

The lava from the eruption of the Nyiragongo volcano advancing towards Goma (Michel Gaboullet)



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ECHO Strategy 2002: Core priorities for humanitarian aid

An increasing number of both man-made conflicts and natural disasters around the globe means humanitarian needs are still considerable. ECHO will respond to that need through its €440 million budget 2002. And whilst the Office's mandate will not change, its strategy will.

The end of the Cold War has sadly not brought the new era of peace many had hoped. Instead, wars and violence have spread across the planet killing an estimated 2.2 million people since 1991⁽¹⁾. Almost 2 billion people have been affected by a growing number of natural disasters over the past decade⁽²⁾ and some 22 million people are currently refugees or displaced within their own country. Faced with such a situation, ECHO's mandate to fund the co-ordinated delivery of Community aid to victims of humanitarian crises is as pertinent as ever. This year it will finance humanitarian operations in more than 60 countries and territories for a total sum of around €440 million with a possible recourse to the reserve.

Guiding principles for humanitarian intervention

ECHO will intervene in areas of the greatest humanitarian need, focus on "forgotten crises" and allocate more balanced aid per beneficiary. So although Serbia and FYROM will still receive considerable support (€42 m) ECHO will continue to shift the emphasis away from Eastern Europe towards crises in both Africa (Great Lakes Region €82m, Horn of Africa and West Africa €34 m) and Asia (Afghanistan,

(1) The Heidelberg Institute for International Conflict Research continued on page 2
(2) Centre for Research of Epidemiological Disasters (CREDE)

Emergency aid for victims of Nyiragongo volcano eruption in Goma

The long-suffering people of eastern Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC) were thrown into further humanitarian crisis on 17 January 2002 when mount Nyiragongo erupted, devastating part of the town of Goma and forcing thousands to flee. The European Commission, acting through ECHO, reacted rapidly providing €5 million in aid to help the victims.

As the Nyiragongo volcano - north of Goma in the eastern part of the DRC - erupted, lava flows first ignited shanty dwellings in the northern outskirts of the town before the lava stream cut the city itself in two. Much of the centre of Goma town and essential infrastructure was destroyed and though casualties were thankfully few, the majority of an estimated 350,000 population was

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Lava flow in the street of Goma

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ECHO - Humanitarian Aid Office

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Pakistan and Iran, €25 m) where the most urgent humanitarian needs have been identified.

Nowhere is the notion of great humanitarian need and "forgotten crisis" more clearly felt than in Africa which continues to suffer from major and protracted disasters though it rarely makes headline news. A large crisis belt spanning from Sudan, DR Congo and the Great Lakes through to Angola has developed over recent years and practically every state in the region has been or is still affected either through direct military engagement or indirectly as a host country for refugees. In some regions, the additional burden of natural disasters and ongoing drought have all but destroyed victims' coping mechanisms.

Showing solidarity with the most vulnerable

ECHO has earmarked €17 million in the Global Plan for Coastal West Africa (Sierra Leone, Guinea, Liberia). Focusing largely on the needs of refugees and internally displaced people, the funding will continue relief efforts in the form of shelter materials, basic non-food items, primary health care and measures to tackle malnutrition.

forced to flee the danger zone, many crossing the border into Rwanda.

With large numbers of people on the move, the priority was to provide quick and flexible emergency aid. ECHO responded fast: within 24 hours a four-strong team of experts was on the ground to evaluate the situation along with humanitarian agencies and the UN Disaster Assessment Team flown in by ECHO Flight, the Commission's humanitarian air service based in Nairobi.

ECHO provided a €5 million aid package covering the emergency needs of 100,000 people regarding water and sanitation, especially the rehabilitation of Goma's municipal water system, shelter and essential relief items, healthcare and emergency road clearance. The aid is being channelled through ECHO's UN, International Red Cross and NGO partners. The population has returned to Goma and an estimated 15,000 families are now homeless. ECHO is contributing to resettlement efforts and liaising with other Commission services with regard to medium-term rehabilitation.

The €5 m provided for the victims of the volcano is in addition to a substantial humanitarian aid package of €32 m already earmarked for DRC under the 2002 Global Plan. In 2001, ECHO funded programmes worth €35 m in the country.

