



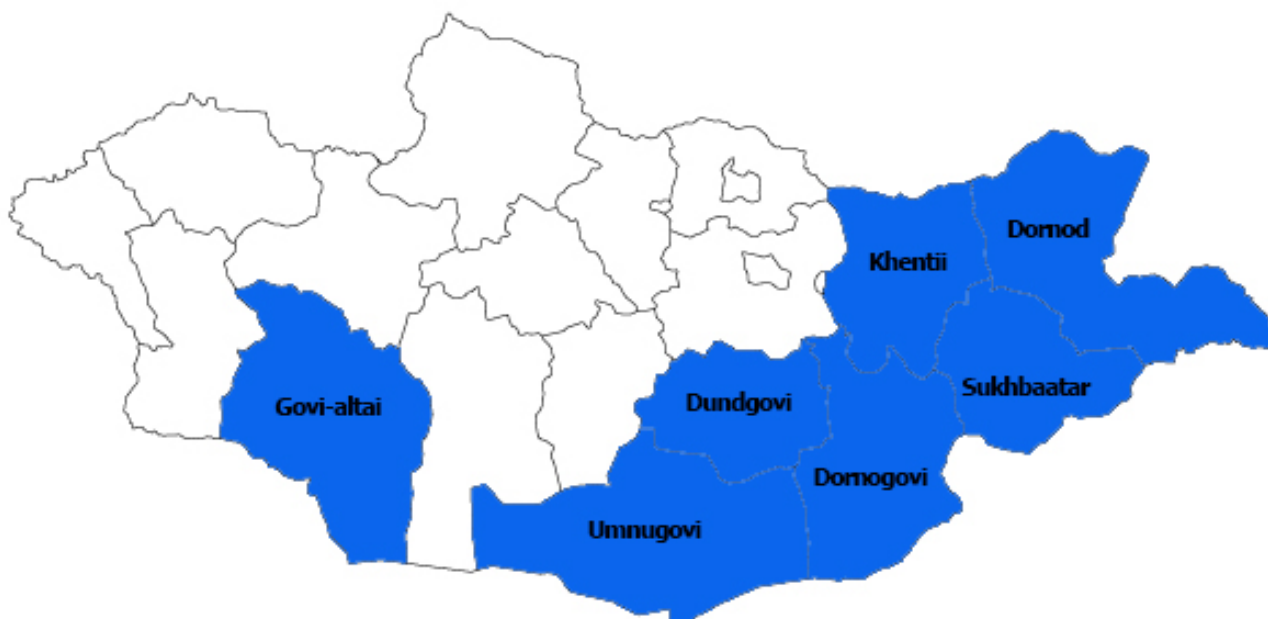
One Ger Distribution Point (Photo: MRCS)

Appeal: MDRMN018	Total DREF Allocation: CHF 337,609	Crisis Category: Yellow	Hazard: Cold Wave
Glide Number: CW-2023-000078-MNG	People Affected: 5,100 people	People Targeted: 3,440 people	
Event Onset: Sudden	Operation Start Date: 29-05-2023	Operational End Date: 30-09-2023	Total Operating Timeframe: 4 months

Targeted Areas: **Dornod, Dornogovi, Dundgovi, Govi-Altai, Khentii, Ömnögov, Sükhbaatar**

The Red Cross Societies and government of Belgium, Britain, Canada, Denmark, Germany, Ireland, Italy, Japan, Luxembourg, New Zealand, Norway, Republic of Korea, Spain, Sweden, Switzerland along with DG ECHO and Blizzard Entertainment, Mondelez International Foundation, Fortive Corporation, other corporate and private donors. On behalf of the Mongolian Red Cross Society, we express our deepest gratitude to all of them for their generous contributions.

Description of the Event



MRCS intervention area (Source: MRCS)

What happened, where and when?

A devastating snowstorm swept across eastern parts of Mongolia, including Dornod, Sukhbaatar, Khentii provinces and certain provinces in the Gobi areas, starting at around 06:00 AM on 19 May 2023 which continued throughout the day and night until around 1:00 PM on 20 May 2023. According to the National Agency for Meteorology and Environmental Monitoring, the average wind speed was 18-20 m/s and reached 28-30 m/s at some points.

According to the Provincial Emergency Commissions and information collected from Mongolian Red Cross Society (MRCS) Branches in Sukhbaatar, Khentii, and Dornod Provinces, the snowstorm caused the following impacts:

Due to the storm, 124 people (mostly from the Herder community) were reported missing as they were following their livestock, which wandered off due to the storm. A total of 122 people were found alive, but tragically, 2 people in Sukhbaatar and Khentii provinces were found dead.

Severe infrastructural damages occurred, including the collapse of 22 electricity sub-stations, resulting in power outages in several counties from 19 to 22 May 2023. Electricity power was later restored on 24 May 2023. Moreover, 149 households faced the complete loss of gers (traditional Mongolian circular domed tents), 288 gers sustained partial damages, 283 constructed houses/buildings were partially damaged, and 317 fences were completely or partially damaged.

Additionally, 70 vehicles belonging to Herders and non-Herders suffered partial damage. The official figure for the total number of people affected by the storm is 5,112. The impact was mostly on shelters, livelihoods and health, with the most affected provinces being Sukhbaatar, Khentii, and Dornod.

As of 25 May 2023, the known loss of livestock caused by the storm was significant, totaling 623,623 including 521,477 in Sukhbaatar, 107,695 in Khentii and 1,451 in Dornod province.

In response to the needs identified, MRCS requested an IFRC-DREF to support people affected by the snow and sandstorm. Through the IFRC-DREF, MRCS allocated multi-purpose cash assistance to 3,440 people from 1,000 households to address their immediate living needs.



In addition, MRCS also provided gers to 347 people from 99 households whose gers were fully destroyed in the disaster. Psychosocial support visits were made by MRCS-trained volunteers to 492 people from 109 households.



