

TURKEY: EARTHQUAKES

3 December 1999

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period covered: 30 November - 02 December

The number of usable winterised tents delivered to Turkey by the Red Cross Red Crescent and the confirmed pipeline now stands at over 15,500, though with the weather continuing to deteriorate, more are needed. During November, the International Federation dispatched over 1,373 metric tonnes of relief items to the areas hit by the earthquake on 12 November. From early next week, three specialised assessment/programming teams will be working throughout the country to identify future rehabilitation and reconstruction, disaster preparedness and health activities to be implemented by the Red Cross Red Crescent, starting in the new year.

The context

North-western Turkey, the country's most densely populated region and industrial heartland, has been struck by two massive earthquakes in less than three months. The first, on 17 August 1999 at 03h02 local time, measured between 7.4 and 7.8 on the Richter scale and lasted 45 seconds. Izmit, an industrial city of one million in western Turkey, was nearest the epicentre. The official death toll stands at over 17,100, with some 44,000 people injured, nearly 300,000 homes either damaged or collapsed, and more than 40,000 business premises similarly affected. On the day of the catastrophe, the Turkish government declared a state of emergency and requested international assistance. The International Federation immediately launched a Preliminary Appeal, followed by a full Appeal for CHF 65 million on 8 September 1999, which remains active.

The disaster was followed by more than 1,300 aftershocks, culminating in the second quake at 18h57 on 12 November 1999 which rated 7.2 on the Richter scale and shook Düzce and Kaynasli counties in the north-western province of Bolu, some 100 kms to the east of Izmit. The jolt was felt both in Istanbul (some 260 kms to the west) and Ankara, the nation's capital, 300 kms to the east. Although this situation report provides updated information related to the August earthquake, the focus is primarily on Red Cross Red Crescent relief activities in response to the latest tragedy in Turkey.

Update

Casualty figures from the earthquake on 12 November now stand at 784 confirmed dead and 4,947 injured. Some 6,540 houses and 1,313 businesses are heavily or moderately damaged. More than 1,608 buildings are due for demolition, in addition to some 900 that had collapsed.

Three children have reportedly died following fires in tent cities caused by gas explosions, and a 72 year old woman was found dead in Düzce due to the freezing temperatures.

Although prefabricated settlements are being handed over to local authorities throughout the affected areas, people left homeless by the quakes seem reluctant to move into them. According to local media reports, the quality of the prefabricated buildings and the settlements' infrastructure fall below expectations and are located too far away from town centres. In addition, people fear that moving away from the tent cities will result in the loss of their entitlement to basic humanitarian aid.

According to the Bolu regional authorities, 150,000 persons - representing half of the region's total population - have been affected by the quake on 12 November. Assistance programmes through the next two years are being considered for the homeless. There are still no clear indications on which institutions will be managing the tent cities; local government authorities outside the disaster zone are being asked to deploy personnel for this task.

Under a recent government decision up to 55,000 homeless persons will be housed in public buildings and government owned hotels throughout the country. To date, according to media reports, some 4,000 persons have accepted the opportunity and left the affected area; this figure is expected to increase during the coming days.

The establishment of fully-fledged tent cities throughout the November quake zone continues, with 43,462 tents distributed - 23,876 by the Turkish Red Crescent Society (TRCS) - according to latest figures from the Prime Minister's Crisis Centre (PMCC).

Red Cross/Red Crescent action

Efforts to source and deliver winterised tents to Turkey remain the top operational priority for the International Federation and Turkish Red Crescent. Good progress has been made this week and the figure for usable family-sized winter tents delivered by the Red Cross Red Crescent to Turkey - through international and local procurement - now stands at 8,708 (sufficient for more than 43,500 people) with a confirmed pipeline of 6,802 (for some 34,010 people). During the second half of this month, deliveries should exceed 15,500 - 55% more than envisaged in the International Federation's appeal. Even so, harsh winter weather conditions are increasing the need for temporary shelter - including replacements for 'summer' tents in the August quake zone - and at least a further 8,000 winter tents would be welcome.

