**Background**

An earthquake measuring M7.5 occurred on 26 Feb 2018 at 0344hrs (PNG) / 25 Feb 1744hrs (UTC) in Southern Highlands. There have also been a series of at least 70 aftershocks recorded since the earthquake.

Located in the vicinity of the quake affected area are several economically significant operations namely the PNG LNG project, the Ok Tedi mines and Porgera mine.

Communications with quake-affected locations have been hampered by disruptions to connectivity.

**Current Situation**

Initial estimates by the National government-led rapid assessment team indicate that Tari (provincial capital of Hela) is possibly worst impacted.

The media continues to report incidences of damage or destruction to homes, properties and infrastructure across Hela and Southern Highlands. A number of unconfirmed deaths and injuries have also been reported in both provinces.

An aerial survey flight between Mt Hagen and Mendi conducted by aviation partners observed large landslides. The area south of Komo (Southern Highlands) was also observed to be badly affected by large landslides.

Access to clean water is reported to be scarce in both provinces due to damage to water storage facilities and water sources.

The two main health facilities in the quake-affected area are Tari and Mendi hospitals. Tari hospital remains fully functional while Mendi hospital is suspected of experiencing disruption to both water and power supply resulting in reduced operations. Status of other rural health facilities remain unknown.

Power disruptions and telecommunications remain a challenge in Tari with possibly more than 30 cellular towers affected by the earthquake.

According to media reports, Tari airport is closed until 2 March with all commercial flights temporarily suspended. Komo airstrip is identified as unusable due to large surface cracks and damaged edges while other airstrips were observed during aerial survey to be undamaged. Moro airport remains operational and Mendi airport continues to receive flights.

According to the National Department of Mineral Policy and Geohazards Management, aftershocks are likely to continue up to several weeks but is expected to weaken with time.
Response to Date

A national technical team led by National Disaster Centre has undertaken aerial assessments since 27 February and will continue with ground assessments in both Hela and Southern Highland Provinces. The assessments are expected to be complete by 1 March. The PNG Prime Minister accompanied by key ministers together with several heads of national technical agencies also conducted an aerial survey of the affected provinces.

The operator of the PNG LNG project is planning for an initial limited response to address immediate healthcare needs of communities around the Hides site. The joint aerial survey is being undertaken by partners on 1 March.

Humanitarian clusters have initiated preliminary discussions with government counterparts to identify estimated impacts and likely priorities. The PNG Disaster Management Team continues to support the National Disaster Centre with information management and coordination of assessments.

Preliminary Estimated Disaster Impacted Locations (UN PNG)

DISCLAIMER: This document is a compilation of information gathered from various sources, including relevant UN agencies, government sources, INGOs, IOs, church-based organisations and the media.

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