

# Information bulletin



International Federation  
of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies

## Mongolia: Hand, foot and mouth disease outbreak

Information bulletin n° 1  
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5 June 2008

This bulletin is being issued for information only, and reflects the current situation and details available at this time. The Mongolian Red Cross Society, with the support of the International Federation, has determined that external assistance is not required, and is not seeking funding or other assistance from donors at this time.

[<click here for a map of the affected areas or here for detailed contact information>](#)

### The Situation

Mongolia is experiencing a serious outbreak of hand, foot and mouth disease (HFMD) due to Enterovirus 71 (EV71) since May 8 and as of June 3, the latest available statistics indicate a total of 1,988 people have been diagnosed with this virus. As many as 95 per cent of all cases are children under 20 years old. No fatal cases have been reported to date; however, at the time of writing this report, several children were reported as hospitalized in critical condition, suffering from severe meningitis or encephalitis (inflammation of the brain) and other complications.

The outbreak affected 19 out of Mongolia's 21 provinces and the capital city, and the number of cases continues to climb every day. It is reported that in within a two-week period in May since the start of the epidemic, approximately 1,500 people were treated, of which some 300 were hospitalized. During this time, an average of 10-16 children per day around the country were in hospitals in serious condition and over twenty children have received intensive, live-saving treatment to date.

The first cases of HFMD were detected on May 8 in Ulaanbaatar, Mongolia's capital city among four children aged 3-8 years. According to the ministry of health of Mongolia, the transmission rate is slower compared to the first days of outbreak, but that number of cases is expected to climb for some time, probably peaking in June and July, before the outbreak wanes. Besides Ulaanbaatar city which alone has reported more than 1,000 cases, the most affected areas are Sukhbaatar, Khentii, Selenge, Dornod, Dornogobi and Uvurhangai provinces, most of which are located along the main trans-Siberian railway line connecting Russia and China and main east-west road arteries, potentially posing threat of further spread to other neighbouring countries. The imminent annual diarrhoea outbreaks in summer time and increased movement of people during summer tourist season further add to the concern of the public health authorities about potential spread of the disease.

This outbreak is seen as an extension of the ongoing HFMD epidemic reported in several Asian countries since March 2008, including Singapore, Taiwan and Mongolia's neighbour China. China has been experiencing a similar outbreak since April 2008 and as of June 2, around 61,500 people have become ill (although possibly not all cases are related to EV71 virus) and at least 43 children have died from HFMD.

To date, the government has allocated approximately MNT 343 million (CHF 307,654 or USD 295,432) for emergency procurement of medical equipment, hospital treatment services and outbreak control efforts. On the day of the first reported cases, the government set up an emergency committee and recently established a hotline to respond to the flood of public inquiries about the epidemic. It printed and disseminated to affected areas a total of 100 thousand information, education and communication materials with HFMD prevention

messages and aired assertive awareness raising messages on TV and radio. It also dispatched rapid outbreak control teams to the affected areas to tighten surveillance and conduct health check-ups to all family members and those who had come into contact with infected children and adults. It organized an emergency training for 1,300 health personnel on surveillance, treatment and infection control of patients suspected or diagnosed with the Enterovirus 71. As this disease primarily affects young children, all the local governments in affected areas were mobilized to raise the awareness of kindergarten and school teachers about the outbreak. The government also tightened quarantine control and promoted public health education at all cross-land borders.

The public and corporate sector also responded to the government appeal to support and cooperate with the ongoing epidemic control efforts and contributed funds, medicines and other in-kind materials. All kindergartens, primary schools, and 4th and 5th grades (children of 10-12 years old) have been closed temporarily and public events have been cancelled in affected areas.

#### Number of reported cases by provinces (3 June)

Regions	Number of reported cases
Ulaanbaatar City	1,075
Central	123
Eastern	444
Orkhon-Selenge	136
Khangai	104
Gobi	99
Western	7
<b>Total<sup>1</sup></b>	<b>1,988</b>

Detailed information on the number of reported cases for each province is available [here](#).

