

# Factsheet

SWISS AGENCY FOR DEVELOPMENT AND COOPERATION IN MONGOLIA

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Swiss Agency for Development  
and Cooperation SDC

## REDUCING IMPACT OF AIR POLLUTION ON MATERNAL AND CHILD HEALTH

### FACTS

#### Project name:

Reducing impact of air pollution on  
maternal and child health

#### Duration:

2018-2022

#### Budget:

- Total CHF 9,941,500
- SDC's contribution - CHF 4,802,500
- UNICEF mobilized contribution - CHF 2,761,000
- Contribution of the Government of Mongolia - CHF 2,378,000 (Municipality of Ulaanbaatar, Bayankhongor province)

#### Target group:

- Preschool children, pregnant and lactating women in Bayanzurkh and Songinokhairkhan districts and Bayankhongor provincial centre.

#### Target area:

The geographical focus will be on Ulaanbaatar as the largest number of children and pregnancies are at risk here (1.5 million Mongolian citizens live in Ulaanbaatar, which is about 50% of the total population). Within Ulaanbaatar, the focus will be on Bayanzurkh district and replication in Songinokhairkhan district, the largest districts of the city with the highest pollution levels during the winter.

#### SDC's Strategic Goal:

To contribute to the empowerment of Mongolian citizens and institutions towards an equitable, green and prosperous society, leaving no one behind.



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### BACKGROUND

Ulaanbaatar – home to half of Mongolia's three million population - is one of the most polluted capitals in the world. On the coldest days of the year, daily average of PM2.5 pollution levels reach 687 micrograms per cubic meter — 27 times the level WHO recommends as safe1.

The most important source of air pollution comes from coal-burning stoves in the "Ger" districts during winter. This is posing major health risks, especially to pregnant women and young children because they are most vulnerable to air pollution.

- In last 10 years, incidences of respiratory diseases in Ulaanbaatar alarmingly increased including a 2.7-fold increase in respiratory infections per 10,000 population.
- Pneumonia is now the second leading cause for under-five child mortality in the country.
- Children living in a highly polluted district of central Ulaanbaatar were found to have 40% lower lung function than children living in a rural area.
- A study found a 3.5-fold increase in fetal deaths has been documented between winter and summer in the capital city.

International studies increasingly find links between air pollution and diseases that can

be highly damaging for children, such as bronchitis and asthma, causing children to miss school and other important learning and development opportunities. Pregnant women's exposure to air pollution can affect growing baby's lungs and respiratory system causing pre-term birth and spontaneous abortion. Furthermore, an increasing body of evidence is showing that air pollution can damage brain development of an unborn child which can affect academic performance and behavior later in life.

In Mongolia, there is insufficient awareness, information and advocacy related to health risks posed by air pollution. The health care capacity is overwhelmed by seasonal high fluctuation of disease burden attributable to air pollution. Approaches to reduce the exposure of preschool children and pregnant women are not systematically piloted, evaluated and rolled out.

While the Government and development partners are focusing its efforts on clean(er) energy solutions which is expected to take at least 5 to 10 years, urgent actions must be taken to reduce maternal and child health risks NOW. This is particularly important considering over half of Mongolia's population lives in Ulaanbaatar, and there are also increasing reports of similar

problems in other cities across the country. Health risk reduction measures should be taken urgently providing better coping mechanisms to people. To support Mongolia address these issues, a comprehensive set of interventions -

from data generation to service provision and informed policy making - are needed in alignment with development policies of the Government of Mongolia and UN Sustainable Development Goals.

## MAIN GOAL OF THE PROJECT

The joint SDC and UNICEF project aims to reduce the risks of air pollution to maternal and child health through enhanced knowledge, evidence-based policy, improved institutional capacity and action on the ground. It will also aim at strengthening health services for vulnerable children and pregnant women in Mongolia.

Ultimate vision is that urban Mongolia has acceptable air quality and the health system will be able to monitor and provide adequate care to children and adults with air pollution related health conditions due to childhood exposure.

## PROJECT ACTIVITIES

- the project will address the short, medium and long term capacity needs for generating and sharing reliable and representative data and analysis on air pollution and maternal and child health. The project will develop stakeholder specific information, education and communication materials on air pollution and maternal and child health and develop the platform for knowledge management and knowledge exchange.
- the project will demonstrate solutions to improve the overall indoor air quality in kindergartens and maternal and paediatric wards, and developing and institutionalizing the required standards, guidance and training. This will not only help reducing exposure to PM2.5 and PM10 in these facilities, but also improve other important indoor air quality parameters such as carbon dioxide and humidity.
- the project will strengthen air pollution preparedness plans for the health sector and primary health care services during the cold season. Aspects will include human and financial resources planning and management, procurement and distribution of equipment and medicine, and monitoring performance.
- the project will undertake policy advocacy including technical assistance for key measures identified under the other outcomes. It will support the Government with cross-sectoral coordination, communication and dialogue both within the Government and with other stakeholders.

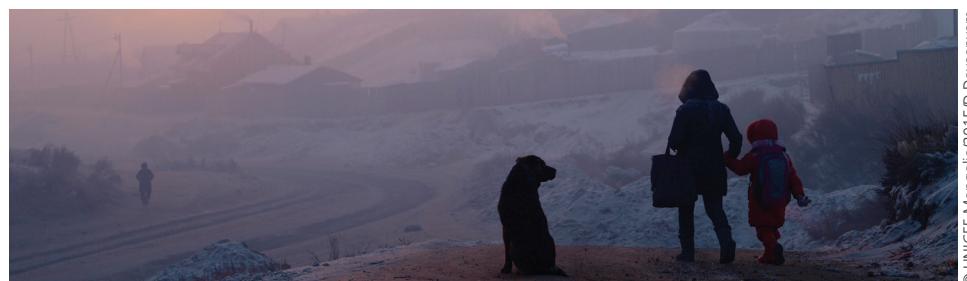
## EXPECTATIONS OR RESULTS

The project has identified the following outcomes:

1. Improved capacity to generate and disseminate data, research, analysis and information on air pollution and maternal and child health.
2. Preschool children and pregnant women are at lower health risk from air pollution through community level risk reduction measures.

3. Maternal and child health risk reduction measures are integrated in relevant national and local policies.

At the impact level, it aims at contributing to 1) reduced prevalence of pneumonia amongst children under 5, and 2) reduced incidence of air pollution related pregnancy risks.



## Implementing partner:

- Ministry of Health
- Ministry of Finance
- Ministry of Labour and Social Protection
- Ministry of Education, Culture, Sciences and Sports
- Ministry of Environment and Tourism
- National Committee on Reduction of Environmental Pollution
- The Governor's Office of Ulaanbaatar city
- The Governor's Office of Bayanzurkh district
- The Governor's Office of Songinokhairkhan district
- The Governor's Office of Bayankhongor province

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