

COLOMBIA

Floods

Fall, 1970

Spring, 1971

... resulting from most severe winter/spring rainy season in 40 years, kill 307, leave 105,000 homeless and affect a total of 5 million. 11,762 homes were destroyed in Magdalena and Cauca River Valleys. Dollar damage as estimated by the Colombia Ministry of Agriculture—\$138.8 million—\$101.3 million to crops and livestock; \$26.7 million to roads, railroads, ports; \$10.8 million to homes, machines and buildings.

Value of U.S. Assistance	\$779,750
Value of Assistance by Other Nations	47,290
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	\$827,040

DETAILS:

Fall 1970 Floods

The annual floods began, as expected, in September of 1970 but reached catastrophic proportions during November and December as a result of exceptionally heavy and long lasting rains. By November 11, after four days of continuous rains, news media were reporting it to be Colombia's most severe winter rainy season in 40 years.

The Magdalena, Cauca and Atrato Rivers overflowed, inundating many villages along the rivers and causing extensive destruction to homes, crops, and animals. Hundreds of people sought refuge in treetops and on mountainsides. On December 12, landslides blocked Colombia's second largest river. A flash flood swept away houses, buses and cars (some 16 vehi-

cles in all) More than 100 persons were buried under tons of earth in the Cauca River Valley. It was reported that 80 passengers in two buses perished when they were trapped by a landslide. Four fishing families in a riverside settlement were carried away by the raging water.

The League of Red Cross Societies reported that over 5 million people were affected in 15 Departments. Especially hard hit were the Departments of Cesar, Bolivar, Antioquia, Atlantico, Cordoba, Magdalena and Sucre.

Spring 1971 Floods

The scene of the 1971 spring floods was a repetition of the September-December '70 disaster, but on an even wider scale. There was practically no dry season during the period from December to February, so that an early buildup of water occurred in March at the Middle Magdalena and Middle Cauca River Valleys. Floods soon resulted from Cali to Antioquia on the Cauca River with severe losses to coffee, sugar, sorghum and soy bean crops. Damage also occurred to roads and bridges. The National Railroad between Manizales and Medellin was cut in many places because of landslides. Estimated damage in the Department of Valle alone was placed at \$47 million and some 30,000 people were forced from their homes.

At the same time, the Upper Magdalena, between Neiva and Dorada, spilled over its banks. Here houses, roads, bridges and crops were destroyed or damaged and upwards of 5,000 people sought shelter outside their homes.

The flood moved down to the Lower Magdalena, affecting primarily the Departments of Bolivar and Magdalena. Losses in cattle and other livestock were substantial. The estimated loss in corn, rice and cotton was about 29%. Over 50,000 people fled their homes.

Then in June and July the floods affected Narino, Putumayo, Huila, Caqueta and Meta in Southern Colombia, driving 20,000 people from their homes.

ACTION TAKEN BY THE GOVERNMENT OF COLOMBIA AND LOCAL ORGANIZATIONS:

President Pastrana Borrero visited the flood region after the fall floods, and a state of national disaster was declared

Although these floods were major disasters and some outside assistance was sought and given, Colombian agencies relied primarily on their own resources and administrative capabilities to cope with them.

Relief efforts were directed by the National Civil Defense following the fall floods. A Council of Ministers was called on April 5 by the President. An emergency committee was established under the National Planning Department to coordinate relief activities and to assist in reconstruction. The Committee prepared a priority list of needs and met weekly with Civil Defense, Red Cross, IDEMA and the Family Welfare Institute.

IDEMA (National Institute of Agricultural Marketing) delivered locally grown food to the affected areas. USG Food for Peace and World Food Program food supplies were also made available. Distribution of food and disaster supplies was made with the cooperation of the Colombian armed forces and US military helicopters from Panama

Necessary steps were taken to immunize the disaster victims against typhoid. Medicines to treat diarrhea and acidity in children and for respiratory ailments were also brought in.

Assisting in the relief efforts were the Colombian Red Cross, Department and Municipal Governments, the Ministry of Government which sponsors local community action groups, the Lions Club and other private charities.

Estimated in-country donations were: \$1.5 million by ICT for reconstruction, \$4 million for Magdalena assistance, \$25 million for the cost of repair and reconstruction to the Public Works Ministry; and \$11 million set aside by the Monetary Group for agricultural rehabilitation. This does not include expenditures by Civil Defense, Colombian Red Cross, IDEMA

and local units of government or the value of aid from private groups. That this was significant was demonstrated by the outpouring of food, clothing, blankets, drugs and mattresses from the City of Pereira to help the victims in La Virginia.

