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Information bulletin

Mongolia: Extreme winter

 International Federation
of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies

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This bulletin is being issued for information and reflects the current situation and details available at this time. The Mongolian Red Cross Society (MRCS), with the support of the International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies (IFRC), has determined that external assistance is required, and is therefore seeking funds and other assistance from donors for the implementation of relief activities.

[< click here for detailed contact information >](#)

The situation

According to the Mongolian National State Emergency Committee, 40 per cent of the country is now facing extreme winter conditions. The committee has warned that over the next weeks there is strong likelihood of disaster similar to what was witnessed in the winter 2009–2010, when the *dzud*, as this type of disaster is called in the Mongolian language, severely affected the livelihood of tens of thousands of poor herder families.

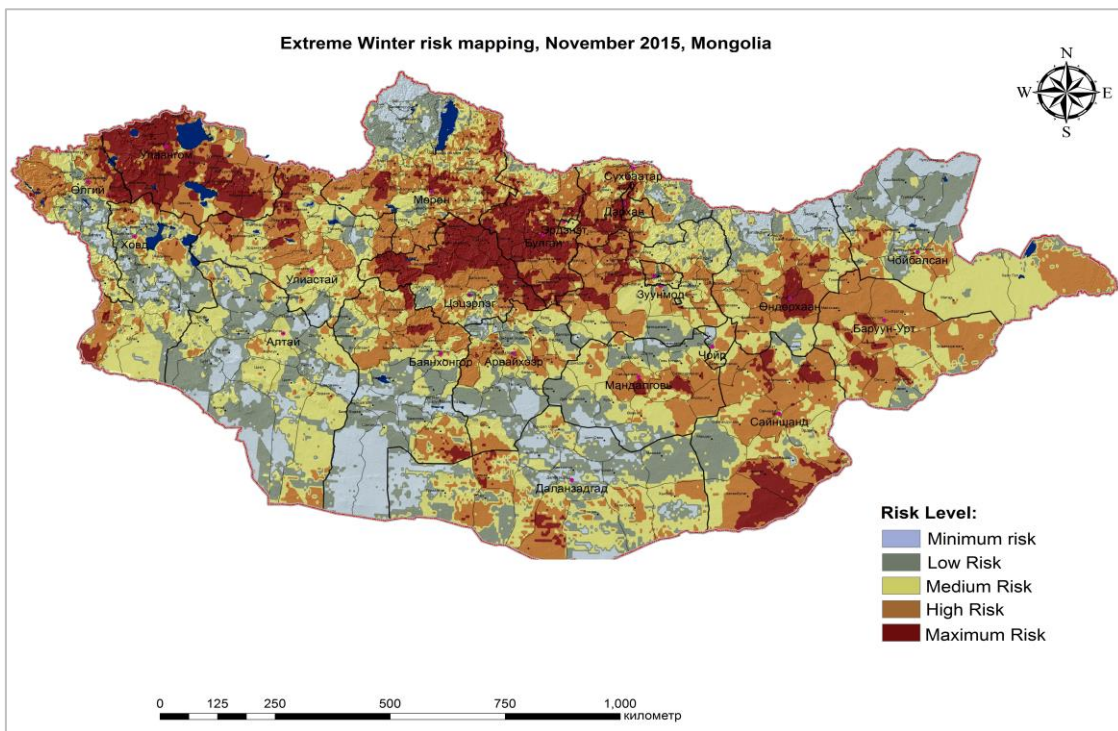
Due to droughts last summer, many herder families have not gathered sufficient winter fodder to guarantee the survival of their livestock in case of severe winter conditions.

Current weather forecast predicts continued heavy snowfall and temperatures are expected to drop below -30 degrees Celsius during daytime and -45 degrees at night. These conditions may persist for the whole months of December and January. Some roads and mountain passes are reported to be already blocked by snow, limiting access to the herders in affected areas.

The map below illustrates the regions affected by the extreme cold and heavy snowfall. The Mongolian government has officially declared that “Extreme Winter” conditions now exist in six regions in central and northwest parts of Mongolia.



Local herder in Uvs province helps staff from the local emergency agency who are struggling to bring their vehicle across grasslands that now are covered with up to 45 cm of snow - November 2015. Photo: Mongolian National Emergency Management Agency



Winter risk mapping by geographic region based on previous drought, temperature, precipitation, height of snowfall, density of snow and pasture lands.

Source: Information and Research Institute of Meteorology, Hydrology and Environment

Due to the difficult road and weather conditions, it is not easy to reach the herders and provide them with the support they need. They live scattered over a vast area, and their nomadic lifestyle makes it very difficult to locate them. The Mongolian deputy prime minister stated that if long term weather forecasts turn out to be accurate, it will take the combined efforts of both domestic and international humanitarian actors to provide necessary support to the affected families.

Presently Uvs province is the most affected part of the country, and 218 families with 110 children are reported to be migrating within the province in search of better pastures for their livestock. Up to 810 families live in the most remote part of the province. This area has now become unreachable because of heavy snow. Of particular concern is the increasing density of the snow cover, as it makes the animals unable to scratch through it to get to the grass below.

According to information from MRCS mid-level branch in Bayan Ulgii province, which is already partially affected, the situation is rapidly deteriorating. Snow is now covering all parts of the province and snow density is increasing.

Red Cross and Red Crescent action

Mongolia Red Cross Society (MRCS):

The Secretary General of the MRCS took part in the National Emergency Commission meeting on 25 November, and has requested humanitarian organizations to initiate preparation actions.

The MRCS is collecting information from local authorities and local branches regarding the affected situation and will be updating numbers of people and families affected.

MRCS is planning to deploy the National Disaster Response Team (NDRT) to conduct needs assessment and relief operation in the affected areas.

MRCS has requested support from IFRC for preparation and response planning and is having discussions with Partner National Societies in responding to the situation.

Together with the IFRC, MRCS will be attending the Humanitarian Country Team (HCT) meeting organized by UN agencies on 8 December 2015 to contribute towards coordinated response.

IFRC:

The IFRC country cluster support team in Beijing and IFRC staff in Mongolia have been closely monitoring the situation in coordination with MRCS. An inventory of relief supplies stored at the regional warehouses of the MRCS has been made. These include blankets and mattresses that have been identified as most important in responding to disasters in winter conditions; and will be deployed immediately if required. IFRC staff from Beijing has been deployed on 6 December to Ulaanbaatar to provide technical support. A DMIS report has been uploaded by the MRCS with IFRC's assistance. Based on the available information that points toward significant humanitarian needs and with further information through assessments when safety conditions and access allow, the IFRC country cluster support team and the Asia Pacific regional office are working closely with MRCS to determine the appropriate response and support.

Contact information

For further information specifically related to this operation please contact:

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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 \(NGOs\) 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.