

## **CHINA/INNER MONGOLIA: BLIZZARDS**

10 May 2001

*appeal no. 03/2001*

*situation report no. 4*

*period covered: 21 March - 29 April 2001*

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*The short term needs of the most vulnerable herders in Xilingol prefecture are being covered to a large extent through food assistance provided by the Red Cross Society of China (RCSC)/Federation. Supplies of wheat flour reached the prefecture on 24 April and distributions have taken place. However, medium and long term prospects depend mostly on the weather and management of the grassland. Many families have lost all their livestock and thereby their livelihood. Further funding is urgently required in order to ensure the success of the operation.*

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### ***The context***

The disaster situation in Inner Mongolia has been brought about by the most serious snowstorms in living memory, which began with an extreme blizzard on New Year's eve, killing and injuring many people and thousands of animals. In an average year there is not a great deal of snowfall, but this year the snowstorms continued constantly for one and a half months as of New Year, forcing herders to exhaust their supplies of hay and fodder.

Although snowstorms are the most visible aspect of the disaster, its devastating effects are the result of many interconnected factors. The affected area has suffered serious floods, droughts and locust plagues for three years. The drought of the summer 2000 left herders with very little hay and most of the animals were already weak as a result of the dry grasslands.

### ***Latest events***

As winter nears its end, the weather is beginning to improve in Inner Mongolia, and the risk of further snowstorms has passed. However, more of the weak animals will die in the coldest areas due to lack of grazing and large groups of herders lost all their animals early this winter. Distribution of Federation

aid started in Xilingol prefecture on 24 April, providing the most vulnerable families with sufficient food for the next 1-2 months. The disaster has left thousands of families without a livelihood, many of whom are facing long term food insecurity. Such families will need continued assistance throughout the summer.

## ***Red Cross/Red Crescent action***

Under the plan of action, 523.1 mt of wheat flour were transported by train from Shenyang and reached the first recipients in the Inner Mongolian Prefecture of Xilingol on 24 April. The wheat flour is a donation from the US government through the Federation appeal, earmarked for the most vulnerable herders.

The herders in Xilingol live scattered throughout the prefecture which covers 200,000 square kms. There are very few roads, and due to the large distances which separate disaster victims from community centres and a lack of appropriate means of transportation, relief items are transported by truck on mud trails to the beneficiaries' homes. Distribution therefore took some two weeks.

The aid has been divided between 6 of the 11 banners of Xilingol prefecture as follows:

<b>Receiving Banner</b>	<b>No of recipients (25kg bags)</b>	<b>No kg (bags x 25)</b>	<b>Amount RMB (kg x 0.79)</b>
<b>East Wujimqin Banner</b>	5'063	126'575	199'988.5
<b>Sonid Left Banner (Dong Su)</b>	5'063	126'575	199'988.5
<b>Sonid Right Banner (Xi Su)</b>	2'532	63'300	100'014
<b>White Banner</b>	3'202	80'050	127'279.5
<b>Yellow Banner</b>	2'532	63'300	100'014
<b>Tai Pusi Banner</b>	2'532	63'300	100'014
<b>Total</b>	<b><u>20'924</u></b>	<b><u>523'100</u></b>	<b><u>827'298.5</u></b>

### **Selection Criteria**

As the living standards of the herders are almost exclusively determined by the number of animals they own, this is the main consideration in selecting beneficiaries for assistance. Families with less than 35 sheep per family member received one 25 kg bag of wheat flour each. In many cases, families which were well off before the disaster have lost most of their animals, even though they may have more than 35 sheep per family member. Many of these families have accumulated heavy debts in futile attempts to save their livestock by buying fodder and hay. In many such cases, the families are included in the lists of beneficiaries as they have depleted all their reserves. Nevertheless, the majority of families receiving Federation assistance have much less than 35 sheep per family member.

### **Field Mission**

During the initial days of the distribution, between 25 and 29 April, the Federation field delegate travelled in two of the targeted banners: East Wujimqin Banner, and Sonid Left Banner (Dong Su). The delegate observed the distribution of wheat flour at a distribution point in the banner capital of East Wujimqin Banner, and carried out random monitoring of a number of the recipients. The delegate also visited recipients who already had received Federation aid in Sonid Left Banner (Dong Su). Most of the families were randomly chosen from lists of recipients provided by the local Red Cross.

The medium term situation of the herders will mostly depend on the climate. Abundant rain in spring and summer will stimulate the growth of grass and as a result, the condition of the animals and their

ability to cope with the coming winter will be improved. The gathering of hay and fodder for the winter also depends on the amount of rainfall during the summer. The grassland has been deteriorating very fast for many years and large parts of Xilingol and other parts of Inner Mongolia have become desert because of overgrazing. Desertification is now taking place faster than before and if the number of livestock is not drastically reduced within a few years, it will become impossible to sustain the present level of grazing. In the long term, further disasters are very likely to occur as it is becoming more and more difficult to keep animals alive during spring and winter. Desertification not only deprives animals of pasture land, but is also causing severe deterioration of the living environment. As large parts of grassland have become sand deserts, sandstorms are becoming a greater problem every year. The strong winds of Inner Mongolia constantly carry sand and dust which gathers up in dunes against houses and cattle shelters. According to information gathered during the field mission, there are severe sandstorms in Xilingol prefecture every 10 days. During his mission, the Federation field delegate experienced a sandstorm that reduced visibility to a couple of metres. When the sandstorms last for longer periods, herders and animals can get lost. Furthermore, sheep are sometimes buried under sand dunes and suffocate.

