

## In this issue

Record response time 1

Managing the grey zone 2

The challenge of improving linkages between relief and development 2

Tajikistan - The struggle to put bread on the table 4

Floods in Orissa (India) / Cambodia - DIPECHO study on risk management 4

Echo News n° 29

Summer 2001

# Echo News

European Commission Delegation  
Library  
2300 M Street, NW  
Washington, DC 20037

SEP 25 2001



Echo News is published by Echo Information four times a year in English and French.  
For information and inquiries please contact :

**Echo Information - European Commission - 200, rue de la Loi - B-1049 Brussels**  
Tel. : + 32 2 295 44 00 / Fax : + 32 2 295 45 72 / E-mail : [echo-info@cec.eu.int](mailto:echo-info@cec.eu.int)  
Website : [http://europa.eu.int/comm/echo/en/index\\_en.html](http://europa.eu.int/comm/echo/en/index_en.html)

## Record response time Earthquake in Peru – first use of new primary urgency procedure

The European Commission, through its Humanitarian Aid Office (ECHO), responded quickly to the overnight news of the earthquake that shook southern Peru on 23 June. Following contacts with partners working in the field, €1.15 million was mobilised to supply urgent relief to the tens of thousands of people affected.

The decision was taken on 25 June, enabling ECHO's partners – the Spanish Red Cross, Oxfam (UK), Save the Children, Medicos del Mundo and the IFRC - to begin work almost immediately. The funds were used to provide food, temporary shelter and medical support, as well as for water and sanitation operations in the stricken zone.

This was the first time that the Commission had made use of its primary emergency procedure, which only came into effect on 13 June 2001. Under the new "fast-track" system, which complements already streamlined arrangements for delivering humanitarian assistance, the decision to provide aid is taken within 48 hours of a sudden onset crisis. The focus, at this early stage, is on getting vital initial relief to the victims of the tragedy. Decisions can cover immediate financing of up to €3 million per crisis for a maximum of three months. Where necessary, this may be followed up with further assistance, using pre-existing procedures, once the scale of the crisis has been more fully assessed.

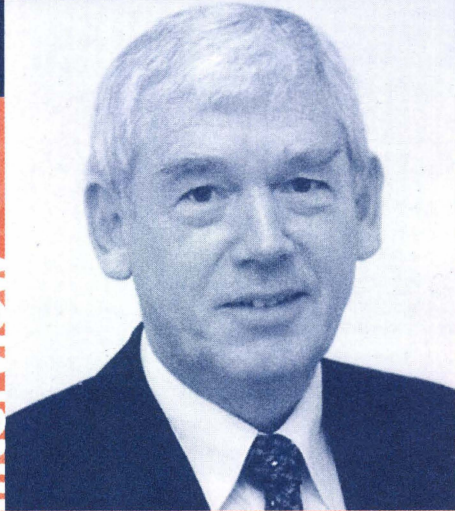


*Aftermath of the earthquake in Peru.*

Commenting on the effects of the earthquake, Poul Nielson, the Commissioner for Development and Humanitarian Aid, noted that "in addition to the tragic toll of dead and injured, many people have lost their homes and will have no shelter against the Peruvian winter. We have a duty to act promptly when tragedy

strikes in this way", he continued. "ECHO has been able to react in record time, helping to ensure that vital supplies are delivered speedily to the crisis zone. I am convinced the new procedure will lend practical and effective weight to our solidarity measures in favour of those in distress".





# Managing the grey zone

In April 2001 the European Commission released a Communication to the Council and the European Parliament. "LRRD – Linking Relief, Rehabilitation and Development – An assessment" points to the urgent need for increased disaster preparedness and conflict prevention dimensions in humanitarian and development co-operation strategies and programmes.

It analyses the current

situation and makes policy recommendations designed to strengthen the EU's response to managing the "grey zone" with proactive and timely instruments. It also urges better co-ordination with the UN and other international initiatives. There is no unique blueprint to address the appropriate linkages between relief and development.

**ECHO News talks to Poul Nielson, European Commissioner for Development Co-operation and Humanitarian Aid, about the long-term effect of humanitarian intervention, its links to development assistance and preparedness, prevention and mitigation.**

**Q. What are the realities on the ground that lie behind the Communication?**

The longer-term effect of humanitarian intervention is very much at the forefront of the Communication. A linkage between such an intervention and development assistance is essential. In post-conflict situations, for example, it is difficult to reconcile the two partly because of the difficulty in identifying partners.

