

European Commission

Evaluating Humanitarian Action
Funded by the Humanitarian Aid Office
of the European Commission

A guide

Edition 2002

European Commission
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Edition 2002

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Foreword

In 1996, ECHO produced its first evaluation manual to provide the methodological basis for its own evaluation practice. The manual was widely distributed in the humanitarian world, including the Member States of the European Union and ECHO's partners. It gave rise to debate and exchanges of information and ideas.

In 1999, ECHO presented a new version of its evaluation manual. It reflected the knowledge and experience the Office had acquired since 1996 and took account of the ideas that had been developed both in the field of humanitarian aid and of its evaluation.

Now, in 2002, ECHO publishes a second revision. While maintaining all that is still valid, it takes account of a number of important recent developments and decisions that touch upon ECHO's work.

To mark the distinction between this booklet and the detailed instruction books abounding in the humanitarian field, it is no longer presented as a manual. As its predecessors, this booklet is meant to provide a succinct overview of the working practices of the Humanitarian Aid Office of the European Commission, and particularly of its evaluation practice. Rather than trying to provide the answer to all the questions that might arise during an evaluation, it sketches the role of evaluation in the current legal and institutional context.

Evaluators and humanitarian organisations that took part in ECHO's evaluations have greatly benefited from the insights they gained from the previous editions of this booklet. Besides, several organisations found inspiration in this overview to redefine their own evaluation practices. ECHO hopes that this revised and updated edition will continue to play this clarifying and inspirational role.

ECHO Evaluation
2002

Introduction

> This booklet is a second revision of the evaluation manual ECHO published in 1996. It takes account of the following considerations:

- the Council Regulation on humanitarian aid ;
- the experience ECHO has accumulated in the area of evaluation and the results of two overall evaluations of Community humanitarian aid ;
- the Commission guides and Communications on evaluation ;
- the Commission Communications on linking relief, rehabilitation and development (LRRD) ;
- the Commission working document on security of relief workers and humanitarian space ;
- the Commission Communication on the European Union's role in promoting human rights and democratisation in third countries ;
- the Commission Communication on integrating gender issues in development cooperation and the Council Regulation on integrating gender issues in development cooperation ;
- the OECD guidance for evaluating humanitarian assistance in complex emergencies.¹

> This booklet is meant as a source of information and inspiration for all those working in the field of humanitarian aid : first of all ECHO's staff and the external consultants working as evaluators for the Office, but also ECHO's partners, the Member States and anyone interested in the evaluation of humanitarian aid. It hopes to contribute to the further development of the culture of evaluation in the humanitarian community.

> Because there are so many works of theory on this matter, this booklet concentrates on practice.

> It is structured as follows:

- Part I describes ECHO's creation and development. It provides a brief description of a number of horizontal issues that are of particular concern to the Commission and that directly touch upon ECHO's work. Finally, it also sketches the way in which the Office operates ;

- Part II describes ECHO's evaluation practice and the regulations and theory that underlie it. It also describes ECHO's evaluation methods ;
- Part III contains two evaluation aids : the standard terms of reference for evaluating humanitarian action and a background document providing definitions of the main evaluation criteria and sample questions that might be considered in the evaluation of humanitarian action ;
- Part IV contains Council Regulation n°1257/96 of 20 June 1996 on humanitarian aid, a list of relevant documents and a glossary of evaluation terms commonly used by ECHO.

1.1. ECHO's origins

> The major crises of the nineties (in Iraq, Bangladesh, Africa, the former Soviet Union, Albania, former Yugoslavia) required donors and relief organisations to put in an unprecedented and sustained effort. The European Commission played an important role in this concerted effort, and sought to learn from the experience it gained and from the problems it encountered.

> Many of the problems that arose were caused by the Commission's structures and resources being ill suited to new requirements. In a bid to solve this problem, the Commission as from March 1992 set up a dedicated department to manage all aspects of its emergency humanitarian aid. The department was called the European Community Humanitarian Office (ECHO), and was made responsible for "managing humanitarian aid for the benefit of the populations of non-Community countries affected by natural disasters or exceptional events requiring a rapid reaction and/or accelerated procedures". The department was later renamed European Commission Humanitarian Aid Office (ECHO).

> The creation of ECHO was intended:

- to bring under one administrative umbrella (and thus have uniform management of) the expertise needed to cope with emergencies and to put the appropriate procedures in place ;
- to expand the Community's presence in the field by building the capability to intervene at various stages : identifying needs, mobilising intervention teams and equipment, monitoring and verification and ex-post evaluation ;
- to improve coordination with the Member States, other donors, non-governmental organisations (NGOs) and specialised international agencies by encouraging combined operations and the signing of framework contracts ;
- to achieve easier mobilisation of the resources needed in large-scale crises.

> By setting up ECHO, the Commission was also seeking to increase the European Union's visibility by making the public in the European Union and other parts of the world better informed about EU humanitarian aid activities.

1.2. ECHO's mandate

ECHO's mandate includes a wide range of responsibilities, such as :

- > Funding the coordinated delivery of Community humanitarian assistance and protection through partner humanitarian organisations, in order to save and preserve life, reduce or prevent suffering and safeguard the integrity and dignity of third country populations affected by conflicts and disasters.
- > Providing assistance and relief to people affected by longer-lasting crises such as civil wars.
- > Assisting refugees or displaced people in the country or region where they find sanctuary, and helping them resettle if they return home.
- > Supporting short-term rehabilitation and reconstruction work in order to help disaster-affected populations regain a minimum level of self-sufficiency, taking long-term development objectives into account where possible.
- > Carrying out feasibility studies for humanitarian operations.
- > Monitoring humanitarian projects and setting up coordination arrangements.
- > Cooperating and coordinating with relevant bodies of the Member States of the European Union dealing with humanitarian assistance.
- > Contributing to an integrated and sustainable European effort to address the often complex causes of humanitarian emergencies.
- > Ensuring disaster preparedness, through early warning systems and the financing of disaster prevention projects in high-risk regions. In order to concentrate more accurately and consistently on priority needs in the field of disaster prevention and preparedness, ECHO decided in 1996 to launch a coherent programme called DIPECHO (Disaster Preparedness ECHO).
- > Promoting and coordinating disaster preparedness measures by training specialists, strengthening institutions and running pilot micro-projects.
- > Promoting and raising awareness of humanitarian issues on the part of decision makers and the general public.
- > Organising training programmes and giving its partners technical assistance.
- > Ensuring that Community aid sends a clear message of solidarity with people in need all over the world and fully expresses the human values promoted by the European Union.
- > Maintaining a large and varied partnership with other humanitarian organisations, based on the assessment of their different capabilities and the recognition of the specific mandates given by the international community to some of these organisations.

1.3. The Humanitarian Aid Regulation

- > On 20 June 1996 the Council of the European Union adopted Regulation (EC) No 1257/96 concerning humanitarian aid.

- > The Regulation entered into force on 5 July 1996 and provides the legal basis for most of ECHO's humanitarian action.
- > It sets out objectives and guidelines for humanitarian aid, plus implementation methods and procedures.
- > The full Regulation can be found in Chapter 8 of Part IV of this guide.

1.4. Reform of decision-making procedures

- > The Regulation concerning humanitarian aid recognised that there are different types of humanitarian crises. Some are of an incidental nature and follow a standard scenario ; others are more protracted and follow an unpredictable course.
- > The Regulation indicated that the Commission might follow different procedures to mobilise funds, according to the urgency of the crisis. In 1999, an independent evaluation of ECHO-funded humanitarian assistance pointed out, however, that the Commission's decision-making procedures were ill-suited to respond to primary emergencies and unpredictable situations : in these situations, the Commission took too long to release funds and to adapt to swiftly changing realities in the field.
- > The Commission recently developed new procedures, giving the Commissioner responsible for humanitarian aid and the director of ECHO the possibility to respond to primary emergencies and to unforeseen development in complex emergencies.
- > The effort to find an adequate way to respond to the urgent needs of disaster victims while maintaining adequate controls to ensure transparency and accountability in public funding, remains at the heart of the history of ECHO.

2.1. Linking relief, rehabilitation and development (LRRD)

- > The link between relief, rehabilitation and development is the first of a number of horizontal issues that concern different Commission services and that also directly touch upon ECHO's work. It has to do with the coordination of different funding instruments.
- > Council Regulation (EC) No 1257/96 of 20 June 1996 concerning humanitarian aid states in the recitals : “ humanitarian assistance may be a prerequisite for development or reconstruction work and must therefore cover the full duration of a crisis and its aftermath ; in this context it may include an element of short-term rehabilitation aimed at facilitating the arrival of relief, preventing any worsening in the impact of the crisis and starting to help those affected regain a minimum level of self-sufficiency. ”
- > In 1996, the Communication from the Commission to the Council and the European Parliament on linking relief, rehabilitation and development (LRRD) stated : “ humanitarian aid will seek where possible to bear in mind and remain compatible with longer-term developmental objectives ”. Humanitarian aid ought to build on local capacities, reinforcing coping mechanisms and institutions. Every possible step should be taken to prevent the

beneficiaries of humanitarian aid from becoming dependent on it and self-sufficiency should always be the goal.

