

AFGHANISTAN: EARTHQUAKE

7 February 1998

Information Bulletin N° 02

The Disaster

A violent earthquake rocked northern Afghanistan and southern Tajikistan on 4 February at 14:33 GMT. According to data from the US Geological Survey website, the earthquake measured a magnitude of 6.1 surface wave, the epicentre was at 37.07N and 70.20E, at a depth of 33 kilometres. Assessments made by the Federation in Tajikistan Red Crescent Society (TRCS) on 6 February concluded little, if any, damage occurred in Tajikistan. The Afghan Red Crescent Society (ARCS) has some staff around the disaster area, however, communication is limited by the lack of technological tools.

Travel is difficult in this mountainous area due to its border location, winter weather, limited road system, and remoteness of villages. Assessment teams are moving towards the disaster area. From the north, the team comprised of Federation and TRCS staff should arrive Sunday, 8 February, following their obtaining authorisation to cross the border. The Federation staff include a logistician, health care provider, and 2 programme officers. The TRCS sent relief and information staff.

From Kabul, a joint ARCS/Federation/International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) assessment team is scheduled to depart Sunday. Travel clearances are being obtained from the various parties concerned.

Additional information is being released in Afghanistan but the originating source of this information is unknown. This provisional information, obtained by the Afghanistan Red Crescent Society (AFRCS) branches in the disaster area earthquake indicates:

- ◆ 2880 have died
- ◆ 966 are seriously injured
- ◆ 1840 houses are damaged or destroyed
- ◆ search and rescue operations continue

Red Cross/Red Crescent Action

Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies around the globe have been receiving calls from their public eager to help the victims, as well as from print, radio, and television journalists. Several Societies have already initiated fund-raising campaigns.

In Kabul, the ICRC, Federation and ARCS are meeting regularly with other organisations to provide a comprehensive response to this disaster. Relief stocks of medicine, tents, blankets, clothing, shelter materials, and cook sets have inventoried. Staff are on stand-by to move these items in as soon as the assessment teams provide the needed logistical information. The Federation and ICRC are determining what role each will take the lead in and are drawing up action plans to meet the anticipated response.

The Europe and Asia & Pacific Departments are jointly following these events. Federation actions are being co-ordinated with ICRC. For further information contact Kris Hurlburt, Desk Officer at 41.22.730.42.69 or hurlburt@ifrc.org

Needs

Further information will be provided as it becomes available, however cash contributions are being accepted.

Ann Naef
Head
Appeals & Reports Service

Hiroshi Higashiura
Director
Asia & Pacific Department

Renny Nancholas
Director
Europe Department