

Papua New Guinea: Highlands Earthquake

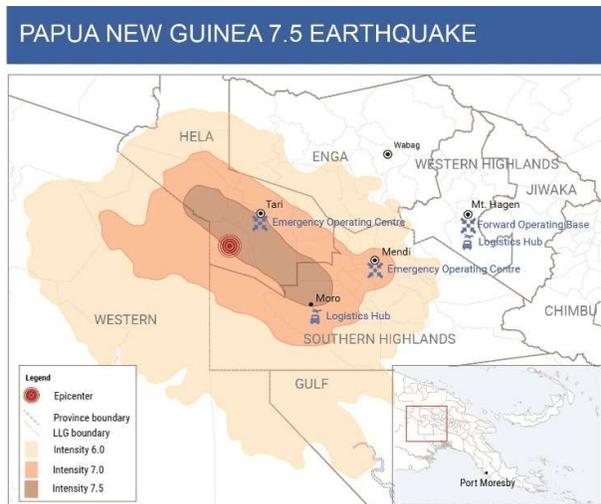
Situation Report No. 2

(as of 14 March 2018)

This report is produced by the National Disaster Centre, the Office of the Resident Coordinator and the United Nations Coordination and Assessment (UNDAC) Team in collaboration with humanitarian partners. It was issued by the Disaster Management Team Secretariat. It covers the period from 10 March to 14 March 2018. The next report will be issued on or around 16 March 2018.

Background

- According to initial estimates, over 544,000 people are affected across the five most affected provinces. Over 270,000 people require immediate humanitarian assistance.
- Priority needs include medicine, tarpaulins and tents, blankets, food, and water.
- The Government, private companies and humanitarian partners have focused initial relief efforts on communities in the worst-hit seven Local Level Government (LLGs) in Hela and Southern Highlands provinces.
- Main roads linking Hela and Southern Highlands provinces have been cleared, but many communities can only be reached with air assets.
- The Government has established Forward Operating Bases in Mt. Hagen and Moro, as well as Emergency Operations Centres in Mendi and Tari.



Source: NDC, UNDAC, OCHA
The boundaries and names shown and the designations used on this map do not imply official endorsement or acceptance by the United Nations.

544,368

affected people

270,442

people in need of
assistance

18,200

displaced in 26
informal care centres

7

LLGs prioritized for
urgent assistance

Situation Overview

The National Disaster Centre (NDC) estimates that around 544,000 people have been affected in five provinces and that more than 270,000 people are in immediate need of assistance. According to the Government, the death toll has reached more than 100 people. Reports from provincial disaster offices confirm 37 deaths in Southern Highlands Province, mostly in the Mendi area due to landslides and collapsing walls, over 300 injured people. The Western Provincial Disaster Office has confirmed 13 people killed, three injured and another three missing. Many reports of casualties across the affected provinces remain to be confirmed. The full impact is likely to remain unclear as many areas remain difficult to reach.

+ For more information, see “background on the crisis” at the end of the report

Based on preliminary estimates, earthquake intensity mapping and assessment data, the Government has prioritized:

- 37,689 people most severely affected and in need of immediate assistance in 7 LLGs¹ in Hela and Southern Highlands provinces;
- 232,753 people affected and needing assistance in Hela and Southern Highlands and some areas in Western Province; and
- 273,926 people affected covering remaining areas in Hela, Southern Highlands, and many communities in Western and Enga provinces.

Many locals are traumatized and afraid of returning to their homes, and staying in informal care centres or with family or community members. Displacement tracking has been rolled out in the 7 most affected LLGs to assist in identifying the needs of the displaced communities. Currently, households are living in clans within the care centres (health facility, schools, churches and host communities). While estimates are difficult given the nomadic nature of the population and the fluctuations between night and day populations in the care centres, approximately 18,200 people are displaced and staying in informal care centres, with thousands more staying with families and host communities. Data collected from Komo-Magarima District's, Hides 4 in Komo LLG, Timu and Lau in Hulia Beneria LLG show that there is an estimated total of 7,000 displaced persons with the majority being women - Hides 4 (63%) and Timu (55%), and there are more males (54%) than females in Lau. Displaced communities and households have restricted movement and access to available services due to fear of their tribal enemies

A number of health facilities have been damaged, some significantly, while many more remain inaccessible. According to the Hela Provincial Health Authority, there are 34 operational health facilities in Hela comprising Tari provincial hospital, 4 health centres and 29 sub-health centres. In Southern Highlands Province, the main referral hospital is functioning, but the operating theatre is not functioning as the anesthesia machine was damaged in the earthquake. In addition to health facility damage and destruction, many health workers have lost their homes, including on-site accommodation at the Mendi hospital and staff accommodation at most health centres in Hela Province. Across both provinces, water systems and cold chain in health facilities are damaged or destroyed, including tanks, pumps, power systems, and refrigeration systems for vaccines. Surveillance systems are not functional, leaving the population highly vulnerable to outbreak risks.

