

MONGOLIA - SNOWFALLS

13 June 2000

Appeal no. 5/2000 (revised)

situation report no. 5

period covered: 25 April - 12 June 2000

Current high temperatures and a shortage of rain are making it difficult for herdsmen and their livestock to recover from the winter disaster and for over-grazed pastures to grow back. The operation's second distribution of a three months' supply of supplementary food to 6,300 households in the six worst affected aimags is almost complete. A third distribution is being organised for July.

The context

Severe snowfalls and extremely low temperatures over the winter period affected large areas of Mongolia between September 1999 and April 2000. They were preceded by the worst drought in 30 years. These and other factors combined to create what is locally called a multiple 'dzud' and caused the death of over two million head of livestock, the mainstay of the rural economy and the sole source of food for herders and their families.

Over 450,000 people in 13 Aimags are affected by the food shortages in the immediate term, and by the loss of their livelihood in the longer term. Throughout the year, the government and the Mongolian Red Cross Society have continued to distribute emergency supplies to the worst affected areas.

In response to the disaster situation, the International Federation launched an initial Appeal on 22 February 2000 to provide support to 30,000 beneficiaries over a 3 month period. Further assessments indicated that the situation was likely to deteriorate further, with far reaching consequences for the affected population. Consequently the Federation launched a revised Appeal on 29 March to support 35,000 beneficiaries over a 12 month period with wheatflour, rice or millet, plus 8,000 pairs of winter boots.

Latest events

Although the harsh winter months are now over, unstable weather characterised by dust and snow storms and relentless winds continued to strike the central, eastern and western Gobi throughout April and the early part of May - a crucial time of year in terms of the lambing season. For example, in Altanbulag soum in Tuv Aimag, the natural loss of livestock in an average year is 3 - 4,000. This year, 6,100 livestock perished of which 3,000 were newly born animals.

The latest figures issued by the State Emergency Commission on 1 June 2000 indicate that 2.39 million head of livestock have now died in 157 soums in 13 aimags and that 2,369 households have lost all of

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The latest figures issued by the State Emergency Commission on 1 June 2000 indicate that 2.39 million head of livestock have now died in 157 soums in 13 aimags and that 2,369 households have lost all of

their livestock. With the onset of summer and warmer weather, the number of livestock deaths is declining.

Some parts of the country that hosted unusually high numbers of migrating herders from dzud-affected areas between November 1999 and April 2000 are now suffering from overgrazing of their own pastureland and having to deal with the disposal of not only their own lost livestock but also those from visiting herds.

There is now a desperate need for rain to enable the pastureland to regenerate over the summer months and to allow the animals to recover in preparation for the winter months and the herders to prepare their own food sources as well as winter fodder and hay. Meteorologists have warned that there is unlikely to be any rain in the first half of June in the central part of the country and that temperatures will be high. Without rain, the threat of another drought in specific parts of the countryside will become a serious reality, with devastating consequences for the preparations for the winter months.

Feedback received during monitoring visits from Aimag (province) and Soum (administrative unit within an Aimag) Red Cross Branches/Committees and from the herders indicates that the current priorities are for food in the short term and for restocking in the longer term.

On 28 April, the legal status of the Mongolian Red Cross Society, reflecting the Statutes and Fundamental Principles of the International Red Cross and Red Crescent Movement, was officially recognised and a law adopted to this effect. This grants the MRCS the sole right to use the Red Cross name and emblem to provide impartial humanitarian assistance within Mongolia. This law became effective on 27 May.

Red Cross/Red Crescent action

Phase 1: March - September 2000

The main objectives for Phase 1 of the Mongolia Snowfalls Emergency Appeal are to provide boots to 2,827 households and a 6 month supplementary food ration of the following to 35,000 beneficiaries (6,300 households) in 6 of the worst affected Aimags as detailed in the table below:

- Wheatflour: 12 x 25 kilogram bags per household
- Rice or millet: 2 x 30 kilogram bags per household

Aimag	Number of Soums	Number of Households
Dundgobi	15	1,415
Bayankhongor	6	465
Zavkhan	24	1,230
Uverkhangai	19	1,425
Uvs	19	1,000
Tuv	12	765
TOTAL	95	6,300

Phase 1 has been subdivided into 3 distributions or Plans of Action (PoA):

- Plan of Action 1 which took place in March included the distribution of a total of 130 metric tons of wheatflour and 65 metric tons of rice to 2,600 households and one pair of boots to an additional 600 households. Each household received 50 kilograms of wheatflour - or a one month ration and 25 kilograms of rice/millet.
- PoA 2 is currently being implemented

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- PoA 2 is currently being implemented

- PoA 3 will be carried out in July.

