

Mongolia



A young learner travels 4 km every day in search of better internet connectivity in order to continue her studies

COUNTRY FACTS AND FIGURES



Population:	3.33 million (Worldometers, 2021)
2021 Global Index Score:	63.79/100 (SDR 2021)
2021 Global Index Rank:	106/165 (SDR 2021)
SDG 4 Dashboard:	● SDG achieved (SDR 2021)
SDG 4 Trend:	↑ On track or maintaining SDG achievement (SDR 2021)
SDG 10 Dashboard:	● Significant challenges remain (SDR 2021)
2019 HDI Value/Rank:	0.737, 99 out of 189 (HDRO, 2020)
GNI per capita (PPP\$):	10,839 (HDRO, 2020)
Gini Index:	32.83 (Statista, 2020)
Income Group:	Lower-Middle Income Status (WB, 2020)
Secondary Net Enrolment:	Total: 85.7% Female: 86.5% Male: 84.8% (UNESCO, 2019)
Literacy Rate (15 years & older):	Total: 98.4% Female: 98.6% Male: 98.2% (UNESCO, 2018)
Out of School:	1,948 children 14,681 adolescents- 7,027 Female; 7,654 Male (UNESCO, 2019)

REFERENCES:

Human Development Report Office (HRDO). (2020). Latest Human Development Index Ranking. Retrieved July 1, 2021, from <http://hdr.undp.org/en/content/latest-human-development-index-ranking>

Sachs et al. (2021): The Decade of Action for the Sustainable Development Goals. Sustainable Development Report 2021. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Statista. (2020) GINI index worldwide 2020, by country. Retrieved July 1, 2021, from <https://www.statista.com/forecasts/1171540/gini-index-by-country>

Sustainable Development Report: Rankings. (2021). Retrieved July 1, 2021, from <https://dashboards.sdgindex.org/rankings>

UNESCO Institute for Statistics (UIS) database. (2018). Retrieved July 1, 2021, from <http://uis.unesco.org/en/country/mn>

UNESCO Institute for Statistics (UIS) database. (2019). Retrieved July 1, 2021, from <http://uis.unesco.org/en/country/mn>

World Bank Country and Lending Groups. (2020). Retrieved July 1, 2021, from <https://datahelpdesk.worldbank.org/knowledgebase/articles/906519>

Worldometers. (2021). Mongolia Population. Retrieved July 8, 2021, from <https://www.worldometers.info/world-population/mongolia-population/>

Civil Society Spotlight Report on SDG 4 for HLPF 2021

I. COUNTRY SITUATION

As the novel coronavirus (COVID-19) started spreading in late 2019, the Government of Mongolia closed its schools and kindergartens on January 27, 2020, before the outbreak, and immediately switched to distance learning. Citizens and organisations were encouraged to work remotely, while community activities, training, and entertainment were restricted. On April 29, 2020, the State Great Hural (Parliament) passed a Law on Prevention, Combat, and Reduction of Social and Economic Impacts of COVID-19. The law has been amended three times and extended until December 31, 2021. However, the implementation of the law remains poor because it fails to address the increasing inequities and exclusion of marginalised groups in education amidst the pandemic.

Mongolia's population is 3.3 million, over a third of which are children ages 0 to 18 years. With the shift to distance learning as a response to the pandemic, coverage has remained insufficient to reach the students at all levels of education. According to the Ministry of Education and Science (MOES), 174,000 children¹ have been missing classes. With the transition to distance education, young children are at risk of being left unattended at home, studying tele-lessons independently without supervision, and becoming hooked to the screen, thus, violating their right to live, develop, and learn in a healthy and safe environment.

Home quarantine also reduced the motivation to study. Due to the inability to communicate and interact with their peers, learners experienced feelings of loneliness, isolation, stress, and fear. Some also had to spend long hours in an unfavourable family environment and had experienced hunger with little access to nutritious food. Child and youth labour among middle school and high school boys also increased. In addition, children with disabilities were no longer receiving additional support, and children from herder families living in remote areas, were not able to access distance learning.

1 <https://ikon.mn/n/25fl> The Minister of Education and Science, L.Enkh-Amgalan, made this statement during a meeting with the UN Resident Coordinator, Tapan Mishra.

II. EQUITY AND FUNDING CHALLENGES FOR SDG 4 AMIDST COVID-19

While tele-lessons, e-lessons, interactive lessons, electronic contents, and audio-lessons were prepared and delivered, a total of 178,577 students were not able to attend tele-lessons and were, instead, provided with self-study printed handouts² due to absence of electricity, poor Internet connection, and lack of technical facilities at home.

