



Office of U.S. Foreign Disaster Assistance

# DISASTER CASE REPORT

Agency for  
International  
Development

Washington D.C.  
20523

## UPPER VOLTA - Meningitis Epidemic

### Data

Date: December 1981 - April 1982 (FY 82)

Location: Nationwide

No. Dead: 650

No. Affected: 6,212 reported cases

Damage: Not reported

### The Disaster

Upper Volta is a country plagued by annual outbreaks of meningococcal meningitis. In recent years the outbreaks have reached epidemic proportions despite efforts to anticipate and control the spread of this highly infectious disease. The meningitis epidemics explode into regionwide pandemics every ten to twelve years.

First reports of sharp increases in the number of cases of meningitis reached Ouagadougou in early February 1982. Information from Ouagadougou Hospital strongly indicated that the annual meningitis outbreak was evolving into a major epidemic. The nationwide incidence of reported cases equalled or exceeded the number recorded during the same months in 1969-1970, the peak year of the last pandemic.

### Action Taken by the Government of Upper Volta (GOUV)

The GOUV Ministry of Health (MOH) has participated in USAID-supported efforts to anticipate and control outbreaks of meningitis through increased surveillance and inoculation of at-risk populations. As the number of reported cases began to escalate, however, the GOUV exhausted its stockpiles of vaccine. It was not until early March that the GOUV declared the epidemic a disaster and requested international assistance.

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Assistance Provided by the United States Government (USG)

On March 9, an Agency for International Development Public Health Officer and a U.S. Centers for Disease Control (CDC) doctor working in Upper Volta met with the Minister of Health to discuss the developing disaster. At this meeting, the Minister of Health requested USG assistance in supplying vaccine for a nationwide inoculation campaign. In response to this request, U.S. Ambassador Julius Walker declared on March 11 that the outbreak had reached disaster proportions and warranted USG emergency assistance.

Through the Office of U.S. Foreign Disaster Assistance (OFDA), 200,000 doses of meningitis vaccine were procured in the United States and airlifted to Ouagadougou. In addition, the CDC sent an epidemiologist and a microbiologist to assist in the inoculation campaign. The two medical specialists hand-carried a total of ten ped-o-jets which CDC loaned to the GOUV for the duration of the emergency. (Ped-o-jets are machines used to facilitate injections of large numbers of people.) The USG purchased and shipped by air all the necessary spare parts for the ped-o-jets. The total value of U.S. assistance is as follows:

200,000 doses of vaccine .....	\$48,000
Transport costs .....	\$4,701
Ped-o-jet parts .....	\$9,052
Transport costs .....	\$175
CDC epidemiologist and microbiologist .....	\$15,000
TOTAL	\$76,928

Assistance Provided by U.S. Voluntary Agencies

None reported.

Assistance Provided by the International Community\*

International Organizations

United Nations Children's Education Fund (UNICEF) - supported ongoing GOUV monitoring and vaccination efforts and provided 120,000 doses of meningitis vaccine and 80,000 doses of measles vaccine, valued at \$60,000.

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World Health Organisation (WHO) - supported early monitoring and preparedness activities of the GOUV and provided 300,000 doses of meningitis vaccine valued at \$90,000 for use in the vaccination campaign. WHO also contributed 18,000 liters of gasoline valued at \$16,500.

TOTAL \$166,500

\* Please note: the listings of assistance provided by U.S. Voluntary Agencies and the International Community are compiled from reports submitted voluntarily to OFDA. It is not always possible to verify the accuracy of these reports, nor the dollar value of in-kind contributions. As a result, the total dollar values indicated in these sections should be taken as representative figures.