identification or registration numbers into the Ministry of Health’s website. Because the total number of confirmed COVID-19 cases in Mongolia is relatively low, all infected persons are being treated in hospitals inside the specially designated, isolated wards. The Mongolian Government introduced and enforced QR code technology to identify the location of citizens if a new COVID-19 outbreak is detected and collects information on all individuals who were in the same location at the time to ensure they have prompt testing and to prevent further spreading of the disease.

The Government aims to complete two-dose vaccination of 60 per cent of the country’s population by the end of July 2021. The following immunizations are being planned and implemented: Since 23 February 2021, when the COVID-19 vaccination drive of 150,000 doses of the Covishield Astra Zeneca Vaccine made in India and granted by the Government of India kicked off in Mongolia, a total of 99,228 people have received the first dose of the vaccine as of 14 March 2021.

Forty-eight immunization teams have worked at 35 locations in nine districts of Ulaanbaatar city to facilitate the vaccine drive.<sup>20</sup> Among them, 47.1 per cent were healthcare personnel, 16.6 per cent were personnel of emergency management, specialized inspection and border protection, and 11.3 per cent were staff members of other organizations and entities. There have not been any serious side effects or complications after the injection reported.<sup>21</sup>

Mongolia became a member of the global COVAX vaccine distribution programme, which is a partnership between the Coalition for Epidemic Preparedness Innovations (CEPI), Gavi, the Vaccine Alliance, the World Health Organization (WHO) and UNICEF.<sup>22</sup> On 12 March 2021, Mongolia received 14,400 doses of AstraZeneca-Oxford vaccines via the COVAX Facility and under this programme the country is set to receive 163,200 additional doses of the AstraZeneca vaccine and 25,740 doses of Pfizer vaccines in the first quarter of 2021. Meanwhile, vaccines from other producers are being studied and negotiated.

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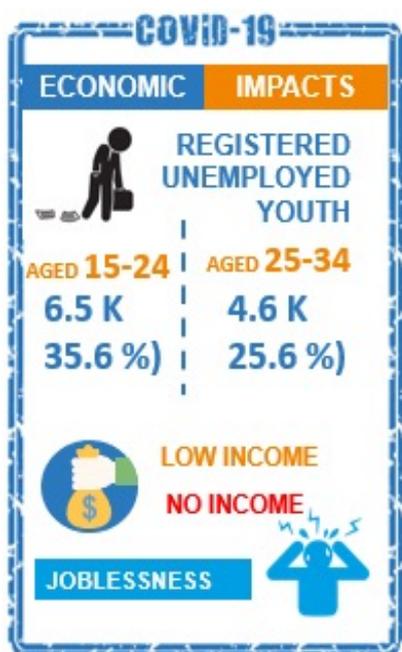
<sup>19</sup> Ministry of Health, *Current news* (moh.gov.mn).

<sup>20</sup> Ministry of Health, daily press briefing 14 March 2021. <https://www.facebook.com/www.moh.gov.mn/photos/pcb.1264674437281269/1264674370614609/>.

<sup>21</sup> Ministry of Health, daily press briefing 2 March 2021.

<sup>22</sup> Ministry of Foreign Affairs, <http://mfa.gov.mn/59208>.

## 5.3 Economic impact of COVID-19 on youth



Mongolia's GDP in the third quarter of 2020 was reduced by 7.3 per cent, mostly due to a decrease of 595.5 billion MNT (a 20.7 per cent decrease) in added value in the mining and quarrying industry and a decrease of 401.4 billion MNT (a 7.0 per cent decrease) in added value in the service industry during this time. The COVID-19 pandemic caused an imbalance between demand and supply. Furthermore, the volume of production and services provided, import and export turnover, consumption and demand level, and investment rates all are declining.

Regardless of business size in many sectors including manufacturing, transportation, hospitality and tourism, trade and services, the production volumes and number of customers sharply reduced, causing significant decline in income and revenues. Particularly SMEs and service providers are facing such challenges, sometimes being forced lay off workers or go into bankruptcy.

