

**EVALUATION OF
ECHO'S 2000 AND 2001 FUNDED ACTIONS
IN CAMBODIA:
June 24 – August 23, 2002
SYNTHESIS REPORT**

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The comments contained herein reflect the opinions of the consultants only.

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Evaluation of ECHO's 2000 and 2001 funded actions in Cambodia:

SYNTHESIS REPORT

Action evaluated: Humanitarian and emergency (floods and drought) aid to vulnerable populations in Cambodia.

Date of the evaluation: June 24 – August 23, 2002

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Purpose and methodology :

- The evaluators set out to obtain the information needed to improve future ECHO actions in Cambodia and to offer an independent opinion of the achievement of expected results, as well as of the relevance, efficiency, effectiveness, impact and sustainability of eight of the projects financed by ECHO in 2000 and 2001 (find the list in annex).
- Three priorities were followed:
 - a) evaluating each project against its own merits and achievements as per their respective LFM's,
 - b) assessing to what extent partners had made progress to hand-over ECHO projects to long term development funding organizations, and
 - c) recommending geographical areas of the country where ECHO should consider a continued involvement in the future.
- In depth reviews were made of documentation at all levels and interviews were held with Echo Brussels and Cambodia staff, the EU Delegation in P Penh and staff of partner NGOs.
- Field visits to all projects followed.
- Summary evaluation reports for each project are presented in a separate document companion to this Report.
- A debriefing was held for most of the partner NGOs (including those not evaluated); see details in annex. The EU Delegation also got a debriefing.

Main findings and conclusions:

Regarding relevance:

- Evaluators found that most activities evaluated fell within the ECHO mandate although the latter leaves room for interpretation and consequently, in a couple cases, ECHO finances some 'borderline' situations.
- ECHO support for emergencies in the country is still needed.
- The design of proposals was found to be weak for all projects especially on technical aspects.

Regarding efficacy:

- Delays in project implementation were often caused by lack of preparation.
- ECHO-sponsored watsan work in urban areas proved to be more difficult given that these groups have a lesser sense of community.
- Cost-efficiency assessments were difficult since the number of beneficiaries is difficult to determine.

Regarding effectiveness:

- The most vulnerable people were often left behind in food security interventions.
- A high level of satisfaction was found among beneficiaries and the authorities.
- Social engineering was fittingly used to ensure the proper use of ECHO-financed inputs.
- Mine clearance activities fittingly complemented ECHO project activities.

Regarding impact:

- The impact of ECHO-funded activities was found to be quite impressive.
- PHC services have seen expansion; a new referral system of patients is making a good start.
- The provision of clean water is not always a drinking water priority, but a priority nonetheless.
- Non-protected wells, hand-dug wells and ponds are not providing safe water. Jars and rainwater catchment systems provided suit local watsan needs.
- Latrines are essential for urban resettlement areas, but not a clear emergency in non-urban areas.
- Water education provided had an impact, but behaviors still need improvement.
- Food security interventions used contributed to the success of resettlement operations.
- Home gardens allowed better nutrition practices.
- FFW was not used often due to a number of constraints.
- Mine clearance operations and road rehabilitation (as issues of access) allowed such a safe access to basic services.

Regarding sustainability and LRRD issues:

- Most project activities do follow national policies.
- The government has no ability to take over services and equipment provided by ECHO.
- Different fees charged by the projects only partially cover the cost of services.
- It has been difficult to link ECHO funding with other funding to continue activities.
- LRRD needs to be pursued in new directions. Current visibility practices are shallow and only please external observers.

Regarding cross-cutting issues:

- Gender issues receive little deliberate attention in all the projects evaluated.
- Most projects have no environmental impact.
- The security of project staff is high on the agenda of partners.
- Human rights are respected by partners, but are not explicitly addressed in their work. Partners' communication with donors is good.

Recommendations:

For ECHO:

- Keep emergency funds available and emphasize more preparedness work.
- Call partners for a two-day workshop on gender issues in the implementation of ECHO projects.
- Clarify issues on the selection criteria of beneficiaries; discuss this with partners in the next meeting with them in P Penh.
- Strengthen the review and approval of proposals.
- Allocate resources for technical reviews of proposals.
- Improve the visibility aspects of ECHO projects.
- Improve the relationship with partner NGOs as relates to more frequent joint information sharing meetings and working out a system of greater flexibility for approving minor project modifications.
- Dengue and cholera epidemics are genuine ECHO priorities.
- The social engineering of water projects is as important as the civil engineering part of them.
- Food security operations should be justified on a case-by-case basis.
- Mine clearance support will be needed for ECHO projects in Cambodia for the years to come.

For the NGOs:

- Improve the design/preparation of project proposals.
- Improve the execution of and reporting on projects.
- Be more gender sensitive.
- Improve the targeting of vulnerable populations.
- Provide some follow-up to ECHO projects after their completion.
- Formally prepare an exit strategy --and report on progress before project completion.

