

# **PAPUA NEW GUINEA: DISPLACED PERSONS**

12 February 1998

*appeal no. 01.25/97*

*situation report no. 7*

*period covered: 1 October 1997 - 31 January 1998*

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*The easing of security on Bougainville enabled the 1997 distributions of family relief packs to be completed. Development and capacity building programmes will start once the necessary funds have been committed.*

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## ***The context***

The conflict on Bougainville Island, a dominating factor in Papua New Guinea (PNG) political life for almost a decade, took a positive turn at the end of 1997 with peace talks which resulted in a truce and in the return to relative normality for most of the island's population. In early February, as the multi-national Truce Monitoring Group appeared on the verge of handing over its tasks to the local police, all concerned parties recognise the significant contribution made by the Red Cross relief operations in establishing the positive climate which led to negotiations and eventually to the cease-fire.

## ***Latest events***

While the overall security situation on the island following the latest agreement in Christchurch, New Zealand has reportedly greatly improved, the Federation/PNG Red Cross staff have experienced difficulties resisting pressure from those who either missed out on earlier distributions, failed to initially accept the aims and objectives of the operation, or failed or refused to register and now feel excluded. Despite some acts of intimidation, Federation/PNG Red Cross activities and profile were maintained. The recent visit of the Federation Head of Delegation, who remained on the island for nearly two weeks, played a major role in stabilising the situation.

## ***Red Cross/Red Crescent action***

Two extra distributions were carried out in the north-west of the island and in the north-eastern Wakunai area in October/November, bringing the total number of family packs procured in 1997 to 30,000 (180,000 persons). During this round, 3,776 packs were distributed in record time to 78 villages and care centres.

During December and January, 1010 family packs and 17 medical kits were distributed to other areas that were not reached previously in 1997 due to security constraints. The remainder of the stock held in Arawa (2,000 packs) was being distributed during the two first weeks of February, while 89 medical packs are being kept in stock for use as part of the primary health care project in the 1998 Appeal.

## ***Outstanding needs***

Although it is now mid-February, the 1998 appeal for Papua New Guinea which seeks CHF 3,458,000 for emergency relief and capacity building programmes has not yet received any donor support. The lack of funds is delaying the start of these programmes.

## ***External relations - Government/UN/NGOs/Media***

Now that security conditions are improving, Bougainville is seeing a sharply increased influx of humanitarian actors -- UN agencies, NGOs and donor representatives. The Federation/PNG Red Cross, which for many years were the only agencies working on the island, are playing a prominent role in co-ordinating activities and facilitating access to the target communities.

## ***Contributions***

See Annex 1 for details.

## ***Conclusion***

The completion of the 1997 distributions of relief parcels and growing prospects for real peace and stability on Bougainville make this an auspicious moment to move on from relief operations and into the development and capacity building programmes outlined in the 1998 Emergency Appeal. However, to make a start in this direction funds must be committed rapidly. Donors are urged to give the appeal their urgent consideration.

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