



One-Month-On: Oxfam Hong Kong Review of Relief Work and Five-Year Plan in Sichuan and Gansu after 12 May Earthquake



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1. Where Oxfam works

Within the first month, Oxfam Hong Kong has carried out emergency relief projects in 17 counties/cities in Sichuan, Gansu and Shaanxi Provinces. (See Table 1.)

2. Oxfam Project Information

As of 10 June, Oxfam Hong Kong has spent 17,204,089 Yuan on relief work and 3,598,750 Yuan on rebuilding schools, for a total expenditure of 20,802,839 Yuan. (See Table 2.)

A total of 279,963 people have benefited from Oxfam's projects: 216,682 people in Sichuan, 52,917 people in Gansu, and 10,064 people in Shaanxi.

Other non-relief and non-school projects include:

Public Health

Oxfam Hong Kong has arranged for 260 medical professionals to work in 5 locations of Sichuan to sterilise areas, prevent and control the outbreak of epidemics, distribute medicine, carry out hygiene education, and counsel traumatised children three days a week. This work was carried out by the West China School of Public Health, which is part of Sichuan University in Chengdu. The team of volunteer professionals was led by the Head of School and several professors.



Dr. Lo Wing-lok, Oxfam Advisor and a Public Health and Infectious Disease expert, met with medical personnel, assessed the situation in Guangji, and made recommendations for relief and rehabilitation efforts. (See table 3.)

Oxfam Hong Kong has provided portable toilets for 64 resettlement centres as well as advice on waste management, such as burying organic waste deep in the soil to prevent infestations of insects and rats, and reusing items such as plastic bottles.



Counselling



Oxfam Hong Kong is providing counselling for children survivors: many of their classmates and friends died. Counsellors from our partner organisation, the West China School of Public Health, work in Dujiangyin three times a week.

The sessions are usually in the form of group activities and discussions, but if children need more intensive, one-on-one support, the professionally trained counsellors also provide private sessions.

3. Characteristics of Our Relief Work

Coordination with government departments and other organisations

From the outset, Oxfam Hong Kong has been communicating with the Poverty Alleviation and Development Office and the Ethnic Minority Commission, which are government departments. We have also worked alongside local community bodies, such as the West China School of Public Health and the Islamic Association of Sichuan Province.



Personally visiting the affected areas and making assessments is imperative to fully understand people's needs, from their perspectives. It had been commonly believed that tents were in demand, yet survivors told Oxfam staff members that in fact, rain-resistant sheets of "red-white-blue" polyethylene or polypropylene fabric were preferred, as it could be used for a variety of purposes. Oxfam sourced this low-cost material for thousands of people.

Many local and overseas organisations are at work in the earthquake-affected areas. To avoid duplication, Oxfam Hong Kong consulted relevant government departments

and organisations to ensure that there was no overlap. We assessed the needs of survivors before we sourced and transported supplies to villages and townships, many of which are remote and needed considerable time and resources to reach.

We have been distributing items directly to people to make sure supplies are actually received by the survivors. Being personally present for the distribution process means that Oxfam staff members can also do any additional assessment of people's needs.

Distribution according to people's needs

Oxfam Hong Kong considers the needs of different groups of people and does not always equally distribute supplies. For example, we prioritised the needs of children, women and elderly people when we distributed milk. People who were grieving the loss of a relative also received priority, as the additional nutrition was a good, solid support.



Ensuring that the needs of ethnic minority people are met



The needs of ethnic minority people are also taken into consideration in our relief work. For example, the Hui/Muslim people do not eat pork products, so they could not eat most of the typical instant food products that are normally provided because the food is cooked with lard. We distributed Halal food and milk to five Hui/Muslim communities through a local association.

Rights based approach – the rights and participation of women

In our experience with relief work, women are often neglected in a disaster. Oxfam Hong Kong and the groups we work alongside all follow common principles, including gender equity. We assess needs of both men and women, and we respond to the practical needs of women. In this disaster, Oxfam encouraged women to participate in the decision-making of relief supplies, and we were told that sanitary pads were needed. We arranged women workers to distribute the pads to avoid any embarrassment.



Sourcing relief supplies locally and responsibly

We take into account three criteria – time, reasonable prices, and quality of goods. Sourcing goods locally is faster, less expensive, and it benefits the local economy. We only purchase supplies after making quotations from three suppliers; this ensures that we pay reasonable prices. In the case of quilts, we checked the quality of the cotton being used in the products before the purchase was made. In the case of rain-resistant “red-white-blue” material for temporary shelters and toilets, the supply was severely limited in Sichuan and nearby provinces, so we had to order it from Guangdong and Beijing.



