

# EVALUATION OF THE DIPECHO ACTION PLANS IN SOUTH ASIA





Blind or deaf children conduct mock school evacuation drill in Dhalli, Simla, India

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## Table of Contents

<b>Executive Summary .....</b>	<b>3</b>
<b>Acronyms and Abbreviations .....</b>	<b>10</b>
<b>1. Background and Context .....</b>	<b>11</b>
1.1. DIPECHO Background in the South Asia Region.....	11
<b>2. The Evaluation .....</b>	<b>12</b>
2.1. Purpose and Objectives .....	12
2.2. Methodology and Key Sources .....	13
2.3. Limitations .....	17
<b>3. Appropriateness / Relevance.....</b>	<b>17</b>
3.1. DIPECHO’s DRR Strategy .....	19
<b>4. Efficiency .....</b>	<b>21</b>
<b>5. Effectiveness .....</b>	<b>22</b>
<b>6. Coverage .....</b>	<b>24</b>
<b>7. Coherence .....</b>	<b>26</b>
<b>8. Connectedness .....</b>	<b>29</b>
8.1. Connectedness and State Assistance .....	29
8.2. Connectedness: Other Donors and the EC .....	31
8.3. Connectedness and National Partner Organisations.....	31
<b>9. Impact and Sustainability .....</b>	<b>32</b>
9.1. Impact among Vulnerable Communities.....	32
9.2. Impact on Local Organisations .....	34
9.3. Impact on Policy.....	36
<b>10. Next Steps .....</b>	<b>38</b>
<b>Works Cited and Bibliography .....</b>	<b>Fehler! Textmarke nicht definiert.</b>
Appendix 1: Terms of Reference .....	<b>Fehler! Textmarke nicht definiert.</b>
Appendix 2: Persons Met.....	<b>Fehler! Textmarke nicht definiert.</b>
Appendix 3: Consultant Itineraries .....	<b>Fehler! Textmarke nicht definiert.</b>
Appendix 4: Map of DIPECHO South Asia 3rd Action Plan Bangladesh .....	<b>Fehler! Textmarke nicht definiert.</b>
Appendix 5: Map of DIPECHO South Asia 3rd Action Plan India	<b>Fehler! Textmarke nicht definiert.</b>
Appendix 6: Map of DIPECHO South Asia 3rd Action Plan Nepal .....	<b>Fehler! Textmarke nicht definiert.</b>
Appendix 8: Best Practice Lessons from DIPECHO and Partner Projects .....	<b>Fehler! Textmarke nicht definiert.</b>

## Executive Summary

### Purpose and Methodology

This report describes the findings, conclusions and recommendations that have emerged from an evaluation of efforts taken by DIPECHO in South Asia. The evaluation was conducted in 2008 by two independent consultants.

According to the ToR, the two primary objectives of the evaluation were to:

- I. “Assess the appropriateness of DIPECHO Actions, in accordance with DG ECHO’s mandate, its impact and sustainability in order to establish whether they have achieved their objectives and to produce recommendations for improving the effectiveness of future operations in South Asia in terms of disaster risk reduction;
- II. Assess the capacities of the Partners and their local implementing partners not only to work on focused disaster preparedness projects such as DIPECHO but also to integrate the Disaster Risk Reduction approach in their overall strategy from response to rehabilitation and development”

In order to gather information on these objectives, the evaluation team conducted documentary research, semi-structured interviews, and focus group meetings, one on one discussions, field visits and direct observations. The evaluation team covered a majority of current DIPECHO partners operating in South Asia, visiting field sites and offices in Bangladesh, Nepal, and India. In all, interviews were held with over 50 people.

### Main Conclusions and Related Recommendations

The report is structured to address key areas identified in the evaluation Terms of Reference, focussing on appropriateness, effectiveness, efficiency, coverage, coherence, connectedness, and impact and sustainability. As the ToR requested specific discussion on capacities of partners, advocacy, management arrangements, etc., special sections are given for analysis of these topics. In the report as well as below, recommendations are shared in bold text next to related findings, analysis, and conclusions.

#### *Appropriateness and Relevance (see Section 3: page 17)*

The DIPECHO programme helps DG ECHO fulfil its mandate towards disaster preparedness through 18 month Action Plans in six key vulnerable regions. In South Asia, the Action Plans have been designed around a need assessment and definition of a regional strategy. Consultations with regional organisations are held in each target country to allow feedback and refinement of the strategy. Next, DIPECHO produces a set of guidelines based on the strategy and a call for proposals to invite applications for funding under the Action Plan. In reviewing the published guidelines and systems used to make funding decisions, the evaluation team has found these tools to be well structured and to support DIPECHO in its mandate. The published objectives and example activities listed in the Action Plans flow from these mandates and guide selection of relevant proposed projects.

DIPECHO's strategy for disaster risk reduction (DRR) revolves around supporting local organisations in their collaboration with national and local agencies. The method DIPECHO uses to call for proposals are found to be quite appropriate in supporting national partner organisations in a range of activities they prioritise. Considering the fact that coping strategies of communities differ significantly across the region, partners active in different areas have devised, proposed and implemented efforts that these partners have found to be appropriate for local needs. DIPECHO supports those that are well considered and likely to succeed.

DIPECHO invests a good deal of time to assess partner capacity in the selection process. Their proposal assessment form asks critical questions and allows for an analytical appraisal. DIPECHO partners invest in building local partner organisation and staff capacity, including management capacity, throughout the Action Plan cycles. Level of both international and local partner capacity for DRR programme design and management however varied significantly. Some were first time DIPECHO partners with limited prior DRR experience, others have been implementing partners of DIPECHO during different cycles with long-term experience with some aspects of DRR, such as community based disaster preparedness (CBDP).

DIPECHO programme cycle runs for 15 months. As funding from a second cycle is not necessarily guaranteed, DIPECHO funding is more appropriate for activities that can achieve meaningful results in this period. Partner agencies experience some delays with the approval of funds, finding experienced expatriate staff, negotiating with the authorities, etc. that can shorten the actual implementation time. Almost all agencies interviewed stated that a 15-month period was too short for most of the DRR activities. This issue is well known across partners and DIPECHO. Partners reiterated this issue in almost all meetings. To improve the programme within the time available, DIPECHO should build on successful projects and partners; prefer projects with INGO with strong management capacity, active and long-term community base and operational or policy link with the government or national level donor initiatives. Even new projects should start from where the communities and partners are in terms of disaster preparedness. Strict reviews of activities and time—including gathering second opinions—may help finish projects in 15 months.

Gaps between the two DIPECHO cycles were also stated to have caused many difficulties for the partners in being effective on the ground. This gap also reduces DIPECHO effectiveness. With no guarantee of continuity, staff retention is a problem between the cycles. The difficulty is not only related to availability of qualified human resources for DIPECHO projects but the difficulty to maintain them in the organisations. This is due to uncertainty of funding from the next cycle and the gap between cycles even when the partners know from the start that DIPECHO is for 15 months and one time only. This results in a loss of staff motivation towards the end of the project when the results are being consolidated and exit strategy is being worked out and implemented. **Reducing the gap between cycles of successful partner programmes could be one way to retain critical human resource.**

Loss of human resources varies across stakeholders. Loss of human resources at community level is limited. The trained community members are the biggest hope for any future disaster. They are the most likely to respond and save lives. They are most likely to take mitigation measures when individual or public resources are available.

The local partners retain their human resources and move the individuals from DIPECHO to other disaster or humanitarian projects. In some cases local partners' human resources are moved to development projects, mainly shelter, water or livelihood sectors. The INGOs and the UN agencies find it most difficult to retain the human resources between DIPECHO cycles mainly due to their own contract and employment regulations and rules and due to expanding private sector job markets at national and international levels in South Asia. Direct investments in local community human resources are thus less likely to be lost between two cycles.

*Effectiveness (see Section 5: page 22)*

National Consultative Meetings and Coordination Meetings are valued practically by all partners met. Over time these meetings have brought the partners closer to each other in terms of knowing about what others are doing in the same area, sharing training and IEC material, and planning joint action such as public rallies, emergency responses and training material creation. They have also allowed partners input into action plan priorities. As such, these meetings are appropriate and important for effectiveness and impact of the projects. **The evaluation team recommends that DIPECHO should continue to encourage coordination and invest resources for more joint activities among the partners as well as support for country and regional level information exchange such as websites that support local organisations in accessing information about community disaster reduction opportunities.**

DIPECHO has also proven to be adaptable to partner needs when this was called for. For example, the change in reporting requirements from three to two reports and the new financial format allowing own templates to be used was well received by the partners. The evaluation team concludes that evolving formats and systems that respond to partner needs have made DIPECHO more effective.

*Coverage (see Section 6: page 24)*

The evaluation team found that the approximate cycle budget of EUR 7,500,000 contributes to important achievements at the community level. Yet it is too small to attract attention of DG ECHO or EC or other donors to build on these achievements for greater coordination and wider impact across the region. The amount is also too small to attract UN or national governments policy level attention as the amount is spread across countries, 22 partners, and in many locations. DG ECHO may consider efforts taken by donors such as DfID in setting appropriation quotas for disaster reduction.

While there is significant earthquake risk reduction work in India and Nepal and by others in Bangladesh, the additional earthquake risk focus in DIPECHO III and IV has been useful as there has been limited interest in the subject in earlier cycles and in general vis-à-vis floods and cyclones. Rapid urban spread in Bangladesh requires earthquake risk safety more than ever before. The evaluation team concludes that the importance of the subject is well recognised by the partners in terms of its life and asset saving potential, the subject expands the range and appropriateness of issues covered by DIPECHO, and is suitable for DIPECHO's agenda in Bangladesh. The subject also has regional dimension in terms of experience and expertise (Gujarat



2001 and Kashmir 2005). Some efforts in the region can provide insight to DIPECHO partners. In India, UNDP's Urban Earthquake Vulnerability Reduction programme (with significant EC support) has lessons available from 38 cities<sup>1</sup>. The Nepal Red Cross Society has developed a contingency plan for an earthquake striking Kathmandu<sup>2</sup>. **The evaluation team recommends more cross regional exchanges of ideas, experience, expertise, and pilot approaches between these and similar programmes.**

*Connectedness (see Section 8: page 28)*

Although DIPECHO is not established to address state policy solutions directly, connectedness with state priorities and public systems is an area where DIPECHO has far more value to add to enhance Action Plan impact on longer-term challenges. Participation of both national governments and non-governmental partners in Action Plan development builds local participation and buy-in to DIPECHO's efforts as well as wider disaster reduction aims. For example, DIPECHO organises comprehensive National Consultation Meetings and DIPECHO partners are involved in these preparations. These meetings are co-organised and co-facilitated with respective governments in each country. Similar processes are seldom undertaken by other donors in the region and the NCM mechanism allows DIPECHO to identify DRR related community needs, sector priorities, and complementarity across partners and with the government. This valuable process is showing results. This should continue and further converge partner efforts. **Meetings could be followed up with a smaller and strategic task group to work out cycle links and who will use the outputs of the DIPECHO partners.** For example, the state needs to be seen as a customer of outputs offered by DIPECHO partners and more emphasis could be placed on ties with authorities through the guidelines preparation and proposal selection process. Similarly, the local authorities appreciate "global" or "international" inputs into their work or plans such as Disaster Management Committees with children as leaders or early warning system for and of communities. DIPECHO partners have been successful at this in some instances.

