

DREF operation update



International Federation
of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies

Mongolia: Cold waves

DREF operation n° MDRMN003
GLIDE n° [CW-2010-000010-MN](#)
Update n° 1
29 January 2010

The International Federation's Disaster Relief Emergency Fund (DREF) is a source of un-earmarked money created by the Federation in 1985 to ensure that immediate financial support is available for Red Cross and Red Crescent response to emergencies. The DREF is a vital part of the International Federation's disaster response system and increases the ability of national societies to respond to disasters.

Period covered by this update: 15 - 27 January 2010.



As part of its rapid assessment, the Mongolian Red Cross Society and the International Federation jointly visited Arkhangai and Khovsgol provinces which are two out of 12 *dzud*-affected provinces. The teams conducted household interviews while providing psychosocial support and material aid. Photo: International Federation..

Summary:

The International Federation increased its initial Disaster Relief Emergency Fund (DREF) allocation to CHF 400,000 (USD 381,982 or EUR 271,687) to support the Mongolian Red Cross Society (MRCS) over five months in delivering immediate assistance to some 1,200 families in the worst-affected five provinces.

On 15 January 2010, CHF 150,000 (USD 147,220 or EUR 101,445) was allocated from DREF to assist MRCS in delivering relief supplies to some 1,500 families. The recent joint assessment conducted by MRCS and IFRC 18-26 January recommended expanding the content of relief packages and the scope of this operation, which led to the increase of the original budget and longer timeline of the operation. DREF will be used for targeted distribution of essential food and non-food items to the most vulnerable 1,200 families, for provision of psychosocial support and health education to the affected families, and for replenishment of relief stocks of MRCS in regional disaster preparedness centers. Unearmarked funds to repay DREF are encouraged.

This operation is expected to be implemented over five months and completed by 18 June 2010. In line with Federation reporting standards, the Final report (narrative and financial) will be available three months after the end of the operation (by 18 September 2010).

The European Commission's Humanitarian Aid Office (ECHO), Canadian and Netherlands governments as well as AusAID made contributions towards the replenishment of the DREF for the allocation made to this operation.

The major donors to the DREF are the Irish, Italian, Netherlands and Norwegian governments and ECHO. Details of all donors can be found [here](#).

The situation

Since December 2009, Mongolia has been experiencing a severe winter locally known as *dzud*, a continuous heavy snowfall combined with extreme cold. According to the National Emergency Management Agency (NEMA) of Mongolia, up to 90 percent of the country's territory was covered with snow as of the beginning of January 2010. Most of the provinces (*aimags*) are covered by up to 50 centimeters of snow, in worst affected areas it reaches up to 100 centimeters. Many transport routes have been blocked.

The average temperature in northern Mongolia has dropped to -35 degrees Celsius, with temperatures in the rest of country hovering between -22 to -17 degrees Celsius. So far, the coldest temperature of -47 degrees was recorded in Uvs province in northern Mongolia, where average coldest temperature in normal winters is around -32 degrees Celsius. Weather forecasts suggest that snow falls and cold temperature will continue throughout January to March, with temperatures ranging between -28 and -45 degrees Celsius, as reported by the Institute of Meteorology and Hydrology.

The government reports that 19 of the 21 provinces are suffering from the harsh conditions, with the following twelve provinces reported to have been affected the most:

- Arkhangai
- Bayankhongor
- Bayan-Ulgii
- Gobi-Altai
- Dundgobi
- Khovd
- Khuvsgul
- Tuv
- Umnugobi
- Uvurkhangai
- Uvs
- Zavkhan

The number of affected herder families is estimated to be 180,000, out of which the government estimates that 120,000 are the most affected.

The less affected areas of the country are occupied with herders who are moving with their livestock to look for better pastureland. According to the situation update from NEMA, currently, about 21,500 people from 7,300 households are in movement. Of them, approximately 12,500 individuals have no access to medical



One of the target groups for the Mongolian Red Cross/ International Federation DREF operation is herding families with many children under 18. Photo: International Federation.

assistance. Also, about 20,000 individuals are suffering from shortage in food, and 9,700 families are lacking in heating materials.

The latest official government reports indicate that a total of 1,071,121 heads of livestock have been lost (2.46 per cent of total 43.6 million), while unofficial numbers from local media reports estimate it to be two million (4.6 per cent of a total livestock in Mongolia). It should be noted that the livestock husbandry accounts for 88 per cent of an agricultural sector of the country, which in its turn, accounts for 19 per cent of Mongolia's GDP¹. Also, according to the World Bank, livestock herding accounts for around 35 per cent of today's employment in Mongolia.

