The impact of COVID-19 has been significant on both the economy and people. Public health social measures such as social distancing, mobility restrictions, quarantine and accelerated vaccination helped Mongolia contain the worst health effects of the pandemic from more than 1,000 daily cases in April and 2,000 cases in September to 100 cases in December. Unfortunately, the maternal mortality ratio tripled compared to 2020 due to COVID-19. Furthermore, there was a significant toll on the economy. The economy is projected to grow by 4.5 per cent in 2021 after a growth moderation at 6 per cent in 2019 pre-COVID, supported by a rebound in exports – mainly mining – and private sector investments on the back of improved foreign direct investment, the Government’s continued income support, and effective vaccine roll-out[1].

The Government’s income support such as quintupling the Child Money Programme payment and covering the utility cost of households (which is the interventions with the highest coverage) and businesses – compensated income loss to COVID-19 among poor households and businesses. A microsimulation analysis of poverty by the World Bank reveals that without such mitigating measures, approximately 195,000 to 260,000 more people could have been pushed into poverty, bringing the poverty rate up to 33.6 per cent. This analysis is supported by new 2020 poverty estimates that reveal poverty dropping to 27.8 per cent. In addition, the analysis further reveals that without COVID-19, it would drop to 24.3 per cent. However, weaker economic recovery, high inflation rates, and rising food and commodity prices raise concerns of increased household indebtedness and vulnerability as well as long-term consequences for child nutrition, education outcomes and health. The inflation rate was 10.5 per cent as of November 2021. The largest contributors to inflation were a food price increase of 47.6 per cent, a price increase for imported products of 50.4 per cent and a fuel price increase of 41.6 per cent[2]. Health expenditure for both the Government and households increased significantly; for example, Health Insurance Fund expenditure increased by more than three times compared with the previous year.

The year also saw the sixth presidential election in the democratic history of Mongolia, that took place in the midst of COVID-19. While Mongolian People’s Party candidate Khurelsukh Ukhnaa won with 67.7 per cent of votes, the largest ever margin in a presidential election, voter turnout nationwide was just below 60 per cent, lower than in previous elections (61 and 68 per cent respectively in 2017 and 2013). Additionally, a third-party candidate, Enkhbat Dangaasuren from the Right Person Coalition, won 20 per cent of the votes, versus 6 per cent for the candidate from the Democratic Party, Erdene Sodnomzundui. As a result, the Mongolian People’s Party’s new Parliament now controls both the legislature and the executive, raising further concerns about the direction in which Mongolia’s democracy is heading. The Cabinet headed by Prime Minister Oyun-Erdene which supplanted Prime Minister Khurelsukh’s Cabinet, that resigned as a gesture of accountability to protests over COVID-19 measures, turned one year old on 27 January 2022.

Climate-related risks, as well as air pollution, remain major concerns affecting the health and development of children. Air pollution, as measured by PM2.5 concentration, did not change compared to 2020, exceeding the national threshold of 50 twice or thrice during December 2021. A recent audit of the National Programme on Reduction of Air and Environment Pollution concludes that out of nine measures, only one was implemented and no impact was observed on health despite a total expenditure of MNT 456 billion (more than US$160 million) 2017–2020. The frequency of earthquakes increased by seven times compared with 2020, according to the National Statistics Office, stressing the need for preparedness and mitigation measures (in 2021 alone 269 earthquakes were recorded, with the highest magnitude reaching 6.8 in Khankh soum of Khuvsgul aimag).

Findings from the Multiple Indicator Cluster Survey (MICS) supported by UNICEF and conducted in collaboration with the National Statistics Office revealed that the COVID-19 pandemic affected children’s education, development and protection, as well as household livelihoods and well-being. Despite a significant increase in households with access to Internet as compared with MICS 2018, one third (34 per cent) of children were unable to access television and radio lessons. In addition, 22 per
cent of households reported that at least one member delayed accessing health services, questioning the sustainability and continuum of basic services, and doubting programmatic approaches and interventions.

