

# **PAPUA NEW GUINEA: TIDAL WAVE**

30 October 1998

*appeal no. 22/98*

*situation report no. 4/98*

*period covered: 15 August - 21 October 1998*

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*As the emergency phase of relief operations has passed, the International Federation and the Papua New Guinea Red Cross Society (PNGRCS) focused efforts on the development of a rehabilitation plan which contains capacity-building components to better prepare the National Society for future disasters.*

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## ***The context***

The tsunami which struck the area around the Sissano Lagoon near Aitape, Sandaun Province, on 17 July 1998, left in its wake a scene of total devastation. The official death toll stands at 2182, and 9199 people have been left homeless.

The response from the community, the rest of the country and the world at large, was rapid and overwhelming. The PNGRCS, supported by the International Federation, were on the scene during the first few days, providing effective and appropriate assistance during the early stages of the emergency phase of the operation. A Red Cross presence in Aitape has been maintained since that time though the number of other involved organisations has dramatically reduced.

The next phase of the operation is to provide medium to long term assistance to those affected by the Aitape disaster and to optimise the utilisation of the substantial donor funds available through the Federation Appeal and PNGRCS. This involves a holistic programme which extends beyond the immediate area of this disaster to include capacity building and disaster preparedness in the PNGRCS as well as "exporting" projects beyond Sandaun Province to reach other disaster prone regions of the country.

## ***Latest events***

The PNG Red Cross and the Federation delegation with the technical support of the Suva regional Delegation have completed the planning of the Aitape Post Disaster Programme composed of 7 projects: water and sanitation; community health promotion and awareness; nutrition assessment; community based self-reliance training; disaster relief warehouse and stocks - Lae; storage/office/training facility - Port Moresby; and strengthening PNGRCS disaster preparedness capacity. The planning was completed by a round table meeting involving several national societies.

There have been reports of dysentery in Barapu, a resettlement area that Red Cross has accepted to provide assistance in water and sanitation. The actual number of persons involved is unclear and none

have been confirmed by diagnostic analysis however, the District Environmental Health Officer has reported the number as being 5 suspected cases.

The number of communities affected by the disaster now stands at 11 which includes the host villages of Pou and Ramo. Population totals in each area are being recounted this week. In most of the locations schools have been re-built and life is returning to normal with communities working to rebuild houses and communal facilities.

The declared state of emergency is still in effect and the general security in the area is quite stable. The ban on alcohol still exists which may be a contributing factor in the security situation however, there are some concerns that the scaling down of distributions in some areas may lead to increased tension.

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

### **Water and Sanitation •**

At this stage, work on water and sanitation projects is not as well advanced as could be expected. Meetings were held with village leaders in Arope on 6 and 20 October and Barapu on 9 October to identify water and sanitation requirements. With the onset of the wet season it is proposed to construct rainwater catchments in the first instance both to capitalise on the rain and to provide some immediate relief. At a later stage these will be supplemented by shallow wells.

Materials required for the work involved have been identified and are now on order. Delivery to the sites is expected to commence next week.

There are some concerns with sanitation in Barapu which will be a permanent settlement for some 350 - 400 families. The land there is flat and poorly drained marshland surrounded by sago swamp, not ideally suited to habitation. Recent roads works have altered the integrity of the area significantly contributing to the drainage problems. The high water table, which is at ground level in some areas following heavy rains, is a major hurdle to overcome in the proper disposal of sewage. The possibility of creating elevated sites for the construction of communal latrines is currently being explored.

### **Community health •**

The community based health team has visited all care centres and resettlement areas to complete an overview of the present and future health priorities from the perspective of the community and the health team.

Recent heavy rains have increased the likelihood of outbreaks of malaria and already significant mosquito breeding has been observed. A further distribution of treated mosquito nets, to supplement those distributed immediately after the disaster, is planned and will be managed by the health team to ensure that each family is adequately protected.

### **Nutrition •**

The nutrition assessment commenced on 14 October with the intention of obtaining approximately 30 nutrition history samples from each care centre and resettlement area. A community health volunteer has been assisting the nutrition team to achieve the required survey samples within the project time frame.

### **Psycho-social needs •**

Currently, the majority of people appear to be focused on rebuilding their homes, their communities and the assets needed to obtain these goals. At this stage, there is little time and energy left for other community interests and even needs. During discussions related to the nutrition assessment, the health team has been confronted by individuals despairing over the loss of partner and/or children.

