

Mongolia



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Total population (2005) ¹	2 646 000
% under 15 (2005) ¹	30
Population distribution % rural (2005) ¹	43
Life expectancy at birth (2004) ²	65
Under-5 mortality rate per 1000 (2004) ²	52
Maternal mortality ratio per 100 000 live births (2000) ³	110
Total expenditure on health % GDP (2004) ⁴	6.9
General government expenditure on health as % of general government expenditure (2004) ⁴	10.1
Human Development Index Rank, out of 177 countries (2003) ⁵	114
Gross National Income (GNI) per capita US\$ (2004) ⁶	590
Population living below national poverty line % (1990-2002) ⁵	36.3
Adult (15+) literacy rate (2003) ⁵	97.8
% population with sustainable access to an improved water source (2002) ⁵	62
% population with sustainable access to improved sanitation (2002) ⁵	59

Sources:

- ¹ United Nations Population Division
- ² World Health Report 2006
- ³ World Health Report 2005
- ⁴ WHO data on National Health Accounts
- ⁵ Human Development Report 2005
- ⁶ World Development Indicators 2005 (World Bank)

Mongolia, a landlocked country with an area of 1.56 million km², is among the poorest countries in Asia. The first democratic elections in 1990 marked the beginning of profound socioeconomic changes in a transition to a market economy and modern democracy. Liberalization of social, political and economic life is progressing but as yet not all of the population has benefited and inequities persist or have even worsened. Communications are difficult as the country has only 1600 km of paved roads and some small ethnic groups live in very remote areas. Winters are long and extremely cold, with average January temperatures below -30°C. Periods of particularly extreme cold (*dzuds*) occur about every 10 years with disastrous consequences.

HEALTH & DEVELOPMENT

Impediments to poverty reduction. Government efforts to improve socioeconomic conditions and access to healthcare are hindered by: the country's geography and severe climate; the widely dispersed population; lack of infrastructure with little access to safe water and sanitation, electricity, communications, and other modern amenities.

Mortality from communicable diseases has decreased. The communicable diseases of concern now include tuberculosis, sexually transmitted infections and brucellosis. Immunization programmes have successfully controlled polio, tetanus, pertussis and measles.

Mortality from noncommunicable conditions is increasing. Cancers, cardiovascular disease, injuries, poisoning and other external causes associated with lifestyle changes are important causes of morbidity and mortality.

Primary care and preventive services are emphasized in the 2001 *State Health Policy* which sets the guiding principles for Mongolia's health sector decentralization, replacing a highly centralized hospital dominated system. With the recently adopted Health Sector Master Plan, Mongolia can now better channel donor support to priority programmes. The Ministry of Health (MOH) and WHO jointly chair a Health Sector Donor Coordination process in collaboration with the Ministry of Finance.

Health sector responsibilities are shared between: the MOH, responsible for planning, policy, regulation, monitoring, and for specialist hospitals (in Ulaanbaatar); the Health Insurance Fund, which receives income-related contributions and subsidies from the Ministry of Finance and makes payments to hospitals according to anticipated needs; and provincial and rural district authorities which manage local public hospitals and allocate funds from central government and the Health Insurance Fund.

OPPORTUNITIES	CHALLENGES
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Government renewed commitment to the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs), 2006 • Poverty Reduction Strategy Paper, 2002 • The year 2000 Action Programme of the Government of Mongolia, the 2005 Health Sector Master Plan and the health law revisions of 2005, provide goals and tools for the health system based on international standards • Poverty Partnership Agreement between the Government and Asian Development Bank in 2000 adopting International Development Targets • Decentralization of health services with emphasis on setting up family group practices • Traditional medicine is popular and encouraged. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Hospital dominated health services, insufficient redirection of resources for provision of better and accessible primary care and preventive services • Decentralization without effective resource allocation mechanisms and governance at different levels; lack of clarity in roles and responsibilities • Over-supply of medical staff, inadequate skill-mix for needs • Inadequate prioritization and ineffective use of financial resources; needed revisions in the health insurance law to improve access; absence of accurate comprehensive national health accounts; lack of evidence-based approach to clinical medicine • Weak implementation capabilities at service delivery level.