The prevalence of moderate or severe food insecurity in Mongolia is 23 per cent (of which severe insecurity is only 1 per cent), with somewhat higher prevalence in urban areas and among households living in the two poorest quintiles. Nearly half of respondents reported weight change both for children under five and adolescents (10–19 years old). Of these, 86 per cent reported weight gain and only 10–12 per cent of parents were concerned. On related note, the proportion of children under five and adolescents spending more than three hours a day on screen time stands at 24 and 55 per cent respectively. Moreover, 29 per cent of children 0–4 years old do not practice age-appropriate sleep time.

COVID-related fears increased with each successive wave. The percentage of respondents reporting fear of a family member getting COVID-19 was 59 per cent in February versus 78 per cent in October. Fears about loss of income rose during lockdowns between February and July, increasing from 61 to 71 per cent and stabilizing at 68 per cent during the October wave of data collection. COVID-19 lessons highlight the importance of preparedness and the recovery response, not only for readiness for pandemics but also for public health implications, including mental health. Sustainable systems-building programmatic approaches need further reshuffling, broadening the scope of cross-sectoral and intra-sectoral collaboration and coordination.

UNICEF adjusted its programming based on real-time assessment, as well as contributing technically and professionally to the operation of the clusters, Humanitarian Country Team, and the United Nations Socioeconomic response plan. UNICEF also played a critical role in COVID-19 vaccination.


Major contributions and drivers of results

The UNICEF Mongolia Office Annual Management Plan focused on four Priority Results in 2021.

1. Country Programme Document (CPD)
UNICEF Mongolia ensured that key child rights deprivations are integrated and strategic priorities of the United Nations Sustainable Development Cooperation Framework (UNSDCF) are in line with UNICEF’s new strategic plan. The common country assessment includes thorough analysis of child rights deprivations, highlighting children as one of the population groups at risk of being left behind. The Mongolia Country Office (MCO) is progressing in the development of its CPD in line with the UNSDCF strategic priorities. Based on several interactions with the regional office, a clear agenda for the country CPD has been developed and the MCO aims to finalize the Programme Rationale by mid-March 2022.

2. Integration of and practicing core values as part of workplace culture
The Staff Association, in close collaboration with management, thoroughly analyzed the results of the staff survey and did a further deep dive to devise concrete actions. Led by the Deputy Representative, actions and plans to manage the workload were identified and implemented in coordination with team leads. Updates on recruitment at all staff meetings were introduced as a response to a staff demand identified through the deep dive. In coordination with HR and the HRDT, training needs for both professional and personal development were addressed via training on psychological management, report writing and public speaking. Staff Association seasonal teams organized online events engaging staff in dancing and cooking, which were appreciated by staff and helped keep human interaction going during lockdowns. Management provided extensive support in vaccinating staff against COVID-19 and keeping staff safe. A combination of efforts resulted in the MCO team demonstrating notable progress in office culture performance, improving its score by 7.6 per cent between June and December, out of 157 offices globally.
UNICEF, in close partnership with the Government and donors, continued to respond to the COVID-19 pandemic based on the changing situation and needs of the most vulnerable population. UNICEF’s response focused on strengthening risk communication and community engagement; ensuring continuous access to education; accelerating child protection services; ensuring adequate health care, immunization and access to nutrition for children, women and vulnerable communities; supporting hygiene and sanitation promotion; and generating evidence for planning and advocacy. About 2,248,000 children, women and vulnerable communities were reached through the response, worth US$26.4 million. UNICEF collaborated with the Ministry of Health to improve health services and the capacities of health workers to respond to COVID-19. UNICEF also procured essential health supplies by providing 7,728 pieces of medical equipment and oxygen supplies worth US$1.4 million; 3.6 million doses of vaccines, 3.4 million injection devices and a central storage facility, all of which were worth US$18.5 million; construction of six mobile clinics and attached water, sanitation and hygiene (WASH) facilities; and 12 ambulances equipped with oxygen supplies, worth US$420,000. UNICEF provided comprehensive support for safe school reopening, including development of plans and protocols to open schools and kindergartens safely, support for a mental health campaign, and communication and advocacy work on hygiene. UNICEF supported the continuity of learning of more than 600,000 children, including those in remote areas or who do not have access to television or online platforms, though offline and online modalities.

