



United Nations Country Team in Mongolia Situation Report No. 1 Severe winter weather 22 January 2010

1. Highlights/Key priorities

Summary of Main challenges:

- Heavy snow causing major disruption in road transportation and access to remote areas;
- Limited supply of hay and fodder for livestock;
- Limited supply of heating, fuel, clothing and food stuff;
- Approximately 22,200 children in 265 dormitories with poorly functioning or non-functioning heating systems and limited nutritious food supply.
- Schools with limited adult supervision or recreation for grounded children.
- Limited supply of energy sources such as coal, firewood and electricity;
- Disruption and limited access to education and health services, particularly for pregnant women and vulnerable children;
- Need for psychosocial support, particularly to children and women;
- Limited resources for conducting media campaign for increasing public awareness on the emergency situation and relief efforts for outreach interventions;
- Identification of safe temporary relocation places for families especially those with children and women

2. Situation Overview

Background:

Mongolia is currently threatened by a “Dzud”, which is a multiple natural disaster consisting of a summer drought where insufficient fodder is stockpiled, followed by heavy winter snow and lower than normal temperatures. The current Dzud is considered to be more severe than the last Dzud in 2001. The last Dzud claimed lives particularly of herder family members; severely impacted the livelihoods of the herder population in Mongolia (herding represents around 35% of all employment) with a significant percentage of the livestock killed; resulted in food insecurity and food shortages over an extended period, often most acutely experienced in the spring time; led to increased ARI and pneumonia in the population; resulted in increased malnutrition and acute infections particularly in children and pregnant women and resulted in migration of large numbers to the capital city.

To date in Mongolia, 7 of the 21 aimags (Provinces) containing 52 soums (villages) have been declared by the government to be disaster areas. A further 12 Provinces (198 soums) are severely affected. Within these provinces there is a growing concern for the humanitarian impact of the Dzud on isolated herder families and inaccessible communities within the soums.

The Government has appealed to the International community for support, a team has been dispatched by the Government to outer aimags to assess the situation, the UN has been asked to coordinate all donor support and the UN Emergency Team has formed to coordinate and agree UN response.

Severe weather:

Currently, heavy and continuous snowfall and blizzards have resulted in a sharp fall in daily temperatures - dropping to below -40°Celsius across most of Mongolia. The weather forecast for January-March 2010 predicts more snowfall than the annual average precipitation.

3. Humanitarian Needs and Response

Assessment:

The State Emergency Commission has deployed assessment teams to rural areas and the findings of the assessment will be available by 25 January 2010. The Government has heeded a call from the United Nations team for detailed humanitarian information to be included in the assessment.

The International Red Cross has brought in an international assessment team and accessed more than \$145,000 to commence humanitarian support. UNICEF proposes to collaborate with the Red Cross and the National Authority for Children on conducting of the assessment and agreeing lines of action.

Impact on livelihoods and food supply:

The extreme cold and heavy snow have already caused the death of more than one million livestock, worsening food security and will result ultimately in a deepening of poverty and increased internal rural-urban migration for many families.

According to the National Emergency Committee, 1,096,550 livestock have perished nationwide of 43.6 million heads of livestock in the country.

The primary cause of a *dzud* is the accumulation of damaging natural hazards, including severe widespread drought in summer, usually cold temperatures in autumn and winter, and then very heavy snowfall. Secondary causes may be over-concentration of stock and overgrazing of pastures in some areas, the disappearance of abundant grass, and inadequate winter hay preparation. Extremes of climate and difficulties caused by social and economic situation are also contributing to the current disaster.

Compared with the same period during the last *dzud* in 2000-2001, *dzud* 2010 is much more severe in terms of the impact of the disaster on people and livestock, which comprise the backbone of the rural economy. The country's snow coverage is 90%, ranging from 20 cm to 50 cm, reaching 120 cm in the most affected areas. More snow can be expected. Over 70% of the country's territory was affected by drought last summer of 2009, which affected preparation of winter hay. The stocks of hay in the state emergency reserves are inadequate. About 97% of livestock losses are in 12 aimags such as Arkhangai, Bayankhongor, Bayan Olgii, Govialtai, Dundgovi, Zavkhan, Uvurkhangai, Omnogovi, Uvs, Khovd, Tuv and Khovsgol. Currently, 21,060 people from 7,703 herder households are in *otor* (migration in search of better pastureland towards central region) with over 5.2 million livestock. If current conditions persist, then millions of livestock are projected to die between January and May, which will affect livelihoods and food supply chains of the herders.