Plan of Action 2 (PoA 2) - May/June

PoA 2 will conclude the distribution of a 3 month supplementary food ration of wheatflour and rice to the identified 6,300 households in the 6 worst affected Aimags as detailed in the table overleaf.

As part of PoA 2, the 2,600 families included in PoA 1 will have received a further 100 kilograms of wheatflour per household (4 x 25 kg bags) representing a 2 month supply and by the end of PoA 2 they will have received their 3 month supplementary food ration of both wheatflour and rice (3 month allocation received during PoA 1).

The remaining 3,700 households will have received 150 kilograms of wheatflour (6 x 25 kg bags) and 30 kilograms of rice (1 x 30 kg bag) which represents the full 3 months supplementary food ration. 2,227 pairs of working boots will also be distributed as part of PoA 2 to households that were not included in the supplementary food distribution.

Aimag	No of soums	No of households	Flour (tons)	Rice (tons)	Boots (pairs) Male	Boots (pairs) Female
Dundgobi	15	1,415	177.25	21.45	320	60
Bayankhongor	6	465	53.75	4.95	300	60
Zavkhan	24	1,230	164.50	24.90	280	100
Uverkhangai	19	1,425	188.75	27.75	320	60
Uvs	19	1,000	135.00	21.00	340	60
Tuv	12	765	94.75	10.95	267	60
Total	95	6,300	814	111	1,827	400

Beneficiary selection process

A detailed set of criteria was drawn up by the MRCS Disaster team to firstly identify the worst affected soums (districts) and then secondly to identify vulnerable households within the soum, taking into consideration the following:

- Number of livestock at the end of 1999
- Loss of livestock
- Number of members in the household
- Number of children, able bodied persons, single head of households
- Income.

This criteria was communicated to the Aimag Red Cross Branches and the local Soum Red Cross Committees. The latter have been responsible for drawing up the beneficiary list with local leaders and passing this information back to the Aimag Red Cross and MRCS headquarters.

Tendering/procurement and transportation of PoA 2 relief supplies

The tendering process for the procurement of rice, wheatflour and boots for the May and July distributions and the drawing up of a detailed transportation plan was carried out during April by a Federation logistics team who worked in close co-operation with the MRCS Disaster team. Contracts with suppliers were signed in May.

Rice for the 6 Aimags has been procured centrally in Ulaan Baatar. With the exception of Uvs Aimag, located some 1,336 km from Ulaan Baatar in the far west of the country, wheatflour for the remaining 5 aimags was also procured in Ulaan Baatar. A local company in Uvs was contracted to provide

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wheatflour for the May distribution and discussions are underway regarding procurement of wheatflour for the July distribution for Uvs. Both men's and women's boots were purchased in Ulaan Baatar. Boots will not form part of PoA 2 but will be included in Phase 2 of the operation.

Samples of both rice and wheatflour were sent to China for testing. In addition, further independent sampling was carried out by a representative from the China National Import and Export Commodities Inspection Corporation who spent 10 days in Ulaan Baatar, prior to the shipment of supplies to soum level.

Due to the transportation difficulties within the country and the large distances to be covered, it was decided that PoA 2 relief supplies should be transported to soum level. A local company was contracted to transport the wheatflour, rice and boots procured centrally to 76 soums in Dundgobi, Uverkhangai, Bayankhongor, Tuv and Zavkhan. The same company was contracted to transport the rice (for both the May and July distributions) and boots for Uvs to the Aimag centre. Transportation companies in Uvs have been contracted to provide onward transportation of the wheatflour, rice and boots to the 19 soums.

The shipment of the centrally procured supplies for the May distribution, which took place between 22 May and 3 June, was preceded by a distribution ceremony held in central Ulaan Baatar by the MRCS.

Following the May shipment of supplies, an evaluation of the performance of the suppliers and transportation companies has been carried out by the MRCS/Delegation so that further improvements can be made for the July distribution.

Distribution of relief supplies

Due to the disparate locations of many of the herder families, various means were used in the 6 Aimags to inform identified Red Cross beneficiaries of the distribution:

- the MRCS weekly five minute programme on the national radio called "Eight Eleven Information Time" provides up to date information on the MRCS/Federation programme and upcoming distributions
- Broadcasts on the local soum radio station, including the reading of beneficiary names
- Beneficiary names posted up in the soum centre
- Local Soum Red Cross Committee members or the Head of Bagh (sub unit of a soum) informed identified Red Cross beneficiaries
- Word of mouth amongst herder families

Distributions have been carried out in the 95 soum centres from the last week of May through to the first 2 weeks of June. These are normally preceded by an introduction by the Soum Governor, the Aimag Red Cross and the local Soum Red Cross Committees regarding MRCS/Federation assistance to families affected by the dzud, the beneficiary selection process and future distributions. Beneficiaries are then called forward in turn to sign the list and to receive their allocation.