***The Public Emergency Readiness level and the lockdown regimes have a significant impact on youth employment.***

Young people aged 15-34 years constitute 46 per cent of Mongolia's working-age population. As of December 2020, the total number of registered unemployed people nationwide is disaggregated by age group as follows: aged 15-24 years – 6,500 (35.6 per cent); aged 25-34 years – 4,600 (25.6 per cent), which means that the age group of 15-34 year accounts for the majority of unemployed people.<sup>23</sup>

Almost 40 per cent of those who were employed before the COVID-19 pandemic discontinued work during the lockdown period or by the end of 2020. However, 61 per cent of them noted that they would return to work after the lockdown. This indicates that the employment termination and stagnation in the labour market might be temporary, and the situation might improve after the pandemic.

### 5.3.1 Measures undertaken by the Government or Ministry of Finance

Within the related policy regulations and legislation, such as the COVID-19 Mitigation Law and Government Resolution No. 211 "On some measures to support households, businesses and organizations during the outbreak of COVID-19", the following measures are being taken to prevent and control the spread of COVID-19 and to reduce its negative social and economic impacts:

<sup>23</sup> Study Report "Impact of COVID-19 on the Job market of Mongolia", the Research Institute of Labour and Social Protection, Ministry of Labour and Social Protection, retrieved from 2021 - Impact of COVID-19 on the Job market of Mongolia, Q4 2020 .pdf (rilsp.gov.mn).

- Personal income tax on salaries and other income of persons who are employed or conduct income-generating activity (excluding civil servants) is fully exempt (valid from 1 April until 1 October 2020).
- The Unemployment Insurance Fund provided 200,000 MNT per month to insured persons whose jobs are in business entities other than state and local government or legal entities with state participation, under the condition that these entities' operations were terminated by decision of the state authorities, beyond their own will, and their sales revenues in February and March 2020 declined by 50 or more per cent compared to the same period of the previous year (valid from 1 April 1 until 1 July 2020).
- Voluntary social insurance premiums on pensions, benefits, allowances for industrial accidents and occupational diseases equal to the minimum wage are exempted for insured persons and the premiums for such amounts are considered as paid for the designated period (valid from 1 April until 1 October 2020).
- Social insurance premiums on pensions, benefits, allowances for industrial accidents and occupational diseases for insured employees of legal entities other than government organizations with a decline in their operations, production and income, but who retained their jobs and submitted social insurance premium payment reports within the period indicated by law shall be exempt (valid from 1 April until 1 October 2020).
- Corporate tax exemption was applied to the taxable income of all taxpayers whose total corporate income revenue was less than 1.5 billion MNT in the previous tax year, except for state and local owned or state participatory legal entities (valid from 1 April until 1 October 2020).
- Waiver from 1 February until 1 September 2020 of tax penalties and fines imposed on taxpayers who failed to pay their taxes indicated in their tax reports on time (within the period specified by law).
- Owners (landlords) of premises and facilities being rented to operate markets, shopping malls, small trades and manufacturing, services, private schools, kindergartens and childcare services who reduced their leasing/rental fees receive a rebate on the income tax by the amount the leasing/rental fee was discounted (valid from 1 February until 1 September 2020).
- Some imported strategic food commodities are exempt from customs duties and VAT (valid from 1 March 1 until 30 June 2020).
- Households and business entities (excluding government agencies, mining companies, banking and finance entities, mobile communications providers, alcohol and tobacco producers) are relieved from paying utility bills such as electricity, heat, steam, water and sewage, and waste, and the government paid off these utilities (valid from 1 December 2020 until 1 July 2021).
- In order to provide support to the residents of the ger districts of the capital city, the price of improved technology or upgraded coal briquettes was reduced by 75 per cent per ton (valid from 4 December 2020 to 1 April 1 2020).

## 6. HUMAN RIGHTS AND YOUTH ISSUES

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### 6.1 Domestic violence during the COVID-19 pandemic

Domestic violence is one of the most serious human rights violations, and during the COVID-19 pandemic and the related emergency situation, domestic violence has been increasing. In the first quarter of 2020, when the restriction measures were enforced to prevent infection, the number of customers at the One-Stop-Service Centers (OSSC) increased by 87 per cent compared to the same period in 2019. The COVID-19 pandemic itself and the restrictive measures, including the lockdown, caused increased emotional and financial stress in families, damaged family relationships, and triggered domestic violence.<sup>24</sup> In Mongolia, during the period of isolation and the lockdown measures undertaken to prevent the spread of COVID-19, reports of domestic violence and the demand for support for victims both increased. Women and children had to spend more time in isolation with their abusers and were deprived of opportunities to seek help.

