

Information bulletin



International Federation
of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies

Mongolia: Cold waves

Information bulletin n° 1
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This bulletin is being issued for information only and reflects the current situation and details available at this time. The International Federation is not seeking funding or other assistance from donors for this operation for time being. The Mongolian Red Cross Society will, however, accept direct assistance to provide support to the affected population.

Beginning from the end of December 2009, Mongolia saw a sharp and sudden drop of temperature combined with continuous heavy snowfall, recognized locally as *dzud*. The current situation has caused a loss of hundreds of thousands of livestock, leaving numerous herders without any source of livelihood. As the *dzud* is a slow-on-set disaster which continues for weeks and months, there are challenges in gathering information and conducting emergency assessments.



Every morning herders find animals that haven't survived the extreme cold of the night before. MRCS.

The Mongolian Red Cross is responding to the disaster through its extensive network of primary and mid-level branches. The National Society has launched a national appeal to assist the herders who are suffering most due to their nomadic life pattern.

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

The situation

Mongolia is experiencing a severe winter locally known as *dzud*, a continuous heavy snowfall combined with extreme cold. Local media indicate that approximately 90 per cent of the country is suffering from *dzud* conditions, with snowfall reaching between 20-100 centimetres. The average temperature in northern Mongolia has dropped to -35 degrees Celsius, with temperatures in the rest of country hovering between -17 to -22 degrees Celsius. So far, the coldest temperature of -47 degrees was recorded in Uvs province in northern Mongolia. As of 10 January 2010, a total of 198 counties in 19 provinces are suffering from these harsh conditions, together with severe snow storms or blizzards that are classified as between dangerous to extremely hazardous by the NEMA.

The national emergency management agency (NEMA) estimates that a total of 454,000 heads of livestock have died, out of which up to 89 per cent belong to the ten worst affected provinces. The total loss of livestock is approximately 10 per cent of the estimated 43.6 million heads of livestock in Mongolia. However, unofficial sources report that livestock losses may reach up to two million across the country.

From December 2009 to 11 January 2010, the number of people referred to hospital due to the frostbite reached 73, twice the number of people compare to the same period of previous year. Up to five people died during a snow storm that battered the country between 23 and 26 December.

On 11 January 2010, a high state of preparedness was declared in Gobi-Altai province due to the worsening situation in that area. All traffic was blocked and livestock could not go to pasture due to heavy snowfall.

A meeting of the State Emergency Commission was held on 8 January 2010 and following decisions were made to meet requests from herders suffering from *dzud*:

- To submit a request to sell 4,000 tonnes of hays and 5,000 tonnes of fodder valued at MNT 1.7 billion (approximately CHF 1.17 million or USD 1.15 million) with 50 per cent of discount to the herders of the most affected provinces
- To deliver a national appeal to municipal councils, governmental and non-governmental organizations as well as international organizations and organize a campaign for assistance.
- To process 30,000 tonnes of red wheat that do not meet food standards into fodder and exchange to stocked meat or lend it to the herders jointly with provincial level administration and study the possibility of exporting meat stocked by herders.
- To conduct a campaign for assistance and arrange well-organized delivering of relief items to local areas and
- To dispatch emergency working groups to the 12 most affected provinces.

The government-appointed working groups are operating in the eight most affected provinces, plans to mobilize cross-country armed forces and border troops' vehicles to open blocked roads and deliver hay, fodder, food, clothes and medicines to the herding families. The Mongolian government plans to allocate a total of MNT 315 million (approximately CHF 217,316 or USD 213,559) from its funds to Dundgobi, Zavkhan, Uvurkhangai, Bayankhongor, Gobi-Altai, Umnugobi, Arkhangai, Bayan-Ulgii, Tuv, Uvs, Khuvsgul and Khovd provinces to deliver urgent health and social care services to herders.

There are limited opportunities to estimate number of herding families suffering from the *dzud* and calculate loss and damage as the disaster covers almost 90 per cent of the country and the herders who are most affected are spread over the country due to their nomadic lifestyle. However, according to the Ministry of Agriculture and Food, the number of affected herding families is estimated to be 120 000.

According to the weather forecast of the National Agency of Meteorology, Hydrology and Environment Monitoring of Mongolia, more snowfall is anticipated between January and March, with temperatures between -28 and -45 degrees Celsius.

Red Cross Red Crescent action

The Mongolian Red Cross Society (MRCS) responded rapidly to the current *dzud* situation, launching a press conference and national appeal to help the herders who are directly impacted by the *dzud* disaster.

In addition, mid-level branches are intensifying their disaster response actions through the mobilization of volunteers for psychosocial support, engagement of students and schoolchildren in donation campaigns and stronger cooperation and coordination with partner organizations.

In December 2009, the National Society delivered relief items including mattresses, blankets, ger canvas, boots and warm clothes to affected people valued at approximately MNT 50 million (approximately CHF 34,494 or USD 33,898) from its disaster preparedness stocks at headquarters level. MRCS is also distributing clothes to the most vulnerable communities affected by the disaster in 20 provinces and three districts of Ulaanbaatar.

