



**Evaluation of ECHO's Humanitarian  
Intervention Plans in Afghanistan  
(including the actions financed in Iran and Pakistan under the plan)**

**and**

**Assessment of ECHO's Future Strategy in Afghanistan  
with reference to actions in Iran and Pakistan**

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The views expressed herein are those of the consultants and do not represent any  
official view of ECHO**

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## Acronyms and Abbreviations

<b>AACA</b>	Afghan Aid Coordination Agency
<b>ACBAR</b>	Agency Co-ordinating Body for Afghan Relief
<b>AIA</b>	Afghan Interim Authority
<b>AIMS</b>	Afghanistan Information and Mapping System
<b>AKDN</b>	Agha Khan Development Network
<b>ANSO</b>	Afghan NGO Security Organisation
<b>AREU</b>	Afghanistan Research and Evaluation Unit
<b>ATA</b>	Afghanistan Transitional Authority
<b>BPHS</b>	Basic Package of Health Services
<b>BSC</b>	Beneficiary Selection Committee
<b>CF</b>	Community Forum
<b>CHA</b>	Coordination for Humanitarian Assistance
<b>CFW</b>	Cash for Work
<b>CHW</b>	Community Health Worker
<b>EC AIDCO F5</b>	European Commission Food Security and Thematic Support Unit
<b>ECHO</b>	European Commission for Humanitarian Aid Office
<b>EMDH</b>	Enfants du Monde – Terre des Hommes
<b>EuronAid</b>	European Network of Food Aid NGO
<b>FAISU</b>	Food and Agriculture Information System Unit
<b>FAO</b>	UN Food and Agriculture Organisation
<b>FFW</b>	Food for Work
<b>GCMU</b>	Grant Coordination Management Unit of the Ministry of Health
<b>GAA</b>	German Agro-Action
<b>HIS</b>	Health Information System
<b>HW</b>	Health Worker
<b>ICARDA</b>	International Centre for Agricultural Research in Dry Areas
<b>ICRC</b>	International Committee of the Red Cross
<b>IDP</b>	Internally Displaced Person
<b>IEC</b>	Information, education and communication
<b>IGA</b>	Income Generating Activity
<b>ISAF</b>	International Security Assistance Force
<b>MDM</b>	Médecins du Monde
<b>MoA</b>	Ministry of Agriculture
<b>MoH</b>	Ministry of Health
<b>MISP</b>	Minimum Initial Service Package
<b>MoIWRE</b>	Ministry of Irrigation, Water Resources and Environment
<b>MRRD</b>	Ministry of Rural Rehabilitation and Development
<b>MSF-B/F/H/S</b>	Médecins sans Frontières – Belgium/France/Holland/Spain
<b>NFI</b>	<b>Non Food Items</b>
<b>NGO</b>	Non-governmental Organisation
<b>NSP</b>	National Solidarity Programme
<b>PACTEC</b>	PACTEC International
<b>PHC</b>	Primary Health Care

<b>SCA</b>	Swedish Committee for Afghanistan
<b>SC-UK</b>	Save the Children UK
<b>SGBV</b>	Sexual and Gender-Based Violence
<b>STD</b>	Sexually Transmitted Disease
<b>TBA</b>	Traditional Birth Attendant
<b>UN</b>	United Nations
<b>UNO</b>	United Nations Organisation
<b>UNAMA</b>	United Nations Mission for Afghanistan
<b>UNCHS</b>	UN Commission for Human Settlements
<b>UNHAS</b>	UN Humanitarian Air Services
<b>UNPICD</b>	United Nations Programme for the International Control of Drugs
<b>UNDP</b>	United Nations Development Programme
<b>UNHCR</b>	United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees
<b>UNMAPA</b>	United Nations Mines Action Programme for Afghanistan
<b>UNICEF</b>	United Nations Fund for Children
<b>VAM</b>	Vulnerability Analysis and Mapping
<b>VO</b>	Village Organisation
<b>WatSan</b>	Water and Sanitation
<b>WHO</b>	World Health Organisation
<b>WFP</b>	World Food Programme

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## Executive Summary

### Main conclusions

#### General evaluation

1. ECHO has employed Budget line B7-210 (under Council Regulation (EC) No.1257/96) in Afghanistan in a broad strategy which has given a balanced approach to the requirements of geographic spread<sup>1</sup>, sectoral exigencies and vulnerable target populations.
2. The work of ECHO's staff has been highly commendable under growing security constraints, tight programming deadlines and a background of staff shortage in relation to its enormous work-load. Under such constraints, project monitoring has been unable to cover all project sites such that the existence of poor quality (as found in some monitored sites) may be assumed. Expanded monitoring is desirable and could improve the sustainability of community assets (such as roads – see 6. below) produced by the projects.
3. Implementing partners consider ECHO to be a flexible and approachable partner who offers valuable support and good technical advice in the development of proposals. The minimal number of delays in ECHO funding release were related to proposal amendments due to poor project planning and estimation of needs by partners. They were also due to project location moves necessitated by a changing security environment.
4. ECHO's choice of partners has been proven to have been correct and to have mobilised serious and professional NGOs with expertise across a wide range of sectoral disciplines. Some of the partners do, however, experience problems of rapid expatriate staff turnover<sup>2</sup> and often blame this on the short-term nature of ECHO funding.
5. The Team feels that at least one NGO may be somewhat overstretched by its overall obligations, including those with other donors and those in other countries and this is due to limited financial capacity.
6. The quality of some of the projects visited is not of an adequate standard to ensure their sustainability. Due to the employment of mass labour techniques in the absence of modern (e.g. compacting) equipment, some of the road constructions<sup>3</sup> will not endure unless ongoing maintenance is provided by the local communities. This is not at all assured. Such projects present a dilemma since they have met

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<sup>1</sup> Insofar as prevailing security conditions allowed.

<sup>2</sup> Recruitment for aid agencies is notoriously difficult. Possibly as a result of this, several agencies (particularly in the field of health and water supply) have expatriate staff with technical skills but little experience in working with and developing social capital or with the complexities of working in the Afghan context.

<sup>3</sup> Particularly in the sandy valley bottoms.

- their primary objectives of providing substantial cash inputs (for work) to cash-poor populations and enabling access for the delivery of humanitarian assistance.
7. Refugees in Iran and Pakistan, IDPs remaining in camps in Afghanistan, returnees denied their land- and human rights back in their own communities, women and those now asset-poor, suffer levels of vulnerability which still need to be addressed by external material assistance and to have their rights protected.
  8. IDPs are still a burden, particularly in the south of the country, and at levels which, although reducing slowly, are likely to remain high for the foreseeable future. Continued insecurity and livelihood difficulties in achieving sustained reintegration in their home communities remain the chief reasons for their continued displacement and vulnerability.
  9. In recognition of the fact that ECHO must improve the quality of some of its project outputs and the precision of its targeting, it should now take a more prescriptive approach by clearly defining the interventions and geographic locations for which it wishes its NGO partners to bid. The problem of NGO partners' unwillingness/refusal to work in certain locations and on certain project types is not underestimated by the Team. ECHO's detailed knowledge of the IDP problem places it in a strong position to advocate for, as well as fund, specific projects in locations where return is possible.
  10. If LRRD, within the Commission services, can work anywhere then this would be in Afghanistan. This is due to the historic cooperation of ECHO with what was the EC's Uprooted Peoples Representative Office in Peshawar and later the Delegation in Kabul, the Afghan experienced personalities involved and their proven capacities to take responsibility for particular sectors or geographic locations<sup>4</sup>. The other Commission services in Afghanistan are now, however, working within specific Government frameworks and different policy spheres from ECHO so limiting possibilities for LRRD between them.

### **Conclusions for the Evaluation of intervention plans**

11. ECHO interventions have, in fact, targeted Preconceived Categories of beneficiary (such as refugees, IDPs and returnees) but such specific targeting was justified as a means of reaching the greatest number of beneficiaries. ECHO and its partners have endeavoured to address the greatest needs of the vulnerable both within and outside the categories, so discovering and covering the most significant of needs. ECHO, however, sometimes fails to reach the most vulnerable because some projects such as shelter construction (requiring land title) and agriculture (requiring access), almost by definition, negate the inclusion of the landless – who are often the most vulnerable.
12. No specific interventions were made in respect of Disaster Preparedness (DP) due

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<sup>4</sup> (in the 1990s: ECHO – urban; DG 1B – rural).

to the limited availability of DipECHO funding<sup>5</sup>. The team considers that there is now a case for ECHO's move into DP with an LRRD objective.

13. ECHO has an emergency response readiness through employment of its Primary Emergency Decision (PED) mechanism<sup>6</sup> (through which it can provide funds within 72 hours) and which was used during the Nahrin Earthquake disaster in April 2002. The PED must, however, be recognized as being subject to *ad hoc* decision making in Brussels and which might produce a positive response (or not) according to many other international factors prevailing at the time.
14. Brussels' current institutional thinking *vis-à-vis* the NGOs is that the latter are the experts. This has placed ECHO in a position of dependency, weakened by the fact that neither the NGOs' technical expertise nor their institutional memories support the 'expert' assertion. NGOs are contractors and, as such, must meet contractual obligations established by a stronger, more prescriptive and professional ECHO.
15. Water is fundamental to human survival and food production. There is concern in Brussels with regard to possible media accusations of the facilitation of opium poppy production through ECHO irrigation interventions. While poppy is a rainfed crop growing in many areas without dependence on irrigation, there is indeed an element of risk that new/rehabilitated irrigation schemes can enable poppy production and increased yields. The burgeoning growth of the trade (in the face of fairly ineffective eradication measures) has, however, far more significant causes, including poverty and lawlessness. In the face of the trade-off, ECHO has made quite justified and judicious irrigation interventions.

#### **Conclusions for the Assessment of future strategy**

16. With more than 4 million Afghans still remaining in neighbouring states due to possible insecurity of return, it is clear that ECHO will need to remain actively engaged in Pakistan and Iran. With the expiry of the Tri-partite Agreements between the Governments of Afghanistan, Pakistan and Iran and UNHCR at the end of 2005, the parties involved are working together to develop a migration framework that aims to address the status of Afghans remaining in exile after that date.
17. The Team considers that the current phasing down of ECHO funding for projects in Afghanistan is an opportunity to concentrate on core projects and on strengthening the professional quality of its better partners. While ECHO is not mandated to undertake large construction projects, it does not demand of its partners many of the technical, administrative and commercial practices<sup>7</sup> accepted

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<sup>5</sup> €10 million for six international regions

<sup>6</sup> Employing Budget Line B7-219.

<sup>7</sup> Examples of good practice are technically correct approaches to road construction, independent assessment of engineering plans and stage payments made on the basis of independent technical monitoring.

as the norm for small works outside the aid sector. This should be corrected and should not necessarily involve 'heavy technical procedures' but the insistence on excellence. Concentrating on smaller, more flexible projects in which ECHO has a comparative advantage and which provide immediate sustenance to those in need of humanitarian assistance is the approach recommended by the Team.

18. ECHO is faced with the dilemma of continuing its phase out from the Health sector in the face of the current 50% contribution shortfall of international funding pledged for the Government's Basic Package of Health Services (BPHS) programme (which the Team considers will result in more than 50% of unmet needs). Those most likely to suffer from the funding gap include the most vulnerable due to difficult access (especially during winter) and those living in insecure areas. ECHO's flexibility in funding gaps between the planned end of its financing and the beginning of that of other donors is very useful.
19. Afghanistan is likely to continue in need of relief assistance in relation to natural disaster, insecurity and logistical support to remote locations (including those inaccessible during winter) and those disasters which do not receive significant media coverage. This is likely to again make occasional demands on the Primary Emergency Decision mechanism which the Team considers should be a back-up to a more serious Disaster Preparedness capability in the country.

### **Recommendations**

20. ECHO now has to make certain difficult decisions as to its possible future, concerning in particular the progressive and partial phase down and even phase out from the region. This will depend upon the political will<sup>8</sup> of the Member States concerning Afghanistan's relative significance in the global humanitarian picture. The Team recommends a twin-track ECHO approach which recognises its need to present an independent balance to the Union's support to the Government of Afghanistan while, at the same time, introducing Disaster Preparedness components into projects to meet the Union's need to make humanitarian response to emergencies. Such activities need to put preparedness in the hands of the community because, under the prevailing situation, little or no institutional capacity exists for handover to central or local government.
21. It is now opportune, in the interests of improving the professional quality of its partners, for ECHO to have access to its own experts to check upon and better assist the improvement of their partners' expertise. This should be achieved through either:
  - a) recruitment of more sectoral specialists to ECHO, Kabul; or
  - b) strengthening of its Regional Technical Resource base in Bangkok with Afghan experienced sector experts and using them (on a visiting basis) to address some of the NGO technical and administrative shortfalls while

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<sup>8</sup> In recognition of the substantial Member States' resources currently (or foreseen) directed at high profile states in crisis (*viz.* Iraq).

insisting that proper engineering and commercial requirements are met.

- 23.** More direct training of NGOs (by ECHO) in project planning, monitoring and reporting will improve the working partnership of the two players. It is recognized that Echo's written records of contracts and monitoring visits (Fichops), which are detailed and impressive, should not be made available to the NGOs in the interest of confidentiality. However, the Team considers that ECHO's current practice of providing verbal and written feedback to NGOs after monitoring visits could lay greater emphasis on alerting them to issues of quality.
- 24.** The Team considers that ECHO and/or other EC services should now concentrate on micro-projects (including land development) performed with excellence<sup>9</sup> by its better partners to meet the most relevant of needs while, at the same time, supporting such interventions with the important, but more marginal, types of project identified in this report. Micro-projects, designed to both provide community assets and immediate sustenance to large numbers of people in need of humanitarian assistance, include rural feeder roads<sup>10</sup>, irrigation canals, wells and potable water distribution systems. These have a clear time-frame of works and tangible structures for hand-over to the community, so enabling a clear exit strategy. They could be supported by interventions that address psycho-social issues, woman/child development and reforestation. Continued support with logistics/air transport is necessary while other services such as assistance to detainees, family tracing and protection against human rights violation remain areas for specialist intervention.
- 25.** Rather than 'spreading' its interventions geographically, sectorally and typically in order to cover all possibilities, ECHO should now concentrate on identifying the most needy people, their needs (eg. water and cash) and designing projects which target both people and needs accordingly.
- 26.** Strategic health intervention, as opposed to that which entails ECHO's long-term commitment and linkage to government structures, should continue on a preparedness basis to 'catch' cases of need where and when they have not been identified by the internationally supported Government system.
- 26.** ECHO should support increased livelihoods programmes in safe/sustainable return areas in order to encourage return and to ensure returnees' integration in their communities. The NGOs so supported could also use their presence in such areas for the development of Disaster Preparedness programmes.

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<sup>9</sup> The question of professional standards in construction need not necessarily be heavy/costly/ bureaucratic and, without them, the Team does not consider such ECHO intervention to be worthwhile.

<sup>10</sup> While other donors and their programmes may be better adapted to road construction, the Team considers that such intervention is so valuable in terms of providing CFW/FFW possibilities, access to vulnerable people, market integration etc, etc, that ECHO would be quite justified in continuing to support such projects.

- 27.** The problem of non-inclusion of the most vulnerable (often landless) in activities such as the provision of shelter and emergency agriculture interventions is an issue which must be addressed through actions or projects such as temporary housing and Cash/Food for Work projects for those who have fallen through the 'assistance net'. Their particular vulnerability should also be recognised in the design of Disaster Preparedness programmes while there is a clear need for continued allocation of some project food aid<sup>11</sup> to those unable to work.
- 28.** ECHO should formulate/adopt a policy, notably in the South, which will enhance the security of its staff and those of its partners while, at the same time, ensuring that the most acute of humanitarian needs continue to be reported, if not necessarily addressed. There is need for a lateral thinking process<sup>12</sup> at ECHO which listens to all shades of suggestions and ideas, however innovative and despite the fact that they are often repeated old ideas which did not work then and probably will not work now..
- 29.** Equally, training in marketable skills is recommended for Refugees/IDPs (unable to return home) as a means of facilitating alternative livelihoods. ECHO should, for example, invite the opinions of Kuchi nomads (without employment and capital) with regard to their possible training in non-livestock skills so enabling their participation in nearby buoyant urban economies<sup>13</sup>. The problem of rural/urban migration must not, of course, be ignored here but this is inevitable in the cases of close camp proximity to, for example, Kandahar.
- 30.** An in-depth<sup>14</sup> audit of one particular ECHO partner is recommended in order to give a clear picture of any insolvency and cash flow problems experienced by the partner, as well as possible steps for ECHO to take in order to maintain its investments already made. The resource base of useful partners for Afghanistan is small and ECHO must endeavour to preserve those that it has in order to maintain capacity for necessary humanitarian actions.
- 31.** Continued funding of specific projects focusing on specific needs such as relocation and protection should continue in Pakistan. Continued funding of ECHO partners is necessary in Iran with closer attention to the deportation screening process and to establish Legal Aid Centres.

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<sup>11</sup> Currently 10% of Foodac and FFW project food is available for free distribution to people unable to participate due to age, infirmity or disability.

<sup>12</sup> eg. 'Proxy assistance' through training of beneficiary representatives (in secure areas) to provide them with skills which they can apply to assess needs for the benefit of their communities. Monitoring of such assistance back in the insecure areas would, of course, be impossible under current security constraints.

<sup>13</sup> While UNHCR estimates that 11 000 long-range migratory pastoralists may be found in Zhare Dasht and Spin Boldak IDP camps, it is also reported that 11 000 Pakistani artisans may currently be found as construction workers in Kandahar.

<sup>14</sup> Several audits (including a recent Field Audit) have been performed for this organization but have lacked the depth to determine possible overall (ie. to include its operations in all countries not just Afghanistan) insolvency or cash flow problems.

**32.** While not condoning poppy cultivation, the Team recommends that ECHO continues to fund irrigation projects in a judicious way. The alternative is to just completely forget intervention against poverty and hunger in the rural areas.

## 1. Introduction

This report concerns the humanitarian interventions funded by ECHO and implemented by its NGO and international organisation partners between mid-2002 and 2003<sup>15</sup> after the fall of the previous regime and following more than three years of drought.

Since April 2002, ECHO has addressed urgent Afghan humanitarian needs in Afghanistan, Pakistan and Iran in the sum of €73.6 million while the Commission has funded a multi-sector programme towards sustainable recovery of rural production systems, social infrastructure and the improvement of food security. It is in this context, where lesson learning is of utmost importance in ensuring the optimal appropriateness of future ECHO intervention, that this evaluation mission was launched.

The Terms of Reference (presented in **Annexe A**) require that, *inter alia*, the Team should :

- independently evaluate the results of the 2002/3 Intervention Plans in Afghanistan, Iran and Pakistan according to the classical evaluation criteria;
- evaluate the way in which these results have been achieved;
- assess ECHO's future strategy in Afghanistan;
- draw conclusions and make specific recommendations at both strategy and operational levels;
- assist ECHO and other EC services to define a coherent and viable LRRD transition plan for its future eventual progressive and partial phase down/phase out from the region;
- review ECHO's policy of treating affected populations without regard to preconceived categories.

The methodology adopted is presented in **Annexe B**. The task commenced with briefings in Brussels, continued with similar exercises in Kabul and led to the collection of documents for review. A key step of the methodology was the elaboration of an ex-post Logical Framework (presented in **Annexe C** with Planned Physical Outputs detailed in **Annexe D**) for the 2002/3 ECHO operations in Afghanistan, as a point of reference for the evaluation.

A List of People met is presented in **Annexe E** while a Mission Itinerary may be found in **Annexe F**. The Team's Bibliography is presented in **Annexe G** with Acronyms and Abbreviations in **Annexe H**. Selected Security reports may be found in **Annexe I**. A Map of areas covered by the operations financed under the Intervention plans is presented in **Annexe J**. A separate **Annexe K** contains forms (Fiches) reporting on the various site visits and constitutes evaluations of individual projects at the operational level.

