



ADRC Highlights

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➤ PNG New Ireland Earthquakes and Tsunamis: Tsunami education was tested

□ New Ireland Earthquakes and Tsunamis

At least six strong earthquakes hit the island provinces in Papua New Guinea from East New Britain to Southern New Ireland, starting at November 16, 2:54pm and making the last main shock at November 19, 0:45am (PNG local time).

According to the National Earthquake Information Center, United States Geological Survey, the main quakes were recorded at M8.0, followed by M7.7 and M7.3. Tsunamis from the main shocks were reported at Rabaul, East New Britain with 1 m height approximately.

□ Damage Reports

The damage information is rather limited and still partial as the affected areas are remote and wide apart.



What we got from various reports so far is that: one boy was killed in the area (location not clear) and one child was killed in Duke of York Island, both due to collapse of houses; a man died due to landslide in New Ireland; many houses were damaged; power poles downed, some land and road slips; communication and power lines cutoff, dislodging of store goods and household items.

In terms of tsunamis, supermarkets at Rabaul and Kokopo were damaged by tsunami waves, many houses collapsed partially or totally in New Ireland and Bougainville islands. Several thousand residents are reported homeless. We have to be careful not to rush to the conclusion as the damage assessment is still going on.

□ Immediate evacuation is a result of tsunami education

The reported tsunami damage is rather limited for the earthquakes of these magnitudes. The reasons for this could be as follows:

- a. Tsunamis are rather small because the quakes could occur due to lateral sliding of faults.
- b. Tsunami warning made by the Pacific Tsunami Warning Center worked to inform the people, though such warning was later canceled with the view that serious tsunami would not reach.
- c. The residents took swift evacuation to safer areas just after the quakes.

In fact, the residents at coastal areas near Rabaul immediately evacuated to higher grounds right after the quake, according to the

Rabaul Volcanological Observatory. This was a contrast to the scene that some people stayed at the coast watching the sea after the strong motion at the 1998 Aitape Tsunami. The people acted according to the lesson of "evacuate now once an quake occurs". Even if a tsunami would be small, such tsunami can kill you.

□ Propagating PNG experience and lessons

As we reported in the previous edition of Highlight, ADRC has been cooperating with the PNG Government in producing and distributing tsunami pamphlets in PNG and the region. If major human casualties were prevented at the tsunamis of this time, this should be the result of the serious and various efforts made by the governments and the people to foster "tsunami culture in PNG" since the Aitape Tsunami of 1998.

In addition to broadcasting special TV programs, making and utilizing videos, posters and books, and education at schools, tsunami awareness pamphlets are also forming a part of the comprehensive tsunami preparedness and awareness program of the nation. This program worked this time. We believe that this experience and lessons of PNG is a good model for tsunami prone countries to apply to the local situations in their own way.

(By Taichi Kusaka, Senior Researcher)

➤ Recent Natural Disaster

□ Expansion of Floods Damage in Southeast Asia

The intense rain since November 19, 2000 has triggered floods and landslides in north Malaysia, the southern part of Thailand, and northern district of Indonesia, which has been causing serious damages.

In Malaysia, being flooded at wide area in Terengganu and Kelantan, the northeast district, about 12 people has lost their lives. Also, more than 8000 people have forced to evacuate and have not come back home even now. In Hat Yai, across the border in southern Thailand, the situation has been similar. Floods damage was quite severe. A lot of areas have been inundated with the heights of 0.5 meters to 2.5 meter, and over 50 people have been died.

Furthermore, although there be not official announcement yet, it is reported that about 100 people passed away by the landslides on November 25 which occurred in addition to the floods in 2 areas of west Sumatra and Ache, the northern districts of Indonesia.

This torrential rain is also causing serious damage in the region every place such as Vietnam and Laos.

(24 & 27 Nov. OCHA Situation Report etc.)

□ Flood damage in Sri Lanka

The downpour of rain that is causing large-scale damage in Southeast Asia caused severe damage also in Sri Lanka of south Asia. The rain that fell intensively from November 19, 2000 through 20th has caused floods in the eastern districts such as Ampara, Batticaloa, the east of 350 km of Colombo. 15,000 families has lost their houses and even cultivated land suffered great damage and many roads became impassable.

(21 Nov. OCHA Situation Report etc.)

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