



**EVALUATION**  
**OF THE DIPECHO IV<sup>TH</sup> AND V<sup>TH</sup> ACTION PLANS IN CENTRAL ASIA**  
**March – June 2009**

**FINAL REPORT**

by

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## TABLE OF CONTENTS

<b>Executive Summary</b> .....	<b>i</b>
<b>1. Introduction</b> .....	<b>1</b>
1.1. Background.....	1
1.2. Purpose and objective .....	1
1.3. Methodology.....	2
1.3.1. Evaluation activities.....	2
1.3.2. Evaluation criteria.....	3
1.3.2.1. Impact, efficiency and effectiveness.....	5
1.3.2.2. Sustainability .....	6
1.3.2.3. Programme and project coverage .....	7
1.3.2.4. Examples of good practices .....	7
1.3.2.5. Relevance/appropriateness of work under DIPECHO .....	8
1.3.2.6. Coordination with Government and amongst partners .....	8
1.3.3. The evaluation report.....	9
1.3.4. Challenges and biases .....	9
<b>2. Operational issues</b> .....	<b>11</b>
2.1. Local disaster management components .....	11
2.1.1. Community disaster management planning.....	11
2.1.2. Capacity-building through training.....	12
2.1.3. Community rescue teams.....	14
2.1.4. First aid training.....	18
2.2. Stock building of emergency and relief items .....	18
2.2.1. Provision of basic equipment .....	18
2.2.2. Stockpiling of relief supplies .....	19
2.3. Small-scale infrastructure and services .....	20
2.3.1. Mitigation projects' quality .....	20
2.3.2. Cost-efficiency.....	21
2.3.3. Mitigation projects as focal point for other DP activities.....	22
2.4. Information, education, communication.....	23
2.4.1. DP/DRR awareness programmes at schools.....	23
2.5. Institutional linkages and advocacy.....	25
2.5.1. National disaster management systems .....	25

2.5.2.	National DM strategies .....	26
2.5.3.	Coordination mechanisms .....	28
2.5.3.1.	REACT in Tajikistan .....	28
2.5.3.2.	“Ownership” of REACT .....	29
2.5.3.3.	DRCU model in Kyrgyzstan.....	30
2.5.3.4.	REACT within DRCU system in Kyrgyzstan .....	31
2.5.3.5.	Sustainability of REACT mechanism.....	32
2.5.4.	Coordination among DIPECHO partners .....	33
2.5.5.	Coordination with other donors .....	34
<b>3.</b>	<b>Cross-cutting issues.....</b>	<b>35</b>
3.1.	General.....	35
3.2.	Increasing DIPECHO projects’ sustainability .....	35
3.2.1.	Types of sustainability .....	35
3.2.2.	Maximizing projects’ impact.....	36
3.2.3.	Enhancing the sense of project ownership.....	37
3.2.4.	Communicating better with project beneficiaries.....	38
3.2.5.	Accepting DP/DRR as a “lower” priority.....	40
3.2.6.	Mainstreaming DP/DRR into development activities .....	41
3.2.7.	Focusing on quality.....	42
3.2.8.	Working with/through local NGOs .....	44
3.2.9.	Applying a country-specific approach.....	44
3.3.	Other cross-cutting issues .....	46
3.3.1.	DIPECHO funding cycle .....	46
3.3.2.	Gender.....	47
3.3.3.	Implementing Hyogo FA.....	48
<b>4.</b>	<b>Strategic issues .....</b>	<b>50</b>
4.1.	Strategic orientation for DIPECHO in Central Asia.....	50
4.2.	DG ECHO involvement in DP and DRR .....	50
4.3.	DG ECHO limitations.....	51
4.4.	New strategic direction for DIPECHO in Central Asia.....	52
4.5.	The current level of DP/DRR awareness in Central Asia.....	53
4.6.	Objectives for strategic advocacy .....	54
4.7.	Mapping DP/DRR activities .....	55
4.8.	Using DIPECHO project implementation experience .....	56
4.9.	Considerations for DIPECHO phasing down .....	57
4.10.	DIPECHO and climate change .....	58

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## **Executive Summary**

### **Introduction**

1. Following a global evaluation on Disaster Risk Reduction (DRR), in 2003 Central Asia became the sixth DIPECHO region to be targeted by the DIPECHO Programme after Central America, Andean Community, Caribbean, South Asia and South East Asia. Since 2003 DG ECHO has implemented four DIPECHO action plans in Central Asia (Tajikistan, Kyrgyzstan, Uzbekistan and Turkmenistan), channeling € 15,000,000 to various disaster preparedness activities.

2. The external evaluation of the first three Action Plans concluded that the DIPECHO programmes have had an appropriate effect in reducing the impact of hazards, ensuring preparedness to respond, and establishing and supporting early warning/intervention system. The present evaluation has been commissioned by DG ECHO following the completion of DIPECHO IVth Action Plan and during the mid-term implementation of DIPECHO Vth Action Plan.

### **Purpose and Methodology**

3. The main *purposes* of the present evaluation are to assess the outputs and impact of the DIPECHO IVth and Vth action plans in Central Asia; to recommend an appropriate methodology to improve the DIPECHO programme added-value and its sustainability; to assess the level of disaster preparedness reached in the region; to assess how far the long term intervention instruments of other actors incorporate DRR activities and how this affect DIPECHO interventions. It was agreed that the evaluation would assess the operational issues, but will have a focus on cross-cutting and strategic issues, including the scope of future interventions or phasing down of DIPECHO programme in the region.

4. The evaluation team visited DIPECHO project sites in Tajikistan, Uzbekistan and Kyrgyzstan. The information was collected through review of documentation, field visits, extensive semi-structured interviews with DIPECHO partners, representatives of the government and local authorities, local NGOs, project beneficiaries and representatives of selected donor agencies. Additional information and feedback was collected during DIPECHO National Conferences in Dushanbe, Tashkent and Osh in May 2009. Preliminary findings, conclusions and recommendations were shared with the partners both during and after the field visits.

### **Main Findings**

5. DP and DM *planning* in communities contributed to improving community disaster response capacity and action, in particular regarding emergency evacuations. However, planning is still perceived by communities and governments more as a formal activity.

6. Most DIPECHO-funded DM *training* programmes contributed to creating and maintaining a certain level of awareness of disaster risks among local populations. However, most training includes a lot of "theory" aiming at increasing the participants' "understanding and knowledge" rather than practical skills. Classroom training is still used as the *key* approach to

DM capacity-building. Partners focus more on maximizing the number, rather than quality, of training events.

7. The volunteer community-based *rescue teams* created by DIPECHO partners in Central Asia contributed to promoting of community participation in DRR as per objectives 1 and 5 of the Hyogo Frame Work for Action. Most such teams are professionally trained; some participated in actual search and rescue operations. Rescue teams are systematically equipped with the standard relief and rescue kits and first aid kits. However, few teams are financially and organizationally sustainable due to lack of ownership and financial resources, labour migration, lack of MoES vision and strategy for utilizing them.

8. Communities particularly appreciate DIPECHO support for *small scale mitigation projects*. DIPECHO I and II mitigation installations observed are in a very good shape, having successfully protected communities for 4-5 years. Later installations, however, showed signs of wear and tear; some were partially destroyed and/or needed repairs.

9. All *DP/DRR awareness programmes at schools* reviewed demonstrated a good level of DRR and DP awareness and practical skills. DG ECHO and partners' successful advocacy resulted in DP/DRR being taught in most schools as extra-curriculum subjects; many partners keep advocating for including it into the regular curricula.

10. DIPECHO support to development of the *national emergency and disaster management systems* in Central Asia resulted in increased awareness about the importance of DM, DP and DRR among the governments and ministries. At the same time Ministries/Committees of Emergencies lack a coherent vision and strategy for disaster management and DRR; they tend to develop DM *plans* rather than *strategies*; strategies lack a decision-making functionality and do not allow defining DM priorities.

11. *REACT (in Tajikistan) and DRCU (in Kyrgyzstan) coordination mechanism* contributed to coordinating emergency response, sharing experiences in disaster management, preparedness, response, mitigation and capacity building and achieving a higher level of coordination among all involved in DIPECHO programme. However, the government in Tajikistan still takes only a partial *ownership* of REACT. REACT/DRCU role and structures are sometimes unclear. Though used successfully during smaller-scale emergencies, REACT appeared to be less effective in case of coordinating larger emergencies (e.g. the winter crisis of 2008 in Tajikistan).

12. DIPECHO programme in Central Asia has a good level of *coordination* and exchange of information among its partners. Projects are usually developed in coordination with other partners and the local authorities and they complement each other with no major duplication observed; many partners utilize co-funding mechanisms. Coordination between the DG ECHO and other donor agencies is generally effective, though information sharing could be improved.

13. DIPECHO projects in Central Asia generally have a fair *gender* mix of male and female participants: women appear to be more active in DP/DRR training and awareness while men

participate more in rescue teams and mitigation projects. Both women and men play part in decision-making: women often show a higher interest and participation in the projects.

14. DIPECHO IV and V programmes in Central Asia closely follow *Hyogo Framework for Action 2005-2015* contributing to making disaster risk reduction a priority, assessing and monitoring disaster risks, building the culture of safety and resilience, reducing disaster risk and strengthening disaster preparedness for response at community, regional and central levels.

### Key Conclusions and Recommendations

Operational Issues (DG ECHO office, DIPECHO partners)		
Conclusions	Recommendations	Lessons to be learned
Merely <i>producing</i> DM plans in Central Asia is not sufficient to ensure that they are followed.	<b>R1.</b> DIPECHO partners should focus less on <i>producing</i> community DM plans, and more on <i>testing and applying</i> them through practical drills, involving all community members.	To have impact, DM planning should primarily focus on applying the DM plans in practice.
DM training should assist communities in acquiring a set of <i>skills</i> and changing <i>behavior</i> in case of actual emergencies.	<b>R2.</b> DIPECHO training should focus on assisting <i>entire</i> communities in <i>practicing skills</i> and <i>behaviors</i> required in actual emergencies. <b>R3.</b> Training objectives should be action-oriented; simulations, drills, action-oriented exercises should become the <i>core</i> element of DM training.	To achieve the sustainable change of behavior all DM training should be primarily action-oriented.
Taking into account substantial difficulties in ensuring the sustainability of community rescue teams, alternative ways of addressing the community “search and rescue” needs should be explored.	<b>R6. R11.</b> DIPECHO partners should invest less in community-based rescue teams and more in more sustainable alternatives e.g. small-scale mitigation projects, expanding DP and DRR at schools and first aid training. <b>R10.</b> Strengthening and reinforcing search and rescue capacity of the community “ <i>as a whole</i> ” should be explored. More women should be involved in this process. <b>R7.</b> DIPECHO should support community rescue teams only if their financial and organizational sustainability is ensured.	Wherever a particular DM, DP or DRR activity cannot be successfully sustained, alternative activities with higher potential for sustainability should be explored.
Small scale mitigation projects produce tangible, visible and long-lasting results, demonstrating the	<b>R16.</b> DP/DRR awareness programmes in communities should be centered around one key, specific and tangible DP/DRR activity, such as professionally designed small-scale mitigation projects. <b>R15.</b> All	Professionally implemented small scale mitigation projects provide an excellent focal point for all DP/DRR

impact of DIPECHO project interventions.	small scale mitigation projects should imperatively include professional technical input from qualified engineers.	activities at the community level.
DP/DRR awareness programmes at schools are highly successful, showing good potential for expanding programme coverage and increasing its sustainability.	<b>R17.</b> DIPECHO partners should continue expanding DP/DRR awareness programmes at schools, possibly focusing on school students as a <i>primary target group</i> . <b>R18.</b> DIPECHO should explore possibilities for integrating DP/DRR issues into all school subjects - by i.a. providing examples and linking DP/DRR messages with the curricula contents - <i>without</i> changing formal curricula.	Focusing on children as a primary target group allows substantially increasing DP/DRR awareness programmes' coverage, impact and sustainability.
The lack of <i>proper DM strategies</i> prevents the governments in Central Asia from identifying their DM and DRR priorities.	<b>R20.</b> DIPECHO should focus more on supporting development of national <i>DM strategies</i> , assisting the governments in turning them into a decision-making tool to better identify their DM and DRR priorities and allocate limited resources.	A viable DM strategy should serve as a decision-making tool for identifying DM priorities and allocating resources to priority tasks.
REACT in Central Asia remains primarily an <i>emergency coordination and response</i> mechanism. The main challenge is to sustain it in-between emergencies.	<b>R25.</b> Recognizing that REACT is primarily an <i>emergency response and coordination</i> mechanism, DG ECHO should continue encouraging the Governments to use it as part of their response system in-between emergencies (by i.a. including it in all MoES/CoES drills and simulations).	Coordination mechanisms and structures created primarily for emergency response should be used as such both during and in-between emergencies.
DIPECHO programme in Central Asia has been effectively <i>streamlined</i> around few key DP/DRR activities (village DM plans and committees, rescue teams etc.)	<b>R26. R27.</b> DG ECHO should encourage the partners to submit joint project proposals, sharing their tasks as per each partner's specific technical expertise, and to actively investigate further co-financing opportunities.	Wherever different actors implement largely similar projects, exploring synergies between them would contribute to increased quality and cost-efficiency.
<b>Cross-Cutting Issues</b> (DIPECHO partners, DG ECHO office, DG ECHO/Brussels)		
<b>Main Conclusions</b>	<b>Recommendations</b>	<b>Lessons to be learned</b>
Few DIPECHO IV and V projects are <i>financially sustainable</i>	<b>R29. R30.</b> DG ECHO should invest more into the DM and DRR projects that have a potential to be more sustainable and to	Some DP/DRR activities, such as DP/DRR awareness programmes at



without continuous external funding.	produce higher long-term impact (e.g. DP/DRR awareness programmes at schools and small-scale mitigation projects). <b>R28.</b> DG ECHO should organize a conference/workshop on maximizing impact and sustainability of DIPECHO programme in Central Asia.	schools and small-scale mitigation projects, have a higher potential of producing a better impact and sustainability.
The level of community and government <i>ownership</i> of DIPECHO projects in Central Asia is generally low.	<b>R31.</b> DIPECHO partners should systematically use and build upon the existing community structures rather than creating the new ones. <b>R33.</b> They should pay more attention to exploring traditional ways of DM in communities. <b>R34.</b> They should invest into more training in using participatory needs assessment techniques.	The level of community and government ownership directly affects the impact and sustainability of DIPECHO interventions.
Communities and government generally perceive DP/DRR as a “lower priority”	<b>R36.</b> DG ECHO and DIPECHO partners should accept the public perception of DP/DRR as having a relatively <i>lower</i> priority, focusing their interventions on <i>mainstreaming</i> DP/DRR into other development activities.	Accepting the reality of beneficiaries’ perception results in increasing community ownership and enhancing the projects’ impact and sustainability.
Few DIPECHO partners in Central Asia apply an integrated approach in their projects <i>consistently</i> .	<b>R37.</b> DG ECHO should continue encouraging the partners to apply an integrated approach in all their projects with the view of <i>mainstreaming</i> DP/DRR into other development activities.	Mainstreaming/integrating DP/DRR into other development activities generally results in a better impact, more innovation and a higher level of sustainability
Many DIPECHO projects in Central Asia tend focus more on <i>quantity</i> and <i>coverage</i> rather than <i>quality</i> .	<b>R38.</b> DIPECHO partners should focus more on enhancing the <i>quality</i> of their project planning and implementation, reducing the programme coverage wherever it contributes to enhancing impact and sustainability.	Investing in more sustainable intervention in a smaller number of target communities results in increasing the quality of interventions.
Many local NGOs working with DIPECHO partners, demonstrate results, innovation, creativity and openness to integrating DRR into their main activities.	<b>R39.</b> DG ECHO should continue encouraging the partners to work with/through qualified local NGOs.	Innovativeness and enthusiasm of local NGOs contributes to increasing sustainability of the DIPECHO DP/DRR interventions.

<p>Few DIPECHO projects are designed to be completed within the 15 months' DIPECHO funding cycle. Most intend continuing their projects assuming that there <i>will</i> be funding from new DIPECHO action plans.</p>	<p><b>R43.</b> DIPECHO programme should retain its current 15-month funding cycle. DG ECHO should encourage the partners to complete all the project activities within 15 months without extension.</p>	<p>Strictly adhering to a defined funding cycle encourages a more innovative approach to project design and implementation, helps defining phasing down and phasing out strategies and encourages communities to rely on their own resources.</p>
<p><b>Strategic Issues (DG ECHO/Brussels)</b></p>		
<p><b>Main Conclusions</b></p>	<p><b>Recommendations</b></p>	<p><b>Lessons to be learned</b></p>
<p>As an emergency response agency, DG ECHO has a number of institutional constraints in directly implementing DP/DRR activities which prevent it from being able to cover all community DP/DRR needs in Central Asia in a sustainable way.</p>	<p><b>R46.</b> DIPECHO programme in Central Asia should be re-focused on “<i>strategic advocacy</i>”, i.e. maximizing the level of awareness of all stakeholders, civil society and aid actors about the importance of DP/DRR and contributing to enhancing their willingness and ability to include DP/DRR in their programmes. <b>R47.</b> The new strategic direction could be formalised in the <i>DP/DRR Strategic Advocacy Orientation note</i>, clarifying roles and responsibilities and identifying various advocacy activities, objectives, targets, milestones, budget etc.</p>	<p>Applying the new approach would require a substantial <i>change of perspective</i> from DG ECHO. Otherwise it might be tempted to continue thinking in terms of “needs first”, sticking to “what worked in the past”, continuing its activities unchanged and being reluctant to pass parts of the programme to other actors.</p>
<p>Directly addressing community DP/DRR needs in Central Asia within the limited DG ECHO budget only allows achieving limited maximum coverage, impact and sustainability. Major development donors are better equipped than DG ECHO for addressing these.</p>	<p><b>R49.</b> The DG ECHO strategic advocacy should be aimed at <i>mainstreaming/integrating</i> DP/DRR into other stakeholders’ programmes and activities. DG ECHO should develop technical expertise for advising on identifying the areas for mainstreaming DP/DRR and in implementing it. <b>R48.</b> While continuing DP/DRR advocacy among the population and host governments via implementing DIPECHO projects, DG ECHO should prioritize advocacy aimed at major development donors within and outside EC.</p>	<p>Advocating for mainstreaming DP/DRR into other projects and activities with major aid and development agencies can ensure higher coverage, increased impact and sustainability of DP/DRR interventions.</p>
<p>DG ECHO has</p>	<p><b>R51.</b> The DG ECHO should continue</p>	<p>DG ECHO technical</p>

<p>substantial field-based experience and technical expertise in implementing DP and DRR projects at the grass-root level. However, it currently lacks working knowledge of the DP/DRR activities of other major donors.</p>	<p>backing its advocacy work with the major development donors by its field-based experience in implementing DP/DRR projects at the grass-root level. <b>R50.</b> DG ECHO should establish a comprehensive <i>mapping</i> of who's doing what in DP/DRR/DM, identifying the areas where DP and DRR could be successfully mainstreamed into the major development programmes.</p>	<p>expertise in implementing DP and DRR projects at the grass-root level constitutes its unique comparative advantage in advocating for DP/DRR.</p>
<p>DIPECHO should stay in Central Asia until there is enough awareness from other stakeholders and major donors to integrate/mainstream DP/DRR into their programmes and activities.</p>	<p><b>R52.</b> It would be realistic to start any phasing down of DIPECHO programme in Central Asia by the end of DIPECHO VII at the earliest. Should more development donors and other actors start actively integrating/mainstreaming DP/DRR into their activities as a result of the DG ECHO advocacy, an earlier phasing down of DIPECHO in Central Asia could be considered.</p>	<p>Advocating for mainstreaming DP/DRR into other projects and activities and developing technical expertise to assist other agencies in it could potentially become one of the main areas of DG ECHO involvement in DP/DRR.</p>
<p>Most DP/DRR programmes deal with the consequences of the environmental changes attributed to climate change. DG ECHO could be involved in adaptation to climate change at the local and community level.</p>	<p><b>R53. R54.</b> To deal with the climate change, DG ECHO should define its strategy and develop its knowledge base and expertise in the matter <b>R55.</b> Should DG ECHO keeps expanding its involvement in DRR (by i.a. including climate change) it could consider possibility of establishing a permanent DRR technical unit at the DG ECHO/Brussels.</p>	<p>Climate change could become an opportunity for DG ECHO to expand the scope of its DRR activities. In such a perspective, DG ECHO should first identify carefully what aspects of Climate Change it would address.</p>

## 1. INTRODUCTION

### 1.1. Background

15. Central Asia is particularly vulnerable to natural and man-made disasters. The Central Asia's political, economic and social transition severely affected the population's development. The inhabitants of this region are some of the poorest and most vulnerable in the countries of the former Soviet Union. Following the collapse of the Soviet Union, poverty and unemployment increased, overall output decreased and social and education expenditures dropped sharply. Frequent small-scale disasters – mainly earthquakes, landslides, mudslides and floods - significantly impact the daily lives of the population already struggling with the economic situation.

