

TURKEY: EARTHQUAKES

28 February 2000

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period covered: 11 February 2000 - 25 February 2000

The highlight of a busy reporting period was the planning and information meeting which was hosted by the Turkish Red Crescent Society (TRCS) and took place in Ankara on 18 February 2000, attended by representatives from 18 Red Cross Red Crescent Societies, the International Federation, the ICRC and a number of international organisations. In addition to reviewing the challenges and achievements of the operation to date, plans and priorities beyond the relief phase were examined. With the programme for the distribution of ECHO-funded hygiene parcels in full swing, more than 55,000 of these items have been received by vulnerable families throughout both earthquake zones. The International Federation has signed a lease agreement for the rental of office space in the Turkish capital, Ankara.

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. The disaster was followed a second quake at 18h57 on 12 November 1999 which rated 7.2 on the Richter scale and shook the north-western province of Bolu, some 100 kms to the east of Izmit. According to the latest casualty figures, there is a confirmed death toll of 845, with nearly 5,000 people injured.

Update

A moderate earthquake rated at five on the Richter scale hit Bolu on Monday 14 February, at 8h56 local time, followed by a 3.8 magnitude aftershock at 9h13. No casualties or property damage have been reported. However, the quake - also felt in Ankara and Istanbul - created considerable panic among the inhabitants of the region. Recent heavy rains and flooding are also worsening the situation of quake victims living in the region of Bolu, where victims still accommodated in tent cities are trying to prevent their tents from being flooded by placing gravel in front of them.

According to the Turkish media, the housing and public works ministry has completed the task of identifying the quake survivors who are entitled to housing in the Marmara region. According to the ministry's assessment, 50,000 people are currently in need of housing, excluding those left homeless after the

November 12 earthquake, for whom no research has yet been carried out. So far, a total of 29,000 quake victims have applied to the ministry for housing; plans for rebuilding 4,364 business premises are also in the pipeline. Tenders for the housing construction will be issued next month with the work due to start in April for completion by the year-end.

During the reporting period, an agreement has been signed between the Turkish government and the European Investment Bank on the first tranche of an EUR 600 million loan scheme. The majority of this package will be directed towards the repair of damaged infrastructure, with the balance used to rehabilitate small and medium scale enterprises.

Red Cross/Red Crescent action

Planning and Information Meeting

Representatives from 18 Red Cross Red Crescent Societies, the International Federation, the ICRC and a number of international organisations attended a planning and information meeting held on 18 February 2000 in Ankara, hosted by the TRCS and co-chaired by the Society's President and the Director of the International Federation's Europe department.

The meeting provided a useful forum for reviewing the challenges and achievements of the Red Cross Red Crescent operation to date and looking beyond the relief phase at longer term plans and priorities. Participants were also able to hear first hand a report by a member of the external team, drawn from business and academic leaders - and commissioned by the TRCS - to look at its structures and future direction. This presentation highlighted a need to enhance the Society's volunteer base and branch network and modernise communications systems.

Among the programmes pinpointed by the TRCS as requiring immediate support were disaster preparedness, blood and first aid training - all underpinned by the institutional development imperative. International Federation delegates presented a wide range of project proposals, covering health, psycho-social activities, water-sanitation, rehabilitation & reconstruction and social welfare. In addition to extensive debate and exchange throughout the proceedings, the meeting concluded with representatives from each Red Cross Red Crescent Society summarising those areas of particular interest for follow up and funding.

A key task now is to harmonise the proposals developed by the TRCS and the International Federation delegation into a single Red Cross Red Crescent programme, also incorporating the activities and added value provided by PNS present in the country. Later this week, those Societies which expressed an interest in the disaster preparedness component have been invited to participate in a conference call to begin the process of taking this activity forward. Meanwhile the International Federation's head of delegation is maintaining close dialogue with the TRCS president and director general and in-country PNS representatives to build on the opportunities created by the meeting.

International Federation

Relief and logistics: A thorough review of the Red Cross Red Crescent programme for the distribution of ECHO-funded hygiene parcels throughout the earthquake zones was conducted at a meeting in Izmit last week between International Federation field delegates and the ECHO country representative. Plans are now in hand to increase the number of local staff handling the activity, widen the beneficiary caseload - subject to formal approval from ECHO - to include ad hoc tent clusters and other vulnerable groups and increase the number of direct deliveries from the International Federation warehouse to local distribution points; storage facilities for the monthly dispatches will also be examined. Implementation of the programme is well underway and to date, more than 55,000 parcels have been distributed to families living in approximately 280 tent cities and prefabricated settlements throughout both earthquake zones. An agreement is also being negotiated with the Italian Red Cross to clarify areas of responsibility.