General lessons learned:

- Many of the approaches used by partners are considered efficiently replicable by the evaluators.
- The development and association of local, national partner NGOs by ECHO partners is desirable and has worked well in the case of HI.
- Periodic frank discussion meetings with all partner agencies are extremely valuable.
- Good formal baseline assessments/situation analyses --even if quick--always ended up in better designed project proposals.
- Beware of projects too ambitious for a nine months implementation.

ECHO phasing out and priority interventions after 2003:

Priority areas:

- Disaster-affected areas (by floods and drought); new resettlement areas in former war affected areas; newly opened areas where people have been living without any external support; and remote areas that have been deprived of assistance, not necessarily for war reasons.

Priority groups:

- Widows, the elderly and female-headed households; the disabled, the elderly and indigenous people.

Priority actions:

- Water supply in re-settlement sites, mine clearance, the organization of outreach health teams, and the provision of rice seeds in recent disaster-affected areas; favor quicker impact actions (while still thinking long-term); favor actions with an initial positive impact independent from follow up. Disaster preparedness is a priority by itself.

Priority sectors:

- Health:
 - Outreach activities, training of HC staff and providing partner-paid staff to do this and to supervise field work; strengthening diagnostic and curative work, as well as streamlining referrals.
- Watsan:
 - Drilling and construction of hand-dug wells, local construction/distribution of jars and the clean tapping of springs, hygiene education.
- Food security:
 - Interventions should be used only in well-justified cases.
- Mine clearing:
 - These activities will continue to be central to gain access to basic services.

Phasing out 2003-2005:

- 2002/2003: Projects have already been submitted by partners and will be approved by the time this Evaluation Report is finalized.
- 2003: Focus ECHO priorities on areas, groups, activities and sectors here proposed, and decrease the total envelope for non-disaster activities by an agreed percentage; pass this decreased amount to fund disaster preparedness activities within the ECHO framework.
- 2004: Decrease ECHO funding for Cambodia by another agreed percentage and continue supporting a rise in ECHO preparedness spending.
- 2005: Re-evaluate a total phase out for other than emergencies.

1 INTRODUCTION

The context of the humanitarian crisis in Cambodia and ECHO's response to it, as well as the justification and timing for this evaluation can be found in the TOR in annex. Also in the TOR can be found the list of one 2000 project and six 2001 '01 projects' chosen by ECHO for close evaluation (out of 17); to those was added the evaluation of one '03 post-drought rehabilitation project' executed by UNICEF. Some of the projects evaluated had been funded by ECHO in previous years already.

Actions evaluated fall under three ECHO Humanitarian Aid Decisions for Cambodia, namely Humanitarian Aid to Vulnerable Populations, Aide d'Urgence en Faveur des Populations Vulnerables du Cambodge Touchees par les Inondations et la Secheresse en 2001, and Aide d'Urgence pour les Victimes d'Inondations et de la Sécheresse au Cambodge.

Most of the ECHO projects evaluated are located in former war frontlines along the Thai border. This areas was at war from the beginning of the 70s until 1998 (when the unrest between government forces and the Royalist and the remaining Khmer Rouge forces ended). Although the war finished 4 years ago, the local population still suffers from its consequences. Resettlement problems such as a lack of roads, clean water and sanitation, a high concentration of landmines, malnutrition, and a high prevalence of malaria and preventable diseases are among the most prominent.

2 PURPOSE & METHODOLOGY OF THE EVALUATION

The purposes/objectives of the evaluation were clearly spelled out in its TOR (attached) and were closely followed by the evaluators. During the evaluators' Brussels briefing, three priorities were emphasized for them, namely a) evaluating each project in the list against its own merits and achievements as per their respective LFM's, b) assessing to what extent partners had made progress to hand-over ECHO projects to long term development funding organizations, and c) recommending geographical areas of the country where evaluators thought --after extensive discussions with partners and others-- ECHO should consider a continued involvement in the near and medium future.

In depth reviews were made of documentation prepared by ECHO Brussels and Phnom Penh, as well as that provided by the NGOs evaluated.

Interviews were held with Echo Brussels staff and the T.A in Cambodia, the EU Delegation in P Penh and staff of partner NGOs

Field visits of approximately two days each to all projects included interviewing their field staff (using the LFM as an evaluation tool), visits to the field, and interviews of local project implementers and beneficiaries.

Preparation of summary evaluation reports for each project evaluated, including all the evaluators' findings, key observations, actions recommended (and by whom) followed and are presented in a separate document companion to this Report.

A half-day meeting was held in P. Penh with most of the partner NGOs (including those not evaluated). General issues pertaining this evaluation were discussed. The EU Delegation got a general debriefing; evaluators were also asked to explain generalities about this evaluation to selected member countries' embassy staff in P. Penh.

