

20 January 2004

REF: 04-81

Rotary world sends relief to victims of Iran quake

Rotary clubs across the world are rallying to the aid of the victims of the devastating earthquake that flattened Bam, Iran, on the night of 26 December 2003. More than 30,000 residents of the 2,000-year-old city were killed and some 80,000 left homeless by the disaster.

Rotarians in Great Britain and Ireland, Canada and the United States are using the existing disaster response infrastructure of the Rotary Shelter Box initiative to contribute toward the essential needs of survivors. Three days after the disaster struck, UK and US Rotarians dispatched 110 Rotary Shelter Boxes to Bam through Feed the Children, a UK-registered nonprofit organization.

As its name suggests, a Shelter Box is a survival kit that typically contains a tent, sleeping bags, water purifying tablets, candles, rope, shovel, windup flashlight, cooking pans, and other essential tools and equipment for ten survivors. Each Shelter Box costs on average £460.00.

The Rotary Shelter Box initiative in Canada has since joined the Bam effort and together Rotarians in the three countries sent 100 more kits to Iran on 13 January.

"Rotarians are involved in this important aid project not only because of the obvious benefit to those affected but because it raises the profile of the unstinting service given by Rotarians throughout the world and they see a quick, direct, and tangible benefit for the money and effort they have contributed," says Tom Henderson coordinator of Rotary Shelter Box in Great Britain and Ireland and member of the Helston Lizard Rotary Club. "The magnitude of this disaster is truly of catastrophic proportion. We believe it is important to show that we care about the plight of all peoples in the world regardless of race or creed."

The Rotary Shelter Boxes will provide a temporary roof for homeless families, in addition to furnishing the basics to help them start their lives over. Government and relief agencies in southern Iran say that some 15,000 mobile or makeshift homes are urgently needed.

Closer to Bam, the Rotary and [Rotaract](#) clubs of Manama and Sulmaniya, Bahrain, also scrambled to the aid of survivors through the Bahrain Red Crescent Society. "[We] donated 900 blankets, about 400 towels, 700 heaters, four generators, and basic needs like clothing and kitchenware," said Wesam Baqer, president of the Rotaract Club of Manama-Sulmaniya, to the Bahrain Tribune.

Also, District 1160, Ireland, has contributed Euros 6,000 (about £3500) toward the purchase of Rotary Aquaboxes, which Rotary clubs in Ireland and Britain often send to help purify drinking water and thus forestall the outbreak of waterborne diseases following a disaster.

For more information or photos please contact Judith Diment on 07860 162313 .

Notes for Editors

1. Rotary is an organisation of business and professional persons united world-wide, who provide humanitarian service, encourage high ethical standards in all vocations and help to build goodwill and peace in the world. Members carry out this work in their own community and/or overseas by

giving their time and their expertise. A Rotary Club is open to men and women who are business, professional or community leaders who want to use their experience for the benefit of others.

For general information on Rotary in your area, contact the local Rotary Club President. Details from Robin Freeman: 01789-765411 www.rotary-ribi.org