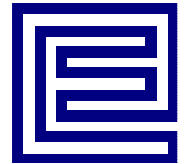

The Evaluation Partnership



EVALUATION REPORT

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For the European Commission
Directorate-General ECHO

Evaluation of Communication, Information and Visibility Actions in Humanitarian Aid

November, 2007

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Evaluation Report
November 2007

Submitted to:

European Commission
Directorate-General for Humanitarian Aid - ECHO

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1.0 EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

DG ECHO's task under its humanitarian mandate is to provide assistance on a non-discriminatory basis to populations of third countries that are affected by disasters, both man-made and natural, and to those affected by conflicts. EU taxpayers have the right to be informed as to the use of the funds that they provide. Thus the accountability aspect of 'Communication, Information and Visibility' activities is of high importance in modern democracies with EU citizens requiring a high level of transparency.

In April 2007, The Evaluation Partnership Ltd was invited to carry out an evaluation of DG ECHO's (the European Commission) communication and visibility practices as implemented via its NGO partners. The purpose of the assessment was to review the effectiveness of communication activities being carried, to identify the factors which might affect this effectiveness, which could include issues of understanding and compliance with the DG's guidelines, and to put forward a proposal for the revision of communication practices to achieve greater impact. The work was divided into two sections: the first focused on the evaluation of current practice, which is reported in this document; the second will take the form of a toolkit which will be proposed to DG ECHO's NGO partners.

The review was undertaken via a survey of DG ECHO's 2006 partners who were invited to complete a structured questionnaire and was complemented by in-depth face-to-face and telephone interviews with NGO partners at EU headquarter level. A significant partner in the provision of humanitarian aid, the evaluation team consulted a number of United Nations agencies in Geneva and complemented research by gathering evidence of practical application in the field during field work to Lebanon. In addition, comparisons and similarities in DG ECHO's approach were made via discussions with other donors including several EU Member States. The final part of this work will involve the development of a tool kit which will be tested with partners in the field towards the end of 2007.

The Executive Summary presents the draft conclusions and recommendations of the evaluation team, which will be discussed with DG ECHO in November 2007. Conclusions and recommendations are focused around the key questions posed by the European Commission related to the assessment of partners information and communication activities and the extent of understanding and compliance with DG ECHO guidelines and requirements.

1.1 BACKGROUND

- ✚ Working with partners allows DG ECHO to overcome the limitations of its own communication operations (human and financial resources), to cover a much broader scope of activities and to take advantage of the sometimes very interesting discounts offered to partners.
- ✚ However, the way that DG ECHO's contract requires visibility and communication activities to be structured and implemented limits DG ECHO's potential to generate an impact because partners are focused on the formalistic meeting of contractual requirements, with limited results.

1.2 CONCLUSIONS

- ✚ Although the concept of basic visibility cannot be avoided/discarded by ECHO, for various reasons, it should be clear what it can realistically achieve (or not). Basic visibility cannot be used to target the EU media, achieves limited value in a multi-donor context and carries little meaning where beneficiaries' level of formal education is low or non-existent and in remote areas.
- ✚ There is a limit to the communication goals that partners are able to achieve for different reasons:
 - Budgets are fragmented across numerous contracts.
 - Some NGO partners are very experienced at communication activities, as evidenced by the impressive activities that they carry out to their target audiences in their Member State or the international arena. Yet even the largest partners find it difficult to achieve 'communication impact in the field' because they have few or no communication staff there.
 - Other NGO partners, generally the smaller ones, have no experience in or capacity for communication activities.
 - There is a lack of clarity among NGO partners as to what DG ECHO is trying to achieve with each audience. NGOs need to know what DG ECHO wants each target group to know and will then tailor the message to suit the context.
- ✚ The content and formulation of the guidelines limit the extent that NGOs are able to understand what is required of them and how they should go about complying with this.
- ✚ NGO headquarters would like increased dialogue with DG ECHO communicators to agree the best approach to achieve communication goals that can benefit all sides (win/win situation). There is a repeated call for this dialogue, without which it is difficult for NGOs to understand fully what should be done.

- ✚ There are limited meaningful impact measurements of information, communication or visibility actions.
- ✚ There is an overlap between the guidelines produced by DG ECHO and those produced by DG AIDCO. This raises the question as to why partners cannot use the same guidelines and whether two sets are required.

1.3 RECOMMENDATIONS

- ✚ DG ECHO should continue to work with its partners to "communicate" about humanitarian aid but should review the approach to organising the visibility and communication activities that are carried out so that they are more able to achieve the desired results.
- ✚ The Guidelines need to be rewritten from a much more practical perspective.

At the field level

- ✚ The minimum for visibility/information actions required should be clearly detailed. It should be clear that any communication action that goes beyond this minimum required is welcome if it is professionally implemented.
- ✚ In the field, DG ECHO should require its partners **only to provide basic visibility and limited information**. This would not extend to logos or stickers on everything, but limited, targeted stickers/logos only where really appropriate, for example places where the NGO is using its own and other donors' branding. It would also include providing beneficiaries and local authorities with information about the sources of funding.
- ✚ DG ECHO should not expect its partners to undertake communication campaigns on behalf of DG ECHO aimed at target groups located in beneficiary countries. This should be DG ECHO's responsibility if it so desires, with invitation to partners to join.

At the EU level

- ✚ DG ECHO should explore other ways of collaborating with its partners to **communicate** about the support that it provides across the globe to audiences located within the Member States, taking into account that:
 - It should not be expected that this can be achieved through basic visibility actions carried out in the field.
 - Too many small/medium amounts split into too many different contracts leads to fragmented and low-impact results.
 - A more meaningful impact can be achieved if contracts are grouped together either on the basis of a region or country or on the basis of the specific theme of humanitarian aid.

- ✚ DG ECHO should explore developing a dialogue with its partners on communicating DG ECHO (e.g. an annual information workshop for certain targeted/volunteer partners). It is suggested that this should be a bottom up rather than top down activity, with different partners bringing ideas to the table and DG ECHO managing the process.
- ✚ If the DG wants to create an impact in Europe it needs to provide specific grants/contracts to NGO partners to carry out communication targeted at Member State/EU audiences on activities supported by DG ECHO. Only partners who have an expertise in communication and show interest in collaborating with ECHO should be considered for these grants.
- ✚ An alternative solution, for NGOs that are responsible for multiple DG ECHO contracts, would be to allow them to merge visibility budgets thus permitting a more significant communication campaign to be carried out.
- ✚ All NGOs receiving funds from DG ECHO should be required to display this clearly and visibly on their web site.
- ✚ Impact measurement should be systematically built into projects. For example: beneficiaries would be questioned about how the project was funded; web sites can monitor browsing activity.
- ✚ The Guidelines should draw on some of the practical aspects from DG AIDCO's Guidelines, but also highlight requirements that are specific to DG ECHO.
- ✚ No change is suggested to present practice with regards to the procedure for obtaining exemptions from visibility actions.

1.4 TOOLKIT CONTENT

The toolkit should be short, simple and more focused on realistic expectations of what partners might practically be able to achieve.

- ✚ There should be a clear definition of DG ECHO's role and function with regards to communication.
- ✚ How does DG ECHO want to be portrayed?
- ✚ What are DG ECHO's objectives in terms of visibility, information and communication?
- ✚ Clear indications need to be provided on the exact objectives and focus of activities: this will be clarified in the first instance with a clear definition of the primary, secondary and other target audiences, both at EU and at field levels and what is expected to be achieved (matrix tools/ audiences).
- ✚ Redefined messages that indicate what the DG would like to achieve/communicate to each audience (slogan versus lengthy messages). i.e., at the beneficiary level the simple understanding that they have been

helped by “Europe” (not the “Directorate General for Humanitarian Aid of the European Commission”) would be adequate.

- ✚ It is helpful for NGO partners to receive clear instructions as to what is required under their contract with DG ECHO and what is not, but may be welcome.
- ✚ The re-definition of if and how basic visibility should be applied at field level and how this should be implemented and assessed. It could be interesting to push for production by partners of all "containers and big items" (plastic sheeting, packages, boxes, jerrycans, ... with ECHO logo printed beside their own logo).
- ✚ A definition and examples of basic visibility actions at EU level: examples (mainly web linking, messages) & impact assessment
- ✚ A definition of the general approach for communication actions in the EU to be implemented with partners, with examples
- ✚ Practical examples of how all this should be applied, including examples of good and bad use of stickers/logo.

1.5 QUESTIONS TO BE ADDRESSED BEFORE DEVELOPING THE TOOLKIT

- ✚ Priority target (EU) as well as second/third priority targets should be approved by ECHO management
- ✚ How could ECHO enable fewer partners to do more effective joint communication actions using larger budgets?
- ✚ Agreement of ECHO management on redefinition of basic visibility obligations.
- ✚ Agreement of ECHO management on revision of Single Form to be adapted (next update) to current visibility/communication decisions.

2.0 OVERVIEW

2.1 Introduction

This document is the Final Report on the Evaluation of the communication, information and visibility activities managed by the partners of the Humanitarian Aid Department, DG ECHO, of the European Commission. The Evaluation Partnership (TEP) Ltd carried out this assessment between mid May and October 2007. The evaluation takes into account the Commission context and background to guidance and requirements on visibility, the scope and type of activities undertaken by partners and an in-depth view on the activities carried out by DG ECHO partners to implement visibility actions (including basic visibility, information and communication) both at the EU headquarter level and in the field.

As well as providing an independent assessment of the visibility actions carried out by partners, this exercise aimed to review the extent of understanding and compliance with DG ECHO's requirements. For this part of the assessment, a specific reference is made to the Guidelines produced by DG ECHO '*A Partnership for Communication*'.

This work has been carried out in preparation of a second phase, to be developed by European Service Network in liaison with TEP, which will provide a range of practical tools that can be used by partners to enhance the range and impact of activities that they carry out to raise awareness of DG ECHO contributions, as well as to enhance their own visibility and communication actions. The mission intends to test this 'Toolkit' with partners in the field to try to ensure a high level of practical usefulness to partners in their future actions.

The structure of this Report is as follows:

- ✚ Part 1: Executive Summary
- ✚ Part 2: An overview of the evaluation approach
- ✚ Part 3: A description of the background and context to the assessment
- ✚ Part 4: A descriptive analysis of partner visibility and communication actions
- ✚ Part 5: Understanding and compliance with DG ECHO requirements
- ✚ Annexes: Details of the consultation of DG ECHO partners

2.2 Objectives and Scope

The purpose of this assessment was to provide an in-depth view on the actions of DG ECHO's partners both at headquarters and field level to give visibility¹ to the support provided by the European Commission in various contexts. The evaluation was carried out over a 6 month period and focused on contracts between DG ECHO and its humanitarian aid partners during the period 2006, including:

¹ Here the term visibility is used to express the concepts of basic visibility actions, information provision and communication activities

- ✚ UN Agencies
- ✚ Red Cross Organisations
- ✚ NGOs at EU Headquarter level
- ✚ NGOs at field level
- ✚ Member State Ministries

The evaluation aimed to assess the following areas: actions undertaken, audiences targeted, messages delivered, delivery mechanisms, responses achieved, feedback analysed and budget adequacy.

As well as providing an independent assessment of the visibility, information and communication actions carried out by partners, this exercise aimed to review the extent of understanding and compliance with DG ECHO's requirements.

2.3 Evaluation Approach

The methodology used to undertake the assessment combined a range of consultation tools including a quantitative survey, and qualitative data gathering via semi-structured face-to-face interviews, as well as one case study trip to the field. A four-phase approach was taken to the assessment as follows:






1. **Phase 1 Inception Phase:** this included an in-depth review of existing documentation including contractual and financial information relating to all contracts in 2006, which allowed the evaluation team to fully understand the scope of visibility actions carried out by DG ECHO partners. In addition, a series of interviews was carried out with DG ECHO's communication unit, responsible for the management of visibility contracts and the evaluation team attended a meeting of Regional Information Officers (RIOs) of the DG. The RIOs are located at the regional headquarters of ECHO in the field and as such provided insights into the implementation of communication activities within their region. The output of this first phase was an Inception Report, which was provided to DG ECHO.
2. **Phase 2: EU Consultation Phase:** this phase was launched with a quantitative survey of DG ECHO partners who were sent a questionnaire by email and asked to send a reply within a two month deadline. The questionnaire focused upon three aspects:

- ✚ DG ECHO's visibility guidelines
- ✚ Questions of implementation
- ✚ Suggestions for improvements

Seventy-one partners responded to the survey and this data was synthesised with the analysis of combined data sources used to make the assessment of partner actions. A series of semi-structured interviews was conducted with a sample of 23 DG ECHO partners at headquarter level. These are indicated in the below chart. The sample of partners was selected according to the size of

visibility budget² allocated during 2006. Coverage by Member State was not used as a parameter for selection. However, the evaluation team ensured a spread of different types of organisations, which could be classified by size as this related directly to the communication capacities of these partners, as well as the way that humanitarian aid is organised and implemented.

Discussion guides were developed to structure the interactions and ensure that each interviewee was asked to provide insights within the same framework. Interviews focused upon 4 main areas:

-  Headquarters approach to communication and visibility
-  DG ECHO's visibility guidelines
-  Working with DG ECHO
-  Working with other donors
-  Feedback and suggestions from the organisation

- 3. Phase 3: Consultation in the Field:** The evaluators spent a week in Lebanon examining information, communication and visibility issues in the field. The field work included discussions with NGO partners, with United Nations agencies, with ECHO staff, with the local press, with local authorities, and with beneficiaries. A list of those met is given in the following table.

Organisations interviewed in Lebanon.

ACF	Action Contre la Faim
ACTED	Agency for Technical Cooperation and Development (ACTED)
AVSI	Associazione Volontari per il Servizio Internazionale Associazioni
Caritas	Caritas
DCA	DanChurchAid
DIA	Organisation de Solidarité Internationale
DRC	Danish Refugee Council
FSD	Fondation Suisse de Déminage
HI	Handicap International
ICU	Istituto per la Cooperazione Universitaria
MAG	Mines Advisory Group
MPDL	El Movimiento por la Paz
NRC	Norwegian Refugee Council
PU	Première Urgence
THW	Technisches Hilfswerk
UNDP	United Nations Development Programme
UN-HABITAT	United Nations Human Settlements Programme
UNHCR	United Nations High Commission for Refugees
UNRC	United Nations Resident Coordinator
	Orient le Jour (French-speaking newspaper)
	Local authorities

The evaluators undertook a field visit to Zaoutar, in southern Lebanon, where they visited de-mining projects (MAG), shelter projects (Norwegian Refugee

² It should be noted that this budget could be used to cover a range of activities beyond the provision of 'basic visibility' through the use of stickers and logos.

Council) and livelihood projects (ICU). These projects were generally well advanced and the evaluators heard feedback from beneficiaries, from the local authorities and from the general population. The evaluators visited a project in Hay el Sellom, Southern Beirut, undertaken by UN-Habitat: the Rapid Rehabilitation of Key Municipal Infrastructure for Local Service Delivery. This project had yet to show results on the ground, but the team was able to expected beneficiaries. Finally the evaluators visited a Caritas project for Palestinian refugees near Baalbeck in the Bekaa Valley. They were welcomed very warmly by these long-term refugees, many of whom had become refugees over 50 years ago. A further visit to another project in the Bekaa Valley had to be curtailed for security reasons. The findings from these field visits are included elsewhere in this report.

4. **Phase 4: Data Analysis and Report:** the final phase of the evaluation included the development of analytical frameworks to allow a structured synthesis of the data gathered from the different data sources. The analysis of this data is presented in this document as are a set of conclusions and recommendations for action. The output of this phase is not only the evaluation report, but also the identification of key issues to be addressed in the tool kit to be proposed to DG ECHO Partners. The tool kit forms a separate deliverable and is not included in this document.

3.0 BACKGROUND AND CONTEXT

3.1 DG ECHO's Mandate

DG ECHO is the Humanitarian Aid Department of the European Commission, and as such as a specific mandate (Regulation (CE) n°1257/96) to provide emergency assistance and relief to the victims of natural disasters or armed conflict outside the European Union. The aid is intended³ to go directly to those in distress, irrespective of race, religion or political convictions.

