

MONGOLIA - SNOWFALLS

13 July 2000

Appeal no. 5/2000 (revised)

situation report no. 6

period covered: 13 June - 5 July 2000

The July distribution will complete Phase 1 of the operation related to the distribution of a supplementary 6 month food ration to selected households.

Despite the need to focus assistance on victims of the snowfalls, the Mongolian Red Cross Society (MRCS) continues to carry out their development programmes for youth, health, information dissemination and social welfare.

The context

Severe snowfalls and extremely low temperatures over the winter period affected large areas of Mongolia between September 1999 and April 2000. These weather conditions were preceded by the worst drought in 30 years and together they created what is locally called a multiple 'dzud'. It caused the death of over two million head of livestock, the mainstay of the rural economy and the main source of food for herders and their families.

Over 450,000 people in 13 Aimags (provinces) 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 of the situation indicated that conditions were likely to deteriorate further with far reaching consequences for the affected population. Consequently, the International Federation launched a revised Appeal on 29 March to support 35,000 beneficiaries over a 12 month period with wheatflour, rice or millet as well as with 8,000 winter boots.

Latest events

The preliminary results of Mongolia’s general election held on 2 July show that the Mongolian People’s Revolutionary Party (MPRP) has gained the majority of seats in Parliament over the coalition of democratic parties who have been in office for the past 4 years.

The State Emergency Commission (SEC), the government body responsible for co-ordinating the overall emergency response has now completed the emergency phase of their operation. With the support of the World Bank, the equivalent to USD 1.33 million has been made available to the Mongolian government from the Poverty Alleviation for Vulnerable Groups Project for restocking of herds. This project will support 1,500 households in 33 soums (counties) in 5 of the 13 affected Aimags.

The latest figures indicate that 2,369 households have lost all of their livestock as a direct result of the multiple dzud which by the beginning of June had caused the death of some 2.39 million head of livestock. Feedback from discussions with local authorities suggest that these households are now either entirely dependent on humanitarian assistance or support from relatives.

In Mongolia, 80 - 90% of the total annual precipitation would usually fall between June and August and as drought conditions persist throughout the country, livestock experts are predicting that the total loss of animals could reach 3 million by late summer. Although this loss only represents approximately 10% of the total livestock in Mongolia, the impact on affected households is significant as livestock are the herders main source of food, transport, heating materials and purchasing power.

The current poor state of the pastureland is of great concern. This is an important time of year for animals to gain weight particularly as the Mongolian summer is a short season and snowfall can start as early as September and last until the following April. Not only do livestock need to be in peak condition by the end of the autumn to enable them to survive the winter but also to allow herders to prepare their own winter sources of meat.

During recent field trips, local authorities and herders themselves have emphasised the importance of preparing hay for the livestock for the winter period though overgrazing in many parts of the country and a shortage of rain during the critical summer growing season could jeopardise these winter preparations.

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 identified households located in the 6 worst affected Aimags;
- To provide a 6 month supplementary food ration to 35,000 beneficiaries (6,300 households) in 6 of the worst affected Aimags as detailed in the table below:

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

Note: The ration consists of wheatflour (12x25kg bags per household = 300kg) and rice or millet (2x30kg bags per household = 60kg)

The distribution of the first 3 month supplementary food ration of wheatflour and rice to 6,300 households as well as the distribution of 2,227 pairs of working boots to households that were not included in the food distribution have been concluded in June.

These distributions coincided with the lead up to the election, and the Mongolian Red Cross Society (MRCS) took extra measures to ensure that the purpose of the Red Cross distribution was fully explained to avoid any possible confusion. Each distribution at soum level was preceded by an introduction and dissemination of the Snowfalls programme by the Aimag and Soum Red Cross.

Reports on distribution and copies of the signed beneficiary lists are still being received by the MRCS headquarters in Ulaan Baatar and a consolidated distribution report will be compiled once all of this information has been received.

Monitoring and reporting

The MRCS Staff and the Federation delegates have attended distributions and carried out post distribution monitoring visits in 5 of the 6 Aimags included in the Snowfalls programme. A visit to Uvs Aimag has had to be postponed to a later date due to priorities related to July distribution.

Positive feedback on the operation and the distribution of supplies has been received from both Aimag/Soum Authorities and Aimag/Soum Red Cross representatives and from Red Cross beneficiaries themselves.

Detailed field reports have been produced and the Federation /MRCS are working together to further develop the monitoring and reporting structure.

The main objective in July is to provide a further 3 month supplementary food ration to 6,300 identified households (35,000 beneficiaries) in Dundgobi, Bayankhongor, Overkhangai, Zavkhan, Uvs and Tuv Aimags.

Procurement and transportation of supplies

Even though contracts have been drawn up and signed between suppliers and the Federation, for the procurement of rice and wheatflour for Phase 1 of the operation, the Delegation/MRCS have experienced some problems with the availability and pricing of supplies for final activities within Phase 1 of the operation.

