

# INFORMATION BULLETIN



International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies  
Fédération Internationale des Sociétés de la Croix-Rouge et du Croissant-Rouge  
Federación Internacional de Sociedades de la Cruz Roja y de la Media Luna Roja  
الاتحاد الدولي لجمعيات الصليب الأحمر والهلال الأحمر

## PAPUA NEW GUINEA: MANAM VOLCANO ERUPTION

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*The Federation's mission is to improve the lives of vulnerable people by mobilizing the power of humanity. It is the world's largest humanitarian organization and its millions of volunteers are active in over 181 countries.*

### In Brief

**This Information Bulletin (no. 01/2004) is being issued based on the needs described below reflecting the information available at this time. CHF 50,000 has been released from the Federation's Disaster Relief Emergency Fund (DREF). Further updates will be issued as required.**

***For further information specifically related to this operation please contact:***

- *In PNG: National Society: Jacqueline Boga, Secretary General, Papua New Guinea Red Cross, Phone +675 325 8577; Fax +675 325 9714; email [hqpngrcs@online.net.pg](mailto:hqpngrcs@online.net.pg)*
- *In PNG: PNG Delegation: Ervin Bulathsinghala, Head of Delegation/Disaster Preparedness, Phone +679 311 2277, Fax +679 323 0731, email [ifrcpg01@ifrc.org](mailto:ifrcpg01@ifrc.org)*
- *In Geneva: EunHee Cho (Regional Officer), Phone +41 22 7304392; Fax +41 22 733 0395; email [eunhee.cho@ifrc.org](mailto:eunhee.cho@ifrc.org)*

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### The Situation

Volcanic activity on Manam Island, Papua New Guinea, – ongoing since October – has recently increased in intensity, affecting all 16 villages on the island and prompting provincial authorities to raise the alert to phase three, and begin the voluntary evacuation of the island. Some of the island's 9,000 inhabitants have already moved to other villages or the mainland to escape the most severe effects of the volcano.

The threat posed by the volcano goes beyond the risk of a large-scale eruption, to the less visible but no less serious critical shortage of food and clean water. Evacuation does not automatically solve these problems, as the arrival of evacuees on the mainland will put scarce resources there under severe stress. The government has reported that water rationing is already being imposed in parts of Bogia, on the mainland, where many evacuees are expected to be located. It is expected that relief will be required even following evacuation (in line with the government response strategy).

A Red Cross assessment team visited the island on 19-21 November, and reported that volcanic ash has caused extensive damage to food crops. In the worst-affected areas, crops have been completely destroyed. Severe food limitations and shortages were already being reported in most villages, and it is estimated that without intervention, the island would face a critical shortage of food within two weeks. The government has commenced periodic food distributions.

Villagers also reported increasing incidences of gastro-intestinal and respiratory health problems as a result of exposure to volcanic ash and consumption of contaminated drinking water. Ash levels averaging 8-10cm were observed in most villages and the team received reports of subsistence food crops on higher ground being buried in as much as 50 centimetres of ash. A shortage of basic health services on the island increases the vulnerability of the island's population, and poor hygiene and sanitation at campsites on the island were observed.

The risk of a major eruption, meanwhile, remains very real. Explosive eruptions occurred on 10-12 November, causing serious damage to previously unaffected tracts of land on both sides of the island. The Rabaul Volcanological Observatory reported that on Tuesday, 23 November, the volcano propelled ash some 10 kilometres high, and threw out pieces of debris measuring up to eight centimetres in diameter.<sup>1</sup>

Protracted lower-level volcanic activity (lasting more than a month so far) has deposited large amounts of ash which, after rain, has led to the collapse of a number of traditionally built houses in the worst-affected villages. There have been several injuries reported from these incidents.

### **Red Cross and Red Crescent action**

Following the eruptions of 10-12 November, the Papua New Guinea Red Cross (PNGRC) conducted an assessment of the situation. In response to the needs identified at that time, and in coordination with PNG authorities, the PNGRC supplied water containers to the worst-affected village.

The PNGRC disaster team continued to liaise with government officials, and another Red Cross field assessment was carried out on November 19-21 by a team consisting of three representatives of the PNG Red Cross (the chairman and disaster coordinator of the Madang Branch, and the PNGRC disaster preparedness programme coordinator) and a Federation delegate normally based in Port Moresby.

The Madang branch of the PNGRC is a member of the Provincial Disaster Management Committee, and has been requested to oversee the distribution of water containers (jerrycans and larger water storage units) and shelter materials such as tarpaulins. So far, the PNGRC has supplied 106 water containers from a planned total of 1,500. PNGRC staff and volunteers from the Madang branch have also begun to distribute tarpaulins and some locally donated food to the victims.

The PNGRC's immediate focus will be on completing the distribution of shelter materials, water containers and water storage facilities for displaced communities both on the mainland and the island. The planned distribution is expected to exhaust the available pre-positioned relief supplies, and additional supplies will be transported by plane from Port Moresby.

The PNGRC is liaising with the Director of the National Disaster Centre regarding any further assistance required, and is developing a proposal based on the needs identified. Meanwhile, the New Zealand Red Cross has offered initial assistance towards the replenishment of relief supplies, and the Federation has released CHF 50,000 from its Disaster Relief Emergency Fund.

**Table: Results of survey on availability of water and shelter in villages**

<b>Village</b>	<b>Number of households</b>	<b>Total population</b>	<b>Water</b>	<b>Shelter</b>
Warisi	53	321	Water difficult to find. People collecting water from freshwater sinks around the shoreline.	Three houses have collapsed. Its inhabitants are now living in two tents. Six houses close to collapse.
Abaria	66	200	Water difficult to find. People collecting water from freshwater sinks around the shoreline.	Houses close to collapse. Tents built for some families.

<sup>1</sup> ABC News Online, "Volcano threat upgraded in PNG", <http://www.abc.net.au/news/newsitems/200411/s1250901.htm>

Bokure 1+2	93	424	Water difficult to find. People collecting water from freshwater sinks around the shoreline.	Houses are about to collapse. Some families living in tents.
Kolang 2	19	150	Water difficult to find. People collecting water from freshwater sinks around the shoreline.	Houses are about collapse.
Kolang 1	85	377	Villagers believe water is contaminated.	Houses collapsed. Some families living in tents.
Dangale	100	1000	Water source (well) unusable because of volcanic ash.	
Boda	183	871	One well. People also fetch water from Boisa village.	Houses collapsed.
Kuluguma	189	819	Water from Boisa. If this is unavailable, water from shoreline is used.	
Yassa	145	692	Water source may be contaminated.	
Madauri	87	398	Water shortages reported.	
Waia	103	426	Villagers believe water is contaminated.	
Zogari	138	742		
Baliau	277	1546	Water source may be contaminated.	
Dugulava	182	1025	Water shortages reported.	

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