ECHO's task is to ensure goods and services get to crisis zones fast. Goods may include essential supplies, specific foodstuffs, medical equipment, medicines and fuel. Services may include medical teams, water purification teams and logistical support. Goods and services reach disaster areas via ECHO partners.

Since 1992, ECHO has funded humanitarian aid in more than 85 countries. Its grants cover emergency aid, food aid and aid to refugees and displaced persons worth a total of more than €700 million per year.

Within this context, the European Commission has identified a clear need to go beyond the provision, monitoring, coordination and promotion of humanitarian aid, by providing visibility, informing and/or communicating about the relief provided to a wide range of audiences. The key drivers of this need to communicate relates to the importance of transparency with regards to the use of public sector funds, as well as the lack of wide spread clarity about what the European Commission actual does. Other drivers of the need for communication are reported to be the potential to create a quality branding on aid actions undertaken as well as the need to raise awareness of decision makers able to influence the allocation of funds for humanitarian aid.

3.2 The Approach to Awareness Raising

To meet the communication challenge, DG ECHO's information strategy sets out the key principles of the approach to be followed by the DG in the communication of DG ECHO activities, this includes the identification of target groups, key messages and a 'cost benefit approach'; essentially the need to use resources effectively. This strategy serves to guide the DG's communication unit, which is a small team of communication officers whose activities are organised according to geographic regions, as well as communication tools such as the web site and audio visual productions.

As a donor of humanitarian aid, DG ECHO works with specialist partners who coordinate the implementation of aid actions on the ground. According to data

³ As described on DG ECHO's web site:
http://www.ec.europa.eu/echo/presentation/mandate_en.htm

received by DG ECHO, there were 851 contracts with 138 partners⁴ for humanitarian aid in 2006. DG ECHO supports humanitarian aid projects in more than 60 countries across the globe. Working with partners is an essential feature of DG ECHO's approach and this is carried through to the heart of awareness-raising. Partnerships are underpinned by Framework Programme Agreements, which set out the conditions for the allocation and implementation of the grant, as described by Article 5.2 of the Agreement:

"Signatory non-governmental humanitarian organisations commit to highlight the Community nature of the aid and to promote the understanding of humanitarian values, in particular in Europe and in third countries where the Community funds major humanitarian operations⁵".

Article 6.2 of the Agreement goes further to explain that the targets of partners' awareness-raising should be: beneficiaries, general public and the media. However, this terminology is vague given the fact that interviews with staff at DG ECHO highlight the importance of raising awareness within Europe, whereas the vast majority of communication actions undertaken on behalf of DG ECHO by NGOs are carried out in the field work. Thus where these target groups are located is not defined. Furthermore relevant types of actions and what needs to be achieved is not defined and is left to the NGOs, whereas their representatives suggested that this leads to confusion as to what the DG actually wants to achieve.

Thus DG ECHO partners are required to carry out actions to give awareness to DG ECHO funding in relation to the grants that they receive. There is flexibility in the appropriateness of such actions in particular in crisis situations where awareness actions jeopardise the safety of aid workers or the beneficiaries of aid. Nevertheless, partners are required to anticipate and to describe how they will meet requirements at the time of application for funds.

3.3 Highlighting the Community nature of the aid: visibility actions

3.3.1 OVERVIEW

Analysis of the contracts between DG ECHO and its humanitarian aid partners in 2006 provides a view of the volume of contracts and the amount of funds allocated to visibility actions within these contracts. Guidelines⁶ are provided for the minimum and maximum amount of funds, which should be allocated to visibility. The rationale for the amounts set is not clarified in the Commission's documentation as is whether there is a link to the actual cost of professional information and communication activities. There are provisions which allow partners to request larger sums for

⁴ In many cases partners were recipients several contracts.

⁵ European Commission publication 'A Partnership for Communication', page 6.

⁶ Suggested amounts are a minimum of €1,000 for basic visibility up to a maximum €50,000 or 5% of the overall contract whichever is least.

visibility actions but these require special approval by the DG. Visibility relates to three types of activities:

- ✚ Basic visibility: use of visual and descriptive branding (logo and slogans)
- ✚ Information: activities to tell target audiences about DG ECHO
- ✚ Communication: activities which go beyond simple information and aim to influence the perceptions of target audiences.

Of the 851 contracts signed in 2006, not all of the contracts were relevant for the present study – 110 contracts were ECHO technical assistance contracts, and a further 24 contracts have no budget figures and had not been signed; thus the contracts of interest are 717. The total value of the 717 contracts was 605,426,184 euros, of which 2,679,990 euros was for visibility actions, and of this last amount 2,299,001 euros was funded by DG ECHO. Summary statistics for the contracts are provided in the table below.

Table 1 - Contract summary statistics

	Contract amount	Visibility amount	ECHO visibility
Contracts	717	717	717
Sum	605,426,184	2,679,990	2,299,001
Average	844,388	3,738	3,206
Distribution			
Minimum	22,500	0	0
25th centile	311,338	750	500
50 th centile (median)	500,000	2,000	1,907
75th centile	849,995	4,000	3,500
Maximum	26,000,000	72,745	50,000

The largest visibility grant from DG ECHO was for 50,000 euros for a contract working in the Palestinian Territories.

- 42 contracts had ECHO visibility lines of 10,000 euros or more.
- 70 contracts had ECHO visibility lines between 5,000 euros and 9,999 euros.
- 378 contracts had ECHO visibility lines between 1,000 and 4,999 euros.
- 89 contracts had sums between 50 euros and 999 euros.
- 138 contracts had no budget for the ECHO visibility line.
- Overall the visibility line represents about 0.4% of the total contract.

The above table presents amounts per contract. In many cases, DG ECHO's larger partners receive a number of contracts and consequently the total amounts that these partners receive can be much higher, for example the highest allocation by partner for visibility in 2006 was 226,582 in relation to 34 individual contracts held by the same partner. According to the current financial provisions, it is not possible to

combine visibility budgets and these must be allocated in relation to each particular contract.

3.3.2 TYPES OF VISIBILITY ACTIVITIES

To understand the types of activities undertaken, a review of a sample of contracts was made. It was decided to select 27 of the potential 183 partners, as those partners receiving larger visibility budgets. Based on this sample, the evaluation team defined a typology of the different information, communication, and visibility actions undertaken. This investigation highlighted that activities can broadly be categorised into three types: actions targeted at beneficiaries, actions targeted at beneficiary country, and actions targeted at the EU level.

Actions targeted at local beneficiary population:

- Mention of ECHO as donor in workshops, trainings, etc.
- Signboards close to new or rehabilitated water points with EU logo
- Health promotion messages with EU logo
- T-shirts, caps & clothing with both ECHO and partner logo
- Vehicles with ECHO logo

Actions targeted at the beneficiary country and in some cases at the diplomatic corps and government officials:

- Local media articles indicating the source of funding
- Local media representative attending a handover ceremony
- Source of funding mentioned in all publications (e.g. posters, handouts, etc)
- Mention of ECHO as donor in Memorandums of Understanding, contracts, workshops, trainings, etc
- Source of funding mentioned in all publications
- Reports and launch ceremonies

Actions targeted at the EU level:

- Film/videos to feature the problem situation and solutions proposed by the project and channels of distribution indicated in very rare instances
- Press trips
- Press releases and actions described on partner website
- Photo reportage exhibition (availability of pictures to ECHO for promotional use)
- Website of partner describing action with mention of ECHO funding
- Newsletter of partner indicating ECHO funding and describing actions undertaken

However, it is noted that the above distinction is not made in the DG's Visibility Guidelines, which do not segment actions by target audience.

3.3.3 THE MULTI-DONOR CONTEXT

In the analysis of the approach to and implementation of awareness activities by DG ECHO partners, it is important to take into account the multi donor context within

which partners are required to work. ECHO partners act as the executors of aid in the field for a wide range of organizations, including their own and other national administrations. As part of the assessment, ECHO partners were asked to describe the arrangements for working with other donors including any guidelines and requirements regarding visibility. In addition, the evaluation team carried a small sample of semi-structured interviews with the representatives of national ministries responsible for humanitarian aid relief.

Regarding national ministries, it seems to be clear that two types of approach are taken. While all of the Member States⁷ consulted confirm that communicating about humanitarian aid relief is an important activity, there is a clear split between those who decide not to brand their supplies and activities in the field and those who take a similar approach to DG ECHO. The rationale for the approach taken to communicating Member State activities in the field seems to be driven by the philosophy/principles which drive the concept of aid relief in each country. Thus, for some, making beneficiaries aware that their country has provided funding and support goes against a basic principle that aid should be provided on the basis of need and that donors do not need to be made aware of who has funded the aid because these countries. Others take similar steps to DG ECHO to ensure visibility in the field by including visibility requirements in their funding contracts.

Thus Member State administrations appear to have differing approaches in their targeting of audiences to provide information on humanitarian aid. Some view their target audiences for visibility and communication actions as being two-fold: the recipient country and beneficiaries, and EU taxpayers, which is similar to the approach presented by DG ECHO. It does not necessarily follow that the '*pro-visibility in the field*' Member States use the same means to achieve visibility as DG ECHO, for example one Member State representative highlighted the use of stickers and flags, but suggested that the production of tee-shirts and gadgets could not be justified. It is interesting to note that stickers are produced centrally and distributed via this Member State's embassies. Several NGO's interviewed by the evaluation team highlighted the difficulties of producing stickers for DG ECHO in the field and asked whether these could be produced and distributed by the Commission.

National ministries who do not place an emphasis on creating awareness among beneficiaries do not disregard the value of communication to their home audience. One Member State highlighted its expectations that NGO partners will refer to national funding in communication with other partners, on their website, in press releases and annual reports. The Member States, who do not want their own donorship to be publicized to beneficiaries, see a value in NGOs doing their own visibility in the field, but assert that NGOs should not be obliged to carry out visibility actions for others. This view highlights the significance of visibility actions targeted at beneficiaries to communicate to these groups that help is at hand.

With regards to other target audiences such as officials in recipient countries and the EU general public, Member States involved in the consultation are not necessarily against DG ECHO trying to raise awareness of its donor ship with these groups. However, there are differences in views with regards to who should do this

⁷ This included, France, Germany, the Netherlands, Sweden and Denmark.

awareness raising and the extent that NGO partners should be required to do so, on behalf of DG ECHO. These views are taken into account in the context of findings from discussions with NGOs reported later in this document.

Some Member States suggested that NGOs need to have flexibility to be able to decide when it is appropriate to implement visibility actions. This flexibility is currently granted in situations where visibility activities would cause a security threat, however the duplication and subsequent dilution of visibility in multi-donor scenarios, where NGOs are being funded by several donors was also raised. Although in some cases donors do not require visibility actions on their behalf vis-à-vis beneficiaries, in practice NGOs find it difficult to highlight the contribution made by one donor, because they are required to provide visibility in the terms of the funding contract, when many other donors have also provided funding. In this situation, NGOs tend to try to give visibility to all of their donors, including those who have not requested visibility. This is highlighted by the below image provided by Oxfam, which shows how NGOs are frequently required to give visibility to a range of different donors. The impact of the message actually conveyed is unclear given the number of donors highlighted.

Exhibit 1: The Multi-donor Context



The above example highlights a fundamental issue in the creation of visibility in the field. Although DG ECHO requires visibility actions targeted at beneficiaries, how much impact are they really able to achieve in a multi-donor context? A further issue suggested by those Member States that considered that DG ECHO should not require its NGO partners to provide visibility for EC funding in the field, is the fact that there can be low levels of understanding of what the European Commission is and questions over the usefulness of using the EU flag and slogans where there are low levels of literacy. However, where Member States do insist on visibility for their funding in the field, they consider that local beneficiary populations would have an understanding of who they are. It was beyond the scope of this evaluation to assess perceptions of different donors in the field, but given the low levels of awareness of what the European Commission does in Europe, it seems possible to draw a similar conclusion. The evaluation team tested beneficiaries perceptions of the EU flag in

Lebanon and identified that there was limited understanding of what the flag represented and that even when the flag was presented with an explanation such as funded by the European Commission Humanitarian Aid department this did not increase comprehension.

3.4 Summary of Findings

This section highlights some of the key observations from the analysis of the context within which DG ECHO and other donors operate.

- ✚ DG ECHO's communication unit is relatively small circa 8 members of staff in relation to its ambitions to raise awareness with different target groups relating to over 700 contracts in 85 countries per year. This limits the amount of impact that the unit is able to achieve and forms part of the rationale for working through partners.
- ✚ Amounts provided to support visibility are allocated per contract and tend to be relatively small, for example a typical amount would be 2 – 3,000 euros per contract.
- ✚ All donors and NGOs see the value of communicating about the support that is provided in the Member States and to international audiences.
- ✚ In the multi-donor context where basic visibility (use of the EU logo) is competing with a range of other symbols for space, it is questionable that DG ECHO succeeds in raising awareness of its contribution.
- ✚ Basic visibility (stickering, boards, etc.) achieves little impact in communication to beneficiaries because they have limited understanding of the EU flag and the explanation that support is provided by the European Commission, or the Humanitarian Aid department of the European Commission does not increase understanding.
- ✚ No segmentation of actions according to target audiences; audiences to target are not well defined in the current DG ECHO visibility and communication guidelines

4.0 ASSESSING DG ECHO PARTNERS' VISIBILITY, INFORMATION, & COMMUNICATION ACTIONS

4.1 Introduction

This section aims to make an assessment of DG ECHO's partners' approach to visibility, information and communication. Consideration is given to partners' overall approach and the way that they work with and on behalf of DG ECHO.

Findings draw from a survey of the 120 partners who concluded contracts with DG ECHO in 2006, as well as from a series of semi-structured interviews with 23 of DG ECHO partners, who were selected on the basis of the amount of funding received from DG ECHO and subsequently the size of budget allocated to visibility and communication activities. This group included UN agencies as well as other NGOs with whom discussions were held at EU headquarters level. Overall main differences in opinion tended to relate towards the size of the partner, the availability of manpower, expertise in information and communication matters and available resources in the field. As would be expected, smaller NGOs tend to report greater limitations with regards to resources, but for each type of organisation there are barriers and constraints as well as opportunities that need to be taken into account. Partners consulted are indicated in the below table:

Action Contre la Faim - France
CARE – France
CARE - UK
COOPI
CORDAID
CROIX-ROUGE – France
CROIX-ROUGE - NL
DANCHURCH AID - DNK
Danish Research Council
GERMAN AGRO ACTION
HANDICAP (FR)
IOM
IFRC
Medecins sans Frontières (FR and BE)
MDM - FRA
OXFAM - BELGIUM
OXFAM - UK
PREMIERE URGENCE
SAVE THE CHILDREN - NL
TEARFUND - UK
UNHCR
UNICEF
UNRWA
WHO

4.2 DG ECHO Partners' Approach to their own Communication

4.2.1 INTRODUCTION

This section presents findings from interviews with the sample of DG ECHO partners on their approach to communicating about their own organisation. This information is useful as a benchmark against which visibility and communication activities carried out on behalf of DG ECHO can be compared and contrasted.

4.2.2 IMPORTANCE OF COMMUNICATION TO ECHO PARTNERS

The increased emphasis placed on communication and transparency by the European Commission in recent years is not operating in a vacuum. It can be concluded that DG ECHO partners responsible for the delivery of humanitarian aid also place a high level of importance on communicating what they do. All of the NGOs and international organisations consulted confirmed the importance that they place on awareness-raising activities. The budgetary allocations for this type of activity vary from organisation to organisation.

At the EU level, NGOs and agencies consulted seemed to speak with the same voice: trying to create a high profile with regards to their own Member State audiences, as well as donors and potential donors is very important. The need for a high profile relates to moral obligations to inform publics how money is spent, particularly where these are public funds, but also the desire to show value for money for public and private providers of funding. Some report that 'advocacy and testimony' are fundamental to their governing mandates. Although the majority focuses on the need for public engagement, engagement in the policy debate is the most important motivation for a few. Partners tend to make use of annual reports and their internet sites to also inform their EU target audiences of their donors and partners. A few partners suggested that they include references to partners such as DG ECHO in their Member State communication campaigns. Where an NGO partner is interested in raising public awareness of its activities in Europe, with a few exceptions⁸, these are very clearly focused on their own Member State audience, rather than the EU public as an audience. It appears that the NGOs have developed a high level of expertise in this area, which is analysed in more detail later in this section.

