

*helping in crises*



**12 Years**  
of Humanitarian  
Aid for  
**Chechnya**

EUROPEAN COMMISSION



Humanitarian Aid

**12 Years**  
*of Humanitarian*  
*Aid for*  
**Chechnya**

# *From Forgotten Crisis to Reconstruction*

After 12 years of continuous humanitarian support to the victims of the conflict in Chechnya, the European Commission Humanitarian Aid and Civil Protection Directorate-General has now launched its last funding decision. On top of the €237 million provided so far, ECHO is providing an additional €2 million to help the most vulnerable families in Chechnya and neighbouring regions to resettle in safety.

Humanitarian support to the victims of the two conflicts in Chechnya has been undoubtedly one of our most difficult operations due to the number of people affected, the extent of the destruction and particularly because it has been an extremely challenging area to work in from a security point of view; the lives of our partners' staff were constantly under threat.

Fortunately, we have moved on from that situation. While some tensions remain in the region, cooperation and development tools are now at the disposal of local and national authorities in order to continue rebuilding the Chechen Republic of the Russian Federation.



## **Kristalina Georgieva**

EU Commissioner for International Cooperation, Humanitarian Aid and Crisis Response

# Chechnya: Returning Home at Last



An estimated 30,000 to 40,000 Chechen civilians died, hundred of thousands were wounded, over 270,000 people fled to the neighbouring regions of Ingushetia, Dagestan and Stavropol Krai; and around 100,000 Chechens fled to the European Union. This is the magnitude of the humanitarian crisis triggered by the second Chechen conflict opposing Chechen insurgents and the Russian forces between 1999 and 2004. Add to this the total destruction of the Chechen socio-economic infrastructure and you have the full picture of the destruction, desolation and humanitarian needs of the Chechen population.

By 2005 the overall situation began to stabilise, mainly as a consequence of the large scale reconstruction plan funded from the Russian federal budget combined with the appointment of a new president. This strategy resulted in political stabilization and a massive return of displaced people. It failed however to protect many basic rights of Chechen citizens.





Currently there are about 8,000 Chechens still displaced in Ingushetia, over 3,500 in Dagestan and about 1,500 in Azerbaijan. About half of these people do not want to return to Chechnya and the governments of Ingushetia and Dagestan are making efforts to integrate them. In Chechnya itself (a part of the Russian Federation), an estimated 30,000 people are still displaced with no real option to return to the homes and jobs that they lost in 1999 and 2000.



# Meeting Humanitarian Needs in a Dangerous Environment

## *The EU's Humanitarian Response*

Between 1999 and 2007 international humanitarian aid became a lifeline for hundreds of thousands of Chechens inside and outside the autonomous Republic. Since 1999, the European Commission has provided almost €240 million for food, clothing, shelter, medical care, water and sanitation and support to legal protection.



According to data from the UN Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA), the EU provided over 40% of the annual budget required by international humanitarian agencies to meet the basic needs of the Chechen population between 2001 and 2006. The European Commission's share of total humanitarian aid funding increased even further after 2006, when the Chechen crisis started to fade from the media spotlight. Thereafter, the European Commission included the North Caucasus in its classification of 'Forgotten Crises', focusing support on the basic needs of the most vulnerable groups left out of the government reconstruction plans.



The funds are administered by the European Commission Humanitarian Aid and Civil Protection Directorate-General (ECHO).

The political and economic situation in Chechnya is now such that humanitarian aid no longer has the right tools to meet the needs of the majority of the population. ECHO therefore started to phase out its humanitarian assistance in 2008, waiting for other funding instruments and tools to take effect.

There were three main phases in the humanitarian response, adapting it to the evolving situation and changing needs on the ground:

- 1999-2001**      Delivery of emergency relief aid during the conflict and the peak of the displacement for which ECHO provided about €64 million.
- 2002-2004**      Following two years of massive displacement and zero progress in reconstruction in Chechnya, basic humanitarian needs re-emerged. The approach shifted from helping the displaced as passive victims, to making them active participants in the recovery process. ECHO provided about €83 million.
- Since 2005**      With improved security conditions, political stabilization and the launch of ambitious reconstruction plans, humanitarian assistance has taken a longer-term approach with focus on rehabilitation and return of the displaced. ECHO has provided about €92 million.

