

TURKEY: EARTHQUAKES

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The reporting period has seen a number of important developments for the Red Cross Red Crescent in Turkey, including the re-election of the President of the Turkish Red Crescent at the Society's General Assembly (28-29 April) and the start of assignment for a new International Federation head of delegation, based in Ankara. Good progress has also been made across a wide range of programmes, particularly psycho-social support, first aid and the distribution of ECHO-funded hygiene parcels. Planning and documentation preparation is also well advanced for next week's meeting in Ankara of the disaster preparedness consortium, comprising representatives from seven PNS, the Turkish Red Crescent Society (TRCS) and International Federation.

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, centred on the industrial city of Izmit, on 17 August 1999, left 17,100 people dead and a further 44,000 injured. 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 death toll from a second major quake - in the Bolu/Duzce region, on 12 November 1999 - reached 845, with injuries to nearly 5,000 people.

Update

A moderate earthquake, measuring 5.2 on the Richter scale, followed by a 3.7 magnitude aftershock, shook the south-western towns of Honaz and Denizli at 15h23 local time on 21 April. No casualties or property damage were reported, but once again the tremors caused panic and concern among the local population. According to a Turkish seismologic laboratory, a total of 168 small and moderate quakes and aftershocks were registered in Turkey in April alone.

The Turkish media has reported on the findings of a team of Turkish, American and Japanese scientists who have examined the detailed historic records kept in the region over the last 500 years to determine the activity of the seismic fault-lines near Istanbul. According to these scientists, since the last major quake in the city occurred in 1894, the faults are late in their cycle, raising the chance that Istanbul could experience a strong earthquake within the next 30 years. The scientists did not predict how strong the quake might be, or when, but suggested steps to protect the city's 12 million people.

Updated figures released by the government's regional disaster coordinator confirmed that there are still 55 remaining tent cities in the two quake-affected areas, hosting nearly 70,000 people. The locations of these tent cities are: two in Yalova, 17 in Izmit, one in Adapazari, 11 in Bolu and 24 in Duzce. Prefabricated settlements now total 136. Some 38,400 prefabricated houses have been completed, with more than 36,580 already occupied, hosting a population of over 140,000. The construction of another 4,393 semi-permanent houses is underway.

Red Cross/Red Crescent action

Turkish Red Crescent

On 28-29 April 2000, the TRCS convened its General Assembly, the Society's supreme decision-making body, which takes place annually in April. Dr Ertan Gonen was re-elected as President of the Society and four new members were elected to the seven-member Executive Committee. The Board of Auditors - responsible for auditing the accounts of the central committee - was completely renewed and five new members were elected for the Society's Central Committee, which comprises 30 members.

In the weeks prior to the General Assembly Turkey's Grand National Assembly Investigation Commission published a series of critical findings on the TRCS conduct and response to the earthquake on 17 August. This report influenced the decision, taken by the Council of Ministers in the Turkish Parliament, to pass a law which grants the government the authority to form temporary committees to replace the Society's management and to amend and cancel rules and regulations of the TRCS. The International Federation is consulting with the TRCS leadership and the ICRC on how to best address this issue. At the General Assembly, the TRCS President outlined measures he was taking with relevant government departments in relation to the law.

At the start of April, the Society ceased the distribution of hot meals to quake victims living in tent cities and is now providing dry food rations to beneficiaries throughout the two affected regions.

International Federation

Disaster preparedness: The American Red Cross team in Ankara continues its activities with TRCS headquarters and the International Federation delegation in creating a programme in disaster response preparedness and management (DRPM). The overall goals of this exercise are to:

- { create a framework for building TRCS planning and response capacities;
- { improve immediate capacities in the event of another earthquake prior to the implementation of the DRPM programme;
- { promote localised mitigation, preparedness and response; and
- { develop a mechanism for organising technical, material and financial input from all interested National Societies.

The results of the work - carried out to date by a group comprising the TRCS, International Federation, and American Red Cross, with participation from German Red Cross - will be presented at a meeting in Ankara on 16 May to a consortium of PNS (from America, Britain, Germany, Greece, the Netherlands, Norway and Switzerland) formed during last February's Turkey operation planning and information meeting. Also attending next week's session will be representatives from the Iranian Red Crescent in an effort to promote regional development cooperation in the field of earthquake response planning.

