



DISASTER
RELIEF

CASE REPORT
Bolivia-Floods
February 1974

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Agency for International Development
Washington, DC 20523

Foreign Disaster Case Reports are publications of the Office of the Foreign Disaster Relief Coordinator, Agency for International Development. This office has responsibility for coordinating U.S. Government foreign disaster relief responses and for the further coordination of such activities with those of the U.S. private and international disaster relief communities.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

The Coordinator acknowledges assistance received in the preparation of this and other case reports from the many public and private organizations in the United States and abroad engaged in foreign disaster relief.

BOLIVIA

Floods—February, 1974

On February 7, 1974, President Hugo Banzer declared a state of national emergency because of serious flooding and accompanying landslides in Bolivia's lowlands (which drain its central Andean highlands) in the Departments of Beni, La Paz, and Oruro, and among other actions, sent a letter to the U.S. Embassy requesting relief assistance. These floods were the result of the heaviest rains in 40 years in Bolivia, and had caused 31 fatalities, 18,000 homeless persons, 10,000 drowned cattle, 100 kilometers of impassable roads, and extensive losses to crops. Dollar damage was estimated in excess of \$10.5 million.

Value of U.S. Assistance	\$ 77,584	
Value of Assistance by the International Community	1,275,031	1,300,709
	<u>\$1,352,615</u>	

Flooding was caused by rising rivers, compounded by high water tables and slow drainage, producing standing water that receded more slowly than did the overflow from the cresting rivers. Thus flood conditions persisted in many cases after the cessation of the rains and overflow flooding, and the standing waters significantly reduced food production from the lands on which they remained for some weeks after the initial flooding. This factor essentially shaped the U.S. Government's disaster relief response as it is described hereafter.

It has been conservatively estimated that 100,000 square kilometers were flooded, with the greatest concentration of population affected in the city of Trinidad and adjacent areas. At the height of the flooding about 800 individuals were evacuated to schools in the center of Trinidad; 200 individuals required temporary housing in La Paz.

ACTION TAKEN BY THE GOVERNMENT OF BOLIVIA AND LOCAL ORGANIZATIONS:

Coordination of the Government of Bolivia's (GOB) relief activities was begun by the Executive Director of ALDE ("Programma de Alimentos para el Desarrollo"), counterpart agency to the World Food Program. He had had considerable experience in prior disaster relief operations and, while the National Emergency Committee (NEC) was preparing to swing into action, called a series of meet-

ings between GOB disaster officials and international donor representatives. Following this the NEC took over. About mid-way in the emergency period, the NEC underwent a reorganization in which the Chairman was replaced by another military officer, who acted for the titular head of NEC, the Minister of Defense.

The GOB arranged for military transportation of relief supplies by air and surface (especially to Trinidad) and delegated authority to the La Paz Prefect's and Mayor's Offices for providing succor to victims in this city and environs—as far as the Lake Titicaca region. Since it initially was not feasible to land C-130s or other large aircraft in Trinidad, the center of the major floods in Bolivian lowlands, the Bolivian Navy brought in 35,000 pounds of supplies with boats, and C-47 or similar aircraft were used to supply immediate emergency needs. The Bolivian Air Force also provided a helicopter and crew for transporting a three-man U.S. military team to Trinidad and other flooded localities to survey damages and assess needs. The GOB also created local National Emergency Committees, chaired by the Governors and Mayors of the following localities: La Paz, Cochabamba, Oruro, Santa Cruz, Trinidad, Cobija, Potosi, Tarija, and Sucre.

In-country financial donations are estimated at \$127,000, of which \$125,000 or 98 percent were from private sources, including GOB



U.S. Ambassador William P. Stedman makes a symbolic presentation on March 1, 1974 of PL 480, Title II Food for Peace commodities to Sub-Secretary of Defense, General Oscar Quiroga. The U.S. Government donated 186,367 pounds of food to assist in feeding 12,117 homeless families.

personnel donations through allotments from salaries.

The newly-formed local National Emergency Committees remained in existence and are expected to form the nucleus for future disaster relief operations. At the time of the floods the GOB, with the assistance of the U.S. Mission Disaster Relief Officer and U.S. Military Group (USMILGP), was working on a National Disaster Plan. The United Nations Disaster Relief Office also provided a disaster relief expert from Geneva for three months from July to October 1974 to assist in the development of a national disaster emergency plan. The ability of the GOB to coordinate and carry out disaster relief operations in future disasters should be considerably enhanced once the National Disaster Plan is completed and adopted.

ASSISTANCE PROVIDED BY THE U.S. GOVERNMENT:

On February 8, 1974, responding to the request for assistance from the GOB, U.S. Ambassador William P. Stedman, Jr. declared the disaster of a magnitude to warrant U.S. Government assistance, exercised his \$25,000 disaster relief authority, and recommended to the Office of the A.I.D. Foreign Disaster Relief Coordinator (FDRC) a list of priority items to be provided by the USG. FDRC arranged for the withdrawal of the supplies (listed below) from the A.I.D. regional stockpile at Panama and for the necessary additional funding to cover their replacement. The assistance of a Disaster Area Survey Team (DAST) from Panama was also requested.

