

Evaluation of DIPECHO Action Plans In Central America (1998 – 2007)

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LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS AND ACRONYMS

AAA	<i>Agro Acción Alemana</i>
ACH	<i>Acción Contra el Hambre</i>
ACSUR	<i>Asociación para la Cooperación con el Sur</i>
ACT	<i>Action by Churches Together</i>
ACTED	<i>Agence d'Aide à la Coopération Technique Et au Développement</i>
AECI	<i>Agencia Española de Cooperación Internacional</i>
ALISEI	<i>Associazione per la Cooperazione Internazionale e L'aiuto Umanitario</i>
AP	<i>Action Plan</i>
APS	<i>Associazione per la Partecipazione allo Sviluppo</i>
ASAPRODE	<i>Asociación para la Promoción del Desarrollo</i>
ASONOGH	<i>Asociación de Organismos No Gubernamentales de Honduras</i>
BCPR	<i>Bureau for Crisis Prevention and Recovery (UNDP)</i>
BMZ	<i>Bundesministerium Für Wirtschaftliche Zusammenarbeit (German Federal Ministry for Economic Development Cooperation)</i>
CAMI	<i>Central American Mitigation Initiative</i>
CAPRA	<i>Central American Probabilistic Risk Assessment</i>
CARE	<i>CARE</i>
CCAD	<i>Comisión Centroamericana de Ambiente y Desarrollo</i>
CECC	<i>Coordinación Educativa y Cultural Centroamericana</i>
CEPREDENAC	<i>Centro de Coordinación para la Prevención de los Desastres Naturales en América Central</i>
CEPRODE	<i>Centro de Protección para Desastres</i>
CISP	<i>Comitato Internazionale per lo Sviluppo dei Popoli</i>
CNE	<i>Comisión Nacional de Prevención de Riesgos y Atención de Emergencias</i>
COCIGER	<i>Convergencia Ciudadana para la Gestión de Riesgo</i>
COEN	<i>Comité de Emergencia Nacional</i>
CONRED	<i>Coordinadora Nacional para la Reducción de Desastres</i>
COOPI	<i>Cooperazione Internazionale</i>
COPECO	<i>Comisión Permanente de Contingencias</i>
COPEN	<i>Consejo Permanente de Emergencia Nacional</i>
COSPE	<i>Cooperazione per lo Sviluppo dei Paesi Emergente</i>
COSUDE	<i>Agencia Suiza para Cooperación y Desarrollo/Swiss Agency for Development and Cooperation</i>
CR-E	<i>Cruz Roja Española</i>
CR-I	<i>Cruz Roja Italiana</i>
CRID	<i>Centro Regional de Información sobre Desastres</i>
CR-NL	<i>Cruz Roja Nederlands</i>
CRRH	<i>Comité Regional de Recursos Hidráulicos</i>
CSUCA	<i>Consejo Superior Universitario Centroamericano</i>

DANIDA	Danish International Development Agency
DCA	Dan Church Aid
DFID	Department for International Development
DG ECHO	Directorate General for Humanitarian Aid
DG RELEX	Directorate General External Relations
DIPECHO	Disaster Preparedness Programme of ECHO
DM	Disaster Management
DMC	Disaster Management Committee
DP	Disaster Preparedness
DPP	Disaster Preparedness and Prevention
DRR	Disaster Risk Reduction
EC	European Commission
ESFRA	<i>Fundación EcuMénica Guatemalteca Esperanza y Fraternidad</i>
EU	European Union
FEMICA	<i>Federación de Municipios del Istmo Centroamericano</i>
FEMID	<i>Fortalecimiento de Estructuras Locales en la Mitigación de Desastres</i>
FPA	Final Project Agreement
FUNDE	<i>Fundación Nacional para el Desarrollo</i>
FUSAI	<i>Fundación Salvadoreña de Apoyo Integral</i>
GM-E	<i>Geólogos del Mundo- España</i>
GOAL	GOAL
GTZ	<i>Gesellschaft für Technische Zusammenarbeit</i>
GVC	<i>Gruppo Volontariato Civile</i>
HQ	Headquarters
IADB	Inter-American Development Bank
IDNDR	International Decade for Natural Disaster Reduction
IFRC	International Federation of the Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies
INETER	<i>Instituto Nicaragüense de Estudios Territoriales</i>
INGO	International non governmental organisation
INSUVUMEH	<i>Instituto Nacional de Sismología, Vulcanología, Meteorología e Hidrología</i>
IO	International organisation
IPADE	<i>Instituto de Promoción y Apoyo al Desarrollo</i>
ISDR	International Strategy for Disaster Reduction
LA RED	<i>Red de estudios sociales en prevención de desastres en América Latina</i>
LRRD	Linking relief, rehabilitation and development
MOLISV	<i>Movimento Liberazione e Sviluppo</i>
NCM	National Consultative Meeting
NGO	Non governmental organisation
OAS	Organization of American States
OCHA	Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (United Nations)

OFDA-AID	Office of Foreign Disaster Assistance of the US Agency for International Development
OIKOS	<i>Cooperação e Desenvolvimento</i>
OPS	<i>Organización Panamericana de la Salud</i>
OXFAM	Oxford Committee for Famine Relief
PAHO	Pan American Health Organization
PRESANCA	<i>Programa Regional de Seguridad Alimentaria y Nutricional para Centroamérica</i>
PREVDA	<i>Programa Regional de Reducción de la Vulnerabilidad y Degradación Ambiental</i>
PRISMA	<i>Programa Salvadoreño de Investigación sobre Desarrollo y Medio Ambiente</i>
PRRAC	<i>Programa Regional de Reconstrucción para América Central</i>
PRRD	<i>Plan Regional de Reducción de Desastres</i>
RAAN	<i>Región Autónoma Atlántico Norte</i>
RAAS	<i>Región Autónoma Atlántico Sur</i>
RCM	Regional Consultative Meeting
SAREC	SIDA's Department for Research Cooperation
SDC	Swiss Development Cooperation
SI	<i>Solidaridad Internacional</i>
SICA	<i>Sistema de la Integración Centroamericana</i>
SIDA	Swedish International Development Cooperation Agency
SINAPRED	<i>Sistema Nacional para la Prevención, Mitigación y Atención de Desastres</i>
SINAPROC	<i>Sistema Nacional de Protección Civil</i>
SNET	<i>Servicio Nacional de Estudios Territoriales</i>
TA	Technical Adviser
ToR	Terms of Reference
TROCAIRE	The Overseas Development Agency of the Catholic Church in Ireland
UN	United Nations
UNDP	United Nations Development Programme
UNICEF	United Nations Children's Fund
USAID	United States Agency for International Development
VCA	Vulnerability and Capacity Assessment
WB	World Bank
WFP	World Food Programme
WHO	World Health Organization

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

INTRODUCTION

This report presents the main findings, conclusions and recommendations on approaches to disaster risk reduction, based on an evaluation of five DG ECHO disaster preparedness (DIPECHO) Action Plans 1998 to 2007 for Central America, undertaken September–November 2007, focussing particularly on community-based disaster preparedness. The evaluation was undertaken by Allan Lavell, Silvia Hidalgo and Sandra Zúñiga.

PURPOSE AND METHODOLOGY

The goal was “to review and assess the progress made in enhancing resilience and reducing vulnerability to natural disaster of the most at-risk populations of Central America and the public institutions that seek to protect them.” The evaluation focussed primarily on the strategic approach taken by DIPECHO through the five Action Plans and the preparation for the sixth, rather than an evaluation of individual projects.

The evaluation team visited El Salvador, Guatemala, Honduras, Nicaragua, Costa Rica, and Panama, and appraised the action of 18 in-country project partners and five regional programmes. Evaluators’ visits centred on community analysis and the different institutional and operational levels of disaster preparedness at the country and regional levels. Community group-based assessments, focus groups, and other interviewing techniques were used with local populations and project beneficiaries. Interviews were carried out with over 120 non-project stakeholders from national and local government, NGOs, international agencies, universities, DG ECHO, and other EU services. In addition, a survey was completed by 17 DIPECHO partners from Action Plans IV and V, representing 20 projects. An analytical framework was used to consider the normative and strategic decisions taken, operational procedures and practices utilised, and their impact.

A. MAIN CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Building on the Past, Looking to the Future: Conclusions and Strategy

1. From 1998 to 2007, DIPECHO has enabled organisations to become involved in Disaster Preparedness and has provided a stable programme that has filled a gap in disaster prone Central America, creating a platform for community focused disaster preparedness and a means for reaching more isolated and vulnerable communities.

The relevance, efficiency, and impact of the last two DIPECHO plans have increased with the use of innovative techniques and approaches, including:

- a. Participatory consultation meetings, providing a platform for disaster risk reduction stakeholders to contribute to decision-making on the priorities of Action Plans;
 - b. Increased personnel capacities and improved monitoring and consultation between the technical advisor and project partners for project elaboration and implementation;
 - c. Defining and strengthening priorities complementary to national strategies and clarifying opportunities for DIPECHO’s role in this increasingly important area.
2. The assessment of the DIPECHO programme in Central America highlights critical aspects which should be at the core of a renewed strategy, taking into account the following key considerations:
 - a. Conceptual strengthening and renewed definition of overall goals, and targets;
 - b. Defining area and topic intervention priorities, further specifying and enhancing the role of consultative meetings, and reducing the national imbalance in favour of areas where partners traditionally are most present;
 - c. Guaranteeing maximum benefit, impact and replicability of “pilot” projects, reducing redundancy, and the potential for decreased innovation within short-term project cycles; increasing synergy, systematisation and replicating good practice;

- d. Understanding that disaster preparedness saves lives and livelihoods and provides a basis for organising recovery;
 - e. Ensuring synergy among DIPECHO projects, providing an enabling environment for linkages, and promoting disaster risk reduction more widely, aiming not only for direct impact but also broader spillover effects;
 - f. Framing and giving further meaning to the notions of “national” and “regional” to guarantee their most adequate strategic and operational involvement in the DIPECHO programme;
 - g. Strengthening the project cycle process, from the definition of areas and themes to selection, implementation, completion, and follow up;
 - h. Continuously strengthening the capacity of DG ECHO partners and local partners.
3. Moving forward, the following strategic priorities should be examined for the future:
- a. Designing a strategic framework and establishing the basis for future planning, continuity, increased synergy and impact through a defined intervention strategy over a six-year, three Action Plan, period;
 - b. Increasing the use of a risk-zone typology in project selection and balancing the extension of simple risk analysis based on hazard, vulnerability, and capacities analysis with risk and contextual analysis (social, political, cultural, economic) within the Latin American context;
 - c. Going from national to regional approaches in order to establish the importance of regional and define national projects with local and community impact and organising regional meetings first to provide opportunities for all actors to engage, and facilitate further synergy with the Andean and Caribbean regions and greater momentum to project replicability;
 - d. Selecting partners based on considerations of disaster risk reduction policy mainstreaming, best practice in proposals, and reference to other disaster risk reduction efforts undertaken in the area targeted by the project;
 - e. Creating continuous opportunities for training and strengthening partner capacities, increasing innovation and follow up on completed projects and including a role for future partners to visit past projects, monitor their sustainability and refresh training;
 - f. Increasing exchange and interchange between partners and with outside agencies, disseminating the efforts of the ProVention Consortium and DFID;
 - g. In line with the Hyogo Framework, broadening the awareness of development-based risk reduction, linking and promoting in-project and inter-project support for disaster risk reduction more widely.

B. SPECIFIC CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

1. Relevance and Coherence of Strategic Orientation

- a. **Lack of an overall DIPECHO strategy** has meant that medium-term objectives and targets have not been defined. The **regional** concept, its definition and relevance **have not been given sufficient consideration**.
- b. Support for community-based disaster preparedness in Central America remains highly relevant nationally and regionally. **The consultative meeting processes** have increased **ownership** of the programme by diverse stakeholders and offered one of few opportunities for **dialogue and consensus** on risk and disaster matters.

Recommendations:

- a. A comprehensive disaster risk reduction strategy should be developed as the basis for DIPECHO’s programme, basing the design and development of future Action Plans on the Hyogo Framework for Action, adopting complementary programmes between other national and regional disaster risk reduction stakeholders. [Strategic]
- b. The consultative meeting process should be strengthened and aligned with DIPECHO goals and objectives. An inclusive regional meeting for all of Latin America should be considered, followed by more local meetings, adapting methodologies for identifying priorities to the goals of an overall strategy. [Strategic]

2. Effectiveness and Appropriateness of Strategies and Actions Enhancing Resilience and Decreasing Vulnerability

- a. The partner selection process has improved over the course of different Action Plans. DIPECHO partners have developed increased capacity in disaster risk reduction. Although there is much need for improvement, increasing the number of partners implementing DIPECHO projects, including organisations with development programmes has led to more **effective integration** of preparedness work with longer-term development projects and facilitated linking relief with rehabilitation and development;
- b. **Important steps have been taken to increase information and documentation processes and to systematise and distribute evidence of good practice in the interest of encouraging replicability and improved practice.** Many innovative approaches have been implemented by partners;
- c. Efforts have been made to base project design and definition on evidence generated through participatory community or locally based diagnoses. However, **participation** is undermined by the inclusion of too many components in a project and unwillingness on the part of certain partners to raise expectations and devote resources prior to project approval;
- d. Requiring the approval **and participation of national government organisations** (technical and operative) for projects in some countries, while clearly appropriate, poses certain constraints;
- e. Overall effectiveness and impact of projects may be limited by the **levels of conceptual and professional** experience of many project staff and promoters;
- f. Greater partner capacity and presence in Nicaragua has led to further project approval, implementation, and impact in these countries, in contrast to Guatemala and El Salvador, where the **consultative meetings that rely on the inputs ongoing partners have fewer resources and tend to perpetuate imbalanced country coverage;**
- g. Communities often felt that **further training in disaster preparedness** was needed. Most local community brigades preferred to have additional time and training sessions in all aspects of disaster preparedness.

