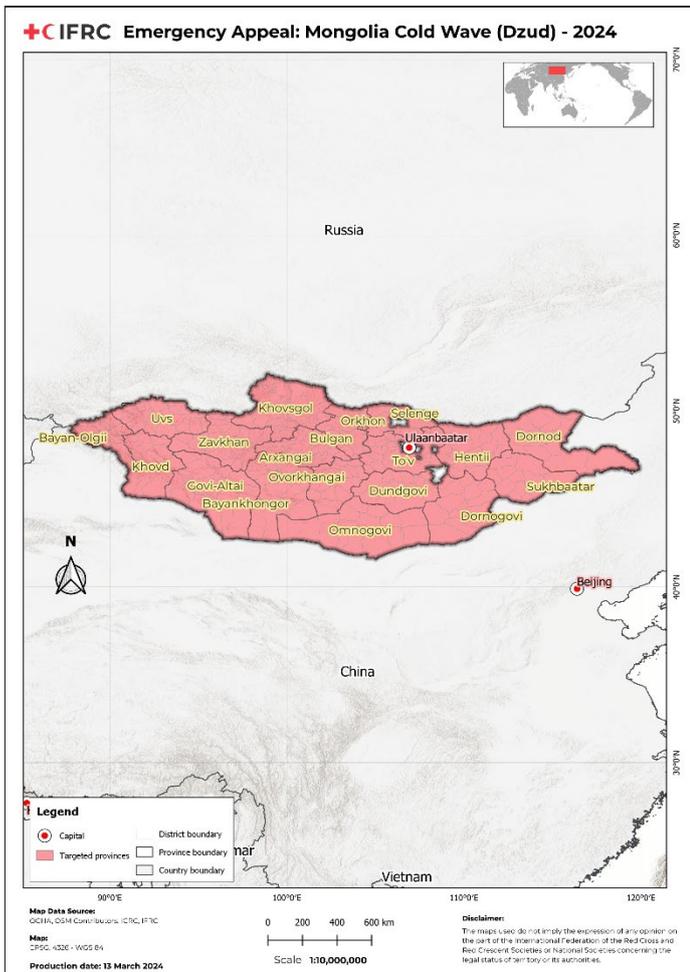




A Red Cross Red Crescent vehicle braves a severe snowstorm, barely visible amidst the swirling winds and snow, highlighting the challenging landscape conditions in Mongolia (Photo: MRCS).

Appeal No: MDRMN020	IFRC Secretariat Funding requirements: CHF 4.5 million Federation-wide Funding requirements: TBD	
Glide No: CW-2023-000262-MNG	People affected: 669,367 people	People to be assisted: 36,000 people
DREF allocation: CHF 1 million	Appeal launched: 15/03/2024	Appeal ends: 31/03/2025



SITUATION OVERVIEW

Mongolia is characterised by unique ecosystems and cultures, primarily consisting of communities that are traditionally nomadic pastoralists, alongside a rapid increase in urbanisation over the past decades. This season’s weather has been recorded as the most severe in 49 years. This winter, Mongolia has been experiencing an unprecedented cold wave crisis, known as Dzud. According to the Dzud Map produced by NAMEM on 26 February 2024, 76 per cent of the country is currently affected by white and ice/Iron Dzud types. Several additional key factors have contributed to the escalation of the Dzud to an exceptional level this winter: numerous blizzards since November 2023, extensive snow coverage across the country, and fluctuating temperatures with periods of intense cold/freezing, followed by warm phases/snow melting, and then refreezing, leaving no grazing options for livestock (sheep, cows, horses, and camels). Consequently, hay and fodder stocks had to be utilised a few months earlier than in usual winters.

The Emergency Operations Centre (EOC), established by the government of Mongolia last December, has reported a rapid increase in livestock mortality from the second half of February 2024, with the latest official figures as of 14 March 2024 indicating over 4,7 million dead animals (compared to 612,000 dead animals on 21 February). This represents 7 per cent of the national livestock (up from 0.94 per cent on 21 February). While the numbers are increasing fast, this situation is already twice as critical as last year’s Dzud, and the government estimates that this year will be far more severe than the worst Dzud recorded in 2010.

On 14 February 2024, the Government of Mongolia passed a resolution declaring a heightened readiness level until 15 May due to the severe Dzud affecting the country nationwide (priority support and involvement in crisis management, at all governmental levels). According to EOC figures, as of the end of February, 185,937 herder households, constituting 75 per cent of all herder households, have been directly or indirectly affected by the Dzud’s impacts. About 100,000 herder families are considered the most vulnerable households. As of 7 March 2024, 1,344 herders have lost their entire livestock, and 18,859 herder families are currently on the Otor movement (a nomadic winter coping mechanism used in past years by herder communities in Mongolia to provide livestock access to pasture).

