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# Emergency Plan of Action (EPoA) Mongolia: Extreme Winter Condition

 International Federation  
of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies

<b>DREF operation n° MDRMN005</b>	
<b>Date of issue:</b> 15 January 2016	<b>Date of disaster:</b> 25 November 2015
<b>Operation manager:</b> Baktiar Mambetov, Acting Head of Country Cluster Support Team in Beijing	<b>Point of contact (name and title):</b> Bolormaa Nordov, Secretary General of Mongolian Red Cross Society
<b>Operation start date:</b> 14 January 2016	<b>Operation end date:</b> 14 April 2016 (3 months)
<b>Operation budget:</b> CHF 158,459	<b>DREF allocated:</b> CHF 158,459
<b>Number of people assisted:</b> 1,500 families (7,500 people)	
<b>Host National Society(ies) present (n° of volunteers, staff, branches):</b> Mongolian Red Cross Society (MRCS) has 33 mid- level and over 800 primary level branches working all over Mongolia 12,500 volunteers and 70,000 youth members. MRCS has 7 established regional disaster preparedness centers.	
<b>Red Cross Red Crescent Movement partners actively involved in the operation:</b> The National Society works with International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies (IFRC) in this operation	
<b>Other partner organizations actively involved in the operation:</b> Mongolia National Emergency Management Agency (NEMA)	

## A. Situation analysis

### Description of the disaster

Mongolia is experiencing very low temperatures and heavy snowfall since early November 2015, locally named Dzud<sup>1</sup>. According to the National Emergency Management Authority (NEMA), snow has covered 90 per cent of the total territory with conditions getting more severe, with the thickness of snow cover between 10 - 40 cm (density 0.12 – 0.24 g/c.cm).

Based on the latest assessment report released from the Mongolian Government in early January 2016, 50 soums (districts) in 16 aimags (provinces) are currently categorized as experiencing Dzud while 120 soums in 20 provinces are on the edge of entering Dzud condition. Some local level governments have already declared Dzud in their respective soums as part of the early warning and preparedness measures.

The Information and Research Institute of Meteorology, Hydrology and Environment has indicated that based on the weather forecast, continuous snowfall, snowstorms and temperatures are expected to persist on average of below -25 degrees Celsius during daytime and -38 degrees during night in the coming weeks. These

will further affect more than 965,000 people, especially vulnerable herders living in the affected soums.



MRCS NDRT member interviewed a vulnerable herder family.  
Photo: MRCS

<sup>1</sup> Dzud is a cyclical slow onset disaster unique to Mongolia. It consists of a summer drought, resulting in insufficient production of hay, followed by very heavy winter snow (10 to 350 cm), winds and lower than normal temperatures (-40° C to -50° C) during which an excessive number of livestock die causing basic services, and in the longer term, livelihoods to collapse in vulnerable herder communities.

The government assessment report shared on 7 January informed that the current hard winter situation was exacerbated by last year's drought which resulted in poor vegetation growth and low yield in hay-making. There is now a higher demand for hay and fodder due to excessive snowfall. This harsh winter situation also isolates the herders families who are living in the remote areas and blocks their access to and from the nearest urban areas where the essential public services (clinics, grocery stores, hygiene facilities and etc) are located.

In facing the extreme winter and shortage of hay and fodder, herders will start losing most of their livestock in the coming months, driving them to put more livestock on the market to exchange for cash in order to buy food, hay and other necessities. However, the oversupply of livestock has resulted in decreased prices. Since the demand for meat and meat products is low, herders are either unable to sell their livestock or forced to sell at a loss.

Delivering ambulance services to the dwellers of some soums in the western aimags with mountainous landscape has become extremely difficult. This was worsened by the lack of vehicles for delivery health services in some soums.

The Mongolian National State Emergency Committee (NSEC) convened its second meeting on the current winter situation in country on 4 January 2016, to discuss the information gathered through government assessments which were carried out in 21 provinces in late December 2015. The deputy prime minister as the head of the National State Emergency Commission followed up on certain issues and ordinances issued in the previous commission's meeting. Working on the information received from the government assessment and the rapid assessments done by the Mongolian Red Cross Society (MRCS), the Mongolia government puts a high priority on maintenance of current infrastructure such as medical services and heating services. The administrations of provinces, soums, and some members of parliament have requested the State Emergency Commission to allocate additional reserves of hay and fodder to the local store points of the state reserves. The only planned action towards the herders is the hay distribution through donation and national reserves or the sale of hay at 50 per cent discount. There is also a request to provide a nationwide policy facilitating sales of meat and livestock.