Tele-attendance averaged 82.4% in the first quarter of the 2020-2021 school year³ while kindergarten enrolment of children with disabilities was only 57.2%. At the secondary level, enrolment rate of registered students with disabilities was placed at 77.6%.⁴

One of the disadvantages of distance learning was the inability to monitor student performance at the same level as classroom learning. Twenty-one per cent (21%) of the students who participated in the survey did not watch TV at all for various reasons.⁵ A UNICEF study noted that students failed to attend televised lessons due to the lack of facilities and TV sets at home, domestic responsibilities, and the large number of learners in the household, among others.

School teachers did not have any form of support and assistance. Most of them lack mobile phones, computers, and access to the Internet; have no previous experience in distance learning; have not been trained; are unfamiliar with the use of e-learning softwares; had little preparation for e-lessons; and are burdened with domestic chores. A huge majority (73.3%) of survey respondents had no teaching experience in distance learning, 75.2% did not attend any training, while 20% never used electronic media. There were more women (76.3%) than men (60%) who said they had no teaching experience in distance education.⁶

The quality of education has been seriously affected by the pandemic with the extended closure of schools and the long quarantine period at home. Difficulties and tensions were experienced by parents and guardians working along with teachers in sustaining learning opportunities for the children. Nonetheless, the interaction was also an improvement in valuing and appreciating the hard work done by the teachers.

2 "Annex to the Order A / 190 of the Ministry of Education and Science dated May 21, 2021"

3 Resolution of the Ministry of Education and Science dated July 1, 2021

4 The same

5 "The Impact of COVID-19 on Education," 2021, p 14.

6 "Teaching and Learning in the COVID-19 Caused Quarantine", Education Coalition, 2020, page 21

MNT 2.5 billion (or USD 877,309⁷) has been spent from the state budget for the preparation and the organisation of tele- and e-lessons in the academic years 2019-2020 and 2020-2021. These expenditures were financed from the Ministry's programme, activities, education standards, curriculum, and teacher training budgets. MNT 1.2 billion (USD 421,107) has been allocated for the preparation and recording of tele-lessons, MNT 98.0 million (USD 34,390) for the salaries and bonuses of teachers who taught and moderated tele-lessons, and MNT 4.0 million (USD 1,403) for other organisational expenses.

Resolution No. 114 of the Government of Mongolia of 2020 "On organising and implementing measures to provide MNT 100,000 thousand (USD 35) per month to all children under 18 years of age for three months from the savings from unused funds as a result of school closure.⁸ To date, however, the MOES has no budget for distance (e-learning) training.⁹

The education expenditure sheet shows that only the costs of preparing, teaching, organising, and disseminating tele-lessons are covered, and that funding for every learner's accessibility is not budgeted. The adoption of the Law on Prevention, Combat, and Reduction of Social and Economic Impacts of the COVID-19 provided a legal basis for the transfer of education budget from one budget portfolio to another (portion of social welfare). It poses risks to the current and future state of financing in the sector, and budget cuts could affect budget planning for education. Health, education, and social security systems need to be strengthened to fully recover from this crisis. Therefore, the "All for Education!" National Civil Society Coalition in Mongolia (AFE Mongolia) emphasises the importance of standing firm in the decision to maintain and protect the budget of the social sector, especially education.¹⁰

Order A/190 of the MOES of May 21, 2021 ensures that a comprehensive plan (2021-2023) to compensate for the learning delays of secondary school students is in line with the "Vision-2050", "Government Action Plan of Mongolia 2020-2024, the Medium Term Plan of the Education Sector 2020-2030, and the government's education policies. The implementation of a comprehensive plan attempts to compensate for and eliminate student learning gaps, ensure the social and psychological well-being of students, and address other issues.

7 The currency converter used for all MNT figures was XE Mongolian Tughril to US Dollar conversion, Retrieved Jul 9, 2021, 11:39 UTC, from <https://www.xe.com/currencyconverter/convert/?Amount=2500000000&From=MNT&To=USD>

8 Resolution of the Ministry of Education and Science dated July 1, 2021

9 "Results of emergency tele-lessons and their appropriateness", 2020, page 14

10 "The Impact of COVID-19 on Education," 2021, p 74



A child from a herder family learns his lessons through the television



More than half a year of studying online and staying at home

III. LINKING SDG 4 TO OTHER SDGS

The impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic have highlighted the fact that kindergartens, schools, and other educational institutions, and development agencies provide a wide range of services, such as nutritional, socio-psychological, health, safety, and child protection services for marginalised children and families. In Mongolia, the quarantine and spread of the COVID-19 pandemic, compounded by the cold season, have exacerbated health, livelihood, economic, and social security crises, and exposed the magnitude of inequality, human rights violations, and economic issues existing prior to the outbreak.

