

MONGOLIA: STEPPE AND FOREST FIRES

30 April 1996

information bulletin no. 3

The disaster

The fires that started on 23 February in the north-eastern aimag (Province) of Dornod and spread to 13 of the 21 aimags in Mongolia are still ablaze in scores of places, racing over parched pasture lands and through forests. The nine worst affected aimags are Huvsgul, Uvs, Hentii, Selenge, Dornod, Bulgan, Tov, Arhangai and Orhon. Although information on the effects of the disaster is incomplete and provisional, the total number of reported deaths so far is 13 persons. At least 34 people have been injured and 700 people left homeless; 5,000 head of livestock have perished in the blaze. These initial figures are expected to increase considerably.

Operational Developments

After receiving a report earlier today from the Federation Representative in Mongolia stating that CHF 170,000 is needed to finance relief assistance by the Mongolian Red Cross Society (MRCS) to fire victims, the Secretariat immediately released this sum from the Disaster Relief Emergency Fund. The amount is sufficient to provide relief to 370 families. National Societies wishing to support the MRCS operation are urged to make cash contributions to cover this withdrawal from the Fund.

Latest events

The State Emergency Commission is co-ordinating fire-fighting and relief activities. As of 29 April, about 24,000 local residents, fire-fighters, pilots and civil defence volunteers, using 1,000 vehicles, were fighting the infernos, which are still not under control. Local authorities are helping to evacuate threatened communities and their herds to safer areas. The government has sent medicines, food and warm clothing to the affected regions.

Because the fires have burned communication lines and cloud cover and smoke are making aerial reconnaissance almost impossible it is very difficult to give a precise assessment of the situation. However, as dozens of fires are still active or rekindling, and as information is still either lacking or incomplete from several aimags, the total number of people affected will certainly be higher than the present figures.

Following an announcement on 27 April by the Minister of Health that the Ministry would meet requirements of medicine and first aid from stocks in hand, the first aid kits reported as being needed in an earlier Information Bulletin will now be supplied from this source.

Federation/National Society action so far

The Federation committed CHF 38,550 under the Federation-assisted Disaster Preparedness Programme (DPP) of the MRCS for the provision of emergency assistance to 56 families.

The MRCS has so far provided relief goods worth 1,567,835 Togrogs (CHF 3,900) to 39 families in the Dashbalbar and Khalkhgol somons (districts) of Dornod aimag.

– In Dashbalbar somon, 7 families received relief goods worth 339,725 Togrogs (CHF 845). The items provided were: blankets, bedding, quilts, boots, warm clothes, candles, flour and rice.

– In Khalkhgol somon, 32 families received relief goods worth 1,228,110 Togrogs (CHF 3,055). The items were: blankets, bedding, quilts, warm clothes, toothpaste, soap, towels, matches, tea, salt, flour and rice.

Most of the relief goods came from the stock at the Dornod DP Centre. The only items newly procured locally were towels and matches worth 10,400 Togrogs (CHF 26). The DP Centre still has some items in stock.

With the remaining funds, the Society plans to provide relief goods tomorrow to people in Dornod, Hentii, Selegnge and Huvsgul aimags.

Initially, the MRCS had decided to provide emergency assistance to 56 families, or 300 persons in ten aimags. However, since precise information on the location of some of these families was slow to emerge, it decided to take action based on what information it already had -- hence the assistance to the 39 families of Dornod described above.

RC operational plan

At this stage, 183 families are known to be affected by the fires. However, since the disaster is by no means over, this number is expected to double within a few days. The MRCS has therefore planned a relief operation and prepared a budget to assist 370 families.

The total budget amounts to CHF 207,200. From this should be deducted the CHF 38,550 committed earlier through the DPP 1996 (see above). A small allowance has been made for transport costs, leaving an **outstanding requirement of CHF 170,000**.

Details of assistance per family and its costs are shown in the table below.

Relief Item	Quantity		Cost per Item or Kilo		Total Cost
(1) Food					23,140
1. Flour	50 kg	x	260 tg	=	13,000
2. Rice	20 kg	x	400 tg	=	8,000
3. Tea	1 block	x	2,000 tg	=	2,000

4. Salt	1 kg	x	140 tg	=	140
(2) Utensils					38,400
1. Kettle	1 pc	x	3,000 tg	=	3,000
2. Pan	1pc	x	5,000 tg	=	5,000
3. Cooking spoon	1pc	x	500 tg	=	500
4. Spoon	5 pcs	x	80 tg	=	400
5. Cup	5pcs	x	180 tg	=	900
6. Candle	30 pcs	x	100 tg	=	3,000
7. Matches	30 boxes	x	20 tg	=	600
8. Water tank	1 unit	x	25,000 tg	=	25,000
(3) Sanitary goods					3,960
1. Towel	3 pcs	x	400 tg	=	1,200
2. Soap	3 pcs	x	180 tg	=	540
3. Laundry soap	3 pcs	x	170 tg	=	510
4. Toothpaste	3 pcs	x	450 tg	=	1,350
5. Toothbrush	3 pcs	x	120 tg	=	360
(4) Clothes/ bedding					129,500
1. Warm clothes	3 pcs	x	8,000 tg	=	24,000
2. Quilts	3 pcs	x	7,000 tg	=	21,000
3. Blankets	2 pcs	x	5,000 tg	=	10,000
4. Bedding	3 sets	x	4,000 tg	=	12,000
5. Childrens clothes	2 sets	x	3,000 tg	=	6,000
6. Childrens boots	2 pcs	x	7,000 tg	=	14,000
7. Adults boots	3 pcs	x	12,000 tg	=	36,000
8. Socks	5 pcs	x	300 tg	=	1,500
9. Trousers	2 pcs	x	2,000 tg	=	4,000
10. Ladies warm trousers	1 pc	x	1,000 tg	=	1,000
(5) Tents	1 unit	x	30,000 tg	=	30,000
Grand total per family					225,000 togrog (CHF560)

402 Togrog = 1 CHF

Relief stocks at MRCS HQs include 92 first aid kits donated earlier by the Republic of Korea National Red Cross and bandages donated by the German Red Cross. These will be utilised in the relief operation.

External relations - Government/UN/NGOs/Media

As the Government's official announcement that external assistance was required was made only in the late afternoon of Friday, 26 April, the response from international organisations and diplomatic sources in Ulaanbaatar or Beijing is still under consideration.

The UNDP office in Ulaanbaatar is requesting an initial USD 50,000 from the Special Programme Resources (SPR) for fuel and food for fire-fighters.

The MONTSAME News Agency, Mongol TV, national radio and daily newspapers are covering the fires on a daily basis. Reuters, BBC, Associated Press and Kyodo Tsushin correspondents are also filing reports.

Delegation

The Federation Delegation in Mongolia is advising the MRCS in all aspects of the relief operation, i.e. obtaining detailed information on the situation and needs, preparing an action plan, and procedures for procurement and distribution, in accordance with the Principles and Rules for Red Cross Disaster Relief.

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