IFRC and MRCS Joint Monitoring Team visiting one recipient's house in Dornod Province. (Source: MRCS)



Distribution of Gers in Dornod Province. (Source: MRCS)

Scope and Scale

Based on the assessment conducted by MRCS's Branch Disaster Response Teams (BDRT) in Sukhbaatar, Dornod and Khentii province, households that lost their homes or traditional gers encountered the most significant consequences leading to urgent shelter requirements. Those who lost their gers sought shelter with relatives, local schools or government structures. Herders who suffered losses of livestock experienced considerable emotional distress. Families whose accommodations were impaired were in pressing need of immediate repairs, primarily due to storm damage to their roofs, leaving them susceptible to further adverse weather conditions.

The anticipated strong winds during the week of 22 May 2023 did not result in additional harm. The Mongolian Government distributed the following items to affected people by the storm:

- 50 gers to people who lost their homes (25 gers in Sukhbaatar and 25 gers in Khentii).
- Food packages from the State Reserve (Khentii: 100 pieces, Sukhbaatar: 100 pieces, Dornod: 50 pieces).
- 20tn fuels per local emergency government organization (province level) to reach out to the affected people.
- 150 pieces of protective clothes to Sukhbaatar and Khentii province which accelerated the recovery process.

The well-being of herding communities heavily relies on pastoral practices in Mongolia and are directly affected by various meteorological events such as snows, windstorms, heat waves, and precipitations. These occurrences, often prevalent from March to June due to seasonal atmospheric and temperature shifts impacts herders and non-herders alike. Typically, individuals get informed about impending storms and receive forecasts to enable early warning and preparedness measures, including safeguarding livestock and fortifying gers. The extent of damage from the recent storm underscores its extraordinary intensity.

The snow and dust storm had enduring consequences, including prolonged disruptions in livelihoods for herder communities, economic strain due to livestock and property losses, lasting psychological impact from trauma and stress, ongoing housing instability, health risks stemming from dust exposure and inadequate shelter, environmental damage, potential shifts in community resilience and migration patterns, and challenges to infrastructure and services.

National Society Actions

Have the National Society conducted any intervention additionally to those part of this DREF Operation?	No
Please provide a brief description of those additional activities	-



IFRC Network Actions Related To The Current Event

Secretariat	<p>IFRC Country Cluster Delegation for East Asia (CCD EA) and Asia Pacific Regional Office (APRO) supported MRCS in developing and monitoring this IFRC-DREF application.</p> <p>A team of 2 staff from IFRC CCD EA visited Mongolia for on-site joint monitoring during the week of 18 September 2023. During the visit, the MRCS and IFRC joint team visited six affected households in Dornod province which took approximately 11 hours by car from the Capital city.</p>
Participating National Societies	<p>There is no physical office of Participating National Societies (PNS) in the country and MRCS was not working with any PNS for the storm response.</p>

ICRC Actions Related To The Current Event

ICRC is not present in the country.

Other Actors Actions Related To The Current Event

Government has requested international assistance	<p>No</p>
National authorities	<p>An early warning was issued by the National Agency for Meteorology and Environmental Monitoring (NAMEM) on 17 May 2023. After an early warning was issued, the main road to eastern provinces was prohibited from use effective from 8:00 AM on 19 May 2023 and resumed to normal on 20 May 2023. As of 22 May, 124 people went missing during the storm and 122 people were later found alive but unfortunately, 2 people died. The Mongolian government distributed the following items to affected people by the storm:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - 50 gers to people who lost their homes (25 gers to Sukhbaatar and 25 gers to Khentii). - food packages from the state reserve (Khentii - 100 pieces, Sukhbaatar - 100 pieces, Dornod 50 pieces). - 20tn fuels per local emergency government organization (province level) to reach out to the affected people. - 150 pieces of protective clothes in Sukhbaatar and Khentii province. <p>The General Department of Veterinary Medicine organized an urgent online meeting with the Veterinary Departments of Sukhbaatar, Khentii, and Dornod Province to prevent the risk of livestock contagious disease, cleaning the dead animal carcasses caused by the storm. Around MNT 17.8 million of materials such as disinfectants and denatured alcohol were distributed and delivered and at the same time, fuel for working in provinces and soums, MNT 40 million as fuel support, and daily substantial allowance (DSA) was provided to the veterinary departments in Sukhbaatar, Khentii, and Dornod province as of 25 May 2023.</p> <p>Similarly, the staff of the Ministry of Food, Agriculture and Light industry donated their 1-day salary to the affected households. From the state emergency commission, fuel support, personal protective clothes and equipment were provided to the staff working in the field.</p>
UN or other actors	<p>Preliminary loss and damage information was disseminated by the United Nations Resident Coordinator's office on 22 May 2023. There was no initiation of any response from humanitarian country team members.</p>
Are there major coordination mechanism in place?	



MRCs maintained close bilateral relationships with key stakeholders including NEMA, NAMEM, the Ministry of Food, Agriculture, Light Industries and the Ministry of Labor and Social Protection. Notably, MRCs holds membership in the State Emergency Commission, while its branch managers are integral members of the Provincial Emergency Commission.

Needs (Gaps) Identified



Shelter Housing And Settlements

Needs assessments were conducted by MRCs's BDRT between 20 and 23 May 2023 in Dornod, Sukhbaatar, and Khentii province, revealing 1,037 homes completely or partially destroyed, affecting total 3,734 people. Assessments indicated that the priority need was shelter as many families lost their gers or their gers were partially damaged. Gers are mostly used by herders or financially incompetent households in Mongolia as a means of housing because it is a cheaper choice of accommodation.

