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PROCEEDINGS  
OF THE  
ELEVENTH ANNUAL CONFERENCE

PRIVATE VOLUNTARY AGENCIES  
AND THE  
OFFICE OF U.S. FOREIGN DISASTER ASSISTANCE

Sheraton International Conference Center  
Reston, Virginia  
October 26-28, 1983

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## Introduction

Each year since 1972, the Office of U.S. Foreign Disaster Assistance (OFDA) has sponsored a conference to bring together members of the OFDA staff, representatives of U.S. voluntary agencies active in providing disaster relief around the world, and members of the international disaster relief community. The purpose of these conferences is twofold: to provide a forum for the exchange of experiences and ideas on disaster-related issues, and; to advance the goal of cooperation and coordination within the disaster assistance community.

The year 1983 contained many notable achievements in the area of cooperation within the voluntary agency community. One, in particular, was the formation of the PVO Working Group. The PVO Working Group was established after last year's conference in response to an expressed need for a means of sharing information and concerns on an ongoing basis. ACVA was selected as the umbrella organization to set up the Working Group. The PVO Working Group has met several times over the past year and had a major part in selecting the theme of this year's conference, as well as in developing the agenda.

The 1983 conference marked the eleventh year of interchange and cooperative efforts. Over fifty people representing U.S. government agencies, international organizations, academic institutions, and twenty-eight voluntary agencies participated. The theme of this year's conference, held October 26-28, 1983, was "An International Look At Disaster Assistance." This document presents a summary of the presentations and discussions that took place at the Eleventh Annual OFDA/Volag Conference.

Eleventh Annual OFDA/VOLAG Conference

Theme: An International Look at Disaster Assistance

October 26-28, 1983

Sheraton International Conference Center  
Reston, Virginia

AGENDA

Wednesday October 26, 1983

- 4:00 - 6:30 p.m. Arrival/Registration
- 8:00 - 8:30 p.m. Speaker - Richard A. Derham, Assistant Administrator (Acting), Bureau for Program and Policy Coordination, Agency for International Development

Thursday October 27, 1983

Plenary Session

- 9:00 - 9:15 a.m. Welcome of Participants and Opening Remarks - Martin D. Howell, Director, OFDA
- 9:15 - 10:00 a.m. "Are Natural and Man-Made Disasters Bringing Greater Losses - Is There a Promise of Worse to Come - The International Response" - M'Hamed Essaafi, Under-Secretary-General, U.N. Disaster Relief Coordinator

Question and Answer Period

- 10:00 - 11:00 a.m. Panel - "Increasing Needs - Are Available Resources Enough?" Moderators - Stanley Mitton, Church World Service; Vincent O'Reilly, UNICEF; Harald Schmid De Grunneck, ICRC; Oliver Davidson, OFDA
- 11:15 - 12:00 p.m. "Philippines Experience: The Way to Disaster Management Self-Sufficiency" - Col. Victor R. Pagulayan, Jr., Civil Defense Administrator, Ministry of National Defense, Republic of the Philippines

Question and Answer Period

- 12:00 - 12:30 p.m. Presentation - "Disaster as Opportunity: Dominican Republic" - David Luther, Director, CETA/VIP, Dominican Republic

Question and Answer Period

Richard A. Derham, Assistant Administrator (Acting),  
Bureau for Program and Policy Coordination, Agency for  
International Development

Mr. Derham began by welcoming the participants and applauding their continuing efforts and increasingly significant role in relief and rehabilitation worldwide. He acknowledged that one of the greatest challenges to voluntary agencies and development organizations today is to provide assistance to increasing numbers of victims while the necessary financial resources are limited and often declining. It is more important than ever, therefore, to give people the tools to help themselves.

Because natural disasters frequently cause severe economic disruption, especially in developing countries, Mr. Derham urged volags to include disaster mitigation components in their development programs. He stated that by integrating disaster mitigation measures with ongoing development projects, volags would be contributing to the humanitarian goal of lessening the negative impact of disasters on people and entire economies. Mr. Derham identified four key strategies A.I.D. employs in development programs. He called upon the conference participants to consider how these same strategies could be utilized to promote disaster mitigation.

