

China Earthquake Appeal – 6 months on

Background

On 12 May 2008 a deadly earthquake measuring 7.8 on the Richter scale devastated the south-western province of Sichuan, affecting more than 15 million people. The earthquake claimed 80,000 lives, injured almost 375,000 people, and left 4.8 million homeless. It was the deadliest earthquake to hit China for 30 years.

The earthquake was felt most in the province of Sichuan; however it also affected six other provinces - Gansu, Shaanxi, Yunnan, Shanxi, Guizhou and Hubei provinces. Most of the affected communities in these provinces had not experienced disasters prior to the earthquake and were ill-prepared for such an event.



The Response of the Red Cross & Red Crescent Movement

The Red Cross and Red Crescent Movement was able to respond immediately to support those affected by the earthquake, with the Red Cross Society of China – the country's main emergency response agency – leading the emergency relief operation, with support from the International Federation and national societies from around the globe.



The scale of the earthquake required the Sichuan branch of the Red Cross Society of China to rally support from other branches across the country, including those in Hong Kong, Macau and Taiwan.

More than 35,000 Red Cross Society of China staff and volunteers were involved – working around the clock to distribute food, water, clothes, shelter and medicines to survivors, as well as rescue those trapped beneath the rubble and provide life-saving first aid to the injured.

The International Federation launched an emergency appeal, which raised over £44 million globally to help families affected by the earthquake. The British Red Cross contributed £1.5 million to the overall

Federation appeal and released £25,000 from its Disaster Fund to ensure immediate support could be brought to those who needed it most.

Red Cross emergency response teams sent from around the world

Red Cross Emergency Response Units (ERU) were sent from around the world to support the enormous relief operation.

A Logistics ERU was deployed to help co-ordinate the arrival and distribution of emergency relief items, which arrived each day and included hundreds of thousands of tents, quilts and clothes; and almost 6,500 tonnes of food. Two Water ERU's were flown into the country and treated approximately 3,000 cubic metres of safe drinking water which was distributed via a network of 52 water points to the Jiulong, Zunduo, and Xinglong townships, serving an estimated 12,000 people.



The British Red Cross Mass Sanitation Module (MSM) was also sent. It was the second deployment for the MSM, which saves lives and reduces disease by delivering essential sanitation and hygiene promotion services. The MSM team comprised a team leader, health expert, sanitation engineer and a support delegate. Working closely with the Red Cross Society of China the team built 308 latrines in the Jiulong and Banqiao townships.

Red Cross Society of China community volunteers were given training by the MSM team on maintaining the latrines and how to prevent sanitation-related diseases. They then passed on what they had learned to members of their own communities through house-to-house visits, drama shows, quizzes and hygiene promotion sessions in villages and schools.

The British Red Cross MSM had a huge impact on the lives of thousands of people living in aftermath of the earthquake – by giving them the chance to contribute themselves to preventing diseases through hygiene education and the construction of latrines.

Meeting people's shelter and medical care needs

A massive 90 percent of buildings were destroyed or made unsafe by the earthquake, leaving almost 5 million people homeless. The Chinese government made a worldwide appeal for tents to house people whose homes had been affected. The International Federation quickly responded to the request by donating 100,000 tents to quake-affected districts in Sichuan, Gansu and Shaanxi. The British Red Cross supported the International Federation's response - contributing 5,000 tents.

A 54-bed field hospital run jointly by the German Red Cross and Red Cross Society of China was set up in Dujiangyan. The hospital, which was staffed by 121 personnel, treated more than 66,000 patients including over 7,000 emergency cases, and safely delivered two babies. Three ambulances provided mobile medical care to survivors living in more remote areas of the region and also enabled those needing more complex treatment to be brought to the hospital.

Rehabilitation for the seriously injured

The Red Cross Movement is also supporting a hospital, which is treating thousands of survivors who were seriously injured by earthquake.

For a 16-year-old lad who enjoys playing basketball, one can only imagine the sense of shock and loss at having to have a leg amputated.

But **Tang Lei**, a young survivor of the devastating earthquake, which hit the Sichuan Province, seems in bouncy spirits as he propels himself ahead on his crutches, flanked by his mother. They are on their way to see if his wound has healed sufficiently to fit an artificial leg.

"I still practise basketball shots," he says, when asked how he plans to pass the long months in hospital.

Marching up and down a ramp of stairs, pushing legs up and down and kneading atrophied muscles, a couple of dozen men, women and children are hard at work in the rehabilitation room inside the hospital building.

"I am doing about three or four hours of exercises a day," says **Tang Rongbi, 34**, with the spikes of a rehabilitative brace protruding painfully from her leg. She suffered multiple breaks when a wall collapsed on her.

Offering psychological support

Six months on from the devastating earthquake, people are still recovering from the enormous stress that it has caused. To help people during this time of high emotional stress, the Red Cross Society of China has established 2 teams to provide psychological support to survivors and relief workers. The teams will also provide training for volunteers so they can provide additional support to survivors coping with post-disaster trauma.

'I've learned to treasure life'

Liu Yujiany, 14, says following the experience of the earthquake and the counselling which she had received, "I have really learned to treasure life and glad that I am alive." Her friend, **Xiao Li, also 14**, agrees, even though she says: "I had a difficult time at first coming to terms with the death of my cousin, who was only a year older than me."

Liu Yujiany and Xiao Li, who received support from the Red Cross Society of China

Preparing for the harsh winter ahead

With a harsh winter approaching, the Red Cross Society of China and the International Federation are providing 100,000 hygiene parcels and warm quilts in the earthquake zone in time for the onset of the cold weather. These items have been distributed to vulnerable people living in isolated villages, as well as to large numbers of people living in temporary shelters.

Committed to people's recovery

Six months on, the emergency phase of the crisis has ended and the operation is moving into recovery and reconstruction.

Before the earthquake, Sichuan, Shaanxi and Gansu were classed as some of the most impoverished areas in China. However according to China's Ministry of Commerce, a further 10 million people saw their lives pushed below the poverty line following the earthquake. Red Cross and Red Crescent Movement programmes are anticipated to continue for another two and a half years up until April 2011 and will focus on the reconstruction of tens of thousands of homes – as well as hundreds of schools, and clinics in township and villages.

Many people rely on agricultural plots to produce food for themselves and feed for their livestock, but the earthquake has affected their ability to grow what they need. Those who are able to have migrated elsewhere to find work to supplement their income, but others – especially the elderly, who are not able to work, are struggling. The British Red Cross is planning to support a cash grants recovery programme as well as providing emergency livelihoods support to help the most vulnerable people, such as the elderly, people with disabilities and single parent households.

"We are helping people in a practical sense to regain their resilience after this huge disaster, but the work of the International Federation has also demonstrated the ongoing solidarity and support of the Red Cross and Red Crescent Movement."

"The support we have provided has been essential, but much work remains to be done"

Carl Naucler, Head of the Federation's East Asia Regional Delegation in Beijing

You have helped to make a difference

Thank you so much for your generosity. It has enabled us to provide invaluable support to the hundreds of thousands of people affected by the earthquake