

MONGOLIA: SNOWFALLS

2 February 2001

appeal no. 5/2000

situation report no. 10

period covered: 7 December 2000 - 21 January 2001

The Federation appeal seeks to assist 35,000 of the most vulnerable Mongolian herders over a 12 month period with food assistance and provision of winter boots. Phase 1 of the operation comprising three distributions was completed in September. Phase 2, composed of two distributions, covers the period from October to March 2001 and is ongoing, although there are delays as a result of difficulties in procurement and delivery of food. A special Federation assessment mission, undertaken with the Mongolian Red Cross Society (MRCS) on 15-21 January 2001 as daily temperatures dropped below to -50°C, revealed an alarming rate of death of livestock at the beginning of the year - suggesting the onset of an even worse disaster if the harsh winter conditions continue.

The context

Severe snow falls and extremely low temperatures last winter affected large areas of Mongolia and were preceded by the worst drought in 30 years. This 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 main source of food for herders and their families. As Mongolia is yet again in the grip of a bitter winter with daily temperatures remaining below -40° to -50°C, there are new reports of massive losses of livestock, which could result in the death of up to 6 million animals, according to the findings of a joint Mongolian Red Cross Society/Federation assessment mission.

Over 450,000 people in 13 aimags (provinces) have been affected by food shortages in the immediate term. Throughout the year, the government and the MRCS have continued to distribute emergency supplies to the worst affected areas. In response to the disaster situation, the Federation launched an initial appeal on 22 February 2000 to provide support to 30,000 beneficiaries for a 3 month period.

Further assessments indicated that the situation was likely to deteriorate further with far reaching consequences for the affected population. Therefore, the Federation launched a revised appeal on 29 March requesting CHF 4,062,000 to support 35,000 beneficiaries over a 12 month period with wheat flour, rice or millet as well as distributing 8,000 pairs of winter boots.

Latest events

Between 15 and 21 January 2001, the MRCS and the Federation relief delegate conducted an assessment mission in cooperation with an UNDAC team - sent to Mongolia to evaluate the effect of the continuing disaster as the country remains in the grip of extremely low temperatures. The joint Red Cross team travelled by road, but the UNDAC team mission was cut short because of a tragic helicopter crash in which 3 UN officials were killed.

The Red Cross team travelled to Henti and Gobi Sumber aimags - now better accessible by road than a week earlier due to heavy wind which had blown snow from the route. However, the situation in the aimags, as well as country wide, has far from improved. Recent snowfall in the western and southern part of Mongolia has added to the plight of the herders and their livestock, and the conditions continue to deteriorate all over the country.

Frozen carcasses of animals were seen everywhere, and the numbers seemed to have increased from a mission to the same area the week before. In addition, obvious frostbite and blackening of the skin were apparent on children and adults alike, as they are forced to go out in the bitter cold to herd the livestock in an attempt to keep as many animals alive as possible. The animals were also suffering from the cold with hoofs and feet frozen solid, and the skin above the hoof breaking open. The latest surveys report that over 504,000 head of livestock have already perished, which suggests a 2.5 increase in death rate from January 2000. This means, if conditions do not improve, that total loss of livestock could be as much as 6 million animals this winter. This would represent 20% of all livestock within Mongolia.

Fire wood and animal dung (common source of fuel in Mongolia) are rapidly being exhausted, as herders have resorted to bringing young and weak animals into their gers (tents) to save them. Old clothes are being sown together to wrap around the animals in to prevent them from freezing to death.

The local Red Cross in Zavkhan aimag has reported that all 24 sums (districts) within its vicinity are in a serious condition. In the one aimag, 12,200 herders and 1.9 million livestock are said to be at risk. Temperatures remain at -42° to -50°C, dropping down to -46° to -52°C in other aimags. Long range weather forecasts predict further snowfall in the mountainous regions over the next few weeks, and temperatures will continue to drop all over the country.

Red Cross/Red Crescent action

The Mongolian Red Cross Society, with the support of the Federation, is presently continuing phase 2 of the Mongolia Snowfalls operation, which is to provide 35,000 herders with complementary winter food rations and a further distribution of over 5,000 winter felt boots for both men and women.

As the conditions have further deteriorated due to extremely low temperatures over the past few weeks, the MRCS has launched a national appeal called "Let's help the herders with whatever you have." The Federation is also looking to launch a further appeal to meet the increased needs of the herders, already exhausted by droughts and harsh winter conditions for the second consecutive year.

Outstanding needs

On 6 December 2000, the Mongolian government appealed to the international community for in kind and cash assistance to help the herder population through yet another harsh winter. With temperatures dropping below -50°C, and the prospect of the death of up to 6 million head of livestock, it is now apparent that further external assistance is needed in order to see the herders and their families through the winter months. The herdsmen could face starvation unless aid reaches them quickly, and their health could further deteriorate as large parts of the community are suffering from frostbite and other ailments.

The current appeal is fully funded, although as mentioned above, a further appeal may be issued given the continuing freezing conditions and the overwhelming needs of the vulnerable herdsmen.

External relations - Government/UN/NGOs/Media

The UN has launched an appeal seeking USD 2,981,000. The Federation delegate in Mongolia continues to cooperate with the UN agencies.