The principle water sources for people in the highlands before the earthquake had been surface water and rainwater collection systems. Many of the water sources have been affected and/or depleted by the earthquakes. Rainwater collection systems have been damaged or destroyed. With no access to safe and clean water, water-borne disease outbreaks, such as diarrhoea, already among the principal causes of under-5 mortality, are most likely to occur. This risk is further compounded by the destruction of sanitation facilities and unsafe hygiene practices. Open defecation in rural communities is widespread. The National Department of Health, supported by partners, are conducting water quality assessments of water sources in Southern Highlands Province and downstream locations in Gulf Province.

Partners are scaling up humanitarian relief efforts and are gaining access to more communities, although there are still unmet needs in many areas. The remoteness and access constraints create logistical challenges and while no major security incidents have been reported, many affected areas have a history of tribal conflict and volatility. To date, most of the main road linking Hela and Southern Highlands provinces have been cleared allowing vehicles carrying relief supplies to pass. Some roads remain blocked with ongoing construction work, but should be opened in the coming week. Due to the ongoing seismic activity and rain, contractors are assigned to station at certain points of the main roads to monitor and clear the roads to allow an uninterrupted flow of vehicles. Remote locations with no road access are still being reached by fixed and rotary wing assets.

¹ North Koroba, South Koroba, Yahapuga Rural, Koma rural, Hulia Rural, Nipa Rural and Lake Kutubu Rural

Funding

As of 14 March 2018, around US\$23.8 million has been pledged in bilateral contributions for relief efforts from five Members States (Australia, China, European Union, Japan, New Zealand) and many private organizations. The Government has allocated PGK450 million (US\$138.8 million) towards relief, recovery and reconstruction efforts. In addition, significant bilateral assistance, particularly from Australia, New Zealand, Oil Search, EXXON and Mission Aviation Fellowship, in logistical support and military assets provides a critical lifeline for many remote communities.

Humanitarian Response



Food Security & Livelihoods

Needs:

- An estimated 143,127 people (74,426 male, 68,701 female) have been rendered food insecure by the earthquake due to landslides destroying food gardens.
- The latest mVAM report indicates that up to 64,070 people were experiencing extreme food insecure conditions before the earthquake events.
- Affected communities are unable to reach remaining food gardens or gather bush food e.g. seasonal nut karuka (edible pandanus nut) due to persisting aftershocks.

54,987

people reached with food

Response:

- To date food supplies have reached 54,987 people in Southern Highlands and Hela provinces.

Gaps & Constraints:

- Availability of food relief supplies and humanitarian access including lack of road access, limited aircraft assets and remoteness of communities continues to hamper the provision of food relief to affected communities.



Water, Sanitation and Hygiene

Needs:

- Reports from communities of disease outbreak probable due to lack of adequate hygiene facilities
- Landslides burying or damming traditional sources and increased observable turbidity in rivers and streams limit access to water for drinking, washing and cleaning.
- Existing community rainwater storage infrastructure has been damaged or destroyed by the earthquake as have any sanitation facilities.
- Ten communities reported as severely affected by the earthquake, and eleven badly affected

15,000

water purification tablets distributed

Response:

- Bilateral and humanitarian partners have provided water containers for distribution as well as ten mobile water purification units and ten 3,700 L water storage tanks.
- To date, partners have distributed WASH NFIs in Mt Bosavi LLG and 300 households in Moro and Para areas together with hygiene kits and water purification tablets. A total of 25 communities have received WASH NFIs.
- Water purification tablets to be distributed to 15,000 people in Kikori.
- Where existing sources of water are not available, bottled drinking water has been distributed together with food relief.
- The National Department of Health, supported by partners, are conducting water quality assessments of water sources in Southern Highlands Province and downstream locations in Gulf Province.

Gaps & Constraints:

- Tari has very low fuel supplies which will hamper relief efforts.
- There is a lack of verified information on water quality at remaining water sources.
- There is no planned response around sanitation and hygiene.

**Needs:**

- Restore functionality of the health facilities to deliver medical services.
- Establish surveillance systems in most affected locations.
- Vaccines and cold chain equipment for immunization campaign.
- Health workforce surge capacity to support health centres in Hela and Southern Highlands.

4,000
mosquito nets
distributed

Response:

- A joint NDOH/WHO health emergency team visited Hela and Southern Highlands provinces on March 6 to assess damage to health facilities and plan for the rapid resumption of health services. While there, the teams provided immediate medical assistance with support from St Johns Ambulance.
- NDOH to facilitate and coordinate health partners and response, and deliver medical supplies to facilities.
- A vaccination plan has been developed and will be rolled out in coming days and weeks.
- NDOH will mobilize volunteers to address the surge of health workers to Enga and Southern Highlands. Mt Hagen will be sending staff to Hela.
- WHO supporting the establishment of the early warning and response system (surveillance system), and EOCs in Tari and Mendi. Surveillance experts have been deployed to support establishment.
- 4,000 mosquito nets have been distributed to address risks of any potential malaria outbreak.