The Law on Prevention, Combat, and Reduction of the Social and Economic Impacts of the COVID-19 is officially being implemented. Measures are being taken to improve the social protection of citizens, but these have not been sufficient to reach the marginalised and vulnerable sectors. Allowances provided to learners, food vouchers, and social welfare benefits have been criticised by civil society groups as insufficient and subject to misappropriation.¹¹

According to the World Bank-funded survey conducted by the National Statistics Office, since the closure of schools on January 27, 2020,¹² 16% of the self-employed have no income, 73% have lost their previous business income, and the income of 70% of households engaged in herder and farming decreased. Sixty-four per cent (64%) of households surveyed reported increased prices for basic main foods, while one in four of poor households (23%) said they were worried about food shortages for the coming week. In this regard, 7% of the children surveyed said that they had to work because of financial problems in their families.¹³ According to the sample survey,¹⁴ 16.7% of working children in Mongolia ages 5 to 17 years and 7.8% of children engaged in hazardous work, most of them in agriculture (horse racing), construction, wholesale, and retail trade and services.

A young person who responded to a youth survey¹⁵ shared his experience: “Before the pandemic, I used to go to school in the morning and play with my friends during the day, but now I make a living by driving a cart at the Narantuu market which lasted from 7 AM to 9 PM and earning only an average of MNT 40,000 (USD 14) a day, although there are times I return home without income.”

11 Education: Quality, Financing and Accountability” National Civil Society Forum, December 9-10, 2020. Civil Society Paper on the Impact of COVID 19 on Education.

12 Result of Mongolia COVID 19 household response phone survey (round 1), 2020.07.17

13 “Corona virus Impact Assessment”, “Save the Children” UB, 2020, page 40

14 Sample survey of social indicators, 20

15 “How did COVID-19 affect a certain group of young people ?” Action-Based Youth Survey, “For Education for All!” National Coalition of Civil Society, 2020, page 30.

In future emergencies, apart from immediate food and livelihood assistance, it is important to address increased risks of violence against children and youth, including child labour. In addition, the implementation of long-term programmes and assistance will be an effective step in ensuring the well-being of children and youth, reducing any violations of children’s and youth’s rights, and the worst forms of child labour.

In the first half of 2020, NGOs and international organisations distributed food, hygiene items, toiletries, and school supplies to at-risk children living in low-income households. Specially prompt and timely actions towards victims of violence were effective.¹⁶ The involvement of citizens and civil society organisations (CSOs) in the implementation of government measures within the social accountability in the education sector has improved. The government received feedback and suggestions well and citizens were provided with the required information. However, much more needs to be done to improve cooperation between the government and civil society.¹⁷

In addition, from August 2020 to May 2021, the AFE coalition organised a series of policy discussions and submitted to the MOES a number of civil society documents, positions, recommendations and studies on the impact of COVID-19 on education and overcoming the education gaps and losses. As a result, on May 21, the MOES approved the “Comprehensive Plan for Compensation and Elimination of School Delays” (2021-2023) and decided on the required funding.¹⁸ It is also significant that the support group recognises CSOs as entities responsible for external evaluation and monitoring.

The Forum of Human Rights NGOs monitored the implementation of the Law on Prevention, Combat, and Reduction of Social and Economic Impacts of the COVID-19, and the AFE education coalition was responsible for ensuring the right to education. The monitoring report was submitted to the Speaker of the Parliament, the government and international organisations, and it was recommended that human rights principles be followed in enforcing the law.

IV. THE ROLE OF EDUCATION IN SUSTAINABLE AND RESILIENT RECOVERY

History has shown that education is a critical component for sustainable social and economic development. The pandemic has provided lessons and experiences on how to ensure equitable and inclusive education

16 “The Impact of COVID-19 on Education,” p 41

17 Ibid.

18 <https://cdn.greensoft.mn/uploads/users/2649/files/Orders/Order%202021%20A-190.pdf>

More than half a year of studying online and staying at home



under crisis situations. Learning needs and requirements may differ depending on the specific context. The need to address the learning requirements of high-risk children and youth during emergencies must be prioritised as they are highly vulnerable to being neglected and left behind. Improving the policy environment for tele- and e-learning, fully identifying stakeholders in the tele-learning process, and making the “econtent.edu.mn” website accessible to students with a wide range of needs, characteristics, and differences by allowing TV lessons to be repeated and recovered.

