

TURKEY: EARTHQUAKES

10 December 1999

appeal no. 19/99

situation report no. 33

period covered: 02-09 December

The number of usable winterised tents delivered to Turkey by the Red Cross Red Crescent now stands at almost 9,500, very close to the Appeal target of 10,000; a further 8,000 are in the pipeline. During the first week of December, the International Federation dispatched over 350 metric tonnes of relief items and food. Two of the three specialised project assessment teams have begun their missions aimed at identifying future activities to be implemented by the Red Cross Red Crescent, starting in the new year.

The context

In the second half of 1999, north-western Turkey, the country's most densely populated region and industrial heartland, was 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.

Update

On Friday 3 December an earthquake rated at 5.5 on the Richter scale hit the Erzurum region in north-eastern Turkey, some 883 kilometres from Ankara. To date, one person is reported dead and five injured. Early estimates indicate that at least 340 homes have been destroyed. According to media reports, around 100 tents were immediately dispatched by the military, with additional supplies expected from the Turkish Red Crescent Society (TRCS).

Meanwhile aftershocks are being felt daily, with varying degrees of intensity, throughout the area affected by the quakes on 17 August and 12 November. Casualty figures from the November earthquake now stand at 808 confirmed dead and 4,948 injured. Some 8,390 houses and 1,519 businesses are heavily or moderately damaged. More than 2,085 buildings are due for demolition, in addition to some 900 that collapsed.

The establishment of fully-fledged tent cities throughout the November quake zone continues, with 47,975 tents distributed - 25,942 by the TRCS - according to latest figures from the Prime Minister's Crisis Centre.

Red Cross/Red Crescent action

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 9,470, very close to the Appeal target of 10,000 and with a confirmed pipeline of more than 8,000. Sourcing of additional supplies of winterised tents is being carried out in conjunction with Societies in Britain, Belgium, Finland, Germany, the Netherlands, Norway, Sweden and the United States; in addition the International Federation has received a number of cash pledges earmarked for these crucial items.

Turkish Red Crescent Society

In addition to winterised tents, working with the International Federation, the TRCS has also dispatched the following items since 12 November: blankets (143,962), sleeping bags (18,000), beds (19,462), quilts (4,359), 150,000 square metres of plastic sheeting, a mobile hospital with 100 beds, a mobile clinic, portable kitchens (42), ambulances (5), generators (118), stoves (23,000), 3,270 gas bottles, portable baths (10), office containers (13) baby hygiene parcels (10,000), adult hygiene parcels (40,000), floor pallets (3,000), bed linen sets (500), blood units (855), medicines, serum and 350.7 metric tons of food.

Since the beginning of December, the TRCS central field kitchen located in the Golchuk area has increased its daily provision of hot meals to some 40,000 persons (a rise of 7,000 on the previous month) living in the surrounding tent cities - and 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 is supporting the current field kitchens in Bolu as well.

International Federation

Working with the TRCS, two International Federation delegates have returned to Istanbul after conducting a needs assessment in the Erzurum region which was struck by an earthquake last Friday. Early findings indicate that while relief activities may not be necessary, many livestock in the area have been lost.

The two-phased disaster preparedness assessment, lead by a senior American Red Cross official, started this week. The first component, 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, has also begun its assessment which 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 mission of the reconstruction and rehabilitation team, which will identify specific reconstruction and rehabilitation projects focusing on public buildings throughout the affected area, will commence at the weekend. As indicated in previous situation reports, the written findings and recommendations of the assessment teams are due for completion by 20 December.

A Geneva based psychotherapist is in Turkey at present, tasked with providing support and advice to Red Cross Red Crescent local and expatriate personnel, working in a stressful environment following two earthquakes in three months and several thousand aftershocks

Relief: During the first week of December, the International Federation dispatched over 350 mt of relief items including tents, food, blankets, beds, mattresses, family and baby hygiene parcels, kitchen sets, plastic sheeting and food; in total some 1,720 mt of goods have now reached the area hit by the earthquake on 12 November.