Government's response

The state emergency commission, local government administrations as well as emergency departments have been taking immediate measures to clear the paths and mountain passes, search for missing people, deliver medical assistance to people and distribute hay and fodder from the State reserve to the affected counties. The government requested additional support from international agencies in-country in a meeting in Ulaanbaatar on 18 January.

the following decisions were made at the cabinet ministers' meeting on 11 January 2010:

- To sell 4,000 tonnes of hays and 5,000 tonnes of fodder, stocked in state reserve branches of Arkhangai, Bayankhongor, Bayan-Ulgii, Gobi-Altai, Dundgobi, Zavkhan, Uvurkhangai, Umnugobi, Uvs, Tuv, Khovd and Khuvsgul *aimags*, with 50 percent of discount.
- To provide hospitals of three counties in Khovd, Khuvsgul and Uvs provinces with a vehicle from the State Reserve.
- To allocate over MNT 1 billion (CHF 723,566 or USD 691,085) from the government reserve fund: MNT 880 million (CHF 636,738 or USD 608,105) for covering cost differences of hays and fodder sold with discount (for further restocking); MNT 60 million (CHF 43,414 or USD 41,465) for transportation expenses to deliver hays and fodders and MNT 60 million for petroleum for vehicles delivering medical and social welfare services.
- To take coordination measures on processing fodder from 30,000 tonnes of non-standard wheat stored in the state reserve and deliver to herders.

On 13 January, the ministry of defense of Mongolia rendered 32 vehicles with high capacity to emergency management units of *aimags* and city. Those vehicles will be used to open snow blocked roads and mountain passes to deliver hay and fodder, food, medicine and relief goods to the provinces impacted by the harsh climate.

Also, the government is planning to spend more than MNT 5 billion (about USD 3.5 million) to buy fodder and medicine from neighboring China and Russia. To date, 314 million MNT has been donated by local organizations, companies and individuals to help herders experience hard times.

Coordination and partnerships

As a member of the Emergency Commission, MRCS closely coordinates its activities with respective government authorities at all levels (national, provincial, county). Field assessments have been carried out with close collaboration with local authorities both at provincial and county levels.

The International Federation and MRCS continue to coordinate their activities with other international non-governmental organizations. The assessment team worked with international organizations operating in Mongolia in order to avoid overlapping of assistance and seek for opportunities of information and experience sharing. Currently, the following organizations have ongoing projects in Mongolia and are in the process of formulating their respective response plans to *dzud*.

Donor	Focus area	Funding	Remarks
UNFPA	Maternal health services in five <i>aimags</i> : Bayan-Ulgii, Khovd, Uvs, Gobi-Altai, and Khuvsgul	USD 100,000	Aid will consist of provision of essential reproductive health (RH) drugs, and kits and other basic supplies, as well as travel cost of outreach medical services.
UNDP	Five counties of three worst-hit provinces	USD 17,000	Forage for livestock; medicine package, flour, rice and heating material
	TBD	USD 100,000	Funding in pipeline. Will provide fuel and medicine

¹ Source: Mongolian Statistical Yearbook 2008.

			as needed. Will pool with other UN agencies on purchase of bulk food.
UNICEF	Focus on children and women in 52 most affected counties	USD 200,000 reprogramming (immediately 45,000 for heating)	USD 45,000 was reprogrammed to address urgent heating concerns in 17 schools and dormitories in target locations. Upon reprogramming of funding food, nutritious biscuit (BP5), blankets, clothing, medical and health kits, indoor recreation kits for children will be procured and distributed.
WHO	Areas proposed by the Ministry of Health	TBD	Proposal under development
FAO	Assessment to be conducted in the coming days to determine the FAO response plan	TBD	MNT 8.2 billion (USD 5.8 million) was requested by the Ministry of Food, Agriculture and Light Industry, with response plan to be determined after the assessment is completed.
French Food Support Programme	Fodder for herders	USD 3 million	
Agricultural Development Fund / World Vision	Fodder	USD 280,000	
SDC (Swiss Development Agency for Cooperation)	Uvs, Bayan-Ulgii, Khovd, Zavkhan, Gobi-Altai, Bayankhongor	TBD	The organization has ongoing projects in western provinces with the focus on pasture management through groups of local herders; livestock management (veterinary services); coping with desertification. The agency is awaiting government's response plan and assessment findings to formulate its <i>dzud</i> response activities.
Mercy Corps	12 provinces Khovd, Zavhan, Arhangai, Gobi-Altai, Bayanhongor, Uvurhangai, Dundgobi, Umnigobi, Uvs, Gobi-Sumber, Dornogobi and Sukhbaatar. Business development services is in additional Bayan-Ulgii, Khuvsgul and Dornod.		The organization has ongoing projects with the focus on economic development (Rural agrobusiness support, business development services).
World Vision	18 provinces	TBD	The organization has ongoing projects in 18 provinces. The agency is awaiting government's response plan and assessment findings to formulate its <i>dzud</i> response activities.

The UN country team in Mongolia was requested by the government to coordinate the response activities of international non-governmental organizations/donor agencies. The International Federation participated in donor coordination meetings on 18 January and 26 January. In addition, with the initiative of UNICEF, a working group to address children's needs was set up between the MRCS, the national centre for children, and UNICEF.

