

MEETING VITAL NEEDS

ANNUAL
REVIEW
2006

EUROPEAN COMMISSION



Humanitarian Aid

CONTENTS

1. MESSAGE FROM COMMISSIONER LOUIS MICHEL
2. KEY EVENTS IN 2006

FEATURES

4. LEBANON: A RAPID AND FLEXIBLE RESPONSE
5. DARFUR: THE WORLD'S 'WORST HUMANITARIAN CRISIS'

ECHO AT WORK

6. GLOBAL REACH
19. FACTS AND FIGURES

PEOPLE

21. JAVA, INDONESIA: 'SUDDENLY, THE EARTH STARTED SHAKING'
22. VARZOV, TAJIKISTAN: 'WE DON'T HAVE THE RESOURCES TO GO ANYWHERE ELSE'

CRISIS ZONES

23. PALESTINIAN TERRITORIES
DEMOCRATIC REPUBLIC OF CONGO
AFGHANISTAN

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'MY AIM: TO ADAPT EUROPEAN HUMANITARIAN ACTION TO THE CHALLENGES OF THE 21ST CENTURY'

In summer 2006, the conflict in Lebanon set off a chain of events that brought even more violence and suffering to the Middle East. The humanitarian response of the European Commission was both swift and substantial. As soon as hostilities broke out, I sought and obtained the release of significant funding – €50 million – for deployment by the Humanitarian Aid department (ECHO). These funds enabled the Commission to meet the urgent needs of people fleeing from southern Lebanon, of communities hosting displaced people both inside Lebanon and in neighbouring countries, and of those caught in the line of fire in the conflict zone.

The Lebanon conflict did not deflect us in our efforts to respond to another pressing situation: the Darfur crisis in Sudan. Faced with terrible shortages of basic goods and services such as water, food, shelter and medical care, millions of Sudanese depend on international aid for their survival. For more than 15 years, the Commission, together with the EU Member States, has maintained its commitment to the victims of crisis in Sudan. In 2006 alone, the Commission, through ECHO, financed humanitarian operations worth €100 million – putting Sudan firmly at the top of the Commission's humanitarian agenda.

These two major crises, however, represent only part of our work. European solidarity is important in many other needy parts of the world. Some of these are familiar to the general public while others are all but invisible. 2006 was punctuated by a series of natural disasters and conflicts. The Java earthquake, a string of hurricanes in the Caribbean, the Palestine conflict, the crises afflicting Sri Lanka, the Horn of Africa and Afghanistan. The list goes on and the challenges they present are part of our daily work. In 2006, the Commission alone provided more than €670 million in relief assistance.

Add to this the bilateral humanitarian aid of the Member States and you find that the European Union is the world's main relief donor, providing more than half of the world's humanitarian aid, helping the most vulnerable populations in more than 60 countries.

AN UNCERTAIN AND OFTEN HOSTILE ENVIRONMENT

For those working in humanitarian aid, 2006 was obviously a year of difficult operations and ever-growing challenges – confirming the alarming trend of recent times. Instead of conventional wars, we now increasingly have internal conflicts. A particular characteristic of such conflicts is the excessive cruelty directed towards ever more vulnerable civilians. International humanitarian law is regularly flouted by belligerents. In such complex situations, where access is difficult and insecurity rampant, it is increasingly

difficult, and sometimes impossible, for humanitarian workers to do their job – all the more so as they themselves are coming under attack more often.

The geopolitical context and the fact that global security is nowadays more volatile and uncertain contribute to this hostile operational environment. It is more difficult to preserve a humanitarian space that is distinct from the political sphere. In addition, the emergence of new 'humanitarian' actors creates new challenges, both as regards respect for the basic principles of impartiality and neutrality, and from the point of view of coordination of aid in the field.

Finally, natural disasters present us with new challenges. Their intensity and frequency have greatly increased in recent years. The cumulative effects of climate change combined with demographic pressures in areas that are already fragile leaves the inhabitants even more exposed to the risk of catastrophe.

Humanitarian players have to adapt in the light of these complex developments and uncertain environment. And the European Union, as a major international player in the humanitarian sphere, must be at the forefront of both reflection and action.

With this in mind, I have launched a consultation on European humanitarian aid policy at the end of 2006, involving Member States, other European institutions and our implementing partners.

TOWARDS A EUROPEAN CONSENSUS ON HUMANITARIAN AID

I aim to have adopted, during 2007, a political reference document – a declaration setting out a European consensus on humanitarian aid. The objective is to improve the quality of our relief assistance, to make it more effective and to adapt it to the new challenges of the 21st century.

A recent Eurobarometer survey showed that a consensus already exists among European citizens with a substantial majority in all 27 Member States favouring European humanitarian action and wanting to see it strengthened. I am convinced that this can be translated more formally into an EU consensus enabling us to do an even better job in providing humanitarian aid. This is my goal and the challenge that lies ahead.

*Louis Michel
European Commissioner responsible for Development
and Humanitarian Aid
March 2007*



JANUARY

Jan Pronk, UN envoy to **Sudan**, says that attempts to bring peace to **Darfur** have failed and that a UN force of 12,000-20,000 troops is needed.

Ellen Johnson Sirleaf is sworn in as **Liberia's** president, making history as Africa's first female head of state.

A state of national disaster is declared in **Kenya** following a long drought that leads to food and water shortages.

At least 120 people die in **Burundi** and thousands flee to neighbouring **Rwanda** and **Tanzania** due to food shortages caused by drought in the north and east of the country.

An estimated 70,000 people are displaced in attacks by Arab militias in **South Darfur**.

The Islamic movement Hamas wins the Palestinian parliamentary elections prompting a significant decrease in international development aid for Palestinians, as well as a halt in tax payments provided by Israel.

FEBRUARY

At least 19 people are killed and 100,000 lose their homes when unusually heavy seasonal rains in **Bolivia** cause rivers to burst their banks and provoke landslides.

Torrential rains in **Zimbabwe** at the beginning of the month destroy hopes for a better harvest following five years of drought.

Around 60,000 **Sahrawi** refugees are left without shelter, food and sanitation following heavy rains and flooding in eastern **Algeria**.

The bombing of a Shiite shrine in **Samarra, Iraq**, seriously inflames ethnic tensions and unleashes a fresh wave of displacements.

MARCH

An estimated 11 million people face food shortages due to a severe drought affecting a swathe of countries from the **Horn of Africa** through **Kenya** to **Malawi, Zambia** and **Mozambique**.

A meningitis outbreak claims hundreds of lives across **Western Africa**.

APRIL

An estimated 11,000 people are displaced in eastern **Chad** following a coup attempt. All non-essential staff of humanitarian organisations are evacuated from the area.

International assistance is provided by humanitarian organisations already stretched to deal with the refugees from **Darfur**.

In a major cholera outbreak in **Angola**, 20,000 people contract the illness, with more than 900 fatalities reported.

Floods in **Ecuador**, following ten weeks of heavy rain, affect more than 165,000 people in the coastal region. 60,000 require emergency humanitarian assistance in the form of food, drinking water and recovery supplies.

Around 20,000 people in **Guinea-Bissau** require humanitarian assistance following fighting in the north of the country between the national army and members of a Casamance rebel movement seeking independence from neighbouring **Senegal**.

Fighting between **Tamil Tigers** and government forces in north **east Sri Lanka** resumes in earnest following a period of relative calm since the 2002 cease fire.

The possibility of providing humanitarian assistance in **North Korea**, resumes. Previously, the authorities had indicated that all humanitarian organisations should terminate their activities in the country by 31 December 2005.

MAY

A 6.3 magnitude earthquake near the town of **Yogyakarta** in **Java** leaves more than 6,200 dead and around a million people without homes.

The government of **Sudan** and the larger faction of the **Sudan Liberation Movement** sign a peace deal aimed at ending violence in **Darfur**.

Nepal's interim government declares an indefinite ceasefire in the 10-year conflict with the country's Maoist group, following the relinquishment of sovereign rule by King **Gyanendra**.

More than 20,000 people are seriously affected by floods in **Suriname** following torrential rainstorms.

JUNE

Clashes in **East Timor**, following the dismissal of 600 soldiers, leave at least 20 people dead and around 150,000 internally displaced.

The UN asks **Bhutan** and **Nepal** to resolve the situation of the estimated 105,000 **Bhutanese** refugees living in camps in eastern **Nepal** for the past 15 years.

Following the capture of an Israeli soldier by the Palestinian group **Hamas**, the Israeli army re-enters **Gaza**, one year after it ended its occupation there.

JULY

An undersea earthquake off the coast of **Java** triggers a tsunami that claims more than 600 lives and displaces around 3,000 people.

Hezbollah fighters in southern **Lebanon** capture two Israeli soldiers in a cross-border raid prompting Israel to launch air strikes on their positions and send troops into the country. The ensuing conflict lasts 34 days and claims the lives of more than 1,200 people, mostly Lebanese civilians. An estimated 150,000 people are displaced.

The **Ugandan** government and the Lord's Resistance Army begin peace talks aimed at ending the conflict that has ravaged Northern Uganda for 20 years.

The **Democratic Republic of the Congo** holds its first democratic presidential elections since 1960, with a second round runoff scheduled for the end of October.

AUGUST

17 local staff from the aid agency 'Action Contre La Faim' are murdered in their compound in **north east Sri Lanka**.

Parts of **Ethiopia** are devastated by floods leading to more than 630 deaths. 200,000 people are seriously affected, including many women and children left homeless and vulnerable to the spread of water-borne disease.

