

Mongolia

National Society Preparedness

Case Study



Introduction

Mongolian Red Cross Society (MRCS) was established in 1939 during the first meeting of the 'Mongolian Red Cross Coalition' ¹. With the legal amendments in 2016, the MRCS changed its status from "national society" to "national humanitarian assistance organisation" ², as a sole nationwide humanitarian organisation that has a mandate to act as an auxiliary to the Mongolian government. The MRCS has significant outreach in country through its thirty-four mid-level branches, 14800 trained volunteers and 78600 Red Cross youth members ³. The National Society (NS) operates their programmes, projects and initiatives through four main programmes of disaster management; social inclusion, development; public health promotion; and Red Cross Youth. In terms of natural hazard risks, Mongolia is vulnerable to a wide variety of natural hazards

including storms, droughts, floods, earthquakes and other extreme weather events such as 'dzud' or severe winter condition in which livestock would perish in large number due to cold and or malnourishment, weakened by summer droughts. Dzud may occur every four to five years imposing major impact on herder families and their livelihoods. In 2010, Mongolia due to this event, nearly twenty five percent (9.7 million) of the country's livestock died ⁴. Flooding can also cause severe impact as more than 200000 people and over 100 schools are located in medium-to-high flood hazard areas in Ulaanbaatar, in the capital where unplanned urban development further increases country's vulnerability (*ibid*).

1. [Mongolian Red Cross Society \(2020\) History.](#)

2. [Montsame \(2016\) Mongolian Red Cross changes legal status.](#)

3. [Mongolian Red Cross Society \(2020\).](#)

4. [Global Facility for Disaster Risk Reduction and Recovery \(2019\). Mongolia.](#)



In the future, Mongolia is likely to be adversely impacted by climate change: increased air temperature, increased precipitation, and a reduction in water resources and arable land.

At times of disasters in Mongolia immediate measures are taken by the Permanent Emergency Commissions of all levels (state, aimag, capital, soum and district), ministries, agencies, organisations and individuals in the event of a disaster or after. The MRCS is an integral part of this commission and works alongside the National Emergency Management Agency. The aim of the disaster management programme within the MRCS is to develop humanitarian cooperation for capacity-building on prevention, preparedness and recovery to save lives and livelihoods of affected populations in times of emergencies ⁵.

Recent responses by the MRCS include fires, floods, dzud responses in 2017, 2018, and recently in 2020 with the forecast-based financing mechanism, early actions have been activated in response to severe winter. In 2020, dzud response entitled unrestricted cash assistance and livestock nutrition kits to the 1000 vulnerable households in targeted eight provinces ⁶.

While the MRCS is responding to disasters, since 2016, the NS has been systematically measuring, prioritising and undertaking preparedness actions. In 2016, with the support from British and Canadian Red Cross the NS assessed their response capacities through externally evaluated Disaster Response Capacity Enhancement process. Based on the recommendations from the evaluation team, the MRCS has been addressing the identified gaps in their preparedness measures and in 2019 utilised the revised and up to date [Preparedness for Effective Response](#) (PER) approach. In addition, the MRCS was working with the IFRC and Red Cross and Red Crescent Climate Center towards establishing the Early Action Protocols, to have financial mechanisms in place prior dzud, based on pilot project on Forecast-based Financing with support from British red Cross. Through these continuous efforts on increasing their response preparedness measures, the NS was able to demonstrate an evidence-based increase in response capacity building, foster cooperation and collaboration with national authorities, private sector and Movement Partners.

5. Mongolian Red Cross Society. Report 2014-2016

6. IFRC (2020) Emergency Plan of Action. Mongolia: Severe winter MDRMN11

Enabling environment

Strengthening functional capacities

Oftentimes building NS capacities means conducting various technical trainings of individuals. There also scenarios whereby individuals within the NSs who have been working years and keeping the institutional memory, once they leave the organisation many good practices and know-hows leave with the person and may no longer be practiced within the organisation. To this end, the MRCS strengthening of response capacities was a successful process as investments went into the system. This means that since 2016 various policies, legal acts and strategies have been developed within the MRCS related to effective disaster management. Throughout 2014-2016, policies on volunteer development, Red Cross Youth Movement support were revised and approved. Red Cross Emblem usage guideline was also developed for the mid-level branches. In addition, the Contingency Plan⁷ also known as the MRCS Preparedness Plan for disasters has been further revised, updated and refined. These efforts institutionalised and strengthened the overall capacities of the MRCS disaster response.