(**Please see Table 4 for details of the relief supplies provided by Oxfam Hong Kong – quantity and costs per item.)

Clear record system for relief items



Before distributing relief supplies, Oxfam staff members encourage and help people form small groups which discuss and then decide on which relief items are most needed; these groups then inform the whole community and help with the distribution; they help ensure that the community receives the right quantity and that everything is in good order. These groups make sure that people sign – or leave a fingerprint – on a record to indicate that they have received the items.

4. Preparation for rebuilding

Oxfam Hong Kong is in consultation with the Poverty Alleviation and Development Office, Ethnic Minority Commission, education departments and community organisations in Sichuan Province on a recovery programme. In the preliminary plan, these projects include rebuilding schools as well as people’s livelihoods. Oxfam aims to contribute to UNISDR and UNESCO’s efforts to making schools safer for children and teachers, and to integrate disaster risk reduction in education.

Key Challenges to the Recovery Programme

Due to the scale of the earthquake, huge areas have been affected. Oxfam will assist poor people living in remote mountainous villages affected by the earthquake. The mission we have undertaken will not be easy.

Disaster risks are ever present in the mountainous villages. These villages lie across the fault line, or are in steep, high-altitude areas made more dangerous by the earthquake, and so the residents here are very vulnerable to future earthquakes and secondary risks such as landslides. Newly formed “quake lakes” (known as “yansai” in Chinese or “blocked-up” lakes) may flood low lying villages in these mountain areas and can cause loss of lives and property.



Relocating these villages may seem to be a logical solution to reduce disaster risks, but there are major concerns that first need to be addressed. The majority of the population living in the mountain areas are from ethnic minorities - Qiang, Cang and Hui (Muslim) - and their livelihoods and cultures are linked, developed and nurtured by these mountain areas. Relocating them to ensure their safety is of paramount importance; but so are their livelihoods and culture. Host communities also need to be prepared to welcome a significant number of ethnic minorities in their communities. This will require understanding not only of the language of the ethnic groups but also of their traditions and ways of life. Social services (such as education and health care) and livelihood opportunities must be adequate to avert any future tensions or conflicts.

Prevention is more important than relief: Design of rebuilding work and monitoring

Disaster prevention is important. In rebuilding schools, or other infrastructure, Oxfam Hong Kong ensures an appropriate design and monitoring of work so that the rebuilt construction will address the needs of the community. All new structures will be earthquake resistant, and the schools to be supported by Oxfam Hong Kong in Gansu Province will benefit from such techniques developed by Lanzhou University. In the current plan, Oxfam Hong Kong will build 10 permanent schools in affected areas of Gansu which will allow children in local communities to study in a safe environment.

Community Participation

Oxfam Hong Kong makes sure that the rebuilding process is participatory, that the community is active in the process. We encourage local people to form themselves

into committees, and that these committees consult with other members of their communities, especially children, women, elderly people and people with disabilities, who are often excluded in decision-making. This process ensures that Oxfam's rebuilding projects address the real needs of everyone in the community, preserve indigenous culture, and foster equitable long-term development.

To prepare for long term work in Sichuan, Oxfam Hong Kong has opened an office in Chengdu. This is the fifth office established by Oxfam Hong Kong in Mainland China, and the staff here will plan and implement work in Sichuan over the next three to five years. The Oxfam Hong Kong Sichuan Earthquake Relief and Rehabilitation Programme Office is located at *Chengda Building, Room 97, 22nd Floor, Unit 1, No. 28, Section 4 of South Renmin Road, Wuhou District, Chengdu, Sichuan.*



5. Making Schools Safer



Rebuilding schools will take two to four years. Oxfam ensures that children will have access to education during this period. Oxfam has discussed and agreed with education authorities to build at least 10 temporary schools in Sichuan, applying techniques usually used for temporary housing, that is, earthquake-resistant structures made of thin sheets of steel and styrofoam. The first of the 10 schools opened on 10 June, and exact sites for three others have already been confirmed. This will enable students to return to school as soon as possible. (**See Table 5 for details.)

In Gansu, Oxfam Hong Kong is adopting earthquake-resistant technology developed and patented by Lanzhou University to build 10 new permanent schools. Personnel from the University will be involved in the construction process of these new schools, and they will help to train students along the way. This training opportunity will help increase the pool of skilled personnel to deal with disaster risk prevention in the future.



