ECUADOR : EARTHQUAKE

1. THE DISASTER

On Thursday 28 March, at 18:03, an earthquake, graded 5.7 in the Richter scale, affected Cotopaxi and Tungurahua, two provinces whose population are mainly farmers and stockbreeders. Many of them are aboriginal people. The epicentre was located 15 km. east of Salcedo (town located 15 km. south of Latacunga, the capital of Cotopaxi) and 100 km. south of Quito. The total population of both provinces is 650,000.

According to the preliminary evaluations conducted by the Government and the Ecuadorian Red Cross, 60 people died and about 100 were injured near the epicentre. The towns and villages on the east of Latacunga are the most affected area, namely Pujilí, San Juan, Cuturibi, Quisinche, Nazaret, La Mercedes, Cusubamba, La Guamaza, Atocha, Rumichinque and Pucara. In Pujilí district, 60% of the houses collapsed. (however, water, electricity and telephone services have not been interrupted in this district). In that area, that is 4,000 metres high and thus very cold, 594 families are homeless. They are living in public shelters.

In the towns and villages of Jatunjuiga, Yanahuco, Jatunbamba and Yanubamba 750 families (3,000 persons) have been affected.

The access to the mountainous disaster area has been very difficult and this has slowed the pace of the needs assessment and the assistance.

2. RED CROSS ACTION

The Ecuadorian Red Cross, particularly through its relief and rescue workers from Latacunga and Ambato, has immediately participated in the evaluation of the disaster and in the primary assistance to the victims. However, in the second area mentioned above, the quantity of relief supplies to distribute was insufficient.
The Federation Regional Delegation in San José (Costa Rica) has been permanently in contact with the Ecuadorian Red Cross and coordinating data regional information and response to the disaster.

The Colombian Red Cross is sending an aircraft with blankets, household items and other relief supplies for 500 persons. It has made available two relief experts to support the Ecuadorian Red Cross and the Federation Regional Delegation in their evaluation and actions.

The Federation headquarters have evaluated the preliminary reports and requested additional information to conclude the needs assessment.

According to its preliminary needs assessment, the Ecuadorian Red Cross is requiring 300 tents for 15 persons each, 3,000 blankets, 3,000 mats or mattresses, food (rice, spaghetti, wheat flour, salt, sugar etc.) and medicines (analgesics, anti-inflammatories, lasting-activity antibiotics, vitamins -B complex- etc.). A detailed plan of action and budget are being prepared in the field.

The Ecuadorian Red Cross plans to purchase most of those supplies in the local market, but the tents should be sent from other countries. It has already pledged USD 100,000 by the Norwegian Government, which has been done by the Norwegian Embassy in Quito, according to information by our Regional Delegation in San José.

3. CONCLUSION

We shall share with donors additional information about needs, as soon as received.

Thanks to a loan from the Federation's Disaster Relief Emergency Fund we are sending the Ecuadorian Red Cross CHF 50,000 for the procurement of relief supplies locally. Therefore we ask donors contributions to reimburse this loan.

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