According to the assessment, 149 households completely lost their gers (yurt, traditional Mongolia circular, domed tent-like dwellings), including 65 households in Sukhbaatar province, 56 households in Dornod province, and 28 households in Khentii province. A total of 50 households, including 25 from Sukhbaatar and 25 from Khentii, were provided gers by the State Emergency Commission. It was identified in the situation assessment that the households whose gers were completely destroyed by the storm were not able to purchase new gers on their own.

Furthermore, 288 gers (103 in Sukhbaatar, 32 in Dornod, 41 in Khentii, 112 households from Umnugovi, Dundgovi, Govi-Altai, Dornogovi) and 283 constructed houses/buildings (53 in Sukhbaatar, 82 in Dornod, 148 in Khentii) were partially damaged, and 317 fences were completely and partially damaged. As households with houses/buildings mostly live in semi-urban areas, they are financially capable of repairing their damaged accommodations by themselves. However, households with gers are mostly herders or people in the slum areas of the provinces. They stated they have no financial capacity to purchase construction materials to replace the damaged parts of gers and houses.

Spring (May) is a critical period for livestock as it marks the end of the harsh winter. During this time, herders need to ensure survival of newborn animals and their animals receive proper nutrition to recover from the winter months. Purchasing supplemental feed or providing veterinary care is challenges their financial resources. Due to the recovery period from the harsh winter, they do not have adequate cash to do repairs unless they resort to negative coping mechanisms, such as destocking their livestock.



Livelihoods And Basic Needs

The households who lost their gers also lost their essential household items. The affected households stated that they would not be able to financially recover from this loss. A total of 1,492 households from the affected provinces lost more than 60 per cent of their livestock. The livestock are the livelihood source of the herder households, hence their source of income for food. The affected households were in immediate basic needs, such as food, warm clothes, and medicine.

To address these urgent needs, MRCs implemented a comprehensive response utilizing multi-purpose cash assistance. This approach allowed MRCs to provide financial support directly to the affected households, enabling them to prioritize and meet their immediate necessities.

In the previous operation [<https://reliefweb.int/report/mongolia/mongolia-cold-wave-2022-dref-application-mdrmn017>] (MDRMN017), multi-purpose cash assistance and livestock care kits were allocated as an early action to reduce livestock mortality. The allocation was done to enable the herders to protect their livestock from the gradual impacts of Dzud, including cold exposure and malnourishment. For this snow and sandstorm situation, the livestock mortality due to recent climate disaster brought irreversible loss effects for the herders.

Furthermore, beyond being not financially feasible, replenishing and restocking the livestock would address long-term needs for the affected households, rather than immediate basic needs (such as food, warm clothes and medicine) created by the emergency situation and varying for each family affected.





While the health impacts of the storm include casualties and widespread distress among the affected population over livestock and ger losses, along with property damage, no reports from MRCS, NGOs, government organizations, or INGOs highlighted major health needs directly resulting from the storm. However, the psychosocial impacts were evident in the field assessments conducted by the BDRT.

The BDRT in Dornod Province visited 3 households in Bulgan soum, 2 households in Bayan-Uul soum and 1 household in Khulunbuir soum. Simultaneously, the BDRT in Sukhbaatar Province visited 3 households in Sukhbaatar soum, 3 households in Munkhkhaan soum and 1 household in Asgat soum. The BDRT in Khentii Province visited 1 household in Bayankhutag soum and 3 households in Umnudelger soum.

Due to limited time and access to Herders (storm context and very long distances to cover by car), it was challenging to reach more households. The BDRT's Report Analysis indicates that all visited households expressed distress over their significant livestock loss and damage to houses/gers. This emphasized the urgency for a comprehensive psychosocial response, such as PFA Training and support provided by MRCS, to address mental health and well-being of the affected population in the aftermath of the storm. Some herders lost all of their livestock and in some cases, the affected population refused to answer and showed signs of aggression out of shock.

Operational Strategy

Overall objective of the operation

The IFRC-DREF operation aimed to assist 1,000 households affected by the snow and dust storm through the allocation of shelter multi-purpose cash assistance and psychosocial support in Dornod, Sukhbaatar, Khentii, Dornogovi, Govi-Altai, Umnugovi, and Dundgovi provinces. Through this support, MRCS assisted the affected population in meeting their bare necessities preventing the situation from evolving into more dangerous conditions.

Operation strategy rationale

The followings were the main strategies for the DREF Response:

- To address the immediate housing/shelter needs of herder households who had lost their homes (knowing as gers), MRCS procured gers and provided them to these households.
- Multi-purpose cash assistance (MPCA) was allocated to meet pressing needs, including house and ger repairs.
- Psychosocial support was provided, practically to those who had suffered the loss of their gers and livestock, experiencing significant trauma.

In the context of longer-term Disaster Risk Reduction intervention, MRCS included advice on climate-resilient herding practices, snow and dust storms, and measures to prevent the impact of cold waves in the certificates for the people reached. Despite early warnings, a severe storm caused considerable damage, prompting concerns about the adequacy of current herding practices and shelter standards.

To ensure community engagement and accountability, MRCS utilized its dedicated hotline for handling complaints, suggestions, and information sharing. Individuals who benefited from the interventions received certificates which included hotline information, details on forthcoming multi-purpose cash assistance, and contact information for the relevant Red Cross branch.

For the multi-purpose cash assistance, MRCS disbursed MNT 370,000 (CHF 108) per household, a value determined in collaboration with a consultant in 2019. The amount was calculated as the Survival Minimum Expenditure Basket per month (SMEB) (MNT 1,085,605 or CHF 317) minus the average income of herder households (MNT 713,772 or CHF 208), is shared among members of the Humanitarian Country Team. Various international organizations, such as FAO and World Vision, base their cash values on specific needs, ranging from USD 90 to USD 200.

The Cash Working Group in Mongolia operates as a sub-group under the Humanitarian Country Team (HCT), established in February 2023. While MRCS is currently in the process of establishing a framework agreement for financial service providers, it opted to expedite the task by leveraging existing documents and knowledge gained from the previous process under DREF MDRMN017.

