

PAPUA NEW GUINEA EARTHQUAKE RESPONSE OPERATIONAL UPDATE 2018

March to May 2018



On the 26th of February 2018, a 7.5 magnitude earthquake hit parts of the Highlands of Papua New Guinea, significantly affecting the provinces of Southern Highlands and Hela. Three months after the devastating natural disaster, people from the affected communities are still in need of assistance. Clean water and shelter are the highest priority needs for communities, as they work to rebuild what was lost and regain their self-reliance. The International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) and the Papua New Guinea Red Cross Society (PNGRCS) have been working with the Highland people to assist in the rebuilding and rehabilitation of their communities.

The Papua New Guinea Government's National Disaster Centre (NDC), estimates that over 544,000 people have been affected throughout five provinces, with more than 270,000 people in immediate need of assistance. The estimated death toll is currently at 100. Due to the remoteness of many of the areas struck by the earthquake, no complete assessments have been possible to date.

Destruction from the earthquake has been far reaching. Roads, communication towers, water tanks, shelters, medical centres, schools and food crops have been destroyed, resulting in both short and long term impacts to peoples' livelihoods. Additionally, the resumption of tribal fighting in some of the affected areas has made access to many communities increasingly difficult.

The ICRC is focusing its humanitarian response to the population located within the periphery of the epicenter, in Hela and Southern Highlands Provinces. In partnership with the PNG Red Cross, the ICRC has provided a wide range of assistance for the affected communities, in coordination with other actors.

"Our immediate emergency response was to assess the extent of damage, especially to health structures, schools and living conditions at care centres, and ensure that basic functioning health structures are restored. Today, three months later, our focus continues to be geared towards the restoration and provision of clean water, solar lighting to some health centres and provision of shelter kits to IDP communities," said Mark Kessler, Head of ICRC Mission in Papua New Guinea.

EMERGENCY PHASE – FIGURES UPDATE March to May 2018

DRINKING WATER SUPPLY

The ICRC has rehabilitated water storage tanks, helping to provide 77,000 litres of clean water storage in Southern Highlands Province (SHP), and 45,000 litres in Hela Province.

Nine new rain water harvesters have been installed, providing up to 45,000 liters of daily storage capacity in both provinces.

EMERGENCY HOUSEHOLD AND SHELTER KITS (NFI)

Since the start of our earthquake response, 15,948 people have received NFI kits, consisting of two blankets, two mats, tarpaulins, buckets and soap.

HEALTH ASSISTANCE

Immediately after the earthquake, the ICRC provided dressing materials for up to 2,000 wounds and donated stretchers to Mendi Provincial Hospital.

Solar lights have been installed in delivery rooms in health centers in Hela and SHP, where a midwife is present.



R. Tabel/ICRC

Community members assisting the ICRC team during the delivery of activities to the affected area of Nipa, Southern Highlands Province.

The complex security situation means that humanitarian responders can at times be targeted in the Highlands of Papua New Guinea. Due to ICRC's previous presence in the area working with communities affected by tribal conflict, the ICRC and PNGRCS have been well received by communities and other stakeholders in the region, as a trusted and familiar organisation.

The ICRC increased its operations and activities in the two hardest hit provinces of Hela and Southern Highlands. In

the past three months, ICRC has assisted nine centres for internally displaced people (IDPs), provided communities with basic shelter kits and assisted the Hela Disaster Committee by providing them with kits, to then be sent to some of the remotest communities within Hela Province. Six health centres, nine IDP communities and six schools have been assisted through the provision of clean water storage and waste management services. The usual programs that are run in the Highlands are continuing in parallel to the earthquake response activities.



R. Tabel/ICRC

Confused and scared, she jumped up from the bed and instinctively reached out for her children. "Our house was swaying...it had been struck by boulders and everything was crumbling under their weight. Suddenly, the roof caved in on me. I somehow forced my right hand through the rubble and helplessly lay there, waving for help," Yapanu, a widow and mother of four, pieced that painful memory together.

