

Operations update



International Federation
of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies

Mongolia: Severe winter

Emergency appeal n°MDRMN004
GLIDE n° [CW-2010-000010-MNG](#)
Operations update n° 1
23 April 2010

Period covered by this Ops Update: 29 March to 20 April 2010

Appeal target (current): CHF 1,062,295

Appeal coverage: The appeal is 32 per cent covered to date, and 35 per cent covered with pledges in the pipeline. Funds are urgently needed to enable Mongolian Red Cross Society (MRCS) to provide immediate humanitarian assistance to those affected by this disaster.

[<click here to go directly to the updated donor response report, or here to contact details>](#)

Appeal history:

- This Emergency Appeal was launched on 29 March 2010, seeking CHF 1,062,295 for six months period in order to assist 13,600 beneficiaries in eight provinces whose vulnerability and needs have dramatically increased due to the seriousness of the climatic and social situation and its worsening.
- **Disaster Relief Emergency Fund (DREF):** CHF 100,000 (USD 93,924 or EUR 70,006) was allocated from the Federation's DREF to support the national society in this operation. Unearmarked funds to replenish DREF are encouraged.

Summary: Mongolia is currently experiencing a crisis arising from a dry summer, extremely cold winter with heavy snow and a continuous cold spell, further compounded by an unstable spring with well below average temperatures and snow storms. The result has been the further destruction of herder's livelihoods in 19 of the 21 provinces in the country which have been severely affected by these extreme weather conditions. Almost two-thirds of the herding population are badly affected.



The winter gave way to spring which is unstable and even more severe with frequent gales, sandstorms and snowfalls. The biggest loss of livestock occurred in March and April, further draining resources and capacity. Photo: Javier Barrera/IFRC

In response to the current crisis, and as requested by MRCS, the International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies (IFRC) launched an emergency appeal to support the most vulnerable in eight selected provinces. In this reporting period, a detailed livelihood assessment, which will help to define the means and modalities of the Red Cross intervention as part of a mid- and long-term recovery process of the affected population, was completed. The aim of the assessments was to focus on immediate relief needs as well as to identify means by which herder households could be helped, so that appeal funds can be used as effectively as possible. Recommendations aimed to provide immediate aid and also ensure that delivery is organized mainly through ongoing Red Cross outreach activities in training and support. Based on the assessment's findings and recommendations, a detailed plan of action will be developed that will map out a process and standards for the implementation of Red Cross activities in support and assistance of the selected households. The assessment

report will be finalized and released on 26 April. As of 20 April 2010, the funding coverage for the appeal is only 32 per cent against the appealed budget. The need for adequate funding is imperative as the living conditions of the identified vulnerable population are worsening on a daily basis.

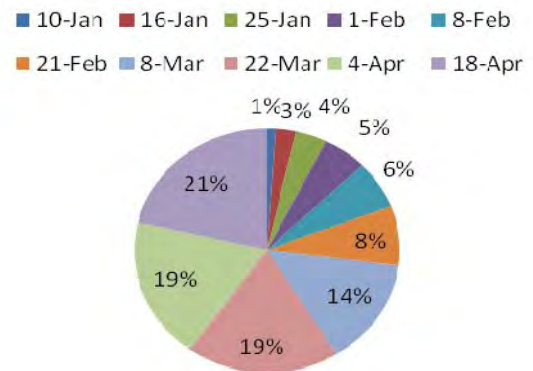
Partners which have made contributions to the appeal to date include British Red Cross, Canadian Red Cross, Finnish Red Cross, Hong Kong branch of the Red Cross Society of China, Japanese Red Cross and Swedish Red Cross.

The IFRC, on behalf of Mongolian Red Cross Society, would like to thank all partners for their generous response to this appeal.

