

INFORMATION BULLETIN



International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies
Fédération internationale des Sociétés de la Croix-Rouge et du Croissant-Rouge
Federación Internacional de Sociedades de la Cruz Roja y de la Media Luna Roja
الاتحاد الدولي لجمعيات الصليب الأحمر والهلال الأحمر

PAPUA NEW GUINEA EARTHQUAKE

10 September 2002

Information Bulletin N° 1

The Situation

A powerful earthquake in Papua New Guinea (PNG) has killed three people and caused widespread damage, latest reports indicate. The quake measured 7.5 on the Richter scale and struck Monday morning (local time), 9 September 2002. The epicentre was 100km off PNG's north coast.

ABC radio in Australia reported that in the town of Wewak, houses had collapsed and the main water supply had ruptured. Electricity supplies were also interrupted and a bridge was reported to be damaged. A small tsunami resulted from the earthquake and seas rose one metre and flooded up to 15 metres inland in some parts. Chris McKee from PNG Geological Survey told ABC that the quake was one of the strongest for some time. Of the three people killed, two are believed to have drowned when the tsunami swamped houses in coastal areas

Catholic Church official Francis Kemaken told the news agency AFP that the death and injury toll 'would definitely increase' as reports come in from four islands in the area. 'They probably experienced extensive damage to houses,' he said. At least two villages had been badly hit and a number of boats lost.

PNG's director for the National Disaster Management Office reported 34 houses destroyed on Tarawai island and 10 on Walis island.

An undersea earthquake in 1998 caused a tsunami that struck the neighbouring West Sepik province, killing more than 2,000 people.

Red Cross/Red Crescent Action

The Madang branch of the PNG Red Cross is the closest to the disaster zone and it is continuing to monitor the situation. The Australian Red Cross, New Zealand Red Cross and the Federation are all keeping a close eye on developments and waiting to hear if the government and National Society need any assistance in their response to the disaster. The director of the National Disaster Management Office is currently travelling to the earthquake zone to assess the situation.

For a full description of the National Society profile, see www.ifrc.org

For further details please contact :

- *Caroline Dunn, Phone 41 22 730 4257; email: dunn@ifrc.org*

- *Suzana Jekic, Phone 41 22 730353; Fax 41 22 733 0395; email jekic@ifrc.org*

All International Federation Operations seek to adhere to the Code of Conduct and are committed to the Humanitarian Charter and Minimum Standards in Disaster Response (SPHERE Project) in delivering assistance to the most vulnerable.

For support to or for further information concerning Federation operations in this or other countries, please access the Federation website at <http://www.ifrc.org>

For longer-term programmes, please refer to the Federation's Annual Appeal.

John Horekens
Head
External Relations

Simon Missiri
Head
Asia Pacific