



Kurdish Lobby Australia

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Report on how Funds raised by Kurdish Lobby Australia for Earthquake Victims in Kurdistan of Iran were Distributed

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‘It all happened in less than 20 seconds’

On 12 November 2017, a 7.3 magnitude earthquake hit southern and eastern Kurdistan on either side of the Iran-Iraq border, although the scale of damages and human casualties were far higher in eastern Kurdistan (in Iran). According to the Iranian authorities, 630 people lost their lives and 8,100 people were injured as a result of the earthquake. Local eyewitnesses believe the casualties were much higher.

In late November 2017, Kurdish Lobby Australia (KLA) appealed to the public, particularly to the Kurdish community in Australia, to raise funds for the victims of the earthquake. By 20 December 2017, \$13,000 had been raised, of which \$4,570 was donated by members of KLA and their families. All the donations were deposited into KLA’s Westpac account.

On 26 December 2017, a KLA member sought the conversion of the raised amount (\$13,000) into Iranian tomans. Based on the exchange rate of the day, \$13,000 converted to just under 42 million Iranian tomans. To round up the amount to 42 million tomans, the KLA treasurer paid \$60 out of KLA’s fund. On 26 December 2017, 42 million Iranian tomans was transferred into an account in Iran, which belonged to the KLA member’s sister, to enable funds to be distributed.

On 29 December, a KLA member travelled to the affected area (at his own expense) and met with two representatives of a local NGO that had started a campaign shortly after the earthquake to coordinate the distribution of funds and goods collected for earthquake victims. They had prepared a list of victims and their addresses in the city of Sar Pole Zahab and villages surrounding Sar Pole Zahab. In the meeting it was decided that funds should be distributed to families and individuals who had lost their homes and contents, and who had no income.

Over two days, on 29 and 30 December, 2018, the KLA member, his niece and two members of the local NGO travelled about 1,000 kilometres between the cities of Kermanshah and Sar Pole Zahab and surrounding villages to distribute the 42 million tomans to 73 families and 35 individuals. The amounts distributed varied (one million, 500,000, 100,000 and 50,000 tomans) depending on the number of people in each family and their situation. All had witnessed their homes partially or entirely destroyed by the earthquake. Some had lost loved ones in the earthquake.

The Scale of Destruction







This whole village
was destroyed.
These photographs
were taken after the
rubble had been
removed.





The Immediate Response

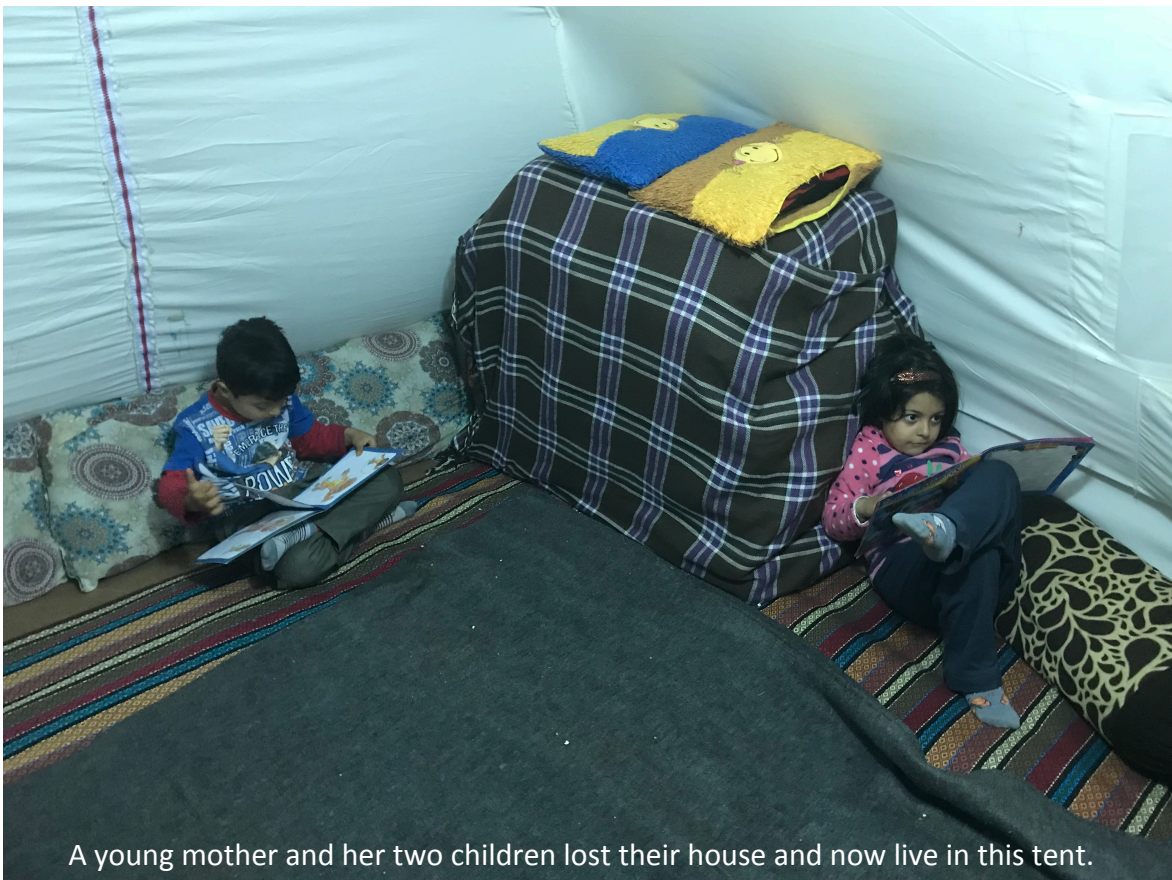
As a result of the earthquake, many families lost their homes and income, some had lost loved ones, and there were incidences of people committing suicide for lack of hope.