PARTNERS

Mongolia depends heavily on external assistance, which accounts for over 20% of total gross domestic product (GDP) (80% provided as loans and credits). The levels of international support to the health sector have increased in recent years, both in absolute terms and as a proportion of total health expenditure.

The Asian Development Bank is the main source of multilateral aid for health sector reform; it emphasizes service quality and a shift towards primary care, progressive establishment of family group practices throughout the country, improvements in referral systems, training in primary care models, hospital renovation and clinic construction.

UNFPA has provided substantial support for reproductive health programmes since 1997. UNICEF has been involved in immunization and essential drugs and in collaborative programmes with WHO on baby-friendly hospitals, Integrated Management of Childhood Illness (IMCI) and child nutrition. UNDP has contributed to HIV/AIDS control and efforts to counter alcoholism and, together with WHO, supports the improvement of water supply to rural areas.

Bilateral support: the German Agency for Technical Cooperation (GTZ), through the joint *Improving Reproductive Health in Mongolia* project launched in 1998; and the Japan International Cooperation Agency (JICA) for maternal and child health, including immunization and combating iodine deficiency, and donating hospital equipment.

Water and sanitation experts from the Asian Development Bank, UNDP, UNICEF, WHO and the World Bank met in early 2006 to develop strategies with the Government to better address the extensive water and sanitation needs of rural schools and hospitals. WHO has taken the lead in this field through its programme to protect springs used by the rural and urban poor and the provision of water and sanitation to demonstration rural hospitals with funding from the Arab Gulf Program for United Nations Development Organizations (AGFUND) and the United States Agency for International Development (USAID).

OPPORTUNITIES	CHALLENGES
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The United Nations Development Assistance Framework (UNDAF) for Mongolia, 2001 and 2006, established a basis for closer collaboration between UN agencies themselves and with the Government • The Department of International Coordination of the MOH with WHO has responsibility for coordinating international support for health with the Ministry of Finance. • Monthly meetings of donors, United Nations (UN) agencies and nongovernmental organizations to discuss the flow of funds and the type of assistance required. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Insufficient external support in the form of grants • Project oriented partner support without channelling resources through the Government planning and budgeting system • Insufficient planning and coordination of external missions.

WHO STRATEGIC AGENDA (2002-2007)

WHO's strategic agenda for Mongolia supports Government health policies to facilitate sustainable health system development, with implementation of interventions to reduce the burden of disease and promote healthy lifestyles. The strategic agenda is based on the UN Common Country Assessment (CCA) and UNDAF. It outlines the process of change within WHO to better meet the needs of Mongolia and identifies strategic directions, operational principles and functions of WHO in the country, concentrating on:

- **Health sector development.** Working with Ministries and agencies across the health sector to achieve better alignment of policies and capabilities for health; assessment of how policies are developed, implemented and evaluated and how policy decisions are communicated and compliance obtained; ensuring that health sector staff have appropriate technical knowledge and management skills.
- **Donor coordination and support.** Assisting the establishment of a comprehensive information system on donor support to facilitate MOH decisions on priorities for donor contributions, monitoring and accountability, effectiveness assessment, promoting synergies and avoiding duplication.
- **Disease control.** Providing technical support for communicable and noncommunicable diseases. Institutional strengthening and targeted donor support (for prioritized activities) requires the Government to assume increasing responsibility for disease prevention and control.
- **Environment and healthy lifestyles.** Working with the MOH and other Ministries in the field of "healthy settings" to influence policy development and service delivery, especially for rural water and sanitation, medical waste and monitoring of air pollution.
- **Health information and evidence for policy.** Improving health information in the context of decentralization to support resource allocation, analysis of service quality, workforce planning and policy analysis. Making better use of existing data and integrating data collection and analysis in routine planning, management and monitoring.
- **Emergency preparedness and response.** Providing support together with other agencies to alleviate the effects of emergency situations such as recent *dzud* disasters and possible earthquakes.



ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

WHO country page <http://www.who.int/countries/mng/en/>

Western Pacific Country Health Information Profile <http://www.wpro.who.int/countries/05mog/>

Mongolian Ministry of Health website <http://www.moh.mn>

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