

PAPUA NEW GUINEA: DISPLACED PERSONS

20 November, 1996

***THIS APPEAL SEEKS
CHF 3,799,000 IN CASH, KIND AND
SERVICES TO ASSIST 120,000
BENEFICIARIES FOR 12 MONTHS***

The Federation's 1996 Emergency Appeal sought CHF 969,000 to provide relief and medical assistance to 55,000 people on Bougainville. It was expected at the beginning of the year that improved access and greater mobility would make it possible to reach this target figure. In reality, security on the island tightened. By September 1996, the operation had reached just under 24,000 beneficiaries.

Recent developments on the island present an opening for the Federation/PNGRC to conduct a short-term, large-scale operation for almost 120,000 people. This will require a much larger budget and needs to begin as soon as possible. Ongoing assistance will resume following the short-term intensive operation.

The appeal, which is part of the Federation's Emergency Appeal 1997 is being issued now in order to obtain funding and make an immediate start on the new operation. Despite this early release, the Bougainville operation and its funding will remain an integral part of the 1997 Appeal when it is issued in December.

Summary

After eight years of fighting on the Papua New Guinea island of Bougainville prospects of a resolution of the conflict in the near future remain dim. Meanwhile, the PNG government is preparing to gradually close care centres (centres for displaced) and is encouraging displaced civilians to return to their home villages. To help the returnees resettle and to support those who remained in their homes, the PNGRC/ Federation will launch an operation to provide a family kit of basic household items to practically every family on the island, while continuing to distribute relief items and provide medical supplies to health centres. Ongoing assistance to Bougainvilleans in the Solomon Islands will also be reinforced.

The Intended Operation

The Papua New Guinea island of Bougainville has been the scene of armed conflict between government and secessionist forces since 1988. The prolonged fighting and blockades of the island have driven large numbers of the population (estimated at 150,000) to flee their homes and to seek safety in care centres. The International Federation has been assisting the National Red Cross Societies of Papua New Guinea (PNGRC) and the Solomon Islands (SIRC) in a series of operations for Bougainvilleans since early 1991. On Bougainville, assistance has been given both in the care centres sheltering the displaced and in home villages, depending on circumstances. In the Solomon Islands, support has been given to Bougainvilleans undergoing medical treatment.

Papua New Guinea

The PNGRC/Federation has been providing basic non-food relief items and medical supplies to the most affected people on the island for several years. The PNGRC/Federation plan to continue this programme of assistance, outlined most recently in the Emergency Appeal 1996, and conceived as a 'limited supply' model that reflects PNGRC capacity and the available logistics set-up. However, because of current circumstances preparations are being made to launch a large-scale, short-term relief operation (based on a "bulk supply" model) that will endeavour to provide a family kit of relief items to an estimated 24,000 families or 120,000 persons, and give support to the health structures.

This decision reflects the fact that there seems little likelihood of a peaceful outcome on Bougainville in the near future and takes into account government moves to encourage the population to leave the care centres and move back to their homes, notably through a planned reduction in the number of care centres from fifty to nine. Conditions are also opportune, since the PNGRC/Federation has assurances from both government and BRA (secessionist) forces that access to all parts of the island will be possible.

The distributions will be carried out from the central depot and base in Arawa and five other focal points around the island. Transport will be by ship, truck and helicopter. In addition, medical supplies will be distributed through health centres in order to offset the acute shortages that are affecting basic health care. Because of the size of the projected operation, economies of scale can be applied: an independent logistics capacity will be put in place.

This extended operation will start as soon as possible, and certainly before the end of 1996. It is expected it will take six months to complete the "bulk supply" model, after which support will continue on the "limited supply" level.



Solomon Islands

The Federation plans to continue to assist the SIRC with its support to Bougainvilleans who have sought medical attention in the Solomon Islands and have not been able to return home.

Currently, 270 Bougainvilleans (patients, their family members and escorts) are being cared for by the Society.

The recent increase in people travelling between Bougainville and the SI has led to a significant expansion of the scope and range of SIRC assistance (including training for its staff and volunteers to ensure they are well equipped to deal with this sensitive situation) that threatens to overwhelm the funding and operational capacities of the Society.

Because of the uncertainty of future developments on Bougainville, this relief assistance needs to be maintained, since the majority of the Bougainvillean families are reluctant to return home until conditions on the island are normalised.

