

TURNING HOPE INTO ACTION IN INDONESIA

A major earthquake struck West Sumatra, Indonesia, during the afternoon of 30 September, causing major damage to the provincial capital of Padang and the surrounding Pariaman District.

Padang is a city of 900,000 people and sits on one of the world's most active fault lines along the so-called 'Ring of Fire'. The epicentre of the earthquake was located 57km west of Pariaman, and its effects were felt around the region, as far as away as Singapore and Malaysia. Another earthquake hit Jambai, the neighbouring province of West Sumatra the following morning, 1 October.

Schools and hospitals have been badly hit and thousands of homes have been damaged or completely destroyed. Over a thousand people are known to have died, and the death toll is expected to keep rising. Men, women and children are in desperate need of shelter, clean water and food.

This disaster comes less than five years after the devastating Indian Ocean tsunami struck in 2004. This was along the same fault line, killed more than 220,000 men, women and children, and left two million homeless.

We might ask where God is in the face of such horrifying statistics of death and destruction in an area of the world that has already suffered so greatly.

But the Christian story is one of hope, and, as people of faith, we believe that new life is possible in the darkest of situations. We can already see signs of hope in the tenacity and compassion of our partner agencies in the region, who responded immediately to the disaster.

The Yakkum Emergency Unit (YEU) sent doctors and nurses as well as emergency supplies such as blankets, tents and hygiene kits to the area. The YTB (Disaster Response Foundation) will start distributing rice and blankets to survivors through its network of member churches. The Church World Service (CWS) is airlifting supplies to the Padang area.

These organisations are all Christian Aid partners, and Christian Aid has released emergency funds to support them. Once they have helped to meet the immediate relief needs, they will begin to rebuild the lives of people affected by the earthquake, and carry out disaster-preparedness work.

Our partners are an inspiration, refusing to give up in the face of widespread destruction and frequent disaster. Jim Wallis says: 'Believers have to choose between hope and cynicism. Cynics get disillusioned and end up a few steps back from engagement... hope is a decision... believing in spite of the evidence and watching the evidence change.'

Please play your part, through your prayers and gifts, in turning hope into action for the people of Indonesia, as well as all those affected by disasters across Asia Pacific, including in the Philippines.

You can help by donating to the DEC appeal on 0370 60 60 900 or online at www.dec.org.uk

