

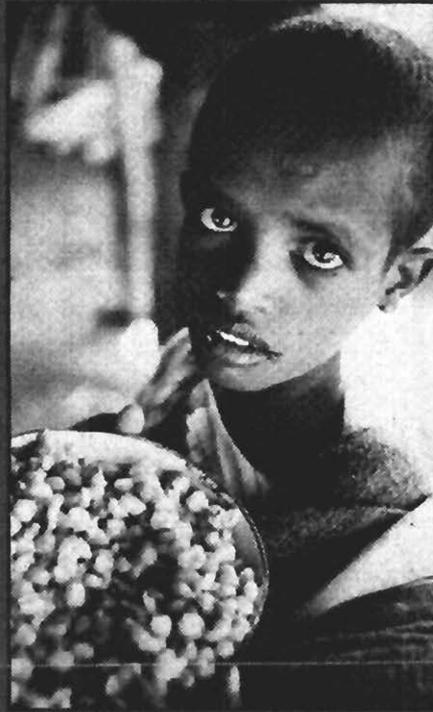
AID *Highlights*

DISASTER ASSISTANCE: A PROUD AMERICAN TRADITION

The American people have a proud tradition of responding generously when disaster strikes. Since the early days of our republic, Americans have consistently provided relief supplies and emergency food aid to victims of earthquakes, famines, floods, fires, hurricanes, and civil strife the world over.

This proud tradition continues today with America's generous assistance to the millions of famine victims suffering from the current drought and food shortages in Africa.

The U.S. Office of Foreign Disaster Assistance marked the 20th anniversary of its coordinated foreign disaster relief efforts in 1984. Since 1964, the United States has assisted victims of 772 disasters in 128 countries. These disasters killed more than 2 million people and affected another 751 million. The United States has provided \$2.4 billion to assist victims recover from these tragedies.



The U.S. Office of Foreign Disaster Assistance (OFDA) within the Agency for International Development (AID) coordinates U.S. government aid to countries hit by disasters. Its responsibilities include emergency relief and rehabilitation as well as disaster preparedness, early warning, and contingency planning.

Disaster relief and preparedness are vital to developing countries. With less developed communications systems, unreliable transport, and weaker economies, these nations often don't have the resources to initiate massive relief efforts when disasters strike. And disasters are more crippling to fragile economies.

AID Administrator M. Peter McPherson calls the disaster assistance program a crucial part of AID's overall development strategy. "Development is a difficult, fragile process, and I have seen natural and man-

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RESPONDING TO THE AFRICAN FAMINE: U.S. DISASTER ASSISTANCE IN ACTION

Twenty African nations currently face food shortages as a result of more than two years of drought, which have wreaked havoc on grain harvests there. Acting as coordinator of U.S. international disaster relief efforts, AID is playing a leading role in mitigating the human suffering this drought has caused.

Most seriously affected is the East African nation of Ethiopia, where relief officials estimate up to seven million people may face serious risk of

starvation. Up to one million people may die during the next 12 months as a result of the famine. Total food assistance necessary to avert these deaths may hit one million tons, according to AID Administrator M. Peter McPherson.

AID has overseen the provision of 574,000 metric tons of emergency food aid for Africa valued at \$204 million since October 1, 1984. Of this total, 223,000 metric tons worth \$115 million are earmarked for famine vic-

tims in Ethiopia. On December 5, 1984, President Reagan released an additional 300,000 tons of food aid from the federal wheat reserve for drought stricken African nations, to be delivered after January 1, 1985. This grain is valued at approximately \$125 million.

To further meet the emergency situation in Ethiopia, AID's Office of Foreign Disaster Assistance (OFDA) has contracted with TransAmerica, a

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Besides emergency relief, OFDA mounts early warning and rehabilitation efforts when disasters strike.



RESPONDING TO THE AFRICAN FAMINE, continued

U.S.-based airline, for two L-100 cargo planes currently being used to airlift food supplies to remote areas of the country. The U.S. also provided \$25,000 from the Ambassador's disaster fund in Addis Ababa to reimburse the Ethiopian government for fuel costs associated with food airlifts.

Additionally, the U.S. has provided \$6.3 million in response to Red Cross appeals for medicines and supplies.

A Growing U.S. Commitment

The generous American response to the current emergency reflects an increasing U.S. commitment to drought relief in Africa, which totaled \$173 million during fiscal year 1984. That represents a 100% increase over 1983 assistance levels, and is three times the amount distributed during fiscal year 1982.