Recurring conflicts destroy the gains made thanks to post-crisis development work. At the same time, gaps between relief and longer-term development can leave people stranded, making recovery difficult if not almost impossible.

A long-term perspective should be adopted from the outset.

**Q. What do you hope to achieve with the policy proposals outlined in the Communication?**

A very important aspect is that short term humanitarian relief actors, such as ECHO, international agencies and NGOs, co-ordinate with each other and with existing local structures (if there are any) so that these needs-driven actions do not undermine the community's ability to strengthen its own capacities over time.

More attention should also be paid to disaster preparedness and prevention in humanitarian actions and particularly in development co-operation programmes. This is a very difficult issue. Bilateral donors (member states) often run the risk of

becoming stuck, long term, in yet another recipient country after the initial humanitarian aid is administered. Without a political understanding by member states and parliament that there is a greater risk in grey zone activities, we will be paralysed. This risk is acceptable in humanitarian crises, but it is often less accepted when we enter the grey zone and take the first steps into development co-operation work. Financing becomes problematic. We must manage the trade-offs between flexibility, speed and control.

**Q. Are there concrete mechanisms being developed within ECHO and the Commission departments responsible for development to ensure linkages between crisis response and long-term development initiatives?**

This is one of the key aspects of the Communication. We have to recognise, however, that the two situations are entirely different and require different response mechanisms. With humanitarian engagements, there is no need for a host government. In fact, there is often no government at all. It is a no man's land where coordination among humanitarian players is the key and where we hope to influence the emerging situation. When moving into the development assistance phase, we need an agreement with the partner government to access the European Development Fund and budget lines.

At the Commission, humanitarian assistance is instant. But for the development work, NGOs applying for funding for projects used to have to wait two years. Now it is about six months - which is still much longer than ECHO's response time. There is also more uncertainty as to whether the proposal will be approved. As a result, the instruments and operations are technically different. There is a big technical threshold to cross to access funding in between the two.

To bridge the gap, we need planning and co-ordination mechanisms. We need to engage in the longer term up front. This way, we can get maximum value from the experience accumulated during the crisis phase. Food aid overlaps and is often a bridge. Linkages must be seen in a broader context involving political, development and humanitarian dimensions. The EU approach to crises should be consistent and link interventions in an integrated way.

**Q. Have you visited any projects while on mission that demonstrate what you hope to achieve?**

Hurricane Mitch devastated Central America (in 1998). There, it took the reconstruction programme two years to become fully operational which is not unusual for a development project. However, I recently visited a remote region in Honduras and found amazing results stemming from ECHO's humanitarian aid, Commission development projects and food aid. The three initiatives worked together very effectively, involving the entire community. Sanitation and water systems were being built; and food aid was being directed at raising poultry and crop diversification. It was an extremely encouraging illustration of how LRRD can work in practice.

## The challenge

### of improving linkages between relief and development



© Reporters (AP Photo/Sayyid Azim)

CROWDED HOSPITAL WARD IN CONGO (DRC).

*"Grey zone" work tends to attract little media attention.*

Successfully bridging the so-called "grey zone" between humanitarian assistance, rehabilitation and development is a difficult task that has persistently challenged both practitioners and academics. It involves defining an exit strategy from a humanitarian action that links in with effective, longer-term development projects. The key is improved community and international preparedness as well as strategic coordination.

Natural disasters – earthquakes, floods, hurricanes, mudslides and tornadoes – are never predictable. Nor are conflicts, although very often, warning signs are ignored and only later acknowledged. What is predictable is that ad hoc responses to disasters and crises seldom work.

The number of crises has increased significantly in recent decades, leaving the international community grappling with how to respond effectively. The human toll - loss of lives and livelihoods – is compounded by steep financial and social costs to which donors are starting to pay attention. There is a growing recognition that a relatively small investment in disaster preparedness, for example, may yield substantial returns. It is the only alternative to putting countries into "intensive care" every time a crisis occurs.

