



PAPUA NEW GUINEA - HIGH SEAS IN BISMARK AND SOLOMON SEAS OCHA Situation Report No. 4

Port Moresby, 19 December 2008

HIGHLIGHTS/ KEY PRIORITIES

- Salt deposits from high tide floods in Bougainville can take up to 12 months to be cleared for land cultivation.
- Drinking water and its storage, and sanitation are still priority concerns in the affected Provinces.
- The Government of Japan has provided emergency relief goods worth PGK 400,000 (USD 163,200).
- According to the Government of Papua New Guinea (GoPNG), the focus will shift from emergency relief to early recovery within a week's time.

CONTEXT

On 8 December 2008, severe sea swells caused by low depression in the waters of Guam and New Caledonia hit New Ireland and Northern Provinces, Manus, East Sepik, West Sepik (Sandaun), Madang, Mur, Morobe, Milne Bay and the autonomous region of Bougainville.

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. The government of PNG has declared this a national disaster for the time being, but expects that the relief phase will quickly transition into early recovery.

HUMANITARIAN NEEDS AND RESPONSE

New Ireland Province

An estimated 32,000 people are affected. Relocation of the most affected population from the outer islands to the care centers is ongoing. AusAID-donated relief materials are being distributed through NGOs and the national Red Cross. Caritas will distribute shelter building tools. Water is still considered a major concern as the water sources are affected and access to safe water is a challenge.

Autonomous Region of Bougainville

Both assessment and relief efforts continue. However, access to outer islands is still a logistical challenge. According to CARE, salt deposits from the high tide floods will take most likely 6 – 12 months to be cleared before land can be used for cultivation. These livelihood related issues need to be carefully analyzed during the early recovery phase.

Manus Province

It is reported that 20,000 people on 24 outer islands are affected. Relief items are being distributed by the Provincial Disaster Centre (PDC), Red Cross and NGOs. Caritas identifies trauma counseling as one of immediate needs. Humanitarian needs of displaced people staying at care centers need to be closely monitored, and durable solutions need to be identified as early as possible.

East Sepik Province

Key installations and communications network in Wewak need to be protected and repaired. In the areas that have already been accessed, Oxfam and Save the Children report that the livelihoods of fishermen, food gardens, water and shelter are affected. Immediate needs include water containers, tarpaulins and food items to these areas. Save the Children is requesting for funding from the Government of New Zealand for 200 household kits. Oxfam is getting 400 water containers from Red Cross to be distributed.

An interagency assessment team comprising UN agencies and NGOs is currently assessing the affected rural 'hard to reach' areas; the results should be out by the last week of December.

West Sepik Province

It is estimated that 1,000 people are affected.

Morobe Province

It is reported that 1,000 people are affected. Relief activities and assessments are on-going.

Madang Province

Red Cross and World Vision conducted assessments and provided material support to several villages affected by this event. Detailed assessment information is not yet available.

Milne Bay Province

According to PNG Red Cross, around 200 families from Kwanauna Islands and Tubetube islands are affected. PDC is conducting an assessment and PNG Red Cross is providing the required humanitarian assistance.

Coordination

- A government stakeholder meeting was held on 17 December, which declared a gradual shift of focus from relief to recovery.
- A five-member UNDAC team arrived in Port Moresby. The team has set up base at the National Disaster Centre (NDC), while one member has joined the interagency assessment in East-Sepik.
- The UNDAC team will provide assistance to GoPNG on:
 - Information management support to NDC to develop a comprehensive overview/database of assessment data; needs and relief provided in the affected areas; for further decision-making on humanitarian assistance; for additional inter-agency assessments and early recovery planning.
 - Facilitating inter-agency assessments if required.

Funding:

- Local fund-raising is ongoing, with the approval of the NDC.
- IFRC has allocated CHF 190,000 (USD 162,500 or EUR 120,360) to the PNG Red Cross for the procurement and delivery of NFIs to approximately 15,450 beneficiaries.
- NZAid has donated NZD 150,000 to the PNG Red Cross for similar programmes, facilitated by the New Zealand Red Cross.
- The Government of Japan has provided emergency relief goods worth PGK 400,000 (USD 163,200).

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