

# 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: MANAM VOLCANO ERUPTION

9 February 2005

The Federation's mission is to improve the lives of vulnerable people by mobilising the power of humanity. It is the world's largest humanitarian organisation and its millions of volunteers are active in over 181 countries.

### In Brief

This information bulletin (04/2005) is being issued based on the needs described below reflecting the information available at this time. CHF 50,000 has been allocated from the Federation's Disaster Relief Emergency Fund (DREF), and a further CHF60,000 was allocated on 19 January. Based on further updates and details from assessment reports, or should the situation deteriorate, the Federation will consider seeking international support through an emergency appeal.

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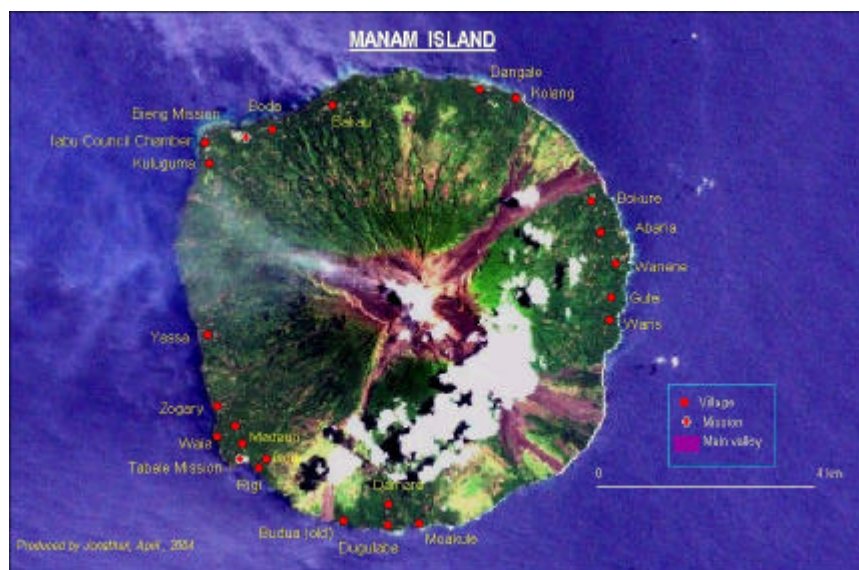
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### The Situation

Manam volcano, located on Manam Island, 15 kilometres off the coast of Papua New Guinea (PNG), began erupting with new intensity on January 28. The Rabaul Volcanological Observatory (RVO) reported that a large volcano eruption took place between 1 to 2 am (local time) on January 28. The ash cloud produced by the eruption reached an altitude of more than 18 kilometres and drifted westward across West Papua, the eastern-most province of Indonesia. PNG's National Disaster Management Office (NDMO) has reported that the flow of scoria and lava on the south-eastern part of the island has swept away a number of houses. One person is missing, presumed dead.<sup>1</sup>

The Provincial Disaster Centre (PDC) of Madang arranged for an assessment team to visit Manam Island on the day of the eruption. Its report has not yet reached the Papua New Guinea Red Cross Society (PNGRCS).

<sup>1</sup> "Manam erupts", *The National*, January 31, 2005, p.1, <http://www.thenational.com.pg/0131/nation1.htm>



Most of the 9,600 inhabitants of Manam Island had already been evacuated to the mainland as a result of ongoing volcanic activity that began in October 2004. Some 2,000 people were on the island when the latest eruption took place. Some had previously refused to be evacuated, while others had returned temporarily to tend gardens and check on property. Following the January 28 eruption, a further evacuation began, and at the time of writing was almost complete, with just 167 people still to be transferred to the mainland.

The future for people evacuated in November 2004 remains unclear. There

is disagreement about whether the state holds current ownership of land in Bogia identified for possible resettlement of evacuees, or whether control of the land has reverted to traditional owners. This uncertainty has been the source of considerable frustration among evacuees. Some aid agencies have delayed their planned assistance because they are unsure of how long evacuees will remain at the care centres.

Having identified a lack of funds as a constraint upon its ability to respond to the needs of evacuees, the Madang provincial authorities launched a public fundraising appeal in PNG. That appeal is ongoing.

Authorities have confirmed reports of heated disputes between evacuees and government officers at the Mangem care centre over alleged theft of relief supplies by district government officers.<sup>2</sup> Evacuees have also reportedly sent a petition to the local authorities outlining dissatisfaction with rations and sanitation in care centres. Security has been restored and is now maintained by the army.

A PNGRCS officer returned to Asarumba on December 24 and will remain until the evacuation is complete. Both he and the PDC have confirmed that all government officers have left the Mangem care centre, and only one community health worker remains there. PNG troops deployed to the care centres in early January 2005 were initially going to be tasked with assisting with camp administration. However, they are at present now solely engaged in maintaining security.

