



Situation Report #5

September 18, 2023

Situation Overview

On September 8, 2023, at 11:11 p.m. local time, a magnitude 6.8 earthquake struck about 50 miles south of Marrakech, near the town of Adassil. The earthquake caused extensive damage in and around Marrakech and the remote villages and towns that surround the region. Reports show almost 3,000 people are dead and over 5,600 injured.

The provinces of Al-Haouz, Ouarzazate, Azilal, Chichaoua, and Taroudant experienced the heaviest damage and are where the United Nations has estimated that approximately 300,000 people have been affected by the earthquake. Concerns persist regarding the ability of medical and humanitarian teams to access remote villages in the Atlas Mountains.

Project HOPE's assessments, conducted through our partners at SAMU, show that while there is some health support along the main highways of the affected area, the smaller villages, called "duars," do not have access to health care and residents are unable to travel to points of service. Many of the duars that our partners were able to visit were completely destroyed, with little shelter left. Government officials have distributed five tents per duar, but some duars are home to almost 100 people.

Project HOPE's team was able to visit Aoulouz, a larger town in Taroudant Province that sustained serious damage. There were at least 200 tents propped up in informal settlements amongst the ruins. It is estimated that at least 1,000 people are living in the tents with no evidence of clear and consistent access to clean water or proper sanitation facilities, including toilets or showers.

Assessments show that there is a significant need for primary health care; mental health care; water, sanitation, and hygiene (WASH) services; and protection measures for women, children, older adults, and people with disabilities. The more rural areas are being served by local community associations and are being provided some goods, including

Quick Facts

- A earthquake with a magnitude of 6.8 struck near Marrakech, Morocco.
- Almost 3,000 deaths and over 5,600 injuries have been confirmed.
- Project HOPE's partner, SAMU-Maroc, has two mobile medical units in the Atlas Mountains treating people in and around remote villages without access to health care facilities.
- Project HOPE is developing local partnerships to address critical mental health needs.

blankets, tents, and non-perishable food, but distribution is inconsistent in both coverage and availability of supplies that match the needs of affected communities.

How Project HOPE is Responding

Project HOPE's partner, SAMU, an emergency response organization based in Spain, began operating on the ground in Adassil, a village southwest of Marrakech, within 36 hours of the earthquake. The first SAMU team in Morocco, made up of 19 people and two search and rescue dogs, was operational from September 9–15 with a base of operations in Adassil.

With support from Project HOPE, SAMU's team conducted dozens of search and rescue interventions and was able to recover the bodies of multiple victims and return them to their families, but unfortunately did not locate any survivors.

In the seven days of their initial deployment, SAMU's team carried out more than 120 health interventions and visited more than 20 villages that lacked primary health care infrastructure. They also transferred multiple seriously ill and injured patients by medical ambulance to larger hospitals in cities such as Marrakech and Tangier. Among their patients was a young girl with a broken arm who experienced serious complications and had to be intubated and stabilized before transportation to a nearby hospital.

Again with Project HOPE support, SAMU has deployed a second group of 12 staff members, including two doctors, two nurses, and a psychologist, to operate two mobile medical units. The two team will travel in 4x4 vehicles to provide primary health care to those living in duars without access to care. The team will be based in Tigouga, in the province of Taroudant, near the epicenter of the earthquake.

Project HOPE is in the process of procuring hygiene kits for distribution by partners. The kits will provide approximately 200 families with essential hygiene items like laundry soap, water purification tablets, toothbrushes, toothpaste, disinfecting wipes, towels, shampoo, hand sanitizer, small bandages, combs, feminine hygiene pads, and razors.

Project HOPE and SAMU have jointly responded to numerous global crises, including the February 2023 earthquake in Türkiye, where our teams supported search and rescue operations. Project HOPE has since remained in Türkiye to support long-term recovery efforts through mental health support, shelter containers for displaced health workers, the provision of clean drinking water, and mobile medical units.

With communities in Morocco still reeling from the September 8 earthquake and the subsequent aftershocks, Project HOPE recognizes that there is much to be learned in the coming weeks about the scale and scope of humanitarian needs. Through SAMU's team on the ground, Project HOPE



Project HOPE's partner, SAMU, conducting search and rescue operations with a search and rescue dog in the initial days after the earthquake. Photo courtesy of SAMU, 2023.



needs of earthquake survivors near the epicenter. Photo courtesy of SAMU, 2023.

has assessed humanitarian and health needs in several mountainous villages and identified significant needs for health care, shelter, and MHPSS support.

Project HOPE has worked in the Middle East/North Africa region since 1975 and has existing relationships with several partner organizations in Morocco.