



DISASTER CASE REPORT

Agency for
International
Development

Washington D.C.
20523

BURMA - Fire

Date: March 24, 1984

Location: Mandalay

No. Dead: None reported

No. Affected: 23,000 homeless

Damage: 2,558 buildings damaged or destroyed over 58 hectares; total value of destroyed property estimated at over \$96 million

The Disaster

On the afternoon of March 24, 1984 a fire broke out in the main commercial section of Mandalay. In just eight hours over 2,500 buildings, including schools, residences, businesses, theaters, and public offices, were destroyed. While no loss of life was reported, more than 23,000 people were left homeless and damage estimates were extensive.

This fire was the second to ravage Mandalay in three years, as a conflagration in May of 1981 destroyed one-fifth of the city and left 90,000 residents homeless. Burmese towns are particularly vulnerable to fires during the dry season from February to May due to urban congestion, highly flammable construction materials (teak and bamboo with thatched roofs), and the widespread use of open fires and kerosene lamps.

Action Taken by the Socialist Republic of the Union of Burma (SRUB)

Local firefighters responded promptly to the fire, but, inadequate water supplies and pedestrian and vehicular congestion hindered the operation. Once the fire was brought under control, Burmese authorities began to address relief needs through the Mandalay Central Fire Relief Committee. Eleven temporary shelters were set up in schools and churches to house

approximately 6,900 of the homeless (16,000 others stayed with relatives or friends). Meal packets and medical services were provided to the homeless in the shelters. The Burmese Red Cross assisted in the relief operation and the ministries of Health and Social Welfare compiled lists of needed supplies and equipment. The SRUB also began assessing longer-term reconstruction needs.

Assistance Provided by the United States Government

The USG responded immediately to the disaster by donating \$15,000 to the Burmese Red Cross. A check for this amount was presented to the Director General of the SRUB Relief and Resettlement Department for transmittal to the Red Cross.....\$15,000

An additional \$10,000 was contributed in response to an UNDRO appeal for funds to purchase needed supplies and equipment.....\$10,000

TOTAL \$25,000

Assistance Provided by U.S. Voluntary Agencies

None reported.

Assistance Provided by the International Community

International Organizations

LORCS - issued an appeal for \$301,852 for immediate relief assistance.

UNDP - provided an emergency grant of \$30,000; the UNDP Resident Representative served as coordinator of the international donor response.

UNDRO - issued an appeal to meet the SRUB request for assistance; gave an emergency grant of \$15,000.

WHO - served as coordinator for medical assistance; provided donors lists of needed medicines and medical supplies.

Governments

Australia - \$92,590 in cash.

Canada - \$19,685 in cash through LORCS.

China, Peoples Rep. - \$10,000 through the Chinese Red Cross.

Germany, Fed. Rep. - \$18,730 in cash.

India - gave medicines and clothing worth \$10,000.

Indonesia - \$2,570 in cash.

Japan - \$10,000 in cash.

New Zealand - \$13,160 through LORCS.

Soviet Union - \$25,260 in cash.

United Kingdom - \$7,115 to the SRUB.

Voluntary Agencies

Canada Red Cross - \$4,005 in cash through LORCS.

Denmark Red Cross - \$1,520 through LORCS.

Finland Red Cross - \$4,634 in cash.

Germany, Fed. Rep. Red Cross - provided 100 tents, value not reported.

Japan Red Cross - gave cash and medicines, total value of \$15,000.

Netherlands Red Cross - \$8,449 through LORCS.

New Zealand Red Cross - gave \$1,320 in cash.

Norway Red Cross - \$13,380 in cash through LORCS.

Oxfam - \$12,270 to the Burma Red Cross for temporary shelter.

Soviet Union Red Cross - donated medicines and textiles, value not reported.

Sweden Red Cross - \$18,997 in cash through LORCS.

Switzerland Red Cross - gave \$13,450 in cash.

United Kingdom Red Cross - \$4,398 in cash through LORCS.

TOTAL \$653,385