- Encouragement of institution building
- Stimulation of resources for technical assistance
- Provision of the transfer of appropriate technology
- Encouragement of the development of the indigenous private sector

Mr. Derham concluded by recognizing that the task confronting OFDA, UNDR0, the private voluntary agencies, and others charged with disaster preparedness and relief is almost overwhelming. Because resources available to respond to disasters are dwindling, all these organizations must continue to work closely to link disaster preparedness with the overall development process.

The answer to the question, "Is there a promise of worse to come?", initially seems to be "Yes," stated Mr. Essaafi. The need for scientific knowledge about natural phenomena and their actual and potential effects increases daily. Some of the world's largest and fastest growing cities, Jakarta, Manila, Lima, Santiago, and Tokyo, are also areas of extremely high seismic risk. But, the UNDRO Coordinator emphasized, scientific studies must be followed up by action, namely, effective disaster prevention policies and sufficient preparedness measures. The benefits which derive from enforced policies and measures are many, both economic and humanitarian. Private voluntary agencies can help in this area by incorporating disaster prevention factors into the development projects they finance. Volags who are aware of hazards help avoid the creation of new risks.

Thus, Mr. Essaafi pointed out, perhaps the correct answer to the question, "Is there a promise of worse to come?", is "Not if...." A recent United Nations assessment of international efforts to meet humanitarian needs in emergency situations concluded that basic facilities and services are now in place and can be made available on reasonably short notice. Further progress depends on the flexibility and ingenuity of participating organizations to adjust rapidly to unforeseen situations.

Mr. Essaafi went on to question whether increasing losses are being met by corresponding increases in contributions. This is not an easy question to answer because of the difficulty of assigning a cash value to much of the assistance provided. Accurate records cannot be kept unless all contributions are reported to a central organization, such as UNDRO. In 1982, UNDRO recorded responses to 27 disasters with contributions totalling over \$400 million. The amount provided by the U.S. Government and U.S. private voluntary agencies virtually equalled the total contributions of U.N. agencies. Despite these large contributions, the major portion of costs associated with a disaster continue to be borne by the disaster-stricken country rather than by the international community.

The UNDRO Coordinator emphasized that the large sums of money involved point to the vital need for concerted and coordinated action during an international response. He went on to describe coordination for disaster response between UNDRO and the U.N. Development Program's Resident Representatives, UNDRO's ex officio representatives in developing countries. UNDRO has instructed the resident representatives to form disaster "country teams" of U.N. agency personnel, and encourages voluntary agencies to join these teams. Such cooperation at the country level helps to ensure that there will be neither duplication nor gaps in the aid which is provided.

Mr. Essaafi stressed that it is more important to improve the quality of response than to increase the quantity. He offered the following advice: "The correct thing, in the right place, at the right

- UNDRO does not concern itself with political events; in all cases, it is concerned solely with humanitarian issues. In Ethiopia, the U.N., as a whole, is engaged only in the provision of humanitarian assistance. When political conflict is the key issue in a country, the Secretary-General may become involved, but even then, only in a facilitating role.
- UNDRO remains in a disaster-stricken country only during the relief phase. The UNDP resident representative is responsible for continuing reconstruction and rehabilitation within ongoing development projects. The information link with the government is established by UNDRO and continued by the resident representative.
- Because it is difficult for agencies to prepare for man-made disasters, they should focus on preparedness activities in nations prone to natural disasters.

Because of increased needs, the ICRC has doubled its permanent delegations and staff since 1974. However, available resources are insufficient to enable the ICRC to continue to fulfill its mandate adequately. Long-term conflicts, such as that between Iran and Iraq in which there has been a poor donor response to relief appeals, have exhausted the ICRC financially. The resulting shortfalls and deficits exist even though signatories to the Geneva Conventions are responsible for sharing the financial burden. On the positive side, Mr. Schmid de Grunck stated that dedication to ICRC founding principles, perseverance, and efficient use of existing resources will ensure that the work will go on.