Media interest has been rekindled with the onset of another winter disaster in Mongolia this year. An information specialist from the Secretariat who is working in the region has informed the Beijing based media of a scheduled assessment/information mission in the worst affected regions to take place in early February.

Contributions

See Annex 1 for details.

Conclusion

The impact of last winter's multiple dzud, and this summer's severe drought had already exhausted the Mongolian herder community's resources. With another winter disaster looming, it is evident that further external assistance is needed in order to save the herders from ill health and starvation.

Peter Rees-Gildea
Head a.i.
Relationship Management Department

Hiroshi Higashiura
Head
Asia & Pacific Department

This and other reports on Federation operations are available on the Federation's website: <http://www.ifrc.org>

Mongolia - Snowfalls						ANNEX 1
APPEAL No 05 /2000		PLEDGES RECEIVED			02/02/01	
DONOR	CATEGORY	QUANTITY	UNIT	VALUE CHF	DATE	COMMENT
CASH						
REQUESTED IN APPEAL CHF ----->				4,062,050		TOTAL COVERAGE 104.1%
Balance carried forward from 1999				0		
AUSTRALIA - RC		16,178	AUD	16,948	04/04/00	
AUSTRALIA - GOVT/RC		98,210	AUD	96,590	04/14/00	
AUSTRALIA - RC		10,000	AUD	10,476	03/02/00	
AUSTRALIA - GOVT/RC		220,000	AUD	215,754	04.07.00	FOOD & BOOTS
AUSTRIAN - RC		34,992	EUR	54,657	16.06.00	
BRITISH - GOVT/DFID		32,000	GBP	82,880	03/14/00	
BRITISH - GOVT/DFID		147,059	GBP	377,942	15.06.00	
BRITISH - RC		4,096	GBP	10,322	18.07.00	
BRITISH - PRIVATE		500	GBP	1,295	03/29/00	
BRITISH - PRIVATE				129	28.07.00	
CANADA - RC		10,000	CAD	10,847	02/25/00	
CHINA, TAIWAN - RC		1,000	USD	1,648	26.05.00	
CHINA - PRIVATE				1,178	01.04.00	
DENMARK - RC		250,000	DKK	54,125	04/05/00	
DENMARK - GOVT/RC		950,000	DKK	200,640	05/10/00	
ECHO		500,000	EUR	778,100	03.05.00	WHEAT FLOUR / STAFF
FINLAND - GOVT/RC		58,865	EUR	94,861	02/22/00	
GERMANY - GOVT		109,250	DEM	88,919	04/12/00	F/1300 PAIRS OF WINTER BOOTS
GERMANY - PRIVATE				206	17.04.00	
ICELAND - RC		1,000,000	ISK	21,895	03/29/00	
ICELAND - RC		200,000	ISK	4,379	02/29/00	
IRELAND - GOVT		75'000	IEP	148,178	22.06.00	
JAPAN - RC				82,000	03/02/00	
JAPAN - RC				121,000	03/31/00	
JAPAN - RC		2,923,723	JPY	45,496	13.06.00	
JAPAN - PRIVATE				157	05.06.00	
REPUBLIC OF KOREA - RC				20,000	02/29/00	
REPUBLIC OF KOREA - PRIVATE/RC		730'000	WON	1,083	07.06.00	PUBLIC CONTRIBUTION
LUXEMBOURG - GOVT		1,500,000	LUF	59,921	04/07/00	
LUXEMBOURG - PRIVATE				275	04/06/00	
MONACO - RC		50,000	FRF	11,985	03/29/00	
NETHERLANDS - RC		15,000	NLG	10,973	03/13/00	
NETHERLANDS - RC		75,000	NLG	54,867	03/13/00	
NEW ZEALAND - PRIVATE				811	22.05.00	
NORWAY - GOVT/RC		450,000	NOK	89,089	03/07/00	
NORWAY - RC		80,000	NOK	15,575	03/07/00	
TURKEY - RC		20,000	USD	31,480	03/20/00	
TAIWAN - PRIVATE		983	USD	1,635	26.05.00	
SWEDEN - RC		1,000,000	SEK	186,700	03/31/00	
SWITZERLAND - GOVT				100,000	05/01/00	FOOD AND NON FOOD ITEMS
SWITZERLAND - PRIVATE				1,000	04/12/00	
USAID		618,255	USD	1,043,614	24.04.00	FOOD ASSISTANCE
UNITED STATES - PRIVATE				82	04/04/00	
UNITED STATES - PRIVATE				1,295	10.04.00	
SUB/TOTAL RECEIVED IN CASH				4,151,007	CHF	102.2%

KIND AND SERVICES (INCLUDING PERSONNEL)						
DONOR	CATEGORY	QUANTITY	UNIT	VALUE CHF	DATE	COMMENT
AMERICAN - GOVT		36,745	USD	62,044	02.05.00	
Japan	Delegate(s)			17,413		
SUB/TOTAL RECEIVED IN KIND/SERVICES				79,457	CHF	2.0%
ADDITIONAL TO APPEAL BUDGET						
DONOR	CATEGORY	QUANTITY	UNIT	VALUE CHF	DATE	COMMENT
SUB/TOTAL RECEIVED				0	CHF	
THE FOLLOWING PROJECTS ARE LINKED TO THIS APPEAL:						
PMN504						