

TURKMENISTAN: EARTHQUAKE

11 December 2000

Information Bulletin N° 1

The Disaster

An earthquake measuring over 7.2 on the Richter scale hit western Turkmenistan during the night/early hours of December 7. Two weaker aftershocks occurred shortly after. The epicenter was concentrated in the oil rich Balkan oblast near Balkanabad (Nebit Dag), the provincial capital, approximately 80 kilometres inland from the coastal town of Turkmenbashi. Six casualties were initially reported in the affected oblast although these are yet to be confirmed; numerous people have been treated at the local hospital in Nebit Dag for minor injuries. Nebit Dag itself seems to have escaped any major structural damage. However, there is limited information regarding the situation of those living in smaller towns and settlements in the outlying area which are more likely to have been seriously affected. At this point it is not possible to estimate the number of potential people in need of food and shelter.

Red Cross/Red Crescent Action

The Chairlady of the local Red Crescent branch is part of a locally organised committee responsible for undertaking the damage assessments. Two towns are still out of contact - Essenguly on the coast and Gyzylatrek a bit further inland along the Iranian border. The disaster preparedness officer from the Ashgabad headquarters of the Red Crescent Society of Turkmenistan has been deployed to the region with a truck filled with a limited quantity of relief supplies, primarily blankets and tents. Regional disaster preparedness stocks had been distributed following floods in the region earlier this year, and available stocks in the regional DP warehouse are reportedly very low.

Needs

Depending on the evolving situation and information expected shortly, it is foreseen that a small amount of funds may be requested to cover emergency food supplies should the damage in the outlying towns be serious. There will also be a need for short-term shelter should families be forced to sleep in the open while basic repairs are made to their homes. The replenishment of national society disaster preparedness stocks may also be requested, and the Federation will follow-up with further information shortly.

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