Recommendations:

- a. When appropriate, encourage partners to frame their interventions within local development plans and give further impetus to disaster risk reduction mainstreaming with their preparedness intervention. In order to guarantee financial and institutional sustainability, DIPECHO projects must coordinate with **local development processes** by incorporating and considering local land use planning, environmental management, and infrastructure development, and give greater consideration to a partial multi-phase approach to further linking efforts; [Operational]
- b. Ask partners to make specific reference in their proposals to examples and **good/improved practice** foreseen in their intervention. Partners should visit each others' projects and occasionally join the Technical Assistant's monitoring visit in another area; [Operational]
- c. Greater emphasis must be placed on framing project response in terms of community or local diagnoses. The introduction of a concept paper approach would encourage partners to assume some of the risks of participatory project identification. Apply guidelines on **participation** foreseen in call for proposals, promote real community participation, and **demand community risk assessment** for pre-selected projects; [Operational]
- d. In order not to override DG ECHO's humanitarian mandate and overall aims, consider the requirement for **approval and participation of national government organisations** on a case by case basis: *What is the requirement adding and what is it taking away?* [Strategic]
- e. The DIPECHO programme and partners should continue to emphasise the need for **continuous project staff and promoter training. Simplify** the call for an expressions-of-interest document, reduce the norms and encourage **innovation, creativity, and the use of learning;** [Operational]
- f. **Harmonise National Consultative Meeting processes** on the basis of a regional meeting and strategy; [Strategic]
- g. Include in future DIPECHO Action Plans and projects follow-up capacity-building efforts and trainings to refresh and **strengthen past efforts** through agreements with local partners and follow-up from DG ECHO partners and DIPECHO monitoring. [Operational]

3. Strategic and Programmatic Complementarity and Synergy

- Strategic and programmatic complementarity, synergy, and coordination have increased. Endorsement of DIPECHO approved projects by national organisations has also created an opportunity for further partnership. DIPECHO interventions have helped strengthen the entire response system. Complementarity has been unevenly sought with several bilateral donors;
- The overall approach has involved multi-function interventions and synergy. Strategies for disaster risk reduction and adaptation based on development approaches have yielded greater benefits than “stand alone” efforts. In many cases, early warning systems are part of multi-purpose communication systems.

Main constraints for increased synergy include:

- a. Limited consideration and understanding of disaster risk reduction within other EC funding instruments, EC, and European Union Member State agency staff;
- b. Despite continued and increased efforts by DIPECHO and DG ECHO to increase dialogue and willingness at the regional level, coordination and synergy between EC projects in the region is low;
- c. Limited capacity of burdened DIPECHO technical assistance staff in countries other than Nicaragua;
- d. The relationship with local NGOs and associations has not always been optimal.

Recommendations:

- a. A desk for disaster risk reduction within the EC delegations and training for EC staff and bilateral donor staff would help increase synergy and complementarity. Attention should be given to the training foreseen by DFID for this purpose; [Strategic]
- b. Additional coordination meetings of all EC programmes within the region should be organised frequently to follow up on opportunities for increased linkages and synergies; [Operational]
- c. Additional means—even short term outsourcing—should be considered to increase DIPECHO relations with actors in countries like Guatemala; [Operational]
- d. Local NGOs should be given the opportunity to define partnership policies.¹ [Strategic]

4. Coordination and Linking Relief, Rehabilitation and Development (LRRD)

- a. The EC regional delegation recognises the **failure** of national governments to prioritise disaster risk reduction influences that development donors and actors may attempt to promote in this field **and the need to give** disaster risk reduction priority in current development schemes. The EC delegation lacks the capacity to provide necessary guidance to programmes on how to mainstream disaster risk reduction. Indicators are needed to monitor progress on disaster risk reduction on the aid provided in the form of budget support;²
- b. Meetings held at a national level between DG ECHO funded partners have increased coordination, exchange, and joint and shared training efforts. The number of global, regional, national, sectoral and local organisations engaging in disaster risk reduction has grown and coordination is more complex. International Strategy for Disaster Reduction (ISDR), as global strategy, has been established to facilitate concerted action aimed at reducing risk and vulnerability and involving all stakeholders. DIPECHO is attempting to include **ISDR and promote it in the region**. The global platform can be used more effectively and linked to local levels;
- c. **Lack of clarity about regional** relations and links with local levels limits effective coordination;
- d. Long-term development instruments have not developed sufficient momentum to enable a phasing down of the DIPECHO programme. The challenge of LRRD is illustrated by the PREVDA programme, which initially created expectations of increased synergy and linkages. Lack of progress reflects the lack of national commitment to disaster risk reduction. Still absent are adequate **attention and funding** to reduce avoidable loss of life, livelihoods, and property, and to safeguard development gains.

Recommendations:

¹ For good practice in relations with NGOs, see the Oxfam GB partnership evaluation, 2007.

² A guidance note for mainstreaming DRR in budget support has been developed by the Provention Consortium. See http://www.proventionconsortium.org/themes/default/pdfs/tools_for_mainstreaming_GN14.pdf

- a. Provide disaster risk reduction training for government staff in the region, include the topic in national development plans, and encourage budget support indicators. Interviews in communities affected by disaster should be mandatory for both civil servants and elected officials who receive basic training in disaster risk reduction, in order to raise awareness of exposure to risk and available instruments for protection; [Strategic]
- b. Increase dialogue with other actors in disaster risk reduction and provide comprehensive support to ISDR and its functions so as to increase its role regionally and locally; [Strategic]
- c. Establish a study and decision forum where notions such as regional, multinational, transnational can be discussed and decided upon in order to better **define and diversify ideas regarding local, national and regional relations**; [Operational]
- d. In the course of analysing potential synergy with other EC funding instruments and programmes, the evaluation found greater links with municipal strengthening programmes. Local development plans and instruments may present better options for LRRD processes. Greater guidance to partners on how to link efforts into local development plans should be pursued. [Strategic]

A majority of DG ECHO partners in Central America are involved in emergency response. DG ECHO's effort to mainstream disaster risk reduction **creates momentum** for linking emergency response to disaster risk reduction.

5. Impact

- a. The DIPECHO programme in Central America is extensive, with projects covering many areas affected by recurring natural disaster. DIPECHO acts as an **intervention response strategy** and provides an **enabling environment** for improved humanitarian response. Its presence in disaster affected areas has **facilitated disaster response, communications, access, and recovery, as, for example, after Hurricane Felix in Nicaragua**;
- b. DIPECHO projects have had **measurable, significant impact, including** reduction of loss of life, consolidation of local social organisations, strengthening of relations and increased knowledge among national-level scientific, normative and operational institutions at the local level. **Awareness of disaster risk reduction** has increased, community disaster preparedness plans were developed, and response teams established, **and preparedness** increased, benefiting many thousands of people over the course of the five Action Plans, as in the aftermath of Hurricane Mitch in 1998 and Tropical Storm Stan in 2005. Additional impact would require greater investment in **promoting self-reliance and community level responses**;
- c. DIPECHO projects tend to be characterised by **early warning and early evacuation** to save human lives, especially in high-risk areas (exposed to landslides, hurricanes, and floods). They have improved timely, informed decision-making and responses, empowered local populations, allowed ownership of the concrete response facilities/measures, and improved response on the part of national actors involved in DIPECHO projects and national governmental actors;
- d. DIPECHO projects convey **state of the art** knowledge, strategy and schemes throughout the region;
- e. There remains lack of clarity regarding the **outputs and outcomes** to be expected from DIPECHO's programme, as these are **not clearly linked** to Hyogo indicators, benchmarks and time frames;
- f. DIPECHO's leverage is insufficient to influence major stakeholders to include disaster risk reduction in their policy, strategy, legislation and long term development plans.

Recommendations

- a. The option should be explored of having one Latin America DIPECHO programme, **organised according to risk typologies, allowing for cross national comparison and implementation and coinciding with the area of responsibility of key regional organisations**. [Strategic].
- b. A strategy with clear objectives for impact **targets**, drawing on good regional practice and systematisation for **differing risk types**; [Strategic].
- c. A more inclusive view of disaster preparedness, maintaining current priorities for saving human lives, but widened to include training for **protection of livelihoods and preparation for recovery**. [Strategic].
- d. Although many arguments favour continuing infrastructure-based mitigation work, investment should be made in **assistance infrastructure**, e.g., escape routes and multi-purpose shelters; [Strategic]

- e. Test and further develop **impact indicators**, such as those developed in the Andean countries under the last DIPECHO plan. [Operational]
- f. Improve linkages between pilot activities and **local government planning**; [Operational]
- g. Create a strategy, in line with Good Humanitarian Donorship efforts, directed by DG ECHO for **knowledge management** and **dissemination** to better capture and disseminate learning and case studies. [Strategic]

6. Sustainability

- a. The regions migrations and polarised politics impede sustainability and cause institutional technical staff to leave with each electoral change. The 15 month DIPECHO project time period is also problematic. Sustainability can only be achieved if projects are planned for this time frame and linked to **longer-term development based initiatives** in intervention zones;
- b. **Full operating capabilities are eroded** after project termination, despite **communication systems** established to offer greater sustainability. In areas where partners continue to actively monitor situations or where change is maintained through successive external interventions capacity is maintained;
- c. The **support of local government** is key to successful project implementation.

Recommendations:

- a. Clear procedures, norms, and guidelines are needed to optimise **continuity** in a particular zone and provide for cross-stage projects that consolidate previous work. Projects located near earlier ones could monitor and refresh training efforts carried out in completed projects; [Strategic]
- b. Diversification of stakeholders to include more stable actors, e.g., teachers; [Strategic]
- c. Partners should establish **clear, normative working relations with development projects** in their areas and promote integration with the efforts of development based organisations. [Operational]

7. Intra Regional Advocacy, Dissemination, Replication of Best Practice

- a. The impact of DIPECHO initiatives on reducing vulnerabilities depends on how Disaster Risk Reduction activities are adopted and replicated under the Action Plans. A comprehensive, long-term disaster risk reduction **strategy is needed**;
- b. The Hyogo Framework was developed after the DIPECHO programme began and organisations involved with “Disaster Preparedness” have undergone a **paradigm shift** regarding the vocabulary and actions of “Disaster Risk Reduction”;
- c. DIPECHO has increased awareness of other EC Directorates and bilateral donors of the wider integration of disaster risk reduction into policy, planning and programme activities;

Recommendations:

- a. Advocacy to integrate disaster risk reduction with **other EU external assistance services**, and strengthen inter-service cooperation in disaster risk reduction should be intensified in Country Assistance Strategy processes. [Strategic]
- b. Provide greater input from DG ECHO to the EC Delegation to include Disaster Preparedness issues in higher level government discussions; [Strategic]
- c. Dedicate a **focal person** within the EC delegations to advocate (within the EC and to EU Members States) and increase linkages with other EC instruments with project partners; [Strategic]
- d. Consider mainstreaming Disaster Risk Reduction in DG ECHO partner policies. [Strategic]

C. MAIN LESSONS LEARNED

- It is not enough to identify priority risk zones based on simple risk conditions. The **risk typology concept** is a powerful tool to add to existing criteria for selecting projects covering a wide range of situations. Disaster preparedness projects in the Guatemalan highlands and the Bolivian altiplano may be more alike than two projects within the same country or political region. Focussing on risk types based on community risk assessments and vulnerability and capacity analysis would give pilot projects greater meaning and increase DIPECHO’s impact;
- There is a trade-off between targeting the most vulnerable communities and ensuring **sustainability**;

- Opportunities exist to promote greater disaster risk reduction mainstreaming within DG ECHO partner policies;
- The concept and significance of **regional approaches** and local-national-regional must evolve in line with developments.
- The Hyogo Framework, combined with ever increasing numbers of other actors, requires a **careful consideration of the role, methods and coordination** of DIPECHO with other initiatives.

1. BACKGROUND AND CONTEXT

1. DIPECHO (Disaster Preparedness ECHO) is a programme developed by DG ECHO to improve the capacities of communities at risk to better prepare for and protect themselves against natural disasters. Central America is one of three regions that were targeted in 1996 since the beginning of DIPECHO. Five DG ECHO, DIPECHO Action Plans were approved in Central America between 1998 and 2007. To date finance for the Action Plans has grown from €2.1 million for six projects in 1998 to €7.5 million and 22 projects in Action Plan V. Of total DIPECHO financing worldwide, Central America has accounted for almost one third of all finance allocated over the last nine years. The density of investment per capita and per area has been much higher than in practically all other regions targeted by DIPECHO. Thirty-four FPA signatory organisations have received project finance support. Most projects have been implemented in the four most disaster prone countries in the region: Guatemala, El Salvador, Honduras and Nicaragua. Costa Rica and Panama are currently included in regional projects.

1.1. Disaster risk in Central America (*see Annex 8 for detailed context analysis*)

2. Central America is a hazard prone region particularly exposed to threats including volcanic eruptions, earthquakes, hurricanes, tropical storms, tsunamis, landslides, droughts, and forest fires. Increased exposure to global warming, environmental degradation, poor land use practices, exploitation of natural resources, rapid urban growth, as well as uncontrolled human settlement increasingly threaten thousands more people.³

3. The prevailing hazard context is associated with extremely high levels of vulnerability and exposure, much of it related to existing poverty levels and lifestyle weaknesses that provide an extreme disaster risk scenario for many parts of the region. The dynamics of this risk constantly provide new and unexpected manifestations of small, medium and large scale disaster throughout the region. In fact the element of surprise is perhaps one of the region's most salient features and reveals that many aspects of the dynamics and causes of risk are as yet un-chartered in the region. Mitch, the Limon earthquake, the Nicaraguan tsunami, the Casitas landslide and the recent earthquake and Danli flooding in Honduras all took scientists and analysts by surprise.

4. As a result, Central America figures high on disaster risk maps and priorities developed by regional and international organisations. Although most concern is shown for the so-called "Mitch countries" (Nicaragua, Honduras, El Salvador, Guatemala), both Costa Rica and, to a lesser extent, Panama, further to the south, are also disaster prone.