Four locally contracted external evaluations have been or are being completed (CARE, HI, Red Cross, ACF); evaluators either read them or talked to the evaluators to add relevant information to this Report.

3 MAIN FINDINGS AND CONCLUSIONS ABOUT THE PROJECTS EVALUATED

Evaluators judged each of the projects evaluated according to standard EU criteria. Details backing these findings are found in the individual evaluation reports for each project evaluated (see separate document companion to this Synthesis Report).

3.1 Relevance and quality of project design

3.1.1 *Most activities evaluated fall within the ECHO mandate:*

Most project activities, except the flood interventions, are within the scope of rehabilitating war-affected areas. They aim at helping people living in former war areas to recover a minimum standard of living and to ready them to receive longer-term development aid. (Cambodia may no longer be an 'emergency country' as such, but the LRRD bridge has not been made and so has not been achieved yet).

NOTE - The ECHO mandate leaves room for interpretation: Evaluators are of the opinion that the ECHO mandate leaves room for interpretation and puts too much responsibility on the shoulders of the TA in case of diverging interpretations by him/her and partners. NGOs have, therefore experienced different interpretations of the mandate in the last three years.

3.1.2 *ECHO does finance a few 'Borderline' situations:*

In a few cases, ECHO found itself financing gaps in partners funding rather than addressing a genuine emergency/post emergency situation or a humanitarian/rehabilitation situation. In a few cases too, partners have some 'borderline' activities under their ECHO funding; none of them was considered too outlying, unrelated or unreasonable by the evaluators.

3.1.3 *ECHO's presence in the Northeast of the country raises questions about the eligibility of populations facing 'chronic emergencies':*

People living in these remote areas are among the most underdeveloped; they thus fall under ECHO's humanitarian mandate since they are not strictly-speaking disaster-affected or in a post-emergency situation.

3.1.4 *ECHO support for local emergency situations will still be relevant and needed in the future:*

Although Cambodia has reached self sufficiency in rice, agriculture (on which 85% of the people depend) remains fragile and vulnerable to recurrent drought and floods that cause profound human suffering.

3.1.5 *ECHO funds do kick-start long-term development projects:*

Within the LRRD policy, ECHO funds are indeed often a kick-start to prepare communities for long-term development interventions.

3.1.6 *The design of ECHO partners' project proposals was found to be weak across-the-board:*

Poor quality designs make evaluation more difficult. Despite ECHO having held a log-frame training for partners, ECHO proposals reviewed included vague LFMs with unverifiable OVIs due to their non-quantification.

3.1.7 *Technical background preparation of proposals is often poor:*

ECHO projects are more and more specialized and require accurate baseline information. Quite a few of the NGOs evaluated conducted well-documented socio-economic baseline studies, but the same lacked solid baseline technical information. Some watsan projects had to go through substantial changes, because insufficient knowledge existed about the local geology; nutrition technical information was also insufficient in some projects. ECHO partners reckon this fact and usually argue that this is due to the lack of time they have to prepare projects.

3.1.8 Selection procedures of targeted beneficiaries need clarification:

Most ECHO partners have their own way of defining vulnerability and of screening beneficiaries. Little information was found by evaluators about criteria used for this; transparency here needs to be increased and closer guidelines are needed.

3.1.9 Insufficient information is presented about staff to be employed by partners:

ECHO project proposals also include little information about the staff that will be employed, especially regarding their technical qualifications and terms of reference.

3.2 Efficiency of implementation

Six projects applied for and were granted extensions from 4 to 8 weeks; UNICEF was the only one who did not apply for modifications in the budget (HU had two); MHD was granted a follow-on contract for an additional 2 months.

3.2.1 National partners of partner NGOs need to be better monitored:

The development of and close association with local, national partner NGOs by ECHO partners is desirable and has worked well. However, NGOs working with them (e.g., HI working with ADA and DEEP, and the French Red Cross working with the Cambodian RC) still need to monitor them especially in their field work and in aspects related to the selection of beneficiaries.

3.2.2 Delays in project implementation are often caused by a lack of preparation:

Most delays were caused by NGOs not anticipating either technical or weather conditions (some watsan project were unrealistically scheduled during the rainy season). Delays were also caused by the difficulty to find staff (especially in remote areas), or because of poor coordination with mine clearing operations. ECHO partners have usually been flexible though to propose adequate modifications when needed.

3.2.3 External technical assistance and monitoring is sometimes needed:

Even if the general quality of the projects evaluated was good, some projects would have needed more technical expertise for their preparation and/or their implementation. Some NGOs should have hired local expertise to provide needed technical advice; an example is that of ZOA's work in Poipet.

3.2.4 Watsan projects were a bit more expensive than average:

Evaluators thought that watsan project interventions costs were a bit more expensive than other similar projects in Cambodia. However, this is mainly due to the difficult logistic conditions where ECHO projects operate (absence of roads, non availability of inputs locally).