*Impact and Sustainability (see Section 9: page 32)*

Although it is still early to assess the impact of the current cycle (IV), the evaluation team found some examples of demonstrated benefits from past cycles. Tens of thousands of local individuals trained under the Bangladesh Red Crescent Society's<sup>3</sup> Cyclone Preparedness Project helped spread the warning and evacuate households as Cyclone Sidr approached in November 2007. Unless there is a disaster in the programme areas during implementation or soon after, the lack of baseline data or clear and available indicators make measuring impact difficult. Practical Action activities during cycle III in east Nepal also promoted preparedness and allowed the community to prepare for the current cycle project. Similarly, Christian Aid built on its work of school safety in the previous cycle by further targeting the most vulnerable schools. Consequently, end of programme reporting tends to focus more on outputs than impact. **It is recommended that DIPECHO develop a system that allows**

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<sup>1</sup> More information is available at: <http://rahat.up.nic.in/earthquake/UEVRP%20Flyer%20revised.pdf>.

<sup>2</sup> More information is available at: [http://www.nrcs.org/documents/contingency\\_plan\\_2008.pdf](http://www.nrcs.org/documents/contingency_plan_2008.pdf).

<sup>3</sup> To help illustrate conclusions expressed, this report includes the names of some of DIPECHO partners.

**reviewing of impact beyond the programme-reporting period. An individual or institution may be assigned this role with matching resources to track impact beyond the Cycle implementation timeframe.**

DIPECHO requires exit strategies to be developed by the proposal stage. The importance of an exit strategy is well recognised by DIPECHO and partners. However, a sustainable exit, or exit that leaves behind a sustainable initiative requires far more emphasis on GO-NGO links and linking relief, rehabilitation, and development (LRRD) links at the local and national level strategies. This also requires continuous refining, and reviewing of the DIPECHO strategy over the project's 15-month course and establishing stronger linkages with other DRR strategies and stakeholders in the region and countries of operation.

Partners are concerned about the need for exit strategies both in relation to INGO vis-à-vis the local partner and the communities. Similarly, DIPECHO partner entry into project areas is also tricky. Ongoing direct links with public authorities, ongoing outreach programmes, and clarity on how DRR contributes to local economic development helped partners such as Practical Action or Care India in this area. In many cases, a multi hazard approach and a capacity development strategy for local partners helped DIPECHO INGO partners enter successfully. However, the uncertainty regarding continuity of the project when this cycle ends in making plans for an exit difficult even when the partners know that DIPECHO is 1 time and for 15 months only. Currently there are several exit strategy models that are being used by partners—some with success and some without. A number of INGOs have planned to handover the work to their local NGO partners where capacities and other ongoing projects in the same geographical area exist. Others may integrate these activities into their ongoing program areas where their own resources allow. Considering the importance of effective exit strategies for sustainability, a good study of these will open up a range of exit options for partners and for DIPECHO. **As this is an area of common challenge, DIPECHO should consider developing guidelines or training to assist partners in exit strategy development.** Examples of successful strategies for Action Plan cycles—such as AKF/Focus in Pakistan, CARE in Andaman, UNDP Nepal with the National DRM Strategy, and CA in India—may be highlighted as case studies in these guidelines or training.

The evaluation team found that capacity building of the vulnerable communities and local partners is largely successful. Within this when capacity of the community is built, or in some cases, put to effective use for reducing risk, the results are encouraging. This success has come through a variety of trainings for which specific materials are developed, such as Plan International's material for children, Action Aid training for garment workers and hospital staff, or Concern Universal and Islamic Relief materials for the volunteers. The evaluation team concludes that the specific trainings such as DP for schools, hospitals and communities, though not original, are contributing towards capacity building. However, the substantive and communication quality of these various materials and methods varied across the partners. **The evaluation team recommends that harmonisation of training methods, messages and material across partners, subject areas and across institutions would be desirable for a more effective capacity building and efficient use of resources.** Within this harmonization process, priority should be given to harmonized contingency planning, capacity analysis and capacity building, hazard monitoring, forecasting and early warning, and information management.

<b>Evaluation Summary</b>		
<b>Main Conclusions</b>	<b>Lessons Learned</b>	<b>Recommendations</b>
The published guidelines and systems used to make funding decisions are well structured and support DIPECHO in its mandate. The published objectives and example activities listed in the Action Plans flow from these mandates and guide selection of relevant proposed projects.	The use of the regional focal point and input from partners in consultative meetings builds a framework for appropriate projects that support national partner organisations in a range of activities that they prioritise.	DIPECHO should consider support for additional focal points in member state delegations in the region that can build coherence between the highly appropriate Action Plan efforts and parallel external similar programming.
The approximate cycle budget of EUR 7,500,000 contributes to important achievements at the community level. Yet it is too small to attract attention of other donors to build on these achievements for greater coordination and wider impact across the region.	The design of a highly appropriate and focused mechanism to support specific projects is a trade-off in terms of broader coherence with regional and national mainstreaming of DRR.	DIPECHO should consider leveraging an up-scaling of investments in disaster prevention in South Asia; Action Plan cycles are an effective mechanism for current purposes and are expected to be so for expanded work.
The additional earthquake risk focus in DIPECHO III and IV has been useful as there has been limited interest in the subject in earlier cycles vis-à-vis floods and cyclones. Urban growth in Bangladesh requires more investment in earthquake safety. Earthquake risk reduction also has regional dimension in terms of available local experience and expertise (i.e. from the Gujarat 2001 and Kashmir 2005 earthquakes).	Recognition of expanded role in supporting a multi-hazard approach has increased relevance for regional risk reduction in Action Plans. Some efforts matched with expertise in the region can provide insight and value to DIPECHO partners and their efforts.	The evaluation team recommends more and systematic cross regional exchanges of ideas, experience, expertise, and pilot approaches between these and similar programmes.
Participation of both national governments and non-governmental partners in Action Plan development builds local participation and buy-in to DIPECHO's efforts as well as wider disaster reduction aims. National Consultative Meetings are valued by local partners	Similar processes are seldom undertaken by other donors in the region and are valuable for identifying local DRR needs and complementarity across partners and with the government. Mechanisms that focus on collaboration and openness have high demonstrative value and	DIPECHO should continue to encourage coordination and invest resources for more joint activities among the partners. This should include support for country and regional level information exchange such as websites or idea exchange that support local organisations in accessing information about DIPECHO partner projects and



<p>and have brought them closer to each other in terms of knowing about what others are doing in the same area, sharing training and IEC material, and planning joint action such as public rallies, emergency responses and training material creation. They have also allowed partners input into Action Plan priorities.</p>	<p>leverage for building awareness among partners and this would be valuable for non-partner organizations.</p>	<p>community disaster reduction opportunities.</p> <p>Meetings should be followed up with a smaller and strategic regional task group to work out cycle links and who will use the outputs of the DIPECHO partners.</p>
<p>Due to the limited duration of projects and the long-term focus of the funded efforts, end of programme reporting tends to focus more on outputs than the substantial impacts.</p>	<p>Some of the longer-term value of projects supported goes undocumented for wider learning by organisations in the region. Tens of thousands of local individuals trained under the Bangladesh Red Crescent Society's Cyclone Preparedness Project, for example, helped spread the warning and evacuate households as Cyclone Sidr approached in November 2007.</p>	<p>It is recommended that DIPECHO develop a system that allows reviewing of impact beyond the programme-reporting period. An individual or individuals or an institution with regional outreach may be assigned this role with matching resources to track impact beyond the Cycle implementation timeframe.</p>
<p>The importance of a sound exit strategy is well recognised by DIPECHO and partners. However, an exit that leaves behind a sustainable initiative requires far more emphasis on GO-NGO and LRRD links at the local and national level than is currently exercised.</p>	<p>Increased sustainability in this area requires continuous refining, and reviewing of the project's strategy over the 15-month course and stronger linkages with DRR stakeholders in operational areas. A thorough study of these will open up a range of exit options for DIPECHO, Action Plan partners and, if published, for many stakeholders across the region.</p>	<p>DIPECHO should consider developing and publishing guidelines or training to assist partners in exit strategy development.</p>

## Acronyms and Abbreviations

AAN	ActionAid Nepal
BCPR	(UNDP) Bureau for Crisis Prevention and Recovery
CA	Care Austria
CDMP	Comprehensive Disaster Management Programme
CRS	Catholic Relief Services
CSO	Civil Society Organisation
DCA	Dan Church Aid
DIPECHO	Disaster Preparedness ECHO
DfID	(United Kingdom) Department for International Development
DG	Directorate General
DM	Disaster Management
DMB	Disaster Management Bureau
DMC	Disaster Management Committee
DP	Disaster Preparedness
DP-Net	Disaster Preparedness Network
DRCS	Danish Red Cross Society
DRR	Disaster Risk Reduction
DRM	Disaster Risk Management
EC	European Commission
EU	European Union
ECHO	European Community Humanitarian Aid Office
EUR	Euro
GDP	Gross Domestic Product
GO	Governmental Organisation
GoB	Government of Bangladesh
GoI	Government of India
GoN	Government of Nepal
HI	Handicap International
ICIMOD	International Centre for Integrated Mountain Development
IFRC	International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies
INGO	International Nongovernmental Organisation
JICA	Japanese International Aid Agency
LRRD	Linking Relief, Rehabilitation, and Development
NGO	Nongovernmental Organisation
NIDM	(India) National Institute of Disaster Management
NREGS	National Rural Employment Guarantee Scheme
NRCS	Nepal Red Cross Society
NSET	Nepal Society for Earthquake Technology
PA	Practical Action
POPI	Participatory Organisation for People's Initiatives
SAARC	South Asia Association for Regional Cooperation
SARD	South Asia Regional Delegation (of the IFRC)
SSA	Sarva Shiksha Abhiyan
ToR	Terms of Reference
UDMC	Union Disaster Management Committees
UN	United Nations
UNDP	United Nations Development Programme
VCA	Vulnerability and Capacity Assessment
WHO	World Health Organisation

## 1. Background and Context

### 1.1. DIPECHO Background in the South Asia Region

DIPECHO was launched in 1996 as a programme within the European Commission's Humanitarian Aid Office (DG ECHO). Initially, the geographic focus of the programme was on Central America, the Caribbean, and South-East Asia. Work in South-East Asia included Bangladesh—the only country of the current review that has been involved with DIPECHO since its inception. Due to high disaster risk and the range of capable stakeholders and partners in neighbouring countries, DIPECHO increased its spread to cover more South Asian countries in 1998.

In order to promote disaster preparedness, DIPECHO initiated its first Action Plan for South Asia in 2001. Through the Action Plan mechanism, DIPECHO established priority objectives and invited proposals from organisations based in European member states for disaster preparedness efforts in contributing to these objectives. Through EU Member State organisations, DIPECHO reaches a wide range of partners—indirectly—through these arrangements. For proposed efforts under the Action Plans, Europe-based organisations collaborated closely with partners based in the South Asia region. This mechanism has continued through a second, third, and fourth cycle and the amount of funding and range of partners has steadily grown. Geographic spread has also increased: Cycle III included support to efforts in Pakistan and Cycle IV included Afghanistan. Due to security difficulties, Sri Lanka has not been included since Cycle I.

Keeping with DIPECHO's mandate to ensure preparedness for risks of natural disasters, the principal objectives of the Action Plans have remained similar: “to increase the awareness and the response capacities of local communities to potential and frequent natural disasters and to reduce the effects of these disasters on the most vulnerable”<sup>4</sup>. Priorities under each Action Plan have evolved, to a degree, to accommodate changing regional needs. Priorities are for each Action Plan published as guidelines that are distributed as a “call for proposal”. These priorities evolve to address issues that arise through prior Action Plan cycles and consultative meetings that DIPECHO hosts in the region. The consultative meetings are considered by partners to be an important opportunity for influencing wider efforts of an important donor and helping set the regional agenda.

