



**eCHO**  
When disaster strikes  
**2004**



Annual review



# Contents

1. Message from Commissioner Louis Michel
2. Message from António Cavaco, Director General of ECHO
3. Key events in 2004

## Features

6. A rapid response to the Indian Ocean tsunami
8. Sudan: a forgotten crisis enters the limelight

## ECHO at work

10. In brief
13. Global reach
26. Facts and figures

## People

29. Burma / Myanmar
30. Palestinian Territories
31. Angola

## Crisis zones

32. Democratic Republic of Congo
32. Iraq



## Commissioner's Message

# “Action where aid is needed”

2004 was characterised by numerous humanitarian emergencies. The terrible images of destruction caused by the tsunami in Asia, and of the suffering of Sudanese people fleeing violence in Darfur remain fresh in our minds.

Through its Directorate General for Humanitarian Aid (ECHO), the European Commission again made a big contribution to helping the victims of humanitarian crises. ECHO works in around 60 countries with a network of more than 180 partners. Its approach, based on the evaluation of victims' needs, ensures that aid is delivered in a neutral and impartial way.

The response to the crisis in Sudan offers a clear illustration of this approach. ECHO allocated aid where it was most urgently needed without taking sides.

A few days after taking up my responsibilities as European Commissioner for Development and Humanitarian Aid, I went to Darfur, the scene of the world's largest humanitarian crisis. I wanted to see the problem with my own eyes and meet the people affected by the civil war. I spoke to beneficiaries of projects financed by the Commission and was deeply moved when they told me about the horrors they had lived through.

ECHO mobilised resources on a large scale in response to this enormous crisis, providing more than 90 million for relief efforts in 2004.

When the tsunami hit the Indian Ocean coastal regions on 26 December, I immediately travelled to the affected countries to evaluate the extent of the emergency.

The disaster prompted remarkable international solidarity with the Commission leading the way. ECHO was the first donor to respond to the disaster, providing funds to agencies working at the scene.

Humanitarian teams are continuing to implement projects financed by the European Union to help reduce the suffering of the most vulnerable. One key concern, which I emphasised at the outset – and continue to stress – is the need to avoid a gap between the initial emergency phase and the subsequent reconstruction and

development. ECHO is working closely with other Commission services to ensure continuity of the aid provided for the tsunami victims. The same approach is used in other regions where crises are followed by reconstruction and development needs.

There were other major humanitarian tragedies during 2004 - conflict in the Democratic Republic of Congo and Colombia, flooding in Tajikistan and Haiti, massacres of refugees in Burundi, attacks on civilians in Chechnya. The list, I regret to say, does not end there. I can confirm, however, that the EU provided a humanitarian response to each of these crises. It also met vital needs in other regions, notably Africa and the Middle East, where millions of people benefited from ECHO-funded projects.

European solidarity is much more than words and promises; it is a daily reality. The context in which it operates, however, is a difficult one. Humanitarian actors are working in an ever more dangerous environment. International humanitarian law is regularly flouted and too many relief workers have been kidnapped or even killed while performing their duties. It is nonetheless vital that we do everything in our power to preserve access to crisis zones, and to ensure that the aid is deployed effectively.

Finally, there are still the “forgotten crises” in various regions that are rarely mentioned in the international press. The Commission gives priority to supporting aid projects in crisis zones that do not necessarily benefit from the spotlight. I am keen to ensure that no-one forgets these crises.

For those who work to deliver European humanitarian aid, the pledge is to act where the aid is needed. This symbolises the very essence of the European project - reflecting its underlying values of solidarity, respect for others and personal engagement.

**Louis Michel**

European Commissioner for Development  
and Humanitarian Aid

March 2005

## Director-General's Message



# How can we improve our response to natural disasters?

On the morning of 26 December, I turned on the radio expecting to hear Christmas carols. Instead an urgent voice brought the first news of a terrible natural disaster in Asia, dampening the festive spirit. Realising that ECHO would have to act quickly, I set out for the office.

A small team of colleagues had already assembled in the ECHO crisis room. At that time, we did not know exactly how bad it was, but we knew it was bad enough. That is why I did not hesitate to sign, on that day, a primary emergency decision for €3 million, the maximum that can be deployed under this fast-track procedure to meet vital immediate needs. The money arrived on the bank account of the International Red Cross Federation soon afterwards - the first donor response to the crisis.

Since then, we have had three further decisions and engaged more than €100 million to relieve the suffering of the tsunami victims. There is no doubt that this is the largest natural disaster we have ever had to deal with. But unfortunately it is neither the first nor the last.

Even without the tsunami, 2004 was a bad year for vulnerable people living in disaster-prone regions. Afghanistan, the Philippines, China, Bangladesh, India and Tajikistan all experienced serious flooding. The Caribbean was battered by several hurricanes and Cyclone Gafilo destroyed homes and livelihoods in Madagascar. Morocco and Afghanistan suffered earthquakes.

The world's weather experts warned us that the tropical storms would be strong in 2004. Of all the countries in the Caribbean, Haiti was the worst hit. Not because Hurricane Ivan was strongest over this poverty-stricken country but because people there have less capacity to cope with the raw forces of nature. A lot of the suffering was due to torrential rain flowing off deforested hill sides into badly constructed shanty towns below. ECHO, with its mandate to help the most vulnerable, spent more than €11 million to alleviate the humanitarian situation in Haiti.

On the positive side, lives were undoubtedly saved across the Caribbean and other regions thanks to projects financed under ECHO's disaster preparedness programme (DIPECHO). When put to the ultimate test, community-based disaster preparedness programmes proved they really can make a difference. These small scale pilot

projects do not pretend to prevent disasters or provide comprehensive early warning systems. As a humanitarian donor this is well beyond our mandate. But we do hope that successful projects will be expanded and repeated. Their impact is multiplied when the strategies are systematically integrated into long term development projects. There is so much that can be done to help vulnerable people cope with inevitable natural hazards.

At the same time, humanitarians must continue to reinforce their capacity to respond quickly to natural and sudden man-made disasters, when affected countries are unable to cope. ECHO's flexible funding instruments mean that, as well as providing initial funds upfront within hours of a disaster, we can also backdate subsequent decisions to the time the crisis began.

In 2004, ECHO continued providing thematic funding to UN agencies to improve their disaster response capacity, for example by pre-positioning relief stocks near disaster prone areas. We know, however, that a speedy response is not enough in itself. To be effective, relief efforts also need to be well coordinated. The United Nations plays a leading role in this respect which is why ECHO gave concrete financial support for their coordination activities in crisis zones.

While natural disasters may have been in the spotlight recently, it is important to remember that most humanitarian tragedies are man-made: a direct result of long-running and often brutal conflicts. Through ECHO, the Commission also maintained its support during 2004 for millions of conflict victims in trouble spots around the world.

The European Commission is a strong advocate for high quality and professional humanitarian aid. We do our utmost to select projects with the best value for money run by aid agencies with the best possible track records. No one can afford to cut corners in humanitarian aid, but we can always try to do better. Disaster victims deserve no less.

**António Cavaco**

Director-General of ECHO  
March 2005





## Key events in 2004

### January

#### Floods in Afghanistan

Severe flooding in Afghanistan's western province of Herat leaves more than a thousand families homeless. The devastation caused by the floods adds to the burden facing the country after 23 years of conflict and five years of drought.

### February

#### Earthquake in Morocco

A powerful earthquake near Al Hoceima in Northern Morocco kills 500 people and wounds hundreds more. An estimated 300,000 people are made homeless.

#### Civil unrest in Haiti

Celebrations marking 200 years of independence are marred by a violent uprising against President Aristide. Rebels seize towns and cities forcing the President into exile. An interim government takes over.

#### NGO community attacked in Afghanistan

Nine NGO staff are killed in a series of attacks apparently targeted specifically at the NGO community in Afghanistan.

#### Emergency declared in Lesotho

Prime Minister Mosisili of Lesotho declares a state of emergency and appeals for food aid. Aid officials say hundreds of thousands face food shortages after three years of drought.

#### Continuing violence in Uganda

The Lord's Resistance Army rebel group kills at least 200 people at a camp for displaced persons in Northern Uganda. An estimated 1.4 million people have been displaced due to the continuing conflict between LRA and government forces.

### March

#### Madagascar hit by cyclone

Cyclone Gafilo wreaks havoc when it reaches northern Madagascar. Buildings are destroyed, trees uprooted and towns flooded. A few days later it strikes again in the south, having changed direction. 32 people are killed and thousands left homeless.

### April

#### Ceasefire in Sudan

The Sudan government and rebels in the Greater Darfur region sign a ceasefire in N'Djamena, Chad. Both sides agree to allow speedy and unrestricted relief assistance, in accordance with international humanitarian law.

#### North Korea train explosion

More than 160 people are killed and hundreds injured when a train carrying oil and chemicals hits a power line in the North Korean town of Ryongchon.

#### Iraq hostage takings

Some 40 kidnappings in just over a week prompt foreign aid agencies and firms to withdraw staff. Reports confirm the first hostage death in Iraq, that of an Italian national.

### May

#### Floods in Haiti and the Dominican Republic

Severe floods in southern Haiti and in neighbouring Dominican Republic leave more than 2,000 dead or missing. Problems linked to both security and storm-damaged infrastructure hamper the distribution of food and clean water.

#### Floods in China

Southern China is heavily affected by floods, flash floods and landslides. 14 million people are affected and 95,000 homes destroyed.

## Key Events 2004

Jan.	Feb.	Mar.	Apr.	May	June
- <b>Floods</b> in Afghanistan	- <b>Earthquake</b> in Morocco	- Madagascar hit by <b>cyclone</b>	- <b>Ceasefire</b> in Sudan	- <b>Floods</b> in Haiti and the Dominican Republic	- <b>Interim government</b> in Iraq
	- <b>Civil unrest</b> in Haiti		- North Korea <b>train explosion</b>	- <b>Floods</b> in China	- <b>Aid worker freed</b> in Chechnya
	- <b>NGO community attacked</b> in Afghanistan		- Iraq <b>hostage takings</b>		
	- <b>Emergency declared</b> in Lesotho				
	- <b>Continuing violence</b> in Uganda				

### June

#### Interim government in Iraq

The US-led coalition transfers sovereignty to an Iraqi interim government headed by Prime Minister Iyad Allawi.

#### Aid worker freed in Chechnya

A Dutch employee of the international medical aid group Médecins Sans Frontières (MSF), who was abducted by gunmen in the southern Russian republic of Dagestan in August 2002, is released.

### July

#### Earthquakes in Afghanistan

Hundreds of homes are destroyed in an earthquake in Afghanistan's south eastern province of Paktia.

#### West Bank barrier ruled illegal

The International Court of Justice (ICJ) rules that the construction by Israel of the West Bank wall is contrary to international law.

#### Floods in Bangladesh and India

Bangladesh experiences its worst floods in years with more than 600 deaths reported. Homes and infrastructures are destroyed and agriculture is severely hit. 41 of the country's 65 districts are affected and more than 30 million people are made homeless.



