

INDONESIA: EARTHQUAKE

28 June 2000

appeal no. 15/2000

situation report no. 3

period covered: 13 June to 27 June 2000

Although aftershocks continue, daily life is slowly returning to normal in the Bengkulu province. Schools and shops are being re-opened (sometimes in makeshift facilities) and reconstruction has begun. Many families still sleep outside as their houses have collapsed or because of fear of further aftershocks. The Indonesian Red Cross or Pelang Merah Indonesia (PMI), with support from the Federation, is now well into the implementation phase with the arrival and construction of the ERU field hospital which opened on June 20 and the distribution of family kits.

The context

An earthquake measuring 7.9 on the Richter scale hit the province of Bengkulu on the island of Sumatra on Sunday, 4 June, at 23:30 hrs local time. It was followed 11 minutes later by an aftershock of 6.7, and since then the area has experienced over 730 aftershocks. The epicentre of the quake was in the ocean approximately 112 km southwest of the provincial capital of Bengkulu (pop. 1.5 million). Initial reports indicated that 90 people died, 788 were severely injured, and 1,709 were injured (these figures continue to increase).

The province of Bengkulu, which covers an area of almost 2 million hectares, has a total population of 1,557,000 (1999 statistics). The province stretches along the shoreline, and further inland becomes more mountainous. The lowlands include the towns of Bengkulu and Manna; the mountainous areas rise to 1000-2000m above sea level.

On 6 June, the Federation issued a preliminary appeal for CHF 5,353,933 in response to a request by the Indonesian Red Cross, or Pelang Merah Indonesia (PMI), for assistance. A Federation relief team arrived in Indonesia the same day to conduct an initial assessment of the situation. Despite the high Richter scale rating, the earthquake was not as serious as it might have been, mainly because it struck rural areas where most of the buildings/homes are only one storey high.

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Latest events

The government is continuing its relief efforts, distributing rice and noodles. The Bengkulu earthquake continues to have high media attention and a TV-show was staged to raise funds.

Life is slowly returning to normal with both reconstruction of collapsed/damaged buildings as well as construction of new buildings. Schools have reopened, although children are being taught outdoors in most places.

Red Cross/Red Crescent action

Federation •

With support from the Federation's Regional Finance Unit in Kuala Lumpur, a revised Appeal for CHF 4,872,921 was launched on 14 June 2000. The full implementation of relief activities is well underway with three distribution priorities: the ERU-field hospital, family kits, and plastic tarpaulins (see detail below). The field sub-delegation is in place, located within the PMI Branch office and warehouse.

PMI •

Ten first aid posts ("Poskos") have been established in the worst hit areas. Trained volunteers are staffing the posts, distributing some medicine and treatment, and referring severe cases to the hospital.

Soup (communal) kitchens have stopped, but almost 200 volunteers have continued to support Federation and PMI activities. Many of the volunteers belong to specially trained teams and have been deployed from other areas where PMI has a stronger presence (Jakarta, Lampung, Pekanbaru); others are students from the local university or new volunteers offering their service to PMI - among them a group of volunteers from the Indonesian-based "Family Care" organisation.

The Chairman of PMI, Mar'ie Mohammad, visited the area last week for three days, facilitating many important contacts and enthusiastically supporting the operation.

ERU - field hospital •

A fully equipped, 150 bed Emergency Response Unit (ERU) field hospital arrived in Jakarta on June 14. On June 15 -16, the Indonesian Army airlifted the hospital by aircraft cargo flights. Construction began immediately with the support of more than 60 volunteers and six technicians and medical advisors from the Norwegian Red Cross.

On June 20 the hospital opened when the first patients were moved to the new Intensive Care Unit. Within eight hours all patients, staff and equipment had been transferred from the makeshift camp on the lawn in front of the damaged Bengkulu provincial hospital. The move was organised by the hospital staff, who have been extremely cooperative and appreciative throughout this operation. The doctors and nurses also facilitated in the layout of the hospital, as well as deciding whether to use the new or old equipment, or a combination of both. The first four surgical operations took place in the operating theatre on June 21, followed by a further six the next day. The OPD is treating between 150-300 cases daily.

The hospital presently has 66 patients, 17 of whom are victims of the earthquake. The ERU hospital will function as a replacement for the damaged provincial hospital while it is being rebuilt. This will take an estimated six-seven months after which the ERU hospital will be repacked and transported by PMI to Jakarta for deployment elsewhere.

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A Memorandum of Understanding was signed between the Federation, the local government, and the Minister of Health (witnessed and signed by the Vice President of the Republic of Indonesia, Megawati Soekarnoputri during a visit to the disaster area).

Shelter and family kits •

The distribution of family kits and shelter material to 483 families on Enggano Island has been completed. Further kits are currently being distributed in Bengkulu province. A further 5,000 family kits have been made available through the ICRC in Jakarta and procurement, in Jakarta, is underway for the balance of kits. The final shipment of plastic tarpaulins have now arrived in Jakarta and are currently being transported to Bengkulu by naval vessel. A final distribution plan is being drawn up for the remaining kits and shelter materials.

Delegates, logistics •

The delegation now consists of a relief delegate and a logistic delegate who are based in Bengkulu, supported by the Head of Delegation in Jakarta. A reporting delegate to replace the interim information delegates arrived on June 23 initially for a three month period.

A six-person team from the Norwegian Red Cross have monitored the construction of the field hospital, and medical advisors have planned the layout and given instruction related to special equipment needs.

A doctor from the Danish Red Cross is present as an observer, and is heavily involved in the work. A Japanese Red Cross team visited Bengkulu for a week, studying the concept and the practicalities of the ERU.

Outstanding needs

The initial donor response has been positive and timely; if those donors who have indicated support confirm their contributions, then a balance of CHF 500,000 will remain outstanding to cover this operation. We, therefore, urge donors to confirm their pledges and to make every effort to cover the balance of CHF 500,000 which will be used for shelter materials and family kits.

External relations - Government/UN/NGOs/Media

The operation continues to attract a high level of local media attention, with the ERU hospital covered on the prime TV and print news (both Indonesian-language and English media). Ten Jakarta-based journalists/photographers were onboard the first ERU cargo flight, and they spent two days in Bengkulu reporting on the PMI and Federation operation. The arrangements are professionally handled by the PMI Information Department.

Many VIPs have visited the hospital site during construction and after the opening, among them the Minister of Health Dr. Ahmad Sudyudi. The appreciation and goodwill from authorities, local population and media continues to be outstanding, providing positive exposure for the PMI and the Federation.

The delegation and PMI continue to provide information to the various Jakarta based Embassies and have facilitated a number of high-level visits to Bengkulu in recent days. In Geneva, the Federation Secretariat and OCHA have continued to exchange information.

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