



PAPUA NEW GUINEA - HIGH SEAS IN BISMARCK AND SOLOMON SEAS

OCHA Situation Report No. 1

Port Moresby, 14 December 2008

HIGHLIGHTS/ KET PRIORITIES

- High seas continue to be experienced along the northern shoreline of Papua New Guinea. East Sepik, Madang, Manus, New Ireland, Morobe Provinces as well as the Autonomous Region of Bougainville are reported by the government as the most affected regions.
- Total of 5 Provinces has been affected by the high seas. The government estimates that between 50,000-60,000 people have been affected.
- Main needs identified by the government are as follows: water containers, tarpaulins, water purification tablets, food rations and treated bed nets.
- The current condition if continued could cause other secondary impacts.

CONTEXT

On 8 December 2008, severe sea swells in Bismarck and Solomon seas hit New Ireland and Northern Provinces, East Sepik, West Sepik (Sandaun), Madang, Manus, Morobe and the autonomous region of Bougainville (please see map attached). The sea swells were caused by low depression in the waters of Guam and New Caledonia.

The sea swells destroyed houses, food and water supplies. In all affected areas, immediate needs include food, tarpaulin, blankets, water supplies and containers, anti-malarial medicines and mosquito nets, building tools and materials. Fuel needs have been highlighted for East Sepik. Except for East Sepik, where key installations like Moem barracks armoury, hospital, power supply tele-communications and postal services are at risk, other areas are yet to report significant damage to infrastructure.

HUMANITARIAN RESPONSE

On Thursday 11 December, the government of Papua New Guinea (GoPNG) has declared the current situation as a National Disaster and committed PGK50 million (USD20.4 million) to assist in relief and recovery activities. No State of Emergency is declared by the government.

Government assessments are being conducted through the Provincial Disaster Centres in all the affected provinces. The results formed the basis of government relief distribution. At the stakeholder meeting on Monday 15 December, government agencies, UN Disaster Management Team, international humanitarian actors and donor communities will identify areas where inter-agency assessment teams will be sent.

OCHA is sending a 4-member United Nations Disaster Assessment and Coordination (UNDAC) team to assist the UN Resident Coordinator's Office (UNRCO) in support of the government response effort. The team is scheduled to arrive in Port Moresby on Wednesday 17 December. One OCHA officer is currently deployed in PNG to support the UNRCO.

Australian Government through AusAID has committed AUD500,000 to support the relief activities through various NGOs and INGOs. New Zealand Government through NDZAID has pledged financial support as well. A national NGO called Halivim (Help) Fund has pledged to support areas not covered by the government, donors and NGOS.

PNG Red Cross Society is currently distributing shelter materials such as tarpaulins and water containers in New Ireland Province. Australian Government has provided more than 400,000 water purification tablets, and 2,200 buckets (with lid and water taps), 1,344 ten-litre water containers, 220 15-litre rigid water containers, 420 tarpaulins. All these were transported on a C130 Royal Australian Air Force (RAAF) plane via Port Moresby and will be distributed on a 50:50 basis Kavieng in the New Ireland Province as well as Manus. Australian Red Cross also supplied 2700 ten litre collapsible water containers on the same RAAF flight. The RAAF plane is expected to do another round of distributions for the NGOs and PNG Red Cross Society to the Manus and New Ireland tomorrow, 15 December, 2008.

Save the Children and Oxfam are currently conducting assessments in East Sepik Province and have indicated that they will support relief activities in their assessment areas. One death was recorded in East Sepik as a result of a child being hit by log.

Care International is supporting the assessment and relief activities in Carterets and Mortlock Islands in the Autonomous Region of Bougainville. Adventist Relief and Development Agency (ADRA) are supporting the Manus Provincial Administration in conducting assessments and distributing relief.

The people on the outer atolls of Manus, New Ireland and Bougainville are worst affected. More than 6,000 people in Manus have been encouraged by the GoPNG to consider permanent relocation to the mainland.

No security incidents have been so far reported to the government in relation to this disaster. Access to all provinces affected is accessible by air, roads and sea.

Water and Sanitation

No formal assessment report has been received by OCHA from NGOs that conducted assessment out in the field. Report from GoPNG indicated that there is immediate need in ensuring potable water is available to the affected population.

Health

In New Ireland, medicine is required for malaria and waterborne diseases. Request was referred to National Department of Health. National Disaster Center (NDC) is considering the possibility of purchasing them from private supplier if the needs can not be met on time. No health needs assessment has been received by OCHA from other Provinces. The Boram Hospital in East Sepik continues to be under threat and the priority is to secure the facility.

Food and Nutrition

Food rations have been provided by GoPNG to the affected population in New Ireland and Manus Provinces. Assessments on the nutritional needs are yet to be conducted.

Shelter

PNG Red Cross Society is taking the lead in providing temporary shelter materials. GoPNG indicated additional need in shelter materials however this is yet to be confirmed through an assessment.

Camp Coordination

Care centres are currently setup in two provinces, Manus and New Ireland. The coordination of the IDP camps is currently being implemented by the provincial administration.

Protection

No assessment conducted in terms of protection, but due to high level of GBV and violence against children in PNG, protection needs to be mainstreamed in all sectors and protection assessment will be included in interagency assessment.

Logistics

The main wharf in Wewak, East Sepik Province has been partially damaged by the waves. This could have an impact in the food and other supplies into the province. The bridge connecting Wewak town to the PNG Defence Force army barracks at Cape Moem has been destroyed. A temporary bypass is currently used by the Moem residents to access essential services in Wewak.

Logistics need are being met by the government, NGOs/INGOs and the Australian Government. This covers sea transportation to the atolls, commercial aircraft charters and land transportation.

Telecommunications

Telecommunication in East Sepik Province is difficult as the high tide damaged its telecommunication facilities. Communication is difficult with outer islands in Manus. Telikom plans to install several new VSAT system in Wewak in East Sepik.

Early recovery

Early recovery needs to be focused on from early stage, but currently focus is on emergency food and NFI distribution. Re-building of shelters is recognized as a priority. There is a need for building materials and tools.

Education

In Mortlock island in Bougainville, school buildings and student books are damaged. UNICEF education programme is supporting the Department of Education to develop a plan to rebuild and repair damaged education facilities.

Cross cluster/sector issues

Considering the high level of GBV and violence against children in PNG, it is crucial to mainstream protection and gender sensitivity planning into all the sectors. Inter agency assessment will incorporate cross cutting perspective and will have protection focus. UNICEF child protection program is supporting the department of community development to develop specific strategies to increase protection for women and children in the most affected areas.

Coordination

- NDC is coordinating the response with assistance from the United Nations, the governments of Australia, New Zealand and Japan and NGOs including Save the Children, Care, Red Cross, Caritas, Oxfam and ADRA.
- NDC works through the provincial administration.
- Government stakeholder meeting is held regularly (the first one on 10th December and next one on 16th Dec).
- The first Disaster Management Team will be held on Monday 16th December.
- Red Cross and NGOs has its network in the provinces, and HQ of NGOs and Red Cross is coordinating with OCHA PNG.

Needs and Gaps

The government has identified the need in IM support at both the national and provincial level. International humanitarian actors see the need to provide support to the government general and relief coordination as well as the assessment effort.

Funding

- AusAID has already committed to donate AUD\$ 500,000 through NGOs and INGOs.
- NZAID also made a pledge but has not yet provided the amount
- Embassy of Japan has pledged financial assistance
- CARE provided PGK5,000 to Bougainville provincial administration

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