Belonging to what was once Yakara village in Toiwaro ward one, Poroma Local Level Government of Nipa Kutubu District, Southern Highlands Province, Yapanu now lives at Urila care center with her four children – Dalin, Melenge, Doli and Undip.

Yapanu Daniel, Urila care centre, Southern Highlands Province

ICRC PNG Head of Mission, Mark Kessler distributing NFI kits to families affected by the earthquake at the Lil Care Centre, Nipa District, Southern Highlands Province

"Despite losing everything I am happy that the Red Cross has come and is providing us the vital essential household items that will help keep us warm during the night in the temporary home."

Martha Kumingipa, Lil care centre, Nipa, SHP



R. Tabel/ICRC



An ICRC team traverses a road where landslides obstructed access to remote communities affected by the earthquake.

“A lot of these communities are isolated and in some cases they have only one road leading to them. The blockage of many of these roads by landslides after the main earthquake had made them inaccessible to almost everyone.”

Ahmad Basel Z. R. Hallak, Deputy Head of Mission, ICRC Papua New Guinea

An area once belonging to Yakara village in Toiwaro ward one, Poroma, SHP, is now deserted, after people were forced to leave following the earthquake.

Three graves lay on the road where people died as a result of the landslides.



Mothers living at care centres are faced with all new, ongoing challenges and struggles.

“We mothers spend most of our time working in the garden to feed our family, and the destruction caused by the earthquake on our gardens caused us more pain. We are finding it very hard to find food and feed our family, we cannot go back to our gardens because big stones and landslips covered our gardens and houses, how we survive here is something that we mothers feel hard to express,”

Janet Tukapaki, Lil care centre, Nipa, SHP

A community leader describes how a village was buried under the landslide that killed seven people in Yalanda village in Nipa Kutubu, SHP.

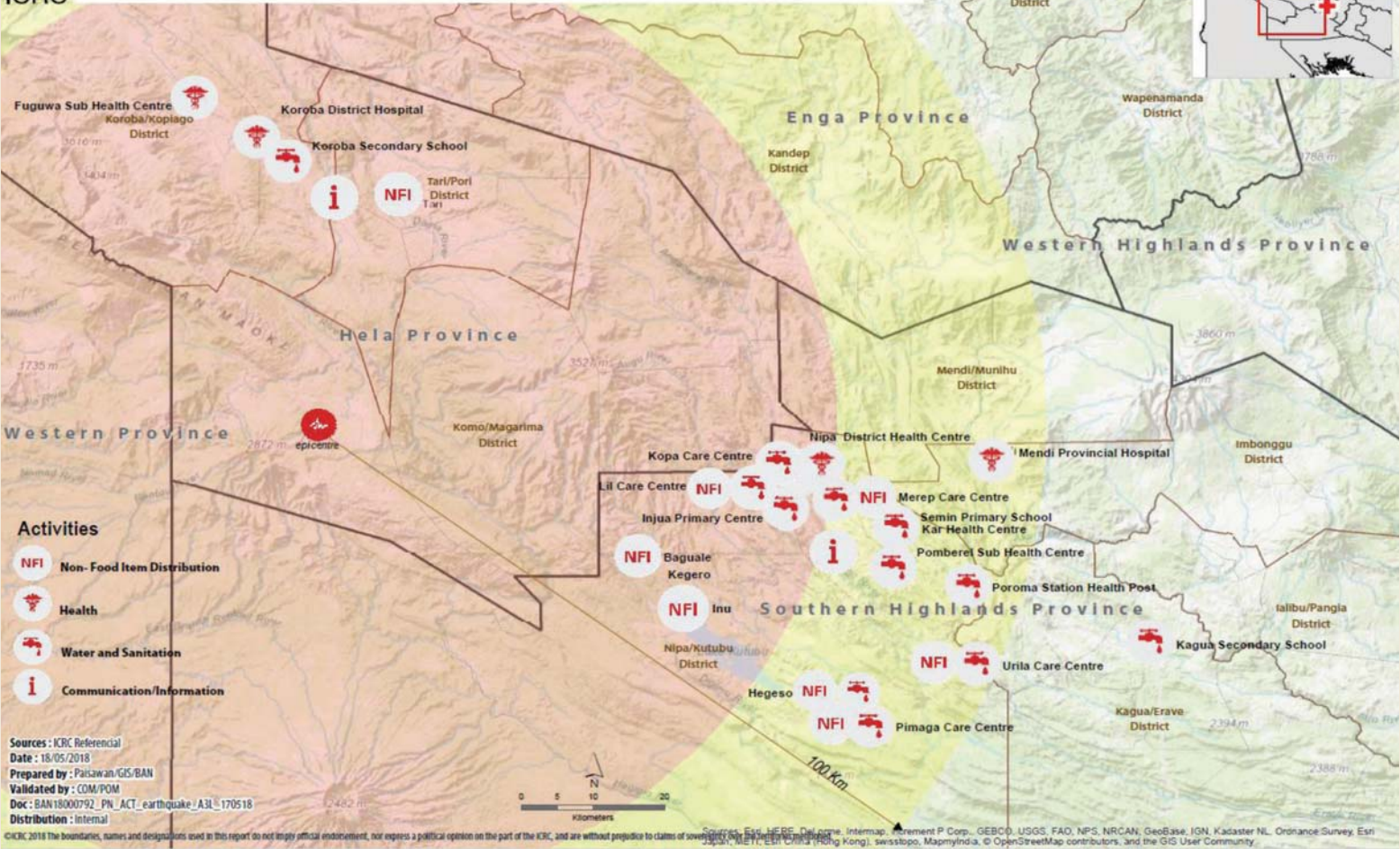
“A 7.5 earthquake, we never experienced, never seen or even never heard from our grandfathers, it was our first time to experience, it was unexpected. The huge landslide killed six people while two were medevac at Port Moresby General Hospital. The continuous tremors after the big one is making people unstable, worried, concerned and panic because this is the first time to experience such a devastating earthquake.”

