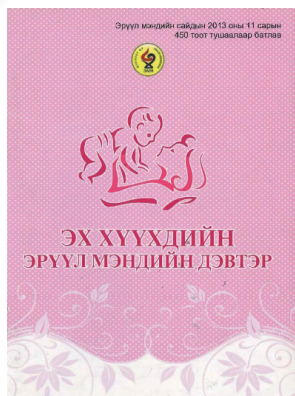




MONGOLIA: MCH Handbook as an 'Entry point' for home-based developmental monitoring of children



Maternal and Child Health Handbook, Mongolia, 2013

Background

Since 2011, Maternal Child Health (MCH) Handbook has been institutionalized into the national health system of Mongolia. The Health Ministerial Order 2010/34 officially approved the nationwide scaling-up of the MCH Handbook, and its subsequent Order 2013/450 endorsed it as one of the official recording forms for the national health information systems. The MCH Handbook is well known among health workers and parents of children as "Pink Book" being used for monitoring health and developmental status of children 0–6 years of age. Initially, the MCH Handbook was piloted in Bulgan Province during the period from 2007 to 2009 with a support from National Center for Global Health and Medicine of Japan. It has been recognized as one of the documents essential to the primary health care settings in Mongolia.

The Mongolia's MCH Handbook is a home-based record containing both recording items and educational messages on antenatal care, delivery/birth, postnatal period, child immunization, child growth, and child development. The MCH Handbook is composed of six parts: (i) basic information of a mother and her child; (ii) pregnancy period; (iii) delivery/birth and newborn period; (iv) childhood period;

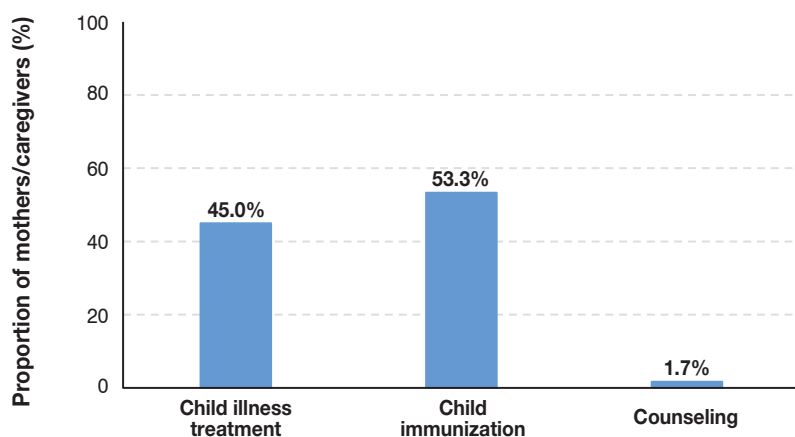
(v) child vaccination; and (vi) child caring and feeding.

The MCH Handbook has significantly contributed to improving maternal and child health by promoting involvement of parents in raising health awareness and enhancing communication between health workers and caregivers of children. Pregnant women receive the MCH Handbook at their first antenatal care visits. Almost all Mongolian children under six years of age retain their MCH Handbooks. Therefore, the MCH Handbook has been serving as the useful and practical tool that facilitates continuum of care and developmental monitoring of children, in Mongolia.

Using MCH Handbook to identify children's developmental delay

To assess the level of utilization of the MCH Handbook, a survey was conducted in Bayangol District, Ulaanbaatar as a part of the JICA-supported "Project for Strengthening Teachers' Ability and Reasonable Treatment for Children with Disabilities". Data were collected in Bayangol District in June 2016, by: (i) observing the health workers' performance on use of the MCH Handbook for case management of the pre-school children attending first-level facilities (family clinics); and (ii) conducting interviews with caregivers about their knowledge and level of utilizations of the MCH Handbook.

It was found that 27 of 60 children under five years of age (45.0%) visited family clinics in search for treatment of illnesses. Also, 32 (54.0%) and 1 (1.7%) of them visited there for immunization services and for counseling services, respectively (Figure 1). Thirty-nine of 60 children (65%) had their weight and height measured and accurately recorded in growth chart of the MCH Handbook.



▲ Figure 1. Reasons for visiting family clinics



Father checking his daughter's development milestone using the MCH Handbook

As the results of observation of health workers' performance, it was found that 18 of 56 doctors' consultations (32%) were based on the contents of MCH Handbook. The importance of and need for child immunizations were explained to 36 of 60 caregivers of children (60.0%), by using the MCH Handbook.

The Mongolia's MCH Handbook includes blue pages, in which caregivers are advised to check their children's age-specific development status and thereby to select either "YES" or "NOT YET" for questions related to development milestones. For example, the question "Is your child able to walk?" is in the page for children 18 months of age. It takes 10-15 minutes for caregivers to complete recording data on child development in the checklist.

In addition to 60 caregivers interviewed at the family clinics, 20 caregivers were interviewed through household visits. Of 80 caregivers, 78 (97.5%) replied that they always take the MCH Handbook to family clinics. Sixty-five of 78 (83.3%) caregivers stated that the MCH Handbook was helpful to track the development of their children and immunization appointment. Forty-one caregivers (52.5%) filled data in recording columns of blue pages prior to their visit to health facilities. Five of them (6.0%) found that their children delayed in developmental progress.

Child health check-up in Bayangol District, Ulaanbaatar

In Bayangol District, the MCH Handbook has been used for screening of child development delay during early childhood. In the district, 18-month old child health check-up has been routinely conducted since May 2017. The MCH Handbook plays an important role in the check-up because caregivers' self-recording effectively informs health workers of children's developmental status observable only at home. Of 377 children having participated in the 18-month-old check-up in May 2017 in Bayangol District, 11 (2.9%) and 42 (11.1%) were found to be delayed in their gross motor skills and linguistic skills, respectively. While some of those delayed in developmental progress were referred to detailed examinations, the others were guided

to participate in the Mother Child Development Program, a specialized early intervention program.

Since little information has been available about early childhood development in Mongolia, systematic monitoring of children's early growth and development by using the MCH Handbook provides an invaluable opportunity of earlier identification of and earlier intervention for developmental delay.

Conclusion

In Mongolia, the MCH Handbook serves as an 'Entry point' to early identification of child developmental delay, which could otherwise be overlooked. Thus, it helps caregivers and health workers initiate earlier or timelier necessary interventions.

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Further readings

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