Despite the signature of the **Darfur Peace Agreement** in May, the security situation in Darfur continues to deteriorate and the delivery of humanitarian aid to an estimated 500,000 people is halted. The number of humanitarian workers killed since May rises to 13.

Floods in **India** and **Bangladesh** claim the lives of an estimated 1,000 people and affect more than 20 million others.

SEPTEMBER

A cholera outbreak in **Niger**, brought on by heavy seasonal rains and flooding, claims 21 lives and affects more than 46,000 people.

The government of **Burundi** and the Front National de Liberation sign a ceasefire agreement.

A major offensive is launched by the Burmese army in Northern Kayin State. Thousands are forced to flee to the eastern border of **Burma/Myanmar** and to refugee camps in **Thailand**.

OCTOBER

An estimated 2.5 million people in **Afghanistan** are affected by drought-related food and water shortages.

The conflict in **Sri Lanka** between government forces and the Tamil Tigers (LTTE) intensifies. The reported death toll since fighting resumed in December 2005 exceeds 3,000 with a further 200,000 internally displaced.

Typhoon Cimaron strikes the Northern **Philippines**, affecting 283,000 people. 19 fatalities are reported.

On 11 October, the 'International Day for Disaster Risk Reduction', events are staged in many countries on the theme: 'Disaster Risk Reduction Begins at School.'

NOVEMBER

More than 15,000 people flee Sake in the eastern **Democratic Republic of the Congo** following fighting between UN and government troops on one side, and army dissidents, on the other.

Unusually heavy rainfall in parts of **Haiti** causes serious flooding and considerable damage, directly affecting nearly 4,000 families.

The updated 'Guidelines on the Use of Military and Civil Defence Assets' (MCDA) in disaster relief are endorsed by the Consultative Group on the use of MCDA.

The Prime Minister of **Nepal** and the leader of the Communist Party of Nepal (Maoists) sign a comprehensive peace agreement, formally ending 11 years of bloodshed.

DECEMBER

Typhoon Durian wreaks havoc in Southeast Asia, claiming nearly 1,000 lives in the **Philippines** and an estimated 100 in **Vietnam**.

Heavy floods strike central **Tanzania** destroying bridges and cutting off many communities.

Widespread floods and landslides in **Indonesia** claim over 100 lives and force more than 300,000 people from their homes.

Heavy fighting in Malakal, **South Sudan**, leaves dozens dead and revives the fear of civil war. Meanwhile, humanitarian operations in **Darfur** continue to be hampered by insecurity and the harassment of civilians and humanitarian workers. Humanitarian staff in Gereida are beaten, sexually abused and robbed.

Following numerous security incidents and major military operations, the UN evacuates its humanitarian staff from eastern Chad. Assistance to around 250,000 refugees and vulnerable people, as well as some 75,000 IDPs is considerably reduced.

It is announced that more than 175,000 people have been displaced as a result of internal conflict in **Colombia** between January and September 2006.





LEBANON: A RAPID AND FLEXIBLE RESPONSE

The bombing of Lebanon began on July 12, 2006. Within just a few days, hundreds of thousands of people had taken to the roads.

They came mainly from Southern Lebanon, from Tyre, Nabathie, Tebnine and El Khiam. They came packed in cars and vans, waving white flags through the windows. Some had left homes already reduced to rubble; others simply locked their doors and headed north. They came with nothing. Sometimes, they ended up with nothing, not even a roof over their heads, and were obliged to sleep in public parks.

The Commission's Humanitarian Aid department was quick to respond. On July 20, an ECHO office was opened with an expert deployed to the field to assess needs and monitor relief operations. The first coordination meeting, chaired by ECHO, was held on the same day at the European Commission Delegation in Beirut. Assembled for the first time were European NGOs and United Nations agencies.

Within a few days, the Commission had committed €20 million to help meet the most urgent needs of the crisis victims: food, water and medicines. Priority was given to delivering emergency aid packages to internally displaced people (IDPs) and isolated families trapped in the south. Blankets and mattresses, canned food and bottled water were rapidly distributed by ECHO partners to thousands of people accommodated in schools, colleges, mosques and courtrooms. Emergency medical aid was also provided, and proper water and sanitation facilities were installed in public buildings temporarily turned into camps for the displaced..

Because of the airstrikes, as well as fighting on the ground, it was initially much more difficult to reach isolated villages in southern Lebanon. But some humanitarian aid convoys managed to get through with vital assistance for the civilians trapped in the conflict zone.

THE GUNS FALL SILENT, BUT NEEDS REMAIN

When the war ended on August 14, around 1,200 people had been killed and 4,000 wounded. Most of the casualties were civilians and one in three were children. As in any conflict, the fact that the guns had fallen silent did not signal an immediate end to the suffering. The humanitarian situation was grave, particular-

ly in southern Lebanon, the southern quarter of Beirut and the Bekaa valley. Around a million people had been displaced: 600,000 had found refuge with host families, 140,000 were sheltered in 800 public buildings, and 230,000 had fled to neighbouring countries.

Following the cessation of hostilities, and the partial withdrawal of Israeli forces from Lebanon, some communities in the south that had been isolated for the whole period of the conflict, became accessible to relief agencies for the first time. In addition, most of the displaced families (both IDPs and refugees) immediately set out for home. Some were lucky: their houses were still standing. For others it wasn't so easy: their dwellings were either damaged or completely destroyed, and in any case, rendered uninhabitable. Once again they had to find hosts to give them a roof over their heads: often relatives or neighbours.

In the space of just a few days the scenario had changed completely, and humanitarian actors had quickly to re-evaluate the needs on the ground. From an emphasis on emergency distributions, ECHO and the other relief actors reoriented their work to the recovery phase. Funds were allocated to help people rebuild their lives: food aid and household goods were provided to returnees, access to drinkable water was prioritised, mobile health clinics were dispatched.

A few weeks later, the Commission granted another €30 million in humanitarian aid to deal with the aftermath of the war. These funds were aimed at stabilising the situation, helping re-launch the economic activity of people affected by the conflict, and giving victims the means to improve their living conditions. Thanks to these extra funds, shelters have been provided, damaged homes repaired, access to drinking water restored, mines cleared and people made destitute by the war helped to get back on their feet.

The emergency rehabilitation stage is expected to last until summer 2007. Humanitarian aid will then progressively be scaled down in favour of longer term reconstruction and development - with continued financial support from the EU, handled by other departments of the Commission.



DARFUR: THE WORLD'S 'WORST HUMANITARIAN CRISIS'

Four years after the eruption of the conflict, the situation in Sudan's Darfur region remains grim.

The European Union has consistently expressed deep concern about the appalling security, humanitarian and human rights situation in Darfur. This protracted humanitarian tragedy can only ultimately be brought to an end through a political solution. The spill-over of the crisis to Chad and the Central African Republic adds a worrying regional component that could have serious consequences. The EU is heavily engaged in the search for a durable political settlement and will continue its efforts to convince all sides that a military 'solution' is no solution.

Darfur, regarded by many as the location of the world's worst humanitarian crisis in 2006, has been high on the EU agenda from the outset. Hundreds of thousands of people depend on external aid for their survival; huge numbers of people have been driven from their homes and civilians are targeted indiscriminately by armed groups. The number of people directly or indirectly affected by the conflict rose to almost four million in 2006, including nearly two million internally displaced people inside Sudan and 230,000 Sudanese refugees in Chad.

The loss of the 'humanitarian space' that agencies need to deliver essential relief is particularly shocking. Aid workers are in the region to help all who are in distress, impartially and without discrimination. Despite this, they and their life-saving operations are often deliberately targeted by the combatants. Attacks on humanitarian organisations have claimed the lives of 13 aid workers since the signature of the peace agreement in May 2006 and have seriously hampered the delivery of relief assistance. Despite the professionalism and courage of the relief agencies, some have been forced into the painful decision to pull out of Darfur because of continuous harassment and attacks.

TWO-PRONGED APPROACH

In addition to its efforts to facilitate a political settlement, the Commission has made a major contribution to alleviating the human suffering, providing a total of €600 million up to the end of 2006. This has involved a two-pronged approach: swift humanitarian aid for millions of displaced people in Darfur and Chad, and for communities directly affected by the conflict (€360m) and support for the international mandate of AMIS, the African Union mission in Sudan (€240m).

The Commission's Humanitarian Aid department (ECHO), under the responsibility of Commissioner Louis Michel, manages most of these funds. ECHO is financing a wide range of relief actions implemented by dozens of relief organisations, including specialised UN agencies, the Red Cross/Red Crescent movement and NGOs. This aid has helped prevent a far worse humanitarian tragedy.



The most urgent priority is to continue supporting life-saving operations for people displaced by the conflict and, where needed, for host communities that are being stretched to the limit. Just a small interruption in the lifeline of relief can have catastrophic consequences. A huge humanitarian effort has to be sustained in all areas of assistance: food, shelter, healthcare, water/sanitation and protection.

Unfortunately, at the time of writing, the security situation did not allow for large-scale repatriation and/or return of displaced people in the foreseeable future. The EU remains committed to the goal of finding a political solution but in the meantime, the Commission, together with EU Member States, are continuing to support the humanitarian work that is so crucial in saving lives and easing suffering in this conflict-torn region. Beyond the international community's many political and financial efforts to sustain humanitarian operations, all the parties in conflict need to take appropriate measures to respect the integrity of humanitarian organisations and their staff. These organisations must be allowed to carry out their assistance and protection work in safety, wherever civilian populations are in need, as required by international humanitarian law. Otherwise, lifeline humanitarian operations may stop and thousands of vulnerable people will be in danger.



