

Mongolia Country Overview

1. Background

Located in the heart of Central Asia, between the People's Republic of China and Russian Federation, Mongolia has 3.3 million citizens living sparsely over a territory of 1,566,500 km², making it the least densely populated country in the world. Due to continuous rural-urban in-migration, Mongolia now has a mostly urban population (67.8% in 2018) with a national sex ratio of 96 males per 100 females. In contrast to human population, Mongolia houses more than 70 million livestock comprising 32.3 million sheep, 29.3 million goats, 4.7 million cattle, 4.2 million horses and 0.5 million camel.

Rapid political changes of 1990–91 marked the beginning of Mongolia's efforts to develop a market economy. Over the past 30 years, Mongolia has transformed into a vibrant democracy, tripling its GDP per capita since 1991. Primary school enrollments are at 97%, coupled with impressive declines in maternal and child mortality (45 per 100,000 live births in 2017 and 15.6 per 1,000 live births in 2019 respectively). With vast agricultural, livestock and mineral resources, and an educated population, Mongolia's development prospects look promising in the long-term assuming the continuation of structural reforms.

Mongolia's official national poverty rate has fluctuated since 2010. The poverty headcount rate declined sharply from 38.8% to 21.6% during the economic boom in 2010-2014. However, between 2016 and 2018, poverty reduction was uneven, declining in rural but not in urban areas. Growth in rural areas was faster and favorable to the poor, contributing to reducing rural poverty from 34.9% in 2016 to 30.8% in 2018.

Mongolia faces unique challenges related to its vast territory, dispersed population and extreme weather conditions. It is the second largest land-locked country in the world and exposed to winter temperatures as low as -40° Celsius. While experiencing rapid urbanization currently at 66.4 per cent. A third of its three million population leads a semi-nomadic lifestyle, constantly on the move in search of better pastureland for their herds.

The country is particularly susceptible to the impacts of climate change. In last 10 years, the number of natural disasters has increased by 1.5 times and 77% of the land is somehow affected by desertification. Annual precipitation has decreased by 7 percent over the same time period, causing increased aridity and glacier retreat, as well as a decline in the number of lakes and rivers. This

leads to decline in water resources and water and sanitation field is one of the most vulnerable to climate change (Mongolia: National Programme on Climate Change¹).

- Mongolia is recognized as vulnerable to climate change impacts, and many of the climate changes projected are likely to disproportionately affect the poorest groups in society. Women and children are among the highest risk groups.
- We applaud that Mongolia's new target to reduce GHG emission by 22.7% and "One billion tree" national programme, an initiative by President of Mongolia Ukhnaa Khurelsukh to reduce climate change impacts and combat desertification.

The national WASH-related priorities defined by the 'Mongolia Vision-2050' long term strategic paper (Goal-6: Green Development, Objectives 6.3 and 6.4)² as following:

- By 2050, 90% of the population is supplied with drinking water sources, meeting the (standard) requirements;
- By 2050, 90% of the population have access to sanitation facilities, meeting the (standard) requirements.
 - (Note: By the both targets, not specified level of services, such as: 'basic' or 'safely managed').

For strengthening the WASH service sector, the government of Mongolia passed a series of policy documents, such as the national standards on "Technical requirements for open-pit latrines, grey water systems" (MNS 5924 : 2015)³, Guidance to Water Safety Plan (WSSP) for small community (2015)⁴, and National Strategy and Action Plan of Health Care Waste Management (2017)⁵.

However, the combination of rapid modernization, traditional lifestyle under harsh weather conditions and climate change impact presents many challenges for rural households and for the delivery of equitable and safe drinking water supply and sanitation services.

In addition, commonly used open-pit latrines in the rural areas increase the spread of infectious diseases (e.g. typhoid fever, dysentery and infection of hepatitis A). Those pit latrines are not safe for children. In other hands, diarrhoea causes 6% of mortality of under five children in Mongolia. The SDG-5 aims to provide gender equality, but women and girls in rural areas, especially the vulnerable girls and children with disability are affected mostly by poor WASH conditions at home, school and kindergarten."