The Response so far

Red Cross/Red Crescent Action •

Papua New Guinea

The PNGRC/Federation operation began in 1991. In November 1993, a Memorandum of Understanding detailing the respective responsibilities and duties of the two parties in the operation was drawn up. Since then assistance has concentrated on providing relief materials and medical supplies for people in care centres and isolated villages, setting up a cold chain on Bougainville and initiating an immunisation programme from bases in Wakunai and Rabaul. The health component was handed over to government departments at the end of 1994. From the start, the operation has had to contend with transport problems, caused by the cancellation or diversion of shipping services, and mobility on the island itself, which has always been subjected to security measures.

Although the bulk of assistance up to the end of 1994 went to people in the care centres, the focus changed as access on the island improved. Since the PNGRC/Federation has

been able to register and assist complete villages which were cut off during the crisis and has been targeting those that had so far not received assistance.

The operation has been conducted with low staff levels because expertise abounds on Bougainville. There are many trained people with suitable skills in logistics, management and health.

The 1996 Emergency Appeal operation had distributed clothing, utensils and relief tools to 23,938 beneficiaries by the end of September. Security problems in the first half of the year posed severe constraints for the implementation of the plan of action. CHF 165,737 has been received to date in response to this appeal.

Solomon Islands

With Federation support, the SIRC provides assistance to Bougainvillean people who have sought medical attention in the Solomon Islands and have not been able to return home. It also provides basic food items, shelter, welfare, and transport assistance, plus basic items to help with rehabilitation, for Bougainvilleans in its care who are trying to return to their homeland .

The numbers helped have fluctuated over the years, reaching a maximum of nearly 500 in 1995. Currently, 270 Bougainvilleans (patients, their family members and escorts) are being helped by the Society in care centres in Honiara, Gizo and Choiseul.

Other Agencies' Action •

With the exception of the Churches, which channel some assistance, the Red Cross is the only humanitarian organisation working on the island.

ICRC

The ICRC is also in contact with the authorities and PNGRC with a view to carrying out its traditional mandate activities.

Co-ordination •

Over the years strong contacts have been built up among Red Cross workers and all parties concerned -- the Government, defence forces, Bougainville Transitional Government and BRA. This mix of relationships puts Red Cross in a unique position to work on the island.

The Needs to be met

Assessment of Needs •

This new operation will extend Red Cross assistance to the whole of Bougainville except Buka Island (administratively part of Bougainville). The current population is estimated to be up to 180,000, of whom 30,000 to 35,000 are on Buka. The number of accessible beneficiaries is estimated to be 20,000 to 30,000 in central areas and scattered parts in the south and 100,000 to 120,000 in other areas.

Immediate Needs •

The short-term operation will be used to get people back on their feet after eight years of conflict. Although the Federation has been involved in a limited distribution of relief supplies for some six years it is expected that most of the people on Bougainville will need assistance. Those who received goods distributed earlier need new supplies, while some families have received very little or no assistance so far.

Most supplies will have to be replaced because goods do not last long in the humid jungle conditions on the island. Both clothes and utensils are washed with gravel and sand in the fast running rivers and have a short, harsh life. Fabric rots in 6-8 months and the commonly-used pots are destroyed by abrasion and heat in the same length of time. Since bush and grass knives are usually the only tools a family owns, they are worn out quickly by the myriad uses to which they are put.

On the Solomon Islands, those seeking medical care continue to depend upon the Red Cross.

Red Cross Objectives

The operation will endeavour to reach all areas on mainland Bougainville. Its focus will move from assisting people in care centres towards assisting those who have remained in their villages or intend to return to them.

The operation's objectives are:

- to provide relief and medical supplies to an estimated 120,000 families in care centres and villages throughout the island
- to promote, where feasible, the return of families to their home villages
- to assist PNGRC to revitalise and strengthen the RC branch on Bougainville so that it may assist in the implementation of the programme.

National Society/Federation Plan of Action

Papua New Guinea

- Relief quantities

270 mt of relief goods and 6 mt of medical supplies will be distributed throughout the island. One family pack (containing relief items) will be given to each family. This contains clothes, towels, blankets, cooking pots, plates, spoons and garden tools. Each unit weighs 11 kg and costs almost CHF 100.