5. Although vulnerability is a product of underdevelopment, in Central America disaster is also the consequence of lack of preparedness. **Disaster preparedness and risk prevention and mitigation have rarely been a political priority or factored into the development process.** The ability to cope with disaster in Central America is low in general, particularly at the local level where many communities and institutions lack capacity. Despite ongoing efforts, disaster preparedness in much of Central America is still weak as the replication of successful disaster risk reduction initiatives is limited and the issue of sustainability remains a key problem. This is the result of multiple factors, including changing authorities and technical personnel in institutions, migration, and meagre investments.

1.2. The European Commission and Central America: mandates in disaster prevention and preparedness

³ According to the U.N.'s Economic Commission on Latin America and the Caribbean, during Hurricane Mitch approximately 75 percent of the losses of goods and services were related to building houses too close to rivers or constructing roads and bridges in vulnerable places.

6. While a concrete legal basis allows for broad coverage of DRR measures through European Commission instruments other than DG ECHO,⁴ **disaster prevention and preparedness is not systematically mainstreamed** into all EC external relations aid programmes and related documents⁵. The European Commission is by no means alone in its lack of substantial progress on this key issue. A Tear Fund report on institutional donor progress with mainstreaming disaster risk reduction (DRR) revealed that this was given a relatively low priority within donors' relief and development plans, processes and implementation. Barriers to mainstreaming disaster risk reduction within relief and development programming include:

- A lack of knowledge and understanding of the concept of risk reduction.
- The divide between "relief" and "development" sectors, resulting in risk reduction not being fully "owned" by either.
- Risk reduction "competing" with other needs.

1.3. Preparedness within DG ECHO's humanitarian mandate

7. Humanitarian aid donors have a recognised role in DRR. The Good Humanitarian Donorship (GHD) initiative, endorsed by donors in 2003, declares in its first principle that: "The objectives of humanitarian action are to save lives, alleviate suffering and maintain human dignity during and in the aftermath of man-made crises and natural disasters, as well as to **prevent and strengthen preparedness** for the occurrence of such situations". Principle number eight further encourages donors to "strengthen the capacity of affected countries and local communities to prevent, prepare for, mitigate and respond to humanitarian crises, with the goal of ensuring that governments and local communities are better able to meet their responsibilities and coordinate effectively with humanitarian partners".

8. There is discussion at the GHD level to see how donors can promote the DRR agenda at field level with a proposal to:

- systematise existing guidance notes on DRR that may be shared between GHD members and to develop new ones for the gaps that exist.
- set up a strategy for further work on how to achieve more accountability on DRR, including greater clarity on expected outcomes, all linked to the development of indicators, benchmarks and time frames, within the Hyogo Framework for Action.⁶

9. Compared with its main mandate on response activities, preparedness is considered as a minor part of DG ECHO's overall mandate with a relatively low budget⁷ that has however steadily increased. Its efforts are operationalised in practice through "*three DRR pillars*": the DIPECHO programme, DRR mainstreaming and advocacy.⁸

1.4. The DIPECHO programme

⁴ The Council Regulation (EC) no.1257/96, states that in addition to its mandate on relief, rehabilitation and reconstruction work during emergencies and the immediate aftermath of natural disasters, the Commission shall: "*ensure preparedness for risks of natural disasters or comparable exceptional circumstances and use a suitable rapid early-warning and intervention system*".⁴

The Council Regulation (EEC) No 443/92 for the developing countries in Asia and Latin America states that: "*part of the aid may be used for rehabilitation and reconstruction following disasters of all kinds and for disaster-prevention measures*" (Article 5). The Regulation further specifies that: "*financial and technical assistance, shall be extended to the relatively more advanced ALA developing countries, in particular in the following specific fields and cases: prevention of natural disasters and reconstruction in their wake*" (Article 6).

⁵ DG ECHO Working Paper on DPP.

⁶ "Good Humanitarian Donorship and Disaster Risk Reduction", Concept Paper, Government of Norway, July 2007.

⁷ "Overall Evaluation of DG ECHO's Strategic Orientation to Disaster Reduction", Final Report, December 2003, http://ec.europa.eu/echo/pdf_files/evaluation/2003/disaster_report.pdf

⁸ "Disaster Preparedness and Prevention (DPP): State of play and strategic orientations for EC policy", Working Paper, DG ECHO 4.

10. Preparedness is implicitly included in Council Regulation 1257/96, which governs DG ECHO. Disaster Preparedness ECHO (DIPECHO) and its activities are defined in Articles 1 and 2 (f)⁹, is a dedicated and specific DG ECHO programme for DP at the community level established in 1996 and has its own budget line (B7-219). Action Plans have been established on a regional basis, which focus on geographical zones in areas at high risk of disasters and with low coping capacities. DIPECHO's main focus has been on "preparation" rather than "mitigation" or "prevention". Mitigation activities are carried out for demonstrative purposes only (see Annex 8 for the way in which terms are used by DG ECHO and the alternatives proposed by the authors of this report, where relevant). DIPECHO projects have mainly focused on the local level where short-term results are possible and where DG ECHO partners are most effective. Its rationale on disaster preparedness has been based on small scale, community based, replicable interventions. Some projects have also supported regional activities for coordination and information activities in order to promote the exchange of best practices. Although it is increasing annually, the DIPECHO programme budget, in proportion to the overall DG ECHO budget in response to natural hazards, is relatively low, representing just 4% in 2006.

1.5. Mainstreaming disaster preparedness measures into relief operations

11. DG ECHO's mandate in DP goes beyond the DIPECHO programme. DG ECHO's major humanitarian financing decisions, especially those in responses to recurrent disasters, should ideally incorporate a DRR element. In Central America, this feature is, in principle, easier to mainstream, as many actors – and DG ECHO FPA partners in particular – are involved in both response and disaster preparedness efforts. The European Commission's decision in response to Hurricane Felix, which hit Nicaragua on 4 September 2007, has incorporated disaster risk reduction into humanitarian operations financed.

1.6. Advocacy towards mainstreaming DP into development cooperation

12. DG ECHO has been a strong advocate for other European Commission services working in the area of development cooperation and external relations to integrate DP into their own programming and operations. DG ECHO has also been the main advocate for "*Linking Relief and Rehabilitation to Development*" (LRRD). Progressively, DPP has received higher priority in other European Commission services. DG RELEX, for example, plans to allocate more than €70 million for DPP in its strategy for Latin America. Despite such progress the European Commission is still far from systematically mainstreaming DP into its development programmes.

2. INTRODUCTION TO THE EVALUATION

13. **DRR-focused evaluations** are being sought in order to accelerate progress on strategic decisions integrating DRR across the relief-development divide and to provide quantitative and qualitative evidence of DRR effectiveness. Donors are also encouraged to regularly **review** their progress with mainstreaming DRR to address potential gaps and priority issues.

Evaluation aims and criteria

14. This evaluation was conducted by a team of three independent consultants (two international and one national, from the region) who worked in Central America from September 5 - 19; September 27 - October 13 and November 1 - 25. The period November 26 - December 4 was devoted to preparing the final report.

Purpose and specific objective of the evaluation

15. The purpose of the evaluation was: "*to review and assess the progress made in enhancing resilience and reducing vulnerability to natural disaster of the most at-risk populations of Central America and the*

⁹ CE Regulation N°1257/96 of 20 June 1996, OL L163 of 02.07.1996. http://eur-lex.europa.eu/smartapi/cgi/sga_doc?smartapi!celexapi!prod!CELEXnumdoc&lg=en&numdoc=31996R1257&model=guichett

public institutions that seek to protect them. The evaluation will include the measurement of the impact of DIPECHO projects in terms of how well preparedness helped the population when they were afterwards affected by a natural disaster”.

16. The evaluation has respected DG ECHO’s mandate and understood the existing boundaries of the Humanitarian Aid department. The evaluation has sought to provide analytical and advisory outputs, providing a sound basis for informing the evolution of existing DIPECHO disaster risk management strategies in the region, as well as contributing to deliberations on DG ECHO’s overall approach to disaster preparedness and risk management. Five Action Plans were reviewed and the evaluation sought to inform the guidelines of the 6th Action Plan, whose Call for Expressions of Interest is to be launched at the beginning of 2008.

17. Focus has been placed on existing differences in levels of DP and DRR in regions where DIPECHO has been present, is currently present and those where it is not. Specific attention was placed on visiting communities that had afterwards been affected by disaster and measuring impacts, including how DIPECHO impacts on DG ECHO’s overall action and response and contributes to saving lives and livelihoods. The evaluation also sought to provide information on DG ECHO’s contribution to awareness raising, mainstreaming at the level of the EC, potential linking and phase out strategies.

Methodology

18. The team comprised three independent consultants, two international and one local, two women and one male, all working under the aegis of DARA International. These consultants received technical and logistical support from DARA. The team leader has lived and worked in Central America for nearly 30 years and has undertaken numerous studies and evaluation consultancies in the region and elsewhere in Latin America, including for GTZ, OFDA-AID, PAHO and IADB. He is a specialist in risk and disaster with an academic background in urban and regional development. The second international consultant is the head of DARA and a specialist in evaluation techniques and methods (with experience in over 15 countries worldwide), and humanitarian action, donor roles and GHD. She was part of the Tsunami Evaluation Coalition process and has worked for DG ECHO and the Red Cross movement. The local consultant is a psychologist that has worked for national disaster agencies, UNDP and CEPREDENAC. She has an intimate knowledge of the region and its risk and disaster organisational and institutional actors and is a specialist in aspects of community and gender.

19. With regard to possible evaluator bias, none of the three have been involved directly or indirectly in previous DIPECHO activities and projects in the Central American region. The lead consultant had, in 2001, formed part of the BMZ-inspired evaluation of the GTZ-FEMID project in the region, a project that had given sway to a first DIPECHO action plan project on early warning systems at the community level. All three evaluators have clear expertise in the field of disaster risk reduction to meet the requirements of the evaluation.

20. The evaluation team visited the six countries of the region: Guatemala, Nicaragua, El Salvador, Honduras, Costa Rica and Panama. Two visits were made to the first four countries prioritised by DIPECHO, one in each of the two phases of the evaluation. On the second occasion, the team attended the national and regional consultation meetings and undertook additional interviews and visits to project areas, widening the information base and searching to further corroborate or reject first phase analysis and conclusions put forward in the intermediate report presented in mid-October.

21. While work in the four priority countries covered a wide range of actors and projects (see Annexes 3 and 4), visits to Panama and Costa Rica were limited to a number of key actors and projects. In Costa Rica interviews included professionals from the National Risk Prevention and Emergency Commission, from the Red Cross Reference Centre and the Regional Disaster Documentation Centre-CRID, as well as a field visit to the first Action Plan’s GTZ sponsored early warning system project for the Reventazón River Valley in Cartago. In Panama visits and interviews were undertaken with regional actors and projects (IFRC, UNICEF, PAHO, OCHA, ISDR).

22. Projects visited for a maximum of two days each were selected based on the following criteria: advice of DIPECHO technical staff, type of organisation (humanitarian, development, environmental etc), number of DIPECHO projects undertaken by the organisation to be visited; type of intervention and country balance. While visits concentrated on ongoing and recently completed Action Plan IV and V projects, projects from Action Plans I and II were also visited and, where possible, documentation was consulted and interviews undertaken within the existing time constraints of the evaluation (161 days total between the three consultants).

23. Eighteen national projects were visited or consulted.¹⁰ Limiting visits to approximately one day was compatible with evaluation objectives and the intention of covering plans, not projects. This approach took into account the work levels of organisations in the rainy and flooding season (various areas were subjected to flooding whilst the evaluation was under way: RAAN area under influence of Felix; Yoro in Honduras; Gracias a Dios, Honduras and RAAS, Nicaragua). Moreover, some project staff had displaced to areas affected by flooding in order to help and were not available at the times the evaluation team could visit.

24. An analytical framework was used considering the normative and strategic decisions taken; operational procedures and practices utilised; and strategic and programmatic impacts. Considered from a methodological perspective, analysis was directed to DIPECHO as an overall structure (normative, strategic, programmatic, financial etc.) with its potential links to the efforts of other EC Directorates and international or bilateral actors in DRR and DIPECHO seen through the eyes of the 64 projects it has promoted over the nine-year period. Moreover, consideration has been given to cross cutting issues, the LRRD and other development challenges and advocacy and visibility aspects. In addition, a survey was completed by 17 DIPECHO partners from Action Plans IV and V, representing 20 projects.

25. The methodology utilised in data collection and analysis consisted primarily of the following:

- Pre-evaluation commencement reading and systematisation of relevant web based and other documentation (August 20 - September 1).
- An initial **briefing** session at the DG ECHO headquarters in Brussels (4 – 5 September 2007) with the evaluation department and staff responsible for the programme. At the end of the briefing, the evaluation team submitted an *Aide Mémoire* outlining the intended planning and scope of the evaluation.
- Purposive sampling of projects was undertaken to plan community visits to areas covered by different DIPECHO projects in accordance with different criteria, including geographic spread, type of hazard addressed, type of project, partner characteristics with a specific emphasis on visiting DIPECHO project areas that had afterwards been affected by disaster.
- In-depth **desk study and reviews** of all project documentation that could be gathered from the files of DG ECHO Brussels and the DIPECHO regional office in Managua. These included EU/DG ECHO policy and strategy papers, project appraisal worksheets, external evaluations, project financial reports, regional and national consultative meeting reports, funding decisions, programme guidelines and documents provided by the partners.
- Use of secondary source data including information on **internet**, principally of the EC websites but also of other relevant sites.

¹⁰ See Annexes 3 and 4.: GVC, RAAN; CARE France in plans IV and V (Telica and Cerro Nuevo); ACSUR-Dipilto; GAA, El Sauce and Villanueva; and the Red Cross, RAAS projects from Plans IV and V in Nicaragua. Red Cross-NL, Santo Domingo (and interviewed staff from AP IV); Oxfam, Guatemala City; and ACH, San Marcos in Guatemala. OIKOS, Ahuachapan; Oxfam San Salvador; CARE Usulután; Red Cross, Usulután, GM AP II (the latter two consulted, not visited). CARE Tegucigalpa (consulted not visited); Italian Red Cross, Tegucigalpa; GOAL, Yoro (AP IV); Trocaire, Colon y Olancho. Regional projects visited or consulted comprised: GTZ, AP I - La Masica (Honduras), Los Diques (Costa Rica); UNDP AP V; IFRC, AP V; UNICEF AP V; PAHO-CRID, AP IV and I. Interviews as regards the CEPREDENAC AP III and IV projects were undertaken.