(End)

Table 1: Oxfam Project Sites as of 11 June 2008

Sichuan Province: 13 cities and counties, including 62 township and villages

County / City	Townships / Villages
Shifang	Bajiao Town, Hongbai Town, Yinghau Town, Luoshui Town, Qianchi Town, Shangyuan Village, Longjusi Village, Shungliu Village
An	XiuShui Town, Hongguang Village, Yingxin Village, Feishui Town
Wenchuan	Weizhou Town, Wolong, Mianchi Village, Longxi Town, Caopo Village, Keku Village, Yanmen Village
Xiaojin	Rilong Town
Chengdu City Wuhou Region	
Li	Shangmeng Village, Xiameng Village, Tonghau Village, Xiecheng Town, Muqia Village, Taoping Village
Mao	Fengyi Town, Kezhai Village, Shigu Village, Ledu Village, Chashan Village
Dujiangyan	Xiange Village, Zipingpu Town, Dujiang Village, Ziping Village
Pengzhou	Lichun Town, Xiaoyudong Village
Mianzhu	Guangji Town, Zhongxin Village, Hanwang Town, Jiulong Town, Tianchi Village, Qingping Village, Mianyuan Town, Zundao Town
Mingyang	
Guangyuan City Qingchuan County	Dayuan Village, Suojia Village, Hauguo Village, Haoxi Town, Qiaolou Village, Qingxi Town, Guanzhuang Town, Guanshang Village, Magong Village, Suhe Village, Hongguang Village, Shiba Village
Guangyuan City Lizhou Region	Baizhao Village, Sandui Town, Qianjin Village, Quhe Village, Sandui Village

Gansu Province: 3 counties , 13 townships and villages

County / City	Townships / Villages
Longnan City Wen County	Bikou Town, Tielou Village, Zhongmiao Village, Liping Village
Wudu Region	Anhua Town, Fengxiang Village, Fengxiang Village, Maliu Village, Qiangjiawan Village, Anhua Town, Guoping Village, Ganshuwan Village, Liping Village, Bikou Town
Cheng	Xiaochuan Town, Suochi Village, Shaba Town

Shannxi Province: 1 county , 10 villages

County / City	Townships / Villages
Ningqiang	Qingmuchuan Town, Dongba Village, Guangping Town, Guangpinghe Village, Caojiagou Village, Shuiguanyin Village, Maozui Village, Damaoping Village, Houba Village, Jinshansi Village, Luojiazui Village, Wangjiahe Village

Table 2: Oxfam Project Information as of 11 June 2008

Name of projects	Amount approved (RMB)	Province
Project for Sichuan Earthquake Relief and Aid	10,000,000.00	Sichuan
Disease prevention project for disaster site in the Sichuan Earthquake	484,100.00	Sichuan
Sichuan “5.12” Earthquake Emergency Relief in Dujiangyan	122,700.00	Sichuan
Emergency Response in Wudu county and Wenxian county in Gansu Province	1,783,120.00	Gansu
Sichuan “5.12”Earthquake Emergency Relief -- Local Purchasing of Second Batch of Aid	150,000.00	Sichuan
Sichuan“5.12”Earthquake Emergency Relief -- Local Purchasing of the First Batch of Aid in Wen County , Gansu Province	180,000.00	Gansu
A Psychological Service Project for Earthquake Affected Groups in Wudu and Wenxian Counties, Gansu Province	56,648.00	Gansu
Emergency Response in Zhangjiachuan County, Tianshui in Gansu Province	829,520.00	Gansu
Emergency Response in Zundao Township of Mianzhu County in Sichuan Province	201,901.00	Sichuan
Emergency Response in Ningqiang County of Shaanxi Province	236,100.00	Shaanxi
Relief project to provide shelter for survivors of Sichuan Earthquake	3,160,000.00	Sichuan and Shaanxi
Provide 10 temporary schools to earthquake affected area in Sichuan	3,598,750.00	Sichuan
Total	20,802,839.00	

Table 3: Assessment of Dr. Lo Wing-lok

Areas Visited	Zhongxin Village, Guangji Township, Mianzhu County, Sichuan, a seriously affected area
Date of visit	28 May 2008
Team Members	Dr. Lo Wing-lok, Specialist in Infectious Diseases, M.B.(HK), F.R.C.P.(Edin.), F.H.K.A.M. (Medicine), D.T.M.&H (London), and Oxfam Advisor Lum Kwokchoi, Communications Team, Oxfam Hong Kong
Scope of observation	Overall situation of water, hygiene, sanitation, and health in the area; Interview with doctor at the health centre; Household visits.
Background of the village	About 1,000 households, under several production teams, with the size of each team varying from 60 to 100 households. Accessible, with convenient transportation, as village borders a small highway.
Record of observation	<p>Health education and information: posters by government addressing health needs after the earthquake; verbal instructions carried out by one village doctor (trained in traditional Chinese medicine), by his wife (trained in nursing) and by some lay volunteers</p> <p>Disinfection: carried out twice daily in certain areas affected by the earthquake (no specific coverage area recorded)</p> <p>Mosquito control: carried out twice daily in selected areas (no specific coverage area recorded)</p> <p>Water supply: mainly from wells, with each household having its own well; in one household visited, the water level was about 20 metres below ground level, the well was protected with a cover and separated from the nearest toilet by about 20 metres; according to villagers, water pumped from wells will first be treated with alum to remove suspended material and then purified by bleaching powder</p> <p>Still and unclean water: found in certain areas, though not yet posing a serious threat to the health of villagers; it should be drained without further delay</p> <p>Toilets: households usually have their own toilet, built within or next to their house; some toilets were clogged with debris caused by the earthquake – in those cases, public toilets were used; some villagers had dug holes in the fields for use as toilets, but they</p>