Each Action Plan Cycle has prioritised efforts to reinforce local coping capacities, improve coordination, establish early warning systems, and spread best practices. The Action Plans aim to trigger additional investments in disaster preparedness in the region by prioritising pilot and demonstrative projects and requiring that a portion of funds are contributed by the partner<sup>5</sup>.

Under each Action Plan, the guidelines identify priority geographic areas within countries and key hazards. The first cycle emphasised flooding. An evaluation of the first cycle, conducted in 2002, recommended that future cycles not be limited to this

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<sup>4</sup> See DG ECHO. 2007a. Instructions and Guidelines: Fourth DIPECHO Action Plan for South Asia. Brussels: EC. Page 5

<sup>5</sup> In Cycle IV, DIPECHO would contribute up to 85% of the total project cost.

hazard<sup>6</sup>. Subsequent cycles have rightly expanded to encourage partners to develop multi-hazard approaches. The guidelines also propose indicative eligible activities.

## 2. The Evaluation

### 2.1. Purpose and Objectives

Regular assessments of operations are part of DG ECHO's mandate<sup>7</sup>. Providing overall guidance to the evaluation team were objectives set out in the terms of reference (Appendix 1). An inception report was produced by the evaluation team in late July 2008 based on information received during a briefing in Brussels one week earlier. There are two primary objectives:

- I. "To assess the appropriateness of DIPECHO Actions, in accordance with DG ECHO's mandate, its impact and sustainability in order to establish whether they have achieved their objectives and to produce recommendations for improving the effectiveness of future operations in South Asia in terms of disaster risk reduction;
- II. To assess the capacities of the Partners and their local implementing partners not only to work on focused disaster preparedness projects such as DIPECHO but also to integrate the Disaster Risk Reduction approach in their overall strategy from response to rehabilitation and development. In that respect the evaluation of the Partner' strategy in DRR and of the "DIPECHO" coordination mechanisms should be seen as a very important part of the proposed evaluation. Conclusions should be drawn as to how DG ECHO and the Partners have worked together so far and how they should work together in the future. The evaluation will outline the usefulness for DG ECHO of working with specialized partners in given sectors and discuss whether this specialization should be reinforced further. It should indicate how DG ECHO's support to the Partner's actions could evolve.

To help gather information around these issues, the evaluation team focussed on the following 11 activities and questions:

1. Review in-depth the *appropriateness* of Action Plans with DG ECHO Mandate.
2. *Cover* the spread of issues around DRR in partner response.
3. Address the in-depth *impact* of DP in the field, including life assets saved.
4. Review the *exit strategy* of the partners, and if not available, think through possible strategies as a key concern.
5. Review *the effectiveness* of intervention widely and suggest alternatives if suitable.

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<sup>6</sup> Lockwood, H. and Conlay, A. 2002. Evaluation of the First DIPECHO Action Plan for South Asia. Brussels: ECHO.

<sup>7</sup> See EC. 20 June 1996. ECHO Mandate. [Regulation (CE) n° 1257/96]. Article 18, Section 1. Luxembourg: EC. Available at: [http://eur-lex.europa.eu/smartapi/cgi/sga\\_doc?smartapi!celexapi!prod!CELEXnumdoc&lg=fr&numdoc=31996R1257&model=guichett](http://eur-lex.europa.eu/smartapi/cgi/sga_doc?smartapi!celexapi!prod!CELEXnumdoc&lg=fr&numdoc=31996R1257&model=guichett).

6. Cover the concerns on: To what extent is DG ECHO's intervention coordinated and *complementary* with that of other donors including the other services of the European Commission?
7. Cover the concerns on: To what extent is DG ECHO's intervention coordinated and *complementary* with state assistance?
8. To what extent is *LRRD* with other Commission instruments and other donors feasible or has been applied? In that respect, good examples of potential LRRD and limits/obstacles to LRRD should be identified. The evaluation team will cover this in-depth in Bangladesh.
9. To what extent is the focus on community-based projects *appropriate* in view of building resilience of communities at risk and to what extent is *sustainability* build in it? The evaluation team will be in-depth to see this impact/aspect.
10. To what extent is the coordination mechanism established at the level of each country desirable, *efficient and sustainable*? The evaluation team will cover the spread of these issues.
11. To what extent the Partners have the capacity to implement quality projects in terms of Programme Management (qualified staff), *appropriate* strategy (disaster risk reduction strategy in place), *appropriate* local networks (both with local implementing partners and authorities)? The evaluation team will cover the spread of these issues."

Throughout the evaluation, the team focussed on these issues and objectives to guide interviews and field visits. It should be noted that during the ToR review meeting in Brussels on 24 July it was agreed that the various points in the ToR could be covered to different degrees of detail in the evaluation.

This report shares findings, analysis, and recommendations around key evaluation criteria identified by the Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development<sup>8</sup>:

- appropriateness/relevance,
- efficiency,
- effectiveness,
- coverage,
- coherence,
- connectedness, and
- impact and sustainability.

Recommendations are offered within the text and flow directly from findings and analysis shared.

## **2.2. Methodology and Key Sources**

The evaluation team followed the evaluation method suggested in the inception report and visited DIPECHO partners, their local partners where relevant as well as the beneficiary communities and authorities in Bangladesh, Nepal, and India.

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<sup>8</sup> Discussion around the use of these criteria is provided in ALNAP. 2006. Evaluating Humanitarian Action using the OECD-DAC Criteria. London: ODI.



*Documentary research* included the review of the sets of documents received from DIPECHO. This has been supplemented by documents provided by the organisations visited and the various DRR and DM frameworks shared by the donors, authorities and organisations in the three countries<sup>9</sup>. *Semi structured interviews* with the key informants were guided by the 11 questions based on the ToR that were circulated to the partners in advance of the meetings. *Focus group meetings* were the main source of information from the communities, where a set of questions were asked systematically and issues were discussed. This was followed by selected individual family visits and *one to one discussions*. *Direct observations* played a key role, where physical and structural mitigation and preparedness measure were part of the project visited. There were several key cross cutting issues but, as agreed during the joint review of the ToR, the evaluation team focused on gender, and where appropriate ensured that views of different age and caste groups and those working with the disabled were represented in interviews. Sub-sections below provide details of the approach taken and the main sources of information in each country.

The evaluation team covered seven current partners and their local partners. Generally, visits to partner projects in the field were daylong and community centred. Discussions with the partners were mainly focussed on the project progress and challenges. The evaluation team received logistic support from the partners in these visits and the meetings with the national and district authorities. The evaluation team met both men and women in the target communities, the community leaders including children and teachers, and community mobilisers. The evaluation team met field staff of local partners, the mid and top management of many local partners, and local partner heads. Key stakeholders listed on the work schedule as well as additional ones were covered as appropriate by the team. The key stakeholders included local authorities, civil society organisations, project staff, local community organisers, and the target communities. Most importantly, the team visited project beneficiaries in key locations, urban and rural, that are exposed to cyclone, floods, earthquake and fire hazards (Appendix 2). Some projects were nearly complete and some were making up for the time lost due to disasters or delays. At the time the evaluation was conducted, four projects (two in India, and two in Nepal) were under suspension due to floods in their operation areas.

The evaluation team gave brief feedback to the partners and their teams. This included filling in DG ECHO Project Partner Review Form as required for promoting dialogue and learning. Partners had informative and constructive discussions with the evaluation team on the contents of these forms. Some partners wanted feedback that is more formal; others found the evaluation visit too short to fill in these forms. There was also the feeling that this process contradicted the overall focus of the evaluation being on DIPECHO and not on the individual partners.

### ***Bangladesh***

The team visited Bangladesh from the 7<sup>th</sup> to the 13<sup>th</sup> of October 2008. A partners meeting was hosted by Plan International, covering all DIPECHO IV partner INGOs and some of their local NGO partners as per the outline provided by the evaluation team in advance. Discussions were held with EC and ECHO on the Comprehensive

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<sup>9</sup> A thorough bibliography is included in this report.

Disaster Management Programme (CDMP). CDMP receives funding from the EU (including DIPECHO), the Government of Bangladesh (GoB), and other donors.

Due to Id holiday, followed by the Hindu holiday of Pooja, and the weekend (9-11 October), many officials and NGO staff were on extended holiday. Meetings were held with United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), CDMP and the International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies (IFRC). The IFRC meeting helped capture the national picture of who is doing what, new DRR initiatives, the role of DIPECHO and its key partners in DRR, the proposed national platform, the nature of National Consultation Meetings, and the impact of DIPECHO support on IFRC. DIPECHO support has allowed IFRC to better plan its projects, address the importance of coordination with other players, and take up greater focus on community level work of the sub-chapters. The IFRC found that DIPECHO support for standby arrangements, inputs to improve early recovery plans, and developing preparedness funds would further increase project impact. The meeting with CDMP provided an excellent overview of the DRR processes, trends and plans. Despite many efforts, meetings with DfID, World Bank, and Disaster Management Bureau (DMB) were not possible as the key staff members were not available. Instead, a few individuals with long-term experience of DRR issues in Bangladesh were interviewed to incorporate historical perspectives<sup>10</sup>.

Due to limited time available and keen interest expressed by the partner organisations for a visit to their project areas, the evaluation team decided to split to cover more areas and partners. Mihir Bhatt covered Plan International's project with the local partner POPI in Lalmonirhat area that reached out to children of the most vulnerable population on *char* lands in major river streams. Yasemin Aysan visited Concern Universal's project in the Mymensingh area met the local NGO partner office, held a focussed group meeting with the target community and visited a drill in preparation. The team jointly visited Action Aid and Concern Universal projects in Chittagong. Yasemin Aysan also met Islamic Relief staff separately and discussed their programs from both DIPECHO III and IV. The visits were day long, compact, and informative.

### *Nepal*

The team visited Nepal from 14 to 20 October 2008. A partner meeting was hosted by Practical Action (PA) covering all DIPECHO IV partner INGOs where discussion was conducted as per the outline provided by the evaluation team in advance. EC and ECHO offices could not be met regarding their work in Nepal as the relevant ECHO officer was away. It was not possible to meet DfID, World Bank and other donors in Nepal as the short mission necessitated that time was spent with the scheduled DIPECHO partners and the communities.

Discussions were held with the programme manager, deputy Resident Representative and various relevant departments of UNDP on their DIPECHO funded project. The component on national capacity building included a joint meeting with UNDP and the Home Ministry (with 11 Government of Nepal (GoN) Ministries and Departments attending). This gave an excellent overview of the national disaster management priorities and plans of the government and allowed exploration of their plans to

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<sup>10</sup> A full list of those interviewed is included as Appendix 2.

integrate disaster risk reduction into development. UNDP partners for a public awareness campaign presented their awareness raising projects. The partners included a media company—a public relations firm hired to reach out to TV and radio audiences throughout Nepal in Cycle III—and street theatre group partner in Cycle IV—known for its focus on social change messages who performed in areas where TV or radio are uncommon or unpopular.

Discussions were held with the Disaster Preparedness Network (DP-Net) of leading Civil Society Organisations (CSOs), including DIPECHO partners, academic institutions and the relevant authorities that are involved with the wide range of disaster related initiatives in Nepal. Drawing from their long-term experience and institutional knowledge of disaster preparedness in Nepal, they provided the overview of the issues, stakeholders and developments including the work of Nepal Society for Earthquake Technology (NSET), the International Centre for Integrated Mountain Development (ICIMOD), and Japanese International Aid Agency (JICA) on earthquake risk reduction.

