

NOW ALSO IN THE CAUCASUS

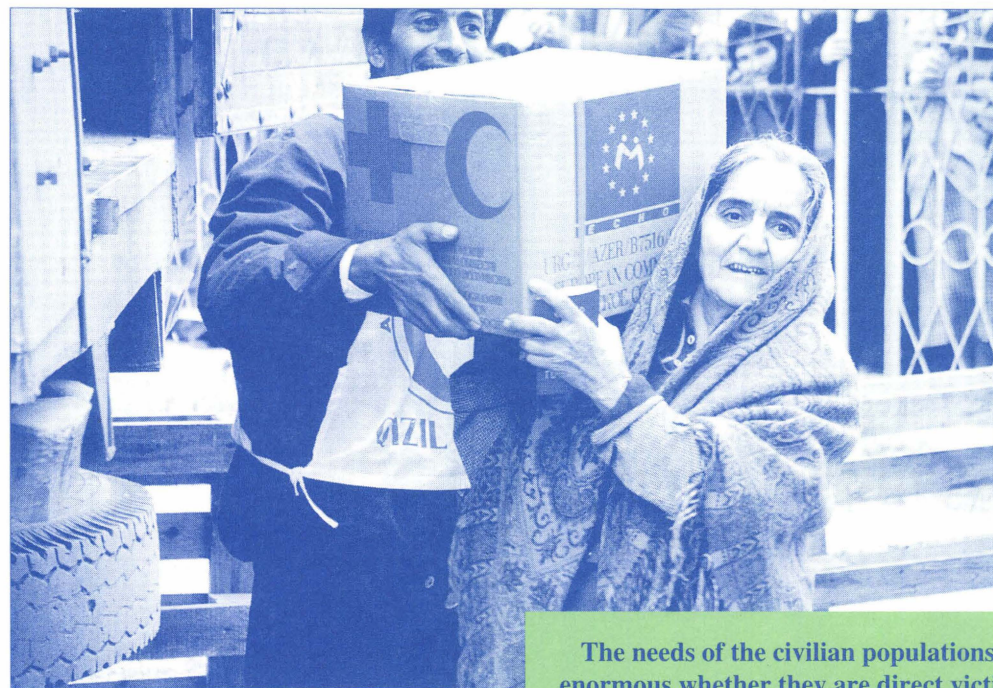


Armenia, Georgia and Azerbaijan, the three independent Caucasus Republics are being severely shaken by successive waves of military offensives. The consequence, if not the objective, of these offensives are vast movements of civilian populations whose humanitarian needs are enormous. Regions bled dry economically are now forced to receive and take care of a huge number of refugees or displaced persons.

The Caucasus has always been the theatre of confrontations between different peoples wanting to increase their respective influence in the region. The institution of three Soviet Socialist Republics (Armenia, Azerbaijan and Georgia) dates from the twenties when each of them consisted of a mosaic of different peoples created by the hazards of their displacements through the course of history.

Violent clashes, particularly between Armenians and Azeris, closely followed the disintegration of the

USSR in 1992 and destabilized the region. The collapse of communism and the breaking of economic and political links which accompanied it only served to aggravate the situation. The decline in the standard of living and the



The needs of the civilian populations are enormous whether they are direct victims of the fighting or when they are fleeing the danger zones, leaving everything behind.

1 inhabitant out of 7 displaced or made refugee in Azerbaijan

"In towns like Imishli and Barda the population has more than doubled within a few months", explains Dr. Alain Devaux of MSF - Belgium, ECHO partner in Azerbaijan. "Families are forced to camp alongside roads, others hide in underground animal lairs and we have even seen people move into railway wagons. Displaced persons are crowding into Azerbaijan. Although the first population influxes found refuge fairly easily thanks to Muslim people's traditional spirit of welcome and sense of hospitality, today the country is completely saturated."

Azerbaijan

Rich in oil and fertile soil, Azerbaijan should have come out of the implosion of the USSR without too much difficulty. But since 1988, the Republic has had to deal with the flood, in irregular waves, of Azeri refugees from Armenia where they are increasingly subject to discrimination and rejection. Radicalization of the conflict between Armenians and Azeris for control

PROFILE

GUNTER BEUCHEL, ECHO Coordinator in Baku

What does your mission in Azerbaijan involve?

