Office of U.S. Foreign Disaster Assistance

DISASTER CASE REPORT

Agency for International Development

Washington D.C. 20523

HAITI - Floods

Date: October 23, 1987

Location: Island of La Gonave

No. Dead: 69

No. Affected: About 75% of the island's population, or 45,000

Damage: 834 homes were damaged or destroyed; considerable crop and livestock losses resulted; roads and water systems were seriously affected.

The Disaster

Several consecutive days of rain, culminating in a torrential downpour on October 23, resulted in severe flash flooding on the island of La Gonave. Sixty-nine people were killed in the deluge which also destroyed 510 homes and seriously damaged another 324 homes. Livestock and crop (maize, millet, and tobacco) losses were expected to be substantial in an area which had experienced below normal rainfall prior to the event. The flood also interrupted electrical service and rendered rural roads impassable. Of particular immediate concern was the lack of potable water due to the contamination of water sources.

Action Taken by the Government of Haiti (GOH) and Non-Governmental Organizations

The Director General of OPDES (Organisation Pre-Desastres et de Secours) led a delegation of government and voluntary agency representatives in conducting a preliminary damage assessment on October 24. Transported to the island by a Haitian Armed Forces helicopter, the delegation visited several flooded areas of the major town of Anse-a-Galets and flew over rural sections of the island. A local aid committee was formed to establish a definitive list of personal damages. Representatives of the

National Water Authority carried out field surveys to determine the condition of the potable water system, and the Minister of Agriculture visited La Gonave on October 31 to survey crop damage.

With potable water being the priority need in the aftermath of the flooding, OPDES appealed to USAID/Haiti for help in procuring four collapsible water storage tanks. The Haitian Maritime Service dedicated a vessel to carrying the water containers and other relief supplies to the island.

A representative of the Haitian Red Cross (HRC) participated in the initial OPDES damage assessment. Subsequently, the HRC dispensed 15-16 tons of relief supplies to the affected population, including water, food, plastic sheeting, water purifiers, and kitchen and eating utensils.

The Service Chretien d'Haiti, a combined service agency of Haitian Protestant churches, participated in a survey of relief needs and provided tools and food.

Assistance Provided by the United States Government

After hearing reports of the gravity of the situation on La Gonave, U.S. Ambassador Brunson McKinley determined on October 30 that a flash flood disaster existed on the island. From his disaster assistance authority, Ambassador McKinley committed $25,000 to the effort to provide potable water to the residents of La Gonave. The cash grant to OPDES was used for the local purchase of one-gallon plastic jugs and chlorine bleach in medicine dropper bottles for water disinfection. The Ambassador's fund also covered the cost of shipping water and other relief supplies to the island in a Haitian Maritime Service vessel.

In response to the GOH request for water storage containers, relayed to OFDA by USAID/Haiti, the USG also provided four collapsible 3,000-gallon water storage bladders. The tanks, which arrived in Haiti on November 2, were transshipped to La Gonave and donated to the GOH. The cost of replacing the tanks in the Panama stockpile was $9,488.

TOTAL	$34,488

Assistance Provided by U.S. Voluntary Agencies

CWS - forwarded $5,000 from the Executive Director's Emergency Fund to Service Chretien d'Haiti to assist in providing emergency relief.

TOTAL	$5,000

Assistance Provided by the International Community

None reported