Special attention was paid to gender and sustainability issues, while ad-hoc indicators were sought to quantify (albeit imperfectly) the impact of the programme. The Team chose nine provinces (Herat, Badghis, Balkh, Kunduz, Takhar, Ghor, Kandahar, Kabul

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<sup>15</sup> Decision Numbers: ECHO/TPS/210/2002/15000; ECHO/TPS/210/2002/19000; ECHO/TPS/210/2002/22000; and ECHO/TPS/210/2003/04000.

and Parwan) for field visits which would enable coverage of both local and international NGOs, as well as international organisations, within the confines of time and security restrictions. One team member also travelled to Iran (Mashad and Tehran) and Pakistan (Peshawar and Quetta areas). Individual semi-structured interviews were held in the field with beneficiaries whose assertions were triangulated against similar interviews with other beneficiaries, with the views of NGOs and UN agency staff (in both the field and Kabul), local authorities and central government. Triangulation was also achieved through focus group discussions which, although they are known to be of limited value in obtaining a quantitative sense of respondent's assessments, were used to refine the understanding of the problems.

The output of the mission consists in the production of three documents :

- an Aide-memoire discussed with ECHO in Kabul at the end of the mission and forwarded to the Delegation, Kabul, as well to ECHO Brussels at the end of the mission;
- a draft evaluation report presented to ECHO;
- a final report submitted to ECHO after incorporation of all comments.

The study was carried out between September and December 2003 by: John Wilding, an agricultural economist; Sara Nam, a specialist in Reproductive Health; Anne Davies, a political scientist.

### **Constraints on the study**

At the outset of the field phase, the Team organised a first trip to Kandahar province and the Pakistan border area Refugee/IDP camps but this was cancelled by the UN due to the killing of an aid worker in the area.

During a later visit to Kandahar City, a proposed visit to the Zhare Dasht IDP camp in the province was called off by the Team in the light of unacceptable security advice after an attack on a demining team within the confines of that camp. Prohibition of all travel outside Mazar i Sherif town due to factional fighting disallowed field visits in Balkh, Sari Pul and Samangan provinces, while a later proposed visit to Faryab province was cancelled for the same reason.

Field observations were thus limited to the North, West and North Centre of the country as well as Kabul and Parwan provinces. The biggest impact of this limitation on the study was that less individual beneficiaries were interviewed in their current surroundings with the tangible evidence of assets created by ECHO intervention. In the case of IDP camp beneficiaries, however, the Team was lucky to meet the elders of Zhare Dasht camp with the Governor of Kandahar on one occasion, and the elders of Maslakh settlement in Herat on another, in meetings set up to air their grievances (which they did eloquently).

Detailed discussions with ECHO partners in the capital and four provincial capitals, as well as close inspection of field reports, are considered to have been an acceptable second best to some planned on-site technical inspections. The Team considers, therefore, that limitations on evaluative judgments were negligible.

## 2. Background

Created in 1991, ECHO commenced its intervention in Afghanistan in 1993 to address the effects of instability that had prevailed in the country since before the arrival of the Soviets in 1979. During the 1980s and 90s the humanitarian environment deteriorated commensurate with the conflict, political instability, natural disasters and collapse of the economy. ECHO's earlier interventions attempted to mitigate the worst effects of these on the population. Between 1995 and 1998 ECHO allocated more than €80 million in the sectors of food aid, health, demining and rehabilitation of infrastructure. In 1998 ECHO revised its strategy and concentrated on emergency intervention, particularly with regard to the consequences of military offensives, with a further € million in 1999. In 2000 an additional €19 million were allocated to address the deterioration in the humanitarian situation caused by drought and continuing inter-ethnic conflict.

By the end of the 2001 international military intervention, the entire country was experiencing humanitarian needs in nearly every sector, exacerbated by four years of drought and 23 years of war. Food production, the means of production and access to clean drinking water were at a very low level, irrigation systems were damaged, livestock numbers were estimated to be reduced by up to 60% below the 1998 estimate, access to education and health were basic or non-existent and property was massively damaged.

The absence of the rule of law gave rise to serious human rights abuses, particularly against certain ethnic groups and women. Regional and local power bases were strengthened or re-established. These problems were compounded by natural disasters such as locust infestations and several major earthquakes. Afghanistan accurately illustrated a country in need of ECHO's core mandate « to provide emergency assistance and relief to the victims of natural disasters or armed conflict »<sup>16</sup>.

The Commission (**DG 1B**) had been active in the country since 1985, employing its 'Uprooted People'<sup>17</sup> sectoral contingencies and, to a lesser extent, other budgetary allocations, managed from a representative office in Peshawar, Pakistan. An official EC Delegation was established in Kabul in early 2002 employing allocations from **DG RELEX** and **AIDCO**. Between 1991 and 1999, the Food Aid Unit of **DG VIII** contributed €84 million, largely in food assistance.

A chronology of ECHO decisions during the latter years shows that response has been broadly targeted to respond to earthquakes, military offensives, refugees, displaced persons and drought:

Date of ECHO decision	Funding (€)	Issues addressed
15/03/1999	750 000	Earthquake
19/07/1999	2 000 000	Hazarajat Offensive
11/10/1999	1 500 000	Shomali Offensive

<sup>16</sup> Council Regulation (EC) No.1257/96 of 20<sup>th</sup> June 1996 concerning Humanitarian Aid.

<sup>17</sup> Between 1991 and 2000, the Commission allocated €196 million under the 'Aid to Uprooted People' budget line.

13/12/1999	1 500 000	Northern Offensive
3/05/2000	2 000 000	IDPs
20/07/2000	5 500 000	Drought: (Iran/Pakistan/Afghanistan)
7/09/2000	2 000 000	Displaced/returnees
1/12/2000	4 000 000	Drought: (Iran/Pakistan/Afghanistan)
12/12/2000	3 000 000	Victims of the conflict
29/12/2000	1 100 000	Food Aid
02/03/2001	2 585 000	IDPs and refugees
03/05/2001	13 000 000	Global Plan
08/08/2001	7 815 000	Drought-mitigation

After the events of 11 September 2001, ECHO mobilised additional resources to address the effects of drought, conflict and the coordination of humanitarian aid.

<b>Date of ECHO decision</b>	<b>Funding (€)</b>	<b>Issues addressed</b>
27/09/2001	4 000 000	Pre-positioning of stocks
09/10/2001	1 500 000	ICRC
15/11/2001	15 000 000	Drought/civil war/ international conflict
07/12/2001	8 500 000	- ditto -
27/12/2001	2 280 000	Co-ordination of humanitarian aid

ECHO reopened its Kabul office in December 2001<sup>18</sup> to bring emergency assistance to the population affected by the combination of war and drought. It also addressed the Nahrin earthquake disaster of March 2002.

<b>Date of ECHO decision</b>	<b>Funding (€)</b>	<b>Issues addressed</b>
05/04/2002	17 085 000	Drought and war affected
15/04/2002	2 050 000	Narhin earthquake
11/06/2002	9 250 000	Refugees and returnees
09/08/2002	16 724 000	Reintegration and drought
24/10/2002	17 645 000	Reintegration and drought
20/03/2003	36 200 000	Reintegration and drought

On 16 October 2003, ECHO announced its decision to provide a further €11.53 m for winterization, drought and IDPs.

Afghanistan's share of ECHO's global financing since 1999<sup>19</sup> illustrates the growing international attention given to Afghanistan and reflects ECHO's response to the gravity of the humanitarian situation.

<sup>18</sup> Having been closed because of restrictions imposed by the Taliban in 1998.

<sup>19</sup> ECHO website : [http://europa.eu.int/comm/echo/finances/budget\\_en.htm](http://europa.eu.int/comm/echo/finances/budget_en.htm).

**1999:** 7.9%  
**2000:** 3.6%  
**2001:** 10.5%  
**2002:** 12%

This attention is an important element of the evaluation. Cursory analysis of the 2001 intervention plan and a deeper analysis of the 2002 plan point towards a somewhat ‘donor driven’ response to the international sensationalism wrought by the media rather than the result of a needs-based assessment. However, such a response was necessary given the immediate needs of the population and the lack of time necessary for proper needs assessment. As this report will show, funds made available by ECHO were well-targeted and constituted a correct financial response, given the circumstances.

### 3. Planned results

**Table A.**, below, has been established on the basis of the achievements planned by ECHO starting with its General Objectives (taken from those stated in the 1996 Regulation). The Specific Objectives are based on a summary of the Objectives stated in the four Decision documents under consideration here.

In the absence of a full set of final NGO project reports from the period under consideration (which might be expected early in 2004) and concise standardised data presentation (by ECHO) of the intended results of its implementing partners' activities, it was not possible to arrive at definitive data regarding Planned Outputs<sup>20</sup> and impossible in the case of Achieved outputs. The Outputs data detailed in **Table A** is therefore drawn from information taken by ECHO staff from different project proposals (which had different classifications for the same items and so were not precise<sup>21</sup> but lower than actual). The figures detailed, therefore, are lower than those actually planned and, as there is little project evidence of these outputs not having been achieved, form a limited basis for comment.

There is a possibility that the numbers of beneficiaries of ECHO intervention may be duplicated (ie. Afghans benefiting from more than one ECHO intervention). The total number of beneficiaries detailed here (more than 7.7 million) is so high as to be considered unrealistic in a country of an estimated 25 million people. Nevertheless, the figures are impressive and represent a significant contribution to assistance and recovery in Afghanistan.

The Objectively Verifiable Indicators in the LogFrame are those which an evaluator would like to study in a situation where time and security might allow detailed examination, whereas the Indicators used below are those which the Team could realistically consider.

**Table A** is thus based upon the programme structure (left hand column) of the ex-post Logical Framework presented in **Annexe C**.

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<sup>20</sup> This has to be judged against the realities of an under-staffed Kabul office and an overload of work to be addressed from a situation wherein ECHO had to establish itself in the country and handle €73 million funds in its first year and now constituting a 'live' portfolio approaching €100 million. Nevertheless ECHO, having already recognized the weakness in its data presentation, has started to address it.

<sup>21</sup> The level of imprecision is unknown.

**Table A. Results (by Logical Framework)**

Planned	Indicators	Comments
<p><b>General objectives:</b></p> <p><b>a)</b> To save and preserve life during the Afghan emergency and its aftermath as well as natural disasters in Afghanistan that have entailed major loss of life, physical, psychological or social suffering or material damage;</p> <p><b>b)</b> To provide necessary assistance and relief to Afghans affected by longer lasting crises arising, in particular, from outbreaks of fighting or wars, producing the same effects as those described in <b>a)</b> above, especially where the Afghan Government has proven unable to help or there is a vacuum of power;</p> <p><b>c)</b> To help the transport of aid and efforts to ensure that it is accessible to those for whom it is intended, by all logistical means available, and by protecting humanitarian goods and personnel, but excluding operations with defence implications;</p> <p><b>d)</b> To carry out short-term rehabilitation and reconstruction work, especially on infrastructure and equipment, in close association with local structures, with a view to facilitating the arrival of relief, preventing the impact of the crisis from worsening and starting to help those affected regain a minimum level of self-sufficiency, taking long-term development objectives into account;</p> <p><b>e)</b> To cope with the consequences of population movements (refugees, displaced people and returnees) caused by natural and man-made disasters and carry out schemes to assist repatriation to Afghanistan and resettlement there when conditions laid down</p>	<p><b>a)</b> Persons benefited from ECHO assistance</p> <p><b>b)</b> - ditto - Unmet needs remaining</p> <p><b>c)</b> Aid personnel carried/cargo arrives/works/no of destinations</p> <p><b>d)</b> Assets rehabilitated are durable and maintained</p> <p><b>e)</b> Numbers assisted. International standards adhered to.</p>	<p><b>a)</b> Figures calculated for the Team in Kabul estimated 7 705 690 beneficiaries, not all of which would have been in mortal danger. There is, no doubt, an element of double counting since 7 million out of a population of 25 million seems unrealistic. Nevertheless, the scale of ECHO's beneficiaries is very substantial.</p> <p><b>b)</b> It is appropriate to measure what ECHO has achieved, but this should be considered in relation to what needs remain unserved eg. MoH have calculated unmet needs of &gt;50% over the next year.</p> <p><b>c)</b> ECHO supported logistics and air-ops improved access to remote areas. Flights now cover a total of 19 destinations for UN/NGO and donors. There were cases of military personnel being carried on ECHO funded flights but this has now been resolved.</p> <p><b>d)</b> Roads enabled aid delivery but quality/durability is questioned. Construction and rehabilitation of health facilities largely appropriate but cases of inappropriate construction eg. Large part of a new hospital wing in Ghor likely to be unused.</p> <p><b>e)</b> Repatriation follows a phased approach in line with international recognition that Afghanistan is not yet ready to receive too much repatriation in a short time-frame which might destabilise fragile peace or reversal of achievements.</p>

in current international agreements are in place;		
<p><b>f)</b> To ensure preparedness for risks of natural disasters or comparable exceptional circumstances and to use a suitable early-warning and intervention system;</p> <p><b>g)</b> To support civil operations to protect the victims of fighting or comparable emergencies, in accordance with current international agreements.</p>	<p><b>f)</b>Preparedness /early warning/ works</p> <p><b>g)</b>No.detainees assisted</p>	<p><b>f)</b> The development of an identification/early warning systems has been successful notably by MSF-B in the North which identifies emergent infectious diseases. DP/Early warning not addressed by ECHO who could now consider such intervention</p> <p><b>g)</b> Data not available from ICRC but activities considered to be useful and no major constraints signalled by them.</p>
<p><b>Specific objectives</b> (corresponding to Activities):</p> <p><b>1. Return:</b> To support the return and short-term reintegration of returning Afghan refugees and IDPs;</p> <p><b>2. Protection:</b> To protect and secure the rights returning Afghan refugees and IDPs covered by international conventions-Geneva, UNHCR etc.</p> <p><b>3. Displacement:</b> To prevent drought related displacement and provide basic life-saving support for displaced populations (including those Afghans finding themselves in third countries, notably Pakistan and Iran);</p> <p>To provide a safety net of essential services focusing on the most vulnerable case load;</p> <p><b>4. Recovery:</b> To assist the Afghan population in its recovery from the Food Security crisis and to secure sustainable livelihoods;</p> <p><b>5. Support services:</b> To facilitate safe, secure, efficient and effective delivery of Humanitarian Assistance.</p> <p><b>6. Health:</b></p> <p><b>i)</b> Enhanced access to quality health facilities including emergency obstetric care and reproductive health care.</p> <p><b>ii)</b> Enhanced access to EPI services</p> <p><b>7. Nutrition:</b></p>	<p><b>1.</b> Tri-Partite Agreements honoured</p> <p><b>2.</b> Recovery of property Less violence</p> <p><b>3.</b> Population movements</p> <p>Services provided</p> <p><b>4.</b> Improved F/S, L/S Trade</p> <p><b>5.</b> Assistance arriving intact/ on time</p> <p><b>6.</b> No/quality of facilities, staffing/ Beneficiaries, Vaccination Coverage</p> <p><b>7.</b></p>	<p><b>1.</b> Good ECHO cooperation with UNHCR/IOM but more proactive intervention required to encourage return and ensure possibilities for self-sufficiency.</p> <p><b>2.</b> Much work still needed on return/identifying sustainable solutions for remaining populations; Rights of deportees from Iran not sufficiently respected according to international standards; Rights of detainees in Afghan prisons closely monitored and largely respected.</p> <p><b>3.</b> On target. Objective not yet fully achieved and needs more work in next two years.</p> <p>Essential services provided in camps: appropriate measures taken to ensure basic level of assistance is not higher than that enjoyed by local population (to prevent pull factor)</p> <p><b>4.</b> Food/livelihood security improved in North due to ‘bumper’ harvests, CFW/FFW. The effects of drought continue in the South along with worsening security. Livelihoods are thus affected here leaving further opportunity for poppy cultivation which is now widespread.</p> <p><b>5.</b> High percentage of population still at basic level of survival. Many IDPs cannot return due to insecurity, drought. Aid delivery conditions worsening in South.</p> <p><b>6.</b> Access improved (particularly women) but difficult in more rural areas. Little evidence of TBA effectiveness in reducing maternal mortality/morbidity in other settings and requires investigation in Afghanistan. Difficulty in finding clinicians despite provision of regular training. Improved quality/impact assessment &amp; better Health/hygiene education needed. Vaccination coverage low except through country-wide national immunisation campaigns (eg. Polio).</p> <p><b>7.</b></p>

<p>i) Enhanced nutritional surveillance. ii) Appropriate nutritional support provision.</p> <p><b>8. HIV/AIDS</b> i) Appropriate implementation of HIV/AIDS into health planning and service provision.</p> <p><b>9. GENDER:</b> i) Enhanced awareness of gender needs of men and women.</p> <p><b>10. SOCIAL PROGRAMMES:</b> i) Improved access to safety nets and development of livelihood mechanisms.</p> <p><b>11. PARTICIPATION:</b> i) Appropriate inclusion of beneficiaries, (including women) involved in programme planning</p>	<p>Reliable data Beneficiaries</p> <p><b>8.</b> Awareness/ guidelines</p> <p><b>9.</b></p> <p><b>10.</b> Reduced poverty &amp; empowerment</p> <p><b>11.</b>Community / women project ownership</p>	<p>Little justification currently for expensive therapeutic feeding centres Improved nutrition education/infant feeding practices/ food insecurity intervention needed.</p> <p><b>8.</b> HIV/AIDS not widely considered in Afghanistan even in Health sector. Universal precautions better practiced in some facilities. More STD detection/management required.</p> <p><b>9.</b> Woman gender needs reasonably addressed in health/social programmes. Several water/ CFW programmes have made concerted efforts to involve women. Male gender needs <i>per se</i> have not been the subject of focus.</p> <p><b>10.</b> Social programmes improving family and child safety mechanisms. Empowerment of women has improved through some programmes. More information on sustainability needed. Needs of the elderly neglected.</p> <p><b>11.</b> Most programmes attempt to work with beneficiaries. CFW, social and livelihoods programmes have made noteworthy efforts to involve women and communities in activities. More effort needs to be made to involve beneficiaries in planning rather than just implementation to achieve a community sense of ownership.</p>
<p><b>Outputs:</b></p> <p>Beneficiaries Man-days worked (CFW/FFW) Shelters Latrines Wells Drinking troughs Water supply systems Water pipelines Irrigation canals (new/rehabilitated) Irrigation systems (new/rehabilitated) Karezes (rehabilitated) Kandas (new) Spring catchments &amp; reservoirs (new) Roads (new/rehabilitated) Bridges Seed distributed Agricultural demonstration plots (new) Livestock vaccinations Training (trainees) Women centres (new) Hospitals (rehabilitated)</p>	<p>7 705 690 no. 1 971 462 no. 53 630 no. 40 782 no. 1 300 no. 120 no. 15 no. 67 km 254 km 5 km 102 km 344 no. 711 no. 1 041 km 2 no. 6 720 MT 35 no. 50 000 no. 29 702 no. 21 no. 1 no.</p>	<p>Extremely high, probably some double counting and undoubtedly unrealistic but significant Significant but undoubtedly incorrect (possibly on the low side) Some shelter projects behind schedule. Insufficient attention to latrines in shelter projects (Kabul/Shomali). Beneficiaries not addressing self-help latrine rehab/construction.</p> <p>Some water projects not maintained by communities (dry wells, broken hand pumps). Probably under-estimated as some fall under Water Supply Systems above. Probably incorrect but significant. Could include Irrigation Canals above. Probably incorrect but significant.</p> <p>This is a vague categorisation and probably incorrect but significant. Probably incorrect but significant. <b>NB</b> comments on quality in the text. Does not include culverts for which the numbers are significant. Undoubtedly incorrect but significant. <b>NB</b> fertiliser &amp; other agric. Inputs also distributed.</p> <p>More attention needed to development of indicators to measure quality/impact of training. Women IGAs generally successful despite some women centres not completed. Construction of new hospital building inappropriate when rehabilitation of existing building</p>