- > An assessment of the Community's policy on the linkage issue, presented on 23 April 2001 in a new Communication from the Commission to the Council and the European Parliament, made suggestions to facilitate international coordination on a more systematic basis and proposed measures to further streamline the Community's working methods.
- > Evaluations of Community external aid instruments repeatedly confirmed the persistent need to improve linkages between relief and development.

2.2. Security of relief workers

- > On 14 May 1998 the Commission (ECHO) put forward a working document on the security of relief workers and humanitarian space. It is a first attempt to tackle this issue, and provides an analysis and recommendations.
- > By offering funding opportunities, ECHO seeks to encourage humanitarian organisations to conduct training programmes in security management. Besides, ECHO is ready to fund security operations and to pay for security equipment as an integral part of the budget for humanitarian operations in insecure environments. Finally, ECHO's partners must explain their position on security in all project proposals.
- > This issue must be covered by all evaluations of ECHO-funded humanitarian assistance.

2.3. Human rights

- > Humanitarian action often takes place in areas where human rights are frequently violated.
- > The Communication of the Commission on the European Union's role in promoting human rights and democratisation in third countries, presented on 8 May 2001, stresses that the promotion of human rights will be mainstreamed in future assistance.
- > The Commission has an obligation to ensure that its operations reflect and promote respect for human rights. ECHO seeks to act upon this obligation by funding humanitarian protection operations and by encouraging coordination between humanitarian and human rights operations. Most EU human rights operations are funded by services other than ECHO.
- > When submitting humanitarian projects for funding by ECHO, humanitarian organisations are requested to explain how their operations will impact on the human rights situation in the field.
- > The human rights situation in the area where the ECHO-funded operations are implemented must be surveyed in all evaluations.

2.4. Gender

- > In the wake of the conclusions of the World Conference on Population and Development (Cairo, 1994) and the fourth UN World Conference on Women (Beijing, 1995), the European Commission decided to integrate gender issues into all its programmes and activities.
- > In its Communication on integrating gender issues into development cooperation, the Commission stressed the need to tackle the obstacles to gender equality and ensure that all policies and programmes worked towards this goal.
- > Council Regulation (EC) No 2836/98 of 22 December 1998 on the integration of gender issues in development cooperation emphasised the right of everyone to participate in the development process and to benefit from its results.
- > Integrating gender issues in humanitarian assistance rests on the understanding of the different roles, responsibilities and expectations of women and men. Women and men may have different needs and capacities, and any planned action may have different implications for each group. Recognising these differences may lead to funding projects that specifically address the special needs of women and men. In a broader sense, integrating a gender perspective in the design and implementation of humanitarian projects may help to maximise the effects of the assistance.
- > Evaluations of humanitarian aid must, wherever relevant, also cover gender issues.

3.1. Organisation

- > ECHO is a specialised Commission department reporting directly to the Commissioner responsible for Development and Humanitarian Aid.
- > ECHO has operational responsibilities such as the management and monitoring of humanitarian action, and supporting responsibilities such as strategy, evaluation, financial matters, information, relations with NGOs and operational coordination.
- > ECHO has its headquarters in Brussels. Besides, it has field offices in virtually all countries that are beneficiaries of ECHO-funded humanitarian aid.
- > The ECHO field offices are managed by Technical Assistants. They provide support for headquarters and partners and they monitor ECHO-funded humanitarian action in the field. Regional Administrative Coordinators, stationed in regional offices, ensure the proper administration of the finances of the field offices.

3.2. ECHO's financial resources

- > ECHO is one of the world's most important humanitarian aid donors. In 2001, for example, it managed a budget of about 520 million euro.
- > Most of ECHO's humanitarian actions are funded from the general budget of the European Communities. In 2000 the different budget appropriations covering humanitarian aid were consolidated under a single heading, allowing ECHO greater flexibility in the way it manages its financial resources.

> Operations for African, Caribbean and Pacific (ACP) countries and Overseas Countries and Territories (OCTs) can also be funded through the European Development Fund (EDF), in accordance with article 254 of the fourth Lomé Convention, with articles 72 and 73 of the Cotonou Agreement, and with article 164 of the OCT-EC Association Agreement.

3.3. ECHO's partners

> Although the Council Regulation concerning humanitarian aid allows for the direct implementation of relief activities by the Commission, in practice ECHO entrusts the implementation of humanitarian aid to its operational partners.

> ECHO's partners include:

- United Nations specialised agencies : the Office of the High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR), the World Food Programme (WFP), the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF), the World Health Organisation (WHO) and the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East (UNRWA) ;
- Other international bodies (PAHO) ;
- Non-governmental organisations (NGOs) ;
- Organisations in the Red Cross and Red Crescent family : the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC), the International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies (IFRC) and national Red Cross and Red Crescent societies.

> The Framework Partnership Agreement (FPA) regulates the relations between ECHO and its operational partners. To date, more than 200 organisations have signed such a framework agreement.

> ECHO's partners include large and small organisations, specialists and 'all-rounders'. This wide range of partners is important for ECHO because it allows for comprehensive coverage of an ever-growing list of needs in different parts of the world – and in increasingly complex situations.

> When they have signed the Framework Partnership Agreement and have undertaken to respect its general conditions, partners are eligible to request ECHO funding for specific projects. This process is expedited by the use of standard forms for proposals, budgets, contracts and reports.

> The Framework Partnership Agreement includes an article on evaluation. It stipulates that the partner will provide the evaluators contracted by the Commission with all the information they need for the accomplishment of their task. Besides, ECHO's partners may include in their project proposals the costs for an evaluation. In all cases their final reports must include an analysis of the results of the operations that were funded by ECHO.

> Evaluations of ECHO-funded humanitarian aid must show a solid understanding of the different roles and responsibilities of ECHO and its partners : they must assess the performance of all parties and their cooperation.

3.4. Annual strategy, global plans and single operations

> On an annual basis ECHO defines the strategic objectives for the delivery of its humanitarian action including its evaluation. This strategy is based on a thorough assessment of existing and forecast needs, using information provided by ECHO's Technical Assistants and other humanitarian operators. The strategy is implemented through funding decisions drawn up on the basis of specific proposals made by partners.

> Global plans are ECHO's main means of programming. Article 15 of Council Regulation 1257/96 concerning humanitarian aid sets out the objectives of the global plans : they are "intended to provide a coherent framework for action in a given country or region where the scale and complexity of the humanitarian crisis is such that it seems likely to continue". Global plans usually contain a series of operations entrusted to different partners. Coordination with Member States, as well as with other donors and agencies, is an important part of the planning process.

> In situations where it doesn't seem necessary to draw up a global plan, it remains possible to finance single operations in response to specific needs.

3.5. The Humanitarian Aid Committee (HAC)

> Article 17 of Council Regulation 1257/96 sets out the composition, remit and operating procedure of the Humanitarian Aid Committee (HAC).

> The Committee is headed by a representative of the Commission and is composed of representatives of the Member States ; it delivers its opinion on the global plans ECHO intends to implement.

> In the case of primary emergencies, the Committee delivers its opinion on the measures the Commission has taken in accordance with the emergency procedures. These emergency measures may not exceed a fixed financial limit.

> Once a year, the Committee receives from ECHO a strategic plan for the humanitarian action to be undertaken in the year ahead.

> General matters to do with humanitarian aid are referred to the Committee and discussed with the Member States.

> The Committee is also notified of ECHO's evaluation programme. It receives a summary of the results of the evaluations that the Office has carried out and it is informed about the follow-up that ECHO gives to its evaluations.

In short

> ECHO, the Humanitarian Aid Office, is the Commission service responsible for the humanitarian assistance to third countries. Through the activities of the Office the Commission expresses the solidarity of the European Union with those affected by conflicts or disasters, both natural and man-made, all over the world.

- > ECHO is one of the world's largest donors of humanitarian aid.
- > The European Community's humanitarian aid mandate is set out in Council Regulation (EC) 1257/96 of 20 June 1996.
- > ECHO has developed different procedures to respond to different kinds of humanitarian crises : primary emergencies, unpredictable situations and protracted crises.
- > ECHO works in partnership with NGOs, organisations in the Red Cross and Red Crescent family, UN agencies and other international bodies ; the Framework Partnership Agreement (FPA) regulates the relations between ECHO and its partners.
- > ECHO relies on global plans as its main means of programming.
- > The Humanitarian Aid Committee (HAC), composed of representatives of the Member States of the European Union, delivers its opinion on the measures ECHO proposes to take in complex and protracted humanitarian crises and on the measures ECHO has taken in primary emergencies.