Meanwhile, the delegation's logistics department is providing advice to the TRCS which is seeking a feasible solution to the establishment of an Istanbul based disaster preparedness stock, following requests made by the TRCS directorate and the Istanbul governor.

Four industrial blower heaters have been purchased to dry the used tents which will be maintained as a part of the TRCS disaster preparedness stock. In addition, the remaining shelter related items, including tents, beds, mattresses and bed linen are being transferred from the International Federation Samandira warehouse to the TRCS facility in Ankara. Over the reporting period, more than 20,200 ECHO-funded hygiene parcels and 82 mt of wheatflour were dispatched by the International Federation.

Health: A second fact-finding mission, comprising members of the Turkish medical community and the International Federation delegation's health department, is due to take place this week to examine further a proposal to treat earthquake victims with severe spinal cord injuries at the Red Cross Red Crescent post traumatic rehabilitation centre in Armenia. Discussions on the project with the Turkish government and the TRCS have progressed well over the reporting period, though a donor has yet to be identified to fund the initiative, currently budgeted at around CHF 2.5 million over two years. Meanwhile, selection of the first patients who will benefit from the treatment is underway.

Over the second half of February, distribution of health-related items included 1,838 baby hygiene parcels and nine wheelchairs. In addition, the Danish Red Cross is handling the procurement of eight mobile clinics intended to offer basic health facilities and patient transport in tent cities, prefabricated settlements and remote areas of the earthquake-hit zones. One of the units is being purchased through contributions from the readers of a leading Danish newspaper, while a further seven are being funded by the Australian Red Cross. Four containers to be used for the storage of health supplies will be placed in Yalova, Izmit, Düzce and Bolu.

The implementation of the International Federation's psycho-social programme is underway and four office containers will be made available for immediate use in the initial phase. Planning for the medical students workshop at the end of March is also progressing well.

Water-sanitation: Recent distributions of water sanitation items include 140 washing machines and 11 shower containers. The German Red Cross has signalled its interest in one of the water-sanitation projects - the rehabilitation of seven reservoirs and one purification plant in Yalova - tabled at the recent planning and information meeting.

Construction: The inauguration of the completed semi-permanent, prefabricated extension to the Kocaeli University Hospital, funded by the Japanese Red Cross, took place on 16 February 2000. The ceremony was attended by a senior official from the Japanese Red Cross, hospital authorities, and representatives from the International Federation and TRCS. The foundation work of the nearby Izmit State hospital, funded by the Singapore Red Cross, has been completed.

Following the planning and information meeting (see above), various Red Cross Red Crescent Societies - including those from Japan, Kuwait, Italy, Spain and the United Kingdom - have expressed firm interest in supporting more than 20 of the 38 health, education and community rehabilitation & reconstruction projects identified by the International Federation's construction team and costed at some CHF 25 million. Detailed discussions will now begin with the relevant authorities, which were contacted during the identification process and gave approval to the International Federation to seek funding for the work.

Delegation: With the relief phase of the operation reaching its conclusion, the International Federation's delegation in Turkey is down-sizing and a number of delegates have concluded their missions in recent weeks. The present complement of delegates stands at 14, supported by 46 local staff. As indicated in previous reports, in the coming weeks the delegation will move its base from Istanbul to Ankara, where the TRCS headquarters is situated. Last week, the International Federation signed a one-year

(extendible) lease agreement for the rental of office space in Ankara, to accommodate delegates, PNS representatives and local staff in the Turkish capital.

Reporting: With the operation entering a more settled phase and winter ending, International Federation situation reports will be prepared and issued monthly until further notice, unless circumstances dictate otherwise. The next report, covering March 2000 will be available in early April.

Outstanding needs

Further resources and support needed to implement on-going Red Cross Red Crescent activities in Turkey were detailed at the planning and information meeting in Ankara and the relevant documentation also mailed to those Societies contributing to the appeal but unable to attend. A revised plan and budget will be shared with donors in the coming weeks. As indicated in previous situation reports, sourcing of all the goods and services required to undertake the International Federation's programme, as set out in the appeal of 8 September 1999 and subsequently confirmed, is now complete. Unearmarked cash contributions continue to be welcome and will be directed towards implementation of activities scheduled for the coming months. A head of delegation is urgently sought, following the appointment of the present incumbent to lead the International Federation's recently opened regional delegation in Beijing, China.

Contributions

Please see Annex 1 for details.

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