



Office of U.S. Foreign Disaster Assistance

# DISASTER CASE REPORT

Agency for  
International  
Development

Washington D.C.  
20523

## MALAYSIA - Fire

Date: February 2, 1987

Location: Kampung Datuk Keramat area of Kuala Lumpur

No. Dead: 0

No. Affected: Approximately 1,000 homeless

Damage: 150 houses were destroyed; damage was estimated at \$863,000.

### The Disaster

On February 2, a major fire broke out in the predominantly Malay residential area of Kampung Datuk Keramat in Kuala Lumpur. The fire apparently started in the cooking area of one of the houses and, because of the traditional Malay wooden construction and the proximity of the houses to each other, spread quickly throughout the squatter community. Efforts of 65 firemen and nine engines to contain the blaze were reportedly hampered by inadequate water pressure. Some 150 houses were destroyed before the fire burned out, leaving nearly 1,000 people homeless. A second conflagration in the same area two days later leveled another 15 houses.

### Action Taken by the Government of Malaysia (GOM) and Non-Governmental Organizations

A Kampung Datuk Keramat Fire Relief Committee was quickly formed to coordinate the response of various government departments and voluntary agencies. The Federal Territories Welfare Services Department (part of the Ministry of Social Welfare) was the primary action agency, providing food for the displaced and a cash donation (\$196) to each family to meet immediate needs. The estimated 775 homeless people who sought government assistance were housed initially in a community center close to the fire site and served meals by the Federal Territories Red Crescent Society

from government provisions. The Fire Relief Committee supervised the distribution of donated clothing, household items, and school supplies. The Saint John's Ambulance Society, the Kuala Lumpur Lions Club, and other voluntary agencies also participated in the relief effort. Some 135 fire victims who did not register with the authorities were believed to be illegal aliens who feared being detained and deported.

By February 14, the government had resettled 62 families in city-owned public housing at reduced rents. The Fire Relief Committee hoped to raise sufficient funds to subsidize rental fees for up to two years. Because city housing was located some distance from the Datuk Keramat area where many of the fire victims worked, others chose instead to move in with relatives or find accommodations closer to their old neighborhood.

The Fire Relief Fund had received \$138,000 in contributions as of February 22, mainly from private Malaysians. The two largest donations (\$20,000 each) came from the state governments of Selangor and Tregganu.

Assistance Provided by the United States Government

U.S. Ambassador Thomas P. Shoesmith determined on February 4 that the fire at Datuk Keramat was of a magnitude to warrant USG assistance. He visited the relief center on February 13 and was briefed by the Fire Relief Committee chairman. From his disaster assistance authority, Ambassador Shoesmith presented a check for \$4,000 to the Relief Committee fund.

TOTAL \$4,000

Assistance Provided by U.S. Voluntary Agencies

None reported

Assistance Provided by the International Community

Germany, Fed. Rep. - donated \$769 through its embassy to the Fire Relief Committee.

Indonesia - contributed cash and food.

TOTAL \$769