

DREF operation update



International Federation
of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies

Papua New Guinea: Floods

DREF operation n° MDRPG003
GLIDE n° **FL-2008-00243-PNG**
Update n° 1
26 March 2009

The International Federation's Disaster Relief Emergency Fund (DREF) is a source of un-earmarked money created by the Federation in 1985 to ensure that immediate financial support is available for Red Cross and Red Crescent response to emergencies. The DREF is a vital part of the International Federation's disaster response system and increases the ability of national societies to respond to disasters.

Period covered by this update: 15 December 2008 to 15 March 2009.

Summary: CHF 190,000 (USD 165,000 or EUR 120,360) was allocated from the International Federation's Disaster Relief Emergency Fund (DREF) on 15 December 2008 to support the national society in delivering assistance to approximately 15,450 beneficiaries, and to replenish disaster preparedness stocks.

This operation was expected to be implemented in three months and completed by 15 March 2009. Intended support to beneficiaries is almost accomplished, although subsequent heavy rainfall has exacerbated the original situation and replenishment of contingency stocks continues. Given these circumstances, an extension of the operation period to 30 April 2009 was requested from the International Federation's headquarters in Geneva, which was subsequently granted.



The Papua New Guinea Red Cross Society, in cooperation and coordination with government and non-government agencies present in the country, mobilized relief items, conducted assessments and distributions in response to the disaster in all eight affected provinces. PNGRCS.

In line with Federation reporting standards, the final report (narrative and financial) is due 90 days after the end of the operation, and will be issued by 31 July 2009.

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The situation

Abnormally high sea levels resulted in severe floods in Papua New Guinea. Affected areas included the provinces of New Ireland, East Sepik, Manus, Milne Bay, Sandaun, Madang, Morobe and the autonomous region of Bougainville. Further assessments by the Papua New Guinea Red Cross Society as well as the provincial and national disaster committees in affected areas bring the total number of people affected to

approximately 63,000, down from the initial forecast of 83,000 people. The table below details updated assessment results available as of 9 January 2009:

| Province | Approximate number of people affected | Houses damaged/ destroyed | Families displaced |
|-----------------------------------|---------------------------------------|---------------------------|--------------------|
| New Ireland | 20,000 | 1,408 | 1,200 |
| Manus | 20,000 | Not available | Not available |
| Sandaun | 85 | 22 | 18 |
| East Sepik | 20,000 | 2,837 | Not available |
| Autonomous region of Bougainville | 1,630 | Not available | 68 |
| Morobe | Up to 960 | 117 | 160 |
| Madang | 259 | 46 | 46 |
| Milne Bay | Up to 159 | 26 | 21 |
| (Estimated) Total | 63,093 | 4,456 | 1,513 |

New Ireland province

The floods affected many communities in the province along the eastern side of New Ireland as well as the outer islands. A child was reportedly killed and two health institutions were destroyed. While the major highway that runs through the main island is near the coastline, the floods caused no major damage.

Communities mobilized themselves and moved to safer ground away from the shore while others established temporary care centres. Many have indicated that they will permanently relocate to safer ground further inland if possible.

An assessment in Emirau Island is planned to be carried out in the next two weeks, to determine the water situation of Tench Islanders displaced to Emirau. The presence of the 118 displaced Tench Islanders is placing extra load on existing water sources on Emirau. They are expected to stay there for at least another year, until the soil on Tench is ready to be cultivated again after the salinity has receded.

Water security remains a major concern, with rainfall providing temporary relief as a water source. The longer-term need for potable water is priority for some of the communities. In addition, beneficiaries have indicated that key needs include tools to rebuild their homes as well as mosquito nets.

East Sepik province

The high tides affected mainly the township of Wewak, the outer islands, east and west coast area and the Murik Lakes to Watam. Most of the affected areas have been inundated by sea water up to ten metres from the normal shoreline. Fish habitats along the reefs were also disturbed, forcing communities to venture further out to fish. In addition, signs of damage have been noted in the mangrove swamps, a habitat for crabs and other crustaceans that communities collect for food. Food gardens and cash crops such as cocoa trees in some coastal areas and the islands are also drying up, which will affect overall food security for some communities.

Milne Bay province

A province with many small islands, it was fortunate that damages were minimal, with only two water sources reported to be destroyed. Traditional coping mechanisms were utilized to assist those affected.

Central province

Even though parts of Central province were affected by the sea swells, assessments carried out were not as prominent as the ones in other provinces. This was brought to the fore in recent assessments undertaken by Red Cross officers in partnership with the Central Province Disaster Office.