4.1. Regulatory basis

- > Evaluation is dealt with in Articles 4, 18, 19 and 20 of Council Regulation 1257/96 concerning humanitarian aid.
- > Article 4 states that one of the possible uses of Community aid is “ preparatory and feasibility studies for humanitarian operations and the assessment of humanitarian projects and plans ”.
- > Article 18 stipulates : “ The Commission shall regularly assess humanitarian aid operations financed by the Community in order to establish whether they have achieved their objectives and to produce guidelines for improving the effectiveness of subsequent operations ”. Such ‘assessments’ or evaluations form an integral part of ECHO's working practice. They correspond with the Commission's constant efforts to improve the mechanisms for defining policy priorities and allocating resources. Article 18 also stipulates : “ The Commission shall submit to the Committee a summary [...] of the assessment exercises carried out that it might, if necessary, examine. The assessment reports shall be available to the Member States on request ”. It adds : “ At the Member States' request, and with their participation, the Commission may also assess the results of the Community's humanitarian operations and plans ”.
- > Article 19 states that the Commission's annual report to the European Parliament and the Council “ shall also include a review of any outside assessment exercises which may have been conducted on specific operations ”.
- > Finally, Article 20 stipulates that, three years after entry into force of the Regulation, “ the Commission shall submit an overall assessment of the operations financed by the Community under this Regulation to the European Parliament and to the Council, together with suggestions for the future of the Regulation and, as necessary, proposals for amendments to it ”. In accordance with this article on 26 October 1999 the Commission submitted a Communication to the Council and the European Parliament on the assessment and future of

Community humanitarian activities. This Communication was based on an independent external evaluation. The Regulation does not call for further overall evaluations.

4.2. Definition, principles and objectives of evaluation

> The most appropriate way of summarising ECHO's view of evaluation is to say that an evaluation is an independent and objective survey of the relevance, effectiveness, efficiency, impact and sustainability of humanitarian actions, in order to learn lessons from experience.

> ECHO's main aims of evaluation are:

- to analyse the quality of actions financed with public funds managed by ECHO ;
- to learn from experience in order to improve the results of humanitarian action and achieve optimum use of funds and other resources ;
- to enrich thinking about methods, strategy and policy ;
- to respond to the requirements for reporting and improve transparency.

> ECHO uses the following key criteria for its evaluations:

- Relevance : a measure of the validity of the objectives of an action, in particular in the light of identified problems and needs ;
- Effectiveness : the degree to which the objectives of the action are or have been fulfilled ;
- Efficiency : a measure of how well the resources are used to produce achievements and results ;
- Impact : all the effects that can be attributed to an action ;
- Sustainability : the degree to which the desired and positive effects of an action can be expected to last beyond its end.

> Evaluations usually also serve to gather information on the integration, wherever relevant, of overarching and crosscutting issues that are of particular concern to ECHO, such as:

- The link between relief, rehabilitation and development (LRRD) ;
- Security of relief workers ;
- Respect for human rights ;
- Gender.

These ECHO policies may also in themselves be the subject of evaluations. In evaluations of individual operations or global plans the respect for these policies can be seen as an additional criterion for the evaluation of ECHO-funded action.

> Evaluation is intended to make it possible to learn from the experience of past actions. Rather than being primarily a means of checking implementation, it should be an aid to decision making. It is an integral part of project cycle management.

> An evaluation is not:

- a scientific study : scientific studies are the result of research that probes the extent of knowledge. Scientific studies usually cover a very specific subject area ;
- an audit : audits are intended primarily to check that programme resources have been used according to the rules. Audits traditionally involve examination of accounts ;
- a monitoring exercise : monitoring is a continuous process coinciding with the implementation of a programme. It is intended to correct any deviation from the operational

objectives. It is usually concluded by a concise internal 'evaluation'. This summary will often yield information that can be used in more profound external evaluations.

4.3. Varieties of evaluation

> In theory the following varieties of evaluation can be distinguished:

- Ex-ante evaluation : an analysis of a situation that describes and quantifies problems in a particular area, sets out objectives and looks at the appropriateness of proposed measures and ways of translating them into action. This type of evaluation should propose criteria or indicators that can eventually be used to gauge the success of the action ;
- Intermediate evaluation : an analysis of an action performed while it is being implemented. It focuses on the relevance of the operational objectives relative to the overall objectives, and on matters relating to implementation and management. It describes what the action has achieved and what its initial effects have been, using information available ;
- Ex-post evaluation : an evaluation carried out after an action has ended. It is designed to assess the action's results and consequences, and to see if any lessons should be learned.

> Given the rapidly evolving situation in which most humanitarian action takes place and the short life span of most ECHO funded projects, intermediate evaluations play an important role in ECHO's working practice. They often function to gather reliable information on existing humanitarian needs, to assess ongoing actions and to establish the framework for future action in the same area : the three varieties of evaluations to a certain extent come together in ECHO's evaluation practice.

4.4. The evaluator

> External and independent consultants always carry out ECHO's evaluations. Following a public call for a show of interest, ECHO has established relations with a broad network of independent external consultants and consultancy firms, specialising in the evaluation of humanitarian aid. For every new evaluation, ECHO chooses its evaluators among this group, after sending out a restricted call for tender to the consultants or firms that seem best suited to carry out the task at hand.

> The quality of an evaluation rides on the professional capabilities of the evaluator or the evaluation team performing it. The choice of the evaluator and the composition of the evaluation team are a vital matter.

> In choosing the evaluators, the following factors are considered:

- expertise and field experience in the evaluation of humanitarian aid ;
- ability to manage the available time and resources and to work to tight deadlines ;
- independence from the parties involved ;
- ability and readiness to work in high-risk areas ;
- talent for oral communication ;
- ability to write clear and useful reports.

> These qualifications, coupled with common sense, impartiality and integrity, guarantee the quality and credibility of the evaluation.

4.5. The terms of reference (ToR)

➤ The terms of reference set out the boundaries of the evaluator's mission, the issues to be considered and the evaluation timetable. They allow those commissioning the evaluation to express their needs and the evaluator to have a clear idea of what is expected of him.
Well-defined terms of reference

> The terms of reference should include the following:

- a description of the action(s) to be evaluated ;
- the general objective of the evaluation (including its origin and goal) ;
- the specific objectives of the evaluation (including the main issues to be considered) ;
- selection criteria for outside evaluators and special expertise required of them ;
- the methods to be used to gather and analyse information ;
- the work plan of the evaluation ;
- the proposed structure for the final evaluation reports.

> Part III of this manual contains a reduced version of the standard terms of reference used by ECHO for the evaluation of its humanitarian action.

5.1. ECHO Evaluation

> ECHO has an evaluation function that works in close collaboration with its other services.

> ECHO Evaluation's main functions are:

- programming, preparing and organising evaluations ;
- safeguarding and improving the quality and independence of evaluations ;
- introducing, adapting and developing evaluation methods ;
- maintaining and updating a database containing information on prospective consultants and consultancy firms specialising in the evaluation of humanitarian aid ;
- analysing and disseminating the results of evaluations ;
- monitoring the effects of evaluations on new decisions ;
- improving the use of evaluation results.

> Evaluations carried out by ECHO generally target global plans. Less frequently they focus on single operations or on a number of operations that are part of a global plan. Besides, evaluations may be confined to a specific field or sector, to the work of a specific partner, or to a specific problem connected with humanitarian aid. Exceptionally ECHO evaluations also cover all humanitarian aid provided over a certain period.

5.2. Programming evaluations

> Once a year, ECHO Evaluation draws up a draft evaluation programme for the year ahead. The draft is finalised after discussion within ECHO. It may be added to as the year progresses. Programmed evaluations may be cancelled when areas become insecure or inaccessible.

> Evaluations must be done at the right moment, i.e. their results must be available for a new decision to be taken. The programming of evaluations must take account of this.

> The annual evaluation plan has to take account of ECHO Evaluation's human resources.

> When deciding on the exact timing of an evaluation, the relevant operational service has to make sure the desk officer can be present for the briefing and debriefing and the ECHO Technical Assistant can be present for the evaluation in the field.

> The decision to carry out an evaluation may be provoked by one of the following considerations (non-exhaustive list):

- serious problems with implementation of an operation or a global plan ;
- doubts about the capacity of a partner ;
- the need for additional reliable information to draft a new global plan ;
- the wish to draw up a strategy to leave a certain area or region ;
- the wish to review the problems in a specific sector of humanitarian aid (e.g. food aid, medical aid) ;
- the wish to take stock of an overarching or crosscutting aspect of humanitarian aid (e.g. gender issues, security of relief workers, donor visibility) ;
- the need to analyse the operation of instruments like the Framework Partnership Agreement (FPA).

