

OFDA
**Disaster
Case Reports**

Benin Fire

April 4, 1978

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

BENIN- Fire

Data

Date: April 4, 1978 (FY 78)

Location: Lake village of Aguegues, near Porto Novo

No. Dead: 2

Injured: Several hundred

No. Affected: Almost 4,000, 3,164 left homeless

Homeless: 3,164

Damage: 664 dwellings were destroyed including most belongings of the inhabitants; the food reserves of the village were also destroyed

The Disaster

In early April 1978, several areas of Benin experienced severe thunderstorms. During one such storm, lightning apparently started a fire in the lake village of Aguegues. Houses in Aguegues, built of thatch on stilts in lagoons, were quickly destroyed, as was most of the village's food reserve. Heavy rains and unseasonable heat served to increase the need for shelter and began to create a serious health threat.

Action Taken by the Government of the People's Republic of Benin (GPRB)

The national president of the Red Cross of Benin and government officials visited Aguegues to study the extent of the disaster and determine the needs of the population. The Benin Red Cross then provided first-aid teams and established an emergency center in Aguegues to provide first-aid, medical supplies, blankets, bread, milk, and other foodstuffs. However, the Red Cross soon exhausted its limited supplies, appealed for outside assistance, as did the GPRB.

The Benin Red Cross asked the League of Red Cross Societies (LORCS) for: 2 tons of sugar, 2 tons of salt, 3 tons of rice, 5 tons of beans, 5 tons of maize, and 5 tons of manioc flour; all of which could be obtained in-country. Out-of-country items such as canned foods, stock fish, milk powder, corn soy milk, aspirin, vitamins, nivaquine, and tents of various sizes were also requested.

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Assistance Provided by the United States Government (USG)

On April 28, 1978, the U.S. Ambassador to Benin determined that a disaster of sufficient magnitude had occurred to warrant USG assistance. A contribution of \$15,000 from the International Disaster Assistance account was made to help purchase shelter materials and medicine.....\$15,000

TOTAL \$15,000

Assistance Provided by U.S. Voluntary Agencies

Catholic Relief Services gave an unspecified amount of badly needed clothing

Assistance Provided by the International Community *

International Organizations

The United Nations Disaster Relief Office contributed \$10,000 to be used for providing shelter and for other relief operations conducted by local authorities

The League of Red Cross Societies sent a delegate to Benin and launched an appeal for aid on behalf of the Benin Red Cross

Governments

Federal Republic of Germany - \$15,000 In cash

France - \$6,500 In cash

United Kingdom - \$10,913 In cash

Voluntary Agencies

Canadian Red Cross - \$2,371 In cash

Danish Red Cross - \$1,874 In cash

Federal Republic of Germany Red Cross - \$8,865 In kind

French Red Cross - \$10,446 In kind

German Democratic Republic Red Cross - \$11,015 In kind

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Hungarian Red Cross - \$8,180 In kind

Netherlands Red Cross - \$7,112 In cash and \$3,520 In kind

Norwegian Red Cross - \$2,725 In cash

Polish Red Cross - In kind contribution

Romanian Red Cross - \$16,814 In kind

Spanish Red Cross - \$2,756 In cash

Swedish Red Cross - \$3,438 In cash

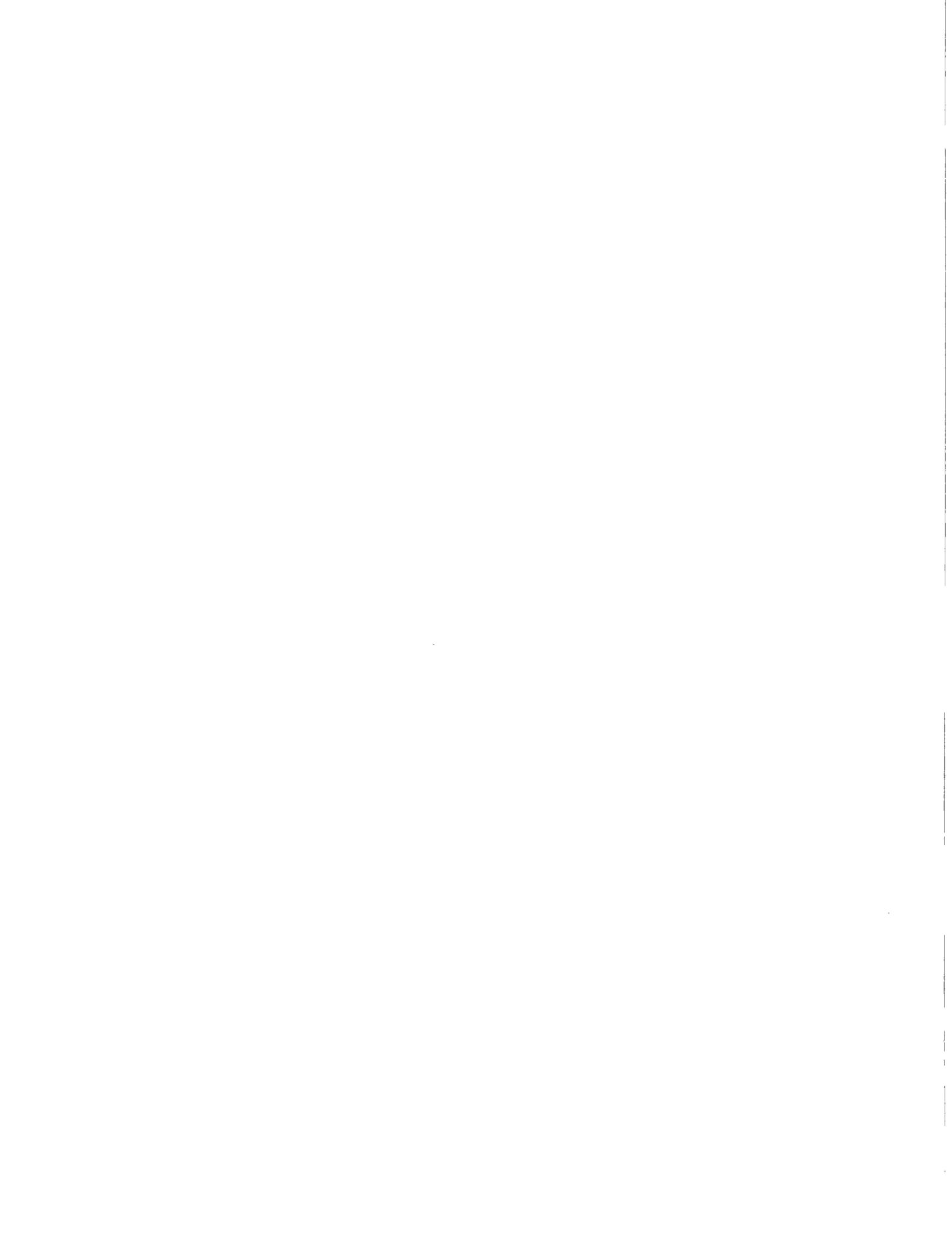
Swiss Red Cross - \$2,725 In cash

United Kingdom Red Cross - \$4,090 In cash

U.S.S.R. Red Cross - \$16,953 In kind

TOTAL \$145,297

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



This publication does not require CRB approval.

