

# ***CHINA: EARTHQUAKE***

*11 January 1999*

## ***Information Bulletin N° 4***

### ***The Disaster***

On 19 November, 1998, two earthquakes measuring 5.6 and 6.2 on the Richter scale hit a rural area on the borders of Yunnan and Sichuan Provinces in south west China. Some 200 aftershocks following the main earthquakes, occurred, causing additional damage to already weakened structures.

According to the Federation's Field Delegate, who visited the affected area 12-19 December, the inhabitants are in the process of reconstructing their homes. Due to the general poverty in this mountainous area, considered one of the poorest in China, the population have resorted to using the traditional earth (adobe style) block construction techniques which are not designed to withstand earthquakes and tend to collapse at the slightest tremor. The only buildings offering any form of resistance are those constructed entirely from logs taken from the woods on the local mountain slopes, but the government has banned all logging after the latest disastrous flooding, caused in part by the massive deforestation in the upper reaches of the Yangtze.

On 4 January 1999 another earthquake (5.0 on the Richter scale) hit the same area. The local authorities reported that on this occasion no major damage was caused, due mainly to the early warnings from the local seismological monitoring station to the population who were able to take precautions. Some of the buildings damaged in the earlier quake collapsed. There were no deaths reported.

#### ***Government action***

The local authorities released 1,000 blankets, 1,200 quilts, 460 woollen mats, 1,000 tents and large quantities of plastic sheeting to help with temporary shelter.. The provincial government earmarked 20 million yuan (CHF 3 million) for emergency aid and relief works and another 10 million yuan (CHF 1.6 million) was allocated by the Ministry of Civil Affairs. Following an appeal by the provincial government, other Chinese NGOs, international agencies (MSF-Holland, Oxfam, Save the Children) and charitable organisations are involved in raising funds and relief distributions.

### ***Red Cross/Red Crescent Action***

The Yunnan Province Red Cross continues to mobilise funds and in-kind donations to assist the most vulnerable in the disaster area.

The Red Cross Society of China (RCSC) agreed to release 200,000 yuan (CHF 32,000) immediately to the region and requested additional assistance of CHF 340,000 from the Federation to supplement these funds. This amount has now been fully covered through contributions from the Canadian Red Cross (CHF 96,000), American Red Cross (CHF 83,000) and ECHO (CHF 176,000). CHF 50,000 taken from DREF was also released at the beginning of this operation.

The Federation delegate, who visited Yunnan to monitor the procurement of relief supplies funded through the Federation, reported that the shelter needs of the victims of the earthquake have mostly been met. The most urgent needs are for food, in the form of rice and wheat flour, and winter clothing and quilts because of the freezing temperatures. Based on this field assessment, the original budget has been slightly modified. The number of tents originally planned for has been reduced from 500 to 300 and 133 MT of rice will now be bought. The number of quilts has been increased.

The Federation has transferred CHF 229,000 so far to the Yunnan Red Cross Provincial Branch through the RCSC HQ. This represents 68% of the total budget requested by the RCSC. Remaining funds (CHF 111,000) will be transferred shortly.

The provincial Red Cross has been able to purchase the initial supplies of the relief items and on 8 January started the distribution of 4,000 quilts and 100 tents in the Lijiang prefecture. The procurement will continue as the funds arrive in the RCSC HQ in Beijing.

The Hong Kong Red Cross has donated, to date, some 530,000 RMB (CHF 88,510), which will be put towards the purchase of additional relief items (food, heavy coats, etc.). A proposal has been submitted to it by the RCSC to assist in the reconstruction of a Red Cross hospital.

## *Needs*

The chart below shows the relief items it is planned to distribute. Although they should go some way towards meeting the new needs outlined by the Yunnan RC Branch, the Federation will continue to monitor the situation in the area, through further field trips, to ensure that the most vulnerable are assisted during this period of recovery.

<b>Item</b>	<b>Quantity</b>	<b>Total Cost (CHF)</b>
Quilts	8,845	115,000
Heavy Winter Coats	5,000	60,000
Tents	300	96,000
Food	133 MT	64,000
Operational costs		5,000
<b>Total</b>		<b>340,000</b>

## *Conclusion*

The Federation and the RCSC thank donor societies who responded so rapidly to this emergency operation.

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