July

- **Earthquakes** in Afghanistan
- West Bank **barrier ruled illegal**
- **Floods** in Bangladesh and India
- **Floods** in Tajikistan

Aug.

- **Refugee camp attacked** in Burundi
- **Hurricane Charley** hits Caribbean
- **Aid workers missing** in Darfur

Sept

- **Aid workers kidnapped** in Baghdad
- **Hurricanes Frances, Ivan and Jeanne** hit the Caribbean
- **Repatriation agreement signed** by Ghana and Liberia

Oct.

- **Aid worker kidnapped** in Baghdad
- **First ever democratic elections** in Afghanistan

Nov.

- **Violence** in Côte d'Ivoire
- **Torrential rains** in the Philippines

Dec.

- **Earthquake and tsunami** in the Indian Ocean

### Floods in Tajikistan

Floods and landslides caused by torrential rains leave an estimated 400,000 people without access to safe drinking water in the capital, Dushanbe.

### August

#### Refugee camp attacked in Burundi

Rebels kill 160 Congolese Tutsi refugees at a camp in Gatumba, Burundi near the DR Congo border. Burundian Hutu rebel group, the FNL, claims responsibility.

#### Hurricane Charley hits Caribbean

Hurricane Charley slams into Cuba and the eastern coast of Florida, causing widespread damage.

#### Aid workers missing in Darfur

Eight aid workers are abducted in a rebel-controlled area of Darfur, Sudan. They are released a few days later.

### September

#### Aid workers kidnapped in Baghdad

Two Italian and two Iraqi aid staff working for a Baghdad-based Italian NGO are kidnapped. They are released unharmed after three weeks in captivity.

#### Hurricanes Frances, Ivan and Jeanne hit the Caribbean

Three hurricanes in succession cut a swathe through the Caribbean. Puerto Rico, Haiti, the Dominican Republic, Grenada, the Bahamas, Jamaica, Barbados, Cuba, the Cayman Islands, Venezuela and the southern USA all suffer with a total death toll of more than 1,500 and hundreds of thousands left homeless.

#### Repatriation agreement signed by Ghana and Liberia

The government of Ghana signs an agreement with Liberia and the UN refugee agency UNHCR for the progressive repatriation of 42,000 Liberian refugees who have been living in Ghana for up to 14 years.

### October

#### Aid worker kidnapped in Baghdad

The director of the charity CARE International in Iraq is taken hostage in Baghdad. There is an international outcry when the news of her murder breaks a month later.

#### First ever democratic elections in Afghanistan

Afghanistan hosts its first ever democratic elections. Ten million people are registered to vote including many Afghan refugees living in Pakistan and Iran.

### November

#### Violence in Côte d'Ivoire

A breach of the ceasefire by the Ivorian army and retaliation by French forces prompts serious riots, looting and fighting in Abidjan.

#### Torrential rains in the Philippines

Torrential rains associated with Typhoon Winnie bring death and injury to communities in the Philippines. Entire villages and towns are inundated with flood waters.

### December

#### Earthquake and tsunami in the Indian Ocean

On 26 December, the biggest earthquake for 40 years, measuring 9.0 on the Richter scale, strikes in the Indian Ocean just off the coast of Indonesia. The quake triggers a tsunami that travels thousands of kilometres in just a few hours. More than 250,000 people are killed making this one of the worst natural disasters in human history.

Coastal and island communities in Indonesia (Sumatra), Sri Lanka, India and Thailand suffer grievous losses and deaths are reported in eight other Indian Ocean countries. Many millions are left homeless and destitute.

# Features

## A rapid response to the Indian Ocean tsunami

Human behaviour probably lies behind most of the humanitarian crises throughout history. This is certainly the case in recent times. Since it was established in 1992, ECHO's largest programmes have been to help the victims of war - in places as diverse as the Balkans, the African Great Lakes, Sudan, Afghanistan, Iraq and Colombia. Conflicts have a tendency to drag on, meaning that the needs can be protracted and humanitarian work has to be sustained for over long periods.

Until recently, natural disasters - although terrible for those caught up in them - have generally had fewer victims and the regions affected often have had shorter 'recovery' times. Nowadays, there are concerns about the apparent increase in the number and scale of natural events leading to widespread death, injury and destruction. The suspicion is that this trend may be less natural than was once assumed and that extreme climatic conditions such as high winds, torrential rains, flash floods and long droughts are caused by mankind's interference with the planet's ecological balance.

No-one can credibly make such a claim for the huge seismic jolt that occurred on the seabed off the coast of Sumatra on 26 December 2004. The resulting waves travelled thousands of miles and killed at least 250,000 people, making it one of the worst disasters ever recorded. Millions lost their homes and livelihoods. This was Mother Nature at her most terrifying.

When disaster strikes without warning, the Commission recognises the importance of a speedy response. Emergency decisions, adopted in just a few days, have long been possible and in 2001, a new fast-track "primary emergency" procedure was introduced. This allows for the release within hours of up to €3 million for immediate relief activities. Both procedures were used by the Commission in response to the Indian Ocean tsunami.

While speed is vital, it is also important to ensure that EU taxpayers money is used effectively to alleviate the suffering of those worst hit by humanitarian crises. The approach used by ECHO for the tsunami victims, as with other tragedies, involves a rolling programme that is sufficiently flexible to adapt to changing circumstances on the ground. It includes a strong emphasis on needs assessments. ECHO's field experts play a key role in identifying and assessing needs that can be addressed by EU humanitarian funds.

In a natural disaster, the initial fast-track decision often has to be taken before a full picture has emerged of the scale of the tragedy. This is right in the circumstances, speed being of the essence, and it does not undermine the principle that aid decisions should be based on the proper identification of needs. In fact, initial needs following a disaster are usually quite predictable - temporary shelters, blankets, emergency food and water supplies, and medical assistance. Up to €3 million can almost always be put to good use. In the days that follow, information about the situation in the field rapidly starts to flow to ECHO in Brussels as its experts and operational partners reach the affected areas and send back their reports. Sometimes, the news is good (or at least less bad) in terms of the extent of the suffering and follow-up funding may not be needed.

With the Boxing Day tsunami, the enormity of the tragedy soon became clear and the Commission reacted rapidly, adopting two emergency decisions, totalling €20 million, before the year's end. It was also recognised that more would be required and consideration was already being given to the next stage in the rolling programme.

ECHO's budget, unsurprisingly, includes reserve funds to meet unforeseen needs. The initial €23 million was drawn from these reserves. When the crisis is big, however, extra resources are sought from the emergency reserve of the European Community budget. Such requests have to be agreed by the European Parliament and the Council of Ministers. For the tsunami victims, €100 million was requested in early January, and granted in record time. A fourth decision, using €80 million of these extra funds, was adopted shortly afterwards.

With its needs-based approach, ECHO's mandate is to relieve the suffering of the most vulnerable. Many of these people are to be found outside the media spotlight in places such as Nepal, the Algerian desert or on the Thailand/Myanmar border. The availability of the emergency reserve allowed the Commission to maintain its commitment to these forgotten crisis zones while providing vital aid to the devastated communities on the shores of the Indian Ocean.





## ECHO funding for tsunami victims

On 26 December 2004, ECHO allocated €3 million\* under the Commission's fast-track "primary emergency" procedure, through the International Red Cross/Red Crescent Federation.

On 30 and 31 December, two further decisions, each for €10 million\*, were taken to provide humanitarian aid in Sri Lanka, Indonesia and the Maldives. These decisions funded the provision of food, essential non-food items, health, nutrition, water/sanitation, temporary shelter, psychosocial support and telecommunications.

On 6 January 2005, the Commission requested a further €100 million from the EC's emergency reserve. This request was speedily granted by the European Parliament and the Council. The bulk of the new resources (€80 million) were rapidly deployed in a fourth decision for humanitarian assistance to the stricken region.

\* €0.169 million remaining in ECHO's 2004 budget. €2.831 million from the 2005 budget. The €20 million in the second and third decisions also came from the 2005 budget.



## Sudan: a forgotten crisis enters the limelight

The biggest country in Africa, Sudan has seldom known peace since independence in 1956. Although decades of civil war created massive humanitarian needs among the most vulnerable Sudanese, the country was rarely mentioned in the international media.

The civil war in Darfur which began in 2003 escalated massively in 2004, prompting the UN to call it the "largest humanitarian crisis in the world". Conflict has, so far, displaced two million people and forced a further 200,000 to flee across the border into Chad. This little known region in north-west Sudan was suddenly thrown into the spotlight. The humanitarian crisis resulting from the conflict needed a fast and effective response. With such a large proportion of Darfur's population uprooted before the planting season, the harvest would be meagre. A major food shortage was looming.

ECHO was not a newcomer to Darfur, having funded projects there during the past decade. Additional aid programmes in response to the conflict were already up and running in 2003, well before the crisis hit the headlines. However it soon became clear that even with extra resources, more would be needed to respond to this growing tragedy.

ECHO reinforced support for Darfur throughout the year to meet needs as they arose. In addition to €20 million initially budgeted for Sudan, a series of quick decisions totalling €83 million were taken to help victims of the escalating conflict in Greater Darfur, as well as the refugees in Chad. ECHO's field presence was boosted with the opening of an office in Nyala (South Darfur) in September.

But financial support alone would not be enough to stave off catastrophe. Access is always a problem in Sudan, due to the size of the territory, the poor road infrastructure, rainy seasons and insecurity. In the first part of 2004, access to the victims in Darfur was limited even further due to bureaucratic constraints. Many operational partners had problems obtaining the necessary papers to travel to the affected areas.

The international community put intense pressure on the fighting parties and the government of Sudan to allow full access for humanitarian agencies. Many promises were made, the most significant of which was the signing of a ceasefire and humanitarian access agreement in N'djamena (Chad) in April.

ECHO participated in international advocacy efforts, for example by co-chairing a donor alert group in Geneva in June. When Commissioner Louis Michel travelled to Sudan in November, he urged the authorities to abide by their obligations to protect their own citizens. This includes actively disarming and prosecuting armed groups acting against civilians.

The lifting of bureaucratic constraints improved assistance significantly, and by the second half of 2004, a major international humanitarian programme was underway. Donors put cash on the table, and aid agencies improved their operational capacity to respond to the disaster. Thankfully, the much feared food crisis was averted.

Despite positive developments, violence continued to hamper aid operations in Darfur throughout 2004. Sadly, several humanitarian workers working for ECHO funded projects were kidnapped or killed carrying out their duties. In June an ECHO employee travelling with a 16-strong UN mission was detained by Darfur rebels for several days. Too often, relief organisations were forced to halt work until security was restored, and vulnerable civilians were again the main victims.

Darfur certainly deserves massive humanitarian aid and media attention. But this should not be to the detriment of other regions of Sudan that also need humanitarian support. In southern Sudan, victims of one of the longest running civil wars have suffered silently for decades. Even when formal development co-operation was suspended, ECHO continued to allocate humanitarian assistance to both north and south Sudan (€310 million since 1994).

