May 2008 China Earthquake

One-Year Update on the American Red Cross Response
One moment, students in China were reciting lessons, shoppers were at the market and farmers were tending to crops. The next, schools crumbled and homes collapsed as the land abruptly shifted beneath them. The world, including the generous donors of the American Red Cross, responded.

China’s Earthquake: A Global Response

In response to the May 2008 earthquake, staff and volunteers from the Red Cross Society of China immediately took action in the heart of the damaged region: the Sichuan, Gansu and Shaanxi provinces of southwestern China. During the weeks that followed, Red Cross and Red Crescent relief workers from around the world joined them, helping to conduct assessments, provide healthcare, and deliver tents, water and food. The earthquake—more powerful than any to hit China in three decades—left almost 87,000 dead or missing, 375,000 injured and 15 million homeless. For months, aftershocks continued and, along with winter rains and landslides, compounded the destruction.

With support from the American Red Cross and other partners, the Red Cross Society of China is leading a recovery operation that will support families as they heal and rebuild.

The International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) is an independent organization that works exclusively in areas of conflict. The International Red Cross and Red Crescent Movement, The World’s Largest Humanitarian Network, consists of 186 national Red Cross and Red Crescent societies, like the American Red Cross, provide services from disaster relief to health and social programs in their countries. The International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies (International Federation) coordinates relief and development efforts for national societies worldwide.

On the cover: Children play outside a temporary school provided by the Red Cross. (Francis Markus/International Federation)
Timeline: The Steps to Recovery

May 12  An 8.0 earthquake hits southwestern China, prompting the Red Cross Society of China to immediately respond. More than 35,000 Red Cross staff and volunteers from across China will eventually participate in relief activities.

May 15  The American Red Cross sends an initial $10 million in cash assistance.

May 19  The first American Red Cross disaster expert arrives to join the relief effort. Two more American Red Cross responders follow in June and July, joining those from dozens of other Red Cross and Red Crescent partners.

June 29 - July 2  American Red Cross President and CEO Gail McGovern travels to earthquake-affected areas to observe the relief efforts. Over the next few months, 1 million people receive clean water, tents and/or basic relief items.

October 9-10  The Red Cross Society of China meets with Red Cross and Red Crescent partners, drawing upon a wealth of collective disaster management expertise to develop plans for how to rebuild communities.

January 2009  Longer-term recovery assistance begins, with a goal of rebuilding 70,000 homes, as well as schools and health clinics.

April 2009  Following months of restoring immunization infrastructure, a campaign is launched in affected areas to vaccinate 7.3 million children against measles.

July 2009  Construction is scheduled to begin on village water supply systems. Preparedness activities will begin to ensure communities are better equipped to withstand the next disaster.

December 2010  Shelter recovery is scheduled to conclude.

July 2011  The full recovery and preparedness program is scheduled to conclude.

Earthquake Damage At a Glance

- An 8.0 earthquake strikes north of Chengdu in Sichuan Province.
- Quake-induced landslides and lakes permanently alter the landscape.
- Powerful aftershocks continue for months, prolonging trauma and leading many families to sleep outdoors.
- 5.2 million homes are destroyed and more than 7,000 schools collapsed.

**Affected Provinces**

![Map Image]
Timely response to disasters is critical, and the network of national societies around the world enables the Red Cross and Red Crescent Movement to quickly respond. Following the Sichuan earthquake, Red Cross Society of China medical teams were among the first on the scene. Red Cross relief goods pre-positioned in affected areas made it possible to meet needs in the early hours following the earthquake. Ultimately 1 million survivors received basic relief items from the Red Cross.

To ensure sufficient resources were available to rapidly deliver assistance, the American Red Cross released an initial $10 million from our International Response Fund within 72 hours. Combined with resources from other Red Cross and Red Crescent partners, this cash provided more than 1 million people with support, including basic relief items, tents, clean water, first aid, medical care and psychological support. The American Red Cross also provided $4 million to the Measles Initiative to prevent disease outbreaks (see box at right).

Cash is only one of the three types of assistance the American Red Cross provides after international disasters—we also pre-position supplies in warehouses around the world and deploy trained personnel. Our first disaster response expert arrived a week after the earthquake and was soon followed by two others. To listen to their stories and understand how they helped, visit www.redcross.org/chinaearthquake.

To the Measles Initiative to prevent disease outbreaks (see box at right).

Disasters and Disease: A Dangerous Combination

When displaced disaster survivors shelter together in crowded conditions, diseases can spread quickly and immunizations are critical. Measles, which kills 540 kids each day, is one of these diseases.

The Measles Initiative—a partnership between the American Red Cross, UNICEF, the United Nations Foundation, the U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, and the World Health Organization—is working to reduce measles deaths by 90% worldwide.

In China, we helped provide measles vaccines to more than 7.3 million children in provinces severely affected by the earthquake.

The American Red Cross and our partners also supported the Chinese government to repair immunization infrastructure, ensuring that routine vaccinations could resume.

“This isn’t just looking at destruction. It’s looking at broken lives. Lives we must help rebuild.”

— Gail McGovern, American Red Cross President and CEO
Empowering Communities to Recover

In every emergency, saving lives through immediate disaster response is only the first step of many. Full recovery takes time, money and support. In China, recovery efforts are expected to last three years, and American Red Cross support will focus on reconstructing homes, restoring village water supply systems and strengthening local skills to respond to the next disaster. Complicating efforts, some affected areas are facing the worst drought in 50 years, damaging crops and threatening the water supply. The global economic downturn has led thousands of factories to shut down, depriving families of the resources they need to recover.

Although there are challenges, there is also hope. Together with support from Red Cross and Red Crescent partners, Red Cross Society of China volunteers are on the ground working with survivors.