- **Design of two different matrices** used at the community level for data collection: (1) to assess the appropriateness and results of community risk assessment processes; and (2) for determining the effectiveness and impact of the project.
- **Survey** of partners from AP IV and V and analysis of responses to questionnaire.
- **Summary financial analysis** of AP I to V.
- **Interviews** held with the DIPECHO team in Managua, regional EU delegations, major donor institutions and organisations (AECI, IADB, World Bank, SDC, GTZ, OFDA-AID etc); national and local government agencies and offices, and other non-DIPECHO organisations that are directly involved in disaster risk management. The full list of organisations and individuals visited is attached (see Annex 5).
- **Field visits** to communities and municipalities covered by DIPECHO. Visits included semi-structured interviews with expatriate and local project managers and their field operations staff; with local government authorities, and group discussions, focal groups and semi-structured interviews with beneficiaries and other inhabitants living in the project areas.
- An intermediate report produced after the first 30-day phase of the evaluation intended to summarise major ideas and preliminary findings. Consolidated feedback was provided by DG ECHO.
- A final debriefing was held in Brussels on the 12th December and the final report was presented on 15 January 2008.

26. Evaluators faced several constraints and limitations, principally the following:

- Less documentation regarding the first, second and third APs, which may have influenced findings and recommendations as these are largely based upon the 4th and 5th APs and preparations for the 6th. There is no closure documentation, nor final evaluation of projects in a process sense.
- The absence of key informants at various levels with the institutional memory of the DIPECHO projects prior to the more recent APs.
- Response operations and the impossibility of visiting some projects and interviewing some staff when originally planned, due to the heavy rains during the evaluation.

As a result of these initial limitations, evaluators sought to undertake additional site visits and interview a greater number of actors from previous plans during the latter half of the evaluation process.

3. OVERALL STRATEGIC DESIGN AND APPROACH

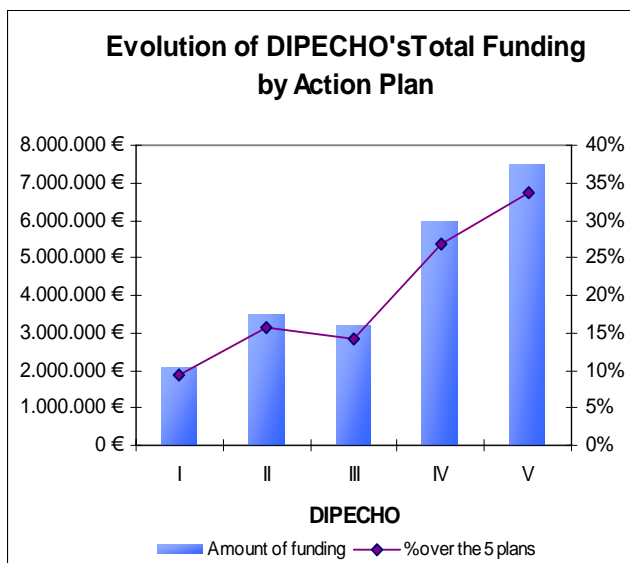
3.1. The conceptual base of DIPECHO (*see Annexes 2, 8 and 9 for additional analysis of concepts and objectives*).

27. Over the years disaster prevention, mitigation and preparedness; vulnerability reduction; root causes, coping capacities and resilience amongst others have all appeared in the terminologies used in the DIPECHO programme. The introduction of different terms is clearly époque driven. The post-Mitch period led to the more frequent use of development based concepts and goals. Post-Hyogo led to the use of resilience and disaster risk reduction as central ideas. The hierarchies and relations and the practical significance of these terms has not always been adequately developed.

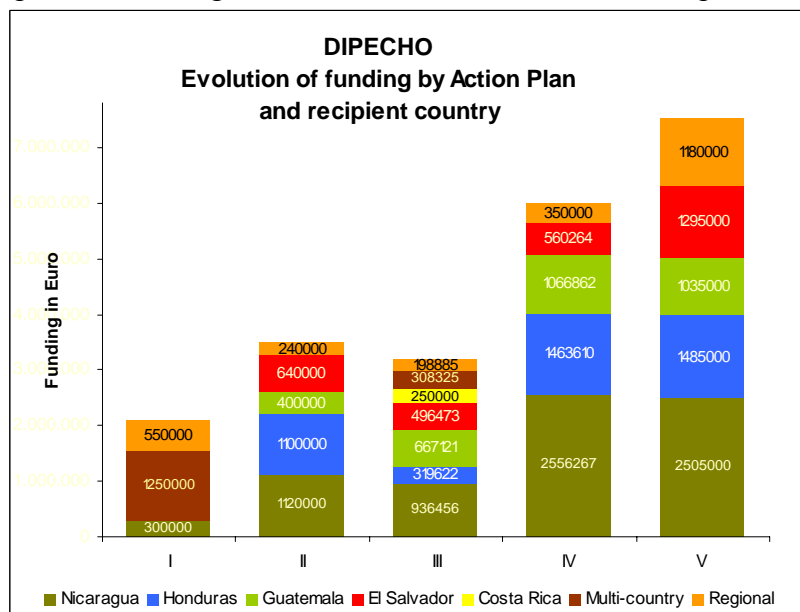
28. While the concept of coping capacities is more easily understood by disaster preparedness organisations, resilience, the more recently introduced term, is not easily understood in Latin America. Current affirmations relating increases in coping capacities with greater resilience are conceptually flawed. Without losing precision or focus, DIPECHO objectives could simply refer to increasing the capabilities of communities to face up to recurrent and non-recurrent events with lower loss of life and welfare, advancing where possible their livelihood options. At times the frequent use of “disaster risk reduction” as an apparent substitute for disaster preparedness also leads to confusion.

3.2. Programme Development over the period 1998 to 2007.

29. From 1998 to 2007 the European Commission has provided a little over €22 million for five successive DIPECHO Action Plans.¹¹ These Plans have comprised 64 projects, including national projects carried out predominantly in Nicaragua, Honduras, El Salvador and Guatemala, and multi-country and regional projects covering the whole or part of the Central American region. The four previously mentioned countries have been prioritised due to their levels of vulnerability when compared to the higher per capita income nations of Costa Rica and Panama.



30. The number of requests for financing increased constantly between Plans I and III, in which it reached 52, and since then has dropped to around 40 for the last two plans. Financial decisions have grown from 2.1 to 7.5 millions, a 257% growth, and AP V financing accounts for 35% of the total funding allocated over the nine-year period. Funding for Central America over the full period



has accounted for near to thirty percent of all DIPECHO financing worldwide (accounting for a little more than 70 million euro, given to the different programming regions worldwide). This means that the region has received a far higher per capita contribution than much larger and complex regions such as SE Asia and the Andean countries., Nicaragua, the dominant country in terms of financing, has increased its share from between 15 and 20% of the total in Plans II and III, to 37% in AP V (it reached an all time high of 44% in AP IV). The other extreme is Guatemala which received 22% in AP III but only 15% in AP V.

31. The lack of balance in allocations to the different countries is clear and has been the subject of debate and concern. Guatemala, and to a lesser extent El Salvador, are consistently under-represented. The situation may be explained by various factors including:

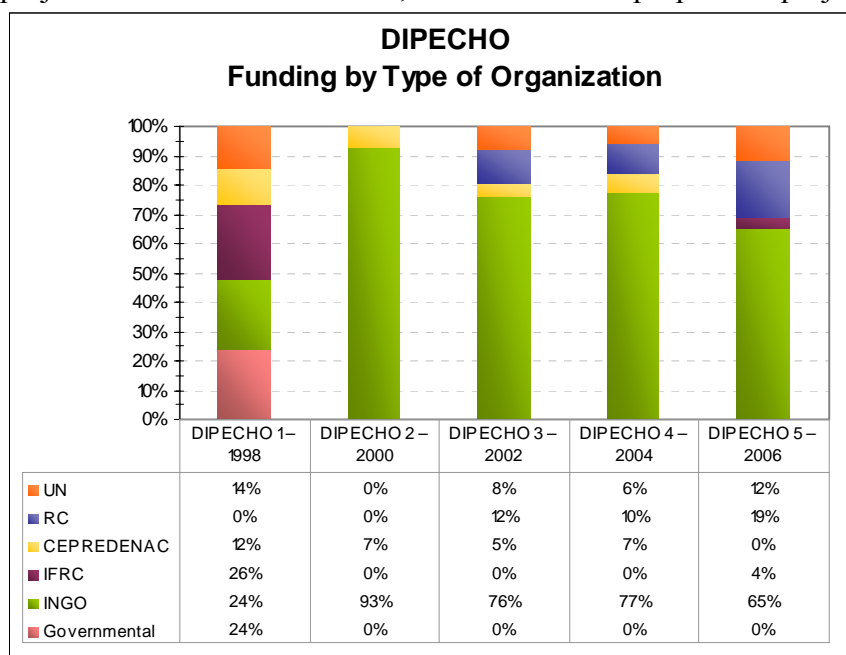
- competing NGO priorities and themes.
- lack of NGO experience in the risk topic.
- greater international NGO presence in Nicaragua and Honduras post-Hurricane Mitch.
- resistance, due to historical reasons, to synergising with government.
- lack of a direct DIPECHO presence in these countries as opposed to Nicaragua.

32. With regard to the relationship between the numbers of projects presented and approved in Guatemala and El Salvador, in DIPECHO III, 10 projects were proposed in Guatemala and two were financed and 12 were proposed in El Salvador with also only two financed. By DIPECHO V, 60% of Guatemalan projects were approved, a considerable improvement over previous plans.

33. Regional and multi-country projects that dominated AP I financing assumed a very low profile from AP II to IV and only with the latest AP V have regional projects come back in to play. An evaluation of AP I undertaken for the European Commission on completion of the Plan recommended that regional

¹¹ See Annex 16 for a detailed financial analysis.

projects be given a low priority given that they were “vague”, had high administrative costs and little finance reached the local levels. Thus, between Plans II and III only CEPREDENAC, the Central American intergovernmental disaster risk reduction coordination agency, received finance for regional projects. Under Action Plan IV, CEPREDENAC proposed a project for Guatemala on behalf of CONRED.



34. Thirty four different organisations have received support over the nine-year period. With the exception of AP I, international NGOs (INGOs) have always dominated access to funds, although this dominance has decreased between AP II and V. 14.6% of total funds have gone to Red Cross organisations. The IFRC, which received 26% of AP I funds, was not financed through APs II to IV and under the current plan it receives 4% of total funding. National and Participating Red Cross societies were not present in the first two APs and since then have accounted for 12, 10 and 19% of total financing for APs III through V.

35. Analysed from the perspective of the different participating organisations, CARE France, the Spanish Red Cross and GAA have received the greatest accumulated support. Eight organisations have received accumulated support of over €1 million. CEPREDENAC, Movimundo and GAA have the longest track records with DIPECHO (four projects each) whilst 17 organisations have only been financed once. With AP V, nine new organisations were financed. The data indicates a dynamic mix of continuity, renovation and newness. Increases in INGO participation have been associated with a growth in the number of “development” NGOs or those that combine humanitarian goals with development actions.

3.3. The National and Regional Consultation Meeting Process.

36. For APs V and VI, National and Regional Consultation Meetings have significantly contributed to the identification of priority zones and activities. Based on a participatory principle, these meetings have been celebrated in the four priority countries and at the regional level with the presence of a wide range of DIPECHO implementing and collaborating partners. This has included government, international agencies, and NGO representatives. The national workshops are preceded by the elaboration of a draft country document in which the bases are set for discussion on priority areas and themes. This is undertaken by contracted consultants who, moreover, facilitate the workshop and discussions. The priorities agreed at these meetings are subsequently incorporated in the next call for expressions of interest documents.

37. The meetings, both national and regional, have most certainly increased the level of participation and the feeling of ownership of the DIPECHO process amongst direct and indirect partners. Moreover, beyond their DIPECHO oriented objectives, these meetings at present constitute one of very few opportunities for the coming together of and discussion between diverse risk and disaster actors in the countries and region and in this way they help fill an important gap at a moment when encounters tend to be more specialised and sectorialised. This has immense benefits and constitutes another of the spin off benefits of the DIPECHO process.

38. A number of critical observations arise, however, as regards the process:

- a. There are important differences in the quality of the country document and workshop process in the different countries and these are associated with the different quality of the methodological approaches used by those that direct and guide the process.

- b. The scale of resolution achieved in the identification of priority geographical zones is overly coarse (zone, sub-regional or municipal) given the community level nature of DIPECHO interventions.
- c. The notion of identifying key intervention sectors or strategies in workshops without direct local and community participation goes against the notion of participatory decision making at the local level. An opportunity for local or community participation in the NCM process could derive from the implementation of sub national meetings in key areas of the country once the national level process has been completed.
- d. The problem of multi-hazard and mono-hazard approaches and the incorporation of vulnerability considerations have not been resolved.
- e. The way in which the process is “controlled” by DIPECHO partners, through their participation in financing and organisation may be overly time consuming and not the most efficient way of achieving the required end product, despite its virtues in terms of perceived ownership and appropriation.

39. A more particular question arises as to where the process should go in the future, the role of a process that at present is enacted every 18 months to two years, and the relevance of attempting to re-identify priority zones and intervention sectors over such short time periods. It therefore faces challenges in the need for innovation and the requirement for constantly renovated logic and new final objectives. As it is designed to promote participatory approaches to programme definition and design, the meeting process can be seen as a key aspect in innovation and pertinence, coherence and impact. This introduces both virtues and challenges. A move towards definition in terms of risk typologies may be beneficial and allow a standardisation of workshop methodologies (see Annexes 11 and 12 for a discussion of typologies and ideas to categorise them).