<p>Clinics – mobile &amp; static (new) Hygiene kits WATSAN (awareness &amp; structures)</p> <p>Jerry cans Schools (rehabilitated) NFI packages (1 per family) Food (incl. cereals, pulses, oil, salt) Transit centres (temporary) Coal mined Coal beneficiary families (250 kg/family)</p>	<p>53 no. 3 100 no. 226 245 no.</p> <p>2 000 no. 3 no. 20 468 no. 14 302 MT 7 no. 13 041 MT 52 162 no.</p>	<p>more appropriate. Clinic construction in North slow/roofing not to MoH standards.</p> <p>Insufficient hygiene training (water points dirty/water wasted/ repairs not carried out. Solid waste still in streets (some areas).</p> <p>These figures bear little relation to reality and are undoubtedly much higher.</p>
<p><b>Activities:</b></p> <p><b>1. Return:</b> Transportation, NFI packages, Return grants, Transit centres, Shelter, WATSAN, IGAs, Cash for Work; Operations to construct shelters.</p> <p><b>2. Protection:</b> Support to ICRC Protection mandate and Dissemination of International Humanitarian Law; Monitoring of places of detention and visiting of detainees; Support to the Red Cross messaging network; Support to UNHCR Protection officers; Support to the Return Commission; Support to the UNHCR Legal Aid Network centres.</p> <p><b>3. Displacement:</b> Actions to prevent displacement through WATSAN and Food Security activities; Provision of minimum standards of Care and Maintenance for Displaced Afghans in third countries (Pakistan and Iran) – NFI packages, Shelter, WATSAN, Medical services.</p> <p><b>4. Recovery:</b> Implementation of WATSAN and Food Security activities.</p> <p><b>5. Support services:</b> Flight ops. (ICRC, UNHAS, PACTEC), Support to NGO security (ANSO) and logistics (ATLAS).</p>	<p>Numbers transported/ transit centres. shelter units IHL seminars held; constraints to monitoring; numbers of Protection officers funded.</p> <p>Nos. assisted in camps Quant./quality of packages and services delivered;</p> <p>SPHERE standards</p>	<p><b>1.</b> Return logistics accomplished successfully and still ongoing. Numbers repatriated overwhelmingly greater than planned, yet adequate response provided to cope.</p> <p><b>2.</b> Activities have been accomplished successfully and according to planned targets. No specific constraints signalled by partners.</p> <p><b>3.</b> Activities accomplished, though more refugees and IDPs remain to be assisted in 2004. Both content and quantity of packages have been reduced due to sheer numbers returning; quality of services in camps in line with internationally accepted standards Medical services have met needs of refugees in Iran; IDPs in Chaman waiting areas and Kandahar area; returnees in Kabul and north and west; remote populations in Ghor and W.Registan desert.</p> <p><b>4.</b> CFW/FFW improving Food Security/creating Community assets</p> <p><b>5.</b> Flight ops. play crucial role in increased access to remote populations (geography/climate/ insecure road conditions. ANSO fills an important gap through provision of security information &amp; advice for NGOs considered impartial to politics.</p>

<b>Inputs:</b>		
ECHO/TPS/210/2002/15000	€16,724,000	
ECHO/TPS/210/2002/19000	€17,645,000	
ECHO/TPS/210/2002/ 22000	€10,000,000	
ECHO/TPS/210/2003/04000	€36,200,000	

## 4. Evaluation at Level 3 – Intervention strategy

### 4.1 Coherence

The seven General Objectives listed in the ex-post Logical Framework (**Annexe C**) and above are copied directly from **Article 2, Chapter 1** of the Regulation<sup>22</sup> and may be seen as the EU legal basis of ECHO funding<sup>23</sup>.

The General Objectives of the four ECHO decisions are variously stated as:

**ECHO/TPS/210/2002/1500** : to support to the Afghan and Pakistan populations affected by drought, civil war and international conflict;

**ECHO/TPS/210/2002/1900** : to improve the humanitarian situation of drought affected and the most vulnerable elements of the Afghan population through the winter and spring, and to engage in short-term rehabilitation actions necessary to support and sustain the reintegration of Afghan returnees;

**ECHO/TPS/210/2002/22000**: to address the humanitarian needs of the most vulnerable parts of the Afghan population, including refugees in Pakistan through the winter

**ECHO/TPS/210/2003/04000**: to sustain life, prevent displacement and alleviate human suffering.

There is no contradiction here between ECHO action and its legal base. ECHO has utilised the Regulation well within the confines of EU policy and could, in the future, go further in its interpretation of what actions are possible under the Regulation.

While no negative effects of policy have been noted, the Team must make a reservation with regard to the ‘prevention of displacement’ and ‘return of returnees’. While a good degree of success has been achieved in reducing drought displacement, some drought affected populations still move for very good reasons which can only be realistically resolved by adequate and sustained rainfall – this has not yet occurred in the South of Afghanistan while some areas of the North have still suffered crop failure.

The UN, amongst others, is adopting a policy of assisted return of Registani Kuchis<sup>24</sup> through livestock replacement, bore-hole digging and other assistance in the absence of adequate pasture and intelligence regarding ground water resources. This is considered by the Team to be an ecologically unsound policy from which ECHO has judiciously distanced itself. This statement is based upon the Team’s own judgements as follows:

- adequate rainfall has not returned to the region;
- that rainfall which has fallen has not adequately recharged ground water reserves, nor led to adequate and sustainable recovery of grazing;
- such environments are highly sensitive to overgrazing;
- the sinking of new wells is inevitably accompanied by a concentration of livestock and consequent overgrazing;
- uninformed well drilling can upset delicately balanced traditional systems.

There is, therefore, a risk that returnees could regain their IDP status or, worse, that

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<sup>22</sup> Council Regulation (EC) No.1257/96 of 20<sup>th</sup>.June 1996 concerning Humanitarian Aid.

<sup>23</sup> Budget line B7-210.

<sup>24</sup> Nomadic livestock herders from the Registan Desert to the South and South-west of Kandahar.

donors could lock themselves into a long-term obligation to sustain such beneficiaries in an untenable environment. Either would constitute a waste of resources. Farmers and herders behave rationally<sup>25</sup> and, in reality, will tend to take what return assistance they can while retaining their livelihood security in the IDP camps.

Equally, the evacuation and future return of Pashtuns to the North are subject to the long-term resolution of ethnic tension and their 'perceived' association with the Taliban regime who were largely (but not completely) Pashtun based and understood to have looked more kindly upon their 'kinsmen'. The issue should not be addressed lightly: some areas may still be unsuitable for return and, if ECHO were to encourage dubious return, it could find itself locked into ongoing responsibility for returnees who could remain or become more vulnerable. Again, in reality, the Pashtun IDPs are most likely to risk sending their young men to reclaim their lands and recommence cultivation while their families remain in the IDP condition.

## 4.2 Coordination

The quick reference guide (**Table B.**) below, indicates the focus activity areas of other donors and the focal coordination points. Meetings under this **Consultative Group**<sup>26</sup> structure are well attended by ECHO<sup>27</sup> to which, it is reported, ECHO makes an energetic and valuable contribution in terms of information on its own activities and areas of need.

Unfortunately, and according to a number of partners and ECHO itself, the Consultative Group mechanism is not working well in that ECHO 'gives more [information] than it receives'. Furthermore, the CG for Returnees and IDPs (one of the better of the twelve CGs) has not met since July. This lack of effective coordination means that issues such as return are not being addressed by collective consultation.

**Table B** is interesting, not only with regard to ECHO/other EC services'<sup>28</sup> coordination, but also from an LRRD perspective. It is clear that, with the exception of Health & Nutrition<sup>29</sup> and Livelihoods & Social Protection<sup>30</sup>, ECHO does not appear under the same sectors as the other EC services. This close coordination between the Commission services confirms a continued degree of complementarity between them.

ECHO coordination with Government is an area which both find difficult because of the former's requirement to be independent while the latter wishes to control all incoming foreign assistance<sup>31</sup>. ECHO participates in the Consultative Group (CG) meetings,

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<sup>25</sup> Otherwise they would not be farmers/herders or would not survive.

<sup>26</sup> Comprising twelve Groups, formed by thematic sector, where specific national and international stakeholders should meet regularly and share reports, views and discuss recommendations.

<sup>27</sup> Which, unlike the majority of members, is not itself party to the Government's National Development Programme up on whose components the CG should consult.

<sup>28</sup> For the sake of this report, the term 'other EC services' refers to those Commission services represented by and whose budget lines are administered by the EC Delegation in Kabul.

<sup>29</sup> From which ECHO would like to exit and see other donors and other EC services enter.

<sup>30</sup> Upon which ECHO and EC cooperate closely.

<sup>31</sup> Since its inception at the end of 2001, Government policy has been to keep control of all incoming foreign assistance and this is diametrically opposed to ECHO's own policy of independence.

through which it keeps the Government informed of its interventions as well as briefing the respective Ministers directly and inviting their comments prior to every funding decision. It is reported that ECHO makes significant contributions of information and ideas in such fora. This subject is followed up in **Section 7.1** (LRRD) below.

Coordination with the PRTs (Provincial Reconstruction Teams) through UNAMA exists through regular ECHO/UNAMA exchanges and ECHO/PRT meetings in the provinces<sup>32</sup>. PRT activities in the provinces constitute military/civilian intervention in support of the Central Government which is again outside ECHO's sphere of interest.

In the North, where the European PRTs' interventions occasionally<sup>33</sup> duplicate those of ECHO<sup>34</sup> and there are no significant problems between the institutions, some ECHO partners have taken a 'purist' position against the very principle of civil intervention by the military which they see as prejudicing their own NGO neutrality. While the sensitivity is accepted, rather aggressive attitudes can develop on both sides<sup>35</sup> and this is not seen as helpful.

In the South, and through no fault of ECHO, direct coordination between ECHO partners and a concerned military unit was observed to be extremely negative. Here, a Health intervention by the military is reported to have vaccinated the same persons previously vaccinated by an ECHO funded NGO less than two months earlier<sup>36</sup>.

Coordination of its own interventions would seem to be assured by ECHO's thorough 'triage' process in which new interventions are selected according to geographic, sectoral, ethnic and technical criteria with no evidence of duplication. Coordination between ECHO's partners and those of other donors can only be encouraged through the respective donor/partners' conditions of contract and through the CG system but no evidence of duplication was found by the Team.

Coordination among NGO partners varies within sectors. Several Health NGOs do not participate fully in central level coordination meetings and there has been limited coordination at field level but this is changing as a result of new contractual conditions. In other sectors, joint international/local NGO proposals are improving coordination at that level.<sup>37</sup>

The team recognises that NGO/Government coordination is limited, again due to the former's need for independence. NGO/donor coordination is fairly good but there is generally little NGO understanding of financial/budgetary issues which, for ECHO, limits NGO understanding of the strengths and limitations of its own funding mechanisms.

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<sup>32</sup> Mazar, Kunduz, Bamyar)

<sup>33</sup> There was an example of duplication in Sar-i-Pol.

<sup>34</sup> The British sector based in Mazar i Sherif is intervening to support civil governance and the rehabilitation of physical and institutional structures.

<sup>35</sup> For example, some NGOs have objected to PRTs moving through their (NGO) 'geographic areas of influence'.

<sup>36</sup> MSF (Holland).

<sup>37</sup> Eg. SC-UK and local NGOs have submitted a joint proposal to address the needs of street children.

**Table B. Government of Afghanistan: Consultative Group Structure covering 12 National Development Programmes**

	<b>1.1 Returnees &amp; IDPs</b>	<b>1.2 Education &amp; VT</b>	<b>1.3 Health &amp; Nutrition</b>	<b>1.4 Livelihoods &amp; Social Protection</b>	<b>1.5 Culture, Media, Sport</b>	<b>2.1 Transport</b>	<b>2.2 Energy, Mining, Telecom</b>	<b>2.3 Natural Resource Management</b>	<b>2.4 Urban Management</b>	<b>3.1 Trade &amp; Investment</b>	<b>3.2 Public Admin &amp; Economic Management</b>	<b>3. Secu Sec</b>
<b>Focal points</b>	UNHCR	US/ UNICEF	<b>Other EC services/ US</b>	EC/WB	UNESCO	ADB/ Japan	WB	ADB	UN Habitat	Germany	<b>Other EC services/ WB</b>	
<b>Key donors</b>	<b>ECHO</b>  Canada Japan Norway Sweden Switzerland US	Denmark France Japan Korea Norway Sweden	<b>ECHO</b>  China France Japan Korea Turkey	<b>ECHO</b>  Aga Khan Canada Denmark Japan Korea Norway Sweden UK US	Aga Khan France Italy	<b>Other EC services</b> India Iran Italy Kuwait Pakistan S. Arabia Sweden US	ADB Germany Iran Pakistan US	<b>Other EC services</b> Aga Khan Canada China Denmark France Japan Turkey UK	<b>ECHO</b>  China Germany Italy Qatar Russia UAE	India Iran Pakistan Turkey UK	ADB IMF Norway UK US	Can U U Jap Gern Ita
<b>Other donors</b>		ADB Canada China India Iran	ADB		<b>Other EC services</b> Germany Greece Japan Norway Switzerland US						Germany	

*Source:* DFID Transitional Country Assistance Plan for Afghanistan

### 4.3 Complementarity

While the complementarity of ECHO's Budget Line B7-210 and the Commission's various budget lines (see **Tables C1** and **C2** below) is assured in theory by their specific Regulations and attempted through the good working cooperation between ECHO and the Delegation, it is difficult in practice to link the interventions of the two Commission services with regard to complementarity in the field. This will be taken up again in **Section 7.1** (LRRD).

Comparison of the scale of ECHO intervention<sup>38</sup> and that of the other Commission services<sup>39</sup> highlights the fact that ECHO's earlier predominant financial presence in Afghanistan has now been reduced to that of a relatively small player since the huge international interest engendered by the September 11<sup>th</sup> incident. The other Commission services' development programmes do not, to any great extent, complement those of ECHO because the former tend to be inherently larger-scale and linked into the Government framework. It is hoped, however and in keeping with its past record, that the Delegation will take into account ECHO's useful interventions in its future planning.

Intra-ECHO interventions indicate that careful thought has been applied to their complementarity. For example, funding of demining has been a precondition of agricultural and irrigation interventions. The construction of roads has been linked to the construction of shelters, camps, clinics and schools. The latter two, however, move into the difficult area of complementarity between structures, their staffing and consumable inputs. This has not been a particular problem in any of the ECHO interventions observed by the Team but should be recognised as an issue for future interventions.

ECHO has always been partially restricted by the need to intervene in locations where its NGO partners are already based, where they have built trust and security and from where they sometimes do not wish to expand. It is difficult to complement interventions of different NGOs not normally present in the same location<sup>40</sup>. If ECHO becomes more prescriptive in its call for project offers, complementarity should be enhanced.

Complementarity between ECHO and other international interventions has had some measure of success<sup>41</sup>. However, the sometimes failure of complementarity between international players has limited the impact of ECHO's work. For example, rehabilitation of the Parwan Canal<sup>42</sup>, a large scale project committed for implementation by the People's Republic of China and upon which greater access to irrigation water by some ECHO funded programmes is dependent, has not yet been started.

The linking of latrines with shelter construction and hygiene education with water supply are considered to be excellent examples of ECHO's clear thinking on sector complementarity.

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<sup>38</sup> €73.6 million in 2002, €5 million in 2003 and an initial €12 million in 2004.

<sup>39</sup> €14 million for Reconstruction and Recovery in its 2004 National Indicative Programme.

<sup>40</sup> Eg. a road complementing agricultural rehabilitation

<sup>41</sup> Eg. ECHO cooperation with IOM and UN with regard to repatriation.

<sup>42</sup> Serving Bagram and Qarabagh Districts, part of Kalakan district and Charikar City.

**Table C1. Budget lines employed by the EC Delegation in 2002**

<b>Nomenclature</b>	<b>Title</b>	<b>Possibilities</b>
<b>B7-300</b>	Financial & Technical cooperation with Asian development countries	Public Administration, Security & Other Technical Assistance
<b>B7-200</b>	Products mobilised under the Food Aid Convention	Food Security
<b>B7-302</b>	Aid to uprooted people in Asian countries	Rural Reconstruction & Development programmes
<b>B671/B671A</b>	Rapid reaction mechanism (RRM)	Studies & Quick Impact Projects
<b>B7-667</b>	Cooperation with third countries on migration	Asylum/Migration
<b>B7-7</b>	Human Rights and Democratisation	European Initiative on Democracy & Human Rights

*Source:* National Indicative Programme of European Community Support 2003/4 between Afghanistan and the European Community

**NB.** As Part of the 2003 budget process, the budgetary authority created a specific budget article for Afghanistan, **B7-305** entitled “Aid for the rehabilitation and reconstruction of Afghanistan” with a total appropriation of €124 million of which €24 million is taken from **B7-302** and €100 million from **B7-300**. Support to Public Administration continued to be funded via **B7-300**. A further €35 million was anticipated from **B7-200** and further support was expected from the cross-cutting budget lines such as **B7-667**, while no contribution was foreseen from the **RRM**.

Further budget lines available to the Delegation are as follows (**Table B2**)

**Table C2. EC Horizontal Budget lines**

<b>Nomenclature</b>	<b>Title</b>	<b>Possibilities</b>
<b>B7-6200</b>	Environmental and Tropical Forests in Developing Countries	Reafforestation
<b>B7-6312</b>	Aid for Population Policies and Reproductive Health Care	Birth control & Sexual Health Education
<b>B7-6200</b>	Aid for Poverty-related Diseases (HIV/AIDS, Malaria, Tuberculosis)	Sexually transmitted Diseases & Infections programmes
<b>B7-6220</b>		Gender awareness programmes
<b>B7-6610</b>	Integrating Gender Issues in Development Cooperation	Demining
	Action against Anti-personnel Landmines	

## **5. Evaluation at Level 2 – Operational strategy**

### **5.1 Intervention logic**

The Team generally found ECHO's operational priorities to have focused on practical solutions to targeted problems with maximum potential impact. These have been broadly commensurate with the overall objectives laid down in the Decisions under review.

Afghanistan's ongoing conflicts have had a prolonged impact on those of its neighbour states which are hosting its refugees. ECHO interventions have aimed at assisting these states to bear the burden as well as supporting repatriation policies.

#### **5.1.1 Intervention in Pakistan**

Despite the high 2002/3 returns, Pakistan still hosts an estimated two million Afghans and, while many of them may be considered as long-term migrants, some are still in need of assistance<sup>43</sup>. ECHO's main focus of intervention has been on supporting sustainable reintegration back in Afghanistan but it has also responded in Pakistan to the most basic needs of refugees in the 'newcomer' camps<sup>44</sup>, namely those of clean water, health, shelter, protection and food (no longer funded) and, in these interventions, it has respected international standards.

Assistance to areas of Pakistan, notably Baluchistan, suffering from the effects of five years of drought, is consistent with ECHO's mandate. Intervention in the water sector (feasibility studies, wells, karez repair) has helped to mitigate refugee impact there as well as providing isolated communities with access to water at deeper levels<sup>45</sup>. Water-trucking to refugee camps is expensive but has reduced refugee dependency on the local population's limited underground water resources. Negotiations are currently underway between ECHO partners and GoP to move refugees from their current isolated and water-less sites to locations further inland where water is more accessible. The relocations are also aimed at reducing protection problems related to the refugees' perceived involvement in smuggling activities.

One of the aims of ECHO support in Pakistan is the promotion of durable solutions. However, the very large numbers of people returning in 2002 risked overwhelming still inadequate infrastructure and resources in places of return. In consultation with GoP, ECHO's partners have agreed to a gradual approach to refugee repatriation :

- i)** to avoid a destabilizing effect on Afghanistan resulting from excessive repatriation movement;
- ii)** to allow time for development activities in Afghanistan to take root, thereby improving its capacity to absorb returnees;
- iii)** in recognition of the fragile peace in Afghanistan and the fact that some places are not conducive to return;

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<sup>43</sup> UNHCR is currently engaged, with the Governments of both Pakistan and Iran, in determining their status.