HUMANITARIAN FUNDING BY REGION

HORN OF AFRICA AND EAST AFRICA

ERITREA: Funding €6 million

Eritrea has been badly affected by years of chronic drought, desertification, poor infrastructure and continued insecurity along the border with Ethiopia. Despite a better harvest in 2005, the country was unable to cover its food needs in 2006. It remained one of the most food-aid dependent countries in the world, with 50% of women and children chronically malnourished. The Commission funded projects to address acute needs for water, food and basic healthcare among the most vulnerable groups. Additional programmes were implemented to support livestock and help internally displaced people (IDPs).

ETHIOPIA: Funding €5 million

Ethiopia continued to be affected by drought. In the second part of the year, the country was also hit by heavy floods. Vulnerable people suffered the effects of extreme climate events, malnutrition, epidemics, conflicts over natural resources and displacement. Additionally, the security situation deteriorated further, following disputed elections in 2005. Commission-funded humanitarian aid covered food, water, health, livestock assistance and protection, as well as support for IDPs.

KENYA: Funding €9.05 million

Successive periods of low rainfall and drought have had serious consequences in the arid and semi-arid areas of Kenya with pastoralist communities particularly badly hit. Water shortages, and major losses of crops and livestock during the year led to country-wide food insecurity. Rival clans fought over access to natural resources such as grazing and water. The 'long rains' replaced drought with floods in some areas, resulting in health risks from waterborne diseases. The Commission funded short-term food aid, livelihood support projects, protection activities and improved access to health, water and sanitation. Assistance was also provided to Somali refugees living in camps on Kenya's border. There are an estimated 160,000 refugees, including 32,000 who arrived in 2006, following the surge in violence in Somalia.

SOMALIA: Funding €10 million

The civil strife that has plagued Somalia since 1991 continued to engender significant humanitarian needs. The situation was aggravated by recurrent cycles of drought and floods, resulting in population displacement and disease outbreaks. An estimated 43% of Somalis were living in extreme poverty, of whom almost a third had no access to water or sanitation. The security situation deteriorated further as alliances of warlords and the Union of Islamic Courts (UIC) fought for control of the country. This made it more difficult to deliver relief to crisis victims. Interventions funded by the Commission included improving access to water and sanitation, health, nutrition and food security.

SUDAN: Funding €97 million

Although the peace agreement of January 2005 ended the 20-year civil war between the North and South, the humanitarian situation in much of Sudan remained highly precarious. Thousands of refugees and IDPs returned to areas already depleted of resources, triggering a number of humanitarian challenges that required a speedy response. One example was the rapid spread of diseases such as yellow fever, meningitis and cholera.

Almost four million people need humanitarian assistance as a result of the four year-long conflict in Darfur. This figure includes more than two million IDPs and around 50,000 refugees in Chad. Since the signing of the Darfur Peace Agreement in May 2006, the situation has continued to deteriorate with rising insecurity, new waves of displacement and further violations of international humanitarian law. The conflict has also spread to Chad and the Central African Republic.

The humanitarian space in Sudan has shrunk considerably. Access to victims has been severely limited due to insecurity or bureaucratic obstacles introduced by the authorities. Humanitarian staff and assets have been increasingly targeted by armed groups and more than a dozen humanitarian workers have been killed.

Aid provided by the Commission targeted the most vulnerable and needy populations and focused on health and nutrition, food security, water, environmental sanitation and protection. Special support was provided to female victims in the Darfur region. Emphasis was put on reducing excess mortality and morbidity among highly vulnerable populations through integrated and primarily life saving services. In addition, the Commission provided support to help stabilise conditions for people and communities whose coping capacities had been seriously reduced, contributing, wherever possible, to a gradual process of recovery by enhancing self-reliance.





CENTRAL AFRICA/GREAT LAKES

BURUNDI: Funding €17 million

Burundi has experienced a successful political transition after more than a decade of civil war and displacement. Elections were held in 2005 and in September 2006, the government signed a peace agreement with the last remaining opposition group, the Front Nationale de Liberation. The situation remained fragile, however, and many people continued to live in dire conditions with little or no access to appropriate health care.

People requiring assistance included around 117,000 Burundians still internally displaced as well as an estimated 30,000 refugees from the Democratic Republic of Congo. Improved security also engendered a need for humanitarian support to repatriate and help former refugees returning home from camps in Tanzania (200,000 Burundians remained in these camps – see page 8). This is a major challenge as Burundi is one of the most densely populated countries in Africa.

The Commission's humanitarian global plan for Burundi focused on the most vulnerable groups: IDPs, refugees and those living in precarious conditions in general. A multi-sector response to humanitarian needs was maintained through interventions in health, nutrition, food security, emergency sanitation and protection. In an improving situation, there was also increased emphasis on ensuring a smooth transition to longer term rehabilitation and development (LRRD).

DEMOCRATIC REPUBLIC OF CONGO: Funding €43 million

After more than 40 years of political instability and war, the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC) saw a democratically-elected president take office, the ratification of a new constitution and the inauguration of a democratic, representative parliament. Despite these positive developments, the population continued to suffer enormous hardship. There was continued fighting between militias and government forces in Ituri and the Kivus, and a new flashpoint emerged in Katanga. Civilians bore the brunt of the instability, with many forced to flee their villages and having their property and fields looted. Women were particularly affected with sexual violence used as an explicit form of terror.

Significant numbers of people returned home in 2006, but an estimated 1.5 million Congolese were still internally displaced or were refugees abroad. Although decreasing, mortality rates continued to be extremely high for children under five. While food security improved overall, persistent pockets of hunger and malnutrition remained.

UGANDA: Funding €19 million

There were dramatic changes in the humanitarian situation in Northern Uganda. Peace talks between the government and the Lord's Resistance Army began in Juba, South Sudan, providing the best opportunity yet for peace, after more than 20 years of conflict. The initial impact of the talks on security and access was significant, with a decline in humanitarian needs and enhanced freedom of movement for IDPs, tens of thousands of whom returned home. The number of child 'night commuters' also fell drastically allowing the closure of some shelters.

Despite the improved political climate, an estimated two million IDPs continued to live in poorly-managed camps without minimum basic services or adequate protection. Recurrent cholera outbreaks testified to the lack of clean drinking water, inadequate sanitation and poor hygiene. Coverage of the peace process notwithstanding, the situation in Northern Uganda continued to be viewed as a forgotten crisis in humanitarian terms. To improve the coordination of assistance provided to the camps, the UN Inter-Agency Standing Committee (IASC) nominated Uganda as a pilot country for the UN's 'Cluster Approach'.

The Commission funded interventions to support this approach with an emphasis on improving conditions in the camps and enhancing freedom of movement including support for people leaving the camps to return home. Projects were implemented to improve access to basic health services, provide water and sanitation, distribute essential household items, and boost livelihoods and food security. While falling short of the ideal, there was a notable improvement in the availability of clean water. Support was also provided for coordination, administration and camp management. The Commission's strategy focused on linking relief, rehabilitation and development (LRRD) and the eventual phase out of its humanitarian activities in Uganda.

EMERGENCY REGIONAL DROUGHT: Funding €15 million

The Horn of Africa has been affected by low rainfall and drought since 2001, leading to a lack of grazing for livestock, and serious food and water shortages. In 2006, the 'short rains' were again insufficient to improve the situation. Nomadic pastoralist and agro-pastoralist communities living in the dry lands of Kenya, southern Somalia, Ethiopia and Djibouti were hardest hit.

The Commission allocated funds to help meet the needs of these communities, many of which have exhausted their coping capacity. Assistance included therapeutic and supplementary feeding for the most vulnerable (including infants and women), targeted food aid, livestock veterinary services, water distribution, sanitation and the promotion of health and hygiene.



The Commission's humanitarian global plan for the DRC focused on the needs of the most vulnerable, especially women and children, with healthcare programmes and support to displaced people, mainly in the east of the country. Health activities included improved access to basic health services, meeting the specialised needs of victims of sexual violence and dealing with recurrent epidemics. Shelter, water/sanitation, food aid and food security were also provided to IDPs, refugees and their host communities. A specific funding decision was taken to meet the needs of victims of the conflict in Katanga. This covered food aid and other emergency assistance, as well as the logistics needed to distribute the relief effectively.

TANZANIA: Funding €16.05 million

At the beginning of the year, 350,000 refugees, mainly Burundian and Congolese (DRC), were living in camps in northwest Tanzania. This was the largest refugee caseload in any African country. They depended almost entirely on humanitarian assistance for their survival. In addition, the Tanzanian government estimated that a further 500,000 refugees were settled on their territory outside the camps.

Repatriation programmes were implemented throughout the year as the political situation in both Burundi and the DRC improved. The Commission supported the repatriation process as well as programmes to reintegrate returnees in their countries of origin.

In the meantime, through its 2006 humanitarian global plan for Tanzania, the Commission funded integrated assistance for the remaining refugees, including nutrition, water and sanitation, health, shelter, protection and transport.

REGIONAL (GREAT LAKES): Funding €1 million

Since the late 1980s, cassava (manioc), one of the staple crops in the Great Lakes region, has been badly affected by the cassava mosaic virus. The disease has considerably reduced the annual yield, threatening region-wide food insecurity and contributing to localised pockets of hunger, especially among the displaced. Although cassava strains resistant to the virus have been introduced, their impact is not yet significant. In 2006, the Commission funded a regional initiative to distribute healthy cassava plants to returning refugees and IDPs, as well as to communities that still host displaced people.

ECHO FLIGHT: Funding €7 million

ECHO Flight was established by the Commission in 1994 to provide essential transport services to humanitarian NGOs operating in the Horn of Africa and the Great Lakes region. In 2005, the aviation company providing the service went into liquidation. Since then, ECHO has supported air operations carried out directly by partner organisations. These are, for Somalia, Aviation Sans Frontières (Belgium) and for DRC, Aviation Sans Frontières (France) and the World Food Programme (WFP).

