



NATIONAL DISASTER MANAGEMENT OFFICE

DEPARTMENT OF PROVINCIAL & LOCAL LEVEL GOVERNMENT

SITUATION REPORT ON THE LANDSLIDE HAZARD IN WANTOAT AREA – MOROBE PROVINCE.

1. INTRODUCTION

1.1 This report summarizes the landslide, which occurred in Morobe Province of Papua New Guinea by the Assistant Director – Risk Management. The Provincial Disaster Office through the media provided the information for this report.

2. DISASTER SITUATION OF WANTOAT-LERON LLG AREA

2.1 Morobe province is vulnerable to the landslide hazard, in particular the Kaiapit area of the Finistere Range. During the past years, large-scale landslides have occurred in the region. For example, on the 6th September 1988, a Kaiapit landslide in the upper Markham catchment killed 74 people, affected a total of 800 people and destroyed 3 villages and properties. Then, on the 22 December 1996, a landslide killed 38 people, injured 8 and affected a total of 209 people in Morobe. Widespread damages were also done on food gardens and houses.

2.2 On Monday night (1st April 2002) or early hours of Tuesday morning (2nd April 2002), a major landslide occurred in the Wantoat area of the Markham Electorate within Morobe Province. The massive landslide struck two remote coffee plantation villages, six kilometers northeast of Wantoat district station in the Morobe Province. This landslide occurred as a result of the continuous rain events, which has been occurring continuously within the area for some time.

2.3 Apart from the rainfall event, an earthquake measuring 5.3 on Richter scale also occurred around 4.15 pm on Monday 1st April 2002 with epicentre stationed below Sialum (North of Lae) of the Huon Gulf Peninsula. The exact location was 6.1 degrees south and 147.9 degrees east. The distance of the earthquake location from the landslide site does not strongly indicate that the earthquake caused the landslide.

2.4 The population of the Wantoat –Leron Local Level Government, according to 2000 census, was recorded at 13, 405. The entire region was not affected by the landslide apart from the one or two villages in the area.

3. CURRENT SITUATION

3.1 According to the media report and telephone conversation from the Morobe Provincial Disaster Coordinator, about 9 people were confirmed dead with further 27 people still accounted for. The number of people at the disaster area currently requiring assistance is 138 people.

4 PROVINCIAL LEVEL RESPONSE.

4.1 On Tuesday 2/4/02 at the conveying of the news of the disaster, the Governor of the Province and the Morobe Provincial Disaster Coordinator made the tour to the site for aerial inspection and disaster assessment.

4.2 The retrieving of the bodies was done by the villagers themselves while the Morobe Provincial Disaster Committee (PDC) and the Lae based Red Cross branch have already responded to the disaster situation by providing shelter materials and cooking utensils to the affected population.

According to the Morobe PDC, everything is currently under control meaning that no outside help is needed for immediate needs of the affected people.

5. NATIONAL LEVEL RESPONSE

The National Government through NDMO has yet to receive a situation report from the Provincial Administration and Morobe PDC. However, the Director for National Disaster Management Office is currently at Lae city and disaster site to assess the disaster situation together with the provincial authorities. The detailed report of the assessment will be made upon the return of the NDMO assessment team.

6. CONCLUSION

Retrieving the buried dead is difficult. While this is morally important for the relatives of the affected people, in so far as the emergency response is concerned, the prime concern of the disaster stakeholders is the welfare of the left over living affected population.

From the outset this appears that the basic needs of the affected people is under control by the Provincial Disaster Stakeholders. On the question of the medium to long term needs, this has yet to be identified by the assessment teams now at the disaster site.