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Giving Long-term Relief

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By Yong Chen
May 12, 2008, will enter the history and China and the world as a day of sadness. At 2:30 p.m. local time, a devastating earthquake, registering 7.8 on the Richter scale, hit Wenchuan near Chengdu, the provincial capital of Sichuan, and the confirmed death toll has soared to more than 41,000.

This is also a moment of perseverance. There are countless stories of surviving victims of the catastrophe—grieving parents, husbands and wives, children, coworkers, neighbors, classmates—doing all they could to rescue and help others. This is a moment of compassion and humanity. China acted swiftly, sending relief workers, volunteers, soldiers along with relief materials to the hard-damaged and difficult-to-reach areas in the midst of continuous aftershocks. The enormous disaster in the distant mountainous areas in inland China has also touched the entire world, as people in many countries are providing assistance in various ways, donating money and sending relief teams.

People in all Chinese communities throughout the world, including Southern California, responded immediately. Upon hearing the news about the earthquake, a UC Irvine graduate student from China tried to money through the Red Cross in Kong Hong only to realize that she could not get to its website because there too many people trying to donate money. At the same time, numerous organizations in Southern California established relief funds, including the SCCCA/ICS China Earthquake Relief Fund, which came into existence on May 13. According to incomplete numbers gathered by the Chinese-language newspaper Qiaobao, Chinese Southern Californians raised more than 3 million US dollars by May 20, while their counterparts in New York raised 2.3 million. These numbers do not include the money sent to China directly or through various overseas and mainstream U.S. charity organizations.

A friend of mine, a victim in Mianyang, another area hit hard by the earthquake, whose family has survived the disaster but whose house has become inhabitable, said recently: "We will rebuild." She was talking about rebuilding not her home but her community and city. With such resolution and with all the help from China and the rest of the world, the damaged areas will stand up again from the rubble.

But for the earthquake victims, the building process will be a long one, and they need the continued assistance from us. Many people are especially concerned about the orphans, who have lost much: their family, teachers, many of their classmates as well as their toppled classroom buildings. Besides sending money to the victims, we also need to develop long-term plans to help them, especially the homeless, school-less children.

Tags: 2008 Earthquake