At the field level, the evaluation team covered Danish Red Cross Society (DRCS) project with the local partner Nepalese Red Cross Society (NRCS) in the flood and landslide prone Udayapur District. The team visited the ActionAid Nepal (AAN) project in the same district where five local partners are working on what is called “right-based disaster preparedness”. A district level meeting was organised by AAN where district officials were met and presentations made by the AAN project officers and selected community representatives. DRCS organised a meeting with the Udayapur branch secretary and staff of the NRCS. Focus group meetings as well as individual household discussions were held in all the communities. Training materials were reviewed and mitigation projects were visited in all locations. While it was not possible to visit projects of Practical Action, their project manager was interviewed on his agency experiences with DIPECHO III and IV for an extended period.

### ***India***

The team visited India from 20 to 26 October 2008. Due to the late arrival of their flight from Nepal, the evaluation team could not reach the monthly partner meeting organised by BBC World Service Trust on 20 October at their office. DfID and EC staff could not be contacted due to limited time available in Delhi and the weekend.

The evaluation team met DG ECHO and several DIPECHO partners. Meeting with BBC World Service Trust helped to understand a new and unusual media partner’s role in DIPECHO. Meeting with UNDP/BCPR provided an understanding of region-wide issues and initiatives. Meeting with the World Bank highlighted the public investment climate in DRR and the longer-term priorities and plans for the region. Meeting with Save the Children (no longer a partner) provided an opportunity to discuss the views of a Cycle III partner who is not included in Cycle IV. Meeting with ECHO Regional Delegation provided insight into DIPECHO-ECHO links in the region as well as procedures, selection and monitoring practice and opportunities for inclusion of DP or DRR into ECHO efforts.

Meetings were also held with IFRC/SARD to review the role SARD can and has played in the region, its views on DP tools used such as the Vulnerability and Capacity Assessment, and its own future plans in the region. Discussions were held with Welthungerhilfe, an organisation active in Orissa and in Assam with ECHO funding. The evaluation team explored programme issues and experiences in detail

when possible. For example, they discussed with CRS (Orissa) how the suspension of a project for a fixed period works out and how recent DP training was useful in the 2008 Orissa floods.

Communities, schools, government offices, and partner teams of Christian Aid were visited in Simla. Christian Aid is a DIPECHO Cycle III and IV partner. The evaluation team visited CARE (India) and Handicap International in the Andaman Islands. For this, they met communities, elected local leaders, the CARE team, and the local disaster management authority. CARE is a first time partner to DIPECHO in Cycle IV. The visits were designed by partners to be as long as possible in order to address the ToR shared with them regarding the evaluation.

DIPECHO programme managers, project teams, field staff, local partners, communities and related authorities were also interviewed. The evaluation team was able to meet and have insightful discussions with teams from the World Health Organisation (WHO), Handicap International (HI), and UNDP on their work with DIPECHO and their regional disaster reduction priorities. The evaluation team could not cover the wide range of authorities including Ministry of Water (floods), other ECHO partners (such as Oxfam), and donors due to limited time.

The one-to-one meetings, individual and group interviews, and discussions helped the evaluation team understand the range of issues, multiple actors, large-scale government initiatives, and civil society initiatives in India in terms of scale of resources, geographic spread, innovations and impact on the communities and institutions. The partners discussed project challenges, progress, pace, and benefit of DIPECHO projects to them and the communities.

### **2.3. Limitations**

The evaluation schedule was tight, and distances were significant, covering three countries. The travel time to the communities from the field office often required several hours but, in most cases, allowed discussion during travel. The evaluation team went to the locations selected jointly with partners to suit evaluation criteria. Partners, their local staff, and the field staff joined evaluation team to every location. In only one case, the DIPECHO partner accompanied the team but never sat in on any meetings, allowing frank discussion.

As said in the methodology selection, the partners were supportive of the evaluation except for its period and schedule. Although the time was limited, communities were well prepared to share significant aspects of their projects. The evaluation team was pleased with the insight and forethought with which they organized short visits. Despite clarifications--both verbal and written--that the focus of this evaluation was not on the individual organisations but the wider work of DIPECHO in Cycles III and IV, there was still an element of anxiety. This was exacerbated in completing the Project Partner Review Forms and resulted in far too much time dedicated to completing these forms and exchanging follow up comments.

## **3. Appropriateness / Relevance**

The relevance of disaster preparedness for human development and poverty reduction is increasingly clear. According to World Bank studies, each year India alone suffers disaster losses of US\$1 billion; on average, direct natural disaster losses amount to

2% of India's GDP and up to 12% of GoI revenues<sup>11</sup>. The UNISDR notes that three South Asian countries—India, Bangladesh, and Pakistan—rank among the top six in the world “most hit by natural disasters” in 2005<sup>12</sup>. Additionally, disasters destroy, and draw resources from, large-scale development cooperation efforts such as those of many EU Member States. Finally, the cost of emergency response is significant, even for preventable disasters; this fact is well known by the DG ECHO that has spent an average of EUR 616.7m annually over the past ten years<sup>13</sup>.

As a vehicle for European Member States to help reduce disasters globally, Article 1 of the EU's mandate to DG ECHO explains that: “... aid shall ... comprise operations to prepare for risks or prevent disasters or comparable exceptional circumstances.”<sup>14</sup> Likewise, it identifies that one of the principal objectives of assistance is “to ensure preparedness for risks of natural disasters or comparable exceptional circumstances and use a suitable rapid early-warning and intervention system.”

The DIPECHO programme helps DG ECHO fulfil its mandate towards disaster preparedness through implementing a series of 18-month Action Plans in six key vulnerable regions. In South Asia, the Action Plans have been designed around a need assessment and definition of a regional strategy. Consultations with regional organisations are held in each target country to allow feedback and refinement of the strategy. Next, DIPECHO produces a set of guidelines based on the strategy and a call for proposals to invite applications for funding under the Action Plan.

In reviewing the published guidelines and systems used to make funding decisions, the evaluation team has found these tools to be well structured and to support DIPECHO in its mandate. The published principle objectives, specific objectives, and example activities listed in the Action Plans flow from these mandates and guide selection of relevant proposed projects.

Proposals are screened with a standard format document that is used to record notes and comments and rationale for funding recommendations. The evaluation team found the criteria used for screening and rationale for project recommendation to be appropriate for DG ECHO's disaster preparedness mandate. Criteria for assessment include administrative and financial management capacities, technical and logistical capacity to implement planned activities, and experience with relevant activities and target area. These are all listed as critical criteria in Article 7, section 2.

While the eligibility requirements suit EC Humanitarian Aid Regulation and accountability requirements of the Commission, it also excludes a range of very

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<sup>11</sup> Lester, R. and Gurenko, E. 2003. “India: Financing Rapid Onset Natural Disasters in India: A Risk Management Approach.” World Bank Report No. 26844-IN. Washington DC: World Bank.

<sup>12</sup> UNISDR. 2006 “2005 Disasters in Numbers”. Geneva: UNISDR.

<sup>13</sup> DG ECHO. 2008a. DG ECHO Financing Decisions 1998-2007. Brussels: EC. Available at [http://ec.europa.eu/echo/files/funding/budget/funding\\_decisions\\_en.pdf](http://ec.europa.eu/echo/files/funding/budget/funding_decisions_en.pdf).

<sup>14</sup> See EC. 20 June 1996. ECHO Mandate. [Regulation (CE) n° 1257/96]. Article 18, Section 1. Luxembourg: EC. Available at: [http://eur-lex.europa.eu/smartapi/cgi/sga\\_doc?smartapi!celexapi!prod!CELEXnumdoc&lg=fr&numdoc=31996R1257&model=guichett](http://eur-lex.europa.eu/smartapi/cgi/sga_doc?smartapi!celexapi!prod!CELEXnumdoc&lg=fr&numdoc=31996R1257&model=guichett).



capable local partners that have excellent field experience and results on DRR but may lack strong partner experience with a European-based organisation.

Regarding DIPECHO Action Plans in the field, appropriateness and relevance is supported with various assessment tools (including VCAs, PVI, PRAs, CRAs, HVCRA et al.) that partners are encouraged to conduct in the programme design stages before proposals are submitted to DIPECHO. When conducted effectively, these tools help identify community vulnerabilities and priorities. An open-ended VCA/PVI conducted prior to a funding guarantee does risk raising expectations of the communities that cannot easily be met from DIPECHO programmes. Yet, strong projects are built on partner experience, thorough contextual understanding and through reflective community need assessments. Both the Single Form and the screening forms used by DIPECHO to assess proposals include requirements for need assessments. **DIPECHO should further appraise the process of community-level need assessments in the proposal screening forms and allow greater flexibility and/or contingency in the projects to meet some community priorities that rise during implementation.**

### 3.1. DIPECHO's DRR Strategy

DIPECHO itself has been strategically established as a mechanism for the EC to provide support to DRR (including preparedness) efforts. On a broad level, the process DIPECHO uses can facilitate a healthy exchange between the European partner and the national partner organisation beyond the direct implementation of the project. Such partnerships are critical for effective DRR and unfortunately rare. Projects designed by national partner organisations are more sensitive to local needs than ones that are more top-down in nature. The Action Plan mechanism used by DIPECHO has been appropriate for supporting national partner organisations in projects of their own design and based on their priorities. The partnership method helped build local institutions and was relatively successful in reaching the vulnerable among South Asian communities. Under the DIPECHO strategy, partners have proven to be adaptable in contouring their efforts to face emergencies and have applied lessons across DIPECHO cycles. Considering the successfulness of this approach, DIPECHO should invest more than the current amount of approximately EUR 7,500,000 per cycle in the Action Plans.

The DIPECHO focus is on community organisations and local institutions such as DMC in north Bangladesh villages and the Fisheries Department in South Bangladesh. The overall focus is more on disaster response preparedness and less on other aspects of risk reduction. These foci were recommended in the 2002 DIPECHO South Asia evaluation<sup>15</sup> that was conducted after Action Plan I and demonstrate that DIPECHO has made good use of the evaluation as a resource. The 2002 evaluation also recommended that DIPECHO “invest more time and attention to investigate potential project implementing partners”; evidence from proposal Screening Forms reviewed by the evaluation team suggests that DIPECHO now does so.

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<sup>15</sup> Lockwood, H. and Conlay, A. 2002. Evaluation of the First DIPECHO Action Plan for South Asia. Brussels: ECHO.

Opportunities for identifying specific results of DRR efforts are limited except where a disaster occurs in the project areas. The early warning project of Practical Action and Mercy Crops in Nepal and IFRC in Bangladesh are good examples of increasing resilience of specific communities in DIPECHO projects. According to the IFRC, nearly 40,000 volunteers trained in the Cyclone Preparedness Programme disseminated alerts and evacuated residents likely to be affected by Cyclone Sidr in 2007<sup>16</sup>.

Another key component of DIPECHO's DRR strategy is supporting local organisations in their collaboration with government agencies—another strategy recommended in the 2002 evaluation. In some cases, DIPECHO partners are working well with government. GO-NGO coordination on the ground is most effectively working in Nepal, though it can be more systematic at district level. In India, at the project level, GO-NGO coordination is best working in the Andamans. The evaluation team found that GO-NGO coordination in projects are difficult. For example, BBC WST has not been able to establish a direct link with the (Indian) National Institute of Disaster Management (NIDM)<sup>17</sup>. NIDM is an important regional public institution with a growing number of trainings and DRR programmes<sup>18</sup>. Partnerships with high-level public authorities require strategies that meet these institutions where they are and on their own terms—not vice versa.

Another indicator of appropriateness can be seen at the ground level. Although the evaluation team did not review the finances of the DIPECHO efforts, it was found that on the ground the local communities are contributing their time and labour to the DIPECHO project. Investments by local families demonstrate the importance of these projects to their needs. Many of these contributors are small and marginal farmers or low-income families.