The US Mission said an improved effort had been made on the part of the Colombian Government to coordinate relief operations and made the following comment: "As the disaster progressed, the planning which preceded efforts allowed aid to be channeled more rapidly and effectively to the people in the flooded areas."

In a summary report prepared after the flood by the Colombia Ministry of Agriculture, it was pointed out that without improved flood control, this kind of disaster would happen again and again. The summary concluded that the Government of Colombia should have a water control program—that it could not afford to reestablish agricultural production and rebuild communications after every flood.

ASSISTANCE PROVIDED BY THE U.S. GOVERNMENT:

Fall 1970 Floods

Mr. Robert A. Stevenson, Chargé d'Affaires, declared the flood an emergency warranting U.S. assistance and authorized use of AID contingency funds for the purchase and transportation of disaster relief equipment, supplies and military personnel from Panama. AID/DRC approved expenditures in excess of the Ambassador's \$25,000 authority, and made the necessary arrangement with the U.S. Military in Panama.

USAID reported that the US Military personnel, helicopter support and disaster supplies were a decisive factor in the success of the relief operations.

50 tents, 100 cots from AID/SOUTHCOM disaster reserve/Panama	\$ 5,118
2 large tents, 92 ponchos, 25 gas stoves from U.S. Military	1,850
Helicopter support for 7 days	28,000
Transportation support equipment	800
	\$ 35,768

The helicopter airlifted 120,045 pounds of food and 192 persons (doctors, nurses, Red Cross representatives, troops, and people needing medical attention).

CARE and Catholic Relief Services obtained USAID approval to use USG Food for Peace commodities to feed approximately 94,000 flood victims. These commodities consisted of 230 metric tons of non-fat dry milk, vegetable oil, bulgur, flour, CSM, rolled wheat and cornmeal. The market value of this food was \$ 78,250

In addition, the USG contributed 385 metric tons of wheat flour, cornmeal, non-fat dry milk and vegetables to the World Food Program for the flood emergency. Estimated CCC value of this food plus ocean freight was approximately \$184,000

Spring 1971 Floods \$298,018

The American Ambassador, Leonard Saccio, declared the spring floods an emergency warranting U.S. assistance, which consisted of the following:

Local purchase of drugs through the Colombian Ministry of Health	\$ 9,576
Transportation of emergency food	707
Purchase of 4 boats from U.S. Military/Panama to be used by Colombia Civil Defense for these and future flood disasters	2,592
Plus 17% accessorial charge	441
Purchase in U.S. of 4 outboard motors and other equipment for the boats	3,885
Cost of export packing and transportation to Panama	1,038
40 tents from AID/SOUTHCOM Reserve at Panama	3,600
Transportation costs to replace tents	1,026
Purchase kitchen equipment for 4 feeding centers on the Magdalena	2,200
Trucking charges from Washington, D.C. to Ft. Lauderdale for shipment of donated clothes and drugs	1,600
This shipment was picked up and delivered to Colombia by the Colombian Air Force.	<u>\$ 26,665</u>

USG P.L. 480 Food

From CARE and Catholic Relief Services stocks on hand in the country---600 metric tons of non-fat dry milk, vegetable oil, flour, bulgur, cornmeal, rolled wheat and CSM, valued at \$250,067

Through the World Food Program---217 metric tons of non-fat dry milk and 57 of vegetable oil. Estimated cost plus ocean freight \$205,000

\$481,732

Total USG Assistance both floods \$779,750

ASSISTANCE PROVIDED BY U.S. VOLUNTARY AGENCIES:

CARE and Catholic Relief Services made available 600 tons of USG Food for Peace commodities as indicated above.

CARE established a mobile kitchen in La Virginia, one of the hardest hit communities on the Cauca, with 5,000 people out of their homes. 3,000 hot meals were served daily over a two month period.

The U.S. Mission reported that both CARE and CRS used their own resources of foods, drugs and clothes to help the flood victims, but quantities and value of this assistance were not available.

ASSISTANCE PROVIDED BY OTHER NATIONS AND INTERNATIONAL ORGANIZATIONS:

The following was reported by the League of Red Cross Societies:

British Red Cross---cash	\$ 1,200
Canadian Red Cross---28 cases children's clothing and 850 blankets	9,900
Canadian Government---2,016 blankets	7,340
Dominican Red Cross---unspecified supplies	*
Guatemalan Red Cross---cash	2,000
Peruvian Red Cross---cash	2,500
Swedish Red Cross---100 sacks of clothing	9,700
Alliance of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies of the USSR---medicaments and cloth	11,140
Magen David Adom in Israel---supplies	<u>3,510</u>

* Value not reported. \$47,290

