



CHINA/INNER MONGOLIA: BLIZZARDS

*Appeal no: 03/2001
25 January 2001*

***THIS APPEAL SEEKS CHF 3,056,180
IN CASH, KIND AND SERVICES
TO ASSIST 60,000 BENEFICIARIES FOR 4 MONTHS***

Summary

On 31 December 2000, a freak blizzard hit a number of rural prefectures in the Chinese Autonomous Region of Inner Mongolia causing the death of 39 people and of over 220,000 head of livestock, the mainstay of the rural economy and the main source of food for herders and their families. The number of people affected as a direct result of the blizzard is estimated at 2.194 million, of whom it is reported that as many as 400,000 are affected by food shortages in the immediate term. The blizzard is the second disaster to hit this undeveloped region in the past six months. A drought in much of northern China during the summer of 2000 seriously effected the growth of grass, thereby impacting the possibility of the herds of cattle in Inner Mongolia to build up reserves for the winter.

A recent joint assessment mission carried out by the Red Cross Society of China (RCSC) and the Federation found that the nomadic herders in the region were struggling to preserve their depleted herds of cattle as a result of the combination of freezing conditions and lack of access to the main towns caused by the heavy snowfalls. Food and fuel reserves for these nomadic people who rely heavily on bartering their animals to provide supplementary food and fodder are rapidly running out.

In order to respond to the growing needs, the Federation is seeking CHF 3,056,180 to provide urgently food, quilts and fuel supplies to help 60,000 of the most vulnerable herders survive the harshest winter for 50 years.

The Red Cross Society of China has launched a national appeal to raise funds to assist the stricken population. The Chinese government, through the Chinese Charity Federation, has also launched a national appeal to gather additional support from within China.

The scale of the disaster is not yet fully revealed as many roads are still impassable, hampering both the gathering of information regarding the affected population and causing difficulties in distributing immediate relief assistance. Whilst the government is already mobilising all its resources to clear roads into the affected areas, heavy winds continue to cause snow drifts across the roads, further preventing the clearing of main and secondary routes. Additional vehicles are being sent to the region to assist in the major snow clearing operation

The Disaster

At approximately 16.00 hours on 31 December 2000, a freak blizzard that combined snow and sand from the Gobi Desert engulfed large parts of the Autonomous Region. The blizzard, which is thought to be the worst in 50 years, lasted up to 75 hours in some areas, and covered six of the twelve Leagues (prefectures) with snow of up to 50 cm in depth. As much as 348.05 million mu (15 mu = 1 hectare) or 23.2 million hectares of grassland have been affected by the snowfall.

Long range weather forecasts predict further snowfall over the next few weeks. There are still three months before the weather will improve sufficiently for the herders to return to their normal pastoral way of life.

The RCSC estimates that up to 400,000 people have so far been seriously affected, mostly ethnic Mongolian herders and their families, who are now facing serious difficulties following the large scale loss of their animals. At least 220,000 head of cattle, sheep and goats have died. The loss of meat and dairy products, which are the basic foodstuffs of the rural population, has resulted in many herders facing severe food shortages.

Cattle are still dying due to exposure to the extreme cold and lack of fodder and grass. After a summer drought that seriously weakened their resistance, the herds are now unable to graze because of the sand/snow cover. Many herders have lost their entire herds of cattle. The current freezing temperatures (as low as - 35 C in some areas) are expected to last for a further three months.

The current disaster is very similar in nature to that which hit Mongolia in 2000 and 2001, where an extensive and prolonged drought during the summer was followed by early, heavy snowfalls.

It was obvious to the RCSC/Federation assessment team that the level of snow cover was severely hampering the animals' access to the sparse underlying grass and thereby further threatening the survival of livestock.