3.4. National-Local, Multinational and Regional Projects.

40. Since the first DIPECHO Plan in 1998 the notions of national, multinational and regional projects have been present. From an early preference for regional projects, preferences rapidly changed in favour of national projects, accepting at all times that these were to be designed from a local or community perspective. As the early dominance of regional and multi-country projects gave way to national projects run by INGOs the notion of local under a regional umbrella took hold. During DIPECHO II and III only regional projects in the hands of CEPREDENAC were approved. DIPECHO V has seen a relatively strong reappearance of regional projects.

41. The return to regional projects run by international organisations such as the UN and the IFRC has been stimulated by the real and perceived need to systematise and standardise disaster preparedness good practice, a need identified and discussed in national and regional consultative meetings. This reappearance of non-CEPREDENAC run regional projects provides an opportune moment to reflect on the balance, relationship and definition of regional, multinational and national projects.

42. The new generation of regional projects outside the CEPREDENAC domain has, in the case of UN agencies, led to certain problems related to the lack of adequate or sufficient consultation procedures with national and regional disaster management systems. Moreover, despite the fact that observations were raised in 1999, after the first DIPECHO plan, on the need to reconsider financial and administrative arrangements for regional projects run through international organisations, this latest round of projects has faced problems and delays due to the very same types of problem.

43. The topic and definition of “regional projects” within a regionally based programme has not been considered in detail and the relations and synergies that should exist with SICA and its disaster organisations - CEPREDENAC in particular - seem to be lacking. A strategic definition of how DIPECHO is to relate to regional actors in terms of desired outputs and outcomes is missing.

44. Questions such as: “what is a regional project as opposed to a multinational or trans-national one?” and “what can and should they achieve?”, have not been detailed or taken up in any real sense. Calls for expressions of interest documents do not distinguish or detail what is required of regional as opposed to

national projects. Besides the strengthening of the regional system under the domain of CEPREDENAC and the systematisation of experiences, what other topics and needs could and should be dealt with by regional projects has not been closely considered. Moreover, the structure and functioning of regional projects and the ways in which they can and should contribute to the strengthening of national and local organisations and approaches has not been discussed in depth. Further clarity on how to operationalise a mutually beneficial partnership with CEPREDENAC would be beneficial considering the EC's priority of strengthening regional integration, and PREVDA's funding of CEPREDENAC.

4. COMPLEMENTARITY, SYNERGY AND COORDINATION

4.1. Strategic and programmatic complementarity and synergy

45. The national and regional consultative meeting process has created a platform for enhancing strategic and programmatic complementarity, synergy and coordination. Endorsement of DIPECHO approved projects by national organisations has also created an opportunity for further partnership. DIPECHO interventions have helped strengthen the entire response system. Despite continued and increased efforts by DIPECHO and DG ECHO to increase dialogue and willingness at the level of the regional delegation, the level of **coordination and synergy among EC projects in the region is low**. Taking into account DG ECHO's mandate, complementarity with Swiss Development Cooperation is feasible in both Nicaragua and Honduras where it is focussing its efforts. At the time of the evaluation, there was further coordination within Nicaragua with the DIPECHO TA's participation in the donor quartet (EC, Japan, Sweden, IADB) on risk management. Complementary funding arrangements have also been sought by partners with AECID (acronym for the Spanish Agencia Española de Cooperación Internacional para el Desarrollo).

There is greater potential for identifying synergies with the latter in both Guatemala and El Salvador. Synergy is a key target of disaster risk reduction which requires effective partnerships. The complementary roles and core competencies of different organisations have to be successfully intertwined. Partnerships must be formed as a first step to develop synergies on the ground.

46. Constraints for further synergy include:

- a. Limited consideration and understanding of DRR within other EC funding instruments, EC and EU Member State agency staff.
- b. The view that DG ECHO has more limited dialogue and relations at the national government level.
- c. Overburdened DIPECHO staff in the region that do not have the capacity to ensure a more regular and permanent presence in countries in order to further link DIPECHO efforts to national and local development plans or coordinate with other donors on a regular basis outside Nicaragua. Gaps are more visible in the context of Guatemala, a larger and more complex country with less DIPECHO presence.

47. A number of examples of **synergy amongst DIPECHO partners** and other stakeholders can be found. The evaluation sought to consider synergy with the aim of determining how the DIPECHO programme as a whole was greater than the sum of the parts and identifying spill over effects. Spill over effects generated by the programme are visible through the approach undertaken by the IFRC and the capacity building and development activities of the Red Cross National Societies. The IFRC, through the regional Red Cross centres, provides capacity building and training both to DIPECHO funded partners (Participating National Red Crosses and European NGOs), national institutions and other non DG ECHO funded DRR actors and NGOs. Plan International, for example, is not currently funded by DIPECHO but benefits from the IFRC funded project. Synergies have also involved multi-function interventions as part of an overall approach. Strategies for DRR and adaptation that are embedded in development approaches have had far more benefit than ones that are "stand alone". In many cases early warning systems are part of multi-purpose communication systems. Previous experiences from programmes supported by other donors have also been positively used in the context of DIPECHO project implementation. Important benefits have accrued to project relations with government organisations where these are strengthened.

48. The relationship with local NGOs and associations **has not always been optimal**. There have been some instances where local NGOs involved or leading the partnership at the proposal identification stage are later given lesser roles in implementation once the DG ECHO FPA partner receives the contract and funding, and may even withdraw from the project due to this. (IPADE in Nicaragua under ACTED's project in DIPECHO V; and disagreements between CEPRODE and Geólogos del Mundo in a previous plan are a couple of known examples). This is an aspect which may be insufficiently monitored during project implementation. In addition, some of the local or extra regional partners which were supposedly consulted, in the design of projects and proposed as participants in project implementation had not been approached or were unaware of the project (eg. UNDP mentioning La Red and CRID in their DIPECHO V project). National Red Cross project representatives have also felt excluded from some of DIPECHO's proceedings as there has been an indication that the European Red Cross representative should attend meetings.

4.2. Coordination and LRRD

49. The number of global, regional, national, sectoral and local organisations engaging in disaster risk reduction has grown and coordination challenges at all levels have become more complex. ISDR is a global strategy established to facilitate concerted action towards reducing risk and vulnerability and involve all stakeholders. DIPECHO is attempting to include ISDR and there is a need to promote its presence in the region and see how the global platform can be further engaged and linked to local levels. It is present in the DIPECHO UNICEF implemented project.

50. Meetings held at national level between DG ECHO-funded partners have facilitated increased coordination, exchange and joint and shared training efforts.

Recommendations

51. Training within the EC at the level of delegations and of government personnel on DRR is necessary for linking and mainstreaming DRR integration.

4.3. Approaches and responses of international organisations, the RC movement, and NGOs

52. International organisations (IOs) have been funded by DIPECHO for regional projects. Aside from the CRID project funding foreseen under AP III and then funded under AP IV, so-called regional projects were no longer considered between 2000 and 2006. The approaches of international organisations are now intended to generate spill over effects beyond the actual implementation of the AP projects and the interventions funded within them. Initially, DIPECHO under the initial APs, also foresaw multi-country projects. UNICEF and ISDR have recently been implementing a regional programme on DRR and education and following a rights-based approach. UNDP has been funded by DG ECHO to gather information and systematise tools on specific components of DRR. Their approach foresees working primarily on a country level within the different countries targeted by DIPECHO interventions in Central America. CEPREDENAC has proposed projects on behalf of CONRED and has yet to fully define its strategic role and approach within DIPECHO. CEPREDENAC has a coordinating role to play.

53. For the International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies (IFRC), DIPECHO has created the possibility of covering disaster preparedness needs at the local community level, a need that was not being met by any other donor. The relationship with the Red Cross movement in the context of the DIPECHO programme has evolved over time. Prior to the DIPECHO programme, the IFRC had requested and received EC support for its series "*Es mejor prevenir*", in 1993. Since 1998, in the aftermath of Hurricane Mitch, there has been a transformation in the Red Cross. The IFRC has helped improve relations between National Societies and their counterpart government agencies. Through the IFRC regional reference centres DIPECHO funding is having an impact beyond the projects funded as in addition to providing support to National Societies and DG ECHO funded Red Cross partners, the regional centres service other organisations working in DRR. The Red Cross Movement has several assets in terms of making use of its volunteers and extensive network. At the same time, Red Cross DIPECHO proposals

have tended to be more expensive. As a result, larger portions of the budget have also been funded by other sources (eg. The American Red Cross in El Salvador).

54. NGOs funded under DIPECHO projects have used different approaches in an attempt to forge effective partnerships and encourage local ownership and sustainability. While the Red Cross movement has a network of volunteers, several NGOs have established agreements with universities to have students from communities participate in project implementation (CARE, GVC). A number of NGOs such as Oxfam (in Guatemala, Nicaragua and El Salvador) and Trocaire and Goal in Honduras work in partnership with local NGOs. It is in areas with less capacity, such as in rural Guatemala, where these options are less feasible and organisations must rely more heavily on their own personnel or subcontract certain services (ACH). In Nicaragua, NGOs have opted for involving Civil Defence as the preferred and most effective means of providing training in communities. In El Salvador, the Salvadoran Red Cross is playing a greater role in providing training in DIPECHO projects implemented by NGOs. NGOs have adapted their approaches to the context of intervention and more importantly to the beneficiary population group. NGOs have also tailored their approaches to the needs of different ethnic communities. Training in urban contexts and with working populations requires a different approach, as do interventions in security deficient areas. DIPECHO has provided its partners with the necessary flexibility to address differing needs and challenges.

4.4. National Red Cross Societies, National hazard monitoring and national response institutions

National Red Cross

55. The Red Crosses in Central America have developed greater capacity in DRR since 2000. The movement received much funding in the wake of Hurricane Mitch. Lower levels of funding after 2000, enabled the movement to further consolidate its activity and created greater incentive for collaboration. The capacity of national societies varies and some are affected by internal problems. On the whole however, DIPECHO has helped decentralise national societies and given further impetus to the process of strengthening local Red Cross structures. The IFRC with the Red Cross regional centres and the agreement between both European Red Crosses (Italian, Spanish and NL) and the support of the American Red Cross have created greater options for synergy and programme strengthening.

National institutions

56. Through DIPECHO projects, national institutions involved in DP have been able to gain practical experience and contextual knowledge at the local level. In addition, DIPECHO provides for partnerships between NGOs and national institutions which provide for the necessary flexibility for trial and innovation in DP. INETER in Nicaragua, through the successive agreements it has had with CARE in three different APs, has been able to take on innovative lower-cost early warning systems because the NGO is able to promote the initiative and assume the risk of trying different non-commercial means. With certain projects, DG ECHO partners have also helped foster internal coordination between different departments within institutes (eg. ACSUR with INETER).

5. IMPACT ASSESSMENTS

5.1. Overall impact¹²

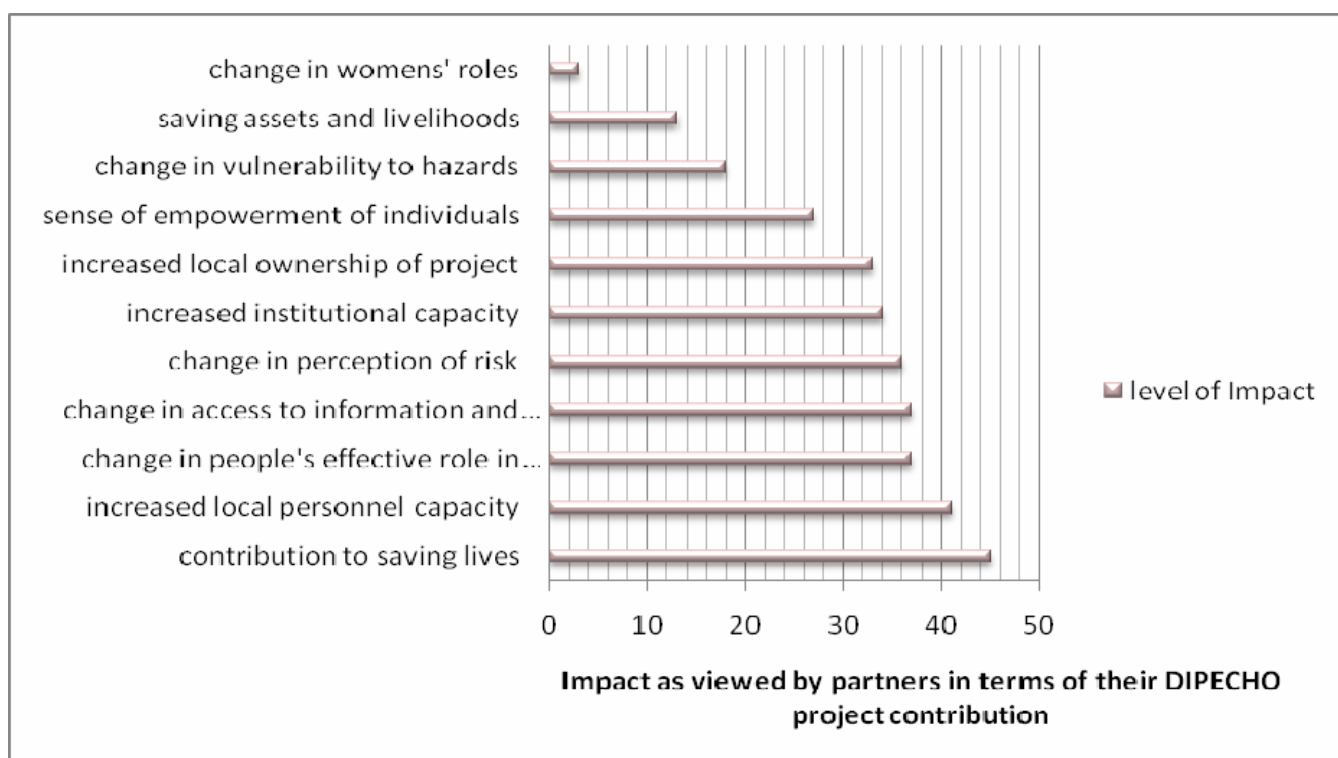
57. DIPECHO projects in areas affected by natural disasters have helped communities react more rapidly and in a more organised manner, allowing lives to be saved and also providing support for practical measures to reduce risks.