The U.S. continues to be the largest single donor of emergency food aid to famine victims, both in Ethiopia and throughout Africa.

The severity of the food shortage results from a drought which has lasted from two to three years depending on the affected country. Some regions of Africa have received only half their average annual rainfall, leading to up to 50% declines in agricultural production. Since African farmers average only three years worth of grain reserves, their supplies are becoming exhausted.

A Tragedy with Many Causes

But the current food emergency has

deeper roots than simply drought. Many African nations maintain food pricing policies which subsidize consumption at the expense of production. Food prices paid to farmers are often too low to stimulate increased production. These disincentives also work to reduce the use of fertilizer and other basic technologies which would otherwise increase production.

Furthermore, irrigation is rare in Africa. Most African farmers engage in dryland agriculture. Research on high-yielding crop varieties for this type of farming has yet to reach its full potential. Africa's inadequate infrastructure of roads, ports, and transport, together with its weak agricultural credit and marketing systems compounds the problem.

Population growth throughout Africa has also put increasing pressure on food stocks. Throughout the continent, population growth rates have increased faster than agricultural production for more than a decade. Moreover, civil strife in some African countries further erodes agricultural productivity.

AID and OFDA have responded to the short-term emergency through food aid and logistical support. Acting as the President's chief advisor on the African famine, AID Administrator M. Peter McPherson traveled to Ethiopia in early November on a personal inspection tour. Meeting with Ethiopian officials and representatives of the private and voluntary organizations engaged in famine relief, he laid the groundwork for increasing the U.S. role in mitigating the tragedy. OFDA Director Julius W. Becton, the President's Deputy Special Coordinator for

International Disaster Assistance, was named director of the Interagency Task Force on African Hunger. The task force is responsible for coordinating the U.S. government agencies involved in this relief effort.

Making A Difference

Already, some of the disaster preparedness efforts of the OFDA have had an effect in the African food emergency. For example, improved forecasting of grain harvests has helped mobilize relief efforts in advance of a crisis. OFDA-launched forecasting methods helped develop an emergency food program in the East African nations of Rwanda and Kenya this year which should save many lives.

AID's efforts in famine relief represent "an enormous immediate response," according to Administrator McPherson. However, he cautions, "it is clear that there is going to have to be a great deal more" done before the emergency abates.

OFDA's role in this emergency is one every American can be proud of. ■

AID *Highlights*

Assistant Administrator for External Affairs, Kate Semerad
Director of Publications, Boisa Scribner
Editor, Roger Mahan
Managing Editor, Paul Olkhovskiy

DISASTER ASSISTANCE, continued

made disasters play havoc on this process," he says.

"Apart from immediate relief," McPherson explains, "our program is designed to help developing countries cope more effectively with disasters by using their own resources. This is done through training and public awareness projects, and by integrating these countries into international early warning systems."

Responding Around the Clock

When disaster strikes, AID mission representatives in the affected country relay reports to OFDA's disaster operations center in Washington. There, the OFDA staff works around the clock gathering information on the extent of the damage, matching requests for assistance with offers of help, arranging the shipment of emergency relief supplies, and answering inquiries from the public.

When two typhoons and a volcanic eruption devastated sections of the Philippines recently, OFDA went into action. The catastrophes left thousands homeless, destroying crops, livestock, power and communications lines, roads and bridges. OFDA dispatched an AID disaster relief team to help assess the damage. Then, the U.S. and private voluntary relief organizations, working with the Philippine relief network, provided \$5 mil-

lion to mitigate the damage. Electric power lines were restored. A one-month emergency feeding program was initiated using U.S. commodities. Emergency medicine and clothing supplies were delivered. A school relief project restored storm-damaged classrooms.

OFDA may find itself managing responses to ten to fifteen disasters at once, varying from floods, fires, and earthquakes to industrial accidents.

Early Warning Saves Lives

OFDA supports disaster monitoring and early warning systems, as well as research on droughts and famine, earthquakes, severe storms, tsunamis, and volcanic eruptions. For example, OFDA and the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA) developed quantitative weather/crop impact assessments for developing countries. The system uses regional rainfall readings, satellite imagery analysis, and ground station reports to determine potential crop surpluses or shortfalls as much as 60 days prior to harvest.

Such readings are produced for more than 400 locales in the developing world. This system's early warning of food shortages helped mobilize a quick response to this year's famine conditions in Africa.

Early warning efforts reduce the uncertainty of disaster situations by using proven technologies to monitor

potentially destructive natural phenomena. They assist emergency managers determine when to activate emergency plans, including evacuation, for populations at risk.