At the headquarters of larger NGOs and agencies, for example, the evaluation team consulted several UN agencies and international organisations, there are highly professional media and PR departments tasked with the communication activities of the organisation both internationally as well as to a certain extent setting the framework for country level operations. Some of these partners have access to media suites and manage their own dedicated television channels. Perhaps more importantly communication roles are staffed by professionals who have previously worked in the media and fully understand the ways of the audio-visual and written media, for example, as well as how to design and implement a highly effective

⁸ These exceptions relate to NGOs who see EU advocacy as a clear component of their mandate.

communication campaign. For these larger organisations, internal communication can play just as important a role as external targeted communications. There is a need for coherence between the different actions carried out in various countries and for the people to be informed of what the others do in another country. This is taken care by newsflash and via the Internet, web streaming and internal TV. Communication to members and adherents of the NGO is also essential.

At the other end of the scale, NGOs with a smaller EU head quarters report that they do not have a communications department and are not focused on communication activities in the field.. This group still understands the need to communicate with their target audiences in their Member State about what they are doing/with a view to raising funds and take opportunities to liaise with the press if these arise, but confirm that the main focus of their activities is the job at hand ‘the delivery of humanitarian aid’.

4.2.3 OBJECTIVES, TARGET GROUPS AND MESSAGES

Each NGO consulted has its own specifically articulated set of objectives or mission which governs the sphere of its activities. There are common themes that appear to be relevant to all such as neutrality and the provision of assistance to those who need it without discrimination. Communication objectives tend to relate to a variety of target audiences for example one NGO explained:

“We communicate to the public that help finance us; we explain the humanitarian cause. In the field we explain to the beneficiaries about what we are doing and why we are there.”

There can be significant differences with regards to the specific target groups which provide the focus for NGOs’ visibility and communication activities. The following table is used to highlight these differences and considers a sample of 10 NGOs, whose representatives were interviewed as part of the evaluation. This sample comprises the EU-level headquarters of NGOs consulted and does not include UN agencies or the international headquarters of international organisations located in Geneva.

Target audience	Total
MS public	8
Political decision makers	6
Donors	5
Beneficiaries	4
Business	2
NGO international network	1
MS schools	1
EU public	1
Local population	0

The above table reports the ‘top-of-mind’ responses of the representatives who were interviewed as part of the evaluation, and may not reflect the official target groups that may be expressed for example in NGO literature. However, it can be considered that these references indicate the most important or significant target groups for

these organisations. In addition to the above, several NGOs highlighted the importance of the media (maintaining close relationships with national media, maintaining media databases, organizing events to attract media attention, etc.) in communicating to their target groups.

Although this is a very small sample, it serves to reflect the overall emphasis of these organisations which lies with communicating within their own country, with a particular emphasis on national publics, political decision makers and existing and potential donors. There is some focus on raising awareness among beneficiary populations, but as far as these groups are concerned, with regards to their own communications, these populations are seen as secondary target group or not a target group at all. This response seems to relate to a number of reasons:

- ✚ that interviews were held at EU/national headquarters;
- ✚ the difficulties in communicating to beneficiary populations, particularly where there are low levels or zero literacy;
- ✚ the increased control, perceived increased impact and value in communicating to home audiences.

With regards to the sample of UN agencies and international organisations consulted target groups tend to relate to a more international geographic focus rather than the more national focus highlighted above. A greater emphasis seems to be placed on visibility and communication in the field with basic visibility to beneficiaries including use of logos and branding with a view to communicating the concepts of security and aid, which can be summed up as reflecting a need to indicate to beneficiaries that they can trust the organisation. As highlighted earlier, these organisations believe that their logos are known and understood therefore the need to communicate a message alongside the logo is reduced, except where the whole purpose is to educate beneficiary audiences, for example with regards to health or use of equipment.

An area of difference between the international organisations and the EU NGOs consulted appears to be the focus on communicating within the field, for example to decision-makers, who are seen as key partners in the aid process. Local media can be another target group although many consulted indicated that there can be difficulties in working with the local media given practices relating to journalists expecting to be paid for placing stories, or the fact that the media is controlled by particular interest groups, for example. It is not that smaller NGOs are disinterested in this target group, rather that they have more limited resources, which necessitates focusing on more specific and achievable targeting to a smaller number of groups.

With their often, though not always, greater availability of communication resources and expertise, like DG ECHO, many international organisations see the field as providing opportunities to provide the content for major communication campaigns, as well as the development of audio-visual material that is then provided to national and international TV and radio broadcasters. Some organisations are able to quote significant success in this area, with their footage being taken up and broadcast widely. Larger EU NGOs with in-house communication expertise also report their efforts to work with national media and deploy resources to the field to allow actual

relief work in the field to provide the content for campaigns back at home. The involvement of 'head office/media teams' seems to be an essential requirement for this type of communication and given the lack of expertise in the field.

As with target groups, each of DG ECHO's partners identified a range of core messages that it hopes to communicate either explicitly or implicitly through visibility and communication actions. Despite the fact that these organisations are all working in the area of humanitarian aid relief they focus on a range of different objectives with regards to the work undertaken. Therefore, it follows that DG ECHO's partners have a wide range of messages that they want to communicate to their target audiences. There is no one size fits all approach. This is an area that needs to be taken into account by DG ECHO, whose visibility guidelines propose a set of messages to be communicated. The relevance of this standardised approach is questionable given the reality that the DG's partners find it necessary to communicate a very diverse range of messages to different audiences in different situations.

Key issues to be communicated are **targeted with the audience in mind**. Therefore, an organisation will convey a different message to national audiences or decision makers in the home country to the message that is conveyed to decision makers in the beneficiary country. Furthermore, the content of communications is **adapted to the specific context** of the project being communicated. When a specific, one-off communication campaign is run DG ECHO partners tend to communicate a central theme or slogan, as highlighted in the below box:

Messages and slogans to communicate NGO's work
<i>"Defending dignity, fighting poverty"</i>
<i>"We believe that it can"</i>
<i>"Living on the edge of emergency"</i>
<i>"help people help themselves"</i> <i>health is a human right"</i>

Although not all of DG ECHO's partners indicated that they used standard strap-lines or slogans in their communication, overall most identify a range of key concepts and rationale that they try to communicate to different audiences in order to raise awareness of fundamental aspects of their work. These concepts can be categorised as broadly falling into four types, those that:

- ✚ Communicate what the NGO actually does and why, thereby raising awareness/increasing the profile of the NGO;
- ✚ Focus on communicating the specific humanitarian crisis and the response to this;

- ✚ Highlighting the fight against human perils: violence and weapons; hunger, lack of health care and education;
- ✚ Political messages including the importance of cooperation, solidarity, conflict resolution.

Message types are used at different times to different audiences and DG ECHO partners may decide not to use certain types of messages. A key finding of the evaluation is that there is a **lack of clarity** with regards to the key concepts that DG ECHO wants to communicate. This lack of clarity is felt particularly strongly by international organisations and large NGOs which have a highly professional approach to communication. Although DG ECHO has identified what it calls 'key messages' there seems to be a lack of understanding as to what the DG is trying to achieve particularly as there seems to be mismatch between the messages articulated and the means and focus which partners are required to communicate.

DG ECHO Key Messages for Visibility, Information and Communication Activities

- ✚ Humanitarian aid is an expression of European solidarity with the world's most vulnerable people.
- ✚ The Commission offers humanitarian aid impartially to people in distress, irrespective of their race, ethnic group, religion, gender, age, nationality or political affiliation.
- ✚ Humanitarian aid goes to those in greatest need.
- ✚ Humanitarian aid is governed by the key principles of humanity, impartiality and neutrality.
- ✚ • The European Commission is committed to preserving the dignity of populations affected by humanitarian crises.

As highlighted above the messages provided in the Visibility Guidelines indicate the **principles** which guide the provision of humanitarian aid. From the partners' perspective these do not articulate what DG ECHO would like each target group to understand or what should be achieved with regards to each group. In addition, it is important to note that there is very limited interest from the media to communicate only about funding. Therefore, as well as the need to identify messages from the point of view of what the audience needs to know, there is a need for greater reflection as to how DG ECHO should be portrayed. This is likely to require consideration of the role of DG ECHO and how this should be characterized (for example as a thought leader on humanitarian aid, the front-runner in anticipating future crises, the body that excels in organizing and structuring the highest quality⁹

⁹ Many of the partners and Member States consulted highlighted their high level of satisfaction with the work of DG ECHO at the operational level and the high quality of projects carried out.

humanitarian aid, etc.), as well as how to communicate the benefits of partnership between DG ECHO and UN organizations and NGOs, and who does what.

Many of the partners consulted confirmed that they have their own guidelines which have been developed to ensure consistency for approaches to visibility and communications both at the communication or media unit level but also with regards to communication activities undertaken in the field. The extent that such guidelines have been articulated depends on the allocation of resources to visibility and communication by the NGO. In some cases, those consulted reported that a corporate policy had been articulated rather than specific guidelines. At the next level of sophistication, graphic charts are used to give coherence. Larger partners have developed detailed guidelines which are made accessible to their staff, for example via intranets and extranets, as well as forming the basis of training.

Guidelines tend to include specific templates, practical advice and previous example that can also be used by specialist and non-specialist staff, for example related to:

- How to talk to the media
- Target audiences and messages
- How to do a newsletter,
- relations with photographers, what type of pictures to select
- How to do an exhibition,
- How to present a programme
- How to do a poster
- Measuring the impact of activities?

DG ECHO's partners' guidelines provide useful examples that have been taken into account in the development of the visibility toolbox which is to be developed as a result of the evaluation exercise. Partners report the benefits of their own guidelines as ensuring understanding and coherence of organisation aims and objectives and how these should be represented to other groups, thus avoiding misrepresentation and mixed messages being passed which confuse rather than inform the target audience.

4.2.4 TYPES OF COMMUNICATION ACTIVITIES CARRIED OUT

As highlighted above, within the EU, DG ECHO partners have developed a high level of expertise in communications within their Member States and take a proactive approach trying to engage the public by harnessing the national media behind their campaigns. Unlike the European Commission, which is faced with the need to communicate to Europeans (a highly diverse linguistic, cultural, national, geographic, socio-economic group), with well known low levels of understanding and appreciation of what the European Commission does, many of DG ECHO's partners report some level of awareness at the national level and have the benefit of being able to target a much more focused audience.

The focus on NGO partners' national target groups allows them to develop a very good understanding of this target audience, it's likely perceptions and

misconceptions, as well as which messages and approaches are likely to be most successful. The NGOs are inside the system and this enables them to use the mechanisms that really strike a cord with national audiences. For example, one NGO reported collaborating with a national lottery scheme to raise awareness. Others reported that they ran joint campaigns with national radio stations involving well known celebrities. Some of the types of activities carried out to target these audiences are detailed in the below table.

EXAMPLES OF NATIONAL CAMPAIGNS OF NGO PARTNERS
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• National lottery campaign• “World breakfast” which organised breakfast from different countries in schools (link between food and development)• “Fashion from the world” a competition between young professional designers to design with fabrics from third countries• Run for life – sport in schools establishing the link with development issues• Runs EuropeAid funded campaign – www.virusfreegeneration.eu on HIV (with a consortium of NGOs that have a similar concern worldwide – www.alliance2015.org)• Direct marketing and bill board campaigns at transport hubs, for example in the metro, at train stations and airports• Bus travelling the country to show people what a refugee camp is like• Radio campaigns involving taking journalists to the field for example Darfur and Chechnya and highlighting issues to national publics• Conference for the public on ‘forgotten crises’.• Visibility campaigns on the Internet including blogs – for this NGO ‘direct marketing is too expensive’.• Using pictures and sounds to raise an interest.• “We focus on press agencies rather than journalists or specific newspapers or television as this does not produce much result.”• Using celebrities as ambassadors for the NGO.

Larger NGO partners working at the international level do not tend to focus their campaigns on specific national audiences, instead they take a more international approach and thus comparisons can be drawn between their much wider target group focus and the approach of the European Commission. Perhaps the key difference is the level of professionalism, expertise and infrastructure available to these partners in comparison to the limitations felt by DG ECHO’s relatively small

and more generalist communication team. For smaller NGO partners, the Internet is clearly a very important tool, as the costs involved in other types of communication activities are prohibitive.

With regards to basic visibility in the field, larger NGOs and UN agencies work with the belief that they are known brands and this tends to shape their approach. They have a sense that there is no need to explain who they are and what they are doing, because their brand or logo conveys this message automatically. Thus there can be tendency not to make use of strap lines or slogans to explain the logo. In consultation, however, it is frequently suggested that DG ECHO does not necessarily enjoy the same level of profile or understanding by beneficiaries as many of its partners in the field, and that this results in limited value of posting the EU flag even when the flag is used consistently used on supplies and equipment. This point will be discussed later in this document.

DG ECHO's partners seem to make use of very similar mechanisms for their own visibility in the field, for example display of their logo on tee shirts, vehicles, as well as on other products. It is suggested by many that this branding conveys messages that help is to hand, as well as a sense that the NGO is there to protect beneficiaries, although each organisation suggests a different emphasis. There are exceptions and some partners, this includes those with a much smaller level of operations, report that the main focus of their activities is on providing humanitarian assistance and that this is where resources must be directed and where their expertise allows them to go. This is reinforced by many NGO partners consulted by the evaluation team in the field. A key difference in the approach taken by DG ECHO's NGO partners is that they report using a high level of discretion with regards to how and when they brand. Whereas, DG ECHO, which is operating within a more centralised structure, insists on the use of stickers and logos on all supplies and equipment (with the exception of use in security situations) and current guidelines do not allow flexibility with regards to the use of European Commission branding.

4.2.5 LOOKING TO THE FUTURE

To contribute to the development of DG ECHO's visibility and communication tool box, the partners consulted were asked to indicate how they are looking to develop their communication activities in the future and whether or not they are investing in any particularly innovative approaches. All planned improvements and would like to do more resources permitting. The value of the mass media is clearly understood and efforts to gain coverage remain important for some, for others priorities include keeping web sites up to date and more tailoring of information materials to specific audiences. No radically new approaches were suggested although some reported increased use of blogs, public advertisements in newspapers and magazines, as well as development of video diaries, which were suggested to be of potential high interest to the media. The importance of viral marketing and press relations was stressed though the need to be able to report **real news** is paramount

4.3 Communicating for DG ECHO

4.3.1 INTRODUCTION

This section provides analysis of the evidence gathered from DG ECHO partners on their activities to communicate on behalf of DG ECHO. Evidence is drawn from the results of the on-line survey¹⁰, which was sent to all of DG ECHO's partners who received financial support during 2006, and is strengthened through the consultation of a smaller group of partners both at headquarter and field level. Analysis is presented in terms of target group as this is the most important starting point for any communication activity.

