



Office of U.S. Foreign Disaster Assistance

DISASTER CASE REPORT

Agency for
International
Development

Washington D.C.
20523

JAMAICA - Floods (II)

Date: June 1979 (FY 79)

Location: Western Jamaica, in the Parishes of Westmoreland, St. James, Hanover, Clarendon, and St. Elizabeth

No. Dead: 32; 8 missing and presumed dead

No. Affected: 160,000

Damage: Extensive damage to roads and bridges (9 destroyed and 21 damaged island-wide); 16,000 acres of crops affected, including major export crops of sugar and bananas; livestock losses included 5,400 head of cattle, pigs, and goats, and 68,000 poultry birds

The Disaster

The wettest year for the decade of the 1970s in Jamaica was 1979. Between January and September, rainfall across the island surpassed the 30-year long-term mean by 33%. Of the four heaviest periods of rainfall during 1979, the one in June was the most severe in terms of the amount of rainfall and its effect on the Jamaican economy. Extensive flooding in April and several weeks of intermittent rain culminated in torrential downpours on June 12th and 13th, especially over western Jamaica.

In all, the June rains resulted in damage to a 975 sq. mi. area or nearly one quarter of the island. Damages were concentrated in the parishes of Westmoreland, St. James, Hanover, and St. Elizabeth, particularly in the areas of Newmarket and Chigwell. At Newmarket a "lake district" was created, covering 600 acres with water up to 90 feet deep; around Chigwell, 25 acres of land were covered. Contributing to the effects of the flood was the peculiar geological composition of the sub-soil which allowed water to continue rising after the rains had subsided. As a result, the immediate disaster period lasted 13 weeks or well into September; only half the flooded areas of Newmarket and Chigwell were free of water by February 1980.

Action Taken by the Government of Jamaica (GOJ)

On June 13, 1979, Prime Minister Manley declared the existence of a disaster in Jamaica. In the hours immediately following the declaration, the Jamaica Defense Force (JDF) played a critical role in coordinating relief work and aiding people in distress until civil authorities could mobilize. The latter quickly formed a special Relief Sub-Committee to direct relief efforts and conduct damage assessments. Within a week of the Committee's formation, however, it became obvious that the problems caused by the floods would have to be addressed over a long period of time and that a more permanent relief committee was needed. A National Committee was then formed, composed of cabinet ministers and representatives of the opposition party, trade unions, churches, voluntary agencies, and assorted experts from different technical groups. These experts and the technical organizations they represented became the primary conduits for U.S. and other donor assistance.

An Emergency Operations Center was established that responded to requests for assistance; assessed relief needs; followed up offers of aid; monitored stock levels; organized the clearance, transport, storage, and distribution of foreign and domestic relief supplies as well as the transport, shelter, and feeding of evacuees; dealt with complaints; maintained an alert for possible disasters during the hurricane season; and kept the various committees abreast of all aspects of the relief program.

Field operations were carried out from a supply depot at Donald Sangster International Airport in Montego Bay, where relief items were received and stored to facilitate easy transport to the west, and relief centers at Savanna-La-Mar (serving the parish of Westmoreland), Lucea, and later Haughton Grove (serving Hanover), and Black River (serving St. Elizabeth). All field operations were supervised by JDF personnel from June 13 to July 22, 1979. Civilian personnel took charge of the three relief centers on July 23 and the Montego Bay supplies depot on September 1, 1979.

To help re-establish reliable road communications, arrangements were made for the U.S. Navy to provide 90 Seabees and 60 U.S. Marine Construction Battalion personnel for 90 days. It took six weeks for a decision to be made that use of DOD assets was possible and the GOJ was required to pre-pay \$1,438,000 toward the cost of this operation. (See next section.) In addition, a National Flood Relief Fund was launched soon after the flood rains. Local contributions totalled \$2 million, including \$1.7 million from bauxite and alumina companies operating in Jamaica. In addition, the government provided \$1.1 million from its consolidated fund and various Ministries made special allocations for flood rehabilitation work from their regular budgets, e.g., \$0.3 million to build and repair indigent housing and \$0.1 million to partially finance U.S. Navy Seabee and Marine recovery assistance.