The peace agreement between the government and the southern rebel movement (SPLM/A) in January 2005 was an historical landmark that should improve the lives of millions of Sudanese. But violent conflict in Darfur continues to overshadow these positive developments. The hope is that, with the consolidation of peace and stability in all regions of Sudan, it will be possible to move forward to rehabilitation and sustainable development. It is clear though that, even if peace is established throughout Sudan, humanitarian needs there will have to be met by the international community for some time to come. The European Commission, working through ECHO, has been funding relief efforts in Sudan from the beginning and it will stay as long as is required - even after the TV cameras have moved on.





## “My people will know not to follow”

Seref Marou is the chief community leader at Kasab camp, near Kutum in the Darfur region of Sudan. Before the war his people were mainly farmers and traders. When his village was attacked, some of the people went to Chad, some went to Kabkabiya and some came here to Kutum. It took him three days to walk from his village to Kutum. When they first arrived they sat under some trees for shelter. They stayed with some kind people in town, until relief workers came along to give them some plastic sheeting to make tents.

He has been living in the camp since it was first set up. Seref says there is nothing much to do during the day, the men just sit around in the shade.

“I do not plan to go home now”, he said. “But if one day it is safe again, our homeland is better than here. If someone says it is safe again I will go there myself. If I do not come back then my people will know not to follow.”



# ECHO at work

## In brief

### Policy aspects

In 2004, ECHO's needs-based response to humanitarian crises was channelled through 102 funding decisions, for a total of €570.4 million. Its response to humanitarian emergencies followed the global evolution of needs, as reflected in the regional distribution of funding patterns. African, Caribbean and Pacific countries were the biggest recipients of aid (€301.6 million), followed by Asia (€111.1 million). In response to the humanitarian crisis in Darfur (Sudan), ECHO requested extra resources of €25 million from the budgetary authority (European Parliament and Council of Ministers), bringing total humanitarian funding for that country to €91 million. Important financial support continued to be provided for the Palestinian population (€37.4 million) to provide for basic humanitarian needs in the absence of a political settlement in the Middle East. The enormous humanitarian needs in Chechnya resulting from more than four years of conflict continued to be largely neglected by the international community. ECHO therefore maintained high funding levels (€28.5 million).

ECHO's annual aid strategy continued to focus on forgotten crises, where there was little interest from political or public opinion and few other donors were present. For 2004, the following most forgotten crises were identified: Algeria (Western Saharan refugees), Democratic Republic of Congo, Guinea, Haiti, India, Myanmar/Burma, Nepal, Northern Caucasus (Chechnya), Thailand, Somalia, Sudan, Uganda and Yemen. The total support allocated to these forgotten crises during the year amounted to €238 million, representing 42% of total funds.

As in previous years, ECHO had to react to new emergencies in 2004, notably the Asian tsunami on 26 December. The European Commission approved three decisions between 26 and 31 December to fund relief efforts for the victims.

Recognising the central role of key UN agencies in the

effective delivery of humanitarian aid, ECHO supported their core mandate on a more systematic basis through 'thematic funding'. Activities funded included the development of information systems by the UN Office for the Co-ordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA), the development of needs assessment tools used by the World Food Programme (WFP), the reinforcement of the World Health Organisation's (WHO) capacity to respond to health emergencies and the strengthening of the UN Children's Fund's (UNICEF) child protection and emergency response work.

Under its DIPECHO (disaster preparedness) programme, ECHO adopted specific action plans for Central Asia, Central America and South East Asia. In addition, it continued to incorporate disaster preparedness activities in its wider humanitarian programmes. In the thematic funding framework, ECHO supported international initiatives to strengthen disaster preparedness, notably through the development of a Global Disaster Alert System with OCHA and the EC Joint Research Centre, and through financial backing for the World Conference on Disaster Reduction held in January 2005 in Kobe, Japan.

As in previous years, ECHO pursued an active relationship with other EU institutions, the Member States, international organisations and other relevant actors, including major non-EU donors such as the United States. At the EU level, ECHO was vigilant and active in ensuring that humanitarian principles remained high on the agenda both within the EU institutions and in international forums. Thanks largely to this approach, a specific provision has been inserted in the draft European Constitution entrenching humanitarian principles.

### Finance and audit

ECHO's financial programming is based on a thorough evaluation of humanitarian needs in the world, taking account of the views of operational partners. ECHO



#### Contents

- Generic Security Guide
- Security Training Directory
- Security Report



### ECHO Security Review

2004

**The “Generic Security Guide” provides comprehensive advice on all aspects of security. It is available for use by NGOs and other humanitarian organisations.**

initially set aside 15% of its 2004 operational budget to cover unforeseen emergency needs. During the year, it became clear that these funds were not enough to meet the scale of additional needs, particularly in the Darfur region of Sudan. ECHO therefore requested its original €490 million budget to be raised to €570.4 million. 100% of the funds allocated were committed, through 837 contracts.

ECHO completed 27 field audits reporting on projects actually underway as well as 19 desk audits of grant agreements. 13 ECHO Office audits were also finalised. A start was made on the verification of costs incurred by UN partners for ECHO-funded projects.

A firm of professional auditors contracted to scrutinise ECHO-funded projects at the European headquarters of operational partners finalised 71 audits in 2004.

The results undoubtedly help to improve partners' financial and administrative controls.

#### Evaluation

Evaluation work undertaken by ECHO during the year included consideration of key themes, an examination of selected partner operations and an analysis of ECHO-funded operations in selected countries or regions.

On the thematic side, ECHO:

- Participated in a joint study with a number of EU Member States on the quality of aid programmes for people displaced inside their own countries. The conclusions and recommendations were presented in a synthesis report.
- Launched an evaluation of how far cross-cutting issues such as security, HIV/AIDS and water/sanitation are taken into account in humanitarian operations.

- Undertook a review of how better to mainstream the prevention of HIV/AIDS into aid programmes. The study resulted in a concept paper on ECHO's specific role as well as model guidelines for aid workers in the field.

Partner evaluations completed during the year concerned the International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies (IFRC) and the French NGO Action Contre la Faim (ACF). Both organisations were shown to be dependable partners with high standards of professionalism and sound management.

On a geographical basis, ECHO-funded operations were evaluated in North Korea, Sri Lanka, Zimbabwe, the Democratic Republic of Congo, the Middle-East and the Caribbean (for disaster preparedness actions). The overall assessment of the evaluators was that the actions financed by ECHO in these countries/regions met key humanitarian objectives.

#### Security

ECHO undertook a security review in response to the increasingly challenging conditions affecting the work of humanitarians in the field. The review is entitled “Standards and Practices for the Security of Humanitarian Personnel and Advocacy for Humanitarian Space”. Following consultation with 75 partner humanitarian organisations over a nine month period, three publications were produced: a generic security guide, a security training directory and a report on the security of humanitarian personnel. The report highlights six recommended good practices and identifies the need for humanitarian organisations to improve the recording of security incidents and ‘near misses’.



**Opening session for students on the NOHA programme leading to the award of a master's degree in humanitarian assistance.**

### **Information and communication**

ECHO jointly organised a "Youth Solidarity Day" with the European Parliament in January 2004. 540 young people and 60 teachers from the then 15 Member States travelled to Brussels for the event. They participated in interactive sessions led by NGOs, and debated a resolution on EU humanitarian aid in the chamber of the European Parliament.

Guidelines to improve joint communication between ECHO and its partners were produced. These encourage innovative and cost-effective ways of achieving common communication goals.

Several publications were produced or updated including ECHO's Annual Review, a brochure on the DIPECHO programme, four leaflets on country programmes and an introduction to ECHO in four languages. Other activities designed to inform the public about ECHO's work included presentations at conferences and to visiting groups, the preparation of briefings and materials for the media, billboard displays in various European locations, and support for audiovisual and radio productions highlighting humanitarian issues.

### **Training and studies**

A complete training programme on the new legal framework governing ECHO's relations with its partners was launched, covering operational partners as well as ECHO headquarters and field staff.

Under the grant facility for training and studies, Oxfam (UK), Caritas (Germany) and Solint (Italy) organised seminars and training sessions, with the support of interactive CD-ROMs and other learning materials.

ECHO also continued to support the Network on Humanitarian Assistance (NOHA), which offers a one-year European Masters' degree through seven participating universities. Students follow a curriculum that provides a comprehensive overview of the humanitarian aid environment. Their studies are complemented by an internship either in a humanitarian organisation or in ECHO.



## Global reach

### Humanitarian funding by country/region

#### **Afghan crisis (Afghanistan, Pakistan, Iran)**

##### **Funding - €35.16 million**

Since the end of major military action in 2002, more than three million refugees and internally displaced people (IDPs) have returned to their home areas in Afghanistan from Pakistan and Iran. However, after 23 years of conflict and five years of drought, the country still faces enormous needs.

In 2004, ECHO continued to assist the most vulnerable groups notably by supporting the return and reintegration of refugees and IDPs. Activities included rehabilitating water/sanitation systems and providing shelter, healthcare, nutrition and protection. The beneficiaries were returnees, IDPs, other vulnerable people in Afghanistan and Afghan refugees in Pakistan and Iran.

Given the problems caused by lack of access and insecurity, ECHO continued to fund essential air transport operations and an advisory security service for NGOs.

#### **Angola, Namibia and Zambia**

##### **Funding - €11.8 million**

Despite the 2002 ceasefire, almost 30 years of civil war in Angola left a legacy that continued to weigh heavily on the country. There were significant ongoing needs linked to both repatriation and rehabilitation of refugees. Large numbers of refugees were still living in neighbouring countries (DRC, Zambia and Namibia) at the end of the year while 70% of the 3.8 million displaced people who have returned, have done so without assistance, to areas unsuitable for resettlement. Landmines and poor infrastructure continue to hamper access to these areas, perpetuating food insecurity.

ECHO focused on the return and resettlement of people who had fled the fighting. It supported the repatriation of around 45,000 refugees from Namibia and Zambia, and

funded a wide variety of projects including nutritional support, primary health care, emergency water and sanitation and provision of seeds and livestock. There was also funding for HIV/AIDS prevention and awareness programmes, and de-mining.

#### **Bahamas**

##### **Funding - €0.48 million**

Hurricane Jeanne hit the Bahamas in October, barely two months after Hurricane Frances. Both were highly destructive storms. ECHO funded the distribution of food and basic essentials, as well as health care, for between 2,000 and 3,000 Haitian families affected by the storms who were illegally settled on the islands of Abaco, Grand Bahama and Eleuthera.

#### **Bangladesh**

##### **Funding - €5.762 million**

In July, Bangladesh and north-east India experienced the worst flooding for several years. In addition to the high death toll, crops and livestock were seriously hit and many people were marooned.

ECHO initially allocated emergency funding for drinking water, medical supplies, shelter, food and other basic essentials. A follow-up decision, taken after a further episode of flooding in September, focused on supporting livelihood recovery and improving water and sanitation.

ECHO also continued to support the Jumma people of the Chittagong Hill Tracts affected by communal violence. Assistance included shelter, support for basic needs and measures to help rebuild the livelihoods of the affected people.