The Response so far

Government Action. w

In the early phases of the disaster, the local government set up a working group of key heads of bureau to carry out a rapid assessment. At the same time, a total of 22.6 million RMB (CHF 4.466 million) has been allocated by the central government to assist the disaster victims through the Civil Affairs and Grassland and Animal Husbandry Bureau. Much of this assistance will be used to provide emergency fodder and grass to the areas worst affected, as well as to provide snow clearing equipment to clear the

roads into the areas. The government has committed further assistance to the herders, especially in the field of health care.

The Chinese Charity Federation, an official government sponsored relief agency, launched a national appeal on 23 January for assistance. The agency called on donors to provide funds to help purchase clothes, heating fuel, food and medicines. Whilst this appeal is likely to raise some funds, it is felt that further international assistance is required to allow the RCSC to provide essential relief to targeted vulnerable families.

Red Cross/Red Crescent Action w

Local Response:

Following the disaster, the Township (Banner) level branches sent in disaster reports to the regional headquarters. Based on these reports, the regional Red Cross has developed a broad disaster relief plan of action for the use of both national and international funds received. This plan has been sent to the Red Cross Society of China's national headquarters in Beijing.

The Inner Mongolia Red Cross has launched its own appeal at various branch levels to raise funds using the guidelines laid down by the headquarters.

The President of the Inner Mongolia Red Cross has recently returned to the regional capital in Hoh Hot from Beijing where she reported to the senior management of the RCSC as well as to the Federation. She also visited the sister Beijing branch and was able to gain a substantial commitment of funds for immediate relief assistance.

National Level Response:

The headquarters of the RCSC has launched a national appeal for assistance through its network of branches, targeting mainly the larger city Red Cross branches. Funds raised from this appeal will be used to target specific areas and to purchase relief items which are not covered by the RCSC/Federation appeal.

Hong Kong Red Cross.

Following the RCSC/Federation joint assessment, in which the Hong Kong Red Cross senior relief delegate took part, the Hong Kong Red Cross has committed a total of RMB 1.5 million (CHF 396,400) to the national headquarters to provide immediate food assistance to specific counties in the affected Prefectures. The Federation's regional office in Beijing will receive details of distribution areas for these and other contributions from the RCSC's branches.

Financial Arrangements:

The regional headquarters in Hoh Hot has set up a series of bank accounts to receive donations from the Hong Kong Red Cross, national donations and those received through the Federation. Purchases for Federation funded supplies will be made directly by the regional headquarters following tendering procedures.

Other Agencies' Action w

Following an emergency meeting of the United Nations Disaster Management Team (UNDMT), it seems that unless a direct appeal is received from the government of China through the UN, none of the UN agencies will launch an appeal for funding. The Federation's office in Beijing will work with UNDMT to ensure provision of information regarding assistance provided through the Federation appeal.

Whilst a number of other international agencies are currently carrying out assessments in the region, the extent of assistance to be provided is not clear at present.

Initial Response w

The RCSC launched a national appeal among its volunteer activists, membership and supporters to assist the affected region.

Initial supplies of relief in the form of quilts (2,100 - of which 1,700 will be funded through the Federation's DREF funds) and 2,000 pairs of winter shoes were forwarded from the regional disaster preparedness centre in the neighbouring province of Loaning at the time of the joint assessment mission's visit to the region. The total value of goods received to date is of RMB 150,000 (approx. CHF 30,000).

Medicines worth RMB 51,840 (CHF 10,000) were donated by a medical company in Shangdong. These medicines are to be provided to the Red Cross medical teams to assist the large numbers of frost bite cases in the affected areas. The medical teams come from hospitals that are 'group members' of the RCSC, and are mobilised during disasters.

Initial funding from the Hong Kong branch of the RCSC has been allocated to provide food to counties targeted in the worst affected areas.

Co-ordination w

At national level, the relief department of the RCSC and the Federation's regional relief delegate based in Beijing will work together to co-ordinate national and international relief efforts. The close links between the RCSC and the Federation which have been built up over the past years, will ensure that assistance received through this appeal will be carefully co-ordinated with government and NGO efforts. The Federation Secretariat is now sending a field delegate to the RCSC in order to support monitoring and reporting functions related to the operation.