UNICEF played a vital role in supporting the Government in its immunization programme during the pandemic by supplying vaccines that reached almost 43 per cent of the population of Mongolia. Some 2.35 million Pfizer vaccines were procured through a bilateral contract funded by the Government of Japan, and 1,327,260 Astra Zeneca and Pfizer vaccines were supplied to Mongolia through the COVAX Facility over nine months. In partnership with the Government and using World Bank funding, UNICEF built a new Central Vaccine Store, including equipment, at the National Centre for Communicable Diseases in three months. This represented a major upgrade in storage capacity and can store COVID-19 vaccines for 60 per cent of the population.

UNICEF worked with the Mongolian Association of Sign Language Interpreters to provide two-way communication and accessible information for people and children with hearing impairments. UNICEF provided National Public Television with full-time sign language interpreters to ensure timely emergency information for deaf people. A video call service in sign language was institutionalized by the Government and became a government-operated service from 1 October 2021.

4. Business efficiencies
The office implemented two global business improvement initiatives: e-tools and pre-paid card solutions. MCO rolled out a pre-paid card solution in early 2021. With pre-paid cards, both programme and operation teams could pay for low value purchases, with seamless integration between the VISION and CIBC technology platforms. This initiative helped eliminate the need for processing invoices through the GSSC, and ultimately led to saving invoice processing time and reconciliation for both the MCO as well as the GSSC.

MCO conducted e-tools training for 43 staff on 12 October 2021. In addition, training on the United Nations Partner Portal (UNPP) was conducted for implementing partners. In 2021, training modules on the UNPP, Partnership Management Portal (PMP) and Prevention of Sexual Abuse and Exploitation (PSEA) were fully implemented. This included registration of 18 civil society organizations (CSOs) on the UNPP module; 13 PCAs, 11 PDs and 3 SSFAs on the PMP module; and 16 PSEA assessments on the PSEA module. Implementation of the TRIP and FAM modules will continue in 2022, in addition to the upcoming PRP and Field Monitoring module.

Annual Programme Results
During the reporting year, UNICEF continued to contribute to national development priorities and UNSDCF results, focusing on the strategic positioning of UNICEF and leveraging outcome-level changes and integrated programming.
Outcome 1: Child survival and development
The country has seen drastic changes and their immediate results, in contrast with those of the first year of the COVID-19 pandemic, including changes in government structures, response strategies and
mitigation efforts. Strategies to achieve herd immunity, preceded by massive vaccination campaigns, resulted in turbulent yet increasingly stable health outcomes. With its multisectoral mandate, UNICEF has been a reliable partner, offering comprehensive technical assistance to the country response to COVID-19 while still supporting the implementation of the joint country programme.

Hand-out notes[i] for those under ‘COVID home-based supervision’, and ‘advisory to families with young children’ helped reduce workloads at primary health-care providers who were already short-handed and overburdened, while supporting individuals to benefit from phone-based services and periodic home visits. To enable real-time monitoring and early intervention to prevent service delay and disruption during COVID-19, UNICEF supported further developments of the H-INFO 3.0 health statistics software[ii] and the child mortality dashboard.[iii] The web-based H-INFO 3.0, now with additional functions, enabled primary-level entries as per updated data sets, which had not been technically possible since 2019, and had resulted in backlogs in health data and financial flows during the pandemic.

This increased functionality not only introduced a real-time service utilization dashboard but also allowed care-seekers (individuals) to receive their ‘COVID-19 treatment pack’, and service providers (hospitals) to get paid for COVID-19-related expenses by the Health Insurance Fund.