Since last September, herders have received early warning messages (from Mongolian authorities and the Mongolian Red Cross Society) and weather forecasts through social media, local TV channels, and door-to-door visits. They prepared for harsh conditions, but not to such an extent. While depleting their resources over anticipated winter preparations, necessitating additional purchases of hay and fodder beyond their usual coping capacity, herders with lower incomes are less resilient to shocks on their livestock. Additionally, fuel for internal movement due to pasture scarcity, coal for heating, and other basic necessities have strained their financial capabilities. The looming snowstorm forecast during March raises additional critical concerns about further reduced road access (households far away from town/city centres and roads covered by snow and ice).

The fast-growing high livestock mortality rate has a direct impact on their food source as they utilise their livestock meat, leading to negative coping mechanisms: reduced daily food consumption, compromising on other basic goods for personal hygiene, warm clothes, and others. Within this exceptionally harsh winter, the most vulnerable households (estimated at 100,000 by the government) in rural areas who have lost their animals will have less capacity to cope with the hunger/lean season, which will last until May 2024. This situation underscores the urgent need to provide immediate support to the most vulnerable households affected by the Dzud.

Herders on the Otor movement or dwelling far away from central areas (with very limited fuel and financial capacity) are hindered from accessing health care services, including medicines. Even more importantly, mental health and psychosocial support (MHPSS) needs are the biggest health gap identified by the Mongolian Red Cross Society (MRCS). These needs are related to the aggravated distress of losing their primary source of livelihood, an increased sense of vulnerability due to the heightened fear of further losses, and feelings of guilt over their responsibilities for their children's future. Herder households on the Otor movement have their children residing in dormitories and are likely to experience increased levels of stress.

In the coming weeks, other critical risks have been identified that must be prevented. The higher spring temperatures following the recent heavy and dense snowstorms will pose an exacerbated risk of post-snow melting floods (referred to as 'yellow flooding'), by late March/early April. Early warning actions are currently in place. However, the combination of a few million deceased animal bodies (higher temperatures in springtime) and flash floods from the snow melting will likely spread infectious diseases to a large geographic area, raising significant public health concerns.

The severe weather conditions have exacerbated the humanitarian impacts of the 2023-2024 Dzud crisis, affecting the well-being and livelihoods of herder communities to an unprecedented level, underscoring the urgent need for substantial humanitarian assistance. Beyond rapid response interventions to contain the dramatic loss and humanitarian impacts, herder families will require additional support for proper recovery and to strengthen their resilience over the changing seasons. Likewise, strengthened anticipatory actions (including EAP), climate-smart disaster risk reduction activities, and consolidated Dzud disaster preparedness are needed for longer-term recovery solutions to support Mongolia's rural communities and traditional livelihoods.

TARGETING

Based on EOC data and the Dzud Map, among a total of 185,973 herder families directly or indirectly affected by the Dzud situation, the MRCS is planning to assist 10,000 Dzud-affected herder families (about 36,000 people) among the most affected group of herders (consisting of 89,863 families with less than 400 animals). The MRCS utilises targeted selection criteria to support herder families affected by the Dzud, prioritising those with between 100 and 400 livestock (low incomes and livestock restocking capacity) and who have lost a significant part of their livestock, those who have decided to renounce to their herder activities and reaching to urban areas and those engaging in the Otor movement in the most affected areas. Additional criteria will focus on households most vulnerable to the impacts of the Dzud, including those with significant livestock losses, single-headed households with multiple children, families with disabilities, pregnant or lactating women, elderly households, and families with five or more children. The MRCS will coordinate with relevant stakeholders on the ground to avoid duplication of efforts and maximise the effectiveness of interventions.

PLANNED OPERATIONS

Through this Emergency Appeal, the International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies (IFRC) aims to support the MRCS in the response to the Dzud. The strategy of the IFRC response will focus on the following areas:

Integrated assistance

(Multi-purpose cash and household items (HHIs) with a focus on livelihoods protection and livelihoods recovery)

The strategy prioritises rapid assistance to herder families impacted by recent events, focusing on multi-purpose cash grants, food vouchers and essential household items to protect and restore their way of life. This approach is tailored to meet each family's unique immediate needs, primarily enhancing food security and sustaining livelihoods, including animals' winter shelter materials. In addition to this, market analysis will be conducted to observe the economic effects of post-cash distribution, with a special focus on livestock and related inputs. This will be complemented by an ongoing multi-sector assessment to comprehensively support the process. Moreover, the provision of animal care kits is specifically designed to mitigate the risks of livestock loss and assist in the direct recovery of the livelihoods of herder families.



