

# ***PAPUA NEW GUINEA: TIDAL WAVE***

**appeal no: 22/98  
21 July 1998**

***THIS PRELIMINARY APPEAL SEEKS  
CHF 907,000 IN CASH AND SERVICES  
TO ASSIST 10,000 BENEFICIARIES FOR 3 MONTHS***

## ***The Disaster***

During the night of Friday 17 July a series of tsunami waves hit the north coast of Papua New Guinea at the Sisson Lagoon, devastating 23 kilometres of coast and killing at least 750 people. Over 3,500 are still missing and feared dead at the time of writing. Up to 12,000 people have been affected and ten villages completely wiped out. Survivors, many with serious injuries, are being treated by emergency workers from the region and other parts of PNG. The Australian Defence Force has flown in medical teams and a field hospital. The needs of the injured and the recovery and burial of corpses are thus being well addressed.

An estimated 3,000 families have fled to higher ground and, fearful of further waves, are unwilling to return. These people lack food, shelter and medical assistance. Their immediate and future needs will become a serious priority as the emergency phase comes to an end, and it is towards this group of vulnerable that the Federation/Papua New Guinea Red Cross will direct their efforts. The region is very remote and transport to and within it is slow and cumbersome, making logistical arrangements much more difficult. A four day National Holiday has further complicated matters.

## ***The Response so far***

### **Government Action •**

Immediately after the disaster, the Government sent a detachment of police and army to the area. The Prime Minister and the Director of the national Disaster Emergency Services visited the area on Sunday, with the former calling for international assistance due to the magnitude of the disaster.

### **Red Cross/Red Crescent Action •**

The chairman of PNG Red Cross has requested the Federation Secretariat to launch a preliminary appeal to support the National Society, which is already part of the government co-ordination body. A joint PNGRC/Federation assessment is currently taking place, involving the Secretary General of the PNGRC supported by two Federation delegates from the ongoing Bougainville operation (Water/Sanitation and Health).

The day after the tidal wave the PNGRC/Federation initiated mobilisation of resources. CHF 50,000 was released from the Disaster Relief Emergency Fund to kick-start the relief operation and move personnel and supplies to the disaster area.

PNGRC/Federation is shipping from its Lae logistics base (used for the Bougainville relief operation) 400 family rehabilitation kits containing clothing, blankets, hygiene supplies, cooking utensils, one 20-foot container of clothing and water/sanitation equipment. This has been made possible due to an immediate response from ECHO. There is no local Red Cross branch in the area so trained volunteers from Madang and Lae Branches will provide staff to work with Federation delegates on the spot.

Apart from ECHO's support, a number of National Societies and governments have already mobilised cash, in kind contributions and delegates including the Red Cross Societies of Norway, South Korea, Japan, Netherlands, Poland, Australia and New Zealand.

Additional relief delegates are on the way to the disaster zone to strengthen the Federation country delegation, which currently comprises seven international staff.

#### **Other Agencies' Action •**

The governments of Australia and New Zealand have dispatched C130 planes with Defence Force medical personnel, a field hospital and supplies. The NGO AMDA has dispatched medical personnel to reinforce the catholic mission in Aitape.

#### **Co-ordination •**

Co-ordination of the operation is the responsibility of the national Disaster Emergency Services with which PNGRC has close contacts and an effective working relationship. Red Cross/Red Crescent international action is being co-ordinated by the Federation Secretariat working closely with its country delegation in Port Moresby.

## ***The Intended Operation***

#### **Assessment of Needs •**

First indications from the Red Cross assessment mission confirm that the affected will need immediate support, mainly in terms of rehabilitation. A complete needs assessment has yet to be finalised, but plans are being made to assist some 10,000 people. Those who survived with minor injuries fled inland to higher ground, where they have no means of support. Their home region, destroyed by the tsunamis, was already very difficult to access, and where they are now is even more so. The staple diet in the region is based on sago and seafood, both of which are now in short supply.

#### **Immediate Needs •**

The immediate need for emergency treatment and first aid have been taken care of by local medical personnel, volunteers and health staff, as well as by medical teams provided by the Australian and New Zealand military and staff from the local Catholic Mission.

The Red Cross operation will be directed towards emergency rehabilitation for survivors and displaced by providing family rehabilitation kits with basic supplies such as blankets and bed

sheets, towels, children's hygienic supplies, clothing, plastic sheeting, cooking utensils, as well as village rehabilitation kits composed of basic building and gardening tools -- saws, hammers, nails spades, forks, bush knives etc.