**Table 1. Location of evacuees**

Care Centre	Population
Potsdam	3068
Asarumba	1448
Mangem	755
<b>Village</b>	
Dagui	426
Tobtenham	1028
Bonaputa	425
Bogia	725
Suaru	843*
<b>Total</b>	<b>7875</b>

\* as of February 6, 2005

**Table 2. Care centre health statistics to end of December 2004**

Disease	Asarumba		Mangem	
	No. cases	Deaths	No. of cases	Deaths
Simple malaria	523	-	908	-
Simple cough	244	-	306	-
Pneumonia	99	-	198	2
Diarrhoea	56	-	Data not available	-
Skin diseases	192	-	Data not available	-
Treatment failure of Malaria	40	-	40	2
STI	2	-	6	-

The number of people seeking medical assistance in the care centres continues to rise. The statistics shown in table 2 (see left) were collected from the local health centre at Asarumba and Mangem camps. Provincial health authorities have not yet advised how these figures compare to the broader population of Bogia.

<sup>2</sup> "Care centre theft claims continue", *The National*, January 31, 2005, p.2, <http://www.thenational.com.pg/0131/nation2.htm>

## Red Cross and Red Crescent action

After receiving news of the latest eruption, PNGRCS began working to locate additional stocks of tarpaulins and water containers throughout its branch network and transfer these to the Madang branch. Stocks at Madang had been exhausted when it became necessary to re-issue a number of items to replace others that had sustained damage through extended use in adverse weather conditions. The PNGRCS representative in Asarumba determined that 225 tarpaulins had been damaged by heavy rain and strong winds. He also found that prior to the most recent volcanic eruption there had been heavy ash fall in the camps (up to two centimetres deep).

People whose shelters were damaged have generally sourced local materials to make repairs. The Madang Provincial Disaster Office has indicated that it is considering a strategy of using traditional materials to construct longer-term shelters<sup>3</sup> and PNGRCS will review its own shelter strategy should this change come about. While it is acknowledged by all stakeholders that the PNGRCS tarpaulins in particular have been in use for a longer period than is normally envisaged, PNGRCS will make a quality assessment of the relief items it presently uses.

PNGRCS continues to work in close consultation with all stakeholders including the PNG government, the PDC, international donors and local and international agencies. At this stage PNGRCS will continue the distribution of relief items as necessary and will reassess its response when a clearer picture has been obtained of what will be done by other agencies. So far, PNGRCS has conducted an assessment of water and sanitation needs, distributed relief items and water purification tablets (see table 3, below) and conducted basic hygiene education dissemination.

PNGRCS was one of a number of organisations to pledge assistance to meet the needs of the Manam evacuees. Despite regular coordination meetings between the participating agencies and the National Disaster Centre, PNGRCS is the only organisation to date to have fulfilled all its commitments. PNGRCS has raised its concerns that other stakeholders have been slow to meet the commitments they have made, particularly relating to water and sanitation. At present there are only very basic water and sanitation facilities in the three care centres.

**Table 3. Relief items distributed by PNGRCS**

	Number already distributed	Total to be distributed
Tarpaulin	2,843	3,000
Jerrycan	947	2,000
Water purification tablets	8,689	24,000

PNGRCS developed an activity plan in November. That plan has since been reviewed – most recently in January 2005 – and appears below.

### 1. Shelter

#### **Objective: Provision of tarpaulins for temporary shelter**

The procurement and distribution is in progress.

#### **Planned activities:**

- Immediate term: continue to distribute tarpaulins.

### 2. Water and sanitation

#### **Objective: Provision of water containers and purification tablets to ensure access to clean water.**

#### **Planned activities:**

- Continue distribution of water purification tablets donated by UNICEF.
- Distribute soap (PNGRCS/Oxfam collaboration)
- Dissemination on the need to boil and decant drinking water.

<sup>3</sup> "Funds urgently needed as rains descend", *Post-Courier*, January 31, 2005, p.3

- Dissemination on the need to protect water sources.
- Monitoring and evaluation.

Water purification tablets donated by UNICEF have been distributed and the distribution of soap made available through the collaboration between Oxfam and PNGRCS is about to begin. In response to World Vision's commitment to meet the sanitation needs of the care centres, PNGRCS decided not to purchase construction materials for pit latrines.

### **3. Health and hygiene promotion**

**Objective: Support Health Department activities through dissemination on basic hygiene, safe water and HIV/AIDS.**

**Planned activities:**

- Organise health volunteers in the affected community from within PNGRCS's trained CBSR volunteer base.
- Source health awareness materials (usually obtained from Department of Health).
- Conduct community-based health awareness activities.
- Monitoring and evaluation.

In response to Save the Children's stated intention to conduct HIV/AIDS awareness activities, PNGRCS decided to focus its activities solely on general health awareness.

### **4. Community-based disaster management**

Not considered at this stage. After six months, however, mapping of hazards could be conducted. Depends greatly on whether evacuees remain at the camps.

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