Government officials, women's rights activists and civil society organizations stated in their reports that with increased domestic violence there was an increased demand for helpline services and shelters for victims. The lockdown regime and isolation for a prolonged time can aggravate worries about security, health and money issues in a household, and limits possibilities to control abusers and provide outside intervention in cases of domestic violence. The National Center Against Violence directly served and provided support to 1,795 persons in 2020, which is higher by 56.08 per cent compared to the data from 2019.<sup>25</sup>

### 6.2 The issue of Mongolian citizens living abroad

One of challenges that emerged during the COVID-19 pandemic is the issue of Mongolian citizens living in other parts of the world. The rapid spread of COVID-19 in other countries also led to social and economic difficulties, loss of jobs and income, and closing of campuses and universities, forcing Mongolian expats to return to Mongolia. However, because of suspended international flights, trains and other transportation services to Mongolia, these citizens had difficulties returning home. Mongolians who went abroad temporarily for treatment and diagnostics suffered the most from not being able to return easily. Although Article 8.1.1 of the newly extended COVID-19 Mitigation Law states that "If a Mongolian citizen from abroad submits a request to return, the departure shall be organized in a few stages, considering the circumstances, such as the COVID-19 prevalence and risk in that certain country and possibilities of direct flights to Mongolia", not all applicants were able to return home for the past year.

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<sup>24</sup> Kaori Ishikawa. "In COVID-19 pandemic, we need to protect our women and girls from violence." Retrieved from UNFPA Mongolia | In COVID-19 pandemic, we need to protect our women and girls from violence.

<sup>25</sup> Annual report (infographics) National Center Against Violence NGO, (3) Facebook.

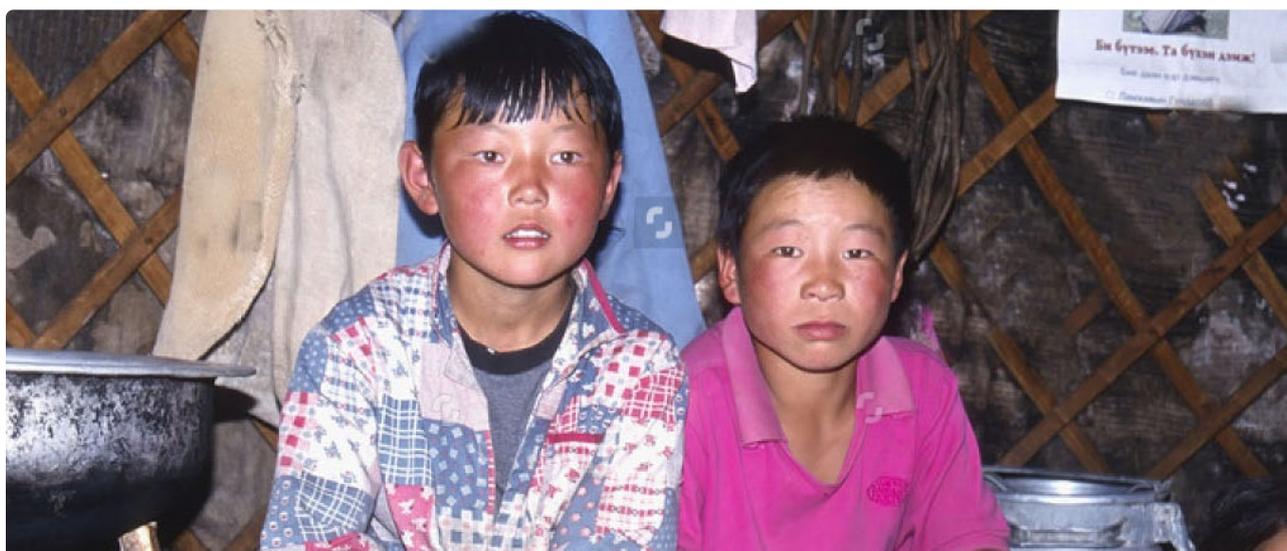
Following the decisions of the Government and the SEC from March to December 2020, a total of 21,916 people from 53 countries were flown in by 119 special chartered flights, and 6,643 people returned from China and Russia by ground transportation, making a total of 28,359 repatriates. The Government repatriated 1,920 people by 11 charter flights in March 2021. However, there are many Mongolians all over the world who applied for return flights and are still waiting, resulting in loss of security, even lives, and many are facing health and financial burdens.