The Turkey delegation telecommunications delegate has just started to visit several TRCS local branches to begin the installations of a radio communications network. This initiative is part of a broader programme aimed at improving the TRCS communication systems and increase the Society's disaster response capacity.

Logistics and Relief: The delegation's logistics function has been involved in current disaster preparedness planning in support of TRCS, ahead of next week's DRPM consortium meeting. At this initial stage of the DRPM programme, the main areas in which the International Federation's logistics team can provide assistance include warehousing and procurement.

Multipurpose social facilities: The implementation of the social welfare project, aiming at providing multipurpose social facilities to prefabricated settlements and tent cities, has begun. Four pilot projects are underway in Yalova, Izmit, Gölcük and Düzce. These projects comprise mainly the provision of sports equipment, furniture, computers, school stationary, books and toys to already existing social facilities in tent cities and prefabricated settlements. The completion of these four pilot projects, funded by the Kuwait Red Crescent, is scheduled for mid-June.

ECHO hygiene parcel programme: The distribution of ECHO-funded hygiene parcels is progressing according to plan. Recent developments have included a more active involvement of the TRCS in the implementation of the programme, particularly of the local branches in Golcuk, Akyazi and Kaynasli. To date, a total of 236,467 parcels have been introduced into the distribution network with over 125,000 already in the hands of beneficiaries. Some 365 communities are assisted in the programme, including tent cities, prefabricated settlements, tent clusters and small villages. The International Federation's relief and logistics departments are working closely on the elaboration of a final delivery plan. It is expected that all ECHO-funded hygiene parcels will have been dispatched from the Samandira warehouse by the end of May.

The Italian Red Cross has finalised the implementation of its ECHO-funded hygiene parcels programme. The Society has distributed 50,000 parcels, concentrating exclusively in the first earthquake area. The International Federation relief team is now assessing outstanding needs in the area formerly covered by the Italian Red Cross for a possible allocation of the remaining parcels still stored at the warehouse.

Health: The delegation's health department is currently distributing surgical instruments to earthquake-affected and buffer hospitals in Karamursel, Izmit, Adapazari and Kandira. Medicines are also being distributed to health facilities throughout the two quake-affected areas. In addition, 6,955 baby hygiene parcels, 127 wheelchairs, 550 pairs of crutches, 96 walking aid equipment, 40 cartons of soap and 75 blankets have been distributed to date by both the health surveillance team and the Turkey delegation health department to quake-victims in tent cities and prefabricated settlements.

The team of four surveyors continue to monitor the developments in the field and all International Federation health-related activities and to assess outstanding needs of the population. Four mobile clinics, one donated by the Danish Red Cross and three by the Australian Red Cross, are now operating in the environs of Yalova and Duzce. These mobile clinics are being used by the local health authorities, facilitating the provision of basic health care in several villages around the two earthquake-stricken towns; a further four clinics, also donated by the Australian Red Cross, will be deployed shortly.

Meanwhile, following up on a priority request from the TRCS, the International Federation is coordinating the development of a first-aid strategy and the planning for an extensive first-aid training programme. The delegation is working closely with the TRCS Central Training Unit, the Istanbul-based Kizilay Nursing School and the German and Spanish Red Cross Societies on the elaboration of a proposed first aid strategy which will be presented to the TRCS leadership in June.

First aid-related activities have so far included the translation into Turkish of the Spanish Red Cross first-aid and training for trainers manuals, due to be completed by mid-May, and the purchase of 15 sets of first aid training mannequins which will be donated to the TRCS. In addition, the Norwegian Red Cross has accepted the invitation to verify the conditions of the three field hospitals donated to the TRCS and to conduct a practical training for the TRCS staff on how to use them.

The German Red Cross has also carried out two independent needs assessments for first aid training and for the development of a basic health care emergency response unit training. Preparations are already underway for the training, scheduled to commence on 18 May for six months at the German Red Cross training centre in Yeniköy.

