

# 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: FLOODS IN CENTRAL & WESTERN HIGHLANDS PROVINCES 22 Mar 2006

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 183 countries.

### In Brief

This Bulletin (no. 03/2006) is being issued for information only, and reflects the status of the situation and information available at this time. The Federation is in the process of launching an emergency appeal for this disaster.

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All International Federation assistance seeks to adhere to the [Code of Conduct for the International Red Cross and Red Crescent Movement and Non-Governmental Organisations \(NGO's\) 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>

### The Situation



The PNG Red Cross Society conducting assessments.

Since December 2005, Papua New Guinea has been wracked with heavy rains, plunging four of its regions into floods that have caused much destruction to its vulnerable communities. In the two severely affected provinces identified for Federation assistance alone – Central and Western Highlands province – thousands are estimated to have been affected, while some deaths have been reported.

In the Western Highlands province, three months of constant torrential rains have caused floods in Dei district. On 6 March 2006, the Avani Bridge between Kainantu and Goroka along the Highlands highway collapsed, halting traffic between the Highlands and Morobe province. The resulting food and fuel supply shortage has severely disrupted the lives of affected communities. Flow of relief supplies has also been obstructed.

Other parts of PNG continue to be ravaged by the heavy rains. Sandaun province is experiencing flooding in Aitape township and its surrounding villages, while the two largest rivers in the provinces of West and East Sepik have been flooded for most of February. Most parts of Malalaua town in the Gulf province are submerged, causing a dangerous infestation of crocodiles in the area. While the heavy floods in Central province appear to have begun subsiding, it will take months to repair the devastation. On the outer atolls of Bougainville, the risk of food shortages is high as crops have been engulfed by storm waves.

The PNG government has assisted some families with food rations, but has not been able to reach all of those affected. Lack of coordination meetings by the national disaster centre (NDC) or central provincial disaster centre (PDC) makes it difficult to gather information on the activities of other stakeholders in Central province. The Western Highlands provincial administration coordinates the flood relief in Dei and has distributed 347 water containers on 18-19 March 2006.

## Red Cross and Red Crescent action

The PNG Red Cross Society (PNGRCS) and Federation Secretariat are targeting the two most flood-affected provinces in its relief operation – the Central and Western Highlands province. An emergency appeal is currently being prepared, which outlines the short- and longer-term needs of affected communities and Red Cross assistance planned. In the meantime however, the PNGRCS, with Federation Secretariat and delegation support, has already initiated various relief activities to meet immediate needs and prepare for the longer relief operation anticipated in the appeal.

In mid-February, a rapid assessment has been conducted in the areas hardest hit by storms and floods to determine the extent of damage and relief assistance needed by the communities at risk. The initial assessment has helped the PNGRCS coordinate relief distribution in Central province (mostly in Kairuku Hiri district) according to changing needs. In Dei district, Western Highlands province, the assessment determined that existing water sources have been contaminated and houses destroyed. It found people living in makeshift shelters and drinking/cooking with polluted water, while food supplies are low. The PNGRCS therefore identified immediate needs -- water containers to store safe drinking water and tarpaulins for relocating families.

The relief supplies sent from Lae, Morobe province to Western Highlands are currently stranded due to poor access on the Highlands highway. In Kairuku Hiri district, Central province, the PNGRCS has distributed initial relief supplies to 248 families based on figures and needs identified in the initial assessments.

Villages	Relief items	Quantity	No. of households
Inauabui	Tarpaulins	71	71
	Water container	50	50
	Second hand clothes	14 carton	14
Bitou	Water containers	50	50
	Tarpaulins	45	45
	Second hand clothes	14 cartons	14
Veifa	Tarpaulins	1	1
Apanaipi	Tarpaulins	1	1
Bapangongo	Tarpaulins	2	2
<b>Total</b>			<b>248</b>

Although it is estimated that more than 248 families are affected, the PNGRCS has adapted their relief distribution after taking into account changing needs as some communities have managed to cope to a certain level. Initial distributions have therefore targeted those most needing the kinds of relief the national society is able to provide. These items need to be replenished as soon as possible to ensure PNGRCS is prepared to face further disasters: 20-litre collapsible plastic containers tarpaulins, blankets (swan blankets) and treated mosquito nets.

As the situation changes rapidly, more participatory-based assessments are planned to identify further short- and long-term solutions. The PNGRCS, with Federation Secretariat support, has worked out a schedule for further activities, which takes into account assessment/staff/volunteers/logistics planning, assessment implementation and project development planning for the next three weeks.

Further in-depth assessments will also help determine new needs (relief to medium/longer-term development) more focused on health care and water sanitation. Indeed, The PNGRCS has a community-based health awareness programme built into the community-based self-reliance programme that can cover health promotion messages for the affected people. It may also widen the scope of Red Cross coverage to include other affected areas where the government lacks capacity to respond.

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