

ATHENS: EARTHQUAKE

26 November 1999

appeal no. 22/99

situation report no. 3

period covered: September - October 1999

The immediate donor cash and in-kind support allowed relief assistance to be delivered quickly. The emergency relief phase is now coming to an end, and while no further relief items are needed, cash support is still required to cover the cost of relief items which have been purchased by the Federation to replenish emergency stocks used in the relief operation.

The disaster

A strong earthquake struck the Greek capital Athens at 14h56 local time on 7 September, measuring 5.9 on the Richter scale, lasting ten seconds and bringing death, injury and destruction in its wake. The tremor was felt as far away as Corinth, 100 kms south of the city. The major impact of the earthquake was in the north western municipalities of Athens. According to official figures, 138 people died, 85 individuals were rescued, 30,000 were left unemployed and 13,000 families have been officially listed as vulnerable. The total number of people affected was estimated at 100,000.

The areas which suffered the most extensive destruction are the relatively poorer suburbs of Athens including: Menidi, Ano Liosia, Thracomacedones, Philadelphia, Zefiri, Metamorphosi, Petroupoli, N. Ionia, Moschato, Fili, Kamatero, Ilion, Elefsina, N. Halkidona, Peristeri, Ag Anargiri, Haidari and Galatsi. A state of emergency was declared in the Prefecture of Attica, which lies at the centre of the disaster zone and comprises a substantial immigrant, refugee and gypsy population.

On 8 September the International Federation launched a Preliminary Appeal seeking CHF 750,000 to provide relief for those affected by the earthquake. This was followed by a full Appeal which was launched on 24 September seeking a total of CHF 2,338,000 to provide for the immediate shelter and

relief needs of 50,000 vulnerable people most seriously affected by the earthquake, and to replenish Hellenic Red Cross disaster preparedness stocks.

Update

In the weeks following the earthquake, through September and October, the government has undertaken surveys of all the damaged buildings in 57 municipalities. The latest figures are: 74,053 houses were completely or partially destroyed (homes for 209,842 people), and as of the end of October, 19,560 people were accommodated in temporary shelter, with the remainder in their repaired houses. Some 8,388 enterprises which had employed 28,116 people were completely or partially destroyed, 3,656 enterprises were closed temporarily, and 850 enterprises have closed permanently. The government is in the process of providing the homeless with either prefabricated houses or alternative accommodation; it is hoped that everyone will be moved out of tents by the end of November.

The Greek Government has been co-ordinating all the relief activities through the Ministry of the Interior, municipal authorities in the affected areas, and the Hellenic Red Cross, which has had the prime responsibility for the relief effort.

Red Cross/Red Crescent action

The Hellenic Red Cross has been at the forefront of the emergency response effort from the start, and moved quickly into action assigning staff and volunteers to the disaster area to undertake search and rescue, first aid, shelter and relief activities. Thirteen field dispensaries/relief centres were set up in the affected areas. Support teams for these centres comprised rescue and first aid workers, doctors, nurses and social workers, tasked to provide medical care, psychological support, and to distribute relief material and hot meals.

An average of 300 Hellenic Red Cross staff and volunteers have been in the field daily. In addition to the initial distribution of 9,565 mattresses and 10,600 blankets (drawn with donor agreement from Red Cross Red Crescent Balkans emergency stocks and dispatched by truck from Skopje to Athens), a total of 5,499 tents, 12,500 mattresses, 15,850 blankets, 5,500 bedlinen sets, 25 large tents, 47 rolls of plastic sheeting, and 2,000 pillows have been distributed for 50,000 people.

To supplement relief activities being carried out by the Hellenic Red Cross with Federation support, the National Society, through its own resources, has provided medical and psychological support to victims and tracing services through its 13 permanent Red Cross teams covering 18 municipalities. The Hellenic Red Cross also provided about 57,000 people with three meals per day for the first few weeks during the initial emergency phase up to 9 October, when the Ministry of Interior took over the provision of food, while the Hellenic Red Cross continued with the food distribution. In addition, the Hellenic Red Cross has purchased and distributed hygiene and baby parcels for 50,000 people, and the Federation is in the process of purchasing a further 5,000 hygiene and 1,000 baby parcels to send to Athens for distribution in November.

The Government will have arranged temporary accommodation (prefabricated houses or rent for alternative accommodation) for all those who lost their homes by the end of November, and the emergency relief programme is therefore winding down and will finish at the end of this month.

Outstanding needs

With the emergency relief phase coming to an end, no further relief items are needed. However, there remains an outstanding cash requirement of approximately CHF 430,000 to cover the cost of relief items which have been purchased by the Federation for the emergency relief operation.

Contributions

See Annex 1 for details. The Hellenic Red Cross and the Federation would like to thank all those PNS who responded so quickly with the provision of relief items and cash contributions.

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