In the DRC, given the scale of humanitarian needs and the lack of ground transport infrastructure, the Commission re-established an ECHO-Flight service initially for one year with the possibility of annual renewal.

WEST AFRICA

CHAD: Funding €14.5 million

Since the eruption of violence in Darfur in 2003, almost a quarter of a million Sudanese refugees have poured into eastern Chad. There are also around 100,000 IDPs in the southeast of the country. The host regions are among the poorest in Chad and are ill-equipped to accommodate such large influxes. Those who have been displaced are vulnerable to militarisation, forced recruitment and militia incursions. Access to beneficiaries became extremely difficult as the security situation deteriorated throughout the year.

The Commission's funding decisions for Chad focused on Sudanese refugees and vulnerable local communities in the east. Programmes were implemented to cover all the traditional humanitarian assistance sectors: health and nutrition, food aid, food security, shelter, water/sanitation, distribution of basic household items and protection. Additionally, the Commission provided support to humanitarian air services in Chad.

CÔTE D'IVOIRE: Funding €5.2 million

Since 2002, Côte d'Ivoire has been divided with the south under government control and the north held by the 'Forces nouvelles' (FN). Although tension remained high during 2006, access for humanitarian operations was possible countrywide. Certain basic public services, including health services, were restored in the north. In the west, some IDPs returned home, despite ethnic clashes and a volatile security situation, but the area continued to host around 30,000 Liberian refugees and 700,000 IDPs.

The Commission assisted vulnerable groups affected by the crisis, funding protection, shelter, basic household items, water/sanitation, health, nutrition and food security. A link with relief, reconstruction and development (LRRD) will allow for a gradual phase-out of Commission humanitarian activities in 2007.

GUINEA: Funding €1.5 million

Over the years, refugee influxes from civil wars in neighbouring Sierra Leone, Liberia and Côte d'Ivoire have had a major impact on Guinea. At the beginning of 2006, more than 60,000 refugees were still hosted in official camps in the south, exerting pressure on a region characterised by high mortality and morbidity. The Commission helped refugees and vulnerable groups, providing basic household items, shelter, health, nutrition, water, sanitation and protection.



GUINEA-BISSAU: Funding €1 million

For the last two decades, communities living along the Guinea-Bissau/Senegal border have been adversely affected by the conflict in the Casamance region of Senegal. In March, Guinea-Bissau launched a military offensive against a faction of the Movement of Democratic Forces of Casamance. As a result, more than 8,500 people were displaced and some 20,000 were isolated by the fighting. The Commission assisted these people, funding the distribution of food aid and basic household items as well as the provision of health, protection and food security.

LIBERIA: Funding €19.8 million

Although Liberia is in a post-conflict phase after 14 years of war, it continues to face major humanitarian challenges. The infrastructure, economy and administrative apparatus were all destroyed during years of fighting. Half of the population was undernourished in 2006 and mortality/morbidity levels were very high. The repatriation process continued, involving more than 190,000 refugees previously in camps in neighbouring countries. For the 80,000 IDPs in Liberia, the return operation was officially declared over in December.

The Commission maintained its support for humanitarian projects, restoring access to basic services such as health, water and sanitation. Livelihood, food security and protection activities were implemented targeting the most vulnerable, especially women and children. Support was also provided for the return home and re-establishment of refugees and IDPs.

NIGER: Funding €12 million

Concern about the continued vulnerability of the many households affected by the 2005 nutritional crisis, and an analysis of the extent and scope of acute malnutrition in the Sahel, led to the intensification of humanitarian assistance to reduce malnutrition and infant mortality. More than 680,000 children were treated for acute malnutrition, over 250,000 people were given improved access to health services and the coping mechanisms of more than 30,000 families were strengthened. Recent nutritional surveys show a marked reduction in wasting and stunting among children since 2005.

A major effort was also undertaken to promote the linkage between relief, rehabilitation and development (LRRD) by working with development donors and government institutions to mainstream humanitarian concerns in development planning. This is leading to a greater articulation of aid instruments from short-term humanitarian aid through medium-term food security budgets to long-term development aid. This coordinated approach is designed to help Niger achieve the Millennium Development Goals of reducing hunger, and child and maternal mortality.

EPIDEMICS: Funding €1.25 million

Communicable diseases such as cholera and meningitis are endemic in West Africa, their effects often exacerbated by conflict, nutritional deficiencies, poverty, lack of sanitation and poor hygiene. The Commission funded projects to reduce morbidity and mortality linked to disease outbreaks. The approach involved intervening at an early stage to prevent large-scale epidemics.



LIBERIA

Liberia's 14-year civil war had a devastating effect on civilians, many of whom suffered from post-war trauma. To address this problem, the Commission funded a pilot project implemented by Médecins du Monde (MDM), targeting the population of Bong County in central Liberia. As part of a wider programme to improve primary health care, MDM provided psychological and psychiatric support to children under five, pregnant women, victims of sexual violence, young people (especially young women), people who had been associated with fighting forces and returnees. This highly innovative project in the field of mental health care in Liberia was successful in addressing post-conflict trauma.



REGIONAL WEST AFRICA:
Funding €0.9 million

In addition to the above-mentioned actions in West Africa, the Commission took a regional decision to improve the effectiveness of protection activities for child victims of conflicts and to support a humanitarian air service.

SOUTHERN AFRICA

ANGOLA: Funding €3 million

Extremely heavy rains combined with underlying poverty, a lack of sanitation facilities and low hygiene standards prompted a major cholera outbreak that spread rapidly to most of Angola's provinces. More than 63,000 cases were recorded, including at least 2,600 fatalities. Around 35% of the victims were children under five. Commission-funded projects focused on the treatment and management of cases, on providing access to clean water and sanitation in the affected areas, and on hygiene awareness campaigns.

MOZAMBIQUE: Funding €2 million

Mozambique is susceptible to various natural disasters. Prolonged drought in the south and centre of the country, combined with the impact of HIV/AIDS on the most vulnerable households, put more than 800,000 people at risk of severe food insecurity. The Commission focused its relief efforts on emergency water and sanitation interventions, aimed at improving access to water and preventing water-borne diseases such as cholera.

ZAMBIA: Funding €2.2 million

The combined effects of drought and HIV/AIDS in Zambia resulted in food shortages affecting nearly two million people in the south and west. The Commission funded operations to help vulnerable groups such as child- and grandparent-headed households. Projects targeted livelihood improvements, including access to water and sanitation, food security and livestock support. All interventions also contained HIV/AIDS components.

ZIMBABWE: Funding €12 million

Various factors have contributed to the humanitarian crisis in Zimbabwe: poor governance, a collapsing economy, an HIV/AIDS pandemic, food insecurity and erratic weather conditions. People living with HIV/AIDS, IDPs, orphans and households headed by the elderly, widows and children were all extremely vulnerable in 2006. At least three million people needed emergency food assistance, including 1.1 million AIDS orphans.

Under the Commission's humanitarian global plan for Zimbabwe, projects were funded to strengthen food security and improve access to water and sanitation. The emergency needs of IDPs and other vulnerable groups were also met through the provision of food and basic non-food items.



UGANDA

Civilians in Northern Uganda have suffered the effects of armed conflict for more than two decades. An estimated two million displaced people ended up living in camps in dire conditions, often without even the minimum of services needed for survival. Action Contre la Faim (ACF) received ECHO funding to mitigate the impact of prolonged displacement of IDPs in the Gulu, Lira and Apac Districts of northern Uganda. The food security component of the project was very imaginative: 'seed fairs' for camps that had better access to land and 'micro-gardening' for those with less space available for cultivation. Pairs of oxen, ploughs and organic pesticides were also distributed. ACF's contribution to food security is greatly appreciated by other agencies who, in their own work, often apply the approach used in this ground-breaking project.



CARIBBEAN

SURINAME: Funding €700,000

Heavy seasonal rains brought severe flooding to Suriname in May 2006. Many schools, clinics and homes were submerged and substantial livestock and crop losses were reported. More than 20,000 people were seriously affected. The Commission helped the flood victims with financing for health actions, water/sanitation, food security and nutrition.

CARIBBEAN/DOMINICAN REPUBLIC/HAITI: Funding €910,000

The Caribbean region is particularly susceptible to a large array of natural disasters including floods, cyclones, earthquakes, volcanic eruptions and drought. The Commission has intervened on numerous occasions to provide assistance to the victims of these catastrophes. In 2006, funds were allocated to strengthen disaster management capacities and continue the Commission's interventions in this region. Emergency aid was also provided specifically for the victims of floods in Haiti.

CAUCASUS AND CENTRAL ASIA

GEORGIA: Funding €2 million

The unresolved conflict in Abkhazia continued to have humanitarian repercussions. Hundreds of thousands of people were still displaced within Georgia, with most of them living in collective centres in very poor conditions. Inside Abkhazia, the situation of many residents and returnees was also very precarious. To help meet the needs of vulnerable groups, the Commission funded food aid and income generation activities, as well as shelter rehabilitation.

NORTHERN CAUCASUS: Funding €26 million

Despite the launch of a significant reconstruction process, humanitarian needs arising from the Chechnya conflict remained acute in 2006, with many of the republic's inhabitants still displaced. Living conditions inside Chechnya, and particularly in Grozny, continued to be extremely difficult. Ingushetia and Dagestan still hosted around 34,000 Chechens while more than 2,500 refugees remained in Azerbaijan, most of them in dire conditions.

