

ECUADOR: EARTHQUAKE

11 July 1996

appeal no. 08/96

situation report no.1 (final report)

period covered: 4 April -- 31 May 1996

The relief operation for victims of the earthquake in central Ecuador was completed on 31 May, after providing food, tools and cooking utensils to 1,000 families in rural areas of Cusubamba.

The disaster

The 5.7 Richter scale earthquake on 28 March 1996 struck mountainous areas of central Ecuador, leaving 13 dead and 150 injured. Some 15,000 were rendered homeless since approximately 3,000 houses in the 93 communities in the affected areas were destroyed. Most of the houses collapsed as they were old and primarily built of adobe, blocks of sand and vegetable fibre and mud. Churches, schools and community buildings constructed with the same materials were also damaged.

The appeal

The Ecuadorean Red Cross (ERC) carried out preliminary relief activities from 28 March to 2 April and, after conducting an initial evaluation of damage in the field and the number of families affected, decided to appeal for assistance to the International Federation. The appeal, for CHF 467,000, sought to assist 3,000 beneficiaries for two months. The Federation rapidly released USD 41,806 from its Disaster Relief Emergency Fund. Four weeks after the event a further USD 50,000 was sent.

Red Cross action

Needs evaluation •

The Ecuadorean Civil Defence, the leading disaster body in the country, allocated area 2 in Cusubamba to the Ecuadorean Red Cross to provide assistance. The area of Cusubamba has 22 communities totalling 1,150 families, 1,116 of whom were affected.

Although the ERC had carried out three assessments within 36 hours after the disaster it had not been possible to get an accurate picture of the situation due to communications difficulties and blocked roads. Even two weeks after the earthquake further affected

communities were being located. In addition, the operation was not carried out in the area initially evaluated.

Because of these factors the ERC made further assessments in Cusubamba, working with a local priest who was knowledgeable about the communities and their leaders, holding meetings with the community leaders and visiting the communities in unknown, steep parts of the high plateau.

After these surveys, the ERC decided to help 1,000 families, in particular those whose homes were destroyed or badly damaged (699 families). The remaining 301 families suffered minor damage to their housing and comprised pregnant women, children under the age of six, elderly persons and lactating women. It was decided to cover the most urgent needs which other agencies and institutions were not covering. These were identified as tools, food, shelter and cooking utensils.

Aid had to be brought to each community. During the operation, the distribution plan changed. The set of tools had to be given first as the communities had organized "mingas" (groups of persons) to begin rehabilitation and reconstruction work. Although the communities were comprised of Indian peasants, they did not have enough tools. It was decided to provide tools as other agencies or non-governmental organizations were not providing this type of aid.

• PLAN OF ACTION

FOOD PROGRAMME

To provide basic food rich in cereals, with a family package calculated for an average of six persons for two weeks. Each family received an average of 65 pounds of the food listed below:

- 12 pounds of rice
- 12 pounds of maize
- 12 pounds of barley flour
- 11 pounds of beans
- 4 pounds of butter
- 2 pounds of salt
- 10 pounds of noodles
- 5 pounds of brown sugar.

TOOLS PROGRAMME

This programme was chosen as 95% of the communities are peasants. Each family was provided a set of tools for rehabilitation and reconstruction and for farming activities which is their livelihood. Each family thus received the following tools:

- 1 spade
- 1 pickaxe
- 1 large hoe
- 1 hammer
- 1 pliers
- 1 saw
- 1 kilo of wire
- 3 kilos of nails of different sizes
- 1 20-litre plastic bucket.

In addition 44 handcarts were given collectively to 22 communities. These were an in-kind donation from the hardware store where the sets of tools were purchased.

COOKING UTENSILS The evaluation revealed that the communities lacked family cooking utensils. It was thus decided to provide a set of cooking utensils to each family, as follows:

- 1 #30 aluminium pot
- 1 #22 aluminium pot
- 1 # 26 aluminium frying pan
- 1 aluminium lunch box
- 1 aluminium pail or small boiler.

NOTE: The shelter programme which was initially scheduled to provide plastic and bedclothes for families in the mountain area was met locally by bedclothes from the Ecuadorean Red Cross and other institutions and plastic sheeting from the United Nations, civil defence and other organizations.

Distributions were completed and the operation closed on 15 May, 1996.

Contributions

See Annex 1 for details.

Conclusion

This operation had to be changed due to the constant change in circumstances. The flexibility of the Ecuadorean Red Cross and the Federation delegate provided that the most vulnerable victims were helped in a timely fashion.

The French Red Cross received a grant from ECHO for CHF 414,450 to follow up this operation with a reconstruction phase which at the present time is underway.

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