**Burundi****Funding - €18.99 million**

Despite the inauguration of a transitional government in November 2003, the huge scale of the humanitarian crisis in Burundi continued to be apparent. In addition to an estimated 300,000 deaths during ten years of civil war, almost a million people were displaced. Many fled to neighbouring countries while others were displaced inside Burundi. With poor harvests and the spread of cassava disease, an estimated one in five Burundians faced starvation.

The resettlement process, begun in 2002, continued. However, up to 700,000 Burundians are believed still to be in Tanzania and repatriation is expected to go on for at least another two years. By mid-2004, around half the estimated 280,000 IDPs living in displacement sites were either on the move back home or had already returned. Most of the territory of Burundi was also accessible, including eastern border areas with Tanzania, where conflict had raged for more than seven years. However, fighting in Bujumbura Rural continued to cause temporary displacement in the vicinity of the capital.

The focus of ECHO's main aid package (a "global plan" for €15 million) was to reduce mortality and morbidity particularly among the most vulnerable populations (refugees, returnees, IDPs, women and children). Funds targeted health and nutrition, food security, water and sanitation. A further €3.99 million was allocated to help relocate and support Congolese (DRC) refugees in Burundi, following a massacre in Mutimbuzi commune, and to help Burundian returnees.

**Cambodia****Funding - €3.5 million**

Although the humanitarian situation in Cambodia is no longer critical, there are still pockets of extreme vulnerability. Only 26% of the population has access to adequate drinking water and infant/child mortality rates are the highest in the region.

ECHO focused on two sectors: access to safe water and health. The latter included vaccination campaigns and mass de-worming of children. In 2004, 160,000 children and mothers benefited from ECHO-supported health interventions. At least 90,000 Cambodians benefited from ECHO water and sanitation actions.

**Central African Republic****Funding - €0.47 million**

Since 1996, the Central African Republic has been destabilised by successive military coups. A new regime came to power in March 2003, but the north-west of the country remained

largely beyond the government's writ and public disorder there disrupted proper access to basic healthcare. ECHO funded water/sanitation and health measures including the supply of basic medical provisions.

**Chad****Funding - €12 million**

By the end of 2004, an estimated 200,000 Sudanese had sought refuge in eastern Chad to escape internal conflict in their own country. While most of these people were accommodated in camps, tens of thousands remained at the border.

€4 million was initially allocated to help Sudanese refugees and host communities that had taken in refugees despite their own extreme poverty. An additional €8 million was provided in August to meet further refugee needs. ECHO relief focused on boosting access to health care, nutrition programmes, drinking water, sanitation, shelter and basic relief items. There was also support for emergency refugee protection activities.

**China****Funding - €2 million**

China was affected by a series of severe floods, including flash flooding and landslides. Fourteen million people were affected, 95,000 homes were destroyed and nearly 400,000 tonnes of crops washed away.

ECHO financed projects focusing on sanitation, water supplies, health and hygiene education in the low-income rural communities affected by the floods. It also supported disaster-preparedness actions aimed at reducing the impact of similar events in the future.

**Coastal West Africa  
(Liberia, Sierra Leone, Guinea and Côte d'Ivoire)****Funding - €24.3 million**

The countries of coastal West Africa have experienced a succession of conflicts over the last 14 years. Recently Liberia and Côte d'Ivoire have been particularly affected.

For more than a decade, Liberians suffered displacement, harassment and human rights violations. The UN estimated that 500,000 people were internally displaced during this period. A peace agreement, signed in Accra in August 2003, enabled humanitarian organisations to start delivering aid outside Monrovia. ECHO funds were used primarily for health care, water/sanitation, basic relief items and protection. Refugees and IDPs began returning to their home areas and ECHO assisted this process.





The situation in Côte d'Ivoire remained highly volatile. Large sections of the country had no public services and the territory was divided between government and rebel forces. Some 750,000 Ivorians were displaced in addition to the 64,000 Liberians still living as refugees in the country. ECHO assistance focused on health, nutrition and protection. Additional funding was provided in November to help vulnerable people directly affected by an upsurge in violence.

In Sierra Leone the situation continued to stabilise, 228,000 refugees having returned home over the previous two years. Following a successful transition to longer term rehabilitation and development, ECHO withdrew from the country, although it continues to monitor the situation closely with a view to responding rapidly in the event of any new emergency. Many operations previously funded by ECHO have been integrated into longer term operations under the European Development Fund (EDF). Although many of those who fled to Guinea in recent years to escape strife have now returned home, an estimated 80,000 refugees remained in the country. ECHO focused its assistance on the continuing needs of this population.

### **Colombia, Ecuador**

#### **Funding - €8.5 million**

More than three million Colombians have been driven from their homes since 1985 due to conflict between the government and various armed factions. In 2004, army offensives on guerrilla strongholds in rural areas increased the number of new displacements. Many of those who fled now live in shanty towns with inadequate access to water, sanitation, health and education services.

Basic needs during the first three months after displacement are largely provided through ECHO's partner, the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC). This is the only organisation with significant access to regions where displacement is occurring. In 2004, 120,000 newly displaced people were helped with ECHO funding.

ECHO also aided 40,000 people in the next phase after displacement (three to 12 months). The funds, largely channelled through European NGOs, provided for temporary shelter, water/sanitation facilities, basic healthcare and psychosocial support. There was a particular focus on remote rural areas, where public services are limited and people are more vulnerable.

Ecuador hosted growing numbers of Colombian refugees with up to a thousand crossing the border every month to seek asylum. An estimated 350,000 Colombians now live legally or illegally in Ecuador. ECHO funded UNHCR to establish effective protection and registration mechanisms for these asylum seekers, to provide emergency relief for them when

they first arrive in the country and to help with their socio-economic integration.

Emergency funding of €500,000 was also allocated to help communities in remote areas following the most serious autumn floods for many years.

### **Congo (Democratic Republic)**

#### **Funding - €40 million**

The inauguration of a transitional government in July 2003 officially ended seven years of civil war in the DRC. While this offered an opportunity to secure long-lasting peace, the country still faced enormous humanitarian problems.

Some four million people were displaced during the conflict. The health system has been devastated with the result that mortality rates due to common diseases such as malaria have soared. HIV/AIDS also grew rapidly. Reduced access to food in conflict-affected areas created widespread food insecurity and pockets of acute malnutrition.

In the past five years, ECHO has been the country's largest humanitarian aid donor. Its focus continued to be on the most needy - notably children and women. Paving the way for further sustainable recovery, ECHO supported the rehabilitation of the local healthcare system as well as funding preventive medical interventions, food security activities, and the return and resettlement of IDPs.

### **Congo (Republic)**

#### **Funding - €2 million**

The long-running conflict in the Pool region of the Republic of Congo has had severe consequences for the civilian population. Health and social structures have been destroyed and agricultural production severely disrupted. ECHO helped improve living conditions for more than 100,000 vulnerable people affected by the conflict with funding to strengthen food security and healthcare, and to resettle displaced people.

### **Cuba**

#### **Funding - €1 million**

In 2004, Hurricanes Charley and Ivan hit Cuba. The storms caused widespread damage to houses, schools, health facilities and crops. Around two million people were temporarily evacuated from their homes. The aftermath of the hurricanes included almost 6,000 homes totally destroyed (leaving 22,000 people homeless) and more than 89,000 houses with structural damage. ECHO provided aid to replace roofs as well emergency cooking kits, benefiting almost 18,000 people.

**Dominican Republic**

**Funding - €1.232 million**

In May, ECHO funded the provision of healthcare, water and essential household items to victims of severe flooding in the south-east of the Dominican Republic.

Later in the year, tropical storm Jeanne brought more destructive flooding, this time to the east and north-east of the country. At least 9,000 families were severely affected. 200,000 hectares of crops were destroyed and there was an increase in the incidence of epidemic diseases, notably dengue fever. ECHO provided emergency relief for some 65,000 flood victims including food aid and water/sanitation projects. An estimated 30,000 of the most vulnerable people benefited from roof rehabilitation projects and medical aid.

**East Timor**

**Funding - €0.25 million**

ECHO responded to the government of East Timor's emergency appeal, following severe drought in 2003, funding food aid, agricultural inputs and measures to tackle acute malnutrition.

**Eritrea**

**Funding - €1 million**

The onset of drought at the end of 2002 prompted ECHO to renew its activities in Eritrea. Groundwater levels have receded following four years of inadequate rainfall, and

women and children are forced to walk long distances in search of water. The amount of water consumed per person has dropped to one third of the recommended daily average. The drought has also caused serious harvest shortfalls and many livestock have perished, leading to widespread food insecurity. Tens of thousands of people face water shortages and nutritional problems.

ECHO helped meet water, health and nutritional needs of an estimated 150,000 people, mainly women and children in rural areas.

**Ethiopia**

**Funding - €6.998 million**

The previous year's drought heightened vulnerability in Ethiopia, where new needs emerged rapidly in 2004. A lack of rain in areas such as the Somali region resulted in water supplies being exhausted. The amount of pasture available was greatly reduced and livestock losses of 60% were recorded in some areas. This led to shortages of milk, a staple food item for marginalised pastoralist populations.

ECHO relief was directed at improving the pastoralists' access to water as well as boosting healthcare and providing complementary and therapeutic feeding for malnutrition victims. ECHO funded livestock vaccinations to maintain a basic stock of healthy animals capable of providing milk. Emergency water and nutritional assistance was also provided for drought-affected areas together with medicines to address a malaria epidemic and other diseases.





## Georgia

### Funding - €4 million

Georgia still faced considerable and largely forgotten humanitarian problems, a legacy of the 1992 conflict in the autonomous republic of Abkhazia that led to the displacement of more than 250,000 people. Declining international support for the victims of this crisis meant that the essential needs of many people were not being met. ECHO funded the provision of food and income-generation programmes for 60,000 of the most vulnerable people in Western Georgia, including Abkhazia. It also supported basic rehabilitation of centres for displaced people and access to primary health care for women and children.

## Grenada

### Funding - €3 million

Hurricane Ivan caused widespread damage in Grenada with almost two-thirds of the country's 95,000 residents losing the roof over their heads. ECHO helped around 5,000 families worst affected by the storm. Emergency food, water, shelter, hygiene kits and roofing tarpaulins were provided. ECHO also funded water and sanitary rehabilitation projects and, in a second phase, the repair of family homes and food security activities.

## Guatemala

### Funding - €0.8 million

In Guatemala, chronic malnutrition affects many women and almost half of all children under five. With little or no medical coverage, and no central system for alerting agencies to the problem, indigenous people in isolated rural areas are at particular risk. ECHO, therefore, focused on the early detection of severe malnutrition and on training health workers who specialise in nutrition. It also funded direct nutritional support for severely malnourished children in some remote areas where no other support was available.

## Haiti

### Funding - €11.565 million

For several years, Haiti has grappled with a serious political and socio-economic crisis. The situation deteriorated dramatically in February 2004 when towns in the north were seized by armed rebels and criminal gangs, and economic activity was severely disrupted. This exacerbated the suffering of vulnerable people already facing difficulties making ends meet. ECHO responded promptly, funding emergency health care and protection activities for victims of the violence.