The Ministry of Food, Agriculture and Light Industry sent an official request letter on 18 January 2010 to the FAO, requesting emergency assistance of MNT 8.2 billion, needed for purchasing and transportation of hay, assistance to herders with health services and food, replenishment of state emergency reserves with animal feed, veterinary medicine for livestock. Assistance is also requested in cleaning the affected areas from carcasses of

dead livestock and sanitation, processing 30 thousand metric tons of lower quality wheat into animal feed.

Humanitarian Impact:

While national attention has focused on economic livelihoods and the saving of livestock, with donor support already recorded for provision of fodder and grass, alarms are being raised regarding the plight of the populations in now inaccessible areas. These populations face a lack of access to food, fuel for stoves and heating, and to medical treatment and facilities.

The severe weather threatens most nomadic herder families isolated and fending for themselves, often leaving small children home alone while lives are risked attempting to save animals.

In addition, of particular concern are the poor households within the most affected soums (villages). 177 637 people (6.4% of the total population) live in the 52 most severely affected soums, out of which 72,416 are children aged 0-18. The families did not have the resources to stockpile food or fuel for heating and the supplies in the village as a whole are limited. On the whole they had already extremely rudimentary access to water, and only limited access to latrines – often located several hundred meters from homes and schools.

The dangerous winter conditions have led the Ministry of Education to delay a vacation ordering children to remain in dormitories rather than face the extreme insecurity of trying to reach their families. In the most affected dormitories, children are living without heat or with limited heat. Education authorities had not planned for the extended school year and also have limited food. The Ministry of Education has appealed to UNICEF for support particularly with the overstretched and broken heating systems and for nutrition / food support for the students. UNICEF and the Ministry of Education predict that there are approximately 22,200 children in 265 dormitories currently in need of assistance, with 600 children identified as in need of urgent response. As the severity of winter conditions spread across the country, as many as 492 dormitories will need assistance with more than 41,078 children in their care.

Over 831 pregnant women are known to be among the migrating herder families in the most affected areas, where the previous practice of sending 60% of them to the Provincial centre for improved medical care during delivery is no longer a possibility. Many soums have limited medical facilities and none in the affected areas have the equipment nor trained personnel to deal with any complications to obstetric or newborn care.

In the last Dzud of 2001, not considered to be as severe as the current 2010 experience, an increase in malnutrition and acute infections of children and pregnant mothers were documented. In addition the isolation of households in 'baghs' (sub-district), 'soums' (district) from 'aimags' (province) centers led to psychological stress and trauma for the families.

The Ministry of Health is assessing the current situation but has signaled that support will be needed in the following areas:

- Essential supplies, drugs and equipment to manage cases of hypothermia
- Nutritional supplements especially for pregnant and lactating mothers and children under five.
- Protective gear including warm clothes, boots and gloves for health care workers
- Logistical support for routine immunization which seems to have stopped due to lack of transport for health care workers

- Support for stress management to those who have lost their animals and property. Mental health seems to be a priority issue for those who have suffered losses .
- Support and supervision for health care workers in terms of transport and per diem for supervisors .

The plight of populations in the post-dzud period which lasts from late February to early spring is also a period of concern with food supplies having been exhausted and the animal supply severely depleted, and the risk of disease heightened. The trauma of losing livelihoods results in families and children at high risk of developing extreme fatigue and psychological stress.

Mongolia was already gripped by a rapidly spreading H1N1 virus, with vaccines only recently received and prioritized to high need groups not yet extended to excluded populations.

Government response to date:

The State Emergency Commission and NEMA release daily updates and have introduced resolutions (# 296 and 367) including the Prime Minister Directive (# 89) to respond to the worsening winter conditions. The measures included assessment, support to soums with supply of hay and fodder for livestock, as well as ambulances and vehicles, diesel power generators and essential medicines. The Government at a donor coordination meeting also called for food, flour, rice, medicines and equipment, candles, heating supplies, warm clothing.