Up to 1,408 houses were damaged or destroyed as a direct result of the sea swells and subsequent floods in New Ireland province. PNGRCS.

One location visited was Nabua in the Kairiku Hiri district that has seen the level of the sea encroach on the land by about fifteen metres in the last eight to ten years. Many families have relocated. The December sea swells and subsequent floods exacerbated this encroachment and eroding land has left the community marooned on a strip of land of about 75 metres between the sea and a mangrove swamp infested with mosquitoes. Community cohesion is strong in this community and a relocation committee has been set up with families voluntarily relocating to higher ground further inland.

Potable water, however, is a major concern for this community and the only clean water source is about one and a half kilometres away. It is proposed that this water source be protected and an appropriate low maintenance water system planned and built around a communal potable water source that is secure from contamination.

The stagnant water from the sea swells in the area has provided a great opportunity for mosquitoes to breed in large numbers, increasing the community's vulnerability to malaria. The nearest health centre is at Yule Island which costs about PGK15 (CHF 6) to reach by public transport. Mosquito nets are also needed for this community.

Coordination and partnerships

The Papua New Guinea Red Cross Society continues to work closely with both national and provincial disaster centres to carry out assessments, map out and respond to the needs of the affected communities while ensuring a coordinated response with all parties involved. The National Society is also working with other government and non-governmental actors in the field including AusAID, CARE International, NZ AID, Oxfam International, Save the Children PNG, the UN Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (UNOCHA) and USAID.

Together with the other actors in the field, PNGRCS was given access to a C130 Hercules aircraft dispatched by the Australian Defence Force (ADF) through AusAID to transport relief items to Manus and New Ireland in two sorties. In addition, Rotary International supported the New Ireland branch at the onset of the floods with up to 2,000 mosquito nets that were distributed to affected communities. Furthermore, a memorandum of understanding was signed with the Morobe provincial disaster centre which allows PNGRCS to store up to three containers on its grounds which are situated in proximity to the main wharf and suppliers.

The remoteness and lack of harbours in some of the most severely-affected locations also required the charter of two fixed wing aircraft, which were used to transport 4.2 tonnes of relief items to East Sepik (where PNGRC does not have a branch) for distribution to beneficiaries through a formal memorandum of understanding arrangement with Save the Children and Oxfam - both agencies who have a local presence and networks on the ground in the province. At the time of reporting, additional items are being procured by PNGRC, including treated mosquito nets, and upon delivery, will be distributed in East Sepik in coordination with Save the Children.

Ongoing lessons learnt are being addressed as well as possible in an effort to improve effective response by the Red Cross. They include a workshop on information management (where draft tools and formats were developed), financial systems and formats, memoranda of understanding with stakeholder organizations and government departments, MOAs with transport service providers and relief item suppliers, recognition of the need for regionalized warehouse facilities for relief stocks, and training of volunteers to conduct health awareness activities in affected communities.

Red Cross and Red Crescent action

At the onset of the disaster, Papua New Guinea Red Cross (PNGRC) deployed staff from headquarters based in Port Moresby to the provinces of New Ireland, Sandaun, East Sepik and Madang for preliminary assessments and support to the branches in the affected areas. All staff in headquarters were mobilized to undertake allocated tasks to ensure an organized and coordinated response, including the handling of relief items from the central warehouse to affected branches. Branch chairpersons mobilized volunteers and members to carry out assessments, distribution of relief items from pre-positioned stocks, information management, liaison with provincial disaster centres and logistics.

A telecommunications delegate was deployed by New Zealand Red Cross and supported the National Society in setting up a high frequency (HF) unit at the PNGRC headquarters in addition to obtaining access to the national disaster centre and national department of health's frequencies.

In addition, Australian Red Cross assisted with jerry cans, personnel and funds to support the National Society in its response to the disaster.

The French Red Cross further supported PNGRC in assessments carried out in Manus.

New Ireland

Approximately 30 volunteers supported the branch in conducting assessments, distributions and the management of relief supplies during the emergency phase of operations. Up to three volunteers ensured that the high frequency radio and telephone were staffed around the clock to receive reports and up-to-date information. Relief distributions included tarpaulins, blankets, water containers, mosquito nets, axes, buckets, clothes and other items.

Assessment of water security in other targeted island communities needs to be carried out. With so many activities related to the floods taking place, the availability of officers to undertake this assessment has been limited and their freeing-up will allow for this to take place.

Health awareness training for the branch volunteers has been identified as a need for the branch to be able to carry out awareness in the affected communities to prevent water-borne disease outbreaks.

East Sepik province

Developments since the first report have affected the proposed outcomes of the PNGRC in the early recovery phase. The provincial administration has procured more than 200 water tanks to support the affected communities in the areas identified by the Red Cross as target beneficiaries.

