

## Smart Investments to Improve Health: MCC's Partnership with Mongolia

On July 13, 2009, Secretary of State Hillary Rodham Clinton announced a broad agenda for the U.S. Government's commitment to global health to include maternal and infant healthcare as well as other chronic diseases that are debilitating to developing economies. She said, "We want a much more holistic view of global health." Due to its country-driven program development process, the U.S. Government's Millennium Challenge Corporation (MCC) is leading the way in development assistance for chronic disease prevention.

After extensive consultations, the Mongolian government requested inclusion of NCDI (Non-Communicable Disease and Injuries) program support within its MCC compact. As a result, MCC is investing \$17 million in a national NCDI program to ensure that Mongolians become healthier and more productive in the workplace. The national program aims to prevent NCDI or, where necessary, increase early detection and better management of NCDI-associated illnesses.

An important element of strengthening the national program is developing effective partnerships with national and global actors. MCC is collaborating with MCA-Mongolia, the entity implementing the compact, the World Health Organization (WHO), and the Mongolian government on the initiative. This joint collaboration focuses international and local technical, financial, and administrative resources on the design of sustainable, evidence-based approaches that reduce deaths and illness.

Mongolia's efforts to improve socioeconomic conditions and access to healthcare have been hindered by the country's geography, severe climate, widely-dispersed population, and lack of infrastructure with little access to safe water, sanitation, electricity, communications, and other modern amenities. Mongolia's rapidly increasing rates of



*Early detection is critical to controlling non-communicable disease and injuries. Above, a local doctor monitors the blood pressure of a patient in Mongolia.*

cardiovascular disease, diabetes, cancer, and injury-induced trauma, have prompted the Government of Mongolia to make significant investments in improving public health outreach, prevention, and disease management programs. Mongolia's mortality and morbidity rates from cardiovascular disease and cancers greatly exceed those of Western countries and now represent the major causes of disability and death.



*Mr. Bayarbaatar, the MCA-Mongolia General Director speaks at the launch of the 2009 STEPS survey that is being funded by MCC and the World Health Organization (WHO). The MCC-Mongolia compact will improve the health and well-being of the Mongolian labor force by reducing the incidence and severity of disease and road traffic injuries.*

Mongolia's MCC compact with the U.S. Government focuses on the health and well-being of the Mongolian labor force by reducing the incidence and severity of disease and injuries and refocusing total health expenditures. The MCC-funded health project is supporting research on NCDI-related behaviors and practices in Mongolia, site visits to successful programs in other countries, communications and education interventions to promote behavior changes, new treatment and disease management protocols, equipment, intensive in-service training for early detection of cervical and breast cancers, and training of physicians and general medical personnel. MCC's currently planned investments in NCDI outreach, screening, and disease management are intended to improve healthcare for approximately 60 percent of Mongolians.

To start this improvement, MCA-Mongolia and WHO launched a survey of NCDI risk factors and frequency in June 2009. This survey utilizes the Stepwise Approach to Surveillance (STEPS) developed by WHO and used in 60 countries to enable Mongolia's Ministry of Health to measure changes in NCDI risk behavior and prevalence and to evaluate the impact of the national program so far. It also provides baseline data for the MCA-Mongolia program evaluation, a critical component of assessing the long-term impact of the MCC-Mongolia compact. Due to this collaboration and combined resources, another survey is being planned for 2013 to continue the rigorous evidence-based approach that will provide further information on the impact of the national program supported by MCC and WHO.

MCC's collaboration with WHO and the Government of Mongolia is an example of the U.S. Government's commitment to fighting global poverty by improving global health in partnership with countries and through an integrated approach with other donors.