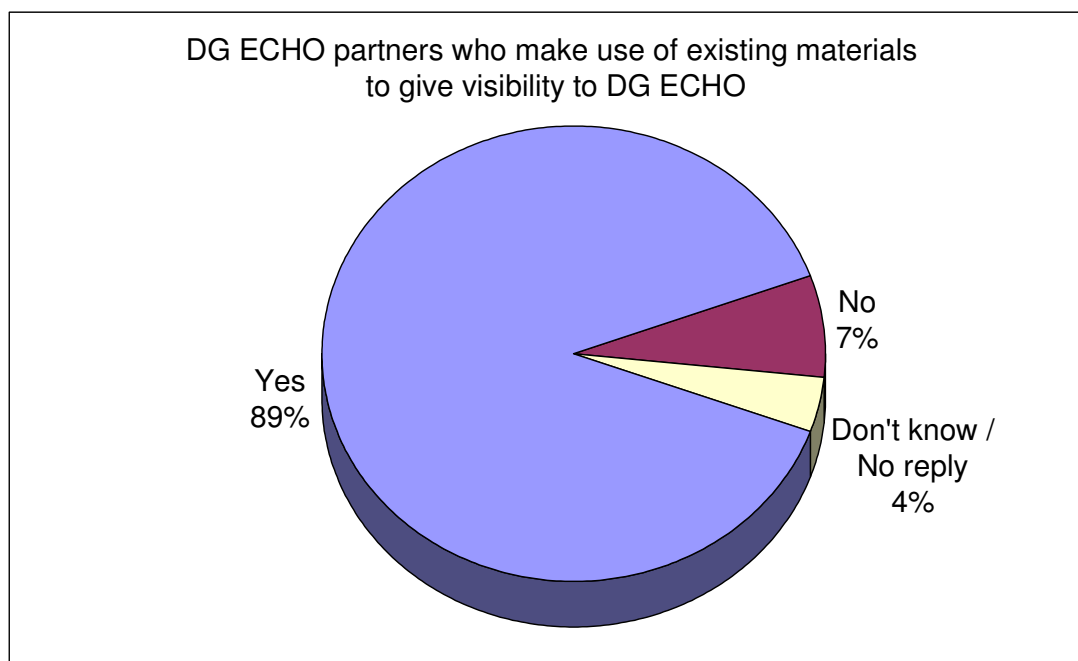
For many of the organisations consulted DG ECHO's funding represents a relatively significant portion of their budget. The proportion of DG ECHO's contribution to the overall budget varies significantly and while all of those consulted also receive funds from a range of other international and national donors, for some of DG ECHO's larger partners the amount provided is significant but may be matched and surpassed by a range of other donors.

The volume of funding allocated for visibility actions by DG ECHO to the sample of partners selected for further analysis ranged between €8,300 and €203,000 during 2006. The amounts indicated here relate to the receipt of numerous contracts. In 2006, the maximum amount allocated to one contract for visibility was €50,000. For DG ECHO's partners the allocation of awareness-raising funds by project limits their potential to create a significant impact. Although there is some understanding that the allocation of funding in this manner reflects administrative constraints with strict reporting requirements. However, the end result is a **fragmentation** of financial support across projects some of which might not be easily communicable or relevant to DG ECHO's target audiences.

The vast majority of partners topped up the amount spent on visibility between 5% and in a few exceptional cases up to 40%. Evidence from the on-line survey of partners also confirms that DG ECHO is benefiting from synergies by working through the partners that it supports in the implementation of humanitarian aid. As highlighted by the below graph the vast majority of partners make use of their own materials (websites, publications and so on) to raise visibility of DG ECHO's funding of their activities. The feasibility of creating added value for DG ECHO in this way seems to be linked to the size of the partner involved, with the largest partners generally having access to greater budgets and resources than smaller ones. The most common way of raising awareness of DG ECHO funding seems to be via organisations' web sites, as well as any brochures or annual reports, particularly those that are targeted at audiences within their Member State or the international community. In these cases, it is not so much that partners feel obliged to make a specific mention of DG ECHO, as is required in the field to target beneficiaries, rather most organisations have a policy of transparency with regards to funding

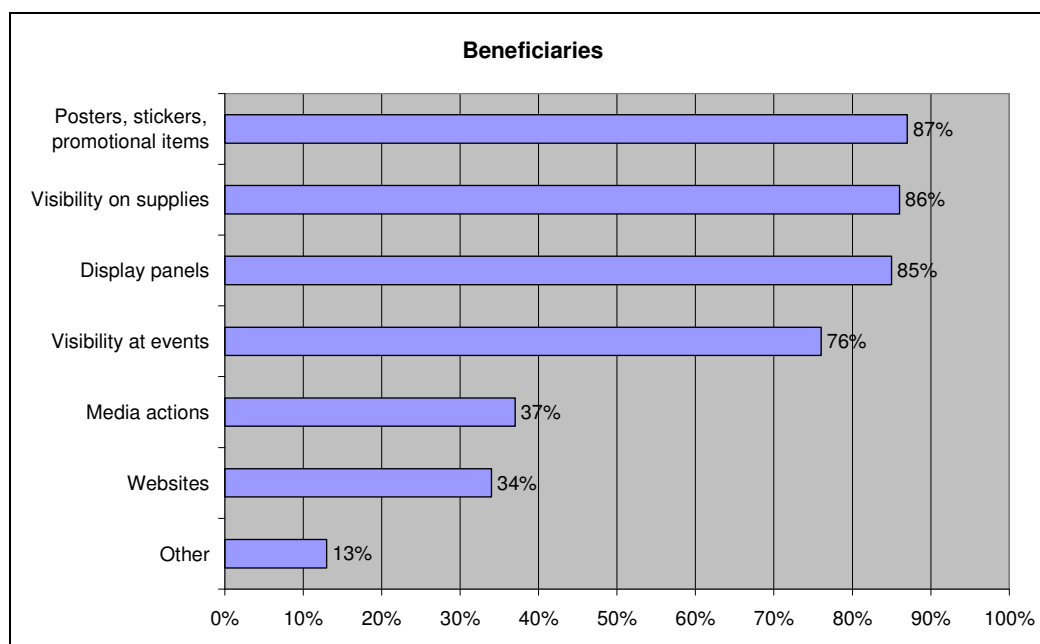
¹⁰ The survey was sent to a list of circa 183 partners who had received contracts from DG ECHO in 2006. In total, 71 partners completed the survey, which can be considered to be a good response rate providing detailed insights into the thoughts and views of partners.

sources. It can be considered that this level of visibility is relatively cost efficient for partners who make use of existing communication tools to highlight a range of donors.



4.3.2 VISIBILITY, INFORMATION AND COMMUNICATION TO BENEFICIARIES

In order to understand how DG ECHO's visibility guidelines are implemented, DG ECHO's partners were asked to indicate the types of visibility that they carry out on behalf of DG ECHO towards beneficiaries. Participants to the on-line survey were given a range of options, which reflect the types of activities described in pages 16 – 22 of DG ECHO's Guidelines for Visibility, with the following result:



Answers to this question suggest that the majority of partners use basic visibility actions to target the beneficiaries of DG ECHO aid. The most frequent methods for communicating to this group are posters, stickers and promotional items, as well as the use of logos on display panels and on supplies which come from DG ECHO. Discussion with partners confirms that actions to target beneficiaries tend to be visibility type actions, which focus on the display of the EU logo. Looking at the data in more depth reveals that there are some differences in approach according to the size of the partner. With regards to visibility on supplies and display panels, similar responses were received from all types of partner. It is interesting to note, however, that 100% of the large partners confirmed their use of posters and stickers and promotional items to provide visibility to DG ECHO and this can be considered to be their main form of visibility for DG ECHO, whereas medium and small partners recorded lower results at circa 80%.

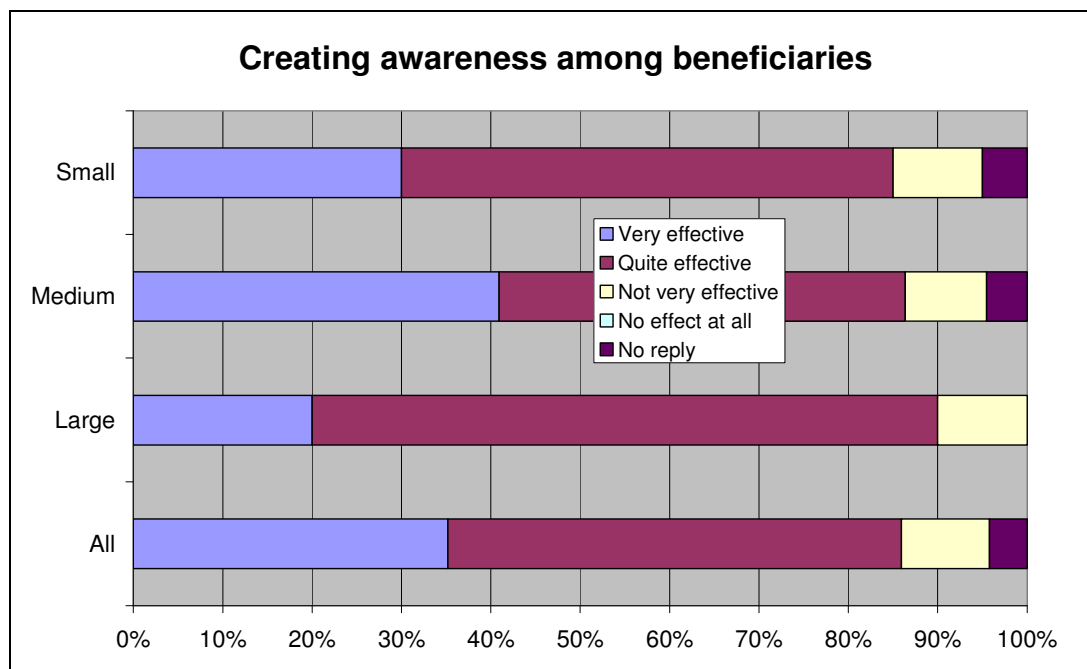
Exhibit 2: EU logo sticker on Water tank



Given the desperate situations that beneficiaries find themselves in, it is not surprising that the Internet is not reported to be an important tool to communicate to this group. In the interviews held, many NGOs suggested that communication activities to this group are constrained by fundamental issues such as basic infrastructure, low literacy, and the need to focus on the core aid relief work at hand. Media actions tend not to be used to target beneficiaries and this relates to the difficulties in ensuring reliable coverage in the media in target beneficiary countries.

In-depth interviews with partners revealed many specific examples of how they present DG ECHO to the beneficiary audience. How to conduct basic visibility is considered to be well understood and not to pose too many problems, particularly considering that field staff are not communication experts. Many partners are very willing to provide visibility in this way, particularly as they value the financial support that they receive from DG ECHO, are required to carry out visibility actions for other donors, and do not find this to be particularly difficult. There can be exceptions to this, including the avoidance of security risks as permitted under the DG's guidelines, as well as situations where labelling equipment or supplies as provided by DG ECHO provides a false image of the support provided in that ECHO is just one of a multitude of donors, the majority of which may not require a focus on visibility.

Respondents to the partner survey were asked to make an assessment of their ability to raise awareness of DG ECHO's support and financing with beneficiaries. The following chart presents their responses, according to all respondents. A breakdown is also provided according to the amount of funding¹¹ received from DG ECHO.



¹¹ The size of partner is calculated according to the level of grant received from DG ECHO in 2006 and not the amounts allocated to visibility. Large is used to indicate partners who received more than 5 million euro of funding in 2006. Medium partners are those that received from 1 to 5 million euro. Small partners received less than 1 million euro of funding from DG ECHO.

The above chart paints a positive picture that DG ECHO's partners consider that they are for the most part effective at raising awareness the support and financing from DG ECHO. No respondents considered that they are able to achieve no effect at all. Comparison between large, medium and small partners suggests very little difference in their appreciation of their ability to create an impact with between 80 and 86% of respondents from partner organisations stating that their actions were either very effective or quite effective. At first hand this result could confirm that DG ECHO's approach of using partners to raise awareness has some merit given that the majority of partners report that their efforts are relatively effective. However, several comments provided in the survey provide a reminder that partners do not measure the impact of their information activities in a structured way and that it is difficult to measure the impact of information and communication activities due to their intangible nature and the fact that awareness creation tends to happen over a long period of time, via repetition and reinforcement of messages.

However, the structured interviews held with a sample of partners in Europe raised a number of issues that need to be taken into account in the process of visibility creation towards beneficiaries. The sample of organisations represented in the interview process represents circa one third of those who responded to the partner survey and for the most part the partners consulted by interview had also completed the survey. Large, medium and small NGOs and international organisations systematically raise a number of issues in relation to the current approach required by DG ECHO. Although the above chart suggests that partners may be relatively effective at what they do, there are fundamental questions as to whether this is the 'right' thing to do. According to Article 6.3 of the General Conditions governing the contracts between DG ECHO and its partners:

"In cases where equipment or vehicles and major supplies have been purchased using funds provided by the Commission and provided that this does not harm the organisation's mandate or the safety of its staff, the humanitarian organisation shall include appropriate acknowledgement on such vehicles, equipment and major supplies, including display of the European logo (twelve yellow stars on a blue background)."

From discussions with DG ECHO's partners the prescribed approach means that partners are expected to 'sticker' everything and this raises a number of questions. Furthermore, although DG ECHO's intention is for acknowledgement to be given to its support, for practical reasons (for example, ease, lack of time and available space on supplies) partners tend to fulfil the basic requirement and to display the EU logo because it is not feasible to provide any other acknowledgement. In contradiction to the responses provided to the survey of partners, when questioned on a one-to-one basis interviewees admitted that they had a number of fundamental issues with the current approach relating to:

- ✚ The diversion from the essential and urgent job of providing humanitarian aid;
- ✚ Why DG ECHO does not take responsibility for its own communication, (even though many are willing to help with visibility) actions;

- ✚ The need to use the EU flag as a logo is seen to be a political symbol in contrast to earlier logos used by DG ECHO;
- ✚ The low impact of visibility due to lack of understanding by beneficiaries and zero media interest, particularly with regards to audiences in the EU;
- ✚ The fact that, as highlighted below, the EU logo does not convey any specific meaning and concepts such as the European Union and the European Commission are not known.

As highlighted by the below illustrations, use of the EU logo conveys an image, which will only be meaningful where beneficiary populations understand what this means. It should be noted that many in the EU do not understand what the European Commission is and the majority do not know the areas of the Commission's responsibility. The second image presented is a car sticker that is used in Lebanon. Although this sticker communicates in Arabic as well as English, which makes it more accessible to local beneficiary populations in the area, it still pre-supposes that this group have an understanding of what the European Commission is.

EUROPEAN COMMISSION



Humanitarian Aid

In addition to basic visibility actions carried out to raise awareness of EU funding among beneficiaries, some partners also carry out other information activities that make use of EU branding. Such actions include the communication of health messages and the provision of information sheets to beneficiary groups, which explain more about how and why they are being helped. In situations where beneficiary populations are largely illiterate, partners may make use of visual images to convey their messages.

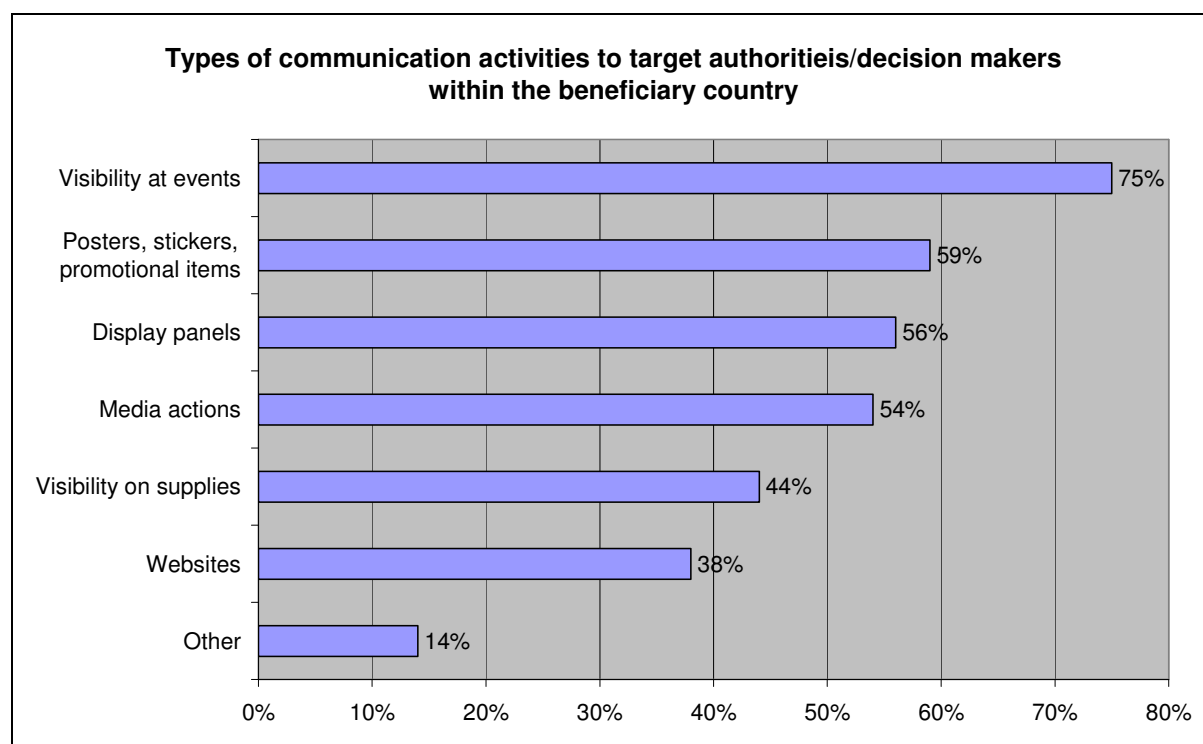


4.3.3 VISIBILITY, INFORMATION AND COMMUNICATION TO OTHER AUDIENCES IN BENEFICIARY COUNTRIES

According to Article 6.2 of the General Conditions, in addition to the need to draw the attention to beneficiaries of DG ECHO's financial support, partners are also required to target the general public and the media. The Visibility Guidelines produced by DG ECHO **do not explicitly state** whether these two groups are located in Europe or located in the beneficiary country. Therefore, both situations are discussed.

