

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: MT. KARAI VOLCANO

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The Federation's mission is to improve the lives of vulnerable people by mobilizing the power of humanity. It is the world's largest humanitarian organization and its millions of volunteers are active in over 185 countries.

In Brief

This Bulletin is being issued for information only, and reflects the situation and the information available at this time. The Federation is not seeking funding or other assistance from donors for this operation at this time.

For further information specifically related to this operation please contact:

- Papua New Guinea Red Cross Society: Jacqueline Boga (secretary-general); email: hqpngrcs@online.net.pg; Phone: +67.5.325.8577; Fax: +67.5.325.9714
- Federation country delegation in Papua New Guinea: Ervin Bulathsinghala (head of delegation); email: es.bulathsinghala@ifrc.org; Phone: +675.311.2277; fax: +675.323.0731; or Pankaj Mishra (disaster management delegate); email: pankaj.mishra@ifrc.org; mobile: +675.682.4868; fax: +675.323.0731
- Federation Secretariat in Geneva (Asia Pacific department): Hyun Ji Lee (regional officer); email: hj.lee@ifrc.org; phone: +41.22.730.4260; fax: +41.22.733.0395; or Yoga Sinnathamby (senior assistant); email: yoga.sinnathamby@ifrc.org; phone: +41.22.730.4329; fax: +41.22.733.0395

The Situation

On 13 July, the Rabaul Volcano Observatory (RVO) reported a series of light to moderate earthquakes accompanying the first historical eruption of Karai volcano in Papua New Guinea. Frequent earthquake activity continues with emissions from another volcano. The RVO confirmed several eye witnesses' account of Mt. Bamus, a volcano that has been inactive for more than 100 years near the volcano Ulawun, which began projecting a steam plume into the atmosphere.

Continued earth tremors were felt within the vicinity of Kimbe and as far as Bialla and Mamota, a distance of approximately of 16 – 20km. The tremors continue to occur at five minute intervals. The affected population, estimated at 2,078 people, lives around the Kaiamu, Malasi, Sulu and Silali villages. These communities have moved out of danger areas in fear of an eruption and now live temporarily in six different informal camps. Camp conditions are reported to be adequate, with local residents using a nearby river as their main water source. Most of these communities have moved voluntarily to safer zones on 10 July 2006 after the increase in seismic activity, whilst some communities have evacuated following instructions from the provincial disaster office three days later. The provincial disaster committee is however concerned over inhabitants that may be reluctant to move, citing that this is a situation recurrent in other disasters.

Seismic activities began on 7 July 2006 at Mt Karai, an extinct volcano unknown to the people in the area and the RVO, and were reported to the provincial disaster office three days later. Seismic activities range from moderate to high levels and are characterized mostly by volcanic tectonic events. Earthquakes are felt at irregular intervals with intensities ranging from intensity one to five. It is reported that earthquakes at intensity one and two occur more frequently. Recordings at Kaiamu on 16 July 2006 indicate heightened frequency and levels of seismic activity consisting of overlapping volcanic tectonic events. A few booming noises were heard yesterday, but there have been no ash emissions during the last two days.

The magma is as yet not connected to the surface via fractures or conduits. However, if the current level of seismic activity continues, an eruption is very much likely to occur.

The provincial disaster office (PDO) has requested the national disaster centre's (NDC) assistance for long-term strategies should the situation prolong. Consultations for are in progress and a team might be deployed soon.

Red Cross and Red Crescent action

Based on initial assessments, immediate needs at this stage are water containers, tarpaulins and basic food supplies. In the meantime, further assessments are ongoing to determine the next cause of action.

The Papua New Guinea Red Cross Society (PNGRCS) has been very active from the early hours of the disaster, working closely with the provincial disaster management office at West New Britain. They were also part of the first joint assessment team deployed by the PDO on 13 July 2006, which comprised the PDO, PNGRCS, Salvation Army and Caritas.

The situation is constantly being monitored through the task force at the PNGRCS headquarters along with the Federation delegation. The preliminary report from the branch indicated that tarpaulins and water containers are priority needs to be covered from PNGRCS's side. The branch has 80 pre-positioned tarpaulins which were further supplemented by another 100 tarpaulins and 100 water containers flown in from the central warehouse in Port Moresby. A decision to fly relief items into Kimbe, West New Britain, was made by the joint task force of the PNGRCS and the delegation.. Some of the items have been dispatched to the affected area and will be distributed by the local branch, with the rest to follow shortly. The director of the provincial disaster management authorities has acknowledge that the Red Cross supply of additional tarpaulins are one of the most important relief items required at this moment.

The PNGRCS has responded efficiently in terms of assessment and timing. At national headquarters, the PNGRCS team remains on standby and is prepared to move to the disaster area if necessary. The national society task force meets on a daily basis to decide on possible courses of action. Limited human resources and the challenges of an inefficient information and communication system have been the greatest constraint so far. This will further impede the national society's capacity to respond to disasters, especially if a larger intervention is required. The positioning of disaster management human resources in key disaster-prone provinces should be of high priority to further build the capacity of the national society in responding to emergencies.

In addition to regular contacts with external agencies, the Federation's disaster management delegate also participated in an emergency meeting with United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (UNOCHA) and AusAid over the weekend. The Federation delegation is constantly providing support to PNGRCS. The Federation delegation is liaising closely with all stakeholders including NDC, PDO, RVO, UNOCHA, AusAid and other international agencies. An emergency interagency meeting with the national disaster centre to stock of the situation and plan the next course of action is likely to happen soon.

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The International Federation undertakes activities that are aligned with its Global Agenda, which sets out four broad goals to achieve the Federation's mission to "improve the lives of vulnerable people by mobilizing the power of humanity".

Global Agenda Goals:

- *Reduce the numbers of deaths, injuries and impact from disasters.*
- *Reduce the number of deaths, illnesses and impact from diseases and public health emergencies.*
- *Increase local community, civil society and Red Cross Red Crescent capacity to address the most urgent situations of vulnerability.*
- *Reduce intolerance, discrimination and social exclusion and promote respect for diversity and human dignity.*

All International Federation assistance seeks to adhere to the [Code of Conduct for the International Red Cross and Red Crescent Movement and Non-Governmental Organizations \(NGO's\) in Disaster Relief](#) and is committed to the [Humanitarian Charter and Minimum Standards in Disaster Response \(Sphere\)](#) in delivering assistance to the most vulnerable.

For longer-term programmes in this or other countries or regions, please refer to the Federation's Annual Appeal. For support to or for further information concerning Federation programmes or operations in this or other countries, or for national society profiles, please also access the Federation's website at <http://www.ifrc.org>