Pooling our resources with more than 30 other Red Cross and Red Crescent societies, the American Red Cross is giving survivors the means and expertise to reconstruct more than 20,000 of these homes. To learn more about the home reconstruction process, visit our Web site.

The Red Cross Society of China will also help rebuild 329 schools, 1,175 township or village health clinics and 97 rural community activity centers. All of these homes and communal buildings will need water and sanitation services.

The American Red Cross is supporting the restoration of village water supply systems, to ensure survivors have access to clean water at their new home. Our partners are also providing additional water and sanitation services, as well as community-based healthcare, psychosocial support and help to reestablish their livelihoods.

Helping Children Recover

His name is Qiuqui, or Little Ball, and he’s helping Chinese children recover emotionally from this disaster.

“After Qiuqui’s parents died in the earthquake, he wandered around for a while, before deciding to rebuild the family’s house with his own two hands,” says one teenager at a middle school in the heart of Sichuan’s earthquake zone, telling a story about the fluffy toy panda she cradles. The panda gets passed to another child who creates a different story. Some children hold Qiuqui tightly, some upside down, still others gaze in his eyes as they talk. A few stop speaking in mid-sentence, unable to continue.

This method of storytelling can be useful in allowing children to move forward from their pain and grief. “The panda is an animal the community identifies with,” explains Health and Psychosocial Support delegate Dr. Jeya Kulaśingam, who brought the activity to the school. “It helps them explain their recovery process, and it helps them recover.”
Preparing for the Future

Disasters occur with increasing frequency and the best time to help is before they hit. The American Red Cross helps our Red Cross and Red Crescent partners better prepare for future disasters by training staff and volunteers for the challenges ahead.

Although current activities are naturally focused on reconstruction, the American Red Cross and the Red Cross Society of China are already making plans to bolster disaster preparedness skills in China by strengthening the capacity of local branches and volunteers. This includes disaster management trainings as well as financial support for restocking supplies in warehouses throughout the country.

American Red Cross disaster preparedness programs are not limited to China. Throughout Asia, we work with our humanitarian partners to—

- Improve the effectiveness of early warning systems.
- Empower communities to develop and practice evacuation plans.
- Train community first responders in first aid and search and rescue skills.

To learn more, please visit our Web site.

A Century of Partnership

The partnership between the American Red Cross and the Red Cross Society of China began more than a century ago. In 1906, the American Red Cross provided relief to famine victims in China and that same year the Red Cross Society of China sent funding in response to the San Francisco earthquake. Since then, we have worked together, exchanging ideas, technologies and methods to improve disaster preparedness and blood transfusion activities.

In the past two decades, American Red Cross support has ranged from the construction of a regional disaster preparedness center to prevention and preparedness training for avian flu. In 2005, the American Red Cross opened an office in Beijing to work with the Red Cross Society of China to improve community health and water services. That same year, Hurricane Katrina elicited a generous outpouring of support from the people of China.

The relationship between the American Red Cross and the Red Cross Society of China reflects the strength of our humanitarian network. Undoubtedly, as both countries face disasters in the future, we will support each other to meet the needs of their communities.
Since the May 2008 earthquake, the Red Cross Society of China has received unprecedented support from within China and around the world. Through support from generous corporations, foundations and individuals, the American Red Cross is proud to have committed more than $55 million as part of this effort, making it the largest international supporter of this Red Cross and Red Crescent relief effort.

The American Red Cross has allocated $16.2 million for relief activities and $38.8 million for recovery and preparedness programs.

The American Red Cross is committed to using every dollar wisely. An average of 90 cents of every dollar the American Red Cross spends is invested in humanitarian services and programs. Thank you for joining us to help those in need.

“*We have seen an outpouring of compassion from across America. While we can never bring back the lives that were lost, we are committed to working together to ensure a full recovery for everyone affected by this earthquake.*”

– Bonnie McElveen-Hunter, Chairman, American Red Cross

**Every Donor Counts**

Despite her age, Kamille Hoggan has become a seasoned fundraiser. Born in China in 1999, she was adopted by Kathy Hoggan of Bellevue, Washington, from a Chinese orphanage. When she heard about the earthquake, Kamille decided she needed to help. “When Kamille saw the coverage of the earthquake, the first thing she wanted to do was look at a map and figure out if that was right where she was born,” said Kathy. “She saw the devastation and heard about the children that were in the schools.”

Kathy contacted their local American Red Cross about raising money for the victims. Afterwards, Kamille personally reached out to all her friends, family and classmates and asked them for help. She even designed a t-shirt and gave it to anyone who gave more than $20.

Her grassroots effort worked. In addition to local donations, she received donations from all over the world. Kamille’s goal was $2,000, but she has raised close to $4,500.
With generous donations from members of the public, Red Cross and Red Crescent societies from all over the world stepped in to bring relief and comfort to survivors of this disaster. This is an indication of the extensive humanity and deep friendship from people all over the world to China.

(Thank You) — Peiyun Peng, President, Red Cross Society of China

Thank you for taking the time to learn more about our response to the May 2008 China earthquake. You can help the victims of countless future crises by making a financial gift now to the American Red Cross International Response Fund, which will provide immediate relief and long-term support through supplies, technical assistance and other support. The American Red Cross was able to respond immediately to this earthquake—even before donations were received—because of contributions already made to the International Response Fund. Please consider helping us as we prepare for the next emergency. Call 1-800-RED CROSS or go to RedCross.org.

To learn more about the international programs of the American Red Cross, please read the International Services FY 2008 Annual Review at www.redcross.org/international. You can also meet us on the Web—stop by the Disaster Online Newsroom, Flickr, Twitter, Facebook, YouTube, Linkedin and Socialvibe.