Red Cross Red Crescent action

In response to the *dzud*, MRCS has launched a national appeal to assist the herders directly impacted by the disaster. The National Society headquarters and mid-level branches mobilized volunteers and dispatched relief items including mattresses, blankets, *ger* canvas, boots and warm clothes to affected people from its disaster preparedness stocks. The MRCS's ongoing community-based social care project, which operates in four of the affected provinces (Bayan-Ulgii, Bayankhongor, Khovd and Khentii) has also started providing material and food assistance to the beneficiaries to help reduce the risk of starvation and frostbite for the

urban poor in centres of these four provinces. MRCS is building *dzud*-response activities based on its previous experience of the 1999-2003 *dzud* operation.

Between 18-26 January, the joint MRCS and International Federation team conducted a rapid assessment to identify the critical needs of the worst-affected population and following Red Cross Red Crescent actions to address the immediate needs. The assessment included the following:

1. field visits to the two most-affected provinces – Arkhangai and Khovsgul – to conduct household interviews, visit health centres, meet with local government authorities;
2. household interviews by the MRCS branches of the other ten affected provinces;
3. phone interviews with the MRCS branches of the affected areas;
4. meetings with other international NGOs and central government authorities; and
5. analysis of existing documents/secondary information.

Key assessment findings indicated that families were facing food shortages, and needed warm clothes and boots, as well as psychological support and health education. The assessments also indicated that government agencies were providing support to affected families, including the provision of hay and fodder, and that other international organizations are in the process of planning their *dzud*-response activities. Assessment findings and recommendations were discussed jointly by the MRCS and IFRC on 26 January and the revised action plan for DREF was agreed (described in the sections below).



Mongolian Red Cross Society - International Federation joint assessment teams conducted household interviews while providing psychosocial support and material aid in the *dzud*-affected provinces of Arkhangai and Khovsgol. Photo: International Federation.

Progress towards objectives

Click [here](#) for the summarized rapid assessment report, and [here](#) for the proposed timeline of activities in this operation.

Relief distributions (food and basic non-food items)

Objective: To ensure that up to 1,200 herder families (approximately 4,800 individuals) most affected by the *dzud* disaster in the five provinces receive essential food and non-food items to meet their immediate needs for up to three months.

Expected Results	Activities
1,200 vulnerable families (4,800 people) affected by <i>dzud</i> have directly benefited with food packages (flour, rice, sugar, vegetable oil and salt) and non-food items (warm clothes and warm boots for adults and children) distributed by MRCS.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Dispatch an international team to assess the current situation and identify needs for the Red Cross actions (immediate and longer-term) in order to assist the most-affected communities; • Define the critical needs of the most-affected communities; • Develop a selection criteria of target locations; • Develop a selection criteria of beneficiaries; • Identify and register 1,200 herder families worst affected by the <i>dzud</i> disaster; • Procure food and non-food items in accordance with International Federation procurement standards; • Distribute food and non-food items to identified beneficiaries; • Continuously monitor the relief activities and provide reporting on relief distributions; • Conduct an additional assessment on impact of the <i>dzud</i> in March and define further support strategies; • Organize lessons learnt workshop.

Progress: Based on the assessment data analysis and recommendations, MRCS and the International Federation completed the selection of target areas. Several factors were considered in selecting provinces, including (1) NEMA classification of *dzud* situation in *aimags*, (2) poverty index in *aimags*; (3) percentage of rural population living in *aimags*; and (4) *dzud* response activities in *aimags* by other organizations. As a result, the following five provinces were selected for relief distributions, which will be implemented through the MRCS regional disaster preparedness centres:

- Through Khangai MRCS disaster preparedness centre:
 - Arkhangai
 - Uvurkhangai
 - Khuvsgul
- Through Altai MRCS disaster preparedness centre:
 - Zavkhan
 - Gobi-Altai

The selection of counties (*soums*) will be done by MRCS branches in coordination with the provincial emergency management agencies and the under supervision of MRCS headquarters. Most-affected and most-remote *soums* will be targeted.

This operation will focus on the most vulnerable households and will take into consideration the following groups:

- Families who are not living in *soum* centers;
- Families who own less than 200 livestock;
- Families who have lost highest percentage of livestock;
- Families with members from socially vulnerable groups (elderly, with many children under 18, with members with disabilities, women-headed households).

The content of the relief package was drawn considering the immediate needs of the affected population, which was revealed during the assessment process. The critical needs of the households are food items (flour, rice, sugar, cooking oil, salt) and warm clothes (clothes and boots for adults and children). The relief package for each beneficiary household will include the following:

Food parcel (for 1 month)		Non-food parcel	
Item	Quantity per family	Item	Quantity per family
Wheat flour	25 kg	Warm coat for adult	1
Rice	5 kg	Warm coat for children	2
Sugar	1 kg	Boots for adult	1 pair
Cooking oil	1 litre	Boots for children	2 pairs
Salt	1 kg		
Tea	1 block		

MRCS will continuously monitor the evolving situation and will generate regular reports on the *dzud* situation in the affected *aimags*. This information will feed into the second assessment, planned for early March and aimed at evaluating the impact of the *dzud* on households and identifying further support strategies by MRCS.

