

SRI LANKA - Civil Strife/Displaced Persons

Date: July 24-30, 1983 (FY 83)

Location: Capital city of Colombo and environs and the provinces of Galle, Kandy, Trincomalee, Matale, and Nawalapitiya

No. Dead: 371

No. Affected: 200,000

Damage: Extent of damage ranged from 10 to 90% in towns and cities throughout Sri Lanka, with average destruction 40 to 50% in nearly every town. Damage occurred primarily to small businesses and some residential areas. Eighty percent of retail outlets in Colombo were destroyed. Total damage was estimated at \$165 million.

The Disaster

On July 24, 1983, violence sparked by ethnic rivalry between the Sinhalese and Tamils broke out in the capital city of Sri Lanka following the ambush and killing of 13 Sinhalese army personnel in the Jaffna peninsula on July 23. In the days that followed, widespread rioting, looting, burning, and physical attacks on Tamils and Tamil-owned properties occurred.

Virtually no city or town escaped damage to its business district, and many residential areas were affected as well. Entire blocks of business establishments were destroyed by arson in a number of communities. Clinics and temples were attacked, as were residences of Sinhalese individuals suspected of protecting Tamil neighbors or co-workers. Motor vehicles registered to Tamil owners were set on fire. Although damage to tea and rubber plantations was less extensive, many workers were terrorized and a number of their residences were damaged or destroyed. At the height of the crisis, more than 127,000 persons, almost all Tamils, had lost their homes or abandoned them in fear.

An estimated 80% of retail outlets for food and other goods in Colombo were destroyed. However, by mid-August, the situation in the capital city was gradually returning to normal. Retail business activity was reestablished as sidewalk stalls were set up in front of burned-out properties.

Total damages were estimated at approximately \$165 million. The following is a summary of loss to several towns and cities:

Kegalle:	43 shops and 15 houses damaged or destroyed
Kandy:	93 shops and 15 houses damaged or destroyed
Gampola:	40 shops (60%) damaged or destroyed
Nawalapitiya:	93 shops damaged or destroyed; Barnagala Estate - 16 line rooms burned (14 families); Monti Christo Estate - 24 line rooms damaged
Matale:	280 shops and 428 houses damaged or destroyed
Masagala:	three sets of line rooms completely destroyed (40 families)
Kotmale:	nine shops destroyed; 50 people homeless
Kandapola:	entire town destroyed

Action Taken by the Government of Sri Lanka (GSL) and the Sri Lanka Red Cross (SLRC)

Immediately after the violence broke out on July 24, the GSL imposed a nationwide 24-hour curfew which remained in effect for several days. The curfew was later lifted during daylight hours but remained in effect during evening hours in many provinces throughout most of August. Units of the Sri Lanka Armed Forces, including reserve units of volunteers, were called into action, primarily in Colombo, in an attempt to contain the rioting, looting, burning, and physical attacks on Tamils and Tamil-owned properties.

The GSL established an Emergency Relief Committee which was responsible for providing emergency shelter, food, and public services to an estimated 50,000 displaced Tamils in the greater Colombo area. These persons were quartered in 14 centers in Colombo, with another four established at Kalutara, Kandy, Elpitiya, and Matara. The GSL offered to evacuate any Tamils who wished to leave Colombo and resettle in Jaffna. An estimated 20,000 people were transported by boat and train to Jaffna, Batticaloa, and Badulla in northern Sri Lanka. Another 8,000 people took asylum in India.

Soon after the violence began, the GSL Ministry of Plan Implementation met with representatives of several voluntary agencies and international organizations active in Sri Lanka to discuss the need for emergency food, medicines, and clothing. On the whole, adequate supplies of food and fuel were available in the country; however, distribution of these supplies was a serious problem. Poor sanitation and inadequate supplies of potable water in the displaced person camps led to numerous cases of diarrhea. As a result, medicines, drugs, and medical supplies were identified as a major relief need.

The GSL set up an island-wide administrative network to coordinate relief, rehabilitation, and the provision of emergency supplies. For each of eleven areas of the country, an officer was designated to coordinate his district's military and civil resources, to provide essential services and distribute food and water. Overseeing the receipt and disbursement of relief supplies (primarily food) at the national level was the Commission for Essential Services, headed by the Secretary to the Prime Minister.

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When the civil violence ended in late July, Sri Lanka was faced with reconstruction of its businesses and industries. Over 100 industrial establishments had been destroyed, 30 of which were textile and garment plants. To deal with the economic damage caused by the communal strife, the GSL created a new ministerial body which reported directly to the President. The Rehabilitation of Property and Industries Authority was responsible for rebuilding all homes and businesses damaged or destroyed during the violence. In addition, nearly all GSL officials and agencies worked to restore security, resettle displaced persons, provide sector assessments, revitalize the tourist industry, and restore foreign and local investor confidence.

From the start, the Sri Lanka Red Cross (SLRC) worked in the displaced persons camps to provide first aid, medicines, clothing, supplementary food, and other necessities. Twelve SLRC doctors worked four hours per day in 17 of the camps, treating serious medical cases. The SLRC also set up a 30-bed hospital in Colombo with the cooperation of the GSL and provided daily milk distribution to 44,000 people. Later, the SLRC operated fully equipped dispensaries with medical and paramedical staff in all camps. With the help of a Philippines Red Cross delegate, the SLRC established a tracing service in Colombo and Jaffna.

Assistance Provided by the United States Government (USG)

On July 30, 1983, the U.S. Charge d'Affaires, Herbert G. Hagerty, determined that the civil violence in Sri Lanka warranted USG disaster assistance. He exercised his authority to provide \$25,000 for disaster relief and requested an additional \$50,000, which was authorized by the Office of U.S. Foreign Disaster Assistance (OFDA). The initial \$25,000 was given to the Ministry of Finance and Planning to provide temporary shelter, sanitation facilities, cooking utensils, and other supplies for the displaced persons. These funds were channeled through U.S. private voluntary agencies, indigenous NGOs, and international organizations engaged in providing relief. The additional \$50,000 was contributed to the GSL for the continued relief effort.