The €17 million humanitarian aid package for Sudan aims to prevent a further deterioration in the conditions of the most vulnerable sections of the population with a special focus on the 13% of the population who are internally displaced. Priority areas for projects are health/nutrition (more than 660,000 will benefit), water/sanitation, food security and emergency preparedness.

But perhaps the most troubling of African countries is currently the Democratic Republic of Congo. Two successive civil wars have caused almost unimaginable suffering leaving more than 3 million displaced and a third of the population suffering from severe malnutrition. ECHO has long shown solidarity with DRC and has increased its aid in line with the worsening situation over the last five years. The €32 m aid package for 2002 will focus largely on health and nutrition/food security. ECHO will continue to concentrate on the sometimes-difficult delivery of relief to the least accessible areas of the country where there are enormous unmet needs. Following the eruption of the Nyiragongo volcano -north of Goma - on 17 January 2002, ECHO provided an additional €5 m emergency aid package to DRC to help the homeless victims forced to flee

the crisis zone. Yet despite the huge scale of humanitarian crises, for the first time in years there is a glimmer of hope. The peace process is underway in DRC and there are relatively stable areas in both Congo and Sierra Leone where ECHO may envisage handing over to other more long-term EU programmes. Wherever possible, it looks to implement strategies linking relief, rehabilitation and development (LRRD) helping populations return to self-sufficiency. ECHO's strategy for 2002 reinforces the Commission's commitment to LRRD in order to maximise the effectiveness of its international aid efforts.

The commitment of the European Commission to helping those most in need remains as strong as ever. This year, ECHO will focus on consolidating the approach undertaken in 2001, including, in particular, the broad dialogue with its partners and other humanitarian stakeholders. In addition to this, a number of specific reforms prepared as a follow-up to the evaluation of ECHO's work in 1999, will have an impact on future humanitarian operations. In this respect, the adoption of the new primary emergency decisions will allow ECHO to achieve even better results in 2002.



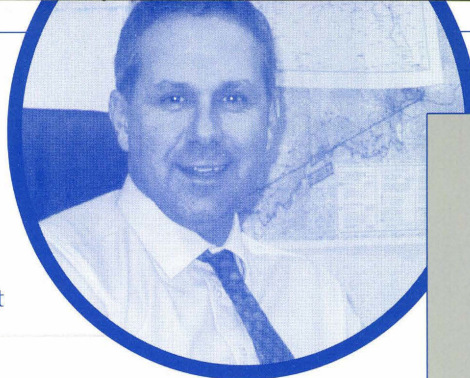
Ignacio Burrull

Food aid operations supported by ECHO in south Sudan



Interview

Aldo Biondi has been in charge of the ECHO Office in Skopje since March 2000. An agronomist, he has spent over 16 years helping people in need all over the world.



Working in the Field: Showing Solidarity to People in Need

Following the ceasefire agreement in August 2001, are there still major humanitarian needs to be addressed in the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia (FYROM)?

The humanitarian situation in the country slowly started to improve after the signature of the Framework Agreement but important needs remain due to the caseload of approximately 20,000 internally displaced people (IDPs) who still require assistance.

It is taking longer than expected to develop a stable humanitarian situation as it depends mainly on the implementation of the Framework Agreement, which has been delayed due to political instability. At the current time, the main humanitarian needs to be addressed include:

- assisting the remaining caseload of 20,000 internally displaced persons, of which 3,800 are still housed in collective centres;
- the emergency rehabilitation of schools, health facilities and houses damaged by the conflict;
- the recovery of public services such as health, education and transport;
- providing support to the resident population in the conflict-affected area, to facilitate the process of returning and economic recovery.

ECHO has initiated a phasing-down strategy in FYROM since mid-2000. What is being done to facilitate the hand-over to more development-oriented agencies?

Since June 2000, ECHO has been implementing its phasing-down strategy aimed at reducing dependency on humanitarian aid, encouraging self-reliance activities, stressing the link between relief rehabilitation and development (LRRD) and co-ordinating strategies with other donors and Commission services.

During this period, ECHO has transformed its emergency operation into a care and maintenance one, assisting the remaining refugees and their host families with self-reliance projects, and at the same time putting a strong emphasis on preparing the ground for durable solutions. When defining its objectives in the country, ECHO has taken into account the

virtual absence of aid instruments that are able to tackle short-term social problems. ECHO has pursued the linkage, setting up clear priority areas for

intervention and focusing on sectors where LRRD has the best chance of working.