In choosing to directly procure gers instead of providing a cash transfer, MRCS considered the higher costs in the eastern provinces. Following a rapid market assessment, MRCS decided to source gers from Ulaanbaatar, where they were more economically viable due to scarcity and unreasonably high prices in the affected provinces. Opting for a cash transfer would have exceeded the current cost per ger.



Due to unforeseen pluvial floods in Mongolia, MRCS submitted a request for a no-cost extension of the intervention, seeking to extend the operation's end date from the initial period of 30 August 2023 to 30 September 2023 to properly complete the project, including proper documentations and learning process (refer to MDRMN018OU for more information).

Targeting Strategy

Who was targeted by this operation?

Through the IFRC-DREF, MRCS allocated cash assistance to 3,440 people from 1,000 households to address their immediate living needs. The total includes the 99 households that received gers, with 347 people benefiting from the provision. Additionally, 492 individuals received psychosocial support through visits conducted by MRCS-trained volunteers to 383 people from 109 households. Furthermore, 2,000 people were reached indirectly through CEA activities, making a combined direct and indirect impact on 3,528 individuals.

The provision of gers targeted 337 people (actually reached 347 people) from 99 herder households out of 556 people from 149 households who lost their gers to complement the government's efforts where gers were provided to 25 households in Sukhbaatar and 25 in Khentii.

Unconditional unrestricted cash grants (MPCA) were distributed to 3,440 people from 1,000 households who lost their gers, whose gers/houses were partially damaged, or who lost more than 60 per cent of their livestock. MRCS used the criteria of the herd size which is not to exceed more than 1,000 in sheep head unit (officially recorded number of livestock owned by the herder in December 2022 by the Government). The rationale for these criteria is if the household has more than 1,000 livestock in a sheep head unit, the herder will be able to recover to its original size on its own by the next year.

Psychosocial support was provided to 450 people which is around 13 per cent of the total targeted people from the affected households, especially the households who lost their gers and livestock and were experiencing great trauma.

Explain the selection criteria for the targeted population

The target population was selected based on the impact assessment conducted by the MRCS branches. MRCS checked with the relevant branches if the targeted households overlap with the people reached by the ongoing IFRC-DREF operation (MDRMN017). The households who have received multi-purpose cash assistance from the previous MDRMN017 DREF operation were ineligible for multi-purpose cash assistance from this operation.

Total Targeted Population

Women	1,022	Rural	70%
Girls (under 18)	787	Urban	30%
Men	988	People with disabilities (estimated)	4%
Boys (under 18)	643		
Total targeted population	3,440		

Risk and Security Considerations

Please indicate any security and safety concerns for this operation

The National Society's security framework was applied throughout the duration of the operation to their staff and volunteers. There were no cases required to request any personnel under IFRC security's responsibility, including surge support and integrated PNS, the existing IFRC country security framework would have been applied if the deployment has happened. All IFRC must, and Red Cross and Red Crescent staff and volunteers were encouraged, to complete the IFRC Stay Safe 2.0 e-learning courses.



Implementation



Shelter Housing And Settlements

Budget: CHF 164,238

Targeted Persons: 337

Assisted Persons: 347

Indicators

Title	Target	Actual
# of people reached with shelter assistance	337	347

Narrative description of achievements

- MRCS received the technical approval from IFRC for ger procurement on 7 July 2023. Within the procurement process, the tender bid was announced publicly and received three price offers.
- The Unu Mongol Ger LLC was selected by the selection committee because of fitting compatibility (sufficient stock and complete documentation).
- Accordingly, the procurement of 99 gers was made on 10 July 2023 and allocated to the affected households between 10 to 18 July 2023, including 40 households in Sukhbaatar, 31 households in Dornod, and 28 households in Khentii province.

Lessons Learnt

- Procurement policy or guideline is essential for promoting transparency, consistency, compliance, and cost control within the organizational procurement process. It helps manage risks, build strong supplier relationships, ensure quality, and enhance efficiency while maintaining budget adherence and a positive reputation. MRCS initiated the policy development process which aligns with the IFRC procurement policy and country legislation.
- Initiating procurement planning as early as possible is crucial. Starting the procurement planning process well in advance, taking into account the lead time required for procurement and delivery is vital. MRCS initiated the procurement policy and it is under the drafting process.
- A pre-agreement framework with suppliers is essential during emergencies because it streamlines processes, ensures priority access, protects against price fluctuations, maintains quality standards, and helps mitigate risks. It will allow MRCS to respond quickly and effectively while maintaining control over costs, quality and supplier relationships during critical situations.
- Having dedicated procurement personnel or a procurement team within the organization is essential for ensuring cost-effective, efficient and compliant procurement processes. They can bring expertise, strategic thinking and risk management skills that will contribute to an organization's success and competitiveness.

Challenges

- The procurement process of gers was initially planned to take four weeks. However, due to the market condition, the process took over a month. The main reasons were the lack of a dedicated procurement officer, the lack of a pre-agreement framework with suppliers, market condition of the country being unable to satisfy the IFRC requirements such as inspection certificates. The complex factors challenged the timeframe of the project which caused delays. Despite these challenges, the target community was informed of the anticipated shelter/ger delivery timeline during the procurement process by the hotline, local branch staff, and volunteers, mitigating any issues or complaints.
- The main risk associated with the market was some insufficient suppliers could meet the requirements. Most suppliers were small entities that sell particular parts of the ger materials. Collection of the parts for full shelter/ger was challenging and should be addressed in future operations.



