



## PAPUA NEW GUINEA - HIGH SEAS IN BISMARK AND SOLOMON SEAS OCHA Situation Report No. 5

Port Moresby, 31 December 2008

### HIGHLIGHTS

- 38,000 people still affected by flooding as a result of early December sea swells.
- 2,000 houses destroyed or damaged in the affected Provinces.
- Safe drinking water and its storage (tanks and containers), food and sanitation are still priority concerns for the affected population.
- The Government of Papua New Guinea allocated PGK 50 million (USD 20.4 million) out of which PGK 20 million (USD 8.1 million) is for relief and the rest for recovery efforts.
- AusAID, New Zealand AID, USAID and JICA have supported response agencies with cash/in-kind contributions.

### CONTEXT

Since 8 December, a combination of king tides, high seas and two tropical depressions in the Pacific caused unusually high seas, affecting low lying islands and coastal regions in 7 provinces in Papua New Guinea (PNG). At the peak of the high seas, an estimated 75,000 people were directly affected by the waves and flooding, spread out over widespread coastal areas and numerous isolated low lying outer islands. The Government of Papua New Guinea (GoPNG) declared a national disaster, however no state of emergency was declared. On 16 December, the GoPNG announced the phasing out of the relief phase, and the shift towards early recovery.

The National Disaster Centre (NDC), the lead agency, coordinated with Provincial Disaster Centres (PDCs) for relief response, which was supported by the development/humanitarian community and donors. Major response agencies include: government agencies, the PNG Red Cross, national NGOs, CARE, World Vision, Save the Children, Oxfam, ADRA, Caritas and Habitat for Humanity. AusAID supported the relief efforts from the very beginning. Other principal donors include New Zealand AID, USAID and JICA. All response agencies were also involved in undertaking damage and needs assessments.

On 17 December, a five-member UN Disaster Assessment and Coordination (UNDAC) team was deployed to PNG to support the government and the Resident Coordinator's office for assessment coordination and information management purposes. The team concluded its mission on 23 December.

### HUMANITARIAN NEEDS AND RESPONSE

Latest inter-agency reports estimate the number of affected population at 38,000, with the bulk of the affected population reported in Manus, East Sepik, New Ireland Provinces and the Autonomous Region of Bougainville. Other Provinces that are still partially affected are West Sepik, Madang and Morobe Provinces. With regard to needs, drinking water, sanitation and food are still key priority issues for the affected population.

#### Manus Province

An estimated 15,000 people on 24 inhabited outer islands have been directly affected yet remain on the islands. 400 people have relocated to higher ground away from their houses. Relief items have been distributed by PDC, PNG Red Cross and NGOs. Safe drinking water is a priority, as well as food supply on the outer islands as gardens and the reef have been affected by the waves, causing damage to marine resources. Food will be distributed and food supply will be monitored in the coming weeks by the PDC.

#### East Sepik Province

Recent inter-agency assessments put the total number of directly affected people at 12,124. There are no people in official care centres, but small groups are still staying in makeshift care centres.

On 22 December, the first load of Red Cross relief items arrived by plane and delivered 3,160 kgs of supplies consisting of 1,770 collapsible water containers and 600 roles of tarpaulins for Oxfam and Save the Children to distribute to families who lost their homes. Oxfam will distribute family kits for 300 families and shelter and fishing materials for an additional 20 families, mainly in off shore islands. Save the Children will provide family kits to around 150 households along the coast and in Murik Lakes.

The main priority is safe drinking water as flood water has overflowed wells and latrines and containers are in short supply.

Distribution has become a critical problem as fuel for transportation (especially gasoline for boat engines) is rapidly running out. Restocking of the fuel supply has proved to be a problem due to damaged wharf which prevents the supply vessel from delivery.

#### **New Ireland Province**

The PNG Red Cross identifies the total number of directly affected communities needing assistance to be 1,460 families (around 7,500 people) who are temporarily displaced because of damaged housing. This includes 118 people relocated from Tench island to Emirau island.

#### **Autonomous Region of Bougainville**

The joint assessment and response team of the provincial government, CARE and World Vision estimate the number of affected people in Bougainville to be 2,600. In total 256 houses on the islands were destroyed. All communal food gardens and water wells were also flooded and destroyed. All families lost kitchen utensils. People are relying heavily on rain water catchments and coconut water to satisfy the fresh water demand. The PDC has distributed some water containers but more are needed. Existing food stocks are expected to last until the next two weeks. CARE reports that salt deposits from the high tide floods will take most likely 6 – 12 months before land can be used for cultivation, and these livelihood related issues need to be carefully analyzed during early recovery phase.

Sanitation is a problem as people are using the beach for defecation.

#### **Coordination/Next Steps**

- On 24 December, the UNDAC team, upon completion of its mission, handed over its functions of assessment coordination and information management to the NDC.
- NDC continues to monitor the situation in the outer, low lying islands and coordinate relief/early recovery efforts, with the participation of the UN agencies and the I/NGO community.
- OCHA PNG will continue to monitor the situation and provide coordination support to the government and the humanitarian community in PNG.
- A sub-regional workshop on rapid assessment methodology is being held in the Solomon Islands in March 2009, where there will be representation from the PNG government, Red Cross and UN agencies.

#### **Funding:**

The GoPNG did not request any international funding, nor did it think that a humanitarian appeal was needed. The GoPNG has allocated PGK 50 million (USD 20.4 million) out of which PGK 20 million (USD 8.1 million) is for relief and the rest for recovery efforts.

Below are some of the major cash/in-kind contributions made to the government and to I/NGOs directly by various bilateral donors:

- AusAID provided cash/in-kind contributions worth AUD 500,000 (USD 345,000) through NGOs and INGOs.
- IFRC's Disaster Relief Fund released CHF 190,000 (USD 162,500) to support the PNG Red Cross to deliver immediate assistance to 15,450 beneficiaries.
- The Government of Japan provided emergency relief goods worth PGK 400,000 (USD 163,200).
- NZAid donated NZD 150,000 (USD 86,500) to the PNG Red Cross, facilitated by the New Zealand Red Cross.
- USAID has provided PGK 140,000 (USD 50,000) to the PNG Red Cross.

Funding does not seem to be a problem in the relief response efforts in PNG.

***Note: Since the focus has shifted from relief to early recovery, this is the final situation report on the humanitarian impact of sea swells in PNG. OCHA will continue to monitor the situation and report as and when necessary.***

#### **For more detailed and updated information please contact:**

**OCHA New York** Ms. Aditee Maskey, Tel: +1-212-963-0910

**OCHA ROAP Bangkok** Mr. Markus Werne, Tel: +66-81-917 8940

**OCHA PNG** Ms. Vini Talai, Tel: +675-321 2877 ext 1249