Turkish Red Crescent Society

In addition to winterised tents, the TRCS has also dispatched the following items since 12 November: blankets (143,662), sleeping bags (7,595), beds (19,422), quilts (4,359), 100,000 metres of plastic sheeting, a mobile hospital with 100 beds, a mobile clinic, portable kitchens (42), ambulances (5), generators (118), stoves (13,231), portable baths (10), blood units (855), medicines, serum and 316.8 metric tons of food.

The TRCS central field kitchen located in the Golchuk area - currently providing daily hot meals to some 33,150 persons living in the surrounding tent cities - is planning to expand its capacity to feed up to 80,000 persons. Until a similar installation is fully operational in the November earthquake zone - where TRCS has the overall responsibility for food distribution, targeting 40,000 persons - the Golchuk facility intends to support the current field kitchens in Bolu by transporting daily food rations.

International Federation

The composition and terms of reference of the three programme planning teams, which are undertaking project identification activities in the first half of December, have been finalised and agreed.

A two-phased approach is planned for the disaster preparedness assessment, lead by a senior American Red Cross official. The first component, which will start next week, is aimed at gathering sufficient information to design a project that will rehabilitate and update TRCS disaster preparedness capacities. The second phase, scheduled for the first quarter of 2000, will facilitate the development of an in-depth TRCS-driven disaster preparedness programme over the longer term.

The health team, lead by the International Federation's health coordinator in Turkey, will provide an overview of primary health care activities and needs in the tent cities and prefabricated villages throughout the entire area affected by the two earthquakes. In addition, a more detailed overview of the hospital needs in the November disaster zone will be undertaken.

The reconstruction and rehabilitation team, lead by an experienced construction consultant assigned to the International Federation by the British Red Cross, is tasked with identifying specific reconstruction and rehabilitation projects focusing on public buildings throughout the affected area. As indicated in previous situation reports, the written findings and recommendations of all three assessment teams are due for completion by 20 December.

Relief: During November, more than 1,370 mt of relief items including tents, food, blankets, beds, mattresses, family and baby hygiene parcels, kitchen sets and plastic sheeting have been dispatched to the field by the International Federation, mainly to the November quake area. Some 28,000 sleeping bags, funded through the International Federation, are being airlifted to Turkey over the coming days.

A consignment of 1,975 winter tents purchased in Pakistan with funding from the Japanese Red Cross arrived in mid week and are being installed in the Bolu region. Experts contracted by the American Red Cross are also setting up a total of 172 tents around the town of Bolu. Sourcing of additional supplies of winterised tents is being carried out in conjunction with Societies in Britain, Belgium, Finland, Germany, the Netherlands, Norway and Sweden and through local procurement.

Water and Sanitation: The International Federation's water and sanitation team is currently assessing the needs in the new tent cities being set up in the Bolu region. Some 25 latrine and 12 shower containers - each comprising six individual toilets - are being dispatched by the German Red Cross and are expected to arrive over the next two weeks. Meanwhile, orders to purchase up to 50 latrine and shower containers have been placed, to be installed in tent cities upon arrival. The installation of Oxfam water tanks in Adapazari's Emirdag camp is due for completion by the middle of this month.

Outstanding needs

At least 8,000 additional winter tents are urgently needed for immediate use, in addition to those in the current pipeline. Unearmarked contributions as well as pledges for the following items are also welcome: pallets for flooring (5,000), baby parcels (30,000), field beds (19,960), kitchen sets (5,500) and winter clothing - details on exact specifications are available from the International Federation's Logistics Department in Geneva.

External relations / Government/UN/ NGOs/ Media

A two day field trip with a BBC team arriving early next week is being organised and briefings with news agencies, including Reuters and AFP, continue upon request. Following an inter-agency coordination meeting held recently in Bolu with the authorities, it has been agreed that such meetings will take place every two days.

Contributions

See the List of Contributions attached to situation report no 31, issued on 1 December 1999.

For further information during next week (6-10 December) please contact the following: International Federation, Geneva: Penny Elghady; tel: +41 22 730 4319; mobile: 41 79 205 1959; email: elghady@ifrc.org. Logistics: Birgitte Stalder-Olsen; tel: +41 22 730 4245.

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