

History of the United States Foreign Disaster Relief Program

Early History

The United States has provided disaster relief to foreign countries since the beginnings of the nation. Although disaster relief has usually come from a variety of private groups, the first recorded governmental involvement came after an earthquake in Venezuela in March 1812. Even though Congress was then preoccupied with the War of 1812 with England, it passed "An Act for the Relief of the Citizens of Venezuela" soon after receipt of news about the quake. It authorized the President to purchase goods up to \$50,000 and to tender these to Venezuela in the name of the government of the United States. This act, however, did not set an immediate precedent. On several occasions Congress defeated foreign disaster relief bills on the grounds that the Constitution did not give Congress power to use public funds for foreign relief. On several occasions, however, Congress did allow naval vessels to be used to transport private gifts of food to countries suffering famines.

From the beginning of the nation to the close of the nineteenth century the bulk of disaster relief was provided by nongovernmental agencies. Each disaster was handled on an *ad hoc* basis with little formal connection with previous relief activities. A major foreign disaster was usually followed by public meetings in the United States, sponsored by chambers of commerce, boards of trade, and business firms. At such meetings speakers pointed out the consequences of the latest disaster and special collections were taken. Bazaars, musicals, and theatrical productions were organized. Donations of food were solicited from farmers and millers. Americans were asked to respond to the needs of the disaster victims across the seas. Of particular importance during this period was the development of the foreign missionary movement supported by permanent church organizations. The movement raised funds not only for its own religious activities, but also for disaster relief and for displaced persons.

A second period of American overseas philanthropy, from the Spanish-American War to the end of the 1930's, was characterized primarily by a greater magnitude of giving.¹ High-level government officials, such as the

¹ See M. Curti, *American Philanthropy Abroad: A History* (New Brunswick, New Jersey: Rutgers University Press, 1963).

President, often issued appeals for disaster assistance. Many disasters evoked major responses. Great interest was shown in the Cubans caught in the last phase of their struggle for independence from Spain. The earthquake in Sicily and Calabria in 1908 stimulated large voluntary donations, as did the floods in France in 1910. Throughout this second period the Red Cross was particularly active. The Red Cross also initiated efforts aimed at disaster prevention. In 1911 an engineering survey was made of the Hsai area of China, with a view toward developing flood control measures in that area. This effort was delayed by the start of World War I.

During this period the U.S. government frequently provided transportation for the voluntary goods donated for foreign disaster relief. In some disasters it also provided funds to the governments of the stricken countries. President Theodore Roosevelt requested government aid for Martinique and St. Vincent in 1902; he also provided transportation for goods privately donated. Also during this period several new nongovernmental agencies, such as the American Jewish Joint Distribution Committee and the American Friends Service Committee, came into existence and began to develop a cadre of trained administrators and field-workers in various relief activities.

Toward the end of the 1930's efforts were made to encourage coordination among several agencies concerned with disaster assistance. Then, in March 1941, a Presidential committee was appointed to review public relief for warring countries. Coordination efforts were accelerated during World War II, when the federal government increased its control over the activities of the nongovernmental agencies that were aiding victims of the war. The President's War Relief Control Board was given the power to coordinate the activities of fund-raising agencies, thus giving the government a wider role than ever before. After World War II a member of the War Relief Control Board proposed some continuation of this coordination effort, which resulted in a Presidential directive to establish the Advisory Committee on Foreign Aid. In a related development after the war, the American Council of Voluntary Agencies for Foreign Service was organized as a clearinghouse for private agencies involved in foreign assistance. Although disaster relief comprises only one of its activities, the Council has developed channels of communication with private and public organizations involved in foreign disaster response.

The developing mixture of governmental and nongovernmental efforts is further evidenced by the activities of the Cooperative for American Relief Everywhere (CARE), Inc. CARE initially took shape as a cooperative organization concerned with unsnarling the complexities of sending private donation packages to Europe. When CARE learned that the U.S. government was ready to declare some army food as surplus, it sought to have the food channeled through its member organizations for shipment and distribution to other countries. This pattern was expanded when government agricultural surpluses became available in 1949. Coordination also characterized efforts of