The situation

The rural population of Mongolia, consisting mainly of nomadic herding communities, suffered severely under extended and extreme winter weather conditions that have impacted the country. The situation is further exacerbated by environmental degradation as a result of the excessive grazing of limited pastures in some areas and *dzud* conditions. The *dzud* is a natural phenomenon that describes these extreme weather conditions which can see a sharp drop of temperature and recurrent and prolonged snowfall that has a devastating effect on the livelihood of herders by causing a serious loss of livestock as well as affecting their own health. Herding is the main livelihood for 80 per cent of the rural community throughout Mongolia. The herding practices have been followed through generations and most families involved are subsistence herders whose animals provide hope and security for present and future generations.

As of 18 April 2010, according to the National Emergency Management Agency, loss of livestock throughout the country reached 6.7 million, which is more than 15 per cent of the total livestock population (44 million) documented before the onset of the disaster. The chart on the right illustrates the mortality of livestock as reported, with the largest percentage of animals perishing in the period of 4 - 18 April.



The latest available report from the ministry of food, agriculture and light industry of Mongolia indicates that up to two-thirds of the total herding population are affected by this disaster, out of which up to 6,500 families are most impoverished as they have lost their entire livestock. There are few replacement births and the female livestock, already weak after delivery, succumb to starvation as the cold weather continues to prevent the growth of new pasture. Herding families are themselves exhausted by months of struggle against the snow, shortages of food and have often reached by now a point of desperation as they seek some support for their precarious situation. Yet, these are resourceful and tough people who only ask for assistance in the face of absolute need and what they want is to be given a chance to overcome these challenges so that they can tackle the problems. The recently completed Red Cross needs assessment findings have shown that one of the most pertinent and effective ways to help these herding families will be through the allocation of small amounts of cash which, organized with the support of local banks, enterprise groups and technical help, can effectively make a huge difference to these struggling households.

The danger in the current situation if unattended is that these families have no other alternatives for livelihood. There is a widespread lack of small and mid-size enterprises at county and provincial levels. Moreover, the herding population in their majority lack specific skills that would help them find employment in other sectors of the economy. The Red Cross needs assessment also indicate that the 6,500 families who have been made destitute by the loss of all their livestock, have no other choice but to seek help by relocating to the district capitals (*soum*) in the hope of finding casual work. The Mongolian government reports indicate that as of April 2010, approximately 1,400 herding households have already moved to the *soum*¹ centres, normally considered as a first step in a migration process which ultimately leads to Ulaanbaatar, the largest city in Mongolia which is already overcrowded and has insufficient social structures to cope with more arrivals. The government estimates that at least 20,000 people will migrate to Ulaanbaatar by the end of this year. The direct impact of this population flow to the capital city includes but is not limited to increased burden on availability and accessibility of health and social services, which will have implications on urban poverty rate, unemployment and many other social factors that will continue to adversely affect the lives of the people involved as well as the overall development of Mongolia.

¹ Administrative unit in rural area: *province – soum – bag*

According to the results of assessments from other agencies, approximately 35 per cent of the total herding population is indebted with various commercial banks. Many of these families have reported that they have taken loans from the banks to try to save their livestock, in the hopes of repaying the bank loans through the sale of cashmere in spring. However, due to the sudden deaths of these livestock, herders now face new challenges and no income to repay their debts. The immediate effects of the situation result in an inability to repay the bank loans, as well as difficulties in providing food for their families and other basic needs. Furthermore, these communities have experienced prolonged periods of stress and the strain of losing livelihoods which has resulted in families and children developing extreme fatigue and psychological stress and trauma.

Seasonal calendar developed during a household visit in Umnugobi province

Activity	Jan	Feb	March	April	May	June	July	Aug	Sept	Oct	Nov	Dec
Cashmere sales												
Milk sales												
Meat sales												
Food shortage												
Buying animal feed												

Coordination and partnerships

Overall coordination of the disaster response is maintained by the Mongolian government, with the national disaster management agency taking the lead in disasters and public health emergencies. The agency and its branches are arranging inter-governmental assistance as well as domestically raised support.