Vincent O'Reilly (UNICEF) focused on the increased needs of his organization's target group: children. Little attention, he said, has been paid to the impact that the worst recession since the 1930's has had on the world's children. Only now are some statistics beginning to surface which show an increase in malnutrition and a rise in the death rate of children in many countries.

The impact of a recession is exponentially greater in developing countries than in industrialized countries. For example, a two percent fall in income in developed countries means a 10-15 percent decline in family income in less developed countries. Cutbacks in social welfare programs which accompany an economic recession result in a decline in the quantity and quality of services to children.

UNICEF is calling for international action to end the recession and for the formal recognition of minimum levels of care for the world's children. Mr. O'Reilly listed several low-cost interventions which should be given priority:

- Promotion of oral rehydration to counteract diarrheal diseases;
- Encouragement of immunization against major diseases;
- Reversal of the trend from breast to bottle feeding; and
- Promotion of home growth charts to measure children's height and weight.

Ollie Davidson (OFDA) suggested that the way to increase resources is through a more focused response which is only accomplished by better planning. "If only we had planned..." is a familiar lament. The many advances in disaster preparedness to date have, in his opinion, barely scratched the surface. However, positive efforts to link disaster planning and development are being made. For example, hazard identification and management activities will eventually reduce damages, but new disaster preparedness strategies are necessary to keep pace with a rapidly changing world. Technological disasters, often linked to economic problems, are increasing. The deteriorating worldwide economic

Col. Victor R. Pagulayan, Jr., "The Philippines Experience: The Way to Disaster Management Self-Sufficiency"

Col. Pagulayan, Civil Defense Administrator in the Philippines, began his presentation by describing the many types of disasters that beset his country. Located in the "circum-Pacific belt of fire and typhoons," the Philippines is subject to floods, tsunamis, storm surges, earthquakes, volcanic eruptions, and typhoons. Technological advances have added lethal weaponry, environmental pollution, air and maritime disasters, and other hazards to the list.

Recognizing that repeated disasters were impeding the country's progress toward economic sufficiency and stability, the government embarked on a massive disaster awareness and preparedness program. This became the primary responsibility of the Office of Civil Defense (OCD). Formerly response-oriented, the OCD's main thrust for the past seven years has been educating and preparing the citizenry for disasters. The OCD, under the Ministry of National Defense, was given the role of coordinator at the national level during emergencies. In carrying out this mission, it has the following functions: 1) to administer a national civil defense and assistance program; 2) to formulate policies for the protection of civilians; 3) to estimate requirements for carrying out the civil defense program and allocating aid to the provinces, cities, and municipalities; 4) to educate public and volunteer workers on civil defense assistance; 5) to guide the provinces, cities, and municipalities in the development of their defense organizations; and 6) to advise the Minister of National Defense on matters concerning civil defense.

The Civil Defense structure consists of an administrator, a deputy, an executive officer, and five major divisions: administrative, planning and programming, training and information, communications and warning, and the Civil Defense Operations Center. There are thirteen regional centers, as well as sub-stations in disaster-prone areas.

The major elements of the civil defense program are: 1) civil preparedness; 2) communications capability; 3) disaster operations; and 4) supportive activities. The first of these, preparedness, includes organization and training of disaster coordinating councils; public information and education; contingency planning; and conduct of drills and exercises.

The OCD is involved in organizing disaster coordinating councils at the national, regional, municipal, and village level, and training their members at all levels. The focus in this undertaking, according to Col. Pagulayan, is on instilling awareness in the minds of the people and a spirit of mutual help and self-reliance at the local level.

cessing, and thence to the regional centers and populations concerned. Disaster requirements and damage reports from the stricken area are likewise passed through the command system.

Col. Pagulayan acknowledged, in conclusion, that while the disaster relief and preparedness system in his country is still not perfect, there exists a determination to strengthen it further. The increased awareness and commitment of the people to their responsibility for themselves and their communities has resulted in a reduction in losses that represents a sizeable economic savings to the country.