other sectors of nongovernmental agencies. In 1946 the Church World Service became the first fully unifying instrument for overseas relief and reconstruction in the history of American Protestant and Jewish Orthodox churches. The growth of this organization was paralleled by the development of Catholic Relief Services. While still maintaining many of their traditional individual programs, these church agencies cooperated with other groups and with governmental bureaus in a wide scope of activities, which included disaster relief. The cooperative efforts between governmental and nongovernmental agencies was not without some degree of strain. Religious groups were sometimes reluctant to enter into some types of activities, fearing violations of church-state relationships and wishing to avoid a close identification with some programs specifically oriented to political purposes. Government agencies were often suspicious of religious groups, fearing they might use goods for other than immediate humanitarian purposes. Disaster relief, however, was often a common meeting ground, because disaster-induced needs were "obvious" and did not contain many political or religious overtones.

Recent History

As the previous section has indicated, efforts within the United States to provide disaster relief to foreign countries have existed from the very beginnings of the nation and have involved many different groups and types of assistance. This segment of Chapter 2 examines the recent developments of the U.S. government foreign disaster relief program, which was formally organized in 1964.

Structural Development of the Program

The Office of Foreign Disaster Assistance² in the Agency for International Development was established to coordinate the diverse and often contradictory forms of emergency disaster assistance within AID and the Departments of State, Defense, and Health, Education, and Welfare. For several years the staff assigned to the Office to administer the program was quite small relative to the magnitude of tasks to be accomplished. Dealing with a wide range of disasters, the disaster relief program has been primarily concerned with one time phase in the disaster process—the emergency period (defined by the AID as a 60-day period following the disaster declaration). Although the largest number of U.S. government disaster relief efforts have

² Although the name of the office was changed from Disaster Relief Coordination (DRC) to Foreign Disaster Relief Coordination (FDRC) to OFDA, we will use the present title. A more detailed history written by Stephen Tripp is on file in the office of the NAS-NRC Committee on International Disaster Assistance.

been in response to natural disasters, the greatest percentage of U.S. government disaster assistance expenditures in the past has gone to civil strife and civil war. The Office has made significant progress toward a coordinated national response at the same time that international interests have been working toward a coordinated international response.

The actual work of developing the disaster relief program was delegated to Stephen R. Tripp, who had previously been with the Latin American Bureau of the Department of State. In 1965 Tripp became Foreign Disaster Relief Coordinator. Over the years the disaster relief program was attached to different units in the AID, such as the Office of Material Resources within the Office of Voluntary Foreign Aid, the Office of Private Resources in 1968, and the Bureau for Population and Humanitarian Assistance in 1971. Eventually the Office became independent and became known as the Office of Foreign Disaster Assistance. The AID Administrator in 1976 was appointed the President's Special Coordinator for Foreign Disaster Assistance, and the head of the AID/OFDA was ordered to report directly to the Administrator. This arrangement has been continued with the present AID Administrator, and the Director of the AID/OFDA has been given the additional title of the President's Deputy Special Coordinator for International Disaster Assistance. The present Director is Ms. Ann Martindell, who was appointed in June 1977. The Office presently has four operating subunits: the Office of the Director, with three professionals and four support staff members; the Operations Division, with seven professionals and two support staff members; the Planning Division, with three professionals and one support staff member; and the Technical Assistance Branch, with two professionals and one support staff member.

The functions of these operating subunits are as follows: The Office of the Director is involved with policy development, overall direction of the Office and representation to the Congress, the private sector, foreign governments, and international organizations. The Operations Division directs needs assessment and relief operations during disasters. The Planning Division develops contingency planning concepts, conducts state-of-the-art studies, and maintains computer and other information systems. The Technical Assistance Branch develops preparedness planning and training concepts for transfer to foreign nations, coordinates U.S. with other international training programs, and conducts an annual International Disaster Preparedness Seminar.

Over the years Congressional committees and government officials have discussed the location of the disaster relief program within the AID and the State Department; some officials maintained that the disaster relief program would be more appropriately located in the Department of Defense or in the Department of Health, Education, and Welfare. The following reasons have been given to support the present location of the AID/OFDA: (1) the financing and administering of disaster relief falls within the foreign assistance

mandate of the Department of State; (2) with its worldwide system of embassies and AID missions, the Department of State has the organizational and political mechanisms to assess disaster-induced needs and to administer aid; (3) the Department of State is sensitive to the foreign policy goals of the United States and is intimately involved in the international political arena; and (4) both the AID and the Department of State are staffed with personnel having the cross-cultural knowledge and skills necessary to relate well to the social, political, and cultural sensitivities of disaster-stricken societies.

