



## **Responding to the 5/12 Sichuan Earthquake**

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Since the 5/12 earthquake, many organizations and individuals across the globe are trying various things to offer emergency relief support to the people of Sichuan. The Factor-Inwentash Faculty of Social Work (IFFSW) at the University of Toronto has since been involved in a variety of initiatives in response to the Sichuan disaster, including: (1) direct response to requests for consultation and training (e.g. Tsinghua University), (2) facilitating knowledge transfer by collecting and circulating reference resources, (3) liaising with colleagues involved in disaster relief globally, and most importantly, (4) developing a long-term strategy for rebuilding community capacity in Sichuan.

On June 12, over fifty community leaders, health care and mental health professionals, social workers, volunteers, and representatives from various community groups and Canadian relief teams came to a Round Table meeting coordinated by the China Project. The participants reviewed the current situation, and came up with a set of guiding principles for relief initiatives (attached). Two of the key ideas are:

1. The need to identify changing local needs through accurate local needs assessment and to identify viable and accountable local delivery system, prior to sending support to Sichuan
2. Building and sustaining local community capacity so the people of Sichuan can tackle their own issues and challenges on an ongoing basis, after international attention fades

On June 24, many community partners, professionals returned from and heading to Sichuan, academics and professionals in areas such as trauma, mental health, and community development attended two task group meetings at the Faculty of Social Work, University of Toronto. Based on the input of the group participants, the following key initiatives were formulated:

## 1. Immediate Response to Local Call for Help

### ***Development and Delivery of a Training Program for Trauma Counselors to Sichuan***

- Key Collaborators include: China Project, Factor-Inwentash Faculty of Social Work, University of Toronto, Tsinghua University Department of Psychiatry, and Department of Health, Municipal Government of Chengdu, Sichuan
- Producing training modules to facilitate learning (instructional materials, web-based learning modules, audio-visual productions, and booklets)
- Consolidation of a core international team of trainers to train the Chinese professionals (100 psychiatrists, psychological counselors and mental health workers), to be delivered in August
- Need to identify: trainers' level, the expectation and needs of the people of Sichuan, and the nature of the training
- The key collaborators will initiate an on-site needs assessment in Sichuan (i.e. Professor Jia Xiaoming of Beijing Institute of Technology will go to Sichuan to assess local needs, one University of Toronto student, and a doctoral graduate are reporting from Sichuan directly)
- A learning needs assessment checklist has been developed for the prospective participants
- Vicarious trauma
  - Focus on the emotional needs of relief volunteers and professionals who have returned to Canada from Sichuan
  - Explore various support mechanisms for returning professional and volunteers, such as support groups and debriefing sessions

#### Proposed Action:

- Formation of a training team consisting of Canadian, Chinese, and international experts
- Design and deliver a training program in Sichuan in July and August
- On-site assessment of training needs as well as training capacity and resources
- The training program will include a prior Trainers Preparation component to make sure that the training team is presenting a coherent program with consistent training strategy and style
- Clear arrangement for follow-up support (see mid-range initiative below) will be developed together with the participants

Estimated Budget: CAD\$100,000

## 2. Mid-Range Initiative

### ***Ongoing Professional Development and Supervision for Local Professionals***

- Colleagues here in Canada and in China have agreed on the need for long-term follow up to the current training program, e.g. ongoing supervision, case consultation, web-based conferencing, debriefing and emotional care for the helping professionals and volunteers
- The importance of promoting evidence-based practices and interventions to Chinese professionals in a culturally sensitive and appropriate manner
- Building service capacity of Chinese colleagues through TTT (Train the Trainers) programs, and ongoing mentorship and consultation support

#### Proposed Action:

- set up a training/consultation team consisting of Chinese, Canadian, and International experts who are willing to provide ongoing support to mental health and human service workers in Sichuan for at least a year
- TTT programs to selected professionals with good potential to become trainers
- ongoing support to Sichuan colleagues through regular web-based consultation and conferences, and on-site visits (follow-up training, boosters sessions)
- identify local expertise in Sichuan and help to develop them into experts (visiting scholarship, training visits to Toronto) capable of taking up future training and consultation roles

Estimated Budget: CAD\$100,000

### 3. Long-term Initiative

#### ***Community Capacity Building***

Based on the parameters for community (re)development initiatives, the meeting came up with the following formulation:

- The need to clearly define “community capacity building” in the context of the social and political context of China
- The process of identifying a specific “target area” in terms of geographical boundaries, population base, local community receptivity, and existing (or lack of) infrastructure
- Exploration of potential funding and other resources for the project
- Process, protocol and politics related to the potential “sponsorship” of the project and the ways and means of effectively cultivating the support and involvement of the different levels of government in China
- Local Delivery Mechanism(s) and the role of other NGOs and international aid agencies
- Strategies to engage the local community
- Specific strategies and programs for mobilizing indigenous and international resources to respond to local needs
- Focus on enhancing community capacity in terms of infrastructure, material conditions and resources, knowledge and skills, leadership, and community building
- Methodology and tools to monitor and evaluate the process and progress of this initiative

Proposed Action:

- set up a centre or office in Sichuan in an identified community to pilot a systematically run community (re)development project
- the community (re)development project will be managed by an international team consisting of Canadian and Chinese professionals and community leaders
- establish collaborative relationship with local authorities
- extensive engagement with community groups and members
- design and delivery of specific programs (e.g., community support network building, public health educational, co-operatives, children and youth programs, leadership training, etc.)
- active and systematic building of community capacity for responding to their own needs and managing their own issues effectively
- ongoing monitoring and evaluation for quality assurance and accountability

It is estimated that this initiative will be successfully completed within 5 years. By the time of completion, it is expected that local professionals, community leaders and members, collaborating with local authorities and agencies, will be able to carry on the work without our support.

Estimated Budget: CAD\$1,000,000 per site  
(We can work in more locations if we have more resources)