**Anticipated Later Needs •**

The Federation will strengthen PNGRC capacity in the affected areas by supporting training of local personnel in anticipation of a more protracted post-emergency relief operation which may include the need to support displaced populations remaining in the bush.

**Logistics •**

In Lae, some 340 north of the capital Port Moresby, the Federation has a logistics base ready and able to procure large amounts of supplies and where marine and other transport resources are available. The difficulties of the terrain have still to be fully assessed but it is certain that ships and helicopters -- both of which are currently used by the PNGRC and Federation for ongoing operations -- will be needed to ensure access to the disaster zone.

**Communication •**

The PNGRC/Federation has a complete communication system including electronic mail and satellite voice and data links within the various operational centres, the PNGRC Headquarters in Port Moresby and the Federation Secretariat.

**Red Cross Objectives •**

- To support 10,000 people for an initial period of 30 days by providing them with 500 grams of food per day, with water containers and water collectors;
- to assist 2,000 families with emergency rehabilitation kits (CHF 200 per kit);
- to provide rehabilitation kits for four groups of villages in the 23-kilometre affected coastal area;
- to identify the basic non-emergency essential medical and pharmaceutical capacities of existing clinics and aid posts and supply them as needed until the situation stabilises.

## ***National Society/Federation Plan of Action***

The initial plan of action will be reviewed in light of the ongoing field assessment being conducted by PNGRC/Federation.

**Emergency Phase •**

During the first 30 days of the operation some 10,000 people will be supported with basic food, water containers and water collectors.

**Phase two: August to September 1998 •**

Provision of basic rehabilitation kits to 2,000 families and to affected villages.

**Capacity of the National Society •**

PNGRC has considerable experience in the co-ordination of relief operations, including the major drought operation over the past eight months, and the Bougainville operation. Capacity at field level is limited and needs to be reinforced. Good relations and working networks with National and Provincial authorities are in place.

**Present capacity of the Federation •**

Two Federation Delegates are based in Port Moresby, one in Lae, in the north and four on Bougainville island. Three more delegates are en route. The Federation Delegation has developed a comprehensive logistics capacity in terms of procurement, warehousing, communication and air and sea transport.

**Evaluation •**

The PNGRC/Federation team will continue to evaluate conditions in the region and will issue a full Appeal on the coming days. The Under Secretary General for Disaster Response and Operations Co-ordination will visit PNG at the end of the month.

## ***Budget summary***

See Annex 1 for details. For further information, please contact Marcel Fortier, Desk Officer, on ++4122 7304268, email: fortier@ifrc.org

## ***Conclusion***

A full Appeal will be issued as soon as a comprehensive needs assessment has been made and analysed. Cash contributions are especially important, as all materials needed can be procured locally, thus saving time and contributing to post-disaster economic recovery.

Margareta Wahlström  
Under Secretary General,  
Disaster Response & Operations Coordination

George Weber  
Secretary General

**BUDGET SUMMARY**

**APPEAL No. 22/98**  
**IN CHF**

ANNEX 1

Papua New Guinea : Tidal Wave  
Preliminary Appeal

**Relief supplies**

Basic Food items (300 MT x CHF 550)	165,000.00
Basic essential drugs	12,000.00
Water & Sanitation (water collector, buckets)	32,000.00

**Emergency rehabilitation**

Family rehabilitation packs (2.000 units)	400,000.00
Village rehabilitation kits (10 units)	30,000.00

**TOTAL NEEDS**

639,000.00

**NEEDS IN CASH**

Sea transport (500 MT x CHF 90)	45,000.00
Air transport (fixed planes/helicopter)	44,000.00
Storage/warehouse costs	4,000.00
Personnel (2 delegates / 3 months)	60,000.00
Personnel ( 8 field staff)	7,200.00
Travel & communications	29,000.00
Information	12,000.00
Administrative, office & general expenses	25,000.00
Secretariat operational support	41,800.00

**TOTAL NEEDS IN CASH**

268,000.00

**TOTAL APPEAL CASH & SERVICES**

907,000.00

**LESS CASH ON HAND****0.00****NET REQUEST CASH & SERVICES**

907,000.00

NB: all items can be procured locally