They also appealed to Municipal Councils, governmental, non-governmental organizations and international organizations to organize a coordinated campaign of assistance to counter the impact on livelihoods of rural herders (fodder, hay and fuel for herders) and access to basic essential services both at household and facility level. Some soums have indicated the need for vehicles and heavy machinery to clear the blocked roads including the need for ambulances. Additional funding support to keep the outreach health post in service especially for migrating herder families was also requested. Conduct campaign and organize delivery of relief items to local areas and to dispatch emergency teams to 12 worst-affected 'aimags'.

Support provided by international organizations so far: USD 3 million provided under the French food support programme to procure fodder for herders, USD 280,000 is provided by the Agriculture development fund and the World Vision will cover the cost of fodder distribution to the affected 'aimags'. The International Federation of the Red Cross has received \$145,000 to undertake assessment and commence response with local Red Cross.

4. Coordination

Inter-Agency Collaboration and Key Partnerships:

The United Nations was formally requested to coordinate all donor contributions. First donor coordination meeting will be held on Tuesday 26 January 2010.

UN have also formed an internal inter-agency emergency working group who will coordinate joint sit reps, flash appeals, share programme responses etc.

UN Proposed Response

A geographic mapping will be done to ensure priority is given to soums in the most urgent need and to coordinate geographic targeting of response. Agreement to pool resources to purchase bulk food for purchase and delivery of bulk food for poor in inaccessible soums and herder families. Support to medical equipment and medicines will be coordinated.

FAO

FAO is waiting on official request from Ministry of Food, Agriculture and Light Industry and proposing an initial rapid need assessment mission next week to assess the needs in the agriculture and livestock sector. FAO would explore further a possibility of mobilizing its own resources under the Technical Cooperation Programme (TCP) to support the agriculture cluster coordination and input support. FAO would look into the provision of animal fodder, veterinary services, sanitation of animal carcasses, rebuilding of fences, etc. if it is successful in mobilizing resources.

UNDP:

Proposed to access BCPR funding of USD 100,000 for assessment / recovery phase. Will provide fuel and medicines as needed; and will pool with other UN agencies on purchase of bulk food for poor in inaccessible soums and herder families.

UNICEF:

Received request from Ministry of Education. Currently will reprogramme USD 45,000 to immediately address urgent heating concerns in school dormitories; will further seek approximately USD 200,000 for food, nutritious biscuit (BP5), blankets, clothing, medical and health kits, indoor recreation kits. Will pool with other UN agencies on purchase of bulk food for poor in inaccessible soums and herder families.

UNFPA:

Allocated an initial funding of USD 100,000 for emergency relief purposes and possibly reprogramme existing AWP's in consultation with IPs to release additional funding if needed. UNFPA's support will focus on maternal health services and will go to essential reproductive health drugs, reproductive health kits; transportation costs for outreach medical services to affected households; will pool with other UN agencies on purchase of bulk food for poor in inaccessible soums and herder families.

UNHABITAT:

UN-HABITAT will commission an assessment to evaluate impact of "Dzud" in "in migration" of affected population into Ulaanbaatar city and prepare for rehabilitation and recovery plan. UN-HABITAT will also further explore possibility to mobilize its project resource to meet emergency supply request.

WHO:

Proposal under development based on areas of proposed need so far signaled from Ministry of Health.

5. Funding

Expected:

FAO: Proposes an initial rapid need assessment and explores possibility of mobilizing own resources under TCP

UNHABITAT: information requested

UNDP: USD 17.000 and possible USD 100.000 for assessment and recovery phase
UNICEF: USD 200,000, reprogramming immediately 45.000 for heating
UNFPA: USD 100.000, possible reprogramming of regular resources
WHO: Information requested
OCHA: Funding sought.

Staffing:

No additional staffing is foreseen at the moment.

Security:

In consultation with UNCT and SMT a temporary travel restriction has been discussed with all travel currently under the review of DO.

1. Contacts

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