- Lack of availability of gers required for the operation was a challenge for the timing. Storing gers in a warehouse for a long time is impractical due to their design and materials. Gers are often made of fabric or felt covering a wooden frame, and they are designed for easy assembly, disassembly, and portability. Long-term storage in a warehouse might lead to issues like mold, deterioration of materials, or difficulty in maintaining the structure. The intended use of gers is more suited to being set up rather than being stored in a fixed space for an extended period. Since the gers are difficult to store, it requires manufacturing the gers after the contract has been signed. It can be a challenge for the timeframe of the operation in the future unless there is better planning.



Multi Purpose Cash

Budget: CHF 124,544

Targeted Persons: 3,400

Assisted Persons: 3,440

Indicators

Title	Target	Actual
# of people reached through cash intervention	3,400	3,440

Narrative description of achievements

- MRCS collected the data of 1,000 affected households or 3,440 persons (1,631 male and 1,809 female) including 787 girls, 643 boys under the age of 18, 95 female and 72 male elderly above the age of 60 via local government, and local Red Cross branches via the on-site needs and damage assessment and remote data collection. The people reached data was used to check the eligibility criteria and clean the bank data.

- To ensure financial transparency and quality, a long-term financial service framework agreement should be established with the service or goods vendor. For this DREF response, MRCS didn't have a framework agreement with its financial service provider (FSP), therefore an exceptional approval was sought for multi-purpose cash assistance provision via the FSP-Khan Bank. The exceptional approval was technically supported by IFRC CCD EA and APRO and was granted on 26 June 2023 by IFRC Geneva.

- The people reached data was sent to the FSP for verification via email on 29 June 2023 and was returned on 17, 21, 24, 25, and 26 July and the list was finalized on 27 July 2023.

- The one-off multi-purpose cash assistance was disbursed to 727 households on 27 July 2023, and the remaining 273 households received their multi-purpose cash assistance on 8 August 2023.

- Overall, 3 monitoring visits were conducted in Dornod and Sukhbaatar province. As of the reporting period, 2 on-site/activity monitoring visits were conducted in Dornod and Sukhbaatar province by the National Disaster Response Team (NDRT) in July 2023, with surveys conducted for 26 households. The on-site monitoring was conducted to ensure that there is immediate feedback in terms of the distribution process, as well as beneficiary satisfaction with the whole process.

- A joint monitoring visit with IFRC Team was conducted in Dornod province, with surveys conducted for 6 households between 21 and 23 September. During the monitoring visits, MRCS and IFRC aimed to assess whether the aid provided met the needs of the affected community and to gain a clear understanding of the on-site situation. The monitoring activities were organized through field visits to 2 affected soums (Khulunbuir, Bayantumen) and the Capital Choibalsan of Dornod Province.

While more detailed findings can be found in the Lessons Learnt and Challenges paragraphs below, the Monitoring Team came to the following conclusions:

- The communities seem well aware of the assistance and its targeting criteria.
- PDM helped to verify the assistance reached the right people. Assisted people were satisfied with the type of assistance and its timing.
- The communities seem aware of MRCS and related selection process, including criteria, indicating that the overall process seems transparent and without concerning feedback from the population.
- The use of the multi-purpose cash assistance was mainly for repairing shelters and securing livelihoods. It indicates that the expected outcome of the operation satisfied its purpose.



- Within the context of favorable legal environment and previous experiences, there was a close coordination and collaboration between Red Cross branches and local authorities. It allowed to avoid any duplicated efforts on that matter.

Lessons Learnt

- Enhancing the Red Cross Primary Level Branches' capacity for effective management of beneficiary information and fostering positive relationships to avoid delays.
- MRCS effectively utilized people-reached data collected via local government, local Red Cross branches, on-site monitoring, and remote data collection to verify eligibility and ensure that multi-purpose cash assistance was provided to the most affected households. This demonstrates the importance of efficient data management and analysis in humanitarian response.
- The experience highlighted the importance of establishing long-term financial service provider framework agreements to ensure financial transparency and quality. FA agreements can streamline procurement processes, enhance cost-effectiveness, and ensure a reliable source of supply, reducing the need for exceptional approvals.
- MRCS sought exceptional approval for multi-purpose cash assistance provision through IFRC CCD in Beijing and APRO, which was technically supported by the IFRC Geneva. This collaboration demonstrates the value of international support and technical expertise in addressing challenges and securing necessary approvals.
- The plan to establish the FA for the FSP FA (Financial Service Provider Framework Agreement) has been initiated.
- Coordination and communication with the financial service provider (Khan Bank) in the disbursement process were effective and had no delays or challenges in the provision of multi-purpose cash assistance, except for some mismatch of the people-reached data.
- Safeguarding people reached data during the verification process is crucial. MRCS has its data protection policy which is applied during the operation, however, it needs improvement to fully apply at local levels.
- It was essential to consider and pre-assess the availability of the local administration and local community to prevent overlapping with other community-based activities.
- The monitoring visit needs a good schedule to meet all necessary stakeholders and the community or volunteers who are involved in the response.
- For monitoring purposes, some households are randomly selected. Therefore, it is essential to inform the households before the visit to prevent their absences.

Most target people who engaged in the PDM were in the central area for a temporary settlement due to the loss of homes. Therefore, the distribution and transportation concerns have not been raised.

Challenges

- The disbursement of multi-purpose cash assistance to 727 households on 27 July 2023 and the remaining 273 households on 8 August 2023 suggests a potential challenge in ensuring timely assistance to all beneficiaries. Delays in disbursement affect the timeliness of relief efforts. This is mainly caused by the verification process where a mismatch of the beneficiary data occurs due to registration errors between banks and the General Authority for State Registration of Mongolia and underperforming methodology of bulk cash transfer.
- The initial joint monitoring/assessment with the IFRC was planned in August 2023. However, unprecedented flooding in urban areas led to the launch of another IFRC-DREF operation (MDRMN019), resulting in shifted capacity of MRCS causing delays in monitoring visits. To address this issue, the MRCS requested a 1-month No-Cost Extension to be able to complete the operation effectively.
- Due to the events of 100th anniversary of the local school in Dornod, most of the relevant local authorities and Red Cross volunteers were unavailable. Therefore, the Monitoring Team was unable to meet some of the key informants.
- To expedite multi-purpose cash assistance (MPCA) delivery, delays occurred due to incomplete receiver information and challenges, including distant residences without phone network access. Privacy restrictions in banks extended correction times, prompting negotiations by some Red Cross Branches while others sought alternative solutions.