Security in Chechnya continued to improve but the situation remained volatile, with low-intensity fighting taking place in different parts of the republic. Ingushetia and Dagestan were increasingly unstable.

The Commission remained engaged in providing humanitarian aid in the Northern Caucasus. Basic food and non-food items were distributed to the most vulnerable groups. Health projects, education support and protection activities were undertaken in all three republics, and access to water and sanitation was improved in Chechnya and Ingushetia. As in previous years, mine risk education programmes were conducted, especially targeting children, while landmine victim assistance continued to be financed. Shelter rehabilitation and income-generating activities were implemented on a larger scale in Chechnya and support was provided for the forgotten refugee caseload in Azerbaijan.

TAJIKISTAN: Funding €5 million

Following the 1992-1997 civil war and a devastating drought between 1999 and 2001, Tajikistan is now well into the process of transition from short-term humanitarian needs to longer-term development. The Commission's policy of linking relief, rehabilitation and development (LRRD) has been successfully piloted in this country.

Despite improvements in the overall economic and social situation, persistent pockets of need remained in 2006. The Commission therefore continued to provide support for the most vulnerable groups, focusing primarily on health. Other priority areas were water/sanitation and food security. This funding was the final component of a three-year humanitarian phase-out strategy, scheduled for completion in 2007. ECHO will remain engaged in Tajikistan through its Disaster Preparedness (DIPECHO) programme for Central Asia.

MIDDLE EAST & NORTH AFRICA

THE PALESTINIANS: Funding €84 million

The humanitarian situation in the West Bank and Gaza Strip deteriorated sharply following the Palestinian parliamentary elections in March. Direct support from external donors was suspended. Meanwhile the Israeli government halted the monthly transfer to the Palestinian Authority (PA) of revenues that comprised about 50% of its budget, thus triggering a fiscal crisis. More than 150,000 PA employees had their salary payments stopped. Additional restrictions on Palestinian labour access to Israel and even more reduced flows of imports and exports across the borders further aggravated the socio-economic situation.

In June, the Israeli Army re-entered the Gaza Strip following the kidnapping of one of its soldiers. Military operations led to sharp rises in Palestinian casualties and in physical destruction. In Gaza, the only power plant was badly damaged, together with a number of major roads, bridges and public buildings.

During the year, the Palestinians became even more isolated with an increase of around 45% in the number of physical obstacles restricting their movement in the West Bank, and the ongoing construction of the separation barrier. The humanitarian situation worsened as more people were cut off from water supplies, farmland and essential services such as healthcare and education.

In the West Bank and Gaza Strip, the Commission provided food aid to more than 300,000 refugee families and 80,000 non-refugee families, while access to water and sanitation were improved for more than 160,000 people. An estimated 30,000 families benefited from income generation programmes, and health and psychosocial support were provided to more than a million people, targeting the most vulnerable, such as children and disabled people. Protection activities continued to be provided.



In Lebanon, some 2,000 elderly and disabled people living in refugee camps were helped with health and psychosocial care. Water and sanitation were improved for an estimated 1,000 refugees. Other activities funded in Lebanon included protection, shelter rehabilitation, and the provision of professional tool kits and training.

LEBANON CRISIS: Funding €50 million

A major conflict broke-out between the government of Israel and the Lebanese Islamic group Hezbollah, when the latter kidnapped two Israeli soldiers. The fighting lasted 34 days and exacted a high human toll. About 1,200 Lebanese, mainly civilians, were killed while almost a million were displaced. Homes and civilian infrastructures in the country were severely damaged and essential services were disrupted. After the fighting ended, most of the displaced people returned home, in many cases to find their dwellings damaged or destroyed.

The initial aid provided by the Commission focused on the distribution of food and basic household items, and on health and water/sanitation projects. Protection activities were supported while psychosocial assistance was given to affected children and their families. The most vulnerable people and returnees were given temporary shelters. Aid activities among UN-mandated agencies, other humanitarian actors and the Lebanese authorities were coordinated to avoid duplication or gaps in the relief effort. Following the cessation of hostilities, the Commission also funded the demarcation and clearance of unexploded munitions, mine-awareness programmes and income-generating activities.

WESTERN SAHARA REFUGEES IN ALGERIA: Funding €10.9 million

For more than 30 years, the Sahrawi refugees have been living in camps near Tindouf, Algeria. They depend entirely on international aid for their survival. The Commission is the largest donor assisting the victims of this long-running crisis. Projects in 2006 included the distribution of basic and fresh food, and provision of basic services (water, sanitation, health and education).

Exceptional flooding in February left more than 12,000 refugee families without shelter. The Commission funded projects to cover immediate needs, in particular the distribution of emergency food and the provision of tents, plastic sheets, blankets and mattresses.

SOUTHEAST & EAST ASIA

MYANMAR (BURMA) AND THAILAND: Funding €15.7 million

The long-running crisis in Myanmar (Burma) has provoked major population displacements with more than 150,000 Burmese refugees in neighbouring Thailand, 30,000 in Bangladesh and over 500,000 IDPs in the east of the country. Many of the refugees depend entirely on international aid for survival. Inside Myanmar, the state of the healthcare system was particularly worrying: the under-five mortality rate was triple that of Thailand. Water and sanitation problems were also of concern, waterborne diseases accounting for 50% of illnesses suffered by young children.

To address the humanitarian needs of more than a million people, the Commission funded projects covering a wide array of sectors. Food, cooking fuel, nutrition, health, water and sanitation were provided for refugees along the Myanmar-Thailand border, while vulnerable groups within Myanmar received health, nutrition and food aid, water/sanitation and protection.

The Commission also helped the stateless population of Northern Rakhine State, notably those who have returned from Bangladesh in recent years.

EAST TIMOR: Funding €3 million

Four years after East Timor gained full sovereignty, the relative stability that the country had enjoyed gave way to civil unrest and communal violence. An estimated 140,000 people were internally displaced. The Commission provided relief aid to IDPs in the form of food, shelter, access to clean water and proper sanitation, healthcare, kitchen sets and psycho-social support for children.

INDONESIA: Funding €9.865 million

In May, the Indonesian province of Yogyakarta was struck by a powerful earthquake which claimed nearly 6,000 lives and caused widespread damage to property and infrastructure. The EU, through the European Commission, was the first donor to offer assistance with fast track funding allocated on the day the disaster struck. This initial emergency aid included medical support, shelter, water/sanitation and the distribution of essential



NORTHERN CAUCASUS

With a significant reduction in fighting in the second Chechen conflict, that began in 1999, many IDPs have returned to Chechnya from Ingushetia. One of the main obstacles they face is the lack of shelter, as most homes were partially or completely destroyed during the war. To help people return to their land, the Commission provided funding for an 'integrated return' project implemented by the International Rescue Committee (IRC). This combined private shelter rehabilitation for vulnerable IDPs and income-generation activities. The project also included small rehabilitation of some public infrastructures in the villages concerned. The aim was to give war-affected communities the capacity to earn their livelihoods without further humanitarian aid.

household items. Further funds were allocated for shelter, water/sanitation, health and logistics following a more detailed needs assessment.

Separately, a cholera outbreak in Papua province resulted in more than 4,000 cases and several hundred fatalities. The situation was aggravated by the limited response capacity of the local health system. The Commission funded a project to help reduce and prevent mortality and morbidity caused by the outbreak, through the provision of a safe water supply and sanitation.

NORTH KOREA: Funding €8 million

Humanitarian needs in North Korea have been generated over a number of years by economic decline and a lack of appropriate development measures to redress the situation. Food shortages continued in 2006 with an ongoing risk of famine in certain areas. In 2005, the government announced that all humanitarian activities should cease by the end of the year but following negotiations with the authorities, Commission-funded relief projects were resumed during 2006.

While the situation in North Korea remained precarious, it was generally recognised that humanitarian needs had stabilised over the previous year with an improvement in food security. Chronic malnutrition rates were similar to those in a number of other countries in East and South-East Asia. The Commission is therefore aiming to phase-out its humanitarian activities as part of the transition to longer-term development.

During 2006, the Commission's humanitarian effort was directed mainly at health actions and included the distribution of basic medical kits, vaccinations, the rehabilitation of water supplies and hygiene promotion.

PHILIPPINES: Funding €2 million*

The Philippines are particularly prone to a wide range of natural disasters. Between September and December, four typhoons struck this island nation. Although most Filipino communities are geared up to the threat posed by tropical storms, their scale and frequency during this period stretched the response capacity of the affected regions and left many people struggling to recover. The Commission supported the worst-hit communities, funding emergency shelter, drinking water supplies, sanitation, the distribution of basic household items and logistics.

* €560,000 was allocated from ECHO's 2006 budget and €1,440,000 was drawn down from ECHO's 2007 budget

VIETNAM: Funding €460,000

In October, the coastal areas of Vietnam were struck by the strongest typhoon in two decades, resulting in serious infrastructure damage and the displacement of an estimated 100,000 people. The poor were the most vulnerable as their houses could not withstand the strong winds. The Commission assisted typhoon victims through home rehabilitation and livelihood recovery, with disaster preparedness integrated into the projects.





PAKISTAN

On 8 October 2005, northern Pakistan was struck by a major earthquake that left more than 73,000 people dead and 69,000 injured. The homes of an estimated three million people were damaged or destroyed. Many of those affected were living high in the hills and mountains on the edge of the Himalayan range, with winter looming. The humanitarian impact could have been much worse were it not for the rapid and massive relief effort. One of the first to respond was the Aga Khan Foundation, already present in the area through its local organisation Focus. ECHO funded the foundation to transport emergency health staff, medicines, food, shelter and other materials by helicopter. The relief effort continued into 2006.

