

Mongolian official wins UN Sasakawa award for work on dzud or 'white death'

A Mongolian Government official was named 2005 laureate of the prestigious United Nations Sasakawa award for his groundbreaking work on dzud, or "white death," the combination of extreme winter conditions that have killed more than 8.5 million livestock over four years by starving or isolating them.

Three other entrants for the UN Sasakawa Award for Disaster Reduction, established by the Nippon Foundation of Japan in 1986, received certificates of Distinction and Merit for their work in emergency preparedness.

Chimeddorj Batchulluun of the Mongolian National Emergency Management Agency (NEMA) won \$40,000 for his work that "provided a model of effective risk reduction, combining traditional and cultural values with modern technical capabilities to increase the resilience of herding communities in Mongolia," the International Strategy for Disaster Reduction (ISDR), which administers the award, said in a statement.

The 18th award of its kind to be given "highlights good practice in disaster reduction and promotes global commitment to reducing risk and vulnerability to disasters," said the Director of the inter-agency secretariat of ISDR, Sálvano Briceño.

Dzud refers to snow, ice, wind, drought and extreme cold that destroy or limit access to grazing materials. It has prevented sheep, goats, horses, yaks, and camels from eating or isolated them from shelter and relief, resulting in mass mortality during the winter months of October to May. Dzud has been responsible for the death of more than 25 per cent of Mongolian herds between 1999 and 2003, and resulted in widespread economic devastation in the country.

Two certificates of distinction were awarded to the former Director of the Emergency Preparedness and Disaster Relief Coordination Programme in the Pan American Health Organization (PAHO), Claude de Ville de Goyet, and to the Chief of the Rescue Dog Unit at the Fire Brigade in Seville, Spain, Jaime Parejo Garcia.

Mr. de Ville de Goyet developed a system of preventive measures to be taken in hospitals before natural disasters, and Mr. Parejo Garcia developed efficiency-saving methods for dog rescues of buried survivors. A certificate of merit was awarded to the Simeulue community in Indonesia for performing disaster preparedness that resulted in only seven of their 83,000 population being killed in the tsunami of 2004.

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