16. Taking into account the permanent threat to the region posed by the small-scale disasters, and the increasing vulnerability of the population due to the fragile economy and high levels of poverty, in 2003 DG ECHO decided to implement a DIPECHO programme in Central Asia. Between April 2003 and July 2008 four DIPECHO action plans have been successfully implemented in Tajikistan, Kyrgyzstan, Uzbekistan and Turkmenistan, with the Vth Action Plan (started in July 2007) being currently implemented.

17. An evaluation of the first three Action Plans took place between June and July 2006. The evaluation concluded that the first three DIPECHO programmes contributed to reducing the impact of hazards, ensuring preparedness to respond and establishing early warning/intervention systems. Noting that DIPECHO has provided a more systematic way of addressing the associated risks, the evaluation identified a number of key areas for improving its efficiency and effectiveness.

18. This independent evaluation of DIPECHO programme in Central Asia has been commissioned by DG ECHO following the completion of DIPECHO IVth Action Plan and during the mid-term implementation of DIPECHO Vth Action Plan. It is intended to assist DG ECHO in preparing the financial decision for the 6th Action Plan (to be launched in 2010) and in deciding on the future - and possible phasing down - of the DIPECHO programme in Central Asia.

### 1.2. Purpose and Objective

19. The main objective of the present evaluation is to provide an *independent* structured evaluation of the results of the DIPECHO programme in Central Asia in line with DG ECHO legal basis 1257/96. The purpose of the evaluation is:

- to assess the outputs of the DIPECHO IVth and Vth action plans and the impact of the DIPECHO programme since its launch in 2003;
- to recommend on appropriate methodology to capitalize on overall achievements in order to improve the DIPECHO programme added-value and to ensure the sustainability of the funded operations;

- to assess the level of disaster preparedness reached so far in the region; to assess how far the long term intervention instruments of other actors incorporate DRR activities and how this affect the achievements of DIPECHO interventions;
- to recommend on the scope of future interventions or phasing down of DG ECHO intervention in Disaster Preparedness in the region.

### 1.3. Methodology

#### 1.3.1. Evaluation activities

20. After briefing in Brussels, the team continued the evaluation by conducting the field work in Tajikistan, Uzbekistan and Kyrgyzstan. In each country the evaluators conducted the following activities:

- *An initial briefing with DIPECHO partners* explaining the purpose of the evaluation. During each briefing the team emphasized that the evaluation primarily aims at assessing the relevance, impact, efficiency and sustainability of DIPECHO programme in Central Asia, the level of coordination with the Government and amongst the partners, as well as at identifying and reviewing the best practices in DP and DRR, and producing the recommendations to DG ECHO regarding its managing and funding of the DIPECHO programme.
- *Meetings with Ministries (or Committee) of Emergencies' representatives at the national and local levels.* In Tajikistan the team interviewed the Chairman of CoEs, the Head of Training Unit at CoEs, Head of Emergency and Ecology Unit, Office of the President, Republic of Tajikistan, and Head of CoES, GBAO. In Uzbekistan the team met with the Director of the Civil Protection Department, MoES of Uzbekistan and the Head of the MoES for Tashkent Oblast. Finally, in Kyrgyzstan, the team interviewed the Deputy Minister of Emergencies, the Chief of the Department of External Affairs and Finance of the MoES and the Head of MoES for Osh Oblast.
- *Meetings with DIPECHO partners and visiting project sites.* With the exception of CARE, whose representatives were not available during the time allocated by DG ECHO for the evaluation, the evaluation team either met with and/or visited the project sites of all DIPECHO IV and V Partners. In *Tajikistan* the team interviewed representatives of SCF, UNICEF, ISDR, ACTED, UNDP, ACT-Central Asia, WHO, and GAA. It visited the projects implemented by HWA and Tajik RC (nearby Dushanbe), Oxfam, Mission East, CARITAS and ACTED (Khatlon district), FOCUS Humanitarian Assistance (GBAO), and attended a meeting of the regional REACT (Khatlon district). In *Uzbekistan* the team interviewed the representatives of Handicap International, World Vision International, UNICEF and the Netherlands Red Cross /Red Crescent of Uzbekistan and visited the projects implemented by UNICEF and the Netherlands Red Cross (nearby Tashkent). Due to the difficulties faced by Handicap International and World Vision International in their relations with the Government, the evaluation team could not visit their projects. Finally, in *Kyrgyzstan* the team interviewed representatives of UNDP, IOM and SCF, and visited the projects

implemented by NRCS/ KRCS, UNDP, ACTED, IOM (Kara Suu District, Osh oblast). The Team Leader also attended in a meeting of the technical advisory group to the MoES and the Inter-ministerial Council for the Prevention and Liquidation of Emergencies (IMCPLE) created with the assistance of IOM within DIPECHO V. With the agreement of the evaluation team all the projects to be visited were selected by the partners themselves.

- *Meeting with local NGOs* that had been involved in DIPECHO I - V projects in cooperation with DIPECHO international partners. In Kyrgyzstan the team visited the small-scale projects implemented in cooperation with IOM by the three local NGOs – *Women Leaders of Jalalabad, Craftsmen of Joy* and *DAI*. In Bishkek the team also interviewed the representatives of the two other local NGOs - *Camp A-la-too* and *Shoola*.
- *Meeting with other international donors*, especially those that have interest in financing, or have financed previously, DP, DRR or general DM projects. The evaluation team interviewed the representatives of DFID, SDC, ADB, GTZ and UNDP GEF Programme in Tajikistan and Kyrgyzstan.
- *Debriefing meetings with partners*. During the field visits the team kept sharing its observations and specific suggestions on the projects with the DIPECHO partners. After the completion of each *region* (e.g. Kulyab, GBAO, Tashkent, Osh etc.) visit, the team invited all the partners visited for a debriefing meeting and shared its observations and suggestions with all the partners who were available to join. At the end of each *country* visit the team shared its overall preliminary findings, conclusions and possible recommendations with all available DIPECHO partners. In addition, several briefing/update meetings on the team's preliminary findings were held with the DG ECHO Central Asia region management.
- *Attending DIPECHO National Conferences* in Dushanbe (Tajikistan), Tashkent (Uzbekistan) and Osh (Kyrgyzstan) on 12-19 May 2009. During the conferences the team contributed to the discussion on DIPECHO good practices in Central Asia outlining some of its conclusions and recommendations. The team used this opportunity to conduct additional interviews with the partners that were not available during the initial evaluation, to collect additional information and to verify its conclusions and recommendations with the partners, DG ECHO staff and representatives of the governments. The extra information and feedback allowed the team to better identify the real issues behind some of the facts observed during the evaluation: this resulted in better adapting the contents of the report to the needs of DG ECHO and partners' staff, as well as in proposing more focused and practical recommendations.

### 1.3.2. Evaluation criteria

21. In accordance with the Terms of Reference the evaluation team assessed the overall impact, efficiency and effectiveness of the DIPECHO IV and V Action Plans in Central Asia based on the relative level of success of the 32 DIPECHO-funded projects (17 DIPECHO IV projects and 15 DIPECHO V projects, 26 projects at the community level and 6 projects aimed at supporting respective governments) implemented by 15 DIPECHO partners. In addition 8

different sites of DIPECHO I, II, or III projects were also visited. As shown in the table bellow, the 32 projects reviewed cover all the range of activities performed under the DIPECHO program<sup>1</sup>:

	Number	%
Total DIPECHO IV and V projects reviewed	<b>32</b>	<b>100</b>
EWS/monitoring	6	19
PRA	9	28
Village DM plans	19	59
DM village committees	13	41
Rescue teams	17	53
DM training	21	66
First Aid training	4	13
Small scale mitigation projects	12	38
Activities at schools	15	47
DM mapping	9	28
Supporting the government	25	78

All these activities fall under the five components of the DIPECHO program as defined by DG ECHO: 1) local disaster management, 2) Stock building of emergency and relief items, 3) Small scale infrastructure and services, 4) Information, education, communication, 5) Institutional linkage and advocacy. The operational part of the report is structured along these. In addition, the team made a number of sites visits on the DIPECHO IV and V programs<sup>2</sup>:

	Mitigation installations			Schools		Rescue teams			
	visited	total		visited	total		visited	total	
<b>Tajikistan</b>		4	RC		594	RC	1	248	RC
		16	GAA		18	GAA		18	GAA
		60	Mission EAST	1	8	Mission EAST	2	86	Mission EAST
	1	?	HWA	1	12	OXFAM	2	37	OXFAM
	1	?	Caritas						
	2	?	ACTED						
	3	90	FOCUS						
<b>Sub-total</b>	<b>7</b>	<b>170</b>		<b>2</b>	<b>632</b>		<b>5</b>	<b>389</b>	
<b>Uzbekistan</b>				1	100	UNICEF			
				1	?	RC			
<b>Sub-total</b>				<b>2</b>	<b>100</b>				
<b>Kyrgyzstan</b>	1	?	RC	1	?	RC	1	?	RC
	1	7	UNDP	1	?	UNDP	2	15	UNDP
		9	ACTED		20	ACTED		60	ACTED
		10	ActCA					10	ActCA
				2	?	IOM	1	?	IOM
<b>Sub-total</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>26</b>		<b>4</b>	<b>20</b>		<b>4</b>	<b>85</b>	
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>9</b>	<b>196</b>		<b>8</b>	<b>752</b>		<b>9</b>	<b>474</b>	

Along these visits, the evaluators could also see and discuss other activities of DM at local level (planning, mapping, training, committees and first aid).

<sup>1</sup> Source: projects summaries

<sup>2</sup> Question marks are due to non availability of fully disaggregated data ; cf. § 48.

The partners' projects and programme activities were assessed against the following OECD/DAC evaluation criteria:

- Impact, efficiency, effectiveness and sustainability of DIPECHO partners' interventions;
- Programme and project coverage;
- Examples of good practices;
- Coordination with the Government and amongst the partners;
- Relevance/appropriateness of work under the DIPECHO programme

22. Wherever relevant, the project and programme activities were also assessed against the cross-cutting issues, such as gender, fulfilling the objectives of Linking Relief, Rehabilitation and Development (LRRD) and compliance with the Hyogo Framework for Action (HFA).

#### 1.3.2.1. Impact, efficiency and effectiveness

23. The team mainly evaluated the projects' *impact* by assessing to what extent the actual project outputs (e.g. the installations built as part of mitigation projects, trees planted, rescue teams trained, village disaster management committees created, local disaster management plans produced etc.) were still present within a community at the time of evaluation, and to what extent they were actually utilized (or could be meaningfully utilized) by the project beneficiaries. In most cases the members of the community were also asked to describe how a particular DP or DRR issue was addressed by the community *before* the DIPECHO project(s). Their feedback was then compared to the outputs and results of DIPECHO Project interventions to determine to what extent DIPECHO projects actually made a difference.

24. Two factors which contribute to both impact and sustainability are the level of *efficiency and effectiveness* of a project. The project *effectiveness* was assessed by examining to what extent the project outcomes contributed to achieving the DIPECHO programme goals of "reducing the vulnerability of populations living in areas most affected by recurrent natural hazards" and "supporting strategies that enable local communities and institutions to better prepare for, mitigate and respond adequately to natural disasters".

25. Wherever appropriate, the team assessed the project *efficiency* by comparing the DIPECHO contribution to a project against its possible financial benefit (i.e. preventing damage to property, agricultural lands, possible loss of income etc.) This was done on a case-by-case basis, taking into account the methodology and approach adopted by the partner in their project implementation and the problems they faced. In order to better assess feasibility and appropriateness of various types of DIPECHO DP and DRR interventions, the team looked specifically into the cost-efficiency of the small-scale mitigation projects as compared to other types of DP/DRR activities.



### 1.3.2.2. Sustainability

26. DG ECHO generally distinguishes between the following types of sustainability (see *Guidelines for proposals under Fifth DIPECHO Action Plan for Central Asia*):

- *financial* sustainability, i.e. ensuring that the “project activities are *financed* after the EC funding ends”;
- *institutional* sustainability, i.e. ensuring the “local “ownership” of the results of the action”;
- *local* sustainability, i.e. ensuring that the “links and coordination with the relevant local authorities” are maintained;
- *policy-level* sustainability i.e. ensuring that the action has a “structural impact” e.g. improved legislation, following codes of conduct, methods and methodologies adopted etc.

27. The evaluation team looked into all the above components of projects’ sustainability, paying a particular attention to examining whether the project outputs/activities could be continued and sustained by the community itself within a foreseeable length of time (financial, local and institutional sustainability). This was done mostly by assessing the level of communities’ (or the final beneficiaries’) genuine ownership of the project outputs and their motivation to continue and develop the project activities (e.g. running regular emergency drills and rescue teams’ simulation exercises, thereby learning and improving the systems, maintaining the mitigation installations, continuing awareness campaigns etc.) after DIPECHO partners’ withdrawal

28. Most importantly, in all cases the team was assessing to what extent the project outputs (e.g. rescue teams, people trained in emergency evacuation etc.) *were* or *could* potentially be *used* in actual emergency situations (e.g. whether a rescue team already “rescued” people, whether it would be physically available during an emergency, whether it could – or had the means to - assemble in time, whether the community was ever evacuated in time during drills and simulation exercises etc).

29. The team viewed positively the communities’ initiatives to adopt their own funding strategies to continue project activities to a stage of community self-financing (achieving financial sustainability). It also recognizes that a number of DIPECHO-funded DP and DRR activities in Central Asia can hardly be fully *financially* sustainable within foreseeable future, and that sometimes alternative sources of international funding had to be secured to ensure that the DIPECHO-initiated projects achieve a desired level of impact. However, the evaluation team did not consider “substituting” one foreign donor by another, relying on the partners’ “commitment” to continue the funding on the own, or building the community’s capacity to apply for international funding as evidence of ensuring the projects’ financial sustainability.

#### 1.3.2.3. Program and project coverage

30. The original idea of the DIPECHO Programme was that interventions should be “pilot interventions” aimed at exploring various ways of enhancing DP and DRR in disaster-prone areas with a view of adapting and replicating the most successful of them later within an area or across different areas.

31. While assessing the projects’ “coverage” (i.e. numbers of beneficiaries, span of the programme across geographical areas, number of activities - e.g. trainings – implemented etc.), the team did not automatically consider a higher or lower project/programme coverage to be an indicator of a project success or failure. Rather, the team viewed coverage in association with sustainability. Coverage was only considered as an indicator of success when the activities in question produced an observable impact and could be considered as sufficiently sustainable.

32. With this in view, during field work, without evidence to the contrary, the team generally focused on examining the *quality* of a particular project intervention, generally viewing the “smaller” (in coverage) but “better” (in quality of design and implementation) DIPECHO projects as more successful.

#### 1.3.2.4. Examples of good practices

33. “Good” (or, “best”, as frequently referred to in literature, DG ECHO documents and by DIPECHO partners) practices has multiple definitions depending on the agency and level of the intervention. Previous evaluations also suggest that certain confusion exists as to what a “good/best practice” may constitute: the existing documents on the subject often list “projects”, “activities”, “tools”, “methodologies”, “approaches” and “principles” as good practices without making a clear distinction between them, while most DIPECHO partners simply refer to their regular project activities as “good” or “best” practices.

34. To assess a specific activity or its elements as “good practice” the team used the UNISDR criteria proposed in its *Guidelines for Submission of Contributions for Good Practices in Tajikistan* i.e. the activities/projects that “show *results, innovative* qualities and potential for *replication*”. Only the activities with a demonstrated *impact* and showing elements or actual or potential *sustainability* were retained as examples of good practices.

35. Based on the field findings, the team attempted to identify some of the key approaches that appear to be producing consistently successful results across various DIPECHO IV and V projects in Central Asia. It also suggested distinguishing between the good practices at the *project* level (e.g. focusing on mitigation projects) and *within* a project (i.e. what made a particular mitigation project work). Wherever appropriate, during the site visits and interviews the team assisted the partners in identifying the elements of good practices within their existing projects and/or activities. The results are detailed in the Annexes C and D of this report.

#### 1.3.2.5. Relevance/appropriateness of work under DIPECHO

36. Since all the Central Asian countries are prone to various natural and man-made disasters, and since all DIPECHO projects directly address the DP and DRR needs in the region, they can all generally be considered as relevant by definition. The team therefore focused more on assessing to what extent an activity or project was particularly relevant in a specific micro-context, and whether *other* possible interventions could have *better* contributed to addressing the identified needs.

37. In addition, since DIPECHO programmes are implemented within a specific DG ECHO mandate as outlined in the Humanitarian Aid Decisions ECHO/DIP/BUD/2006/03000 (DIPECHO IV) and ECHO/DIP/BUD/2008/01000 (DIPECHO V) on the financing of humanitarian operations from the general budget of the European Community in Central Asia, the evaluation team reviewed to what extent the current interventions fit within the DIPECHO programme goals and objectives.