# Major Challenges: Access and Security

The United Nations Development Programme estimated that 800,000 of Chechnya's 1.1 million people were displaced during the conflict. In addition to the massive humanitarian needs, the main challenge faced by aid organisations was the lack of security and access to victims.

The climate of impunity created by the disregard of the rule of law, the "weapons culture" and the fragmentation of the conflict contributed to a negative atmosphere towards humanitarian actors.



Yet, the reduction of humanitarian space in Chechnya was and is not only a matter of security, but also of strict controls imposed by authorities at all levels, thus preventing aid workers from operating with the independence and neutrality demanded as a matter of principle. Humanitarian actors nevertheless abided by the principles in Chechnya, thereby limiting their areas of intervention.

Although the situation improved significantly in 2005, the lack of security and thus access created serious obstacles for field assessments, comprehensive monitoring of operations and evaluation of results. It also had a negative impact on inter-agency co-ordination, information sharing and probably reduced considerably the number of agencies working there, therefore diminishing the resources and expertise available.

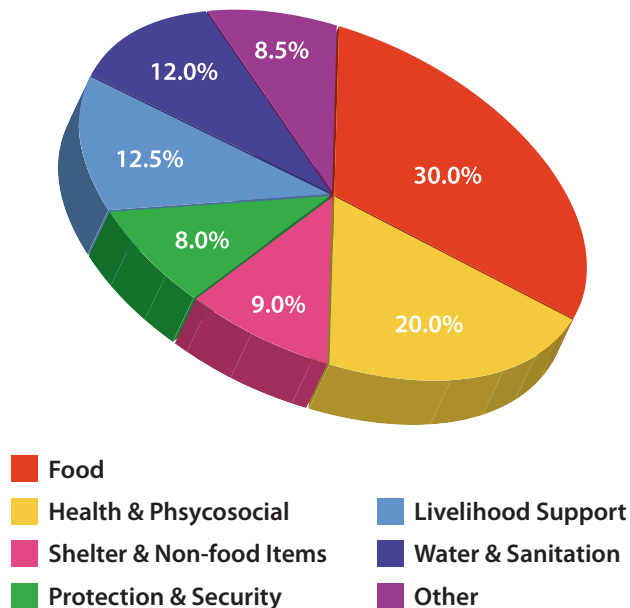


# Helping to meet daily challenges

European Commission humanitarian aid initially helped to meet the most basic needs of the refugees: food, water and sanitation, shelter and basic medical care. Progressively with people returning to Chechnya, livelihood, psychosocial support and legal protection became more important.

Funds were made available to partner organisations such as members of the Red Cross and Red Crescent movement, specialised UN agencies and international non-governmental organisations.

***European Commission Humanitarian Aid by Sector, 1999 – 2009***



# Food Assistance

Making sure that people affected by the conflict received regularly a minimum of food was one of the main concerns for ECHO. In 2000, ECHO spent about 42% of its budget on food aid reaching some 360,000 people through general food distributions. An additional 150,000, mainly children, pregnant or breastfeeding women, disabled and elderly people were included in supplementary food distributions to meet their special nutritional needs.

Surveys carried out by aid organisations over the years documented that about 80% of surveyed households in Chechnya and Ingushetia fell under the poverty level set in the Russian Federation at US\$2.25 per day. With an official unemployment level of 85%, food aid remained essential until the overall situation improved. From 2005 onwards, the number of households receiving food aid could be reduced. In many cases food aid was replaced by direct cash transfers that allowed people more autonomy and promoted the local economy.

In parallel, between 2001 and 2008, ECHO supported the distribution of one hot meal per day in the most affected schools in Chechnya, to ensure that at a particularly vulnerable age children received a basic nutritional intake and were allowed to join school, thus offering them a 'normal' life. The project reached up to 170,000 children until gradually authorities and parents were able to provide sufficient food for them.



# Water, Sanitation and Hygiene



The war completely destroyed the water distribution system in Chechnya. Sewage and garbage removal systems were no longer operational and medical waste could no longer be safely disposed of.

At the same time, Ingushetia's water system could not meet the needs of an additional 185,000 refugees from Chechnya, most of them living in improvised settlements and camps.