The below chart¹² illustrates the types of activities carried out to inform local authorities and decision-makers in the beneficiary countries. As revealed in the interviews conducted with partners, providing information to those who have an influence on decision-making and public opinion forming, as well as potential access to a crisis situation can be considered to be vital. This need was particularly emphasised by UN agencies and larger NGOs who may take more of a lead in opening up access to a particular situation, which is then followed by other smaller NGOs.

The responses received highlight that a different emphasis is placed on the types of activities that are used to raise awareness with local authorities in contrast to those used to target beneficiaries. Notably there is much reduced emphasis on visibility on supplies with a view to targeting local authorities. It is likely that this is still somewhat important to confirm the provision of aid if and when authorities visit crisis areas, however this aspect is not considered to be a main tool to target the authorities.



It is interesting to note that a relatively high level of emphasis is placed on display panels. Display panels can provide an indirect way of raising awareness of support.

¹² Survey respondents were asked to select all of the different activities that they carried out and therefore could pick multiple responses. Therefore, responses do not add up to 100%.

According to the chart, a greater emphasis is placed on posters, stickers and promotional items. Evidence from field work carried out by the evaluation team in Lebanon supports this and particularly emphasises the use of promotional items.

Various promotional items were identified such as mugs and computer mouse mats. These items are used in combination with another fundamental



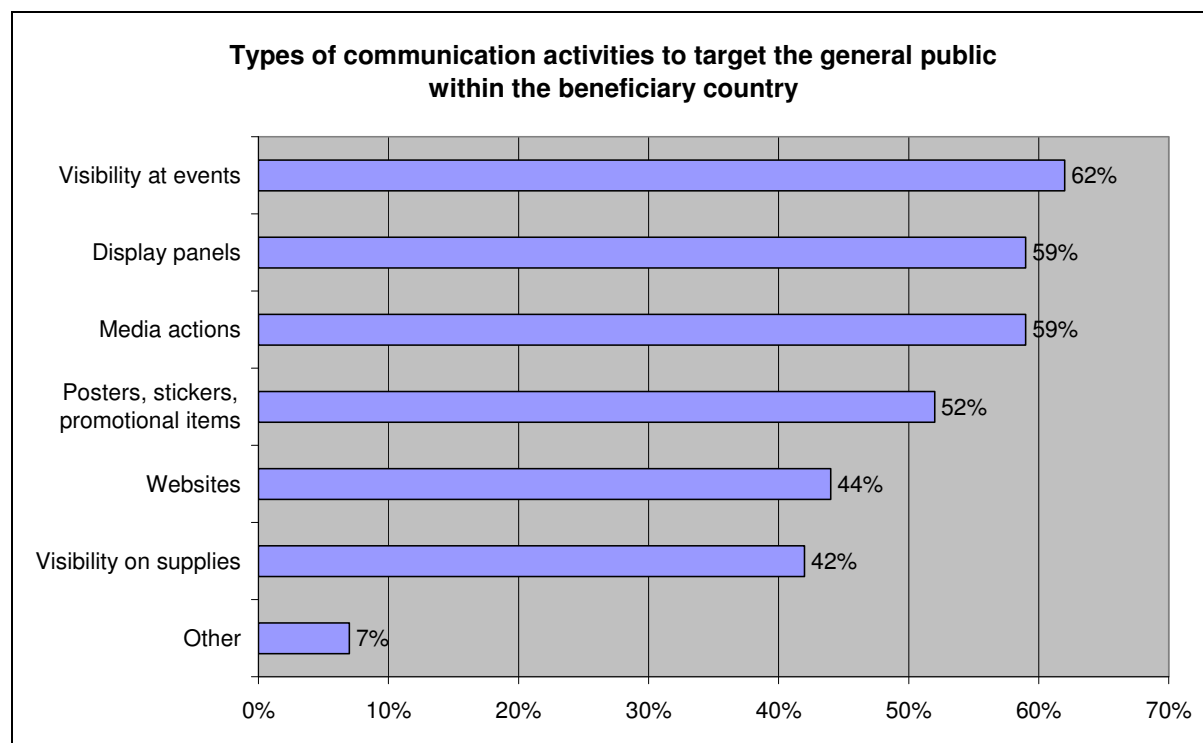
communication activity which is direct contact and discussions with local authorities to explain about the humanitarian aid being provided, which can be considered to be an essential internal project communication tool and could be a useful alternative to stickering and boards). This type of information action is sometimes supported by the distribution of information leaflets and documents tailored specifically to this group. It should be noted that neither of these options were provided in the survey. The mechanisms through which ECHO projects are financed also allow for awareness raising of local authorities. Indeed beneficiaries are, in the case of reconstruction projects, identified by the local authority who seems well informed of the multiple partners working in its constituency.

According to the survey, by far the greatest communication action undertaken to target local authorities in the beneficiary country is holding of events, which highlight the role of DG ECHO. Such events are sometimes held in the capital of the country rather than out in the field and as such may also have the potential to attract local and possibly international media attention depending on the subject, presentation and timing. However, it is noted that just over half of NGO partners see media actions as a mechanism to communicate to local authorities and thus in contrast to holding events, raising the awareness of this group via the media is considered to be more of by-product than a direct impact. With regards to the local media, although DG ECHO encourages the use of press releases and making use of the media, depending on the beneficiary country, it can be extremely tricky to gain appropriate coverage in local and national media particularly in uncertain political contexts. In other developed countries working with the media may present other difficulties for example where aid is being provided in highly politically or security sensitive areas.

As with beneficiaries, limited emphasis is placed on use of the internet to target local and national authorities, which is likely to relate to low levels of internet access and usage as well as the fact that provision of information on a web site is a passive rather than proactive approach to communication.

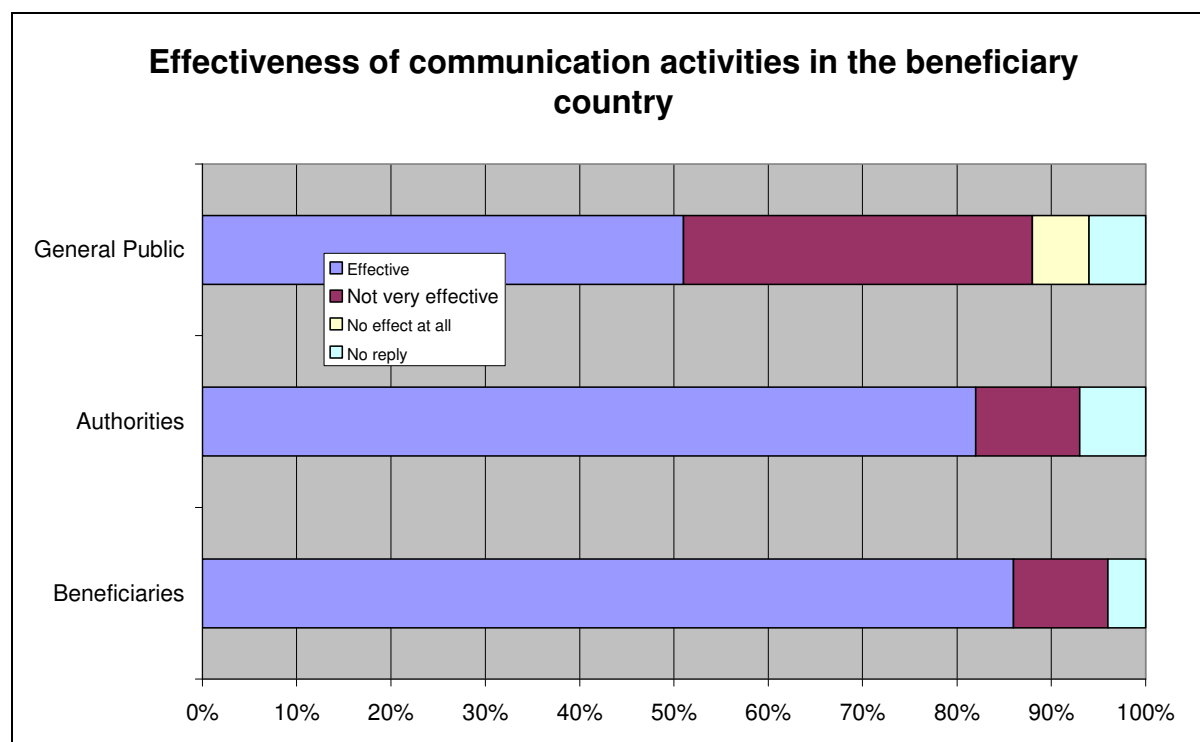
In addition, to activities to target beneficiaries, decision-makers and the media in beneficiary countries, respondents to the partners survey were also asked to indicate

to what extent they make use of various tools to target the general public in the beneficiary country. The chart highlights the results of this survey question.



The relatively low scores, which average at a 47% response rate, suggest that this group is not a key priority for DG ECHO's partners. This was confirmed by interviews with partners at headquarter level as well as in the field. However, some of the basic visibility actions prescribed by the DG (display panels, visibility at events, and media actions) enable visibility to be brought within the sphere of general publics.

In summary, it is interesting to review DG ECHO's partners' perceptions of the extent of effectiveness of the actions carried out to target the three groups discussed. This is presented in the below chart.



These results confirm that beneficiaries and local authorities/decision makers tend to be the main target groups of visibility actions carried out on behalf of DG ECHO and as the focus of this attention it is considered that actions are more effective towards these groups than towards the general public. However, there are a range of other factors highlighted by partners that will be discussed in Section 5 of this document that need to be taken into account in the assessment of activities carried out.

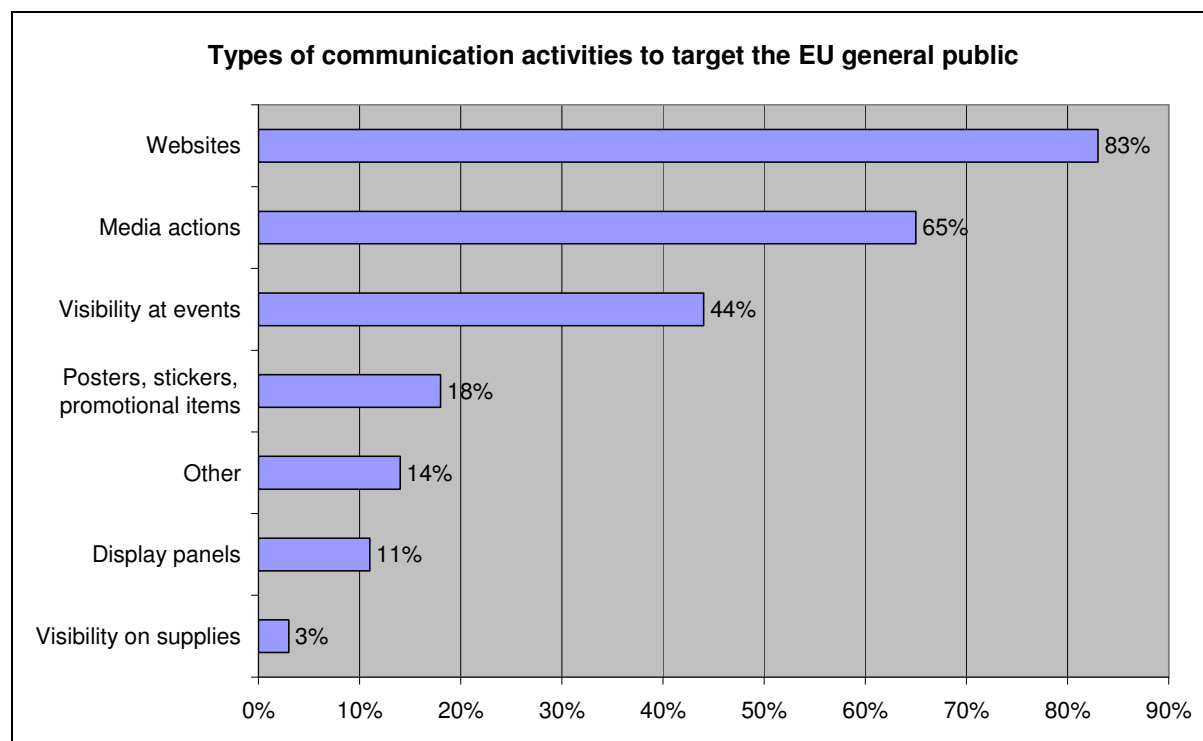
4.3.4 VISIBILITY, INFORMATION AND COMMUNICATION TO EUROPEAN AUDIENCES

Chapter 1 'Why is Joint Communication Important' of DG ECHO's visibility guidelines underlines the rationale behind the need to communicate to European audiences, as being linked to:

- ✚ **The obligation to be transparent:** The Commission's Humanitarian Aid Directorate-General (DG) manages public funds and has a duty to inform EU citizens about how the money is spent. Few EU citizens are aware that the Commission is one of the world's largest humanitarian donors.
- ✚ **Getting closer to the citizen:** This is a Commission commitment that entails pro-active communication efforts. Most Europeans support the idea of aiding the world's most vulnerable people through relief assistance. They should be informed that this support is reflected in the humanitarian work of the Commission and its implementing partners;
- ✚ **The changing framework of the European Union** (enlargement, a possible new Constitution, new Commission etc.) In a period of flux, it is important fully to inform EU decision-makers about the Commission's role in delivering effective assistance to victims of humanitarian crises.

The audiences highlighted in the guidelines are the general public including young people, those in decision-making positions, for example within Member State

governments, as well as information multipliers such as the media. Although the visibility guidelines state that partners should aim to raise awareness with the media and general public the extent that this relates to the public in Europe is not very explicit.