SOUTH & SOUTHWEST ASIA

AFGHANISTAN: Funding €22.5 million

Following decades of armed conflict and, more recently, severe drought, Afghanistan experienced gradual economic and political progress. Substantial humanitarian aid was still needed, however. In 2006, it was estimated that only 23% of Afghans had access to safe drinking water and 70% of the population was undernourished. The under-five mortality rate was around 20%. The country had an estimated 135,000 IDPs including 20,000 newly displaced due to the fighting in the south. More than three million Afghan refugees were still living in Pakistan and Iran.

The Commission, through its 'Global Plan' for Afghanistan, provided humanitarian aid to IDPs and refugees, including support for the return process and reintegration. Shelter, water/sanitation, hygiene education and protection were all funded. In addition, aid went to the most vulnerable host communities, many of whom had only recently returned themselves. Humanitarian flights and the Afghan NGO security office were also supported. An estimated 1.4 million people benefited from ECHO-financed programmes.

Funds additional to the Global Plan were provided to help victims of the drought, brought on by extremely low levels of snow and rainfall. Around 2.5 million people were affected. Cash-for-work and food-for-work, as well as free food distributions were supported, while special attention was given to disabled people and female-headed households.

BANGLADESH: Funding €1 million

There was serious flooding in southwest Bangladesh following heavy rains during the monsoon season. An estimated 3,000 families were forced to live in makeshift shelters and another 15,000 families required emergency support. Food, shelter, health, water/sanitation and livelihood rehabilitation were provided through Commission funding. The focus was on the most vulnerable flood-affected people living in rural areas.

PAKISTAN: Funding €1 million

Population displacement continued in Pakistan during 2006 because of landslides and aftershocks following the 2005 earthquake, compounded by exceptionally heavy rains in July. Despite progress towards rehabilitation, around 1.8 million people from the earthquake-affected zone faced the 2006-2007 winter in temporary shelters. The Commission funded logistical support to facilitate the timely delivery of humanitarian relief throughout the winter. Additionally, humanitarian funding was deployed to help contain several outbreaks of epidemic diseases.



INDIA: Funding €5 million

The decades-long dispute between India and Pakistan over the Jammu-Kashmir region has generated significant humanitarian needs. Since 1989, more than a dozen militant groups have been fighting Indian security forces in the area and the conflict has claimed an estimated 40,000 lives. The Commission allocated funds to address the needs of vulnerable people affected by the conflict. Activities included strengthened protection for conflict-related detainees and civilians, and improved awareness-raising about international humanitarian law. Psychological support and health services were also provided.

Heavy rains during the monsoon season provoked major flooding in both western and eastern India. There was extensive damage to livestock, crops and property. Around 500,000 people were forced to move to makeshift shelters. The Commission assisted the most vulnerable people with the supply of food, shelter and water/sanitation as well as support for livelihood recovery and the rehabilitation of damaged homes. Also provided were medical aid, hygiene education and water purification to help avoid disease outbreaks from contaminated water supplies.

NEPAL: Funding €7.8 million

The Nepalese government and Maoist guerrillas signed a ceasefire in November, effectively ending a 10-year long internal conflict that had claimed the lives of nearly 13,000 people. Despite this positive development, the political environment remained unstable. Years of violence have had a devastating impact on Nepal, one of the world's poorest countries. A separate humanitarian challenge is posed by the situation of more than 100,000 Bhutanese refugees living in camps in eastern Nepal. They have no legal status and depend entirely on external aid for survival. Under the Commission's humanitarian 'global plan' for Nepal, vulnerable people, especially women and children, received protection assistance, as well as relief in the form of healthcare, water/sanitation and food security. Food aid was provided to the Bhutanese refugees.

The lowest winter rainfall in recorded history as well as late summer rains in 2006 resulted in severe drought in the far west and mid western hills of Nepal. Crop production was badly hit, leading to widespread food shortages. The Commission assisted more than 120,000 people, financing emergency food aid, nutritional and therapeutic support, and actions to strengthen food security.

SRI LANKA: Funding €12 million

Since 1983, conflict between the Sri Lanka government and the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam (LTTE) in the north and east of the country has claimed more than 65,000 lives and displaced an estimated 1.7 million civilians. A ceasefire agreed in 2002 has effectively broken down and during 2006, violence escalated significantly. More than 3,500 people have been killed and 215,000 displaced since the fighting resumed. This is in addition to the estimated 350,000 people still displaced as a result of previous violence or because of the tsunami. Over 80,000 Sri Lankan refugees have fled to camps in neighbouring Tamil Nadu, India.

The Commission helped conflict victims inside Sri Lanka funding shelter, food, food security, water/sanitation, basic household items, healthcare and protection. In 2006, the focus reverted to relief operations – as opposed to rehabilitation – reflecting the increasing numbers of IDPs. Tsunami victims in the north and east continued to be assisted although many were displaced again by fighting. ECHO also funded a project in refugee camps in Tamil Nadu, aimed at improving water and sanitation.





CENTRAL & LATIN AMERICA

EL SALVADOR: Funding €2 million

In October 2005, Hurricane Stan struck El Salvador triggering a number of localised disasters and causing damage to housing, crops and infrastructure. Around 250,000 people were internally displaced. The consequences of the hurricane were compounded by the eruption of the Ilimatepec volcano which led to the evacuation of people living in nearby communities. In addition to funding provided in 2005, the Commission continued to support the return of the most vulnerable populations, helping them regain a minimum level of self-sufficiency. Home rehabilitation, water/sanitation, and disaster preparedness projects were implemented.

GUATEMALA: Funding €2.6 million

Ten days of incessant rains, brought on by Hurricane Stan in October 2005, set off serious landslides, causing widespread destruction in Guatemala. An estimated 3.5 million people were affected by the disaster. A detailed needs assessment, following initial funding, prompted the Commission to continue its relief operations. The extra funds were focused on helping victims regain their self-sufficiency and establish a basis for local and national reconstruction. Projects included improved water and sanitation, basic health services, agricultural support and disaster preparedness.

BOLIVIA: Funding €1 million

Flooding brought on by continuous heavy rainfall in Bolivia throughout January caused serious damage to crops, homes and infrastructures. The Commission funded programmes to meet the most urgent needs of the flood victims, including water/sanitation, health, emergency repairs to health centres and schools, and disaster preparedness. Food security and short-term agricultural activities were also undertaken. Around 51,000 people benefited from these programmes.

ECUADOR: Funding €1 million

Torrential rains in Ecuador caused flooding and landslides, directly affecting more than 165,000 people. The Commission funded assistance for 79,000 of the most vulnerable. Activities included restoring access to water and sanitation, distributing hygiene products, and disinfecting health centres and schools that had been inundated. The other components of the programme were food aid, epidemiological surveillance and disaster preparedness.

COLOMBIA: Funding €12 million

The armed conflict in Colombia, which has lasted 40 years, has claimed hundreds of thousands of lives. More than two million people have been displaced since 2000. Although some stability has been restored in major towns and on key roads, security in many rural areas has not improved. 2005 saw a further 250,000 people displaced by the conflict, with 175,000 suffering the same fate in the first nine months of 2006. Other consequences of the conflict include the recruitment of child soldiers, restrictions on free movement for civilians and the flight of people to neighbouring countries, mainly Ecuador and Venezuela. An estimated 500,000 refugees from the fighting in Colombia are now living in these two countries.

Through its 2006 humanitarian 'global plan' for Colombia, the Commission targeted the most urgent needs of IDPs and refugees, principally in the areas of protection, water/sanitation, shelter, healthcare, food, livelihood support and psychological assistance. Children, a priority group for funding, were given informal education, psychosocial care and nutritional support.



THEMATIC FUNDING

The Commission's commitment to working closely with international institutions in improving the provision of humanitarian assistance worldwide is demonstrated through thematic funding decisions. Funding allocations have helped aid organisations such as the UN agencies and the Red Cross/Crescent movement to strengthen their response capacity in humanitarian crises. In 2006, thematic funding decisions were taken for the following organisations.

UNITED NATIONS CHILDREN'S FUND (UNICEF):

Funding €6 million

The number of man-made and natural disasters has increased significantly over the last few years, leading to serious economic losses and large-scale population displacement. The main victims have been women and children. The Commission provided assistance to strengthen UNICEF's emergency preparedness and response capacity in humanitarian crises.

Children are generally most at-risk in a crisis, whether natural or man-made. The Commission supported UNICEF in strengthening child protection in humanitarian emergencies.

UNITED NATIONS HIGH COMMISSIONER FOR REFUGEES (UNHCR): Funding €4 million

UNHCR traditionally provides protection for refugees who have fled from crises in their own countries. However, the UN body is also increasingly involved in assisting the internally displaced (IDPs). At the beginning of 2006, there were more than 20 million uprooted people (refugees and IDPs) 'of concern' to the UNHCR.

The Commission helped strengthen UNHCR's capacity to respond to the needs of these groups. Projects were implemented to improve refugee registration (Project Profile), support the rapid deployment of protection staff in sudden crises (Surge Project) and boost UNHCR's emergency response mechanisms.

UNITED NATIONS OFFICE FOR THE COORDINATION OF HUMANITARIAN AFFAIRS (OCHA): Funding €3 million

Key to an effective humanitarian response is the ability to collect, analyse, disseminate and act on accurate information in a timely matter. Good coordination among international actors is equally essential. OCHA's information systems, such as ReliefWeb and IRIN, are pivotal in ensuring that there are no gaps or duplications in humanitarian responses worldwide. With a view to further improving the coordination of humanitarian aid, the Commission continued to support the development of OCHA's information management systems and services.