I help our partners identify the needs of the populations and coordinate their actions so that they are as efficient as possible. My mission also involves liaison with the local authorities.

What kind of aid does ECHO provide?

Of the million refugees or displaced persons in the Republic, 400,000 are in a

very difficult situation. Generally, we provide them with massive medical aid, food aid and goods to cover their basic needs such as camps, blankets, various hygiene products so that they can spend winter in acceptable conditions.

What hits you most in this crisis situation?

The overflow of refugees or displaced persons has practically brought the whole social system in Azerbaijan to a

standstill. In the most affected districts, all the schools, public facilities, university cities such as Sabirabad for example have been requisitioned to shelter people and so cannot fulfil their function. Of the 61 schools in Imishli, none are open any more; enforced holiday for the pupils but for how long? As far as water or electricity supplies are concerned, the systems were not designed to deal with this kind of overload...

"From the instant of the first requests for humanitarian aid from the Caucasus, ECHO expressed its concern to maintain a balance in the distribution of aid between the three Republics, at the same time adapting budgets according to needs", explains Donato CHIARINI, ECHO 2 Department Chief.

from left to right: MM. Mamashvili, Georgian Minister, R. Lewartowski (ECHO) et D. Chiarini (ECHO)



of Nagorno Karabakh at the end of 1993 resulted in hundreds of thousands of Azeris fleeing to the East, driven by the fighting. Today, Azerbaijan has almost one million displaced persons and refugees, or 1 inhabitant out of 7! This burden is too heavy for an economically weakened republic.

ARMENIA

It is not easy to identify the populations in dire need in Armenia because that description can cover practically the whole population. The breakdown of economic links with the former USSR and the blockade imposed by neighbouring countries have considerably worsened the standard of living in this Republic which, in the time of the USSR, had the most flourishing trade and import/export activity. Armenia is on the point of death, with no energy supply, no production of its own and deprived of imports following the blockade imposed on it. In addition, it has never recovered from the earthquake in 1988

1 hour of electricity a day in Yerevan

**Mark Raymaekers,
ECHO coordinator in Armenia**

"No heating, no cooking resources, no light or running water in apartments, hospitals which are just ticking over... for us it is difficult to imagine what a town without electricity means. The inhabitants of Yerevan, the capital, have been living with this daily for several months. When electricity is connected, often in the middle of the night, there is hysteria. The whole town gets up to try to cook or start up some machine or other. Very quickly, there is an overload and Erevan is again plunged into darkness. This causes despair, particularly when there has been nothing but bread and cold tea to eat and drink for months."

GEORGIA

Since 1992, Georgia has been suffering from a very unstable political climate due to its conflict with the autonomous regions of South Ossetia and Abkhazia. The Republic has had to deal with several influxes of displaced persons, mainly Georgians, fleeing the danger zones. The Abkhazian offensive on 16 September last brought about a massive exodus of 200,000 Georgians from Abkhazia, a result of the tragically well-known policy of "ethnic cleansing" which is also plaguing this region.

Georgia is currently holding approximately 500,000 displaced persons or refugees for whom it is unable to care because of the period of deep economic crisis it is going through. The ECHO actions cover almost the whole of the country and aim to meet the needs of the most destitute populations such as refugees and displaced persons, victims of the civil war, orphans, the elderly and homeless.

Driven by Abkhazian breakthroughs, a large number of men, women and children (50,000) have been forced to flee to Georgia via the mountains of Svanetia, the wildest and most inhospitable region in the country. 300 to 400 people died from exhaustion and cold during this journey. Some of them spent 15 days in these mountains without solid food and with no warm clothing or were poisoned from eating wild leaves and fruits found on their route.

