

PAPUA NEW GUINEA:

Emergency Relief, Capacity Building

21 December 1998

appeal no. 01.33/98

situation report no. 2

period covered: 1 September 1998 - 1 December 1998

The distribution of resettlement kits and medical kits is taking place. With the arrival of extra delegates, community health, water and sanitation and trauma counselling projects will get under way. Although freedom of movement after the ceasefire agreement has made logistics easier, security remains a concern.

The context

The signing of the Cease-fire Agreement and the arrival of the Truce Monitoring Group has brought about a significant improvement in security. With freedom of movement restored, life is slowly returning to normal. Various rehabilitation/reconstruction programmes are starting, and new trade stores and markets are being established. Progress in the political sector is slow and delicate. The Australian and New Zealand Governments are trying to assist in the process by organising regular visits of official delegations to the island and supporting the reconstruction of hospitals, health centres, airports, bridges and water systems destroyed or damaged during the nine year conflict.

The Federation/PNG Red Cross (PNGRC) presence on the island since the early days of the conflict and the various distributions of individual and family relief packs that took place over the years contributed significantly to the recovery and rehabilitation of the people of Bougainville. The next phase of the operations in support of the thousands of people displaced by the conflict, outlined in the 1998/1999 Plan of Action, is to continue distributions of village and community resettlement packs containing items including household equipment, and tools for construction of dwellings and gardens. This programme will cover all districts of the island.

Latest events

The establishment of an interim Provincial Government for Bougainville has officially been suspended until the next sitting of parliament in June 1999. Local politicians on Bougainville have announced that they will proceed independently with the process.

The reconstruction of Buka hospital and Airport is now complete and the buildings were recently inaugurated.

The security situation is still very fragile and the incidence of armed robberies is on the increase, with aid agencies now being directly targeted.

Red Cross/Red Crescent action

The Federation/PNGRC programme implementation on Bougainville is going well, although slightly behind schedule. The arrival of two additional long term Federation delegates will assist in speeding up the remaining distributions of community resettlement kits, and the distribution of medical packs, as well as starting the much awaited Water and Sanitation project. The imminent arrival of a short term technical delegate will also move forward the launching of the Trauma counselling programme .

Village Resettlement Kits (VRK) project •

The distribution of VRK went well in the northern part of Bougainville, where a total of 81 kits were distributed in: North west, North east, Central, Bana and Wisai districts. The distribution of kits to southern and remaining central districts has been suspended temporarily due to the deteriorating security situation and recent incidents. Consultations with Chiefs, village elders and the authorities are underway to ensure safe and fair distributions in these areas.

Community Health Care projects •

During this period, the distribution of medical kits entered a new phase, with kits now being distributed to Health Care Centres only (HCCs). These HCCs will then supply Aid Posts' (AP) needs in their areas. APs are encouraged to place orders directly with supervising HCCs to prevent overstocking and re-establish the "pre crisis" health system.

During the crisis and until now, the Red Cross supplied APs directly with medical kits, an expensive and time consuming exercise, but now with the present freedom of movement and improved transportation systems the new system will allow faster distributions, with increased community participation and responsibility.

A training course was conducted in conjunction with Arawa Health Centre staff to upgrade knowledge levels of AP-staff in the Central district.

Water & Sanitation •

This project was suspended due to the Aitape tidal wave disaster, when the Water and Sanitation delegate had to transfer from one operation to the other. With the arrival of the new Water and Sanitation delegate in January 1999, these programmes will resume. Already in place are plans based on assessments done in the past and updated recently. Stocks of hardware and materials are about to be shipped to Arawa.

The Water and Sanitation project is an integral part of the Community Health strategy and aims at providing improved standards of water quality in use around Health Care Centres and Aid Posts.

Trauma Counselling for youths and children •

This project is about to start with the arrival of a Consultant from the Australian Red Cross. The first assessment trip is scheduled for early January 1999.

Logistics •

Logistics remain a great challenge with huge costs involved due to limited regular shipping services. Locally, there are some difficulties due to the present security situation.

Delegates & Staff •

The Federation Bougainville team presently consists of a Team Leader and one Health delegate, and a Relief delegate just waiting for immigration formalities. A Water & Sanitation delegate will arrive shortly. A Logistics delegate based in Lae has arrived and is fully operational providing support for the

Bougainville operation as well as other operations in the country. The Bougainville Red Cross team also includes 14 local staff members.

Security •

The security situation has worsened with three incidents involving Red Cross personnel or equipment. Three vehicles have been stolen at gun-point from residences. One has since been returned. Additional security features have been installed in the residences. A number of meetings have been held between local Authorities and Aid agencies on how to address the situation and how to improve security for all.

External relations - Government/UN/NGOs/Media

Close liaison is maintained with EU, as well as with AusAID and NZODA.

Bougainville Transitional Government/Bougainville Revolutionary Army/Bougainville Interim Government: Good relationships continue through frequent meetings, co-ordinating distribution plans and discussing security and other issues.

Media: Several "image boosting" articles have appeared in local media covering or mentioning Red Cross operations and activities.

Contributions

See Annex 1 for details.

Note this appeal is fully covered by contributions, there are no outstanding needs.

Conclusion

Although the end of year festive season is beginning, when activities normally slow down, the plans and necessary logistical support are in place to enable the operation to progress in the coming months. However, the security situation continues to be of concern.

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