

15 September 1999

PAPUA NEW GUINEA:

Rehabilitation, disaster preparedness & capacity building

Appeal No: 01.35/99

Situation Report No: 3/99

period covered: 1 July - 31 August 1999

The Aitape post disaster programme has made effective progress with most of the planned activities already completed or near completion. With the Federation's support, the National Society is now focusing on its own development. In Bougainville, the implementation of the health, water, and sanitation activities has gained momentum over the last several weeks. The support provided by the Red Cross logistics base in Lae has proved a valuable addition to the operation.

The context

A new Prime Minister was overwhelmingly elected by Parliament and has promised a government of reconciliation as well as an anti-corruption drive, a development which has created a general sense of optimism. Despite this, the economy continues to experience difficulties, with the devaluation of the kina against the US dollar continuing. There is emerging evidence of increased economic pressures on low income urban families or those in the informal or subsistence sector of the economy. The cost of gasoline has increased, as well as the duty on alcohol and cigarettes. Airfare increases and the introduction of a Value Added Tax (VAT) have all contributed to pressures on wages and salaries. Negotiations with the World Bank to secure budgetary support continue.

Leaders on the island of Bougainville expressed disappointment that the new Prime Minister had cancelled a planned visit. Unofficial elections were recently held to establish the Bougainville People's Congress (BPC), but it is still not clear whether this elected body is to be made permanent.

Latest events

In Aitape, religious and traditional mourning ceremonies have been held to commemorate the first anniversary of the tsunami disaster. A Federation Communications project was completed before the anniversary, with a video and news letter/photographs produced and distributed world-wide.

Un-seasonal wet weather has precipitated flooding in the Western Province, and, more recently, in the Central Province. Aid to the victims has been provided at a provincial level, and the Red Cross has not been requested to become involved so far.

The Peace Monitoring Group (PCM) on Bougainville has downgraded activities due to increasing property vandalism and law and order problems.

Red Cross/Red Crescent action

The Red Cross team in Bougainville has continued to be busy, and a new Health Delegate has recently joined the team. The expected shipments of relief goods arrived during the reporting period. Elsewhere, work continued on water and sanitation projects in Milne Bay, as well as in Aitape. Institutional development and capacity building in the National Society also continued with a key strategic planning workshop being held.

Country Wide Programme w

Institutional and Programme Development and Capacity building

Technical support was provided to the Papua New Guinea Red Cross Society (PNGRCS) to undertake a major assessment and institutional development workshop in August. Twenty-eight participants were brought together from seven branches, the Council, and key staff from the National Headquarters. Along with the Federation's Institutional Development Delegate, the Head of Delegation as well as the Secretary-General of the National Society provided support to the workshop as resource persons. The recently appointed Head of the Regional Delegation also participated in the workshop.

Four sub-committees have now been set up by the National Society to complete the Mission Statement, the Strategic Development Plan 1999 – 2004, and the related programming of activities. A Resource Development Committee will investigate new and more broadly based sources of funding and decide on a sustainable resource-building strategy. The final two committees will review the need for constitutional reform and also produce procedures manuals for branch and Headquarters use on various administrative matters, including VAT legislation and other statutory issues. All committees are expected to complete their objectives by year-end.

Bougainville Island Programme w

The new Federation Health Delegate has been actively meeting with key individuals to gain information on health programmes and advice on related issues.

Two relief shipments consisting of 160 medical kits arrived. Thirteen kits were distributed in July in the Wakunai and Tinputz districts, and twenty-four more were distributed in August in the Central, Wisai and Siwai districts, and to Torokina and Kunua on the west coast.

The distribution of final Village Resettlement Packs (VRP), comprised of construction tools and material distribution, was completed in the Central districts. The remaining VRP's are stored in the warehouse and will be used to support the more vulnerable communities in the mountain region of the mainland. From June 1998 to August 1999, a total of 224 packs have been distributed, serving a population of 117,000.

The Regional Finance and Administration Delegate provided support and training in Arawa, and the possibility of staff exchange visits to Port Moresby for training and familiarisation was explored.

Community First Aid Training

Support was provided to a community health training workshop in Arawa for 30 participants assigned to government aid posts in the central and southern districts. Red Cross dissemination and awareness lectures were included in the curriculum.

Obstetric Revision for Nurses and Traditional Birth Attendant Training

During this reporting period, there has been no reported progress in this area, although health representatives from the province attended a national planning workshop in Port Moresby.

Medical Equipment/Minor Equipment Maintenance

Two shipments of medical supplies and equipment arrived in Arawa during the period, including 29 solar refrigerators destined for health centres. Consultations related to the effective use of this equipment has begun with health authorities at the district and provincial level.

Tuberculosis and Leprosy Officer Training

Under the auspices of a national government programme, a recent training was undertaken in Buka for provincial leprosy programme staff. Plans have been made to meet with provincial co-ordinators to discuss Federation/PNGRCS health projects.

Mental Health

The implementation of this project was suspended in July, and will be re-assessed.

Safe Village Water Supplies

Out of the approximate one hundred rain water catchment projects planned in central and south Bougainville 23 are completed or close to completion. With the arrival of materials from the Lae Logistics Base, several more water catchment projects have now been initiated. This work concentrates on aid posts and schools identified through community consultation as critical areas requiring support. Unusually wet weather has made road travel more difficult, and some areas inaccessible. Communities, however, have assisted by providing local labour to carry materials to the intended destinations.