Present policy and procedures for disaster relief, as set forth in the *AID Foreign Disaster Assistance Handbook*, have evolved from the organizational groundwork of 1964-1965; at that time the first coordinated and directed system for responding to requests for disaster relief was developed. The initial effort to establish a coordinated U.S. disaster relief system was widespread; the development of the system involved many contacts with government officials (in the Departments of State, Defense, Commerce, and Health, Education, and Welfare; in the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration; in the U.S. Geological Survey; and in AID itself), representatives of voluntary agencies (particularly the American National Red Cross), and representatives of international organizations. During the time this system was being organized the staff was heavily engaged in foreign disaster response. The development of disaster assistance guidelines was therefore influenced by actual events and the accumulation of operational experience in responding to a wide variety of foreign disasters. Although high-ranking officials in the State Department and the AID were interested in and verbally supportive of these efforts, the additional personnel required to facilitate the proposed actions were not provided. The initial staff consisted of the coordinator, a temporary secretary, and the part-time assistance from AID personnel awaiting reassignment. As late as 1970 there were only five employees on the AID/OFDA staff—the coordinator, three operations officers, and a secretary.

Initially, the Disaster Relief Coordinator was given latitude to develop the emergency operations program and to carry out relief actions. Gradually authorization was given for the Coordinator to make expenditures up to \$100,000. Although this \$100,000 authority was recalled after the AID/OFDA was made a part of the Bureau of Population and Humanitarian Assistance (PHA), there was little difficulty for the AID/OFDA to obtain approval for expenditures up to this amount. When the AID/OFDA became independent in 1976, the authority to commit up to \$2 million was delegated to that office. Amounts above that sum required and still require advance approval from the AID Bureau of Program and Policy Coordination (PPC) or from the Administrator.

From 1964 to 1971 actions were initiated via verbal requests, and approval and funding documents were issued later. The Coordinator in the Department of Defense (DOD), for example, initiated and directed DOD units to conduct

emergency relief operations based solely on telephoned requests from the AID Disaster Relief Coordinator, who provided funding numbers and amounts. The practice at that time was not to issue written procurement requests to the DOD. Cablegrams on anticipated actions and costs sent to the AID Missions in foreign countries were considered sufficient by the AID/PPC and Controller and by the DOD. Procurement of commercial tents, blankets, and other supplies was initiated by telephone, and appropriate purchase orders were prepared and sent through proper AID channels after the fact. Bills of lading were always issued for the use of commercial aircraft. The informality of these procedures was sometimes questioned, but speed of response was considered paramount; an accounting of the items procured and their costs was kept by the AID/OFDA and was included in disaster memos and case studies. Procurement and contracting procedures had become formalized by 1972; they are now specific items in the *AID Foreign Disaster Assistance Handbook*.

The development of AID Mission guidelines for disaster response merits some attention. In October 1964, the AID issued the first *Manual Orders* relating to foreign disaster relief. These *Orders* provided the AID Missions with specific policy directives and procedural instructions for administering foreign disaster relief operations. An important provision of the *Manual Orders* was the authority given to a U.S. Chief of Diplomatic Mission³ to expend up to \$25,000 for disaster relief. The discretionary use of this \$25,000 enabled a Chief of Mission not only to express the U.S. sympathy and concern for the disaster victims but also to back it with a tangible gift of money or other resources. It should be noted, however, that the Foreign Service Act, until amended in 1966 and 1968, prohibited assistance to countries in the Sino-Soviet bloc as well as assistance to the economically developed nations. The *Manual Orders* were revised in 1968 to reflect the AID/OFDA authority to commit on its own larger sums for a disaster, to assign documentation and control of disaster funds to the AID/OFDA, and to provide more flexibility for activities in rehabilitation and disaster preparedness.

The AID Mission Directors⁴ were at first reluctant to base disaster response actions on the *Manual Orders*. They also generally ignored the request that a Mission Disaster Officer be designated, because the assignment of disaster relief duties to staff members at the time of a disaster was believed to be sufficient. The idea that predisaster training for Mission personnel would be useful received little positive response. However, as the disaster response from Washington evolved and received commendation from the Department of State and the AID, this response improved somewhat. In 1965 the Disaster

³The term "U.S. Chief of Diplomatic Mission" refers to a U.S. Ambassador, Charge de Affairs, or Principal Officer in a foreign country.