For the first four years, ECHO therefore supported water trucking, garbage and sewage removal in Chechnya (mainly Grozny) and in Ingushetia's settlements. Where possible, existing facilities were rehabilitated and maintained. The distribution of hygiene kits was another key component of this strategy.

By 2005 these activities could gradually be taken over by municipal services, particularly as people were returning from Ingushetia to Chechnya and settlements were dismantled. ECHO progressively focused its funding on connecting social or community institutions such as schools and hospitals to the functioning water network. Water trucking and garbage removal activities were phased out by 2007.

# Shelter

With over 112,000 rural houses and 50,000 urban apartments destroyed in Chechnya's twelve largest cities (including Grozny), finding homes for the hundreds of thousands of Chechens displaced in the autonomous republics of Chechnya, Ingushetia and Dagestan was one of the most pressing problems right after the start of the war. Initially, two thirds of the displaced were accommodated with host families in Ingushetia, 15% had found refuge in administrative or communal buildings, abandoned factories and rail wagons. Only about 10% of the displaced population settled in camps established by the authorities.

Resources of host families were quickly overstretched. Many of the accommodations found in communal and other buildings were of very poor condition and local authorities could only offer the bare minimum. Although families were entitled to financial compensation for repairing or rebuilding houses, heavy bureaucracy made many families to receive only part or none of the 350,000 roubles due per house (about €9,000 at the time).

ECHO's response was therefore two-fold: temporary shelters were erected during the phase of displacement and more permanent housing was funded for those who wanted to resettle. The positive psychological impact of a new 'home' was enormous on the beneficiary families.





# Psychosocial Support



*'Bella' camp, Sleptsovsky region, Ingushetia*

"My sister and I are happy that our family was able to find a shelter where we feel safe now. We don't need to hide from bombings anymore. Someone told us that we received this help from the Danish Council..." - account collected in 2000.

Since 1992 the daily life of the civilian population in the Chechen Republic of the Russian Federation had been affected by a high degree of violence and suffering: bombings, armed clashes, night raids in houses, displacement, arbitrary arrests and detentions, disappearances, rapes and torture.

According to a WHO survey in 2002, over 85% of the surveyed population in Chechnya displayed signs of psychological disorders; 31% were diagnosed as having post-traumatic stress disorder.

ECHO support went mainly to psychosocial programmes for children. Children, in particular, had been exposed to a continual period of traumatic or emotionally wounding events, while also being deprived, to a large extent, of timely and professional psychological assistance.

Projects, implemented in close cooperation with schools and authorities, included the set up of play areas in camps and settlements, the training of teachers and psychologists and the organisation of consultation centres at local schools.

## *"Chechnya through the eyes of children"*

Under a project implemented by UNICEF in cooperation with "Let's Save the Generation", a Chechen non-governmental organization (NGO) active in the psycho-physical rehabilitation of young victims of war, 10 children were selected in Grozny - aged between 11 and 18 - for a photography contest: "Chechnya through the eyes of children". They were trained to capture in their pictures the daily reality of life in a place devastated by conflict.

Among them was 11-year old Yaser (first one on the left, lower row): his father died in 2000 in a landmine explosion. His elder brother was killed in 2001, his mother in 2003 at the market in Grozny. He lives in an orphanage. There is also Salman, 18: his mother died during a bombing and he himself became an invalid due to shrapnel wounds. Ruslan, 16, injured by a landmine; Khamzat, 11, fatherless...

The story of Magomed Bamatkiriev (second on the right, standing), 14, is typical.

He describes the moment his life changed forever. He was asleep in his bed.... "It was three years ago, I was 11. It was late at night when something hit the house and the roof fell in on me. I didn't realize I was hit, I felt nothing; I can only remember a lot of smoke in the room... Then I saw the blood on my bed, but I didn't think it was anything to do with me. I saw my father leaning on me and then I fainted. When I opened my eyes, I was in the arms of a doctor on the way to the hospital. Next day I realized I had lost a leg." Three years later, Magomed is back on two feet. Today - thanks to his prosthesis - he can even play football. "I'm the goal keeper; of course... they say I'm good. I came to this centre twice a week to learn how to walk again..."

The pictures entered a contest and were shown at a photo exhibition in Moscow launched during the XII International Film Festival. The winning picture was the one of the little girl jumping the rope.