Provincial emergency commissions have implemented winter preparations, made adjustments in their emergency preparedness plans, made lists of expectant mothers, children under five years of age, elderly people and persons with disabilities, and transferred soon-to-deliver pregnant women to the administrative centres. No maternal and infant mortality has been encountered.

To complement the government's nation-wide efforts in responding to the increasing Dzud situation, the government has appealed to MRCS on 8 January to mobilize available resources to aid vulnerable herders and respond to the essential survival needs in some Dzud affected areas.

## **Summary of the current response**

### **Overview of Host National Society**

The Mongolian Red Cross Society (MRCS) is a member of the National Emergency Commission and is actively involved in the planning and design of the national response to the emerging crisis. The secretary general of the MRCS took part in the National Emergency Commission meeting on 4 January 2016, during which the government updated the current situation and response plan. MRCS is coordinating its plans closely with NEMA, especially with regard to sharing transportation resources.

The MRCS national disaster response team (NDRT) members, supported by the IFRC, were deployed and have completed a rapid assessment in two most-affected provinces namely Lun and Undurshireet soum, Tuv province on 10-11 December 2015, and Khashaat and Undur-ulaan soums in Arkhangai province on 24-26 December 2015. Mid-level branches of the MRCS are collecting information from their local soum authorities and participating in their respective local emergency commission meetings.

This DREF is launched to ensure that immediate humanitarian needs are met in the affected areas. MRCS is monitoring the situation closely and all concerned units are feeding updated data to the National Headquarters. In view of the needs, MRCS needs to go for a more comprehensive response. These include the need for scaling up the distribution of food and essential non-food items, and effectively integrating the relief and longer term livelihoods support components into the anticipated response operation. Thus, MRCS is working on a longer term strategy to access additional resources to meet these needs. MRCS, with the support of IFRC, is preparing an Emergency Appeal for the scale-up actions, which will be launched in the coming days.

### **Overview of Red Cross Red Crescent Movement in country**

IFRC has an in-country programme advisor in Mongolia with coordination and support provided from the Country Cluster Support Team (CCST) in Beijing. IFRC has completed field assessments in cooperation with MRCS to carry out feasibility studies of potential actions based on needs and capacity of the National Society. IFRC will support the

MRCS in the implementation of activities through joint assessment, cash transfer support, procurement, distribution and monitoring.

### **Movement Coordination**

The IFRC Country Cluster Support Team (CCST) in Beijing has been working closely with MRCS and maintains close communication. An information bulletin on the situation in Mongolia has been shared with partners of the Mongolian Red Cross, including the Australian, Japanese, Korean, and Chinese Red Cross Societies

### **Overview of non-RCRC actors in country**

In October 2015, the representatives from FAO Emergency Department met with NEMA and Ministry of Food and Agriculture's officials to assess the impact of a possible Dzud during the winter 2015-2016. Between 29 October and 7 November 2015, FAO assessment team made an assessment in three provinces/aimags and met with governors, technical experts and herder families in several soums to evaluate the impact of a potential severe winter following the drought that affected large parts of the country last summer. The assessment report dated 7 January 2016 shows a strong likelihood of a severe Dzud this winter, and herders were not able to fully prepare due to drought in summer, and the severe drop (50-75 per cent) in market value of their livestock. Therefore herders could not make cash from their livestock.

NEMA is the main disaster response coordinator and responder to disasters in the country. The agency holds limited stocks of hay from the state reserve to be distributed based on the government decision (enough to feed livestock for three days according to government hay reserve regulations in the affected areas), but not enough to make much impact in the present situation as the need for feed is much more than in a normal year. NEMA also supports logistics of any government services such as ambulances, police services and humanitarian organizations in affected areas, and also plays a crucial role in the evacuation of severely affected herders from remote places. As part of their response actions in harsh winter situation, staff of Local Emergency Management Agencies (LEMA) are clearing major roads in their region and helping the vehicles that are stranded..