As of 19 February 2021, a total of 9,143 people applied to return home, of which 2,773 people requested immediate repatriation. The newly established Mongolian Government announced that in order to minimize repatriates' burden, the mandatory 21 days of quarantine in isolated facilities is reduced to 10 days, and the number of such facilities has increased along with the frequency of special chartered flights.<sup>26</sup>

### 6.3 Data security issues

A QR technology smartphone application based on the already existing "E-barimt" application was launched on 16 December 2020 in order to detect close contacts of COVID-19 cases, monitor the spread of the disease, and provide prompt information to those at risk. Safeguarding the lives and health of the population from COVID-19 became a priority for the Mongolian Government. In executing this duty, the Government might enact legislation and take action that restricts freedom of movement or supports preventative measures.

However, such restrictions shall be evidence-based, reasonable to the extent satisfactory to protect public health, and shall have minimal impact on human rights and freedoms.<sup>27</sup> On 29 January 2021, the National Human Rights Commission submitted an official note to the SEC claiming that the use of E-barimt-based E-registration of citizens' movements without legal regulation created a risk of violation of the right to freedom and protection of privacy.



<sup>26</sup> The quarantine of repatriates will last 10 days | News.MN.

<sup>27</sup> February 16 2021, The Interview with National Human Right Commissioner

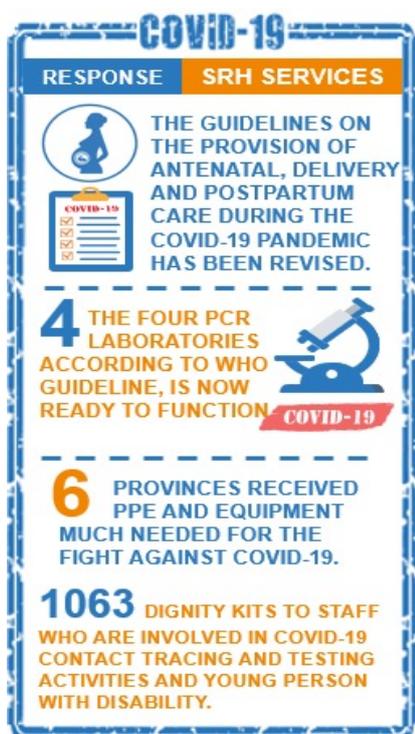
## 7. UNFPA MONGOLIA'S RESPONSE TO COVID-19

In 2020, the UNFPA Mongolia Country Office successfully mobilized USD 2,037,935.50 from core and non-core resources – 100 per cent of the total funding requirements for the COVID-19 response. The Country Office has continuously reviewed the specific needs for frontline staff, youth, girls, women and persons with disabilities.

Funds from non-core resources include support from the Government of Japan (as part of the agreement between UNFPA and UNICEF), the Government of the Grand Duchy of Luxembourg, the Swiss Development Agency, the UN Multi-Partner Trust Fund, and the private sector including Oyu Tolgoi LLC and Rio Tinto LLC Mongolia.<sup>28</sup>

UNFPA Mongolia stands in solidarity with the Government of Mongolia in fighting the COVID-19 pandemic while ensuring that women and girls have access to sexual and reproductive health services, including reaching out to adolescents and youth with COVID-19 messages and information on sexual and reproductive health, and gender-based violence.

### 7.1 Supporting continuity of sexual and reproductive health services and interventions, including protection of the health workforce



Due to the increasing number of COVID-19 positive cases, the UNFPA Country Office is supporting the Minister of Health (MOH) to revise the guidelines on the provision of antenatal, delivery and postpartum care during the COVID-19 pandemic. The distance antenatal care (ANC) guidelines allow four out of eight required ANC check-ups to be conducted online are being finalized with the support of community health workers and family health centre nurses.