58. In Central America the DIPECHO programme is considerable both in absolute and relative terms. Projects currently cover a large proportion of areas affected by recurring disaster. DIPECHO has an impact

¹² For partner responses as regards the programme and its impact and needs, see Annexes 10, 13 and 14.

in terms of providing an enabling environment for response. There is a case for considering the role DIPECHO projects and action plans have in Central America as an **intervention response strategy**. Not only do projects facilitate the response and reaction of communities themselves and governmental institutions such as Civil Defence or auxiliary organisations like the Red Cross in areas that are affected by disasters, but they also provide an opportunity for channelling aid to affected persons - often in remote areas - that would otherwise not receive assistance (eg. WFP providing food aid as a result of ACH DIPECHO V project). Recurring disasters in Central America include smaller events that do not result in an additional DG ECHO intervention in response to a sudden onset disaster.

Average of partner responses based on their assessment of their project's impact on different issues
(where 50 represents the highest level of impact, and scores below 25 are considered to have little impact).



59. In general, the outcomes of the majority of projects undertaken by partners in the five DIPECHO Action Plans have contributed to increased disaster preparedness and reduced vulnerability of inhabitants in many municipalities of Central America who have benefited from the programme and its approach. In addition, there has been a demonstrated increase in the **capacity of local institutions**, mandated with protecting vulnerable populations (including Civil Defence, municipal councils, disaster management committees at different levels in project areas and implementing partners themselves).

60. As DIPECHO projects target high risk areas, partners are present in many localities that are affected by persistent and recurrent hazards. This is the case in areas that are subsequently targeted for additional assistance and response to a sudden onset disaster on the part of DG ECHO, as in the cases of Hurricanes Mitch, Stan and Felix. Partner presence in this area has provided key information for needs assessment and decision making. Target areas have proven relevant in this sense because DIPECHO partners are present in areas affected by heavy rains and other hazards this year. In Nicaragua, 216,000 people were affected by torrential rains this rainy season in the western part of the country. In this country, where DIPECHO funds most of its projects under the Fifth Action Plan, all partners have been working in areas persistently affected by natural hazards. In Guatemala, two out of three projects were affected and triggered a response.

5.2. Disaster risk reduction capacities at the local level

Reduction in community vulnerability through increased preparedness, capacities, and resilience

61. In terms of boosting the resilience of local people to the most frequent hazards, there is a greater level of preparedness by communities in the target areas. A large number of communities in all project areas

have developed some basic DP plans over the course of the APs, although this varied according to the quality of risk assessments undertaken. Although the quality of these plans has not been thoroughly assessed, this is significant evidence of an increased level of preparedness and enhancement of people's capacity to prepare for and to respond to disasters. In the case of recent disasters, there is evidence that the projects did improve response by local people; most of the projects involved the mobilisation and organisation of community disaster response teams.

62. The enhanced level of preparedness comes as a result of community DP awareness raising and training of significant numbers of local implementing partner staff, local governments, and citizens. Overall, the local government entities in the project areas have increased awareness of DRR and developed better capacities to manage their own DRR programmes. Whilst long-term in nature, there have been gradual improvements in knowledge, attitude, and practices of such stakeholders, and there has been evidence of application of methodologies and tools.

63. The **impact, in terms of volume**, has been greatest at a national level in Nicaragua. It is, however, in El Salvador and Guatemala where there is evidence of linkages between national and local levels for the first time as a result of DIPECHO project implementation. The establishment of the first decentralised SNET in a micro-region of El Salvador through OIKOS is a good example of how DIPECHO impacts the DP system and creates an enabling environment for improved local preparedness and response. A similar project at the micro-regional level implemented by Solidaridad Internacional in Nicaragua did not prove sustainable. OIKOS, however, seems to have secured joint interest and Spanish Cooperation funding for the micro-regional centre in Ahuachapan.

64. There is an **increased level of preparedness and improvement** in people's capacity to prepare for and respond to disasters. There is evidence at a local level in several recent and ongoing projects in all four countries (eg. Oxfam in Guatemala, CARE El Salvador, Trocaire in Honduras, GVC in Nicaragua).

65. A majority of **DIPECHO projects are increasingly focusing on the municipal level** and select municipalities as the point of entry for DIPECHO project design. The community level is then incorporated via consultation processes. However, a **factor counterproductive to impact and sustainability** in many projects is either lack of interest on the part of municipal authorities or municipal authority turnover.

66. Political polarisation in Central America is such that elections often entail the complete removal of all technical personnel at practically all levels. At the same time, the **DIPECHO funding instrument** has a value added and plays an important role in these contexts. In Nicaragua, where most donors currently face problems implementing their aid, DIPECHO receives the highest number of proposals.

67. Greater emphasis should be placed on understanding and protecting people's livelihoods as it is integral to saving lives and protecting future livelihoods. Together with the change in women's roles, it is in this area where partners felt that their DIPECHO project had had the least impact. Where early response is enacted and community participation includes considering assets, communities could focus on options for saving livestock, critical instruments of trade, etc. Moreover, training in rehabilitation methods and techniques could also be attempted. Guidelines for saving livelihoods could be incorporated in partners training formats.

6. UNDERSTANDING THE CHALLENGES OF LRRD

68. Despite the momentum created for DRR in a post-Mitch environment, governments in the region have yet to fully integrate and prioritise the topic within their development plans. Failure on the part of national governments to prioritise DRR influences what development donors and actors may attempt to promote in this field. This is especially the case in Nicaragua where cooperation is primarily provided in the form of

budget support¹³. The World Bank is attempting to create national demand for Disaster Risk Reduction as governments are not submitting requests for the \$1 million funding it makes available to countries for investment in DRR mapping.¹⁴ There is recognition at the level of the EC regional delegation on the failure and the need for prioritising DRR in current development schemes. There is a lack of capacity within the EC delegation to provide the necessary guidance to programmes on how to mainstream DRR and a need to introduce indicators to monitor progress on DRR in the aid provided in the form of budget support.¹⁵ It is recognised that in addition to donor agency staff, a welcome move so as to foster inclusion of DRR would be to provide training to government staff in the countries of the region. This suggestion also coincides with a plea from communities affected by disaster that it be mandatory for both civil servants and elected officials at all levels to receive basic training on DRR along with education on exposure to risk and instruments for protection.

69. Long term development instruments have therefore not yet developed sufficient momentum to enable a phase down of the DIPECHO programme. A clear example illustrative of the challenges of LRRD is the PREVDA programme which initially created some expectations on the possibility for increased synergy and linkages. Implementing the regional project has proved difficult thanks to its regional set-up which foresaw the channelling of €20 million through CEPREDENAC and a complex modus operandi involving the establishment of national secretariats at country levels. At the time of the evaluation it is in those countries, where DIPECHO is most active and where environmental policies are less advanced, that PREVDA had made less progress in terms of establishing a project management unit. Lack of progress is also seen as a reflection of lack of national commitment to DRR. In practical terms, and because PREVDA is a regional programme involving six countries and envisaging four levels of results, actual projects at country level are foreseen as pilots – for an €8 million amount - and will usually involve only one river basin. The location of the pilot river basin project not always coincides with vulnerability criteria established by the DIPECHO programme.

70. In the process of analysing potential synergy with other EC funding instruments and programmes, the evaluation found greater links with municipal strengthening programmes such as *Municipios Democráticos* in Guatemala¹⁶ where environmental issues are cross-cutting and the potential for municipalities to request funding for DRR in the development plans is being explored. In addition, the regional PRESANCA food security programme targets many municipalities and communities covered by the DIPECHO programme. With the exchange that the longer term PRESANCA foresees between different municipalities, communities that have benefited from different DIPECHO action plans have shared their knowledge with other communities in other countries. These initiatives have yet to develop traction for any future phasing out of DIPECHO, however. The level of attention and funding needed to reduce avoidable loss of life, livelihoods and property, and to safeguard development gains is absent. Risk reduction measures must in fact be expanded to avert or reduce the scale of future disasters.

7. MAIN CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

71. This section of the report summarises the main conclusions of the evaluation and provides corresponding recommendations. The conclusions are presented according to the main evaluation criteria, while the recommendations correspond exactly to the order and numbering of the conclusions, unless otherwise indicated.

7.1. Relevance and coherence

¹³ The term budget support is used to describe external assistance channelled directly to recipient governments using the governments' own management processes and systems.

¹⁴ The Central American Probabilistic Risk Assessment (CAPRA) project.

¹⁵ A guidance note for mainstreaming DRR in budget support has been developed by the Provention Consortium. http://www.proventionconsortium.org/themes/default/pdfs/tools_for_mainstreaming_GN14.pdf

¹⁶ (ALA/2000/3062 DTAGUA/B7-310/00/0020)

72. A **DIPECHO strategy** defining mediumterm objectives and targets and the steps and means to achieve them has been lacking. Such a process would **provide a basis** for planning continuity and sustainability, strengthening options for replicability and dealing with the problems and challenges of synergy and inter-project cooperation. An incremental approach to solving typical DP risk context problems could also be imagined with a strategic perspective that establishes the bases for continuity with areas and communities most at risk.

73. Support for community based Disaster Preparedness in Central America has been and remains very relevant in the national and regional contexts. The programme's overriding objective of reducing risk by better preparing vulnerable populations in the most disaster prone areas remains highly pertinent. Disaster preparedness remains a key factor in saving lives and ensuring an appropriate response in disaster prone Central America. The programme **continues to fill a gap** addressed by very few other agencies or programmes. DIPECHO programmes and objectives are generally well understood by beneficiaries. The DRR initiatives of other EC services, national and regional efforts, and of bilateral cooperation agencies are meagre and do not provide a basis for phasing out DIPECHO in the short or even medium term.

74. Despite clear statements of the fact that DIPECHO takes a **“regional” approach** and that local projects are conceived under a “regional umbrella”, there is enough evidence to suggest that the regional side of the equation, its concept, definition, relevance, opportunities and needs **have not been given sufficient consideration**.

75. The **National and Regional Consultation meeting process** has **increased the ownership** of the programme by diverse stakeholders and has offered one of very few opportunities for **dialogue and consensus** in the countries on risk and disaster matters as a whole. Renovation and innovation in ways of delimiting priority areas and themes should be considered constantly, Plan to Plan. One immediate opportunity is to choose priorities for intervention from a range of areas delineated according to an identified risk typology.

Recommendations

76. A **comprehensive DRR strategy should be developed** to form the basis for DIPECHO's programme and inform the process of design and development of future Action Plans. This should consider programme development over three successive Plan periods - six years - and take as one of its bases the risk typology concept (see point 65). The Hyogo Framework for Action should be explicitly used as the basis for this overarching strategic approach and to facilitate the adoption of complementary programmes between other national and regional DRR stakeholders. [Strategic]

77. A specific study should be commissioned in order to examine the notion, role and opportunities associated with a regional DIPECHO approach that would maximise impact and improve the likelihood of replication within the region.

78. The NCM and RCM processes should be maintained and strengthened, enhancing their role in both the definition of DIPECHO goals and objectives and more widespread national and regional risk reduction objectives. This should be achieved introducing the following modifications and innovations:

- a. A single methodology should be developed, cross country, and applied by a single team of experts located optimally in public universities or research centres of the region.
- b. The incorporation of the notion of **risk typologies** as the basis for analysis and subsequent selection of projects during the next Action Plan, achieving throughout the region a balance of different types such that DIPECHO contributes to innovation and real options for replicability under different circumstances. Further links should be established with DIPECHO interventions in other regions of Latin America.

- c. The running of the regional RCM first - with the presence of all key national actors and potential partners - so as to provide a real regional dimension and framework for project selection and definition at the national level and an enabling environment for the improved definition of a DIPECHO strategy in the region, further linked to the European Commission's strategy in Central America.
- d. Organisation of the workshops by professionals in meeting organisation and the design of adequate administrative and financial procedures in order to achieve this.

7.2. Effectiveness

79. The partner selection process has improved over the course of the different action plans. The increase in the number of partners implementing DIPECHO projects in the region, including organisations with development programmes, has led to an effective integration of DP work with longer term development projects and facilitated LRRD. Partners have developed increased capacity in the DRR sector through DIPECHO project implementation. Staff turnover has not been a significant problem in the region and the programme has been able to benefit from relative stability of human resources. Continued presence has enabled staff to incorporate good practice into successive projects. The nature of the relations and the distribution of attributes and functions between FPA signatories and their local partners has not always been adequate. The lack of norms and normative behaviour contribute to unequal treatment of some parties. Strengthening of local partner's capabilities and attributes has not always been an important aspect in the development of these relationships.

80. The call for Expression of Interest document has grown in size and demands and may be becoming user-unfriendly. This is especially true where the time period between calls of interest and project presentation is short and the requirements for making proposals are complex. Efforts need to be made to reorganise and redesign the intervention sectors and requisites-parameters now in place. Project implementation has been challenged by the short-term nature of DIPECHO funding and the inclusion on the part of partners of too many components and activities, which limits some partners from achieving certain outcomes and focussing on process. As partners focus heavily on implementation indicators, there is little time for risk analysis in the course of the project. The shorter timeframe of project implementation decreases opportunities to engage in corrective action when problems arise. DIPECHO could reach a greater level of effectiveness, innovation and reflexive action if partners were able to focus more on fewer components. Many communities greatly appreciated the training they had received through DIPECHO projects but felt they needed more training and capacity building to be able to respond adequately as rescue and evacuations brigades. Most preferred to have additional time and training sessions. Additional themes such as radio repair, basic items for swimming or flotation devices were also mentioned. In the case of Nicaragua, an agreement with Civil Defence for the purpose of providing additional training could be envisaged post project implementation.

81. Efforts have been made to base project design and definition on evidence generated through participatory community or locally based diagnoses. However, there is still much room for improvement and for varying reasons a number of organisations interviewed do not undertake such analysis to the extent required for a project to reach the foreseen level of effectiveness.