Many of the partners have demonstrated a good degree of adaptability to local needs. This is critical for organisations to address community needs continuously and reflects an effective approach by DIPECHO. For example, Practical Action's efforts in Nepal demonstrate the lessons they learned in Cycle III. The original team, lessons, community leaders, and community knowledge cultivated through the previous cycle were used as a base for cycle IV. The evaluation team also found that DIPECHO has been sensitive to the ground reality and have allowed suspension of partner's activities when communities in Nepal and India have faced floods. Though the terms of suspension were well thought out in India, the staff running costs of suspension has been covered by one partner with difficulty in Nepal.

Despite the adaptability seen, the evaluation team found that some recent disasters (such as the widespread July floods of 2007 and Koshi floods of 2008) were used as opportunities to advocate DRR to a greater degree. Considering the number of partners that have proposed advocacy activities, more could be hoped for in terms of advocacy for risk reduction following these disasters. In the future, where appropriate,

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<sup>16</sup> IFRC. 2007. Emergency Appeal: Cyclone Sidr. N° MDRBD003. Accessible at: <http://www.ifrc.org/docs/appeals/07/mdrbd003prelapp.pdf>.

<sup>17</sup> More on this is discussed, below, under Connectedness with State Assistance.

<sup>18</sup> Including a popular online DRM training course, hosted with the World Bank Institute that reaches hundreds of trainees annually.

DIPECHO may use appropriate means to “suggest” such activities to partners that have incomplete advocacy objectives and budgets.

The method DIPECHO uses to call for proposals is found to be quite appropriate in supporting national partner organisations in a range of activities they prioritise. Considering the fact that coping strategies of communities differ significantly across the region, partners active in different areas have devised, proposed and implemented efforts that these partners have found to be appropriate for local needs. DIPECHO supports those that are well considered and likely to succeed. As a whole, organisations in India are rather rapidly moving ahead and developing a range of coping strategies. The gaps are around tribals and *dalit* communities and bringing up local institutions and local CSOs. Likewise, disaster reduction efforts in Bangladesh have evolved largely over the years thanks to efforts of many including ActionAid, which has initiated a workplace safety programme with a federation of garment workers. Yet, as a country, it still needs outside intervention and support for preparation and small-scale mitigation activities at community level. Nepal, as a newly emerging democracy needs more policy and resource support to build coping capacity. International interventions such as DIPECHO’s calls for proposals are most useful for this purpose in Nepal.

#### **4. Efficiency**

Greater efficiency may be seen in Action Plan projects if DIPECHO partners would make more extensive use of local networks. Implementation with local networks contributes to efficiency by tapping into a range of existing network member skills, supporting wider coalitions to accomplish disaster reduction aims, and through demonstrative effects of DIPECHO programme process and activities. **DIPECHO should encourage use of local networks more strongly in guidelines for future Action Plans.**

When partners would collaborate, significant value was added to the efforts of both organisations. In Nepal, for example, the evaluation team found meaningful and practical collaboration between Practical Action and Mercy Corps as well as Action Aid and the Danish Red Cross Society in area or activity selection. The partners developed their local networks. DIPECHO might provide more space and resources within its existing arrangements to let such collaborations evolve. With DIPECHO funding, Disaster Preparedness Network (DP-Net) moved from being a network only to also providing training services to its membership and continuity of these services once funding ceases. Some of the DP-Net members can put in far more resources in DP-NET than they have so far to leverage DIPECHO contribution

The evaluation team found that in general there is a fear of feedback among partners to use local formal or informal networks or authorities even when there is a need to find ways to improve performance. Similarly, often the project is started with the belief that time is too short to link up with local networks and authorities. The evaluation team also found that some partners think that they are linked up with networks or authorities and do not need such links while these links are more symbolic or status related than for anything operationally meaningful.

## 5. Effectiveness

The quality of work changes from country to country and from partner-to-partner to a large degree. More importantly, the quality of work from one community to another community also varied. Work on earthquake safety and awareness in India and Nepal needs some quality review. For example, one partner had a whole set of awareness materials for public schools that use complex technical language to describe furniture as “non-structural” assets. The evaluation team recommends time-to-time independent review of key hazards—earthquake and floods—and key information, especially materials used for public awareness. **DIPECHO should reserve some financial resources to check the quality and effectiveness of work independently.**

The evaluation team has noted a range of unique efforts by DIPECHO partners on how key lessons are being captured within the cycle. This has included CARE’s efforts to link tsunami recovery with DRR as well as its development work with DRR through the ongoing government Integrated Child Development Services programme; Welthungerhilfe’s work in incorporating short-term physical mitigation measures in ECHO relief projects; or UNDP’s efforts in promoting DRR policy with and in, simultaneously, 10 ministries. Perhaps what is happening is the capturing of knowledge at community level without caging (or killing) it through various forms or formats or procedures. **These lessons—and those from previous cycles—should be synthesised towards a volume of good practice or for national advocacy purposes to encourage uptake among other organisations dedicated to risk reduction. One method for doing so may be to offer lesson compilation as a supported activity under the next funding cycle.**

As per the evaluation ToR, the evaluation team looked into the desirability, efficiency, and sustainability of coordination mechanism established at the country level. The evaluation team finds the national and regional coordination valuable. The coordination at the national level is more efficient than at regional level. The coordination by DIPECHO TA and by the partners on their own complements one another.

Some partners find the cost and time involved in participating in the coordination meetings in Delhi exhausting. The other partners find the coordination mechanism a bit closed and would like invitations from ECHO, EC, or other donors more often on a thematic basis. Some partners in Bangladesh see value in using the DIPECHO partners and their partners as a force to promote DRR in national initiatives such as CDMP and other World Bank projects coming up Bangladesh. Addition of individuals and institution who are not DIPECHO partners is desirable, based on the thematic focus of DIPECHO coordination meetings. Several partners approach the coordination meetings cautiously for fear of feedback from other partners and DIPECHO.

The evaluation team looked at DIPECHO’s relations with specialised partners. They found that the partners are using their comparative advantages in DIPECHO projects. Examples of this include AAN’s work with a Rights Based Approach to DRR, CARE’s, long-term development approach, and Practical Action’s (PA) on tools for DRR. DIPECHO support to partners according to such strengths adds value to DIPECHO cycles as well as the wider DRR sector.

Skills development around DRR—such as how DRR can be presented to the media and the public—is well appreciated by partners. The role of BBC WST in this skill development is well recognised. Other DIPECHO partners wish to benefit more from this partner. The evaluation team found that adding such missing but key proficiencies through a competent partner is a worthwhile addition to the DIPECHO repertoire. The evaluation team finds that the costs can be contained by reducing international and increasing local expertise in the project. However, currently local team costs are high, partly due to rise in salaries in the media sector in India and partly due to structure of BBC WST. Costs are difficult to negotiate down at this stage. **Attracting proposals and support in related activities and skill development from additional national experts would benefit future cycle partners.**

On the ground, awareness about hazards, and response, has increased in the areas visited by the team. Some of this awareness is increased at national level due to ongoing activities and campaigns. Response capacity of partners has increased in terms of tools, equipments, charts and exit maps, but not in terms of resources to sustain, replenish, or add new or more tools for communities, task forces or others.

The evaluation team found that some partners refined their own DRR strategies—such as for example the human rights based DRR of Action Aid or the Child-Centred DRR of Plan International. Yet, how consistently these strategies are applied to project efforts remains less clear. Partner efforts under the DIPECHO project are usually more DP focussed than typical activities of the partners under other donor programmes or the donors' DRR support to national frameworks that link DRR with issues such as livelihoods and food security. The evaluation team found the focus on children by Plan International, focus on *dalits* and the poor by Action Aid Nepal, and focus on tribals and island communities by CARE in India important contribution to their DRR concepts. These contributions either are in the process of application or are latent and there is no example of full application of these concepts in partner strategies under DIPECHO.

Partner capacity is critical for delivering time-bound DRR projects and for DIPECHO to achieve its mandate. Success of DIPECHO rests on partner capacity. DIPECHO invests a good deal of time to assess partner capacity in the selection process. Their proposal assessment form asks critical questions and allows for a systematic appraisal. DIPECHO also invests in building partner organisation and staff capacity, including management capacity, throughout the Action Plan cycles. Level of partner capacity for DRR programme design and management varied significantly.

Due to the long history of NGO movements and community disaster preparedness activities in Bangladesh, particularly in the coastal areas, human resources are present in the NGOs relevant for DIPECHO programs. Many local partner NGO staff met during this mission had long-standing professional work with NGOs and some had even taken up international assignments. The skills to balance between technical DRR issues and community mobilisation among the fishing, migrant or tribal communities are well developed by partners including Plan, Concern Universal, and Action Aid Bangladesh. It was not difficult but did require a good deal of time to absorb DIPECHO work into current partner portfolios as DIPECHO projects remained separate entities throughout. Almost all partners strived for this absorption.



In each country visited, the evaluation team found that the gap between the two DIPECHO cycles causes many difficulties for partner effectiveness on the ground. The Action Plan cycles are designed to support a tight project that should be integrated into the partner's wider efforts; yet, with no guarantee of continuity, staff retention is a problem between the cycles. The difficulty is not related to availability of qualified human resources for DIPECHO projects but the difficulty to maintain them in the organisations. This is due to uncertainty of funding from the next cycle and the gap between cycles even when the partners know from the start that DIPECHO is for 15 months and one time only. This results in a loss of staff motivation towards the end of the project when the results are being consolidated and exit strategy is being worked out and implemented. Loss of staff with experience of DIPECHO program is seen by the partners as a big loss—of capacity built with rare resources and a lot of organisational investments—to the organisation, the DRR field of work, the DRR field of work, as well as to the communities. To address this gap, partners need to better integrate their DIPECHO efforts into their long-term programmes<sup>19</sup>.

It was also difficult to attract experienced expatriate project staff—a DIPECHO requirement—in Nepal for 15 months. Several partners suffered delays due to this requirement. In addition, in some cases, a consultant was employed to develop the proposal and later a programme manager was recruited. Thus, those who prepared the proposal and those who later managed the programme were different at times resulting in implementation difficulties.

The evaluation team found four types of areas in project management where partners faced challenges. First, this included turning a solid project strategy into an effort on the ground that performs well. A second challenge related to the fact that DIPECHO projects do not always sit on the core of partner's work or vision. Third, developing the ability to cope with new initiatives that inevitably deviate from original targets written in proposals was a challenge. Finally, some partners lose an opportunity by not planning sufficiently what they would like to achieve from the consultative meetings or how they can influence the emerging strategy.

## **6. Coverage**

The evaluation team discussed the issue of more country coverage with some regional stakeholders including UNDP/BCPR, WHO and World Bank. These discussions indicated that, first, more is not always better. This principle is well established in DIPECHO's funding arrangement. Yet this contributes to the second issue: low-level inputs spread across large countries result in high cost-output ratios. Third, advantages from longer involvement in one country over sporadic and disconnected "in and out" intervention is beneficial.

The evaluation team found that the approximate cycle budget of EUR 7,500,000 contributes to important achievements at the community level. Yet it is too small to attract attention of ECHO or EC or other donors to build on these achievements for

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<sup>19</sup> More discussion on this topic and recommendations for DIPECHO action follow, below, on exit strategies.

greater coordination and wider impact across the region. The amount is also too small to attract further UN or national governments policy level attention as the amount is spread across countries, 22 partners, and in many locations. DG ECHO may consider efforts taken by donors such as DfID in setting appropriation quotas for disaster reduction.

By investing DIPECHO resources in projects that dovetail large public, or donor, or private sector investments, smaller budgets can contribute to greater impact. This means DIPECHO partners having much closer links with national budgets and authorities, participation in donor consultations in humanitarian, DRR or even development projects, and keeping an eye on where private sector investment is moving. Infrastructure, roads, ports, power, real estate, and manufacturing are some of the areas where private sector is investing heavily in the region. EC trade delegations have up-to-date information for each country. This private investment money can be dovetailed (without formal links) with DIPECHO DRR investments in safer schools, flood preparedness or any other suitable DRR activity. Action Aid in Chittagong, Bangladesh, is working with the federation of readymade garment makers to promote workplace safety against cyclones, earthquakes and fire for contract labour. This is only one example.