Short-term humanitarian and emergency relief actions do not – and usually cannot – take long-term development issues into account. To this end, a proactive development policy should aim to protect vulnerable individuals and communities through sustainable actions to help them cope when disaster strikes. This includes human resource development, and organisational and institutional strengthening.

There are signs that international disaster and crisis response is gradually shifting away from delivering one-shot relief and emergency aid to victims. However, it is still difficult at times





CROPS DESTROYED BY A HURRICANE IN HONDURAS.

*The EU has sought to fill the gap between relief and development activities in Central America.*

to "sell" longer term strategies to the politicians and donor agencies. It is much easier to make predetermined aid contributions during the highly visible crisis stage than to take on the burden of ongoing engagement.

The visibility aspect should be recognised here. "Grey zone" work tends to attract little media attention and donors need to be seen to be active (and effective).

The situation in countries with long term or recurrent armed conflicts such as Somalia, Sudan or Congo illustrates the problem. Likewise, populations in highly vulnerable post-crisis situations tend to be neglected. In Guinea-Bissau, after the return to democracy in early 2000, the support provided by donors was insufficient to stabilise the post-conflict situation, leading to renewed tensions and problems a few months later. In Liberia, despite earlier commitments, few donors have intervened since 1998. The EC aid programme has been the most significant one in recent years. The Western Saharan crisis has lasted many decades and ECHO is one of very few donors now providing support to the Saharan refugees in Algeria.

Another factor which has been identified is that, during the transition period, the work can be more complex and demanding, and expectations are likely to be higher: In the emergency phase, the aim is to save lives and alleviate human misery. Aid is given unconditionally to help people in desperate need. Once the immediate crisis has passed and one moves towards rehabilitation and development, other factors come into play. In particular, it is often necessary to place conditions on development funding to ensure its effectiveness and promote sustainability.

It is generally recognised that it would be wrong to impose similar conditions in the sphere of humanitarian assistance, merely to ensure a smooth transition, since this would introduce delays and blur the focus on the victim which underpins humanitarian action. The aim, according to Commissioner Poul Nielson, should therefore be to aim for a "meaningful transition", where short-term solutions do not undermine the fragile dynamic of local capacity building.

## A delicate but critical balance

Assistance can have a negative impact if it is not carefully planned and adjusted to the specific situation. An immediate influx of external resources, or an extended period of emergency assistance, can encourage corruption, divert aid or prolong conflict. It is a delicate but critical balance.

Past evaluations of EU interventions have confirmed that linkages between relief and development could be improved. Over the past five years, the EU has launched initiatives to fill evident gaps in a number of post-crisis situations including Bosnia-Herzegovina, East Timor, Sierra Leone and Central America and there are signs that this approach is beginning to bear fruit.

The importance of this issue is reflected in a recently-issued Communication entitled "Linking Relief, Rehabilitation and Development (LRRD) – An Assessment" [COM (2001) 153]. This document takes stock of past achievements and shortcomings, and proposes a reassessment of EU policies across the relief-development continuum.

continued on page 4

## Big increase in numbers of people affected by disasters

Almost two billion people have been affected by natural disasters in the past decade and the year-on-year figures show a rising trend. This is one of the conclusions of a statistical analysis, carried out by the Brussels-based Centre for Research of Epidemiological Disasters (CRED) for the World Disaster Report 2001 which was released in June 2001.

The report notes that 255 million people were affected by natural disasters in 2000 compared to 87 million in 1990. This is an increase of 185% compared to a rise of just over 30% in the number of reported events in the same countries. In other words, the number of people directly affected by individual disasters is rising, an alarming trend that is thought likely to continue.

"By pointing a finger at uncontrollable natural events, we draw attention away from the fact that inequitable distribution of resources is forcing more and more people to live in risky areas," says Debarati Guha-Sapir, Director of CRED. "Disaster prevention and preparation must move out of the humanitarian agenda into the development framework."

CRED advocates a proactive approach to community response based on:

**Preparedness** - to develop, increase or improve disaster response capacity through training, organisation and equipment for effective rescue, relief and rehabilitation as well as through setting up of early warning systems.

**Mitigation** - to reduce a disaster's impact on communities and their environment.

**Prevention** - to reduce or eliminate the vulnerability of communities to disaster, and strengthen local capacity to cope with crises.