The existing capacity of MRCS regional disaster preparedness centres in Altai and Khangai will be instrumental in the mobilization of experienced volunteers, selection of beneficiaries, procurement, relief distribution, and monitoring and evaluation.

Continuous monitoring will be an essential activity throughout the operation. The MRCS headquarters has an experienced team and branch staff who will supervise the distribution process and conduct spot-check monitoring visits to households following the distribution.

Challenges: Road blocks caused by heavy snows may hinder the process of selection of beneficiaries and distribution of relief goods. MRCS plans to work in close coordination with local government authorities and utilize their facilities/vehicles during relief distribution.

Health

Objective: To ensure health status of the *dzud*-affected population is improved through provision of psychological support, health education (including hygiene promotion and first aid training) and clean-up activities over the next five months.

Expected Results	Activities
Target population receive psychological support and health education messages through information dissemination and household visits by MRCS.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Mobilization of MRCS psychosocial support and first aid volunteers; • Refresher psychosocial support and first aid training for MRCS volunteers; • Refinement of existing health education materials; • Production of printing materials; • Household visits by volunteers to support affected families and disseminate information; • Production of mass media messages (public service announcements and special programmes on TV and radio) and regular broadcasting; • Organization of clean-up activities to bury dead animals; • Continuous monitoring of health situation in coordination with local health authorities.

Progress: The assessment findings revealed that (1) herder families feel depressed as a result of livestock loss; (2) there is a low level of knowledge among the herders on first aid, e.g. for frostbites, (3) dead animal carcasses are left to rot nearby gers, which will pose an increased public health risk when the temperatures become milder (starting from March). To address these issues, MRCS plans to utilize its existing pool of trained volunteers in *aimags* and implement health education and psychological support activities. The National Society will build on its experience of implementing similar activities.

Logistics

Objective: To reinforce logistics capacity of MRCS at national and regional levels by facilitating logistical support during relief activities and replenishing disaster preparedness stocks.

Expected Results	Activities
At least 80 MRCS trained volunteers and staff at national and provincial levels will have increased their capacity through participation in provision of immediate assistance to 1,200 vulnerable families.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Mobilization of a short-term international logistics specialist to support MRCS; • Mobilization of and training for volunteers for beneficiary selection and distribution activities; • Organization of procurement by MRCS staff; • Transportation of relief items by MRCS staff and volunteers; • Management of distribution points; • Management of warehouses; • Control supply movements from point of dispatch to end user; • Other general and administrative arrangements.
Non-food relief item stocks for a total of 750 households (including mattresses, blankets, warm clothes and first aid kits) have been procured and replenished in the regional disaster preparedness centres.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Selection of suppliers; • Procurement of non-food relief items; • Delivery to regional disaster preparedness centers.

Progress: The assessment findings indicated that the procurement of relief items (both for distribution and replenishment) can be done locally in Mongolia. All items are available in local markets (both in Ulaanbaatar and provinces). MRCS, with support from the International Federation, will carry out the necessary procurement, building on the last year's experience in response to the floods.

A short-term international logistics specialist will be invited to support MRCS in procurement, logistics and supervision of MRCS mid-level branches.

Proposed Timeline

No	Activities	Timeline (in month)					Remarks
		1	2	3	4	5	
Objective 1: To ensure that up to 1,200 herder families (approximately 4,800 individuals) most affected by the dzud disaster in the five provinces receive essential food and non-food items to meet their immediate needs for up to three months.							
1.1	Joint MRCS-IFRC rapid assessment and definition of critical needs						Completed
1.2	Develop a selection criteria of target locations						Completed
1.3	Develop a selection criteria of beneficiaries						In progress
1.4	Identify and register 1,200 herder families worst-affected by the dzud disaster						
1.5	Procure food and non-food items in accordance with the Federation's procurement standards						
1.6	Distribute food and non-food items to identified beneficiaries						
1.7	Conitnuously monitor the relief activities and provide reporting on relief distributions						
1.8	Conduct an additional assessment on impact of the dzud in March and define further support strategies						
1.9	Organize lessons learnt workshop						
Objective 2: To ensure health status of the dzud-affected population is improved through provision of psychological support, health education (including hygiene promotion and first aid training) and clean-up activities over the next five months.							
2.1	Mobilization of and PSS, FA training for MRCS volunteers						
2.2	Refinement of existing health education materials						
2.3	Production of printing materials						
2.4	Household visits by volunteers to support affected families and disseminate information						
2.5	Production of mass media messages (public service announcements and special programmes on TV and radio) and regular broadcasting						
2.6	Organization of clean-up activities to burry dead animals						
2.7	Continuous monitoring of health situation in coordination with local health authorities.						
Objective 3: To reinforce logistics capacity of MRCS at national and regional levels by facilitating logistical support during relief activities and replenishing disaster preparedness stocks.							
3.1	Mobilization of a short-term international logistics specialist to support MRCS						In progress
3.2	Mobilization of and training for volunteers for beneficiary selection and distribution activities						
3.3	Organization of procurement by MRCS staff						
3.4	Transportation of relief items						
3.5	Management of distribution points						
3.6	Management of warehouses						
3.7	Control supply movements from point of dispatch to end user						
3.8	Replenishment of stocks						
3.9	Other general and administrative arrangements.						