ECHO PARTNERS

AZERBAIJAN

IFRC - ICRC - Oxfam (UK) - MSF (B) - Merlin (UK) - WFP - Guller - Diakonisches Werk (RFA) - GTZ/THW (FRG)

ARMENIA

Red Cross (RFA) - Aznavour pour l'Arménie (F) - Tri-Med (UK) - Solana - Red Barnet (D) - Mission Ost - Forum des Associations Arméniennes de France - WFP - MSF

GEORGIA

MSF (F) - MSF (Esp) - MSF (P-B) - HCR - CICR - IFRC - Oxfam - Red Barnet (Dk) - Caritas Denmark - ASB - AEC - British Red Cross



PHOTO NEWS

For warmth, the whole family gathers in the same room around the invariable daily menu : bread and tea.

which razed Spitak's surroundings to the ground.

Added to all these difficult conditions are a very harsh climate (-10° C during the day, indoors) and an inhospitable terrain. The result is serious inaccessibility for the humanitarian convoys.

ECHO provides food aid to the Armenian population which, particularly this winter, is in a very precarious situation given the difficulty of the supply route across Georgia.

Medical assistance is also a priority, although the crucial problem for the country nevertheless remains the energy supply. This is why ECHO decided to come to the aid of the Armenians by supplying them with heating for schools in the earthquake region and by restoring a large number of hydro-electricity production units, the only source of energy the Armenians have.

José-Maria MENDILUCE, regional HCR representative A NEW CHALLENGE FOR HUMANITARIAN ORGANIZATIONS

What is your general feeling about the working conditions of humanitarian workers in the Caucasus?

"Conditions are very similar to those in the former Yugoslavia: ethnic cleansing, massive displacement of civilian populations, difficult transport of humanitarian aid and dangerous work for our personnel. The prospects are not good in the Caucasus: the 3 Republics will undoubtedly have to rely on large-scale humanitarian aid for another 2 or 3 years, the time needed for things to settle down and for a political solution to be found. During that time, we will continue to fulfil our mission which

is looking increasingly complicated. On behalf of the HCR, I would like to thank ECHO for its efficient work which makes a great number of our actions possible."

Does the role of humanitarian organizations change?

"The role remains the same: to provide help to populations in distress. But the working conditions have changed completely. Good intentions are not enough today. The implementation of humanitarian aid in the field is becoming increasingly specialist work. We have had to get used to working, wearing bullet-proof vests and hel-

metts, to driving armoured trucks and using highly sophisticated security systems. We are a regular military target because we provide aid to all the parties in the conflict, independently of ethnic, religious or political considerations. A difficult situation to manage on the ground, an action often negatively viewed by the various parties which regularly accuse us of favouring their enemies. One thing is certain: humanitarian organizations are finding it increasingly difficult to remain silent, neutral and non-political in the face of the dramas to which they are the main witnesses. But that's another issue..."



ECHO'S GLOBAL REACH

ANGOLA

No more food or health care; humanitarian organizations are sounding the alarm for Angola. Famine and malnutrition have gripped the whole country. For the Angolan population, victims of 16 consecutive years of civil war, the situation is completely dramatic. The mortality rate is enormous and particularly affects children (80% of them are undernourished) and the elderly. To stop the slaughter, all efforts must be mobilized to provide massive food aid to the population. The European Commission has just decided on a series of operations amounting to 18 million Ecus for the affected Angolan population. This is above all food aid, a health care programme and agricultural tools and seeds to encourage production and reduce the threat of a medium-term food shortage.

BURUNDI

Faced with the scale of the human catastrophe emerging from the bloody ethnic clashes in Burundi, the EC has set up a global humanitarian aid plan with its partners for a period of 6 months. The situation is comparable to that in Somalia or Northern Iraq and requires close coordination to increase the effectiveness of the aid. An initial instalment of 18.3 million Ecus has been released with the aim of providing, for two months, for the basic needs of Burundi refugees in the neighbouring countries (Tanzania, Rwanda, Zaire) and of displaced persons inside the country. This is to cover food, water, shelter and vital medical care.

Overcrowding in the refugee camps : a ripe breeding ground for epidemics.