<sup>44</sup> Established to accommodate refugees fleeing the 2001 conflict.

<sup>45</sup> Visits to drought-affected populations in Pakistan could not be undertaken due to time restrictions but evaluation was conducted by bilateral talks with ECHO partners and the local GoP authority (Commission for Afghan Refugees).

- iv) to respond to protection concerns of certain refugees whose return to Afghanistan is not yet possible.

### 5.1.2 Intervention in Iran

Despite ECHO partners' 2003 efforts (with GoI agreement) to instigate a deportee screening process at two border exit points, activities in Iran have met with mixed success. Evaluation indicators employed for judging this were the numbers of vulnerable people identified through the screening process as being in need of further protection and the wider operational context of the screening process. On the one hand, screening has allowed for improved transparency in the deportation process and has revealed that, so far, deportations have been justified<sup>46</sup>. On the other, problems identified are as follows:

- i) While there have been less deportations in 2003 than in the previous year and despite the screening mechanism to prevent the deportation of *bona fide* protection cases, the Team is concerned that an undetermined number of people are still being detained and deported<sup>47</sup> without due process of international law;
- ii) Screening of court-sentenced deportees is not permitted by the Iranian authorities resulting in possible protection cases being deported;
- iii) Although Iran is a signatory to the 1951 Convention<sup>48</sup>, the authorities have not allowed Refugee Status Determination (RSD). This results in an unclear status for Afghans in the country, many of whom hold different kinds of registration documents while others, who may be genuine refugees, have none;
- iv) Partners report that an undetermined number of Afghan refugees/migrants continue to be arrested and some have their registration cards confiscated, leaving them unable to prove their legal status in Iran<sup>49</sup>. The magnitude of this problem is difficult to assess since, once registration cards have been confiscated, the people concerned cannot prove they ever held them ;
- v) The Iranian authorities plan to re-register all Afghan residents and issue temporary stay cards, renewable every 3-9 months at a cost of **USD 6-7**. Those too poor to pay at the required intervals will lose their legal stay rights and face deportation. If an RSD system were in place, genuine refugees would be better protected. The GoI ambiguity towards the Afghan presence (cheap labour versus a drain on resources) is manifested by vagueness, inconsistency, arbitrary arrest, deportation or reluctant tolerance.

ECHO partner's success in mitigating such practices is uneven because it is unable to prevent illegal deportations and negotiations with GoI to bring about change are difficult and slow. UNHCR and GoI is therefore putting greater emphasis on the new registration system as a means of legalizing the status of persons of concern while continuing to work towards improvements in the screening system. Notwithstanding the complexities of the operating environment, ECHO should remain engaged in Iran in order to retain its

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<sup>46</sup> Of all those detained and deported, none was found to be of concern to UNHCR according to the 1951 Convention relating to the Status of Refugees.

<sup>47</sup> Partners report deportation at night and across non- monitored border crossings or via authorized border crossing points where screening does not yet take place (ECHO September Mission Report);

<sup>48</sup> The 1951 Convention relating to the Status of Refugees.

<sup>49</sup> It is noted, however, that no court sentenced deportee has made an asylum claim which, if/when it happens, would serve as a test case.

monitoring role and to support its partners to improve implementation of the screening system. Indeed, ECHO's proposed support to a new partner to open up Information and Legal Aid Centres in Iran is justified in the interests of encouraging a more informed, and voluntary, repatriation. Close ECHO monitoring should ensure follow-up to the screening improvements recently recommended to its partner<sup>50</sup>.

### **5.1.3 Intervention in Afghanistan**

This has followed a rational pattern of first providing for immediate survival (food, shelter, water, sanitation and health) of populations in areas most affected by conflict and drought, followed by a progressively targeted approach to vulnerable populations in areas of greatest need.

Reintegration assistance in Afghanistan can be considered a successful cornerstone of ECHO intervention with the choice of geographical areas, partners, sectors and targeted beneficiaries strategically relevant and designed for maximum impact. There are many implementation problems which may be expected in such a fluid environment but these are closely followed by the ECHO field team and addressed with its partners. ECHO's 2003 strategy has been a carefully nuanced move into the rehabilitation phase in order to stabilise populations and ensure the sustainability of return.

The Team recognizes ECHO's constant attempts to refine its targeting of vulnerable groups while gradually disengaging from areas and beneficiary groups which show signs of sustainable recovery. While ECHO is actively trying to link its interventions with the rehabilitation and development activities of other actors, the Team believes it is premature to end assistance in areas where doing so would risk leaving whole communities vulnerable to renewed impoverishment/displacement. For example, ending assistance in the water sector in the Shomali Plains before longer-term development activities commence, could risk important projects being left unfinished and ultimately lead to an unraveling of ECHO's investment. Kareze and well repair, in particular, should be continued to improve access to clean water.

Assistance to IDPs in camps within Afghanistan gives recognition to the considerable number of people who continue to be displaced and who are thus among the most vulnerable of the population. ECHO has recognized the need to continue in the sectors of shelter, WATSAN, Community Health and the full spectrum of care and maintenance for the estimated 210 000 IDPs still remaining in camps, while working with partners to identify strategies that promote return to their places of origin.

## **5.2 Relation to overall objectives**

With reference to **Section 5.1** (Coherence) above, ECHO's overall objectives, stated as Principal Objectives in the four decisions considered here, have developed from general support to the Afghan and Pakistani populations affected by drought and conflict (**2002/1500**) through the process of addressing the particular susceptibility of the vulnerable to winter conditions as well as the continuing return of the displaced in those conditions (**2002/1900** and **2002/22000**) to the more general one of sustaining life,

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<sup>50</sup> ECHO September Mission Report.

preventing displacement and alleviating human suffering (2003/04000). The overall objectives have thus reflected the needs and the politico-security reality as it has developed over the period mid-2002 to mid-2003.

In keeping with the last (2003/04000) decision's objectives, ECHO has shifted its focus from immediate life-saving interventions to those that address the more medium-term issues of return and recovery. These interventions now place ECHO at a cross-roads of decision-making on its future overall objectives in which the questions is whether ECHO should now:

- a) continue with its more medium-term intervention;
- b) move back to emergency response; or
- c) follow a twin-track approach.

The Team recommends the latter course of action which would entail an element of disaster preparedness, not addressed by interventions so far. DP is also a development issue that lays the foundation for self-help or capacity for rapid, cohesive call for assistance. In very recent years, ECHO has responded well<sup>51</sup> to both high and low profile disasters in Afghanistan and neighbouring countries<sup>52</sup> but this is, by definition, Disaster Response and the responsibility of the Commission. ECHO has, however, made no interventions in terms of a Disaster Preparedness capacity in the responsibility of the Afghan people. While not denying the magnitude of the task and the limit on DipECHO funds, it is now opportune for the latter to look into the possibilities for intervention.

While the Team does not necessarily support the suggestion of some Government ministers regarding a €1 million ECHO pre-positioned Disaster Response Fund in Kabul, this is an issue which is of great interest to the Government.

### **5.3 Relevance of the choice of geographic areas**

As discussed above, ECHO's intervention in Afghanistan, Pakistan and Iran is relevant to the large needs of repatriated refugees (some 1.7 million to date) and the circa 300,000 who still remain in 'newcomer' camps. Within Afghanistan, ECHO's intervention has focussed on areas of high return where vulnerable families need reintegration assistance, as well as on areas hosting high numbers of IDPs in camps or settlements.<sup>53</sup> It has also addressed drought-affected areas.

ECHO and its partners recognise that re-integration support should be provided in other provinces and places of potential return where there is a need for assistance regarding the effects of drought and ongoing conflict. However, international assistance to these areas is compromised by lack of security such that, in provinces such as Kandahar, where in 2002 and early 2003 ECHO was supporting a wide range of IDP activities, there has been a forced scale-down due to threats (and incidents) of harm to aid workers.

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<sup>51</sup> Employing the Primary Emergency Decision tool through which ECHO Brussels can deliver funds to site within less than 72 hours.

<sup>52</sup> Pakistan floods.

<sup>53</sup> Predominantly in Kandahar (some 93 000) and Herat (15 000 – down from 32 000 in June 2003)<sup>53</sup> provinces.

ECHO faces the dilemma of recognizing the need for assistance in these areas while understandably being unwilling to put aid workers at risk. Provinces in this category include Nimroz, Helmand, Kandahar, Zabul, Uruzgan, Ghazni and Farah with increasing danger in the eastern provinces bordering Pakistan. These are the 'homelands' of the Taliban which has a presence there and continues to enjoy a degree of acceptance if not some popular support. Insecurity is now a key constraint to ECHO's work, not only in these provinces but also in the once considered 'safe areas' of the country as a whole where armed robbery and the targeted assassination of aid workers have been on the increase.

Much of the ECHO intervention has fallen geographically within the 'drought crescent' (as it existed between 1998/9 and 2002) which ran along the Northern foothills from Badakhshan in the North-east, westward to Herat, down the western foothills and plains on the Iranian border to Nimroz in the South and then eastward through the Southern foothills and desert areas bordering western Pakistan towards Kandahar.

This drought, starting variously between 1998 and 1999, was one of the worst (and certainly one of the longest) in Afghan history and caused massive loss of livestock<sup>54</sup> and destructuration<sup>55</sup> of farming household economies. The response of large numbers of households was their migration to urban centres such as Mazar i Sherif in the North, Herat in the West and Kandahar in the South as well as to the neighbouring states of Iran, Pakistan and the ex-Soviet territories. Those who stayed depended upon the reducing wealth of extended family networks.

There has also been an ECHO concentration on the structural poverty zone in the Central Highlands and specifically Hazarajat. This area, impoverished since its annexation and abuse by King Abdur Rahman in the late 19<sup>th</sup> century had seen a return of 'perceived' Pashtun oppression under the Taliban regime which enabled the largely Pashtun nomadic Kuchi to demand past rents/tributes and return of their grazing lands.

In addition to the drought and historic conflict-related migrations, anticipation of problems in the Autumn 2001 conflict led to further migrations particularly to the Pakistan border areas. These, too, have benefited from ECHO intervention.

The East has not benefited so significantly as others and perhaps reflects the better climatic conditions there over the period under consideration, the longer period<sup>56</sup> over which it benefited from Commission assistance particularly from the 'Uprooted people' budget line and, consequently, the greater degree of recovery it has enjoyed. Gaps in areas still in need have usually been because of the impossibility of entry due to poor security conditions.

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<sup>54</sup> Estimated as being between 40 and 60% of the livestock herd.

<sup>55</sup> Asset stripping or the selling off of productive-, then household-, assets and traditional reservoirs of wealth, such as jewelry, so eventually leading to absolute destitution.

<sup>56</sup> Since 1985.

ECHO has again, therefore, adroitly targeted its interventions in the most relevant geographic areas. While provision of health services has been appropriate in meeting the needs of the vulnerable in areas of difficult access (Wardak, Badghis, Balkh, Nimroz and Ghor)<sup>57</sup>, the problem of insecurity is now reducing geographic scope but some urban areas and their environs remain accessible.

#### **5.4 Relevance of the choice of main sectors**

Needs in the target areas described in **Section 5.3** above are clear and ECHO has addressed a large proportion of them. In the face of finite ECHO resources, widespread needs and the huge NGO demand for funds in late 2001, this wide geographic and sector 'spreading', while achieving substantial visibility, has had its limitations with regard to meeting all needs. With the anticipated annual reduction in ECHO funding for Afghanistan, the possibility for such a wide coverage of sectors and type of project is likely to become limited.

The main sectors addressed have included:

Food security, Food Aid, Nutrition, Agriculture, Irrigation, Potable water, Sanitation, Health, Hygiene, Roads, Shelter, Refugees, Return, Livelihoods, IGA, Urban cleaning, Air transport, Land transport, NGO Security, Heating, Protection of vulnerable individuals - and have incorporated a large degree of CFW and FFW.

Issues addressed to a lesser degree have included:

Psycho-social, Training, Community development, River Bank Protection, Parent/Child Activities, Personal Development, Education, NFIs, Livestock, Legal, Human rights, Prisons, Family Tracing and Tree planting.

While the global impact of some of these interventions have been minimal, all are important.

#### **5.5 Relevance of identified needs of targeted beneficiaries**

The selection of beneficiaries seems to be more erroneous in some fields than in others. Where humanitarian aid provides an almost 'blanket' coverage of beneficiaries at the community level (for example, through health or water services), beneficiaries are clearly not, by definition, selected according to individual characteristics or vulnerabilities. For example, health services provide benefits at community level for vulnerable populations, (if appropriately sited) and beneficiaries tend to be self-selecting (assuming access).

Beneficiary selection has been problematic for the CFW, FFW and IGA components of some livelihood programmes visited in the West. It is questionable whether beneficiaries of road and water reservoir construction projects were, in fact, the most vulnerable. For example, a FFW project in Herat province was paying wheat to workers on a dam construction despite the fact that they had, themselves benefited from a 'bumper' harvest and were selling their surpluses. A road construction project in a valley bottom was, naturally, employing men of the valley, again not necessarily the most vulnerable

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<sup>57</sup> Refer to WFP Afghanistan Vulnerability Assessment Mapping, August 2002. District vulnerability Mapping – combined map of health, food, access and landmines / UXOs. Available from map centre at url: <http://www.reliefweb.int>.

compared to the populations of the upper valleys. While beneficiary selection is not the responsibility of ECHO, it is noted that, in some programmes, the task has not always been thorough and nor to have considered the needs of more deserving groups in some areas.

It appears that some NGOs have made decisions about beneficiary village selection without the use of stringent criteria and participatory approaches. Closer monitoring would identify these anomalies and allow them to be addressed.

GoA policy to limit shelter repair assistance to those with land title represents a dilemma as land is a capital asset whose owners, by definition, do not constitute the most vulnerable. In consultation with a number of actors, the Team concludes that the limitation is justified as there is a risk of compounding existing land tenure problems and might encourage illegal land grabbing for the purpose of gaining assistance. In many cases, district authorities have granted temporary 'right of use' to people living on land for some time and whom ECHO partners have considered as eligible beneficiaries. The international community is once again forced to make a trade-off between increasing available housing stock and minimising the risk of future conflict over land tenure.

Selection of beneficiaries in some micro-projects has been appropriate in, for example, protection and livelihood activities targeting identified vulnerable groups, namely women and children. The impact of such projects on both individuals and households is notable in some projects visited. For example:

- the empowerment of individual women was evident through literacy and numeracy training in Women's Circles of a marginalised population in Kabul (see fiche for programme ECHO/TPS/ 210/2003/04015) where women were selected through a series of meetings with community leaders and through individual assessments by programme staff.
- a successful psycho-social programme in Kabul selected children through a social worker's thorough assessment of each child's background and family history. Each child was discussed by a Selection Committee before acceptance/rejection.

## **5.6 Specific conditions affecting different localities**

**5.6.1** It is clear that there will be a need for an ECHO presence in Afghanistan in the foreseeable future as the effects of drought continue in the South (as well as in certain areas in the North – eg. Ghor province) and as factional fighting increases in the North of the country.

The problem of ECHO intervention in the South is a difficult one for ECHO to address. The deteriorating security situation there is primarily a political one requiring a political approach, while military activities can be nothing more than short-term solutions increasingly inappropriate to guerrilla/terrorist tactics. The ECHO policy to intervene in areas only when access for ECHO project monitoring can be assured at the time of contract signature, is fully supported by the Team. This does, however, mean that the number of locations in which ECHO partners can work is likely to continue falling.

**5.6.2** It may be necessary in the South to adopt a policy of ‘if we cannot get to them, they will have to come to us’. An example of such an approach would be the training of non-livestock skills to displaced Kuchis so enabling them to participate in the buoyant urban economies close to which they currently find themselves without work and without capital. With regard to the assisted return of Registani Kuchis to their grazing lands, the Team supports ECHO’s distancing of itself from the return efforts of several international actors, notably UN, on the grounds that the drought still prevails in the South and that it would be environmentally unsound to bring undue pressure to bear on such an ecologically sensitive area<sup>58</sup>.

**5.6.3** Much of Afghanistan’s agriculture is dependent upon its irrigation systems which, largely destroyed by the Soviets in the 1980s but also by the Taliban (particularly in the Shomali Plain in the late 1990s/early 2000s), remain a massive sector for rehabilitation with outstanding returns to investment and, if well engineered, sustainability.

ECHO, however, is faced with a moral dilemma on the subject of poppy cultivation upon which the Commission is committed to a policy of eradication<sup>59</sup>. Poppy is a rainfed crop which does, however, benefit from irrigation in terms of yield and a linkage proven between its introduction into new locations and increased water supply<sup>60</sup>. Some NGOs have tried to cover this eventuality by signing conditionality agreements with local communities such that, should poppy cultivation commence as a result of irrigation intervention, then the NGO will terminate the works.

Nevertheless, poppy cultivation is also poverty and lawlessness induced. One of the most cost-effective tools of poverty reduction in Afghanistan is the supply of water together with the production of high value crops and their efficient marketing. There is a trade-off here which should not be unduly influenced by an uninformed European media. ECHO’s judicious intervention in the sector is supported by the Team, which strongly recommends its continuation.

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<sup>58</sup> If and when the drought recedes, then pasture, whose seeds will remain dormant below the ground almost indefinitely, will respond. What is missing is the drought resistant shrubs and trees which provide a natural means of erosion control and an inducement to soil water retention – any intervention in the restocking of appropriate plant species (including forage varieties), which can currently be established in the absence of significant livestock attack, should be encouraged.

<sup>59</sup> The UK Government is taking a lead in this field.

<sup>60</sup> Water represents power and money in Afghanistan.

## **6. Evaluation at Level 1 – Sector strategy**

### **6.1 Relevance**

As discussed in Section 5, the selection of interventions by ECHO since mid-2002 has been masterful in terms of a balanced approach to the requirements of geographic spread, sectoral exigencies and vulnerable target populations.

The interventions chosen have covered almost every possible type of project imaginable but this should not be seen as ECHO having ‘covered’ Afghanistan but rather as a clever ‘spreading’ of its limited resources. ECHO should not mislead the observer or itself into complacency.

Although the wide approach means that ECHO has been able to address a number of issues across several sectors, the progressively decreasing number of Decisions with each passing year (7 in 2002, 4 in 2003 and one Global Plan for 2004) reflects its acknowledgement of the need to consolidate and so focus on fewer contracts of higher quality.

Some of the core interventions, such as Food Aid, Potable and Irrigation Water, Shelter, Roads, Health and Protection of vulnerable individuals, have addressed major needs and very significant populations which, in the absence of such intervention, could have been the subject more loss of life and more physical, psychological or social suffering.

Some interventions, however, while clearly falling within ECHO’s mandate and not dissimilar from the interventions of several other international donors, cannot be considered relevant as an emergency or humanitarian response neither in terms of the 2002/3 Afghan context nor in terms of the quality of work produced.

**6.1.1 Agriculture** – ECHO seed distribution<sup>61</sup> to rainfed farmers, whose planting is a gamble<sup>62</sup>, could not be considered a relevant humanitarian response because the intervention could not assure any significant possibility of harvest and could not, therefore, meet the objective of achieving some level of food production. As it happened, the 2002/3 cropping season was the best in 25 years and the intervention was successful but this does not change the humanitarian aid principle of meeting real emergency needs without an element of gambling.

General distribution of quality seed to farmers with assured irrigation is, however, a very relevant intervention if the objective is to increase food production (for sale and auto-consumption) and to provide employment to the vulnerable in a deficit area. However, in the light of irrigated farmers’ land holding and access to agricultural inputs, it has to be recognised that they are not the ‘most vulnerable’ and the condition of the latter (landless and frequently rainfed farmers) must be addressed through such as FFW/CFW projects.

**6.1.2 Roads** – the widespread choice of road construction/rehabilitation has been

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<sup>61</sup> Other Commission services (AIDCO F5) also distributed seed through the Delegation and its partners.

