

PAPUA NEW GUINEA: TIDAL WAVE

31 July 1998

appeal no. 22/98

situation report no. 2

period covered: 24 - 31 July 1998

The Tsunami disaster, while devastating in the numbers it killed, has nonetheless proved to be relatively manageable in terms of aid to the displaced. Transparency and appropriate follow-up is required. It is the intention of the PNG Red Cross/Federation to approach the rehabilitation phase in this spirit and to ensure that the substantial funds raised as a result of this tragedy are well used.

The context

Friday evening, 17 July, a massive tidal wave engulfed coastal villages in West Sepik Province, Papua New Guinea. Considering the remoteness of the area and the difficulty with communications, the response was remarkably quick with the Government, military and police receiving rapid technical and medical support from the Australian and New Zealand Defence Forces. The Catholic Mission in the area provided immediate help to the injured and displaced. Over the first weekend additional help came in from PNG Red Cross/International Federation, ADRA and other NGOs. By midweek the national and international response both financially and in kind was huge.

Latest events

Health •

Whilst the worst injuries have been addressed and their health conditions are stabilising, concerns arose in a number of health areas. Because of fear of coliform contamination in the Sissano Lagoon area due to decomposing bodies, burials and cremation of the corpses without a full identification were necessary. This also prevented human corpses being eaten by wild pigs dogs, sharks and crocodiles. Difficult logistic and communication conditions, the retrieval of the remains and the thousands of bodies still in the lagoon and along the coast have prompted the PNG government to declare a state of emergency and restrict access in a five-km radius of the lagoon.

Plans to bomb open the lagoon entrance to allow it to be flushed out by the sea have been abandoned due to sensitivities among the local community which now regards it as a mass grave. The Prime Minister has ordered a recall of Parliament to ratify the state of emergency and review the future.

Latest official figures show 2,173 confirmed deaths and over 8,500 displaced in centres in Ramo Care, Pou, Amsor/Nimas, Malol, Ombrum and Raimbrum. Another 800 are still hospitalised.

The government has established an Aitape Tidal Wave Relief Committee, which includes the PNG Red Cross Secretary General. Three major NGOs have been operational: ADRA, — water and sanitation in the care centres; World Vision — health and medical response and CARE. Others have arrived recently to assess the situation including MSF and Lila Foundation.

Relief and logistics •

Early on, supplies were successfully distributed to the survivors, hospitals, clinics and care centres. These items arrived from the Australian and New Zealand military teams, PNGRCS/Federation, Japanese Red Cross and others in the field.

Now that the situation has stabilised and the real emergency phase is over, the main concern remains the lack of co-ordination regarding deliveries. Relief items continue to arrive on the scene complicating an already complex logistics and distribution situation. Future needs have to be fully assessed and evaluated in terms of quantities to be delivered or in the pipeline, quantities already distributed, and in stock. The Secretary General of PNGRCS has shared the Red Cross view among all the partners, by pointing out that the Federation/PNGRCS only responds to specific targeted needs as identified by its team on the ground at Aitape.

Red Cross/Red Crescent action

At Madang a surplus of relief supplies from the PNGRC/Federation Ramu River operation was loaded on a plane and delivered to Aitape by the SG on 21 July. He was then joined by two Federation delegates (Water/Sanitation and Health) and two PNGRCS volunteers from Rabaul Branch. These supplies were then distributed directly by the team to survivors in all care centres and along the road at Malol. The team carried out an assessment of the conditions and needs as they visited the disaster area.

Supplies distributed included 1,200 water containers, 840 buckets, 150x 200m plastic sheeting, 100 cartons of protein biscuits, 200 bush knives, 50 axes and 24 spades.

Logistics •

A ship was chartered from Lae, loaded with relief supplies from the Bougainville/Drought operation stock and directed to Aitape, where it arrived four days later. This consignment is being distributed by the team and consists of 412 “Bougainville” Family Packs (clothing, hygiene, blankets, clothes, cooking pots and tools), six large “Bougainville” Village Resettlement Packs consisting of basic construction and gardening tools and supplies such as nails saws, hammers, six medical packs with essential drugs for 2,000 people for three months each, 300 cooking pots, 1,000 plates, 1,000 sets of cutlery, 1,000 cups, 2,000 bars of soap, three containers of clothing, one container of clothing and food, school packs and three collapsible water tanks.

PNGRCS took delivery of a donation flown in from the firm Wills (PNG) of cups, plates, blankets, cooking pots, hurricane lamps, soap, spades, clothing, straw sleeping mats, sponges, and steel wool.