Budget: CHF 1,826
Targeted Persons: 450
Assisted Persons: 552

Indicators

Title	Target	Actual
# of people reached through PSS activities	450	492

Narrative description of achievements

• PFA training was conducted at the MRCS Youth Camp from 19 to 23 June 2023 and 60 volunteers were trained. The volunteers developed MHPSS response plans along with the local community and health offices of the relevant provinces. Furthermore, the trained volunteer provided PFA for 109 households (or 492 people) via in-person and phone calls. Overall, a total of 552 people were assisted: 492 people with MHPFA and 60 volunteers were trained on PFA.

Lessons Learnt

- Conducting PFA training empowered volunteers to collaborate with local communities and health offices in developing Mental Health and Psychosocial Support (MHPSS) response plans.
- The successful training of 60 volunteers demonstrates MRCS's commitment to building the capacity of its workforce. These trained volunteers played a crucial role in responding to psychosocial needs in this response and will play the same role in the future.
- The volunteers's ability to provide PFA to 109 households via in-person visits and phone calls depending on the accessibilities and the resources in a timely manner underscores the effectiveness of the training program.
- Engaging the local community in response planning and PFA service delivery contributed to community resilience. It builds the community's ability to support its members' mental and psychosocial needs during challenging times for the future as well.
- Timely psychosocial support significantly contributed to the well-being of affected individuals.

Challenges

- Maintaining the skills and capacity of trained volunteers over the long term can be challenging. MRCS should have plans in place for continuous training and support.
- Effectively measuring the impact and quality of PFA services is challenging. Developing robust monitoring and evaluation mechanisms is essential to ensure the effectiveness of psychosocial support.
- To expedite multi-purpose cash assistance (MPC).
- Scaling up psychosocial support services to reach a larger number of affected people may pose logistical and resource challenges, especially when in-person visits are required. Planning for scalability is essential.
- While community engagement is a valuable approach, building active participation within the community can take time and effort.
- Reaching individuals in remote to hard-to-access areas for in-person PFA visits was challenging due to logistical and infrastructure limitations. However, the one way to reach those communities is via phone call, and the quality of the service might differ from the in-person visits.
- Managing a larger number of trained volunteers can be a coordination challenge. Therefore, effective volunteer management and supervision in emergencies are essential.



Budget: CHF 0

Targeted Persons: 3,400

Assisted Persons: 3,440

Indicators

Title	Target	Actual
# of people reached through PGI activities	3,400	3,440

Narrative description of achievements

- MRCS conducted a child safeguarding risk analysis and submitted the document to the IFRC focal point. With the analysis, the operation strengthened MRCS's child safeguarding practices and reduced the risk of harm to children as outlined in the IFRC Child Safeguarding Policy. As an outcome of the analysis, MRCS was able to evaluate the potential risk level of the children. When recruiting new volunteers, MRCS screened the volunteers and ensured they signed the Code of Conduct.
- PGI issues were overall integrated by collecting 1,000 households or 3,440 persons disaggregated data of targeted people. MRCS selection criteria includes strong gender and inclusion parameters to ensure proper and priority target of the most vulnerable groups.

Lessons Learnt

- The child safeguarding risk analysis led to an improvement in MRCS's child safeguarding practices. MRCS gained a better understanding of potential risks to children within their programs and operations.
- Conducting the analysis helped MRCS align its child safeguarding practices with the IFRC Child Safeguarding Policy, demonstrating a commitment to international standards and guidelines.
- MRCS developed the capacity to evaluate the potential risk level faced by children involved in their programs. This understanding is valuable for tailoring protective measures.
- The analysis prompted MRCS to establish a screening process for new volunteers. This step is essential in ensuring that volunteers meet certain standards and are committed to adhering to a code of conduct, thereby reducing the risk of harm to children.

Challenges

- Conducting a comprehensive child safeguarding risk analysis requires resources, including time and personnel. Allocating these resources can be challenging for organizations with limited capacity.
- Ensuring that staff and volunteers are adequately trained in child safeguarding practices and procedures is a significant challenge. This requires an ongoing commitment to training and capacity-building efforts.
- Maintaining consistency in implementing child safeguarding practices across all activities and locations can be a challenge. Ensuring that all staff and volunteers follow the established procedures is essential.
- Regularly monitoring and ensuring compliance with child safeguarding practices are demanding. MRCS should have mechanisms in place to oversee and enforce these practices effectively.
- Managing a pool of volunteers, particularly regarding recruitment and screening, is resource-intensive. Ensuring that all volunteers meet the required standards is an ongoing challenge, however, MRCS has recently adopted its volunteer policy, and applying the policy across the organization is an ongoing process.
- While MRCS implemented a code of conduct for volunteers, ensuring full adherence can be challenging. MRCS needs mechanisms for reporting and addressing any violations.



- MRCS is implementing CEA and PGI projects to address community concerns or issues and exploring ways to establish localized mechanisms. Some of the key CEA activities are capacity-building training for volunteers, staff, and stakeholders about conducting vulnerability and capacity assessment, routine perception public surveys, expanding MRCS community feedback mechanisms, digitalizing processes and linking together feedback channels, and identifying nationwide communication channels to reach marginalized groups. For PGI project is at the early stage of mainstreaming the policy into all MRCS programs and activities.



