

Alert

Indonesia – No. 35 / 2010

Mount Merapi Volcanic Eruption

Geneva, 27 October 2010

1. Brief description of the emergency

Indonesia's Mount Merapi, located 30km north of Yogyakarta, erupted three times on Tuesday 26 October 2010, causing thousands of people to flee their homes as it emitted searing clouds of volcanic ash as high as 1.5km and clouds of gas and ash rolled down the slopes.

2. Impact

As of 27 October, at least 28 people are confirmed dead and 19 hospitalised (UNOCHA report 27 October).

The four main hospitals near Merapi - Bethesda (run by ACT member YAKKUM Emergency Unit or YEU), Sarjito (a public hospital), and Panti Nugroho and Panti Rini (private Catholic hospitals) - reported more than 30 people suffering burns of 50 – 70% to the body. Search and rescue operations are ongoing in different areas surrounding the volcano.

Volcanologists have warned that there is a strong likelihood of a further major eruption soon. .

3. National Response

On 25 October, authorities put a 10km radius around Mount Merapi on red alert and were making arrangements to evacuate around 19,000 people. However, even before the eruption, officials reported that nearly 15,000 people had ignored the evacuation orders despite several minor blasts that sent lava spewing down Merapi's southern slopes. Many people sleeping in camps returned to their homes during the day to work and tend their cattle. Some men refused to leave altogether, confident they would be able to escape.

4. Planned Response

YEU-run Bethesda Hospital is co-ordinating with local authorities and providing necessary burn treatment. Panti Wilasa hospital is on stand-by for back-up if needed.

YEU has been co-ordinating with the district government to ensure that preparedness and contingency plans are in place. YEU Disaster Training Centre has opened makeshift tents and rooms for temporary shelter (equipped with emergency toilets, water, food and health services) in response

to an urgent request from the site leader of Hargobinangun village, where the most populated evacuation camp is located.

Nearby churches are supporting YEU with volunteers, food and tents. Another ACT member, Diakonie Katastrophenhilfe (DKH), has sent staff from its local office to support the YEU operation. ACT members Yayasan Tanggul Bencana di Indonesia (YTBI) and Church World Service Indonesia (CWSI) are on standby only for Merapi, as they are focussing on assessing and responding to the Mentawai earthquake.

YEU continues to monitor the situation and will keep ACT Alliance updated. An appeal may be forthcoming.

An ACT Alert for the Mentawai Islands earthquake and tsunami emergency (off the coast of west Sumatra) will be issued once more information is received. Information is currently very sketchy as the islands are difficult to reach due to strong winds and rough seas.

Any funding indication or pledge should be communicated to Jean-Daniel Birmele, ACT Chief Finance Officer (Jean_Daniel.Birmele@actalliance.org).

Thank you for your attention.

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