Not all Red Cross beneficiaries have been able to attend the distributions as many are located a long way from the soum centre or have no means of transportation with which to carry back their relief supplies. For example, in Tuv Aimag, out of 235 identified Red Cross beneficiaries in 3 soums, 150 actually attended the distribution.

For those who do not attend, their allocation is kept by the local Soum Red Cross Committee who along with the Aimag Red Cross Branch take the responsibility to ensure that these beneficiaries receive their supplementary food ration. Beneficiaries will either collect it at a later date or the Soum Red Cross will distribute to the households themselves. At this point Red Cross beneficiaries will sign the list.

Monitoring and reporting

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Monitoring and reporting

The MRCS have sent 6 representatives from the Ulaan Baatar District Branches to monitor the distributions and 2 members of the Managing Council attended the distributions in Zavkhan and Dundgobi.

The Federation Delegation and MRCS have made monitoring visits to 4 Aimags and further visits are planned. The emphasis will be on post distribution monitoring and in particular to those herders who were not able to attend the distribution.

MRCS •

The MRCS have further strengthened their Disaster Team which is now made up of 6 people from the MRCS relief, international and finance departments.

Federation Delegation •

During the reporting period, the Delegation has been staffed by one Federation Field Delegate from the Japanese Red Cross and 2 national members of staff. Towards the end of the reporting period, a logistics delegate from the Danish Red Cross arrived and will take over from the field delegate who leaves at the end of June. The Reporting delegate from the East Asia Regional Delegation in Beijing is spending one month in Mongolia to assist with monitoring and reporting.

The Mongolia Snowfalls Operation is also supported by the East Asia Regional Office in Beijing and by the Southeast Asia Regional Delegation in Bangkok.

National Action w

Local specialists from the Ministry of Health and Social Welfare (MoHSW) and the Ministry of Agriculture and Industry (MoAI) continue to monitor the removal and/or disinfection of animal carcasses to prevent the spread of disease.

The equivalent to USD 1.33 million has been made available to the Mongolian government from the Poverty Alleviation for Vulnerable Groups Project by the World Bank for a restocking project to assist herders affected by the 'dzud' in 33 soums in Dundgobi, Overkhangai, Bayanhongor, Zavkhan and Uvs Aimags. Certain eligibility conditions and appraisal criteria have been drawn up to identify those to be included in the project. The MoAI and the Poverty Alleviation Programme Office will be responsible for carrying out this project.

Outstanding needs

The clear priority in the short term is for food; wheatflour and rice and funds are still urgently needed to enable the MRCS/Federation to support those households who have been affected by the dzud. Although the winter is over, the situation remains very serious for herders who continue to lose livestock and for those 2,369 households who have lost all of their livestock.

There is a great awareness within the MRCS and the Delegation that as the situation is changing, there are herders who have been affected who are not included in the current Red Cross distributions. This will be further evaluated during the planned mid term assessment of the programme in July/August and within the scope of the Appeal and funds available, some adjustments may be made.

External relations - Government/UN/NGOs/Media

The MRCS/Delegation have continued to attend the weekly co-ordination disaster relief meetings organised by the UNDMT for humanitarian organisations involved in emergency relief activities. These meetings continued until the end of May. They have been replaced by ad hoc meetings which will be called to discuss relief issues, as required. MRCS representatives still attend the weekly meeting convened by the Prime Minister's office to share information on relief activities.

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The UNDMT have now set up a new forum for information exchange and discussion for humanitarian organisations interested in rehabilitation activities.

To mark the adoption of the law recognising the legal status of the MRCS and the first shipment of relief supplies from Ulaan Baatar, a celebration was held in the main square which was covered by both national television and radio. On World Red Cross day, a 30 minute television programme on the current disaster situation and MRCS activities related to the dzud was broadcast on national television.

The MRCS and the Delegation have continued to brief and provide information to interested international media and Mongolian national television and radio stations.

Contributions

See Annex 1

For further information, please contact Marcel Fortier, Desk Officer, on +41 22 730 4268 (e:mail: fortier@ifrc.org).

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