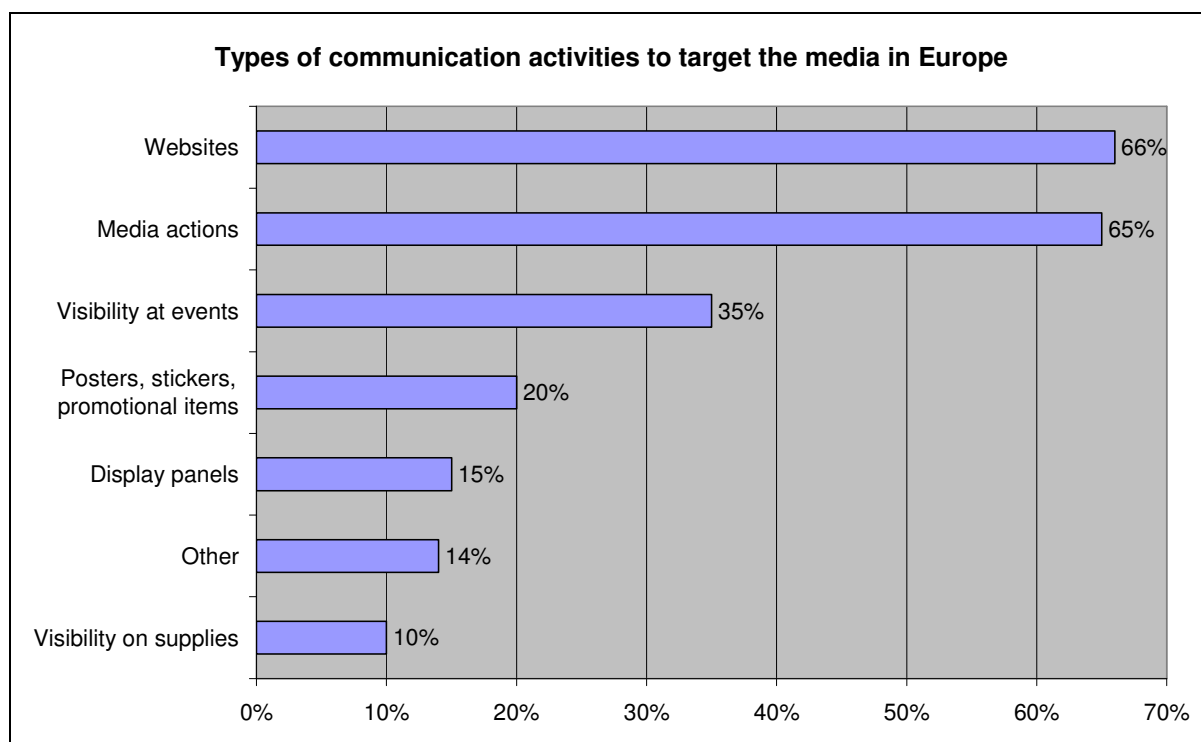


It is interesting to note that the main form of communication activities carried out by DG ECHO partners towards the EU general public is the provision of information via the organisations' web sites. Eighty-three percent of respondents indicate that the internet provides a main vehicle for visibility towards this group. Media actions form the other main vehicle for communication to the general public. However, several caveats need to be taken into account at this point:

- ✚ In interviews with the representatives of NGO headquarters in Europe, DG ECHO partners confirmed that for the most part they focus their communication actions on nationals of their own Member State. Meanwhile UN agencies and international NGOs focus on the international community rather than specifically the EU public;
- ✚ Although the majority claim to raise visibility of ECHO via their web site, most sites are a passive tool; users need to proactively see out the site. This means that the impact vis-à-vis the general public is likely to be very minimal although this may be higher towards publics interested in the NGO who visit the web site recently, however:
- ✚ A brief review of a sample of partners' web sites reveals that information about financial support from DG ECHO is not particularly visible,
- ✚ Testimonies from NGOs interviewed confirm that the Commission is not always associated with activities targeted at the media in their own country

and that this sometimes relates to the fact that the media do not 'pick up' any information which could be construed to be propaganda. The media is under pressure, solicited by a multiplicity of sources and attracting media attention requires a good stories or providing an overall perspective on a situation, etc.

A comparison, with activities undertaken to target the media in the EU shows a similar approach to the use of web sites and specific media activities for example press releases to gain media coverage. As discussed the latter is likely to be more effective, where there is a really newsworthy story to tell although there is limited likelihood that credit will be given to the EU. However, what is interesting to note is the extent that other types of activities are used or perceived to be effective in targeting the national or international media.



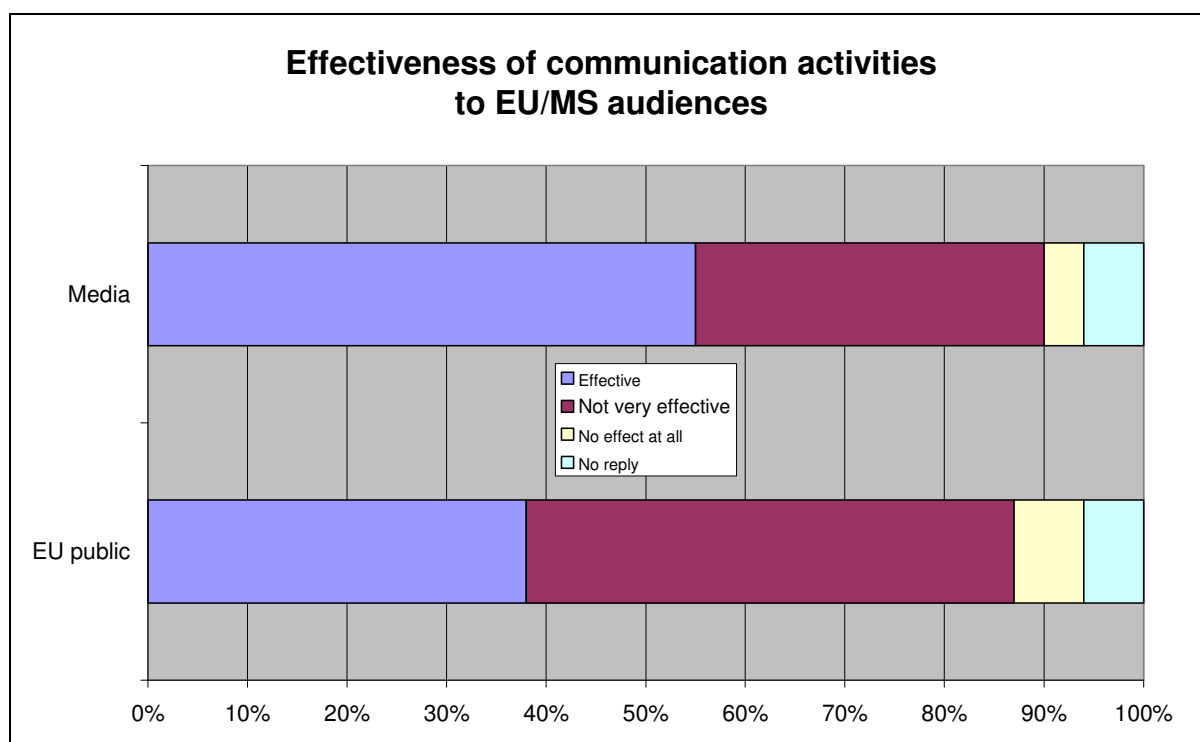
In addition to the desire to inform beneficiaries of the fact that the European Commission has provided aid to support them, DG ECHO's Visibility Guidelines emphasize the need to display EU visibility on vehicles, equipment and supplies with a view to achieving media coverage. It is suggested that this is most likely to be feasible at the start of a crisis when there can be heightened media presence. In addition, partners are encouraged to develop audiovisual footage that includes EU visibility. As highlighted above, partners pay minimal attention to the use of basic visibility to target the media. When consulted on this point, most partners confirmed that the reason for their response is that they do not consider that basic visibility on supplies and equipment is able to achieve media impact back in their home country. Instead partners report that to achieve media coverage, sophisticated media campaigns are required which are carefully orchestrated to capture the interest of the media. For those with the capacity, this can include organizing press trips to the field. However, the evaluation team was repeatedly informed that the media is very

sceptical of attempts to raise the profile of a particular organization and that any obvious labelling or attempts are disregarded in the coverage of a particular story.

In summary, it seems as though partners consider that the activities that they carry out to give visibility are less effective in targeting audiences in the EU (which frequently means within a Member State context) than the activities that they carry out to target beneficiaries and decision makers and authorities in the beneficiary countries. The response rates for the effectiveness of activities towards beneficiaries and authorities are circa 80% as opposed to a maximum of 55% percent perceiving that their activities towards EU audiences can be considered to be effective. As highlighted this reflects the fact that:

- ✚ The Visibility Guidelines emphasize the need to carry out ‘basic visibility’ as an absolute minimum,
- ✚ Basic visibility actions are more likely to gain exposure to target audiences in the beneficiary countries than audiences in the Member States
- ✚ According to partners activities to target groups in the EU seem to be less effective (web sites) and press releases than those to targeted at beneficiaries and this is likely to relate to the passive nature of web sites and the difficulties in generating media coverage.

Respondents to the on-line survey rated the level of effectiveness of their activities in the EU and these are represented in the table below:



In terms of targeting the EU public, more respondents considered that their efforts were ineffectual than effective. With regards to the media, only 11% of respondents believed that their activities are very effective. Otherwise, the number of respondents who consider their activities to be quite effective is broadly similar to those who indicate that their activities are not very effective or have no effect at all.

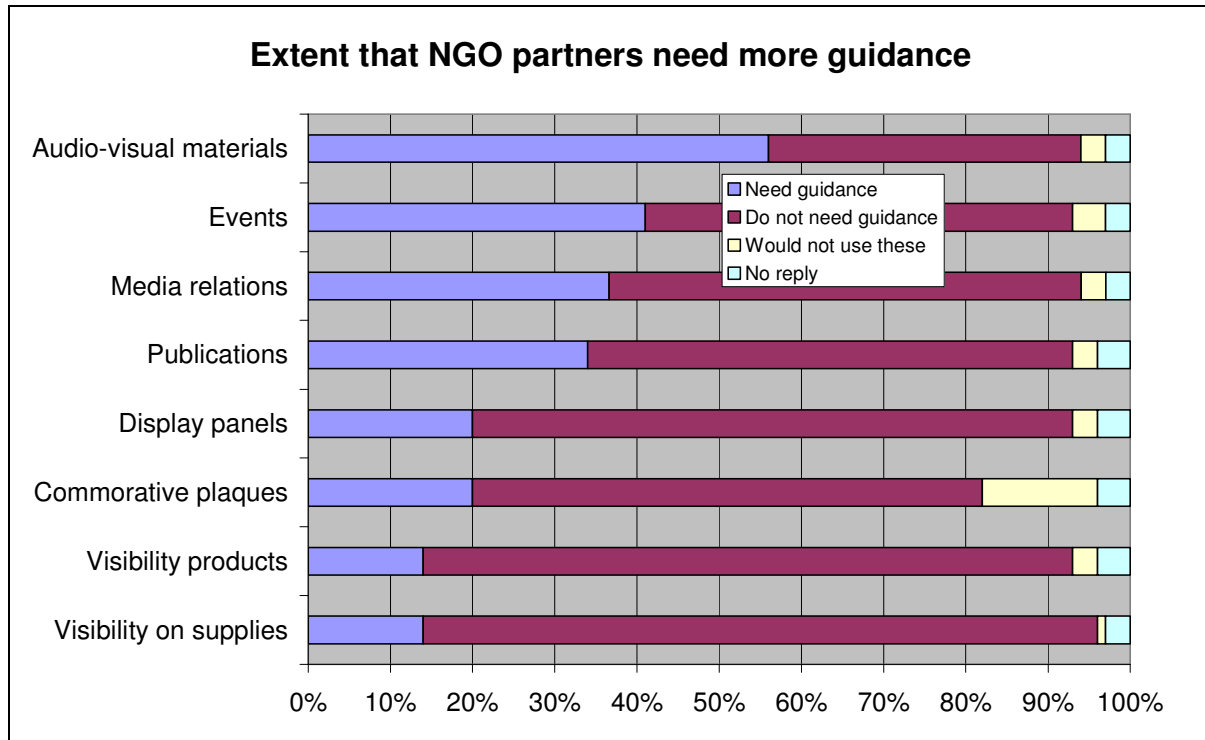
4.4 Summary of Findings

Analysis of the outcomes of the assessment made highlight a number of key points that need to be taken into account to improve partners' ability to meet DG ECHO's visibility requirements.

- ✚ NGO headquarters tend to focus their own activities on national or international audiences rather than European audiences, thus it cannot be concluded that partners are focused on a multi-Member State/EU approach as would be desired by DG ECHO. NGOs have expertise with regards to their own Member State but may find it difficult to communicate as effectively to multi-national audiences. There is an opportunity for DG ECHO to harness this national knowledge, with the overall impact being raised awareness in Europe, but this is not yet harnessed. There is here good potential for true communication partnerships, either at national levels, or to organize an EU-wide event with all partners on humanitarian value for example.
- ✚ Many larger NGOs have a professional staff of communicators in their headquarters who are responsible for implementing their campaigns. In the field they report less or little communication expertise. This impacts on the ability of the NGO to conduct effective communication campaigns in the field and results in a focus on basic visibility.
- ✚ NGO headquarters focus on a range of different target groups and do not necessarily lay the same emphasis as DG ECHO on the beneficiary and EU populations. Large partners, in particular, make significant efforts to inform decision makers in beneficiary countries. DG ECHO does not appear to place much emphasis on this group in its literature.
- ✚ There is no 'one size fits all' approach to the use of messages. Different partners have different points that they want to communicate – this should be taken into account in the definition of messages by DG ECHO.
- ✚ Partners target their messages to the context and the intended audience. This type of segmentation is not prescribed by DG ECHO but is likely to be necessary to allow partners to be effective. Consequently, there is a lack of clarity as to what DG ECHO wants to communicate to each target group.
- ✚ Partners believe that DG ECHO logos and branding have limited impact in the field. Beneficiaries do not know who the European Commission is and the EU flag is another symbol. Despite this the focus on activities to beneficiaries are of the basic visibility type. This raises questions about the value of these activities.
- ✚ It appears that DG ECHO does not harness partners' expertise in their own countries through joint communication campaigns. Instead partners use passive communications towards EU audiences and focuses on activities in the beneficiary countries, where partners confirm they have a number of weaknesses due to expertise and resources. This reflects the fact that visibility is strictly tied to individual operational contracts and NGOs cannot integrate funds to achieve greater impact.

- ✚ Efforts to raise awareness of DG ECHO in Europe seem to tend to focus on more passive forms of communication (web site, brochures). Thus, in theory, there is more scope for the DG to work with partners at this level.
- ✚ It is very difficult to harness the media in beneficiary countries and partners indicate limited success in this area. This relates to the national context and lack of NGO expertise in the field. The best way to attract media coverage is for NGO headquarters to bring journalists from Europe but this type of campaign may be off limits due to small visibility budgets. This has important limitations as the media will not necessarily mention EU funding: media compete for a good and exclusive story.
- ✚ Support for visibility, information and communication actions is fragmented across projects
- ✚ In general, use of basic visibility in beneficiary countries is not an effective mechanism to gain media coverage.
- ✚ Limited use is made of the internet as a communication tool in the beneficiary countries and this seems to reflect limited availability of infrastructure. Meanwhile the internet is perceived to be more useful to communicate with European publics.
- ✚ There are limited meaningful impact measurements of information, communication or visibility actions. Impact measurement (either through exit interviews with beneficiaries or web traffic, etc.) should be systematically built into projects.
- ✚ What needs to be communicated to each target group is not clear to partners who do not require 'messages', as they will determine these according to the context/target group.
- ✚ Partners need direction as to how DG ECHO should be portrayed to target groups. This is an area that needs to be defined and communicated.

In addition to the above, findings it is useful to consider responses to the question as to whether NGO partners consider that they need more guidance from DG ECHO with regards to their visibility, information and communication activities. With the exception of audio visual materials, more partners believe that they do not require further assistance. However, as highlighted above there are a number of areas that could be adapted to increase the effectiveness of the activities that they do carry out.



5.0 UNDERSTANDING AND COMPLIANCE WITH GUIDELINES

5.1 Introduction

A Framework Partnership Agreement is signed between each NGO that receives financing to provide humanitarian aid and the European Commission Humanitarian Aid Directorate General. The General Conditions that govern this agreement set out the responsibilities of NGO partners including the requirements concerning visibility. The general rule¹³ is that:

“The humanitarian organisation shall contribute to the visibility of the humanitarian operations financed by the European Community, provided that this does not harm the organisation’s mandate or the safety of its staff.”