<sup>62</sup> With a maximum 30 to 50% chance of adequate rainfall in any given year

relevant as a vehicle for CFW/FFW to meet the needs of a cash-poor or food deficient population and as a means to access them. It also has many further spin-offs such as market integration<sup>63</sup> and easier access to health facilities, education and ideas. However, some (but certainly not all) road works observed by the Team would condemn those interventions as only partially relevant in that they will not last more than one season.

**6.1.3 Shelter** – this has been one of the most relevant interventions in terms of securing the sustainability of return. Through the funding of shelter rehabilitation projects ECHO has assisted beneficiaries to return to their communities, enabled others to avoid displacement and provided an important means of income-generation (cash for work) for shelter beneficiaries, cash/food poor beneficiaries and artisans. The quality of housing repair under most projects observed was satisfactory. Partners adhered to established guidelines and showed flexibility with regard to regional design differences. Earthquake-resistance techniques were not preferred by all beneficiaries and most partners offered the option.

Completion targets have been met by some partners but others manifested problems with delays due to materials shortages (due to the high demand) which resulted in some degree of project under-expenditure. ECHO is following the problem with the Partners and extension of project deadlines is the likely solution, on a no-cost basis.

**6.1.4 Livelihoods** – Intervention in this sector has had a mixed record, according to the degree of impact observed and the potential for sustainability. It was not always clear whether income-generation activities were based on surveys to determine whether profitable markets actually existed for the products of such projects. In one project visited this was clearly the case. In another, greater emphasis was laid on the beneficiaries' own choice of their preferred projects and many were found to be inappropriate for market absorption. Nevertheless, ECHO intervention has proved relevant in the context of sustaining life, helping people to capitalise on assets provided and to improvement of livelihoods and returnee stability. There was clear evidence that beneficiary participation was a key component of micro-project selection.

Skills training is a relevant intervention in Afghanistan where upgrading is needed in nearly every sector but it should include clear post-training employment objectives. One ECHO-funded project linked carpentry training with income-generation through the purchase of finished products for project use but suffered problems of meeting time schedules for delivery to needy beneficiaries.

An area of particular relevance for ECHO support is IDP training in camps and settlements to provide them with employment opportunities, both in their areas of displacement and to help them to reintegrate on return. Such intervention has so far been limited to sectors such as construction where there is a potential for trainees to compete with foreign workers in a buoyant market, yet there is scope for a broader range of sectors in which skills training would be highly relevant.

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<sup>63</sup> The reduction of input and consumable costs and the increase of financial margins on saleable production.

Irrigation projects have proved highly effective for sustaining livelihoods when built/rehabilitated to a high standard, constructed within the framework of traditional community structures, passed into their ownership and properly maintained by them. The intervention is relevant to both the need to provide mass labour opportunities through CFW to address an immediate response to cash-poor communities and as a means of passing on quality community assets to address livelihoods through food production.

The current controversy regarding the exploitation of irrigation waters towards increased poppy production is undeniably a problem but one in which trade-offs must be recognised. The Team's clear conclusion is that the benefits gained by ECHO and other donors' intervention in irrigation far outweigh the negative narcotic aspects which are such a large unresolved (under current international policies) problem and beyond the influence (or mandate) of ECHO. Those who suggest stopping irrigation intervention might just as well recommend taking cars off the road because they cause traffic accidents. The objective is to break the cycle of poverty and, to this end, the supply of water is fundamental.

### **6.1.5 WATSAN**

In the light of the fact that water-borne diseases are the most significant factor in the incidence of malnutrition in Afghanistan (after, equal to or even more significant than food deficiency) and the debilitation of large sections of the population, the very substantial intervention in provision of potable water, hygiene and sanitation is an indicator that ECHO has been aware and sensitive to the most relevant of needs.

Manifestations of malnutrition are often due not to lack of food but to inefficient use of food by a body suffering from diarrhoeal disease. This constitutes, therefore, a gross waste of resources targeted through food aid and medical treatment. When seen in this light, and despite their high cost, such interventions are considered (but not proven by this study) to be very cost effective.

The linking of latrines with shelter construction and hygiene education with water supply, which has been done so well by ECHO, is seen as a *sine qua non* to be followed in future WATSAN interventions.

### **6.1.6 Health**

ECHO has appropriately funded health programmes targeting areas where there are large numbers of IDPs<sup>64</sup> and returnees<sup>65</sup> and where there are fewer health facilities per head of population<sup>66</sup>. Several mobile clinics were established in the immediate aftermath of the

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<sup>64</sup> Kandahar, Spin Boldak, Chaman & Herat (see AIMS maps available at reliefweb.int map centre / Afghanistan).

<sup>65</sup> Notably in the Khunduz, Balkh, Jawzjan, Sar-i-Pul, Takhar, Baglan, Faryab, Badghis and Kabul/Parwan provinces & Kabul City.

<sup>66</sup> National Health Resources Assessment, September 2002, MoPH & USAID/AHESP, November 2002 (map available from <http://www/reliefweb.int> map centre.)

post-September 11<sup>th</sup> instability. These mobile clinics delivered health care to the displaced, some later adapted to changing needs by becoming fixed health centres. ECHO had, at the time of the evaluation, stated a decision to phase out of funding new health programmes but also stated that it would consider bridging funds for its own partners in the health sector. There are three factors affecting ECHO's commitment in health at the intervention strategy level:

- the current transition in the provision of the Basic Package of Health Services (BPHS);
- the current security situation;
- the constant threat of natural disaster in Afghanistan.

The national health system is currently undergoing a country-wide transition towards the tendering of BPHS provision to NGOs as described above. It appears that there was little, if any, NGO effort towards coordination of bidding for BPHS provision within geographic regions. Some MoH provincial officers seemed ill-informed about the details of changes taking place. The process seems to have been heavily donor-led with World Bank and USAID taking the lead. This impacts in several ways on the health sector and on ECHO partners:

*i) Funding gaps:* As the BPHS tendering-out process is new, there are inevitably unforeseen teething problems and delays. The decisions for selecting NGO's by the GCMU in the second round of WB PPA proposals were delayed. The call for cluster-wide proposals was re-announced (only to those NGOs selected in the initial call) but for provincial-wide provision of services as this was noted to be considerably lower in cost per capita (€7.8 versus €4 ). NGOs currently providing health services in regions where other agencies have been granted contracts have faced funding gaps from the end of the ECHO contract to the start of the BPHS contract. ECHO has manifested its flexibility by granting a cost extension to ensure that three clinics (providing health care to a population of 500 000) are able to operate until the NGO with WB PPA funds is able to take over.

*ii) Quality:* All NGOs running health projects which are to be handed over to other agencies, expressed concern regarding the maintenance of service quality. This concern is related to limitations in the capacity of the NGO taking over and to the lower quality required in the BPHS for basic health centres. For example, several organisations express doubt that the cadre of CHWs required for the BPHS will work without an incentive. One agency expressed concern that the IEC required at each level of the BPHS will not be possible for some time as there are no allocated funds for this in the budget frameworks. One NGO in the Western region was expected to hand over a health facility, yet the incoming NGO had not made contact two days after the take-over date and has since expressed a desire for the NGO to stay and work alongside them (but outside of the BPHS). This demonstrates the anticipation of the challenges that face the BPHS system even in funded regions.

*iii) Coverage:* With the current level of funding from donors (so far only USD 130 million pledged for the coming 2½-3 years), MoH has calculated a massive unmet need. Using even modest population estimates and growth rates and assuming a modest annual

BPHS cost of **USD 4.5** per capita, **USD 305.5** million is calculated to enable complete delivery of basic health services country wide for 3 years. This leaves a funding gap of **USD 175.5** million for the coming 3 years<sup>67</sup>. By the end of the first year, it is expected that 51% of the population will not have access to the BPHS. By year three, this rises to 72%<sup>68</sup>, of course assuming that all the expected activities are carried out as planned and not interrupted due to such as insecurity.

**LRRD:** The European Commission ,through AidCo, is contributing €19 million for the provision of BPHS in eight provinces. In doing so they are involved in the overall coordination of national health service provision. The EC is, in theory, supposed to ensure the linkage of the relief to development continuum through other EC services taking over projects funded by ECHO as the situation moves out of a post-conflict situation. However, the regions to be funded by other EC services for the BPHS are in the southern central and eastern region. These areas do not coincide with the regions currently supported by ECHO. The EC Delegation has also commented that those proposals submitted to it by ECHO partners for health funding have generally been of poor quality<sup>69</sup>. This further contributes to the disinclination of the other EC services to fund such projects.

### 6.1.8 Social safety nets

The government lacks a clear social protection policy and so humanitarian assistance is drawn into a substitution role. ECHO funds several protection programmes and has also supported psycho-social care and well-being for marginalised children in Kabul, where a thorough and holistic approach has been adopted (see **Annexe K** - Fiche for ECHO/TPS/210/2002/19007). This programme has been successfully handed over to other Commission services' funding. ECHO has recently agreed to fund a rights-based approach for working children in Mazar and Kabul and a livelihood programme in one of Kabul's poorest districts that offers income generation and kitchen garden skills through 'women's circles' (see fiche for ECHO/TPS/210/2003/04015).

Although the needs of such people are to some extent absorbed by the family, the extra strain on a family who are already stretched to their limits can render them less able to cope. An elderly or handicapped person may need extra assistance and this could mean keeping a child from school to act as a carer or to work to boost the family income. Projects which address the needs of the disabled have already been handed over to other donors.

Such programmes make a significant micro-impact on the lives of the direct beneficiaries

<sup>67</sup>

Assuming a current population level of 22.2 million and an annual growth rate of 1.92% (figures used by the MoH & WHO):	Year	Population	BPHS cost pa. USD
	1	22,200,000	99,900,000
	2	22,626,240	101,818,080
	3	23,060,664	103,772,987
	Total		305,491,067

<sup>68</sup> Figures provided by the Chair of the GMCU, MoH.

<sup>69</sup> Personal communication with Health and Social Sector Officers, EC.

and have the potential for a trickle ‘up’ effect to the macro level. The immediate needs of families can be addressed making them more able to cope in a relief setting through promotion of coping mechanisms.

## 6.2 Effectiveness

The Team considers that ECHO has contributed to both the preservation and sustenance of the lives of a very substantial number of people affected by displacement and drought in Afghanistan, Pakistan and Iran. The number of 7 705 690 beneficiaries of ECHO assistance estimated in **Annexe D**, while undoubtedly unrealistically high, nevertheless does reflect the very significant scale of the effect.

While observed WATSAN projects were overwhelmingly well implemented and very effective due to their rather straightforward nature, there are some specific concerns in relation to the sector:

- A project visited in Herat province manifested inappropriate use of funds in the purchase of a second-hand deep-well pumping engine which would not start. Due to the incorrect placement of filter pipes<sup>70</sup> in the upper levels of the well, it was reported that saline water was drawn and delivered. This ‘deep-pumped’ water was then issued into an open canal system for irrigation purposes. This practice is almost definitely not economic<sup>71</sup> with regard to the cost of fuel/maintenance/capital investment *vis-à-vis* the value of crop (wheat) produced. This project thus neither supplied potable water, economic irrigation water nor, on the day of inspection, any water at all.

- Professional practice was called into question in Takhar province where a large, and technically intricate, water intake scheme was funded on a ‘design and build’ (by the NGO) basis in the absence of independent professional evaluation of its technical feasibility. The Team was unable to predict whether or not the structure will withstand the considerable forces of water to which it will be subjected but that is not the issue here. The issue is that such lack of professional control is not acceptable in even the smallest of works outside the aid sector.

- Water piping schemes from spring water sources, sometimes implicating long distances (more than 10 km.) to beneficiary communities, tended to have been carried out to good technical standards and with good liaison with and contributions from those communities. There were, however, some problems of competition between beneficiary communities in Badghis which led to disruption and even sabotage of neighbouring communities’ works.

- The continued drawing of water by an NGO<sup>72</sup> directly from an irrigation canal for a hospital’s drinking and cleaning needs, two months after being warned by ECHO, highlights again the frustration of the latter’s staff in trying to monitor, in distant places, the activities of an NGO which it cannot completely trust.

ECHO and its partners have generally maintained a flexible approach to programming and have responded well to changing situations. Partners have, in collaboration with

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<sup>70</sup> Pipes with intake/filter holes designed to draw non-salinated water from the lower levels of the well as opposed to closed sided delivery pipes at its upper levels.

<sup>71</sup> Although cost/benefit analysis of the project was not carried out.

<sup>72</sup> In Charikar (Shomali plain).

ECHO, adapted approaches to better meet the needs of beneficiaries through lesson learning. For example, in Ghor province, a partner involved in food security and provision of irrigation water found that local needs for potable drinking water were as much more a priority than that for irrigation water. ECHO supported an amendment to enable provision of safe drinking water while, in the same contract which covered Zabul and is now inaccessible due to insecurity, an amendment to enable funding to be reallocated to Kandahar City is currently under consideration.

The design of Primary Health Care (services offered, salary scales, location etc) can appropriately assist the transition of most projects towards the Government BPHS plan. Whilst women and children are identified as beneficiaries with particular health needs, services are available to all without regard to pre-conceived categories. Additionally, many health programmes have outreach programmes that aim to provide basic health needs to those not living in the immediate vicinity of the clinics, although these services still do not reach those most distant regularly. Many health programmes include the training of Traditional Birth Attendants (TBAs).

Nutrition status has improved as the result of a bumper harvest this year in most of the North of the country. Malnutrition is a chronic problem although data for the population at large is not available. ECHO partners have found that much malnutrition is related not only to food insecurity to also to poor understanding of nutritional requirements, to harmful infant feeding practices and, very significantly, to poor access to potable water resulting in water-borne diseases which are a major contributor to child malnutrition. It is unlikely, however, that global acute malnutrition levels are high enough to justify the current support to dedicated therapeutic feeding centres. It would not be adequate to suggest the opening of a feeding programme based on the nutritional status of U5s attending clinics, as this data is heavily biased. Few nutrition surveys have been completed recently although some are planned by, for example, AMI. In addition to this, default rates among those therapeutic and supplementary programmes that do exist, demonstrate major failures. A notable failure includes unacceptable default rates of more than 60% on average. Cure rates are low at a mean of 29%. Such high default rates are likely due to cultural constraints that limit the time a woman can spend away from the home and family, although this assumption requires investigation.

An alternative approach is that of community therapeutic feeding. This approach involves the decentralised outpatient feeding in compliment to therapeutic feeding of severely malnourished people. Development of local capacity is encouraged through involving a network of outreach workers and mother-to-mother mobilisation. This approach has been proven to be effective in exceeding SPHERE standards in recovery, default and mortality rates<sup>73</sup>. This approach improves acceptability through improving access to feeding support and ready-to-use therapeutic foods have been used which negate problems relating to water access. It also enables improved follow-up of patients and more accurate collection of data to provide a better picture of the nutritional status of a

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<sup>73</sup> Outpatient care for severely malnourished children in emergency relief programmes; a retrospective cohort study. S. Collins and K. Sadler. The Lancet, vol 360, Dec 7th, 2002 Available from URL: [http://pdf.thelancet.com/pdfdownload?uid=llan.360.9348.original\\_research.23483.1&x=x.pdf](http://pdf.thelancet.com/pdfdownload?uid=llan.360.9348.original_research.23483.1&x=x.pdf)

community. Most research and programme experience in the field of community therapeutic feeding is Africa-based. ECHO might consider supporting the adaptation and evaluation of such a programme in other contexts such as Afghanistan.

ECHO funded programmes which address the needs and rights of children have been effective at a micro-level. Development among children who have demonstrated psycho-social disorders has been remarkable. The programme (see fiche ECHO/TPS/ 210/ 2002/ 19007) helps children to recover from psycho-social disorders related to their parent's inability to parent effectively as a result of traumatic stress related to the conflict/displacement setting. Children improve from being dysfunctional to being normal, happy children with a capacity to develop well. The programme assists families in enrolling children to schools and provides children with the basic requirements in numeracy and literacy required to attend school. Such micro-impact lays the foundation for achieving an impact at a wider community level through empowerment of individuals to realise their potential.

ECHO has verbally agreed to fund a programme with SC-UK to address the rights of working children in Mazar and Kabul. Estimates of the number of street children in Kabul alone range from 37 000 to 60 000 (see fiche ECHO/TPS/210/2003/Support to working children). The programme aims to support 2 000 children by working with children, their families and employers to address working conditions and education of children. The programme also plans to work with police and the Ministry of Labour and Social Affairs to develop an awareness of child rights. This programme has the potential to have longer lasting and wider-reaching effects through affecting policy and attitudinal approaches.

The provision of basic literacy and numeracy skills to women through social/livelihoods programmes has been laudable, although this is not the primary objective of such programmes. 150 women in Kabul were offered income generation activities through quilt making. The programme also supported women in developing problem solving approaches to the issues they face within their community (such as the threats by officials to pull down their housing which are built on municipal land unless they are offered bribes). In learning to read and write, the impact on them is tangible. Women demonstrate a wider understanding of the world in which they live (prior to the programme, many did not even know their neighbours or how to enrol their children in school) and an ability to navigate their community. They felt that their confidence has been boosted and expressed an ability to deal with literate people without feeling 'stupid'. Simple tasks such as being able to sign one's name or to read the destination of a bus have made the women more independent. Women also demonstrated an awareness of possibilities that are open to them and expressed hopes of developing a profession and getting a job as a result (see fiche ECHO/TPS/210/2003/04015). However, weaknesses do exist, as described in section 6.1.4.

### **6.3 Efficiency**

The release of funding has been timely and no major delays were reported by partners. ECHO has responded rapidly to requests for bridging funds when unplanned gaps in

contracts (notably in the Health sector) arose and for emergency funds through the Primary Emergency Decision tool<sup>74</sup>.

Quantitative outputs in relation to inputs have been impressive (refer to **Table A** for broad outputs) and ECHO has done well to maintain fairly close monitoring through regular contact with partners in response to reports and through site visits. The quality of outputs and activities is covered in more detail in **Annexe J**.

While assessment of beneficiary numbers (for example, in those accessing legal or health services) is relatively easy, measurement of the quality of service provision is more difficult and poor quality can be disguised behind quantitative data. The Team found that LogFrames were generally poorly prepared (and in some cases, not at all) as a tool for developing proposals. Some LogFrames were noted to be exactly the same as previous proposal submissions.

Quality indicators were poorly considered and elaborated in proposals. For example, indicators for monitoring the quality of health and education/training activities included quantitative figures (such as ‘the number of health indicators trained’ and ‘number of health education sessions conducted’). However, there were no indicators that measure how much information is retained by audiences. Furthermore, reported achievements in interim and final programme reports were often not linked to the indicators described in the corresponding LogFrames.

ECHO partners in the health sector have been very satisfied with ECHO funding. It is obvious, through reviewing ECHO-partner communications, that ECHO TAs are accessible and review reports in detail. Monitoring trips have been intense with the recent arrival of new TAs. Detailed records (Fiche ops) on such trips are elaborate, well kept, but several partners mentioned limited feedback after a monitoring mission by TAs although e-mail communications kept on file provide evidence of some informal feedback. ECHO has found that partners are often extremely late in submitting interim and final reports. Some programmes had no contractually required ‘End of Contract’ reports several months after completion and other interim reports in the health sector were received 3-4 months late. This is a significant delay for projects with 6-9 month funding periods.

Some NGOs might benefit from guidance in the wider issues relating to relief and humanitarian assistance in the elaboration of proposals. Areas of particular concern in proposals include the lack of foresight in relation to sustainability (how to enable continuation of activities once ECHO funding ends), and how continuation of activities will fit into a broader framework of development if and when Afghanistan moves out of a relief situation.

The ability to retain appropriately skilled personnel by ECHO NGO partners is mixed. Afghanistan is currently not an attractive posting for NGO staff and the very high (and worsening) risks inherent in working in the South of the country lead many staff to refuse

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<sup>74</sup> ECHO provided funds for the Nahrin Earthquake response

to work there. The relief sector as a whole is fraught with human resource difficulties which results in a preponderance of inexperienced aid workers. Some NGOs attribute the rapid turnover of international staff to the short term nature of ECHO funding and related short term guarantee of funding for international positions. Both these factors contribute to recruitment of personnel who may be eager to work and possess technical skills, but often lack long term commitment and a wider understanding of relief settings. This contributes to limitations on institutional memory and to longer term programme planning.

