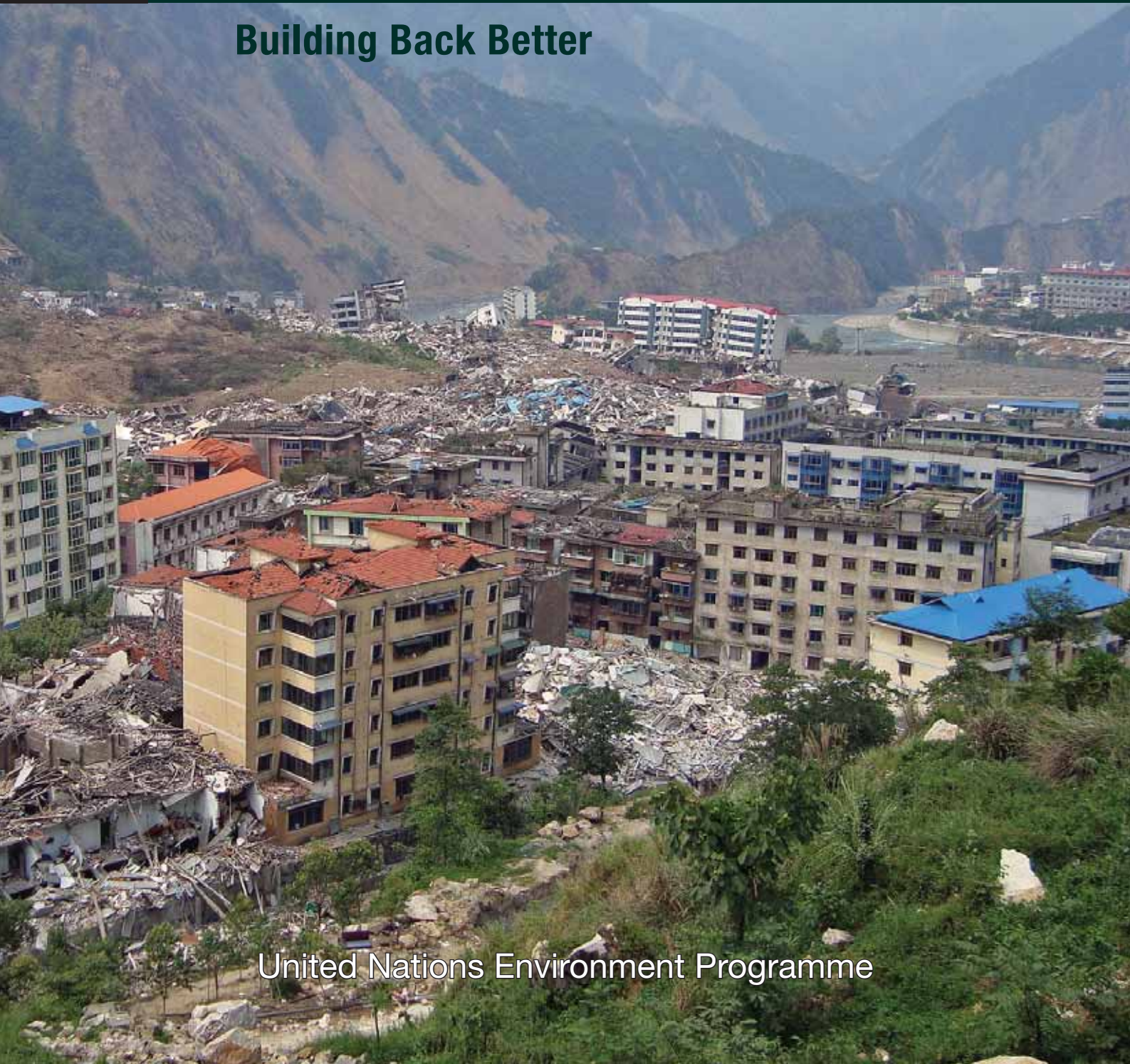




UNEP in China

Building Back Better



United Nations Environment Programme

UNEP's post-earthquake activities in China were made possible by generous funding from the Government of Norway.

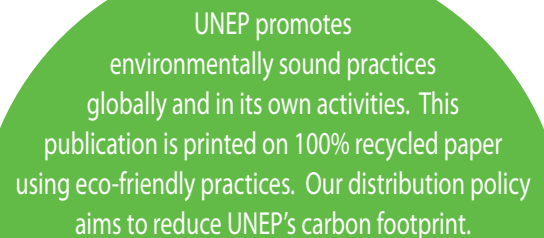
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Cover image: The aftermath of the earthquake in the Sichuan Province on 12 May 2008 © UNEP

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Sichuan province has historically been known as the “Province of Abundance”

A Province of Abundance

Sichuan Province, whose name means “four circuits of rivers,” is located in southwestern China. It is surrounded by the Himalayas to the far west, including the nearby Tibetan Plateau, Qinling range to the north-east, and mountainous areas of Yunnan to the south.

Sichuan has historically been known as the “Province of Abundance,” as it is one of the country’s major agricultural production bases. In addition to rice and wheat, commercial crops produced in the region include citrus fruits, sugar cane, sweet potatoes, peaches and grape seed.

