

MONGOLIA: STEPPE AND FOREST FIRES

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General situation

More fires have been brought under control, leaving 46 fires still active as of today in nine aimags: Dornod, Hentii, Zavkhan, Tov, Selenge, Bulgan, Arhangai, Uvs and Huvsgul.

According to the latest figures, 16 people have perished in the fires and 60 persons have been injured. A total of 6,218 herd of cattle have died and 1,667 communication-line posts have been destroyed making it almost impossible to keep an accurate count of the fires or receive information. A total of 358 cattle shelters, 250 tons of hay, 10 drinking water wells have also been destroyed. 32.9 thousand square km of forest and 50 thousand square km of pasture land in 13 aimags have been destroyed.

Of the nine affected aimags, six are more seriously affected. As of today, 154 families need emergency assistance rather than 183 families as previously reported.

3.7 million herd of cattle and 370,000 people are located in the fire areas and the Government plans to evacuate them to safer places.

The State Emergency Commission is continuing to co-ordinate relief activities in the fire-affected areas. To date, about 114,000 local residents, fire-fighters and civil defence volunteers have been involved in fire fighting together with the military and the police force, while 1,000 vehicles and pieces of equipment have been mobilised.

Government / NGO activity

The Government of Mongolia has provided 20 million togrog in cash, 100 gers and 50 tons of petrol.

The Mongolian Trade Unions Federation have allocated one million togros of assistance for the fire-affected areas through its aimag branches. While the Ministry of Nature and Environment donated 15 million togrog, the Ministry of Trade and Development staff donated one day's salary as did the Mongolian Revolutionary Party. The Democratic Force of Mongolia donated 1 million togrog.

Mongolian Red Cross operation

The MRCS continues with its relief operation in six worst affected aimags. Today it transferred funds to Selenge and Bulgan aimags for procurement of relief goods locally. Uvs, Huvsgul aimags are also procuring the relief goods locally. Relief goods purchased in Ulaanbaatar for Dornod and Hentii aimags will be transported by road as soon as they are ready.

Although most relief items, except tents, are available locally, procurement of large quantities has been difficult and time consuming. Under the circumstances, the MRCS made a radio announcement about the need for specific relief items. A good number of suppliers responded to this announcement.

Although the MRCS earlier planned to purchase tents, it has now decided to purchase felt materials instead since not enough tents are available in country. Felt materials are normally used to make ger housing and are easily available anywhere in Mongolia. Two pieces of felt materials make one temporary shelter for nomad families. It will purchase whatever tents are available in Ulaanbaatar and meet the remaining requirements with felt materials.

Thirty ger houses, purchased by the MRCS with the financial assistance of the US Embassy in Ulaanbaatar, have been transported to Dornod aimag together with 20 ger houses purchased by the Government: 35 gers are for Dornod aimag and 15 for Hentii, a neighbouring aimag.

Response from international organisations and diplomatic missions

The latest information on international assistance includes: UNHCR's commitment of USD 30,000, UNICEF USD 25,000, WHO medical supplies worth of USD 5,000. This brings the total of donations from international agencies to: USD 360,000, GBP 50,000, DM 30,000 and CHF 208,550.

The Saitama Prefecture in Japan has donated some relief goods.

Federation

The Federation Delegation continues to support the MRCS in all aspects of the relief operation and is working closely with the new President, the Secretary General and the Programme Manager of DPP of the MRCS.

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