With the immediate emergency phase in the November earthquake nearing completion, the International Federation has redeployed one of its two field liaison delegates to Izmit where he will continue working with the TRCS in the August disaster zone, also covering Adapazari, Golchuk and Yalova.

Over the past week, the International Federation relief team and TRCS joined representatives from national authorities, UNDP and NGOs at a meeting intended to provide the basis for regular coordination sessions in November disaster zone.

Water and Sanitation: Needs assessments by the International Federation's water and sanitation team continue in the Bolu, Düzce, Kaynasli region. Twenty toilet containers provided by the German Red Cross are being installed in a tent city in Bolu where the Spanish Red Cross are distributing tents, beds and blankets. A further 20 toilet and 12 shower containers from the German Red Cross are expected to reach Turkey by mid December. A quantity of 1,000 garbage cans ordered for the August earthquake zone have started arriving at the Red Cross Red Crescent Samandira warehouse and will be dispatched to the field in the coming days. The installation of Oxfam water tanks in Adapazari's Emirdag camp is due for completion by the middle of this month.

Participating National Societies

American Red Cross: The Society is continuing its major support to Red Cross Red Crescent activities in relief, health and water-sanitation. The architectural work for the rehabilitation of the Izmit State hospital has been finalised and a Memorandum of Understanding between the International Federation and the position of hospital head doctor is under preparation.

Belgian Red Cross: A two-member expatriate team is currently following up site preparation works in Golchuk targeted at installing at least 70 prefabricated houses linked to utilities. Meanwhile, the Society has undertaken an assessment of the water-sanitation conditions within the temporary shelter settlements throughout Golchuk.

French Red Cross: The Society continues its activities in Akyazi and Kaynasli, projected at the reconstruction of a school for 1,000 pupils and the distribution of relief items, including 800 tents, heaters and other shelter materials. A mobile clinic run by Turkish staff has started operating in the villages around Kaynasli treating some 30 persons per day and may expand its activities elsewhere in the vicinity.

German Red Cross: The Society's field hospital at Golchuk is transferring from tents to prefabricated units, which will soon be fully operational. In addition, good progress is being made on the prefabricated hospital for Yenikoy, and the Society is also supplying some prefabricated containers to Karamur-sel State hospital.

Italian Red Cross: The coordination and implementation of an ECHO-funded project for the distribution of 50,000 hygiene parcels to the affected population continues.

Japanese Red Cross: The construction of the Kocaeli University hospital funded by the National Society, through the International Federation, is ongoing. Besides supporting the TRCS and International Federation overall relief operation, further projects are being identified, focusing primarily on rehabilitation and reconstruction. An official of the Japanese Red Cross international relief division is

currently in Turkey evaluating rehabilitation and reconstruction needs and assessing the further involvement of the Society in the operation.

Netherlands Red Cross: The National Society continues supporting the TRCS and International Federation relief efforts and monitoring the reception and distribution of winter relief items. The production of the winter clothes and shoes funded by ECHO is due to be finalised before the end of this month, with distributions starting immediately and expected to continue through the second week of January.

Spanish Red Cross: The installation of winter tents and the organisation of a tent city in Bolu is underway, supported by four Spanish Red Cross delegates. To date, some 200 tents are already erected and it is expected that people will start moving into the settlement in the coming days.

Swiss Red Cross: Some 2,000 winter tents and 20 sanitary containers purchased by the Society are being installed in Yayahkaptan and Cephanelik tent cities. Further rehabilitation and reconstruction projects are being studied.

Outstanding needs

At least 8,000 additional winter tents would be welcome for immediate use, in addition to those in the current pipeline. Unearmarked contributions as well as pledges for the following items are also sought: 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

Earlier this week a BBC team visited the operation - including a TRCS field kitchen and various tent cities - to broadcast a live radio programme from Golchuk. Among the interviewees were an English speaking beneficiary, a Turkish government representative and the International Federation's information delegate.

Contributions

See Annex 1 for details.

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