## A coordinated international response

East Timor is an example of a linear process from a violent phase to the takeover of the rehabilitation process by the UN and the gradual introduction of development cooperation.

The UN coordinated donors with a special unit to gather and exchange information. This is an example of the so-called "Brookings Process" and the "Friends of" approach in action.

The Brookings Process began in January 1999 as an informal gathering of donors, launched by the World Bank and UNHCR, with a view to finding practical ways of improving donor coordination and raising contributions to crises that attract less attention. The "Friends of" approach involves the broadest possible number of international donors coordinating their actions in a particular country. This approach has been adopted in Sudan, Afghanistan, East Timor and Tajikistan.



**ERITREA**  
GLOBAL PLAN - €7 MILLION

The 2001 global plan for Eritrea is designed to ensure the continuity of humanitarian aid for war and drought victims. Although the border conflict with Ethiopia is over, its effects are still being felt. In March, an estimated 300,000 people were still displaced and many could not be resettled due to the risks posed by landmines. Activities to be financed include the provision of water and non-food items for camp residents, the resettlement of IDPs, minefield demarcation and awareness-raising about the dangers of mines.

**EAST TIMOR**  
€9.275 MILLION

Although East Timor is now relatively stable following the violent crisis which erupted in September 1999, there are continuing humanitarian needs, notably in the areas of health and sanitation. The latest Commission decision in favour of East Timor focuses on providing water and sanitation facilities in almost 500 schools. The health needs of handicapped people are also addressed.

**TAJIKISTAN**  
GLOBAL PLAN - €10 MILLION

The people of Tajikistan suffered significantly in recent years as a result of civil war and the situation was exacerbated in 2000-2001 by severe drought. A decline in agricultural production has caused serious economic problems and major food shortages with many young children affected by malnutrition. ECHO's support will involve food aid, nutritional support, improving access to primary health care and boosting drinking water supplies.

**OTHER INTERVENTION/GLOBAL PLANS RECENTLY ADOPTED**

Iraq - €13 million  
Western Saharan refugees in Algeria - €11.8 million

**OTHER DECISIONS RECENTLY ADOPTED (OF €2 MILLION OR MORE)**

Burmese refugees on the Thai border - €4.5 million  
Cambodia - €4.2 million - humanitarian actions in areas recently made accessible  
Chechnya - €2 million for food aid and protection activities  
ECHO Flight - €8.4 million  
Indonesia - €2.2 million for victims of ethnic, religious and political conflicts (mainly health care)  
Kenya (2 decisions) - €3.1 million for drought victims  
Myanmar/Burma - €2 million for health education, sanitation, water supplies  
Palestinian Territories - €5 million to boost food security among marginalised groups  
Serbia - €3.3 million for vulnerable groups (soup kitchens)  
South Asia - €3.2 million for disaster prevention and preparedness (DIPECHO)  
Western Saharan refugees in Algeria - €3.77 million

One general conclusion of the Communication is that the international community should improve its response to disasters and other crises in a development perspective. Increased coordination, systematic exchange of information and better working methods could reduce the negative effects of existing gaps.

To streamline the Community's response, new Country Strategy Papers will provide a central reference for different interventions

**Tajikistan - The struggle to put bread on the table**

Bread is still the staple of the Tajik diet, which explains why the people of Tajikistan value it as highly as gold, silver, cotton and aluminium - commodities usually associated with the country. But despite being a predominantly agrarian society, Tajikistan has one of the lowest arable land/per capita ratios in the world.

Structural food shortages have been exacerbated by the severe drought that struck Central Asia in 2000 and has continued into 2001. Many Tajik children suffer from malnutrition as a result and with the decline of the public health system, the incidence of disease has increased.

As a response, Action Against Hunger has established specialised feeding clinics that provide a temporary home for severely malnourished children many of whose mothers are also malnourished, anaemic and unable to breast-feed. Bottle-feeding with unboiled milk or dirty water has worsened the condition of many of these children.

**Selling assets to buy food**

Thirty-five year old Khafiza, who was widowed during the civil war, is a mother of five. Her life in the southern village of Pakhtakor is a struggle that is becoming increasingly common in all areas of Tajikistan - the problem of not having enough bread (or even crumbs) on the table. She has had to sell her few remaining assets to buy food for her children, parents and mother-in-law. Khafiza faces a desperate plight but she is more fortunate than others forced into begging, drug trafficking or prostitution.