The international donor community response has been coordinated by the United Nations (UN) resident office in Mongolia as requested by the Mongolian government. Accordingly, the UN has established three clusters: health/nutrition and survival; agriculture; and early recovery to support the coordination of the response to the disaster. As a result of coordinated efforts, it is expected that the UN will launch an international appeal amounting in the tens of millions of dollars in the coming weeks. A number of efforts have been already initiated by the international donor community towards responding to the situation, strengthening and expanding ongoing projects in rural areas. In this reporting period, some organizations such as World Vision, Samaritan's Purse and the Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO) have begun to distribute relief goods to the affected population in some areas. MRCS with the support of IFRC is coordinating with the different clusters, while simultaneously, bilateral coordination is ongoing with organizations that have presence in the same areas planned under this appeal.



A detailed livelihood assessment was conducted to help define the means and modalities of the Red Cross intervention and support to the affected communities.

Photo: Javier Barrera/IFRC

The international donor community towards responding to the situation, strengthening and expanding ongoing projects in rural areas. In this reporting period, some organizations such as World Vision, Samaritan's Purse and the Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO) have begun to distribute relief goods to the affected population in some areas. MRCS with the support of IFRC is coordinating with the different clusters, while simultaneously, bilateral coordination is ongoing with organizations that have presence in the same areas planned under this appeal.

Organization	Response
World Vision	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Food, non-food items and concentrated feed for animal for 3,500 households in 12 provinces: Arkhangai, Bayankhongor, Gobi-Altai, Dundgobi, Khentii, Khovd, Uvurkhantai, Tuv, Zavkhan, Khuvsgul, Bulgan, Bayan-Olgii 2. Health assistance (medical check-up, distribution of micro-nutrition for infants, first aid kit, hygiene kit and brochures with health recommendations) for 2,025 households in nine provinces: Arkhangai, Bayankhongor, Gobi-Altai, Dundgobi, Khovd, Uvurkhantai, Tuv, Zavkhan, Bayan-Olgii
Samaritan's Purse	Food aid for 280 households in Uvurkhantai province
UN FAO	Concentrated feed for animals, milk powder for new born animals, package of veterinary drugs for 2,614 households in seven provinces: Uvurkhantai, Dundgobi, Umnugobi, Arkhangai, Bayankhongor, Zavkhan, Gobi-Altai

The Mongolian government has recently developed a joint plan on mitigating the impact of the disaster. The action points are:

1. To establish a working group from related ministries and institutions in order to develop a detailed plan on the recovery and rehabilitation process;
2. To assist the herding families who have completely lost all their livestock by following means:
 - To restock 50 per cent or 3,235 herding families with 70 heads of sheep and goats. The action requires a budget of MNT 12.9 billion (USD 10 million) and the government expects to raise 50 per cent of the total required funds from international donor community, 30 per cent from the government budget and 20 per cent utilizing local resources.
 - To engage the remaining 50 per cent of affected families in other employment sectors.
3. To support small- and mid-size enterprises at provincial and local levels through the provision of vocational training for young herders under 35 and support them in seeking appropriate jobs.
4. To provide medical check-ups and if required, to facilitate treatment for affected herders in 2010.

Red Cross Red Crescent action

Overview

The Mongolian Red Cross Society (MRCS) has been successfully implementing a national response since December 2009 by addressing the immediate needs of the most vulnerable herding households in the severely affected provinces with assistance and support from the IFRC country, East Asia regional and Asia Pacific zone offices. MRCS continues to engage with government agencies and ministries and was able to raise funds through a national appeal and received cash donations from its partners on a bilateral basis.

However, as the current crisis worsened, MRCS, with the support of IFRC, launched an emergency appeal which focuses on relief distributions in eight provinces and livelihood interventions in the most affected of 13 provinces.

