

TURKEY¹

Situated between Asia and Europe, Turkey is a country which is prone to many natural disasters—earthquakes, floods, droughts and forest fires, which historically have caused heavy loss in both lives and property.

The Turkish Red Crescent Society, founded 11 June 1868 (the oldest of the League's Red Crescent member National Societies), has a long history of disaster emergency relief work.

Its experience gained from numerous catastrophes proves the value of disaster preparedness and preplanning. Under governmental mandate, the Turkish Red Crescent has primary operational responsibilities to build up stocks of relief goods and cash reserves; recruit and train personnel for relief operations; provide food, clothing, shelter, first aid and general medical and nursing services; establish local stores of relief supplies; and related activities.

To meet these responsibilities, the National Society developed extensive supplies and training programmes. Supplies are kept in a large, central warehouse in Ankara, the capital, and in five provincial depots throughout the country. Transportation is planned in advance, so that as soon as a disaster emergency is reported, relief goods can be expedited.

Mobile first-aid clinics are also kept on the ready, stocked with standard treatment materials and medicaments. Fully trained Red Crescent personnel are available, on an alert basis, for any likely calamity. This personnel is trained continuously by the Red Crescent, in accordance with known and anticipated requirements.

Medicaments, food and shelter

Primary requirements in most disaster situations are medicaments, food and shelter. The Turkish Red Crescent Society's check list includes various medical supplies and non-perishable foodstuffs, tents, ambulances, blankets, clothing, soup-kitchen equipment, water-purification units, power generators, mobile dispensaries and various delivery vehicles. The Society can distribute up to three hot meals a day to disaster

¹ Extract from *Contact* number 4: Tom Majors, Assistant Director Information Bureau of the League of Red Cross Societies.

victims,¹ due to its good organization, and it keeps 25,000 tents and 100,000 blankets stored permanently in its warehouse and depots—ready for any eventuality.

Most of the tents for disaster relief are manufactured in the Red Crescent's workshops at the Central Warehouse in Ankara. Those tents returned from a disaster area are repaired, as required, and cleaned, before being re-stocked for later use. For relief goods which are imported from abroad the National Society has pre-arranged for the non-imp-osition of customs duties and other taxes.

A recent law established a Central Co-ordinating Committee on Disaster Relief, composed of representatives of the Government and various agencies and chaired by the Ministry of Reconstruction and Resettlement. Similar committees exist in the countryside, under the provincial governors. The Red Crescent is a member of both the Central and provincial Disaster Committees.

The Central Committee establishes policy and procedures, draws up and revises plans, defines tasks of participating agencies and issues instructions to local committees on the handling of emergency operations. Executive power is delegated to governors, subject to general supervision by the Central Committee.

Within this organization the Red Crescent plays a vital role, with its own plans for national and local actions—plans which can be adapted rapidly according to the intensity or the duration of any foreseeable disaster, to protect life and health and to ensure respect for the human being.

¹ *Plate.*