

OFDA
Disaster
Case Reports

Laos Floods
August-September 1978

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

LAOS - Floods

Data:

Date: August - September 1978 (FY 79)

Location: South and central Laos, particularly the provinces of Champassak, Savannakhet, Khammouane, and Vientiane

No. Dead: 31

No. Affected: 459,000

Damage: Most serious damage was to the rice crop, reduced by an estimated 25%; 940 houses were destroyed, many schools and public buildings were damaged or destroyed, and the city of Pakase was flooded

The Disaster

From August 10-18, Laos was subjected to unusually heavy monsoon rains during the middle of its rice growing season. The resulting flood caused the Mekong River and its tributaries to overflow their banks. The Mekong River reached a record level of 14.62 meters near the city of Pakase. The Government of the Lao People's Democratic Republic (GLPDR) urged people to replant flood-damaged fields but this replanting effort was frustrated in many parts of the country by a second wave of flooding in September. Approximately 120,450 tons of rice were lost in the floods: 44,800 tons in Champassak Province, 30,350 tons in Savannakhet, 14,600 tons in Khammouane, 10,700 tons in Vientiane, and 20,000 tons in Luang Prabang, Sayaboury, Attoupeu, and Saravane provinces.

Action Taken by the Government of the Lao People's Democratic Republic (GLPDR)

After the August flooding, the GLPDR made a request to the international community for donations of seed urgently needed for replanting. The Government of Vietnam immediately donated 550 tons of rice seed, 197 tons of which were flown from Hanoi to Pakase at Lao expense (approximately \$104,000). When the September floods caused the replanting to cease, the remaining 353 tons were transported over land. The GLPDR also initiated a mass vaccination campaign to protect against post-flood diseases in the affected areas.

LAOS - Floods

Assistance Provided by the United States Government (USG)

A grant of \$25,000 from the Ambassador's Disaster Assistance Account was given to the U.N. High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) to purchase milk, sugar, salt, and butter oil for people displaced by the flooding. The USG announced the willingness to provide P.L. 480 foods should the World Food Program (WFP) issue an appeal; but the WFP did not do so. Some of the 10,000 MT of rice that the USG provided earlier (FY 78) for drought relief was probably used for flood relief. Apart from disaster relief assistance for which there is a special statute, direct bilateral assistance to Laos (not including food aid authorized under P.L. 480) has been subject to a prohibition in section 108 of the Foreign Assistance Appropriations Act, 1979.....\$25,000

TOTAL \$25,000

Assistance Provided by U.S. Voluntary Agencies *

American Friends (Quakers) - cash contribution of \$5,000 to the Food Agriculture Organizations/Office of Special Operations (FAO/OSRO) for rice seed

Church World Service - cash contribution of \$4,000 to FAO/OSRO for seeds

Mennonite Central Committee - cash contribution of \$5,000 to FAO/OSRO for rice seed; 50 tons of meat, blankets, clothing, and soap

TOTAL \$14,000

Assistance Provided by the International Community *

International Organizations

CARITAS Internationales - cash contribution of \$65,800 to FAO/OSRO for seeds

UNDP/FAO (U.N. Development Program) - cash contribution of \$30,000 for rice seed; cash contribution of \$309,000 for 400 tons of rice seed and 550 tons of maize seed; cash contribution of \$10,000 for approximately 32 tons of insecticides and 260 sprayers

LAOS - Floods

U.N. Disaster Relief Organization (UNDRO) - cash contribution of \$20,000 for spare parts for road maintenance machinery

UNHCR - 50 tons of rice seed

UNICEF - cash contribution of \$100,000 for mosquito nets, clothing, blankets, tools, and kitchen utensils

WFP - donated 3,060 tons of rice to feed approximately 85,000 people for 3 months valued at \$760,000

World Health Organization (WHO) - cash contribution of \$50,000 for antimalarial drugs and diagnostic reagents

Governments

Australia - 200 tons of rice; value not reported

China, People's Republic - 1,000 cotton blankets, 12,200 pull-overs, 2 tons of canned meat, and 1 ton of insecticides through the Chinese Red Cross; value not reported

Germany, Democratic Republic - 11 tons of relief goods including medicines, tinned food, etc; value not reported

Germany, Federal Republic - cash contribution of \$128,205 in cash to FAO/OSRO for seeds and insecticides

Hungary - cash contribution of \$160,428 worth of medicines, clothing, food, and other relief goods

Sweden - cash contribution of \$1,131,222

Switzerland - cash contribution of \$51,613 to WFP for rice and canned meat

Thailand - cash contribution of \$100,000

United Kingdom - cash contribution of \$39,604 to UNDRÜ

U.S.S.R. - large quantity of relief goods including medicine, food, and clothing; value not reported

Vietnam - 550 tons of rice seed

LAOS - Floods

Voluntary Agencies

Bulgarian Red Cross - cash contribution of \$31,260 to the League of Red Cross Societies (LORCS) for relief supplies

Romanian Red Cross - cash contribution of \$82,850 to LORCS for relief supplies

Save the Children Fund - 30 bales of clothing, mosquito netting, and blankets; value not reported

World Council of Churches - cash contribution of \$10,000 to UNDRO for airlift of relief supplies

TOTAL \$3,079,982

* Please note: the figures for total U.S. voluntary agency and international assistance are an approximation. In many cases the cash value of in kind aid is unavailable.

This publication does not require CRB approval.

