



IOM and USAID Officials conducting a rapid assessment of the effects of drought and frost in Southern Highlands.
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Highlights

- IOM conducts a rapid needs assessment in the most affected Highlands Provinces. Urgent needs include WASH and food assistance.
- IOM delivers 200 Litre water storage containers in Oro Province.
- IOM continues water, sanitation, hygiene education, drought preparedness and response planning.

Situation Overview

A million people in the Highlands of Papua New Guinea (PNG) are currently enduring the impact of drought and frost in what has been described as the worst El Niño weather system in living memory. PNG's National Disaster Centre estimates that it will cost USD 12 million (PGK 35 million) just to bring food to the affected families over the next four months. The Government of Papua New Guinea has so far disbursed PGK 5 million (USD 1.85 Million) and pledged another PGK 25 million (USD 9 million) for emergency assistance. An assessment team made up of national and provincial agencies, IOM, Red Cross, and Caritas found that water, sanitation, participatory health and hygiene education, drought preparedness awareness messaging and food assistance are required in the worst hit communities.

The impact of the disaster is clearly visible: crops and vegetation affected by frost show permanent wilting which has increased their susceptibility to wild fires. Tuber crops—sweet potatoes, Irish potatoes—and vegetables—cabbage, broccoli, cauliflower and carrots—have been badly affected by frost and unique local trees (e.g. casuarina) are wilting. This has resulted in a reduction in incomes for households that are solely dependant on agriculture production. The sale of livestock has increased a coping mechanism. Water levels in creeks and rivers have diminished resulting in people walking long distances and queues at springs with low water levels. For the past two months the tanks for harvesting rain have been empty; as a result, unexploited underground water remains the most sustainable option. Inland fisheries—a multimillion dollar initiative sponsored by the National Fisheries Authority as a supplement to subsistence farming and an additional source of protein and cash—have also been hard hit, with immediate and devastating consequences for the farmers and the economy. Localised migration has been observed in Enga province from Kendep to Webeg and Pogera mining areas. PNG experienced similar droughts in 1972 and 1997; however, the current effects of El Niño seems to surpass the devastation that resulted in the past droughts.

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IOM RESPONSE

Preparedness and response

IOM is monitoring the potential drought impacts throughout the country as part of its preparedness planning to respond to drought and frost induced by El Niño event. This is building on the current community-based disaster preparedness and response committees network. Preparedness awareness campaigns on water usage and food preservation are on-going on the provincial radio, IEC material distribution and national television programmes. The assessment team verified the economic, environmental, social impact of the frost and drought and how this has reduced quality of life and changes in lifestyle.



IOM delivering water drums to affected communities in Oro Province © IOM 2015 (Photo: Simon Kafu)

Health

Many creeks and streams have dried up and villagers are being forced to use alternative and unsafe sources of water. Poor water and sanitation facilities may contribute to the spread of communicable diseases such as typhoid, cholera, and many other diarrheal diseases. Rural health centres lack the facilities to respond to a potential outbreak of disease. Water shortages have also affected schools which are operating on a half day basis and experiencing lower student attendance. In order to improve water storage and access to clean water, IOM distributed 200 litre water containers in Oro province. Participatory health and hygiene education trainings are on-going focusing on gastro-intestinal diseases and how communities can minimize risks. Alternative sources of water such as boreholes fitted with manual lift pumps, and pump minders trainings, will be piloted in Jiwaka and Simbu province in November 2015.

Pathway to Recovery

IOM recommended an array of measures to save lives through provision of food relief, seed distribution, food preservation awareness campaigns in affected communities, and use of drought and frost resistant and tolerant crops such as wheat. IOM will