- Dissemination of information--basically an awareness raising activity, according to Mr. Luther, aimed at all levels, from individual builders to professional planners, and employing workshops, seminars, and a published bulletin to stress the importance of sound building practices.
- Training--related to information dissemination, and directed toward the same target groups, but involving actual instruction of techniques.
- Formulation of disaster prevention, mitigation, preparedness, response, and reconstruction measures--to be achieved by the members of CII-Viviendas, working as a group and in cooperation with the National Emergency Plan now being prepared by the government. A series of inter-institutional workshops, involving Council members and selected national and international experts, is planned to assist in this process.
- Revision of ongoing development programs in terms of potential vulnerability to disasters. Mr. Luther described this last activity as perhaps the most ambitious and the most difficult to implement as it involves establishing the Disasters Unit as a watchdog group for all organizations in the development field. Through the mechanism of review, Mr. Luther stated that his organization hoped to reorient much of what is done in development to take disaster-related measures into account. The projects proposed for review are in the areas of housing and urban development, sites and services, infrastructure development, and human settlements. The members of the Unit will need more specialized training to effectively carry out this task.

In conclusion, Mr. Luther acknowledged that the growing consciousness in the Dominican Republic of the importance of preventing, mitigating, and preparing for disasters is only a beginning. It must now be translated into effective, practical action. CII-Viviendas welcomes assistance.

During the discussion which followed his presentation, Mr. Luther explained that most assistance now comes from within the Dominican Republic, and from Intertect and the Disasters and Settlements Unit at Oxford. The organization's clout to effect change comes from the government's active involvement in the program (several ministries and the National Housing Institute are represented on the Board of Directors).

Asked if a mechanism had been set up to avoid commercial exploitation following disasters, Mr. Luther replied that his organization is not prepared to handle this; however, he believes criteria should be established for external assistance. Fred Cuny (Intertect) commented that the growing awareness and involvement of government and public

Panel Discussion - "Giving People the Tools and Diminishing the Risks"

Panelists: Gudrun Huden - OFDA  
Alex Costas - Salvation Army World Service Organization  
(SAWSO)  
Franklyn McDonald - Jamaica Office of Disaster  
Preparedness  
Fred Cuny - Intertect

Gudrun Huden introduced the panel's theme and the panelists.

Alex Costas (SAWSO) introduced the panel's topic by describing an OFDA-funded housing rehabilitation project in Fiji. SAWSO was asked by the Government of Fiji to assist Fijians in upgrading and repairing their homes, community buildings, and churches, damaged in March 1983 by Cyclone Oscar. Over a period of several months, the SAWSO project built low-cost, cyclone resistant housing and upgraded existing housing, using building technology suggested by Intertect. The housing was designed to incorporate safety measures, but still fit in with the community's cultural needs. In addition, the project did not require extensive financial outlay on the part of the Fijian Government or individual homeowners.

Mr. Costas suggested that the housing rehabilitation project in Fiji may provide volags with a number of lessons. It demonstrated the importance of involving individuals in the repair of their own homes. The SAWSO project also demonstrated to the local residents that, with a little training and the appropriate tools, they could repair their homes and community buildings themselves, without waiting for government assistance programs to reach them.

Franklyn McDonald began by briefly discussing the origins of Jamaica's Office of Disaster Preparedness (ODP), for which he is the Director. One of ODP's principal tasks is to reduce the risks/dangers associated with the hazards which threaten Jamaica. Mr. McDonald outlined the methods through which his office reaches out to vulnerable populations to increase their awareness of disaster and educate them in ways they can help reduce the threat, and be prepared in the event of disaster.

Education is the key, Mr. McDonald believes, to making people aware of disasters, and teaching them how to reduce the impact of disasters. Voluntary agencies and community groups are vital to the education process in Jamaica since the island lacks TV media as an educational tool. These groups help to promote the idea that disaster preparedness is a necessity. In this regard, church groups have probably been most influential.