Four fully equipped PCR laboratories are being established under a UNFPA and Oyu Tolgoi LLC joint project with a grant of USD 602,000 from Rio Tinto Mongolia.<sup>29</sup>

The UNFPA Country Office supplied personal protective equipment (PPE), including N95 masks, disposable masks, goggles, gowns, sanitizers and medical equipment to provincial and local health facilities and agencies to protect the health and safety of frontline workers and to ensure the continuity of services. With the financial support of the Luxembourg Development Cooperation, the UNFPA Country Office provided 1,063 dignity kits to young persons with disabilities and staff working in COVID-19 contact tracing and testing.<sup>30</sup>

<sup>28</sup> UNFPA MONGOLIA Situation Report #1 on COVID-19 response.

<sup>29</sup> <https://mongolia.unfpa.org/en/news/first-comprehensive-pcr-laboratory-established-rio-tinto-mongolias-covid-19-relief-fund-has>.

<sup>30</sup> UNFPA MONGOLIA Situation Report #2, #4, #6 on COVID-19 response.

## 7.2 Supporting youth development and youth engagement



In partnership with the Ministry of Education and Science (MOES), the UNFPA Country Office has supported the development of engaging, interactive content on health education, which is supported by TV-based learning.

A total of 14 health education modules have been produced and are available on econtent.edu.mn, which is the main platform MOES uses to deliver TV lessons. Since its launch on 25 November 2020, interactive learning content has reached a cumulative total of more than 149,161 children, parents and teachers, and the capacity of 147 teachers and government representatives has been strengthened in e-learning.<sup>31</sup>

The UNFPA Country Office has supported continued access to adolescent and youth-friendly health services and information through e-counselling during the lockdown. Adolescent clinics provided online counselling on issues related to sexual and reproductive health, family planning and mental health.<sup>32</sup>

Due to restrictions on movements, many university students were not able to return to their homes in the provinces. The UNFPA Country Office supplied personal care hygiene kits to over 1,000 university students who were quarantined in 71 dormitories in Ulaanbaatar, while MOES has provided them with food items.<sup>33</sup>

Four "What and Why Comprehensive Sexual Education" media cards, with information on comprehensive sexuality education and its promotion, have been developed and shared through social media, targeting decision-makers.<sup>34</sup>

<sup>31</sup> UNFPA MONGOLIA Situation Report #7 on COVID-19 response.

<sup>32</sup> UNFPA MONGOLIA Situation Report #7 on COVID-19 response.

<sup>33</sup> UNFPA MONGOLIA Situation Report #8 on COVID-19 response.

<sup>34</sup> UNFPA MONGOLIA Situation Report #8 on COVID-19 response.

## 8. YOUTH ENGAGEMENT TO PROTECT AGAINST THE COVID-19 PANDEMIC

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In order to fully implement the Law on Youth Development, two important documents, the “Regulations on registration and certification of youth volunteerism” and the “Regulations on student part-time employment” were adopted and enacted. Before they were finalized, drafts of both Regulations were posted on the website of the Ministry of Labour to collect feedback, suggestions and comments. Many young people actively participated in discussions and shared the challenges they are facing during the pandemic.

To ensure youth participation and engagement in youth-related decision-making, Mongolia has established more than 330 Youth Development Sub-Councils in the capital city and the provinces. These sub-councils are chaired by the province or district governors and consist of 15-17 people representing the state, civil society and youth organizations. There is a lack of comprehensive information on how these sub-councils cooperate and achieve outcomes together, as well how they are engaged in activities against the pandemic. The Ministry of Labour and Social Protection (MLSP), through the Authority for Family, Child and Youth Development (AFCYD) and its Youth Development Centers (YDCs) in the provinces, and capital city and its districts, implemented the following measures and activities to support young people during the pandemic:

1. Following MLSP approval of guidelines and recommendations, YDCs provide information, training, advocacy, intervention activities, counselling and services to support adolescent and youth personal development, health, education, employment and access to safe environments to develop. Considering the COVID-19 pandemic, these institutions conduct most activities through social media and websites, and focus on increasing information distribution, expanding the range of services available, and increasing the participation and cooperation of professional organizations in online consulting services.
2. The Authority for Family, Child, and Youth Development launched two new hotlines with professional counselling to address the psychological and mental issues faced by children and youth and the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic related measures on their daily life.
3. Distributing face masks and hand sanitizer, and disseminating the information on infection control and recommendations to prevent COVID-19 spreading.
4. Organizing the campaign “Youth Unite against the Coronavirus”, which includes sewing face masks, teaching others how to make face masks, and donating them to others in need.
5. Engaging youth in different online learning activities (e.g., learning musical instruments, dancing, psychology self-help basics) to help them productively spend time in lockdown, to help reduce stress and boredom, and prevent unhealthy lifestyles and habits.

6. Organizing an online contest “Let’s decorate the Christmas/New Year tree with successes”, which involves decorating the family Christmas/New Year tree with notes and photos showing new positive attitudes, habits, initiatives, achievements and creative work implemented by the family in 2020.
7. Organizing and conducting the online training programmes “Positive attitude is the beginning of success”, and “Family values and cherished relationships”.
8. Organizing a video contest “Waves of happiness” to promote young families who are spending productive time at home during the lockdown, disseminating their good practices, and making a positive impact through it.
9. Providing basic mental health advice, information and counselling to families with members who were or are domestic violence victims or abusers, or youth with alcohol dependency to reduce the risk of domestic violence during the lockdown; and providing general and basic health advice, information and exercise instructions on how to maintain mental stability and calmness and how to take care of children.
10. Providing opportunities for adolescents and young people to learn and develop using online options during the lockdown period, which include a variety of different activities such as personal development training, one-on-one career counselling, life skills activities, speech contests and photo contests.



## 9. LESSONS LEARNED AND CONCLUSIONS

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- From the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic, when China began informing the world about the new coronavirus infection, Mongolia was at high risk as a neighbouring country. However, the immediate actions taken, such as closing the borders, suspending international flights and other means of transportation, and prompt distribution of recommendations and advice on preventing the spread among the population allowed Mongolia to be one of the few countries that did not have community or local transmission of COVID-19 until November 2020.
- The Government of Mongolia adopted and enacted the COVID-19 Mitigation Law in the beginning stages of the pandemic. This Law specifically addresses youth education, training and tuition fees. Based on this law as the legislative framework, related decrees and regulations were enacted to prevent the spread of COVID-19, and to create favourable conditions for the population, including young people, as well as to provide assistance and support to businesses.
- The Ministry of Health and SEC were promptly and regularly providing the public with accurate and timely information on COVID-19 cases, prevalence, spread, recommendations, and guidelines on prevention. As a result, the Government obtained the trust of the citizens, and people were willing to follow its decisions and measures.
- As a result of the Government's prompt and decisive actions, the current situation is relatively stable. However, further spread of COVID-19 will create a serious risk for public health and for livelihoods and income of young people. For young people who have lost their jobs and income, it will be challenging to recover financially.
- The self-employed, temporary workers and these who were working in the informal sector are probably hit the hardest because they lack skills, resources and opportunities to cope during the COVID-19 pandemic.
- At a time when many young people are facing difficulties, such as finding new jobs, starting a new business, or switching to another sector, the Mongolian Government is committed to implementing measures to support youth employment as a part of its "To save the economy and health" programme, and is allocating 500 billion MNT for this purpose and 3 trillion MNT in soft mortgage loans for young families.