It was found that for comparable or similar amounts of grant the partners were covering a wide range of communities and locations, for example in Nepal (PA in 6 locations and another organisation in 21 sites<sup>20</sup>). **The evaluation team recommends that DIPECHO more realistically match resource allocation with the likelihood of achieving results in proposed projects.** Project budget size should match the community coverage and the likelihood of effectiveness on the ground.

Bangladesh and Nepal are both similar in their high levels of hazard and disaster risk; but they are very different in terms of capacities and funding for disaster management. After years of instability, with the formation of a new Government, Nepal has started attracting Government and some donor attention to natural disasters that has gained further momentum since the recent Koshi floods of 2008. Nevertheless, GoN has to deal with many competing public priorities and is primarily concerned with constitutional and governance matters that will limit its ability to allocate significant funds to DM and DRR. Key disaster related programs include select work of NSET, ICIMOD, DG ECHO, AusAid, EU (through Danish Red Cross), and JICA. UNDP is also active in promoting DRR, especially through the application of the HFA.

Over the years, earthquake risk identification and public awareness campaigns have been the focus and Kathmandu valley has been the main target area for most activities while other areas, at high risk of landslides and flooding received less attention. This focus may continue. The evaluation team concludes that DIPECHO support in Nepal has been valuable in focussing on areas and issues that were less covered by others. For example, DIPECHO support for community level projects in Bangladesh is especially valuable, as little funding is otherwise available for this level of support. DIPECHO has also been one of the few donors for DRR in Nepal. The new

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<sup>20</sup> In this case, DIPECHO informed the evaluation team that partner was advised against such a wide effort.

institutional environment and limited outside funding justify scaling up support to local organisations in Nepal. **The evaluation team recommends intensification of DIPECHO support for Nepal and DIPECHO advocacy with EU and other donors for resources to Nepal to scale up DRR support.**

In Bangladesh, the additional earthquake risk focus in DIPECHO III and IV has been useful as there has been limited interest in the subject in earlier cycles. Rapid urban spread and construction of large economic assets in Bangladesh require earthquake risk safety more than ever before. Unlike floods or cyclones, earthquake risk reduction is a difficult area in which to raise awareness, as an earthquake is not perceived as a threat in the day-to-day consciousness of people across the country.

The evaluation team found that the technical knowledge of the subject, quality and appropriateness of the messages as well as the effectiveness of the methods to communicate seismic safety varied across the partner NGOs. One partner—Action Aid Bangladesh—has been able to guide the local hospital in rethinking its expansion plan by adding seismic safety elements incorporated in the building construction. They also developed, under the 2<sup>nd</sup> Action Plan, an Earthquake Vulnerability Atlas, that was available for use by the Chittagong City Corporation, and Chittagong Development Authority, and, later, the national Comprehensive Disaster Management Program. The evaluation team concludes that the importance of the subject is well recognised by the partners in terms of its life and asset saving potential, the subject expands the range and appropriateness of issues covered by DIPECHO, and is suitable for DIPECHO's agenda in Bangladesh. The subject also has regional dimension in terms of experience and expertise (Gujarat 2001 and Kashmir 2005). Some efforts in the region can provide insight to DIPECHO partners. In India, UNDP's Urban Earthquake Vulnerability Reduction programme (with significant EC support) has lessons available from 38 cities<sup>21</sup>. The Nepal Red Cross Society has developed a contingency plan for an earthquake striking Kathmandu<sup>22</sup>. **The evaluation team recommends more cross regional exchanges of ideas, experience, expertise, and pilot approaches between these and similar programmes.**

The evaluation team found that partners, such as Practical Action in Nepal, are making much-needed regional links by taking partners and communities to Bangladesh project sites. AAN is planning a similar regional activity. The evaluation team concludes that such regional exchanges in lateral learning are much needed for transfer of ideas and experiences. **The evaluation team recommends DIPECHO to fund more such regional lateral learning DRR initiatives, including internet based knowledge networking, regional web site, etc. Such related priorities may be suggested as eligible activities in subsequent cycles.**

## 7. Coherence

The regional nature of DIPECHO's Action Plans poses a challenge for coherent impact considering the diverse contexts of national DRR policies and local actors. While support provided for self-designed initiatives is essential for supporting local

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<sup>21</sup> More information is available at: <http://rahat.up.nic.in/earthquake/UEVRP%20Flyer%20revised.pdf>.

<sup>22</sup> More information is available at: [http://www.nrcc.org/documents/contingency\\_plan\\_2008.pdf](http://www.nrcc.org/documents/contingency_plan_2008.pdf).

organisations in their own programming priorities, it results in a patchwork of local strategies. DIPECHO support addresses a niche of concrete risk management that is currently under-addressed by other donors. Too much focus on coherence with additional policies and priorities may dilute the unique DRR value of DIPECHO support. This is essentially a balance between local appropriateness and coherence that DIPECHO has managed well.

The evaluation team found that it is not easy to coordinate and consolidate DIPECHO work spread over a large area, across diverse communities, with a range of Framework Partnership Agreement and Financial and Administrative Framework Agreement partners, and with over nine types of broad activities.

The DIPECHO and EC administration is not slim. The DIPECHO team is small and stretched. The management, administration, follow up, consultation and coordination activities require much in terms of staff and resources from DIPECHO teams in Delhi and Brussels. The DIPECHO team in Delhi is under constant pressure for time, juggling several schedules and urgent demands across the region. The team is coping by maintaining high level of motivation and long hours of work. This is sometimes at the cost of DIPECHO providing or inviting technical expertise. This gap shows in areas such as risk transfer—a quickly growing strategy for DRR in South Asia. DIPECHO needs both DG ECHO and EC support to better coordinate and consolidate as well as national and regional expertise to improve the quality of their approach continuously.

Bangladesh has always attracted donor and Government attention for natural disasters and their interest has been intensified in recent years, gaining further momentum since Cyclone Sidr and the floods in 2007. This interest is likely to intensify further. This is evident in the donor interest to continue supporting CDMP. Several DIPECHO partners—including Plan International and Action Aid Bangladesh—are aware of these key programs and have made efforts at local levels to link and align their work. The evaluation team concludes that this new environment requires a revision of the DIPECHO action plan objectives in Bangladesh and set of priorities within that. **The evaluation team recommends that the existing good working relationship between EC Bangladesh and DG ECHO-DIPECHO should be extended into a more strategic and complementary partnership to increase the effectiveness of support to the GoB. An example of such complementarities could be in looking for opportunities to scale good practices from DIPECHO supported projects.** Examples of success in this area include DIPECHO work with Plan International on child-driven DRR and Action Aid work with hospital preparedness for mass casualties. Media and DRR work is also worth addressing, maybe in new arrangements with NIDM, India, to have more influence on national and legislative frameworks in the region.

Discussions with partners and non-DIPECHO participants in coordination meetings found that best practice sharing is a good activity. The time has come for outside experts or authorities to identify a good practice and share in coordination meetings and even beyond. In addition, similar activities are often done across cycles. A “multi-generational approach” to product development such as seismic safety material or school safety material or DP trainings can be taken up in coordination meetings.

The evaluation team found that DIPECHO has made due efforts to coordinate the strategies that underpinned the Action Plans with the priorities of the EC as well as with Member States.<sup>23</sup> It was not clear to the evaluation team to what extent these efforts were successful in helping DIPECHO strategies evolve.

The evaluation team found that the Coordination Meetings are valued by many partners, including Plan, Concern Universal, Islamic Relief, Concern Worldwide and Action Aid. Over time these meetings have brought the partners closer to each other in terms of knowing about what others are doing in the same area, sharing training and IEC material, and planning joint action such as public rallies, emergency responses and training material creation. The need to go beyond information exchange was identified by the partners. A few actions have been taken by the DIPECHO partners, notably creation of a National Platform for DRR in Bangladesh, to take a joint national stand on DRR issues. A website where project and information, education, and communication (IEC) material can be placed has been developed by the partners to put the material to wider, longer, and direct use. As such, these meetings are important for effectiveness and impact of the projects. **The evaluation team recommends that DIPECHO should continue to encourage coordination, invest resources, increase focus on results and exit strategy for the remaining period of the project, add regional inputs such as for example on training methods and modules or issues of inclusion, and expand advocacy on thematic basis.**

National Consultative Meetings were valued by partners in Bangladesh – for example by Plan and Islamic Relief - as an important medium where issues and lessons can be discussed with DIPECHO and other key stakeholders. The evaluation team also found that the partners want these meetings to have more EU, donor, and GoB participation and want to start these meetings as reviews of achievement, address issue of sustainability, map out the challenges of contextualisation, and identify options for reducing disaster risks in Bangladesh. The meetings are a good start for shaping the DIPECHO programme in Bangladesh to the local reality and partner needs. **The evaluation team recommends that some discussion regarding the expectations from these meetings should be discussed with the key stakeholders to determine issues that are both, relevant to DIPECHO mandate and regional in their nature and extent.**

The evaluation team found that the change in reporting requirements from three to two reports and the new financial format allowing own templates to be used was well received by the partners. The evaluation team concludes that evolving formats and systems that respond to partner needs have made DIPECHO more effective.

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<sup>23</sup> For example: Albuquerque, R. (15.06.2005). Correspondence to European Commission. ECHO3/BM/ D (2005) Réf. D. 6511. Albuquerque, R. (15.06.2005). Correspondence to European Union Member States. ECHO3/BM/ D (2005) Réf. D. 6510.



## 8. Connectedness

### 8.1. Connectedness and State Assistance

Although DIPECHO is not established to address state policy solutions directly, connectedness with state priorities and public systems is an area where far more can be done to enhance Action Plan impact on longer-term challenges. Participation of both national governments and non-governmental partners in Action Plan development builds local participation and buy-in to DIPECHO's efforts as well as wider disaster reduction aims. For example, the state needs to be seen as a customer of outputs offered by DIPECHO partners and more emphasis could be placed on ties with authorities through the guidelines preparation and proposal selection process. Similarly, the local authorities appreciate “global” or “international” inputs into their work or plans such as Disaster Management Committees with children as leaders or early warning system for and of communities. DIPECHO partners have been successful at this in some instances.

The new Nepalese government in place has interest in DRR work facilitated by UNDP, which is starting dialogues and planning within ten ministries. There is no major donor funding available to continue with this work. The evaluation team concludes that the momentum created in developing the national strategy through DIPECHO cycle III and IV support should not be lost. **If no other funders will come forward, the evaluation team recommends some continuity of DIPECHO support to this national strategy.**

Awareness of DRR has grown since the DIPECHO Action Plans began. The pace and energy behind preparedness efforts that slowed down after the Latur earthquake recovery and 1999 Orissa cyclone recovery is now picking up again across South Asia India. Several national governments have recently enacted disaster management policies. The large projects of multi-lateral donors offer opportunities for up-scaling future partner projects. The meetings with World Bank and the DIPECHO partners in India revealed that significant progress has been happening in India in terms of DRR and DP initiatives by individuals, public and private institutions, agencies and central, state and local authorities. These involve a huge range of efforts across many geographic areas and type of risks. World Bank has already invested in recovery and DRR significantly and is planning additional large investments. US\$200 million that was saved from tsunami recovery efforts will be used in Tamil Nadu for safe housing and other projects. Another US\$300 million is planned for a Cyclone Mitigation Project; this will include early warning, focus on reaching the community level, repair embankments, construct cyclone shelters, and more. The World Bank also plans initiatives around risk financing, long-term recovery lessons from Gujarat, and initiatives to promote South-South Cooperation. Other noteworthy wide-scale initiatives in disaster preparedness include the work of UNTRS Team (UN Tsunami Recovery Support) and the Government of Tamil Nadu after tsunami in 2004—this work came up in discussions with CARE (India) in Andamans and Welthungerhilfe in Delhi. The Disaster Risk Management work of Gujarat State Disaster Management Authority and Government of Gujarat after the 2001 earthquake with the UNDP, Christian Aid and Save the Children has also been significant.