#### 1.3.2.6. Coordination with Government and amongst partners

38. Although DG ECHO is not mandated to work with the national and local Governments directly, to be able to participate in the programme DIPECHO partners are required to fully liaise and coordinate with the respective Governments. Within DIPECHO programme this mostly means coordinating the project interventions with the Ministries of Emergency Situations, the Local Government, line agencies and associated specialist agencies directly related to DIPECHO projects.

39. In all Central Asia countries visited the emergency management and response systems are directly managed by the Government. The team mainly focused on evaluating the level of coordination with the central and local Governments in the region by assessing to what extent DIPECHO projects fit into and strengthen the existing emergency response systems. Wherever such a system is underdeveloped or inefficient, the team looked into how DIPECHO interventions contributed to the government's effort in developing one.

40. The team looked, in particular, at the observable impact and sustainability of various initiatives aimed at building capacity of the governmental structures and bodies. Wherever relevant, it also identified hindrances caused by the Government systems in DIPECHO IV and V projects.

41. The effectiveness of REACT (Tajikistan) and the DRCU (Kyrgyzstan) coordination mechanisms was mainly assessed by verifying their actual performance in coordinating national and international emergency response during the recent emergencies, as well as by the extent to which the respective governments used (or bypassed) it in their decision-making.

42. The level of coordination amongst partners was assessed by verifying to what extent DIPECHO partners' interventions were coordinated in terms of the activities implemented and communities covered; the team also tried to assess the level of exchange of information and

knowledge between the partner agencies, actual or potential complementarities in their interventions and – wherever possible - their impact on the beneficiary communities.

### 1.3.3. The evaluation report

43. After an initial briefing in Brussels (reported through the Inception Note and feedback) and the field work in Tajikistan, Uzbekistan and Kyrgyzstan (reported through three separate Aide Memoirs and feedback), the present report is designed to document the key findings, conclusions and recommendations of the evaluation team regarding the impact, relevance, effectiveness and sustainability of the Central Asia DIPECHO IV and V Action Plans, as well as the future of DIPECHO programme in Central Asia.

44. In accordance with the Terms of Reference, the main body of the report and the recommendations are subdivided into the Operational and Strategic Issues, followed by the sections on some cross-cutting and country-specific issues. At the request of DG ECHO, the Operational section of the report is structured by the sectors of intervention suggested in the Humanitarian Aid Decision ECHO/DIP/BUD/2008/01000 (DIPECHO V) and the respective Guidelines for Proposals for DIPECHO V.

45. Apart from the findings obtained during the Brussels briefing, from the reference material provided and during the field visits, the ensuing report also incorporates the feedback from DG ECHO on the three country Aide Memoirs submitted, as well as the feedback obtained during the three National Conferences in Tajikistan, Uzbekistan and Kyrgyzstan (12-19 May 2009).

46. The evaluation team notes that all the conclusions and recommendations in this report are based on the feedback from DG ECHO officials, DIPECHO partners, relevant central and local authorities, the programme beneficiaries, and a selected number of other donors. Most recommendations outline a possible alternative course of action aimed at increasing DIPECHO programme efficiency and effectiveness *within its existing mandate*, organizational and financial capacity and limitations. All the recommendations represent the professional opinion of the evaluation team members only: all, some or part of them could therefore be accepted and implemented or rejected by DG ECHO.

### 1.3.4. Challenges and biases

47. During the evaluation, the team came up against a number of challenges and a number of biases on the team which they attempted to mitigate as much as possible for this evaluation:

- *The time allocated for such a comprehensive evaluation was relatively short.* Although the evaluation team did meet many stakeholders and/or visited many project sites over a three-week period, some of the key DIPECHO covered regions could not be reached for logistical and time availability reasons. The team succeeded to increase the number of areas and sites visited thanks to the excellent coordination, commitment and cooperation among DIPECHO partners.

- *A part of the evaluation mission coincided with the local holiday's period (Nawroz) lasting for over a week.* This inevitably limited the number of sites visited and the availability of staff for meeting the team during the initial trip. This was partly mitigated with the assistance, support and understanding of most DIPECHO partners; in addition, the team succeeded to collect additional information during the National Conferences (12-19 May 2009).
- *The team could only physically observe a limited number of DIPECHO project activities in the field* (e.g. 9 mitigation projects, 8 school projects, 9 rescue teams etc.). To form an informed opinion about the programme activities, the first-hand observations were therefore supplemented by reviewing the existing project documentation for other similar projects, as well as by interviews with the project managers and, wherever possible, the project beneficiaries.
- While the team had access to all the DG ECHO DIPECHO project data, *most of it did not contain sufficiently disaggregated overall information about the DIPECHO IV and V projects* (i.e. the total number of small-scale mitigation projects implemented, total number of rescue teams created and trained, total number of village DM committees created, all the schools covered etc.). Wherever necessary, the team had therefore to rely on the estimates based on the partners' project descriptions and project reports.
- *Experiential Bias.* The Team Leader has significant long-term experience in the disaster management sector in Kyrgyzstan at both community and national level, having worked previously as Team Leader for the World Bank/ADB project there. The other International Evaluator has substantial previous experience with the International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies and the National Red Cross/Red Crescent Societies in the region. The team addressed this by ensuring that respective projects were primarily visited and assessed by the member with least previous exposure to the country or the partner.

## 2. OPERATIONAL ISSUES

### 2.1. Local disaster management components

#### 2.1.1. Community Disaster Management planning

48. DG ECHO field monitoring records generally affirm that most disaster management plans produced in communities with the assistance of DIPECHO partners contributed to improving community disaster response capacity and action. Similarly, according to the same field monitoring records, communities often reported that simulations and drill exercises helped them to respond to natural disasters faster, better and in a more organized and systematic way. At the same time the on-site observations and interviews conducted by the evaluation team indicated that in most cases the actual DM planning in communities was limited to identifying safe places for evacuation, specifying the evacuation routes, installing a very basic early warning system (a bell, gong or similar device) and appointing those responsible for the early warning (i.e. “ringing the bell”).

49. While many communities interviewed reported having conducted disaster *simulations* and drills, none of them indicated that the results of the simulation exercise (e.g. the time required for evacuation, the number of people evacuated etc.) were actually used to draw conclusions and to improve the system (e.g. to speed up evacuation, identify gaps in skills and competencies of those involved in the simulation etc). Overall, most communities visited confirmed that – apart from being potentially able to respond to emergencies in a more “systematic” and “organized” way - there is often little difference between the ways they responded to emergencies *before* and *after* creating village disaster management plans.

50. Recognizing that disaster management planning at the community level is an important component for building the communities’ resilience and their capacity to better respond to emergencies, it is, however, important to note that most countries in the region have a long-standing experience of operating under the Soviet centralized planning system. This system required institutions and organizations to formally produce various "plans" at virtually every level of management and administration (including kindergartens). With the exception of industrial and agricultural production plans, the system however demanded little in terms of actually implementing the plans, or ensuring that planned activities produced any observable impact.

51. According to the observations of the team, the substantial part of the population and many officials in the region still perceive "planning" as mostly a formal activity to be simply reported on, rather than to be used for practical purposes. DM planning in communities is often introduced by the same local officials and MoES officers that were in charge of it during the Soviet time: this only reinforces the above perception. Combined with the local culture of generally accepting whatever is proposed and a certain tendency to “please” the donor, this often results in communities producing “DM plans” that risk “staying on the shelf”.

52. With this in view, a mere fact of "producing" and "having" a written DM plan in a community in Central Asia – in particular since its real value can only be tested during an actual

emergency – is simply not sufficient to ensure that it will be followed. To maximize the probability of the communities actually *acting* according to the above plans in case of emergency, it is essential to continue supplementing DM plans development by conducting an increasing number of practical simulation exercises and drills. Such exercises should imperatively involve *all* the population liable to be affected by a potential emergency.

### Recommendation

R1. It is suggested that DIPECHO partners focus less on *producing* community disaster management plans, and more on *testing, applying and reviewing* them through practical drills and exercises. Wherever possible, such exercises should involve *all* the population liable to be affected by a potential emergency.

#### 2.1.2. Capacity building through training

53. Most DIPECHO projects in Central Asia include enhancing the level of DP/DRR awareness in communities, generally using classroom training (workshops, seminars etc.) as the *key* approach to DM capacity-building of both communities and the government structures. Nearly all partners produce a substantial amount of various training and visual materials. Most training activities generally involve one- to five-days workshops, often followed up by practical drills and simulation exercises.

54. Nearly all DIPECHO partners in Central Asia tend to measure and report their achievements in training simply by the number of trainings or participants trained. Many focus on various “training of trainers” programmes, using essentially the same “cascade training” approach. According to most interviewed, this is often done in the belief that the trainees will pass the competencies gained through trainings back to the community, hence increasing its resilience to disasters. However, none of the projects visited provided the evidence that it actually happens: apart from a few isolated cases, most of interviewees failed to report any examples of such transfer of knowledge.

55. The evaluation team recognizes that most DIPECHO-funded DM training programmes in communities generally contribute to creating and maintaining a certain level of awareness of disaster risks among the potentially affected local populations. There is certain evidence that the communities which benefited from DIPECHO DM training were somewhat less affected by the recent natural disasters in the region (e.g. earthquakes in Kyrgyzstan in December 2007). At the same time, it appears that the quality of DM training can be improved.

56. Though all projects reviewed attempt to increase the effectiveness of their training by applying elements of participatory methodology, it still remains very basic (simple group work, exercises and case studies). Nearly all classroom sessions for adults observed by the team sooner or later fell into a standard “teacher-asks-student gives-a-correct-answer” pattern.

57. All the examples of classroom training in communities reviewed during the evaluation included a substantial element of “theory”, somewhat at the expense of practice. Training sessions reviewed usually aimed at increasing the participants’ “understanding and knowledge”

(e.g. about various types of disasters, including the ones generally not encountered in Central Asia, theory of planning etc.) rather than teaching the practical skills or enhancing their abilities to perform specific tasks (i.e. what participants are able to *do* after the training). Though most DIPECHO partners do supplement the classroom training with practical exercises, real-life drills and simulations, the relative amount of time spent on “theory” and “knowledge” still remains disproportionately large compared to the time spent on really useful “practice” and “skills”.

58. Many partners employ former MoES officers as coordinators and technical experts for their DIPECHO projects. While this allows establishing closer relations and trust with MoES, many of them still tend to apply traditional top-down Soviet-style approach to DRR and DP training. This results in most of the training activities still being largely based on the Soviet-style civil defense manuals and methodology, thus somewhat reducing the impact of training and potentially limiting the value-adding input of international innovation and best practice.

59. In the view of the team, the true *added value* of DM training programmes lies in assisting the entire communities in acquiring and *practicing* a basic set of *skills* and *behaviors* in case of actual, community-specific emergencies (e.g. earthquakes, mudslides, floods etc.). Most of it usually simply involves a set of specific actions and non-structural mitigation measures (earthquakes), activating an early warning system (gongs, bells etc.) and rapid evacuation to safe ground (floods, mudslides) either previously known to the community or identified during the DM planning exercises. Therefore increasing the amount of time spent during training on *practicing* such skills (rather than “*talking*” about them) would substantially increase the probability of the community behaving in this way during an actual emergency.

60. To ensure a more action- and practice-oriented approach in DIPECHO training programmes it would be advisable, for instance, to formulate the training objectives focusing on what the participants are expected to *do* (rather than to *know*, or *understand*) after the training, and designing the respective training sessions in such a way that participants actually *perform* (rather than *talk* about) the required tasks during training. For example, instead of merely identifying the evacuation routes on the map, the participants could be asked to physically move along the identified routes to the designed evacuation point within a specific time; rather than discussing the importance of planting trees as a mitigation measures, they could physically plant trees, receiving any necessary information during this exercise etc.

61. The team recognizes that some DIPECHO partners already use the above action-oriented methodology in their training. Also, many do conduct the simulation exercises and drills *after* their regular classroom training sessions. The team, however, would encourage all the partners to make such simulations and action-oriented exercises the *core* element of their training, introducing only the minimum amount of theory required, preferably after or during such exercises.

## Recommendations

R2. In their DM training programmes DIPECHO partners should focus more on assisting the *entire* communities in acquiring and *practicing* a basic set of *skills* and *behaviors* in case of actual, community-specific emergencies and ensuring that participants actually apply in



practice the knowledge and skills obtained during training. It would generally be advisable to substantially reduce the "theory" element in the training curricula, increasing the time for practicing the skills.

- R3. To ensure a more action- and practice-oriented approach in DIPECHO training programmes, the partners should preferably formulate the action-oriented training objectives focusing on what the participants are expected to *do* after the training. It is furthermore suggested to design DM training sessions in such a way that participants actually *perform* the required tasks during training; wherever feasible the simulations, drills and action-oriented exercises should become the *core* element of DM training programmes.
- R4. Any proposed "train-the-trainer" activities should only be funded provided the partners could submit sufficient evidence that the future trainers would actually perform the training for which they were trained.
- R5. DIPECHO partners should consider better utilizing the experience and capacity of their staff who are former MoES employees where appropriate (e.g. cooperating with MoES) rather than where their former experience and knowledge might be outdated or insufficient (e.g. designing and delivering training programmes).

#### 2.1.3. Community rescue teams

62. Experience shows that the populations affected by a disaster are always the first to provide relief to the victims. The difficult terrain (e.g. isolated mountainous regions), the lack of infrastructure (mostly roads) and the nature of disasters (avalanches, landslides, mudslides) in Central Asia effectively leave most remote communities on their own for a prolonged period of time after an emergency. In countries like Tajikistan, it can take several days before the first relief provided by the professional rescue teams can reach the victims. In addition, the governmental budget and official emergency response resources are usually limited: all the three countries in Central Asia require significant support in building the capacity and the resource base of their respective emergency response ministries.

63. To enhance the capacity of community members as "first responders" most DIPECHO partners in all the three Central Asian countries visited are actively engaged in creating various community "emergency response teams". With few exceptions (e.g. NRCS/URCS emergency response teams in Uzbekistan) most such teams are expected to perform search and rescue during emergencies.

64. In Tajikistan, for instance, following the initiative of Tajik CoEs many DIPECHO partners started creating, training, and equipping "*semi-professional*" community-based *rescue* teams at the community, sub-district and district levels. According to the Head of CoES training unit, *all* such teams follow a standard full-scale curriculum for professional CoES training teams, including mountain rescue, water rescue, earthquake search and rescue, fire-fighting and first aid. Most teams are carefully selected by CoES staff and trained by professional CoES instructors. In most cases they are expected to act as auxiliary disaster response services for CoES, conducting search and rescue within the first 72 hours after disaster strikes, and before the main specialized

CoES forces arrive to the affected area. According to CoES staff interviewed, the Committee appreciates and highly values DIPECHO assistance in creating, equipping and funding the training for the rescue teams. A fairly similar approach is followed by many DIPECHO partners in Kyrgyzstan.

65. Creating, training and equipping the community-based rescue teams in Central Asia is considered by DG ECHO and many DIPECHO partners as a *key* element of the emergency response system in remote areas. While the idea of equipping communities as “first responders” to a disaster makes a lot of sense in Central Asia, the evaluation team believes that addressing it mainly by creating community-based rescue teams is questionable.

66. While all the Committees or Ministries of Emergencies are clearly in favor of creating community-based rescue teams, nearly all of them lack a clear *vision* and *strategy* for utilizing these teams. Though the volunteer community rescue teams are sometimes considered to be formally “integrated” in the national emergency system (e.g. in Tajikistan volunteer rescuers are officially recognized by the COES and receive certificates of professional rescue workers), none of the Tajikistan CoES staff interviewed, including the ones responsible for selecting and training them, could clarify how CoES sees the community teams fitting into an overall CoES emergency management system, what their primary role is, and how they are expected to operate in case of a major emergency. As a result, most rescue teams presented to the evaluation team in Tajikistan were clearly “over-trained” for whatever tasks they could realistically perform within their community. Since all the teams follow the standard professional CoES rescue curriculum, there were examples when the teams located in the plains were trained in mountain rescue, or teams in areas with no rivers spend time training for water rescue.

67. Both CoES in Tajikistan and MoES in Kyrgyzstan currently lack coherent procedures for deploying the teams. While CoES in Tajikistan, for instance, affirmed that the teams created at district level were expected to be deployed outside their own location at short notice, none of the teams interviewed had any transport, or could only rely on the members’ private cars. In at least one case mentioned to the evaluation team the rescue team members were expected to assemble at the district centre and collect their equipment from the central warehouse, while they all live in the villages located between 10 and 40 km from the assembly point.

68. Overall, in the opinion of the evaluation team, few community rescue teams created in Central Asia are financially and organizationally *sustainable*. Nearly all community rescue teams are formed on a voluntary basis; with the exception of some rescue teams at schools - mainly comprised of school teachers - few team members are permanently employed elsewhere. Sometimes the team members were recruited from among the least educated community members who – due to their low qualifications - had no choice but to stay in the villages instead of migrating for work elsewhere. Despite the attempts of the local authorities to sometimes provide incentives to retain at least some of the trained rescuers in the community, many leave as part of labour migration. Feedback from interviews indicates that at least 20% of any given team left the team after training, mostly in search for a job. Generally few teams can assemble more than 60% of their members for drills or actual emergencies.

69. None of the members of the rescue teams or communities interviewed has actually come up with an idea of creating such teams: in all the cases reported the initiative came directly from the DIPECHO partner or local authorities. In individual discussions with the evaluation team, some rescue team members openly admitted that they were motivated to join the team by a possibility to “get a paid job” or learn extra skills that would increase their chances of getting a job. Interestingly, even some of the CoES staff recognized that the key skills taught during the course – e.g. climbing and mountain rescue - could effectively increase the participants’ chances of obtaining employment, in particular in construction industry.

70. In most cases, neither team members, nor their communities have their own resources to maintain and replace the teams’ equipment. Ministries of Emergencies cannot help either due to severe lack of resources: in one of the regions in Tajikistan visited by the team, CoES even had to disband its *own* professional rescue team after 4 years of successful operation simply due to the budget cuts.

71. According to most DIPECHO partners interviewed, they are generally all aware of the lack of sustainability of rescue teams. Many have been trying to address it. For instance, UNDP in Kyrgyzstan is currently pursuing the initiative to formally recognize the “service” with a community rescue team as an alternative to a compulsory military service. Should that initiative be implemented, it would certainly contribute to enhancing sustainability of community rescue teams. However, in this case DIPECHO partners will need to substantially adjust their rescue teams’ project components, possibly focusing more on supporting the MoD and MoES in implementing this decision and adjusting their training programmes accordingly.

72. Some DIPECHO partners apply a somewhat different approach to addressing emergency response needs at the community level. NRCS/URCS in Uzbekistan, for instance, focuses on creating the community “emergency response” – rather than purely “rescue” – teams. Following the Red Cross/Crescent expertise in emergencies, these teams would specialize in conducting needs assessments and providing material assistance to the affected population (i.e. distributing food and non-food items) rather than in search and rescue. In fact, a possibility to be trained in “search and rescue” is apparently offered to the teams more as an “incentive” to keep them interested and motivated; sometimes it is also used as a “selection tool” for potential candidates to join the professional MoES teams. Generally, with a 30% turnover, few of such volunteer teams are expected to perform the actual rescue in emergencies.

