

Mercy Corps Response to Devastating Ya'an Earthquake—*Sichuan, China*

April 24, 2013



Survivors in Shuangshi township, photo by Mercy Corps

BACKGROUND

Mercy Corps and our partners are working to provide **water, sanitation and hygiene solutions** and **protect children's emotional wellbeing** following the magnitude 7.0 earthquake that struck Ya'an prefecture in Sichuan, on April 20th. The powerful quake caused extensive damage to homes, buildings, roads and water systems in the three counties of Lushan, Tianquan and Baoxing. Early reports indicate at least 188 people have been killed, and more than 11,000 injured. The most recent estimates are that 2 million people have been displaced from their homes.

Mercy Corps Sichuan office responded immediately along with long-standing partner the China Foundation for Poverty Alleviation (CFPA).

Together we were able to carry out immediate assessments of the most affected areas, assist deliveries of drinking water and begin to form a more detailed plan for relief and recovery.



Map of affected area

MERCY CORPS AND CFPA

Mercy Corps and CFPA share a long record of successful joint emergency response activities. Our staff is carrying out joint assessments and the CFPA response team in the area is operating out of Mercy Corps' Chengdu office.

PROPOSED ACTIVITIES

Mercy Corps will support the immediate post-disaster needs of the most vulnerable survivors as well as long-term resilience of the affected communities. This will include providing **water, sanitation and hygiene** supplies and services to the most affected families and protecting the **emotional and social wellbeing of children and families** through community-based child psychosocial support activities.

Our rapid assessment in Lushan County indicated that preliminary shelter materials and basic food are being provided by the government. However, the earthquake, subsequent aftershocks, and resulting displacement means that thousands of families lack access to clean drinking water, adequate toilets and hygiene facilities. As a result, the distribution of hygiene kits will represent a large part of our assistance in the coming days.



Simple plastic cover shelter in Wuxing Longmen, photo by Mercy Corps

We aim to distribute at least **25,000 hygiene kits**, benefiting **100,000 individuals**. A typical kit will include: bucket and/or water storage containers, water purifier, towels, toothbrush/toothpaste, sanitary napkins, soap, washing powder, mosquito repellent and/or oil, disinfectant, antibacterial gel, diapers and powder for infants and toddlers, and antiseptic ointments.

In addition, Mercy Corps, in partnership with CFPA, will carry out a more detailed assessment of camps for the displaced, as well as affected areas where drinking water, sanitation, and proper hygiene are unavailable. We will develop sustainable, context-specific solutions such as hygiene training and promotion, appropriate water storage, water-source cleaning and rehabilitation, and latrine construction or rehabilitation.

Mercy Corps and CFPA also plan to target **5,000 children** aged 5 to 9 years old and train **100 caregivers** for six months with the **Comfort for Kids** methodology, remobilizing the same team of local and international master trainers that we jointly developed following the 2008 Sichuan earthquake. We are ready to deploy with an established suite of localized curriculum

and materials for communities in need. We are also assessing the needs of older youth and can potentially supplement Comfort for Kids activities with our **Moving Forward** program, which uses sports and physical activity to promote teamwork, self-esteem and provide a healthy outlet for crisis-affected youth.

Young children are especially vulnerable to the traumatic effects of disaster. Specifically tailored safe spaces are necessary for them to receive support and recover. Children tend to recover more slowly than adults, and require a stable environment over a sustained period to minimize disruption to healthy development.

In Sichuan province following the 2008 earthquake, Mercy Corps implemented both Comfort for Kids and

Moving Forward to meet the needs of survivors. Working our partners CFPA, Sichuan Youth Federation, and the Dujiangyan Women's Federation, we trained 1,800 adults and supported 30,000 children.

WHAT MAKES MERCY CORPS' APPROACH DIFFERENT?

Our experience demonstrates that during times of turmoil and tragedy, there exists the possibility for positive change. We add our greatest value as an international relief and development agency by supporting those kernels of positive change with community-led and market-driven action. Decades of field experience have shown us the most effective ways to support that transformation. We know that local people are the best agents of their own change and that local markets are often the fastest, most durable drivers of economic recovery. That is why we listen to what communities need and prioritize their most important projects, and this is also why we partner with local organizations like CFPA.



Most houses destroyed in Longmen township, photo by Mercy Corps

In responding to the Ya'an emergency, Mercy Corps will be using its extensive footprint with the experience of implementing post-disaster programming in Sichuan province and the existing relationships spanning government, the private sector, and local NGOs to provide support for survivor's immediate needs as well as long-term recovery and rebuilding.

JOIN US

We appreciate the opportunity to share this update on our response efforts in partnership with CFPA. We would welcome the opportunity to discuss in greater detail how we can work together to meet the immediate needs of survivors while supporting long-term recovery and resilience. Corporate and Foundation grants are being accepted to support the relief effort as well as employee and consumer gifts. Thank you for your partnership.

CONTACT

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