- So far there are no examples of the Government engaging youth NGOs to officially share in the implementation of measures to fight against the pandemic. However, several youth NGOs initiated their own fundraising and humanitarian campaigns to help poor, vulnerable families and children in challenging conditions. With contributions and donations from more than 2,861 individuals, Lantuun Dohio, a youth-led NGO working on child protection and development services for children who suffer from all forms of violence, including physical and sexual violence, was the first NGO to successfully initiate a campaign. The campaign provided food assistance to 800 low-income and poor households in difficult circumstances during the COVID-19 pandemic.
- During the COVID-19 pandemic, a few serious human rights violations were reported. These were due a number of factors, including the lack of coordination between the relevant government agencies at all levels, lack of prompt and comprehensive systems of exchange of information and decision making, and the slow multi-step response process.
- Based on the experience over the past year, it can be concluded that many Mongolians do not have sufficient capabilities and resources to cope with wide-ranging emergencies such as the COVID-19 pandemic and natural disasters. Building resilience to emergencies within the country is critical, particularly for young people.
- Many children and young people in Mongolia realized that education can be obtained from distance and/or online sources. They developed a variety of skills, personal good practices and useful habits related to e-learning. However, the transition to e-learning was not smooth for all: children of remote herders or from low-income families without access to the Internet or computers cannot equally participate in such distance learning.
- There are no known examples of insurance companies' involvement in the COVID-19 pandemic response.
- The current COVID-19 pandemic response has several features that show overcoming the challenges cannot be done through health sector alone. The response needs multi-sectoral cooperation, coordination and partnership in many socio-economic areas, including education, finance, employment and social security.

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<sup>35</sup> Article 9.18 states: "The General Prosecutor, the General Intelligence Agency and the Head of National Police Agency shall jointly approve the Regulation for obtaining information from citizens and legal entities for the purpose of identifying the movement of infected citizens."

# 10. RECOMMENDATIONS

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- Include in the new General Law on Education, a provision differentiating university tuition fees for the training programmes provided, in electronic and classroom formats.
- During the e-learning transition, students' needs should be studied and identified; the content of e-learning programmes and curricula should be regularly reviewed and improved.
- Continue the activities of newly established online psychological counselling for youth, expand the services, and engage professionals and establish their teams.
- Develop and adhere to national standards for infection control protection in healthcare facilities and for medical personnel to prevent infections and create a safe hospital environment during pandemics.
- Continue the policy of providing free services to detect, diagnose or confirm, isolate and to treat COVID-19, and expand it in the future by allocating additional funds.
- Develop and supply short-term, affordable, and accessible health and life insurance products that will protect against COVID-19 and other similar infections; the Government shall initiate such activities and collaborate with private insurance companies providing such financial security to its citizens.
- Approve immediately and enact the regulation indicated in Provision 9.18<sup>35</sup> of Article 9 of the COVID-19 Mitigation Law that allows the Government to obtain information on COVID-19.
- Provide counselling, basic services and shelter to adolescents and young people who are victims of violence during the COVID-19 pandemic, and establish cooperation and partnerships with national and international organizations and NGOs in this regard.
- Organize effectively and promptly activities to repatriate the Mongolian citizens willing to return to their homeland.
- Involve youth initiatives and engage youth NGOs, voluntary unions and groups in COVID-19 pandemic prevention and control activities to increase resources and reduce the workload of the government and public organizations, and to explore the possibility of delegating certain tasks to implement prevention activities.
- Provide professional care and support to adolescents who are left alone in the event of their parents or caregivers being infected and isolated in health facilities, or adolescents and children who have had parents die and live in orphanages or temporary care centres, nursing homes or households led by adolescents.

# Annex: List of people interviewed

Organization	Position/Affiliation	Name	Method
<b>National level</b>			
<b>The Ministry of Labour and Social Protection</b>	Head, Division for Children, Youth Elderly and Family Development	N. Bayarmaa	Key informant Interview (KII) (online)
<b>Family Children and Youth Development Agency</b>	Head, Division of Youth Development	I. Selenge	KII (face-to-face)
<b>National Human Rights Commission of Mongolia</b>	Commissioner	Dr. Sunjid	KII (face-to-face)
<b>The Ministry of Labour and Social Protection</b>	Youth Specialist	G. Gan-Oyun	KII (online)
<b>UNFPA Mongolia</b>	Youth Officer	Kh. Battuya	KII (face-to face)
<b>COVID-19 Taskforce Team, Emergency Commission</b>	Member	B. Dolgorsuren	KII (online)
<b>Ministry of Health, Department of Health Policy</b>	Senior Specialist	G. Oyuntsetseg	KII (face to face)
<b>Youth NGOs and civil society organizations (CSOs)</b>			
<b>Council of Mongolians Abroad NGO</b>	President	N. Nomun-Erdene	KII (online)
<b>“Ивээл, итгэл сэтгэл” NGO</b>	Executive Director	Sh. Enkhjargal	KII (online)





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