A detailed livelihood needs assessment was undertaken to identify the most appropriate livelihood intervention, to complement existing MRCS programmes and which together can form an early recovery basis for longer-term recovery and risk reduction among 1,200 herder households. The needs assessment team includes experienced personnel from MRCS, IFRC, British Red Cross and UN FAO. Visits were made to four of the most affected provinces: Umnugobi, Dundgobi, Gobi-Altai and Uvurkhangai. Semi-structured interviews and discussions were also held with herder families, local representatives and officials from the province, *soums* and *bags*² of the visited provinces. The principle objective was to encourage the engagement of herders in weighing ideas concerning their own future in order to identify workable plans which can be effectively implemented with local commitment. In addition, MRCS continues to actively implement a humanitarian diplomacy approach - engaging with key figures in Mongolia to highlight ongoing humanitarian needs.



Evidence from household visits conducted suggests a deteriorating health condition among the affected households clearly related to the very stressful experience and hard conditions of the continued winter. Photo Vinay Raj/British Red Cross

Progress towards objectives

Relief distributions (food and basic non-food items)

Outcome: To ensure up to 1,800 herder families (7,200 people) in eight provinces (Bayankhongor, Dundgobi, Khentii, Khovd, Sukhbaatar, Tuv, Umnugobi, and Uvs) receive essential food and non-food items to meet their immediate needs for up to three months.

Output	Activities planned
1,800 vulnerable families (7,200 people) are assisted in maintaining a minimum level of subsistence	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Develop selection criteria of target locations; • Develop selection criteria of beneficiaries; • Identify and register most affected herder families; • Procure food and non-food items in accordance with IFRC procurement standards;

² Administrative unit in rural area: province – soum – bag

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Distribute food and non-food items to identified beneficiaries; • Continuously monitor the relief activities and reporting on relief distributions; • Conduct ongoing assessments and review support strategies; • Organize an impact evaluation including beneficiary consultation at the end of the operation.
--	---

Progress: Having identified the most seriously affected areas and utilizing strict selection criteria in what continues to be a coordinated effort with local authorities and representatives from the affected communities in the selected provinces, MRCS has already identified hundreds of families who will be provided with food and basic non-food items. The findings of the recent detailed assessment have shown that these families who have completely lost all their livestock face bleak months ahead, which necessitate further intervention from the Red Cross Red Crescent Movement as part of a mid-term response in supporting livelihood needs. The MRCS is in the process of securing providers to acquire the urgently required relief items. Unfortunately, the purchase of these sorely needed items is delayed due to the limited amount of financial contributions received to date for the appeal. In addition to the costs of the items required, there is a need to account for the very high costs of transportation associated with the distribution of these relief items.

Health

Outcome: To ensure the health status of 1,800 most affected herder families (7,200 people) in eight provinces (Bayankhongor, Dundgobi, Khentii, Khovd, Sukhbaatar, Tuv, Umnogobi, and Uvs) is improved through the provision of psychological support and health education (including hygiene promotion) over the next six months.

Output	Activities planned
1,800 most affected herder families (7,200 people) receive psychosocial support and health education assistance	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Psychosocial support training for MRCS volunteers; • Mobilization of MRCS psychosocial support; • Provision of first aid training and psychosocial support to affected families; • Review, update and production of MRCS information, education and communication materials (IEC); • Purchase of first aid kits ; • Herder family visits by volunteers to support affected families and disseminate information; • Production of mass media messages (public service announcements and special programmes on TV and radio) and regular broadcasting; • Promotion of clean-up activities and the burial of dead animals; and • Continuous monitoring of the health situation in coordination with local health authorities.

Progress:

The National Society's local branch network continues to visit the affected areas to provide psychosocial assistance. In these household visits, evidence suggests that there is a deteriorating health condition among the affected households which is clearly related to the very stressful experience and hard conditions of the continued winter. In this reporting period, two regional trainings on the provision of psychosocial support were conducted. A total of 50 Red Cross volunteers have been trained and deployed to provide psychosocial support for people experiencing depression. These trained volunteers continue to conduct household visits, accompanying *soum* and *bag* authorities, at time of reporting.