- Agriculture - The East-West Center has undertaken an agricultural vulnerability reduction program in the South Pacific. Sweden is conducting some research in this area and recently developed a new chemical fertilizer which permits rapid crop replacement.
- Economic Recovery - Few programs have been developed in this area, although CADEC has been working in the Caribbean and a program is underway in Peru. Alternative insurance programs are a new development although little has been done to further this idea since last year's UNDRO conference on the subject.
- Response Plans - In Venezuela, the nongovernment sector has put together a disaster response program using local resources. Similar plans have been developed in the Philippines. Here voluntary agencies work closely with government organizations and in community-based activities.
- Institution Building - D. Scott Luther's work in the Dominican Republic is a good example of institution building. People are brought together to work in task forces. Volags should take the lead in this area, instead of waiting for the government or OFDA to act.
- New Resources
  - Training - University of Wisconsin Disaster Management Course; Oxford Polytechnic Disasters and Settlements Unit; International Disaster Institute workshops (primarily areas of famine and refugees); Centre de Recherche sur l'Epidemiologie des Desastres in Brussels, Belgium; and the East-West Center disaster management program, funded by OFDA and aimed at the South Pacific.
  - Technology - Little technology has been developed in the past year. Crop assessment techniques, LANDSAT, and famine monitoring are still not available at the volag level. Water programs have increased in importance since the "Decade of Water." One example is a water kit developed by Oxfam.
  - Information - Volunteers in Asia have developed a microfiche reference system with a section on disasters. Disaster materials are also now available from the A.I.D. Document and Information Handling Service in Chevy Chase, Maryland.

makes a recommendation to the President. If a Presidential declaration is made, FEMA appoints an emergency director in the affected area and several disaster assistance centers are established.

FEMA's direct emergency assistance falls into two categories:  
1) public assistance (aid to State and local governments) and  
2) individual assistance (aid to disaster victims and their families).  
A number of government agencies become involved in the assistance program including the Emergency Food Stamp Program, Social Security, the Small Business Administration, and the Veteran's Administration.

Mr. Guiffrida emphasized the importance of training in emergency management. At the National Emergency Training Center, there are 400 students enrolled at any given time in either the Emergency Management Institute or the National Fire Academy. Public administration programs in universities are also a current focus, and FEMA is working with curriculum planners nationwide. FEMA is also establishing a Graduate Fellows Program, for doctoral candidates with specialties in fields such as fire prevention and chemistry.

FEMA and the Congress recognize the importance of private voluntary agencies, and have established memoranda of understanding with a number of organizations, including the Red Cross, Church World Service, the Boy Scouts, and the Salvation Army. FEMA has also expanded its efforts to increase contacts with other countries and is working towards establishing a mechanism for exchanging information with these countries.

Mr. Guiffrida concluded by stressing to the participants that all relief efforts must be acceptable to the victims. It is important not to strip them of their pride and their feeling of self-reliance.

Following Mr. Guiffrida's presentation, two questions were asked.

Tex Harris (State Department Refugee Programs) asked Mr. Guiffrida to compare the "turf hassles" that he has experienced in his three careers (military, State government, and Federal government). The FEMA Director responded that although the Director of FEMA reports only to the President, he must coordinate with other departments (Defense, Commerce, Agriculture, Interior, etc.). FEMA's mandate is supported by legislation but many of these laws have never been tested. Some problems have been solved and difficult situations prevented through regular meetings with Cabinet officers and White House officials.

David Luria (Partners of the Americas) asked Mr. Guiffrida to describe a typical State emergency plan. Mr. Guiffrida stated that there are no uniform standards and this often poses problems. Some states have good emergency plans and others do not. The Federal Government has no control over State standards, although it can make recommendations. According to Mr. Guiffrida, training is the best way to standardize State emergency plans and services.

however, by diverting food from existing programs in-country or from ships at sea carrying P.L. 480 commodities to another destination. Mr. Lambacher stressed the mutual dependence of FFP and the volags who distribute food aid once it has arrived in the affected country.