Nutrition support to the Government – including nutrition counselling, detection and treatment of acutely malnourished children and vitamin A supplementation during the COVID-19 pandemic – reached 358,494 children under five throughout the country. A national protocol on ‘Integrated Management of Acute Malnutrition’ was approved by the Health Minister’s Order #A/379,[iv] enabling the most vulnerable and severely malnourished children to access early detection and adequate treatment. Furthermore, thanks to UNICEF’s technical assistance, a comprehensive landscape analysis was conducted on the situation of childhood obesity in Mongolia, prompting the Government to draft an amendment to the Advertisement Law.

UNICEF provided technical support to local governments on cross-cutting policies and plans for climate-resilient WASH, disaster risk reduction (DRR) and winter preparedness, through organization of capacity-building training and provision of national consultancy to analyse local policies and create recommendations for integrating climate resiliency and child-focused strategies. As a result, WASH policies and the capacity of local authorities were strengthened through approval and updating of water safety plans (WSPs) in 95.2 per cent (59 out of 62) of the target communities. To implement the WSPs, UNICEF provided technical support to design and demonstrate climate-resilient WASH facilities in the target areas, which is particularly relevant in the context of the COVID-19 pandemic. Realizing the environmental rights of children and reducing exposure to air pollution has been a standing priority. A ‘teen parliament’ project was implemented together with the Sub-Standing Committee of the Parliament on the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). The project champions young people as changemakers. The aim is to avert climate catastrophe and eliminate air pollution by engaging with policymakers through innovative two-way communications technology, learning about climate change and environmental policies, and leading actions in communities. A high-level consultation, ‘Air pollution in a time of COVID-19: Rights to a clean, safe, healthy and sustainable environment’ was jointly organized with the Parliament, the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) and the World Health Organization (WHO). This enabled a dialogue on the results of air pollution reduction measures, and an exchange of experiences and lessons learned. The participants endorsed 18 recommendations and submitted them to the Cabinet for implementation.

Outcome 2: Inclusive, healthy and quality learning environments
UNICEF focused on further strengthening the policy environment for integrated early childhood development to support holistic development of young children, and inclusive education programmes to enhance access and the learning environment of children with disabilities (CWD) at regular kindergartens and schools. As a result, key documents such as a procedure on inclusive education for CWD in kindergartens (https://www.meds.gov.mn/post/73435), guidance on assessment of individual lesson plans for CWD, and a model curriculum to develop spatial and movement skills for children with visual impairments (shorturl.at/lmtE9) were developed.

COVID-19 necessitated that extra attention be paid to children’s physical and mental well-being. UNICEF supported the development of the first curriculum on postgraduate training for adolescent
doctors and a policy document on supporting mental health and psychosocial support in schools. Through volunteer engagement at school and community level, public awareness campaigns on mental health and the impact of air pollution on health were carried out successfully, reaching 90,000 people. UNICEF demonstrated two child-friendly kindergarten building models with better ventilation and heating, healthy and safe spaces, socially inclusive, WASH and kitchen facilities. It also improved five kindergartens and organized relevant trainings to enhance capacities for intersectoral collaboration in health, nutrition and protection services, benefiting 4,950 of the most disadvantaged children. Over 6,900 children in nine schools and six kindergartens in UNICEF target areas had access to climate-resilient WASH facilities (e.g. indoor toilets, showers and handwashing facilities with water and energy-efficient technologies). UNICEF’s advocacy coupled with the demonstration of innovative WASH facility models in schools and kindergartens contributed to an increase in government funding for the construction/rehabilitation of indoor WASH facilities nationwide in 2021.

