

INFORMATION BULLETIN



International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies
Fédération internationale des Sociétés de la Croix-Rouge et du Croissant-Rouge
Federación Internacional de Sociedades de la Cruz Roja y de la Media Luna Roja
الاتحاد الدولي لجمعيات الصليب الأحمر والهلال الأحمر

MONGOLIA: DZUD

4 December 2002

Information Bulletin N° 1

This Bulletin is being issued as an update on the crisis in Mongolia. The Federation is seeking assistance as outlined below and will communicate more as it works with the Mongolia Red Cross. An international appeal for assistance will follow. The Federation is seeking assistance from National Societies to immediately identify a Federation Field Operations Manager and a Logistics Delegate to support the Mongolia Red Cross to develop the emergency operation Plan of Action and Appeal.

The Situation

An early and heavy snowfall in many areas of Mongolia, and worrying predictions for winter, threaten health levels and livelihoods in both rural and urban environments. The snowfall, known as a dzud, which is a winter disaster involving the mass debilitation, starvation and death of livestock. It seriously damages the livelihoods of the herder households who depend upon them. The direct cause of a Dzud is the combination of damaging natural hazards, including severe widespread drought in summer, unusually cold temperatures in autumn and winter and then very heavy snowfall. The indirect causes are mainly over-concentration of stock and overgrazing of pastures in some areas, leading to environmental degradation, the disappearance of abundant grass, and inadequate winter hay preparation.

The impact of three previous dzuds and droughts have severely depleted coping mechanisms. There are increasing numbers of herders with insufficient or no livestock to sustain their livelihood. There are increasing levels of destitution due to lack of assets and employment of ex-herders in bag (village), soum (district) and aimag (provincial) centres. There is also evidence of increasing numbers migrating to the capital, where unemployment and high registration fees (barring access to welfare services) is causing destitution.

Food shortages and animal deaths will be most noticeable from February to April 2003 when stocks for humans and livestock have been depleted. Also, severe cold and other winter conditions will last until late April.

Red Cross/Red Crescent Action

Last week a Strategic Review of the Mongolia Red Cross Society/Federation Cooperation was completed by an independent Review Team. Part of the Review Team's mandate was to assess whether an emergency appeal should be launched for the 2002/2003 winter.

Based on the vulnerabilities described above, the Review Team has recommended that an emergency appeal be launched once more information is collected on target groups and needs.

The current Program Coordinator in Mongolia is ending his mission this week after a handover with the incoming Head of Delegation (HOD), who will start on January 1.

The Federation is seeking assistance from National Societies to immediately identify a Federation Field Operations Manager and a Logistics Delegate to support the Mongolia Red Cross to develop the emergency operation Plan of Action and Appeal.

As mentioned above, food shortages and animal deaths are most noticeable from February to April. Goods must therefore be delivered late February to have maximum impact on the needs created by the winter. The Mongolia Red Cross with support from the Field Operations Manager and Logistics Delegate will be undertaking the preparatory work over December in order to ensure the delivery of food in late February.

The basic approach recommended by the Review Team for the Emergency Operation is as follows:

- To respond to the priorities as expressed by the affected population by providing inputs that directly relate to the preservation of health levels (food, clothes), and that provide economic inputs to certain priority household expenditures (school items, radios), thus releasing cash for other more specialised priority expenditures (ie fuel, fodder, medicines, tools).
- To focus on the areas of Red Cross comparative advantage and experience: including the types of relief, the scale of the operation and the rural rather than Ulaan Baatar-centred beneficiary populations.
- To ensure an integration of these short term inputs with more coherent longer terms strategies to address vulnerability in the longer term.

The Review Team has recommended the following operational objectives, these will be confirmed by the Mongolia Red Cross and the Federation Delegation over the month of December:

- To provide assist to 7,000 of the most vulnerable families in the areas worst affected by the accumulated effects of repeated dzud and drought over the past 3 years, exacerbated by another possible dzud in 2002/3;
- To maintain or increase school attendance for 10,000 very vulnerable kids in the worst affected areas through clothing and school equipment;
- To provide a supplementary ration of wheat flour (550 kCal/person/day) to 35,000 people for 6 months.
- To provide 7000 boots to 7000 households (1 pair per household);
- To give very vulnerable isolated herder families access to weather, health, psycho-social and other information via radio.

Additional Information on the Strategic Review Findings

The Review Team has recommended that an emergency appeal is appropriate for this winter based on the vulnerabilities mentioned above and the National Society's current capacity. However, the Team is also recommending that over the next 12 months, the Mongolia Red Cross with support from the

Federation, refocus its programs towards reducing vulnerability through longer term programs. Specifically, that the NS redefine and clarify its vulnerability criteria in order to look at urban poverty.

Although the Review team has found that relief inputs since 1998 have been appropriate, it is recommending that annual emergency responses are unsustainable and that in 2003, the Federation and Mongolia Red Cross, focus on re-engaging sister societies by involving them in the longer term solutions and the many opportunities facing the National Society.

The draft Review report will be distributed to Mongolia Red Cross, participating National Societies and Secretariat later this week for comment.

For a full description of the National Society profile, see www.ifrc.org

For further details please contact :

*The Mongolian Red Cross Society in Ulaanbaatar ; Phone 976-11-312684; Fax 976-11-323334;
email redcross@magnet.mn*

Aurelia Balpe, Phone 41 22 730 4352; Fax 41 22 733 0395; email balpe@ifrc.org

All International Federation Operations seek to adhere to the Code of Conduct and are committed to the Humanitarian Charter and Minimum Standards in Disaster Response (SPHERE Project) in delivering assistance to the most vulnerable.

For support to or for further information concerning Federation operations in this or other countries, please access the Federation website at <http://www.ifrc.org>

For longer-term programmes, please refer to the Federation's Annual Appeal.

John Horekens
Director
External Relations

Simon Missiri
Head
Asia Pacific