UNITED NATIONS WORLD FOOD

PROGRAMME (WFP): Funding €3.5 million

The ability to assess humanitarian needs accurately boosts the effectiveness of the aid response during a crisis. Lack of information about needs can lead to inadequate programming and thus, inappropriate assistance. The WFP emphasises the importance of needs assessment in the food sector during its relief operations. The Commission supported the second phase of the WFP's SENAC (Strengthening Emergency Needs Assessment Capacities) project which is designed to improve needs assessment methodology and capacity.

INTERNATIONAL COMMITTEE OF THE RED CROSS (ICRC): Funding €3 million

Civilians are often caught up in the violence of armed conflict or directly targeted by belligerents who are unaware of, or do not respect, international humanitarian law. Protection of conflict victims is the core of the ICRC's mandate. Through thematic assistance, the Commission supported the ICRC's work in the Republic of the Congo, Rwanda and Sierra Leone, funding programmes aimed at protecting civilians and people deprived of their liberty, and restoring family links at times of armed conflict.



DISASTER PREPAREDNESS

DIPECHO: Funding €19.05 million

The Commission's disaster preparedness programme (DIPECHO) was launched in 1996 to help prepare populations in areas at risk from natural catastrophes such as earthquakes, floods and cyclones, and to support practical measures to reduce these risks. Preventive measures (risk mapping, small-scale mitigation, institutional strengthening), preparatory work (early warning systems, awareness-raising), and actions to speed up recovery following a disaster (capacity-building for emergency response teams, community level training) have all been implemented. An important aim is to facilitate the integration of disaster risk reduction into long-term development and national strategies.

Developing countries, with less coping capacity at both national and community level, are especially at risk from natural disasters. Since such disasters are not confined to state boundaries, DIPECHO programmes are organised regionally.

Three new decisions were taken under the DIPECHO programme in 2006 to strengthen local response capacities in:

- **Central America** (€6 million): El Salvador, Guatemala, Honduras, Nicaragua, Costa Rica and Panama
- **Central Asia** (€6.05 million): Kyrgyzstan, Uzbekistan, Turkmenistan, Kazakhstan and Tajikistan, including small cross border initiatives with Northern Afghanistan
- **South East Asia** (€7 million): Cambodia, Indonesia, Philippines, East Timor and Vietnam (Laos and Thailand featured in a regional programme).

DROUGHT PREPAREDNESS:

Funding €10 million

2006 also saw the adoption of a first disaster preparedness decision for Africa. This covers seven countries in and around the Horn of Africa, and seeks to bolster the resilience of local populations, essentially nomadic pastoralists, in the face of the inevitable drought cycle. The funding decision integrates human health, water provision and livestock-related activities in a holistic way.

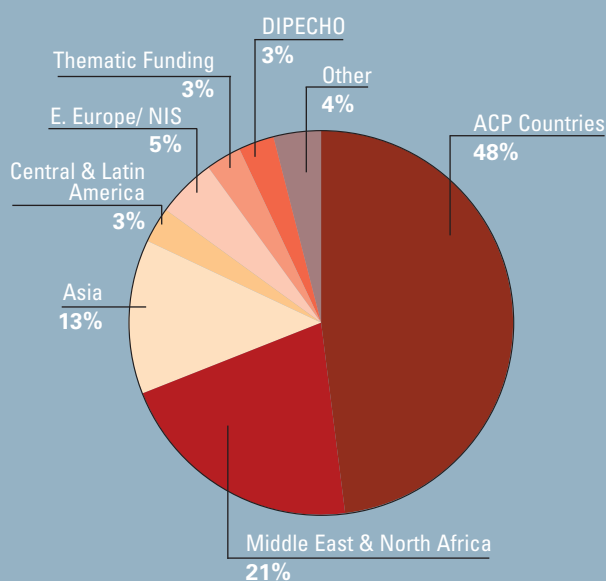


FACTS AND FIGURES

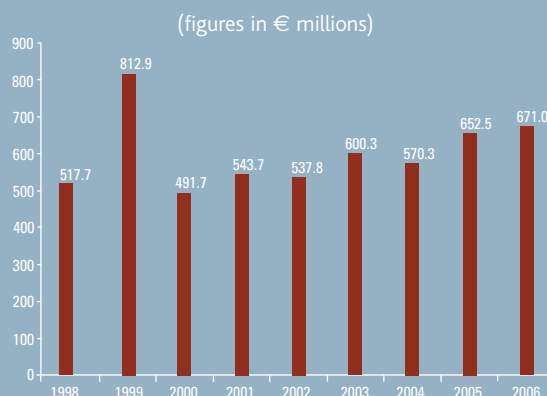
FINANCIAL DECISIONS FOR HUMANITARIAN AID BY REGION IN 2006

Country/region	Decisions in €	Country/region	Decisions in €
AFRICA & CARIBBEAN	322 060 000	CENTRAL & LATIN AMERICA	18 600 000
Angola	3 000 000	Bolivia	1 000 000
Burundi	17 000 000	Colombia	12 000 000
Chad	14 500 000	Ecuador	1 000 000
Caribbean	910 000	El Salvador	2 000 000
Congo (Democratic Republic)	43 000 000	Guatemala	2 600 000
Côte d'Ivoire	5 200 000		
Eritrea	6 000 000	EASTERN EUROPE, NIS	33 000 000
Ethiopia	5 000 000	Georgia	2 000 000
Guinea	1 500 000	Northern Caucasus (Chechnya crisis)	26 000 000
Guinea Bissau	1 000 000	Tajikistan	5 000 000
Kenya	9 050 000		
Liberia	19 800 000	MIDDLE EAST & NORTH AFRICA	144 900 000
Mozambique	2 000 000	Algeria (Sahrawi refugees)	10 900 000
Niger	12 000 000	Lebanon (not including Palestinian refugees)	50 000 000
Regional (Great Lakes)	1 000 000	Palestinian Territories and Palestinian refugees	84 000 000
Regional (Horn of Africa)	15 000 000		
Regional (West Africa)	2 150 000	DIPECHO	19 050 000
Somalia	10 000 000	Central Asia	6 050 000
Sudan	97 000 000	Central America	6 000 000
Suriname	700 000	South East Asia	7 000 000
Tanzania	16 050 000		
Uganda	19 000 000	THEMATIC FUNDING	19 500 000
Zambia	2 200 000	UNICEF	6 000 000
Zimbabwe	12 000 000	UNHCR	4 000 000
ECHO flight (Somalia & DRC)	7 000 000	OCHA	3 000 000
		WFP	3 500 000
		ICRC	3 000 000
ASIA	86 885 000	OTHER FUNDING	27 005 000
Afghanistan	22 500 000	Technical assistance	19 000 000
Bangladesh	1 000 000	Evaluation/Communication/Audit	6 190 000
East Timor	3 000 000	Grants and Services	1 000 000
India	5 000 000	Other	815 000
Indonesia	9 865 000		
Myanmar (Burma)/Thailand	15 700 000	Total	671 000 000
Nepal	7 800 000		
North Korea	8 000 000		
Pakistan	1 000 000		
Philippines	560 000		
Sri Lanka	12 000 000		
Vietnam	460 000		

ECHO: FINANCING DECISIONS 2006



ECHO: FINANCING DECISIONS 1998 - 2006



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JAVA, INDONESIA: 'SUDDENLY, THE EARTH STARTED SHAKING'

Under bright green banana trees, 30-year old Asnuri and his wife Nurjanah were sitting together with their little daughter on a wooden bed – the only piece of furniture still intact after the earthquake hit their village. Next to them was a pile of bricks, tiles and wooden beams: all that was left of their home.

Karet, located less than 20 km from the epicentre, was almost totally destroyed by the earthquake that hit the popular tourist destination of Yogyakarta and surrounding districts in the early morning of 27 May. The quake killed almost 6,000 people, injured around 40,000, made over a million homeless and destroyed or severely damaged close to 300,000 houses.

'We had been listening a lot to the news' recalled Asnuri 'because we were expecting Mount Merapi to erupt.' The nearby volcano had been rumbling for months and ejecting clouds of smoke and lava for weeks. 'But the earthquake took us by surprise. Luckily it was almost six in the morning so we were already up and getting ready for breakfast. Suddenly the earth started shaking. I lost my balance, managed to get back on my feet, grabbed my daughter who was screaming and ran out of the house. All around me, I could hear beams breaking, roof tiles falling, walls cracking.'

Anticipating a volcanic eruption, the Indonesian Red Cross, the army, local authorities and some international organisations had already begun prepositioning relief supplies and evacuating about 20,000 people from the areas closest to the volcano. So while they weren't expecting an earthquake, more emergency stocks and personnel were in the area than would normally have been the case. The authorities were thus able to providing speedy relief in the form of medical aid, food and shelter. Despite this, the local response capacity quickly became overstretched because of the scale of the earthquake and international help was needed.



Asnuri and Nurjanah met members of the ECHO team that arrived in Karet soon after the disaster to assess humanitarian needs in coordination with local authorities and international organisations. Asnuri said that he and his daughter had received prompt treatment from a nearby army field hospital for minor injuries, caused by falling bricks. Living conditions were still difficult though.

'At the moment, there is just one toilet and one well with drinkable water for almost 50 families he explained.' We have had food, jerry cans to store water and soap from the Indonesian Red Cross and from relatives who were not affected by the earthquake. Today we received a family tent which we will put up on the foundations of our house. Finally we will have a roof over our heads again. In the next few days I can return to my job in a nearby factory. But what I really want to do is clear up all the mess and rebuild the house.'