IFRC Country Cluster Support Team (CCST) in Beijing is a part of the Mongolian Humanitarian Country Team (HCT). HCT holds regular meetings to coordinate possible response action among its members. The first meeting was held on 9 December and was chaired by UNOCHA. To ensure that early action would be taken as soon as possible, the HCT agreed to identify a suitable time-bound country and risk specific coordination arrangement for a potential Dzud intervention and outlined a basic humanitarian response plan to augment Government response to Dzud.

The humanitarian NGO People in Need is planning to provide relief assistance in Arkhangai and MRCS is negotiating to carry out a joint assessment with People in Need in Arkhangai. The NGO is expecting to be able to raise additional funds to further expand its operations to the eastern provinces of Mongolia if the situation continues to deteriorate.

### **Needs analysis, beneficiary selection, risk assessment and scenario planning**

Based on the NDRT assessments in the two Dzud affected Arkhangai and Tuv provinces, of which 50 vulnerable herder families were sampled in each of the affected soums. The most vulnerable herders are found to be in desperate need of cash, food, and warm clothes to prepare for the extreme winter condition. This also confirmed a recent survey questionnaire done by MRCS using Trilogy Emergency Response Application (TERA) in the affected areas.

In normal times the most vulnerable herders find income to meet their most essential needs from their few livestock by selling the dairy products. This still does not allow them to generate sufficient money to invest back into their livestock for breeding to raise their numbers and leaves herder families increasingly vulnerable over generations.

Due to the current market situation, and also the heavy snowstorm, the vulnerable herders are facing starvation, freezing temperatures with nothing to generate heat, and a high risk of losing their livestock. With very little to no cash on their hands, and with only transportation means, which is a horse in most vulnerable herder families, herders are not able to reach nearest urban settlers (nearest is 23kms) to buy food, warm clothes, coal and timbers to generate heat in their gers<sup>2</sup>. Procuring hay to feed their livestock is always one of their urgent needs to survive through harsh winters.

The Government and its National Emergency Management Agency have focused their efforts to support the urban areas to overcome this extreme winter, but has extremely limited resources and capacities to meet the essential survival needs of the vulnerable herder families. Its current focus is to maintain the functioning of the infrastructure in affected areas and to deliver hay and fodder to the most affected areas for distribution to vulnerable herders. As

<sup>2</sup> Ger is the transportable dwelling of the Mongolian nomads.

mentioned, it is being sold with 50 per cent discount to the affected herders in provinces in Dzud state. Practically and from many years of experience LEMA often assists in any logistics efforts to deliver the government public services in remote areas and facilitates humanitarian assistance. Another one of NEMA's task is to clear the major roads from snow and ice, to enable access between provincial centres. This however is limited and does not necessarily open up the road access to the most remote urban areas.

In the most severe cases, LEMA will try to evacuate the most severely affected herders to urban areas (in most cases herder families who lost all of their livestock and have nothing to live on in coming days except the carcasses of their dead animals), and to mobilize all readily available resources including food, warm clothes, coals, timber, transportation and fuel from local organizations. These provided relief aids however are required to be repaid by the beneficiaries during the early recovery phase. Due to current extreme shortage of funds, the local authorities are likely not launching any massive response, leaving the most vulnerable herders with no other option but to rely on their own resources and survival skills.

Weather forecasts indicated that the coldest time this winter will be in January and February. In this situation the total number of soums in Dzud state will further increase as worsening weather makes herders' access to the nearest urban settlements more problematic; this will also create harsher conditions for their livestock in open fields.

With more snowfalls expected in the coming weeks, and temperatures falling below minus 30°C, the death toll of livestock will increase rapidly. This will badly affect poor herders who are inadequately prepared and put their lives at risk of starvation and other risk exposures.

### **Risk Assessment**

Mongolia is a relatively calm and peaceful country and there are no high risks to the Dzud relief operation.

The Parliament election will be held in 2016 and many members of parliament are already initiated their campaigns in the provinces. It is imperative that the RCRC operation and its visibility strategy are clearly distinguished from any politically motivated activities.

Physical access to remote areas might increase security risks due to road access and a challenging environment, but IFRC fleet regulations can address risks related with logistics efforts.

MRCS has some Cash Transfer Programme experience and a risk assessment based on previous Dzud relief operations in 2009 and 2010 was carried out, but still requires close monitoring from IFRC.

## **B. Operational strategy and plan**

### **Overall objective**

The overall objective of the operation is to ensure that immediate humanitarian needs of 1,500 families affected by Dzud are met through the provision of food and unconditional cash grants. This DREF allocation will also cover the cost of mobilization and deployment of 13 NDRT members and one RDRT.