Livelihoods

Outcome: Up to 1,600 families (6,400 people) who have lost their livestock will be assisted in recovery and in building resilience for a period of up to six months.

Output	Activities planned
1,600 most affected herder families (6,400 people) have improved means of livelihood	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Conduct a detailed assessment to define livelihood needs and capacity; • Study the capacity of MRCS and IFRC to deliver a variety of livelihood initiatives such as cash grants, cash for work and other recovery initiatives for vulnerable families reinforcing economic and social security; • Finalize the modalities and means for supporting livelihood continuity; • Develop selection criteria of target locations; • Develop beneficiary identification strategy and registration system with herder families for delivery of identified assistance; • Distribute resources according to plans emanating from the livelihoods

	assessments; • Awareness and sensitization of social services for families who have migrated to urban centres • Share best practices between herder families; • Monitor and evaluate the activities; and • Develop an exit strategy.
--	--

Progress: The expected wave of migration towards urban areas by destitute herder families has commenced. Reports indicate that in excess of 1,500 families have already relocated to urban centres. MRCS, in coordination with local authorities, continues to provide assistance to these families. An elaborated plan of action and its implementation, based on findings and recommendations from the detailed needs assessment, will be processed in close cooperation and coordination with the Mongolian government authority at local and national levels in accordance to existing policies. All actions to be undertaken will be closely coordinated with other humanitarian agencies involved in the disaster response, recovery and rehabilitation.

The framework of the plan of action is based on the recommendations of the needs assessment report. The key recommendations released until now suggest the following:

Provision of cash grants to severely affected families:

To provide cash grants to destitute herder households in order to facilitate a restocking process, primarily focused on subsistence herding. It's projected that supported households will obtain a viable herd within three years, if ordinary replenishment rates are maintained. This type of intervention was identified as the most appropriate based on the following factors:

- Animal husbandry comprises approximately 30 per cent of employment in the country. There are many senior herders who have been engaged in farming their whole lives and are unable to move to any other sector.
- Young herders who are willing to try other sectors of employment do not have specific skills and knowledge and their education level is limited, usually with an incomplete secondary education being the highest level.
- While there are opportunities to be involved in different vocational and life skills trainings, limited rural development and industrialization would not allow those trained to utilize and practice their acquired knowledge and skills.

Formation of cooperatives:

To encourage individual herders to form groups that will help them withstand natural disasters through better preparedness and response mechanisms collectively. Being a Mongolia-specific hazard, *dzud* is not only a natural phenomenon, but is also closely associated with the loss of animals (wealth) due to the severe weather conditions. The assessments conducted in relation to the current crisis indicate the impact of the severe winter has been aggravated by the human related factors such as insufficient levels of preparedness and a lack of adaptation mechanism. Therefore, it is important to support the collective effort of herders towards finding solutions to pressing issues such as effective pastureland management, intensified animal husbandry and mitigation measures from the climate change effects.

Increased awareness of animal husbandry:

To train and raise awareness of herding population on issues such as appropriate feed, pasture maintenance, shelter improvement and other aspects of improved animal husbandry. During the detailed assessment visits many of the interviewed herders as well as local authorities expressed their interest in adopting a more scientific approach that would intensify the traditional herding methods and slowly develop animal husbandry into a profession. Trainings to provide technical know-how will be required.

Health programme:

To empower the herding community through health promotion and disease prevention using MRCS's existing mechanism such as primary and mid-level branches across the country and the nationwide network of active volunteers. MRCS currently runs community-based projects addressing needs and vulnerabilities in the health, first aid, disaster preparedness and social care integrated with psycho-social support elements in rural areas.

Communications – Advocacy and Public Information

The launch of appeal was communicated to all partner national societies and disseminated to in-country donors and partners. The head of IFRC's country office in Mongolia met with ambassadors and heads of various international institutions and organizations in-country to bring to their attention to the deteriorating situation and the need for a coordinated effort to adequately respond to the humanitarian imperatives of the current crisis.