At 6.3 on the Richter Scale, the 2006 Java earthquake was a lot less powerful than the undersea quake that generated the tsunami in 2004. But because it occurred quite close to the earth's surface in a highly populated area, it still caused a great deal of damage and gave rise to significant humanitarian needs.

On the day of the earthquake the European Commission earmarked €3 million in fast-track emergency aid. The funds were rapidly used for medical assistance, shelter, kitchen sets and hygiene kits distributed by the Red Cross as well as for urgently needed logistics and telecommunications support. A further €6.5 million was provided for shelter, water/sanitation, health and logistics following a more detailed needs assessment.





VARZOV, TAJIKISTAN: 'WE DON'T HAVE THE RESOURCES TO GO ANYWHERE ELSE'

The village of Khoja Obigarm is a beautiful but dangerous spot. Located in a narrow valley, surrounded by high mountains, in the Varzov district of Tajikistan, it is regularly hit by floods, mudslides and earth tremors. With more than 400 danger spots already identified, it is the kind of place where good disaster-preparedness can mean the difference between life and death.

Fifty-five year old Aziza Niosova is a resident of the village. She still vividly recalls the fateful day in 2004 when a mudslide struck her community.

'The summer had been very hot but then it started raining. It poured for days. On July 23, a huge mudslide came down the mountain, bringing stones and rocks with it, demolishing houses and even carrying away two tractors. 'We were able to save ourselves because it was daytime and we saw it coming. We jumped out of the window and escaped from the other side of the building.'

'Luckily', continued Aziza, 'we had just completed the construction of a protective gabion. It was destroyed by the fury of the flood, but it did help to spare many buildings. If it hadn't been there, I don't know how many more houses would have been swept down the hillside. 'We have seen floods before, but never so bad.'

The mud that flowed through Khoja Obigarm was recorded at up to four metres high and some of the big rocks it swept down were deposited on the first floor of the village's old sanatorium.

Since 1985, more than 50,000 minor and major landslides have occurred in Tajikistan, which is in an identified disaster-prone area. Since the country's main sources of income are land cultivation and animal husbandry, recurring natural disasters are a major obstacle to longer-term development as well as being the source of great suffering for the affected communities.

It is rarely possible to thwart the forces of nature but when communities are well prepared for the day that disaster strikes, many lives can be saved and livelihoods restored more quickly. This is the philosophy that underpins the European Commission's disaster preparedness actions funded through the DIPECHO programme.

Today, in Khoja Obigarm, the defences are being strengthened with the construction of a higher gabion. The project, financed by ECHO, is being implemented by the NGO CARE. Local commu-

nities are always encouraged to assume responsibility in solving their problems and the people of Khoja Obigarm have rallied round to protect their village. 'We have collected 2,360 somoni (around €570) from the village,' explains Aziza, 'and all the men have worked hard to build the new barrier. If we don't do this now, the next flood will sweep us away. This summer was very dry, and we know from experience that if you have a dry summer, you can expect flooding in the winter.'

The high poverty levels in Tajikistan mean that many communities have limited capacity to withstand and recover from disasters, or to implement the measures to prevent and reduce the impact of future floods, landslides or earthquakes. It is a vicious circle in which the poor are usually the most affected.

Thanks to preparedness projects supported by ECHO over the last 15 years, however, coping capacities have been boosted. The DIPECHO programme focuses on small-scale mitigation projects, awareness and preparedness activities in schools and communities, and contingency planning.

But why do people try to cling on when there is barely a living to be made from the land and the ground itself is so unstable? Sometimes, there is no other choice, as Aziza explains: 'The land is not good here. It is full of rocks and there isn't enough water most of the time. Those who could afford to move, have already done so. But we don't have the resources to go anywhere else.'





PALESTINIAN TERRITORIES

The humanitarian situation in the Palestinian Territories deteriorated sharply during 2006, following the Hamas victory in the parliamentary elections in January. This marked a turnaround from the renewed hope for peace that had prevailed in 2005. The Israeli government froze the monthly transfer of tax and customs revenues to the Palestinian Authority (PA) and tightened security procedures, which also restricted trade flows. A number of international donors ceased their financial assistance to the PA as well. Restrictions on access by Palestinian workers to Israel and Israeli settlements, and the continued building of the separation barrier, contributed to further impoverishment and isolation of the Palestinian population.

The capture of an Israeli soldier in the Gaza Strip in June prompted an Israeli military offensive, that continued intermittently until the end of the year, costing the lives of almost a thousand Palestinians. There was also an upsurge in fighting between Hamas and Fatah supporters, raising fears of a civil war.

An estimated 4.3 million Palestinian refugees continued to live in Gaza, the West Bank, Lebanon, Syria and Jordan. The deterioration of the Palestinian economy throughout 2006 led to a dramatic increase in humanitarian needs. Movement restrictions made it difficult for relief aid to reach all of those in need.

The conflict between the Israeli Defence Force and Hezbollah during July and August further exacerbated the plight of Palestinian refugees in Lebanon. The Commission provided €84 million in humanitarian assistance to meet the growing needs of the Palestinians.

CRISIS ZONES

DEMOCRATIC REPUBLIC OF CONGO

In 2006, after more than four decades of authoritarian rule and war, the citizens of the Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC) adopted a new constitution and elected a new president and legislature by universal suffrage. It is hoped that with these new institutions, the country will enjoy the stability required to embark on the urgent tasks of pacification, reconstruction and development.

Despite the positive political developments, violence continued throughout the year, mostly in eastern DRC, in the provinces of Ituri, North Kivu and South Kivu. Katanga also emerged as a new flashpoint. As usual, civilians, and especially women and children, bore the brunt of the violence. 1.2 million people remained displaced and 400,000 refugees were living in neighbouring countries. Nevertheless, the overall humanitarian and security situation improved, allowing people gradually to return to their homes. With all the destruction that has occurred in these areas, the returnees need assistance to re-establish their livelihoods. The Commission allocated €43 million in 2006 to help the victims of conflict in the DRC.





AFGHANISTAN

Following 23 years of civil war and five years of successive drought between 1999 and 2004, the political and economic changes that have taken place since the fall of the Taliban regime in 2001 have been slow. Although the international community has contributed large amounts of aid to alleviate the suffering of the Afghan population and to help the government in its reconstruction and rehabilitation efforts, there are still enormous humanitarian needs. One reason is the magnitude of refugee returns. In the last five years, 20% of Afghanistan's current 22 million population have returned from neighbouring countries. The needs of returnees and the host communities are significant and cover a wide array of sectors including water/sanitation, shelter, health, income generation, nutrition and protection.

People still displaced inside Afghanistan, and the 3.4 million refugees remaining in Iran and Pakistan, also face particular challenges.

The plight of the Afghan population was exacerbated in 2006 by a severe drought, causing many to reach the limits of their coping capacity. Additionally, insurgent attacks against Afghan security and international coalition forces increased in 2006, causing further displacements and insecurity among the civilian population. The Commission provided €22.5 million in humanitarian relief for the crisis in Afghanistan.

USEFUL WEB LINKS:

NGO partners: http://ec.europa.eu/echo/pdf_files/fpa_partners.pdf

Funding decisions: http://ec.europa.eu/echo/information/decisions/index_en.htm

Country operations: http://ec.europa.eu/echo/field/index_en.htm

ECHO aid strategy: http://ec.europa.eu/echo/information/strategy/index_en.htm

Publications and documents: http://ec.europa.eu/echo/information/publications/index_en.htm

Photo library: http://ec.europa.eu/echo/information/library/index_en.htm

Links to other useful web sites: http://ec.europa.eu/echo/partners/links_en.htm

'EUROPE CARES' – EU CITIZENS' VIEWS ON HUMANITARIAN AID

A special Eurobarometer survey on humanitarian aid, carried out in 2006, revealed a high level of solidarity among EU citizens with victims of conflict and natural disasters outside the Union.

Nine out of ten citizens (91%) think it is justified to help by supplying humanitarian aid. Only 5% take the opposite view.

There is also a strong endorsement of the Commission's mandate to provide relief aid, undertaken through its humanitarian aid department (ECHO). 88% think that EU funding in this area is important but not all of them are aware of it: more than half (57%) knew that the European Union funds relief actions (31% at the last survey in 2001 in EU15). The number of respondents who spontaneously named the EU/Commission as a humanitarian actor rose from 5% in 2001 to 7%.

There were no striking differences at Member State level on the issue of providing relief aid to crisis victims outside the EU.

European citizens want to be informed about the EU's humanitarian aid activities, 87% indicating that this is important. The percentage of those who feel they are well or relatively well-informed doubled from 11% in 2001 to 22% in 2006.

The results of the poll show that Europe really cares.

The survey: Special Eurobarometer 268 was carried out in the 25 EU Member States and Bulgaria and Romania. 26,853 citizens were interviewed face-to-face between 7 June and 12 July 2006 about their perception of humanitarian aid in general and EU humanitarian aid in particular. For the special Eurobarometer report:

http://ec.europa.eu/echo/index_en.htm

EUROPEAN COMMISSION - SUPPORTING HUMANITARIAN AID WORLDWIDE



WHAT IS ECHO?

ECHO is the European Commission's Humanitarian Aid department, 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 ECHO's mission is to raise public awareness of the issues at stake.

WORKING WITH PARTNERS IN THE FIELD

ECHO works with around 200 operational partners, including specialised United Nations agencies, the Red Cross/Crescent movement and non-governmental organisations (NGOs).

A KEY DONOR

The Commission is one of the biggest sources of humanitarian aid in the world. In 2006, it provided €671 million through ECHO for relief programmes. This does not include the aid given separately by the EU's 27 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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