In addition to the General Conditions, DG ECHO has produced an information document that is designed to help NGO partners to better understand how the rules on visibility should be applied. The document ‘*A partnership for communication*’ presents the visibility guidelines of the DG, which provide information on:

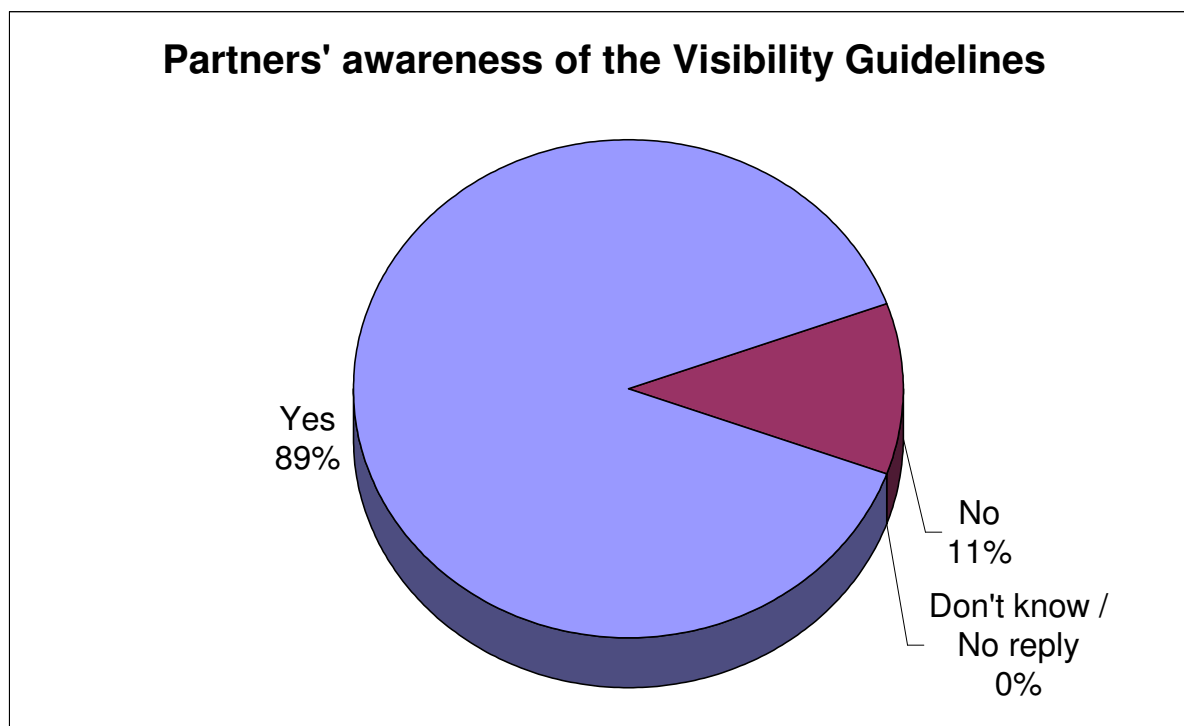
- ✚ The approach to information and communication within the DG;
- ✚ How a joint approach with NGOs can help the DG to meet its objectives;
- ✚ The minimum requirements for visibility actions by NGOs;
- ✚ The types of visibility actions that are expected;
- ✚ Examples of how visibility criteria can be applied.

In-line with the Terms of Reference to the evaluation, this Chapter presents an independent assessment of NGO partners’ understanding and compliance with DG ECHO’s communication, information and visibility requirements. The Chapter is split into two sections the first dealing with awareness and understanding and the second looking at issues related to compliance. As with Chapter 4, evidence is drawn directly from contacts with NGO partners both at headquarter level and in the field. Practical examples of understanding and compliance were evidenced in the field when the evaluation team visited projects in Lebanon. The findings and evidence from this and the previous section will be taken into account in the design of the tool box.

5.2 Awareness and Understanding of Requirements and Guidelines

Respondents to DG ECHO’s partner survey were asked to indicate their level of awareness of the Visibility Guidelines document. Respondents to the survey are located at the headquarters of the organisations in Europe rather than those in the field. For this group a very clear picture emerges from the results received and this is confirmed by the interviews carried out with partners.

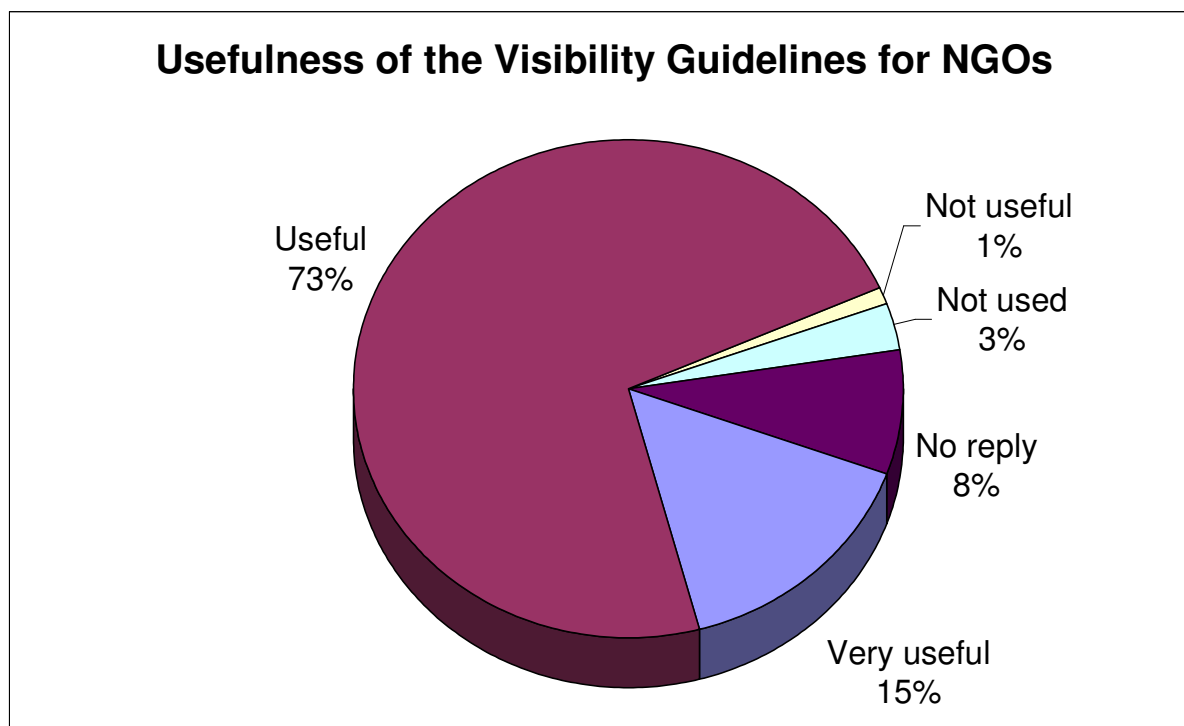
¹³ See Article 6.1 of the General Conditions of the Framework Partnership Agreement



This result suggests that the DG has been effective at disseminating the visibility guidelines to NGO and UN headquarters. However, this effectiveness does not necessarily translate down to those in the field. Those at NGO headquarters confirmed that they make efforts to communicate about the requirements to their agents in the field, for example by making summaries of the guidelines and disseminating these or disseminating the actual guidelines.

Several interviewees from different organisations suggested that sometimes people in the field are not always aware of the guidelines and in a few cases are not aware that visibility is a key component of their humanitarian aid contract despite the fact that the message is passed from head office. It was beyond the scope of this assessment to test total levels of awareness of the guidelines in the field, given the broad geographic scope covered by DG ECHO. It seems likely that there will be occasions when awareness is lower than others, for example where NGOs are working with local staff to help them to implement their aid relief, at the same time there are likely to be other examples of higher awareness for example for NGO staff. There were high levels of awareness in Lebanon when the evaluation team visited project teams in September 2007.

A high awareness of the guidelines among NGO headquarters is a positive indicator. It is also necessary to establish to what extent NGO partners find the guidelines to be understandable and useful, and how these are actually used in practice. Respondents were asked to comment on the usefulness of the Visibility Guidelines in their work, with the following results:



It is encouraging to note that 72% of respondents considered that the Visibility Guidelines are useful. This suggests that DG ECHO is taking the right approach in giving further explanation as to how the General Conditions of the Framework Partnership Agreement should be met. However, interviews with a sample of partners highlight there are a number of underlying issues with regards to the Guidelines, which are listed and discussed below:

- ✚ Multiple guidelines: the requirement to meet at least two sets of guidelines: those for DG ECHO and those for DG AIDCO
- ✚ Style and content of the document: length and tone
- ✚ Application of the guidelines: expectations of the DG, relevance and types of examples given
- ✚ Lack of clarity with regards to what DG ECHO wants to achieve, including objectives and messages

Multiple guidelines: several interviewees reported that in many situations they are required to comply with one set of guidelines for DG ECHO and one set of guidelines for DG AIDCO. When this point arose, NGO representatives tended to point to the guidelines from DG AIDCO as being more 'practical', understandable and easier to follow. The DG AIDCO guidelines are particularly clear because they cover a full list of possible information and communication tools, describe how these should be used, and give specific examples and templates. In comparison, the DG ECHO guidelines are not as comprehensive. This suggests that it may be important to take into account what DG AIDCO are prescribing in the formulation of the tool box and raises the question as to whether two separate approaches are really required. Furthermore, it was noted that many large NGOs have their own guidelines for communication.

Style and content of the document: mixed views were received on the style of the Visibility Guidelines. Some point to the length of the document and suggest that for this reason it is not useful in the field and also can result in NGOs not being aware of the content of the Guidelines in detail and this reduces their ability to ensure that the Guidelines are implemented by their partners in the field. As it stands the document combines policy aspects and descriptions of rationale, with rules and examples of what can be done. It may be worth considering splitting this information into two documents, one aimed at the headquarters and the other at staff in the field. The latter document could be shorter with very concrete examples of what should and can be done. The former would be a management type document for those responsible for managing the aid process.

At headquarter level, many suggest that the document is relatively clear. Some even commented that it is one of the clearest documents produced by DG ECHO although DG AIDCO's document is felt to be even easier to understand. For those at headquarter level it is useful to receive a document from DG ECHO which attempts to interpret the FPA General Conditions even if there could be aspects which could be changed. However, several question the tone and style of the document suggesting that they are too onerous and prescriptive. Although the Guidelines are called a partnership for communication, NGOs can have a sense that the focus of requirements rest with them rather than with DG ECHO, which suggests that there may be a need to better define the role that DG ECHO intends to play.

In summary, it seems that NGOs appreciation of the document can be quite subjective some appreciate the guidelines they are just happy to have some instructions from the DG; others are more critical. Those who are particularly critical are those who have higher levels of expertise in the development of communication activities and do not need to be told how to write a press release, but instead want to better understand what the DG wants to achieve and what DG ECHO's objectives are. This need arises because NGOs suggest that the approach described in the Guidelines will not achieve the impact that the DG wants. On the other hand, those with limited communication resources also suggest that the Guidelines are not sufficiently practical to provide assistance.

Application of the guidelines: many of the NGO partners consulted suggested that the guidelines, and the way that they are monitored by DG ECHO, can be unrealistic and too prescriptive. This point relates to the fact that in many cases the amounts allocated to visibility can be quite small because each specific project needs to have a visibility element. Several quoted examples of visibility plans being rejected because of a need to provide a detailed communication plan including detailed target audiences and indicators of impact for very small amounts, for example €2,000. Although the visibility guidelines indicate an understanding that relevance is linked to the nature and context of the aid relief and that some projects lend themselves more to visibility than others, it is reported that those responsible for monitoring the application of the 'guidelines' do not tend to apply the guidelines flexibly.

It will be important to address questions over the examples given in the tool kit that will be prepared as a result of this assessment. Most NGOs suggest that the examples provided by DG ECHO are often not realistic particularly with regards to the media and cannot be applied in practice. Also many suggest that the tools

prescribed are not suitable to meet the aims of the DG, for example raising the EU public's awareness that DG ECHO is the largest donor of humanitarian aid.

Lack of clarity over DG ECHO's objectives and how it wants to be portrayed: many of the NGOs consulted question the impact of the activities described in the Visibility Guidelines, which leads to confusion over what the DG is trying to achieve. This issue arose time and again in the interviews with NGOs, as well as in interviews with other donors. Here it is useful to highlight the direct comments received by the evaluation team:

"Within [NGO's name] there seem to a lot of fundamental questions with regards to the purpose of ECHO's visibility efforts and what the DG is trying to achieve."

"ECHO's objectives in messaging are still unclear. It is understood that DG ECHO wants to target the European public, but what the message is, remains completely unclear."

"Two levels of objectives need to be articulated by DG ECHO: the overall objective in terms of what, who, when and a second level of objectives per activity funded – specific objectives."

"How does ECHO want to be seen by its audience? This is the key issue that needs to be communicated to NGO partners and agencies. Once that is understood then partners can translate the desired output into actions and how [NGO's name] can help ECHO on the ground."

"There seems to be a desire to increase awareness at the EU level but this cannot be achieved through stickers/basic visibility in the field. There is a need to bring journalists from Europe to the field rather than to rely on the idea that the international media will see stickers/branding by accident when they are filming."

These and other comments suggest that although the Visibility Guidelines provide some clarity to NGO partners, they do not go far enough. One issue relates to a lack of segmentation of target groups and what the DG wants to communicate to each group. The Visibility Guidelines present a series of 6 key messages¹⁴ that are reported to be used by the DG in its communication activities and it is suggested that NGO partners should also make use of these messages. Respondents to the DG ECHO partner survey were asked to consider these messages and to rate their relevance. Relevance for each message was scored on a scale from 0 (Not at all relevant) to 100 (Very relevant). The average score for each of the key messages is as follows:

European Commission – helping the victims of humanitarian crises (the basic message).	78
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¹⁴ See page 4 of the Visibility Guidelines

Humanitarian aid is an expression of European solidarity with the world's most vulnerable people.	70
The Commission offers humanitarian aid impartially to people in distress, irrespective of their race, ethnic group, religion, gender, age, nationality or political affiliation.	86
Humanitarian aid goes to those in greatest need.	74
Humanitarian aid is governed by the key principles of humanity, impartiality and neutrality.	87
The European Commission is committed to preserving the dignity of populations affected by humanitarian crises.	80

All of the key messages scored relatively highly. It is not surprising that the message related to impartiality and neutrality scored the highest because this reflects the basic principle which is shared with all NGO partners. However, discussions with NGOs on the messages revealed that although these messages reflect the nature of the aid supported by DG ECHO, they are too specific and are not written from the point of view of target audiences. From a practical point of view, these messages are never used by NGOs because each communication campaign needs to be applied to the target audience and what is trying to be achieved. What it is that DG ECHO wants each type of partner to understand is not evident. There is a need to segment what needs to be achieved and to present this in the Visibility Guidelines so that partners can tailor their communication and visibility actions to achieve communication objectives.

It is suggested that a basic template which segments target groups and what needs to be achieved is developed and that this is discussed with NGO partners to identify the best way to achieve these communication outcomes, for example:

Target audience	What DG ECHO wants to achieve/impact	How this can be best achieved
Beneficiaries	That beneficiaries know that their aid has been provided by	

	Europe	
EU General Public ¹⁵	<p>That the public in Europe know that the European Commission is the largest donor of humanitarian aid in the world</p> <p>That the European Commission provides a significant proportion of the budget that is used by the UN and other major aid partners (Oxfam, Red Cross and Crescent, etc.)</p> <p>That humanitarian aid supported by the European Commission is required to meet quality benchmarks in terms of impact, accountability, etc.</p> <p>That DG ECHO leads the way in terms of defining the approach to humanitarian aid relief, etc.</p>	
Decision-makers in beneficiary countries		
Decision-makers in EU and Member States		

In the above, a basic difference is made between whether or not target groups need to understand that funding has come from the European Commission. As highlighted earlier, the beneficiary audience is highly unlikely to understand what the European Commission is, therefore Europe is more meaningful. Meanwhile, there is a need to raise the profile of the Commission in the EU hence the use of the European Commission, instead of DG ECHO as differentiating the Commission by DG reduces the impact with this group. Thus, in summary, NGO partners understanding would be improved if DG ECHO was to clearly identify what it wants to achieve with each audience rather than providing a set of specific messages. The NGOs can then work out how this needs to be communicated on the ground. It is suggested that implementation aspects are discussed with those responsible for communication at NGO partners as a mechanism to improve the feasibility and more importantly the impact of the Guidelines.