At local level, the RCSC regional branch will coordinate with the local, regional, prefecture and county Red Cross staff to ensure that there is no duplication of efforts with other relief initiatives.

The Intended Operation

Assessment of Needs w

A joint assessment team from the RCSC/Federation visited some of the most badly affected counties in the Zilin Prefecture between 18 and 21 January. Using the information gathered on this mission, plus disaster reports from the Red Cross branches, the assessment team was able to compile a list of target Leagues (Prefectures) that were worst affected by the disaster. Based on the findings of this mission, a initial plan of assistance has been drawn up. Further statistical information will be sent to the RCSC headquarters to build up an overall distribution plan, specifying the needs by Banner (county).

Immediate Needs w

Food: With the loss of their herds, many herders have lost their sole source of food. The Red Cross response will be to supply 3,600 MT. of wheat flour -- representing complementary emergency food for 60,000 beneficiaries for 120 days. Each person will receive the equivalent of 500 gr. of wheat flour per day.

Coal: Whilst a large proportion of ethnic Mongolians live in simple brick built accommodation over the winter, many of the herders in the region still live according to nomadic traditions and do not have fixed winter quarters. Given the fact that they are travelling with their herds, they are not able to build up large reserves of animal dung and are therefore facing critical heating problems in their simple Ger or tents.

The Inner Mongolian Red Cross branch therefore sees the provision of coal as a main priority to ensure that these herders have sufficient fuel to carry them through the worst of the winter. The Red Cross will therefore seek to provide a standard two metric ton ration of coal for each of the 5,000 families who are most at risk.

Winter Quilts: A total of 1,700 quilts were sent to the region as part of the RCSC headquarters' immediate response to the disaster. The appeal will aim to replace these stocks and allow the headquarters to be in a position to react to further disasters in the region.

Vehicles: Due to the lack of vehicles at the League Red Cross headquarters level, the Federation is seeking to provide three jeeps to allow the Red Cross to carry out monitoring activities. A further higher grade vehicle will be supplied to the regional Red Cross headquarters to ensure that the means to co-ordinate the relief operation and pay site visits are available.

Operational Funding: The appeal will include operational funds for the RCSC which will be essential to allow the various levels of the Inner Mongolian Red Cross to increase their staffing levels during the operation. Further funds will be used to provide fax machines to those Leagues which do not already have them. Additional funding will be provided to the RCSC headquarters to provide it with the means to assist with the coordination of the operation.

Anticipated Later Needs w

The full effects of this disaster will probably not be fully apparent for some weeks to come. The Federation will monitor the situation in the affected areas and may extend the scope of the appeal at a later date.

Red Cross Objectives w

- To ensure the rapid mobilisation of national and international funds to provide immediate assistance.
- To provide 60,000 of the most vulnerable herder beneficiaries in the three Prefectures of Xilin, Chifeng and Xingan with complementary emergency food assistance (wheat flour) for a 120-day period. The food represents a daily calorie intake of 1,750 Kcal and a protein content of 50 grams. The total herder population within these three prefectures is over 1,281,000 million.
- To provide a total of 10,000 metric tons of coal to 5,000 beneficiary families.
- To replenish the disaster preparedness stock with 1,700 quilts.

National Society/Federation Plan of Action

Emergency Phase

Phase 1: January - mid February 2001

The RCSC will use the stocks it currently holds at the regional disaster preparedness centres, together with funds made available through its national appeal, to alleviate the worst effects of the disaster prior to the mobilisation of international funding. Funding generated within the country (including the significant Hong Kong Red Cross branch donation) will help to bridge the gap. In order to assist the RCSC during this early emergency phase, the Federation has allocated CHF 250,000 from its Disaster Relief Emergency Fund (DREF) for the immediate procurement of relief supplies for the worst affected Prefectures.