Risk Reduction, Climate Adaptation And Recovery

Budget: CHF 4,564

Targeted Persons: 25

Assisted Persons: 25

Indicators

Title	Target	Actual
# of lessons learned workshop organized	1	1

Narrative description of achievements

- Lessons learnt workshop was organized from 28 to 30 September among 25 participants including representatives of staff, volunteers, and branch secretariats from the affected provinces at the Youth Training Center.
- Lessons learnt workshop report and the general recommendations list have been produced after the workshop and shared internally.

Lessons Learnt

MRCS highlights the following key lessons learnt from this response:

- **Early warning system:** Strengthening and enhancing early warning systems was critical. Despite early warnings, the snow and dust storm still caused significant damage. This highlights the need for continuous improvement in forecasting and communication to ensure that affected communities have ample time to prepare.
- **Climate resilient practices:** The response underscores the importance of promoting climate-resilient practices in vulnerable communities. This includes educating herder households about practices that can help them mitigate the impact of extreme weather events, such as snow and dust storms.
- **Adaptive shelter solutions:** The procurement and distribution of gers were found to be effective in addressing immediate shelter needs. This highlights the importance of using housing solutions that are adapted to local conditions.
- **Psychosocial support:** The provision of psychosocial support was vital, particularly for individuals and families who experienced trauma. Including psychosocial support in disaster response plans helped communities cope with the emotional impact of disasters.
- **Multi-purpose cash assistance:** The allocation of multi-purpose cash assistance to address immediate needs, such as houses, ger repairs, food, and securing the livelihood, proved effective. This demonstrates the importance of providing affected households with the flexibility to determine their own priorities and allocate resources where they are most needed.
- **Community engagement:** Utilizing hotlines for complaints, suggestions, and information sharing enhanced community engagement and accountability. This mechanism allows affected individuals to voice their concerns and contributes to transparency in humanitarian operations.
- **Cross-organizational collaboration:** Collaboration among different organizations, both local and international, led to a more comprehensive and effective response. Coordination efforts among organizations prevented duplication of resources and ensured a holistic approach to disaster relief.
- **Documented processes:** Utilizing existing documents and knowledge gained from previous IFRC-DREF operations expedited response efforts. Having a history of similar responses was essential for the timing.



Challenges

- Communication and early warnings: Establishing effective communication and early warning systems in rural and nomadic areas was difficult. Reaching herder households and conveying timely warnings were the logistical challenges.
- Most of the affected regions lack the infrastructure required for a rapid and efficient response. This included transportation and adequate shelter, sometimes difficulty in accessing health services in remote areas when there is heavy snow.
- For herder communities, the loss of livestock and damage to grazing land have long-term economic repercussions. Rebuilding herds and restoring livelihoods was a complex and lengthy process.
- Preparing communities for future extreme weather events and enhancing their resilience to such disasters requires ongoing efforts with adequate funding and human resources.



Community Engagement And Accountability

Budget: CHF 4,869

Targeted Persons: 3,400

Assisted Persons: 3,845

Indicators

Title	Target	Actual
# of people reached through CEA activities	3,400	3,845

Narrative description of achievements

- A total of 1,000 households/3,440 people who received the multi-purpose cash assistance and 99 households who received gers were provided with the certificates which clearly indicate the source of the aid (MRCS), what aid they were receiving, and how to communicate with MRCS if there was any issue. The community was constantly updated in the process of the delivery of the cash transfer and the shelter via midlevel branch volunteers and a hotline number.
- Throughout the operational phase, MRCS maintained communication with the target community via a dedicated hotline number. Predominantly, the calls received conveyed information about successful assistance delivery, with individuals expressing gratitude for the support received.
- A hotline number received 78 calls (56 female, 22 male) during the operation. The calls were about query on when multi-purpose cash assistance would be provided and expressing gratitude.
- During the refresher training, the Community Engagement and Accountability (CEA) orientation session was integrated with a focus on the CEA Toolkit from IFRC. The training covered community engagement, communication with communities, participation, and community feedback, 60 volunteers were trained at the Youth camp, and 82 volunteers were trained via peer-to-peer training at local RC branches.
- Overall, four posters were developed regarding the operation, and 13 feedback boxes were placed at the distribution sites in 13 provinces and received 121 feedback. The feedback received via the feedback boxes were mostly about the Red Cross member benefits, expression of gratitude, and training for the herder community. Furthermore, information desks were organized at 13 locations and assisted 245 people. MRCS volunteers provided a short summary of the operation at two community meetings.

Lessons Learnt

- The use of certificates with clear information and hotline numbers facilitated effective communication with people reached. It allowed them to seek information, express gratitude, and provide feedback.
- The integration of CEA orientation into refresher training for volunteers, along with the use of the CEA Toolkit from IFRC, demonstrates a commitment to engaging communities, promoting participation, and collecting valuable feedback.



- Conducting peer-to-peer training at local Red Cross branches for 82 volunteers was an effective way to build capacity and disseminate knowledge within the MRCS.
- Placing 13 feedback boxes at distribution sites and organizing information desks in 13 locations made it easy for the collection of feedback from people reached. That was valuable for understanding people reached needs and concerns.
- Presenting a short summary of the operation at the community meetings helped keep people informed and engaged, fostering transparency and trust.

Challenges

- Effectively managing hotline calls, information desks, communication with people reached, and sustaining long-term community engagement demands significant organizational capacity, ongoing commitment, and dedicated resources. Responding to specific questions related to Red Cross member benefits and herder community training adds to the resource-incentive nature of these tasks. MRCS currently implements one CEA project which is particularly focused on health and pandemic impacts.
- When collecting feedback and communicating with people reached, data privacy and protection are the priority. This requires a robust data handling process which MRCS needs to improve in the future.