How we work

All International Federation assistance seeks to adhere to the [Code of Conduct for the International Red Cross and Red Crescent Movement and Non-Governmental Organizations \(NGO's\) in Disaster Relief](#) and is committed to the [Humanitarian Charter and Minimum Standards in Disaster Response](#) (Sphere) in delivering assistance to the most vulnerable.

The International Federation's activities are aligned with its Global Agenda, which sets out four broad goals to meet the Federation's mission to "improve the lives of vulnerable people by mobilizing the power of humanity".

Global Agenda Goals:

- Reduce the numbers of deaths, injuries and impact from disasters.
- Reduce the number of deaths, illnesses and impact from diseases and public health emergencies.
- Increase local community, civil society and Red Cross Red Crescent capacity to address the most urgent situations of vulnerability.
- Reduce intolerance, discrimination and social exclusion and promote respect for diversity and human dignity.

Contact information

For further information specifically related to this operation please contact:

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**<revised budget, map of affected areas and annex below;
click here to return to the title page>**

DREF BUDGET SUMMARY

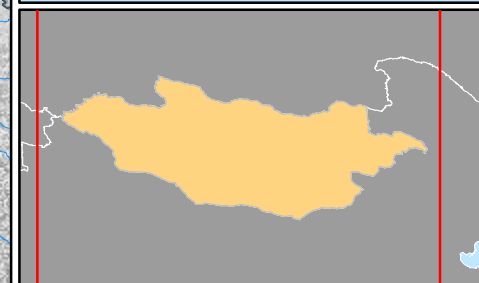
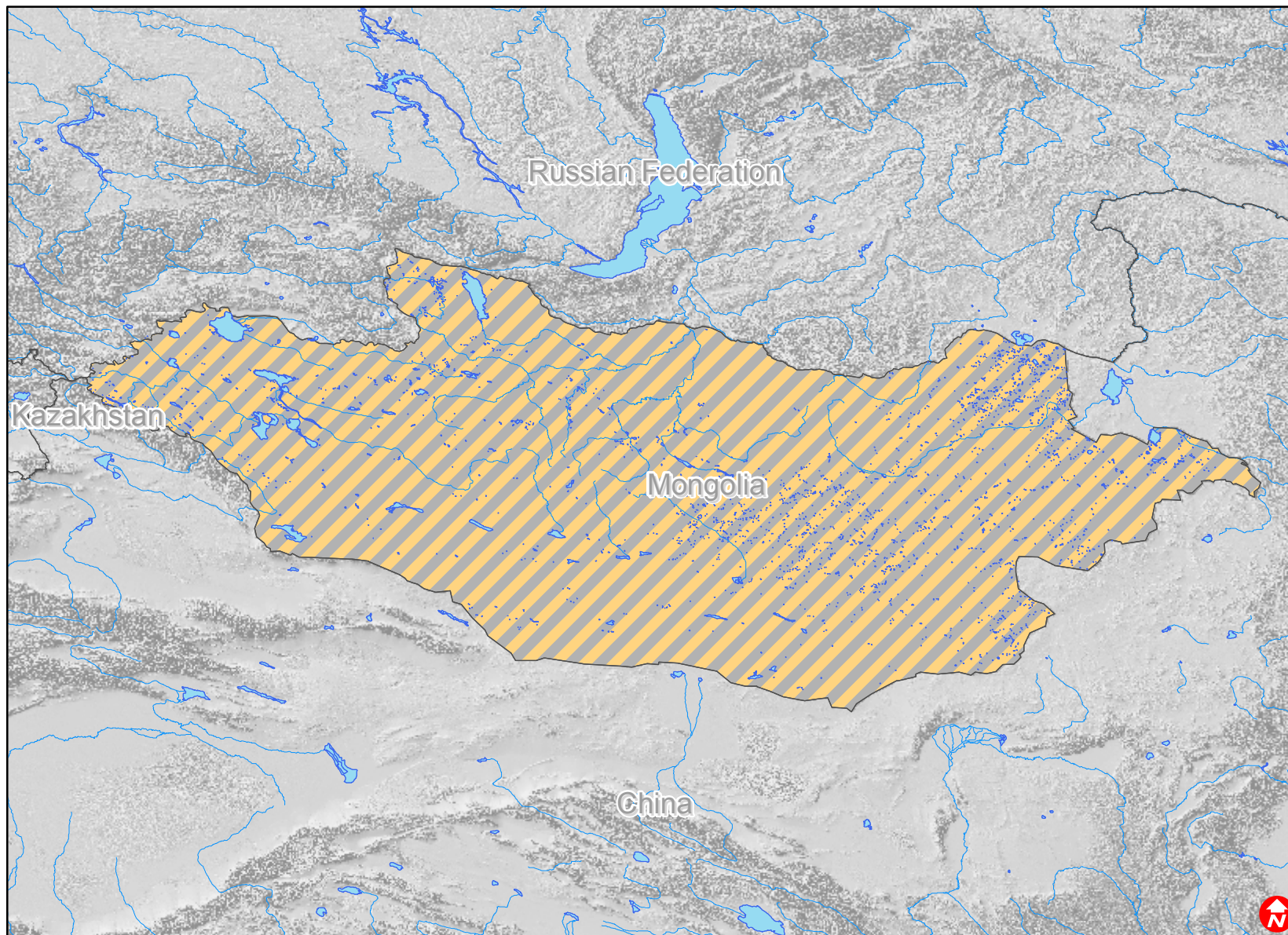
MONGOLIA DZUD - COLD WAVE