According to the latest survey – Mongolia Social indicator sample survey (SISS, 2018)⁶, 82.5% of households has 'at least basic' drinking water service, and 31% of households don't have access

¹ <https://policy.asiapacificenergy.org/node/2721>

² <https://www.legalinfo.mn/law/details/15406>

³ <https://www.mohs.mn/uploads/files/MNS%205924;2015.pdf>

⁴ <https://www.mohs.mn/uploads/files/2d8c2342cbb123ad09cdfb5a0c1ffc99.pdf>

⁵ <https://www.mohs.mn/uploads/files/3cfd017f597f04ef023f624b267ed1126b24ce1e.pdf>

⁶ https://mics-surveys-prod.s3.amazonaws.com/MICS6/East%20Asia%20and%20the%20Pacific/Mongolia/2018/Infographic/SISS2018_Infographic_English.pdf

to even 'basic' sanitation facility (or 69% of households have access to 'at least basic' sanitation facility).

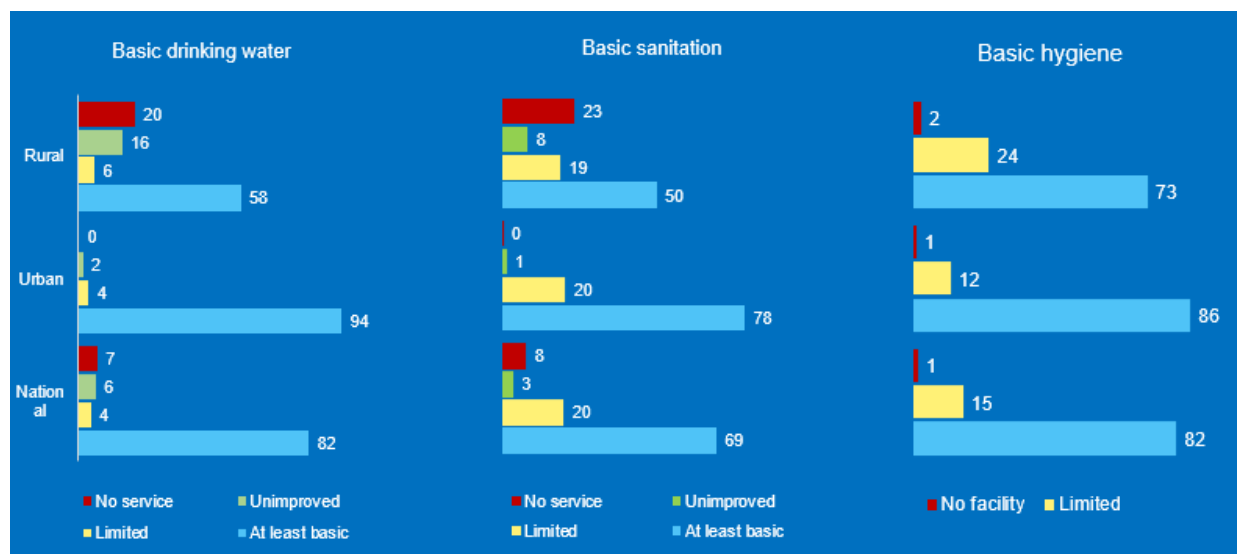


Figure 1. Access to basic WASH services in Mongolia (SISS/MICS-2018)

It should be noted that obtaining data on safely managed water and sanitation services are quite challenging in Mongolia. Currently, in rural areas, only 6% of population have access to safely managed water services (at the national level only 22 %) and no data available for safely managed sanitation (Figure 2, SISS/MICS, 2018).

