

# Early Semi-Postals For Disaster Relief

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Once semi-postal stamps were invented in the late 19th century, postal services soon realized that these stamps could be used to raise funds for disaster relief. In addition, the stamps gave ordinary citizens a way to contribute to relief efforts. This exhibit looks at variations in how semi-postal stamps were crafted in four countries that were among the first to use this new approach to funding relief.

## 1907 Barbados

Barbados was the first to use a semi-postal stamp for disaster relief. After a severe earthquake struck Kingston, Jamaica in 1907, it created a semi-postal stamp for the Kingston Relief Fund by overprinting the definitive 2 pence stamp then in use with a 1 penny surcharge for relief. When an invert got into the public's hands, it switched to inverted overprints, so both versions of the stamp now sell for the same amount. Barbados raised 216 pounds for relief.



Barbados Sc B1, B1b

## 1919 China



Republic of China Sc B1-B3

Issued for flood relief in 1919, these semi-postals have an overprint that explains the reason for the surcharge and adds a new franking value to the stamp. The stamp sold for the original franking value, thus making the surcharge 1 cent for each stamp.

## 1921 Russia

The Volga Famine Relief issue of semi-postal stamps was the first instance where disaster response in action was depicted on a semi-postal stamp. This stamp shows boats on the Volga River bringing in food to relieve the famine. A second stamp design (not shown) depicts aid being administered to a famine victim.



Russia Sc B14

## 1913 Hungary

To create semi-postals to raise funds for victims of the Danube River floods of 1913, Hungary modified the design of an existing definitive stamp and included the 2f semi-postal surcharge in the stamp design.



Hungary Sc 92, B9