



DISASTER  
RELIEF

CASE REPORT  
Syria-Floods  
March-April 1974

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.

## SYRIA

### Floods—March and April, 1974

Although floods in Syria are nearly an annual occurrence, torrential rains which fell during March and April 1974 in the north and northeast of the country, along the Euphrates and Khabour Rivers, resulted in unusually severe inundation in the Provinces of Alep, Rakka, Deir el Zor, and Hassaka. The toll in human lives was kept to a minimum through advance warning and evacuation of those threatened by rising waters, but 130,000 people were significantly affected. Up to 75,000 of these required emergency aid until normal conditions were restored. Some of the most fertile land in Syria is located in the four affected provinces, and a promising harvest was ruined. Damage figures were as follows:

	Dollar Damage (Est.)
11,000 dwellings and other property destroyed .....	\$19,000,000
35,000 hectares of cropland flooded .....	13,000,000
11,000 head of livestock and large quantities of farm equipment lost .....	5,400,000
620 kilometers of roads, bridges and culverts destroyed as well as 100 pumping stations and many irrigation ditches .....	1,600,000
<b>Total .....</b>	<b>\$39,000,000</b>
<b>Value of Assistance From:</b>	
U.S. Government .....	\$ 132,000
U.S. Voluntary Agencies .....	6,800
International Community .....	1,033,982
<b>Total .....</b>	<b>\$ 1,172,782</b>

#### ACTION TAKEN BY THE GOVERNMENT OF SYRIA:

Rapid rescue and relief action by the Central and local Government authorities minimized fatalities. A Disaster Relief Coordinating Committee under the State Planning Commission was formed and held its first meeting on March 28.

The Syrian representative in Geneva conveyed a Syrian Government request to the United Nations Disaster Relief Office (UNDRO) for assistance in mobilizing and coordinating external emergency relief and advised that priority needs were food, medicines, tents, blankets, and cash. The Government of Syria indicated bilateral offers of assistance would be considered, but made clear that help provided through the UN as a multilateral channel would be more desirable.

Specifics on Syrian self-help are not available, except that in the area of housing,

plans were drawn up for rebuilding 4,500 homes at a cost of about \$7.5 million.

#### ASSISTANCE PROVIDED BY THE U.S. GOVERNMENT:

The U.S. Principal Officer in Damascus determined on March 29 that the floods were of sufficient proportions to warrant U.S. assistance and recommended that the U.S. Government make its contributions through UNDRO. Since tents and blankets were among the priority items needed by the Government of Syria, the Office of the Foreign Disaster Relief Coordinator (FDRC) suggested to UNDRO that A.I.D. could provide 595 tents and 9,440 wool blankets from the A.I.D. regional disaster supply stockpile at Leghorn, Italy. When this offer was accepted, FDRC immediately authorized withdrawal of these items from the stockpile. The tents and blankets arrived in Syria on April 7.

Total Value of U.S. Government  
Assistance ..... \$132,000

**ASSISTANCE PROVIDED BY U.S. VOLUNTARY AGENCIES:**

American National Red Cross— cash donation.....	\$ 1,800
Church World Service—cash donation to the World Council of Churches for Syrian flood assistance.....	5,000

**ASSISTANCE PROVIDED BY INTERNATIONAL ORGANIZATIONS AND OTHER NATIONS:**

*United Nations*

The Syrian Government appealed for assistance to the United Nations Disaster Relief Coordinator. The Coordinator dispatched one of his staff to the disaster area for an on-the-spot assessment of emergency requirements in cooperation with the Syrian Government Disaster Coordination Committee and the UN Development Program Resident Representative. UNDRO made an appeal for contributions of food, medicine, tents, blankets, and cash to potential donor nations, and from resources within the United Nations the following contributions were made:

UNDRO—for local procurement of supplementary food .....	\$ 20,000
World Health Organization—purchased vaccine, halazone tablets, chloro- mycetine, and tetracycline using \$1,200 provided by Save the Children Fund and from its own resources .....	1,280
UNICEF —2,000 blankets, 200 kerosene burners, 30 hurricane lamps, and \$21,000 for local procurement of cooking utensils and supplementary foods .....	29,555
World Food Program—1,200 metric tons of wheat flour and 60 metric tons of edible oil (for 50,000 persons for 60 days) .....	516,200

*League of Red Cross Societies (LICROSS)*

In response to an appeal by LICROSS for aid to Syria, the following contributions were made by National Societies:

Afghanistan—cash .....	\$ 5,000 ✓
Australia—cash .....	1,487 ✓
Bahrain—cash .....	1,274 ✓
Brazil—13 tons rice, 2 tons sugar, 1 ton soluble coffee, and 2 tons medicaments .....	13,200
Canada (Government and Red Cross)—cash .....	28,923 ✓
Denmark—cash .....	1,681 ✓
Egypt—cash .....	25,556 ✓
Finland—3 tons powdered milk .....	3,243 ✓
France—200 blankets .....	619 ✓
Germany (Democratic Republic of)—2,500 blankets, 50 tons flour, and 10 tents .....	44,234 ✓
Hungary—5,668 tins beefmeat, 1,226 kilograms powdered milk, and 404 blankets .....	12,048 ✓
Kuwait—2,204 pairs shoes, 990 blankets, clothing, powdered milk, cheese, tinned mutton, and sardines .....	18,734 ✓
Lebanon—cash .....	439 ✓
Libya—200 tents and 3,000 blankets .....	40,000 ✓
Luxembourg—cash .....	444 ✓

Morocco—11 tons sardines .....	9,302 ✓
Netherlands—2,856 kilograms babyfood .....	1,927 ✓
Norway—1,000 blankets, 1,000 pairs rubber boots, and 5,000 plastic cups .....	8,491 ✓
Romania—tinned meat and blankets .....	27,816 ✓
Saudi Arabia—cash .....	12,077 ✓
South Africa—cash .....	283 ✓
Sweden—160 tents, 1,500 blankets, and 10 tons clothing .....	44,764 ✓
Switzerland—10 tons powdered milk .....	26,962 ✓
Turkey—500 blankets and 100 tents .....	18,543 ✓
United Kingdom—600 blankets .....	2,174 ✓
USSR—blankets and food .....	38,560 ✓

*Other International Organizations and Voluntary Agencies*

From donations of Protestant Church groups in Australia, Denmark, France, Netherlands, and the United States, the World Council of Churches (WCC) contributed \$54,063 to the Middle East Council of Churches for the Syrian floods. Among other things, these funds were used to purchase 4,600 blankets in Beirut (\$20,000) and to assist with housing reconstruction in Deir el Zor (\$25,000). Included in the WCC contributions was \$5,000 donated by Church World Service (CWS). Since this amount has been credited to CWS, the balance creditable to WCC was .....

was .....	\$49,063
The Intergovernmental Committee for European Migration arranged, on behalf of UNDRO, for the charter airlift of medicines, tents, and blankets. Charter cost was .....	\$28,200
Save the Children Fund (United Kingdom) gave a cash donation to UNDRO .....	\$ 1,220
UNESCO Staff Association—cash .....	\$ 683

