

PAPUA NEW GUINEA, EARTHQUAKE AND TIDAL WAVE

16 November 2000

Information Bulletin N° 1

The Disaster

An earthquake measuring 8 on the Richter scale hit the coast of the New Ireland region (3.97S, 152.32E) at 4:54 am (UTC) on 16 November. This was followed by a quake of magnitude 7.7 which hit a nearby area 5.24S/153.06E at 7:42 am (UTC). After the earthquakes, landslides occurred on the road to Gazelle Peninsula. Several water tanks were broken and damaged and a supermarket was hit by a wave in Rabaul. There was a degree of panic in the city, but no casualties were reported. The earthquake was also felt in Lihir where it registered magnitude 4 and in Buka where it registered magnitude 5 and there was a metre high tidal wave in Kopoko. At 7:50 am (UTC) the national disaster emergency office received an alert from Hawaii tsunami warning centre. This was followed at 8:50 am (UTC) by a message stating that a tsunami would not hit. The provincial disaster management office is assessing the situation and continually updates the national disaster emergency office. The national disaster emergency office will hold a co-ordination meeting on 17 November to which the Papua New Guinea Red Cross Society is invited.

Red Cross/Red Crescent Action

The Papua New Guinea Red Cross Society (PNGRCS) is a member of the national disaster preparedness committee. The Federation delegation is prepared to carry out a joint assessment in the area together with the PNGRCS, if appropriate.

The Federation and the PNGRCS have gained extensive experience in emergency operations, responding to the devastating tidal wave which hit near the town of Aitape in 1998 and a drought in the interior of the country in 1997.

Further information on the situation will be provided as it becomes available.

Peter Rees-Gildea
Head

Hiroshi Higashiura
Head

Operations Funding and Reporting Department

Asia & Pacific Department

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