Further works in improving water supply networks countrywide have been undertaken and a comprehensive database will soon be produced to facilitate the handing-over to local counterparts and international development-oriented agencies. There has also been a substantial contribution to tuberculosis prevention in the framework of the national TB programme.

In your opinion what have been ECHO's main achievements in FYROM over the past twelve months?

Since the beginning of the FYROM crisis in spring 2001, ECHO has responded efficiently to the needs as they have arisen. Being prepared for a rapid response, ECHO re-oriented some of its funds to provide emergency assistance to the victims of the conflict in the

"ECHO has pursued the linkage, setting up clear priority areas for intervention and focusing on sectors where LRRD has the best chance of working"

country. In addition, two emergency financial decisions of €1 m and €0.5 m were taken in 2001, to further assist internally displaced persons (IDPs) and other vulnerable population groups. Through its partners, ECHO has distributed food assistance to all IDPs and hygiene parcels to all host families throughout the country. IDPs have also been provided with animal feed, which has helped them to avoid slaughtering their livestock. In a bid to help the reconciliation and return process, ECHO has funded emergency rehabilitation of schools and health facilities in conflict-affected villages, enabling resumption of these important community services.

Over the past 12 months, in spite of last year's crisis, ECHO has succeeded in implementing the phasing-down plan initiated in June 2000. It has also offered a rapid and efficient response in helping the population affected by the 2001 crisis. Globally, the humanitarian assistance provided by ECHO reflects the evolution of the situation from a serious crisis in 1999 to a post-emergency phase.

Afghanistan: Moving away from humanitarian catastrophe

Freed from the Taliban regime, the blighted Afghan people are striving to create a brighter future. Humanitarian aid is as vital as ever in helping them rebuild their impoverished nation.



Years of war, drought, neglect and fundamentalist rule have left Afghanistan in tatters with only a subsistence economy, little infrastructure and many still dependent on food aid. Yet fears of major famine at the height of the crisis were averted as more than 200,000 tons of food aid reached Afghanistan in the last 4 months of 2001. Another positive note is that despite the enduring refugee and IDP population, the UNHCR reports a dramatic recent drop in the numbers seeking asylum.

The new situation should also mean easier access to those who so desperately need help and allow humanitarian aid groups to have a longer-term presence in the country.

In line with the changing situation, ECHO channelled €8.5 million through the UN's FAO and WFP, the IOM and seven NGOs in early December. It included help for those returning home (shelter materials, seeds and tools); food aid for resident populations in drought-stricken areas; vital de-mining and further support for the many IDPs thought to be waiting for spring before returning home.

The international community have also responded, pledging considerable sums of aid in Tokyo to help the interim government put Afghanistan on the road to recovery. Since such substantial aid flows need good management systems, ECHO's latest humanitarian aid package of €2.28 million will help to maximise the impact and effectiveness of aid operations.

Funding will focus on data collection and mapping via support for the UN's PROMIS mapping centre and the newly-created Humanitarian Information Centre (HIC). Monitoring will be boosted through the new UN/NGO Strategic Monitoring Unit (SMU) set up by the Afghan Support Group. As a reflection of the critical role NGOs play as the main source of humanitarian and development support in Afghanistan, the Kabul-based NGO co-ordination body ACBAR will also receive funding.

A fourth component will fund technical assistance for running the ECHO office in Islamabad and the newly reopened ECHO office in Kabul.

ECHO's global reach



AFRICA

Global Plans - €91.5 million

Early in 2002, the Commission adopted five Global Plans to provide aid for victims

of humanitarian crises in various parts of Africa:

👤 **Congo (DRC):** €32 million - Health and nutrition/food security operations.

👤 **Sudan:** €17 million - Assistance to vulnerable sections of the population, particularly Internally Displaced People (IDPs).

👤 **Coastal West Africa (Sierra Leone, Guinea and Liberia):** €17 million - Aid for victims of the crisis, focusing on health care, relief items and resettlement of displaced and returnees.

👤 **Angola:** €8 million - Support to victims of the war.

👤 **Burundi:** €17.5 million Humanitarian assistance to IDPs and other vulnerable groups affected by civil war.

