

UN food aid to benefit 60,000 people in earthquake-hit Papua New Guinea

The United Nations emergency food relief agency has airlifted over 80 metric tons of vital nutritional supplements – enough to feed approximately 60,000 people in earthquake-hit Papua New Guinea.

According to the UN World Food Programme (WFP), the aircraft carrying the nutrient-dense, high energy biscuits, departed the UN Humanitarian Response Depot in Dubai, the United Arab Emirates (UAE), Monday morning, and its life-saving cargo will reach those in need within days.

The plane used for the airlift was provided by Sheikh Mohammed bin Rashid Al Maktoum, the Vice-President and Prime Minister of UAE and the Ruler of Dubai.

“[This] support is crucial to deliver humanitarian assistance to those most affected by this natural disaster,” said Stefano Peveri, the head of the Humanitarian Response Depot in Dubai.

More than 270,000 people, including 125,000 children, remain dependent on humanitarian assistance across the Pacific island nation after it was hit by a devastating 7.5 magnitude earthquake in February.

The earthquake was followed by a series of severe aftershocks throughout March, causing widespread panic among communities.

In addition, Papua New Guinea already faced severe food insecurity and alarming malnutrition levels before the earthquake. WFP’s remote assessments estimate that approximately 37 per cent of the population, or 60,000 people, were severely food insecure before the earthquake.

The earthquake and its aftershocks have further impacted people in the most vulnerable areas of the country, destroying root crops and vegetable gardens; the primary food sources in the affected area, said the UN agency.