At the same time as the wheat flour assistance through the Federation appeal arrived in Xilingol prefecture, on 24 April, the Xilingol Red Cross branch also received wheat flour from the Hong Kong Red Cross branch through a national appeal. The Hong Kong Red Cross assistance is being distributed between other banners in Xilingol as follows:

Receiving Banner	No of recipients (25kg bags)	No kg (bags x 25)
Xilinhot City	3'797	94'925
West Wujimchin Banner	6'329	158'225
Abaga Banner	2'532	63'300
<b>Total</b>	<b>12'658</b>	<b>316'450</b>

At the same time, further wheat flour assistance from the Hong Kong Red Cross branch through the national appeal is being distributed in the prefectures of Xingan and Chifeng, which are not areas that are targeted by Federation assistance. This assistance was distributed as follows:

Receiving Prefecture	Receiving Banner/City/County	No of recipients (25kg bags)	No kg (bags x 25)
Chifeng	Balin left banner	2'532	63'300
Chifeng	Balin right banner	10'126	253'150
Xingan	Kuyutung banner	3'797	94'925
Xingan	Jalaitu banner	2'532	63'300
Xingan	Wulanhot City	1'266	31'650
Xingan	Tuchan county	1'266	31'650
Xingan	Kuyuchen banner	2'532	63'300
	<b>Total</b>	<b>24'051</b>	<b>601'275</b>

### *Outstanding needs*

Although substantial assistance is being distributed in Xilingol and other prefectures of Inner Mongolia, covering most immediate short term needs, many families have lost most or all of their livestock and have no work or other means of life support. These families in areas allocated to receive assistance from the Federation will need further medium and long term food assistance.

The well-being of the animals, which are the only source of income for most Mongolian herders, depends first and foremost on the rainfall during the coming spring and summer. A prolonged drought will further aggravate the weakened condition of most animals. Another summer of drought will inevitably affect the grassland, and thereby the access to grazing during the winter and the animals' ability to feed during the autumn. Even if another major snowfall does not occur during the winter of

2001/2002, another disaster is possible if measures are not taken immediately to address the underlying problem caused by overgrazing and management of the grassland.

Current coverage of the appeal stands at 32.2% and donors are encouraged to commit further funds to ensure the success of the operation.

## ***External relations - Government/UN/NGOs/Media***

During a Federation field mission between 25 and 29 April, the field delegate gathered photographs and video footage which has been submitted to news agencies. There is considerable interest among the media.

## ***Contributions***

See Annex 1 for details.

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

<b>China - Inner Mongolia</b>						ANNEX 1
<b>APPEAL No. 03/2001</b>		<b>PLEDGES RECEIVED</b>			10.05.2001	
DONOR	CATEGORY	QUANTITY	UNIT	VALUE CHF	DATE	COMMENT
<b>CASH</b>						
REQUESTED IN APPEAL CHF ----->				<b>3'056'180</b>		<b>TOTAL COVERAGE 32.2%</b>
CASH CARRIED FORWARD						
AMERICAN - GOVT		100'000	USD	162'800	02.02.01	EARMRK. 516 MT WHEAT FLOUR
BRITISH - GOVT/DFID		147'059	GBP	354'412	11.04.01	PURCHASE OF FOOD & OPERATION SUPPORT
CANADIAN - RC		50'000	CAD	54'125	05.02.01	
DANISH - RC		95'000	DKK	19570	07.02.01	
DANISH - GOVT		30'000	USD	48'840	16.02.01	WHEAT FLOUR & OPERATIONAL COSTS
JAPANESE - RC				153'000	06.03.01	
SWEDISH - GOVT		1'000'000	SEK	173'700	30.01.01	RELIEF AND OPERATIONAL NEEDS
<b>SUB/TOTAL RECEIVED IN CASH</b>				966'447	CHF	31.6%
<b>KIND AND SERVICES (INCLUDING PERSONNEL)</b>						
DONOR	CATEGORY	QUANTITY	UNIT	VALUE CHF	DATE	COMMENT
Iceland	Delegate(s)			18'398		
<b>SUB/TOTAL RECEIVED IN KIND/SERVICES</b>				18'398	CHF	0.6%
<b>ADDITIONAL TO APPEAL BUDGET</b>						
DONOR	CATEGORY	QUANTITY	UNIT	VALUE CHF	DATE	COMMENT
<b>SUB/TOTAL RECEIVED</b>				0	CHF	
<b>THE FOLLOWING PROJECTS ARE LINKED TO THIS APPEAL:</b>						