Fostering ownership of the process

Another factor that served as an enabling environment throughout the MRCS preparedness capacity strengthening process is that there was a commitment and ownership of the process. In 2019, NS Preparedness for

Effective Response re-orientation, assessment, prioritisation and analysis phases were attended by the MRCS staff away from their duty stations in Ulaanbaatar at the Youth Training Centre for a week to invest quality time and dedication in measuring and analysing their response preparedness. Mr. Nyamkhuu, the Disaster Management officer stated that 'this demonstrates the endorsement from the MRCS leadership of the PER process'. Furthermore, during the development of the work-plan the Secretary General of the NS attended several sessions and was briefed by the PER facilitators' team on the final work-plan to further increase the MRCS preparedness.

Working across organisations, sectors and levels

For an effective disaster management, it is important that the activities are conducted with a collaboration between and across different sectors, areas and levels. As it was noted by the MRCS Disaster Management Officer during the PER process in 2019, 'disaster management is everyone's business'. The PER process was attended by not only disaster management team but also different departments from health, coordination, legal and support services, in addition to the branch managers. It was a critical momentum for the MRCS to have an overarching goal of having an effective, timely and efficient response where roles and responsibilities are clearly identified.

7. It is worth noting that the term 'Contingency Plan (CP)' is not easily directly translated into Mongolian and that the document MRCS currently contains more information that one would expect to find in a standard CP. This document also captures details that would usually be found in a response plan, SOPs and other operational documents.

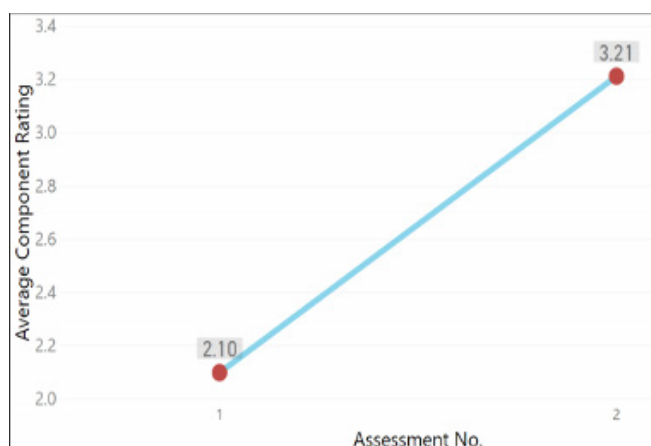


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Impact of a continuous investment on NS preparedness

In the future, Mongolia is likely to be adversely i The MRCS was able to demonstrate evidence-based change in their response preparedness as the NS utilised the same methodology over time Well-Prepared National Societies phase I, II, III, in (2005-2007) and (2009-2011); and Disaster Response Capacity Enhancement (DRCE) in 2016- systematically measuring and demonstrating improvements in the NS response system elements.

The overall response and preparedness capacity of the MRCS has improved since 2016. As demonstrated below the average component rating of NS response system has increased from 2.10 in 2016 to 3.21 in 2019. Additionally, this average looks at components that were assessed both in 2016 and 2019. Components which were not assessed in one of those year was not included in this comparison. Regardless, it would appear there is an improved preparedness of MRCS as a whole.



Across all five areas of the interrelated response system, the NS have progressed in most of the components, specifically the area of analysis and planning of response preparedness has improved significantly. This could be in relation to the approved Early Action Protocols for dzud which expanded the NS collaboration and ability to access the hazard risk information from the National Emergency Management Agency and National Agency for Meteorology and Environmental Monitoring, together with early actions such as cash assistance and livestock nutrition to herder families.