In the meantime a Japanese Red Cross team of three delegates arrived in Port Moresby with a planeload of plastic sheeting, followed by additional deliveries of medical supplies. PNGRCS volunteers and Federation delegates in Port Moresby have been co-ordinating donations, logistics and communications for the field team as well as liaising with Federation Secretariat staff who have been co-ordinating the response to the Appeal. Additional goods and services are being either stored or forwarded as requested from the field. These include emergency medical supplies to Aitape Hospital as identified by the team there.

After acknowledging that immediate needs for the victims are now being met, a longer term assessment of the situation will be carried out. In order to monitor and co-ordinate ongoing activities in the disaster area, two Federation delegates supplied at short notice by New Zealand Red Cross will remain in the field together with two PNGRCS volunteers, government officials and other NGOs. The Japanese RC team will depart PNG Sunday 2 August and the two Bougainville-based Federation delegates deployed at the beginning of the operation will return to Port Moresby to participate in the PNGRCS/Federation post emergency assessment and planning future action before returning to their posts.

A Federation Under Secretary General is in PNG this week to review the Federation's support to the National Society and the ongoing Bougainville and Drought operations. She will visit all operational

areas with the PNGRCS officials and the Head of Delegation. The strategy for a post-emergency operation as well as future Red Cross rehabilitation activities in Aitape area will be major points of discussion.

Institutional Development •

The Federation proposes to support a self-evaluation of PNGRCS to build on existing strengths. Such an approach helps to better define objectives in various areas, establish programmes and to reinforce branches. Within this framework, an institutional development delegate will be posted for an initial period of one year to provide support to the PNGRCS.

Outstanding needs

All needs for the emergency and immediate post-emergency stages have been covered due to the generous support from National Societies, Governments and their humanitarian agencies as well as from the public in many countries. Ongoing needs are also likely to be fully covered but details will follow in future situation reports following the assessment.

External relations - Government/UN/NGOs/Media

The PNGRCS has close and effective relations with the government at all levels as well as with NGOs. The Red Cross has played an important and well recognised role in field operations, co-ordination and management functions. The PNGRCS Chairman, Secretary General, and the Federation Delegation have been and continue to be closely involved with the ongoing assessment of the future activities in the region.

Contributions

See Annex 1 for details.

Conclusion

The Red Cross was one of the first to raise the awareness of the government and the public that the time has come to reassess and review the needs and the future application of financial and material resources. No further Red Cross supplies will be sent into the region unless specific and targeted needs are identified. Other partners are encouraged to do likewise and address the longer term use of the substantial funds raised. A detailed Plan of Action for the coming months will be the next stage of operations.

Peter Rees-Gildea
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**PAPUA NEW GUINEA -
 TIDAL WAVE**

APPEAL No. 22/98

**PLEDGES
 RECEIVED**

31/07/98

DONOR	CATEGORY	QUANTITY	UNIT	VALUE CHF	DATE
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CASH

REQUESTED IN APPEAL----- ----->		907,000	
AUSTRALIAN - RC	250,000 AUD	220,700	28/07/98
BRAZILIAN - RC	500.00 USD	750.00	24/07/98
BRITISH - RC/GOVT	75,000 GBP	184,035	23/07/98 VILLA
CANADIAN - RC	2,000 CAD	2,049	22/07/98
CANADIAN - GOVT	100,000 CAD	102,460	24/07/98
ECHO	175,000 XEU		TO BE
ICELANDIC - RC	200,000 ISK	4,187	22/07/98
NORWEGIAN RC/GOVT	1,298,701 NOK	254,000	22/07/98
NEW ZEALAND - RC	600,000 NZD	447,300	25/07/98 PUBLI
POLISH - RC	1,000 USD	1,500	22/07/98
SWISS - RC/GOVT		150,000	24/07/98
AMERICAN - RC	75,000 USD	112,500	24/07/98
REP. OF KOREA - RC		20,000	28/07/98
SUB/TOTAL RECEIVED IN CASH		1,499,481 CHF	

KIND AND SERVICES (INCL. PERSONNEL)

DONOR	CATEGORY	QUANTITY	UNIT	VALUE CHF	DATE
JAPANESE - RC	1 DEL X 1 MONTH			5,000	
NEW ZEALAND - RC	2 DEL X 2 MONTHS			20,000	

SUB/TOTAL RECEIVED IN KIND/SERVICES	25,000 CHF
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**NOT REQUESTED IN
APPEAL**

DONOR	CATEGORY	QUANTITY	UNIT	VALUE CHF	DATE	
JAPANESE - RC	Plastic sheeting	6,300	pcs			
	Medical supplies			175,000	31/07/98	total
SUB/TOTAL RECEIVED				175,000 CHF		