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Helping when needed most

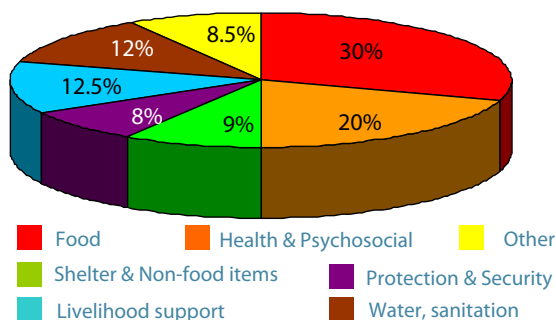


Humanitarian Aid for the Victims of the Chechen war



Over the past 11 years the European Commission has continuously supported the victims of the conflict in Chechnya with a total of €239 million, making it the largest donor for humanitarian aid. Its last funding decision for €2 million was launched in December 2010 to help the most vulnerable families settle in safety.

EC humanitarian aid by sector from 1999-2009



War - forgotten crisis – reconstruction

An estimated 30,000 to 40,000 Chechen civilians died, hundred of thousands were wounded; over 270,000 people fled to neighbouring Ingushetia and Dagestan; around 100,000 Chechens fled to the EU. This is the almost forgotten magnitude of the humanitarian crises which was triggered by the second Chechen conflict opposing Chechen insurgents and the Russian forces between 1999 and 2004. Add to this the total destruction of an already weak Chechen socio-economic infrastructure and you have the full picture of the destruction, desolation and humanitarian needs.

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

Currently there are about 7,000 Chechens still displaced in Ingushetia and just under 3,000 in Dagestan. About half of these people do not want to return to Chechnya and the governments of both republics are making efforts to integrate them. In Chechnya itself an estimated 30,000 are still displaced with no real option to return to the homes and jobs they lost in 1999 and 2000.

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 republic. Since 1999, the European Commission has provided almost €239 million for food, clothing, shelter, medical care, water and sanitation and support to legal protection through its department for Humanitarian Aid & Civil Protection (ECHO).

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

- 1999-2001: provision of emergency relief aid during the conflict and the peak of the displacement. 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 process. ECHO provided about €83 million.
- Since 2005: with improved security conditions, political stabilization and the launch of ambitious reconstruction plans, humanitarian assistance takes a longer-term approach with focus on rehabilitation and return of the displaced. ECHO provided about €92 million.

Major challenges: access and security

The climate of impunity in Chechnya 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.

Phasing out

Throughout the past 11 years, humanitarian aid could only partly address the consequences of the conflict by covering the most basic needs of a population of several hundred thousand people affected by the crisis.

All indicators suggest that EC humanitarian aid has reached the maximum limit of its support. Other tools are now at the disposal of the local and national authorities as well as the international community and must be used fairly and efficiently to continue the rebuilding of the republic and its people.



I. (8) and R. (11), 2000, "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".



Z. (48) Malgobek region, Ingushetia, 2000 in a mobile clinic: "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 mobile clinic does many good and indispensable things for refugees who live in this area."



Zura Ustarhanova (49), Gernenchuck, 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.



Shamsaev Magome (57), Achkhoy-Martan, Chechnya 2010, he received 3 beehives under an income-generating programme "In the past years we have been dependent on our disabled and elderly family members' pensions. It is not normal that disabled or old people have to support young people who are fit to work. This project allowed me to return to a normal life."

ECHO – UNICEF psychosocial support project included a photo contest 'Chechnya through the eyes of children' with the winning picture on the right, 2006



About European Commission Humanitarian Aid:

Through the funding of the European Commission's Humanitarian Aid & Civil Protection department (ECHO) millions of people are helped each year in more than 70 countries through 200 partners (NGO's international organizations, the Red Cross and Red Crescent movements, and UN agencies).

For further information: <http://ec.europa.eu/echo> and ECHO's Regional Support Office, Amman: echo-amman@ec.europa.eu