By focusing on the psychological and social well-being of stakeholders and the increasingly significant role of parents, the government will take the necessary policy and planning measures. Methodological advice to teachers, students, and parents, training, and provision of books, free internet and digital equipment to eliminate delays were addressed but tended to lag behind in terms of time and accessibility.

The National Human Rights Commission, in its Recommendation 1/25 to the MOES, on January 8, 2021, noted the lack of access to tele- and e-learning and suggested providing free internet access and electronic means to children with limited access to tele- and distance learning. It further recommended to increase access to education through the introduction of printed books and applications that work without the Internet, as well as to support the safe digital use of children; to include guidelines and protection against cyberattacks in the curriculum; to develop a response plan for the COVID-19 in education including the provision of common information. The Ulaanbaatar City and District Education Departments investigated the performance of teachers and students on delays, but rarely provided feedback on results and recommendations.

V. RECOMMENDATIONS

- ◆ Develop a comprehensive programme on e-learning transition, ensuring adequate funding to finance digital infrastructure, sustained training of teachers and learners, and family support for effective home learning.
- ◆ Significantly increase financing for education and mobilise resources to provide equitable, accessible, and quality education amidst and beyond the pandemic and put in place safe learning environments for all learners, especially the most marginalised.
- ◆ Upgrade internet connectivity and ensure adequate provisions of equipment, gadgets and server facilities in every school and educational institution. Prepare the schools, teachers and students for hybrid learning combining online education with classroom learning and other appropriate teaching methods.
- ◆ Incorporate media and information literacy in the school curriculum, including the appropriate usage of electronic and non-electronic media, to ensure safe and effective use of technology.
- ◆ Implement policies and programmes to address the mental distress of the pandemic on students, parents and guardians; develop psychosocial services in the field of education to create a positive learning environment through provisions of school-based and mobile psychologists and guidance teachers.
- ◆ Assess teacher workloads, coping mechanisms, and support during emergency situations; conduct analytical research to help teachers' transition to distance learning and assessment methods; ensure the provision of training and equipment support to teachers.
- ◆ Improve parental participation and responsibility in education and implement parental education programmes starting from the preschool level.
- ◆ Monitor and evaluate equal access to education and focus on improving cooperation and coordination among parents, teachers, schools personnel, and CSOs.
- ◆ Study good practices of other countries in distance learning and identify which can be adopted and customised in Mongolia.
- ◆ Develop international partnerships to strengthen the capacity of the Ministry of Education and Science to respond to health and other emergencies. •



Asia South Pacific Association for Basic and Adult Education (ASPBAE) is a regional association of more than 200 organisations and individuals working towards promoting quality education for all and transformative and liberating, lifelong adult education and learning.

Unit 106 Sterten Place Condominium, 116 Maginhawa Street,
Teachers Village East, Diliman, Quezon City, Philippines
Tel/Fax: 63 2 8441 4594
Email: aspbae@gmail.com | Website: www.aspbae.org

ISBN: 978-621-95859-0-3



"All for Education!" National Civil Society Coalition
Room 3, Shuren Building-22, Embassy Street 8/4,
Sukhbaatar District, Ulaanbaatar, Mongolia
Tel/Fax: 7000 8292, 8818 6672, 9663 3360
Email: info@all4education.mn
Website: <http://www.all4education.mn/>

Established in 2010 with support from the Civil Society Education Fund (CSEF), "All for Education!" National Civil Society Coalition advocates for the full implementation of Sustainable Development Goal 4 (SDG 4) in the country. The coalition works for sustainable nation-wide changes in the education policies and system to create and strengthen institutionalised channels for meaningful and impactful citizen and civil society participation at all levels of decision-making, to institutionalise multi-stakeholder consultative mechanisms, and to continuously influence education policy reform to ensure every person's right to life-wide and life-long quality education, all while implementing a human rights-based approach and amplifying the voices of the marginalised. AFE Mongolia is a member organisation of the Asia South Pacific Association for Basic and Adult Education (ASPBAE).