ECHO Partners
HCR - WFP - Caritas - Care - Medecins du Monde - MSF (F) - MSF (B) - MSF (P-B) - Pharmaciens sans Frontières - AICF (F) - IFCL

The former YUGOSLAVIA

The situation here remains very serious. ECHO and its partners continue without respite to transport basic goods wherever needs made more acute by the winter season - lack of heating, food, shelter and warm clothing - are most pressing. The majority of the aid is being supplied to Bosnia and Serbia-Montenegro. Croatia is the Republic best covered by humanitarian aid. The European Task Force (ECTF) continues to provide direct food aid there to all refugees and displaced persons and to a large number of "social cases". ECHO is trying to increasingly accurately assess the needs of populations in distress. This has led to 850,000 items of underclothing being directly distributed by ECHO to refugees in Serbia-Montenegro and 200,000 exercise books to children in primary schools in the same Republic.

Main partners: HCR, ICRC, IRFC, WFP, WHO, UNICEF and some thirty NGO's.

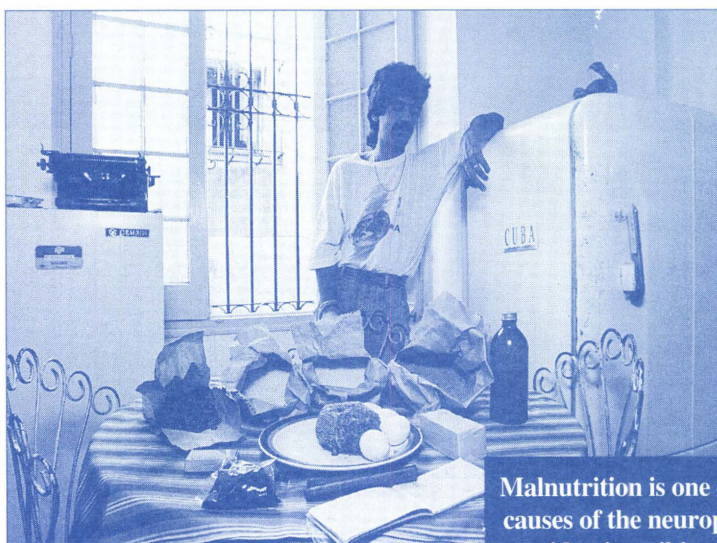
Amounts involved in the latest decisions on behalf of the former Yugoslavia:	
30 November 1993:	72 million Ecus
13 December 1993:	86 million Ecus
Total EC effort in 1993:	400 million Ecus

CUBA

Cuba's living standards have been relentlessly deteriorating since the collapse of the former USSR. Malnutrition and poor sanitary conditions have contributed to a rapid rise in infectious diseases such as dysentery and sarcoptiosis (skin infection). Unhealthy conditions and an increase in allergic substances are causing asthma in a large part of the population. In November 1993, ECHO decided to intervene by providing medicines and

assistance to the country's hospitals and by distributing hygiene parcels to the most destitute families (1.4 million Ecus). Last July, ECHO had already intervened in Cuba to stop the neuropathy epidemic which was due to widespread malnutrition (5.5 million Ecus). The latest decision (330,000 Ecus, December 1993) relates to aid to Cuban flood victims.

ECHO Partners
Medicos del Mundo (Esp) - Caritas (Esp) - Red Cross (Esp) - MSF (Esp) - GVZ (I) - Solidarietà con il Terzo Mondo (I) - IFRC



Malnutrition is one of the causes of the neuropathy epidemic striking the Cuban population.

MOZAMBIQUE

Hope is returning to Mozambique thanks to the continuation of the cease-fire and to the arrival of the rains after the worst drought of the century. The 1.5 million Mozambican refugees who were in the neighbouring countries (Malawi, Zimbabwe, Lesotho, Swaziland, Tanzania, Zambia and South Africa) have begun, slowly but surely, to return to their country. ECHO is financing actions with the aim of encouraging and facilitating repatriation of the refugees (e.g. mine disposal on the main roads) and to provide assistance centres along the roads they have to travel. This means that refugees and displaced people can find food, medicines and basic products along their return route. Other important problems to overcome in Mozambique are the very high number of displaced persons inside the country and the demilitarization of the armed forces. Henceforth, because of the prospects of a lasting peace, ECHO's humanitarian aid is being extended via the development actions of DG VIII. The country, ravaged by 16 years of civil war, will have to be entirely rebuilt.