82. The requirement of having approval and participation of national government organisations (technical and operative) in projects in some countries, whilst clearly advantageous and correct, does pose problems and these may increase in the future. The technical capabilities and resources of these organisations are limited in size and scope and may put a brake on the number of projects that can be developed at any one time.

83. Overall effectiveness may be limited by the levels of conceptual and professional experience of project staff and promoters. Experience is undoubtedly of great importance but in the end is no direct substitute for up-to-date concepts, methodological understanding and knowledge. This factor may in fact be restricting efficiency and impact as many projects become routine rather than innovative.

84. Important steps have been taken to increase information and documentation processes and to systematise and distribute evidence of good practice in the interest of encouraging replicability and improved practice. Whereas processes to improve documentary sources and access are now long lived - through the CRID system in particular efforts at systematisation of good practice are new. A typology approach to project selection would have impacts on the conceptual and practical aspects of systematisation of good practice.

Recommendations

85. DIPECHO should privilege financing of those organisations that have medium-term development goals and presence in attended regions and encourage the linking of the DP projects to these. Options for sustainability will only be improved under such circumstances. DIPECHO projects should, whenever possible, link into local development processes by means of their relationships with local land use planning, environmental management, infrastructure development schemes etc. This is the only way to ensure sustainability in financial, institutional and community terms. [Operational]

86. Selection should also be based on a consideration of those FPA organisations that develop and maintain healthy partnerships with local humanitarian or development NGOs or associations. The role, decision-making sharing principles, financial conditions, and areas of participation of local organisations should be clearly laid out in the project document approved. [Operational]

87. Simplify the call for expressions of interest documents, reducing the norms and encouraging innovation, imagination and reference to good practice. Intervention sectors should be reconsidered and revamped according to clearly identifiable integral mechanisms for intervention. Proposal formats should be designed in order to guarantee that partners do not propose overly burdensome tasks that take time away from efforts to adequately and thoroughly develop training and other schemes. Clearly lay out opportunities and contexts for continuity in the same intervention areas, plan to plan. [Operational]

88. Promote wider ranging real community participation and demand community risk assessment for pre-selected projects. Address financial limitations faced by some organisations and the unwillingness on the part of partners to create undue expectations or excessively burden local communities. Introduce the concept paper approach, potential future cost coverage and clear guidelines as to method and objectives of community and beneficiary participation. [Operational]

89. Shortfall on national technical expertise in priority countries could be overcome by using technical and professional resources from universities and disaster organisations in Costa Rica and Panama, thus serving as a mechanism for the construction of a non-exclusive regional approach. [Operational]

90. Provide opportunities for the permanent professional training of project staff over the AP-period. Working groups and networks should be established to consider the relationship and strengthen the link between concepts and practice. Promoting lessons-learned exchange within these project networks would be an important aspect of this type of a DIPECHO staff “certification” scheme.

91. Documentation and dissemination procedures should be encouraged by the projects themselves. It should be obligatory for all partners to deposit utilisation focused briefs, reports and/or documents in existing documentation centres or websites. Project preparation procedures should require partners to clearly quote, cite and detail the good practices they have reviewed and considered in project elaboration. The impact and utility of the systematisation procedures and schemes now under way should be evaluated on project termination and, to the extent typology considerations are considered, new ideas on systematisation and guidelines on an inter-regional basis should be adopted

7.3. Efficiency

92. A large number of the more traditional and newer DIPECHO partners are of very high quality. Despite this, even some approved proposals remain weak in very significant criteria such as technical abilities of professional staff (the characteristics of personnel which allow it to adequately lead and innovate in a project) and sustainability.

93. Promotion, evaluation, selection, project control and monitoring are all undertaken efficiently by field staff and the Brussels office. The TA provides an important advisory role during project implementation. The growth in the number of financed actions and, potentially, a further future growth in number of requests inevitably places greater pressure on DIPECHO professional staff, possibly taking time away from process and innovation in favour of more routine activities.

Recommendations

94. Consideration should be given to discussing partner project proposal performance with both selected and non-selected partners, (where the latter are considered in principle good options for future partnership). Specific workshops could be staged to improve project preparation in critical areas - methodology, key concepts, technical requirements, sustainability etc. Greater emphasis on the use of internationally available guidelines and reference to good practice would help increase project quality. Clear definitions of concepts used in DIPECHO literature should be undertaken and clear indications given to partners as to the significance and pragmatic relevance of these as regards definition of intervention actions. This is particularly important in dealing with development based concepts such as resilience, resistance, risk and vulnerability reduction. [Operational]

95. Pressure could be taken off TA and other local staff if a concept paper approach was introduced to filter first round proposals for projects. A programmatic approach to DRR needs to be developed over more than one action planning cycle, wherein brief concept papers would be developed prior to a substantive proposal and consideration given to approval of partners' annual work plans and budgets over several Action Plans. The bi-annual calls for proposals would continue to draw in fresh partners. [Strategic]. In order to facilitate innovation, exchange between and amongst partners, introduction of novel approaches and provision of advisory services to partners, follow up on older DIPECHO projects and their current levels of sustainability should be put into operation. A regional risk management and disaster preparedness advisor should be appointed. [Operational]

7.4. Coverage

96. DIPECHO projects complement government policy and provide benefits and assistance to areas that would not otherwise receive attention. The recent inclusion of **large city marginal communities** is a very positive step. Present and projected future trends do however tend to suggest that poverty and risk are and may continue to grow more rapidly in **intermediate and small urban centres in the future**.

97. **Imbalance in the number of projects** presented and approved in the different priority countries is of concern. Under-representation of Guatemala and, to a lesser extent El Salvador and the permanent dominance of Nicaragua may be explained by structural, historical and contextual factors. Costa Rica and Panama should be encouraged to present projects where the nature of these can be seen to offer innovative elements for future DP schemes.

98. DIPECHO's objective of working in the most disaster-prone areas (highly vulnerable areas subject to recurrent small scale disasters or affected by an important disaster during the last ten years) is not always followed, with other criteria being weighted more heavily. In these cases, the partner may consider their staff capacity, the receptiveness of communities and local authorities towards implementing a project. It should be understood that addressing the most vulnerable communities implies a trade-off with ensuring that development processes are in place in the community or ensuring further likelihood of sustainability.

Recommendations

99. The future definition of priority areas for intervention should be achieved through the use of the aforesaid risk typology concept. This should guarantee a more comprehensive incorporation of diverse types of risk areas in rural and in large and smaller urban areas, where the ultimate criteria for selection is the potential for saving life and livelihoods.

100. More promotional activities should be undertaken in countries that present a limited number of projects and efforts made to have DIPECHO representation in each of these countries - linked to other EC services if necessary.

101. Efforts must be made to incorporate those areas that suffer from high disaster risk but which have little awareness, social capital and organisational bases and which would not normally be considered by partners in the framework of 15-month projects. This could involve two-stage projects where the first stage is undertaken with more limited funds - up to €100,000 - and the second stage with increased funding commensurate with training and early warning needs, for example.

7.5. Coordination, complementarities, coherence and synergy

102. There is limited consideration of DRR within other EC funding instruments, and EC and EU Member State agency staff in the region have only partial understanding of the nature of DRR and of DIPECHO's projects. Despite continuing and increased efforts by DIPECHO and DG ECHO to increase dialogue and discussion and the search for synergy, coordination and complementarities between EC projects in the region, these continue to be low. There are prospects for further cooperation with food security and municipal strengthening programmes. More progress has been made with Swiss Development Cooperation and the potential exists for further interaction with Spanish Cooperation, especially in Guatemala. DIPECHO's leverage is insufficient to influence major stakeholders to include DRR in their policy, strategy, legislation and long-term development plans. The World Bank and other major actors have limited knowledge of DIPECHO. The EC Regional Delegation is also in favour of prioritising DRR, mainstreaming DRR in EC programmes, developing further knowledge both among EC personnel and national government personnel, and defining appropriate DRR indicators for budget support.

103. Opportunities clearly exist for synergy and collaboration, but transforming opportunity into reality requires the existence of programming, and spatial and temporal considerations that are not yet in place. It is unrealistic to believe that DIPECHO can be the champion of mainstreaming and LRRD. The movement in favour of these fundamental aspects can be supported by DIPECHO but the major initiative must come from larger humanitarian and development based schemes promoted by DG ECHO and other EU services and international agencies.

104. Some partner organisations have developed techniques and methodologies using other financing mechanisms that are now being perfected or widened through participation in DIPECHO projects. This is the case of CARE and its methodological developments, which have come out of the OFDA-AID financed Central American Mitigation Initiative. It is also the case of the IFRC with the development of its VCA methodology with support from the DFID and PROVENTION Consortium. DIPECHO has provided a unique opportunity for the development and testing, refinement and improvement of these techniques with impacts in other organisations and settings. Support for the IFRC reference centres is an extremely positive measure which facilitates complementarity, coherence and synergies throughout the region and assists actors beyond those directly supported by DIPECHO.

105. A number of examples of synergy amongst DIPECHO partners and other stakeholders can be found. These have tended to be concentrated, although not exclusively, within organisations from the same "consortium" (Red Cross, CARE, Oxfam, for example). The number of cross organisational collaborations is rising.

Recommendations

106. Dialogue with other EC funding instruments and EU Member States should be increased, particularly those supportive of DRR. This will require more professional human resources linked to DIPECHO. A DRR focal person within EC delegations should be supported to improve coordination, advocacy and complementarity. [Operational]

107. Development of a strategic framework and the ability to predict spatial and temporal patterns for project development would create options for synergy with other agency projects and plans. [Strategic]

108. Continuous efforts should encourage and support inter-partner and inter-project collaboration in conceptual, methodological, experiential and practical terms. This can be achieved during project preparation, project implementation and project closure. Consideration should be given to financial allocations that may be used to sponsor and stimulate inter-project discussion during implementation, where needs and options occur ad-hoc. [Operational]

7.6 Impact

109. The notion of impact covers community, local, sub-national, national and regional levels and also individual, family, social group, institutional and organisational aspects. DIPECHO projects have had measurable, and at times very significant, impacts on all these levels. Reduction of loss of life, consolidation of local social organisation, strengthening of relations and knowledge of one another between national-level scientific, normative and operational institutions and the local and community levels, the development of local infrastructure and an improvement in local analytical capabilities, including their understanding of the root causes of disaster, are amongst these.

110. In Central America the DIPECHO programme is considerable both in absolute and relative terms. Recent and ongoing projects cover a large proportion of areas affected by recurring natural disaster. The presence of DIPECHO projects in disaster affected areas has, on a significant number of occasions, **facilitated disaster response, communications, access and recovery** on an ad-hoc basis. This is clear in the interventions of several partners during the 2007 rainy season, including after Hurricane Felix in Nicaragua. Increased communication greatly benefited isolated communities and improved their living conditions. In measuring the impact of DIPECHO projects in terms of how well preparedness helped the population when they were afterwards affected by a natural disaster, the evaluation found evidence of increased local response, including evacuation of people in life threatening situations in high risk areas, timelier and better-informed decision-making, a greater level of empowerment on the part of local populations and ownership of the response, along with improved responses on the part of national actors involved in DIPECHO projects.

111. In all programme areas **awareness of DRR** has increased progressively, community DP plans have been developed and response teams established. Significant direct impact in terms of **increased preparedness** is evident in project areas, benefitting several hundreds of thousands of people over the course of the five APs. Overall, the **local government entities** throughout the project areas also have **increased awareness of DRR**. DIPECHO Action Plan impacts have been positively boosted in the aftermath of Hurricane Mitch in 1998 and Tropical Storm Stan in 2005, which both affected the vast majority of territories covered by the programme. As a result, the **level of motivation of stakeholders** has been significant. There have been gradual improvements in knowledge, attitude, and practices of such stakeholders, and there has been evidence of application of methodologies and tools. Additional impact would require greater human resource, financial and time investment in **promoting self-reliance and community level responses**.

112. DIPECHO projects tend to be dominated by notions of early warning and early evacuation in order to save human lives. Present and past interventions have **concentrated on flooding and landslide prone areas**, affected directly or indirectly by hurricanes and tropical storms. Despite the fact that some organisations, under their own volition and financing, reach out to other types of risk reduction activity

(land use planning, cropping patterns etc) within the framework of the project, notions associated with **safeguarding livelihoods** (domestic animals, for example) are scarce. Moreover, DP activities mainly concentrate on immediate response aspects whilst the idea of preparedness for recovery is not raised much beyond the evaluation of damages and loss.

113. Mitigation works have had **positive impacts** on communities, including the way participation in the decision making and construction of these has increased social cohesion and consolidation and consciousness of causes. Moreover, some works are used beyond the immediate needs associated with disaster - bridges for example, in linking and integrating communities. Investment in DP infrastructure has had a great impact in communities. Low-cost bridges that serve as vital emergency evacuation routes have had an impact on improving living conditions. In Honduras access to markets and schools improved

114. There are very clear examples of DIPECHO projects **developing state of the art** knowledge, strategy and schemes that have transcended the region. This is the case of the early warning schemes developed by GTZ in a DIPECHO I project in all the countries of the region. However, the **level and range of replicable experiences** generated due to innovations or methodological developments undertaken in DIPECHO projects is **still a grey area**.

115. There is some lack of clarity as to what should be expected in terms of **outputs and outcomes** within DIPECHO's programme as these are not clearly linked to the development of indicators, benchmarks and timeframes within the Hyogo Framework for Action. Indicators used were generally SMART and verifiable but partners found the identification of **impact or outcome indicators** for DRR challenging to develop. Some partners are weak in impact monitoring due to the absence of baseline information from the beginning of projects and also due to the short-term nature of funding. Ideally, information should be provided before and after project intervention.