F.A. (Tex) Harris (State Department Migration and Refugee Assistance Program) addressed the question, "When is a disaster a disaster?," from the refugee standpoint. Most refugee situations are 'creeping' disasters, and are, therefore, analogous to drought. There are three ways in which the U.S. government may respond to disasters involving refugees:

- Refugee Programs may request funding from Congress after receiving an appeal from an organization such as ICRC or UNHCR.
- Refugee Programs may recommend that the President use his emergency fund. Such a presidential determination was made in the case of Lebanon.
- Assistance may be provided as part of a multilateral effort when, through diplomatic consultation, an international determination of disaster has been made.

Mr. Harris pointed out some of the problems associated with providing aid to refugees. The politics of the host nation may impede assistance. It is important to determine that the affected people are truly refugees and not migrants or displaced persons. In this connection, he mentioned the 'magnet effect' which complicates the process: poor people tend to move to areas/countries where food and medical services are being provided. UNHCR assists persons crossing national boundaries only if they face persecution at home. In the case of displaced persons, other organizations, such as UNDRO and OFDA may provide temporary assistance.

Vincent O'Reilly (UNICEF) stated that, while UNICEF is primarily involved in long-term development, the organization can accelerate existing programs in response to a disaster. In addition, there is a discretionary fund which can be used for emergencies. Because UNICEF maintains political neutrality, it is able to provide humanitarian assistance in many situations where bilateral assistance is difficult.

Harald Schmid de Grunneck (ICRC) reiterated the point made in an earlier discussion that ICRC makes a distinction between international conflicts and internal disturbances. If ICRC is already represented in a country when an emergency occurs, the agency offers its services, which are usually accepted. Otherwise, certain criteria must be met, based on the number of casualties, the number of arrests, the presence of the local Red Cross, etc., before a determination of disaster is made and an offer of assistance is extended.

The Honorable Don Young, U.S. House of  
Representatives, Republican Member from Alaska

Congressman Young began his presentation by recalling the immediate and effective response from the disaster relief community at the time of the devastating 1964 Alaska earthquake and tidal wave.

In moving on to his main theme, the Congressman pointed out that as a member of the House Committees on Merchant Marine and Fisheries and the Interior, he has an interest in areas that are also of concern to the development and disaster relief community. In its jurisdiction over parks, monuments, and wilderness lands, the Interior Committee has a role in the process of determining how these resources are to be used. Congressman Young suggested that populations which lack the basic necessities of life may not understand the desire of some groups to preserve our natural resources in an undeveloped state. The Congressman's own state of Alaska has vast resources that could be used to grow food and provide energy. Yet, the Congressman asserted, these and other lands are not being developed because of the influence of special interest groups.

Congressman Young expressed his conviction that if the available land and technology were being used properly, hunger could be eliminated from the world and with it the disorder and conflict that inevitably accompany it. Both the Lebanon and Grenada conflicts, he declared, are related to impoverishment. Congressman Young concluded his presentation by urging the voluntary agencies to send a message to Congress expressing their concern about this issue and demanding that Congress show justification for keeping 47 million acres in park and wilderness areas when millions are starving.

During the question and answer period, Terry Lambacher (FFP) commented on the difficulty he encounters in complying with the 50-50 shipping law (50% of American goods must be shipped on American vessels). As the cost of food and transport go up, he is able to buy less food. Congressman Young promised that as a member of the House Merchant Marine and Fisheries Committee, he would look into that requirement.

• UNDRO issues situation reports only on those disasters in which the agency is involved; information reports are issued for a number of other disasters. Mr. Walter stated that UNDRO should continue to act as a distribution center for information. He suggested, however, that the collected information should be tagged and credited with its source. In a sense, UNDRO could act as a mail service to transfer collected information, tagged with its sources, to other organizations. NASA now utilizes such a telemail system.

• Henry Norman of VITA described an amateur satellite system being established by that organization. The system will enable the speedy transfer of technical data to developing countries worldwide. Total costs will be less than \$1 million because most of the work will be done by volunteers. Mr. Walter briefly described the INMASAT satellite system which allows transmission to many frequencies, but has drawbacks as well. It was pointed out that some countries, for example India, prohibit the use of satellite transmitters and receivers.