3.2.5 Cost-efficiency is sometimes low:

Cost efficiency of some watsan activities was found to be lower than that for other similar projects. The cost- efficiency of other activities is difficult to determine, because of the often lack of information regarding the total number of beneficiaries.

3.2.6 Mine clearance activities indispensably complemented ECHO project activities

Although demining operators have their own system of planning, It was found that mine clearance activities were efficiently integrated with other ECHO activities, and that ECHO partners have appreciated the quality of the demining operation done by HALO Trust and CMAC. (HALO Trust for instance gets funding from donors to follow its own surveying and demining priorities; but when ECHO requests them to clear mines from a project site, they accept, making an exception to their own priorities due to the perceived high beneficiaries per square meter cleared ratio of these sites.)

3.3 Effectiveness

3.3.1 *The most vulnerable people are sometimes left behind in food security interventions:*

Food security activities --distribution of seeds and tools and FFW-- often do not reach the poorest of the poor, those who have no land or no labor capacity (widows, women-headed households, the disabled). Activities that did eventually reach these groups had long-term and not short-term impact (e.g., cow bank).

3.3.2 *A high level of satisfaction was seen among the beneficiaries and the authorities, but more attention should be given to the direct distribution of benefits to families:*

Services to be provided by ECHO partners were most often discussed with local authorities/leaders. (All local authorities interviewed appreciated the help provided by ECHO). The level of satisfaction among beneficiaries was also high. However, the distribution and location of some pieces of equipment can and did create some resentment in served populations. Special attention must be given to social cohesion issues when distributing items to families rather than to the community as a whole.

3.3.3 *Social engineering was fittingly used to ensure the proper use of ECHO-financed inputs:*

Most projects included relevant education and social mobilization components to ensure the proper use of ECHO funded products and services. In watsan, water use and hygiene education were provided directly to the local population, using face-to-face and videos. Regarding health, outreach teams were trained to provide essential preventive services and to disseminate health promotion messages to local populations.

3.3.4 *Guaranties are taken to ensure the effectiveness of mine clearance operations*

Local people have expressed a very high level of satisfaction regarding the mine clearance operations in the North West. It was also found that demining agencies (CMAC and HALO) operating in the ECHO areas guarantee that the land demined is safely usable for the intended humanitarian purposes.

3.4 Impact

The impact of ECHO-funded activities is quite impressive in the Northwestern areas of the country, especially concerning the development of basic infrastructure. Thanks to ECHO assistance, roads have allowed access to remote areas, functioning health services have been put in place, clean water has been provided to thousands of settlers and poor farmers which only had access to unsafe water supplies. Health and water-related behaviors have improved due to large education campaigns. In the Northeastern provinces (Rattana Kiri), impact has been less visible as ECHO is engaged in what really is a longer-term process that includes community education/mobilization and a long-term training campaign.

Health:

3.4.1 *Very good impact in the fight against malaria has been achieved in newly opened areas:*

Activities implemented in the Northwestern areas have had an impressive impact in reducing malaria prevalence (not all due ECHO funding). Outreach teams and health posts have allowed improving the malaria and overall health status of people living near the forest.

3.4.2 *Primary health care services have been expanded:*

ECHO funding has allowed the installation of basic health infrastructures and services (construction of health centers, training, follow up of staff, supply of essential drugs) that have had a significant impact on the population. NGOs also trained community health workers and organized them into feedback groups to increase the penetration of services and the referrals to HCs. ECHO-supported HCs now treat between 300 and 1000 outpatients per month. The improved quality of services is

confirmed by patients interviewed, and the fee systems put in place provides a modest additional income for staff while not seeming to constrain the poorest who seem to be getting exemptions. *But some shortcomings persist:* Coverage rates of EPI and FP/ANC in outreach work of the projects with a health component have increased, but still have a long way to go.

3.4.3 A new referral system is making a good start:

Referrals from outreach location to HC and from there to a hospital when needed has been streamlined quite a bit. In Oddar Meanchey province ECHO funding has also permitted rehabilitating the referral hospital providing it with water, electricity, drugs, a functioning lab, a better TB ward, and a working surgical theater.

Watsan:

3.4.4 The provision of clean water to a community is not always a drinking water priority, but a priority nonetheless:

Most Cambodian people do not like to drink groundwater, because of its not always pleasant taste (it often contains calcium salts and iron). As a result, not all people use water from ECHO wells for direct drinking and continue to drink water from non protected sources. However, well water is used for other domestic purposes (body hygiene and clothes and dishwashing) and this indirectly improves health.

3.4.5 Non protected hand-dug wells and ponds do not provide safe water:

Some hand-dug wells built by the different projects do not provide safe water as they are not protected. Wherever necessary, the provision of ponds or other unprotected points as sources of drinking water should be coupled with the distribution of household equipment for water processing for making it potable.