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Assistance Provided by the United States Government (USG)

On June 15, 1979, the U.S. Ambassador declared an emergency in Jamaica and authorized the use of \$25,000 in immediate disaster relief. Arrangements were then made to have the designated disaster coordinator stay in the Embassy to act as liaison with the various GOJ organizations, Country Team, Peace Corps, and OFDA, as well as to have Peace Corps Volunteers assist in receiving and accounting for U.S. contributions sent through Montego Bay and provide personnel for relief centers.....\$25,000

The most urgent item sought from the U.S. was helicopter airlift support to survey the disaster area and deliver needed relief supplies. The Coast Guard responded on June 16th with two HH3Fs for a week. For the first time in years permission was granted to over-fly Cuba. The helicopters flew 115,805 pounds of disaster supplies and 17 passengers during 96 sorties lasting 45 hours of flying time at an estimated value of over \$200,000.....\$200,000

Food, medicine, and clothing were the next highest priority items sought from the U.S. OFDA arranged for and paid \$37,607 to have 52,600 pounds of Church World Services donated clothing flown down on June 19th. Over 44,000 pounds of PL 480 Title II food was flown down on June 20th at a cost to OFDA of \$26,450. The total value of the A.I.D. donated food was \$108,300. The 461,565-pound balance of A.I.D. donated food was delivered by the end of June, using free sea transportation provided by Kaiser Bauxite and Alumina Company.....\$172,357

OFDA also arranged for the purchase and air delivery of approximately \$70,716 in medicines, which started to arrive on June 19th. The medical supplies were as follows: 10,000 twenty-five mg. dimenhydrinate tablets; 500 dimenhydrinate injections; 40,000 lomotil tablets; 250 gallons benadryl elixir; 100 benadryl injections; 15 cases xylocaine (1%); 1.5 million ampicillin 250 mg. capsules; 2,000 vials ampicillin suspension (125 mg per 5 ml); 2,500 vials of crystalline penicillin; 8 cases flexible gauze bandages; 12 cases steri-pads; 4 cases adhesive tape; 15 cases regular bandaids; 6 cases extra-large bandaids.....\$70,716

OFDA also arranged, at a cost of \$21,756, to have a U.S. Department of Defense engineering assessment team survey flood damage and recommend possible remedial actions to restore reliable road communications starting June 20th. Both the United States Naval Mobile Construction Battalion 40 (Detachment Jamaica) and U.S. Marine 8th Engineer Support Battalion (Jamaica) received Certificates of Honor for Meritorious Service. An OFDA officer also surveyed flood damage for five days starting June 21st at a cost of \$1,175.....\$22,931

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TOTAL

\$491,004

Assistance Provided by U.S. Voluntary Agencies

American National Red Cross - cash grant through LICROSS for \$10,000. Foodstuffs, household items, cooking utensils, building material, agricultural equipment, detergent and soap, farm tools, and fertilizers all valued at \$946,740.

Baptist World Alliance - \$5,000 in cash.

Catholic Relief Services - 20 bales of blankets and 3 drums of soap, all with a value of \$3,236.

Church World Service - 550 bales of clothing (\$72,450); 1,000 lanterns, \$7,800; \$5,000 in cash to CADEC Jamaica.

Food for the Hungry - 30,000 lbs. of baby food.

Salvation Army - 80,000 lbs. clothing to its seven centers for distribution; \$69,000 in cash.

Southern Baptist Convention, Foreign Mission Board - \$55,000 in food supplies.

World Vision Relief Organization - \$4,000 to the Salvation Army.

