



Sichuan **Quake Relief**



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The windows started rattling, and in seconds were wobbling, and the whole building shaking. Our 40 staff gathered on the road outside, coping with the panic and relief of escaping unharmed. Chengdu, a city of 10 million people in Sichuan province in southwest China, had been lucky, far from the epicentre.

At 2.28pm on May 12th 2008 an earthquake of almost 8 on the Richter scale hit Wenchuan County, northwest of Chengdu. The earthquake began at a depth of just 14 kilometres, making the surface damage severe. In just over a minute a 200-kilometre surface rupture, and another 60 kilometres long, ripped along the line from Anxian to Dujiangyan, at the base of Longmen mountain on the Chengdu plain.

Yingxiu town, at the epicentre of the earthquake in Wenchuan County was razed to the ground. 2,000 of the town's 12,000 population survived. Hundreds of other towns and villages were devastated as the earthquake caused thousands of landslides, and mud and rock flows. The disaster caused almost 90,000

deaths. Over 360,000 people were injured. The disaster directly affected almost 18 million people. Buildings and infrastructure were damaged, mostly in difficult to access, mountainous areas. Over 10 million people were left with no place to live.

The response of the Chinese government was immediate, with massive amounts of aid directed to the region. To help out, a group of Chengdu-based expatriates joined forces, and using the local Bookworm Cafe as headquarters, worked to assist the relief operation, identifying the specific needs of some remote communities not receiving immediate assistance, sending out appeals, collecting funds and supplies, and coordinating deliveries.

Months later, life in the area is returning to something like normal with large amounts of temporary housing erected, basic roads rebuilt, water supplies reconnected, and schools and businesses reopened. Sichuan Quake Relief is now focusing its efforts on acting as a credible information hub, connecting communities to donors and project managers from large organisations. In the face of 'compassion fatigue', the aim is to maintain a spotlight on developments in the earthquake zone.

Contact info@sichuan-quake-relief.org or go to www.sichuan-quake-relief.org for more information or to donate to Sichuan Quake Relief.