Based on the HEA¹ Baseline Report, poor and very poor herders combine labour and livestock activities as their livelihoods. The MRCS is planning to implement Cash for Work (CFW) programmes, which include tasks like animal carcass disposal to mitigate the risk of disease and environmental contamination.

The CFW programme is structured to be adaptive and resilient, with contingency plans in place for extreme weather conditions, such as flash floods and snowstorms. This ensures that the work can continue despite adverse weather, safeguarding the community's welfare.

Income diversification training will be also designed and implemented, as well as technical training on how to improve livestock quality and management. As part of the early recovery approach, vocational training sessions will be considered as one of the interventions to support herders who have lost all of their livestock and move to the soum centres to start new livelihoods. For restocking activities, the MRCS will continuously monitor and coordinate with the Government of Mongolia on its plan for restocking livestock. In the event that any gaps are identified, the MRCS may consider addressing them based on the resources available.



Health & Care including Water, Sanitation and Hygiene (WASH)

(Mental Health and Psychosocial Support/Community Health)

The Otor movement, a traditional coping mechanism where herders move to greener pastures to sustain their livestock, is ironically placing additional emotional and mental stress on the families involved, particularly affecting children who are separated from their parents and residing in dormitories. With 18,859 herder households currently engaged in this nomadic shift, the absence of regular communication exacerbates the emotional distress experienced by these children, creating an urgent need for targeted psychosocial interventions.

¹ <https://reliefweb.int/report/mongolia/mongolia-household-economy-assessment-hea-baseline-profiles-sukhbaatar-steppe-and>

This need is further amplified by the cultural tendency among Mongolian herders to internalise their emotions, increasing the risk of long-term psychological trauma. The gap in psychosocial support (PSS), highlighted by the lack of interventions by government agencies and organisations as of 28 January 2024, indicates a critical area for intervention.

The MRCS will implement strategies focused on addressing the mental health needs of herder families affected by the Otor movement, implementing both in-person visits and mobile communications to provide support. This includes refresher training sessions for MRCS volunteers at middle and primary level branches on psychosocial first aid, and MHPSS stations at the branch level for consultations and awareness-raising. With technical support from the IFRC's MHPSS, the interventions aim to disseminate key messages developed in collaboration with the National Authority of Mental Health, ensuring that the interventions are culturally sensitive and effectively tailored to the unique challenges faced by these communities. Furthermore, the strategy includes conducting monitoring visits to ensure the interventions reach their intended targets and assess the ongoing needs of the herder communities.

In anticipation of the potential risks of epidemic diseases caused by flash flooding, the MRCS plans to promote key messages related to WASH in flooding contexts and distribute hygiene kits based on the assessed needs. Trainings will be held for strengthened community-based surveillance.

Protection and Prevention

(Protection, Gender, and Inclusion (PGI), Community Engagement and Accountability)

The MRCS will look into streamlining the strategy to prioritise the review of child safeguarding and establish comprehensive criteria for vulnerable group participation, and community engagement and accountability. Additionally, the MRCS distributed dignity kits in collaboration with UNFPA. These measures aim to ensure that the Dzud response activities are not only efficient but also inclusive, emphasising the need for direct feedback mechanisms and communication channels for the herder communities.



MRCS will keep strengthening CEA capacity by improving its volunteer information system to enable them to collect and input information received from the herders. Initiatives like setting up hotlines, conducting visibility activities, and establishing feedback desks at distribution points underscore the commitment to an integrated, responsive approach to meet the specific needs of those affected by the Otor movement.

Enabling approaches

The sectors outlined above will be supported and enhanced by the following enabling approaches:

Coordination and Partnerships

This Emergency Appeal promotes a Federation-wide approach to the response based on the expertise, capacities, and resources of all members active in the targeted areas. The MRCS and IFRC are closely coordinating to develop an Operational Strategy and action plan to support the humanitarian assistance efforts for immediate and medium-term needs.





IFRC Secretariat Services

The IFRC will support the MRCS in terms of strategic coordination and communications, humanitarian diplomacy, resource mobilisation, financial management, logistics and procurement, as well as facilitate technical expertise in the thematic sectors defined in the Operational Strategy. Regular operations updates against the activities in the Operational Strategy and a regional technical review will be carried out.



National Society Strengthening

This IFRC will support the MRCS in further strengthening its institutional capacity, especially at the branch level, to also increase its readiness and preparedness for disasters, including personnel and the pre-stocking of disaster relief supplies.