Other successful advocacy campaigns led by UNICEF with other partners using a blended learning approach resulted in nationwide schools and kindergartens reopening in September. Through cross-sectoral collaboration, UNICEF provided comprehensive support around school and kindergarten reopening. Guidance for safe school reopening was developed and relevant trainings were organized for more than 5,000 school and kindergarten staff. Critical hygiene and prevention supplies, including hand sanitizer and a hygiene package, were provided to 699 schools, dormitories and kindergartens. During school closure, the learning of 320,000 children – including those in remote areas – was supported by developing workbooks and audio lessons. The audio lessons were distributed via national radio and radio equipment as well as online platforms. Teachers found audio lessons not only useful for home-based learning but also in-classroom teaching, especially for remedial learning. More than 350,000 users accessed interactive e-learning content, which was a first-of-its-kind initiative in Mongolia’s preschool and general education sectors.

Outcome 3: Equitable social policies and protective systems
UNICEF Mongolia’s progress in advancing inclusive and equity-focused child-related policies, budgets and systems that are shock-responsive and risk-informed was noteworthy in 2021. This includes solid evidence generation through sectoral and subnational budget reviews, poverty analysis, pilots and studies, policy advocacy and capacity-building in the areas of universal child benefit, family-friendly policies, child protection, child-friendly local governance and the social service workforce. UNICEF contributed to the enabling environment by providing technical support in the development of the Government’s long-term strategies and adoption of significant standards, guidance and standard operating procedures (SOPs).

UNICEF’s partnership and evidence-based policy advocacy led to a continued top-up of the Government’s flagship social protection programme for children, the Child Money Programme, throughout 2021, while the MCO continued its support in mainstreaming shock-responsiveness into the Government’s existing social protection system. UNICEF supported the measurement of multidimensional child poverty, which was timely to influence the ongoing development of the Government’s 10-year targeted programme on human social development. Under a joint programme with UNDP, UNICEF completed a social sector budget review in the health, education and social protection sectors.

UNICEF continued its support and commitment in strengthening the child protection system towards ending violence against children at home, in schools, and online. The Standards for Provision of Social Work Services and the Standards for Child Protection in Emergencies were approved by the Committee for Standardization of Social Services. The Deputy Prime Minister and Head of the State Emergency Commission endorsed the SOP for Providing Child Protection Services during the pandemic.

UNICEF supported the strengthening of subnational government capacities in child-friendly planning and budgeting, with a special focus on ensuring the sustainability of implementation of the Child-Friendly Communities Initiatives (CFCI) in five geographic focus areas (GFAs). The GFAs developed sustainability action plans on CFCI to be implemented with their own resources. Despite economic challenges due to COVID-19, local governments maintained the spending for children from Local Development Funds at 25–30 per cent.

UNICEF conducted a review of child focus in 56 existing policies and procedures related to DRR and
winter preparedness plans (WPPs) to enhance the resilience of children and families to environmental shocks and disasters. The review provided policy recommendations to national and subnational governments to ensure that policies, procedures and plans are child-centred. Accordingly, three local governments developed child-focused DRR and WPP plans, and are piloting them with UNICEF’s technical assistance.

Despite a series of restrictions due to COVID_19, UNICEF continued to expand business engagement in Mongolia by actively promoting family-friendly policies among the biggest companies operating in the country. Progress in improving the enabling environment for working families to raise happy and healthy children was created through the adoption of a new amendment to the Labour Law by the Parliament, introducing gender-progressive provisions to family-friendly policies in Mongolia.

As part of UNICEF 75th anniversary celebrations, the MCO organized a youth TED Talk where children delivered powerful messages on disabilities, discrimination and online bullying. Mongolia launched #OnMyMind, a digital activation on mental health for World Children’s Day and the release of the State of the World’s Children report, engaging about 150,000 people with compelling video content, illustrations and street art.