	<p>were advised not to dig such holes near any source of drinking water; generally, no serious breach in hygiene was observed</p> <p>Corpses: buried at least 2 metres underground, those not buried deep enough were exhumed to be buried again according to the required standards; disinfectant was used; 15 bodies handled from 12 May to 28 May</p> <p>Infectious diseases: no serious problem identified; only some cases of diarrhoea recorded</p> <p>Heath record: a daily record of patients and diagnoses were kept and sent to the local government at a fixed time, a separate record for infectious diseases was kept ; the number of medical consultations did not increase significantly after the earthquake – remains as usual; monitoring system appears basically effective;</p> <p>Medicine: in stock, including some antibiotics, medicine for fever and diarrhoea; no supply of vaccines; village-doctor does not seem to have such knowledge; no refrigerator for storing medicine (including vaccines), added to this is an unstable supply of electricity, which is essential for cold storage</p> <p>Counselling services: Nil</p> <p>Medical rehabilitation services: Nil</p> <p>Special medical services for women and children (including nutritional management): Not recorded</p>
<p>More views from Dr. Lo, not from his direct observations in the village</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Should remain highly alert for infectious diseases, including meningococcus meningitis, measles, dysentery, typhoid, cholera, especially in crowded settlements, with very basic sanitation and water supply of inadequate quality and quantity; - With temperatures in Sichuan still relatively low, in particular in villages in the mountains, there is the concern that villagers may be suffering from cold weather at night; - Wounds must be treated quickly and appropriately, so as to prevent complications, and any possible amputation - As many of the injured people are children, the chance of transmission of certain child-specific diseases such as measles and hand, foot, and mouth disease (HFMD) could be higher because of the crowded conditions of the children wards

Table 4: Supplies Distributed by Oxfam Hong Kong as of 11 June 2008

Items	Quantity	Unit Price (RMB)
Rice	210 tons	3.28/kg
Quilts	24,640	80.9
'Red-white-blue' woven plastic fabric (for temporary shelters)	7,296	256.8
Milk (250ml)	312,000 packs	2.16
Portable Toilet	64	3,100
Oil (5L)	63,320 bottles	60
Flour	236 tons	2.2/kg
Tents (including Transportation fee)	2,000	1,580
Mosquito net	5,000	19.5
Mosquito coil incense	1,600 boxes	6.05
Sanitary pads (Day and night use)	7,060 packs	7.5
Bags (For packing food)	110,000	0.97
Electricity generator	15	1733
Emergency lighting	300	46.8
Torch	1,620	5.2
Battery	9,720	2
Milk Powder	1,100 packs	21.5
Florida Water (For mosquito repellent)	3,240 bottles	7.3
Soap	4,860 pieces	3.6

Table 5: Details about 4 temporary schools (location selected and confirmed)

1) Pengzhou City Lichun Town Beijunpring Primary School

- 18 classes, 932 students
- 15 classrooms, 2 staff rooms, indoor area: 900 m², total area:1103.96 m²
- Oxfam also supports 922 sets desks and chairs for students, 40 sets for teachers, and 15 blackboards
- School opened on 10 June
- Total cost: 538, 000 RMB

2) Mianzhu City Chunyi Primary School (Under Construction)

- 13 classes, 460 students
- 13 classrooms, 2 staff rooms, 1 kitchen, total area:935 m²
- Desks and chairs can be reused
- Estimated cost: 360,000 RMB

3) Mianzhu City Guangji Town Centre Primary School (Construction work will start after clearing the debris)

- Total 9 classes (3 classes for kindergarten, 6 classes for primary school), 423 students
- The original school was totally devastated in the earthquake
- 12 classrooms (including 3 bedrooms for kindergarten students), 1 staff rooms, indoor area: 640 m², total area:800 m²
- Estimated cost: 310,000 RMB

4) Mianzhu City Guangji Town Qixiang Primary School

- As only the roof of the school was damaged in the earthquake, experts advised to replace the damaged roof with one made of light and strong materials