

The ESO Solidarity Group in Support of the Earthquake Victims

The ESO Solidarity Group^{*1}

¹ ESO

In the early morning of 27 February 2010, a devastating earthquake followed by a tsunami hit the central part of Chile. Immediate action initiated spontaneously by GEMINI and ESO employees, which was supported by the Solidarity Group, allowed around 500 kg of emergency supplies to be brought to the victims living in the countryside between Cauquenes and Pelluhue. The first-aid items were delivered on 2 March, before government help had reached these remote areas. This prompt action created the initial momentum for a series of concrete actions led by the Solidarity Group to further assist the earthquake victims. These acts of charity could be carried out thanks to the generosity of many ESO employees both in Europe and Chile who promptly answered the call for donations.

Based on requests from local communities and through on-site visits, a number of small projects were proposed. Due to limited resources, a selection was made to retain the cases where our support would be the most useful and efficient (depending on project size, condition of the potential beneficiaries, geographical

location and amount of help already received).

The main actions carried out so far have been:

- Construction of three wooden houses of area 25 m² in the village of Pichidegua (Rancagua area). This work, funded at the 50 % level by the ESO Solidarity Group, was completed by 5 April.
- Insulation of three wooden houses in the vicinity of Coinco village (Rancagua area) on the weekend of 10–11 April. In addition, 250 m² of roofing tiles to cover 20 emergency houses were bought and handed over to the administration of the Coinco Municipality.
- Construction of six wooden houses of area 30 m² in the village of Cumpeo (Talca area). This work is entirely funded by the Solidarity Group and is mainly executed by ESO volunteers. Work is currently ongoing.

A mosaic of photographs from these projects is shown on the News section page (p. 52). Other actions are planned and will be implemented as time and resources allow.

We would like to thank the ESO employees who made these actions possible through their donations and/or active participation as volunteers.

The ESO Solidarity Group

In January 2008, inspired by the Garching Charity Group, eight ESO volunteers created the Solidarity Group in

Chile with the mission of providing support, mainly to ESO community members (employees and contractors) in emergency situations and in fund-raising for general charity work (such as donations to schools, old people's homes, non-profit organisations and handicapped individuals). By December 2009, the Solidarity Group had provided help to a contractor rebuilding her home lost in a fire, a contractor whose wife suffers from a severe illness that had to be treated with expensive medicine and an ESO staff member recovering from a heart transplant. Donations included an old, but operative, written-off science laptop to a paraplegic girl; written-off bed clothes and towels from the ESO Guest-house to an old people's home; a wheelchair to a disabled ESO staff member; two fully filled trucks with obsolete written-off computer items to a state technical high school teaching youngsters to build and repair computers; two fully operative sets of written-off computers and printers to a primary school in Bahia Murta (an isolated distant southern Chilean village); and partial coverage of funding for specific medical treatments at the request of contractors. Since February 2010, all funds collected specifically to support the 27 February earthquake victims have been handled separately and exclusively directed to persons not belonging to the ESO community.

More information on the ESO Solidarity group can be found at <http://www.eso.org/intra/activities/charity/chile.html>.

* The ESO Solidarity Group is composed of: Alejandra Emmerich (President), Maria Madrazo (Treasurer), Paulina Jiron (Secretary), Cecilia Ceron, Philippe Gitton, Agustin Macchino, Gianni Marconi, Francisco Olivares, Claudio Saguez, Linda Schmidtbreich

ESO Participates in Germany's Girls' Day Activities

Douglas Pierce-Price¹

¹ ESO

On 22 April 2010, ESO participated in the Germany-wide Girls' Day activities, in which technical enterprises, universities and research organisations were invited

to organise an open day for girls, to give female school students an insight into science and technology professions and to encourage more of them to choose such careers in the future. The ESO Girls' Day, "An introduction to the work of the European Southern Observatory", was organised by a group of students and staff, with support from the education and Public Outreach Department.

Although the open day was publicised at relatively short notice, places were rapidly fully booked, and 33 students attended the event at ESO Headquarters in Garching. The students, aged between 11 and 15, came from a wide range of schools in the Munich area.

During the morning, a series of women speakers gave talks about the work of