ECHO Partners
ICRC - HCR - AICF (F) - AISPO (I) - Joint Action (3 Portuguese NGO's).

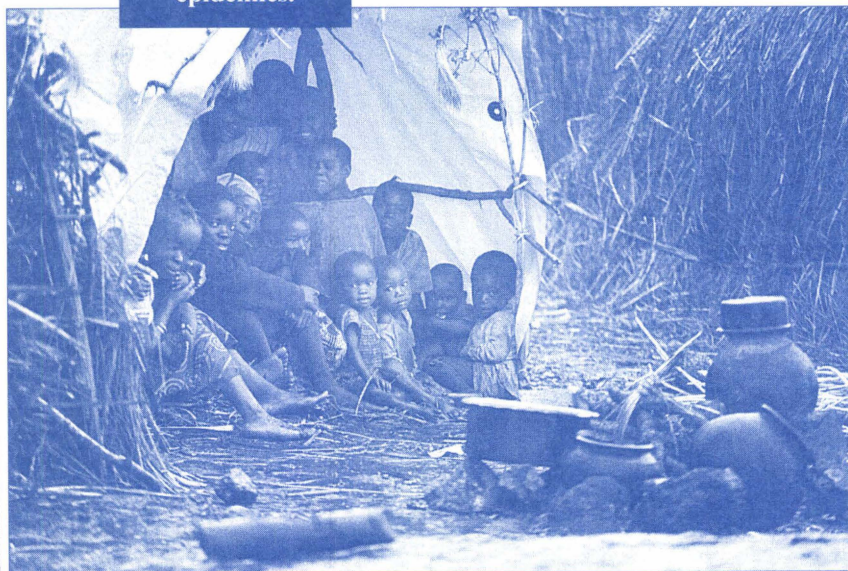


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ECHO ACTIONS IN 1993

In 1993, the European Union donated 650 million Ecus to help victims of conflicts or of natural disasters in 49 countries.

Major crisis: the former Yugoslavia

Over 4 million refugees and displaced persons spread in all the former republics of Yugoslavia have been assisted during this year with a wide range of projects, including psychiatric treatment to victims of rape during the war, newsprint for independent media and copy books for school children. The European Commission allocated 400 million Ecus to former Yugoslavia in 1993. This aid was rendered largely through UN relief agencies, eg. UNHCR, WFP, WHO, UNICEF, through the Red Cross and through 40 NGOs.

"European Union assistance to former Yugoslavia rep-

resents the largest per capita humanitarian aid to a population affected by a conflict" stresses Antonio De Menezes, ECHO Counsellor for Information. "The scale of needs has called for the intervention, not only of numerous NGOs and UN agencies but also of the European Community Task Force (ECTF) with direct ECHO participation."

Africa

The other major crises were in the horn of Africa and Sudan where ECHO allocated about 23 million Ecus in

The former Yugoslavia continued to be the main recipient of EC aid in 1993. The provision of exercise books to refugee children is one of the many actions undertaken by ECHO alongside massive food aid and covering the people's basic needs.

food aid to refugees of civil conflict in the region. Some twelve European NGOs, including Médecins sans Frontières, participated in these operations.

More recently the ethnic strife in Burundi and the new exodus of refugees to

the neighbouring countries received immediate attention. The Commission allocated 12 million Ecus of relief aid to the region.

For the various other emergencies in the rest of Africa aid totalling some 34 million Ecus was granted, including 7 million for Angola.

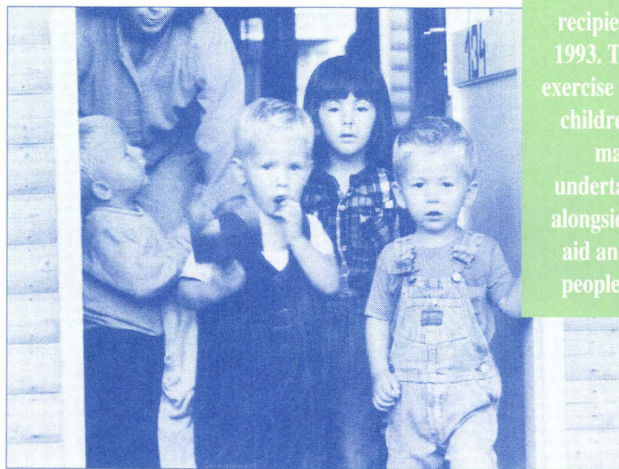
Former Soviet Union and Central Asia

The growing tensions in the former Soviet Union, and particularly in the Caucasus (Georgia, Armenia and Azerbaijan) and in Central Asia (Tajikistan and Kirgizia), have led to the extension of ECHO action to those regions. These include emergency food aid, shelter and heating fuel to over 3 million refugees. The overall cost of projects for these republics, including Russia, is about 48 million Ecus.