73. Taking into account the substantial difficulties in ensuring sustainability of community-based rescue teams, the evaluation team believes that alternative ways of addressing the community “rescue” needs in case of emergency should be explored. According to the feedback, generally in Central Asia the whole communities - rather than small groups of trained individuals - tend to participate in search and rescue in emergencies. With few exceptions – e.g. knowledge of avalanche danger while rescuing the avalanche victims or awareness of the “crush syndrome” in an earthquake rescue - such work requires a certain level of coordination, but only a fairly limited knowledge and technical skills. With this in view, the team suggests exploring an idea of reinforcing the search and rescue capacity of the community “*as a whole*”. This could be done by i.a. assigning specific emergency responsibilities to every household, training the members of

the existing rescue teams in organizing – rather than directly performing - search and rescue work and designing search and rescue drills and simulation exercises involving the whole community. In the opinion of the team, such shorter and more practice-oriented drills would have a higher impact and would therefore be more cost-efficient than the currently delivered rescue team training. Taking into account that women generally tend to stay in communities rather than migrate in search of work a possibility of involving women more in search and rescue training could also be considered.

### Recommendations

- R6. It is suggested that DIPECHO partners re-consider their priorities in addressing the communities' emergency response needs by focusing mainly on the small-scale mitigation projects, expanding DP and DRR awareness programmes at schools, and expanding first aid training, and investing comparatively less in creating and training the community-based rescue teams.
- R7. Should some DIPECHO partners wish to continue investing into volunteer community rescue teams, they should clarify the proposed scope of operation for the team, its specific tasks and deployment procedures and how they fit into Ministries of Emergency national and local disaster response plans. They should ensure that then teams are only provided with *appropriate* training and equipment to be able to perform the tasks specified. Should the teams are to be deployed outside their base area during an emergency they should have access to sufficient and appropriate means of transport. The project proposals should clearly mention how the trained team members would be *retained*, and how those who leave are planned to be *replaced*. In addition, the partners should clearly indicate how the equipment provided would be maintained and replaced throughout the first 3-5 years of the operation of the team.
- R8. All the Ministries of Emergencies in Central Asia should be encouraged to fully integrate the already existing and possible future community rescue teams into their countries' emergency management systems, by i.a. developing the strategy for creating, training and sustaining such teams, developing the standard operational procedures for their deployment within and outside their base areas, and conducting their joint training with professional rescue teams.
- R9. Wherever feasible, DIPECHO partners could explore the possibilities of supporting, training and equipping the professional rescue teams created within the structure of the Ministries of Emergencies, provided their operational, institutional and financial sustainability could be ensured. Wherever possible, their professional training could include a set of skills to be able to provide support and training to the volunteer community rescue teams.
- R10. To explore possibilities of supporting, strengthening and reinforcing the search and rescue capacity of the community "*as a whole*". This can be done by i.a. assigning specific emergency responsibilities to individual households or individuals (e.g. professional drivers could be responsible for evacuations and transport, shop keepers – for food procurement and supply etc.), training the members of the existing rescue teams in organizing – rather than

directly performing - search and rescue work, designing search and rescue drills and simulation exercises involving the whole community, etc. Taking into account that women generally tend to stay in communities rather than migrate in search of work a possibility of involving women more in search and rescue training could also be considered.

#### 2.1.4. First aid training

74. Many DIPECHO partners, in particular the members of the International Red Cross and Red Crescent Movement, include first aid training as part of their DP activities within DIPECHO-funded projects. Most of it is implemented at schools. In all the schools in the three countries of the Central Asia visited by the evaluation team the students demonstrated a very good level of practical first aid skills.

75. Interestingly, while nearly all DIPECHO projects at schools include substantial and mostly very successful first aid training as part of their DP/DRR activities, relatively few communities benefit from similar programmes. While first aid is generally included in training of the rescue team members, communities in general benefit less from it.

76. In the opinion of the team, the basic first aid training component should be included into as many DP/DRR activities as possible. Training communities in first aid both increases their resilience to disasters, and enhances their safety and security at “normal” times. First aid training is relatively easy to deliver, mostly due to the widespread presence and substantial first aid training capacity of the RC/RC Movement in the region. This does have a clear immediate impact. While very few members of the rescue teams interviewed by the evaluation team had actually participated in any rescue operation since they were trained, nearly 30%, of those trained in first aid (including children) had had the opportunity to provide first aid successfully at home, at schools or within their communities.

#### Recommendation

R11. It is suggested to consider expanding First Aid training programmes. Wherever feasible the DG ECHO should encourage DIPECHO partners to include it as a component in all DP activities at the community level.

### 2.2. Stock building of emergency and relief items

#### 2.2.1. Provision of basic equipment

77. Wherever they are created, most community-based rescue and emergency response teams in the region are systematically provided with the basic relief and rescue kits (shovels, ropes, flashlights, rubber boots, loudspeakers) and the first aid kits. The list of equipment is fairly standardized; its quality varies depending on the experience and financial capacity of the partner, the specific requirements of the team and – sometimes - individual requests of the Ministries of Emergencies: some teams reviewed by the evaluation team were equipped with high quality foreign materials (e.g. professional mountaineering ropes, inflatable boats), while others received locally produced materials of a substantially lesser quality.

78. The teams usually receive the equipment at the end of training; it is often stored at the community center, the house of the team leader, or – e.g. for the district teams - at the premises of the local Ministry of Emergencies. The storage and maintenance conditions seem to entirely depend on the commitment of the team leader and its members; approximately half of the stock reviewed during the evaluation was fully operational: most often the rubber boots and flashlights were missing or unusable due to the batteries expired. Only in a few cases reported to the team the equipment provided was actually used in emergencies, more often than not the communities utilized their own shovels, ropes and other tools during search and rescue.

79. In the view of the evaluation team providing community emergency response teams with appropriate equipment is a necessary component of DP at community level. However, the equipment provided should fully fit into the purpose and scope of operation of each team: i.e. the professional rescue equipment should be provided primarily for professional teams. In addition, most equipment currently provided (shovels, boots, ropes, flashlights) is sufficiently basic: In the view of the team communities should be encouraged to provide for at least part of it themselves as part of their contribution to the project.

### Recommendations

R12. Wherever DIPECHO partners are involved in creating and training community-based emergency response teams, to provide only those emergency response items that the communities cannot procure themselves. To encourage communities to provide and/or procure their own basic equipment (shovels, ropes, flashlights etc.) as part of their own contribution to the project, thus reinforcing their sense of project ownership.

R13. To review the stock of the emergency response items provided to communities until now, encouraging the communities – wherever possible - to replace the missing elements using their own resources.

#### 2.2.2. Stockpiling of relief supplies

80. With few exceptions, none of DIPECHO partners in the region is involved into any significant stockpiling and pre-positioning of relief supplies at the central or community levels. As far as the team understands, DG ECHO is currently examining possibilities of supporting, for instance, the CoES in Tajikistan in the pre-positioning of relief stocks, mostly in the remote mountainous areas that could be cut due to avalanches, snowfall and mudslides. In the view of the team this would contribute to increasing the speed of any emergency response operation in such areas and should be encouraged.

### Recommendation

R14. To continue examining possibilities for supporting Ministries of Emergencies in pre-positioning of relief stocks, primarily in the areas that could be cut due to avalanches, snowfall and mudslides.

## 2.3. Small scale infrastructure and services

### 2.3.1. Mitigation projects' quality

81. The evaluation team visited a total of 9 small scale mitigation projects implemented by 6 different DIPECHO partners in Tajikistan and Kyrgyzstan in course of DIPECHO I to V Action Plans. As with all field visits, the projects presented to the team were selected by DIPECHO partners as sufficiently representative of all their activities in small-scale mitigation. In all DIPECHO projects visited, with no exception, communities highly praised DIPECHO support for such projects, generally showing considerable commitment and enthusiasm for building and, in most cases, maintaining them.

82. During the field visits the team noted that DIPECHO I and II mitigation installations observed by the team were in a very good shape, having successfully survived mudslides and floods for over 4-5 years and usually required little if any repairs. At the same time, DIPECHO IV and V installations already showed clear signs of wear and tear; some were partially destroyed and needed substantial repairs. It appears to the team that later projects either had faults in technical design or were implemented with insufficient technical input, possibly using sub-standard construction materials, or without properly following acceptable technical standards.

83. Overall, it appears that DIPECHO I and II mitigation installations had a generally higher level of professional technical input in design and implementation as compared to the installations built during DIPECHO III to IV cycles, and that the technical quality of the mitigation projects seem to have somewhat deteriorated between DIPECHO I and IV. According to some interviewed, this could have resulted from a certain “over-emphasis” on ensuring “community involvement”, possibly misunderstood by some partners as relying “entirely” on communities, including for the specialised technical input. Some partners also claimed that DG ECHO suggested that they “scaled down” the amount of funding allocated to mitigation activities in their proposals. Though, according to DG ECHO, during negotiations with partners it simply “indicated the total amount available but didn't specifically require the reduction of mitigation projects”, this could have nevertheless inadvertently resulted in a reduced technical input into the project, consequently compromising the soundness of engineering structures.

### Recommendation

R15. All mitigation projects implemented by DIPECHO partners should imperatively include an increased professional technical input from qualified engineers. Obtaining the professional expert input and advice on the hazards, as well as all the technical aspects of the mitigation work will ensure a higher rate of sustainability and effectiveness of such projects and their enhanced impact over a longer period of time.

### 2.3.2. Cost-efficiency

84. The guidelines for DIPECHO V stipulate that “small-scale mitigation measures, whether they are structural or non-structural will be considered *only for demonstrative purposes*,

complementary to other disaster preparedness measures. They should be the result of an appropriate methodology (e.g. a HVCA and/or PRA) and be *affordable* and easily replicable in neighboring areas and when relevant in the country/region. Sustainable actions and maintenance schemes should be foreseen". According to the feedback, generally DG ECHO considers the mitigation projects as a rather “costly” component of DIPECHO projects, sometimes encouraging the partners to consider “other” DRR activities instead.

85. In the view of the team, this reflects a more general approach to assessing the programme cost-efficiency. Traditionally DG ECHO assesses the cost effectiveness of its projects by dividing the projects costs by the estimated number of direct beneficiaries (e.g. the number of people trained, the approximate number of people reached by awareness campaigns etc.). Such costs vary between 0.50 and 8.50 euros/person, with DG ECHO generally considering the costs of up to 10.00 euros/person as acceptable.

86. As any other emergency response organization, DG ECHO primarily focuses on saving human lives during an emergency. This is often indicated/inferred in legislation, decrees and various emergency management regulations. As one interviewed emphatically put it, “wherever even one person is saved, the whole Ministry (of Emergency) celebrates”. Consequently, most of its DP activities are aimed first and foremost at reducing the number of human casualties, rather than also on minimizing any material damage during an emergency. However, using only the number of beneficiaries as a basis for calculating cost efficiency makes, for instance, most mitigation projects – which save not only lives but also property and livelihoods - look prohibitively expensive compared to relatively "cheaper" options, e.g. conducting DP awareness and training programmes.

87. However, the actual data provided by a number of DIPECHO partners in Tajikistan and Kyrgyzstan suggests that this assumption may be incorrect (see Table 1 below).

Table 1  
Data for calculating relative cost-efficiency of small-scale mitigation projects

Examples of small-scale mitigation projects in Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan	Total ECHO contribution, €	Min cost of re-building 1 house, €	Loss of crop from 1 ha minimum, €	Loss of crop from 1 ha maximum, €	Total houses protected	Total ha protected
Kunduzchi village, Kyrgyzstan, UNDP	6,700	3,300	4,300	17,200	290	82
Aral village, Kyrgyzstan, UNDP	5,250	3,300	4,300	17,200	236	87
Bidurd village, Tajikistan, FOCUS	4,200	15,000	1,000	1,000	28	3
Tishor village, Tajikistan, FOCUS	4,800	18,000	1,150	1,150	35	7
Rozhdara village, Tajikistan, FOCUS	5,600	12,000	750	750	9	5
Rimvoj village, Tajikistan, FOCUS	8,000	10,000	600	600	9	3
Shulduq village, Tajikistan, CARITAS	6,000	7,100	23,300	23,300	11	18
Humdom village, Tajikistan, GAA	4,600	1,800	300	2,500	22	51
Kuloba village, Tajikistan, GAA	7,400	2,300	300	5,000	120	115
Darai Vali village, Tajikistan, GAA	7,800	2,500	700	3,200	30	10
<b>Total ECHO contribution, €</b>	<b>60,350</b>	<b>75,300</b>	<b>36,700</b>	<b>71,900</b>	<b>790</b>	<b>381</b>
<b>Average, €</b>	<b>6,035</b>	<b>7,530</b>	<b>3,670</b>	<b>7,190</b>	<b>79</b>	<b>38</b>



88. Though individual data for different mitigation projects varies considerably, on average a small-to medium-scale mitigation project funded by DG ECHO in the region would be protecting about 800-1,000 people, around 80 houses and 40-80 ha of agricultural land. An average DG ECHO contribution to such projects would amount to €6,000 – 8,000. Taking into account that an average minimum cost for re-building only 1 (!) house in the region would often exceed €7,000, and that only 1 (!) protected ha of agricultural land could produce an average crop of €3,000 -7,000, it makes practically any small-scale mitigation project in Central Asia automatically financially viable.

89. Since in reality the actual emergencies (mostly mudflows and floods) would often destroy 2-3 houses and 4-5 ha of agricultural land, the cost-efficiency of the above installations increases dramatically. While protecting only 1 house and 1 ha of land would allow a community to prevent on average around €5,000 net material damage (after deducting the cost of building the installation), with 2 houses and 2 ha this figure increases to €16,000, and with 3 houses and 3 ha of land – to almost €27,000. The detailed cost-efficiency calculations provided, for instance, by CARITAS, Luxemburg in Tajikistan show that with an average annual cost of investment of € 650 the annual gains (reduced risk = initial risk – risk with measures) for such projects can easily be estimated at €3,500, i.e. a cost efficiency (= annual gains/annual costs) rate of 5 or more. In addition, the increasing frequency of weather-related emergencies in the region (nearly all mitigation project sites visited experienced at least one major emergency since the installations were built) makes such small scale mitigation projects even more cost-efficient.

90. Taking into account that most professionally implemented small-scale mitigation projects would effectively be protecting the community for up to 5 years, potentially preventing even larger damage from two or more emergencies, such "return on investment" makes them undoubtedly more cost-effective and viable than almost any other, seemingly "cheaper" DP activities. In addition, all such projects protect not only people lives, but their livelihood (property and sources of income) as well, thus directly contributing to addressing poverty - the main economic and social issue in all the Central Asian countries.

### 2.3.3. Mitigation projects as focal point for other DP activities

91. In view of the above, it is not surprising that nearly all communities visited by the evaluation team requested DIPECHO partners to support them in implementing small-scale mitigation projects. Wherever DIPECHO partners implemented the mitigation projects, with no exception, communities appreciated and highly praised their support for such projects. Generally communities also showed more commitment and enthusiasm for building and, in most cases, maintaining such project installations, compared to other types of DP/DRR activities.

92. Recognizing that the purpose of DIPECHO is mainly to enhance community-level preparedness for emergency response rather than to directly reduce disaster risks, the evaluation team, however, believes that implementing small-scale mitigation projects provide an excellent entry point for implementing more efficient and effective DP awareness programmes in communities. Professionally implemented mitigation projects produce tangible, visible and long-lasting sustainable results, clearly demonstrating the impact of DIPECHO project interventions.

93. Direct community participation in constructing the mitigation installations creates a clear sense of ownership of the project. Taking into account that such projects generally involve a large number of community members who participate in such works on a voluntary basis (the practice of “khashar” or community work), those participating are also potentially more interested in learning more about DP and DRR, than other community members, and could therefore become a potential target group for further DP/DRR training. Planning and implementing small-scale mitigation projects could also provide a good ground for integrating DP/DRR awareness programmes for school students with those for communities at large.

### Recommendation

R16. To center DRR awareness and DP activities in communities around one key, specific and tangible DP/DRR activity involving a large number of community members, such as professionally designed *small-scale mitigation projects* (as opposed to a set of separate loosely connected interventions). Such mitigation projects therefore become a “centre-piece” of the overall training and capacity building programmes implemented under DIPECHO in communities.

#### 2.4. Information, Education, Communication

##### 2.4.1. DP/DRR awareness programmes at schools

94. The evaluation team visited a total of 8 school projects implemented by 6 different DIPECHO partners in Tajikistan, Uzbekistan and Kyrgyzstan in course of DIPECHO I to V Action Plans. As with all field visits, the projects presented to the team were selected by DIPECHO partners as sufficiently representative of all their activities at schools. Similar to the observation made during previous DIPECHO evaluations, nearly all schools visited in all the three countries generally demonstrated a good level of DRR and DP awareness, as well as both practical and theoretical knowledge and skills in actions during earthquakes, providing first aid and implementing non-structural mitigation.. All DIPECHO partners interviewed emphasized that focusing on DRR and DP training in schools allows further disseminating DP and DRR knowledge and practices which the school children will take home, into their families, households and eventually communities.

95. During the course of implementing DIPECHO programme the partners in all the three countries - often encouraged by DG ECHO - focused mainly on integrating DP and DRR-related contents into the formal school curricula, usually either as an optional “extra-curriculum” courses, or by including extra hours into the existing courses, or as totally separate subjects (e.g. *Basics of Safety and Security* in Kyrgyzstan). This was mainly done through advocating for the importance of DP and DRR with the Ministries of Education, supporting them in developing separate DP and DRR-related training materials and encouraging and facilitating cooperation between the respective Ministries of Emergencies and Ministries of Education.

96. At the time of the review most DP and DRR activities at schools in Central Asia – apart from those that are included into the *Basics of Safety and Security* subject in Kyrgyzstan - are run on an “extra-curricular” basis, i.e. out of regular curriculum hours. It is important to note that the

practice of including various subjects proposed by international organizations into “extra-curricular” hours has been often adopted by the Ministries of Education in Central Asia in response to the donors’ pressure to include “their” subject in school curricula. In most cases, however, the total number of available extra-curriculum hours is extremely limited (up to 24 hours a year), many of them being allocated to covering “compulsory” subjects (e.g. national day, constitution day etc.) with the choice of subjects for the remaining hours being entirely left to the discretion of the teachers in charge. To address this issue, many DIPECHPO partners tried to find other ways of including DP and DRR within the official school curriculum. It appears that their efforts contributed to MoEd creating the *Basics of Safety and Security* course mentioned earlier.