[iv]https://moh.gov.mn/laws/3

UN Collaboration and Other Partnerships

UNICEF collaboration with United Nations agencies was based on identifying gaps and overlaps in development support to SDG-focused national needs and priorities, and addressing them with coordinated and reliable response and expertise. UNICEF, as custodian of the Convention on the Rights of the Child, continued providing support to implement commitments under the Convention, related global norms and internationally agreed standards. In the pandemic context, United Nations partnership strove to support national response and prevention even more effectively, efficiently, and in a coordinated manner.

As part of COVID-19 response, UNICEF partnered with the United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA) and WHO to support countrywide preparedness and response to COVID-19, leading to improved health-care worker capacity, and monitoring of and early response to child mortality. With the International Organization for Migration, UNICEF supported the emergency return of vulnerable Mongolian children and families stranded abroad due to COVID-19. During school closure, UNICEF – together with the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization and UNFPA – developed 104 exemplary interactive pieces of content to support television lessons via a learner-centred approach. This content uses multimedia elements to create highly visual storytelling and teach children through interactive problem-solving activities. UNICEF, together with UNFPA, WHO and UNDP, continued working on an integrated support programme on women’s and youth health in Umnugobi Province, and an innovative SDG financing project. UNICEF also collaborated with the International Labour Organization, UNFPA and the Food and Agriculture Organization on shock-responsive social protection programmes.

UNICEF actively contributed to the joint United Nations communication strategy and workplan throughout the year. The United Nations Communication Group worked to raise awareness about the SDGs and celebrate the 60th anniversary of Mongolia’s accession to the United Nations. In partnership with the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, United Nations agencies organized several events to promote and celebrate the United Nations contribution to the country’s development.

UNICEF continued leveraging partnerships, building on new and existing platforms such as the Gender and Human Rights Theme group, the PSEA network, health sector stakeholders’ meetings, education donor meetings, United Nations humanitarian cluster meetings, development partners’ Working Group on Air Pollution, Youth for Climate Change and Clean Air Network (YOUCCAN), the National Committee on Environmental Pollution Reduction, etc.
UNICEF leveraged private sector resources to respond to the pandemic. In response to UNICEF’s call, Khan bank, Monos Cosmetics, JCI and member companies of the International Women's Federation of Commerce and Industry procured and delivered hygiene and education kits to COVID-19 patients, particularly children and pregnant women in hospitals.

To strengthen the capacity of adolescents to better prevent and manage violence, UNICEF collaborated with the Jiu Jitsu federation and a famous social influencer/model, Mr ‘Anguuch’ Battur by implementing a self-defence programme for over 200 adolescents in disadvantaged neighbourhoods. UNICEF received generous funding support from with the Government of Japan, the United States Agency for International Development, the World Bank, Asian Development Bank, and the Access to COVID-19 Tools Accelerator Supplies Financing Facility for joint efforts to support country preparedness and response to COVID-19.

**Lessons Learned and Innovations**

Lessons learned: In partnership with the Government of Mongolia, UNICEF commissioned an evaluation of implementation of the Child Protection Law. The evaluation examined the efforts and commitments of duty bearers at national, subnational and community levels (soum and bagh) in Ulaanbaatar and Bayan-Ulgii, Khuvsgul and Umnu-Gobi Provinces from 2016 until mid-2020. The Evaluation Reference Group, which comprised officials from sectoral ministries and agencies, validated the findings and conclusions, and agreed with the recommendations to do more to protect children from risks of harm.

An external evaluation of ‘UNICEF’s geographic targeting approach in programming’ was conducted in a timely manner to assess its achievements in Mongolia and inform the design of the next CPD. The evaluation offers several recommendations and lessons learned on UNICEF’s geographic targeting approach and ways to improve its effectiveness. The Management Response Plan was approved for implementation of the recommendations and to help strategize the geographic targeting approach for its next CPD. The findings, recommendations and lessons learned from the above two major evaluations are feeding into the development of the next CPD for 2023–2027 and UNSDCF. The MCO learned that the success of the CFCI largely depends on multisectoral coordination, collaboration and partnership. The CFCI is successful when multisectoral cooperation and partnership is well cultivated, involving all key stakeholders, including local and national authorities, service providers, the private sector, CSOs, NGOs, communities and children. The depth of these partnerships varies, from dissemination of information to financial support and implementation of the CFCI. Therefore, local governments should continue playing a key role in leading and strengthening these partnerships under CFCI.