Richard Don, Yalanda village. Nipa-Kutubu, SHP



Rainwater collection systems throughout the region were damaged during the earthquake, disrupting clean water sources for residents, and health and education institutions.

Quick and efficient repairs to water and sanitation infrastructure has been crucial following the natural disaster. The ICRC's two mobile repair teams were able to respond to more than a dozen care centres within the first three months after the earthquake.



FACTS & FIGURES

Southern Highlands Province

- Kar Health Centre: water supply restored
- Kar Primary School: water supply restored
- Nipa District Health Centre: water supply restored, solar lighting installed and fetal doppler provided (a device used to listen to a baby's heartbeat in utero)
- Kopa Care Centre: new rain water harvester installed and NFI kits distributed to 834 people
- Lil Care Centre: new rain water harvester installed, temporary latrine constructed and NFI kits distributed to 640 people
- Merep Care Centre: new rain water harvester installed, temporary latrines constructed and non-food distribution reached 583 people
- Injua Primary Centre: new rain water harvester installed
- Semin Primary School: water supply restored
- Pomberel Sub Health Centre: water supply restored and solar lighting installed
- Urila Care Centre: new rain water harvester installed and NFI kits distributed to 746 people
- Pimaga Care Centre: new rain water harvester installed and NFI kits distributed to 1,668 people
- Kagua Secondary School: new rain water harvester installed and water supply restored
- Kegero Care Centre: NFI kits distributed to 1,548 people
- Baguale Care Centre: NFI kits distributed to 1,068 people
- Hegeso Care Centre: rain water harvester installed and NFI kits distributed to 624 people
- Inu Care Centre: NFI kits distributed to 654 people
- Mendi Provincial Hospital: stretchers and dressing materials for up to 2,000 wounds were donated

Hela Province

- Fugwa sub-Health Centre: water supply restored, rain water harvester installed, damaged structure re-inforced, solar lighting installed and fetal doppler donated
- Koroba District Hospital: water supply restored, solar lighting installed and fetal doppler donated
- Koroba Secondary School: on-going restoration of water supply
- Hela Provincial Disaster Committee: supply of NFI kits to be distributed to 7,400 people living in remote areas