Given this picture, it is possible to improve direct and sustained impact in DRR with links to national government efforts in DIPECHO Action Plans. Linkages between the DIPECHO programming process and Ministry of Home Affairs initiatives have been



absent although the reasons are not clear. The Ministry of Home affairs runs the Disaster Risk Management (DRM) programme, one of the largest in the world. The DRM has operated since 2002 in 169 districts and 38 earthquake prone towns and cities and supports both national and local capacity for preparedness, including preparedness plans for most programme districts. The programme received over EUR 12.000.000 in EC and DG ECHO through 2007<sup>24</sup>. The evaluation team emphasises the importance of linking any DRR initiative with the local, state, and central authorities as an important consideration the DIPECHO programme in India.

DIPECHO has made several efforts to link up with the South Asia Association for Regional Cooperation (SAARC) Centre on DRR. The Centre, in New Delhi, is jointly promoted by South Asian countries and the Government of India and UNDP-promoted National Institute of Disaster Management (NIDM) of India. The Centre and NIDM, which are seated in one institution now and headed by the same official of NIDM, are invited to DIPECHO coordination meetings and two national consultations. SAARC Centre/NIDM has a wide-ranging training schedule (up to 23 training modules) and an estimated annual budget of US\$1 million. It carries regional influence and holds a biannual national congress on disaster risk reduction. The SAARC Centre pilots CBDM in the region by working with lead national and CSO authorities in each country. Two of the DIPECHO partners worked with NIDM: the BBC World Service Trust and Handicap International. Both had initial contacts, some exploratory discussions and a long lull. The NIDM is waiting to hear from the two DIPECHO partners. The evaluation team finds that good initial contact is made, potential is identified, and much remains to be done, both in using the NIDM/SAARC Centre as a DIPECHO partner or resource as well as for input as an expert agency for DIPECHO's own policies, project selection, monitoring and review work in the region. Even joint advocacy work with DIPECHO may be possible in the coming cycle.

Another example of the importance of connectedness with public initiatives can be found in Nepal. As noted above, Nepal is going through a major political change and the new government is designing and developing new structures and policies. DIPECHO had supported UNDP Nepal in Cycle 3 to develop what a National Strategy for Disaster Risk Management for the Ministry of Home Affairs. For cycle IV, UNDP built on cycle III, and took the policy to Ministry of Home Affairs and set up a national inter-ministerial coordination mechanism for DRR, set up a DRR focal point in each of the 10 key ministries and a commissioner. A fund was set up to support one innovative DRR project in each ministry. The activities are progressing well. The evaluation team found that the scale on which this collaboration is taking place between UNDP and GoN is large enough to promote joint work but not too large to prevent the agenda from moving. Further, the diversity—ten types of ministries or departments—offered different but complementary input to the process is bound by the draft strategy. In addition, UNDP's global credentials and UN's consultative ways of working with host authorities helped sustain the process.

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<sup>24</sup> GoI and UNDP. 2007. Disaster Risk Management Programme. New Delhi: GoI/MHA.

## 8.2. Connectedness: Other Donors and the EC

Local partners are able to approach development-focussed donors for continued support when the Action Plan cycle concludes but the evaluation team did not find this connection common. The connectedness of DIPECHO efforts with those of other key donors varies across countries and organisations. In Bangladesh, efforts of DIPECHO, DG ECHO, and EC have come closer than in India or Nepal. The evaluation team met the DG ECHO and EC officials in Dhaka. The EC is more aware of the work of DIPECHO in Bangladesh, and has met some of the DIPECHO partners in many capacities on many occasions, including one-to-one meetings. DG ECHO understanding of DIPECHO and its role is clear and systematic. The EC in Bangladesh, which is supporting a comprehensive CDMP project for the second phase is well aware of DIPECHO though there can be more direct synergy.

The evaluation team did not see visible evidence of joint action between the three bodies in any partner meetings, partner projects, strategies, or plans. **The evaluation team recommends that the closer direct and country level collaboration is a good way of moving ahead to mainstream DRR in DG ECHO and EC work.** The evaluation team discussed this possibility of more joint work with some of the partners who felt that there could be some benefit from involving the EC in the project selection process, as well as in the provision of technical inputs at least once or twice during the cycle for possible upscaling or mainstreaming.

In India, DIPECHO's role is additionally useful as a follow up to DG ECHO relief projects—in vulnerable areas by an established partner with local links to CSOs and authorities—after a major disaster such as the unusual 2008 floods in Bihar or regular floods in Assam and the North East India. Increasingly partners submit DRR sensitive proposals and are taking up DP and related initiatives in their DG ECHO projects. Welthungerhilfe mentioned their DP work with DG ECHO in this light to the evaluation team. Incorporating DIPECHO concerns in DG ECHO structure through a dedicated individual for both functions at the country level is a step in the right direction. **The evaluation team recommends that large scale relief operations of DG ECHO can be one entry point for DIPECHO, whereby small scale DP initiatives are implemented at the end of DG ECHO relief and further supported by DIPECHO funding if proven useful and effective.**

## 8.3. Connectedness and National Partner Organisations

The partnerships evolve within cycles and from cycle to cycle. The evaluation of partner-to-partner partnership is tricky. The partnership of CARE and HI in Andamans has evolved well during the cycle but the partnership between NIDM and HI has not in India. CARE and HI both were physically present in Andaman Islands and jointly conducted most activities. CARE invites authorities to events where authorities agree to the importance but do not in writing sign a MoU or similar arrangement. Partnerships with other national authorities have had less success. Still, HI has added value to CARE's ongoing, large, and system-wide work of recovery and DRR. This is a good example of two partners working together and not competing. **Such joint links should be a more firm requirement at proposal stage and not be left to evolution or coordination during the cycle.**

The partners have been careful in taking care of overlap of areas and in Nepal DRCS and AAN have demonstrated the adaptability of their partnership in their ability to readjust villages for project work.

DIPECHO Action Plans themselves have regional focus but most projects and partners work at the national level. ICIMOD, in the past cycle, has regional reach and works at regional level on regional issues. Nevertheless, generally the regional reach of partners is narrow to national or sub-national level. Regional bodies to advocate DRR are few. In fact, the SAARC Centre at NIDM is the only such public body. Thus, DIPECHO has limited scope to support regional advocacy. The World Bank develops South Asia plans and sector work but DIPECHO or its partners do not have regional analysis or studies to influence World Bank's work in the region to encourage uptake of DIPECHO's lessons in community-driven DRR. These plans are available with World Bank and other IFIs and UN organisations are aware of them. The National Disaster Management Authority and National Institute of Disaster Management are also involved in developing these plans. Occasionally, civil society consultations are held by the World Bank on these plans. Often CSOs find accessing these plans difficult—an issue that could be taken up with World Bank by DG ECHO.

The Glacial Lake Outburst Flood project with UNDP/BCPR has regional dimensions, though not advocacy work it is valuable scientific work and can support policy advocacy. India is missing in GLOF activities. UNDP has a regional policy and governance dimension that can be taken up more directly but community-based operational work in this regional project is not UNDP's forte.

During discussions with partners, several issues of regional relevance came up, including urban flooding, trans-national drainage basins, community-based early warning, and others. Partners are aware of relevant regional issues, but may need more encouragement to work more closely across boundaries. For example, Practical Action has taken up a cross-country exchange of DIPECHO project teams between Nepal and Bangladesh. Action Aid Nepal is also planning such an exchange.

## **9. Impact and Sustainability**

The evaluation was launched in July, visits planned in August, and field visits according to joint decision were rescheduled for October 2008. The current DIPECHO Cycle (IV) will end for most partners around February 2009. Thus, evaluation visits were 4 month before the end of 15-month projects. As a result, most activities are in the process of completion. Therefore, the findings only reflect what has been accomplished so far. DIPECHO had direct positive impact on the work of Practical Action in east Nepal where the community based early warning system is taken from one cycle to another. Similarly, the impact of Plan International's work on children and communities is encouraging. In both cases, a holistic approach is developed, institutional and legislative frameworks are addressed, and local readiness for response exists.

### **9.1. Impact among Vulnerable Communities**

DIPECHO rightly emphasises the importance of impact from programmes: this is also reflected in the evaluation team's ToR. Although it is still early to assess the impact of the current cycle (IV), the evaluation team found some examples of demonstrated benefits from past cycles. Tens of thousands of local individuals trained under the

Bangladesh Red Crescent Society's Cyclone Preparedness Project helped spread the warning and evacuate households as Cyclone Sidr approached in November 2007. Practical Action activities during cycle III in east Nepal also promoted preparedness and allowed the community to prepare for the current cycle project. Similarly, Christian Aid built on its work of school safety in the previous cycle by further targeting the most vulnerable schools. Unless there is a disaster in the programme areas during implementation or soon after, the lack of baseline data or clear and available indicators make measuring impact difficult. Consequently, end of programme reporting tends to focus more on outputs than impact. **It is recommended that DIPECHO develop a system that allows reviewing of impact beyond the programme-reporting period. An individual or institution may be assigned this role with matching resources to track impact beyond the Cycle implementation timeframe.**

Generalising DRR and implementing a mostly standard package across the region may not be the most effective way of addressing localised needs. The evaluation team concludes that DRR must be specific to hazard and location and be cognisant of existing national and community processes of risk reduction and resources available, locally and from outside. Due to the multiplicity of actors involved in DRR and the differences in capacities and resources across India's states, this is truer for India than other DIPECHO programme countries visited. **The evaluation team recommends the need for DIPECHO to readdress repeatedly the question how DRR in each country really works at community level and not how it is being planned to work by authorities and agencies in various public documents and strategies.**

The evaluation team found that individual project activities have built some confidence among the vulnerable communities such as in the Char area of Bangladesh or with the fishing folk—among individuals and families. This has created a sense that when organised—as workers in the coastal areas or in urban settings—they will have more opportunities to voice their risk and safety related concerns, and be represented in the ongoing risk reduction and emergency preparedness initiatives. The evaluation team finds this to be very valuable achievement of the partners. In the areas visited, through the CBDP projects, members of the community have managed to secure places in the Union Disaster Management Committees (UDMCs). This representation is extended to both men and women and in some projects to children and youth in a systematic manner.

However, sustainability of this representation is uncertain, as the individuals may not have the resources to participate. Additionally, and as the positions are elected, the composition of the UDMCs may change. The evaluation team concludes that the individual, family and community level DP inputs are certainly more likely to be sustainable while institutional arrangements such as the Union level DP plans, UDMC representation or calling upon the trained volunteers are less certain. **The evaluation team recommends that efforts to achieve sustainability at the community level link closely with the broader strategic alliances and complementarities that need to be discussed by DIPECHO with the key national and international stakeholders in Bangladesh.**

A solid and active community based approach is fundamental to successful DIPECHO projects. Those partners who had prior community base—CARE in Andaman and Practical Action in West Nepal for example—were able to move faster,

effectively, and achieve quality results. Project areas with strong community presence—such as by DRC/NRCS in Udayapur and Plan in char lands in Lalmonirhat—were also able to achieve substantial results. Thus, DIPECHO is better able to reach communities where partners build on their ongoing work.