OFDA also helps reduce the suffering caused by disasters through preparedness efforts. Most of the burden of disaster relief ultimately falls on the affected community itself. Training host country officials in establishing national disaster organizations, disaster plans, and emergency operations centers is crucial to organizing effective responses to emergencies. Furthermore, providing training in specialized areas like hazard identification, shelter management, fire fighting, airport safety, and damage assessment limits the tragic after-effects of disasters.

While these efforts should reduce human suffering when disaster strikes, emergency relief still remains the most important part of OFDA's work.

Emergency Relief—the American Response

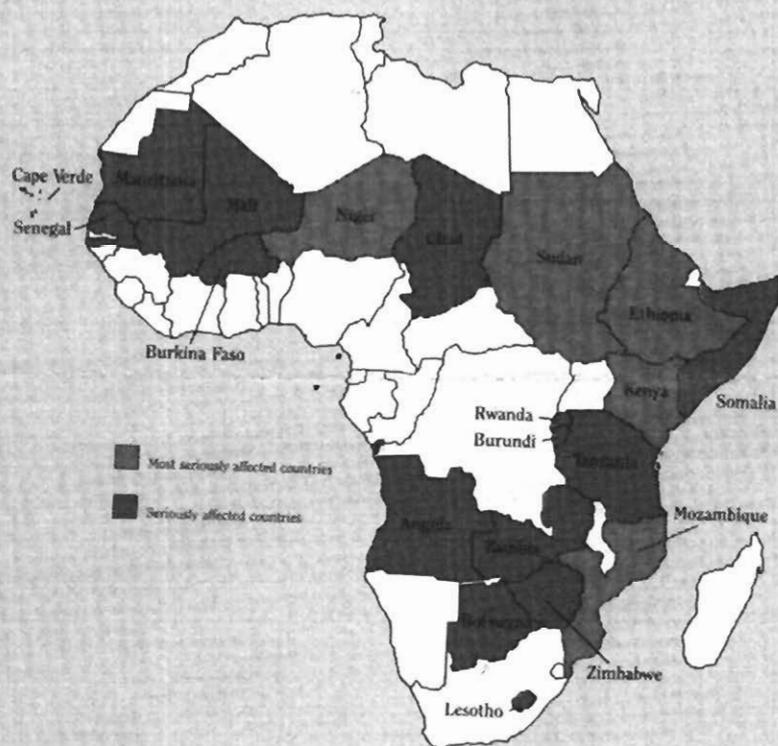
When a natural or man-made calamity strikes a foreign country, the U.S. Ambassador on the scene determines that a disaster has occurred, that U.S. assistance is warranted, and that the affected country desires assistance. The Ambassador can then exercise his authority to spend up to \$25,000 for

"We know the agony and sorrow our own citizens endure when floods, hurricanes, or drought strike. In developing countries the loss is intensified a thousand times."

—President Ronald Reagan



Food Shortages in Africa



immediate emergency relief. Beyond that, OFDA and the AID Administrator, in his role as the President's Special Coordinator for International Disaster Assistance must approve all further U.S. relief efforts. The U.S. Ambassador may choose

to make a cash donation to the stricken country's government, the Red Cross, or other voluntary agencies operating in the country. He may also choose to buy relief supplies locally, to finance distribution costs, or to hire local labor and equipment.

Should food aid be required, American commodities already provided under the Food for Peace program may be diverted for emergency feeding efforts. Additional emergency food may be authorized through the Food for Peace program as well.

When local supplies are not available, relief supplies from OFDA stockpiles can be delivered in 24 to 72 hours. OFDA stockpile tents, blankets, cots, cooking stoves, auxiliary generators, plastic sheeting, water pumps, hand tools, and other emergency supplies in five strategic locations around the world. Specialized supplies and equipment can also be procured from private U.S. companies.

Emergency relief is immediate assistance to save lives and alleviate suffering in the first days or weeks following a disaster. The rehabilitation stage, lasting up to three months after a disaster strikes, helps to reinstate basic public and private services. Long-term reconstruction is not carried out by OFDA, but rather through AID's other economic development programs, or under specially appropriated funds from the Congress.

OFDA does not work alone on disaster relief and preparedness efforts. Together with U.S. voluntary organizations, the U.S. military, international relief agencies, and other nations' governments, OFDA responds to nearly 40 disasters every year. Through coordinated early warning, preparedness, and relief efforts, OFDA helps soften the blow wherever disasters strike.

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