The quality of budget reporting is not of major concern but ECHO's new financial regulations are not clear to NGO partners and this may be a contributing factor to their confusion in calling for inappropriate budget amendments.

The NGOs supporting health projects will need to consider working in collaboration with the government to initiate the development of cost-recovery systems in order to promote sustainability of facilities once the country moves towards a developmental situation. Some health facilities had initiated a nominal charge of Af.3 (the equivalent of a 200g loaf of bread) for registration at clinics and this initiative is instilling the concept of quality among beneficiaries and is developing a capacity, albeit small, for fund management in Community health organisations, where they exist<sup>75</sup>.

Social projects addressing the rights of working children, the psycho-social needs of children and income generation activities for women are more costly in relation to the number of direct beneficiaries but the ensuing empowerment of beneficiaries is considered a noteworthy and laudable investment of funds. The impact on personal growth, development and self-esteem have made great impacts on women (as described in **Section 6.2** above). Such programmes have the potential to contribute towards emancipation of women and to re-dressing gender inequalities. Many programmes, however, have not developed indicators that sufficiently reflect such impacts.

## **6.4 Impact**

The Team found that a number of ECHO funded activities have had unintended consequences, both positive and negative, the most noteworthy being listed in **Section 6.4.1** and **6.4.2** below. The impact of road rehabilitation and of interventions on the environment is discussed in **Sections 6.4.3** and **6.5.4**. Greater detail regarding the impact of specific projects is provided in the Project Fiches presented in **Annexe K**.

### **6.4.1 Areas of greatest impact and positive intended consequences**

**Refugee return:** Success to date is manifested by the high numbers of people who have voluntarily repatriated. In other parts of the world such figures would normally signal the end of a refugee problem. Success can also be measured by the willingness of all three concerned governments to now embark on a new plan, agreed on at the October 2003 session of UNHCR's Executive Committee in Geneva, to devise future arrangements for remaining caseloads after expiry of Tri-partite return agreements in 2005.

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<sup>75</sup> Some NGOs have not yet addressed the need to develop community health committees.

**Legal Advice Centres:** According to beneficiaries interviewed at centres in Pakistan and Afghanistan, assistance is greatly appreciated. Statistics show that most interventions constitute resolution of legal problems for refugees without legal recourse in host countries and civil/family disputes for returnees and IDPs within Afghanistan.

Interventions are low key and take time to conclude, according to the Partners involved (ICMC and NRC) but are judged as having a high impact in resolving conflicts between refugees and local residents. NRC reports that an unintended positive spin-off has been the growing number of requests for information by Afghan civilians with respect to their individual rights and electoral issues. Partners also indicate the longer-term benefits of capacity building for local judges, lawyers and others in the legal profession.

**Shelter assistance:** According to UNHCR an estimated 500 000 homes were either partially or totally destroyed during the decades of conflict. According to ECHO statistics (see **Annex D**) funding over 2002 and 2003 has been provided for the rehabilitation of some 60 000 shelters or 12% of total estimated needs. This is high for a single donor and the high impact of this funding, especially in urban areas and their peripheries, is quite visible. It has increased the housing stock in areas of concentrated return and provided an important reintegration ‘anchor’ to returnees who expressed their desire to remain.

**Water:** Impacts have included:

- Improved access to clean water for return communities, hospitals and clinics, drought-affected populations, refugee camps;
- Revival of skills in repairing traditional water systems such as karezes;
- Transfer of knowledge of traditional artisanship
- Improvement of irrigation systems for small-scale agricultural activities;
- Kick-start to improvement and repair of larger irrigation systems.

**Cash for Work:** Impacts have included:

- Employment generation for those able and willing to work;
- Injection of cash into cash-poor economies;
- Use of local resources in reconstruction projects;
- Short-term improvement of livelihoods.

According to IMF statistics, Afghanistan’s economy grew by 30% in 2002<sup>76</sup>. Extrapolation from this may conclude that much of the growth can be imputed to international relief efforts, of which CFW has been an important component.

**Income-generation:** Site visits and focus group discussions with beneficiaries attested to positive impact, specifically:

- Empowerment of women engaged in producing home-made goods;
- Capacity-building of community shuras leading to better prioritisation of funds for projects;

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<sup>76</sup> The Economist, 27 September 2003.

- Increase of rural participation with regard to prioritisation of projects.

**Health:** Impacts have included:

- Improved access to health care for those living near health facilities;
- Improved access to health care for women by same-sex clinicians;
- Sensitisation to and management of the psycho-social effects of complex political emergencies.

**ECHO presence:** Impacts have included:

- Close consultation with partners at local levels;
- Ability to coordinate with other donors at local levels;
- Ability to participate in policy making and to guide policy debate with regard to international intervention strategies;
- Ability to assess feasibility of projects prior to signing of contracts;
- Ability to monitor ongoing projects;
- Ability to solve project implementation problems in a timely manner;
- Intimate knowledge of local issues enhancing ECHO's credibility vis-à-vis partners and other donors;
- Familiarity with political and developmental issues, leading to informed intervention choices
- Ability to provide ECHO Brussels with informed policy advice for higher-level decision making;
- Advocacy and advice to donors, partners, beneficiaries and media.

#### **6.4.2 Roads**

Road construction can have both positive and negative impacts and these are usually significant. The Team observed no evidence of a negative road impact but, on the contrary, populations affected by the World Vision constructed/rehabilitated roads in Herat province enthusiastically informed the Team of their many positive impacts, which included:

- reduction in the price of inputs (indicated by the fact that the price of sweets had fallen by one third!);
- reduction in the cost of taking their produce to market (so increasing their margin of profit);
- the possibility to jointly hire road trucks for the delivery of produce and the carriage back of production inputs;
- the fact that they do not necessarily now have to transport commodities by donkey translated into a saving of both time and the cost of accommodation/meals in the market towns;
- the greater ease with which they can receive medical assistance (patient to doctor or *vice versa*);
- the greater ease with which their children can access education and (suggested by the Evaluator) become exposed to new ideas.

The immediate short-term impact of road construction was stated as the significant improvement in incomes generated through CFW or FFW, while roads present a very

valuable visibility tool with placards strategically presented at the beginning and end of the roads as well as every few kilometres. The Team did not visit road constructions entering forest areas but the risk of road-related deforestation should not be forgotten in future interventions.

### **6.4.3 Impact on the environment**

All mass movements of people have an impact on the environment, mostly negative and usually involving deforestation from firewood collection. ECHO has not specifically intervened in the environmental sector and there would seem to have been no specific mandate for it to have done so, other than as means of creating CFW/FFW for the affected population, both displaced and local. In the latter respect, interventions in rubbish and ditch cleaning are a positive contribution to the environment. The provision of coal (mined directly by ACTED in the North of the country) should also be seen as a small contribution to the reduction of wood-cutting and the burning of animal manure.

No negative environmental impacts of ECHO intervention were observed by the Team although the sinking of new wells could have fallen into this category through uninformed location and inappropriate depth. The water table in Afghanistan has fallen significantly over the last four to five years and will take many years to recover, if ever. New wells tend to be sunk to lower levels and can constitute a ‘theft’ of water from existing wells which may not be recharged as water tables rise again. The poor, who cannot afford to re-sink their wells, again face a situation in which the ‘poor become poorer’.

The solution to this problem is developmental and requires return to and updating of the Afghanistan Government Water Regulations, written in the 1960s and not, as yet, updated. The regulatory framework needs to be accompanied by a thorough Hydro-geological survey as recommended in Footnote<sup>77</sup> below and, with an estimated cost of €8 to 10 million, is not within ECHO’s mandate. The proper approach for ECHO with regard to ground water exploitation is to employ its own (or hired in) technical experts who have the capacity for serious hydrological survey and preferably good knowledge of the country.

New wells in grazing lands create a ‘pull’ effect on livestock herds which over-graze surrounding pastures. This should be taken as a warning to those considering early return of herders to sensitive ecological areas and raises the need for serious study of the natural resource base (including ground water reserves) before embarking on ill-informed intervention.

Intervention in the construction of latrines and the return of ‘night soil’ to the land, while lauded by this Team, should also not be taken lightly bearing in mind the build-up of harmful trace elements, particularly mercury, which can re-enter the food chain at concentrations higher than those acceptable to the human body.

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<sup>77</sup> **Wilding,J and Moghadam.S** *Elements for a European Commission Post-conflict strategy in the field of Food Security in Afghanistan*, CDR Resources Ltd., Kabul, March 2002.

#### 6.4 Sustainability

General Objective **d**), as presented in the programme Logical Framework (see **Table A. Results**), was stated as:

‘To carry out short-term rehabilitation and construction work, especially on infrastructure and equipment, in close association with local structures, with a view to **i**) facilitating the arrival of relief, **ii**) preventing the impact of the crisis worsening, **iii**) starting to help those affected to regain a minimum level of self-sufficiency, taking long-term development objectives into account.’

The payment of project beneficiaries in food or cash for work has gone a long way to meeting criteria **ii**) with respect to short-term sustenance and shelter while many of the project products have assured criteria **iii**) with regard to such as longer-term potable water supply, irrigation, housing and livelihoods. Criteria **i**) has certainly been met in the construction/rehabilitation of communications infrastructure.

While sustainability *per se* is not a major objective of humanitarian or emergency response, ‘taking long-term development objectives into account’ is important and, as some CFW/FFW beneficiaries articulated to the Team, they worked on the projects with the aim, not only of short-term gain, but of producing tangible community assets. In the view of the Team, there is no excuse for such assets to be unsustainable through poor implementation and it is unfair, to communities who have worked on their production, to hand-over such poor quality assets.

While the quality of many project outputs, notably in the shelter and WATSAN sectors were of a very high quality; some were not. This is best illustrated by reference to the poor construction/rehabilitation of some roads notably in valley bottoms. Roads built on rock in the mountains were relatively good (although occasionally requiring more attention to drainage and bank erosion) but those ECHO funded roads built on fragile substrates in valley bottoms suffered from a lack of proper preparation down to parent material and inadequate compaction of mixed aggregate layers (with watering) in stages of appropriate thickness. In simple terms, the projects have done nothing more than flattened existing ground and, with minimum compression of that ground or subsequent layers, then proceeded to cover the easement with gravel. The result is the pleasing, but short-term, appearance of a final surface that will not last more than one season without annual maintenance (re-gravelling and compaction) by the community, a work which is realistically beyond their practical and financial capacity.

The issue was frequently justified by implementing partners, and by ECHO itself, with the usual reference to primary project purpose (a vehicle for CFW/FFW).

The Team noticed widespread confusion between the terms Cash for Work (CFW) and Income Generating Activity (IGA), the former having no sustainability criteria while the latter which should lead to sustainable economic activity. Some IGAs had not benefited from a pre-examination of market possibilities but represented a simplistic assessment of what was considered possible on the production side. Sustainable incomes are not possible in non-existent market places.

## 7. Cross-cutting issues

### 7.1 LRRD

LRRD finds its roots in Complementarity (see **Section 5.3**) since the linkage can take the form, not only of a continuum (linked in time series), but also of contiguum (linked in time parallel).

Historically, since its arrival in Afghanistan in 1995, ECHO has enjoyed very close cooperation with what was **DG 1B** (through the EC's Uprooted Peoples Representative Office in Peshawar) and are now **DGs RELEX** and **AIDCO** (through the EC Delegation in Kabul). This, probably the best example of such cooperation in the Commission, is (and was) due to the involvement of Afghan experienced personalities involved and their capacities to take responsibility for particular sectors or geographic locations<sup>78</sup>. The two offices in Afghanistan are now, however, not only often working in separate locations but the Delegation is now largely working within specific Government frameworks and policy spheres which are different from those of ECHO.

ECHO has elaborated three criteria for defining when it is appropriate to exit<sup>79</sup>. The first is when basic requirements for sustaining the lives and dignity of those affected by conflict or calamity are met and surpassed, such as described in the SPHERE standards<sup>80</sup>. The second is when sufficient commitment by other donors and humanitarian actors has been solicited to continue and maintain aid. The third is when the situation on the ground necessitates a forced exit due to worsening conditions, for example through risk of loss of life to personnel.

In the health sector, mixed results are expected for the success of LRRD between ECHO and the Delegation. In the National Indicative Programme for Afghanistan,<sup>81</sup> the EU states a commitment to take over ECHO-funded health programmes that give longer-term support. Although other Commission services have successfully taken over support to one health NGO working in the East, it has failed to do so in Ghor province.

The Team considers, therefore, that the type of linkage referred to in the Regulation would not seem to constitute a real possibility for ECHO and the other Commission services in Afghanistan, other than in the case of certain interventions in sectors where the scale and type of project is similar for both services. A good example would be the case of irrigation canals rehabilitated by ECHO but which need follow-up in terms of significant engineering works to guarantee sustainable supply of water. In this example the necessary works would easily fall under the umbrella of the appropriate budget lines managed by the Delegation, namely those for Rehabilitation and Food Security.

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<sup>78</sup> (in the 1990s: ECHO – urban; DG 1B – rural).

<sup>79</sup> Helchman, CJ. 20<sup>th</sup> December 2001. ECHO Strategy 2002: discussion paper on defining general guidelines for ECHO's Exit Strategy.

<sup>80</sup> SPHERE Minimum Standards. Available from url: <http://www.sphereproject.org>.

<sup>81</sup> European Commission External Relations Directorate General (2003) National Indicative Programme of European Community Support 2003-2003 Between Afghanistan and the European Community. Adopted by the Commission on February 11<sup>th</sup> 2003.

The requirement of ECHO to remain independent of Government control<sup>82</sup> is not entirely commensurate with the Delegation's (and international community's) imperative to support the incumbent regime. ECHO partners are frequently also those of the Delegation and, more recently, partners of the GoA's internationally supported National Solidarity Programme (NSP), which is clearly political. This has the potential to raise certain contradictions. While the Team considers that the future success of Afghanistan lies in its continued support and recognition of the GoA's legality by the international community, it also respects ECHO's legal mandate on what amounts to the fundamental humanitarian principle of independence.

ECHO's desire would seem to be that of an independent humanitarian guarantor of those populations (of which there are many) who fall through the Government/International Community safety-net. Certain Government ministers stated to the Team that it does not find acceptable a situation in which such a parallel independent operation while, in fact, entertaining it as a reality because it needs the aid. This real-life example of contiguity and eventual continuum will, of course continue but it is unfortunate that it does so under such circumstances.

While ECHO can, and does, practise contiguity with non-Commission bodies such as USAID, World Bank, it now needs to be even more proactive in moving this on to the continuum phase and informing/preparing its implementing partners to follow more developmental themes. Again, the Team does not raise great hopes of success, not because through any fault of ECHO, whose attempts at LRRD are considered to be laudable, but because the International Organisations (UN, WB etc) again have their own agendas which do not necessarily correspond with those of ECHO intervention.

The hope for real LRRD lies with ECHO's beneficiary communities. Certain projects, such as rural feeder roads, irrigation canals, wells and potable water distribution systems, which have a clear time-frame of works and tangible structures for hand-over to the community, present the type of core interventions which ECHO may be well advised to concentrate upon in a reduced scope of work in the forthcoming Global Plan for 2004.

## 7.2 IDPs

**7.2.1 The IDP Problem:** Despite considerable reductions (to which ECHO has made a significant contribution) in the scale of its internally displaced population, the IDP question remains one of the most enduring humanitarian problems in Afghanistan. The international community has become more focused in 2003 (judging from the proliferation of studies being carried out<sup>83</sup>) to look into solutions from different sectoral perspectives<sup>84</sup>. The emphasis is on promoting return and exploring alternative *in situ* livelihoods where return is not imminently possible.

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<sup>82</sup> Which is essential in order for ECHO to fulfil its legal mandate granted by the European Council of Ministers.

<sup>83</sup> Some of these are ECHO-financed, eg. Land Rights in Crisis: restoring Tenure Security in Afghanistan; by Liz Alden Wily. Afghanistan Research and Evaluation Unit (AREU) Issues Paper Series, March 2003;

<sup>84</sup> MRRD/UN Study – Return from the South; VARA study, in collaboration with CORDAID, January 2003: “An assessment of economic opportunities for Kuchi Internally Displaced Persons in Maywand and Panjway Districts”.

Less positive is the Government's attitude, which does not consider the problem a priority for its own intervention, although a Return Commission has been set up in the North under joint MRRD/UN leadership.

### **7.2.2 Humanitarian support to IDPs**

The impact of support is mixed according to population groups. Assistance to IDPs in camps (initially estimated at over 400 000<sup>85</sup> but now reduced to some 210 000 individuals<sup>86</sup>) is only a temporary solution while support to the return of some 400 000 IDPs (largely to Kabul, Nangahar, Kunduz, Parwan and Baghlan provinces<sup>87</sup>) has had a significant impact on reducing the amount of aid in the IDP settlements.

Coverage of the programme has left some gaps due to insufficient monitoring of IDP (and refugee) returns to some areas because of security constraints and insufficient data to show whether return has been sustainable. It is possible that some, perhaps many, returnees have been forced into secondary migration due to unfavourable return conditions such as ongoing conflict, unresolved land issues and inadequate grazing for nomadic populations. There is also believed to be a considerable number (estimated at 100 000) of IDPs who are not assisted in camps and have not managed to return to any home or find alternative livelihoods in other locations<sup>88</sup>. These people are thought to be living in difficult circumstances yet, due to the prevailing security problems in certain provinces, they are not the specific target for assistance by any donor group (including ECHO). Finding durable solutions for IDP 'remainees' is likely to be the focus of international and government effort over the next few years. ECHO strategy does not currently address this, but it is encouraged to do so, in its advocacy role.

It is not possible to distinguish between IDP and refugee returnees in the high return areas in which ECHO has intervened due to the fact that they are now integrated. As noted in Section 7.3 below, ECHO reintegration projects have targeted beneficiaries according to need rather than to preconceived categories in areas such as Kabul and the Shomali Plains, which have absorbed high numbers of returnees. These beneficiaries have greatly benefited from ECHO assistance, both individually in the case of shelter assistance and from projects targeted at community infrastructure.

A predominant obstacle to IDP return is land tenure, identified by AREU as one of the underlying causes of conflict and obstacles to peace. The ultimate solution of the IDP problem, therefore, is closely linked to a synchronised approach to resolving land issues and reducing conflict. This would indicate the need for better links between ECHO and development aid.

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<sup>85</sup> UNHCR statistics – August 2003.

<sup>86</sup> UNHCR is currently undertaking a registration of IDPs in the 5 southern camps to get a more accurate count. The registration has had to be postponed several times due to opposition on the part of the IDPs, who fear that being counted will lead to a reduction in assistance once it becomes clear that many of those formerly registered are no longer actually staying in the camps.

<sup>87</sup> UNHCR statistics – August 2003.

<sup>88</sup> According to UNAMA.

**7.2.3 Approaches for Solutions:** UNHCR has the lead role in caring for IDPs in camps and, in conjunction with Government counterparts and other UN bodies, is seeking solutions through the Consultative Group and other mechanisms. However, solutions of a developmental nature do not fall within UNHCR's mandate. Furthermore, UNHCR's policy of insisting that the Government must take the lead despite the limitations of its capacity, is causing the process to move too slowly.

IDPs themselves will make rational decisions to return to places of origin based upon :

- Reduction of conflict in return areas;
- Impact of development projects in return areas;
- Improved conditions (grazing, water availability) in drought-affected areas;
- Security of land tenure;
- Availability of land for the landless.

Solutions will depend on land reform, the improvement of conditions in the drought-affected areas, conflict-resolution and improvements to the justice system and require concerted action between the Commission and other international donors. As with IDP situations in other countries, most of the solutions will take time and should be matched with the pace of development and improvement to livelihoods. ECHO can usefully advocate, with other Commission services and other donors, for specific areas of return that would benefit from development intervention to expedite the return process.