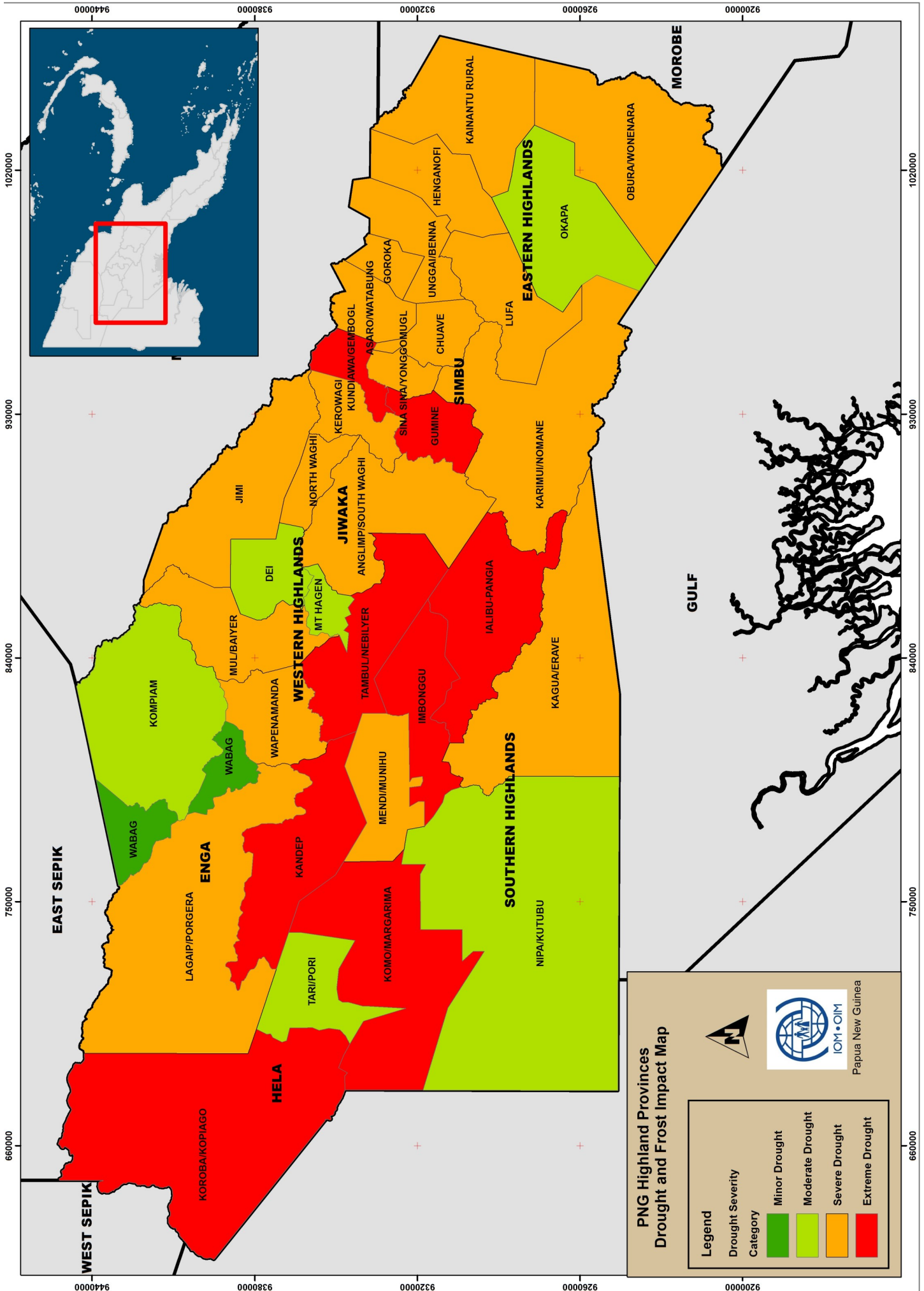
continue to support the Government in its efforts to alleviate the adverse effects of El Niño in the Highlands. In coordination with the National Disaster centre, IOM will organize climate tolerant crop diversification programming including distribution of fast growing sweet potato vines, African yam, cassava, drought tolerant banana, fast growing sweet potato (beauregard and brondal) and other tuber crops tolerant to frost and drought. Other recovery activities will include livelihood diversification, the revival of fish farming, and expansion of the current food preservation and storage facilities. With regards to water health and sanitation, IOM is planning to organize health and hygiene trainings, distribute water containers, assist with the drilling of bore holes and wells, distribute water purification tablets, and organize awareness campaigns regarding the effects and estimated duration of the drought.



IOM delivering key resilience messages to a hard-hit village in Enga Province © IOM 2015 (Photo: George Gigaui)

Needs	Response Targets
Food	Food distribution and logistics for 200,000 individuals; Awareness on food management
Nutrition	Supplementary school feeding
Rural Water Supply	Distribution of water containers, repair of water harvesting infra-structure, borehole drilling and desalination of water for atolls communities; Provision of small-scale pumping and purification facilities at bridges on major rivers, schools and health facilities to give access to safe drinking water
Agriculture	Restore local production through seed distribution and crop diversification including wheat production in Kandep and rehabilitation of the research centre (burned down) Seed support for drought tolerant sweet and Irish potatoes, maize and peanuts
Request:	3.000.000 USD

Map of Most Affected Districts in Papua New Guinea



PNG Highland Provinces Drought and Frost Impact Map

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