Two disaster consultants were sent by OFDA to assist the USAID Mission in assessing needs and coordinating USG relief activities.

The USAID Mission, in conjunction with OFDA, offered additional relief assistance to the GSL. Subsequently, 1,000 tents and flies, 500 rolls of plastic sheeting, 2,010 five-gallon water containers, and 10,000 cotton blankets were airlifted from OFDA's stockpile in Singapore to Sri Lanka on five flights from August 8 to 12. The value of these commodities was estimated at \$523,440. However, only the transport costs of the commodities were paid from FY 1983 accounts. Replacement costs of 1,000 tents and flies were paid from FY 1984 accounts.

Medical Assistance Programs International (MAP) - donated 4,000 lbs. of medicines and medical supplies, valued at \$248,600. Transportation costs were funded by OFDA.

Save the Children Federation - contributed \$10,000 in cash and in kind for the construction of sanitary facilities and for the provision of medicines, hardware and equipment, dry rations, speakers and amplifiers, plastic ware, towels, and linens.

World Relief Corporation - provided \$31,000 for medical supplies, a housing project, and relief expenses.

World Vision International - gave \$5,000 in cash for emergency relief.

TOTAL \$382,100

Assistance Provided by the International Community

International Organizations

European Economic Community - contributed \$172,980 through LORCS.

League of Red Cross Societies (LORCS) - on August 3, LORCS issued an appeal for assistance on behalf of the Sri Lanka Red Cross. The appeal asked for \$1,143,641 for 10 dispensaries, clothing, utensils, rice, milk powder, four Landrovers, and two ambulances. A delegate was also sent to conduct an assessment. Air Lanka provided two free airlifts from Switzerland and India in support of the LORCS operation. (See contributions below.)

UNICEF - made a cash grant of \$20,000; provided medicines, tents, sewage water pumps, and children's clothing, valued at \$120,000.

World Council of Churches (WCC) - as of August 19, contributions through the WCC totaled \$40,000.

World Food Program (WFP) - provided 290 tons of wheat flour, 19 tons of pulses, and 13 tons of dried skimmed milk for distribution to 65,000 persons residing outside camps on a one-time-only basis and for a 42-day feeding program for 15,000 persons residing in displaced person camps. Total cost of the food, including transportation, was \$155,000.

World Health Organization - provided medicines not available locally; and gave \$80,000 for emergency health needs including disposable syringes, water purification tablets, and iodine tablets.

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Governments

Australia - contributed \$88,000 to the GSL for bread, rice, clothing, sanitary equipment, disinfectants, and drugs.

Germany, Federal Republic of - contributed \$19,231 through the German Embassy in Colombo and \$34,615 through the German Red Cross.

India - provided 2.4 MT of medicines, 4.9 MT of bread, 32 MT of flour, 24.5 MT of sugar, 23.4 MT of vegetable oil, 3.4 MT of other food items, 2.5 MT of soap, and 4.9 MT of clothing; daily charter flights carried the supplies to Sri Lanka. The Government of India (GOI) also provided a small ferry for the evacuation of displaced persons to Jaffna. The GOI set up a Sri Lanka Relief Committee and Relief Fund with initial contributions totaling \$1,005,025.

Netherlands - gave \$206,898 in cash.

New Zealand - contributed \$16,340 in cash through LORCS and provided cash through Save the Children and World Vision International.

Norway - gave \$26,846 through the Norway Red Cross.

Switzerland - at the request of the GSL Relief of Properties and Industries Authority, the Swiss Disaster Relief Unit dispatched a representative to assess rehabilitation needs.

United Kingdom - contributed \$74,627 in cash to the GSL and donated \$44,776 through Oxfam.

Voluntary Agencies

Australia Red Cross - gave cash and 10,000 dozen gauze bandages, all valued at \$42,887.

Canada Red Cross - contributed \$51,292 in cash.

China (P.R.) Red Cross - donated clothing and blankets valued at \$26,000, including transport costs, through LORCS.

Denmark Red Cross - gave \$10,256 in cash through LORCS.

Finland Red Cross - gave \$17,269 in cash through LORCS.

Germany (F.R.) Red Cross - provided two ambulances and five dispensaries, valued at \$43,001.

India Red Cross - donated 1,500 tons of rice and dispensaries, valued at \$365,965; and provided cloth and transportation.

Japan Red Cross - contributed cash, clothing, tableware, and cloth, all valued at \$148,948.

Korea (Republic) Red Cross - donated \$3,000 in cash.

Nepal Red Cross - gave \$1,500 in cash.

New Zealand Red Cross - contributed \$2,000 in cash through LORCS.

Norway Red Cross - gave \$19,796 in cash through LORCS.

Oxfam - contributions through Oxfam totaled \$94,801 to local governments, churches, and local relief organizations.

Salvation Army (UK) - provided \$15,000 for food and cooking utensils to supplement the local Salvation Army relief effort.

Save the Children (Australia) - gave \$22,000 in cash for emergency relief.

Save the Children (UK) - provided 500 collapsible water containers, 10,000 plastic cups and plates, and medicines; all valued at \$4,000.

Singapore Red Cross - donated two tons of milk powder and clothing, value not reported, through LORCS.

Sweden Red Cross - gave \$37,740 in cash and 250 tons of wheat flour through LORCS.

Switzerland Red Cross - donated 20 tons of milk powder, valued at \$77,768, through LORCS.

TOTAL \$3,087,561