Severe weather events aggravated the situation. Torrential rain in May led to serious flooding in the south-west while in September, devastating floods were triggered by tropical

storm Jeanne. ECHO provided urgent aid to an estimated 60,000 people affected by the disaster. Funds were used to purchase emergency food, relief items and medicines, and to restore water supplies, health services and agriculture.

## India

### Funding - €3 million

More than 10,000 people died when the tsunami generated by an earthquake off Sumatra struck the east coast of India on 26 December (see page 6).

Before this tragedy, ECHO's efforts were focused on meeting humanitarian needs at the other end of the country. Since 1989, tens of thousands of people have been killed or reported missing in the Kashmir conflict, and more than 350,000 have been displaced. The lack of security and widespread violence hinders humanitarian work and leaves many people feeling isolated and vulnerable.

The focus of ECHO's assistance was on providing protection, psychosocial support and primary healthcare to vulnerable groups and on raising awareness of the principles of international humanitarian law.

Funds were also allocated for victims of the exceptional monsoon floods that hit north-east India, killing hundreds and leaving millions marooned. ECHO funded medical supplies, shelter, food and basic essentials for the most vulnerable people affected by the floods.

## Indonesia

### Funding - €3.5 million

The 26 December tsunami had its epicentre just off the coast of Indonesia, and the western island of Sumatra, notably the province of Aceh, suffered huge devastation (the tsunami tragedy is covered separately on page 6).

Prior to this catastrophe, there was conflict in the province between government forces and an Aceh separatist movement. While closely monitoring the situation, ECHO was constrained by a lack of access to victims of the conflict, preventing a proper identification of their needs.

In Central Sulawesi, another flashpoint, ECHO-funded programmes to restore the livelihoods of both displaced and local people affected by communal violence were initiated. Psycho-social support was also provided for young people.

In other parts of Indonesia previously affected by conflict but where the security and humanitarian situation has stabilised, ECHO was able to phase out its assistance for IDPs and medium-term aid programmes are now in place.



**Iran****Funding - €7.661 million**

Following the devastating earthquake that struck the Iranian city of Bam on 26 December 2003, ECHO followed up its initial fast-track funding of €3 million (allocated the day after the earthquake) with a further €6.2 million. These funds were used for healthcare, the rehabilitation of health structures, water/sanitation systems and hygiene facilities as well as psychosocial care for the most vulnerable groups (children and elderly people) affected by the tragedy.

During 2004, ECHO also continued to provide support for Afghan refugees living in Iran.

**Jamaica****Funding - €1.2 million**

Thousands of Jamaican homes were damaged or destroyed by Hurricanes Ivan and Jeanne leaving some 60,000 people needing humanitarian aid. ECHO provided 4,000 vulnerable families with emergency shelter, drinking water, sanitation, health care, hygiene kits and other basic items.

**Kenya****Funding - €3.85 million**

Northern Kenya was affected by severe drought, with pastoralists particularly badly hit. Some 600,000 people benefited from ECHO's emergency drought response, which included emergency water, health and veterinary assistance.

**Laos****Funding - €1.5 million**

Laos, with its widely different ethnic groups, is one of the world's poorest countries. Government-induced relocations, alongside spontaneous population movements, have had a negative impact on livelihoods. Ethnic minorities living in the mountains are particularly vulnerable.

ECHO provided drinking water, improved sanitation facilities and supplied other basic essentials for vulnerable families. Support included tools to help people improve their living conditions and food security. Programmes to clear unexploded ordnance and improve mine awareness were also implemented.

**Madagascar****Funding - €2 million**

High winds and floods associated with Cyclone Gafilo destroyed 200,000 homes and affected 774,000 people in Madagascar. Large areas of crops were also ruined. ECHO provided prompt relief to around 60,000 people, funding

emergency repairs to roads and bridges, water decontamination, sanitation measures and primary health care to prevent disease outbreaks. Food and seeds were also distributed to the most needy families, together with shelter repair kits for rebuilding homes.

**Middle East****Funding - €37.35 million**

Conditions in the occupied Palestinian Territories deteriorated further in 2004 as the peace process remained deadlocked. Closures, house demolitions (especially in the Gaza Strip), and other measures by the Israeli authorities made life increasingly intolerable for ordinary Palestinians. 70% of the estimated 3.8 million population was food insecure or in danger of becoming so, while the numbers in poverty remained close to two million. Construction of a "security barrier" in the West Bank and around East Jerusalem, which the International Court of Justice ruled was unlawful in July, left hundreds of thousands cut off from their farmland, wells or medical and social services. Aid agencies continued to face problems gaining access to those most in need and the cost of delivering humanitarian aid remained high.

ECHO assisted 850,000 people in the West Bank and 175,000 in the Gaza Strip with food and water/sanitation measures. Some 50,000 people were provided with temporary job opportunities. Transport facilities were provided to enable health personnel to reach adversely affected communities, medicines were distributed and at least 80,000 people received health and psychosocial support. ECHO also funded ICRC protection activities and NGO coordination, while around 20,000 people affected by home demolitions in the Gaza Strip received emergency relief or temporary accommodation.

ECHO continued to support vulnerable Palestinian refugees in neighbouring countries. In Lebanon, medicines and medical supplies were provided to cover 50% of the annual requirements of the Palestinian Red Crescent Society. Services to disabled people, the elderly and children were funded, as well as water and sanitation actions benefiting some 60,000 refugees. Protection activities were also supported. In Jordan, Lebanon and Syria, funds were earmarked to rehabilitate the shelters of more than 4,000 people facing particular hardship. Finally, support was provided to some 1,500 refugees from Iraq still hosted in two camps in Jordan and in the no-man's land between Jordan and Iraq.

**Mongolia****Funding - €1 million**

Mongolia has been hit by an unprecedented three-year sequence of severe winters followed by exceptional summer droughts. Around 2.5 million livestock have died as a result,





with 665,000 people directly affected. After several years of relief programmes, ECHO funding this year aimed at enhancing the disaster preparedness of herder and ex-herder households through agricultural projects at community level. Measures to improve the food security of the most vulnerable groups (particularly poor urban children) were also supported.

### **Morocco**

#### **Funding - €0.975 million**

A powerful earthquake near Al Hoceima in northern Morocco killed 700 people and wounded hundreds more, with many families left homeless. ECHO provided funding to help meet initial needs for urgent medical assistance, clean drinking water, household utensils, hygiene products and shelter.

### **Myanmar (Burma) and Thailand**

#### **Funding - €19.74 million**

The situation in Myanmar has led to an acute humanitarian crisis that particularly affects ethnic minorities, displaced people, detainees and other vulnerable groups. The effects of the crisis are also felt in Thailand, where vulnerable minorities from Myanmar have taken refuge.

ECHO provided €11.45 million to assist more than 140,000 Burmese refugees living in ten temporary camps in Thailand, close to the Myanmar border. This funding covered basic food aid, improvements to health, water and sanitation infrastructures, mine-awareness actions and assistance for 800 people handicapped following mine accidents.

In Myanmar itself more than €8 million was provided to help vulnerable people, particularly in the border areas with Thailand and China as well as in Rakhine State where malnutrition is widespread and health services are limited. ECHO funded medical assistance and protection for approximately 600,000 people. Key targets included addressing the malaria epidemic, improving access to clean drinking water and boosting primary health care. Treatment was also provided for 14,000 victims of acute malnutrition. The living conditions of some 600 children in special centres were also improved.

On 26 December, Myanmar and Thailand were both victims of the tsunami that ravaged the Indian Ocean region (see page 6).

### **Nepal and Bhutan**

#### **Funding - €4 million**

The plight of more than 100,000 refugees from Bhutan, who have lived in camps in Nepal for the last 12 years, attracts little international attention. The refugees are caught in a legal vacuum, as neither Nepal nor Bhutan recognises them

as citizens, and they rely entirely on external aid. Over the last three years, because of donor fatigue, the WFP has had increasing difficulties providing food for the camp residents. Recognising that the interruption of supplies would have disastrous humanitarian consequences, the Commission allocated €2 million through ECHO for the purchase of food.

A further €2 million was allocated for victims of the conflict between Maoist insurgency groups and the government. ECHO-funded interventions included protection activities, water and sanitation improvements and primary health care. Aid was focused on the mid-west region which has been particularly affected by the insurgency.

### **North Korea**

#### **Funding - €16.75 million**

The Ryongchon train disaster in April 2004 killed 161 people, injured many more and caused widespread destruction and homelessness. In response to an official appeal for international aid, ECHO funded the speedy provision of vital medical supplies, first aid kits, kitchen sets, water decontamination tablets, tents, blankets and tarpaulins for shelter.

In recent years, humanitarian needs in North Korea have persisted. Frequent food shortages have led to widespread malnutrition and increased susceptibility to disease, particularly among children. Healthcare suffers from insufficient supplies and equipment. Water and sanitation systems are dysfunctional and power cuts commonplace.

ECHO focused on the needs of children through the rehabilitation of maternity facilities and the provision of therapeutic food, Vitamin A supplements and deworming programmes. It also continued to provide much-needed equipment and medicines and helped rehabilitate health centres, hospitals, specialist medical facilities, water supply systems and sanitary facilities.

### **Northern Caucasus (Chechnya crisis)**

#### **Funding - €28.5 million**

The Chechnya conflict has resulted in widespread physical damage and enormous human suffering. An estimated 50,000 Chechens are still exiled in neighbouring republics while a further 140,000 are displaced inside Chechnya.

ECHO provided substantial funding to help meet the needs of more than 450,000 people affected by the crisis, both inside Chechnya and in neighbouring Ingushetia and Dagestan. Assistance included basic food aid for vulnerable people in the three republics, water supplies for Grozny, support for hospitals and primary health care in Chechnya and shelters for IDPs in Ingushetia. Essential non-food items were also provided and protection activities undertaken for IDPs in all three republics.

Other ECHO-funded actions included continued mine-awareness training for children in Ingushetia and Chechnya, improvements to sanitary conditions through the construction of latrines, water points and showers in IDP settlements in Ingushetia and support for primary education and vocational training in Chechnya and Ingushetia.

### Peru

#### Funding - €1.9 million

Extreme winter conditions in the Andes, with temperatures falling below minus 30°C, led to a severe crisis for the alpaca shepherds in Peru who depend on their herds for survival. Many animals died in the bitter cold leaving the shepherds and their families with little or no income. The cold also had a serious effect on human health. ECHO funded much-needed nutrition, medicines and basic health assistance for the affected families together with animal feed for their surviving livestock.

### Philippines

#### Funding - €1.65 million

The June 2003 ceasefire between the government and the Moro Islamic Liberation Front (MILF) on Mindanao continued to hold, allowing most IDPs to return home, although a full peace agreement had yet to be signed. ECHO provided initial support to returnees and local people more generally, focusing on water, sanitation and health. Assuming the situation continues to stabilise, ECHO anticipates phasing out its operations by 2006.

In November, Typhoon Winnie, following in the wake of tropical depression Merbok and Typhoon Muifa, brought widespread destruction including landslides and floods. ECHO responded with emergency assistance for 200,000 people.