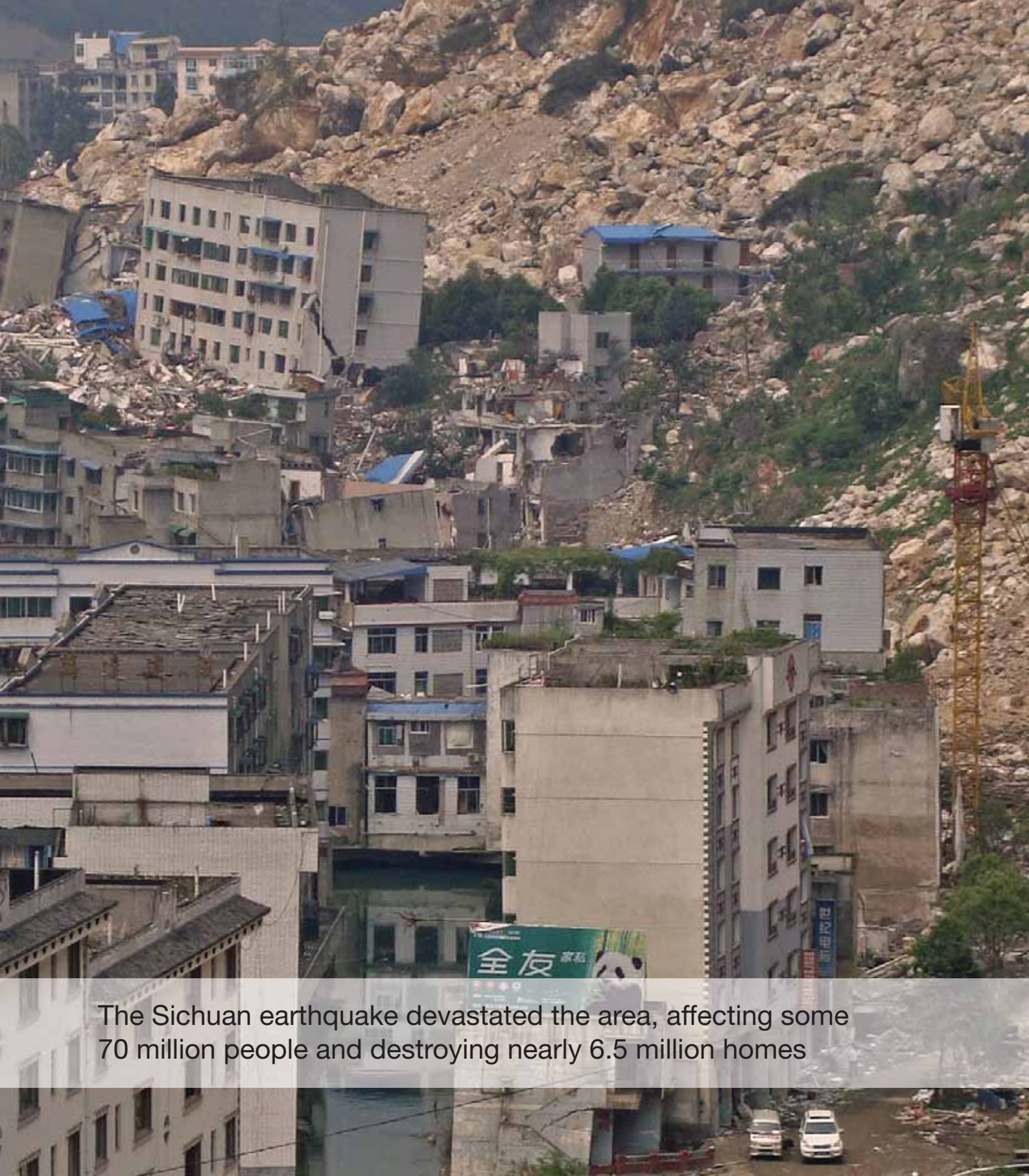
Sichuan is also one of the major industrial bases of China. In addition to heavy industries such as coal, energy, iron and steel, the province has established a light manufacturing sector comprising building materials, wood processing, as well as food and silk processing.

Chengdu, the provincial capital, is one of the most important economic centers and transportation and communication hubs in China, as well as one of the production bases for textiles and electronic products.



Sichuan Province is also one of China’s major industrial bases





The Sichuan earthquake devastated the area, affecting some 70 million people and destroying nearly 6.5 million homes

The Event

On 12 May 2008, at 14:28 hours, Sichuan Province was struck by a devastating 8.0 magnitude earthquake. Its impact was felt as far as Beijing and Shanghai, some 1,500 km and 1,700 km away. The epicenter of the quake was located in Wenchuan County, 80 km northwest of the provincial capital Chengdu. The disaster affected approximately 70 million people and destroyed nearly 6.5 million homes. Some 15 million people were evacuated and it is estimated that approximately 4.8 million people were forced to live in temporary shelter. In addition, more than 5 million farmers lost their harvest. As of December 2008, the death toll had reached more than 100,000 with over 374,643 injured and 17,923 missing.

As the United Nations system's designated entity for addressing environmental issues at the global level, the UN Environment Programme (UNEP) was requested by the Government of the People's Republic of China to lend assistance in the aftermath of the disaster. UNEP immediately engaged in the post-disaster recovery effort, including by coordinating the environmental response to the earthquake through its office in Beijing, which was supported by international experts and technical staff from across the organization.

This publication outlines the key achievements of UNEP's engagement in the country from 2008 to 2010, which focused primarily on providing high-level expertise and capacity development for the management of the environmental impacts of the disaster.



Some 15 million people were evacuated from their homes, and it is estimated that approximately 4.8 million people were forced to live in temporary shelter



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