MDRMN003




	Original	Revised	Variance
<u>RELIEF NEEDS</u>			
Shelter			
Construction Materials			
Clothing & Textiles	85,500	180,865	95,365
Food	17,250	77,954	60,704
Medical & First Aid	17,250	17,250	0
Total Relief Needs	120,000	276,069	156,069
<u>TRANSPORT, STORAGE & VEHICLES</u>			
Transport & Vehicles Costs	7,000	20,938	13,938
<u>PERSONNEL</u>			
International Staff	6,000	8,000	2,000
Regionally Deployed Staff	0	4,000	4,000
<u>WORKSHOPS & TRAINING</u>			
Workshops & Training	500	25,500	25,000
<u>GENERAL EXPENSES</u>			
Travel	6,000	34,570	28,570
Information & Public Relations	0	461	461
Office running costs	400	2,154	1,754
Communication Costs	300	2,108	1,808
Financial Charges	50	200	150
<u>PROGRAMME SUPPORT</u>			
Programme Support - PSR (6.5% of total)	9,750	26,000	16,250
Total Operational Needs	30,000	123,931	93,931
Total DREF Budget (Cash & Kind)	150,000	400,000	250,000



Mongolia: Cold waves



Mongolia is experiencing a severe winter locally known as dzud, a continuous heavy snowfall combined with extreme cold. The national emergency management agency estimates that a total of 454,000 heads of livestock have died, out of which up to 89 per cent belong to the ten worst affected provinces.

-  Lakes
-  Rivers
-  Affected areas

INTERNATIONAL FEDERATION OF RED CROSS AND RED CRESCENT SOCIETIES

MONGOLIAN RED CROSS SOCIETY

RAPID ASSESSMENT OF DZUD SITUATION IN MONGOLIA

(JANUARY 18 – JANUARY 26, 2010)

SUMMARY REPORT



Herder in dzud-affected Kuvsgul aimag, Davaa is moving long distances with his one year old daughter and wife in hope to find better pastures. Already 30 of his livestock died of cold and starvation/IFRC

SUMMARY REPORT

This report is a shortened version of the rapid assessment report which was conducted jointly by the Mongolian Red Cross Society (MRCS) and the International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies (Federation) from 18 to 26 January, 2010, in response to the evolving disaster situation in Mongolia termed dzud. Dzud is a type of disaster unique to Mongolia which is characterized by heavy snowfall and extreme cold temperatures (in minus 40-50) that result in massive deaths of livestock which is the cornerstone of existence for one third of country's population who are entirely dependent on pastureland livestock and lead nomadic lives.

Dzud happens on a periodic basis and it is the result of a complex combination of unfavorable weather (trigger), terrain, as well as human and social factors. In the current dzud situation, there is a big regional diversity in underlying reasons why the large number of animals is dying at this high speed, how the dzud is impacting the livelihood of people and the level of dzud response. Some aimags have been affected aimag-wide, whereas in some aimags only few soums have been affected, but very heavily. The rapid assessment team's main findings are generalized for all 12 heavily affected aimags, but the responses should factor in those regional and intra-aimag differences.

The general background information on this disaster and the response of the Mongolian Red Cross Society and international Red Cross/Red Crescent assistance can be found in regular operations update on this disaster on the Federation website: <http://www.ifrc.org/where/country/cn6.asp?countryid=194>. For the purpose of this assessment, the assessment team also conducted a quick mapping of dzud responses by other international organizations, a copy of which can be found in the DREF update at the above mentioned link.