### Sahrawi refugees

#### Funding - €8 million

ECHO continued to support the Sahrawi refugees who have lived in the Algerian desert close to Tindouf since 1975. According to UNHCR, 158,000 people still live in refugee camps, dependent on humanitarian aid. ECHO provided basic food supplies and supported the replenishment of the buffer stock that ensures the refugees receive regular and adequate food supplies. The rehabilitation of a third chicken farm will help provide more varied and protein-rich foodstuffs. Smara camp has also been connected to the water supply network.

### Somalia

#### Funding - €9.15 million

Somalia's long-running crisis continued due to a combination of armed conflict and severe weather (drought and floods). The country's water supply systems have long since collapsed and 30% of the population has no access to basic health serv-

ices. ECHO focused on improving access to effective health, proper nutrition and clean drinking water.

Droughts, floods and fighting have also seriously disrupted livestock production, leading to food insecurity in many areas. ECHO supported projects to minimise the impact of climatic hazards on livestock by funding vaccinations and supplying food supplements. Seeds, tools and irrigation equipment were also provided to boost crop production. Some 500,000 people were expected to benefit from these activities.

### Southern Africa (Lesotho and Swaziland)

#### Funding - €2 million

The crisis in Lesotho and Swaziland is due to the cumulative effects of drought, crop failures, inefficient agricultural policies and dwindling economic activity, compounded by the highest HIV/AIDS prevalence rates in the world (39% of adults in Swaziland and 29% in Lesotho). The result is that many people face food insecurity.

ECHO supported vulnerable households in drought-affected rural areas. Supplementary food, school feeding and family parcels were provided, benefiting an estimated 87,000 people (children as well as adults affected by HIV/AIDS). More than 12,000 households received agricultural inputs to help them regain some level of self-sufficiency. Funds were also provided for HIV/AIDS awareness campaigns.

### Sri Lanka

#### Funding - €6.5 million

More than 30,000 people died when the tsunami generated by an earthquake off Sumatra struck Sri Lanka on 26 December (see page 6)

Before the tsunami tragedy, humanitarian efforts continued to be focused on needs following the 19-year long civil war. The ceasefire signed in February 2002 between the government and Tamil separatists had brought new hope for peace. But it was also the catalyst for large-scale population movements. 372,000 IDPs have now returned to their home areas but hundreds of thousands of others are still displaced. In addition, 60,000 Tamil refugees remain exiled in camps in Tamil Nadu (India).

In 2004, ECHO assisted 250,000 people – refugees, returnees, IDPs living in welfare centres and resident populations - with integrated programmes focusing on the provision of essential non-food items, shelter, water/sanitation, and food security.

Up to a million unexploded mines are scattered across the former conflict zone. ECHO-funded mine disposal and awareness-raising operations have contributed to a reduction in the number of landmine injuries from 15-20 a month immediately after the ceasefire to between 4 and 7 a month by the end of the year.



## Sudan

### Funding - €91 million

The situation in Darfur was viewed by many as the world's worst humanitarian crisis. ECHO, which has been funding humanitarian actions in Sudan for many years, mainly because of the conflict in the south, deployed significant extra resources to help victims of the Darfur crisis.

At the end of the year, the government of Sudan and the Sudan People's Liberation Movement/Army were close to signing a peace agreement that would officially end more than two decades of war. The fighting led to the displacement of some four million people with hundreds of thousands more becoming refugees in neighbouring countries, and to the collapse of many basic services. Huge numbers were left dependent on international aid. Improved security in southern Sudan has revealed the enormity of the humanitarian challenge in previously inaccessible areas. In some districts, no-one has access to safe drinking water.

Priority areas for ECHO funding were health, nutrition, water/sanitation, emergency preparedness and food security. ECHO also supported logistics (transport and security), protection activities and family tracing. The aid was targeted both at displaced people and vulnerable local communities.

In addition to funding of €20 million initially budgeted for Sudan, a series of emergency decisions totalling €71 million were taken to assist victims of the escalating conflict in Greater Darfur. The strategy is based on a rolling programme, responding to needs as they arise and taking account of the capacity of ECHO's operational partners to respond effectively.

The Darfur situation has been dubbed a 'protection crisis'. At the end of the year, harassment and violence were continuing and this backdrop of serious insecurity and limited access made it difficult to cater for the humanitarian needs of more than 1.6 million displaced people assembled in around 160 camps and some 500,000 residents of host communities.

## Tajikistan

### Funding - €8.35 million

The situation in Tajikistan improved thanks to better rainfall, higher cereal production and relative political stability over the last two years. However, infant malnutrition remained widespread and many people had no access to clean drinking water and basic health care. This led to a high incidence of waterborne diseases and malaria.

ECHO provided food aid to around 65,000 people, while a further 3,200 rural households benefited from short-term food security projects. 250,000 people obtained better access to clean drinking water and sanitation through the rehabilitation or construction of more than 250 water and sanitation systems. Finally, ECHO supported better access to primary health care for the whole population as well as health and sanitation education.

## Tanzania

### Funding - €14.9 million

Tanzania continued to host the largest refugee population in Africa, with more than 400,000 refugees living in 13 camps in the north-west. Almost two thirds of these were Burundian and just over a third Congolese. ECHO continued to be the key donor to UNHCR, which is mandated by the Tanzanian Government to run the camps. The refugees depend almost entirely on humanitarian aid for survival. Programmes were supported in the sectors of health, water, sanitation, nutrition, shelter, transport, education and protection. Funding was provided notably for programmes run in all camps to prevent the transmission of the HIV virus from mothers to their children. The repatriation of more than 80,000 Burundians was facilitated by UNHCR in 2004.

## Uganda

### Funding - €18.62 million

Northern Uganda has suffered chronic insecurity for years due to the insurgency of the Lord's Resistance Army. ECHO funds targeted the most acute needs with an emphasis on health, nutrition, food security and the supply of essential non-food items. Water was a particular priority with support for measures to boost access and improve sanitation. There was also a greater focus on HIV/AIDS awareness, the treatment of malaria and the rehabilitation of child soldiers into society. An estimated 750,000 people benefited from ECHO-funded activities.

To maximise the impact of its humanitarian aid, the Commission set up an ECHO support office in Kampala in October 2004.

The latter part of the year saw a renewed push for peace by the government, leading to a ceasefire and hopes for an end to the conflict. For some operational partners, this meant improved access. However, 1.6 million people remained displaced.

## West Africa

### Funding - €1 million

ECHO continued to fund emergency projects in response to outbreaks of communicable diseases in West Africa, where around 200 million people are at risk. Cases of meningitis, cholera and yellow fever continued to place a major burden on local health systems. Repeated outbreaks were assessed rapidly by personnel and medicines were then supplied to as many affected people as possible. ECHO also helped the prevention effort through immunisation, awareness campaigns and water/sanitation activities.



**Yemen**

**Funding - €2.53 million**

Yemen still faced significant humanitarian needs, notably in the health and water sectors. Malnutrition is widespread while malaria affects 1.5 million people, killing around 15,000 every year. 70% of the population has no direct access to safe drinking water. ECHO focused on improving mother and child healthcare for the most vulnerable rural people. An estimated 180,000 Yemenis are benefiting from projects to improve obstetric services and rehabilitate medical centres. ECHO allocated nearly 40% of available resources to improve access to drinking water country-wide and reduce the incidence of water-borne diseases.

**Zimbabwe**

**Funding €15 million**

ECHO channelled substantial assistance to victims of the growing crisis in Zimbabwe. The political, economic and social situation continued to worsen with around half the population requiring food aid and high levels of HIV infection. Over a million children have been left orphaned, three-quarters of them having lost their parents to AIDS.

ECHO provided supplementary and therapeutic feeding to more than 330,000 children and people living with HIV/AIDS. Almost 200,000 farming households received practical support such as seeds, tools and fertilisers. Other actions included rehabilitation of water and sanitation systems in rural communities benefiting around 400,000 people, HIV/AIDS awareness-raising projects and support for orphans and households headed by young people. 236,000 orphans and other vulnerable children benefited from these activities.





## Bangladesh

working towards a new start

Bangladesh is regularly affected by monsoon floods. Those that struck in summer 2004, however, were particularly disastrous. ECHO supported a project by the UK NGO Oxfam, that gave more than 14,000 homeless people access to emergency first aid. Other assistance provided included food aid, drinking water, temporary shelter, clothes and blankets.

Beyond the immediate emergency aid, ECHO also supported Oxfam's work in improving hygiene and sanitary conditions and in helping people rebuild their lives - through the supply of items such as building materials and agricultural tools.

## Chechnya

meeting life's daily challenges

European solidarity for the victims of the Chechnya conflict is expressed through projects such as those undertaken by the German NGO *HELP-Hilfe zur Selbsthilfe*. The NGO, which has long experience of providing humanitarian assistance in crisis zones, supplied mattresses, wood fuel, hygiene kits, cleaning utensils and stoves to help vulnerable groups cope with Chechnya's harsh winters. The project, supported by ECHO, aimed to ease the burden of everyday life for victims of the conflict, while enabling them to retain their dignity.

The programme benefited some 24,000 people in Ingushetia who have been displaced, as well as around 53,000 people in Chechnya.

# Project focus

## Iran

at the heart of disaster

On 26 December 2003, the Iranian city of Bam was hit by a devastating earthquake. Many thousands were killed, injured or left homeless and all the main medical facilities were destroyed. ECHO supported the *Finnish Red Cross* - working in close collaboration with the Iranian Red Crescent - to establish a general emergency hospital. By the end of the first week, this facility with 200 beds had treated a thousand patients - including a 97-year old woman miraculously pulled from the rubble of her home by a Red Crescent volunteer nine days after the catastrophe! In total, the hospital staff treated more than 36,000 people and performed 300 surgical operations.

## Haiti

access to impartial  
emergency healthcare

While Haiti should have been celebrating the bicentennial of its independence in 2004, the country was struck a double blow with major humanitarian consequences. In January, internal tensions linked to the departure of President Aristide erupted into full-scale conflict in the main urban areas. Later in the year, Hurricane Jeanne brought further suffering and devastation.

ECHO funded *Médecins Sans Frontières Belgium* to supply emergency medical aid to the people of Port au Prince and Saint Marc. The project provided free access to healthcare for all the wounded, regardless of their political beliefs or their ability to pay. It also covered the despatch of medical equipment (surgical kits, anaesthetics and medical consumables). Almost 2,000 people received emergency first aid and medical follow-up in complete security and the project helped hospitals to restore their regular activities, including maternity services.

## Thematic funding

ECHO's commitment to working closely with United Nations and other international organisations is reflected in thematic funding decisions. Through this instrument, ECHO gives priority to innovative start-up activities that provide added value in meeting humanitarian needs and in strengthening the response capacity of the humanitarian community.

### UN Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA)

#### Funding - €4 million

ECHO recognises the importance of information management in humanitarian crises. It is crucial for rapid and coherent coordination within the international humanitarian community. OCHA's information systems, including IRIN, ReliefWeb and Humanitarian Information Centres are pivotal for the humanitarian community. Through thematic funding, ECHO supports OCHA's efforts to further develop and strengthen its information management systems, including the development of a global mechanism for disaster alerts (GDAS).