Some partners were too spread in too many communities to achieve any substantial results in a sustainable manner. DRC/NRCS may be facing such a difficulty in achieving results in many districts of Nepal simultaneously.

The evaluation team found that DIPECHO partners in Nepal have their own DRR strategies and activities developed from their global experiences and activities that add value to the DIPECHO projects. Scaling up of these strategies is difficult. DIPECHO projects give partners the opportunity to pilot a range of activities, however, their sustainability and scaling up are equally difficult out of their own resources, and major donor resources are not forthcoming. Refresher training or some small-scale supports to beneficiary communities in the future from the agencies own resources are envisaged but not guaranteed. **While long-term support is outside the remit of DIPECHO, support to partners in attracting funding through advocacy with donors and within EU for larger DRR support in Nepal is recommended.**

Some of the partners who continued from DIPECHO III have undertaken refresher training in the same project areas under DIPECHO IV. The evaluation team concludes that such measures taken by the partner organisations are useful, timely, evolving, and should continue. At the same time, exit strategies also need to take into consideration from the start how the DIPECHO projects can be linked up with other DRR and DP initiatives within the organisation, area, communities, and the section of the population such as the garment or fish workers. **This requires DIPECHO to be engaged, directly and continuously, with the key national initiatives for possible ‘hand-over’ by the partners.**

## 9.2. Impact on Local Organisations

The evaluation team found that capacity building of the vulnerable communities, local partners, and the enabling environment is largely successful. This success has come through mainly variety of trainings for which materials are developed, such as Plan International’s material for children, Action Aid material for garment workers, hospital staff, or Concern Universal and Islamic Relief materials for the volunteers. These have been utilised at community, institutional, and national level by the partner organisations for awareness raising. The evaluation team concludes that the specific trainings such as DP for schools, hospitals and communities are contributing towards capacity building. Similarly, DP plans are prepared for various purposes and institutions. The substantive and communication quality of these various materials and methods varied across the partners. **The evaluation team recommends that harmonisation of training methods, messages and material across partners, subject areas and institutions is desirable for more effective capacity building and efficient use of resources.**

The evaluation team was delighted to see that most partners in Nepal were active in both Cycle III and IV, building on the previous cycle where possible. UNDP and ActionAid did especially well in this building on previous cycle in Nepal as Practical Action also did in its Early Warning work. The evaluation team concludes that partners do well when they build on previous cycle and programmes are more likely



to be sustained. **The evaluation team recommends DIPECHO to ensure that cycles build on previous cycles where appropriate in terms of content, logic, and activities.**

In some locations, partner efforts are progressing well and have potential to up-scale. In India, for example, work by partners in the Andamans has the potential for follow up activities in future cycles in terms of sustainability and system-wide relevance. Further, Himachal Pradesh has a high Human Development Index for India, and the Andamans score low. In both locations, neither the GoI nor any key INGO is working on a large scale. Therefore, partner efforts, supported by DIPECHO are geographically well targeted. The school safety initiative for the Blind and Deaf has a potential to develop into a region wide “method” project involving partners such as HI as well as others. There is a potential to link up or connect this specialised approach with other school safety related initiatives across South Asia region through a hub in India or Nepal. **A simple mechanism for doing so will be for DIPECHO to suggest school safety as an eligible topic under the next call for proposals.** National governments in the region are promoting substantial education initiatives that could benefit from school safety components. For example, in India, school safety initiative could be directly linked with the Sarva Shiksha Abhiyan (SSA) Education for All Campaign of the Government of India in a systematic and structured way. This could include national, state, department, district and community level links in the vulnerable states such as Gujarat, Bihar, Orissa or Kashmir for example, or in vulnerable 38 cities covered under UNDP’s urban earthquake vulnerability reduction programme.

DIPECHO requires exit strategies to be developed by the proposal stage. The exit strategy is known to DIPECHO and partners, and in many cases evaluation team found that also to the local communities and authorities. This is a good method. However, a sustainable exit, or exit that leaves behind a sustainable initiative requires far more emphasis on GO-NGO links and DRR and LRRD links at local level. This also means more thinking, refining, and reviewing the strategy over the project’s 15-month course.

Partners are concerned about the need for exit strategies both in relation to INGO vis-à-vis the local partner and the communities. Entry strategies are as important as exit strategies. DIPECHO partners with existing local partners, local partners with an established base in communities and local communities with access to public authorities and funds improve effective project entry. Entry was more effective where projects started with community concerns, such as water or work, and built in support for other risks—such as cyclones, tsunami, or flood as Care India, Practical Action and Action Aid in Nepal have done. Similarly, Plan International in Bangladesh found its entry more effective because it emphasised community participation (lead by children) and links with local authority. Concern Worldwide found its entry easier when DRR was customized to the particular setting. Danish Red Cross in Nepal found that a more decentralized responsibility structure allowed easier entry.

However, the uncertainty regarding continuity of the project when this cycle ends in making plans for an exit difficult even when the partners know that DIPECHO is 1 time and for 15 months only. Currently there are several exit strategy models that are being used by partners—some with success and some without. A number of INGOs have planned to handover the work to their local NGO partners where capacities and



other ongoing projects in the same geographical area exist. Others may integrate these activities into their ongoing program areas where their own resources allow. Considering the importance of effective exit strategies for sustainability, a good study of these will open up a range of exit options for partners and for DIPECHO. **As this is an area of common challenge, DIPECHO should consider developing guidelines or training to assist partners in exit strategy development.** Examples of successful strategies for Action Plan cycles—such as AKF/Focus in Pakistan, CARE in Andaman, UNDP Nepal with the National DRM Strategy, and CA in India—may be highlighted as case studies in these guidelines or training<sup>25</sup>. Effective exit strategies may include aspects of the following:

- A good understanding of the community and its coping mechanisms
- An effective working relationship and constructive advocacy link with government
- Technical expertise that is accessible within the region
- Complementarity with a larger or ongoing programme within the partner organisation, with a key donor, or with a state or national programme
- Effective dissemination of results or lessons that contribute to a key global initiative
- Development of simple institutional structures deliberately at the community level to continue critical aspects
- Handing over key areas to a local network
- Handing back control to a local authority
- Ensuring that other financial structures can provide continued support
- Success in influencing policy-making
- Involvement of additional civil society, government, or private organisations that may develop the programme

### 9.3. Impact on Policy

Due to DIPECHO's status and mandate, advocacy is not something it can do *directly* in host countries. Yet advocacy is important for widespread impact of DRR initiatives and DG ECHO notes the importance of the role of advocacy in its own literature<sup>26</sup>. Another indicator of the importance placed on advocacy is the call for a review of advocacy in this evaluation's ToR. DIPECHO has to walk a fine line of advocating DRR from national to regional level and not taking any step or stand that is political or controversial. As a result, most advocacy efforts mainly focus on cooperation to avoid taking occasionally uncomfortable positions with governments. In other words, DIPECHO advocacy comes through consultation with partners. Further, DIPECHO partner INGOs also have limitations themselves. They are international NGOs working in host countries. The options for them to advocate issues are limited, especially in a well-established and strong state such as India. The main source of advocacy is the information and awareness work of the local partners and success is seen in Nepal and Bangladesh. Largely, partners of DIPECHO are engaged in awareness raising and information dissemination activities on how to reduce the

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<sup>25</sup> One useful resource includes an Exit Strategy Planning Matrix that local organisations may use to develop relevant approaches. Gardner, A., Greenblott, K., Joubert, E. 2005. What We Know about Exit Strategies: Practical Guidance for Developing Exit Strategies in the Field. C-SAFE. Accessible at: <http://reliefweb.int/rw/lib.nsf/db900SID/KKEE-6HPRNA?OpenDocument>.

<sup>26</sup> DG ECHO. 2007b. Humanitarian Aid: Preparing for Disaster Saves Lives. Brussels: ECHO. Page 5.

impact from disasters. This mostly takes the form of published material and theatre shows but also through various forms of media, school curriculum and training.

DIPECHO partners visited by the evaluation team had rich experiences with local advocacy. Local advocacy—when effective—has a demonstrative effect, showing concrete results to local teams and local communities. For example, the local advocacy work of Action Aid Nepal in the Udayapur area that also targets the district officers has brought better attention to DRR issues in the districts. Similarly, the advocacy work of CARE in Andaman and Nicobar Islands to influence the establishment of a directorate for disaster relief within the administrative structure of the Island is an example of effective local advocacy with potential for long-term sustainability beyond the project lifetime. These are only some examples.

The evaluation team found that most projects aimed at making local authority accountable for DP and DRR beyond the projects but were limited in their ability to create a formal link or an agreement with the authorities that can lead to better sustainability of the project outcomes beyond the DIPECHO cycle. For example, Action Aid Bangladesh has taken a rare route to advocate with the local garment makers and their factories regarding earthquake safety. The initiative is important to the rapidly growing economic areas in and around Chittagong's coast as a rare example of NGO-private sector link. There is still more that can be done in terms of advocating the approach with the wider private sector in garment industry as well as with the safety authorities such as the fire brigade that does regular training in these factories for fire preparedness.

The INGO partners also have their own direct ways to work with or influence government with other humanitarian or development projects. Nepal offers a special situation where the new government is making new structures and plans and is willing to take up new and useful ideas and policies.

The policy work of UNDP Nepal under Cycle III and IV has been most useful in influencing the Home Ministry to actively take up a DRR agenda and convene 10 ministries and a commission to coordinate DRR issues. The Ministry of Home Affairs has established a DRR focal point in each ministry and initiated a development-oriented DRR mainstreaming pilot. Part of this progress is due to UNDP's building on Cycle III, the changing national politics, and UNDP's renewed presence in many governance issues in Nepal.

Similar policy work at national level in India is yet to materialise in spite of efforts made by DIPECHO partners. Perhaps partner projects are too small and comprise too many pilots to attract national policy attention. Policy change especially requires keen interest among national policymakers, who may be more prone to support programmes with immediate benefits than long-term risk reduction. Partners also have their own advocacy agendas and the growth of national public DRR efforts provide an abundance of opportunities for more active advocacy. Due to its strategic location on the Andaman Islands, CARE has been able to attract the attention of Ministry of Home Affairs of the Government of India for specialised CBDRR efforts in the Islands. This deserves recognition. The evaluation team wonders how results would have been different if the efforts of Christian Aid to draft a DRR plan for Himachal Pradesh State were used to advocate for such plan and not prepare such a plan.

## **10. Next Steps**

To move ahead, the DIPECHO team in Delhi and Brussels should organise a management response to recommendations provided through the current review. A follow-up matrix should be designed with the key recommendations, management response and individuals responsible for specifically identified follow-up activities.

In general terms, the way ahead for DIPECHO has following ingredients. Adjust DIPECHO leadership to directive—not leading or facilitating—style. The guidelines are a good start. Turn national consultation meetings also into visioning exercises to go beyond projects and hazards and locations to share ideas about broader DRR visions for the region and to bring out ideas on what support partners may desire in getting there. Further, in the way ahead, augmenting existing affiliations such as those with BCPR or the UN International Strategy for Disaster Reduction or NIDM will be critical. DIPECHO should continue the participative nature of coordination and consultations.

The move to have a DIPECHO person in DG ECHO office in each country would be timely and a step in right direction. The evaluation team recommends that DIPECHO additionally support to a small number of regional and strategic projects that have both regional and high demonstrative value.

Focussing on hazards in precise geographic areas such as urban floods, or floods in main land Indian rivers, may be an additionally efficient way to get the demonstration impact of the DIPECHO projects.

Support to partners over slightly longer durations—or over two cycles—is a good way to move ahead with key partners for a substantial project with both, innovation and impact.