ASSESSMENT METHODOLOGY

The assessment's overall objective was to identify the immediate and medium-term (early recovery) needs of the affected populations and potential response activities by the Mongolian Red Cross Society. The assessment findings and recommendations will serve as the basis for developing a plan of action under the framework of international Red Cross assistance to the MRCS through the Federation's Disaster Relief Emergency Fund (DREF) and other international assistance channels and guide the overall MRCS' national response.

The assessment team was composed of disaster and health staff members of the Federation and MRCS and included Elzat Mamutalieva (Federation's Asia Pacific Zone in Kuala Lumpur), Amгаа Oyungerel (Federation's East Asia Regional Office in Beijing), E. Bold-Erdene (MRCS), A. Zoljargal (MRCS), E. Altantulga (MRCS), D. Enkhtsetseg (MRCS) and Kh. Solongo (Federation in Mongolia). The assessment team looked across six different thematic areas: health and psychological support, food and nutrition, shelter and non-food items, livelihood, logistics and water, sanitation and hygiene promotion.

To accommodate the requirement to deliver the initial assessment findings by 26 January and significant logistical challenges in reaching the most affected and snowbound communities, the primary data collection periods were relatively short and conducted in two out of 12 most affected aimags: 3 days in Khuvsgul aimag (from 21 to 23 January) and 3 days in Arkhangai aimag, including the travel time (from 22 to 24 January). The team conducted household interviews, key informant interviews with local authorities and visits to health centers during these field visits. However, this limitation was balanced with extensive follow-up communications with the respective Red Cross branches and government officials and relevant international and national organizations in Mongolia. This included face-to-face and over-the-phone interviews with all most affected 12 aimags following a set of guiding questions developed by the assessment team. Also, each of the Red Cross branches in 12 most affected aimags conducted 10 household interviews with the herders, following a set of 15 key questions and guidelines provided from the assessment group (semi-structured interviews).

KEY FINDINGS:

Health and Psychosocial Support:

- (a) Limited access to health care services, especially for emergency medical services in most affected soums;
- (b) Increased burden on health care services, increase in ARI cases among the affected population;
- (c) Reported increased level of stress and anxiety among the affected population, feeling of loss;
- (d) Low level of knowledge among the herders on first aid, for example what to do when they have frostbites which is now common occurrence during the dzud;
- (e) Increased risk of communicable diseases from animal dead carcasses if not buried before the weather gets warmer, water scarcity, and poor sanitation and hygiene practices.

Food and nutrition: the food security of the most affected herder families is seriously threatened.

- a) Availability of food in local markets (in some remote, difficult to reach aimags such as Gobi Altai)
- b) Reduced physical access for the remote, snowbound communities and families in *otor*¹ to local markets;
- c) Financial constraints (influenced by increased prices for basic food commodities, sudden drop in household income due to lower prices for meat and animal products for barter and abolition of government subsidies for families with children starting from January 2010). Not necessarily of these factors are related with dzud situation, but they exacerbate the existing situation.
- d) Proper food utilization: poor dietary diversity and reduced household food consumption, posing a risk of increased chronic malnutrition levels among children. The most critical period for food assistance will be the coming March, April and May months.

Livelihood: The livelihood of a large segment of the country's herders' population is threatened.

- (a) It is too early to predict the full impact of this dzud and the second assessment is required to assess the medium and short term impact of the dzud on the livelihood of the affected herders. Learning from the past dzud disasters, the potential impact include: increased poverty for the large number of herders who lost their livestock; other socio-economic consequences such as migration to cities in masses, joblessness, destitution, psychological stress and school drop-out. It is estimated that 60-70% of all herders own less than 200 livestock, which is considered that it is not economically viable and is sufficient for households' mere subsistence only. Obviously, this group will be the most heavily affected by the dzud.
- (b) Early household coping strategies to slaughter animals in the anticipation of the dzud have turned out to be very unsuccessful on individual levels (no opportunity to sell or barter). On a collective basis, these strategies have been detrimental to the small local economies in rural areas, leading to reduced prices for animal products.
- (c) The herders are using a variety of coping strategies to reduce their animal losses (providing hay and fodder, preparing special nutritional mixtures for weak animals, keeping the animals inside of gers and in warm shelters). However, those strategies are not sustainable in the long run and can lead to large debts, sales of household assets and exhaustion of people.

¹ *Otor* – a Mongolian term which means movement of nomadic herders in search of better pastures.

Shelter and non-food items:

- (a) No major needs expressed in terms of sheltering, but there are widespread constraints with heating materials (lack of access to wood and animal dung - main heating materials of herder families), especially those living in Gobi areas, isolated communities and also those who are left behind at winter places when families move in *otor*.
- (b) Affected households lack extra warm clothes (both for adults and children) and boots to enable them to stay warm while herding or in their houses.