### **Proposed strategy**

MRCS has been actively engaged in disaster preparedness and response over the past two months by utilizing the countrywide presence of its staffs and volunteers. Branches in nine severely affected provinces have engaged in resource mobilization through local charity campaigns and by engaging with local donors. They have also been monitoring the situation and collecting information on the most vulnerable herder households which need assistance as a matter of priority. The operation focuses on meeting the needs of the most vulnerable among the affected herders by providing food and unconditional cash grants.

A total of 1,500 herder families (approximately 7,500 people) in eight provinces (Tuv, Uvs, Arkhangai, Zavkhan, Bulgan, Khuvsgul, Selenge, Bayan-Ulgii) will be assisted by MRCS through this DREF allocation.

Of which, **1,200 families** (240 per province) **in five provinces** (Tuv, Uvs, Zavkhan, Arkhangai, Bayan-Ulgii) will receive **food parcels for 2 months and cash transfer of MNT 64,000** (approximately CHF 32). The food parcels will be particularly useful for families who do not have immediate or have less accessibility to a functioning market.

Whereas another **300 families** (100 per province) **in 3 provinces** (Bulgan, Khuvsgul, Selenge) will only receive **cash transfer of MNT 192,000** (approximately CHF 96). This amount of unconditional cash grant is based on Government policy and advice, which provides flexibility of choices for affected families.

The DREF operation is implemented over three-month period, and is expected to be completed by mid-April 2016. A final report will be made available three months after the end of the operation.

Upon identification and registration of beneficiaries, the cash grant will be transferred to their bank accounts or issued directly if they do not have a bank account. MRCS/IFRC are currently establishing an agreement with the national bank to finalize the cash transfer modality and define terms and conditions of the cooperation.

Procurement of food items will be done centrally in Ulaanbaatar according to IFRC standard procurement processes and procedures. Selection of soums targeted with food assistance will be finalized based on the findings from the assessments carried out by MRCS NDRT and IFRC in December 2015. NEMA and local government will provide the vehicles for transportation of the food parcel and DREF will cover the fuel expenses.

**Table 1: Summary actions planned under this DREF operation**

No	Type of assistance	Description	Target families*	Target provinces
1	Food parcel	Food supply for 2 months consisting of 25kg wheat flour, 10kg rice, 2kg sugar, 1 litre cooking oil, 500g salt, and 1 block of tea	1,200 (240 per province)	5 provinces (Tuv, Uvs, Zavkhan, Arkhangai, Bayan-Ulgii)
	Cash transfer	MNT 64,000 (approximate CHF 32)		
2	Cash transfer	MNT 192,000 (approximate CHF 96)	300 (100 per province)	3 provinces (Bulgan, Khuvsgul, Selenge)
	<b>Total</b>		<b>1,500</b>	<b>8 provinces</b>

\*Estimated number of soums targeted in the operation in each of the selected provinces

#### **Beneficiary selection**

A total of 1,500 families across the country will be identified based on their vulnerability level and on how they have been affected by the disaster. Selection of the specific target area will be based on further assessment and coordination with the Mongolian government and other humanitarian responders. Only poor and vulnerable herder households (poverty stricken, single headed, people with disability, multi-children, lone elderly, sick person) will be targeted foremost with Red Cross assistance. One of the most important criteria will be number of livestock per household. Average family size is five in Mongolia, therefore households that have less than 100 livestock (approximately 20 livestock per person) will be targeted as they face greater hardships.

Identification and selection of beneficiaries will be done with the inclusion of beneficiaries themselves, local social care offices and LEMA. Beneficiary feedback mechanism such as hotline services will be established to promote accountability to beneficiary.

Further assessments by NDRT will be carried out to analyze the worsening situation in the affected provinces, as Dzud is counted as a slow onset disaster. Preparedness and risk reduction promotion activities, including IEC distribution will be carried out from the local branch to enhance local capacity and knowledge among beneficiaries.

## **Operational support services**

### **Human resources**

MRCS closely coordinates its actions with central and local governments through its headquarters in Ulaanbaatar and 15 mid-level branches in affected areas. MRCS has 30 programme staff at headquarters level and around 100 at branch level. Some 20 branch volunteers will monitor the relief efforts in the eight target districts. Branch instructors will coordinate with NEMA on food distribution in their branches, and will monitor cash transfer to beneficiaries in the targeted soums. MRCS Finance and logistics officers will provide support in procurement of relief goods and cash transfers.

