

PALAU: BRIDGE COLLAPSE

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The Disaster

The collapse of the bridge linking Koror and Babelthaup, the two main islands of the Pacific nation of Palau on 26 September left the 12,000 inhabitants of Koror, the country's most populated island, without water, since there is no natural water source on the island. The government of Palau declared a state of emergency and asked the Palau Red Cross to assist in the provision of drinking water to all households.

Red Cross/Red Crescent action

The consignment of 3,096 collapsible water containers and 6 fuel water pumps, procured and airlifted to Palau by the Japanese RC, has been distributed by the Palau RC. All items are already in use and much appreciated by the local population.

Because of the very high air freight costs between Guam (an unavoidable transit point to Palau) and Koror, the Federation Secretariat asked the American RC to investigate the possibility of obtaining air transport assistance from the US Military, from its airbases in the Pacific. An agreement was reached that the Hawaii chapter of the American Red Cross will purchase another 6,000 units of collapsible water containers and that these will be airlifted by the USAF to Palau from Honolulu within the next two days.

(At the Palau government's request, the US military has provided Water Purification Units, water pumps, water filter-purification support materials and some water containers.)

With the above assistance, the situation is reportedly being under control. The only outstanding item on the list of equipment drawn up by the Palau RC -- 200 x 200 litre water containers -- has been put on hold pending a review of needs.

The Federation released CHF 80,000 from its Disaster Relief Emergency Fund (DREF) to reimburse the Japanese and American RC for expenses they incurred and wishes to express its appreciation for their support in organising the logistics of this operation. It also gratefully acknowledges a contribution of YEN 2,000,000 (CHF 20,000) from the Kanagawa Prefecture Chapter of the Japanese RC, which was used by the Japanese RC to cover part of the purchase and transport costs. Contributions from other donors to cover the outstanding amount would be welcomed.

This is the first emergency relief operation of the Palau RC, which was only established in May this year. It has been an excellent opportunity for the NS to demonstrate its service potential to its country and to raise its public profile. At the same time it has helped publicise the international RC network of solidarity and the Society's link with the Federation.

Jerry Talbot
Director
Asia & Pacific Department

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