

OFDA  
**Disaster  
Case Reports**

Burma Fire  
April 11, 1981

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



## BURMA - Fire

### Data:

Date: April 11, 1981

Location: The town of Taungdwingyi in central Burma

No. Dead: 8 official; 100 unofficial

No. Homeless: 20,000

No. Affected: 28,588

Damage: 5,000 dwellings were destroyed and most public buildings and facilities were damaged or destroyed.

### The Disaster

On April 11, 1981, a fire caused by overheated cooking oil which had been left unattended, broke out in the town of Taungdwingyi in central Burma. According to the Burma Red Cross, simultaneous cyclonic whirlwinds caused the fire to spread throughout the town. Over 80 percent of the town was destroyed and 5,000 families, or half of the town's population, were left homeless.

### Action Taken by the Socialist Republic of the Union of Burma (SRUB) and Local Organizations

A relief effort was immediately initiated by local authorities, neighboring towns, the Burmese Red Cross, church groups, and SRUB agencies. Camps were set up to provide temporary shelters for the fire victims who were also given first-aid care and daily warm food rations. The SRUB Relief and Resettlement Department provided fire victims US\$ 85,000 worth of relief supplies and US\$ 57,000 in cash. The relief supplies included a 14-day supply of rice, cooking utensils, and textiles (including women's sarongs, blankets, and 15,000 yards of cloth). Four generators, and nine 1,000 gallon plastic water tanks were also provided. In addition, a special committee was set up to receive cash and relief goods donated by other townships in the Magwe Division.

The small loans department of the Burma Economic Bank opened a branch in Taungdwingyi and a temporary bazaar and cooperative clinic were also opened to attend to the needs of the fire victims. The State Timber Corporation provided 4,000 sheets of plywood and 400 tons of timber to assist in reconstruction.

Over 500 volunteers from the Burma Red Cross (BRC) assisted in the relief effort. Supplies provided by the BRC included plastic sheeting for tem-

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porary shelters, first-aid equipment, anti-diarrheal medicines, blankets, milk powder, used clothing, and cotton cloth for women's sarongs. The BRC also issued an appeal through the League of Red Cross Societies (LORCS) for additional relief items.

The Burma Council of Churches (BCC) made a grant of US\$ 750 to the Taungdwingyi Central Relief Committee and the Chairman of the Christian Service Board visited the city to assess needs. The BCC, in conjunction with the Burma Baptist Convention (BBC), made a local appeal for cash and relief goods. Volunteers from BCC and BBC distributed clothing and US\$ 75 to twenty needy families.

Local expenditures totaled approximately \$144,250.

### Assistance Provided by the United States Government (USG)

On April 25, 1981, the United States Ambassador to Burma made the determination that a disaster of such a magnitude as to warrant outside assistance existed. Accordingly, the Ambassador made available \$25,000 from the International Disaster Assistance Account for the relief of the fire victims. On May 13, a check was presented to the President of the Burma Red Cross, the agency chosen to distribute U.S.-provided aid. These funds were then transferred to the Relief and Resettlement Committee of Taungdwingyi to be distributed in the form of cash donations to families of victims.

TOTAL                    \$25,000

### Assistance Provided by U.S. Voluntary Agencies

None reported.

### Assistance Provided by the International Community \*

#### International Organizations

World Health Organization (WHO) - supplied medicines from the WHO office in New Delhi, India; value not reported.

#### Voluntary Agencies

Gifts in cash and kind, totaling approximately \$157,519, were received from ten National Red Cross Societies and the Oxford Committee for Famine Relief (OXFAM) in response to the

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appeal of the League of Red Cross Societies. Making up part of that total were the following contributions:

Belgian Red Cross - cash contribution of \$2,756.

Canadian Red Cross - cash contribution of \$4,242.

Federal Republic of Germany Red Cross - supplied 100,000 charcoal tablets of 500 mg. each; valued at \$615.

Finnish Red Cross - cash contribution of \$5,141.

Great Britain Red Cross - cash contribution of \$4,370.

Japanese Red Cross - donated 15,000 pieces of used clothing worth \$23,136, 1,000 blankets worth \$1,770, and 30,000 tetracycline tablets and 30,000 chloromycetine capsules valued at \$4,910.

Netherlands Red Cross - cash contribution of \$12,853 for the purchase of cotton cloth.

New Zealand Red Cross - cash contribution of \$874.

Norwegian Red Cross - cash contribution of \$3,660 and 500 blankets valued at \$884.

OXFAM - an OXFAM representative visited the disaster area and assisted in the assessment of relief needs.

Swedish Red Cross - cash contribution of \$12,853.

TOTAL \$157,519

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



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