## Red Cross and Red Crescent action

Since the start of the epidemic, the Mongolian Red Cross Society has been actively monitoring the evolution of the epidemic and exchanging information with relevant government agencies and the National Emergency Management Agency (NEMA). The national society has responded swiftly by mobilizing its branches nationwide to contribute to national outbreak control efforts. The headquarters developed short TV presentations with risk communication messages on Enterovirus 71 which are being broadcast nationwide twice per day. The headquarters also produced and disseminated to all 21 provinces a total of 3,000 leaflets and another 2,500 copies of posters are in print for distribution to nine districts in Ulaanbaatar. The MRCS has also developed a twenty-minute long radio programme for national broadcasting and this will help to spread the message to people living in remote rural areas where radio is the only means of mass communication.

The most effective way to prevent the spread of HFMD is by washing hands and the national society has integrated HFMD awareness messages in its hygiene promotion activities. It has also enforced chlorination of the 14 water kiosks it runs under the water supply and sanitation project implemented in the outskirts of Ulaanbaatar. In total, some 200 Red Cross volunteers in Ulaanbaatar were mobilized to conduct public risk communication campaigns in public gathering places such as markets and ger districts.

However, the national society recognizes that the amount of effort is far from sufficient to contain the spread of the epidemic and with its cadre of trained volunteers and nationwide branch network, it has a special advantage in contributing towards the national response for this emergency. MRCS' health and disaster management staff and volunteers have responded to outbreaks of cholera and other communicable diseases in the past years and are able to apply this long-standing experience from Red Cross hygiene promotion, health education and first aid programmes in the affected communities for intensive public risk communication work required for the successful containment of this outbreak. More efforts needed are in communicating HFMD awareness and prevention messages to children both in

<sup>1</sup> Please note that data for all affected provinces is not complete and rapidly changes on a daily basis.

and out of school, youth and their parents, communities living in remote rural areas, and other vulnerable groups.

## How we work

*All International Federation assistance seeks to adhere to the [Code of Conduct for the International Red Cross and Red Crescent Movement and Non-Governmental Organizations \(NGOs\) in Disaster Relief](#) and is committed to the [Humanitarian Charter and Minimum Standards in Disaster Response \(Sphere\)](#) in delivering assistance to the most vulnerable.*

The International Federation's activities are aligned with its Global Agenda, which sets out four broad goals to meet the Federation's mission to "improve the lives of vulnerable people by mobilizing the power of humanity".

### Global Agenda Goals:

- Reduce the numbers of deaths, injuries and impact from disasters.
- Reduce the number of deaths, illnesses and impact from diseases and public health emergencies.
- Increase local community, civil society and Red Cross Red Crescent capacity to address the most urgent situations of vulnerability.
- Reduce intolerance, discrimination and social exclusion and promote respect for diversity and human dignity.

## Contact information

**For further information specifically related to this operation please contact:**

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- East Asia regional office in Beijing: Carl Naucler (head of East Asia regional office); email: [carl.naucler@ifrc.org](mailto:carl.naucler@ifrc.org); phone: +86.10.65327162, fax: +86.10.65327166, and Amgaa Oyungerel, regional health delegate; email: [amgaa.oyungerel@ifrc.org](mailto:amgaa.oyungerel@ifrc.org); phone: +86.10.65327162, fax: +86.10.65327166
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[<map below; click here to return to the title page>](#)