A simplified schema, presented below, encapsulates the main problems with regard to IDPs and proposes some possible avenues of solution. These will need a concerted, long-term approach, led by the government with the support of the international community.

### **7.3 Pre-conceived categories**

ECHO's objective, in Afghanistan, is to provide life-sustaining assistance to those most in need, irrespective of whether they fall into pre-conceived categories (such as refugees and IDPs) or the local population. It is easier to identify pre-conceived categories of the population (and therefore easier to design implementation strategies to assist them) but it is very much harder to identify (and assist) vulnerable individuals.

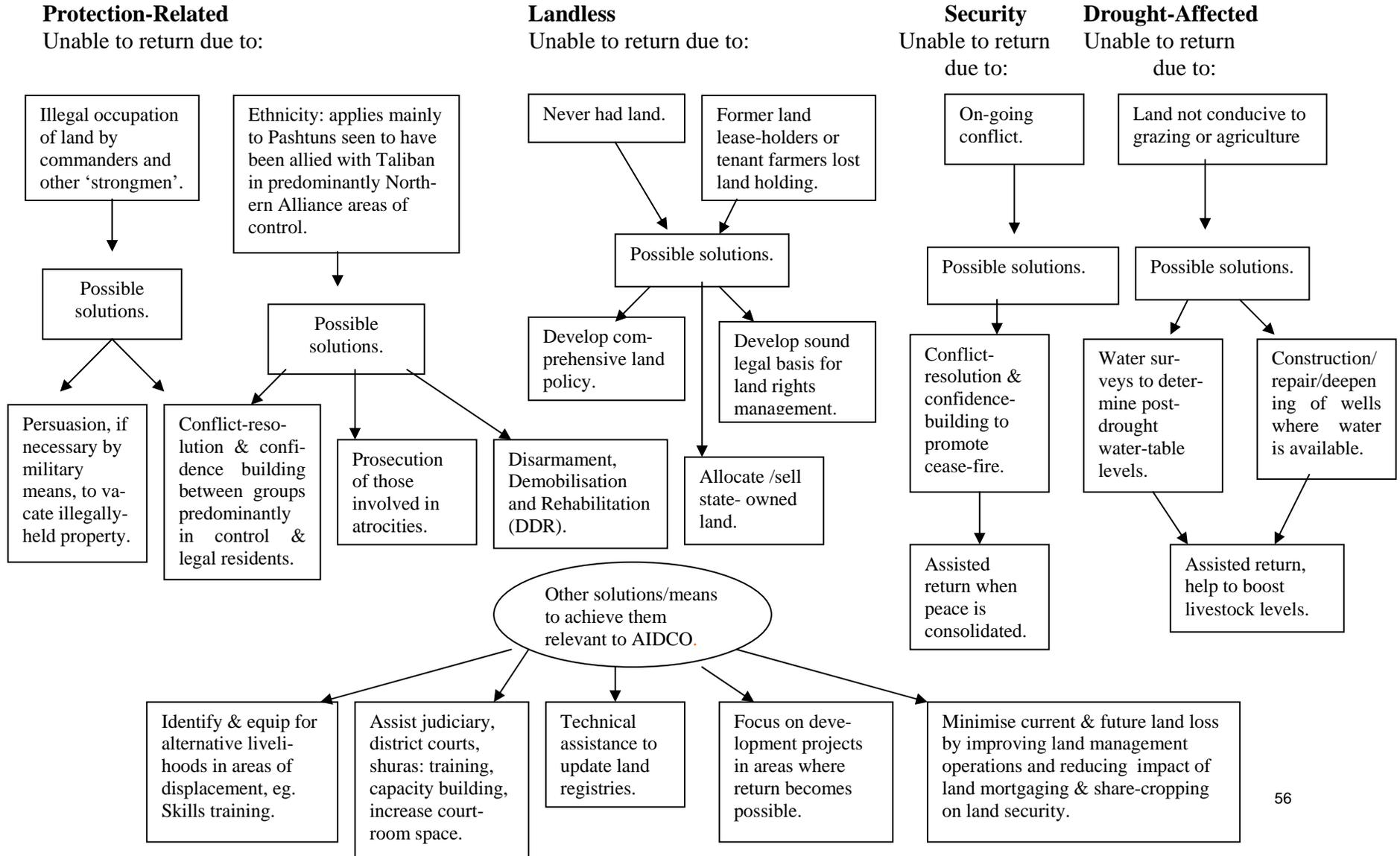
In ECHO's Afghan programmes, refugees and IDPs have indeed been singled out for assistance and certain projects have been specifically targeted to support refugees, IDPs and returnees as exclusive beneficiaries of, for example, return assistance and Advice/Information and Legal Aid Centres. It would appear therefore, that ECHO's policy objective of treating affected populations without regards to pre-conceived categories has not been strictly followed in the case of Afghanistan.

This said, evidence from visits to field sites, ECHO documentation and discussions with beneficiaries reveal that ECHO has made every effort to include other vulnerable people in its projects. Some examples include:

- Selection of beneficiaries for shelter activities on the basis of greatest need, without distinguishing between returnees or local populations;

## In Search of Solutions for IDPs

*A summary of main problems and possible solutions, to be addressed by the GOA with the assistance of the international community  
In the context of LRRD*



- Selection of communities in return areas for irrigation, WATSAN, health, skills training and IGAs which benefit the whole community;
- Drought mitigation in host country areas heavily impacted by the refugee presence that will benefit affected communities through improved access to water;
- Winterisation projects targeting the urban poor as well as returnees and IDPs;
- Provision of health services aimed at improving morbidity in the poorest and remotest communities without discriminating between local and returnee populations;
- Social programmes for women and children towards improving livelihood skills and addressing human rights, gender vulnerability and exploitation irrespective of their displacement status;
- ECHO has also demonstrated a willingness to consider activities in drought-affected areas within Afghanistan that would benefit not only returning IDPs but also the local community.

These facts manifest that, while ECHO has adopted an approach that does distinguish between categories of people, it nevertheless tries to assist those in most need when it comes to the detail of project elaboration. The Team considers this to have been a good pragmatic approach in the circumstances prevailing during the evaluated time period (heavy workload, understaffing, large funds disbursement, need to identify large numbers of beneficiaries) but that a more ‘needs approach’ should become appropriate as such pressures moderate.

### **7.3.1 Assistance to refugees and returnees**

Refugees, whether in countries of asylum or returning to Afghanistan, do not necessarily represent the most vulnerable segment of the population. The fact that they have been able to travel to neighbouring countries is in itself an indicator that they have had sufficient means to leave. Indeed, many have managed to find employment in countries of asylum (Pakistan and Iran) and can be considered partially or wholly independent.

The reason for assisting this category of people is both to afford them international protection and to help host governments bear the impact (economic and environmental) of large refugee burdens. By assisting them to return, ECHO’s objectives are twofold:

- a) to contribute to repatriation - the most desirable of durable solutions;
- b) to anchor returnees in their home communities and ensure the sustainability of their return.

### **7.3.2 Assistance to IDPs**

ECHO financing of projects to assist this vulnerable category of the population in settlements within Afghanistan where they number an estimated 210 000<sup>89</sup> is logical: it helps GoA to bear the burden of assisting large numbers of its people and the basic level of assistance offered is designed to avoid a ‘pull’ of other sections of the population towards the camps. While such temporary assistance does not constitute a sustainable

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<sup>89</sup> Down from 700 000 at the beginning of 2003.

solution, the most pressing consideration has, from the beginning, been to save and preserve lives and to prevent further displacement.

### **7.3.3 Vulnerable groups**

In the most recent funding decision<sup>90</sup>, ECHO stated that particular focus would be on helping women, children, single parent families, the elderly and the infirm.

Significant numbers of women have been widowed in Afghanistan<sup>91</sup> in recent years and are vulnerable through such as sexual exploitation, lack of coping mechanisms and reduced income. ECHO has targeted female-headed households through Shelter, CFW, Social and Income Generation programmes.

The needs of children are addressed through Health (although the particular health needs of adolescents requires more consideration) and through the SC-UK 'Support to working children' programme and the previously funded EMDH psychosocial programmes. The needs of the handicapped have been addressed directly through support to one NGO (HI prosthetics centre) while the needs of the elderly are not explicitly addressed in any ECHO-funded programmes.

The disabled are not addressed explicitly in any of the Primary Health Care programmes but one NGO (of the few organisations which address the needs of the handicapped through IGAs and prosthetics) was funded by ECHO under decisions not examined in this evaluation<sup>92</sup>.

Social safety nets for vulnerable groups rely on cultural/familial networks in the absence of government systems but this places an undue strain on those families or networks.

### **7.3.4 Other categories**

The absolute destitute, arguably the most needy, have been obliged to remain *in situ* without the means to move to areas where they may improve their livelihoods. ECHO is well aware of the existence of such groups but, given the difficulties in identifying them, especially in rural areas, is unable to assist.

ECHO's policy to limit shelter repair assistance to those with land title represents a dilemma since land is a capital asset whose owners, by definition, do not constitute the most vulnerable. In consultation with a number of actors, the Team concludes that the limitation is justified in that there is a risk of compounding the existing land tenure problems and might encourage the proliferation of illegal land grabbing for the purpose of gaining assistance. In many cases, and in order that they may benefit from shelter assistance, district authorities have granted a temporary 'right of use' to people who have been living on land for some time and ECHO partners have considered them as eligible

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<sup>90</sup> ECHO/TPS/210/2003/04000.

<sup>91</sup> Azerbaijani.Moghaddam, S. (2002) Report of the EC Rapid reaction mechanism assessment mission. Afghanistan gender guidelines. April 2002.

<sup>92</sup> It was noted in the debriefing meeting with ECHO Kabul that none of these agencies had approached ECHO for funding.

beneficiaries. Again, the international community has to make a trade-off between increasing available housing stock and minimising the risk of future conflict over land tenure.

ECHO is currently assessing a project proposal that aims at assisting groups of homeless people squatting in public buildings (mainly public offices unusable in their current state) in Kabul. The objective of the project is to rehabilitate to minimal standards in order to provide the homeless with shelter over the winter and Kabul Municipality has given verbal assurance that it would not evict them during the winter<sup>93</sup>. Within the same project is a component to assist women in need of protection – victims of abuse or in an otherwise extremely vulnerable situation – by placing them in rented ‘safe houses’ where they would be cared for and protected by specially trained female Afghan carers. The proposal illustrates a genuine effort to target assistance to the most needy and vulnerable (the poorest of the poor) and to ensure their survival over this difficult period.

### **Conclusion**

ECHO’s intervention decisions in Afghanistan have, by definition, targeted pre-conceived categories of people. This targeting is a departure from ECHO’s policy of ‘no prior categorisation’ but is considered to have been relevant to the circumstances prevailing at the time. Nevertheless, ECHO and its partners have worked hard to address the humanitarian needs of vulnerable populations beyond those categories, especially in the re-integration phase.

### **7.4 Gender**

Gender roles and related inequalities in Afghan society have the potential to inhibit the benefits of humanitarian assistance and development. It is known, for example, that the single most influential factor that leads to improved health outcomes for a population is the availability of primary education for women and girl children. That education has been restricted to many women who do not benefit from literacy skills. The restrictions placed on women limit the recruitment of female service providers as well as restricting their ability to develop independence in livelihood mechanisms.

On the whole, ECHO funded programmes have made a concerted effort to address the needs of women. In the livelihood and water sectors, organizations have more strategically designed activities to redress gender inequality through the inclusion of women in road building/CFW programmes or through the development of women’s shura’s. Health services address gender inequities by assisting the neglected reproductive health needs of women and children but do somewhat neglect the specific health needs of men.

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<sup>93</sup> ECHO and the partner are insisting on obtaining the assurance in writing.

The international community has failed to openly acknowledge the issue of sexual and gender-based violence, thereby setting it back from achieving the Minimum Initial Service Package (MISP)<sup>94</sup> in meeting the reproductive health needs of refugees and displaced people. This package is ascribed to by an interagency task force including many ECHO partners and the UN. Dealing with such an issue is fraught with obstacles in a society where access to appropriate justice is severely lacking.

Survivors of sexual abuse have in the past been ostracised and persecuted (stoned or beaten) as though they were players in extramarital affairs. Sexual matters are not openly discussed between men and women in Afghan society but this should not deter ECHO from addressing the issue both psycho-socially and medically in order to meet the standards to which partner organisations are signatories. ECHO plans to embark on this issue through funding a UNHCR initiative to address sexual violence through the establishment of safe houses. In addition, SC-UK has acknowledged the sexual exploitation of children in their proposal to assist working children of Kabul and Mazar. Opportunities exist for ECHO to address sexual violence through these two programmes.

Since the gender needs of men are often neglected in ECHO funded programmes because 'gender' can be mistakenly interpreted as 'addressing inequalities for women', a more strategic gender approach needs to be encouraged. ECHO highlights gender as a crosscutting issue, yet no ECHO policy or working paper exists<sup>95</sup> by which to guide gendered planning.

### **7.5 Protection/human rights**

ECHO's choice of protection activities has been appropriate in the context of minimising human rights abuse and of promoting minimal human rights standards. Assistance as a tool of protection has been instrumental in sustaining a minimum level of livelihood for those in camps unable to assure their own survival and in ensuring safety for those in transit on their return home.

Interventions funded in this sector, which include support to ICRC, support to UNHCR protection activities and the funding of Legal Aid Centres in Pakistan and Afghanistan through the Norwegian Refugee Council (NRC), are low-key but with a high impact that is not easily discernible. Support involves the funding of key staff to carry out protection functions, such as conducting visits to detainees in Afghan prisons to ensure treatment is in line with international standards. ICRC reports that the number of detainees has dropped from over 3,000 at the end of 2001 to just over one thousand today. Other activities include dissemination of international humanitarian law (IHL), intervening with local and Government officials in reporting human rights abuses or lapses in agreed protection mechanisms and to propose remedial action, family tracing, monitoring protection in refugee and IDP camps, monitoring screening mechanisms and helping those in need of legal advice or assistance. It was not possible for the Team to evaluate these activities and ICRC does not provide a breakdown of the ECHO funding below the country programme contributions.

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<sup>94</sup> Available at url: <http://www.ippf.org/resource/refugeehealth/manual/htm>

<sup>95</sup> although the EC *Afghanistan, gender guidelines* (April 2002) are a useful overview

## 7.6 Security of aid workers

ECHO contributes well to meeting its obligation (as stated in **Regulation 1257/96, Article 2c**) to promote security of aid workers whilst promoting the continued delivery of humanitarian assistance. Most ECHO partners were noted to be security conscious, with appropriate and adaptive security plans and guidelines in place.

In order to promote safe delivery of humanitarian aid, ECHO supports ICRC and PACTEC flight operations in Afghanistan and until recently the UNHAS flight operations. The availability of these flights is appropriate as demonstrated in the number of humanitarian agencies that utilize the services (see fiches for contracts ECHO/TPS/210/-2002/22015, 2003/04019, 2003/04011). Around 5 500 passengers are carried per month between the three flight carriers. Provision of flights promotes access to areas less accessible over land due to insecurity and poor road conditions (particularly in the winter).

Flight frequency has improved and, with the re-opening of airstrips in some more remote regions, services now cover 23 destinations. Through ECHO funding, MSF-Spain in collaboration with PACTEC has rehabilitated one air strip and will possibly address Panjab (both in Bamyan province). Such initiatives will enable continued humanitarian assistance and project staffing by ensuring medical evacuation etc. if required.

ICRC flight operations are funded primarily for the delivery of ICRC humanitarian assistance and, accordingly, a cost recovery scheme has not been introduced such that vacant seats are available to international staff of registered NGOs at no cost. UNHAS flights operate a cost-recovery system that is slightly more expensive at the point of delivery than the PACTEC (Care) flights but both these serve to reduce abuse by passengers of the air service (particularly last minute cancellations or 'no shows'). The fees charged (30% of cost) help programme activities to continue for longer. UNHAS flights are used by all sectors of humanitarian community including the diplomatic and media sectors. UNHAS is also funded by USAID, DFID, and the German Government - in the last funding period, ECHO funded some 40% of the UNHAS flight operations with 15% usage by ECHO partners.

ECHO and its partners expressed concerns regarding the use of UNHAS flights for transportation of military personnel that continued up to June 2003. An agreement that Coalition use of flights would cease in mid-May was not adhered to<sup>96</sup> and consequently some NGOs ceased use of the flights. This issue has now been resolved, although it took some time for the UN to respond despite high-level intervention. ECHO will undoubtedly require assurance that such violations of impartial humanitarian assistance do not occur under future funding agreements.

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<sup>96</sup> Reasons given being lack of funds to move PRT military personnel as recorded in "Summary of ECHO Partners Meeting, Kabul 17<sup>th</sup> June 2003".

An initiative, widely applauded by NGO partners, is the initiation of the Afghan NGO Security Office (ANSO)<sup>97</sup> following concern that UN security advice may be politically driven. As a result, the advice provided through ANSO is considered to be useful and impartial. Other services available through ANSO, such as the conducting of property security surveys and the forthcoming watchman training, further promote security of aid personnel. ANSO has however, suffered rapid staff turnover due to reported poor salary incentives.

The ANSO office visited in Herat is not performing adequately as a result of a lack of expatriate presence; NGO partners commented that the weekly meetings do not take place and that information is not flowing as well as it did when there was an expatriate presence. On the other hand, the Mazar office presented the Team with a serious, honest and apparently accurate briefing which confirmed NGO confidence in ANSO in the area.

### **7.7 HIV/AIDS and other communicable diseases**

HIV/AIDS carries a great stigma, is an obstacle to all sectors of development and its rapid transmission facilitated by conflict and humanitarian disaster. Socio-demographic factors include: massive population movement through displacement and return; a large economic migrant population; intravenous drug use practices in neighbouring Pakistan particularly along the borders of Afghanistan; incidents of sexual assault pertaining to conflict; the existence of a sex industry both within Afghanistan and in neighbouring Iran and Pakistan. Medical factors include the presence of STIs which facilitate transmission of the virus and poor immunological status related to poor nutrition and an epidemic of TB.

Despite the presence of numerous factors that facilitate the rapid transmission of HIV/AIDS, the issue has been massively neglected in the delivery of humanitarian assistance in Afghanistan. In the Health sector, universal precautions are put in place, although the effectiveness varies from site to site.

The presence of STDs, which facilitate the transmission of HIV, is evident through clinic records and indicates that unsafe sexual practices do occur. Diagnosis and management of STDs is poor and although most health facilities stock condoms as a means of prevention, only those in urban areas attract patients who are interested in using them (clinicians report that patients who do take condoms use them to prevent pregnancy and not primarily for prevention of STDs).

Tuberculosis (TB) is endemic in Afghanistan and is thought to cause 16 000 deaths per year<sup>98</sup>. Treatment requires meticulous planning and long-term commitment to ensure completion of treatment (4 to 6 months per patient) in order to avoid development of multi-drug resistance which can have enormous public health implications. ECHO is

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<sup>97</sup> ECHO/TPS/210/2002/22011.

<sup>98</sup> Sharp, TW. Burkle, FM. Vaughn, AF. Chotani, R Brennan, RJ. (2002) Challenges and Opportunities for Humanitarian Relief in Afghanistan. *Clinical and Infectious Diseases*, S215-28. From url: <http://www.journals.uchicago.edu/CID/journal/issues/v34nS5/020228/020228.text.html> [accessed on 15/08/2003]

funding some TB programmes which should be carefully monitored to avoid such resistance and the missing of doses by patients must be discouraged.

### **7.8 Participation**

The balance of responsibility to involve community and beneficiary participation has been mixed in sectors. Some efforts have been made to solicit involvement and promote ownership by communities in development of project activities, such as in the Goal social programme for women, where women's requests for assistance with kitchen gardens has been met by the development of a proposal for funds to meet this need. An ACF programme in Ghor province adapted a programme to provide potable drinking water in response to community requests for this along side water for irrigation.

In the health sector, creation and involvement of health committees is more developed in some projects than others. The role of such health committees has yet to be developed, but all committees were established after clinics were established. There is little evidence that communities were involved in the location of facilities.