### World Health Organisation (WHO)

#### Funding - €3.5 million

Despite considerable efforts, most humanitarian actors recognise that there are still challenges to overcome in responding to health emergencies, in terms of assessing situations, developing response strategies, convening partners, establishing joint action, identifying gaps and ensuring they are filled. WHO, which has an important role to play in the health sector in humanitarian crises, is seeking to boost its emergency capacity. ECHO contributed to this effort with funding for the UN agency's Health Action in Crises (HAC) programme. This involves designing a global capacity-building process to help WHO ensure coordinated programmatic and operational responses to health emergencies.

### World Food Programme (WFP)

#### Funding - €4.5 million

In emergencies, the WFP plays a crucial role in determining whether external assistance is required to meet immediate food needs and whether food aid is the appropriate form of assistance. WFP handles nearly 70% of global emergency food aid and is ECHO's second biggest UN partner. ECHO supported WFP to improve its needs assessment capacity during emergencies and their immediate aftermath.

### UN Children's Fund (UNICEF)

#### Funding €7.43 million

Children are among the most vulnerable victims of humanitarian crises, suffering violence, exploitation, abuse and neglect. According to UNICEF, an estimated 20 million children have been forced to flee their homes and some 300,000 child soldiers are involved in more than 30 conflicts worldwide.



ECHO provided €2 million to support UNICEF's child protection activities. This funding is being used to help in the development of a strategy on psychosocial support to children, to support the needs of unaccompanied and separated children and to boost the reintegration of former child soldiers. The decision contains a strong advocacy/public relations component to raise general public awareness of child-related issues.

In a separate decision, €5.43 million was allocated to strengthen UNICEF's emergency preparedness. The ultimate beneficiaries will be children and women in emergencies. The emphasis is on enhancing the UN agency's humanitarian response capacity. Measures include pre-positioning of essential medicines and relief items in strategic locations and creating a stand-by 'surge' capacity to intervene rapidly in crisis areas. The priority areas selected for this decision are countries/regions susceptible to natural disasters or characterised by high levels of conflict (such as Haiti, Colombia, Laos, Sudan, Côte d'Ivoire, Nepal, Afghanistan, and Pacific island states).

### Secretariat of the UN International Strategy for Disaster Reduction (ISDR)

#### Funding €0.36 million

ECHO supported the organisation of the World Conference on Disaster Reduction (WCDR) in Kobe, Japan in January 2005. The funding covered the presentation of 24 good practice initiatives in disaster reduction from six disaster-prone regions.

## Other funding

### Disaster preparedness (DIPECHO)

Funding - €13.7 million

The DIPECHO programme helps the most vulnerable populations in at-risk areas to prepare for natural catastrophes. Funds are allocated for training of communities and local authority staff, capacity-building, awareness-raising, small-scale mitigation activities and early-warning systems. Some projects aim at reinforcing dialogue and coordination by supporting key regional institutions involved in disaster reduction. The Commission took three decisions to strengthen local response capacities in:

- Central America (€6 million). Guatemala, Honduras, El Salvador, Nicaragua, Costa Rica and Panama.
- Central Asia (€2.5 million). Tajikistan, Kyrgyzstan and Uzbekistan.
- South East Asia (€5.2 million). Cambodia, Vietnam, Laos, East Timor and Indonesia.

DIPECHO programmes under previous funding decisions are also running in the Andean Community, the Caribbean and South Asia.

### ECHO Flight

Funding - €9 million

ECHO Flight continued to provide free air transport for aid agencies operating relief and development programmes in Central and East Africa. Personnel and cargo were flown aboard scheduled services using a fleet of six light to medium aircraft. In 2004, ECHO Flight carried almost 20,000 passengers, 553 tonnes of humanitarian cargo and more than 5,000 mail parcels to five destinations in Kenya, 18 in Somalia and 18 in DRC.



# Facts and figures

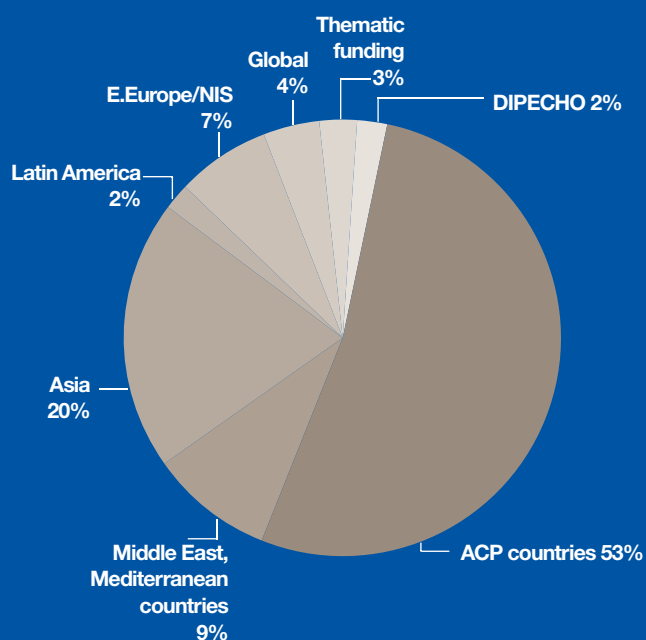
## Financial decisions for humanitarian aid by region in 2004

Country/sub-region	Decisions in € m	Country/sub-region	Decisions in € m
<b>AFRICA, CARIBBEAN, PACIFIC</b>	<b>301.555</b>	<b>EASTERN EUROPE/NIS</b>	<b>41.850</b>
Angola	8.800	Mongolia	1.000
Bahamas	0.480	Northern Caucasus (Chechnya crisis)	28.500
Burundi	18.990	Southern Caucasus	4.000
Central African Republic	0.470	Tajikistan	8.350
Chad	12.000		
Congo (Democratic Republic)	40.000	<b>MIDDLE EAST</b>	<b>37.350</b>
Congo (Republic)	2.000	Palestinian Territories, Lebanon, Jordan,	
Dominican Republic, Haiti	12.797	Syria	37.350
ECHO Flight	9.000		
Eritrea, Ethiopia	7.998	<b>MEDITERRANEAN COUNTRIES</b>	<b>11.505</b>
Grenada, St Vincent and the Grenadines	3.000	Morocco	0.975
Jamaica	1.200	Western Saharan refugees	8.000
Kenya	3.850	Yemen	2.530
Lesotho	1.000		
Madagascar	2.000	<b>DIPECHO</b>	<b>13.700</b>
Namibia	1.000	Central Asia	2.500
Somalia	9.150	South East Asia	5.200
Sudan	91.000	Central America	6.000
Swaziland	1.000		
Tanzania	14.900	<b>THEMATIC FUNDING</b>	<b>19.430</b>
Uganda	18.620	WHO	3.500
Zambia	2.000	WFP	4.500
Zimbabwe	15.000	UNICEF	7.430
West Africa	25.300	UNOCHA	4.000
<b>ASIA</b>	<b>111.122</b>	<b>FIELD SUPPORT</b>	<b>15.300</b>
Afghanistan	35.160	ECHO field experts	13.500
Bangladesh	5.762	ECHO regional field offices	1.800
Cambodia	3.500		
China/Tibet	2.000	<b>OTHER FUNDING</b>	<b>6.328</b>
East Timor	0.250	Audits	1.830
India	3.000	Evaluation	1.338
Indonesia	3.500	Information	0.737
Iran	7.661	Training and studies	1.548
Laos	1.500	Other	0.875
Myanmar/Burma	8.070		
Nepal/Bhutan	4.000	<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>570.340</b>
North Korea	16.750		
Philippines	1.650		
Sri Lanka	6.500		
Thailand	11.650		
Asia regional (tsunami)*	0.169		
<b>LATIN AMERICA</b>	<b>12.200</b>		
Cuba	1.000		
Colombia/Ecuador	8.500		
South America	2.700		

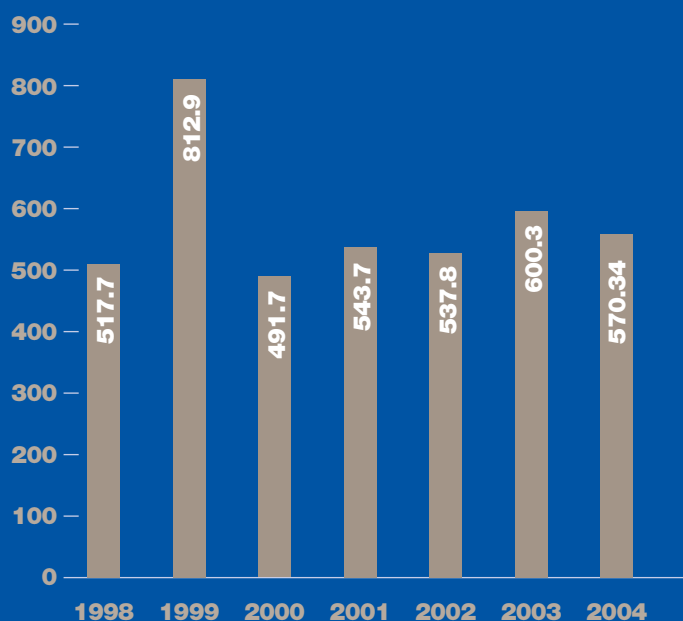
\*A €3 million primary emergency decision in response to the Asian tsunami of 26 December was funded using the remaining available funds for 2004 (€0.169 m) with the balance (€2.831 m) drawn down from ECHO's 2005 budget. Two further decisions each of €10 million, were taken at the end of December also using 2005 funds.



## ECHO financing decisions 1998-2004 (figures in € millions)



## ECHO financing decisions 1998-2004 (figures in € millions)



## Who's who in ECHO

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## Hungary

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## International

### UN Agencies

OFFICE FOR THE COORDINATION OF HUMANITARIAN AFFAIRS (OCHA) • OFFICE OF THE UNITED NATIONS HIGH COMMISSIONER FOR REFUGEES (UNHCR) • UNITED NATIONS CHILDREN'S FUND (UNICEF) • UNITED NATIONS DEVELOPMENT PROGRAMME (UNDP) • WORLD FOOD PROGRAMME (WFP) • WORLD HEALTH ORGANISATION (WHO) • FOOD AND AGRICULTURE ORGANIZATION (FAO) • UNITED NATIONS RELIEF AND WORKS AGENCY FOR PALESTINE REFUGEES IN THE NEAR EAST (UNRWA)

### Others

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## Portugal

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# People

## Clean water for a better life

### Burma / Myanmar

An estimated 57% of people living in Myanmar have no access to sanitation while for two in five of the country's inhabitants, safe drinking water is not available. Diarrhoea is the second cause of death among children under five. It is against this backdrop that ECHO funds water and sanitation projects throughout Myanmar.

On the outskirts of Yangon, separated from the golden pagodas, the old colonial mansions and the new commercial centre, is Dala township. It is home to around 100,000 people, mainly daily labourers. Many earn barely \$3 a month, far short of the World Bank's poverty benchmark of \$1 a day.