⁴The term "AID Mission Director" refers to the head of AID within a U.S. Diplomatic Mission abroad.

Relief Coordinator took part in the direct training of Mission personnel by participating in the AID orientation program for new AID officers assigned to foreign posts. He also participated in the public safety and regional meetings to discuss disaster relief functions and the requirements for an effective response. The AID/OFDA staff had consultative meetings with AID Mission Directors and encouraged AID Mission personnel who were returning to Washington to visit the Office for a discussion of potential disaster problems in the host countries.

In 1973 the AID instructed all elements to rescind the *Manual Orders* and replace them with handbooks. This gave the AID/OFDA staff an opportunity to add to the handbooks sections covering recent policy and procedural changes and to expand the sections in the Mission guidelines covering disaster response operations, coordination, disaster preparedness, reporting, procurement, and surveys and assessments. The AID/OFDA first issued the *Foreign Disaster Assistance Handbook* in November 1974.

The AID/OFDA International Disaster Assistance Fund (\$25 million per year) and special appropriations for specific disasters are the primary sources for financing U.S. disaster relief operations. This fund contains provisions for stockpiling of disaster-relevant goods, training foreign disaster relief personnel, and supporting disaster research.

Since its inception the primary emphasis of the AID/OFDA disaster assistance program has been directed to the problems of short-term emergency relief. Disaster prevention, preparedness, and prediction were historically considered to be functions that should be handled internally by each nation. However, the Office began to assume some responsibility for training disaster relief officials in foreign countries to prepare for and to reduce hazards in their own countries. The groundwork for such training was begun in 1967, when a disaster relief official from Jamaica came to the United States and spent 6 weeks training with the AID/OFDA and the American National Red Cross. This led to the development of the first International Disaster Preparedness Seminar for foreign participants held in 1969 in Washington, D.C. These 6-week seminars have been held each year since 1969, and over 125 foreign disaster officials from 35 nations have participated in them during that time. Since 1973 the seminars, together with in-country disaster technical assistance, have been administered by a separate unit of the AID/OFDA known as the Disaster Technical Assistance Branch.

In addition to disaster preparedness, the broader possibilities of utilizing science and technology to improve disaster relief were also recognized. Throughout the first 10 years the AID/OFDA attempted to accumulate scientific and technical knowledge on a variety of disaster relief subjects including hazard mitigation and preparedness, disaster prediction and warning, weather systems research, etc. However, until 1974 the Office was not sufficiently staffed to assign anyone to investigate the wide range of possibilities

for applying science and technology to disaster relief activities. The Office has defined several areas in which it hopes to make progress, such as the use of satellites and high-level aerial photography for hazard monitoring and damage assessment.⁵

Policy and Program Emphases

In the development of the program, certain emphases have emerged, sometimes as a result of specific policies and other times as a result of practice and experience. The AID/OFDA has responded to a wide range of disaster events, including civil strife. It has continued to work with and through nongovernmental agencies. Thus it has had to devote considerable attention to coordination with these nongovernmental agencies, as well as with other governmental units and with international agencies. Its primary emphasis has always been on assistance in the emergency period.

In general, foreign disaster relief has been seen as an expression of the humanitarian heritage of the people of the United States, although the enhancement of the U.S. image abroad has also been a motivating factor. Since 1964, when the Office was established, the AID/OFDA, the American Red Cross, other voluntary agencies, and the AID Office of Food for Peace have emphasized disaster assistance to victim populations. This motivation was usually evident in cases of natural disasters of the sudden-impact type (e.g., earthquakes, hurricanes, and floods). However, political considerations have played a major role in such man-made disasters as wartime conflicts and civil strife. Recent examples were civil strife problems in Cyprus in 1964-1965, the Dominican Republic in 1965, Nigeria in 1969, Jordan in 1970, and the Middle East during the Seven-Day War of 1967, to name a few.