TOTAL

\$1,178,226

Assistance Provided by U.S. Private Sector

Johnson and Johnson Co. - 45 cases of first-aid materials.

Kaiser Aluminum - \$1 million for relief supplies and a ship to carry USG-donated food.

Lederle Co. - 288 eight-ounce bottles of Robitussin cough syrup.

Reynolds Aluminum - at least \$325,000 worth of food.

TOTAL

\$1,325,000

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Assistance Provided by the International Community

International Organizations

European Economic Community - 1,000 tons cereals and 275,000 units of account (approximately US\$370,000) in cash.

FAO/UNDP - project for emergency rehabilitation and reconstruction in the agricultural sector valued at \$1,000,000.

Inter-American Development Bank - sent an assessment team.

Organization of American States - \$100,000 in cash.

UNICEF - medical supplies including dextrose injections, penicillin, sphygmometers, stethoscopes, scissors, oral rehydration salts, syringes, ophthalmic ointment, chloramphenicol capsules, multivitamins, tetracycline, first-aid kits and supplies, and citrimide solution all valued at \$45,000.

United Nations Development Program (UNDP) - \$20,000 in cash pledged.

United Nations Disaster Relief Organization (UNDRO) - \$10,000 in cash and the services of a disaster relief specialist.

World Bank - sent an assessment team.

World Food Program - plan to divert 4 tons of canned food already in Jamaica from regular programs to emergency programs, valued at \$10,000.

Governments

Australia - cash through UNDRO for animal feed valued at \$21,500.

Belgium - insecticides valued at \$10,000.

Canada, in conjunction with the Canadian Red Cross - pledge of \$29,000 in cash.

Cuba - blankets, shoes, and 100 MT of sugar.

Federal Republic of Germany, in conjunction with the FRG Red Cross - 10 marquee-type tents.

Netherlands - 14 water pumps plus transportation valued at \$173,270; cash through UNDRO \$324,350.

Norway - \$197,000 in cash; plus commodities.

Sweden - \$250,000 in cash to WHO for epidemic prevention and control.

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United Kingdom - 5,000 blankets, airfreight of a large quantity of drugs and medical supplies (including antimalarial tablets, lomotil tablets, benadryl injections, bandages, elastoplast, phenergen injections, ampicillin, penicillin, antitetanus serum, piriton tablets, cardiac digoxin tablets, tedral tablets, water purification tablets, and tetracycline), 8 marquee-type tents, two powered assault boats and crews, radio communication unit, engineering detachment to survey road damage, for a total value of \$71,000.

Voluntary Agencies

Austria Red Cross - \$11,350 in cash and kind.

Bahamas Red Cross - \$976 in cash.

Bermuda Red Cross - \$46,743 in kind.

Canada Red Cross - \$9,433 in cash.

Christian Action for Development in the Caribbean - \$2,500 in cash.

Christian Aid (U.K.) - \$16,350 in cash.

Denmark Red Cross - \$7,800 in cash.

Federal Republic of Germany Red Cross - \$24,228 in kind.

Finland Red Cross - \$11,509 in kind.

Great Britain Red Cross - \$46,924 in kind.

Japan Red Cross - \$230,000 in kind.

Netherlands Red Cross - \$14,320 in cash.

Norway Red Cross - \$200,375 in cash and kind.

OXFAM - \$10,000 in cash.

Poland Red Cross - \$19,540 in kind.

South Africa Red Cross - \$28 in cash.

Spain Red Cross - \$5,600 in cash.

Sweden Red Cross - \$61,553 in cash and kind.

Switzerland Red Cross - \$108,300 in kind.

Thailand Red Cross - \$235 in cash.

United Kingdom Red Cross - cash and kind valued at \$135,050.

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USSR Red Cross - \$235,000 in kind.

World Council of Churches - \$10,000 in cash, and \$28,000 in cash from Caribbean Conference of Churches.

TOTAL

\$3,866,934

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