On the recommendation of a PNGRC assessment team, two 9,000 litre polythene water tanks have been procured specifically for the community of Turubu and are being installed on 'neutral ground', with the community taking ownership of the project.

An increase in mosquito-breeding in stagnant water is giving rise to malaria cases, leading to communities, stakeholder partners on the ground and the Provincial Administration identifying the provision of mosquito nets as a high priority. Treated nets have been procured and PNGRC is awaiting delivery of these items from the supplier. A memorandum of understanding was signed with Save the Children PNG based in East Sepik province to enable the allocation of mosquito nets according to Red Cross distribution and reporting criteria.

The delay in the implementation of these activities in East Sepik has been due to the provincial administration going ahead with the procurement of the water tanks and asking Red Cross to put its early recovery activity of water tanks on hold to avoid duplication.

Manus

The Manus provincial administration is taking the responsibility of providing water tanks to the affected communities. The PNGRC is working with water specialists from the French Red Cross to carry out a technical assessment of water wells in the next three weeks. This will pave the way for the construction of water wells for communities whose wells have been destroyed. Mosquito nets have been procured awaiting delivery to be deployed to Manus for distribution to the affected communities.

Autonomous region of Bougainville

In partnership with CARE International PNG on Buka, the Red Cross received information on water security issues on the atolls of Mortlocks and Carterets.

Liaison with suppliers on the ground in Buka has already been established with quotations received and procurement ready to proceed. An assessment team has made arrangements with the local authorities for transport of the water tanks and accessories to the atolls, which are quite a distance from the provincial capital. Mobilization of resources for this exercise was also arranged.

The Secretary General of PNGRC visited the Bougainville branch on 17 February 2009 and met with the authorities to discuss the timeframes involved in the implementation of installing the water tanks procured for the communities affected. This visit ascertained that the Red Cross implementation location will only be in Carterets and atoll locations, not on the mainland.

Procurement and implementation of the water tanks for other target locations in Mortlocks and Nuguria will be handled by the authorities and CARE International PNG based in Bougainville.

Malaria is also increasing and islanders are reported to be traveling to Buka for treatment. Procurement of mosquito nets for distribution will also be done to reduce the vulnerability of islanders to malaria.

Morobe province

Operations in response to the floods were coordinated from the Morobe provincial disaster office, with a PNGRC volunteer liaising closely with the provincial disaster office in obtaining assessment information and mobilizing resources for relief distribution. Up to 36 bags of clothing, 36 axes, and 25 20-litre containers were distributed to those affected.

Progress towards objectives

Relief distributions (food and basic non-food items)

Objective: 15,000 beneficiaries have the necessary immediate support to meet their basic needs of non-food items.

Progress and impact:

To date, approximately 100 PNGRC volunteers were mobilized and, together with PNGRC staff, reached up to approximately 17,000 beneficiaries with relief items which include (but are not limited to) tarpaulins, blankets, jerry cans/water containers, mosquito nets, buckets and clothes. The response from PNGRC at branch and headquarters level is a significant achievement given the scale of the disaster where eight provinces were affected simultaneously.

Distribution of family kits and shelter materials to all intended beneficiaries has been completed. The second (recovery) phase of the response to the sea swell disaster is ongoing. However, limited availability of materials, delay in branch response and a variety of other factors is affecting execution of remaining activities.



Volunteers assembling family packs for distribution. PNGRCS.

PNGRCS, with support from the regional logistics unit in Kuala Lumpur, procured 2,000 tarpaulins of International Federation standard, which are expected to arrive in Papua New Guinea by early April 2009. Replenishment of relief items used from the New Ireland branch containers are underway, with items being procured in Lae.

Challenges:

Unforeseen variables, such as new disaster situations, activities undertaken by provincial administrations, non-availability of materials locally, shipping irregularities and flight difficulties are greatly impacting the implementation of the activities of the Red Cross.

Water, sanitation, and hygiene promotion

Additional heavy rains in the following months, resulting in flooding and landslides, together with the aftermath of the sea swells, have brought health issues to the fore. Assessments in the affected areas indicate a need for health-related response, including basic hygiene and health awareness. Health awareness training was conducted in Manus by the PNGRC health and care team, and related health activities are currently taking place in one affected area of Central province.

There was a rapid transition from the emergency phase to early recovery in most of the affected areas. The transition process highlighted further needs in affected communities. Of these, water security, malaria prevention, and health hygiene awareness to prevent waterborne diseases from escalating are the most significant.