- Beneficiaries

The current system of registration will be continued. Firm numbers of beneficiaries will be established at each of the six focal points (including Arawa) from lists of families provided by the village chiefs. A list of families will be made at each focal point before the distribution is made. Distribution will be made on the basis of registered beneficiaries.

- Logistics

Transport

Helicopter flights are used at present to reach most care centres. They are chartered on a regular basis by the PNG and Bougainville Transitional Governments and are available for private charter. At present most places, except Arawa, are readily accessible only by helicopter. Access by road is improving but is subject to surface and security conditions. Circumnavigation of the island by ship is possible. Drop-front barges are preferred because they can off-load wherever there is a beach.

Reaching the inaccessible areas, moving goods, personnel and involvement in medivac operations will be carried out by using a designated Red Cross helicopter for the estimated two month period of the operation.

80 mt of support supplies and equipment (including fuel and a front-end loader to move cargo) will be required for the relief operation and will be transported, together with the relief supplies, on two voyages by a 300 mt capacity drop-front barge.

Packaging

Relief goods will be packed in two ways: in **bulk** for distribution from focal points with bulk capacity (eg secure warehouses in Arawa and Buin) and in **family packs** for quick distribution from drop-off points.

Distribution of goods

Approximately 100 mt of **bulk** goods will be delivered to Loloho and stored in a secure warehouse on the wharf. These goods will be delivered by truck along the east coast road and into the central area using the Panguna - Jaba River road.

Approximately 170 mt of relief goods will be packed by the supplier in **family packs** which will be transported to a further five focal points around the south, west and north-west coasts by the barge. Goods will be dropped off at Kanga Beach for Buin, Mamagolta for Tonu, Marau for Sovele, Torokina for Torokina and Kuriao for Kuriao.

These drop off points will be split between the two voyages to allow delegates time to cover the distribution for each area (e.g. Buin and Tonu first, Sovele, Torokina and Kuriao second). Spare time between voyages (if any) will be taken up with distribution by road out of Arawa.

The six centres will be the focal points for the operation. Conditions between the drop off points and the destinations are known and in some cases are being improved.

Excess goods will be held in the Loloho warehouse for distribution using the existing relief operation model. There may be sufficient goods left in the warehouse at the end of the operation to support the normal distribution needs for some months.

Purchasing

The bulk of goods will be obtained from our traditional suppliers in Lae and any shortfall will be purchased in either Rabaul or Port Moresby. At this stage it is not foreseen that out-of-country suppliers will be required.

- Health

Medical personnel will work among the population in areas around the focal points during the distribution.

Basic drugs and medical supplies will be purchased and distributed through health centres, according to Federation guidelines and in consultation with the PNG Department of Health. The contents of a standard drug and medical supply kit have been established and these will be distributed within the above logistical system.

A Health Delegate will be appointed and the health workers involved will be trained health personnel who are already working at the health and care centres.

- PNG Capacity Building

Through the implementation of the programme, PNGRC personnel will be recruited and trained. Funds (CHF 32,000) are already available to help rebuild the RC branch building in Arawa; another CHF 13,000 is required.

– **Staffing**

Six delegates will be needed for the extended operation. Short-term support will be needed to cover information and telecommunication functions.

Information and Evaluation •

A short-term mission by an information delegate will take place at some stage and an independent evaluation of the programme will be conducted, by the Federation at the end of the extended stage. Provision will be made for on-going monitoring and review.

Solomon Islands

Continued support to Bougainvilleans seeking medical care, their families and escorts will be given by the Red Cross.

Budget summary

See Annex 1 for details. Since most of the medical and relief supplies listed are available locally, cash contributions are strongly preferred.

The following breakdown applies:

Papua New Guinea

- CHF 2,249,000 for part 1 comprising "bulk supply" distributions from five focal points.
- CHF 1,455,000 for part 2 comprising "bulk supply" distributions from the main base.

Total: CHF 3,704,000

Solomon Islands

CHF 95,000 is needed to cover the costs of this operation.

Conclusion

This expanded operation provides for appropriate assistance from the Federation to the PNGRC and the people of Bougainville in present circumstances. It takes into consideration the effects of possible changes in security and communications within the country and the manner in which the assistance from the Federation will be modified and strengthened. Donors are kindly requested to subscribe quickly to this appeal.

Margareta Wahlström
Under-Secretary General,

George Weber
Secretary General

Disaster Response & Operations Coordination