*The winning photo*



*The young photographers*

# Medical Care

Laid to ruin by the war, there was little left of the physical infrastructure of the Chechen health system by 2000. In 2003, the predominant problem for hospitals was the lack of specialised equipment, essential drugs and consumables. In 2007, 50% of rural health centres were understaffed with poorly trained existing staff, 47% required rehabilitation, only 20% had water access and only 11% proper sewage system.

Against this backdrop and with up to 290,000 displaced people needing basic medical care, ECHO's first priority during the war and until 2005 was direct support to war-related surgeries and traumas. The second priority starting in 2001 was the provision of quality primary health and mental health care across the region. In parallel, the physical rehabilitation of health facilities (including the provision of medical equipment) was launched. Staff training commenced in 2002 to ensure that these rehabilitated facilities became operational.

Despite these efforts structural problems remain: the lack of quality health services, including preventive health; the low level of awareness among the population of healthy life-styles, safe hygiene and nutritional practices and the low skill levels of health workers. In addition, Chechnya and Ingushetia range high in the world in terms of drug-resistant tuberculosis rates.



*Malgobek region, Ingushetia, public consultation in a mobile hospital of MSF - Belgium*

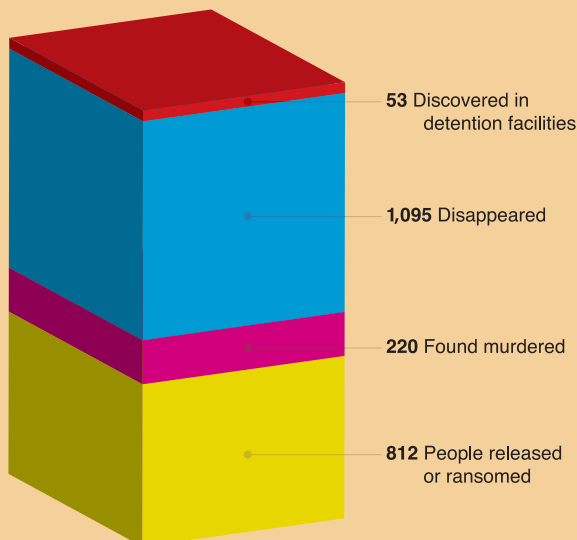
"I used to work at our local hospital in Grozny before the first war. Then my family and I moved to Ingushetia in 1998. This hospital does many good and indispensable things for refugees who live in this area" - account collected in 2000.

# Legal Protection

Both Chechen wars were accompanied by massive violations of human rights by the warring sides and a disrespect of the basic principles of international humanitarian law. While the first Chechen war claimed more lives, the second war was characterised by extreme levels of brutality. Around 30,000 – 40,000 civilians were killed and over 4,000 went missing. Between 2002 and 2004, 2 people a day disappeared in Ingushetia and Chechnya.



***Between 2002 and 2009, 2,179 people disappeared inside Chechnya***



*Source: Memorial*





ECHO was funding the operations of agencies mandated in legal protection such as ICRC and UNHCR since the very beginning of the second Chechen conflict. Even though the lack of independent access has severely limited their capacity to implement those mandates, both agencies have continuously tried to push these limits to ensure the respect of the rights of civilians. Activities funded included travel assistance to families wanting to visit their detained relatives, psychosocial and basic financial support to families of missing persons, advocacy work with the authorities as well as case-by-case investigation of applications received from civilian victims.

The Russian Federation has a comprehensive social protection system – pensions for people with disabilities and for the elderly, monetary assistance for women-headed households, unemployment benefits plus a system of compensation for injuries received or property lost during the conflict, which should render humanitarian aid unnecessary. However, due to heavy bureaucracy, people did not receive the full amount of the social benefits and monetary compensation to which they were entitled. Therefore, in 2004, UNHCR started to develop a protection approach based on a network of local human rights groups. Through experience, training and capacity building this network has proved to be very effective in helping people access their rights.



***Mines and unexploded ordnance (UXO)*** remain a threat to Chechens lives and limit their economic activities. 2,897 mines and UXO casualties were registered by ICRC between 1994 and 2008. To reduce the deadly risk, around 1 million people benefited from ECHO-funded mine awareness activities. Part of the activities focused on helping people injured by mines or UXOs to reintegrate society despite disabilities; the ECHO-UNICEF supported football teams of mine survivors served as role models.