Phase 2: Mid February - June 2000

Further plans of action, matching funds mobilised by this appeal with the specific needs at the time such funds arrive in China, will be developed to allow more deliveries of basic relief supplies to the worst affected areas.

Logistics and Procurement

Given the considerable distances between the regional capital and some of the affected Prefectures and in order to reduce the delivery time and the cost of transportation, all relief goods will be procured in the Prefecture capitals, when feasible, thereby allowing speedy distributions to the outlying areas and also reducing the cost of transportation.

Whilst to a large extent the cities and towns in the affected areas have also suffered from the blizzard, the markets are still operating and will be able to provide all the relief commodities at reasonable prices. All the required goods can be purchased within the country itself and therefore no in kind donations are requested.

Capacity of the RCSC and its Autonomous Regional Red Cross w

The RCSC has a dedicated team of relief staff at its headquarters in Beijing with many years of experience in relief operations. Operational procedures are in line with those required by international donors.

The Inner Mongolia Branch of the RCSC has an extensive network of branches and has proved in the past to be able to plan complex distributions during emergencies. The Federation has a positive experience of working with the Inner Mongolian regional branch, having assisted during the 1998 flood operation. The Mongolia branch is ready to follow all donor requirements in order to complete the operation successfully. Donors are welcome to visit distributions during the course of the operation.

The Red Cross in the region, whilst being independent from the local government, has built up strong links with the relevant agencies at local level. The Red Cross has received a commitment of support for its activities during the relief operation from all the main government agencies in the region.

Present Capacity of the Federation w

The Federation's regional office in Beijing is currently staffed by three expatriate and three national staff. The Federation staff includes the regional relief delegate who will act as the programme manager of this operation. The team will be reinforced by the assignment of a field delegate. An information delegate has been assigned to the delegation to deal with all media activities during the launch of the appeal. In addition, the operation will receive further support from the regional information and finance delegates based in the Federation's Southeast Asia regional delegation in Kuala Lumpur.

Monitoring and Reporting w

The Federation field delegate will carry out monitoring missions to the all the Prefectures, together with staff from the RCSC relief department in order to ensure that the operation is running to plan.

Budget summary

See Annex 1 for details.

Conclusion

This appeal is in response to the worst snowfalls in Northern China for fifty years. The heavy loss of livestock, an essential means of survival for the herders, has been catastrophic for many of the poorer herders. Funding is urgently needed to assist the Red Cross Society of China in its efforts to reach the most vulnerable victims of the disaster. Donors are therefore urged to provide support for this appeal.

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

		ANNEX 1
<u>BUDGET SUMMARY</u>		APPEAL No. 03/2001
China - Inner Mongolia		
TYPE	VALUE	
RELIEF NEEDS	IN CHF	
Clothing & textiles: 1,700 quilts	18,500	
Food: 3,600 mts	1,316,000	
Other relief supplies: coal	812,000	
TOTAL RELIEF NEEDS		2,146,500
<u>CAPITAL EQUIPMENT</u>		
Vehicles	80,000	
Computers	3,500	
Office furniture & equipment	10,500	
<u>PROGRAMME SUPPORT</u>		
Programme management	206,078	
Technical support	61,689	
Professional services	68,413	
<u>TRANSPORT STORAGE & VEHICLE COSTS</u>	204,000	
<u>PERSONNEL</u>		
Expatriate staff: 2 delegates for 5 months	100,000	
National staff	38,000	
Personnel (training)	10,000	
<u>ADMINISTRATIVE & GENERAL SERVICES</u>		
Travel & related expenses	15,500	
Information expenses	36,000	
Administrative & general expenses	76,000	
TOTAL OPERATIONAL NEEDS		909,680
TOTAL APPEAL CASH, SERVICES		3,056,180
LESS AVAILABLE RESOURCES (-)		
NET REQUEST		3,056,180