3.4.6 Household water equipment provided (jars, rainwater catchment) suits local watsan needs well:

The household water equipment distributed (jars, roof rainwater catchment systems) have had an impact on the health and hygiene of the targeted families. By using jars, people conserve and consume cleaner water. On the other hand, where families continue to drink water from ponds, more equipment could have been given to help families treat (filter/decant) or boil water.

3.4.7 Latrines are essential for urban resettlement areas, but not a clear emergency in non-urban areas:

Latrines have had a clearer impact in improving the sanitation in the peri-urban areas targeted by ECHO, despite the fact that much more is needed (e.g., in Poipet). Pilot latrine operations that have been financed with ECHO funding have not yet resulted in higher potential impact since replication by the local population has been slow.

3.4.8 Water education provided has made the population more and more aware, but improved behaviors are still lacking:

All ECHO partners got involved in water education, but only few conducted the relevant surveys to check the impact of this training. In general, the knowledge of people is increasing while changes in their practices are still an unknown.

Food security:

3.4.9 Basic agricultural inputs (seeds and tools) have contributed to the success of resettlement operations:

Seeds and tools have allowed new settlers to clear land and start crops. Seed banks have brought about long-lasting positive effects. This type of intervention will be less and less needed considering

that most people in those areas already have some basic tools and equipment or have had the chance to receive seeds and tools kits during previous operations.

3.4.10 Gardening activities introduced have allowed better nutrition practices:

Vegetable seeds distributed and gardening activities implemented have allowed the introduction of new techniques and seeds that have a positive impact on nutrition.

3.4.11 FFW is often not used due to time and other constraints:

The use of FFW is decreasing as it is difficult to manage. Local families are less interested to receive food, and the quality of FFW-related work is often lower than that from machine work. However, whenever possible, involving the local population in community work should be preferred to machine work.

Mine clearance and roads

3.4.12 Reduction of risks has meant better access to basic services:

The combined role of demining (implemented by Halo Trust, MAG and CMAC) and rural road construction (for access) has had a tremendous impact on the security of the population, has guaranteed access to public services funded by ECHO projects and has improved the socio-general economical situation of local population (better access to social services and markets).

3.5 Potential sustainability and LRRD issues

[Note that sustainability may be a more distant aim of short ECHO projects. Nevertheless, evaluators feel that it should be equally considered (as the preceding four parameters) in all projects --and the present evaluation consequently does so].

3.5.1 Most project activities do follow relevant national policies:

Health interventions are in line with national guidelines and new HCs are included in the National Health Coverage Plan. Watsan activities are also in line with national recommendations. Most actions are planned in collaboration with line provincial departments.

3.5.2 Maintenance and fee charges put in place by NGOs only partially cover the costs of services provided by ECHO:

A cost-sharing and a maintenance fee system have been put in place both in health and watsan activities. However, considering the low income capacity of the local population, these systems will not be sufficient to ensure the sustainability of ECHO funded equipment and services; subsidies will still be needed.

3.5.3 Doubt is legitimate about the ability of the government to take over services and products funded by ECHO:

It is very unlikely that government structures will be able to take over services funded by ECHO. External support will, therefore, be needed to maintain the level of services offered by ECHO partners.

3.5.4 Some resettlement operations have had side effects on security and on the environment:

Resettlement operations have an impact on the environment and on safety. This because people go to the forest to get wood and are exposed to mines; they also engage in slash and burn operations to clear land.

3.5.5 Most ECHO projects fit into the partner NGOs long term strategies:

Some operators such as CARE, ZOA, HI, AAH, HU have long time commitments which the present ECHO projects match as the first phase of a long-term involvement.

3.5.6 *It has been difficult to link ECHO funding with other funding to continue activities:*

According to NGOs, it is difficult to link ECHO short-term funding with other sources of funding, especially because of current processing times of development proposals. ECHO being more quick and flexible than other donors, there is a preference by NGOs to approach ECHO when searching for funds.

3.5.7 *LRRD is to be pursued in new fronts:*

The continuity of services initiated with ECHO funding will depend partially on other types of assistance available such as that from the ADB or the WB; but the latter is available for projects in rural infrastructure. Partner NGOs could have a role in planning and executing the community mobilization part of the same projects.

3.5.8 *Present visibility practices are shallow and only to please external observers:*

Stickers, t-shirts and sign boards only very superficially impress outside observers. Beneficiaries do not understand much about ECHO or Europe. Most partners confirm that ECHO stickers and signs displayed on project-provided community structures may actually detract from local ownership.

4 LESSONS LEARNED

It is difficult to be exhaustive on lessons learned, because almost all the findings of this evaluation have taught the evaluators something. What follows is but a distillate of some of the major ones.