• Volags need updated and complete information to perform their jobs effectively. Sitreps presently prepared by UNDRO do not provide all the information that an individual volag may require. The system of exchange proposed by OFDA should allow for questions to be asked by member groups.

Northrup also raised the issue of proposal guidelines. Mary Little explained that the idea was to develop a more streamlined format and that the guidelines OFDA submitted to ACVA were intended only as suggestions for discussion. George McCloskey (OFDA) cautioned on the need for flexibility in the proposals. Because of the nature of disaster relief, a rigid format may be too confining. Asked if the proposal should be made to the U.S. field group or to OFDA, Mr. McCloskey replied that it depended on the focus of the proposal. If the beneficiary is in a particular location, it should go to the country team; if there is no specific target population, the proposal goes to OFDA.

Mr. Fred Cuny  
Intertect  
Box 10502  
Dallas, Texas 75207

Mr. Eduardo Perez  
Intertect  
1789 Columbia Road, N.W.  
Washington, D.C. 20009

Dr. Eugene Grubbs  
Executive Director  
Interchurch Medical Assistance  
Inc.  
P.O. Box 429  
New Windsor, Maryland 21776

Mr. Harald Schmid De Grunec  
Delegate to International  
Organizations  
International Committee of the  
Red Cross  
815 Second Avenue, Rm. 102  
New York, N.Y. 10017

Mr. William R. Dalton  
Consultant  
International Development  
Services Inc.  
9100 Glenbrook Road  
Fairfax, Virginia 22031

Mr. Kenneth Killen  
Assistant Executive Secretary  
Lutheran World Relief  
360 Avenue South  
New York, N.Y. 10010

Ms. Roxie L. Howser  
Director  
Corporate Relations  
MAP International  
327 Gunderson Drive  
P.O. Box 50  
Wheaton, Illinois 60187

Mr. Robert Lehnhart  
Director  
Relief and Community Development  
Mission Aviation Fellowship  
Box 202  
Redlands, California 92373

Dr. Lou Walter  
National Aeronautics and Space  
Administration  
600 Independence Avenue, S.W.  
Code EE  
Washington, D.C. 20546

Colonel Victor R. Pagulayan, Jr.  
Director  
Office of Civil Defense  
Camp Aguinaldo, Quezon City  
Philippines

Mr. F.J. McDonald  
Office of Disaster Preparedness  
2A Devon Rd.  
Kingston 10, Jamaica

Mr. E. David Luria  
Director of Administration  
Partners of the Americas  
1424 K Street, N.W.  
Washington, D.C. 20005

Dr. William B. Walsh  
President  
and  
John T. Walsh  
Director  
Project Hope  
Hope Center  
Millwood, Virginia 22646

Mr. Alex Costas  
Project Officer, South Pacific  
and  
Ms. Joan Roberts  
Assistance Director  
Salvation Army World Service Office  
1025 Vermont Avenue  
Suite 305  
Washington, D.C. 20005

Mr. Melvin A. McCaw  
Director  
Africa Programs  
Save the Children Federation  
48 Wilton Road  
Westport, Connecticut 06830