- At the beginning of June, the supplier of rice informed the Delegation/MRCS that they would be unable to provide 189 tons of rice as stipulated in the contract due to a shortage of rice in the country. This was confirmed by the Ministry of Agriculture. The possibility of procuring rice from either China or Russia has been ruled out due to the high purchase and transportation costs involved. Following discussions with the MRCS, the decision was made to purchase additional wheatflour instead of rice for Dundgobi, Bayankhongor, Zavkhan, Uverkhangai and Tuv Aimags.
- To minimise transportation costs, wheatflour for Uvs Aimag was purchased locally in the previous period. Due to a significant increase in the price of wheatflour in Uvs Aimag (located some 1,300 kms from Ulaan Baatar), 150 tons of wheatflour for July will be procured in Ulaan Baatar.

The savings made on purchasing wheatflour instead of rice for 5 of the Aimags will be used to offset the additional costs that will be incurred to transport wheatflour from Ulaan Baatar to Uvs.

Therefore, 5,300 households in Dundgobi, Bayankhongor, Zavkhan, Uverkhangai and Tuv Aimags will receive the following 3 month supplementary food ration in July:

- 6 x 25 kg bags of Grade II wheatflour
- 1 x 25 kg bag of Grade I wheatflour (instead of rice)

A part of the rice allocation (21 tons) for Uvs Aimag was procured and shipped by truck from Ulaan Baatar to Uvs with the rice in May and stored. Additional 7.5 tons are needed to assist, in total, 1,000 identified beneficiary households.

The identified 1,000 households in Uvs Aimag will receive the following 3 month supplementary food ration:

- 6 x 25 kg bags of Grade II wheatflour for 1,000 families.
- 1 x 30 kg bag of rice for 700 households and 1 x 25 kg bag of wheatflour for 300 households.

Distribution

The wheatflour will be transported by truck from Ulaan Baatar to 95 soums and the main distribution will take place at the soum centre. A team from the MRCS headquarters has been assigned to each of the Aimags to accompany the trucks from Ulaan Baatar and to monitor the distributions. They will also be responsible for the dissemination of information on the programme and providing an update on the current MRCS activities.

The shipment of supplies to the soums is already underway and has been completed for Tuv and Dundgobi Aimags. Distributions in these 2 Aimags is likely to be completed before mid-July. The shipment of wheatflour to the remaining Aimags will be completed by end-July.

The distribution schedule for the 6 Aimags is detailed in the table below:

Aimag	No: of Soums	No: of households	Wheatflour (tons)	Rice (tons)
Dundgobi	15	1,415	247.6	
Bayankhongor	6	465	81.3	
Zavkhan	24	1,230	215.3	
Uverkhangai	19	1,425	249.4	
Uvs	19	1,000	157.5	21
Tuv	12	765	133.9	
Total	95	6,300	1,085	21

With the completion of the above distribution, 6,300 households will have received a 6 month supplementary food ration of rice and wheatflour and 2,827 pairs of working boots will have been distributed to households that were not included in the food distribution.

Mid-term evaluation

A joint MRCS/Federation mid-term evaluation of the programme is due to take place at the end of August and detailed terms of reference for this are currently being drawn up.

Phase 2: October 2000 - March 2001 •

Discussions are already underway between the MRCS Disaster team/Federation Logistics delegate and potential suppliers for the procurement of relief supplies for Phase 2 of the operation. Transportation and storage is being carefully looked into given that distributions are scheduled to take place during the winter period; September 2000 and January 2001.

MRCS •

Despite the large impact that the Mongolia Snowfalls programme has on the ongoing MRCS programmes, activities linked to the established development programmes, such as Youth, Disaster Preparedness, Information and Dissemination and Health have continued to take place. Detailed quarterly reports are provided on these development programmes and a consolidated situation report covering the first six months of this year will be issued shortly.

Federation Delegation •

A Logistics / Field delegate from the Danish Red Cross arrived in early June to replace the outgoing Field Delegate. The Reporting Delegate from the East Asia Regional Office in Beijing will be based in Mongolia in July and will continue to provide support to the ongoing monitoring and reporting of the programme.

Outstanding needs

Thanks to the generous financial support, the Mongolia Snowfalls Appeal has already attained 102.5% coverage which has enabled the MRCS/Federation to provide much needed assistance for some 6,300 households over the first six month period.

The continued shortage of rain is presenting a very serious problem to herders in the preparation of their herds and their fodder for the winter. Future distributions of supplementary food items are still being identified as a high priority.

It is well recognised that there are many herders who were badly affected by the consequences of the harsh winter but have not been included into the Red Cross beneficiary lists. Depending on the outcome of the mid-term evaluation, the MRCS and the Federation might consider increasing the scope of their operation to provide additional assistance to these herders.

External relations - Government/UN/NGOs/Media

During the first half of June, the Delegation and the MRCS held meetings with key Embassies in Ulaan Baatar to provide an update on the current situation and the Snowfalls Appeal. This initiative was well received by the Embassies.

The Federation delegates and MRCS staff were interviewed by the Mongolian National Television for a special Red Cross programme which was broadcast on 30 June, on the occasion of the Mongolian Red Cross day.

The Delegation has also held meetings with SCF UK and ADRA to share information on the ongoing relief activities. The Delegation has also met with representatives from the State Emergency Commission and the Mongolian Herders Association to gain a better understanding of the challenges facing herders in the coming months.

A story and photographs from the June field visit to Bayankhongor Aimag have been posted into 'Direct from the Field' which is accessible via the Federation's web site: www.ifrc.org

The MRCS and the Delegation continue to respond to enquiries from the media regarding the situation in Mongolia.

Contributions

See Annex 1 for details.