5.3. Working methods

> ECHO has conceived and evolved its own method of evaluating its actions (operations and global plans). This method is dictated by the needs and working practices of the Office. Its main hallmark is flexibility. Evaluations can be performed on all varieties of ECHO-funded humanitarian aid, including disaster prevention and preparedness operations.

> ECHO's evaluation method is founded on the key criteria : relevance, effectiveness, efficiency, impact and sustainability.

> These key criteria have been incorporated into a set of standard terms of reference. A reduced version of these can be found in Part III of this manual. This model is adapted to each evaluation, considering the specific nature and objectives of each particular evaluation exercise.

> ECHO has compiled a document with sample questions to be considered in the evaluation of humanitarian aid. This document is structured in accordance with the key criteria and is a standard annex to the terms of reference. Its purpose is to assist the evaluators. It is only a guide and is to be considered open-ended. This document can also be found in Part III of this manual.

- > The terms of reference set out the methods that the evaluators will use to accomplish their mission. The terms of reference describe the division of tasks among the members of the evaluation team, the timetable of the exercise and the methods of data collection and analysis.
- > Unforeseen obstacles and important new insights may dictate methodological adjustments. The evaluation report should therefore include a methodological review of the exercise.

5.4. Guiding the evaluation

- > ECHO Evaluation is responsible for guiding the course of the evaluation.
- > In close collaboration with the relevant operational service, ECHO Evaluation draws up the terms of reference. Standard terms of reference are tailored to each evaluation.
- > The choice of consultants is made in the light of the specific characteristics of each evaluation, including the area where the action is implemented, the languages that are spoken by the different stakeholders and the sectors that are to be evaluated. When evaluating global plans, ECHO Evaluation usually recruits a team of consultants, lead by a team leader. Each sector is then evaluated by a different consultant, in accordance with the required expertise.
- > Once the consultants have been selected, ECHO Evaluation draws up an evaluation contract, including the terms of reference and the evaluation budget.
- > ECHO Evaluation is responsible for providing all parties involved with information on the implementation of the evaluation exercise. To that end, it dispatches the terms of reference and the consultant's CV to the relevant ECHO operational service, to other Commission departments where necessary, to the partners responsible for implementing specific operations on which the evaluation might focus, to the ECHO Technical Assistant in the field and to the Commission Delegation.
- > The evaluation begins with a briefing at ECHO's headquarters involving ECHO Evaluation, the evaluators and the country or regional desk of ECHO (and other Commission departments, where appropriate). The meeting, headed and organised by ECHO Evaluation, provides everyone involved in the evaluation with the opportunity to discuss the contents of the evaluation and to identify the priorities for the exercise. It should allow the consultants to clarify any doubts they might have about the scope of their mission. The outcome of this discussion will be set out by the team leader in a note that must be submitted to ECHO Evaluation and the relevant operational service before the evaluators' departure to the field. This note will form an integral part of the terms of reference.
- > ECHO Evaluation ensures that the relevant operational service makes all documentation that the evaluators will need available for analysis (desk study).
- > The evaluation includes a field visit. ECHO Evaluation ensures that the Commission Delegation and the ECHO Technical Assistant in the field do all they can to help the evaluation mission run smoothly. The ECHO Technical Assistant will notify ECHO's local partners of the evaluation and its objectives before the arrival of the consultants. He will offer logistic support and will provide the evaluators with all information necessary for the proper conduct of their mission. To safeguard the independence of the evaluators, he should not

accompany them on their visits to other parties in the field. The consultants must refer to ECHO Evaluation any problems they have been unable to resolve on the spot. The relevant operational service may be called upon to provide additional information.

> At the end of the evaluation mission, the consultants must supply ECHO with a draft report. If satisfied with the basic quality of the draft, ECHO Evaluation will disseminate it within ECHO, to the appropriate Commission services and to the partners. ECHO Evaluation ensures that any written comments will be communicated to the consultants before the debriefing.

> ECHO Evaluation coordinates and chairs the debriefing meeting at which the evaluators present the draft reports to the parties involved in the evaluation. The debriefing serves to verify if the draft reports meet the requirements set out in the terms of reference and allows for a thorough discussion of the conclusions and recommendations of the consultants. On the basis of the conclusions of the debriefing the evaluators draft their final evaluation reports.

> ECHO Evaluation disseminates the final evaluation reports to all the parties involved. ECHO Evaluation notifies the consultants of ECHO's final agreement with the reports, if need be on the condition that the evaluators consider some final comments. The partners will be given the opportunity to have their final comments attached as an annex to the final report.

5.5. The evaluation report

> By commissioning an independent evaluation ECHO expects to obtain an objective, critical, readable and transparent analysis of the progress made with its actions. This analysis should contain recommendations on future courses of action.

> The evaluation report is of value to ECHO only if it clearly reflects the evaluator's independent view. ECHO's greatest concern is to respect this independence. Where differences of opinion on the interpretation of the evaluator's findings cannot be reconciled, the stakeholders' comments may be included in one or more annexes to the final report.

> The report must cover scrupulously all the items in the terms of reference. Any decision not to cover one or more of the items described in the terms of reference will have to be justified in the text of the reports.

> The evaluator has to mention his sources : the quality of the report depends to a large degree on the evaluator's access to the appropriate information.

> The method and logic the evaluator has applied to come to his conclusions must be transparent.

> The report will be drafted in accordance with a standard structure, set out in the terms of reference.

> The report must contain a summary of the key points that the evaluator wishes to put across. This summary must be drafted in such a way that it can be understood without having to refer to the rest of the report.

- > The evaluator's recommendations must follow logically from his findings. They must be practical and realistic and should be carefully targeted at the appropriate stakeholders.
- > The report should be worded in a direct and non-academic style.
- > When drafting his report, the consultant has to bear in mind that it will be published on the ECHO Internet site.

5.6. Dissemination of results and follow-up

- > The full evaluation report is forwarded to:
 - ECHO management ;
 - The Commissioner responsible for humanitarian aid ;
 - the partner(s) ;
 - the Commission delegation involved ;
 - the ECHO Technical Assistant in the field ;
 - other Commission departments involved ;
 - anyone who submits a motivated written request.
- > The evaluation report is published on the ECHO Internet site.
- > Information received as confidential must appear in a separate annex to the report. This annex will not be distributed outside the Commission.
- > Article 18 of the Regulation stipulates that the Humanitarian Aid Committee must receive summaries of the Commission's evaluations. ECHO therefore submits the executive summaries of the reports to the Member States, accompanied by a fact sheet drawn up by the operational service explaining what will be the follow-up of the evaluation.
- > In line with Article 19 of the Regulation concerning humanitarian aid, after the end of each financial year, the Commission submits an annual report to the Parliament and Council that includes a summary of all the outside evaluations performed.
- > Acting on the conclusions and recommendations of evaluations is an important part of the decision-making process. In order to close the project management cycle, ECHO's operational services must take account of the results of evaluations when establishing global plans and other humanitarian action : all global plans must explicitly indicate to what extent they are in accordance with evaluation results. In a wider sense this is also true for ECHO as a whole : the overall evaluation that was carried out in 1999 in accordance with Article 20 of the Regulation concerning humanitarian aid, touched upon all ECHO services and laid the basis for important institutional reforms.

In short

- > The most appropriate way of summarising ECHO's view of evaluation is to say that an evaluation is an independent and objective survey of the relevance, effectiveness, efficiency, impact and sustainability of a humanitarian action, in order to learn lessons from experience.

> Evaluation is intended to make it possible to learn from the experience of past actions. Rather than being primarily a means of checking implementation, it should be an aid to decision making. It is an integral part of the decision-making process.

> The key criteria used to evaluate humanitarian aid are relevance, effectiveness, efficiency, impact and sustainability.

> An evaluation is not:

- a scientific study ;
- an audit ;
- a monitoring exercise.

Terms of reference
for the Evaluation of (ECHO funded action)
in (country or region)
in (period)
Contract number(s) :
Name(s) of evaluator(s) :

1. Introduction

> Brief description of the causes and nature of the humanitarian crisis.

> Brief description of the action that is to be evaluated, including its objectives, its level of implementation, and the number(s) and amount(s) of the relevant financial decision(s) taken by the Commission.

> Reason(s) for and general objective(s) of the evaluation. The general objective of all ECHO evaluations is to learn from experience and to obtain recommendations, at both institutional and operational levels, that may inform future decisions. This general objective must be further specified. The goal of this particular evaluation -for example gathering information for the establishment of a new global plan- must be explicitly formulated.