Five percent of all people who had their house damaged or destroyed were given tents supplied by the Iranian government. These tents had no running water, electricity or sewage services.

In the first weeks, locals and people from all over Iran sent clothing, blankets and other necessities to those affected. However, police and government officials blocked all people from visiting the afflicted area and there were incidences of police and government officials confiscating the donated items. The people impacted by the earthquake said that what they most needed was cash for day-to-day needs.







A young mother and her two children lost their house and now live in this tent.



Distribution of Funds raised by KLA

Each donation was handed directly to the recipient. Given that the average public servant in Iran earns one million tomans a month or approximately AUD\$311, all recipients were very happy on receiving the money. However, the KLA member had to explain that it was a one-off contribution, and that KLA could not provide on-going support. See Table of Distributed Funds.

Table of Distribution Funds

Amount in tomans & AUD\$	Families	Individuals
One million (\$311)	4	1
500,000 (\$155)	59	9
100,000 (\$31)	10	15
50,000 (\$15)	0	10
42 million - \$13,060	73	35

Conversion Rate on 26/12/2017: AUD \$1.00 = approximately 3,216 Iranian tomans

The Joy of Giving & Receiving



Before the earthquake the lady on the right supported her family by sewing. She had borrowed around AUD\$200 to purchase the sewing machine, which was destroyed in the earthquake. KLA was able to give her the equivalent of AUS \$155.



This young lady is an accounting student who lives with her sister and brother-in-law. Their house was severely damaged. She now lives in this tent, located next to where the house used to be. This young lady is very vulnerable due to her living arrangements.



The gentleman in the wheel chair was trapped under rubble. He sustained a spinal cord injury whilst being pulled out and rescued. He received 500,000 Iranian toman (\$155)



This lady lost her husband and her house in the earthquake. She has two children and is pregnant with a third. She received 1,000,000 Iranian toman (\$311).



This lady had sustained back injuries during the earthquake. We were able to provide her and her three teenage children with one million tomans (AUD\$ 311).



This lady and her baby live with her mother whose house was hit by the earthquake and severely damaged. They received 500,000 Iranian toman (\$155).



This series of images shows a family cleaning bricks from their destroyed house before they rebuild.



Whilst living in tents, people have had to endure sub-zero winter temperatures and flooding. Since the KLA member's visit, the weather became colder and there were heavy snows. The KLA member was informed that two children living in tents had died from the cold.





Despite the devastation, children still managed to smile and be welcoming.

Evaluation of the Earthquake Appeal and Distribution of Donations

The appeal and distribution of funds were successful thanks to the generosity of donors and because a KLA member went to the affected sites to personally hand donations to recipients. Two individuals from a local NGO made the process possible because they could identify those in the greatest need. KLA is unable to identify the local NGO, the individuals who work for the NGO, or the recipients, in case this causes problems with the government. If an organisation is not in the position to directly hand over cash donations it is important that funds are transferred directly into a recipient's bank account, or are distributed by a trusted local NGO.