Gaps & Constraints:

- Information remains a major challenge.
- Gaps remain in public health staff capacity due to the earthquake's impact on health workers.
- There is a lack of a clear and coordinated staging plan detailing the dispatching of essential supplies, medical and public health.

**Shelter / Camp Coordination and Camp Management****Needs:**

- Up to 54,260 households are estimated to need emergency shelter due to damage/destruction to homes or displacement due to fear of returning to existing homes.
- Site assessments to facilitate reconstruction on safe ground.

54,260
households need
emergency shelter

Response:

- 300 households in Hela province have received emergency shelter NFIs and plans are to reach 1,500 households by 20 March 2017.
- Displacement Tracking Matrix (DTM) teams were deployed and have verified 3,242 households have been recorded as displaced (18,188 individuals) in 26 informal care centres, and have covered two of seven priority LLGs.

Gaps & Constraints:

- 7,000 shelter NFIs kits are urgently required.
- Lack of road access, limited aircraft assets and remoteness of communities continues to hamper the provision of emergency shelter to affected communities.

**Protection****Needs:**

- Trauma counselling and psycho-social support for the approximately 143,127 persons in the affected area.

143,127
people need psycho-
social support

Response:

- Intervention on women-friendly safe spaces offering psychosocial support, prevention education, counselling and sexual and gender-based violence counselling and support are in preparation and should be established once site assessment has been done.
- Gender Based Violence in Emergency specialist arriving in POM this Thursday and will participate in the joint assessment team.
- A joint NGO-government supported trauma and crisis counselling toll-free hotline continues to receive calls from affected areas. Targeted promotions for the hotline offering toll-free trauma counselling will be starting late this week via SMS and radio.
- A Communications with Communities Working Group has been established to mainstream messages and ensure participation and consultation of affected populations in response efforts.
- Code of conduct is with Government for endorsement and will apply to all humanitarian responders.
- Additional dignity kits and post rape kits will arrive in country by end of the week.

Gaps & Constraints:

- There is a lack of incorporation of persons with disabilities in humanitarian response efforts.

General Coordination

The Government is leading the response operation and has welcomed the support of humanitarian partners. The National Disaster Committee (NDCComm) and relevant sub-committee have been mobilized to develop the national response strategy. The National Disaster Centre (NDC) coordinates assessments and relief operations. On 1 March, the Government appointed an Emergency Controller to lead the National Emergency Disaster Restoration Team in overseeing the relief and recovery efforts.

The Government has established two Forward Operating Bases (FOBs), one in Mt Hagen led by the Western Highlands Provincial Disaster Coordinator, and one in Moro is led by the Provincial Administrator. The Government has further established Emergency Operations Centres (EOCs) in the capitals of Hela and Southern Highlands provinces, Tari and Mendi respectively. Provincial Administrators have assumed leadership in coordinating provincial responses.

The National Department of Health (NDOH) is leading the health response for the earthquake affected areas with support from the humanitarian Health Cluster. Emergency Operation Centres have been established in NDC, with similar centres to be set up at in Mendi and Tari.

The joint interagency PNG Disaster Management Team has been convened to coordinate relief efforts of humanitarian partners and private companies. Seven informal clusters (WASH, Shelter, Food Security, Health, Protection, Education, Nutrition) and the inter-cluster coordination group support the work of the Disaster Management Team.

An UN Disaster Assessment and Coordination (UNDAC) Team has deployed to directly support the NDC in response coordination and information management. UNDAC supports an inter-agency coordination network comprising UN agencies, NGOs, CSO, FBOs and the Red Cross. This network augments the coordination capacity of Provincial Administrators in key operational nodes in Port Moresby, Mt Hagen, Moro, Tari and Mendi. The Government has tasked the PNG-DF to assist local partners in the distribution of relief items. Logistics coordination specialists have deployed to provide supply chain coordination support to the Government and the PNG-DF, particularly in Port Moresby, Mt. Hagen and Moro.

Humanitarian partners are encouraged to register on www.humanitarian.id and actively use the dedicated earthquake response window on www.humanitarianresponse.info/en/operations/papua-new-guinea.

Background on the crisis

On 26 February 2018, at 3:44am local time, an earthquake measuring M7.5 hit the Highlands region of Papua New Guinea (PNG), with its epicentre located 30 km south of Tari town, Hela Province. The tremor was the largest earthquake recorded in the region since a similar event in 1922. A series of strong aftershocks, including a M6.7 quake on 8 March in the same area and a M6.8 quake off the coast of New Ireland, caused widespread panic amongst the communities. According to preliminary estimates and based on latest earthquake intensity mapping, around 544,000 people in five provinces were affected and more than 270,000 people are in immediate need of assistance.

For further information, please contact:

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For more information, please visit <http://pngndc.gov.pg/> or <https://www.humanitarianresponse.info/en/operations/papua-new-guinea>.
To be added or deleted from this Sit Rep mailing list, please e-mail: undacpng2018@undac.org