### **Logistics •**

On several occasions, proposed field visits have been delayed or postponed due to restricted helicopter transport as a result of the lack of fuel. During a recent visit by the Chairman of the Disaster Fund this matter was raised, together with the use of helicopters for destinations on normal scheduled commercial flight routes. The advice received was that the issue of transport co-ordination has been under scrutiny and that plans to address the deficiencies are underway.

#### **Communications and transport •**

In addition to the satellite telephone which was carried over from the disaster operations, the programme is now supported by phone/fax facilities and VHF radios. A base station has been installed at the office location and a mobile in the landcruiser patrol. A portable QMac radio is also available for use in the field. All personnel have now received instruction on the operation and use of this equipment. The handhold portable radios also left from the disaster operations are only useful over relatively short distances.

The construction of new roads and the extension of existing road systems has resulted in access to some villages and resettlement areas previously only accessible by air. Where possible, road transport is used, however, this is reliant on weather conditions and the state of the river crossings.

The arrival of the Toyota Landcruiser has significantly improved the transport situation through increasing mobility and by allowing more flexibility in the deployment of the team.

## ***Outstanding needs***

Each community has specific needs pertaining to their geographical and population situation. With diminishing transport access due to rain and high costs of helicopter transport, there is a need to improve sea transport and radio communication.

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

Daily contact is maintained with the principal District Health personnel particularly in matters of community health and water and sanitation. Regular meetings of those agencies engaged in water and sanitation projects, although proposed, have not occurred. However, two ad hoc meetings for the exchange of information have taken place.

## ***Contributions***

See Annex 1 for details.

## ***Conclusion***

Generally, the operation is proceeding satisfactorily with all personnel approaching their respective projects with considerable enthusiasm and diligence. As the programme contains a number of new concepts, particularly in relation to the involvement of volunteers, it is proving to be a learning

experience for all concerned. The presence of the Red Cross continues to be well received by the authorities and community, as well as the other agencies involved.

Peter Rees-Gildea,  
Director  
Operations, Funding and Reporting Department

Hiroshi Higashiura,  
Director  
Asia & Pacific Department

**TIDAL WAVE****APPEAL No. 22/98****PLEDGES  
RECEIVED****30/10/98**

DONOR	CATEGORY	QUANTITY	UNIT	VALUE CHF	DATE	COMMENT
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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 VILLAGE REHAB. KITS
CANADIAN - RC		2,000	CAD	2,049	22/07/98
CANADIAN - GOVT		100,000	CAD	102,460	24/07/98
COOK ISLANDS RC				11,880	07/08/98 USD 3.886 + NZD 7.628
GERMANY - RC/PRIVATE		1,000	DEM	826.00	09/10/98
ICELANDIC - RC		200,000	ISK	4,164	22/07/98
ITALIAN GOVT/Emergency Fund		100,000	USD	150,000	21/07/98
JAPANESE - RC		10,000,000	JPY	107,760	13/08/08
MONACO -RC		30,000	FRF	7,389	23/09/98
NETHERLANDS - RC		300,000	NLG		03/08/98 CANCELLED
NORWEGIAN RC/GOVT		1,298,701	NOK	254,000	22/07/98
NEW ZEALAND - RC		817,661	NZD	609,566	25/07/98 PUBLIC DONATIONS
PALAU - RC				809.00	01/09/98
POLISH - RC		1,000	USD	1,500	22/07/98
AMERICAN - RC		75,000	USD	112,500	24/07/98
REP. OF KOREA - RC		20,000	USD	30,000	28/07/98
WESTERN SAMOA		87,050	SAT	40,200	07/08/98
WESTERN SAMOA				1,499	27/08/98
PRIVATE DONOR		250.00	CHF	250.00	28/07/98
<b>SUB/TOTAL RECEIVED IN CASH</b>				<b>1,842,337 CHF</b>	

**KIND AND SERVICES  
(INCL. PERSONNEL)**

DONOR	CATEGORY	QUANTITY	UNIT	VALUE CHF	DATE	COMMENT
JAPANESE - RC	1 DEL X 1 MONTH			5,000		
NEW ZEALAND - RC	2 DEL X 2 MONTHS			20,000		
<b>SUB/TOTAL RECEIVED IN KIND/SERVICES</b>				25,000 CHF		

**NOT REQUESTED IN  
APPEAL**

DONOR	CATEGORY	QUANTITY	UNIT	VALUE CHF	DATE	COMMENT
JAPANESE - RC	PLASTIC SHEETING			175,000	31/07/98	INCLUDING TRANSPORT
<b>SUB/TOTAL RECEIVED</b>				175,000 CHF		