Emerging opportunities: The COVID-19 pandemic worsened the underlying challenges of sustainable development and resulted in the reversal of achievements in child well-being. However, it has also created opportunities for economic diversification, digitalization and regional cooperation, while confirming the essential need for improved emergency preparedness in social sectors and strengthened shock responsiveness of existing social protection system. There are a number of emerging opportunities that can help advance child rights, close gaps in service delivery and promote inclusive green growth.

- Mongolia has a vast potential for renewable energy, which creates opportunities for green economic development, and decreasing both air pollution and energy dependency. The provision of basic social services using solar and wind energy sources is a real opportunity to reach the most disadvantaged.
- The Government’s recent launch of the digital platform ‘E-Mongolia’, which provides over 180 public services, demonstrates enormous digital opportunities and innovation brought by technologies. This could create opportunities to resolve inequality and education gaps among all social groups. Expansion of e-governance will bring services and public good closer to communities.
- There is an opportunity to create more fiscal space for social spending by strengthening macroeconomic and fiscal management, as well as by improving revenue generation and increasing the efficiency of public expenditures. There is room to increase revenue collection by making tax rates more progressive and broadening the tax base, and by strengthening the tax administration.
· Mongolia is developing an Integrated National Financing Framework, which aims to align financing with development priorities but also to mobilize new financial resources for sustainable development, especially from the private sector.
· South-South cooperation in terms of technology transfers, sharing of solutions and experts, and other forms of exchanges is an important opportunity for Mongolia. Especially, the neighbouring China is actively promoting South-South cooperation around the world and between various public and private actors.

Innovation: UNICEF has continued supporting youth engagement to address air pollution and climate change. YOUCCAN has attracted over 7,000 children across the country: 2,766 teenagers participated in training and 3,250 children took part in youth/child-led projects. YOUCCAN activities, including training for children, contests among CWD, UNLEASH Hackathon digital solutions, a design thinking workshop co-organized with HQ, and community activities reached over 176,000 children nationwide. Some 5,000 children learned about energy-efficient solutions to replace coal with electric heating and also about cooking, heating and insulation solutions for Mongolian traditional tent homes (gers). More than 21,000 children and young people responded to online surveys on the environment, climate change and its impacts. Building on these results, UNICEF has implemented a YOUCCAN project through Innovation set-aside funding, with the aim to capacitate YOUCCAN members, enhance awareness of government authorities about the importance of children's participation in decision-making, equip children with knowledge about climate change, and create a platform to influence decisions affecting the rights of children to a safe, healthy, clean and sustainable environment. As a part of the project, the Teen Parliament initiative was launched jointly with the Sub-Standing Committee of the Parliament on SDGs. Ninety members of the Teen Parliament aged 15–17 years old were equipped with knowledge on climate change, air pollution and child rights to a clean environment; and learned about communication tools and gained skills to communicate, lead, act and advocate for climate change decisions and actions. Teen Parliament members directly reached 10,617 children, engaged 33,800 children through social media and online platforms, and mobilized 4,257 children in their community actions on climate change, air and soil pollution, and waste reduction. The Teen Parliament created space and opportunity for children to speak up about environmental issues through media, social platforms and face-to-face meetings with government authorities and Parliament members. An online platform (serser.mn) ensures that young people have easy access to environmental and climate policies and can verify the adoption of environmental child rights asks by policymakers.
This cross-cutting environment and youth initiative has enabled children to become champions for environmental acts and the rights of children, and motivated them to contribute to national climate change commitments that the country has made. Currently the Teen Parliamentarians are advocating on the importance of indoor air quality in educational buildings.