👤 **FYROM and Kosovo - €5.5 million** The European Commission has allocated €5.5 million to provide basic assistance to refugees, IDPs and other vulnerable groups in the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia (FYROM) as well as to vulnerable minorities in Kosovo (Serbs and Romas in particular) considered to be still at risk.

OTHER RECENT DECISIONS (of €1.5 million or more)

👤 **Afghanistan:** €2.28 million - Data collection and mapping, monitoring and co-ordination in order to maximise the impact and effectiveness of aid operations in the country.

👤 **Congo (DRC):** €5 million - Emergency aid for victims of the eruption of Nyiragongo volcano in the Goma region.

👤 **DIPECHO - Andean Community:** €1.8 million - Disaster prevention and preparedness activities.

👤 **Kenya:** €1.5 million - Aid for populations affected by drought.

👤 **Mexico:** €1.8 million - Assistance to IDPs and returnees in the province of Chiapas.

👤 **North Korea:** €1.89 million Essential health actions.

👤 **Palestinian Territories:** €2.5 million Aid to victims of the fighting in the West Bank and the Gaza Strip.

👤 **Russian Federation (Northern Caucasus):** €7.5 million - Aid to victims of the Chechnya conflict.

Gujarat earthquake, one year later

On 26 January 2001, a devastating earthquake hit the State of Gujarat in India, claiming approximately 20,000 lives. Below are the main results of ECHO's swift intervention.

On 30 January 2001, the Commission adopted a first emergency decision of €3,000,000 to support six partners active in the area: Save the Children, Oxfam, DanChurchAid, Concern, Care and the German Red Cross. Relief mainly concerned the rapid distribution of essential relief items, temporary shelter, safe drinking water and medical aid. Emphasis was immediately put on rural and isolated villages. About 425,000 people benefited from this distribution.

Given the scale of the disaster and the critical need for improved co-ordination of actors in the area, ECHO dispatched a team to Gujarat to assess the situation and define how to target the priority needs most effectively by avoiding duplication.

A second decision for €10,000,000 was adopted on 2 March 2001. To respond to the huge and urgent need for durable temporary shelters, ECHO focused, through nine partners,

on the provision of around 45,000 family tents of a clearly defined standard. Representing a third of estimated requirements, the shelter ensured protection from the forthcoming dry season followed by monsoon, responded to the needs for privacy and safety and represented a first step towards recovery for thousands of families struggling to rebuild their houses. The tents are still being used as living quarters. One such project implemented by UNDP and visited recently by Commissioner Poul Nielson, targeted an estimated 17,000 people in the Kutch district. This project has ensured the link with the rehabilitation operations funded by other Commission services. ECHO's clear focus also helped other donors address different intervention sectors.

ECHO allocated €500,000 out of the first decision and €2,102,500 from the second to support the Red Cross Emergency Field Hospital in Bhuj, operational four days after the earthquake. The hospital was the main referral centre in the area, serving a population of more than 800,000 people. Nearly 20,500 patients have been treated, 481 operations have been performed, and 3,000 laboratory tests carried out. Extremely high standards of service have been confirmed.

The hospital, managed by the Finnish and German Red Cross organisations was almost entirely supported by ECHO and was transferred to the Gujarat Ministry of Health in April 2001.



Nicholas Bridger

Disseminating more information about the activities of ECHO

The interest aroused by the main publications of the Humanitarian Aid Office: the annual report and the quarterly newsletter "ECHO News" has encouraged ECHO to broaden its field of action. Since 2001, this has resulted in the publication of theme-based brochures and information leaflets intended for the general public and for humanitarian aid players. Among recent publications, we should mention a general presentation of the activities of the Office around the world ("ECHO at a glance"), and, in the context of EU Presidencies, two new information brochures on the humanitarian operations conducted in collaboration with ECHO's Belgian and Spanish partners.

International Aid & Trade Conference and Exhibition 2002

ECHO was present at the 2002 International Aid & Trade Conference and Exhibition held in Geneva on 30-31 January. The Director of ECHO, Mrs. C. Adinolfi, addressed the conference focusing her presentation on how the European Commission approaches the subject of Linking Relief, Rehabilitation and Development (LRRD). She also stressed the need to increase co-operation between other international institutions active in this field. More information on European Union humanitarian assistance was then given at the ECHO stand during the two-day exhibition. More than 300 visitors expressed an interest in knowing more about ECHO's activities.