



# Papua New Guinea: Volcanic Activity

## Office of the Resident Coordinator Flash Update No. 5

As of 12 July 2019

This update is produced by Office of the Resident Coordinator in Papua New Guinea in collaboration with humanitarian partners. It covers the period from 18:00 05 July to 18:00 12 July 2019 (GMT +10). The next report will be issued if there are new developments or significant changes in the situation.

### HIGHLIGHTS

- On 26 June, the Ulawun volcano in West New Britain erupted. The eruption ceased after 24 hours.
- Gaps remain in addressing evacuees' needs at care centres, including sanitation and hygiene. Disease outbreaks remain a concern.
- A preliminary assessment from the Rabaul Volcanological Observatory indicates people in East New Britain may return home, while those in West New Britain sites may be able to return home in a week's time.
- On 28 June, the Manam volcano in Madang began actively emitting volcanic ash and superheated pyroclastic flows to the west and northeast slopes of the volcano.
- The PNG Government has sent a barge with relief items and Defence Force preventative health and medical teams to Manam island.



### SITUATION OVERVIEW

#### Mt Ulawun Volcanic Activity

The Rabaul Volcanological Observatory's (RVO) preliminary assessment indicates that people evacuated in East New Britain Province may return home immediately, while those evacuated in West New Britain Province may be able to return home in a week's time. The alert level remains at 1, indicating a low threat to life. However, continued low-level volcanic tremors suggest the magma system below the volcano remains active. RVO continues to monitor seismic activity and volcanic tremors.

The greatest impact caused by ash and scoria fall appears to be a swath on the west side of the volcano extending to the coast where vegetation, mostly palm oil plants, has browned. Except for a 6-kilometre pyroclastic flow on the northern slope and a 7-kilometre pyroclastic flow along the southeast slope, the rest of the area around the volcano, accounting for 80 per cent, were minimally affected. Sulphur dioxide levels measured on 4 and 7 July showed low flux levels (100 tonnes/day).

West New Britain provincial authorities have downgraded the State of Emergency on 12 July, noting that it would be scaling down operations and officers would be returning to their normal duties.

Gaps remain in addressing evacuees' needs at care centres, apart from food. In addition to personal hygiene, especially for women and young children, a major concern remains the risk of disease outbreaks due to a lack of access to water, poor sanitation and hygiene conditions, and general living conditions at the care centres and other

evacuation sites. The care centres have been well covered for measles, rubella, and oral polio vaccine immunization. However, provincial health activities in Bialla and Ulamona villages are slow. The Navo clinic inside the Hargy plantation remains closed. Strengthened surveillance in the eruption-affected areas documented 96 reported health-related cases between 4 and 7 July. Sores and skin infections ranked first, followed by malaria, diarrhoea and cough.

The West New Britain public health authorities are assessing a suspected diarrhoea outbreak around Ulamona and Bialla. Digging of latrines has begun at some evacuation sites, but more efforts are needed to prevent the spread of certain communicable diseases, as people defecate mostly in the open or in nearby rivers and streams. Hygiene kits are urgently needed at most sites. Basic hygiene education and awareness must be stepped up. The Health Cluster has identified shortages of basic drugs and medical supplies in the existing health posts and recommends restocking of those referral centres with health kits rather than loose items and boxes of basic drugs.

### **Manam Island Volcanic Activity**

Manam volcano continues to emit volcanic ash. An eruption at 11:40 a.m. (UTC+10) on 12 July sent a plume of volcanic ash to approximately 3,660 metres (12,000 feet) in the air, according to a Darwin, Australia, Volcanic Ash Advisory. An estimated 1,410 people from seven villages on the island remain affected. Disaster authorities have identified immediate needs for food and water, noting the only available water sources currently available to be muddy or brackish.

## **RESPONSE**

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### **Mt Ulawun Response**

National Executive Council has approved PGK7 million (USD2 million) toward the response. They have established a National Disaster Restoration Team that includes the Defence Secretary but not National Disaster Centre.

The National Disaster Centre is coordinating with provincial authorities, the Food Security and Agriculture Cluster and Red Cross to distribute a one-week supply of tinned fish and rice to some 7,000 people living in evacuation centres in West New Britain province.

The Health Cluster has drafted an action plan that seeks to establish a national health response team and activate cluster activities to stockpile supplies and coordinate logistics among partners, strengthen surveillance and provide clinical and public health goods to support the provincial health authorities. At the provincial level, the plan calls for establishing a provincial emergency response team, permanent public health team sites, and both static and mobile clinics for surveillance and response. The plan also calls for establishing mobile or static health facilities and surveillance focal points in the care centres. WASH, nutrition and reproductive, maternal, neonatal and child health care elements have been incorporated into the plan.

The Department of Health has completed stockpiling medical supplies with the provincial health authority in West New Britain. Fifty dengue rapid diagnostic tools and 30 specimen collection kits have been sent to West New Britain. WHO will send available Inter-Agency Emergency Health Kits, a standardized kit of essential medicines, supplies and equipment to West New Britain.

UNICEF has deployed a logistician to West New Britain to work with a vaccine coordinator to ensure vaccines are distributed to health clinics and strengthen the routine vaccination programs, including people affected by the eruption. One nutrition specialist has been deployed to the province to support the implementation of nutrition activities. Two additional staff members will be deployed to support building capacity at health facilities and the treatment of malnutrition cases (covering severe and acute malnutrition cases).

The WASH Cluster agreed relief items to be shipped to West New Britain for the response. It had completed a draft action plan but will revise the plan to scale down care centre activities and shift to early recovery activities. It will also be supporting the Health Cluster's action plan.

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In preparation for the anticipated return of evacuees to their homes, the Shelter/NFI/CCCM Cluster has been requested by National Disaster Centre to register displaced people at the seven West New Britain care centres. The National Disaster Centre is also preparing to distribute tools and masks to returnees to assist them in clearing and restoring their properties.

The International Federation of the Red Cross issued an emergency action plan on 4 July seeking CHF176,474 (USD178,345) to assist 5,000 people (1,000 households) over the next five months.

The Disaster Management Team Secretariat is collecting information for a 3W (who-what-where) of cluster activities for the response. It will be shared on or around 17 July.

### **Manam Island Response**

A Defence Force naval barge will depart on Monday, 15 July, from Port Moresby for Manam Island with 350 kitchen sets, 47 10-litre collapsible water containers, 450 blankets, 70 hygiene kits, 100 3m x 4m tents with poles, 1,120 solar lights, and 300 tarps, as well as assorted other relief items, including clothing, slippers and toys.

Medical and preventative health personnel from the Defence Force are aboard the barge and will conduct medical check-ups, WASH awareness activities, install water purification units, register IDPs and support distribution of relief items.

The Disaster Management Team, led by IOM, is working on an operational plan for the response and is working closely with Defence Force personnel deployed to Madang province. IOM is coordinating with the provincial authorities to distribute the first lot of relief supplies for Manam.