2. Specific objectives of the evaluation

> Description of the specific objectives of the evaluation. The most important specific objective of almost all ECHO evaluations is to obtain an objective and independent analysis of (ECHO-funded action) in (country or region) in (period) in terms of its relevance, effectiveness, efficiency, impact and sustainability. Besides, evaluations usually serve to gather objective information on the integration, wherever relevant, of ECHO policies on the link between relief, rehabilitation and development (LRRD), the security of aid workers, respect for human rights, gender and donor visibility. These specific objectives must be further specified. The weight given in the evaluation to each of the criteria will depend on the nature and the level of implementation of the action. The

‘Criteria and sample questions to be considered in the evaluation of humanitarian aid’ will serve as a guide to establish the main issues to be studied in this particular evaluation. These issues may be further refined during the briefing. The team leader will draft a note that describes the conclusions of the discussions during the briefing. Once ECHO has agreed with it, this note will be attached to these terms of reference.

3. Qualifications and tasks of the consultants

- > A team of..... consultants with solid experience both in the humanitarian field and in the evaluation of humanitarian aid will carry out this evaluation. Further qualifications that apply to all consultants, such as sound knowledge of certain languages and of certain geographic areas and the willingness to work in high-risk areas, may be added here.
- > Mr/Ms. (name), the team leader, is responsible for the overall coordination of the mission, for the final coherence of the separate reports, both in terms of content and presentation, and for the synthesis report. Besides, he/she will produce a separate report on (sector) Further qualifications that specifically apply to the team leader may be added here.
- > Mr/Ms. (name) will produce a separate report on (sector) Further qualifications that apply to this particular evaluator may be added here.
- > Mr/Mrs. (name) will produce a separate report on (sector) Further qualifications that apply to this particular evaluator may be added here.

4. Sources and methods

- > To accomplish their task, the evaluators will use information available at ECHO headquarters, from its Technical Assistants in the field, from other Commission services, the local Commission delegation, ECHO partners, aid beneficiaries, local authorities and international organisations.
- > Information will be gained from documents, interviews and field observations.
- > In their analysis the evaluators will apply the criteria as defined in the annex ‘Criteria and sample questions to be considered in the evaluation of humanitarian aid’ that is attached to these terms of reference. Further guidance can be found in the guide on “Evaluating humanitarian action funded by the Humanitarian Aid Office of the European Commission : A Guide ” that can also be found on the ECHO Internet site (<http://europa.eu.int/comm/echo>).
- > The evaluators will analyse the available information and incorporate it in coherent reports that respond to the general and specific objectives of the evaluation. While maintaining the highest standards of professionalism in their analysis, the evaluators will avoid the use of theoretical or academic language in their reports.
- > The team members will work in close coordination under the responsibility of the team leader.

5. Work plan and timetable

> The evaluation will last no more than... working days. It will be implemented within a contractual period that will begin with the date of signature of the contract by the last party and that will end no later than... with the acceptance of the final reports.

> The evaluation will be implemented in 3 phases:

1. Briefing and desk study

- During a briefing at ECHO all relevant documents and all necessary clarifications will be provided by ECHO and other services of the Commission ;
- The consultants will examine and analyse the documents (desk study) and they will plan the activities/visits to be undertaken in the field.

2. Field study :days

- The consultants must work in cooperation with the relevant Commission Delegation, ECHO Technical Assistants, ECHO partners, local authorities, international organisations and other donors ;
- The consultants will devote the beginning of their mission to the field to preliminary and preparatory discussions with the Delegation, ECHO Technical Assistants and local ECHO partners ;
- At the end of their field mission the consultants will meet with the Delegation, ECHO Technical Assistants and ECHO partners for discussion of their observations.

3. Debriefing and drafting of reports

- The first draft reports, drafted in accordance with the format given in paragraph 6 below, shall be submitted by electronic transmission (format ...) to ECHO within 15 calendar days after the consultants' return from the field ;
- The starting date for the debriefing in Brussels will be fixed by ECHO not earlier than 10 working days after the submission of the first draft reports. Prior to the meeting, ECHO will have transmitted in writing any substantial comments to the consultants ;
- The debriefing will last.days ;
- On the basis of the results of the debriefing the final draft reports will be submitted to ECHO within a maximum of 15 calendar days. ECHO should mark its agreement within 15 calendar days or request further amendments ;
- Submission of the final reports.

> If necessary, a visit to the headquarters of the partners can be planned before or after the field mission.

6. Reports

> The evaluation will result in the drawing up ofreports written in a straightforward manner, in either English or French. Each report will have a maximum length ofpages, including an Executive Summary that should appear at the beginning of the report. The consultants will take account of the fact that the reports will be published on the ECHO Internet site.

> The following report format will be strictly adhered to:

1. Cover page:

- Title of the evaluation report : “ Evaluation of

(ECHO funded action) in(country or region) in(period)
.....(Sector or synthesis report)” ;

- Consultant’s name ;
- Date of the evaluation ;
- Disclaimer : “ This report has been produced at the request of the European Commission and has been financed by it. The comments contained herein reflect the opinions of the consultant only. ”

2. Table of contents

3. Executive Summary (.....pages maximum):

- Brief description of the evaluated action, including number(s) and amount(s) of the relevant financial decision(s) ;
- Objectives, methods and duration of the evaluation ;
- Main conclusions. The conclusions must refer to the main evaluation criteria and the crosscutting issues set out in paragraph 2 of these terms of reference, and particularly to the main issues that were to be studied. There must be a clear link between the conclusions and the supporting evidence in the main body of the report
- Main lessons learned ;
- Main recommendations. The recommendations must be directly and logically related to the conclusions. They must be as realistic, operational and pragmatic as possible, taking careful account of the circumstances currently prevailing in the context of the action and of the resources available both locally and in the Commission.

4. Main body of the report (.....pages maximum). The main body of the report will provide the background to the points listed in the Executive Summary. It will contain a description of the findings and an analysis or interpretation of the action in terms of the main evaluation criteria and the crosscutting issues set out in paragraph 2, focusing particularly on the main issues that were to be studied. It will include a methodological review of the evaluation exercise. Conclusions, lessons learned and recommendations should be the subject of separate chapters.

5. Annexes:

- Terms of reference ;
- List of persons/organisations consulted ;
- List of literature and documents consulted ;
- List of sites visited ;
- Map of the area covered by the action ;
- List of abbreviations.

6. Separate annex:

- All confidential information obtained from parties other than Commission services must be presented in a separate annex.

> Each report must be drawn up in.....copies and transmitted to ECHO.

> The report must be submitted with its computer support, including all annexes, attached. (diskette or CD ROM, format ...)

7.1. Relevance

> Relevance can be defined as a measure of the validity of the objectives of an action, in particular in the light of identified problems and needs.

> To determine the relevance of an action one might look, first of all, at the way the decision to intervene came about. Was the action preceded by an ex ante evaluation or a needs assessment? Were the existing problems and needs correctly identified? Was the target population correctly identified? Did the specific objectives correctly and pertinently address the identified problems and needs? Was the chosen strategy appropriate? Was the project budget adequate for its purpose? Were local capacities for absorbing and implementing the aid properly analysed? Was sufficient attention paid to social-cultural factors that might interfere? Were prior consultations undertaken with appropriate people on the spot, i.e. the Delegation, national and local authorities, intended beneficiaries and other donors and aid organisations (the latter being particularly important to ensure complementarity and avoid overlap)?

> An important factor in determining the relevance of an action is, furthermore, its connectedness with other actions with similar objectives. Is the action justified in the light of ECHO's mandate? Is it coherent, coordinated and complementary with the current (and short-term future) plans and actions of other donors like the Member States, the US, the World Bank, UN agencies and other Commission departments? What is the role of local authorities and beneficiaries? Was there a correct balance of responsibilities between the various stakeholders? Are the different actions connected at both institutional and field levels?

> In the case of humanitarian emergencies, the relevance of an action depends to a large degree on its timeliness and its flexibility. Was the time factor adequately integrated in the decision-making procedure? Did the decision show an understanding of the difficulties and opportunities in the way of mobilising adequate aid to the victims? Did the action adequately adapt to refined or revised information and to changing realities in the field?

7.2. Effectiveness

> Effectiveness can be defined as the degree to which the stated objectives of the action are or have been fulfilled.

> Assessments of the effectiveness of an action usually focus on the achievements and results (the operational and initial impact) of an action. Have the intended goods and services been delivered in the intended time and in the intended amounts and quality to the intended beneficiaries? Were they suitable and did they produce the intended results for the target population? Have the intended structures been developed? Predefined indicators can often serve as tools to determine the effectiveness of an action.

> Effectiveness is often determined by the limitations of 'humanitarian space'. To what extent was the action constrained by political, military, infrastructural or climatic factors?

> In emergencies, where the stated objectives must often be refined or adjusted in the course of the action, results should be seen as part of a process, rather than outcome of a project. The analysis should then try to capture the dynamics of the action. What stages did the action go

through, in terms of its intended and unintended results ? How do these stages relate to any adjustments of the original objectives ?