A natural disaster usually stimulates the affected country and outside organizations to organize relief operations. Wars, civil strife, and "creeping" disasters (e.g., famines), on the other hand, often force people to take sides. This makes both the delivery and receipt of disaster assistance more difficult. Also the governments of the affected countries may refuse to admit that human suffering exists within their geographic boundaries. As a result, the United States, other nations, voluntary agencies, or even international organizations may not be permitted to assess relief requirements or to provide assistance to the victims.

During the period 1965-1975, 60 percent of the U.S. assistance for disaster relief went to countries suffering from civil disturbances, other internal political problems, and wars. Disaster assistance to Bangladesh alone has accounted for about 25 percent of all U.S. government disaster relief expenditures since 1970; this assistance began in 1970 in response to a devastating

⁵For example, high-level U-2 aerial photography was used for damage assessment purposes in the Guatemala earthquake of 1976.

cyclone that was followed by a protracted civil war with Pakistan.⁶ The United States can do little to prevent civil strife and internal conflicts. However, sometimes it can influence relief operations. For example, in the Nigerian-Biafran civil war⁷ the United States encouraged and supported the International Committee of the Red Cross as it brought pressure on the combatants to give attention to civilian victims. It also encouraged other nations to assist the victims through international organizations. The United Nations, the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC), the League of Red Cross Societies (LICROSS), and Joint Church Aid (JCA) have in the past been accepted organizations for reaching victims of these types of disasters.

The original *AID Manual Orders* contained a restriction against a cash grant to any international organization that regularly received annual contributions from the United States. Exceptions were made, however, and the precedent for cash grants to the Red Cross and other voluntary agencies to carry out relief operations was established in 1964-1965 with a \$15,000 grant to ICRC for the victims of the internal conflict in Cyprus. The UN at that time did not have an established role in the disaster field. The *AID Foreign Disaster Assistance Handbook* now states specifically that cash grants may be made to international organizations that have the capability and willingness to undertake a comprehensive disaster assistance program. The program includes, but is not restricted to, responses to civil disturbances and wars.

It is difficult to assess the overall effects of the expanded U.S. government program on other donors of disaster relief. For example, during the past 20 years the proportion of total U.S. assistance provided by the government has increased from about 15 percent to 85 percent. This fact has been noted by AID on a number of occasions. Although a portion of U.S. government assistance is channeled through the voluntary agencies, particularly in politically sensitive situations, the U.S. government has clearly become a major bilateral donor in the world, providing government-to-government assistance and committing substantial internal funds to cover transportation and logistics costs. The U.S. military is particularly important in this regard because of its worldwide network of bases and disaster-relevant resources.

Although more than 400 voluntary organizations in the United States are doing foreign disaster assistance work, only a few have had the type of disaster relief capabilities (e.g., access to U.S. food surpluses, ongoing worldwide programs, organizational arrangements in other countries, and personnel with disaster relief expertise) that would justify a "contractual" relationship. The U.S. government tends to work with the group of voluntary agencies that

⁶U.S. government expenditures for the Pakistan cyclone of 1970 were more than \$16 million; relief expenditures in the Bangladesh civil war (through September 1972) totalled \$296 million.

⁷U.S. government relief expenditures in the Nigerian-Biafran civil war of 1968-1969 were just under \$66 million.

have those capabilities and characteristics. One should not conclude, however, that there has been a diminution of nongovernmental disaster assistance. In general, the total volume of U.S. disaster assistance, both public and private, has expanded greatly. The growth of U.S. disaster assistance has also been accompanied by a similar expansion of aid rendered by voluntary agencies in other countries, other governments, and international organizations.

Regardless of the type of disaster or the level of societal development, matters of sovereignty, pride of country, and demonstrations of self-reliance and responsibility are very important considerations in disaster response. In many instances they stimulate positive consequences in dealing with the problems induced by disaster. In other instances, however, they manifest themselves in the form of sensitivity to and suspicion of the motives of other countries or agencies that are offering disaster assistance. Even when local resources or actions are inadequate, outside aid may be resented.

Although the U.S. government has on occasion provided its assistance for civil strife disasters only through international organizations, it has usually carried out its own disaster relief operation at the same time. Other countries have also taken this approach. Beyond the initial response to civil strife disasters, the AID/OFDA has had only an advisory role, and in this role the AID/OFDA has influenced the nature and extent of the U.S. government contribution. The critical decisions, however, have been determined by Department of State officials and sometimes by the Chief Executive, based both on long-range foreign policy goals and on the desire to help victims on both sides of the conflict. Once these decisions have been made, the AID/OFDA has coordinated the emergency relief operation. The international and domestic reactions to the U.S. provision of direct relief in civil strife disasters have not always been favorable.