In addition, the Pre-disaster Agreements were rated as non-existent in 2016, in 2019, it was rated as good performing. This improvement is attributed to MRCS having established agreements with NEMA and have meetings annually, having established pre-agreements with Ministry of Health, Social Welfare, Trade Development Bank, and with private sector organisations like APU. MRCS holds State-Red Cross Cooperation Council meetings twice a year. In September 2018 MRCS had their first pre-disaster meeting, where Movement partners' capacities/resources were mapped out.

Established Emergency Operations Centre

Another positive change from 2016 is that of the MRCS's Emergency Operations Centre. Previously non-existent, the MRCS has established a new facility capable of being their command centre in times of emergency. The EOC contains necessary equipment for the MRCS to manage operations which also had improved the Information Communications Technology. The internal communications in times of emergency has improved due to amendments and additional information in the Multi-Hazard Contingency Plan, containing all the contact details and decision-making charts. The NS will also be working on Standard Operating Procedures for the EOC.

Increased branch capacities

In 2016, DRCE simulation exercise was conducted in Darkhan branch. Since then Ms. Otgonbayar, the branch manager stated that there have been various improvements, particularly in communications in emergencies, and safety and security management of volunteers. The recommendations that came out of the DRCE evaluations resulted in the branch developing a plan of action with the support from the MRCS headquarters. Within this plan, sixty percent of 400 volunteers are equipped with personal protective equipment including clothing with phosphorus for night and with red cross logo and first aid kits. The volunteers have also signed contracts with the red cross branch, with briefings on the red cross principles and mandate. Furthermore, with the support of the MRCS headquarters and in consultation with the Local Emergency Management Agency there has been much increase on operational information sharing and improvement on decision-making and clarity on roles and responsibilities in times of emergencies.

Improved legal environment for the MRCS disaster response preparedness

In 2016, it was noted that although the MRCS has a well-defined auxiliary role and mandate, it is not well disseminated among staff and volunteers, and not reflected in different MRCS policies and strategies. In 2017, the MRCS played an instrumental role in the amendment of Mongolian Disaster Protection Law, which revitalised legal base for disaster risk reduction and response preparedness. Within this law, the MRCS is defined as a sole national humanitarian organisation, and it can call for international assistance from the Red Cross and Red Crescent Movement in times of disaster, prior the national declaration of emergency. In 2019, most of the key staff and volunteers were aware of such changes and entitlements of the MRCS mandate, as further work on disseminating the Disaster Protection Law was organized with technical support from Disaster Law Programme of IFRC.



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Developed a multi-sectorial and multi-resourced NS disaster preparedness plan

In October 2019, through the PER process, the MRCS was able to develop a multi-sectorial and multi-funded plan to further strengthen its response capacities. This plan brought together existing NS capacity assessment results such as Organisational Capacity Assessment and Certification (OCAC), Logistics Capacity Development and Livelihoods, particularly actions that will contribute towards improving overall NS capacities of response preparedness. For instance, organisational Risk Management was one of the priorities of the NS, as previously during a dzud response few years ago the MRCS faced an incidence concerning the MRCS reputation, the mitigation actions were taken. Nevertheless, the NS wants to systematically address this point and therefore, actions from OCAC was integrated into the plan.

The plan is multi-sectorial as it was developed in collaboration with all relevant programme and administration staffs. As MRCS's capacity to respond to natural disasters increased, MRCS is also looking into improving its capacity to respond during health emergencies and started working with Australian Red Cross on influenza preparedness since 2019.

This demonstrates that the PER plan could also be used for marketing purposes to identify in-country partners expertise on certain elements and mobilise resources, whilst bringing together different preparedness projects, programmes and initiatives.

The support services such as Resource Mobilisation, Administration and Planning, Monitoring, Evaluation and Reporting were also present throughout the process, resulting in some of the actions to create synergies and joint efforts towards effective and timely MRCS response in times of disasters and crises. It is worth noting that despite the fact that the plan includes multiple sectors, areas, departments, there have been clearly assigned functions for each activity and the overall plan is overseen and monitored by the Planning, Monitoring, Evaluation and Reporting Team. This overarching plan is for four years, it was noted by the Secretary General of the MRCS that the NS will implement the plan through annual operational plans.

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