The planned response reflects the current situation and is based on the information available at the time of this Emergency Appeal launch. Details of the operation will be updated through the Operational Strategy to be released in the upcoming days. The Operational Strategy will also provide further details on the Federation-wide approach which includes the response activities of all contributing Red Cross and Red Crescent National Societies, and the Federation-wide funding requirement.



RED CROSS RED CRESCENT FOOTPRINT IN COUNTRY

Mongolian Red Cross Society

Core areas of operation	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Protecting people’s lives and livelihoods from natural hazards, ensuring preparedness and strengthening the capacity of disaster response and recovery. Implementing public health promotion activities through community-based approaches and contributing to the development of a non-violent and peaceful society. Developing the leadership for members, supporters, youth, based on the values and new innovative practices of the Red Cross Red Crescent Movement, improving community engagement in decision-making, and ensuring the organisation’s sustainable development. 	
 Staff	171

 Volunteers	20,857
 branches	33

The MRCS was established in 1939 and is the largest humanitarian organisation in Mongolia with 33 mid-level branches across the country and over 800 primary-level branches covering all provinces. The “Law on the Legal Status of the Mongolian Red Cross Society” was updated in 2016. It recognises the auxiliary role of the MRCS in the humanitarian field, to provide support in disaster risk reduction and management, public health promotion, social protection, youth engagement, the dissemination of International Humanitarian Law (IHL), and other services. According to the Law on the Mongolian Red Cross, the National Society is recognised as the sole National Humanitarian Organisation that operates across the whole country. The MRCS set up the Youth Development Centre in 2016, which has

become a hub for regional workshops, conferences, and meetings, focusing on subjects like school safety, climate change, and youth engagement strategy. It is a significant training facility in East Asia and the broader Asia-Pacific region. In 2023, the

MRCS finished the statute revision for the third time, contributing to the continued consolidation and improvement of the National Society's position in Mongolia.

IFRC Membership coordination

The IFRC Country Cluster Delegation (CCD) in Beijing works with the MRCS to support its operational planning and coordinate resources coming from Secretariat-wide partners. No Participating National Societies (PNSs) are physically present in Mongolia. For this relief operation, the IFRC will ensure the MRCS is fully supported with technical resources identified in the Operational Strategy plan, enabling them to drive the implementation plan with the IFRC's relevant and quality technical support. The IFRC will also work with the MRCS to ensure Federation-wide quality reporting for the emergency response, demonstrating the collective support of the IFRC membership in providing humanitarian assistance to the affected herder population.

The MRCS benefits from its continued collaboration with the Australian Red Cross (ARC), Finnish Red Cross (FRC), Red Cross Society of China (RCSC), Japanese Red Cross Society, National Red Cross Society of the Republic of Korea, and ECHO. Opportunities to work in linking anticipatory action with social protection systems and climate-smart disaster preparedness are of special interest to the MRCS and FRC partnership programme. The ARC and MRCS bilateral partnership has enabled the MRCS to build on its strong foundations of institutional strengthening, financial sustainability, and disaster preparedness, and developed a plan to enhance strategies for mitigating the effects of climate change. The RCSC has provided relief supplies following the onset of the Dzud and has continued its support through both government-to-government channels and between the two Red Cross National Societies. The Operational Strategy will demonstrate a coordinated IFRC-wide approach, applying relevant measures on anticipatory action in climate-induced disaster settings.

Red Cross Red Crescent Movement coordination

The ICRC does not have a presence in Mongolia. The IFRC maintains close coordination with the ICRC through the East Asia delegation based in Beijing.

External coordination

The MRCS is a member of the National Emergency Commission and the UN Humanitarian Country Team (HCT), which are involved in the planning and design of the national response to any emerging crisis. It is important to note that the response plan of the MRCS and hence, the IFRC Emergency Appeal, reflects part of the overall needs from the Government of Mongolia and the HCT's early action and response for the country's Dzud. The IFRC, in close coordination with the MRCS, convened a Humanitarian Friends Meeting on 29 February 2024, co-organised by CCD Beijing and MRCS and hosted by the Mongolian Embassy in Beijing, which was attended by embassy officials. Furthermore, a Partners Meeting is on the agenda for 15 March 2024, where several IFRC members will launch resource mobilisation initiatives to support the operation.

After 31 March 2025, the response to this disaster will continue under the [IFRC Network Mongolia Country Plan](#) for 2025. The IFRC Network Country Plans integrate ongoing emergency responses and longer-term programming tailored to the needs of the MRCS, streamlining activities under one plan while still ensuring that the needs of those affected by the disaster are met in an accountable and transparent way. Information will be shared should there be a need for an extension of the crisis-specific response beyond the above-mentioned timeframe.

Contact information

For further information specifically related to this operation, please contact:

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Reference



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- [Link to IFRC Emergency landing page](#)