Dehydrated and severely malnourished, her youngest son, Khodir, is one of a growing number of children being admitted to such clinics. Khafiza, bewildered and exhausted by her predicament, has also been allocated a bed. The clinic gives Khafiza hope that her son will recover. Already, after less than two weeks, he is responding to treatment. Soon she will return home to resume the daily task of taking care of her family.

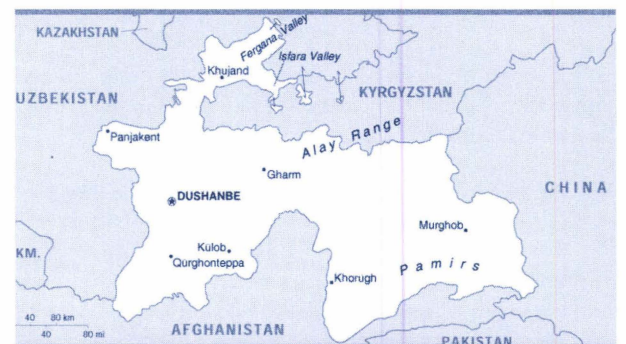
Khafiza and her family qualify for supplementary food rations from the World Food Programme, but she wants to become more independent. She is participating in a Mission East project that provides vegetable seeds and fertilisers. This will enable her to grow her own food and generate enough money to buy staples and perhaps a goat or a cow.

at different stages and will be used as a forward planning and preventive tool.

Finally, NGOs, who are important players in this area, need to think strategically when becoming involved in projects. If, during the humanitarian phase, they anticipate making a longer term engagement to the affected country or region, then this should be reflected from the outset in the strategies that they adopt.

With the assistance of ACTED, which has installed a hand pump to ensure a regular and reliable supply of clean drinking water, Khafiza irrigates her small garden. Next year, her eldest daughter Zulfia, 15, who works every day from dawn to dusk in the cotton fields, will join a sewing co-operative established by ACTED. The family will then be eligible to participate in a credit scheme so they can raise poultry.

These ECHO-funded projects directly enhance the food security and health status of people like Khafiza all over Tajikistan. Their aim is to enable people to start rebuilding their lives and to look towards a brighter future for themselves and their children.



Independent for 10 years, Tajikistan remains one of the least-known nations in the world. It is a land-locked, mountainous country, roughly the size of Greece or Tunisia, with a population of about 6 million. High mountains, arid plateaus and vast glaciers comprise more than 90% of the terrain. The north was part of the ancient Silk Road trading routes and supported an urban culture linked with other regions and peoples, resulting in a unique fusion of Iranian and Turkic cultures.

Today, industrial development is stagnant and the country is linked only to Uzbekistan and the Kyrgyz Republic by international highways. For up to half the year, many of the passes through the various mountain ranges are blocked by snow, making travel difficult between regions. This is a significant obstacle to communication and hinders the country's social and economic integration.

**Floods in Orissa (India)**

ECHO reacted speedily to the news of the devastating floods in the Indian state of Orissa. As soon as the scale of the crisis became known, it contacted partner NGOs working in the stricken area with a view to supporting their efforts to deliver relief to the affected population. It is estimated that some eight million people have been affected by the disaster with many losing their homes and livelihoods. Disease outbreaks linked to the flooding have occurred. An initial sum of more than €2 million was earmarked in July for immediate relief actions covering food, temporary shelters, water/sanitation projects, other essential relief items and medical supplies. ECHO's partners in the operation are Save the Children (UK), Oxfam (UK), Concern (Ireland), DanChurchAid (Denmark), the Spanish Red Cross and Care (UK).

**Cambodia - DIPECHO study on risk management**

In the framework of its DIPECHO programme, ECHO has funded a research study on Risk Management among the poor in Cambodia. The study has been undertaken by CARE-France. The report includes recommendations on incorporating emergency prevention, mitigation and preparedness into development programming in Cambodia as well as advice for 'emergency practitioners' on how they might strengthen development initiatives in responding to emergencies.

The report is available either from CARE France or from ECHO in Brussels (Contact: laure.boutinet@cec.eu.int).