Recommendations

116. With a programme that is able to finance a relatively limited number of projects every two years, consideration should be given to how representative project interventions are in terms of **the "typology" of risk** in the region and as how to increase this representativity. Thought - without affecting funding levels - should be given to the option of having one Latin American DIPECHO programme that also includes the Dominican Republic, Cuba and Belize that is organised according to risk typologies and in which cross national comparison and implementation are achieved. At present DIPECHO projects are repetitive as regards hazard types and DP interventions.¹⁷ [Strategic]

117. Regional projects that intend to systematise good practice should take into close consideration applications in differing types of risk area. Such projects should be promoted on a multi-regional level (throughout LA), where cross national comparison can be made of strategies and mechanisms used in similar types of risk zone (for example, multi-ethnic and lingual communities in lowland areas; dispersed subsistence rural areas; rapidly growing urban settlements due to in migration.) [Strategic]

118. Measures should be taken to promote a more inclusive view of DP, maintaining the current priorities as regards the saving of human life, but widening interests and training in order to consider protection of livelihoods and preparation for rehabilitation and reconstruction. This could be associated with pre-project workshops for coordinators where new and up to date visions are provided and discussed. [Operational]

119. Although there are many arguments in favour of carrying on with mitigation work when these are infrastructure based, the investment should be put into DP assistance infrastructure such as escape routes

¹⁷ For example, promote two or three projects in up to three countries that test strategies and mechanisms in multi-lingual, multi-ethnic communities in the Andes and Guatemalan highlands; promote interventions in the lowlands of Ecuador, Honduras and Costa Rica where commercial agriculture employs highly poor and vulnerable persons working and living under extreme conditions; DP work in marginal urban communities of Bolivia, Colombia, Guatemala and Honduras where these are typified by high rates of immigration and occupation of urban slopes.

and multi-purpose shelters. If mitigation is to be carried on then this should also focus on actions that do not necessarily involve building such as environmental management schemes.[Operational]

120. Test and further develop impact indicators such as those developed in the Andean countries under the last DIPECHO plan. [Operational]. Develop a realistic set of **impact indicators** for various DRR interventions¹⁸ and support partners through training in monitoring. [Operational]

121. DIPECHO interventions would gain in efficiency if they were to address lack of information and the insufficient regional institutional memory of DP interventions. The provision for baseline studies in DIPECHO V projects will facilitate future evaluation of impacts. Consideration should be given to **categorising levels of community resilience**¹⁹ before and after DIPECHO interventions. [Operational]

Levels of Community Resilience - Characteristics of a Disaster Resilient Community:

Level 1. Little awareness of the issue(s) or motivation to address them. Actions limited to crisis response.
Level 2. Awareness of the issue(s) and willingness to address them. Capacity to act (knowledge and skills, human, material and other resources) remains limited. Interventions tend to be one-off, piecemeal and short-term.
Level 3. Development and implementation of solutions. Capacity to act is improved and substantial. Interventions are more numerous and long-term.
Level 4. Coherence and integration. Interventions are extensive, covering all main aspects of the problem, and they are linked within a coherent long-term strategy.
Level 5. A “culture of safety” exists among all stakeholders, where DRR is embedded in all relevant policy, planning, practice, attitudes and behaviour.

122. Improved linkages between pilot activities and **local government planning** processes are an option for scaling up. The EU can suggest introducing DRR indicators in budget support.[Operational]

123. In line with GHD efforts, a strategy directed by DG ECHO in Brussels for **knowledge management and dissemination** to ensure that learning and case studies are captured and disseminated more widely. There is a need for using material to advocate for the adoption and institutionalisation of a community based approach and to mainstreaming DRR. [Strategic]

7.7. Sustainability

124. Sustainability is a constant problem in Central America. Stakeholders also view the 15-month time period for DIPECHO projects as a major constraint for achieving sustainability.

125. Sustainability remains a problem despite partner effectiveness in developing a sense of community ownership for DP and providing appropriate technology that is not difficult to manage and maintain. In most cases institutional sustainability, political change and migration create the greatest problems when the project terminates. These factors affect all programmes in Central America.

¹⁸ Impact indicators for DRR were developed in 2006/07 by John Twigg for BOND/DFID DRR group of agencies and there are others available from UN ISDR, UNDP, etc.

¹⁹ John Twigg for the DFID Disaster Risk Reduction Interagency Coordination Group, “A Guidance Note, Characteristics of A Disaster Resilient Community”, Version 1, June 2007.

126. In a significant number of cases **full operating capabilities are eroded** after projects finished. The **communication systems** put in place tend to offer the greatest levels of sustainability. Where acceptable levels of sustainability have been seen this is associated with the **density of diverse sorts of support** received prior to and following the intervention. Migration and change of authorities and civil servants affect sustainability. Sustainability is less of a problem in those areas where partners continue to be active and monitor the situation. When partners are funded within the same country with DIPECHO projects covering different areas, the opportunity for follow-up and monitoring exists and is usually pursued.

127. A key to successful project implementation is having the **support of local government** at the municipal and district levels. Some more successful projects have managed to encourage municipalities to incorporate budgetary allocations in their annual plans for maintenance and support. However, local government changes every four years and many times interest wanes as new financial responsibilities are assumed.

Recommendations

128. Project schemes that can be feasibly undertaken within the given timeframe and options for linking into longer-term development-based initiatives in intervention zones, including the opportunity for continuity of DIPECHO projects in the same area over more than one Plan period should be foreseen. [Operational]

129. Partners should establish clear and normative working relations with development projects in their area of action or, in the case of development-based organisations, promote integration with their own projects. Focus, when feasible, on including other more stable stakeholders in projects such as teachers and, in many communities targeted through DIPECHO interventions, women. Provide instruction on LRRD and other more wide-reaching DRR issues of relevance to DP initiatives to potential partners and to DG ECHO and EC staff in the regions. [Operational]

130. Specific attention should be paid to existing municipal plans and projects foreseen so as to introduce means for continuity and mainstream DRR in local development plans. Training of trainers programmes should be envisaged and a role provided for previously targeted communities to share learning with new DIPECHO interventions. [Operational]

131. Equipment foreseen for DP should become the property of the community response teams as opposed to municipal authorities. Means for partners to loosely monitor past project interventions (stakeholder compliance with established agreements) and refresh training should be envisaged in future Action Plans. [Operational]

7.8. Linking Relief, Rehabilitation and Development

132. A majority of DG ECHO partners in Central America are involved in emergency response. DG ECHO's effort to mainstream DRR in response creates momentum for linking emergency response to disaster recovery and rehabilitation. Organisations made progress in taking up the LRRD approach and there has been a natural progression from relief response to long-term support to communities.

133. DIPECHO has created a growing awareness of the importance of this approach, although more needs to be done in practical terms to put it into practice, both by DIPECHO and other EC funding instruments. LRRD required flexibility and purposive identification of means which are still lacking. The shorter-term nature of DG ECHO funding, specifically for emergency responses, limits the ability to establish greater links with other longer-term development programmes.

Recommendations

134. Training within the EC at the delegation level and of government personnel on DRR is necessary for linking and mainstreaming and DRR integration. [Operational]

135. There is an opportunity to develop DRR indicators to monitor government progress in budget support, specifically in Nicaragua in the aftermath of Hurricane Felix and where the EC provides most of its aid in the form of budget support. In addition, on the tenth anniversary of Hurricane Mitch, there will be a new opportunity for greater governmental interest in the field of DRR. [Strategic]

7.9. Cross-cutting Issues

136. In general partners have sought to include too many components within their projects within a limited time period. Only a selected number of partners have in addition considered fully integrating cross-cutting issues within their projects. Attention to cross-cutting issues further anchors DIPECHO within DG ECHO's humanitarian mandate and vulnerability focus, however. Where structural constraints in a society result in exclusion from decision-making or economic security, risks are unevenly spread. **Inclusive and consultative processes are needed that engage those most at risk.** Often those most at risk are the least included in economic and political life. This will include women, children and the elderly.

Women

137. Gender influences the types of hazard to which an individual is exposed and an individual's access to resources with which to build resilience to hazard and to recover from disaster. The continued exclusion of women from all levels of political decision-making is one of the greatest lost opportunities for human development and disaster risk management. Long-term cross-cutting goals for development and disaster risk reduction encourage a self-analysis on the social structures within which women and girls live their lives. Enabling a greater voice for the views of women will allow women to identify priorities. Highlighting gender in development and disaster risk to enable women to address disaster risk reduction raises a broader issue of inclusiveness in decision-making.

Children

138. Children are at greater risk of being affected, injured or killed by disaster impacts than adults. Loss of livelihoods can lead to extreme poverty and homelessness for children. DIPECHO, through the AP IV Plan International in El Salvador and UNICEF/UNISDR project, has been directly focussing on children and DRR. Other DIPECHO projects include specifically targeting schools and the Ministry of Education (NL Red Cross in Guatemala).

Environment

139. Soil degradation, biodiversity loss, over-fishing, deforestation and drinking water scarcity undermine rural livelihoods and pave the way for vulnerability to environmental hazard. In cities, pollution of waterways and the air and inadequate provision of drinking water, sanitation or solid waste management systems shape patterns of illness that erode resistance to everyday hazards. Many measures can be taken at the community level to improve sanitation. Risk accumulation that ends in disaster is often closely tied to problems of environmental sustainability. Strategies to enhance environmental sustainability will make a contribution to breaking this chain of risk accumulation.

140. In general, there was limited incorporation of cross-cutting issues in the projects reviewed due to several factors: limited time, excessive numbers of components and activities foreseen within a project, uncertainty of continued funding, organisational mandates, lack of partner expertise and knowledge of community vulnerability criteria. There have been some efforts on the part of the DG ECHO Regional Office to heighten awareness on specific issues such as gender, the physically challenged, children and ethnic minorities.

141. Many projects address the themes of education and school children to such an extent that UNICEF is working with these projects through its safer school practice DIPECHO project. Gender relations and the promotion of gender equality have been more unevenly addressed.

Recommendations

142. Further **indicators** to measure the success and impact of projects **in terms of outcomes** in cross-cutting issues should be included. [Operational]

143. Assessments as foreseen in the Single Form should consider groups that have specific needs and draw attention to them if necessary. [Operational]

144. Defining interventions by type, including references to cultural specificities, may help strengthen mainstreaming of cross-cutting issues. This is already done by partners working in multi-cultural areas. Partners hire field staff that speak indigenous languages and training materials are adapted to local cultural contexts, translated into local languages, etc. [Operational].

7.10. Advocacy

145. DIPECHO has increased the awareness of other EC directorates and bi-lateral donors with regard to wider integration of DP/DRR into their policy, planning and programme activities. There is a growing realisation that DRR should be a higher priority in the region.

Recommendations

146. The area of documentation, diffusion, historical memory, information access and use is under-worked and under-prioritised and requires more consideration - from web-based services, through online and on site documentation services and other mechanisms. [Operational]

7.11. Implementation strategy for future DIPECHO activities and relations with overall DRR and LRRD

Recommendations

147. Further advocacy of the integration of DRR into other EU external assistance services, strengthening of inter-service cooperation in DRR should be intensified at key moments of the Country Assistance Strategy process. [Strategic]

148. A dedicated **DRR focal person within the EC** delegations is a pragmatic way to undertake advocacy (within the EC and to EU Members States) and increase the likelihood of linkages to other EC instruments with project partners. It was suggested by the regional delegation that projects be circulated to DIPECHO for their review for the purpose of mainstreaming. [Operational]

149. Capacity building should focus on empowering the community to respond on its own. The **community should be considered the key resource in disaster risk management and the key actor** as well as the primary beneficiary of disaster risk management process. In a number of limited cases, when the system does not function, the impact can be negative. In Guatemala, in many areas affected by Hurricane Stan, there is a lack of credibility in CONRED. DIPECHO projects can empower communities to know how systems should function in practice while also enabling them to rely on themselves if necessary. Communities should not necessarily depend primarily on a central response. [Strategic]

150. There is a **need for greater clarity** as to what should be expected **in terms of outputs and outcomes**, and this should be linked to the development of indicators, benchmarks and timeframes within the Hyogo Framework for Action. DFID's Conflict and Humanitarian Fund has funded agencies to work on DRR initiatives. A common set of "characteristics of a disaster-resilient community" that can be used by local partner organisations to demonstrate the impact of community DRR projects has been developed in 2007. Opportunities exist for DIPECHO and its partners to either trial and pilot this simple categorisation or develop its own common approach to monitoring and evaluation as a means of measuring

progress in DRR. Indicators are being discussed in the context of the DIPECHO in the Andean region. The evaluators drew up “Characteristics of a Disaster-Resilient Community”: a guidance note for government and civil society organisations working on DRR initiatives at community level with DIPECHO partners.²⁰ It is worth noting, as mentioned earlier in this report, that the concept of resilience in Latin America is not integrated into practice and has the great disadvantage of making DRR difficult to understand. [Strategic]

151. In the process of prioritising geographic locations for DIPECHO interventions, consideration should be given to developing **criteria for community selection** and for categorising and defining different types of interventions. While DIPECHO projects usually target a community for a 15-month period, it may be that the level of resilience and disaster preparedness of the community is so low to begin with that its characteristics would eventually require DG ECHO to consider repeating an intervention in the project area. This is in fact what has been done under the fourth and fifth Action Plans by the Spanish Red Cross in the RAAS in Bluefields and El Rama, along with the Guatemalan Highlands with ACH. A similar course of action could be considered in communities such as those targeted by GVC in Sandy Bay, even if they had not suffered from hazards during project implementation. This has been foreseen in the Call For Proposals which states “recognising that the process of raising risk awareness, risk identification, strengthening capacities, increasing resilience, installing sustainable planning and management systems etc. at community level is a process that can only be achieved over the long-term, DIPECHO will not ignore proposals for DP strategies that are *multi-phased in nature* (ie. can entail a series of phases financed over ≥ 1 action plan)”. A typology of communities and criteria for community selection would add clarity to this process and enable DIPECHO to gather further information on its impact. [Operational]

²⁰ The first edition of the guidance note, published in October 2007, is a pilot version, which is now being tested in the field. It shows what a disaster-resilient community might consist of by setting out the many different elements of resilience. It provides ideas on how to progress towards resilience and can be used at different stages of project cycle management, particularly in planning and assessment, and monitoring and evaluation. It can also be linked to other tools used in DRR projects and research (eg. vulnerability and capacity analysis). The guidance note is designed to support processes of community mobilisation and partnership for DRR but the findings of reviews and assessments carried out using the note may also have some value in advocacy work at local and higher levels.