# Livelihood Support

Once the emergency phase was over and food was available, the main outstanding issues for Chechens became unemployment and subsequent poverty. In 2004 an estimated 75% of the able-bodied population were officially unemployed. Increasingly the humanitarian community was therefore combining relief programmes with longer-term recovery aspects to create opportunities for self-employment.

The first livelihood support activities were launched in 2004 on a small scale for a limited number of households. Activities included sewing workshops, bakeries, carpentry and brick production. In 2006, ECHO and its partners stepped up their activities. 80% of the projects were agricultural projects - green housing, sheep breeding and beekeeping - building on the professional skills and capacities of the households selected.

Project monitoring documented that one to two years after their launch close to 60% of projects were ongoing and generating income. Yet, for about 17% of the households that did not continue with the initial activity, the project proved to be a good stepping-stone towards a more sustainable or suitable activity.



*Achkhoi-Martan, Chechnya, 2010*

"In the past few years we have been dependent on our disabled or elderly family members' pensions", admitted Shamsaev Magome, who returned to Chechnya in 2008. "You start losing your self-respect. This is very a bad feeling. It is not normal that disabled or old people have to support young people who are able to work. ECHO and IMC have enabled me to return to a normal life, to rebuild my self-confidence and to be proud of being a human being."



*Germenchuck, Chechnya, 2006*

"Tomatoes kept me alive during the war, now I can help others to survive." Zura was recruited as trainer in an income-generating programme rebuilding green houses and cultivating tomatoes. "There is so much poverty around me, so much despair. I want to do what I can to help my people out of the abyss we have fallen into."

# Working with Partners in the North Caucasus:

Action Contre la Faim (ACF-France), CARE (Austria), Caritas (France, Czech Republic), Danish Refugee Council, FAO (Food and Agriculture Organisation), Finn Church Aid, Hammer Forum (Germany), Handicap International (France), Help (Germany), Hilfswerk Austria, Hungarian Interchurch Aid, International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC), International Rescue Committee (ICR-UK), International Medical Corps (IMC), Médecins du Monde (MDM-France), Médecins sans Frontières (MSF-Belgium, Netherlands, France), OCHA (United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs), People in Need (Czech Republic), Polish Humanitarian Organisation, Secours populaire français, United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR), United Nations Children's fund (UNICEF), Office of the United Nations Security Coordinator (UNSECOORD), World Food Programme (WFP), World Health Organisation (WHO), World Vision.

## Photo Credits:

*Front Cover: ECHO/D. Cavini*

*Inside: DRC (p.8) ECHO/D. Cavini (pp. 2,7,16), ECHO/T. Saidulaeva (p.16), EU/ECHO (pp. 2,4,6,7,9,10,11,13,14), EU (p.1), HELP (p.15), UNICEF (pp. 12,15), UNHCR (pp. 3,8)*

*Back Cover: Hilfswerk Austria*

## European Commission Humanitarian Aid

Through the humanitarian aid funding of the European Commission millions of people across the world receive relief aid after the outbreak of man-made crises or natural disasters. The aid financed by the European Commission's Directorate-General for Humanitarian Aid and Civil Protection (ECHO) is directly distributed to victims by three groups of partners: the Red Cross and Red Crescent Movement, international non-governmental organisations and specialised UN agencies. The aid is delivered independently of the victims' ethnic origin, religious beliefs or political affiliation.

For major emergencies within or outside Europe, the European Union has a mechanism to coordinate civil protection assistance. All 27 EU countries as well as Croatia, Iceland, Liechtenstein and Norway participate. They pool resources that can be made available to disaster-hit countries. Assistance may include search and rescue teams, medical teams, water purification units and temporary shelter.

© European Union, 2011

# 12 Years of Humanitarian Aid for Chechnya

**European Commission Humanitarian Aid  
and Civil Protection Regional Support Office  
Amman**

EU Delegation – Princess Basma Street

Amman 11185 Jordan

Tel: +962 6 460 7000

[echo-amman@ec.europa.eu](mailto:echo-amman@ec.europa.eu)