The IFRC and MRCS jointly initiated immediate communications actions and travelled with early assessment teams. Press releases, human interest stories, photos and videos were widely distributed to international media and to potential donor national societies. Efforts led to significant coverage in international press, including by BBC, Al Jazeera, CNN and the Washington Post.

How we work

All IFRC 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 the [Humanitarian Charter and Minimum Standards in Disaster Response \(Sphere\)](#) in delivering assistance to the most vulnerable.

The IFRC's vision is to inspire, encourage, facilitate and promote at all times all forms of humanitarian activities by National Societies, with a view to preventing and alleviating human suffering, and thereby contributing to the maintenance and promotion of human dignity and peace in the world.

The IFRC's work is guided by [Strategy 2020](#) which puts forward three strategic aims:

1. Save lives, protect livelihoods, and strengthen recovery from disaster and crises.
2. Enable healthy and safe living.
3. Promote social inclusion and a culture of non-violence and peace.

Contact information

For further information specifically related to this operation please contact:

- Mongolia Red Cross Society
 - Mr. Ravdan Samdandobji, Secretary General, Mongolian Red Cross Society; email: redcross@magicnet.mn; phone: +976 11 312 578; fax: +976 11 320 934
- IFRC country office in Ulaabaator, Mongolia
 - Mr. Javier Barrera, head of office, email: javier.barrera@ifrc.org; phone: +976 11 312 720; fax: +976 11 321 684
- IFRC regional office in Beijing, China; phone: +86 10 6532 7162; fax: +86 10 6532 7166
 - Mr. Carl Naucler, head of regional office, email: carl.naucler@ifrc.org;
- IFRC Asia Pacific zone office in Kuala Lumpur; phone: +603 9207 5700, fax +603 2164 1857
 - Mr. Jagan Chapagain, head of operations; email: jagan.chapagain@ifrc.org;
 - Mr. Daniel Bolaños González, operations coordinator: email: daniel.bolanos@ifrc.org phone: +603 9207 5728, fax +603 2164 1857
 - Mr. Jeremy Francis, regional logistics coordinator; email: jeremy.francis@ifrc.org; phone: +603 9207 5753, fax: +603 2168 8573
 - Ms. Penny Elghady, resource mobilization & PMER coordinator; email: penny.elghady@ifrc.org; phone: +603 9207 5775, fax +603 2164 1857

Please send all pledges of funding to: zonerm.asiapacific@ifrc.org
- Jason Smith, communications manager; jason.smith@ifrc.org phone: +6012 9207 5780, fax: +603 2161 0670:

[<Emergency Appeal budget and map below;](#)
[click here to return to the title page>](#)