There is an urgent need to replenish MRCS emergency stocks as soon as possible to meet future needs of disaster affected communities if required.

The MRCS also runs a European Union-funded community-based social care project which assists the most vulnerable people within the community in four of the affected provinces, of BayanUlgiii, Bayankhongor, Khovd and Khentii. The MRCS has started providing material and food assistance to the beneficiaries to help reduce the risk of starvation and frostbite for the urban poor in centres of these four provinces.

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 \(NGO's\) 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

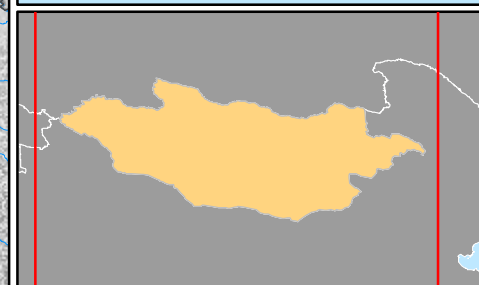
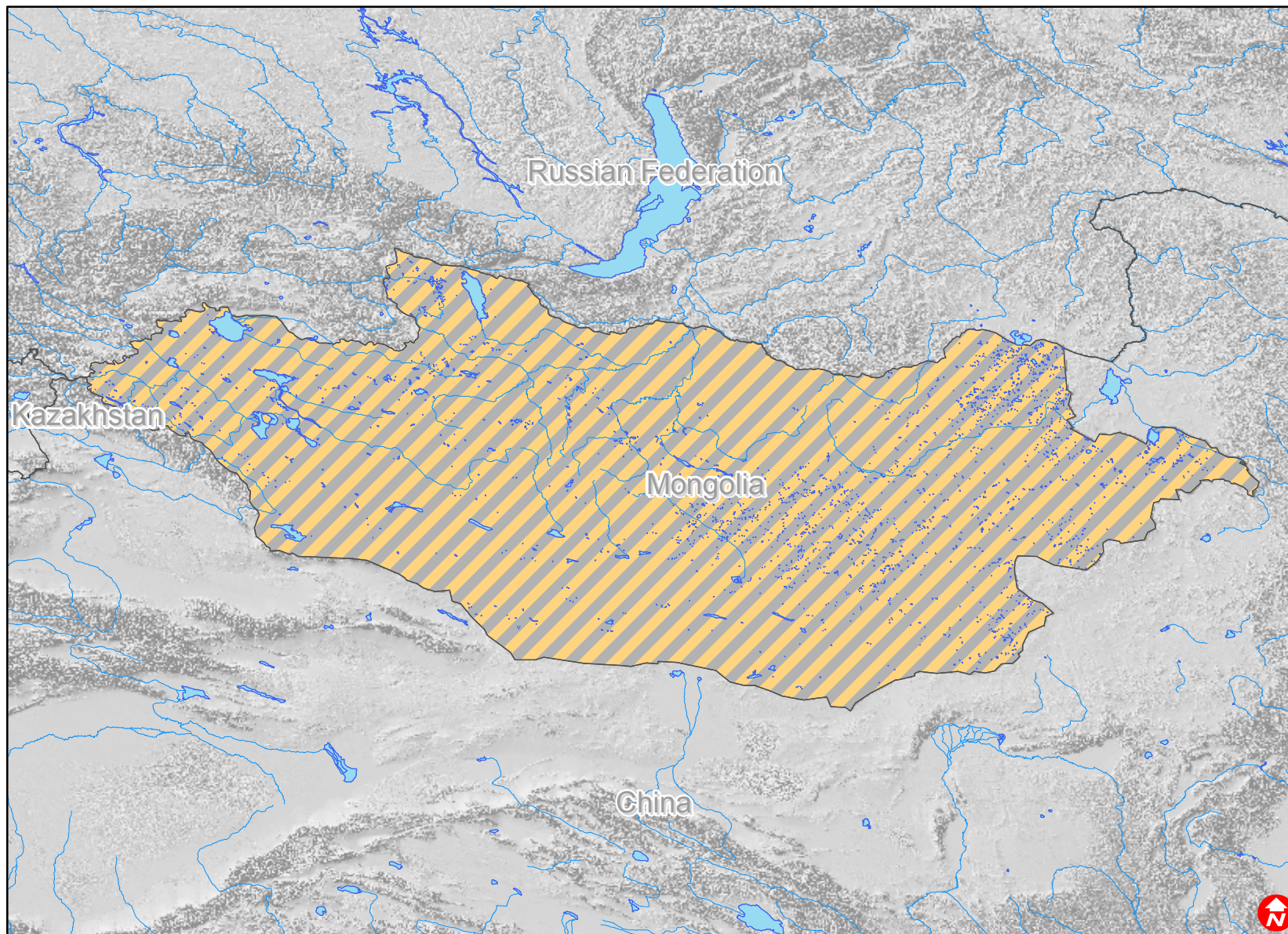
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-  Lakes
-  Rivers
-  Affected areas