7.3. Efficiency

- > Efficiency can be defined as a measure of how well the resources are used to produce achievements and results.
- > The central element to be considered here is the organisation of the action. What aspects of the action are directly handled by the partners and what aspects are delegated or shared ? Do the partners have the necessary communications and logistics equipment ? Are their representatives in the field in a position to take immediate decisions in the light of circumstances, or do they have to await decisions from headquarters ? Are the storage and distribution facilities suited to the quantity and type of goods involved ?
- > An important element of the organisation of the action is the management of the financial budget. Audits usually cover the proper implementation of adequate and transparent financial control arrangements. Evaluations may include cost-effectiveness analyses related to operational aspects of particular budgetary importance, such as transport, storage or construction arrangements. What are the major budgetary posts ? Does the action show an understanding and awareness of cost aspects ? Could the same achievements and results have been produced at a lower cost ? What were the costs of omissions or missed opportunities ?
- > Another important element is the role of local and expatriate staff. Do the partners have enough or too much staff for the tasks at hand ? Does the local and expatriate staff have the appropriate professional qualifications to perform their functions ? Could local staff fulfil the tasks of the expatriate staff ?
- > A final specific aspect of the organisation of the action regards the systems to monitor (and evaluate) the action. Did the partners set up appropriate systems of monitoring (and self-evaluation) and did these systems function properly ? Did the partners' monitoring systems correspond with ECHO's reporting requirements ?

7.4. Impact

- > Impact can be defined as the effects attributable to an action. Impact can be short or long-term, positive or negative, intended or unintended, at macro (society or sector) or micro (household) level.
- > Whereas the desired effects in terms of achievements and results are usually analysed under effectiveness, the desired consequences and unintended effects are usually analysed under impact. An impact analysis usually covers the context in which the action took place. To what extent did the action directly change the humanitarian situation ? How did it affect existing local structures and the local economy ? Did it directly or indirectly feed into a war economy ? Did it create new dependencies ? Did it have an effect on the physical environment ? What steps were taken to minimise negative side effects ?

> Impact also includes the political perception of the action, both among the beneficiaries and among neighbouring groups. Was the action perceived to be impartial and purely humanitarian? Did it fuel discontent among groups that did not directly benefit from the aid?

7.5 Sustainability

> Sustainability can be defined as the degree to which the desired and positive effects of an action can be expected to last beyond its end.

> In the case of disaster preparedness and rehabilitation operations, sustainability is an important consideration. Are the structures that have been developed likely to subsist? How durable are the constructions and installations that have been rehabilitated? What maintenance arrangements have been made? How will recurring and continuing costs be covered?

> The sustainability of desired and positive effects usually depends to a large degree on the commitment of beneficiaries, local organisations and local authorities to the action, from its initial phases until the withdrawal of external involvement. To what extent was the action carried by local stakeholders? Contextual considerations may also play an important role. How well did the operation fit in with local culture, traditions, skills or knowledge?

> In some cases, connectedness may replace the concept of sustainability. To what degree has the ground been prepared for humanitarian aid to give way to development aid? Can and should the existing coping and response mechanisms be maintained and developed? Have the problems underlying the crises been solved or addressed, or is a similar crisis likely to reoccur? Does the situation require a continuation of humanitarian action, perhaps of a different kind?

7.6. Integration of crosscutting and overarching issues that are of particular concern to ECHO

> A final criterion to assess ECHO-funded humanitarian action is the degree to which a number of crosscutting and overarching issues that are of particular concern to ECHO have been integrated in the action, wherever and whenever this was relevant. These issues frequently touch upon the other criteria, but still deserve a separate and explicit treatment.

> Linking Relief, Rehabilitation and Development (LRRD). The LRRD policy of the Commission addresses the need to link relief activities with longer-term development actions, in order to reduce deficiencies resulting from the different approaches and priorities. This policy includes the Commission's efforts to ensure that the activities of its different departments are properly coordinated. How does the ECHO-funded action relate to the overall objectives of the Commission in the country? Is it coherent, coordinated and complementary with activities funded or carried out by other Commission departments? These questions are usually already treated to a certain extent when determining the relevance and sustainability of the action.

- > Security of relief workers. ECHO wants the security of aid workers, both expatriate and local, to be ensured. Did the action have contingency plans for emergencies (evacuation plans, etc.)? What steps were taken to ensure the security of the staff (both expatriate and local)? What communications facilities did they have?
- > Respect for human rights. What is the security situation in the area covered by the action? Are the human rights of the civilian population being respected? How do the implementing agencies approach this situation? Does the action cover victims of human rights abuses? Does it include elements of protection or advocacy?
- > Gender. Wherever this is relevant and appropriate, ECHO wants to raise the awareness of gender inequalities in the field, if only to ensure the relevance and effectiveness of its actions. Were gender issues taken into account when the global plans and operations were being drawn up or implemented? How did this affect the effectiveness and impact of the action?
- > Donor visibility. ECHO wants the European Union to be widely recognised for the humanitarian action it is funding. What was its communication strategy in this particular case? Did the partner take steps to ensure that everyone knew that the activities were being funded by the European Union? Was the ECHO logo clearly visible on goods, trucks, warehouses, buildings, etc.? Were the local authorities and inhabitants aware of ECHO's presence and contribution?

1 Further details regarding the documents that are mentioned here can be found in Chapter 9 of Part IV of this guide.

THE COUNCIL OF THE EUROPEAN UNION,
 Having regard to the Treaty establishing the European Community, and in particular Article 130w thereof,
 Having regard to the proposal from the Commission (1),
 Acting in accordance with the procedure laid down in Article 189c of the Treaty (2),
 Whereas people in distress, victims of natural disasters, wars and outbreaks of fighting, or other comparable exceptional circumstances have a right to international humanitarian assistance where their own authorities prove unable to provide effective relief;
 Whereas civilian operations to protect the victims of fighting or of comparable exceptional circumstances are governed by international humanitarian law and should accordingly be considered part of humanitarian action;

Whereas humanitarian assistance encompasses not only relief operations to save and preserve life in emergencies or their immediate aftermath, but also action aimed at facilitating or obtaining freedom of access to victims and the free flow of such assistance ;

Whereas humanitarian assistance may be a prerequisite for development or reconstruction work and must therefore cover the full duration of a crisis and its aftermath ; whereas, in this context, it may include an element of short-term rehabilitation aimed at facilitating the arrival of relief, preventing any worsening in the impact of the crisis and starting to help those affected regain a minimum level of self-sufficiency ;

Whereas there is a particular need for preventive action to ensure preparedness for disaster risks and, in consequence, for the establishment of an appropriate early-warning and action system ;

Whereas the effectiveness and consistency of the Community, national and international prevention and action systems set up to meet the needs generated by natural or man-made disasters or comparable exceptional circumstances should therefore be ensured and strengthened ;

Whereas humanitarian aid, the sole aim of which is to prevent or relieve human suffering, is accorded to victims without discrimination on the grounds of race, ethnic group, religion, sex, age, nationality or political affiliation and must not be guided by, or subject to, political considerations ;

Whereas humanitarian aid decisions must be taken impartially and solely according to the victims' needs and interests ;

Whereas close coordination between the Member States and the Commission both at decision-making level and on the ground constitutes the foundation for effective humanitarian action by the Community ;

Whereas the Community, as part of its contribution to the effectiveness of international humanitarian aid, must endeavour to cooperate and coordinate its action with that of third countries ;

Whereas, in pursuit of that same objective, criteria should be established for cooperation with non-governmental organizations and the international agencies and organizations specializing in the field of humanitarian aid ;

Whereas the independence and impartiality of non-governmental organizations and other humanitarian institutions in the implementation of humanitarian aid must be preserved, respected and encouraged ;

Whereas cooperation in the humanitarian sphere should be encouraged between non-governmental organizations in the Member States and other developed countries and their equivalents in the third countries concerned ;

Whereas the very nature of humanitarian aid calls for the establishment of efficient, flexible, transparent and, where necessary, rapid decision-making procedures for the financing of humanitarian operations and projects ;

Whereas procedures should be established for the implementation and administration of humanitarian aid financed by the European Community from the general budget, with emergency aid under the Fourth ACP-EC Convention signed at Lomé on 15 December 1989, amended by the Agreement amending the said Convention, signed at Mauritius on 4 November 1995 remaining subject to the procedures and arrangements laid down in that Convention,

HAS ADOPTED THIS REGULATION:

CHAPTER I

Objectives and general principles of humanitarian aid

Article 1

The Community's humanitarian aid shall comprise assistance, relief and protection operations on a non-discriminatory basis to help people in third countries, particularly the most vulnerable among them, and as a priority those in developing countries, victims of natural disasters, man-made crises, such as wars and outbreaks of fighting, or exceptional situations or circumstances comparable to natural or man-made disasters. It shall do so for the time needed to meet the humanitarian requirements resulting from these different situations. Such aid shall also comprise operations to prepare for risks or prevent disasters or comparable exceptional circumstances.