The U.S. government has little control over the spontaneous outpouring of relief supplies from private U.S. citizens. Supplies are often collected throughout the United States without regard to what is needed, to the climate of the disaster-stricken country, or to the customs of the stricken populace. The U.S. government is then pressured to provide air transportation. If turned down, some of these groups manage to provide their own transportation of goods to the country, and the goods often accumulate in large quantities at the airport or otherwise clog local transportation systems in the stricken country. This kind of unstructured response hinders relief operations and causes intense logistical problems.

A U.S. government plan to coordinate this spontaneous outpouring of disaster relief was inaugurated during the Honduras hurricane of 1974. The plan was developed by the AID/OFDA staff in cooperation with the American National Red Cross, other voluntary agencies, the Defense Civil Preparedness Agency, and the offices of the state governors. The plan establishes an organizational mechanism for direct communication between the AID/OFDA

and the state official responsible for disaster preparedness and relief (usually the civil defense director for the state or the director of emergency services). When news of a foreign disaster reaches the AID/OFDA, a cable is sent to each of the state coordinators (with a backup message sent via the civil defense communications network), informing them of the occurrence of the disaster and the requirements for relief supplies in the disaster-stricken country. The coordinators, in turn, transmit this information to the news media in the state. In the absence of any firm request for material goods, the public is encouraged to make cash donations to the voluntary agencies operating in the disaster-stricken country. When material goods are requested the state coordinators meet with the voluntary agencies and supervise the process of collecting, sorting, and shipping the donated goods to a designated port of embarkation. Since the Honduras hurricane this organizational mechanism has been used in several major disasters, including the Honduras hurricane of 1974, the Guatemala and Italian earthquakes in 1976, and the Mexican hurricane of 1976. The AID/OFDA staff have credited it with easing the problems connected with the spontaneous and informal donations made by citizens and numerous voluntary groups.

Although the U.S. Chief of Mission in each country can provide up to \$25,000 of disaster aid on his own authority, assistance above that amount requires the approval of the AID/OFDA. The AID/OFDA can make financial procurement and transportation arrangements for airlifting to stricken countries such commodities as medical supplies, emergency food, tents, blankets, mattresses, clothing, coats, cooking utensils, water purification tablets, vitamins, stoves, and, occasionally, air and land vehicles and other transportation equipment. The services of disaster relief officers, physicians, and epidemiologists can also be provided if conditions warrant.

In addition to rescue and relief during the emergency period, short-term rehabilitation assistance may also be provided for up to 90 days after the emergency period. The materials provided can include tools for restoring agriculture, seeds, hand-operated cement block-making machines, cement and roofing for rebuilding homes, and equipment and materials to rebuild damaged roads, bridges, embankments, irrigation systems, and wells. Such rehabilitation, however, has been designed only to restore conditions to a predisaster level.

The guiding principle of the AID/OFDA has been to give only those goods and services that are actually needed by disaster victims. However, adhering to this principle is not often easy: The assessment of disaster damage is highly subjective; the identification of needs is not precise; different groups, both domestic and international, often pressure the U.S. government to act immediately; and other groups pressure the government to provide specific goods and services that are often unrelated to the needs of the disaster victims.

Because of the emphasis on immediate assistance, the assessment of damage and the identification of disaster-induced needs pose continuing problems. The U.S. Missions and the disaster-stricken country frequently have not had the resources to make dependable assessments of damages and needs. The AID/OFDA was reluctant to use U.S. military personnel to assess damage because it was believed that they might not be accepted in a disaster-stricken country; still, the decision was made to try this technique. One of the first disasters in which a Military Disaster Assessment and Survey Team (DAST) was used was the El Salvador earthquake of 1965. That experience demonstrated the need for better training of the DAST teams and for closer ties with the AID/OFDA. It also demonstrated that these teams should be used primarily, if not exclusively, to assess damage and needs rather than becoming involved in the actual relief effort.