On February 9, two U.S. Air Force C-130s departed Howard Air Force Base, Panama Canal Zone, for La Paz with the supplies and a two-man DAST. The DAST personnel, accompanied by an officer from the USMILGP with considerable experience in disaster relief, immediately set out for Trinidad and other flooded communities to survey damages and assess further needs. Subsequently DAST reported that communications with Trinidad were virtually non-

existent and they were unable to render a situation report until they arrived in Santa Cruz, Bolivia. They attempted to contact the USMILGP by using the Bolivian helicopter communication system with it was non-operational. They have recommended that in future DAST operations, if communications equipment is lacking in the disaster country, it be provided along with the team from the Canal Zone.

The Ambassador and A.I.D. Mission Director gave priority attention to the relief operations. The Mission Disaster Relief Officer coordinated U.S. Government relief activities with other international donors, voluntary agencies, and GOB institutions—principally NEC and the Ministry of Health. The USMILGP coordinated U.S. efforts with the Bolivian Military.

Summary of U.S. Government Assistance:

Blankets, cotton (5,000)	\$15,000
Blankets, wool (3,500)	20,125
Penicillin tablets (10,800)	182
Vitamin tablets (62,400)	175
Cooking kits, family (594)	5,346
Cooking units, mass feeding (10)	1,500
Food preparation sets (456)	798
Airlift, Panama to La Paz	18,908
Transportation and handling charges	30
Per diem for two DAST officers, 4 days	176
	<u>\$62,240</u>

In addition to disaster supplies from Panama, the U.S. Government provided 186,367 pounds of PL 480, Title II commodities to assist in feeding 12,117 families. Value of this food was \$14,344

Total Value of U.S. Government Assistance \$76,584

ASSISTANCE PROVIDED BY U.S. VOLUNTARY AGENCIES:

Catholic Relief Services acted as an intermediary in the distribution of U.S. Government PL 480 food commodities which was carried out through Caritas, its counterpart agency in Bolivia.

Church World Service made a cash donation for local purchase of supplies in the amount of \$1,000

ASSISTANCE PROVIDED BY OTHER NATIONS AND INTERNATIONAL ORGANIZATIONS:

International Organizations:

United Nations

The United Nations Disaster Relief Office sent a disaster relief expert to assist the GOB and authorized funds for relief operations. The World Health Organization (WHO) and UNICEF contributed medicines and sanitation equipment, and the World Food Program (WFP) provided 169 metric tons of wheat, meat, milk, cheese, and butteroil. Value of this assistance was:

✓ UNDR0	\$ 53,110 ✓
✓ UNICEF	16,400 ✓
✓ WFP	116,000 ✓
	<u>175,510</u>

✓ *Organization of American States (OAS)*
The OAS purchased 100 prefabricated houses (\$82,148) in Peru and two health services river launches (\$19,500), for a total of \$101,648

League of Red Cross Societies (LICROSS)

In response to LICROSS's appeal for cash and supplies for the flood victims in Bolivia, Red Cross Societies made the following donations:

✓ Australia—cash	\$ 274 ✓
✓ Brazil—4,000 kilograms of food-stuffs and medicines	* ✓
✓ Chile—one case of medicines ..	470 ✓
✓ Colombia—clothing, 150 sheets, 150 blankets (\$6,129) and 10,000 tons wheat (value estimated by FDRC \$859,000) ...	865,129 ✓
✓ Costa Rica—clothing, 50 blankets, 2,440 tins condensed milk, and one case medicines (value estimated by FDRC)	1,000 ✓



Members of the Disaster Area Survey Team from the Panama Canal Zone discuss the

assessment of damages and needs with Bolivian officials.

✓ Dominican Republic—cash	*	Caritas Organizations	
✓ Germany (Federal Republic of)—100 tents (value estimated by FDRC)	10,000 ✓	Denmark	\$ <u>2,000</u>
✓ Great Britain—cash	2,306 ✓	✓ Spain	286
Guatemala—relief supplies	*		<u>2,286</u>
✓ Honduras—cash	51 ✓	OTHER GOVERNMENTS:	
✓ India—relief supplies	1,226 ✓	✓ Argentina—cash	\$ 274 ✓
✓ Israel—medicines	*	Brazil—assorted relief supplies .	*
✓ Netherlands—cash	3,203 ✓	✓ Chile—2,530 kilograms of food, 700 pieces of clothing, and 23,000 units of drugs	* ✓
✓ Peru—tents, medicines, and clothing	*	✓ Great Britain—cash	5,000 ✓
✓ South Africa—cash	295 ✓	✓ Mexico—286 bags of food, 13 bags of clothing, and considerable quantities of drugs	*
✓ Spain—two cash grants and medicines	18,000 ✓	✓ Spain—food and medicines	85,000 ✓
Sweden—1,000 blankets	5,285	✓ Venezuela—cash	*
✓ Switzerland—relief supplies	11,045 ✓		<u>90274</u>
✓ Yugoslavia—45 kilograms of medicines and antibiotics	1,970 ✓		
✓ LICROSS (own resources)—clothing and food	737 ✓	* Incomplete or not reported	
	<u>920991</u>		

Changes have been coded a total figure (conflicting with original total in this booklet) was arrived at 1300 809