Article 2

The principal objectives of the humanitarian aid operations referred to in Article 1 shall be:

- (a) to save and preserve life during emergencies and their immediate aftermath and natural disasters that have entailed major loss of life, physical, psychological or social suffering or material damage ;
- (b) to provide the necessary assistance and relief to people affected by longer-lasting crises arising, in particular, from outbreaks of fighting or wars, producing the same effects as those described in subparagraph (a), especially where their own governments prove unable to help or there is a vacuum of power ;
- (c) to help finance the transport of aid and efforts to ensure that it is accessible to those for whom it is intended, by all logistical means available, and by protecting humanitarian goods and personnel, but excluding operations with defence implications ;
- (d) to carry out short-term rehabilitation and reconstruction work, especially on infrastructure and equipment, in close association with local structures, with a view to facilitating the arrival of relief, preventing the impact of the crisis from worsening and starting to help those affected regain a minimum level of self-sufficiency, taking long-term development objectives into account where possible ;
- (e) to cope with the consequences of population movements (refugees, displaced people and returnees) caused by natural and man-made disasters and carry out schemes to assist repatriation to the country of origin and resettlement there when the conditions laid down in current international agreements are in place ;
- (f) to ensure preparedness for risks of natural disasters or comparable exceptional circumstances and use a suitable rapid early-warning and action system ;
- (g) to support civil operations to protect the victims of fighting or comparable emergencies, in accordance with current international agreements.

Article 3

Community aid referred to in Articles 1, 2 and 4 may be used to finance the purchase and delivery of any product or equipment needed for the implementation of humanitarian operations, including the construction of housing or shelter for the victims, the costs associated with the outside staff, expatriate or local, employed for those operations, the storage, international or national transport, logistics and distribution of relief and any other action aimed at facilitating or obtaining freedom of access for aid recipients. It may also be used to finance any other expenditure directly related to the implementation of humanitarian operations.

Article 4

Such Community aid referred to in Articles 1 and 2 may also be used to finance:

- preparatory and feasibility studies for humanitarian operations and the assessment of humanitarian projects and plans,
- operations to monitor humanitarian projects and plans,
- small-scale training schemes and general studies in the field of humanitarian operations, to be phased out gradually where funding is over several years,
- the cost of highlighting the Community nature of the aid,
- public awareness and information campaigns aimed at increasing understanding of humanitarian issues, especially in Europe and in third countries where the Community is funding major humanitarian operations,
- measures to strengthen the Community's coordination with the Member States, other donor countries, international humanitarian organizations and institutions, non-governmental organizations and organizations representing them,
- the technical assistance necessary for the implementation of humanitarian projects, including the exchange of technical know-how and experience by European humanitarian organizations and agencies or between such bodies and those of third countries,
- humanitarian mine-clearance operations, including campaigns to increase awareness of anti-personnel mines on the part of the local population.

Article 5

Community financing under this Regulation shall take the form of grants.

The operations covered by this Regulation shall be exempt from taxes, charges, duties and customs duties.

CHAPTER II

Procedures for the implementation of humanitarian aid

Article 6

Humanitarian aid operations financed by the Community may be implemented either at the request of international or non-governmental agencies and organizations from a Member State or a recipient third country or on the initiative of the Commission.

Article 7

1. Non-governmental organizations eligible for Community financing for the implementation of operations under this Regulation must meet the following criteria:

- (a) be non-profit-making autonomous organizations in a Member State of the Community under the laws in force in that Member State ;
- (b) have their main headquarters in a Member State of the Community or in the third countries in receipt of Community aid. This headquarters must be the effective decision-making centre for all operations financed under this Regulation. Exceptionally, the headquarters may be in a third donor country.

2. When determining a non-governmental organization's suitability for Community funding, account shall be taken of the following factors:

- (a) its administrative and financial management capacities ;
- (b) its technical and logistical capacity in relation to the planned operation ;
- (c) its experience in the field of humanitarian aid ;
- (d) the results of previous operations carried out by the organization concerned, and in particular those financed by the Community ;

- (e) its readiness to take part, if need be, in the coordination system set up for a humanitarian operation ;
- (f) its ability and readiness to work with humanitarian agencies and the basic communities in the third countries concerned ;
- (g) its impartiality in the implementation of humanitarian aid ;
- (h) where appropriate, its previous experience in the third country involved in the humanitarian operation concerned.

Article 8

The Community may also finance humanitarian operations by international agencies and organizations.

Article 9

Where necessary, the Community may also finance humanitarian operations by the Commission or the Member States' specialized agencies.

Article 10

1. In order to guarantee and enhance the effectiveness and consistency of Community and national humanitarian aid systems, the Commission may take any measure necessary to promote close coordination between its own activities and those of the Member States, both at decision-making level and on the ground. To that end, the Member States and the Commission shall operate a system for exchange of information.
2. The Commission shall ensure that humanitarian operations financed by the Community are coordinated and consistent with those of international organizations and agencies, in particular those which form part of the United Nations system.
3. The Commission shall endeavour to develop collaboration and cooperation between the Community and third-country donors in the field of humanitarian aid.

Article 11

1. The Commission shall lay down the conditions for allocating, mobilizing and implementing aid under this Regulation.
2. Aid shall not be implemented unless the recipient complies with these conditions.

Article 12

All financing contracts concluded under this Regulation shall provide in particular that the Commission and the Court of Auditors may conduct checks on the spot and at the headquarters of humanitarian partners according to the usual procedures established by the Commission under the rules in force, and in particular those of the Financial Regulation applicable to the general budget of the European Communities.

CHAPTER III

Procedures for the implementation of humanitarian operations

Article 13

The Commission shall decide on emergency action for an amount not in excess of ECU 10 million.

The following operations shall be deemed to necessitate emergency action:

- operations to meet immediate and unforeseeable humanitarian requirements generated by sudden natural or man-made disasters, such as floods, earthquakes and outbreaks of fighting or comparable situations,

- operations limited to the duration of the unforeseeable emergency response : the corresponding funds shall cover the response to the humanitarian needs referred to in the first indent for a period of not more than six months laid down in the decision on financing.

Where operations fulfil these conditions and are in excess of ECU 2 million:

- the Commission shall adopt its decision,
- it shall inform the Member States in writing within forty-eight hours,
- it shall account for its decision at the Committee's next meeting, in particular giving the reasons for its use of the emergency procedure.

Decisions to continue operations adopted by the emergency procedure shall be taken by the Commission, acting in accordance with the procedure laid down in Article 17 (3) and within the limits set in the second indent of Article 15 (2).

Article 14

The Commission shall appraise, decide upon and administer, monitor and assess operations under this Regulation according to the budgetary and other procedures in force, and in particular those laid down in the Financial Regulation applicable to the general budget of the European Communities.

Article 15

1. Acting in accordance with the procedure laid down in Article 17 (2), the Commission shall:

- decide on Community financing for the humanitarian-aid protection operations referred to in Article 2 (c),

- adopt implementing Regulations for this Regulation,
- decide to take direct Commission action or finance action by Member States' specialized agencies.

2. Acting in accordance with the procedure laid down in Article 17 (3), the Commission shall:

- approve global plans intended to provide a coherent framework for action in a given country or region where the scale and complexity of the humanitarian crisis is such that it seems likely to continue, and the budgets for those plans. In this context, the Commission and the Member States shall examine the priorities to be established in the implementation of these global plans,

- decide on projects in excess of ECU 2 million, without prejudice to Article 13.

Article 16

1. Once a year the Committee referred to in Article 17 shall discuss general guidelines presented by a representative of the Commission for humanitarian operations to be undertaken in the year ahead and examine the whole question of the coordination of Community and national humanitarian aid and any general or specific issues concerning Community aid in that field.

2. The Commission shall also submit to the Committee referred to in Article 17 information on changes in the instruments for administering humanitarian aid, including the framework partnership agreement.

3. The Committee referred to in Article 17 shall also be notified of the Commission's intentions regarding the assessment of humanitarian operations, and, possibly, its timetable of work.

Article 17

1. The Commission shall be assisted by a Committee composed of the representatives of the Member States and chaired by the representative of the Commission.

2. Where the procedure laid down in this paragraph is to be followed the representative of the Commission shall submit to the Committee a draft of the measures to be taken. The Committee shall deliver its opinion on the draft within a time limit which the Chairman may lay down according to the urgency of the matter. The opinion shall be delivered by the majority laid down in Article 148 (2) of the Treaty in the case of decisions which the Council is required to adopt on a proposal from the Commission. The votes of the representatives of the Member States within the Committee shall be weighted in the manner set out in that Article. The Chairman shall not vote.