The European Union continues to be the main donor of aid to the Kurdish population of Northern Iraq with 23 million Ecus.

Other parts of the world

In Asia (Cambodia, Lebanon, the Occupied Territories in West Bank and Gaza, Nepal, India, Pakistan, Afghanistan, Mongolia) and Latin America (Peru, Ecuador, Bolivia, Brazil, Nicaragua, Venezuela and Cuba), the European Union donated 10 million Ecus to assist in natural calamities or epidemics, or to cope in some situations in the aftermath of a conflict.



EVALUATION OF ECHO OPERATIONS

Did we correctly assess needs before intervention? Did we choose the best means of transport? Are the personnel sent to the sites competent? Were the objectives set at the start achieved? ... Assessment provides an answer to these basic questions and to many others. This is in no way a policing exercise but a real will to constantly improve ECHO's ability to assist.

Humanitarian action demands speed, efficiency and an appropriate response to the needs of populations in distress. Each action, each type of aid undertaken by ECHO helps to achieve one more step towards this ideal. Each experience is an acquisition both for ECHO's personnel and for its partners. These experiences still have to be shared to help continuously improve assistance. This is the aim of the assessment.

The first assessment took place in Rwanda last November and related to actions implemented by Caritas International and Bel-

gium's Red Cross. Why Rwanda? Because a large number of problems exist simultaneously there: political insecurity, drought, the flood of refugees from Burundi and displaced persons in the North of the country; many parameters making the humanitarian situation difficult.

The assessment is carried out while actions are underway. It is in the heat of the problems that they can be seen most clearly and that decisions have to be taken to deal with them. ECHO's assessment personnel then draw up a report which will be rapidly discussed at the end of the action with all the partners concerned, with the aim of taking stock and making recommendations for future actions.

Currently, an assessment is underway on action intended to support the independent media in the former Yugoslavia. Further action will follow in this region and in other regions of the world where ECHO is called on to intervene.

A EUROPEAN UNIVERSITY DEGREE ON HUMANITARIAN AID

At the initiative of ECHO, 5 reputable European universities are developing a special degree (graduate students) in humanitarian aid for the academic year 1994-1995. The creation of this degree meets a continuously growing need for professionalism, both on the part of students wishing to work in the humanitarian field and within organizations active in this field. The degree provides a multi-disciplinary approach encompassing all the major aspects linked to international humanitarian aid such as law, economics/logistics, anthropology/psychosociology, geopolitics and medicine/epidemiology.

The degree is being organised in the framework of the ERASMUS programme which enables students to follow part of their courses in a foreign university. The 5 universities associated with this humanita-

rian degree are highly specialized in the subjects taught and all enjoy a great international reputation. They are l'Université d'Aix-Marseille (France), l'Universidad de Deusto (Spain), the Ruhr-Universität Bochum (FRG), l'Université Catholique de Louvain (Belgium) and the University of Oxford - Refugee Studies programme (U.K.).

Colonel E. THYS from Belgium left the post of Chief of the ECTF (European Community Task Force) at the end of 1993, after a successful stint at the head of the Zagreb based operations. He is replaced by General MARTINEZ-ESPARZA VALIENTE who was previously Chief of Military Information Branch (UNPROFOR) in Zagreb. In that capacity the Spanish General was closely involved with other agencies of the UN and the local authorities in former Yugoslavia.

Mr Hubert ONIDI has been appointed ECHO 1 department chief as from 1 January 1994. ECHO 1 covers the former Yugoslavia and the ACP (Afro-Caribbean-Pacific) countries.