The IFRC Country Cluster Support Team (CCST) in Beijing and IFRC Regional Office in Kuala Lumpur will actively support the National Society in the implementation of the DREF operation. A regional disaster response team (RDRT) member might be deployed from Asia Pacific region for one month to provide logistics/procurement technical support.

### **Logistics and supply chain**

Logistics support will be provided to MRCS in collaboration with IFRC CCST in Beijing and regional logistics unit in Kuala Lumpur.

Procurement of food items will be done locally in Ulaanbaatar by MRCS with support from IFRC. An RDRT will be deployed to assist the process, if required. Sourcing and procuring relief items (food) will be carried out in compliance with the IFRC standard procedures to ensure quality and timely delivery. Transportation of relief goods (food) will be provided by NEMA in accordance with an existing MoU between MRCS and NEMA.

### **Information technologies (IT)**

The cost for communication will be low and mainly the use of mobile phones and mobile internet by assessment teams. TERA has been made available to MRCS at no cost and allows two-way communication with almost 600,000 subscribers throughout the through its SMS interface.

NDRT has satellite phones and satellite service is provided by Iridium. Cellular service operators are working normally in target provinces and soums.

### **Communications**

With support from the regional communications unit in Kuala Lumpur, the IFRC CCST communications delegate in Beijing will support the production of news stories to be published on the IFRC website. Partner National Societies will be provided with information on the response through Newswire and information bulletins.

### **Planning, monitoring, evaluation, & reporting (PMER)**

MRCS will establish a special monitoring team comprised of NDRT members who will monitor the implementation of the DREF operation in the field. Team members will receive refresher training from CCST through an intensive workshop. MRCS headquarters will receive weekly updates from target branches and develop and send weekly update for IFRC Mongolia. Weekly update formats will be developed and introduced for target branches.

A special telephone line and email account will be established at MRCS headquarters. The telephone number and email address will be communicated to beneficiaries through the TERA application. Similarly, a beneficiary satisfaction review will be carried out using TERA tools. A lesson learnt workshop of the DREF operation will be carried out after the completion of the activities.

### **Administration and Finance**

IFRC has a finance and administration manager who is based in Mongolia. IFRC teams at Asia Pacific Regional office and CCST in Beijing have the capacity to provide a wide range of support services to the DREF operation, including finance, administration and logistics.

Technical support related to cash transfer programming will be provided to MRCS by IFRC (through RDRT and IFRC technical staff).





## Budget

### DREF OPERATION

13/01/2016

MDRMN005 : Mongolia Extreme Winter Condition

<b>Budget Group</b>	<b>DREF Grant Budget CHF</b>
Food	54,609
Cash Disbursements	67,313
<b>Total RELIEF ITEMS, CONSTRUCTION AND SUPPLIES</b>	<b>121,922</b>
Storage, Warehousing	480
Distribution & Monitoring	4,776
Transport & Vehicle Costs	1,094
<b>Total LOGISTICS, TRANSPORT AND STORAGE</b>	<b>6,350</b>
International Staff	4,650
National Society Staff	480
Volunteers	2,020
<b>Total PERSONNEL</b>	<b>7,150</b>
Workshops & Training	2,000
<b>Total WORKSHOP &amp; TRAINING</b>	<b>2,000</b>
Travel	7,500
Office Costs	1,250
Communications	1,656
Financial Charges	960
<b>Total GENERAL EXPENDITURES</b>	<b>11,366</b>
Programme and Services Support Recovery	9,671
<b>Total INDIRECT COSTS</b>	<b>9,671</b>
<b>TOTAL BUDGET</b>	<b>158,459</b>

## Contact information

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## How we work

All IFRC 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 the Humanitarian Charter and Minimum Standards in Disaster Response (Sphere) in delivering assistance to the most vulnerable.

The IFRC's vision is to inspire, encourage, facilitate and promote at all times all forms of humanitarian activities by National Societies, with a view to preventing and alleviating human suffering, and thereby contributing to the maintenance and promotion of human dignity and peace in the world.

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1. Save lives, protect livelihoods, and strengthen recovery from disaster and crises.
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3. Promote social inclusion and a culture of non-violence and peace.