Many of the affected areas have water sources that are situated in low-lying locations. The sea swells inundated or destroyed these water sources and some communities are reliant solely on rainwater catchment. Some communities, women and children are now traveling long distances (in some cases up to one and a half hours) to access water. Potable water is their main need.

The other health-related issue in this phase is an increase in malaria cases reported by health facilities. The sea swells left a lot of stagnant water in and around affected communities and access by some of the affected communities to health facilities in some areas is difficult - both in terms of transport availability and the spending power of the affected population.

In close consultation with partners on the ground (including provincial administration and the national disaster centre in the affected provinces), the National Society established an information database on the water and sanitation-related needs of the affected communities. PNGRC national staff officers were sent to East Sepik, Bougainville and Manus Provinces to gather the baseline data and also to establish procurement and logistics arrangements on the ground.

The assessments in East Sepik and Bougainville were funded by USAID, while the assessment in Manus was carried out under the auspices of the French Red Cross.

Capacity building

Objective: Improved capacity of Papua New Guinea Red Cross volunteers, branches and headquarter capacity to manage disaster relief operations.

Progress and impact:

Of seven containers to be repaired and have shelters built over them, three have been completed. Madang, Morobe and New Ireland branches have completed their shelters, with Madang still to carry out minor repairs on its containers.

The PNGRC branch in the autonomous region of Bougainville also needs to have its containers repaired. Manus, Milne Bay and Sandaun continue to have their containers shelters built and minor repairs done. With the exception of the Eastern Highlands branch, all PNGRC branches have pre-positioned containers that have relief stocks in them for immediate relief distribution.

As part of branch capacity building, it is planned that a container will be made available to the Eastern Highlands branch in 2010. A recent landslide in the province that killed up to seven people and displacing several households highlighted the lacking capacity of the branch to immediately respond. Furthermore, a recent assessment report by a national disaster response team member strongly recommended a container with relief items be made available for the branch with any remaining funds from the DREF. This is an issue that needs to be addressed quickly, as the weather patterns are very unpredictable and the Eastern Highlands branch needs to be prepared for immediate response.

In addition, DREF funds were used to support the national society strengthen its organizational capacity through the procurement of computers, printers and other communications materials for branches identified, with more detailed information to be made available in the next update.

Challenges:

The replenished stocks of 100 family relief packs has not been sufficient in certain branches - especially with the ongoing bad weather affecting causing more and more damages. More stocks need to be procured and deployed to these branches and contingency stocks containers refurbished and replenished.

New disaster developments (flooding and landslides)

The chain reaction of disasters happening around the country is merging response activities for the sea swells with flooding and landslides currently taking place in the highlands and Momase regions. Emergency response for the situation in the Western, Eastern and Southern Highlands provinces and in Morobe is taking priority parallel to the early recovery activities of the sea swells.

The National Society has also been the beneficiary of emergency funds from multiple external government agency donors including AusAID, NZAID and USAID – a reality that has constrained PNGRC ability to spend and account for DREF use within the originally planned timeframe. Given all of these circumstances, an

extension of time was sought from the International Federation and granted accordingly, to enable completion of planned activities by 30 April 2009, with a final narrative and financial report to be submitted by 31 July 2009.

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How we work

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.

The International Federation's activities are aligned with its Global Agenda, which sets out four broad goals to meet 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.

Contact information

For further information specifically related to this operation please contact:

- In Papua New Guinea Red Cross Society: Ms. Esme Sinape, Secretary General, email: hqpngrcs@online.net.pg, phone +675 325 2145.
- Pacific regional office in Suva, Fiji: Mr. Frank Kennedy, Head of regional office, email: frank.kennedy@ifrc.org, or Mr. John Bales, Regional disaster management coordinator, john.bales@ifrc.org, phone: +679 3311 855, fax: +679 3311 406
- Asia Pacific Zone office in Malaysia:
 - Jagan Chapagain (Deputy head of Asia Pacific zone), email: jagan.chapagain@ifrc.org, phone: +6 03 9207 5700
 - Disaster management unit: Mr. Daniel Bolanos (Regional disaster response delegate), email: daniel.bolanos@ifrc.org; phone: + 60 3 9207 5728, mobile: +60 12 283 7305
 - Regional logistics unit: Mr. Jeremy Francis (Regional logistics coordinator), jeremy.francis@ifrc.org, mobile: +60 12 298 9752, fax: +60 3 2168 8573
 - Resource mobilization & planning, monitoring, evaluation and reporting (PMER) unit: Ms. Penny Elghady (Resource mobilization & PMER coordinator), email: penny.elghady@ifrc.org, phone: +60 3 9207 5771
 - For pledges of funding: zonermsiapiacific@ifrc.org