97. The team also noted that many current and former DIPECHO project partners - such as UNISDR, UNICEF, CARE and others – who have been actively involved in training activities in schools, worked hard together with the MoEd to integrate DRR and DP into the school curricula. Recognizing the importance of this work, the team notes, however, that advocating for this type of integration into the official school curricula is an extremely difficult and time consuming task, which may potentially be better taken up by other EC or different donor programmes, having a more direct access to the respective governments through providing technical assistance.

98. In the view of the team, based on the experience of DIPECHO I to IV programme, it would be advisable that – in *addition* to advocating for including DP and DRR into the existing school curricula - DIPECHO further explores the possibilities of integrating disaster preparedness, response and risk reduction issues into the standard school subjects (physics, chemistry, science, biology, literature, history, mathematics etc.).

99. This can be done by e.g. reviewing the existing curricula and the school manuals and providing the teachers – either through special training sessions, or during their regular refresher courses run by MoEd – with examples of how a particular RP and DRR issue could be covered within regular subjects (i.e. covering trees in biology could include explanations how tree roots prevent soil erosion, earthquakes can be covered in science, history lessons could include examples of how people in the area dealt with floods, earthquakes and avalanches before, literature could include reading texts about emergencies etc.). The team noted that some of DIPECHO partners have already started doing this; according to their feedback this approach really works and is appreciated by both teachers and students.

100. In the opinion of the team this approach would result in a more, natural, seamless integration of DP and DRR messages, directly linking it to the students’ everyday life, rather than addressing it as a “stand-alone” issue. According to the feedback from some of the school teachers, that would also help dealing with a perceived pressure to “make space” for DP/DRR in the school curriculum by “excluding” other subjects from it, which often results a certain reluctance in centrally adjusting the curricula.

## Recommendations

R17. To continue expanding various DP and DRR awareness programmes at schools, possibly focusing DP and DRR awareness programmes on *schools and school students* as a primary target groups.

R18. While continuing supporting MoEd in including DP and DRR into regular curriculum, to encourage DIPECHO partners to further explore the possibilities of integrating disaster preparedness, response and risk reduction issues into the existing school subjects (physics, chemistry, science, biology, literature, history, mathematics etc.) - without necessarily changing the formal curricula.

### 2.5. Institutional linkages and advocacy

#### 2.5.1. National disaster management systems

101. All DIPECHO projects at the community level in all the three countries in Central Asia are developed in coordination with the central government and the local authorities; they generally fit into and support the existing emergency and disaster management system in the country. According to DG ECHO regulations, the project partners' FPA could only be accepted provided that the partner receives an agreement of support for proposed activities by the MoES and other relevant government agencies.

102. Apart from focusing on strengthening the communities' resilience to disasters, a substantial part of DIPECHO programme in Central Asia is aimed at directly assisting the governments in the region in building their national disaster management systems. Since DG ECHO itself has no mandate to directly support the governments, this is usually achieved by funding various projects implemented by DIPECHO partners, who cooperate closely with the various ministries and state committees in charge of DP/DRR-related matters (CoES, MoED, MOH etc.).

103. Supporting the governments in the region in building their emergency management systems clearly fills in an important gap in DP and DRR. After independence all the three countries visited were confronted with the task of transforming their administrative (essentially provincial) structures inherited from the former Soviet Union to a fully functional administrative system of an independent state. All of them initially faced a certain decline in the system, caused i.a. by the lack of laws, the gaps in the legal system, upgrading the status of the national language and the need to replace a number of experienced administrators and officials, many of whom left the countries after the independence. In many cases, legislative instruments from former USSR are still being utilized until a replacement is found and decreed by the national authority. In case of Tajikistan this was further aggravated by the consequences of the civil war, which resulted in the most administrative systems being totally or partially destroyed.

104. When all the three countries started (re)building their administrative systems, initially they simply attempted to restore what existed before. Consequently, the emergency response systems of all the three countries were largely copied from the older Soviet civil defense System.

In recent years all the three countries are extensively using the models and experience of the new Russian Emergency Response system (nearly all MoES/CoES senior and staff officers are trained in Russia). In fact, initially all these countries essentially used the international assistance (including that provided by DG ECHO) for “re-building” the Soviet-style civil defense system. While their systems are still largely based on the previous model, following a prolonged cooperation with various international partners (including DIPECHO programme) all the three countries started focusing more on natural and man-made disasters, progressively introducing the civil "protection" and DP and DRR concepts in their work.

105. Though all the three countries visited share many similarities in their disaster management systems, there are also notable differences. Kyrgyzstan has probably the most functional disaster management system among the three countries visited. Uzbekistan has a fairly developed system, which compared to that of Kyrgyzstan appears to be somewhat more bureaucratic and “over-complicated”. Despite consistent support from, i.a. DIPECHO programme, the national DM system in Tajikistan appears to be the least developed among the three countries: In the view of the team, this results from a generally more difficult economic situation, the consequences of the civil war and a generally weaker central government. At the same time this allows for providing more direct support from the programme to the authorities at the oblast, district and local levels.

### Recommendation

R19. To continue supporting the development of national emergency response systems in the three countries in Central Asia through DIPECHO programme, taking into account the specificities of each country’s system, building on the strengths of the previous civil defense system and developing it further by using the available international experience and expertise more effectively.

#### 2.5.2. National DM strategies

106. DG ECHO and its implementing partners realize that focusing *only* on developing DP and DRR at the community level cannot fully address the DP and DRR needs in the countries of the Central Asia. The work at the community level has to be supplemented by supporting the development of a coherent and functional state emergency response system. With this in view a number of DIPECHO partners – mainly the UN agencies such as UNDP, ISDR and UNICEF - support the governments in Central Asia in formulating their DM strategy and national emergency management and response plans within the framework of DIPECHO programme.

107. In Kyrgyzstan, for instance, the Government started formulating the National Emergency Management and Response plan already in 2006. The plan focuses on enhancing and developing the capacity of the existing emergency management system to prepare, mitigate and respond to emergency situations more effectively. The Plan development has been financed by the IDA and is being expanded by the MoES. The UNDP - partly using DIPECHO IV and V funding - has been supporting the development of the Plan by i.a. building capacity of the local (Ail Okmoty) and municipal government in developing hazard/risk mapping and emergency response planning at the local level, as well as encouraging information exchange among project partners. UNDP

and, partly ISDR in Tajikistan are involved in developing both the national emergency response plan and DM/DRR strategy; in Uzbekistan UNICEF started being more actively involved in supporting the Government in this field.

108. Though both the governments and DIPECHO partners recognize the importance of having a coherent DM vision and strategy, in practice most of the efforts at both central and local levels appears to be spent in developing the national DM *plans* rather than DM *strategies*. In fact, even where the partners do support the government in the DM strategy development process (e.g. UNDP in Tajikistan), the actual output of the process seems to be more of a “strategic *plan*”, rather than a “*strategy*”.

109. A certain bias in favor of strategic “planning” among the governments in the region is fully understandable, taking into account their traditional familiarity with the Soviet planning system. The concept of “strategy development” is less familiar to them; therefore the governments in the region tend to focus more on “planning”, somewhat ignoring the “strategy” aspects of it. The feedback from all the MoES officials interviewed suggests, however, that generally all the Ministries (in Kyrgyzstan and Uzbekistan) and Committee (in Tajikistan) of Emergencies lack a coherent vision and strategy for disaster management and DRR.

110. Though most definitions of “strategy” (e.g. “the process of... planning and conducting a military campaign”, a “long-term plan for future success or development”, “a detailed plan for achieving success in situations such as war, politics, business, industry or sport”, “the skill of planning for such situations” etc.) do imply some type of planning, any properly designed strategy would usually contain some “principles” or strategic “directions” that would allow decision-makers to make decisions about concentrating limited resources (or “forces” in military terminology) at the right time and at the right place to produce the desired impact. In terms of DM and DRR this could mean, for instance, choosing to focus on building the emergency response capacity primarily at the central or mainly at the local level, emphasizing the general community-based DP or investing more into specialised emergency response teams, focusing more on DP or DRR etc.

111. In the view of the team, this particular element – i.e. strengthening the decision-making function of a strategy - is somewhat missing in most DIPECHO strategy development work with the governments in Central Asia. In fact, the current “strategies” and the ones being developed do not allow the governments to truly define their DM priorities: this results in attempting to develop the system simultaneously in “all directions”, spreading the already limited resources too “thin”, and therefore reducing the potential impact of national efforts and international assistance. In most cases the *actual* – rather than a formally *declared* - governmental “strategy” in relation to disaster management in all the three countries is simply to “React!” in case of emergencies: interestingly, many partners noted that the governments truly appreciate the DG ECHO and DIPECHO partners’ efforts when it fits into and directly supports this informal “strategy” (by e.g. rapidly providing food supplies, equipment, fuel etc.).

112. The evaluation team recognizes that DIPECHO partners invested substantial efforts in supporting the Government in this field. It noted that this work resulted in increased awareness

about the importance of DM strategic planning among the governments and ministries in the region. It further notes that any project aimed at developing country-wide sector strategies and policies requires a lot of specialised technical expertise, and involves substantial amount of advocacy, time and patience. The team, however, believes that DIPECHO partners should currently focus more on assisting the governments in Central Asia in turning their emerging strategies into an effective decision-making tool, allowing them to identify their priorities and concentrate limited resources on addressing these priorities.

### Recommendation

R20. In supporting the development of national DM and DRR strategies and plans, DIPECHO partners in Central Asia should focus more on *strategies* rather than *plans*. They should in particular assist the governments in Central Asia in turning their emerging strategies into an effective decision-making tool, which would allow them to better identify their DM and DRR priorities and to concentrate the limited resources on addressing these.

#### 2.5.3. Coordination mechanisms

##### 2.5.3.1. REACT in Tajikistan

113. Like in any similar situation elsewhere in the world, the constantly growing number of international donors, international organizations and NGOs in the countries of the Central Asia over the past 10 years resulted in the obvious need to establish some kind of mechanism to coordinate their activities among themselves and with the host governments. This has been first addressed in Tajikistan by creating - at the initiative of OCHA - the Rapid Emergency Assessment and Coordination Team (REACT) in 2001.

114. Rapid Emergency Assessment and Coordination Team (REACT) was established in 2001 to promote the sharing of information, logistics and other resources between partners active in the disaster management sector, including the Committee of Emergency Situations and the Government of Tajikistan. The group includes over 50 state, local and international organizations and entities; it usually meets to coordinate and share experiences on issues related to various areas of disaster management, including preparedness, response, mitigation and capacity building activities with national bodies. During emergency situations REACT role is to coordinate emergency response and international assistance.

115. REACT has been meeting more or less regularly since 2001: in 2005, 2006 and 2008 the meetings were held almost on a monthly basis. Initially REACT meetings were chaired by the representatives, and since 2008 by the Chairman of the Tajik Committee of Emergencies. Based on the experience of the “central” REACT in Dushanbe, regional REACT mechanisms were created in Zeravshan and Rasht valleys (2004-2005), Kulyab (2005) and Sugd (2007) regions and in Kurgan-Tube (2008). All of them include DIPECHO partners in the regions, representatives of local authorities and are generally chaired by the representatives of the CoES. Both the central and regional REACT mechanisms have been directly supported by the DG ECHO implementing partners since the beginning of DIPECHO programme. Some of them (e.g. UNDP, Oxfam) serve as REACT Secretariats.

116. It is obvious that, wherever a number of international agencies and donors are present in a country, establishing some kind of a coordination mechanism between them and the host Government is essential to ensure the effective coordination of emergency preparedness and response. The REACT coordination mechanism is highly valued by DG ECHO and is generally appreciated by all DIPECHO partners. According to DG ECHO, it proved useful for emergency response and coordination, in particular for conducting operational needs analysis, relief mobilization and coordination of DP and DRR activities in the country, and has contributed to the currently achieved level of cooperation between DIPECHO partners and the government.

117. In the opinion of the team, creating such a coordination mechanism in Tajikistan in the form of the central and later regional REACTs, generally contributed to achieving a sufficiently high level of coordination among all parties involved in the DIPECHO programme in Tajikistan. The regional level REACTs, in particular, have made a significant contribution to the partner - Government cooperation, opening the information exchange and coordination lines amongst partners, defining project priorities in their regions and implementing DIPECHO action plans.

#### 2.5.3.2. “Ownership” of REACT

118. According to some of the partners, directly involved in supporting REACT, and the DG ECHO staff, CoES in Tajikistan has lately become more actively involved in the REACT activities at central, regional and district levels. Most recent REACT meetings are formally chaired by the Chairman of the CoES; according to some representatives of CoES, the level of commitment and “ownership” of REACT mechanism by the leadership of CoES - as compared to the early days of REACT - has increased.

119. At the same time, it appears to the team that in Tajikistan the government still takes only a partial ownership of REACT, often perceiving it as a body created and managed by the “donors”. This perception is shared by some DIPECHO partners: during informal discussions with the evaluation team some of them also referred to REACT as a “donors’ club”. In the view of the team this is not surprising: the central and all regional REACTs were created at the initiative of DIPECHO partners; with few exceptions the partners continue providing financial, secretarial and organizational support to all REACTs, they often convene its meetings (even when it is done “on behalf” of the CoES) and to a large extent define their agenda. In some cases – in particular at the local level - partners almost “substituted” the government, gradually taking over the implementation and coordination of most DP and DRR tasks.

120. In the opinion of the team this has a certain impact on the effectiveness of the whole REACT mechanism in Tajikistan. Though it *was* used on a number of occasions for needs assessment and coordination by all the agencies involved during various smaller-scale emergencies, it appeared to be somewhat less effective in case of larger emergencies: during the recent winter crisis of 2008, for instance, REACT (though used for information sharing) was simply bypassed by the Government, who mainly worked through the CoES internal committee, directly liaising with one large donor agency who offered to coordinate the international assistance entirely outside of the REACT mechanism.



121. DG ECHO and its partners appear to have learned from this experience: a consultant has been hired by the UNDP DIPECHO project to work on improving the information flow between the REACT group and the Tajikistan government. In addition, the team believes that the ownership issue could also be addressed by e.g. gradually limiting the DIPECHO partners' involvement in organizing and managing REACT meetings thus encouraging the government to take over.

### Recommendation

R21. In order to increase the sense of government ownership of REACT coordination mechanism to examine, wherever feasible, the possibility of gradually limiting the DIPECHO partners' involvement in and technical support to organizing and managing REACT meetings, thus encouraging the government to take over.

#### 2.5.3.3. DRCU model in Kyrgyzstan

122. Based on earlier DIPECHO coordination experience in Tajikistan, DIPECHO partners in Kyrgyzstan created Disaster Response Coordination Unit (DRCU), a REACT-type structure for coordinating disaster response between the MoEs and international organizations. Kyrgyz DRCU seems to have taken into account the partners' experiences with REACT in Tajikistan: though it was created later, the overall DRCU structure and mode of operation in Kyrgyzstan appears to be more logical and potentially more functional than that of Tajikistan.

123. The DRCU is a consultative coordinating body (somewhat similar to what REACT was initially in Tajikistan) established by MoES initiative with the UN country team and representatives of donors and international organizations. It is aimed at developing and implementing joint policy and strategy in disaster response, as well as decision making policy for humanitarian relief, as well as at enhancing collaboration and coordination of disaster response between the Government, the UN and other international organizations and community-based institutions. DRCU works in close collaboration with the MoES, which acts as an executive body of the Inter-Ministerial Commission. A representative of the DRCU participates in the IMCPLC (Inter-ministerial Commission on the Prevention and Liquidation of Emergencies) meetings and takes part in coordination discussions with various government agencies involved in emergency management, often at the higher (Minister and Prime Minister) levels.

124. The DRCU is organized in a fairly non-conventional way, effectively appointing a "lead agency" (UN, EC, RC/RC etc.) as a "representative" or "coordinator" of a group of other agencies. UN in Kyrgyzstan, for instance, is "in charge" of UNCT and OCHA, EC delegation is "assigned" coordination of all donor governments (both EU and non-EU), RC/RC coordinates the National Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies members of the IFRC, Counterpart International and ACTED represent INGOs, and Shoola and DCCA – local NGOs. In addition, various agencies lead sector groups according to their expertise: WFP, for instance, is responsible for Food Security, WHO leads Health group; UNICEF is in charge of Water/Sanitation and Child Protection etc.

125. Although the idea of assigning to one agency the function of representing others within DRCU is interesting and innovative, it appears that the way it was done creates confusion and decreases its effectiveness. According to the representatives of the EC Delegation in Kyrgyzstan, for instance, the information flow between various agencies involved during the Osh earthquake in January 2008 was slow and complicated, which apparently contributed, among other factors, to a one-week delay of delivering emergency relief supplies. While choosing some “lead” agencies in DRCU for coordinating groups of other agencies was appropriate (e.g. NRC/KRC to coordinate other Red Cross/Crescent Societies), some other choices (e.g. requesting EC delegation to coordinate *all* donor governments, including those from the non-EU countries) appear questionable.

### Recommendation

R22. To review the structure of DRCU and, possibly, the terms of reference (or some of its parts) aiming in particular at clarifying roles and responsibilities, streamlining needs assessment and speeding up decision-making as regards offers of bilateral assistance. In the view of the team, this may be addressed within the work on National Emergency Management and Response Plan: the plan could, for instance, specify roles, responsibilities and operating procedures for DRCU, various sector groups, local NGO’s, international agencies and other agencies the Government and/or MoES may call upon in case of an emergency.

#### 2.5.3.4. REACT within DRCU system in Kyrgyzstan

126. The Kyrgyz model of REACT effectively separates the coordination of the emergency response (performed by DRCU) and rapid emergency needs assessment (REACT proper). REACT teams (North and South) in Kyrgyzstan are part of the DRCU structure. According to its terms of reference, REACT in Kyrgyzstan is a “a mobile operational body of the DRCU assigned for the conduct of rapid situation assessment, damage assessment, primary needs, gaps, provision of operational information and coordination of response and rendering the humanitarian relief directly in disaster-affected areas”. REACT is expected to be operational within 2-6 hours, and to operate in the affected area for a maximum of 3 days.

127. In addition to REACT South, DIPECHO partners in Osh created another coordination body – Southern Region Coordination Center (SRCC). The Centre comprises the same members as REACT South, but focuses mostly on DRR and DP before emergencies. As any such information exchange body, SRCC serves for coordination among partners and helps avoiding “overlapping” of project interventions.

128. It is important to note that despite MoES joint initiation, recognition and using of the DRCU and REACT mechanism, it still maintains its own rapid assessment teams (“Prompt Groups of MoES Territorial and Ministerial Commissions for Disaster Response”). These teams would focus mainly on assessing *damage* rather than *needs*, often with a view of providing subsequent financial assistance and rehabilitation/reconstruction in the affected areas. In the discussions with the evaluation team representatives of both DIPECHO partners and MoES admitted that parallel functioning of these basically identical assessment structures reflects a

certain level of distrust still existing between the Kyrgyz government and the international community that needs to be addressed.

### Recommendations

R23. When creating any REACT-type coordination mechanisms in Central Asia, to separate organizationally the function of *coordinating* emergency response (similar to that performed by DRCU in Kyrgyzstan) and the function of conducting *rapid emergency needs assessment* (as performed by REACT in Kyrgyzstan).