In a related development, the AID/OFDA conducted a feasibility study of stockpiling such commonly needed items as blankets, cots, tents, cooking utensils, and watercans at AID locations close to the countries likely to need disaster assistance. The AID/OFDA was able to establish a stockpile when an agreement was reached with the Department of Defense in 1967 to store limited quantities of the above supplies in Panama for use in Latin America. This initial pilot operation worked well; it has been continued. From 1973 to 1975 three additional stockpiles were established at Guam; Leghorn, Italy; and Singapore.

Efforts have also been made by the AID/OFDA to improve coordination among governmental agencies and between the U.S. government and voluntary agencies. In 1964 the Departments of State, Defense, and Health, Education, and Welfare were asked to appoint coordinators to work with the AID Foreign Disaster Relief Coordinator. By the latter part of 1964 each of these departments had designated specific people to serve as coordinators. The efforts to obtain needed goods and services then became less complicated. The Department of Defense became the primary source for the procurement and delivery of initial emergency supplies. As the rapport between the DOD and the AID coordinators developed, many beneficial precedents for expediting operations and improving relief efforts were set. Cooperation with the Department of Health, Education, and Welfare grew rather slowly, but it improved immeasurably in 1966, when the Department assigned a senior health official to work part time with the AID/OFDA on disaster-related health problems. Later the health officer was detailed to work with the AID/OFDA on a full-time basis. The Department of State coordinator facilitated the work of the AID/OFDA by providing necessary guidance in those disasters where political considerations affected the type of assistance offered and the way in which relief aid was administered. This arrangement continued until 1968, when this coordination was arranged more directly with the appropriate Department of State officials in regional bureaus.

Steps were simultaneously taken to improve coordination with voluntary agencies. In 1964 the AID/OFDA initiated direct contacts with the AID Advisory Committee on Voluntary Foreign Aid and with the registered agencies involved in foreign disaster relief. Meetings were held to exchange information and ideas and to discuss problems. Voluntary agencies were placed on the AID/OFDA mailing list to receive Disaster Memos and Alerts, as well as summary reports, and in return they sent copies of their reports to the AID/OFDA. At this time the American Council of Voluntary Agencies for Foreign Services, Inc., established a disaster committee. Sometime later mailing lists were expanded to include such international organizations as the International Committee of the Red Cross, the League of Red Cross Societies, various United Nations agencies, and the World Council of Churches. Occasional contacts were also made with representatives of other donor countries.

U.S. AID/OFDA and the Office of the United Nations Disaster Relief Coordinator (UNDRO)

These efforts at coordination by the AID/OFDA are only part of a very complex picture, since they focus primarily on U.S. governmental and non-governmental groups. In most major disasters around the world, the United States is only one of many nations that respond. This shifts the coordination problem to a global level at which the United States is only one participant. Much of the effort at improving coordination must therefore take place at the international level.

A variety of recommendations have been offered to improve the coordination of international disaster relief. In the case of nations receiving disaster assistance, improved disaster relief planning and the development of more formalized coordination systems branching from the national level to local levels have been recommended. For international donors, the recommendations have included incremental efforts to improve exchanges of information; planning for *ad hoc* but flexible umbrella organizations based on common types of services and relief management systems; the creation of regional and international mutual aid agreements that are tied to international humanitarian law; and the establishment of a single, centralized international coordination agency that would organize knowledge and funding efforts and establish an international disaster relief distribution system. The latter recommendation pertains especially to the efforts of the United Nations to develop an international coordinative mechanism for disaster assistance and relief. This part of the chapter focuses on the United Nations program because of the similarity of many of its activities to those of the AID/OFDA and because the U.S. government has provided considerable financial support for the United Nations disaster assistance program. The coordination of U.S. and UN efforts is particularly important.

Following the outbreak of civil strife in East Pakistan (now Bangladesh), the United Nations passed a resolution that established the Office of the United Nations Disaster Relief Coordinator (UNDRO) in 1972. The general mandate of the UNDRO is: (1) to mobilize and to coordinate international disaster relief; and (2) to promote predisaster planning and preparedness. UNDRO is authorized to engage in a broad range of pre- and postdisaster activities of the following types:

1. Mobilize, direct, and coordinate the relief activities of the various United Nations agencies in response to requests for assistance.
2. Coordinate United Nations disaster assistance programs with those of other foreign assistance groups and organizations.
3. Accept contributions offered to the United Nations, the purpose for which is disaster relief.
4. Provide assistance to disaster-stricken countries in assessing damage and needs.
5. Evaluate priorities of disaster-induced needs, disseminate disaster-relevant information to international donors, and serve as an information clearinghouse for assistance extended or planned by all sources of external assistance.
6. Promote the scientific study, prevention, control, and prediction of natural disasters.
7. Provide technical assistance to governments on disaster mitigation, preparedness, and planning.