Logistics:

- (a) The assessment team made a quick analysis of the logistical capacity (warehousing, transportation, suppliers, relief distribution, and procurement) of the MRCS, Federation and available options for outsourcing for immediate relief distribution. There is no warehousing capacity at the MRCS to store food items.

KEY RECOMMENDATIONS:

Overall recommendations:

1. Second joint Federation/MRCS assessment to be conducted in early March 2010. The assessment will identify the additional needs for the immediate and medium-term assistance as the situation evolves in the coming months, which are most critical months in dzud situation. Upon this assessment further international assistance options will be considered. This assessment should also include the review of existing and past livelihood projects implemented by the MRCS and analysis of the MRCS capacity and mandate to conduct livelihood interventions vs. the other organizations. Based on the results, we recommend deciding whether it is worth for the MRCS to be involved further in longer-term livelihood assistance projects.
2. Update an overall response plan for the MRCS and include the mapping of pledged and received funding for the disaster, including the Federation's assistance to make sure an accurate needs-based allocation of resources to the most affected aimags.
3. RC assistance should focus on the most vulnerable groups, which in the current dzud situation are: (a) those currently living in very remote, isolated areas due to blocked roads; (b) those who are in *otor*, especially if they have either pregnant women, elderly, small children or people with chronic conditions moving with them; (c) those who are left behind at winter places when families move in *otor* – they are most likely to be either elderly, disabled, small children or pregnant women, as all able bodied family members migrate with herds; (d) herder households that own less than 200 livestock, with the highest percentage of loss of livestock. There is some overlapping of these groups.

Sectoral recommendations:

1. Continuous monitoring of health situation, focusing on the most vulnerable such as the elderly, pregnant women, small children, the disabled and those with chronic conditions.
2. First aid basic education for common injuries like frostbites through distribution of brochures, radio messages, TV spots.
3. Health education, including hygiene promotion and FA training for households and distribution of first aid kits starting from April – May in dzud affected soums.
4. Psychosocial support to the affected herders by trained Red Cross volunteers.
5. Local mobilization of volunteers for clean-up and burial of dead animals for families which do not have able bodied members (elderly, female headed households, etc.)
6. MRC has an experience of conducting such activities in the previous dzud disasters.
7. Targeted food assistance for the most affected households minimum for the coming 3-4 months (February – April), proposed items for distribution: rice, flour, sugar, tea, vegetable oil, salt in selected five aimags.

8. Information dissemination to herder families on how to mitigate livestock loss – serve as information dissemination channels through mobilization of Red Cross volunteers.
9. Local (not regional/international) procurement of wheat flour: central procurement in Ulaanbaatar and/or local procurement in those aimags where there is grain milling and processing capacity.
10. Distribution of warm clothes and boots for adults and children.

Specific recommendations for the Federation’s immediate assistance to the MRCS:

1. Recommended aimags for targeting: Gobi Altai, Khuvsgul, Arkhangai, Zavkhan and Ovorkhangai. The selection of these aimags was based on the extensive analysis of all 12 affected aimags based on the information gathered from NEMA, MRCS and assessment team’s observations. The aimags were selected based on the following criteria: (a) NEMA classification of dzud situation in aimags; (b) aimag poverty index; (c) % of rural population in those aimags and (d) extent of the current and planned dzud response activities by other organizations and MRCS.
2. In those five aimags, select the soums that are considered the most affected and most remote. The selection should be done by aimag Red Cross branches in coordination with aimags’ Emergency Management Agencies, with the support from the MRCS national headquarters.
3. Proposed selection criteria for beneficiary herder households: (a) households not living in soum centers; (b) households which own less than 200 heads of livestock; (c) highest % loss of livestock and (d) if they have any family members from socially vulnerable groups (disabled, elderly, households with many children, female headed households).
4. In the selected five aimags, provide a “household package” of (a) non-food items (warm clothes/boots, 6 items) and (b) 3 month worth supply of basic food items (6 different items). The distribution of these items should be accompanied by “software” support (psychosocial support, basic first aid, health education for the affected herders), depending on the needs of individual households.
5. The remaining seven affected aimags, which are not targeted for the Federation-supported relief assistance plan, are being considered for assistance from the other funding sources (MRCS national appeal, bilateral Red Cross and external assistance, etc.). For those aimags, the Federation’s assistance plan should include “software” support (psychosocial support, basic first aid, health education for the affected herders).
6. The selection of soums for targeting and relief distribution and monitoring should be conducted through the existing network of MRCS’ Regional Disaster Preparedness (DP) Centres, in consultation with the aimags’ Red Cross branches. The five aimags selected for the International Federation’s assistance will be provided support through Khangai RC DP center (Arkhangai, Uvurkhangai, Khuvsgul aimags) and through Altai RC DP center (Gobi Altai and Zavkhan aimags).

<End>

For more information on the assessment, please contact:

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