4.1 General lessons:

- Many of the approaches used by partners are considered efficiently replicable by the evaluators.
- The development and association of local, national partner NGOs by ECHO partners is desirable and has worked well in the case of HI.
- Periodic frank discussion meetings with partner agencies have already proven to be valuable both in the preparation and the follow-up of projects and should continue.
- Good formal baseline assessments/situation analyses --even if quick--always ended up in better designed project proposals.
- Beware of projects too ambitious for a nine months implementation.
- ECHO work in urban areas was confirmed to be more difficult, due to greater mobility and a lesser sense of community of the population.

4.2 Health:

- The outreach activities in a health project are as important (or more) as the fixed facility services. On-the-job training for government health staff on outreach activities works better than classroom learning.
- Feedback committees (made up of VHWs trained) work better and more regularly than HC co-management committees set up so far; transport allowances for members often make a difference in the attendance.
- Hygiene and sanitation training done one time (only) in a village is not sufficient; this activity needs follow-up.

4.3 Watsan:

- The social engineering in a water project is as important as the civil engineering part of it.
- Pre-well drilling social mobilization activities are a must; post drilling activities have to follow-up work of the water committees set up.
- Systems that were produced locally (roof rainwater catchment, jars) proved to have a good impact and replication value.
- ECHO work in urban areas is more difficult due to greater mobility and a lesser sense of community of the population.

- Training of children on water hygiene and use and water saving should be targeted separately.

4.4 Food Security:

- Cow banks give chosen families a good kick-start, but are not a clearly cost-effective post-emergency intervention; conversely, the setting up of rice banks is a good emergency food security measure.
- Food For Work is less and less used: because of tight timing, ponds and other works often have to be made by machine.

4.5 Rural roads

- A system to charge trucks tolls for roads built with ECHO funding (with the involvement of a local pagoda committee) seems possible.
[In a special meeting evaluators held with partner NGOs, NGO representatives contributed important lessons they have learned in executing ECHO-funded projects; they have been summarized in annex].

5 GENERAL RECOMMENDATIONS

5.1 General recommendations for ECHO

5.1.1 *Keep emergency intervention funds for Cambodia available and emphasize more preparedness:*

Frequent floods and drought will and should make Cambodia eligible for ECHO support for a long time to come. Initial preparedness special action plans need to be incorporated into future flood relief operations early on; these projects also have to ensure that the activities retained fit the concrete needs of each concerned village.

5.1.2 *Clarify the procedures to map and select vulnerable beneficiaries:*

Eligibility of beneficiaries proposed in partner proposals is to be jointly assessed with partners so as to match intended beneficiaries with the ECHO mandate; for this to happen smoothly, ECHO is to shed more light to partners about the often conflicting terms of "war-affected", "resettled (including the time elapsed since resettlement)", "emergency needs", "post-emergency activities", "chronic emergency (concerning the indigenous populations)" and the eligibility of each of these for ECHO support. Moreover, third year ECHO funding of partners should only be considered under very special circumstances related to justified emergency/post-emergency situations.

5.1.3 *Strengthen the review and approval of proposals:*

Log-frames are to be required for all future projects as a design and monitoring/evaluation tool; then, ECHO has to insist on better quality LFM; in them, ECHO should insist that objectives/purposes are more specifically worded and, ideally, even quantified; proposal and LFM are to be screened more thoroughly by ECHO for content and consistency before their approval (they have to match); ECHO is to insist partners have only one overall objective and then break it down into a couple of purposes with several expected results each as needed; the number of OVI in the LFM has then to be kept not too high, commensurate with a short project like the ECHO ones. Some kind of a project-specific (recent and objective) needs assessment is highly desirable at the time of proposal writing; ECHO should, therefore allow sufficient resources and time to the partner NGOs to prepare their proposals and do the related quick needs assessments.

5.1.4 *Allocate resources for technical reviews:*

The project proposals approval process should benefit from technical reviewers inputs (e.g. watsan specialists); actually, ECHO should consider relieving the TA from some technical functions by making funds available for the country office to hire local experts (to advise the TA); the TA should

get some funds to call upon such expertise locally. (Evaluators consider this to be cost-effective; it would probably have avoided higher than average costs found in all watsan projects evaluated).

5.1.5 ECHO-allowed staff salary top-ups need to be standardized:

Salary top-ups of HC or other government staff working in ECHO projects, although unsustainable, seems to be a necessity and should be allowed as long as the project runs. It would help coordinating this with other donors.

5.1.6 Improve the communication aspects of ECHO projects:

Evaluators are the first to recognize that visibility issues have no simple solution. Visibility attained using stickers, painted signs and t-shirts is shallow; the message they convey is simply not easy for beneficiaries to grasp; videos, have a greater potential to make people understand who is behind the aid that they are receiving; more creative approaches are needed; a well adapted video may be an option to convey the message to beneficiaries of the help they are receiving from the people of Europe; a media consultant could be hired by ECHO; if needed, a video for the European public can also be considered.

