

INDIA: EARTHQUAKE

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The Disaster

A strong earthquake registering 6.0 on the Richter Scale shook an area 1000 km south of New Delhi for 50 seconds at 04h22 on 22nd May 1997. The epicentre was located 20 km south-east of Jabalpur, in Madhya Pradesh state. Approximately one million people live in the affected districts of Jabalpur, Shahdol, Seoni, Mandla, Balaghat, Betur, Rewa, Satna, and Sagar. More than 50 villages were significantly impacted by this earthquake.

The death toll, 43 people according to official Government figures, may rise as search and rescue operations continue. Local newspapers report 1,500 injured. The low death toll can be attributed to several factors: because of the high temperatures in this part of central India many people were sleeping outside in the cooler night air and thus were not in their homes when the earthquake struck; most of the buildings were built on a rock base providing a strong foundation; and homes were constructed of wood, providing more flexibility during the tremor.

The Government of Madhya Pradesh, drawing on preliminary assessments, determined that nearly 25,000 houses were badly damaged, of which 6,000 were destroyed. At the epicentre in the village of Kusam Ghat, all 115 houses were destroyed, leaving 700 people homeless. Electricity, transportation and communications were impacted throughout the earthquake area.

Red Cross/Red Crescent Action

Within an hour of the earthquake the IRCS was in action. The Chairman of the Madhya Pradesh Red Cross Branch and volunteers rushed to the affected area where they participated in search and rescue operations, administered first aid, provided comfort to the victims, and transported the more seriously injured to hospitals. The following IRCS relief supplies were sent to the area for distribution:

- 540 kg of emergency food rations
- 475 kg of rice
- 1000 pieces of assorted clothing
- 144 kitchen sets
- 500 cotton blankets

Many of these items were distributed by the IRCS Jabalpur branch to Kusam Ghat, the worst affected village. On 26 May, the Federation Delegate was present for one of the distributions there and reported that it went smoothly.

Needs

Needs Assessment

Indian Red Cross Society (IRCS) officials from national headquarters and the Federation Delegate have just returned from conducting assessments in the disaster area. They have identified relief needs and are focusing aid efforts on six of the most devastated villages where communities rely on factories for employment opportunities and personal income is very low. After consultation with the President of the Jabalpur Branch, it was determined that emergency food rations, kitchen sets, shelter, and bedding were needed, in addition to what the IRCS was already providing.

Medical supplies are not needed as those injured have received treatment in Government hospitals and most injuries were not serious. The quantity and quality of the water was not significantly affected by the earthquake. There is no need for agricultural kits since the majority of people are not farmers.

The IRCS has prepared a Plan of Action. It will provide emergency relief to 1000 of the most vulnerable families (5000 - 7000 people) in six of the most severely affected villages, and the surrounding areas. The six villages include Kusam Ghat and Mohall Mujar where all homes were destroyed; in the other four villages destruction was estimated at 70%. Approximately 800 families from the six villages will be selected by the IRCS in consultation with the Government. An additional 200 families from outlying areas, selected on a basis of their losses and physical vulnerability to the elements, will also receive aid.

Plan of Action

Commodities to be provided

- Dry ration packets: rice, dhal, cooking oil, spices, high energy biscuits
- Kitchen sets: since the majority of the houses in the most seriously affected areas collapsed, destroying household belongings, the distribution of utensils is essential
- Tents to provide shelter from the fast approaching monsoon season
- Cotton blankets.

Distribution and Administration

Procurement and distribution will follow standard Federation procedures. Copies of vouchers will be provided to the Federation and funds will be transferred on a working advance basis. Commodities can be purchased locally. When funds become available the IRCS will make them available to local branches for procurement. Distribution will be carried out by local staff and volunteers. Transportation and financing of administrative costs within the IRCS will be covered by the Society.

<i>Budget</i>	<u>Rs</u>	<u>CHF</u>
Dry ration packets for 1000 families @ Rs 500 each	500,000	20,000
Kitchen sets for 1000 families @ Rs 500 each	500,000	20,000
Family tents for 1000 families @ Rs 5000 each	5,000,000	200,000
Cotton blankets for 5000 beneficiaries @ Rs 150 each	750,000	30,000
Sub-total	6,750,000	270,500
Secretariat costs @ 5%	13,500	
Monitoring and regional support by Delegation	<u>8,000</u>	
TOTAL		292,000

The Indian Army was the first to reach the earthquake area and continues to carry out search and rescue missions, debris removal and food distribution. The Forest Department is distributing materials for reconstruction such as timber and bamboo. The Police Force is also involved with the relief work. IRCS officials have maintained close contacts with the relief related Governmental Departments. There is little NGO relief activity in the area .

Conclusion

Because of the relatively small scale of the operation, no appeal will be issued by the Federation . However, the proposed IRCS relief operation is largely dependent for its realisation on outside support and any contributions in cash or kind would be warmly appreciated. Consultations made by the Secretariat indicate that some of the donors are willing to contribute towards this proposed action utilising funds in their possession initially earmarked for the Maharashtra Earthquake programme (now completed). Funding confirmation would be much appreciated .

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