Four projects have been completed, including a rainwater catchment system, with two 1,000 gallon tanks, in the busy Arawa Health Centre, and the remaining three in community schools in the Central District. Construction materials have also been distributed in the Wisai Sub-District, to provide rainwater catchment systems to one sub health centre, two aid posts and three community schools. Projects in the Central District were also started in another six schools, two aid posts and one village clinic. A total of 10,000 beneficiaries have benefited so far with these projects.

The production of pit latrine slabs commenced at the Red Cross headquarters at Arawa, and eight have been distributed. Training of community selected youths will enable production of these slabs to be carried out in the target communities in the future.

Aitape Tsunami Post Disaster Programme w

Water and Sanitation

The water well and hand pump project initiative has been well received in the targeted villages in the Aitape area, and has proceeded smoothly. With seven of the proposed wells installed, and five more under construction, only one in Ramu village remains to be started. The concrete ring lined wells are protected with a concrete apron and equipped with a locally marketed hand pump. Communities have participated fully in the decision-making process and have provided labour. Water committees have been formed in the villages to promote hygiene awareness and to manage the facilities. Unseasonable rainy weather has made road travel difficult or impossible at times in the project area, and this problem has been partially resolved by using outboard motor boats to travel along the coast, and/or accessing isolated villages by foot.

To date in the Aitape area, 14 polymer water tanks, 5 ferro-cement water tanks (both types with 9,000 litre capacity), and 10 iron-sheet catchment roof structures have been installed or erected in a total of five villages. In addition to the water well project, 501 pit latrine liners have also been installed, as well as 17 steel road drainage culverts.

The Federation Water and Sanitation Delegate has also returned to drought relief projects in the Milne Bay province, assisting with equipment and material procurement, establishing operational logistics out of Alotau, the provincial capital, and supervising a three-person National Society team.

Community Health Promotion and Awareness w

A three-person National Society health team visited the Aitape area early in July to continue health education in relation to safe water and sanitation practices and good personal hygiene in the affected communities. The team also followed up results of the recent nutritional survey.

Approximately 1,250 fishing kits, over 4,000 mosquito nets, 2,285 sago beaters, 492 adzes, 319 axes, 155 canoe scrapers, 12 tarpaulins, 75 metal files, 55 stone files and 7 tank liners have been distributed by the Red Cross to a total of 10,785 people since the start of the assistance programme.

On this latest visit, the team distributed plastic bottles for hand washing and over 1,300 kg of nylon twine for net making. The nets will allow the communities greater access to fish sources and thereby increase their protein intake, as well as renewing traditional weaving skills amongst the women. HIV/AIDS educational material, written in English and Tok Pisin, were also distributed to health centres, women's groups, school teachers, and community leaders, along with other health booklets.

Nutrition Assessment w

The report of the second nutritional survey of communities affected by the tsunami has been completed. The first report was completed in October 1998; the second report was specifically timed to be carried out after rations distribution in the area had ceased. A National Society team, consisting of a nutritionist and a health worker, completed the assessment. Initial indications are that the majority of people in the relocated communities are now regularly catching and eating fish, and harvesting the traditional staple sago and other crops from their newly established gardens.

Most communities appeared adequately nourished, although hookworm infestation in one village has contributed to some malnourishment among children. This is also linked with inadequate sanitation facilities. Access to safe water is still dependent on rainfall, and safe water is dictated by community adherence to good water management practices. Infant mortality rates had not increased, although skin infection rates amongst 0-5 years children were considered high. Diarrhoea and dysentery in this age group had also increased over 1998 figures. The report concluded that nutrition and health education interventions should continue in the villages.

Community Based Self Reliance Training w

The implementation of the Community Based First Aid (CBFA) project is planned to start soon, and the Federation is now completing the mobilisation of the necessary human and financial resources.

Disaster Response and Relief Centre (Lae)w

Goods valued at CHF 50,000 for the PNGRCS Water and Sanitation project in Milne Bay Province were procured and delivery completed. In addition, a chartered ship took CHF 500,000 worth of medical and other supplies from Lae to Bougainville.

In the Lae Logistics Warehouse, an intensive inventory and re-organisation has been completed, and a proper stock database established. Some relief supplies were re-positioned to Lae during this period, including USAID relief supplies temporarily stored in Port Moresby since the Aitape disaster. Work has also been planned to set up proper procedures, and reorganise relief supplies, in the newly completed National Society warehouse.

National Headquarters Office Space and Storage Facilities w

Apart from a few minor tasks being carried out on the renovated office accommodation, the renovations are complete and the official opening by the PNG Red Cross Patron will occur before year-end.

Outstanding needs

The response to the 1999 Appeal for general assistance and the Bougainville programmes continues to be limited. Further discussions are taking place with National Societies for support to the Community Based Self Reliance programme. In view of the current level of funding, the Delegation is in the process of reviewing operational needs for the remainder of the year.

External relations - Government/UN/NGOs/Media

In Bougainville, meetings have been held with the President and Speaker of the Bougainville People's Congress. Contact has been maintained with the relevant UN agencies, as well as with the Department for International Development (DFID), AusAid, and NGO's.

In Port Moresby, the Head of Delegation presented a dissemination and awareness lecture at a Red Cross funded Disaster Management workshop attended by provincial disaster co-ordinators and representatives from NGOs. The course is part of a series of four being administered and managed by the National Society under contract to the Australian Red Cross.

Press coverage of the Aitape tsunami anniversary included the national television broadcast of the Federation's video.

Contributions

See Annex 1 for details.

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