5.1.7 Improve the relationship with partners:

Some improvements have already happened. Keeping periodic frank discussion meetings with all partner agencies is extremely valuable and recommended. While welcoming ECHO's willingness to reconsider an imminent phasing out from the country, NGOs also expressed the wish "to be treated more as partners than as contractors", i.e. allowing for a bit more flexibility and trust on their judgement on the justification of some modifications made during project implementation. NGOs understand that ECHO officers have rules to follow on the issue of modifications and do not imply greater flexibility there, but rather on seeking the agreement of the TA on certain modifications they feel strongly about.

5.1.8 Increase gender sensitivity of project implementation:

The options for partners to carry out a more gender sensitive implementation of ECHO projects are many and have been well identified by gender experts. In the ongoing effort to increase communications with partner NGOs, it is proposed that ECHO calls for and organizes a two-day workshop, facilitated by a gender expert, for all partners in P. Penh.

5.1.9 Recommendations related to health:

ECHO support to provincial hospitals can only be justified on a case by case basis when the absence of a reasonably reliable second level of care must be assured to justify health interventions at the community and HC level. Dengue and cholera epidemics are genuine ECHO priorities although other projects should pick up more on the preventive work.

5.1.10 Recommendations related to watsan/food security/demining:

ECHO money should be reserved for starting up emergency/post-emergency interventions with a chance of then being built upon by longer development actions --if needed. Regarding watsan, priority should be given to newly resettled villages and newly opened areas. The social engineering in a water project should be considered as important as the civil engineering part of it. Food security interventions should be justified on a case-by case basis and are to be reserved for very vulnerable groups.

5.1.11 Recommendations related to demining:

Humanitarian Mine clearance will remain an priority in the North West for many years to come as there are still thousands of hectares not yet demined, especially in Oddar Meanchey and Preah Vihear.

Mine-clearance support will be needed for quite a few ECHO projects in Cambodia to come; As there is no other E.U support for field mine clearance, ECHO should therefore maintain mine-clearance support that is linked to the delivery of ECHO assistance.

Mine-clearance needs should be clearly identified and planned for in advance; if needed, a budget should be allocated up-front.

5.2 General recommendation for the EU Delegation:

5.2.1 Help providing continuity for ECHO interventions in the Northwest:

The EU has a long-term indicative program 2002/04 for Cambodia; it should consider onward work in areas ECHO has been funding.

5.2.2 Help linking partners with funders in EU member states:

Efforts should be made at the Delegation level to link ECHO partners with bilateral funding sources in each of the member states.

5.3 General recommendations for partner NGOs:

5.3.1 Improve the design of project proposals:

As regards project proposals preparation:

- log-frame matrices preparation is to be more thorough and to better match the respective project proposal document;
- the objective and purpose are to be worded in more specific terms;
- OVIs should always be quantified in the log-frame and should be of two types, namely OVIs for outcomes (e.g. infrastructures, health status, practices) and for processes (intermediary OVIs telling the monitors that the project is on its way to achieve its objectives);
- if the expected results are changed, a revised LFM should be prepared;
- submitted proposals should be more realistic concentrating on a few things that can be achieved in just nine months;
- find mechanisms for greater participation of community representatives in project design, as well as to progressively incorporate beneficiaries' representatives in project everyday decision-making;
- women involvement in decisions is to be insisted upon and recorded/reported on.

5.3.2 Improve the execution of and reporting on projects:

Quarterly and monthly formal work-plans and disbursement schedules for project implementation are desirable. More attention is also to be paid to the completeness of reporting, e.g. OVIs should be followed more explicitly in the reporting about all project components.

5.3.3 Improve technical base:

Partner NGOs to improve the technical information added and filed when designing projects, when monitoring them, and when contracting with the private sector. Partners should also share this information in meetings, reciprocal visits and eventually joint work.

5.3.4 Improve cost -efficiency:

Partners are to give more attention to cost-efficiency, especially concerning watsan activities; this, by reducing their unit costs (bidding out some of the work) and expanding the coverage of ECHO activities.

5.3.5 Be more gender sensitive:

Partner NGOs to explicitly specify in their proposals actions directed at widows, women-headed households and the disabled so they are included as beneficiaries with actions suited to their post-emergency situation; partners also to renew their efforts to more explicitly address gender roles and gender-related needs in their proposals (see 5.1.8 above). Gender issues also to be more prominently reported on.

5.3.6 *Improve the targeting of vulnerable beneficiaries:*

Partner NGOs are to ensure impartiality in the final selection of project beneficiaries; special attention should be given to pre-qualifying and categorising the type of expected beneficiaries. Letting communities do the actual selection --giving them a set of minimum guidelines-- is judged to be the best. (See paragraph on priority groups below under 6.2 and annex 4). Further refinements on these minimum guidelines should be arrived at in the next ECHO-partners meeting to be held in P Penh. This notwithstanding, the key element in targeting the most vulnerable is to always ask the question whether the package of benefits being provided by the project is reaching this group. If not, discussions should be held with the community to find alternative activities that will favor those who cannot take advantage of the overall package.