Psycho-social support: The programme's first psycho-social support centre was inaugurated in Avcilar, Istanbul, on 21 April. The first psycho-social training module will take place from 25 to 29 May and the two main objectives of this pilot training programme are to teach the participants methods of identifying psycho-social related problems within their own community, also enhancing coping mechanisms and to engage the local population in the activities carried out in the psycho-social centre.

The Swiss Red Cross has expressed interest in supporting the psycho-social centres in Izmit and Karamursel. In addition, the Society is providing financial support to another psycho-social project in a prefabricated city of 800 houses in Yalova, implemented by a Swiss NGO.

Water-sanitation: During the reporting period, the water-sanitation team provided a two-day training to the TRCS warehouse technicians in Ankara on the use of water sanitation material recently handed over to the Society. These items, which include containers, washing and drying machines and water tanks, will be incorporated into the TRCS buffer stocks on their release from the field. Negotiations on the implementation of a pipeline project for the Kandira district - presented at the Turkey operation planning and information meeting in Ankara in February - are continuing. Funding for the project will be provided by the Swiss Red Cross.

Construction: Reconstruction work for the Izmit State Hospital is progressing as planned. Full structural completion has been achieved and electrical wiring, partitions and cladding works are in progress. Coordination for the provision of additional medical equipment with the delegation health team and hospital authorities is in process.

An agreement has been reached with the TRCS, the Ministry of Health and the Ministry of Education to start the process of planning for the reconstruction of three hospitals and five schools in both quake-affected areas, funded by the Japanese Red Cross and Kuwait Red Crescent.

The Belgium Red Cross has completed the basic construction and electrical wiring works of half of the houses in its 70-unit prefabricated settlement located near Golcuk. Completion of the entire project is expected for mid-June.

The French Red Cross construction works for a school in Akyazi are progressing well and according to schedule. In addition, the Society is preparing a memorandum of understanding to be signed by the International Federation and the TRCS for the construction of the Gölcük State Hospital and also covering other activities carried out by the French Red Cross in Turkey.

Two of the German Red Cross construction projects were completed in April: the blood bank and six kindergartens in Duzce were officially handed over to the beneficiary communities.

The Spanish Red Cross has finished the drawings and prepared all tendering documents for the construction of a school in Adapazari, a hospital and a policlinic in Karamursel and a health centre in Kaynasli. Trilateral agreements between the Society, the TRCS and relevant authorities have already been signed for the implementation of the projects.

Evaluation: At the Turkey operation planning and information meeting held in Ankara on 18 February 2000, attended by representatives from 18 PNS, participants strongly supported a proposal requesting the International Federation to undertake an in-depth, independent assessment of the Red Cross Red Crescent operation to date, focusing particularly on the 'lessons learnt'. Accordingly, an external consultant has been commissioned to analyse and review the coordination, approach and effectiveness of Red Cross Red Crescent activities in Turkey from 17 August 1999 through 30 April 2000. Following meetings in Geneva, the consultant undertook a first visit to Turkey from 5 to 14 April when he met International Federation personnel and PNS representatives. A second visit, to meet with officials of the TRCS and Turkish government and beneficiaries, took place this week. The consultant's report, with relevant findings and recommendations, covering both the strengths and weaknesses of the operation, will be shared with all Red Cross Red Crescent contributors to the International Federation appeal and other interested parties, as appropriate.

Delegation: A new International Federation head of delegation, sponsored by the Swedish Red Cross and based in Ankara, began his assignment in Turkey in mid-April. The preparation of a plan of action and budget for the post relief phase of the operation - covering all ongoing and planned activities - is close to completion and will be shared with PNS in the coming weeks. At present, there are 13 International Federation delegates in Turkey, covering the areas of management, finance, administration, health, relief, construction, water and sanitation, logistics, reporting and telecommunications, and 46 local staff.

Outstanding needs

Further resources and support needed to implement ongoing 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. As indicated above, a revised plan and budget will be shared with donors in the coming weeks. In the meantime, unearmarked cash contributions continue to be welcome and will be directed towards implementation of the planned activities agreed with TRCS.

Contributions (Please see Annex 1 for details.)

Peter Rees-Gildea
Director
Operations Funding and Reporting Department

Martin Faller
Acting Director
Europe Department