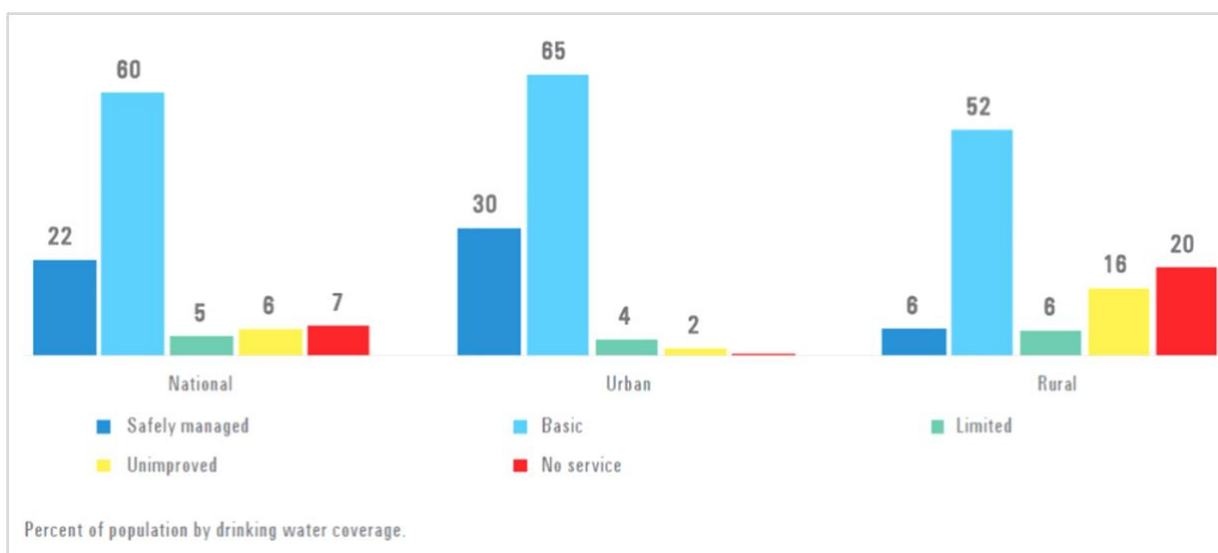


Figure 2. Drinking water coverage in Mongolia (SISS/MICS-2018)

In school settings, the latest data from the WHO/UNICEF Joint Monitoring Programme (JMP, 2020)⁷ reveal that 23% of schools across Mongolia lacked access to basic handwashing with soap and water – a key condition for schools to be able to operate safely. Only 74% of schools had basic access to clean drinking water and 63% had access to basic sanitation facilities.

Mongolia	Water					
	National	Urban	Rural	Pre-primary*	Primary	Secondary
	2019	2019	2019	2019	2019	2019
Basic Service	74	85	73	-	73	73
Limited Service	24	15	25	-	24	25
No Service	2	0	2	-	4	1
Insufficient Data	0	0	0	100	0	0

Source: WHO/UNICEF JMP (2020)

Mongolia	Sanitation					
	National	Urban	Rural	Pre-primary*	Primary	Secondary
	2019	2019	2019	2019	2019	2019
Basic Service	63	70	58	-	70	63
Limited Service	21	30	18	-	16	21
No Service	16	0	24	-	14	15
Insufficient Data	0	0	0	100	0	0

⁷ <https://washdata.org/data/downloads#MNG>

Mongolia	Hygiene					
	National 2019	Urban 2019	Rural 2019	Pre-primary* 2019	Primary 2019	Secondary 2019
Basic Service	41	53	35	-	44	66
Limited Service	36	34	41	-	36	10
No Service	23	13	24	-	20	24
Insufficient Data	0	0	0	100	0	0

Figure 3. WASH service coverages in schools in Mongolia (JMP, 2020, washdata.org)

In addition to such low access to WASH service coverages in Mongolia, drinking water quality is becoming one of pressing issues, specially in the arid and semi-arid regions. Meetings with local communities confirms that many rural communities and settlements in such arid regions are fully dependent from a few groundwater wells, which mostly contain higher minerals (hard water with calcium, magnesium carbonates and sulphates) and various heavy metals, including arsenic (Gobi-Altai government, Oct.2019).