R24. To explore the possibilities of further coordinating and/or integrating the operation of MoES assessment teams with that of the REACT teams by i.a. clarifying their respective roles and responsibilities in the National Emergency Response plan and the standard operating procedures, as well as conducting joint trainings, drills and simulation exercises.

#### 2.5.3.5. Sustainability of REACT mechanism

129. The REACT system in Tajikistan and other countries in Central Asia was created as and remains primarily an emergency response mechanism. Though all parties involved initially had (and some still have) very different expectations of REACT – e.g. an information exchange forum, a networking body, a “control and monitoring” body for the government etc. - and though over the years it effectively performed at some stage most of the above roles, coordinating the international assistance during actual emergencies was and still remains its primary function.

130. The continuous efforts of DIPECHO partners over the past few years to build the coordination capacity of the government via the REACT mechanism should be commended. However, similar for all emergency response structures, the main challenge for REACT is sustaining it as a functioning body while there are no emergencies to respond to. Until now it has been primarily done by simply maintaining REACT as a “structure”, i.e. by conducting its regular meetings, focusing – in the absence of actual emergencies - on information exchange, coordination of the ongoing DIPECHO projects and general advocacy for DP and DRR. Though certainly important, this work has become somewhat repetitive: the review of REACT meetings’ minutes for the period 2006-2009, for instance, showed that relatively little has changed in its work, both in the subjects discussed or the way they were generally addressed.

131. In the opinion of the team, simply “maintaining” REACT as structure in-between emergencies is not sufficient to ensure that it is effectively used by the government when a disaster strikes. In fact, using it for networking, advocacy and promoting DRR - i.e. the functions often perceived by the government as only indirectly related to emergency response - may somewhat “diffuse” its coordination role in emergencies: this could have been another factor that contributed to the government bypassing REACT during the 2008 winter crisis.

132. The REACT mechanism can only be considered as sustainable and effective when it is actually used by the respective governments and other actors in emergencies. In the view of the team, this can be achieved by constantly emphasizing the primarily emergency response

coordination role of REACT – including in-between actual emergencies – and encouraging the Government to use it as part of its emergency response mechanism, i.a. including it in all emergency response drills and simulation exercises conducted by CoES and other governmental bodies. In the opinion of the team this would help in creating a certain “habit” of using REACT in emergencies, and it would also contribute to enhancing the sense of its ownership within the government.

#### Recommendation

R25. To continue emphasizing the REACT role as primarily an *emergency response coordination* mechanism, rather than an information exchange, networking and advocacy forum. To continue encouraging the Government to use it extensively as part of its emergency response mechanism by i.a. including it in all emergency response drills and simulation exercises conducted by CoES and other governmental bodies.

#### 2.5.4. Coordination among DIPECHO partners

133. DIPECHO programme in Central Asia generally has a good level of coordination and exchange of information amongst its partner agencies. The partners generally cooperate well with each other, in particular at an oblast and district level. The overall majority of the DIPECHO partners’ staff interviewed by the team appears to be active and committed; most are genuinely interested in coordinating and cooperating with other partners.

134. Projects are usually developed in coordination with other partners and the local authorities; they usually fit into and support the existing emergency and disaster management system in the country. All the projects the evaluation team either observed or interviewed about the projects with the respective partners appears to complement each other; no cases of duplication or lack of coordination were reported by any of those interviewed. Generally the level of coordination, cooperation and exchange of information within DIPECHO programme appears to have improved between DIPECHO IV and V.

#### Recommendation

R26. Taking into account substantial similarities between most DIPECHO partners’ projects, wherever feasible, DG ECHO should encourage the partners to submit joint project proposals. Wherever such proposals cover the same geographical areas, the partners could be encouraged to cover those project components that fit most their particular expertise (e.g. first aid for Red Cross, mitigation projects for GAA, risk mapping for FOCUS etc.)

#### 2.5.5. Coordination with other donors

135. Coordination between the DG ECHO and other donor agencies to ensure funding coherence and avoiding overlapping generally appears to be effective. Many partners utilize co-funding mechanisms in their DIPECHO projects: part of the funding is contributed by the partner itself, part of it comes through DIPECHO, while other donors (e.g. SDC) cover the costs of non-

DIPECHO financed project components (GEF funding is perceived as another potential source of co-financing through partners). Representatives of all donor organizations interviewed by the team (DFID, ADB, SDC, GTZ, World Bank, DG AIDCO) did mention, in one way or another, that information sharing amongst donors related to DIPECHO Programme (i.a. to programme announcements, sharing project reports and evaluation materials) could be improved.

#### Recommendation

- R27. DG ECHO should continue encouraging the partners to actively investigate further co-financing opportunities, especially when joint participation of the partners in a joint project contributes to mainstreaming and integrating DRR/DP into other development programmes.

### 3. CROSS-CUTTING ISSUES

#### 3.1. General

136. Most DIPECHO projects reviewed by the team generally encompass a number of various components ranging from the relatively small, short term and easy-to-implement community-based projects (e.g. creating and training rescue teams, developing village risk maps and community disaster management plans) to the activities requiring substantial technical and engineering input (e.g. various small-scale mitigation projects) and the longer-term fairly complicated projects (e.g. building the emergency management capacity of the Government).

137. Most projects reviewed effectively center around a few key activities: creating village disaster management committees, drafting community disaster management plans, training community rescue teams, conducting DRR awareness campaigns in schools and communities, implementing small-scale mitigation projects and supporting the Committee of Emergencies. All activities use essentially the same methodology and are implemented in a very similar way by nearly all DIPECHO partners with relatively little innovation and creativity involved. While some partners try to innovate, generally the team observed little variation in e.g. training approaches, methodology and materials used, the ways of conducting needs assessments, or ensuring communities' involvement in the project implementation.

138. Overall, based on the team' direct observations, and the partners' presenting their "best" and most successful projects, it appears that over the course of DIPECHO implementation the programme has been effectively *streamlined*. All of them consequently share a number of common cross-cutting issues, most of which are – in one way or another - related to DIPECHO projects' impact and sustainability. The section below examines some of these issues, focusing mainly on the practical ways of enhancing the programme impact and sustainability.

#### 3.2. Increasing DIPECHO projects' sustainability

##### 3.2.1. Types of sustainability

139. DG ECHO in its Guidelines for proposals under Fifth DIPECHO Action Plan for Central Asia distinguishes between the following four types of sustainability:

- *financial* sustainability, i.e. ensuring that the "project activities are financed after the EC funding ends";
- *institutional* sustainability, i.e. ensuring the "local "ownership" of the results of the action";
- *local* sustainability, i.e. ensuring the "links and coordination with the relevant local authorities"; and
- *policy-level* sustainability i.e. "the structural impact of the action, e.g. improved legislation, codes of conduct, methods etc.

140. Both DG ECHO staff and all the partners interviewed recognize that few, if any, current DIPECHO IV and V projects are financially sustainable without the continuous external funding. Most partners affirmed that should DIPECHO funding stops, they will have to either entirely

stop the project activities or to substantially reduce the current coverage. Though most partners demonstrate willingness and commitment to continue funding their projects after DIPECHO funding stops, this can only be considered as a way to ensure projects' *continuity* for a certain time, rather as an evidence of its financial sustainability.

141. Taking into account that neither DIPECHO nor any other external funding could be provided indefinitely, it becomes imperative to find other ways of enhancing the programme sustainability by investing in strengthening its institutional ("ownership"), local ("coordination") and policy-level sustainability, as well as by maximizing the overall programme impact (i.e. the "sustainability of results").

### Recommendation

R28. DG ECHO is encouraged to organize a conference/workshop on maximizing impact and sustainability of DIPECHO programme in Central Asia. The conference/workshop could focus on sharing experiences and good practices in maximizing impact and sustainability at the project and programme level, and discussing the ways of enhancing it further.

#### 3.2.2. Maximizing projects' impact

142. Achieving a higher impact simply means that the actual outputs and results of the project would be sustained for longer, consequently maximizing the "return on investment" that the partners' and DG ECHO made. For instance many DIPECHO community-based project activities aimed at increasing the population DP and DRR awareness (e.g. creating village DM committees, producing village DM plans, running DP awareness programmes) generally produce a relatively short-term impact: the achieved level of awareness can only be sustained for a fairly short time and, unless applied during an actual emergency, most skills and knowledge acquired risk being lost. The partners usually address this by investing into constant drills, continuous re-training and more awareness campaigns, all of which require continuous external funding. Instead of investing financially into e.g. extra training, the partners could, for instance, focus on maximizing the retention of material: hence the importance of applying more action-oriented training methodology mentioned earlier in the report.

143. Some DP activities also have an almost "in-built" potential of producing a higher impact and sustainability. As mentioned in the previous sections of the report, investing into DP and DRR awareness programmes at schools and kindergartens ensures that the key DP messages are assimilated by the younger population who are likely to retain them for a longer period of time. Should they also be included into various school subjects (either as extra themes or teaching hours, or by simply integrating them as examples into the existing themes) rather than as a stand-alone separate subject, that would maximize the impact of such programmes even more.

144. Another example of the projects with potentially higher impact and sustainability are the small-scale mitigation installations. Provided they are implemented with an appropriate technical input and maintained by the beneficiary community, mitigation projects would generally protect the community for five to six years, thus having a more lasting impact. The very physical presence of such an installation in a community serves as a visible reminder of the disaster risks,

thus constantly reinforcing the DP awareness messages delivered during the awareness and training programmes.

### Recommendations

R29. Instead of addressing the project sustainability by increasing the amount of inputs (e.g. training courses, awareness campaigns) DIPECHO partners should focus more on developing the ways of maximizing the projects' impact (e.g. to what extent participants remember, can recollect and act upon the information presented) as a means of increasing "sustainability of results".

R30. DG ECHO and project partners are encouraged to invest more into the DM and DRR projects that have a potential to be more sustainable and to produce higher long-term impact, such as DP and DRR awareness programmes at schools and small-scale mitigation projects.

#### 3.2.3. Enhancing the sense of project ownership

145. Generally the level of ownership and genuine community involvement in DIPECHO projects is low. All communities interviewed referred to DIPECHO projects in their area as "DIPECHO" or the "Red Cross", or "Oxfam" etc. projects. No community indicated that it was "their" or "our" project. In one case, a District Government official even requested the permission from a DIPECHO partner to "use *your project* members" in a weekend district fair (the partner pointed out that the official should ask the community, as the partner was not the community "owner"). In another similar example, local officials tend to phone the partner during every emergency, asking it to "deploy *your* rescue team"; only after the partner finally refused to do so (reminding the official that after it has been created and trained, the rescue team becomes part of the local emergency management system) did the authorities start managing the team themselves. In fact, by explicitly refusing to take "ownership", the partner helped the authorities in question to increase their own sense of ownership.

146. Communities often willingly accept DIPECHO partners' proposals rather than come up with their own, or adapt whatever the agencies suggest to suit their particular community needs. Apart from requesting DIPECHO partners to implement small-scale mitigation projects, few communities interviewed by the team came up with their own project ideas. None of the rescue teams' members interviewed suggested "creating" rescue teams: in all cases reported to the evaluation team the initiative came from the DIPECHO partner or local authorities. The very fact that the partners continuously talk about the need "to ensure sustainability" and to "transfer the ownership" of interventions to communities and local organizations indirectly indicates that the existing "level" of ownership at the start of most projects is lower than desired.

147. Due to a certain lack of community initiative, the partners often have to form various community structures (committees, groups etc.) themselves to ensure successful implementation of project activities. This is particularly noticeable in Tajikistan, and, to a certain extent in Kyrgyzstan. While doing it, the partners also often create *new* structures, rather than identifying the existing ones within the community itself. While, in most cases, a few core trained members



of such groups would be motivated, generally such committees require continuous partners' involvement to be kept motivated and sustained. Though working through the existing community structures (such as the makhallah system in Uzbekistan) does not in itself guarantee a higher sense of project ownership, In the view of the team it is one of the necessary elements for enhancing the communities' motivation and enthusiasm for the projects, thus increasing their impact and sustainability.

148. The same approach is sometimes applied in working with the Government at both local and national levels where DIPECHO partners sometimes created and/or funded new coordination structures rather than integrating the coordination function into the existing governmental emergency response system. For example, one partner in Kyrgyzstan started establishing various "Inter-Ministerial Working Groups" without sufficiently talking into account the existing similar groups already working with MoES or within the framework of the Kyrgyz National Emergency Management system. As a result the same staff from various organizations were often appointed by their superiors to participate in various working groups. With too many working groups created both the agencies and their representatives started losing interest in the whole activity.

### Recommendations

R31. While planning and implementing projects, DIPECHO partners should systematically explore the possibilities of using and building upon the existing structures (both at the community and government levels) rather than creating the new ones. New structures should only be introduced after it is confirmed that the DP/DRR project activities cannot be integrated into the existing development activities or performed by any existing community or government structures.

R32. Wherever feasible, DIPECHO partners should also be encouraged to obtain more written endorsements and agreements with local authorities (not only CoES): this would generally indicate that the local authorities are committed and more proactively involved thus enhancing their sense of project ownership.

#### 3.2.4. Communicating better with project beneficiaries

149. In the view of the team, a certain lack of project ownership described above can be partially addressed by improving the way DIPECHO partners interact with communities and other project beneficiaries during needs assessments, and at the project design and implementation stage.

150. All DIPECHO partners apply various participatory assessment tools, such as Participatory Rural Appraisal (PRA), Vulnerability and Capacity Assessment (VCA) etc. for their pre-project needs assessments, risk assessments, and at various stages of project implementation. At the same time, most project staff interviewed had insufficient experience with using PRA: many simply attended short training sessions which focused primarily on using a few tools for conducting community surveys, rather than on interpreting the results obtained.

151. PRA, conducted as part of risk assessments in communities, are often performed with a pre-set idea of what the implementing partner wants to do. It sometimes appears that the targeted communities are almost “expected” to accept a set of DRR activities already defined by the DIPECHO partner, having little say in influencing the decision. While all communities generally appreciated whatever was offered by the programme (DP awareness training, equipping rescue teams etc.), when interviewed by the evaluation team many mentioned that they would “really” need assistance with small-scale mitigation projects rather than with what the partners proposed: in one case the village committees were apparently almost competing for the “right” to have one in their villages, and being “left out” created a lot of hard feelings between the communities.

152. This sometimes results in missing the "organic" ways and approaches to DRR and DM: in fact, few partners noticed that in most cases the *whole communities* led by the local leaders – rather than any specialised groups - participate in search and rescue work after emergencies. Consequently, few partners examined the possibility of reinforcing the rescue capacity of the *whole* community as a potentially more effective approach to DP.

153. Simply asking the beneficiaries about when and how various community structures were created revealed that DIPECHO partners had often left unnoticed a number of previously existing village structures (agriculture, education, sports committees etc.) that could have successfully integrated DP/DRR activities in their regular work. Checking how communities responded to emergencies *before* DIPECHO interventions showed that many of them already did whatever they were taught at DP workshops: and consequently, the time spent on teaching them what they already know could have been spent more efficiently.

154. Communicating with communities is particularly important at the project monitoring and evaluation stage. All beneficiaries approached by an external entity – be it DIPECHO partner, DG ECHO monitors, assessment or evaluation teams – would naturally tend to “please the donor”, often giving a positive response they expect the donor would like to hear. In the experience of the evaluation team members this “please-the-donor” bias in community responses is fairly widespread in the former Soviet Union countries in Central Asia, and needs to be seriously taken into account in all community-based activities. This could be addressed by i.a. asking more indirect questions aimed at discovering facts and examples that could confirm that a particular change – that the project was aimed to produce - happened or could happen with a certain degree of probability. DG ECHO could also consider a possibility of using independent monitors in addition to their regular staff: according to the feedback, some DIPECHO partners already successfully applied this practice.

### Recommendations

R33. While assessing the beneficiary needs before designing projects, DIPECHO partners should be encouraged to pay more attention to the project ideas coming from the project beneficiaries, as well as to exploring the traditional ways they use for preparing, responding to and reducing the risk of emergencies. That would allow adjusting project design and training curricula accordingly with the view to focus on building upon the knowledge and skills a community or other project beneficiary already has, and

developing those that it genuinely lacks. This would also contribute to the communities retaining some sense of ownership over the project, potentially enhancing its impact and sustainability.

- R34. All DIPECHO partners should be encouraged to invest into more in-depth training in using various participatory needs assessment techniques (PRA, VCA etc.). The trainees should be trained in using various communication techniques, in particular in asking indirect questions aimed at discovering *facts* rather than opinions. Any classroom training should imperatively be supplemented by the extensive on-the-job coaching: the trainees should be generally accompanied during a number of their first assignments by the project or external staff experienced in communicating at the community level, each session should be thoroughly debriefed to identify the best techniques used. The trainees should also be assisted in analyzing the information obtained.
- R35. In all interactions with project beneficiaries DIPECHO partners should take more into account the existing community bias towards “pleasing the donor” fairly widespread in the three countries of Central Asia.

### 3.2.5. Accepting DP/DRR as a “lower” priority

155. The population and the government in most areas in Central Asia are constantly exposed to various disaster risks; communities generally see it as a part of life to be dealt with rather than as something “exceptional” and “dramatic”. Most communities and local authorities interviewed by the evaluation team mentioned *water, electricity, employment and income* as their *highest* priority, generally perceiving DP and DRR as a *lower* priority. In the opinion of the team, few DIPECHO projects take this sufficiently into account during project design and implementation.

156. When the team pointed out this obvious fact to DG ECHO staff and some of the partners, many argued that, due to DIPECHO interventions, this has changed. Some partners claimed that the Governments have gradually increased its interest in emergency management development over the course of implementing DIPECHO programmes. In Tajikistan, for instance, this “renewed” interest was apparently confirmed by a certain progress noted within the CoES emergency response planning and strategy development, as well as by establishing the Department of Environment and Emergency Situations under the Executive Office of the President. At the same time, all involved recognized that downgrading the former Ministry of Emergencies to a State Committee (lower status than a Ministry) in Tajikistan could hardly be interpreted as a sign for a “renewed interest” in disaster management.

157. It is important to note that, in view of the current economic and social situation in the countries of Central Asia there is nothing unusual in DP/DRR being perceived as a relatively lower priority by the population and the government. However, ignoring (and sometimes denying) this obvious fact could result in either faulty project design or substantial extra efforts being spent on constantly advocating for and trying to “convince” communities and governments to pay more attention to DP and DRR, while their immediate perceived priorities clearly lie elsewhere.

158. In the opinion of the team, a “head-on” approach to advocacy and – as one interviewed put it - “changing the population and government mind” is simply inefficient. The team recognizes that one of the key activities of DIPECHO is DRR advocacy, and agrees that one of the best ways of advocating for DRR is to provide governments and communities with expertise and support their DP and DRR activities (e.g. preparation of action plans, setting-up of coordination mechanisms, integrating DRR into the education system, development of coordinated early warning systems, implementation of small-scale mitigation projects etc.)

