

OFDA  
**Disaster  
Case Reports**

Djibouti Flood  
March 18, 1981

**Office of U.S. Foreign Disaster Assistance  
Agency for International Development  
Washington, D.C. 20523**

## DJIBOUTI - Flood

### Data

Date: March 18, 1981 (FY 81)

Location: Djibouti City and Obock Town

No. Dead: 25

No. Injured: 50

No. Affected: Approximately 102,000

Damage: Approximately 2,500 homes in Djibouti City and 50 buildings in Obock sustained water damage; 72,000 lbs. of P.L. 480 food commodities were rendered unfit for consumption after becoming wet.

### The Disaster

Between March 18 and 20, 1981, 240 mm. (9.3 inches) of rain, slightly above the total average annual rainfall, fell on Djibouti City and outlying areas. About half of the city's 200,000 people found their homes inundated with up to 1.5 meters (5 ft.) of water. Because drainage away from Djibouti City is poor, heavy rains frequently cause flooding when run-off water is trapped between raised streets. The town of Obock also experienced extensive flooding causing approximately 2,000 people to be temporarily displaced from their homes. All danger from flooding was over by the end of March.

### Action Taken by the Government of the Republic of Djibouti (GROD)

On the morning of March 19, 1981, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs called a meeting of GROD agency heads, private entrepreneurs, and representatives of the donor community to discuss the disaster. Based on the belief that the rain would continue unabated for several days, the GROD sought pledges of emergency relief assistance from assembled donors. The GROD stated that Air Djibouti would transport any relief commodities free of charge.

The GROD relief program was aided by government and voluntary agencies and the military. ONARS (Office National d'Assistance aux Refugees et aux Sinistres) worked with other donors to meet the needs of victims, particularly in the delivery of food. The Civil Defense pumped water from the flooded area. Evacuation of stranded victims to high ground and to facilities such as schools and hospitals was carried out by the Gendarmerie and Djiboutan military in cooperation with the French military. The local Red Cross assisted in the distribution of relief supplies which had been previously donated for drought victims. A number of local commercial

DJIBOUTI - Flood

companies provided milk, blankets, and other goods to the flood victims and ONARS made available plastic sheeting for temporary shelters. Because tents and plastic sheeting usually stockpiled by ONARS had been diverted to assist victims of the recent droughts, the GROD did not have sufficient shelter materials to meet the present flood disaster needs. Only about one-third of the flood victims finally made use of public shelters or tents; the rest sought refuge with relatives or friends.

Assistance Provided by the United States Government (USG)

On March 19, in response to the GROD request for emergency assistance, the U.S. Ambassador to Djibouti determined that a disaster existed and authorized the use of funds from the International Disaster Assistance Account. In the hope of averting an outbreak of disease such as had occurred in the aftermath of previous Djibouti floods, the USAID and the U.S. Embassy concurred in the GROD's request to provide pumps to remove water and to provide shelter for the overflow of evacuees from schools and clinics. Accordingly, two gasoline pumps and 200 pilgrim tents were procured from Jeddah, Saudi Arabia. Transportation was provided by Air Djibouti. Total amount expended, including handling was.....\$38,916

Assistance Provided by U.S. Voluntary Agencies \*

Catholic Relief Services - using regional funds from CAFOD (Catholic Fund for Overseas Development), provided 250 cartons of condensed milk and 400 cartons of sterilized milk valued at \$9,834; supplied 160 tons of flour and 150 bales of clothing, value not reported; assisted ONARS in organizing food delivery.

TOTAL                    \$9,834

Assistance Provided by the International Community \*

International and Intergovernmental Organizations

European Economic Community - donated \$60,000 in cash.

Islamic Conference - cash contribution of \$300,000 to the GROD.

UNDRO - donated \$30,000 in cash toward the purchase of 5 power generators, 20 motor pumps, 20 mobile kitchens, tents, food, and medicines requested by the GROD.

## DJIBOUTI - Flood

United Nations Development Program (UNDP) - contributed \$30,000 in cash.

United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) - diverted unspecified quantities of bread, tea, and sardines from refugee supplemental feeding programs; assisted ONARS in distributing 3,000 surplus blankets, value not reported.

UNICEF - airlifted 15 tons of medicines and medical supplies, total value of \$69,700.

### Governments

Ethiopia - provided 145 tons of sugar and 14.5 tons of pati, wood for reconstruction, and plastic sheeting, value not reported.

France - provided \$19,770 in cash to the GROD; the French military stationed in Djibouti assisted in evacuation activities and supplied 3,000 blankets, 40 tents, mobile kitchens, and medical teams, value not reported.

Iraq - supplied 8,000 blankets, 230,000 meters of cloth, 4 trucks, 8 water tanks (for drought relief), value not reported.

Libya - donated \$200,000 in cash to the GROD.

Saudi Arabia - supplied 16 plane loads of miscellaneous relief goods, value not reported.

South Yemen - provided 3,000 bags of flour, 1,000 bags of lentils, 1,000 bags of beans, 1,000 blankets, and 75 barrels of cooking oil, value not reported.

United Kingdom - donated \$22,500 in cash to the GROD.

USSR - provided 200 tents, 2,000 blankets, and an unspecified quantity of medicine, value not reported.

### Voluntary Agencies

Catholic Fund for Overseas Development (CAFOD) - provided \$10,000 through Catholic Relief Services for the purchase of a 3-day supply of fresh milk. (Contribution credited under U.S. Volags).

DJIBOUTI - Flood

League of Red Cross Societies - provided blankets and biscuits worth \$28,250; made available medical teams stationed in Djibouti in support of drought relief efforts.

Private donors - contributed \$56,000.

TOTAL \$816,220

\* Please note: the figures for total U.S. voluntary agency and international assistance are an approximation. In many cases, the cash value of in kind aid is unavailable.