A more concerted effort is required to move beneficiary/community involvement into the sphere of the project planning cycle and to develop the ability of such individuals to effectively represent their communities in this capacity. As discussed in **Section 5.5**, the inclusion of community representatives in the selection of beneficiaries (individuals or communities) will promote more appropriate targeting and identification of the most vulnerable. The development of mechanisms to ensure community/beneficiary feedback would promote more appropriate targeting and would promote ownership of programmes by the community.

### **7.9 Disaster preparedness**

Preparedness has been demonstrated most effectively in the health sector through plans to respond rapidly to outbreaks of infectious diseases. MSF-H, for example, responded rapidly to a cholera outbreak in mid-September 2003 with WHO in Spin Boldak and limited the case load to 35 with 7 fatalities through establishment of a cholera unit. MSF-B in the North has a demonstrable Early Warning System and has been able to respond to, and identify, cases of infectious diseases within three days of reports being received.

Disaster Preparedness in Afghanistan has, however, been largely ignored by ECHO partners as a specific intervention in most sectors and the Team consider this to be a sector in which ECHO could usefully introduce a link with development through helping communities to be better prepared for the disasters which strike Afghanistan annually.

### **7.10 Donor communication strategy and visibility**

ECHO promotes visibility of its activities with a specific budget line. Although not all agencies are very imaginative in this area, most ECHO-funded projects are relatively easily identifiable. Recent security threats, however, may require a modification (which ECHO accepts) of the approach since the recent explicit threats against foreign organisations and those (expatriates and Afghans) who work for them. This is a particular problem in the South and, to a lesser extent, in the North.

## 8. Conclusions

### Level 3 – Intervention strategy

**8.1 Project selection** - The complementarity of intra-ECHO interventions has, to a large extent, been achieved through ECHO's in-depth review of proposals via its 'triage' process, but this is limited by NGO-led geographic preferences as well as the latter's preference for certain types of project. ECHO thus finds it difficult to intervene in locations of its choice and sometimes in projects of its choice. The process<sup>99</sup> is not conducive to ideal targeting and treats the NGOs as the experts in both the country and in their subject. Consideration of the experience, expertise and institutional memory of some of the NGOs interviewed by the Team would contradict this assertion.

**8.2 Coordination with the EC Delegation** - The facts that the other Commission services' interventions in Afghanistan are integrated within the Government framework, the latter's preferred geographic locations and the inflexibility of RELEX/AIDCO funding mechanisms restrict their ability to complement their activities with those of ECHO. There have, however, been opportunities to promote complementarity in the Health sector and, accordingly, for ECHO to prepare the ground for true LRRD. This has been achieved in some regions but the differences in the funding calendars<sup>100</sup> have made it difficult for a smooth transition from ECHO to other Commission services' funding. The willingness of ECHO to 'bridge' funding gaps as the MoH BPHS contracting mechanism is introduced, (in order to assure smooth transition) is laudable.

**8.3** The scale of Delegation intervention since the September 11<sup>th</sup> 2001 incident, has now made it significantly more important than ECHO and difficult to include ECHO considerations into its programming. It would now seem incumbent upon ECHO to programme around Delegation thinking if and when appropriate and if such intervention falls within ECHO's perceived mandate.

### Level 2 – Operational strategy

**8.4 Pakistan** - Funding of the same activities continues to be necessary in Pakistan albeit at reduced budgetary levels commensurate with levels of need until such time that the Governments of Afghanistan, Pakistan and Iran, in collaboration with UNHCR have reached a post-2005 immigration framework.

**8.5 Iran** - The Team acknowledges the complexities of operating in Iran particularly in relation to the still imperfect deportation screening system and the unclear status of undocumented Afghans. Accordingly, there is a need for ECHO to remain engaged in Iran for a similar timeframe to that recommended in **8.4** above, for a regional solution to the refugee/migrant issue, to advocate for enhanced protection measures aimed at safeguarding Afghans' rights and to establish Legal Aid Centres.

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<sup>99</sup> About which ECHO can do little if NGOs of the required quality refuse to work on ECHO preferred projects in ECHO preferred locations.

<sup>100</sup> Parts of the other Commission services' strategy being developed in September 2003 will not be implemented until 2005 (the EC 2005 Strategy for Afghanistan).

**8.6 Afghanistan** - The Team considers ECHO's support to the ongoing process of refugee/IDP return and reintegration to be a key contribution to the political process. The highly likely reality is that insecurity in the country will not allow the return, to their communities, of significant numbers of IDPs presents ECHO with the prospect of dealing with the ongoing issues for the foreseeable future.

**8.7 Preconceived categories** - Despite stated policy to the contrary, ECHO interventions have necessarily targeted the pre-conceived categories of refugees, returnees, IDPs and those affected by drought, war, natural disaster, poverty, remoteness (both geographically and educationally) and gender but such specific targeting has been found to be justified. ECHO and its partners have, however, worked hard to address the greatest of humanitarian needs of vulnerable populations both within and beyond those categories so discovering and covering the most interesting of needs. To greater or lesser extents, these have included psycho-social issues, parent/child development, prison welfare, tracing, sexual and physical abuse, river bank protection and tree destruction.

**8.8 Specific conditions affecting different localities** - ECHO Brussels is understandably sensitive to the moral issues associated with poppy cultivation and the possibility of European media accusations of its funding for irrigation projects which might 'encourage' cultivation of the crop. Nevertheless, poppy is a rainfed crop<sup>101</sup> which is poverty and lawlessness induced and irrigation can address the former most cost effectively. ECHO's judicious interventions in the sector is supported by the Team and the trade-off should not be unduly influenced by an uninformed European media.

**8.9** ECHO intervention in the increasingly insecure South is difficult to address, the problem being primarily a political one which must be addressed by political means with military solutions becoming increasingly inappropriate to guerrilla/terrorist tactics. The ECHO policy, to intervene in areas only when project monitoring by ECHO staff (local and international) can be assured at the time of contract signature, is fully supported by the Team on the basis that this is public money for which ECHO staff are accountable and could enable the use of European funds for poor quality (or worse) projects. This does limit ECHO's ability to address acute needs. The degree of populations' need in these areas is not currently considered to be life-threatening but this may change.

### **Level 1 – Sector strategy**

**8.10 Health** - ECHO has considered a phase out of health as MoH begins to adopt a developmental approach to the sector. However, at the current level of donor funding to the MoH BPHS scheme, there is still more than a 50% funding gap over the next three years. This suggests that a similar percentage of the Afghan population will have no access to regulated Primary Health Care in the foreseeable future. This is unacceptable, yet there are limitations in the way that ECHO can work in the health sector with the MoH BPHS scheme that would breach ECHO's mandate to act independently of the government.

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<sup>101</sup> Which does, however, benefit from irrigation in terms of yield.

In primary health care programmes, the effectiveness of TBAs in reducing maternal mortality and morbidity is not well understood in Afghanistan. However, in a situation where women rely on female clinicians for health advice, and where maternal mortality is amongst the worst in the world, TBAs for the moment are one way of providing basic health care advice to women. The most effective way to address the poor maternal mortality is through the provision of skilled attendants, as opposed to unskilled attendants.

**8.11 Relevance** – ECHO’s very relevant geographic and sectoral interventions have enabled its partners to reach some of the most vulnerable by the targeting of drought areas, high returnee populations and isolated regions. Selection of the ‘poorest of the poor’ in target populations within those geographic areas is, on occasions, problematic particularly in livelihood and food security (FFW and CFW) projects for which such beneficiaries may be unable to work because of weakness, illness and availability (eg. female-headed households). Agricultural and shelter programmes also present problems for the landless where access and title to land is required.

**8.12** Many interventions have assisted beneficiaries to remain in their communities and have also been important means of providing income to cash-poor populations. Some implementation problems were observed, with delays in obtaining project materials (due to high demand) so occasionally leading to project under-expenditure.

**8.13 Effectiveness** - The work of ECHO’s staff is commendable and particularly so against a background of staff shortage in relation to its enormous work-load. At the time of writing, three TAs and two local assistants are managing live contracts in the order of €100 million.

**8.14** Although some NGOs manage to recruit experienced and capable expatriate staff, there is difficulty in obtaining and maintaining adequate expertise in the field. Although technical skills may be of a high calibre, wider appreciation of the complexities of humanitarian aid in Afghanistan is often lacking. Personnel problems are reflected in rapid staff turnover.

**8.15** Implementing partners have found ECHO to be a flexible and approachable partner who offers valuable support in the elaboration of proposals. Technical advice offered by ECHO TAs was reported to be invaluable and their project monitoring records (Fiche.Ops) are impressive. The few delays in ECHO funding release are commonly related to proposal amendments and NGO delays in providing required information.

### **Crosscutting issues**

**8.16 LRRD** - The requirement of ECHO to remain independent of Government political control is not entirely commensurate with the European Union’s (and international community’s) imperative to support the incumbent regime. While this affects the possibility of LRRD between ECHO and other Commission services, the main obstacles to the creation of linkages are the inflexibility of RELEX/AIDCO funding mechanisms, their administrative calendars and the long lead time between their planning

and implementation. Likewise, linkage with other donor programmes (which frequently have their own agendas) are very often not practical.

**8.17** Linkage with ECHO's beneficiary communities is the area which presents the greatest potential for success. Interventions, such as rural feeder roads, irrigation canals, wells and potable water distribution systems, which have a clear time-frame of works and tangible structures for hand-over to the community constitute project candidates for the good practice of LRRD.

**8.18 Refugees and IDP returnees** - Support to the ongoing process of refugee and IDP return and reintegration is a key contribution to the political process but IDPs are likely to remain an issue in Afghanistan in the medium to long-term future.

**8.19 Gender** - is fairly well addressed in many ECHO programmes, although the definition of gender as an abstract concept is still generally poorly understood. i.e. most programmes focus on redressing the inequalities of women and the gender roles of men tend to be viewed as an obstacle to access women. For example, although health programmes are good in making allowances for women to work through employing male relatives as chaperones, there seems to be little understanding of *why* this is needed (e.g. family honour) and the implications of this on men. Men are traditionally the breadwinners and there are implications on the status of men if their wife is known to be earning more than her husband. Even more simply in operational terms, the reproductive needs of women are highlighted when those of men are not.

**8.20 Protection/respect of International Humanitarian Law** - ECHO's partners' activities in this domain are crucial, not only for the maintenance of international standards but also for their monitoring function in areas to which they have unique access, credibility and expertise. The work load with regard to prisoners and detainees (over 3,000 at the end of 2001 to just over one thousand today) is reducing but support to this vulnerable group will remain an important cornerstone of protection until such time as Afghanistan's law enforcement and judicial institutions can be brought closer to international standards. The Legal Aid Centres are likely to become increasingly relevant and useful to refugees, IDPs and returnees, both within Afghanistan and in Pakistan and Iran.

**8.21 Security of aid workers** – The Afghan NGO Security Office (ANSO) initiative has provided NGOs with an important impartial advice service. It enhances the security of aid workers through its information network and warden system. Support to air operations has been invaluable in improving security, providing safe access to remote regions and a medevac/secuirivac service for aid workers.

**8.22 HIV/AIDS** – To date, HIV/AIDS has been poorly addressed by humanitarian assistance in Afghanistan and the country's instability and displacement has not been recognised as an enabling environment to prevent rapid transmission of the disease.

**8.23 Donor communication strategy and visibility** - ECHO partners are fully aware of the visibility mandate and, although not always imaginative, ECHO-funded programmes are largely identifiable. In light of the direct threat against foreign aid workers, however, partners may wish to reduce visible signs of foreign assistance. ECHO recognise this dilemma and its current lenient approach is appropriate.

## 9. Recommendations

### Level 3 – intervention strategy

**9.1 Project selection** - Further coordination is encouraged between sector specialists within ECHO and the Delegation while the recruitment of TA sector specialists would seem to be fundamental. If it proves difficult to attract such specialists to Afghanistan, ECHO should strengthen its Regional Technical Resource base in Bangkok with Afghan experienced sector experts.

**9.2 Coordination with the EC Delegation** – ECHO does not need to see the other EC services as its natural successors for later uptake of its interventions but should bear the possibilities in mind if and when they exist. Likewise, while ECHO should continue to look for the very few opportunities to link its partners with other donors, it should see LRRD with its beneficiary communities as the more realistic pathway for its own exit.

### Level 2 – operational strategy

**9.3** Funding of the same activities in support of beneficiaries in refugee camps should continue in **Pakistan** at budgetary levels commensurate with levels of need. In **Iran**, while the screening system may be imperfect, it is undoubtedly of greater benefit to Afghans than none at all and ECHO should continue to support the process while advocating for improvements. Close monitoring of developments is recommended to ensure that improvements proposed to the partner are followed up<sup>102</sup>. Monitoring of activities in both countries is likely to continue to require a dedicated ECHO presence to cover them with greater attention to Iran than at present. In **Afghanistan**, on-going support to the process of refugee/IDP return and reintegration should continue with emphasis laid upon projects that are conducive to sustainable return. At the same time, ECHO has to remain engaged with the IDPs ‘trapped’ in the longer term, in the camp situation.

**9.4 Pre-conceived categories** – With reference also to Section 9.8 (Relevance) below, the Team considers that ECHO’s *de facto* dual approach to the targeting of pre-conceived categories of beneficiary is in fact correct and should be continued.

**9.5 Specific conditions affecting different localities** - ECHO must remain sensitive to the real possibility that its irrigation interventions may be exploited for the purpose of poppy cultivation. While not condoning the practice but preparing its defences against the vagaries of possible criticism by the European media, ECHO should continue with its judicious intervention in the supply of water to crop production. The alternative is to just completely forget intervention against poverty and hunger in the rural areas.

**9.6** It is now time for ECHO to address a means of ‘proxy’ intervention in the increasingly insecure South in such a way that it does not initiate a ‘pull’ effect of populations from the insecure to the secure areas. With the withdrawal (at the time of writing) of ICRC, UNHCR and MSF (normally the last to leave) from the insecure areas, the dearth of solutions now necessitates consideration of innovative ideas.

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<sup>102</sup> ECHO September '03 Mission Report.

## **Level 1 – sector strategy**

**9.7 Health** – ECHO is encouraged to reconsider its planned phase out from the Health sector, as conditions therein do not yet meet international minimum standards and a minimum of 50% unmet needs exist. In order to do this, sensitive negotiations will be required with MoH to find a way of working that does not compromise ECHO's independence. This could be through adopting a more strategic, vertical approach to diseases and might include:

- funding rapid-impact projects, such as bed-net distribution programmes;
- surveys to provide health programme planning information;
- training of female clinicians (by short-term consultancies through NGOs, development of a midwifery curriculum and possible training of midwife trainers).

Such programmes should be carefully selected and NGOs should be able to demonstrate how such projects fit within the scope of PHC principles. Good coordination would be required with Government and other donors to avoid overlap. Coordination should also be promoted in service provision to ensure the mainstreaming of disease projects into the wider primary health care framework.

**9.8 Relevance** – ECHO needs to recognise its inability, on occasions, to reach the most vulnerable ('the poorest of the poor') because some targeting, almost by definition, negates their inclusion. This is not a criticism of ECHO targeting but compensation in areas so missed should be continued through such assistance as the allocation of free food aid for those unable to work on FFW/CFW projects.

**9.9** Although impact cannot always be measured, partners can contribute to future measurement of impact indicators through contributing to the collection of baseline data.

**9.10 Effectiveness** - A realistic expectation for effective TA performance in a hard environment would be a ratio of 1 TA per €10 million of contract value managed. ECHO Kabul staff establishment is currently not filled and this needs to be corrected as soon as possible while planning should allow for a decrease in the current ratio with the increase of one extra TA.

**9.11** The Team considers that concentration on and professionalisation of some its better partners is now desirable. ECHO may be well advised to concentrate on the achievement of excellence of such partners through assistance in addressing some of their technical and administrative shortfalls while, at the same time, insisting on professional practices which are accepted as the norm outside the aid sector. Such practices include the scrutiny of partner's technical plans by independent (or ECHO) specialists prior to acceptance of their proposals.

**9.12** ECHO training of NGO field and local personnel in humanitarian assistance management, proposal development, monitoring and reporting could improve their performance as ECHO partners, with the addition of objectives of promoting the retention of staff and improvement in institutional memory.

### **Crosscutting issues**

**9.13 LRRD** – In the prevailing scenario of internationally supported Government policy frameworks and preferred intervention locations, the Team considers that LRRD, is hardly workable between ECHO and the other Commission services in Afghanistan. LRRD possibilities with other donors are also few. Instead, ECHO should advise its partners of their need to move towards more developmental themes and then to become more proactive in exploring the possibilities and modalities for transfer to other donors and to the community itself.

**9.14** Certain projects, such as rural feeder roads, irrigation canals, wells and potable water distribution systems, which have a clear time-frame of works and tangible structures for hand-over to the community present the type of interventions which ECHO may be well advised to concentrate upon in a reduced scope of work in the forthcoming Global Plan for 2004.

**9.15 IDPs** – ECHO can encourage the process of return through the support of better IDP home location information gathering and promote sustainable return/reintegration by funding appropriate return encouragement projects.

**9.16 Gender** - It would be appropriate for ECHO to initiate the development of an issue or policy paper on each of the crosscutting issues. This is particularly urgent for Gender while, at the same time, widening the gender issue beyond just women to include men and the needs of the elderly.

**9.17 Protection/respect of human rights** - Protection support activities will continue to be needed in 2004, albeit at a reduced rate due to the reduction of prison detainees in Afghanistan. Plans by NRC with UNHCR to open up additional Legal Aid Centres in Iran<sup>103</sup> and Afghanistan<sup>104</sup> are considered to meet very real needs and represent an area that ECHO could support in the future. It is intended to link the location of new centres with the legal obstacles to return which have been raised by IDPs currently wishing to return. ECHO should promote activities that include the provision of information to non-returnees regarding existing national and local legal referral mechanisms. This would be of benefit to local populations.

**9.18 Security of aid workers** - Continued support to flight operations is encouraged. ECHO must obtain confirmation from all its institutional partners that their impartiality will not be compromised in the future by such incidents as the transport of military personnel. The continued support is encouraged of the ANSO programme (brought up to its full staff compliment in the planned relevant major cities of Afghanistan).

**9.19 HIV/AIDS and other infectious disease** - ECHO could contribute to improved HIV/AIDS awareness among it's NGO partners through sensitising them (possibly

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<sup>103</sup> To play an instrumental role in the repatriation process from Pakistan by providing Afghans with place-of-origin information.

<sup>104</sup> To play a similar role for IDPs in Afghanistan if they are strategically placed to promote potential minority return.

through development of an issue/policy paper) and encouraging (or necessitating) the inclusion of HIV/AIDS awareness in its programmes. Initially, this awareness raising may only be appropriate to clinicians. The development of an HIV/AIDS working paper by Brussels is welcomed and would benefit from adopting a wider perspective that cuts across all sectors (not just health). When ECHO considers supporting TB programmes, the following criteria should be met by the implementing partner:

- a) security conditions must enable clinician access to patients for the foreseeable future;
- b) implementing partners should have assured continuation of funding to meet the cessation of ECHO funding. availability of appropriate diagnostic facilities;
- c) logistical supply of complete courses of medication ensured for every patient;
- d) a methodology for assessing adherence to therapy;
- e) if second line therapy is to be offered, a means of testing sensitivity to it will be required.

**9.20 Donor communication strategy and visibility** – Pressure from ECHO, Brussels on the subject of ‘in-country’ visibility should be eased (for security reasons) while better informing the European media of the complexities of ECHO’s work in Afghanistan in sensitive areas such as the trade-off between combating hunger/rural poverty and the risk of facilitating poppy cultivation. On this subject, ECHO must ‘choose its ground, study its ground, know its ground and [<sup>105</sup>] stand its ground’.

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<sup>105</sup> [by golly] original quotation by John Fitzgerald Greg, Archbishop of Armagh, Dublin *circa* 1945.