159. However, all the above DIPECHO projects should be designed based on *accepting* the existing community and government perception of *their* priorities, rather than attempting to *change* them. Accepting this fact would almost automatically result in building DIPECHO interventions around what communities and governments perceive as their “true priorities” (e.g. water, income generation etc.). This in turn would result in prioritizing the projects that attempt to *integrate* DP/DRR into other development activities (e.g. the Handicap International project aimed at mainstreaming both DRR into disability and disability into DRR), effectively *mainstreaming* them into other programmes, thus increasing community interest and ownership, and enhancing the impact and sustainability of DIPECHO interventions. While some of DIPECHO partners already started applying this approach, all should be encouraged to do so.

### Recommendation

R36. To ensure impact and sustainability of any possible future DIPECHO activities in Central Asia DIPECHO interventions in Central Asia should realistically take into account the public perception of DP/DRR as having a relatively *lower* priority compared to their immediate livelihood needs. Rather than attempting to “change” people’s perceptions of their priorities, DIPECHO projects should *accept* them, building most of their interventions accordingly and, wherever possible, integrating and mainstreaming DP/DRR into other development activities. This will allow the partners to develop new, more realistic approaches, in their project design and implementation.

#### 3.2.6. Mainstreaming DP/DRR into development activities

160. As mentioned in the previous sections, listening more to project beneficiaries and accepting *their* perceptions of priorities would inevitably result in prioritizing the projects that *integrate/ mainstream* DP/DRR into other development activities.

161. Currently only 4 out of 17 DIPECHO partners appear to be consistently applying an *integrated approach* in their projects. Only 8 out of the 32 DIPECHO IV and V projects reviewed attempted to integrate DRR and DP into other development activities. With few exceptions, DP/DRR was introduced in communities as separate projects rarely linked to the communities’ priorities and/or other development activities. While nearly all projects visited by the team would often include nearly the whole range of possible DP/DRR activities (small-scale mitigation, disaster preparedness plan, first aid training, creating community disaster management committees, establishing and training rescue teams etc.), little consideration would generally be given to, for example, integrating the proposed activities into the work of the groups

and committees that existed in the village long before DIPECHO project started or to integrate the disaster management plan into an already existing village development plan.

162. At the same time, nearly all projects where a DIPECHO partner – deliberately or sometimes unintentionally - integrated DRR and DP into the community’s and the agency’s “mainstream” activities, combined addressing the needs of various target groups within the same project, or combined different components in some other way, the projects generally showed a better impact, more innovation and a higher level of actual or potential sustainability. The team believes therefore that mainstreaming or integrating DP/DRR into other development activities should be encouraged and – wherever possible - consistently applied in all DIPECHO projects in Central Asia. This would further contribute to the European Commission “efforts to mainstream Disaster Risk Reduction into longer-term development aid” emphasised in the European Consensus on Humanitarian Aid, 2008 (point 90)

### Recommendation

R37. To increase the impact and sustainability of DIPECHO DP/DRR activities in Central Asia, the DG ECHO should continue encouraging the partners - wherever possible – to apply an integrated approach in all their projects with the view of *mainstreaming* DP/DRR into other development activities.

#### 3.2.7. Focusing on quality

163. Many DIPECHO projects seem to focus more on *quantity* (covering more areas or populations) rather than *quality* and *impact*. DIPECHO partners, for instance, often tend to measure their results in terms of amount of materials distributed, the number of training sessions held or village disaster preparedness plans developed and mitigation projects implemented. One partner, for instance, listed the “500 copies of teachers materials distributed, 400 copies of risk maps developed and disseminated to local communities and local government, 10 exhibitions on wheels conducted and 89 sets of simple community alarm systems installed” as “project results” in one of its DIPECHO IV projects.

164. This way of measuring results encourages more of a quantitative approach, inevitably focusing the partner’s attention on achieving quantitative indicators, rather than on increasing the effectiveness, sustainability and impact of the intervention. While these numbers certainly represent significant project *outputs*, much less attention is paid to assessing e.g. to what extent the risk maps are being *used* by the communities and the local government structures, or how the communities and local government could and would *update* these maps. It is neither clear from the reports whether, as a result of this particular intervention the beneficiary communities would be able to *use* the skills and competencies acquired to deal with possible risk level changes in the future or whether a new project would be necessary to address this.

165. Some projects explicitly consider project implementers (the government, rescue teams, school teachers etc.) as project "beneficiaries". This somewhat diverts the attention from the actual end results (e.g. ensuring that the rescue team actually “rescues” people) allowing to

consider a project successful simply if all the project activities were implemented (i.e. if the rescue team was simply “taught” how to rescue people).

166. In the view of the team, DIPECHO programme could also increase the quality of its projects by i.a. reducing the overall programme coverage. Though the DG ECHO guidelines do not explicitly encourage the partners to increase the coverage and the number of communities served, many DIPECHO IV and V projects still appear to aim for the maximum coverage, somewhat at the expense of quality, sustainability and effectiveness of the intervention.

167. In the opinion of the team, focusing on maximizing the programme coverage could sometimes compromise effectiveness of a project. While many DIPECHO projects, for instance, constantly create more and more new rescue teams, few of them are truly sustainable: only a few communities visited showed any evidence of developing alternative sources of funding to maintain these teams and replace their equipment in time. In one of the projects observed, a “district” rescue team included members coming from several neighboring communities, living 10 to 40 km away from the district centre. With only one set of equipment at the district CoES warehouse, and having no means of transport, the rescue team – though theoretically “covering” a larger geographical territory, could hardly be considered fully “operational” in any point within the said area. In the view of the team, having smaller, stationary groups or even trained individuals within each of the targeted communities would have certainly increased the project’s effectiveness, efficiency and sustainability.

168. Reducing programme coverage is sometimes interpreted as having fewer people “prepared for disasters” or “capable to reduce disaster risks” in communities. In the opinion of the evaluation team, however, investing in developing a sustainable, high impact effective and efficient project intervention in a smaller number of target communities could result in more neighboring communities becoming genuinely interested in implementing and replicating similar activities.

169. This would allow DIPECHO partners to focus on a reduced number of communities, thus increasing the quality of their interventions. Then, after direct DIPECHO financing is completed, some partners could focus on assisting the successful communities in sharing their experiences with other communities, thus effectively expanding the coverage from one community to another. The word about a truly resilient community, which successfully minimized the loss of life and material damage after a hazardous event, is likely to spread to neighboring communities, possibly encouraging them to develop their own DRR and DP measures themselves.

### Recommendation

R38. DIPECHO partners should generally focus more on enhancing the *quality* of their project planning and implementation, and less on the *quantity* and extending their project/programme coverage. Wherever reducing project coverage would contribute to increasing the projects’ impact and sustainability, it should be seriously considered.

### 3.2.8. Working with/through local NGOs

170. According to DG ECHO regulations, DIPECHO projects can only be implemented by partners who have signed the FPA with DG ECHO, i.e. are mainly by International NGOs and International Organizations. At the same time DG ECHO encourages its implementing partners to work with local NGOs: at the moment there are a number of local NGOs implementing small-scale projects on behalf of some DIPECHO partners (e.g. UNDP in Kyrgyzstan works with *Camp Alatoo*; IOM supports i.a. *Women Leaders of Jalalabad*, *DIA* and *Craftsmen of Joy*; *Shoola* has a lot of experience having worked previously as local partner with a number of International NGOs etc.).

171. The evaluation team was quite impressed by the results and achievements demonstrated by the projects run by the local NGOs, in particular in Kyrgyzstan. Their representatives, interviewed by the evaluation team appeared to be somewhat more “enthusiastic” than some of the international partners. All of them generally showed relatively more innovation and creativity; all were either already trying or seemed to be more open to *integrating* DRR into their main activities. *Camp Alatoo*, for instance, has been doing this in Southern Kyrgyzstan, integrating DRR into its Watershed Management programmes (interestingly, they apparently adapted this practice to the local environment based on the experience of the Mission East - CAMP collaboration effort in Kulyab, Tajikistan, financed under DIPECHO IV). CAMP in both Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan is currently conducting a survey to assess and document effective indigenous disaster preparedness and risk reduction approaches and technologies in farming etc.

### Recommendation

R39. It is recommended that DG ECHO continues encouraging project partners to involve qualified local NGOs as local implementing partners. In the view of the team, the high innovativeness and enthusiasm of many local NGOs would contribute to increasing sustainability of the current and planned DIPECHO DP/DRR interventions.

### 3.2.9. Applying country-specific approach

172. Though all the three countries visited share a number of similarities, mainly due to their common Soviet past, over the part years each of them developed a lot of specificities which do have an impact on DIPECHO programme and need to be taken into account to ensure the programme impact and sustainability. Each of them provides certain advantages and disadvantages, and each requires applying somewhat different approaches.

173. While, for instance, all the countries in Central Asia generally maintain a fairly centralized government system, in Tajikistan it is somewhat less strong, allowing DIPECHO partners to work more with the CoES at the local level. An extremely centralized system of government in Uzbekistan allows for almost any DP and DRR programme to “cascade” down to the lowest possible level, provided it has been introduced or approved at the central level; at the same time it discourages the local initiative at the community level. While communities in Tajikistan have virtually no access to any local government financial resources other than their

own, the decentralization reform in Kyrgyzstan resulted in the local communities gradually benefiting from an increasing amount of funding from the local decentralized budgets etc.

174. DIPECHO programme in the region can also be particularly affected by certain political considerations. For instance, over the past few years the Uzbek government has been consistently restricting the activities of international and local NGOs. No international NGOs have been recently registered in Uzbekistan; it is becoming increasingly difficult for the international agencies to obtain registration and to work with or through the local NGOs. According to the current legislation, all NGO projects can only receive international funding through a “Civil Society Agency” set up by the Government. Since funding for NGOs under DIPECHO cannot be channeled through the host government system, this inevitably limits the DIPECHO programme in Uzbekistan to a fairly small group of implementing partners i.e. the UN agencies and those partnered with Uzbekistan Red Crescent Society. The team was also informed that a similar regulation - possibly limiting the registration and operations of NGOs - is being considered in Kyrgyzstan. If adopted, it might substantially limit the activities of both local and international NGOs, which might consequently affect DIPECHO programme in Kyrgyzstan.

### Recommendations

- R40. To the extent possible DG ECHO and DIPECHO partners working in all the three countries in the Central Asia should take more into account the specificities of each of the countries in designing and implementing their projects, in particular the regional and cross-border ones. Both DG ECHO and DIPECHO partners are also encouraged to regard the possible limitations resulting out of the countries’ specificities as *opportunities*, effectively utilizing them for maximizing the projects’ impact and sustainability.
- R41. In view of the current government policy regarding NGOs in Uzbekistan, it might be prudent to focus DIPECHO funding on the UN partners rather than NGOs. This could also be used as an *opportunity* to focus on supporting the Government in developing a comprehensive vision and strategy for DM and DRR. This in turn would reveal the areas which could and should be covered by NGOs and INGOs, thus hopefully contributing to increasing their role in DM and DRR system in the future.
- R42. DG ECHO should further investigate the possibility of Kyrgyz government passing legislation potentially restricting activities of local and international NGOs. Should that prove to be true DG ECHO and its partners should consider possible advocacy actions, as well as assessing possible impact of such decision on the programme, and make appropriate adjustments in its planning for DIPECHO VI.

### 3.3. Other cross-cutting issues

#### 3.3.1. DIPECHO funding cycle

175. The DIPECHO current funding cycle is 15 months. In 2009, considering the harsh, long winter, it was extended to 18 months. Though DG ECHO has clearly stated on many occasions that its current funding cycle (DIPECHO V) will remained unchanged, some of the partners still



mentioned to the team that they would appreciate DIPECHO funding cycle to be extended to 18 or 24 months. Some also commented that by the time partnership agreements for DIPECHO are signed, the delays in signing and start-up processes - often due to administrative delays from both DG ECHO and the partners' sides - result in delaying the project implementation: sometimes they have to start at the time of year (e.g. mid-winter) when the project activities cannot be implemented. This in turn further delays project interventions, forcing the partners to request for project extensions. Interestingly, a number of similar requests were reported by previous evaluations as well, though, apparently, this time there were fewer such comments.

176. Nearly all DIPECHO partners interviewed by the team continued their project activities started under DIPECHO IV into DIPECHO V. In fact, few projects seem to be explicitly designed with the view to be completed within the 15 months. Almost every partner interviewed by the team in all the three countries visited intended continuing the current DIPECHO V projects, clearly assuming that there *will* be funding from the consecutive DIPECHO action plans. Though in the project proposals (Chapter 5 of the FPA), partners are required to describe how the proposed interventions will be completed within a 15 month period, almost every partner consistently showed to the team how their project would be *continued* under a next DIPECHO cycle; some even explicitly planned to use their own alternative sources of financing “*to cover the lag period*” between DIPECHO V and DIPECHO VI.

177. The tendency to rely on the quasi “imminent” availability of the subsequent DIPECHO funding has persisted in the programme for a while. In the view of the team, few partners have seriously considered the possibility that DIPECHO VI financing may or may not be granted. Most clearly rely on DIPECHO financing to be “automatically” secured in the next funding cycle. Whenever, in some cases, the partners did not receive DIPECHO V funding, this came as a “surprise”, sometimes even “shock”.

178. Though all DIPECHO project proposals include some kind of “exit” strategy, In the view of the team few could be considered realistic. Wherever the current project activities are completed, many simply tend to submit new applications for basically expanding similar interventions to the new geographical areas.

179. In the view of the team, such an approach generally jeopardizes the projects' sustainability and making communities more “aid dependent” or even “DIPECHO programme” dependent as opposed to being self-sustaining. In addition, unforeseen circumstances – such as new government regulations and/or restrictions - might prevent financing of a project through the DIPECHO cycle forcing closure of the project in an area before completion (this actually happened to the World Vision International which failed to receive DIPECHO V funding). Therefore, more explanations might be required in the Single Form on how the project will be completed within the 15 month timeframe; the partners should also be required to specify how the individual DIPECHO Project is related to the Project Partner's longer-term strategy in the area; and how the eventual sustainability of the Project(s) will be ensured.

180. While some of the current projects might need up to 24-months funding, In the view of the team the overall majority of the small scale disaster preparedness projects funded by

DIPECHO in Central Asia *can* and *should* be completed within the current 12-15 months funding cycle. With this in view, all partners should be firmly encouraged to clearly indicate in their proposals *how* they intend to *complete* all project activities within the allocated timeframe.

181. This would encourage the partners to better select and prioritize the project activities, privileging the ones that could be both realistically completed *and* produce the desired impact, still within the project timeframe. This would also require the partners to consider examining more seriously how the activities will be taken over by the beneficiary communities or will be sustained over the long-term. It will in turn help the partners in defining their phasing down and phasing out strategies, ultimately encouraging communities to rely more on their own resources and enhancing their sense of project ownership. In short, projects having a proper exit strategy are more likely to be more sustainable.

182. Finally, strictly adhering to the 15-months' funding cycle could also encourage a more creative approach to project design and implementation, and would result in more innovation in DIPECHO programme in general. The partners could, for instance, use a "modular" approach, similar to the one used in training: a project could be designed in such a way that – being completed within DIPECHO funding cycle – its results could be fully used. Should additional funding be available in the next cycle, a new project, building up on the outputs of the previous one could be initiated. The whole series of projects could be planned in advance, irrespective of whether there will be an actual second phase or not. This approach could eventually result in producing a “string” of mutually reinforcing smaller-scale projects, which could be easily expanded or phased out depending on the availability of funding, still producing sustainable impact and results.

### Recommendations

R43. DIPECHO programme should retain its current 15-month funding cycle. DG ECHO should continue encouraging all DIPECHO partners to clearly indicate in their project proposals *how* they intend to *complete* all the project activities within the allocated timeframe of 15 months without any possible extension or carry-over into another funding cycle.

#### 3.3.2. Gender

183. Ensuring gender equality is at the center of attention of the EC. The European Consensus on Humanitarian Aid, 2008 emphasises that “recognising the different needs, capacities and contributions of women, girls, boys and men, the EU highlights the importance of integrating gender considerations into humanitarian aid”. According to the “Cross-cutting Issues Concept Paper” (2005) gender-related issues are a priority within all DG ECHO-funded programmes. FPA Article 17 specifies that “priority shall be given to analysis of the beneficiaries’ situation... including assessments of the different needs, capacities and roles that might exist for men and women within the given situation and its cultural context”. DG ECHO also calls for the data on gender and other vulnerabilities to be disaggregated.

184. This, in a way, follows the general pattern of gender-specific roles and responsibilities within communities in the Central Asia: the region has benefited from the former USSR cultural norms, where a greater emphasis was placed on gender equality in society than is obvious in other countries in Asia.

185. DIPECHO project interventions generally have a fair mix of male and female participants: most community training and DP/DRR awareness events attended by the team had a majority of female participants, while most members of the rescue teams are males. Men would also provide the bulk of the workforce for most mitigation projects reviewed by the team. Women and men appear to be both playing a part in decision-making: in many communities visited women demonstrated a somewhat higher level of interest and participation in the projects than men. At the same time, it appears that few DIPECHO projects explicitly focus on reducing gender-specific vulnerabilities or address potential gender-specific impact of disasters on male and female project beneficiaries.

### Recommendation

R44. In line with the DG ECHO and EC policy on Gender, future DIPECHO DP/DRR interventions could address gender issues more explicitly. DIPECHO partner agencies, especially those with expertise in gender and development – such as UNICEF and Oxfam – could be encouraged to focusing more on assisting other DIPECHO partners in mainstreaming gender into their DP and DRR activities.

### 3.3.3. Implementing Hyogo Framework for Action

186. Recognizing that reducing risk and vulnerability through enhanced preparedness is essential to preserving life, especially in zones vulnerable to natural disasters and climatic change, the EU is committed to promoting disaster risk reduction and disaster preparedness in developing countries through coherent and coordinated action at local, national and regional level. With this in view “the EU promotes international efforts within the Hyogo Framework for Action as well as support for the coordinating role of the International Strategy for Disaster Reduction, to increase coping capacities at all levels through strategic planning and action.” (European Consensus on Humanitarian Aid, 2008, point 75).

187. All three countries visited in Central Asia are currently implementing the “Hyogo Framework for Action 2005-2015” at national, local and community levels. DIPECHO IV and V programmes in the region closely follow the priorities identified in this framework. Humanitarian Decision for DIPECHO IV, for instance, explicitly emphasizes that “the Priorities for Action of the Hyogo Framework for Action 2005–2015: *Building the Resilience of Nations and Communities to Disasters*” provide the strategic logic underpinning the Fourth DIPECHO Action Plan for Central Asia”.