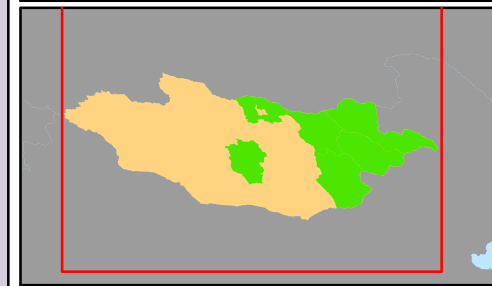
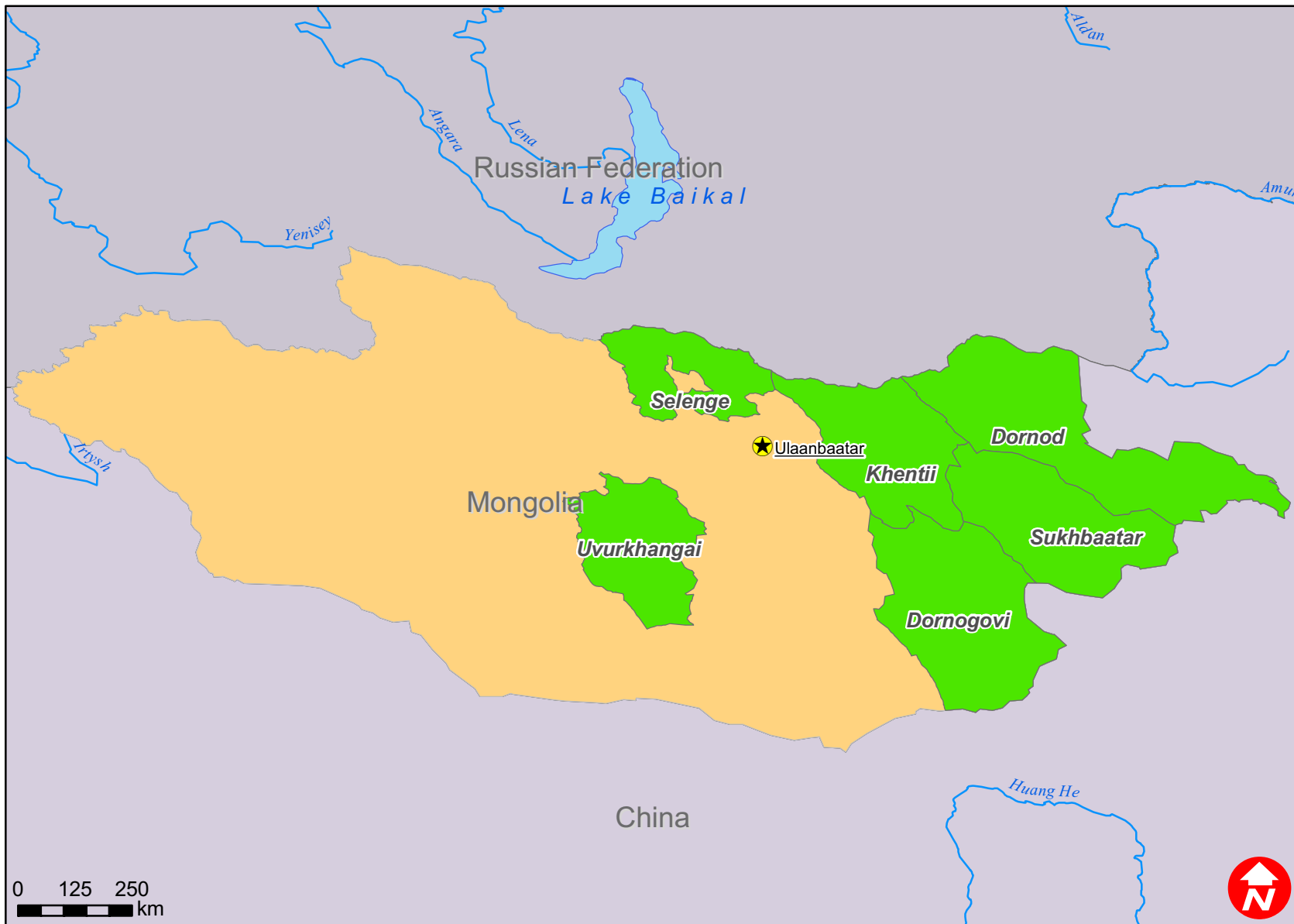
**Mongolia: Hand, foot and mouth disease outbreak**  
 Number of reported cases by province as of 3 June 2008

Region	Provinces	Number of cases
	Ulaanbaatar	1,075
Central	Tuv	123
Eastern	Sukhbaatar	281
	Khentii	74
	Dornod	89
Orkhon- Selenge	Darkhan -Uul	7
	Orkhon	19
	Selenge	95
	Bulgan	15
Khangai	Arkhangai	27
	Uvurkhangai	33
	Khubsugul	8
	Bayankhongor	33
	Zavkhan	3
Gobi	Dornogobi	73
	Dundgobi	5
	Gobisumber	13
	Umnugobi	8
Western	Khovd	2
	Uvs	5
	<b>Total</b>	<b>1,778</b>

Area	Number of cases as of June 3
Ulaanbaatar	1,075
Central	123
Eastern	444
Orkhon-Selenge	136
Khangai	104
Gobi	99
Western	7
<b>Total</b>	<b>1,988</b>



# Mongolia: Epidemic



Mongolia is experiencing a serious outbreak of hand, foot and mouth disease (HFMD) due to Enterovirus 71 (EV71) since May 8. As of June 3, a total of 1,988 people have been diagnosed with this virus.

 Moste affected provinces