5.3.7 *Monitor local partners:*

Evaluators think that the use of local partners is a good initiative. But, when using local (national) counterpart NGOs for project activities, a more formal contract should be drawn with pertinent technical specifications and monitoring responsibilities by the ECHO partner.

5.3.8 *Provide some follow up to projects after their formal completion:*

Some interventions implemented by ECHO projects will need KAP studies after project completion to measure impact. Some post-project follow-up and support by the partners is also desirable to help the beneficiaries make needed adjustments.

5.3.9 *Formally prepare an exit strategy:*

NGOs are to get involved in finding longer term donors (for their projects started with ECHO funding) early-on in their implementation phase; a progress report on this should be filed at the time of submitting each Interim Report. They should also explore whether they can tap into some of the upcoming ECOSORN funding. Moreover, NGOs are again encouraged to apply for co-financing funds from EUROPAID (as most know already). Involving EUROPAID in ECHO's phasing out deliberations would be a good idea.

5.3.10 *Other:*

Whenever possible, inputs bought for projects should be bought in the province to decrease transport costs and to bolster the local economy.

Technical recommendations for NGOs on watsan/infrastructure/food security, and technical recommendations for the same on health, can be found in two ad-hoc technical evaluation documents (Health and Watsan respectively) that accompany the submission of this Synthesis Report.

6 ECHO PHASING OUT: PRIORITIES FOR INTERVENTION AFTER 2003.

6.1 Priority areas:

Disaster-affected areas (floods, drought) will remain highest ECHO priority since support will be needed for a long time to come. Further, ECHO should continue to support or start activities in: New resettlement areas in former war affected areas; newly opened areas where people have been living without any external support (no NGOs, no donor-funded projects) after the war; and remote areas that have been deprived of assistance, not necessarily for war reasons.

6.2 Priority groups:

The identification of the neediest beneficiaries has to get the greatest attention. The meeting proposed above should address this issue for the Cambodian context. It is suggested that priority be given to widows, the elderly and female-headed households; the disabled and indigenous people.

6.3 **Priority actions:**

Upcoming ECHO interventions should consider or continue considering the following aspects: Address as a priority the most urgent needs of people such as water supply in re-settlement sites, mine clearance, the organization of outreach health teams, and the provision of rice seeds in recent disaster-affected areas; favor highest priority (often quicker impact) actions (while thinking long-term); favor actions that are expected to have a needed positive initial impact independent from follow up. ECHO priorities should go first for immediate impact followed by short-term and only last (but not excluded) for long-term impact actions; disaster preparedness is a priority by itself.

6.4 **Priority sectors:**

Evaluators recommend to focus future funding on four sectors:

Health: Outreach activities to improve EPI, ANC, FP, health and nutrition education are highest priority; this passes through incentivating and training HC staff and providing partner-paid staff to do this and to supervise field work; referrals from outreach work to the HC and PHC needs of the population require strengthening diagnostic and curative work there, as well as a streamlining of referrals to the hospital as needed.

Watsan: Drilling and construction of hand-dug wells, local construction/distribution of jars and the clean tapping of springs.

Food security: interventions should be used only in well-justified cases to support priority vulnerable groups.

Mine clearing: These activities will continue to be central to start the population in the ECHO areas on a development path.

6.5 **Phasing out:**

[Note that phasing out cannot possibly be linked to the project having surpassed certain cut-off points or having achieved a certain level for some of the major indicators used to measure progress in health, watsan or any other sector. Each situation is peculiar and a weighted set of criteria will have to help in deciding how and when to phase out].

- **2002/2003:** Projects have already been submitted by partners and will be approved by the time this Evaluation Report is finalized.
- **2003:** Depending on specific local needs identified, focus ECHO priorities on areas, groups, activities and the four sectors here proposed, and decrease the total envelope for non-disaster activities by an agreed percentage; pass this decreased amount to fund disaster preparedness activities within the ECHO framework.
- **2004:** Decrease ECHO funding for Cambodia by another agreed percentage and continue supporting a rise in ECHO preparedness spending.
- **2005:** Re-evaluate a total phase out for other than emergencies.

If this (or any other) scenario is approved, it should be officially communicated to all partners.

[A more complete analysis of phasing out can be found in a full document in annex].

ANNEXES

Annex 1: Comments about the ECHO strategy for phasing out.

Annex 2: Summary of the comments made during the meeting with the NGOs,
23 July 2002.

Annex 3: Analysis of the processes of selection of beneficiaries

Annex 4: Terms of reference for the evaluation of ECHO actions in Cambodia.

Annex 5: Persons met.

Annex 6: Acronyms.

Annex 7: Projects evaluated and schedule of the mission.

Annex 8: Maps.