The Commission shall adopt the measures envisaged if they are in accordance with the opinion of the Committee.

If the measures envisaged are not in accordance with the opinion of the Committee, or if no opinion is delivered, the Commission shall, without delay, submit to the Council a proposal relating to the measures to be taken. The Council shall act by a qualified majority.

If, on the expiry of a period of one month from the date of referral to the Council, the Council has not acted, the proposed measures shall be adopted by the Commission.

3. Where the procedure laid down in this paragraph is to be followed, the representative of the Commission shall submit to the Committee a draft of the measures to be taken. The Committee shall deliver its opinion on the draft within a time limit which the Chairman may lay down according to the urgency of the matter. The opinion shall be delivered by the majority laid down in Article 148 (2) of the Treaty in the case of decisions which the Council is required to adopt on a proposal from the Commission. The votes of the representatives of the Member States within the Committee shall be weighted in the manner set out in that Article. The Chairman shall not vote.

The Commission shall adopt measures which apply immediately. However, if these measures are not in accordance with the opinion of the Committee, they shall be communicated by the Commission to the Council forthwith. In that event the Commission may defer application of the measures which it has decided for a period of one month from the date of such communication.

The Council, acting by a qualified majority, may take a different decision within the time limit referred to in the previous paragraph.

Article 18

1. The Commission shall regularly assess humanitarian aid operations financed by the Community in order to establish whether they have achieved their objectives and to produce guidelines for improving the effectiveness of subsequent operations. The Commission shall submit to the Committee a summary, which shall also indicate the status of the experts employed, of the assessment exercises carried out that it might, if necessary, examine. The assessment reports shall be available to the Member States on request.

2. At the Member States' request, and with their participation, the Commission may also assess the results of the Community's humanitarian operations and plans.

Article 19

At the close of each financial year, the Commission shall submit an annual report to the European Parliament and to the Council with a summary of the operations financed in the course of that year.

The summary shall contain information concerning the agencies with which humanitarian operations have been implemented.

The report shall also include a review of any outside assessment exercises which may have been conducted on specific operations.

The Commission shall notify the Member States, within no more than one month of its decision and without prejudice to Article 13 of this Regulation, of the operations approved, indicating the amount granted, the nature of the operation, the people who have received aid and the partners involved.

Article 20

Three years after entry into force of this Regulation, the Commission shall submit an overall assessment of the operations financed by the Community under this Regulation to the European Parliament and to the Council, together with suggestions for the future of the Regulation and, as necessary, proposals for amendments to it.

Article 21

This Regulation shall enter into force on the third day following its publication in the Official Journal of the European Communities.

This Regulation shall be binding in its entirety and directly applicable in all Member States.
Done at Luxembourg, 20 June 1996.

For the Council The President P. BERSANI

Published in Official Journal No L 163 of 2.7.1996, p. 1-6.

Communication from the Commission to the Council and the European Parliament on the assessment and future of Community humanitarian activities, COM (1999)468 final, 26.10.1999

Evaluation. Concrete steps towards best practice across the Commission, SEC 96/659, 8.5.1996

Good practice guidelines for the management of the evaluation function. SEC (99) 62, 14.1.1999 and SEC (2000)245/4, 23.2.2000

Focus on results strengthening evaluation of Commission activities. SEC (2000)1051/3, 27.7.2000

European Commission XIX/02, Evaluating EU expenditure programmes : a guide. Ex post and intermediate evaluation (Brussels 1997)

Commission Européenne/AIDCO, Guide des procédures et structures d'évaluation actuellement en vigueur dans les programmes de coopération externes de la Commission, (Bruxelles 2001)

Communication from the Commission to the Council and the European Parliament on linking relief, rehabilitation and development (LRRD), COM (96) 153 final/2, 13.11.1996

Communication from the Commission to the Council and the European Parliament. Linking Relief, Rehabilitation and Development – An assessment, COM (2001) 153 final

Commission working document on security of relief workers and humanitarian space, SEC (98) 797 final, 14.05.1998

Communication from the Commission to the Council and the European Parliament. The European Union's role in promoting human rights and democratisation in third countries. COM (2001)252 final, 8.05.2001

Communication from the Commission to the Council and the European Parliament on integrating gender issues in development cooperation, COM (95) 423 final, 18.9.1995

Council Regulation (EC) No 2836/98 of 22 December 1998 on integrating of gender issues in development cooperation, OJ L 354, 30.12.1998

OECD/DAC Working party on aid evaluation, Guidance for Evaluating Humanitarian Assistance in Complex Emergencies (Paris 1999)

Achievements

The goods and services generated by an action. Also known as output.

Action

A general term to describe the measures (in the form of global plans or operations) that were taken in the face of a specific problem.

Coherence

A connection in terms of usefulness between various resources and actions, focusing notably on the division of labour and on exploiting comparative advantages.

Consequences

The effects of an action on the humanitarian situation, seen within a wider social and historical context.

Cost-effectiveness analysis

A calculation of the relationship between the cost of an action and its effects, to make it possible to compare different ways of attaining the same objective.

Effectiveness

The degree to which the (specific) objectives of the action are or have been fulfilled.

Efficiency

A measure of how well the resources are used to produce achievements and results.

Emergency

A situation endangering the life of people who have no means of providing for their own essential needs.

Evaluation

An independent and objective survey of the relevance, effectiveness, efficiency, impact and sustainability of a humanitarian action, in order to learn lessons from experience.

Evaluation report

Document in which the evaluator responds to all the questions contained in the terms of reference.

Follow-up

The use of the information stemming from the evaluation in subsequent decision-making.

Humanitarian aid

Action to help people who are victims of a natural or man-made disasters meet their basic needs, such as adequate health care, water, sanitation, nutrition, food and shelter. (see also Article 1 of Regulation 1257/96)

Impact

A general term to describe the effects that can be attributed to an action. The impact can be positive or negative, and expected or unexpected. A distinction should be made between operational impact (achievements or output), initial impact (results) and longer-term impact (consequences).

Indicators

Characteristics or attributes of an action that can be used to monitor and evaluate its development. There are qualitative and quantitative indicators.

Needs

The socio-economic problems of a target population.

Objectives

The expected effects of an action. A distinction should be made between general objectives – the expected effects of an action in terms of its consequences, specific objectives – the expected effects of an action in terms of its results, and operational objectives – the expected effects of an action in terms of its achievements. The general objectives are also known as the goal. The specific objectives are also known as the purpose.

Relevance

A measure of the validity of the objectives of an action, in particular in the light of identified problems and needs.

Resources

Human, material and financial means put into implementing an action. Also known as input.

Results

The immediate effects of an action on the beneficiaries.

Sustainability

The degree to which the desired and positive effects of an action can be expected to last beyond its end.

Target population

The expected beneficiaries (individuals, groups or organisations) of an action.

Terms of reference

A document setting out the evaluator's tasks, the issues to be tackled and the timetable to apply. The terms of reference allow those commissioning the evaluation to express their needs and the evaluator to have a clear idea of what is expected of him.

European Commission
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1 OJ No C 180 of 14.7.1995, p.6.

2 Opinion of the European Parliament of 30 November 1995 (OJ No C 339 of 18.2.1995, p.60), Council common position of 29 January 1996 (OJ No C 87 of 25.3.1996, p.46) and Decision of the European Parliament of 21 May 1996 (OJ No C 166 of 10.6.1996).

About ECHO

HUMANITARIAN ACTION WORLDWILDE

ECHO is the European Union's Humanitarian Aid Office, a service of the European Commission under the direct responsibility of Commissioner Poul Nielson.

Since 1992, Echo has funded relief to millions of victims of both natural disasters and man-made crises outside the EU. Aid is channalled impartially, straight to victims, regardless of their race, religion and political beliefs. Echo works with more than 200 operational partners, mainly organisation which have signed a framework partnership agreement with the commission. Its partners include specialist United Nations agencies, the Red Cross and non-governemental organisations (NGOs).

ECHO is one of the biggest sources of humanitarian aid in the world. In 2001, it provided 544 million in funding (not including aid that the EU's 15 members States gave separately). ECHO support went to projects in more than 60 countries. The funds are spent in goods and services such as food, clothing, shelter, medical provisions, water supplies, sanitation, emergency repairs and mine-clearing. ECHO also funds

disaster prevention, preparedness and mitigation projects in regions prone to natural catastrophes.

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ACRONYMS

ECHO Humanitarian Aid Office
EU European Union
ICRC International Committee of the red Cross
IDP Internally displaced person
NGO Non-governemental organisation
UNHCR United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees
UNICEF United Nations Children's Fund
WFP World Food Programme

“ Un homme qui a commis une erreur
et ne la corrige pas
commet une autre erreur. ”
Confucius

“ The important thing is to
not stop questioning. ”
A. Einstein