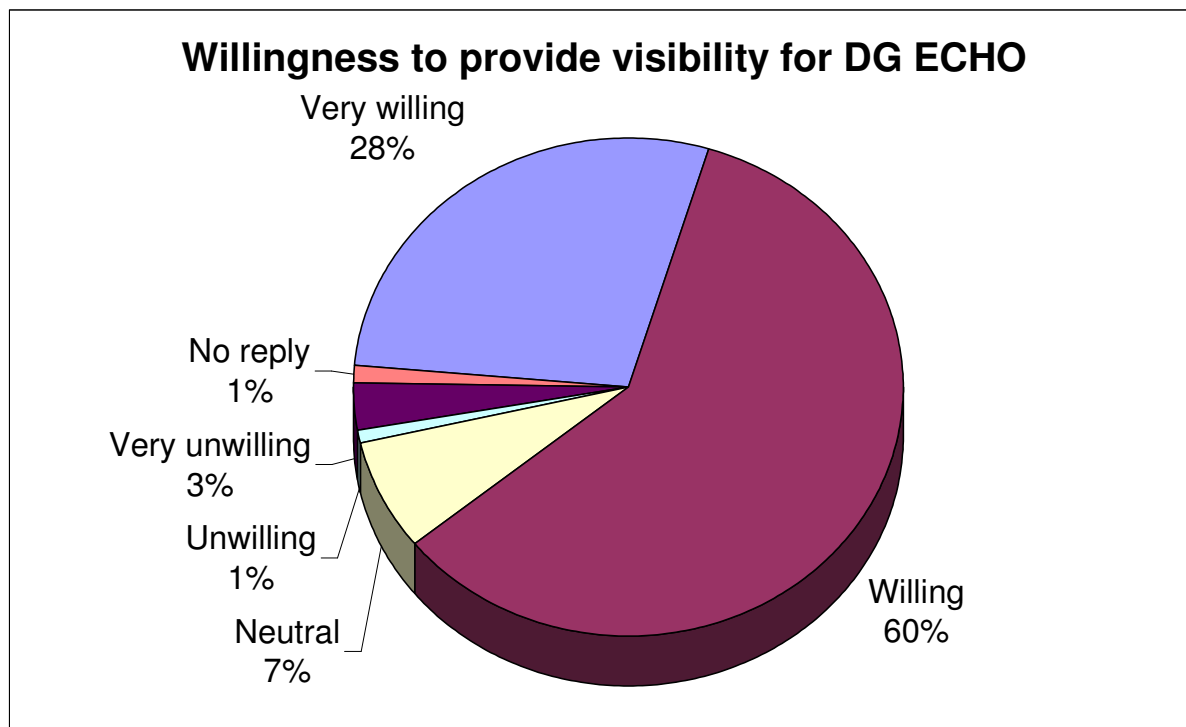
5.3 Compliance with DG ECHO Requirements

This section describes the analysis and findings of the evaluation team on the extent that DG ECHO's NGO partners are compliant with the visibility requirements expressed in their contracts. Consideration is given to evidence of compliance and also takes into account barriers and constraints to full compliance.

¹⁵ The desired impacts listed above are examples rather than suggestions.

5.3.1 PROVIDING VISIBILITY

Respondents to the survey of DG ECHO partners were asked to indicate to what extent their organisation was willing to comply with DG ECHO's conditions and provide visibility for the DG.



The picture that this graph provides is that NGO partners are willing to comply with the requirements of their FP agreements for visibility. Discussions with partners in the field confirm that this is in fact the situation. For many NGOs, DG ECHO is one of their biggest donors. Thus, it is not surprising that partners are willing to show compliance with the guidelines. Although some representatives of Member State administrations suggest that compliance represents a significant burden for NGOs and that requirements are met because NGOs feel obliged to do so. Interviews with NGOs suggest that the requirements placed upon them by DG ECHO can indeed be burdensome, certainly in contrast to many other donors. However, the central message is that there is an interest in cooperating with DG ECHO and that the more it is possible to make this cooperation a win/win situation, where both organisations benefit, the better. NGOs and DG ECHO are considered to have a common interest informing target groups what they are doing, even if they go about this in different ways.

The interviews with NGOs both in Europe and in the field uncovered a multitude of examples of how NGOs work to provide DG ECHO with visibility. Evaluation team members were provided with copies of DVDs, books, pamphlets, book marks, postcards, electronic postcards and a whole range of materials that are used. Anecdotal evidence was also given of television programming related to ECHO funded projects that had been shown on various channels including coverage by BBC World. In addition to these tangible outputs, partners reported inventive ways of engaging with beneficiaries and target groups in beneficiary countries, for example

street festivals, football matches and tournaments. Where NGO partners had the resources and expertise many of the tools produced can be considered to be of particularly high quality. See the below example of an electronic postcard used by the Danish Refugee Council, which is sent to all email recipients.

E-mail text here

All the best,

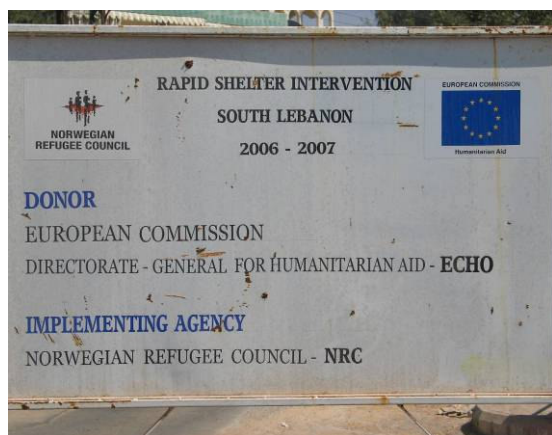
Project Manager
Danish Refugee Council – Lebanon



In the field, the evaluation team identified many examples¹⁶ of how DG ECHO's partners provide visibility in the field, as highlighted below:

Despite the many examples of compliance and a high level of professionalism in the communication activities carried out by NGOs, discussions with NGOs in Europe and in the field highlighted that DG ECHO's partners are required to work against a number of constraints, which limit their ability to comply with requirements and to fulfil DG ECHO's desire to achieve visibility impact, including:

¹⁶ Both examples provided were identified in Lebanon. The mug is a promotional item that is used for local authorities.



- ✚ Lack of expertise: this point relates to the need to develop communication plans with identified target groups and indicators. Both at headquarters and in the field, NGOs highlighted the fact that staff that work in the field do not tend to have communication skills. This is summed up by several comments made to the evaluation team in Lebanon:

“Would you ask a communications company to do humanitarian aid? So why ask humanitarians to do communications? They are different professions. Let each do that which they know how to do.”

“NGOs don’t have the structures for doing high-level communication – communication just doesn’t go anywhere – what real impact do they have – ECHO is not a bank – it is a partner – I am very happy to promote ECHO”

“NGOs find communication a real nightmare – we have no link with the communication department in Brussels”

- ✚ Lack of resources: the design and implementation of an effective communication campaign is a skilled and costly exercise. Many NGOs suggested that DG ECHO has high expectations in terms of what it wants its partners to achieve. Even those with significant communication resources at headquarters level, for example the evaluation team interviewed one UN agency with a communication unit of 25 staff many of whom were former professional journalists, programme makers and broadcasters, suggest that the DG’s expectations can be too high because this expertise is not located in the field. One of the fundamental reasons for this assertion is the fact that each specific humanitarian aid project needs to have a distinct visibility component. NGOs are not permitted to combine budgets from several projects and to develop a more significant campaign. This fragmentation of budgets is reported to have the end result that many relatively insignificant actions are carried out, which for example focus on ‘sticker’ which achieve minimal impact or at best are only able to achieve some levels of recognition as a symbol by beneficiaries but can not hope to achieve the other communication goals that the DG has set for itself. A common call from NGO partners is to be able to combine visibility budgets to achieve greater impact. Another reason for this call is that some aid projects do not warrant significant communication actions. Although the Visibility Guidelines suggest that in some cases projects do not merit significant communication actions because they are not particularly interesting to other publics, in practice, NGOs often find themselves expected to carry out more significant actions even when they believe that this would not add any value.

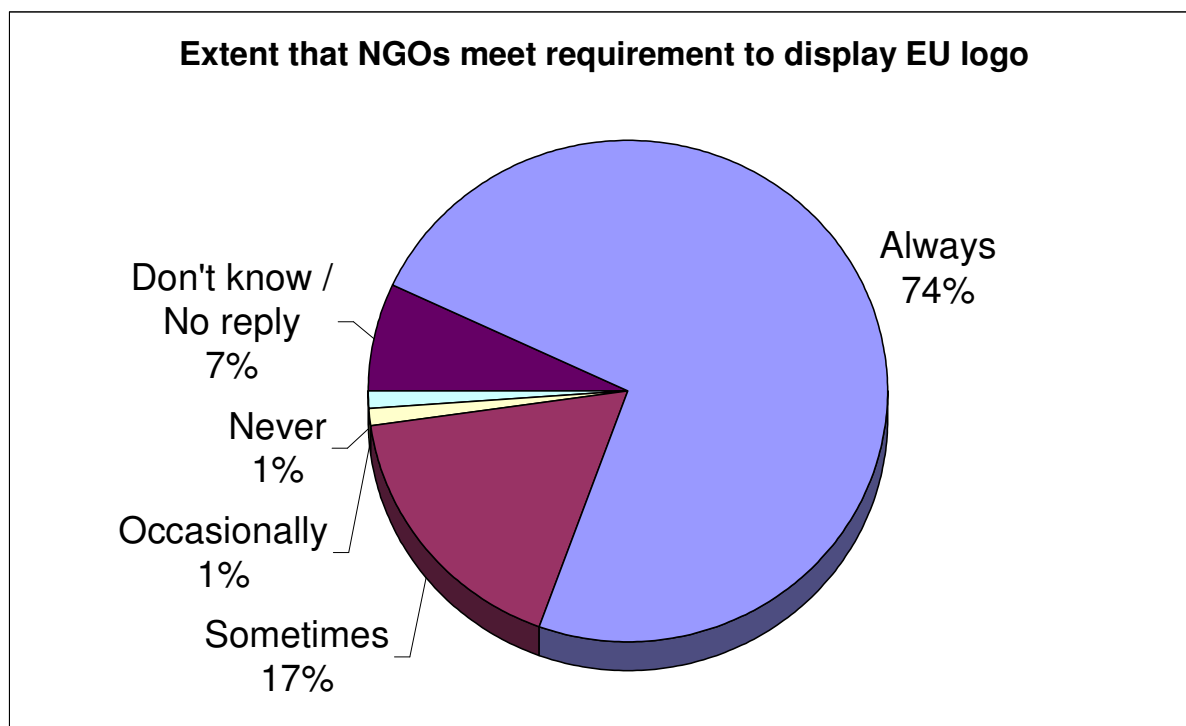
- ✚ The nature of communications: The potential for NGOs to plan large-scale campaigns is also limited due to the unpredictability of campaigns and the fact that timing is crucial if the media are to be attracted. Journalists are not interested in ‘old news’. NGOs are required to agree a visibility plan before

they undertake their campaign, but it is difficult to foresee whether a topic that might have created media interest may no longer be of interest if the situation changes. For this reason, and because NGOs do not want to lose funds allocated to them if they are unable to spend their visibility budgets, some NGOs reported that they lack ambition in their visibility plans and focus to a great extent on the provision of basic visibility, because they know that they can meet targets set.

Other constraints related to the nature of communications include the fact that generating media coverage is difficult and it is not possible to guarantee that efforts will be taken up by the press.

5.3.2 ACHIEVING BASIC VISIBILITY

Respondents were also asked to indicate to what extent their organisation met the requirement to use the European logo on vehicles, equipment, and major supplies funded by ECHO and are able to comply with the guidelines. From the results it is possible to ascertain that the majority of partners meet this requirement.



Looking in further detail at the data it is interesting to note that all of the representatives of large NGOs indicated that they always display the EU logo, whereas circa 20% of medium-sized and small partners indicated that they are able to meet this requirement sometimes but not always. Discussion with partners highlighted the following issues that limit their ability to always display the EU logo, and also presents some examples of non-compliance.

- ✚ **Security concerns:** in some cases displaying the EU logo is likely to endanger the lives of staff providing aid on the ground. This exemption is taken into account in the visibility guidelines and partners are required to request a

specific exemption. According to the survey carried out 17% of respondent organisations have asked for an exemption in the past. However, many partners highlighted this as a particular concern. There is some anecdotal evidence to suggest that exemptions are not always formally requested for example with a letter that is added to the contract file, but that situations are sometimes agreed informally with DG ECHO technical assistants in the field. Also, on other occasions, although a formal exemption is not applied for NGOs consider that they are justified in not providing visibility because of the situation.

- ✚ When DG ECHO is not the principal donor: in many aid situations DG ECHO is not the only donor financing humanitarian aid and may not be the principal donor. Several organisations suggested that sometimes it is not appropriate to sticker in these situations. Although efforts are made to comply it seems that in the field staff use their discretion when using the EU logo would give a false impression of who has provided finance.
- ✚ Local staff do not understand what is required: during the field visit to Lebanon, the evaluation team identified numerous occasions when visibility was being used inappropriately. Although this was not highlighted by staff at headquarters' level in Europe, there were many examples of logos and stickers on items which were not related to a particular project. This gave the impression that because the evaluation team had arrived stickers had been posted everywhere to show willing. The examples below show how stickers are also posted on items that are not related to humanitarian aid projects.



In addition to evidence found in the field and anecdotal evidence from partners, the survey suggests that a very small group are not willing to comply with the DGs requirement from a philosophical point of view for the following reasons:

- ✚ The political nature of the logo: one of the main principles shared by the partners of DG ECHO is the concept of impartiality. Several NGO representatives reported that the fact that DG ECHO is now advocating display of the EU flag in replacement of earlier logos that had been developed compromised this principle. The EU flag is considered to be the flag of a political institution.
- ✚ Disagreement on the concept of providing visibility: a small minority of partners feel particularly strongly that they should not be responsible for carrying out visibility actions to raise awareness of the EU. Furthermore, these partners do not believe that beneficiaries should be made aware of who is providing funding because they believe that this goes against the principles of Good Humanitarian Donor ship, which the European Commission has signed up to.

5.4 Summary of Findings

This section summarises key findings on NGO partners understanding and compliance with visibility requirements.

- ✚ NGO headquarters have a high level of awareness of the visibility guidelines. However this awareness is not necessarily as high among their staff in the field.
- ✚ NGO partners need more practical examples of how to apply the DG's visibility and communication requirements, the example of DG AIDCO's visibility guidelines could be inspiring, as could the guidelines produced by other organizations provided to the evaluation team.
- ✚ There is an overlap between the guidelines produced by DG ECHO and those produced by DG AIDCO. This raises the question as to why partners cannot use the same guidelines and whether two sets are required?
- ✚ There maybe merit in splitting the visibility guidelines into two documents: the first aimed at managers and administrators, which explains the approach and rationale; the second aimed at those responsible for communicating which is highly practical with numerous concrete examples.
- ✚ The requirement for a visibility plan to be developed with details of target audiences and intended impacts is unrealistic in many cases, where partners are implementing relatively small visibility budgets.
- ✚ NGOs ability to achieve an impact is reduced by the fragmentation of visibility budgets across contracts.
- ✚ There is a lack of clarity among NGO partners as to what DG ECHO is trying to achieve with each audience. NGOs need to know what DG ECHO wants each target group to know and will then tailor its own message to suit the context. Thus specific messages are not required. Provision of a template which segments audiences and outcomes would be useful.

- ✚ NGO headquarters would like increased dialogue with DG ECHO communicators to agree the best approach to achieve communication goals that can benefit all sides (win/win situation). Without this dialogue it is difficult for NGOs to really understand what should be done.
- ✚ Most NGO partners are willing to comply with DG ECHO visibility requirements and produce a range of high quality communication material. However it is difficult for them to carry out sophisticated communication campaigns in the field due to lack of communication staff.
- ✚ There is evidence that NGOs are meeting basic visibility requirements. However, sometimes these requirements are not being met as was intended, with stickers in inappropriate places or just to satisfy officials' visits.
- ✚ NGOs do not necessarily request formal exemptions from their visibility activities, they may use their discretion and tend to make DG ECHO technical staff in the field aware.

6.0 ANNEXES

6.1 ANNEX 1 ECHO VISIBILITY BUDGET 2006

6.2 ANNEX 2: PARTNER CONSULTATION

6.3 ANNEX 3: PARTNER SURVEY