

Crisis Opens Doors for Christ in China

Record rainfall is making a bad situation even worse in southwest China.

Earthquakes hit a mountainous region late last week, killing at least 80 people and leaving hundreds of thousands homeless. Now, massive rains are triggering flooding and landslides in the quake zone, and survivors' "trauma tolerance" might be pushed to the limit.

"After a traumatic event like this, you're always gonna have questions. You're always gonna have fears," said Jeff Palmer, executive director of Baptist Global Response (BGR).

The ministry has already sent more than \$25,000 of supplies to the area. BGR teams are on the ground, pointing stressed survivors to the only One who can calm their anxiety.

"Our teams are equipped to do some trauma counseling in a way that also points them to a greater hope, which of course is in Jesus Christ," Palmer says.

On Monday night, about four inches of rain fell over the course of a few hours. It reached nearly six inches in the town hit worst by last Friday's earthquakes. Flooding in the quake zone forced refugees to flee temporary shelters in droves; rescue workers evacuated 2,000 people. Flood waters have also damaged a drinking water supply pipeline and an alternative water source. BGR has water filters and filtration systems that they'll begin implementing to provide fresh, clean water for survivors.

"A big issue...is going to be water," Palmer explains. "We've already approached government officials and local communities about how to help with the water systems."

Chinese officials haven't always welcomed help from Christians.

Four years ago, a earthquake rocked the Sichuan province, killing more than 70,000 people and leaving millions homeless. Relief aid and support was allowed at first, but as the 2008 Beijing Olympic Games drew closer, the scene shifted. National believers trying to help earthquake survivors began to face heavy persecution.

Now, Palmer says, the Chinese government is cooperative and open to working side-by-side with BGR and other Christian relief organizations.

"They've been very open to aid," Palmer says. "They learned from the 2008 earthquake that it was good to mobilize all sectors."

Palmer says BGR also learned important lessons from the 2008 earthquake. They began training response teams in China, enabling them to assist the government with disaster response. Having national teams allowed BGR to "hit the ground running" when earthquakes hit rural Yunnan and Guizhou last week, some of China's poorest regions. BGR teams are working diligently among survivors, providing food, temporary shelter and water.

"Within 24 hours, we were already responding in some areas," Palmer explains. "We were able to find those cracks and hidden areas with people who needed help and weren't getting help."

Palmer says that recent quakes didn't just take a physical toll; they damaged other areas.

"Not only were [survivors] physically shaken, but they were spiritually and emotionally shaken, too," he says. BGR ministers to these deeper needs by pointing survivors to the hope of Christ. They'll be dealing with a lot of traumas, a lot of fears, and just trying to figure out how to put their lives back together."