



PAPUA NEW GUINEA - HIGH SEAS IN BISMARCK AND SOLOMON SEAS OCHA Situation Report No. 3

Port Moresby, 16 December 2008

HIGHLIGHTS/ KEY PRIORITIES

- The National Weather Service forecasts thunderstorms in sea swell affected northern coast of Papua New Guinea, which are expected to last until 19 December.
- East Sepik is likely to run out of fuel in the next few days, due to collapse of inter oil fuel pipelines.
- Food shortages reported in atolls of Bougainville.
- A four-member UN Disaster Assessment and Coordination (UNDAC) team will reach Port Moresby on 17 December.
- IFRC's Disaster Relief Fund has released CHF 190,000 (USD 162,500) to support the PNG Red Cross to deliver immediate assistance to 15,450 beneficiaries.
- New Zealand has committed 300,000 dollars as relief assistance.

CONTEXT

On 8 December 2008, severe sea swells in Bismarck and Solomon seas hit New Ireland and Northern Provinces, Manus, East Sepik, West Sepik (Sandaun), Madang, Mur, Morobe, Milne Bay 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.

According to the Papua New Guinea Red Cross, at least 75,300 people are displaced, with the biggest number in New Ireland (32,000) followed by Manus (20,000) and East Sepik (15,000). Almost 50 percent of the displaced population require immediate support. An estimated 416 houses have been destroyed. The government of PNG has declared this a national disaster for the time being, expecting that the relief phase will quickly transition into early recovery.

HUMANITARIAN RESPONSE

NGOs, Red Cross and National Disaster Centre/Provincial Disaster Centre (NDC/PDC) assessments are still ongoing. This includes Oxfam/Save the Children joint assessment going on in East Sepik, and PDC/government officials/World Vision/Care assessments in the islands in Bougainville. Most of the initial rapid assessment results are expected by 19 December.

On 18 December, an inter-agency team comprising PDC, UNICEF, UNDAC members, Save the Children, Oxfam and other local actors will be deployed to East Sepik, which is expected to cover the rural coastal areas, and hence come up with a better picture of needs.

Relief supplies, both food and non-food items (NFIs), are being delivered by commercial ships to the affected islands in Bougainville such as Mortlock and Carteret Islands and Nuguria. Relief assistance – food and NFIs such as tarpaulins, water containers, water purification tablets, blankets and treated bed nets – is also being sent to other affected Provinces.

Water and Sanitation

On 17 December, Oxfam will dispatch to Wewak, the capital of East Sepik, 3 water bladders which will be used to help restore safe water in the affected areas. Other NFIs that will be mobilized from Port Moresby and Brisbane for East Sepik include jerry cans and tarpaulins.

Health

OXFAM reports significant number of sick, injured and traumatized people in the care centres in Wewak, East Sepik. In New Ireland, anti-malaria medicines have been requested from the National Department of Health.

Food and Nutrition

Care International Field Office in Bougainville reports severe food shortage in the atolls of Bougainville - Mortlock, Nuguria, Carteret, and Inus. The need for food and NFIs here remains still high.

Shelter

Temporary shelter materials are being provided by the PNG Red Cross. The government is yet to make a request for additional needs.

Camp Coordination

Camps for internally displaced persons are being managed by the provincial administration in Manus and New Ireland.

Protection

The Disaster Management Team has agreed to include protection concerns in upcoming inter-agency assessments.

Logistics

The main wharf in Wewak, East Sepik has been partially damaged, hindering relief as well as fuel supply. There is no alternative sea port for this area.

Telecommunications

Telecommunication in East Sepik still remains a challenge as high tides have damaged facilities.

Early recovery

According to Care International Field Office in Bougainville, food gardens in the atolls of Bougainville – Mortlock, Nuguria, Carteret and Inus – as well as the coastal areas of Tinputz and Manop are destroyed, this affects estimated 1,198 people.

The Government has set aside PGK30 million (USD 12.2 million) of the allocated PGK50 million (USD20.4 million) funding to address early recovery needs and activities.

Coordination

- Government Stakeholder meeting is scheduled for Wednesday, 17 December.
- UNDAC team members will arrive on Wednesday 17 December to provide support to the UN Country Team and the humanitarian community.

Needs and Gaps

The Government and humanitarian actors are trying to meet the immediate needs of the affected provinces. Coordination and information flow from some of the affected provinces still remain a challenge.

Funding:

- Local fund raising exercise for the affected provinces is ongoing, with the approval of the National Disaster Centre.
- Mining company, Lihir Gold Limited, has donated PGK250,000 (USD102,000) to the New Ireland PDC.
- IFRC's Disaster Relief Fund has released CHF 190,000 (USD 162,500) to support the PNG Red Cross to deliver immediate assistance to 15,450 beneficiaries.
- New Zealand has committed 300,000 dollars to assist with relief efforts. New Zealand's assistance, which will be delivered through the government's international development agency NZAID, will go to organisations such as the Red Cross, to provide stocks of emergency supplies.

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