UNDRO's financial support came primarily from voluntary donations, but efforts have been made to transfer certain costs from voluntary funding to the regular budget of the United Nations. As in the case of the AID/OFDA, the UNDRO began its operations with a very small staff of professional and support personnel. However, in November 1974 the United Nations authorized an expansion of UNDRO's staff to 41 professionals, and since that time staff size has increased appreciably. UNDRO also draws on the staff of the United Nations Development Program (UNDP). In effect, UNDRO has made arrangements for the UNDP resident representatives to act as liaisons within developing countries for both preparedness and relief programs. The UNDP resident representatives are located in more than 100 developing nations.

By the spring of 1977 UNDRO had provided relief efforts for approximately 80 disasters, had directly allocated approximately \$1 million in relief assistance, had dispensed about \$27 million in cash from various international donors, and had reportedly saved donors \$1.5 million in air freight costs by obtaining space available on commercial carriers and using government-owned-and-operated aircraft. It had also carried out technical advisory functions in 20 countries, had developed a "World Survey of Disaster Damages"

(the data are now being analyzed), and had disseminated numerous publications on disaster prevention, preparedness, and response. UNDRO inaugurated a permanent disaster coordination center on November 24, 1976, in Geneva. The center is to serve as a central information exchange during disasters. It is equipped with multiple telephones and telex facilities and has a computer terminal link to the United Nations International Computer Center at Geneva.⁸

The United States has publicly encouraged and financially supported the development and improvements of UNDRO. In addition to bilateral disaster relief, the U.S. government provided supplies, equipment, transport, and approximately \$30 million through the United Nations during the civil strife in Bangladesh. The Department of State and the AID have, in turn, publicly supported the improvement of UNDRO⁹ and provided funds specifically allocated to enhance UNDRO's capabilities.

In summary, the United States has long been involved in foreign disaster relief, and this involvement has usually included a mixture of governmental and nongovernmental activities. Much of the early foreign disaster relief provided by the United States was handled on an improvised basis by numerous voluntary religious and charitable organizations, but the U.S. government interest and participation has increased strongly in recent years. The pattern of cooperation between the government and voluntary agencies that was developed in handling relief aid to the victims of World War II has been continued and expanded.

A major effort to provide greater order and coherence to the U.S. program of foreign disaster relief was begun in 1964, when the AID Office of Foreign Disaster Assistance was established. In the intervening 13 years, the Office has coordinated the U.S. response to nearly 500 foreign disasters throughout the world. During this time the Office has sought to rationalize and improve the U.S. organizational mechanisms of response by instituting and refining various policies, programs, and procedures. It has formalized the disaster response procedures used by the U.S. Diplomatic Missions throughout the world. It has developed new domestic and international coordinative mechanisms with U.S. governmental and nongovernmental agencies, with other donor nations, and with international organizations. It has initiated disaster preparedness planning programs through its yearly International Disaster Preparedness Seminars and by giving direct technical assistance to other nations. It has established

⁸See United Nations Disaster Relief Organization, *UNDRO Newsletter*, 3 (May 1977), pp. 1-2.

⁹See Department of State and AID commentary in the following recent government reports: Reports to the Congress by the Comptroller General of the United States, *Need for an International Disaster Relief Agency* (Washington, D.C.: U.S. Government Printing Office, May 1976); and *Observations on the Guatemala Earthquake Relief Effort* (Washington, D.C.: U.S. Government Printing Office, August 1976).

stockpiles of disaster-relevant commodities and has undertaken other measures to speed the process of delivering commodities and services to disaster-stricken nations during the emergency and rehabilitation phases of disaster. It has undertaken efforts to apply science and technology to the problems of foreign disaster preparedness and relief problems. As will be noted in detail later, the Office has instituted various internal planning efforts to improve its operational capability, including a relatively comprehensive, computer-based management information system. And it has assisted the United Nations in the planning and establishment of the Office of the United Nations Disaster Relief Coordinator in Geneva.