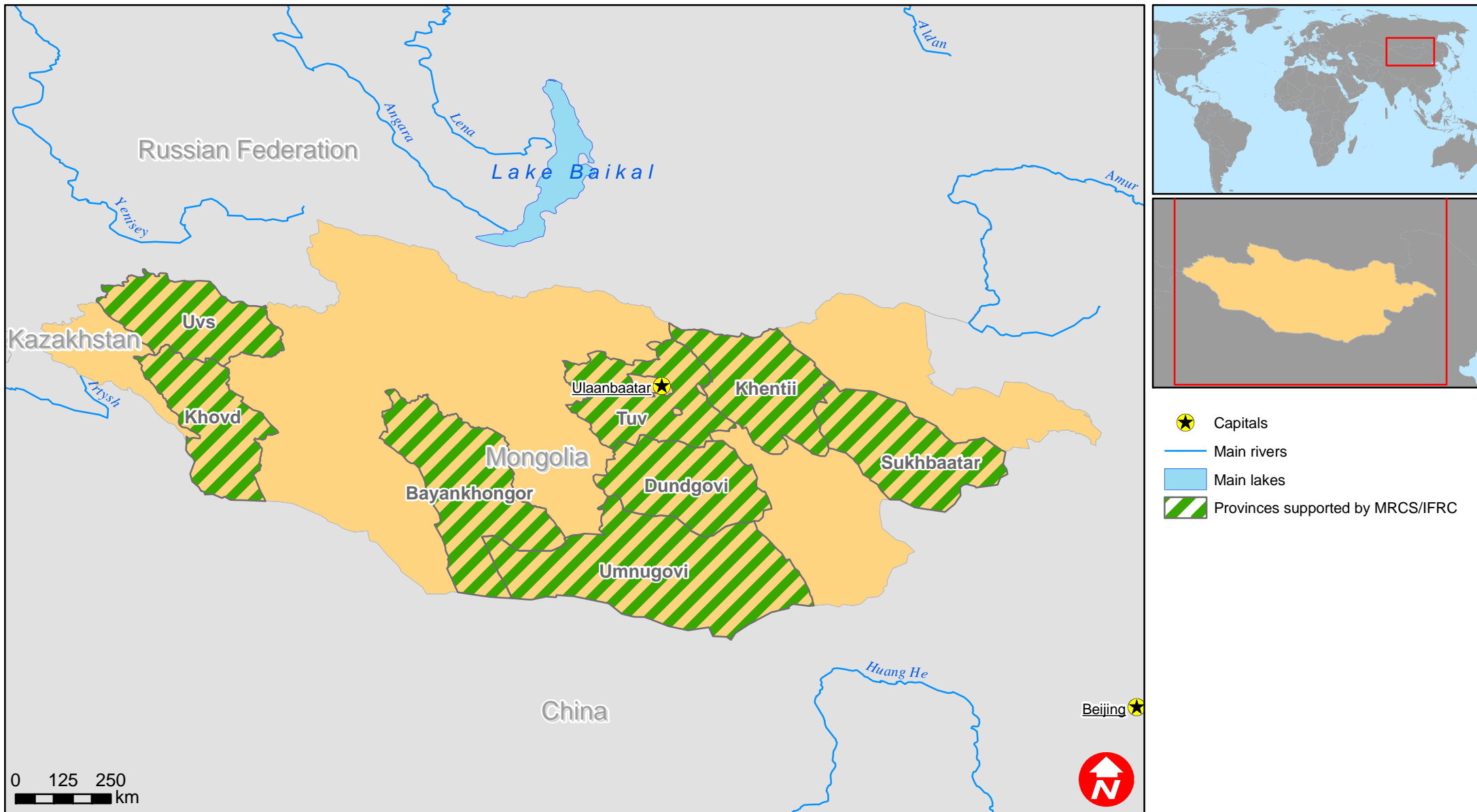
MDRMN004 -MONGOLIA: SEVERE WINTER

BUDGET SUMMARY

Budget Group	Multilateral Response
Clothing & Textiles	152,802
Food	120,303
Medical & First Aid	24,806
Teaching Materials	51,771
Other Supplies & Services & Cash Disbursements	268,000
Total Supplies	617,683
Vehicles	40,000
Computer & Telecom	7,016
Office/Household Furniture & Equipment	5,000
Total Land, vehicles & equipment	52,015
Storage	8,769
Distribution & Monitoring	19,994
Transport & Vehicle Costs	29,724
Total Transport & Storage	58,487
International Staff	82,000
National Staff	45,000
National Society Staff	28,620
Other Staff benefits	4,830
Total Personnel	160,450
Workshops & Training	28,605
Total Workshops & Training	28,605
Travel	29,500
Information & Public Relation	15,000
Office Costs	6,000
Communications	6,000
Professional Fees	20,000
Financial Charges	720
Other General Expenses	3,000
Total General Expenditure	80,220
Program Support	64,835
Total Programme Support	64,835
TOTAL BUDGET	1,062,295



Mongolia: Severe winter



The maps used do not imply the expression of any opinion on the part of the International Federation of the Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies or National Societies concerning the legal status of a territory or of its authorities.

Map data sources: ESRI, DEVINFO, Federation - MDRMN004.mxd