"Water has always been a problem in Dala", says fifty-year old Daw Mia Mia, who leads one of the new water user groups established in the township. "That is why the only people who live here are those with no other option. Hardly anyone has access to running water. We get our water for cooking, washing, cleaning and drinking from ponds. During the dry season, these dry up and we have to buy it from merchants. In the rainy season the river floods and there is water everywhere. A lot of people get ill because of the water problems."

There is a high incidence of waterborne diseases in Dala. Every year, one person in three suffers seriously from diarrhoea. Half the victims are children for whom this ailment is particularly dangerous. Groundwater is often salty and polluted by rust. Water sources are unprotected, open to animals and regularly filled by floods carrying waste and excrement. The problem is exacerbated by a lack of rules governing basic hygiene and the almost complete absence of medical infrastructure.

Since July 2001, ECHO has provided more than €1.5 million, through the French NGO Aide Medicale Internationale (AMI) to improve water access for more than 30,000 of Dala's inhabitants. The funds have been used to build flood proof rainwater collectors, groundwater pumps and latrines, and to protect existing ponds. In addition, basic hygiene education has been provided and children and pregnant women have received treatment against waterborne diseases.

"AMI advised us on how to set up the water user group with our neighbours", explains Daw Mia Mia. "We had to organise and build the foundations for a big rainwater collection tank. Then AMI arranged for the building of the rain water collector and the pump. Now we collect money regularly for spare parts." She shows us the new collector just across the street from her house. "It's my duty to ensure it's well maintained". She carefully unlocks the fence built to keep out animals and the heavy lid of the collector, removes the protective plastic sheet and checks the water level. Almost full. Enough to cover the needs of her 70-member user group during the dry season. "No need to buy from the vendors this year," she smiles.

The project is due to end in May 2005. By then, around 400 water user groups will have been established covering almost a quarter of Dala's population and more than 4,000 flood proof latrines will have been built behind the homes of beneficiary families (with their assistance). 47 schools will have improved water/sanitation systems and almost 20,000 families will have received basic hygiene education.





# Help for the most vulnerable

## Palestinian Territories

**Mariam Ahmed, sits outside her home in Tubas, her nine-month baby Sundus by her side. She gazes at the dry hills around her, most planted with olive trees. We are in the deep, rural heart of the West Bank. The outside world may be speculating on the chances of restarting the Israeli-Palestinian peace process but Mariam's concern's are much more immediate. How will she manage to feed Sundus and her other ten children today?**

"Bread, rice and lentils make up our daily meals. We eat chicken and fresh vegetables only when we can afford it", she says, "which is not often". The Ahmed family belongs to a new class of Palestinians plunged into poverty by four years of Intifada. Previously a farm worker earning his living in Israel, Mariam's husband has been unemployed since 2001. He now spends most of his days looking for sporadic, part-time and low-paid jobs inside the West Bank.

The family home could hardly be more basic. Four concrete walls under a sheet metal roof. No bathroom or toilets. A simple sink and a gas bottle for the kitchen. "When night comes, we split into the two rooms and sleep on mattresses", explains Mariam. Eight of her children go to school. "We could not pay their annual school fees". Local workers unions and religious charities did it for them. Despite all the hardship, social networks still provide an important safety net for poor households.

The other good news is that the Ahmed family can now enjoy clean water for their drinking and domestic needs. A year ago, the Spanish NGO Acción Contra el Hambre built

a 60-cubic metre cistern. "Before, we used to buy water and store it in plastic containers" says Mariam. They were also given two sheep, primarily to produce milk and yogurt for the children. Two lambs have since been born. "Soon, we hope we will be able to sell the meat and buy chicken, which is cheaper for us to eat".

Along with dozens of other beneficiaries, Mariam was also trained on water chlorination and how to prevent water-borne diseases. The project is funded by ECHO, whose top priority in the Palestinian Territories since 2000 has been to support the most vulnerable.

The living standards of the population in the West Bank and Gaza have dramatically deteriorated as a direct consequence of the conflict. After four years of crisis and restrictions on the movement of people and goods, average Palestinian incomes have declined by more than a third. A quarter of the workforce is unemployed.

The result is that up to 2.2 million people (60% of the population) now live below the poverty line of less than \$2 a day. Coping mechanisms have been strained to the limit. Families are forced to reduce spending on food and health-care. This has had debilitating effects, with the elderly and young particularly vulnerable. Mariam's children spend two hours daily walking to school and back home. What if they don't eat breakfast?





# An exile returns home

## Angola

"I am so happy today" says Maurice Simao, a 45 year-old teacher I met at the reception centre in Huambo in the Angolan central highlands. He strikes me as a charming, but shy man. Maybe he is just tired, exhausted by four years of exile and his recent return to his motherland.

Maurice has just arrived from the Mungo transit centre in Zambia. He came to Huambo with 106 other returnees on an International Organisation for Migration (IOM) chartered Hercules plane. ECHO funds the IOM to help Angolans return home.

There are two or three rotations a day, which means between 200 and 300 returnees daily, six days a week. Since March 2003, the IOM has helped repatriate around 60,000 people. So far, more than 5,000 have used the newly-established reception centre in Huambo as their entry point.

Maurice, like most returnees, has arrived from Zambia. Others come in from Namibia. Once in Huambo, they spend two days at the centre, having their documents sorted out by the authorities and registering for assistance provided by humanitarian agencies.

Maurice is very tired today, having gone through the whole registration process. For now he just wants to eat and rest so he can be ready for the mine and HIV-awareness programmes tomorrow. On their last day at the centre, Maurice and the other heads of family will be given essential items to start them off in their new life: two months of food rations, plastic sheeting for temporary shelter, mosquito nets, blankets, water containers, kitchen utensils and tools. IOM buses will then take them to their final destinations. In

Maurice's case this is N'halea in Bié province.

"When they asked where I wanted to go, I hesitated. I finally opted for Bié because that is where I was born." Maurice, like many others at the centre, has lived in many

places. He lived in N'halea until his mid-twenties, cultivating a small plot. In 1985, when fighting between Government and UNITA rebels reached his area, the family moved south to Kubango province. In 1997, they had to move again, this time to Moxico. Still, they were unable to escape the horrors of war. As Maurice recounts. "Things were bad but we stayed there until 2000. That was the worst year - it was all so cruel."

So once again, Maurice set off with his wife and two children, this time to new uncertainties abroad. "We walked for seven days, only moving by night. The daytime was too dangerous." Reaching the Zambian border, Maurice walked to the nearest village. "It was the village chief of Lukea who first helped us. He put us in contact with the Zambian immigration authorities. They sent us to a nearby camp for some weeks and then we were transferred to a UN refugee camp near Mungo in the south."

In the years at the camp, says Maurice, the most frustrating thing was having no real work. "People had nothing to do. They just listened to the radio and waited, waited. But at least my two boys were able to go to school."

"I found work as a translator at the mission. There was no money, but..." - he stops to fish for something in his pocket - "I got this". He carefully unfolds a paper. "It is a recommendation from the mission - look, here is the official stamp". The paper says "Maurice Simao has worked well with us. He is a fine man, true servant of God. God bless anyone who helps him." Stamp. Signature. Another Stamp. Maurice smiles proudly, his eyes shining.

I ask him about his plans for the future. "I shall go to Bié and find a small piece of land I can cultivate manually. After saving some money, hopefully I will be able to mechanise the farm and earn more so that my children can get an education. They will be doctors one day."



# Crisis zones

## Democratic Republic of Congo

After seven years of civil war, the Democratic Republic of Congo is suffering from a chronic and complex crisis. Progress in the peace process and the restoration of stability in certain areas has prompted some of the millions of people displaced by conflict to return home. This has generated even greater needs in the short term, which is why the ECHO programme was increased to €40 million in 2004. The deterioration of health services has resulted in the spread of disease and unprecedented mortality rates. Rape and sexual slavery are common in conflict zones and the problem of HIV/AIDS is increasing rapidly. Access to food remains difficult in areas affected by the civil war, and this has provoked widespread food insecurity and even malnutrition in some regions. Despite the recent political progress, armed groups continue to disrupt the east of the country and vulnerable groups need sustained protection and assistance.



## Iraq

It is no secret that humanitarian operations in Iraq have been seriously hindered by insecurity. Violent attacks on the "humanitarian space" have forced some projects to close down while others have been delayed or modified. Despite the difficulties, a good number of ECHO partner organisations have continued to provide vital assistance to hundreds of thousands of vulnerable Iraqis, with the help of dedicated local staff.

Between March 2003 and December 2004, the Commission allocated €100 million for humanitarian operations in Iraq, channelling the funds through experienced relief agencies.

Initially, the focus was on emergency assistance and protection. Subsequently, ECHO focused on rehabilitating health services and providing water and sanitation.

Despite the fear and uncertainty associated with regular violent attacks in Iraq, from a purely humanitarian perspective, basic needs have now largely been met, allowing the Commission to focus its assistance on long term reconstruction. ECHO, however, will continue to follow the situation closely with a view to responding, if required, to any new humanitarian crisis.



# Acronyms

<b>DIPECHO:</b>	ECHO's disaster preparedness and prevention programme
<b>DRC:</b>	Democratic Republic of Congo
<b>ECHO:</b>	Humanitarian Aid D.G.
<b>EU:</b>	European Union
<b>FPA:</b>	Framework Partnership Agreement (between ECHO and its operational partners)
<b>ICRC:</b>	International Committee of the Red Cross
<b>IDP:</b>	Internally displaced person
<b>IFRC:</b>	International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies
<b>IOM:</b>	International Organisation for Migration
<b>LRRD:</b>	Linking relief, rehabilitation and development
<b>NOHA:</b>	Network on Humanitarian Assistance
<b>NGO:</b>	Non-governmental organisation
<b>UNHCR:</b>	United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees
<b>UNICEF:</b>	United Nations Children's Fund
<b>UNOCHA:</b>	UN Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs
<b>UNRWA:</b>	United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East
<b>UXO:</b>	Unexploded Ordnance
<b>WFP:</b>	World Food Programme
<b>WHO:</b>	World Health Organisation

## Photo credits

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# ECHO - backing for humanitarian aid worldwide

## What is ECHO?

ECHO is the European Union's Humanitarian Aid department, a service of the European Commission under the direct responsibility of Commissioner Louis Michel.

Since 1992, ECHO has funded relief to millions of victims of natural and man-made disasters outside the European Union.

Aid is channelled impartially to the affected populations, regardless of their race, ethnic group, religion, gender, age, nationality or political affiliation.

Part of its mission is to raise public awareness of the issues at stake.

## Working with partners in the field

ECHO works with about 180 operational partners, including specialised United Nations agencies, the Red Cross/Crescent movement and non-governmental organisations (NGOs).

## A key donor

ECHO is one of the biggest sources of humanitarian aid in the world. In 2004, it provided €570 million for humanitarian programmes. This does not include the aid given separately by the EU's 25 Member States. ECHO support went to projects in more than 60 countries. The funds are spent on goods and services such as food, clothing, shelter, medical provisions, water supplies, sanitation, emergency repairs and mine-clearing. ECHO also funds disaster preparedness and mitigation projects in regions prone to natural catastrophes.

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