



Canadian Red Cross
Croix-Rouge canadienne



Red Cross...Anywhere. Anytime.

Earthquake in Iran: helping survivors rebuild their lives

January 29, 2004

The need

A major earthquake registering 6.3 on the Richter scale hit Iran on the morning of December 26, 2003. The death toll has reached 41,000. Over 30,000 people were injured and more than 75,000 people have been left homeless.

The earthquake centred on the city of Bam in the southeast of the country, causing massive destruction in the city and damage in the surrounding villages. In Bam, 85% of homes are either badly damaged or destroyed, and both of the city's hospitals were flattened in the quake.

One month after the disaster, the ongoing relief efforts are still focused on the emergency relief needed for the survival of tens of thousands of families living and sleeping amid freezing night temperatures, sandstorms and aftershocks.

The need for shelter, clean water and medical assistance is urgent.

How the Red Cross is helping

The International Red Cross Red Crescent, whose mandate is to provide assistance to those affected by disaster, and the local Red Crescent have been working to alleviate the suffering of earthquake survivors. The Iranian Red Crescent Society has significant experience in responding to natural disasters in Iran, particularly with earthquakes. In the early hours and days following the quake, the local Red Crescent's search and rescue teams pulled 11,000 survivors from the rubble. Now, efforts are focused on helping survivors—many of whom are injured and without homes.

The Red Cross Red Crescent has launched a worldwide appeal for \$53.9 million CAD to support the relief operation and longer-term relief work in health, water and sanitation and shelter.

Emergency relief

Since the first days following the quake, the Iranian Red Crescent Society has been registering the affected people, targeting beneficiaries and issuing ration cards to ensure that help is getting to those who need it most. Tents and plastic sheeting for shelter, blankets, cooking utensils, food, clean water and kerosene are being distributed as quickly as possible by over 1,700 local and international Red Cross and Red Crescent relief workers. Tent-to-tent visits ensure proper registration and distribution of relief items.

The Red Cross Red Crescent is managing 12 tent camps set up in and around the city of Bam to house survivors of the devastating earthquake. A Red Cross Red Crescent referral hospital and three basic health care emergency units are serving the many injured and providing basic health care services to the residents in and around Bam following the destruction of both area hospitals.

Concerns about disease are great, so clean water and sanitation systems have been installed in the referral hospital, clinics, tent camps and distribution points in the area.

The Iranian Red Crescent Society is also providing psychological support to an estimated 25,000 people requiring help to overcome trauma experienced in the earthquake.

Restoring family links

The Red Cross and Red Crescent strives to reunite loved ones separated by disaster or conflict and has a tracing team in Bam and several satellite phones to help families contact concerned loved ones around the world. The use of satellite phones has proven very successful in other disaster and conflict zones and provides great reassurance to families who can be in touch, even if only briefly.

How Canadians are helping—and how you can help

Canadians have donated over \$2 million to the Red Cross relief effort since the earthquake hit Bam. The Canadian Red Cross immediately released \$100,000 from the International Disaster Relief Fund and sent two relief workers to help in the area.

Financial aid and goods flow directly through the International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies response system to assist the Iranian Red Crescent Society in providing immediate relief and basic assistance to the beneficiaries in Bam, Iran. The operation is regularly monitored to ensure the proper handling of all goods. Donations and goods are not distributed through the Iranian government or non-partner agencies.

Help is still needed. Canadians are urged to donate generously to help survivors of this devastating disaster. Cash transfers to the affected region provide the optimum flexibility to our Red Cross colleagues so they can meet the most urgent needs.

In-kind donations of food, clothing and other items, while well intentioned, are not the best way to help those in need. There are tremendous processing and transportation costs involved in shipping these items to beneficiaries. Local purchases of food and clothing are more culturally appropriate and effective. Red Cross supplies can be purchased in the immediate area, thereby reducing transportation costs.

Please help those affected by the earthquake in Iran.

Make your donation

- online at www.redcross.ca
- toll-free at 1-800-418-1111
- at any local Red Cross office
- by mailing a cheque or money order (no cash in the mail, please) to Canadian Red Cross National Office, 170 Metcalfe Street, Suite 300, Ottawa, Ontario, K2P 2P2, or
- by contacting