Secretariat Services

Budget: CHF 5,325

Targeted Persons: 83

Assisted Persons: 83

Indicators

Title	Target	Actual
# of monitoring visits conducted	1	1

Narrative description of achievements

- Between 21-23 September 2023, the Preparedness and Resilience Coordinator (Yvan Grayel) and the Senior Disaster Risk Management Officer (Zheng Xiao) from IFRC CCD Beijing joined the monitoring visit of MRCS to Dornod Province where the DREF MDRMN018 operation was implemented. During the joint monitoring visits, IFRC and MRCS visited 2 affected soums including Khulunbuir, Bayantumen and the Capital Choibalsan of Dornod province. The Joint MRCS/IFRC Team met with provincial and local MRCS branches and 6 households.

Key findings and recommendations were discussed to MRCS and therefore jointly improved during the Monitoring Visit, including a debriefing meeting with MRCS Secretary General. They are also reflected in this Final report on Lessons Learnt and Challenges part of each Activity Section.

- IFRC GVA, APRO, and CCD Beijing provided technical support to MRCS in developing exceptional approval for financial service providers for cash distribution. IFRC APRO and CCD Beijing also assisted MRCS in ensuring the ger procurement and followed IFRC procurement standards.

Lessons Learnt

- The distribution of early warning information could be stepped up with support of modern technologies to reach a greater number of populations, especially herders hard to reach.
- Public awareness towards risks should be enhanced, potentially through daily community-based disaster risk reduction activities of the branches.



Challenges

- It takes longer hours (11 hours) by car to reach Dornod Province. In addition to be a regular implementation constraint for MRCS during the project, it also reduced the scale of field monitoring investigations.
- It can be difficult to meet the herders as they are often out herding during the daytime.



National Society Strengthening

Budget: CHF 32,243

Targeted Persons: 210

Assisted Persons: 210

Indicators

Title	Target	Actual
# of volunteers provided with appropriate training	60	60
# of volunteers who received appropriate incentives	150	150

Narrative description of achievements

- A refresher training was organized for 60 volunteers on 19 to 21 June 2023 at the MRCS Youth Camp. During the training, MRCS covered sessions on overall operational plan among the volunteers, their roles and responsibilities, and emphasized the importance of volunteers' well-being to ensure the mental and emotional resilience during the operation. The volunteers learned about the importance of mental health and self-health recommendations, disaster context and the aid MRCS and IFRC were providing, enabling them to engage more effectively in the operation and disseminate relevant information to the public.
- In addition, volunteer incentives were allocated for 150 volunteers engaged in the operation. These incentives covered the meal and transportation costs of the volunteers. The volunteers were tasked providing MHPSS, working at distribution sites and information desks, as well as conducting data verification for the affected population. MRCS volunteers were insured by the IFRC insurance.

Lessons Learnt

- The refresher training provided clarity on the operational plan for 60 volunteers. Explaining their roles and responsibilities in the context of the plan enhanced their understanding and preparedness for the operation.
- Allocating incentives for 150 volunteers, covering meal and transportation costs, was a valuable practice. It recognizes and rewards volunteer efforts, promoting continued engagement in the operation.

Challenges

- Managing the logistics and coordination for volunteers requires careful planning and organization. Addressing logistical challenges such as transportation and communication in remote areas, excessive timing for collective process, digital attendance tracking system for effective monitoring is crucial to avoid volunteers being overworked, undervalued, and stressed. To address these challenges, MRCS has initiated an information management system (IMS) development to register volunteer's work time. Additionally, to ensure fair treatment and equal distribution of incentives, the MRCS is planning to initiate the volunteer incentive system in the near future.
- Maintaining volunteer engagement and providing incentives over the long term can be challenging. MRCS should have strategies in place to sustain volunteer participation beyond the immediate response.



Financial Report

DREF Operation

FINAL FINANCIAL REPORT

MDRMN018 - Mongolia - Cold Wave 2023

Operating Timeframe: 29 May 2023 to 30 Sep 2023

Selected Parameters			
Reporting Timeframe	2023/5-11	Operation	MDRMN018
Budget Timeframe	2023/5-9	Budget	APPROVED

Prepared on 30/Dec/2023

All figures are in Swiss Francs (CHF)

I. Summary

Opening Balance	0
Funds & Other Income	337,609
DREF Response Pillar	337,609
Expenditure	-320,837
Closing Balance	16,772

II. Expenditure by area of focus / strategies for implementation

Description	Budget	Expenditure	Variance
AOF1 - Disaster risk reduction		20,263	-20,263
AOF2 - Shelter	164,238	7,712	156,526
AOF3 - Livelihoods and basic needs	124,544	271,830	-147,285
AOF4 - Health	1,826		1,826
AOF5 - Water, sanitation and hygiene			0
AOF6 - Protection, Gender & Inclusion			0
AOF7 - Migration			0
Area of focus Total	290,608	299,805	-9,197
SF11 - Strengthen National Societies	41,676	18,020	23,656
SF12 - Effective international disaster management			0
SF13 - Influence others as leading strategic partners			0
SF14 - Ensure a strong IFRC	5,325	3,013	2,312
Strategy for implementation Total	47,001	21,033	25,968
Grand Total	337,609	320,837	16,772

[Click here for the complete financial report](#)

Please explain variances (if any)

A total of CHF 337,609 was allocated from IFRC to support MRCS in the snow and dust storm response. By the end of the operation, an expenditure of CHF 320,837 had been recorded, representing 95 per cent utilization.

The remaining balance of CHF 16,772 will be returned to the IFRC-DREF pot. Expenses on transportation were realized due to the logistics costs of ger/shelter transportation and the exchange rates in multi-purpose cash assistance. Throughout the intervention, the operation team planned to conduct 3 monitoring visits and mobilize volunteers for these visits.

Contact Information

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

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IFRC Project Manager: Yvan Grayel, Preparedness and Resilience Coordinator, yvan.grayel@ifrc.org

IFRC focal point for the emergency: Nusrat Hassan, Operations Coordinator, opscoord.eastasia@ifrc.org

[Click here for reference](#)

