

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

17 January 2003

Information Bulletin N° 2/03

Disaster Relief Emergency Fund (DREF) Allocated: 300,000 CHF

This Bulletin is being issued as an update on the winter crisis in Mongolia. The Federation and the Mongolia Red Cross Society are developing a 3.9m CHF appeal for assistance to 155,000 people which will be launched on Monday 20 January. The International Federation last week released 300,000 CHF from its Disaster Relief Emergency Fund (DREF) in order for the Mongolia Red Cross Society to immediately procure and distribute 500 metric tonnes (MT) wheat flour (6 months ration) for 3300 families.

The Situation

Mongolia is facing another devastating winter which will greatly exacerbate the effects of the three previous drought/dzud¹ cycles (2000, 2001, 2002) and the transition from a command to a free market economy (since early 1990s). Both these features have already caused extreme poverty amongst a proportion of the population.

Based on the latest information collected by the Mongolian Red Cross Society and the State Emergency Commission, 665,000 people or 131,000 families² have been severely affected by this year's dzud. The summer drought has prevented a large number of herders from collecting enough hay for the winter, a winter that started earlier than normal, forcing many herders to use their scarce stocks of hay starting from September.

Many herders are now running out of fodder. With animals not being likely to have access to fresh pasture until May, the number of animals who will not make it through the winter is going to increase dramatically. In the first two weeks of January, 24000 animals are reported dead by the State Emergency Commission which is a strong

¹ The direct cause of a dzud disaster is the accumulation of damaging natural hazards, undermining the welfare and food security of the herding community through large-scale death and debilitation of livestock. 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. Extremes of climate and difficulties caused by social and economic transition have also contributed to the current disaster situation.

² Average family size estimated at 5 persons.

indication of worse to come. The State Emergency Commission has forecasted that 2.3 to 2.5 million animals are expected to die within the next 3-4 month.

The Government has released funds for the distribution of wheat, rice, milk powder, warm clothes, boots and medical supplies in 12 aimags. The same 12 aimags have also been given supplies of fodder for the animals at discounted rates.

The Mongolian Government is in close contact with UNDP but as yet not decided to appeal for international assistance through the UN system.

Red Cross/Red Crescent Action

The International Federation undertook an in depth assessment of the developing winter situation in late November 2002. The Assessment Team reported that the impact of three previous dzuds and droughts have depleted coping mechanisms to the point where coping failure is likely given another dzud this winter. The Assessment team also reported that there are increasing numbers of herders with insufficient or no livestock to sustain livelihood; there is evidence of increasing destitution due to lack of assets and employment of ex-herders in bagh (sub county), soum (county) and aimag (province) centres and there are increasing numbers of households migrating to Ulaan Baatar, where unemployment and high registration fees (barring access to welfare services) is causing severe destitution.

An International Federation appeal will be launched on Monday 20 January in support of 115.000 women, men and children in rural and urban areas affected by the dzud in Mongolia.

The MRCS and the International Federation will be requesting approximately 3.9 million CHF to ensure a minimum calorific intake for 23,000 families for 6 months by providing them with a supplementary ration of 300 Kg wheatflour. 23.000 sets of children's warm clothes will also be provided to increase the possibilities for these children to attend school while 23,000 herding households will receive a pair of adult boots allowing them to continue herding. A key objective of the operation will also be to build the capacity of the Mongolia Red Cross Society to reduce longer term vulnerability through revitalising Red Cross local branches (primary organisations) in 17 soums.

The International Federation last week released 300,000 CHF from its Disaster Relief Emergency Fund (DREF) in order for the Mongolia Red Cross Society to immediately procure and distribute 500 MT wheat flour (6 months ration) for 3300 families (16,500 people) in three of the worst affected aimags: Khubsgul, Bulgan and Selenge. These three aimags have suffered the most severe snowfall combined with icy conditions.

The Federation's Regional Disaster Management Delegate and Regional Information Delegate have just returned from a field trip to affected areas and have confirmed that the situation is becoming increasingly difficult for large segments of the population.

After a week of very cold temperatures the climate has become somewhat milder, but below minus 30 temperatures are expected again in the coming weeks. By January 11, more than 80% of the whole territory was covered with snow ranging from between 20 cm to more than one meter in the worst affected areas which are mainly in the aimags of Bulgan, Khubsgul, Selenge, Darhan-Uul, Umnugobi, Tuv and Orhon.

For further details please contact :

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

Richard Grove-Hills, Head of Regional Delegation, Beijing; Phone 8610 65 327 162/3/4/5; Fax 8610 65 327 166.

Aurelia Balpe, Phone 41 22 730 4352; Fax 41 22 733 0395; email aurelia.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