State/AID Participants

Frederick M. Cole  
AID/OFDA

Regina Coleman  
AID/FVA/PVC

Oliver Davison  
AID/OFDA

Denise Decker  
AID/OFDA

Richard A. Derham  
AID/AA/PPC

Raymond Dionne  
AID/OFDA

F.A. "Tex" Harris  
State/RP/EO

Faye Henderson  
ETI

Clarke Horvath  
AID/OFDA

Martin D. Howell  
AID/OFDA/D

Gudrun Huden  
AID/OFDA

Rose Jourdain  
AID/GPA

May Kido  
AID/OFDA

Paul Krumpe  
AID/OFDA

Terry Lambacher  
AID/FVA/FFP/D

Mary Little  
AID/OFDA

Heidi Mayer  
AID/OFDA

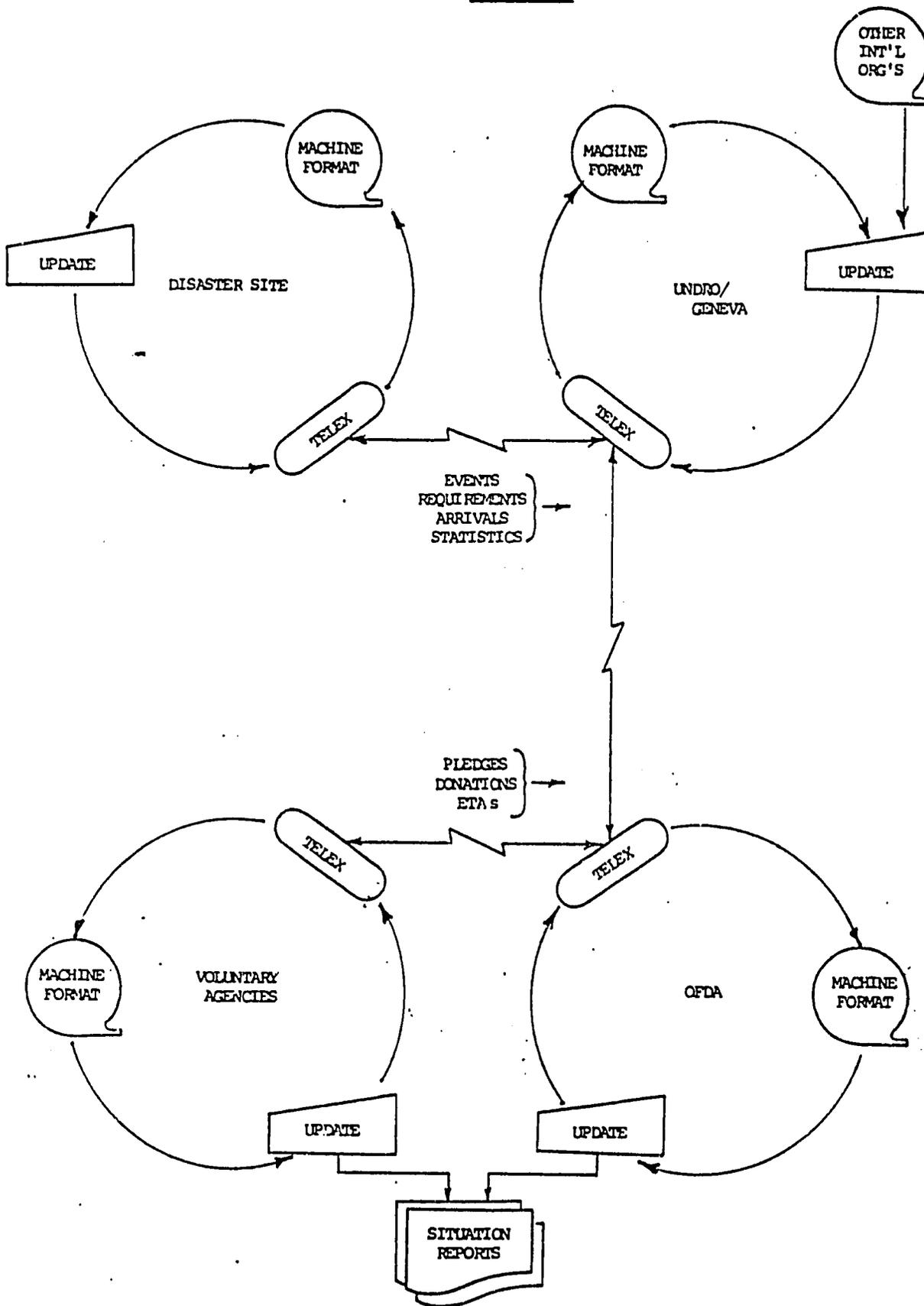
George McCloskey  
AID/OFDA

Thomas McKay  
AID/FVA/PVC/D

Susan Carroll Rome  
ETI

Jack Slusser  
AID/OFDA

Figure 1



Prepared by Frederick Cole, OFDA