

PN-AAM-117

PN 15513

OFDA
**Disaster
Case Reports**

Ethiopia Floods
April 1976

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

ETHIOPIA - Floods

Data

Date: April 1976 (FY 76)

Location: The town of Kelafo in Harrarghe Province; areas adjacent to the Wabe Shebelle River from Imi to Ferfer on the Somali border; scattered settlements located throughout the Ogaden desert

No. Dead: 0

No. Homeless: 20,000

No. Affected: 50,000

Damage: Approximately 500 mud and wattle houses suffered minor flood damage; destruction of large quantities of food stocks and germinating crops; 7 irrigation pumps, 15 vehicles, and miscellaneous equipment damaged by mud

The Disaster

Heavy, unseasonal rainfall in the highland plateau and foothill areas from Addis Ababa to the Bale Mountain region flooded the Wabe Shebelle watershed and river basin creating a lake covering 50 sq. miles in the immediate area of Kelafo. The rains also inundated approximately 50 settlements between the town of Imi and the Somalia border and later isolated five drought relief shelters with a total of 30,000 nomads. A total of more than 20,000 people were forced to evacuate their villages for temporary shelter on higher ground and at least 2,000 persons in Kelafo were homeless until the flooding ended in late July 1976. The situation grew worse in late April 1976 when torrential rains fell over the entire Ogaden region. This unseasonal rain, combined with the flooding in the highlands, covered roads and airstrips throughout the region, isolating populated areas from food and fuel supplies.

Action Taken by the Government of Ethiopia (GOE)

Within 24 hours of the flooding in Kelafo, the GOE Relief and Rehabilitation Commission (RRC) initiated an emergency response, coordinating the government effort by radio with the National Police unit and a Society of International Missionaries (SIM) medical team in Kelafo. The RRC, utilizing an abandoned airstrip four kilometers west of Kelafo, brought in an on-site relief operations coordinator, a six-man medical team, and a three-man relief crew. Two DC-3s began air delivery of the first of more than 15 tons of food, blankets, and medical supplies. The RRC issued an appeal for small boats and helicopters able to transport supplies to the stranded villages and assist in evacuation.

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In addition to specific relief actions, the RRC mounted a 30-day disease control program, inoculating 5,000 individuals against cholera and typhoid; anti-malaria spray operations covered several hundred sq. mi. of standing water. The RRC estimated that the total cost of the medical relief operations, salaries, fuel, and locally purchased supplies totalled some US\$750,000.

Assistance Provided by the United States Government (USG)

On being advised of the developing emergency, A.I.D./Ethiopia made the Mission aircraft available to the RRC for transport of RRC personnel to the affected areas. The Mission Disaster Relief Officer accompanied RRC personnel in making the assessment and determination of requirements to meet emergency needs. U.S. Naval Medical Research Unit #5 (NAMRU) volunteered an unused 24 ft. aluminum boat for use by relief personnel.

In response to the GOE's appeal for assistance, the U. S. Ambassador formally declared the existence of a disaster and authorized \$12,000 for provision of fuel, medical supplies, and operating expenses for the relief and medical teams organized by the RRC. In addition, the USG airlifted five aluminum boats, six 40-horsepower outboard motors, spare parts, and maintenance manuals costing a total of \$8,562.....\$20,562

Under FY 1977 the USG reimbursed the costs of a DOD airlift to Ethiopia, the overland freight charges for the aluminum boats, and a final purchase of outboard motor spare parts.....\$17,797

TOTAL \$38,359

Assistance Provided by U.S. Voluntary Agencies *

Mercy Airlift (Food for Hungry) - provided almost daily DC-3 airlift service of supplies and personnel for the period April 23 - mid-June 1976 for an estimated 200 hours of flying time. In accordance with their regular relief operations, all flights in support of GOE relief efforts were flown for a maximum cost of \$35 per flying hour; all other costs were borne by the Mercy Airlift/Food for Hungry volag.

Assistance Provided by the International Community *

International Organizations

European Economic Community (EEC) - tinned biscuits, edible oil, blankets; estimated value \$50,000

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United Nations - the UN/WHO Smallpox Eradication team provided intermittent use of two Hughes 500-C helicopters; estimated value of \$40,000

Voluntary Agencies

Ethiopian Red Cross - provided medical supplies and volunteer personnel for medical team operations; estimated cost of \$25,000

Swedish International Development Association - provided two SAAB single engine aircraft for a 30-day period; estimated value of \$75,000

TOTAL \$190,000

* Please note: the figure for total international assistance is an approximation. In many cases the cash value of in kind aid is unavailable.