

The Love of Christ in Action

Our response to meet the needs of communities affected by these two natural disasters

BY JOANNE BEACH



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The Christian and Missionary Alliance family across Canada has expressed great love for the people affected by natural disaster this year. As they were exposed to the needs of the communities affected by the Myanmar cyclone and the earthquake in China, hundreds of churches and individuals sent money to assist those that had lost everything. A priority for us was to resource local believers, enabling them to fulfill the mandate to love with action.

Cyclone in Myanmar
After the cyclone, various Christian denominations in Myanmar, including The Christian and Missionary Alliance, joined together for relief efforts. They united in what they named the Myanmar Christian Committee for Cyclone Response (MCCCR). This is indirectly the fruit of Ric and Gail, International Workers from Peace Portal Alliance, who had built relationships with these denominational leaders over the last several years.

The government recognized the MCCCR as an organization that would help the victims of the cyclone, and they were given official permission to distribute aid. We were immediately able to provide them with funds as they sent teams to the affected area to deliver items like rice, plastic tarps for roofing, cooking pots, and mosquito nets.

We are also partnering with Canadian Food for the Hungry International (CFHI) and Samaritan's Purse on a couple of specific projects.





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These partners are working through the MCCCCR to distribute material aid of rice, tarps, clean water, medical aid, school supplies, as well as fishing nets and small tools for income recovery.

CFHI is involved in training the MCCCCR in disaster response, assessments, logistics, accounting and reporting. Our partnership with Samaritan's Purse focuses on pond rehabilitation—most fresh water ponds in the delta area were spoiled by salt water from the tidal surges. It is essential that these communities have fresh water ponds for drinking and for their livelihood.

A recent report from a contact in Myanmar stated: "The way in which the various churches and para-church groups are pulling together in Myanmar is one of the most inspiring and encouraging acts I have been privileged to witness."

Earthquake in China

Our efforts in China have had the same response. One of our workers reported, "It is so amazing to see the Chinese from all over the country coming here and especially the Christian people coming wanting to help our team." The team which started out with 35 volunteers now has over 100.

Our team, which had been involved in Community Health and HIV/Aids Education before the earthquake quickly transitioned

their focus to do first aid, distribute rice, oil, tarps, and medical supplies. The team also gave out children's care packages and is running day camps to enable children to engage in educational activities and regain structure to their days.

As well, they are addressing a great need for crisis counseling as they help kids and adults process the trauma and grief. This is done both through group counseling and through simply walking with them in their sadness. Here is an excerpt from one worker's prayer letter regarding their visit to a village in the hardest hit region:

"Would you like to go with us up the mountain to pay our respect to our classmates and teachers?" the young people asked. What an opportunity to step into their world with open eyes, listening ears and compassionate hearts! They led us to terrace upon terrace of new graves made of cement half culverts. Each terrace had 30-40 graves, making the total of dead from this area nearly 400.

"This is my teacher," a ninth-grade girl said while pointing to a grave.

"This friend was great at playing basketball," another ninth grader said, pointing to another gray grave with a candle and some memorabilia at the headstone.



"This boy helped many girls get out before the building collapsed on him," another youth told us, pointing to yet another grave.

I told them that there was a story in a favorite book of mine that says there is no greater love than when someone lays down his life for a friend. How I longed to explain who my friend is and how he had given his life for each of them.

Another member of our team found a man alone sitting in front of his wife's grave. She was a teacher in one of the schools that had collapsed. They had been married 20 years. Life looked hopeless. Our worker listened to this man and mourned with him.

As acts of compassion are done through the empowering presence of Christ, it is our prayer that the recipients of these actions will be drawn to the One whose love led him to lay down his life for them. It is this conviction that motivates us to increase our commitment to proclaiming the love of Jesus through word and deed.

So whether in times of tragedy or among the poor and vulnerable in the countries we work, we are dedicated to loving people through acts of compassion both directly through our workers and indirectly through the gifts of the Alliance family across Canada.

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