188. In the view of the team, all the DIPECHO IV and V projects reviewed directly contribute to achieving all the DRR priorities outlined of the Hyogo Framework for Action:

- *Make Disaster risk reduction a priority – ensuring that DRR is a national and local priority with a strong institutional basis for implementation.* DIPECHO programme contributes to it by primarily having created and supporting REACT coordination mechanism in Tajikistan and DRCU/REACT in Kyrgyzstan.
- *Know the risks and take action – identify, assess and monitor disaster risks and enhance early warning.* Nearly all DIPECHO projects are designed based on assessing and constantly monitoring disaster risk at various levels. At least two practical tools and methodologies for comprehensive risk assessments have been developed and implemented in Khatlon Province and in GBAO in Tajikistan during DIPECHO IV and V.
- *Build understanding and awareness – use the knowledge, innovation and education to build culture of safety and resilience.* A number of DIPECHO IV and V projects reviewed by the team directly support DP/DRR and safety awareness in schools; most DP/DRR projects in GBAO, Tajikistan, are explicitly built on the principle of using knowledge to build the culture of safety and resilience; under DIPECHO V a group of technical institutions is being developed in order to provide technical and scientific advice on hazards and risk reduction to the MoES and the Inter-Ministerial Committee on Prevention and Liquidation of Emergencies in Kyrgyzstan, etc.
- *Reduce risk – reduce the underlying risk factors.* Many DIPECHO V projects examined by the team are increasingly including an agro-forestry component aimed at reducing potential hazards. In most cases these projects are initiated based on direct community requests; communities also tend to participate in implementing such projects more actively.
- *Be prepared and ready to act – strengthen disaster preparedness for effective response at all levels.* Almost all DIPECHO projects include various DP awareness programmes and first aid training. A number of partners support the governments in the region in developing their national emergency management systems and various National Emergency Preparedness and Crisis Management Plans.

### Recommendation

- R45. DG ECHO should continue encouraging project interventions that contribute to the implementation of the Hyogo Framework for Action under DIPECHO V and continue utilizing this as one of the criteria in selecting projects for DIPECHO VI.

## 4. STRATEGIC ISSUES

### 4.1. Strategic orientation for DIPECHO in Central Asia

189. The *raison d'être* of addressing strategy in a special chapter is multiple. First, the field observations lead the team to conclude that DIPECHO program is not sustainable as it is. We argue that the sustainability issue in this case cannot be sorted out at the sole operational level, but rather requires a strategic focus. Second, the team reckons that even a proper implementation of all operational and cross cutting recommendations would not lead to a complete fully satisfying coverage of local DP issues in Central Asia under the current DIPECHO formulae. Here is another hint for the need of a more strategic insight on how to address these gaps. Finally, as mentioned in as stated in the *DG ECHO implementation policy on DRR*, it is an issue for DG ECHO to set clearer indicators for phasing in and out DIPECHO programs. In the team opinion, formalizing a phasing out criteria consistently with DG ECHO mandate and EC Consensus on Humanitarian Aid cannot be addressed properly anywhere below the strategic level.

190. Like most DIPECHO programmes in other geographical areas, DIPECHO in Central Asia went through different stages. DIPECHO I and II cycles were aimed at developing new types of projects through trying various approaches and action learning. DIPECHO III to V were mostly consolidating and streamlining the outcomes of the previous two cycles.

191. In the opinion of the team, DIPECHO VI (and possible subsequent cycles) should be managed by DG ECHO more as a coherent programme - rather than as a collection of individual projects – focusing primarily on maximizing the impact and sustainability of all DIPECHO programme outputs with a view of gradually phasing the programme out. This could be done first and foremost by implementing the specific operational recommendations for improving the programme impact, efficiency and sustainability at the project level, outlined in the previous sections of the present report

192. However, simply improving the operational functioning of DG ECHO in Central Asia or the project work of its partners within the existing DG ECHO strategy, mandate and budget might not be sufficient to make a difference in the state of DP and/or DRR in the region. Due to other operational priorities, certain lack of awareness, insufficient budget and other limitations, this can hardly be done in a sustainable way by DG ECHO or by the local actors (DIPECHO partners, government, beneficiaries) in Central Asia. The best way of getting momentum in this regard, therefore, is to leverage the DIPECHO action in at the strategic (DG ECHO, Brussels) rather than operational level (DG ECHO, Central Asia)

### 4.2. DG ECHO involvement in DP and DRR

193. Having created DIPECHO, DG ECHO literally pushed the “borders” of traditional emergency response, “stepping into” something new for it: first into disaster preparedness, then – into disaster risk reduction. Compared to other actors, DG ECHO – in many ways - remains a pioneer and leader in this field: UNICEF, for example, does not have an official strategy on DP; GFDRR seems to have little interest for DP at local level etc. Though there was and still remains

a certain void in the proper coverage of all DP aspects in Central Asia, the DG ECHO - through DIPECHO in Central Asia - certainly added value by a) contributing to filling the gaps in DP/DRR knowledge and capacity, and b) by increasing the general level of awareness about DRR issues among the populations and governments in Central Asia.

194. Since its beginning in the region in 2001 DIPECHO has always operated somewhat "at the edge" between DP and DRR. Most DIPECHO activities at the community and government levels (village DM plans, community rescue teams, EWS, supporting MoES in creating a coherent disaster management system, training MoES staff, providing GIS equipment and training, risk mapping etc.) aim at enhancing the level of disaster preparedness. Small-scale mitigation projects (drainage canals, reforestation, river bank protection etc.) mostly fall under a scope of other (i.e. non-DP) DRR activities, while the information campaigns and other awareness-raising among the general population fit into both DP and DRR.

195. While it is difficult to draw a clear line between DP and DRR (in particular since DP – i.e. preparing communities, governments and local authorities to respond in the event of an emergency - is an integral part of DRR), this ambiguity inevitably created a number of institutional and organisational tensions within DIPECHO programme. Though DG ECHO demonstrated certain flexibility in adjusting its policies, budgets and objectives to be able to “expand” into DP and DRR, DG ECHO still remains essentially an emergency response agency, which constantly tries to “fit” its DP and DRR activities into its existing mandate, technical capacity and budget.

196. One of the direct implications of this is the DG ECHO applying essentially a “needs-based” approach in most DIPECHO projects. According to the European Consensus on Humanitarian Aid, 2008, “the objective of EU humanitarian aid is to provide a *needs-based* emergency response aimed at preserving life, preventing and alleviating human suffering and maintaining human dignity” (point 8). However, while the emergency response needs *can* be meaningfully satisfied within the limited timeframe and resources available to DG ECHO, fully satisfying the essentially development DP and DRR needs is clearly *beyond* the DG ECHO capacity.

#### 4.3. DG ECHO limitations

197. Being an emergency response agency, DG ECHO has a number of institutional constraints in successfully implementing its DP and DRR activities. The DG ECHO mandate does not allow it to work directly with governments, which, in most countries are the *main* actor responsible for disaster management, DP and DRR. DG ECHO cannot directly contract technical assistance (TA) to the government or to procure equipment often needed to build up emergency response capacity of the government, nor can it contract private local companies or institutions. All of this inevitably reduces the cost efficiency of DG ECHO DP and DRR programmes.

198. At the same time, none of these constraints exist for most *development* donors, including various respective DGs at the EC. Their mandates allow them to directly support the partner governments and to contract private companies, NGOs, local or international, research centres etc. While DIPECHO can only “advocate” for community-based DP and DRR, a development

donor can “encourage” the host government to pay more attention to DP and DRR at the local level by putting conditions on supplying it with much sought-after technology (e.g. sophisticated EWS, mapping and alarm systems, computerised monitoring systems, crisis management centres etc.) often asked for by the host governments. Finally, a development donor has more possibilities to “convince” the government to mainstream DP and DRR measures into the development programmes which it funds (e.g. water, energy, food security, education, institutional building, governance etc.) thus effectively maximising their impact and sustainability.

199. The evaluation team noted that the niche identified by DIPECHO (i.e. DP/DRR at community and government levels) corresponds to a very important need. It also recognises that, should DIPECHO withdraws from Central Asia in the near future, most of what has been achieved by now risks being lost, mainly due to the lack of sustainability of most projects. At the same time the team concluded that DIPECHO programme is unlikely to be able to fill the gaps in DP/DRR in Central Asia in a sustainable way either a qualitative nor in a quantitative manner, simply because DG ECHO is not the best “tool” to deal with DP/DRR.

200. Theoretically this can be addressed by either transferring most of the DRR activities to a more appropriate development donor (e.g. DG RELEX, DG AIDCO) or by changing the DG ECHO mandate, financial limits and regulations, effectively allowing it to manage long-term development programmes and effectively turning it into more a development, rather than an emergency donor. In the view of the team neither of these options is feasible. As mentioned in the *European Consensus on Humanitarian Aid, 2008*, “through its DIPECHO programme, supported by the humanitarian aid budget, the European Commission has acquired considerable practical experience of disaster preparedness focussing on community-based activities” (point 90): the first option therefore might lead to a substantial loss of this expertise and experience. The second option risks creating the “image confusion” among international community, possibly jeopardizing emergency response operations DG ECHO is known for.

#### 4.4. New strategic direction for DIPECHO in Central Asia

201. Taking into account the limitations and constraints listed above, the evaluation team believes that they can only be meaningfully addressed by reconsidering strategic direction of the DIPECHO programme in Central Asia. Rather than simply attempting to address as much of the DP and DRR needs as possible within its limited resources, DIPECHO could explicitly focus on “strategic advocacy” i.e. *maximizing the level of awareness of all stakeholders, civil society and aid actors about the importance of DP/DRR and contributing to enhancing their willingness and ability to include DP/DRR in their programmes.*

202. The need to “strengthen its role in humanitarian advocacy” is explicitly emphasized in the *European Consensus on Humanitarian Aid, 2008* (point 97) and a number of DIPECHO projects already address this need. Overall, however, DIPECHO only focuses on awareness-raising among communities, selected government bodies involved in emergency response, and the general population; the bulk of the programme is still aimed at covering direct DP and DRR needs at the community level. This effectively leaves out a number of stakeholders (e.g. large

development donors etc.) who do have the mandate, budgets, flexibility and relevant working timeframe to substantially contribute to increasing the level of DP and DRR in the countries in Central Asia, far beyond of what DG ECHO could realistically do.

203. The benefits of the new approach are obvious. Simply developing its technical capacity for advising other agencies and development donors on mainstreaming DP and DRR into other development projects could allow the DG ECHO to dramatically expand DP and DRR activities therefore increasing their overall impact and sustainability. In fact, advising other agencies and development donors on mainstreaming DP and DRR could potentially become a possible new focus for any future DIPECHO programmes.

204. Applying this new strategic direction would also allow DIPECHO to have clearer criteria for phasing in and out consistently with the DG ECHO mandate and available budget. As regards the current DIPECHO programme in Central Asia that would mean, for instance, that *DIPECHO should stay in Central Asia until there is enough awareness from other stakeholders and aid actors to integrate DP/DRR into their programmes.*

205. The team is fully aware that that applying this new approach would require a substantial change of perspective from DG ECHO, which, as any emergency response agency, traditionally thinks in terms of covering the “needs” first. Since over the past few cycles DIPECHO in Central Asia gained considerable momentum in filling the DP/DRR “need gaps”, it might be tempted to stick to “what worked” and to continue its activities more or less unchanged. It could also be reluctant to pass some parts of the programme over to other actors. However, the team strongly believes that the proposed change in strategic direction is required to address the DP and DRR needs in Central Asia in a more effective and efficient way.

### Recommendations

R46. To re-focus DIPECHO programme in Central Asia on “strategic advocacy, i.e. *maximizing the level of awareness of all stakeholders, civil society and aid actors about the importance of DP/DRR and contributing to enhancing their willingness and ability to include DP/DRR in their programmes.*

R47. The “strategic advocacy” approach outlined above and further detailed in the sections below could be formalised and further developed in the *DG ECHO DP/DRR Strategic Advocacy Orientation note*. It could clarify the new strategic orientation for DIPECHO programme, specify the roles and responsibilities, and identify various types of advocacy activities, specific objectives, targets, milestones, related budget targets etc.

#### 4.5. The current level of DP/DRR awareness in Central Asia

206. Any “advocacy” is about calling the attention of *others* on a given issue. In case of DIPECHO in Central Asia the key target groups for strategic advocacy are primarily the general population, DIPECHO partner agencies, the host governments and other development donors (including other relevant DGs of the EC). The current level of the awareness of importance of DP/DRR among these groups in Central Asia varies:



- As mentioned earlier in the report, though DIPECHO programme succeeded in increasing the level of DP and DRR knowledge among the *general population*, it still perceives DP/DRR as a somewhat lower priority, i.e. the level of awareness of the *importance* of DP/DRR issues among the general population is generally *low*.
- The awareness of the importance of DP/DRR among DIPECHO *partners*, on the contrary, is *quite important*. Taking into account that it was apparently less the case before DIPECHO started, DIPECHO programme has obviously succeeded in increasing the level of awareness among this group.
- As far as the host *governments* are concerned, it appears that DIPECHO programme contributed to somewhat increasing their level of awareness, in particular at higher (ministerial) levels. Although *improved*, the government awareness on the importance of DP/DRR in Central Asia is still to be promoted.
- Regarding the level of awareness among other major donors, though the situation has been improving, it has not resulted yet in anything but a few interesting but limited initiatives. While the World Bank and ADB are getting increasingly involved, there are still only few major DP/DRR programmes in Central Asia. Overall, it could be affirmed that the general level of DP/DRR awareness among the donors is still *low*.

#### 4.6. Objectives for strategic advocacy

207. As mentioned earlier, focusing on “strategic advocacy” - i.e. maximizing the level of awareness of all stakeholders, civil society and aid actors about the importance of DP/DRR - provides DIPECHO with much clearer criteria for phasing down and phasing out. As regards the DIPECHO programme in Central Asia that would mean that *DIPECHO should stay in Central Asia until there is enough awareness from other stakeholders and aid actors to integrate DP/DRR into their programmes*.

208. Essentially it means that the level of DP/DRR awareness among all the target groups involved (beneficiaries, partners, government, donors) has reached a level when the actions performed got enough momentum to be either sustained on their own or be taken over by other, more appropriate donors. In this perspective, an exit strategy would correspond to the following tentative “awareness objectives” for each of these groups:

- i. Increasing the level of DP/DRR awareness among the *general population* is the hardest target, and can only be achieved if many other conditions are set. Those are well above what DG ECHO can perform on its own. Therefore, in relation to the general population rather than fixing any kind of quantitative objective on level of awareness, the team suggests *focusing on quality* rather than quantity and applying the “*small is beautiful*” principle, with greater emphasis on *education* and *small-scale mitigation projects* along the lines outlined in the previous sections of this report. This would require from the DG ECHO a certain change of perspective from a “needs-based” emergency response approach to a quality-based approach much better suited to a DP/DRR programme.

- ii. As far as DIPECHO *partners* are concerned, the objective is mostly reached already. DG ECHO should continue encouraging them to *mainstream* DP/DRR into their other projects to ensure their better impact and increased cost efficiency.
- iii. Since DG ECHO does not have mandate to work directly with governments, it is unrealistic to fix specific objectives on awareness of importance of DP/DRR among the governments. DG ECHO should, however, continue encouraging the partners to work with the governments on this. In the view of the team, DG ECHO could also allow itself more flexibility in engaging a direct dialogue with the government, in particular on the importance of *mainstreaming* DP/DRR into the work of various ministries and government agencies.
- iv. Regarding the main development donors, DG ECHO could mainly focus on encouraging them to *mainstream* DP/DRR in their development programmes, possibly – as mentioned above – offering them its technical expertise in identifying possible areas for mainstreaming. Since their projects directly address people’s livelihood concerns, they are more likely to produce more sustainable impact. Having much larger financial means, their programmes could also easily incorporate substantial technical assistance at both the institutional and technical level, as well as procuring various EWS equipment (e.g. for avalanches, flood mapping, satellite imagery processing in food security etc.).

#### Recommendations

- R48. While continuing its advocacy for DP/DRR among the general population and the host governments (via implementing DIPECHO projects), DG ECHO should focus in particular on the advocacy aimed at the major development donors, both within EC (DG AIDCO, DG RELEX) and outside EC (WB, ADB etc.)
- R49. The strategic advocacy targeting DIPECHO partners, governments and major development donors should be mainly aimed at *mainstreaming/integrating* DP and DRR into their other programmes and activities. It is suggested that DG ECHO develops a particular technical expertise for advising other agencies on identifying the areas for mainstreaming DP and DRR and providing technical expertise in implementing such mainstreaming.

#### 4.7. Mapping DP/DRR activities

209. As mentioned earlier, to achieve maximum impact DIPECHO strategic advocacy should be mostly focused on two target audiences: the general population who currently benefit from most DIPECHO projects, and the major development donors. Improving the impact and sustainability of the ongoing DIPECHO projects along the lines suggested earlier in the report would generally contribute to enhancing the DP/DRR awareness of the general population. The team therefore suggests focusing more on the advocacy aimed at mainstreaming DP/DRR into the programmes of the major development donors.

210. As a first step in this direction, the DG ECHO could establish a comprehensive *mapping* of who's doing what in DP/DRR/DM. While there exist several national and global platforms on DRR, involving many donors, public and private actors, research centres etc., DG ECHO appears to lack sufficient working knowledge of these structures.

211. In the view of the team, however, DG ECHO could truly add value by both providing its *current* implementing partners with an “overview” and “bigger picture” of DP and DRR (e.g. by introducing them to the climate change and its impact on DP and DRR, as has already been done at the recent National Conferences attended by the team), and getting *new* partners – in particular the major development donors (including DG AIDCO and DG RELEX) – more actively involved in DP and DRR.

### Recommendation

R50. DG ECHO should establish a comprehensive *mapping* of who's doing what in DP/DRR/DM paying particular attention to the activities of other major development donors. During the process it could also potentially identify the areas where DP and DRR issues could be successfully mainstreamed into major development programmes.

#### 4.8. Using DIPECHO project implementation experience

212. Efficient advocacy cannot be only based on effective communication. It would certainly benefit from the experience and legitimacy of DIPECHO operational activities. Though some of the major development donors, like the World Bank or DG AIDCO, have the experience of working at a grass-root level (e.g. when using calls for proposals for local NGOs they are not that far from DG ECHO *modus operandi*), most of the major development donors would often lack this perspective. Grass-root work is rarely part of their mandate, it involves a lot of community-level monitoring, it represents a relatively small part on the overall budget and most of them would usually deal with formal institutional/structural changes required or purely technical aspects of projects.

213. In the view of the team it is critically important that the DG ECHO continues backing its advocacy work with the major development donors by its field-based experience and technical expertise in implementing DP and DRR projects at the grass-root level. In its advocacy work DG ECHO could, for instance, use examples of good practices from the successful and sustainable DIPECHO projects at the community level, backing up its arguments by showing examples of comparative cost-efficiency of various types of DP and DRR activities. This would contribute to the legitimacy and efficiency of its advocacy efforts.

214. At the same time it would require re-orienting the knowledge management in DP/DRR at DG ECHO from simply disseminating “good/best practices” at the *operational* level more towards promoting coordination and LRRD at the *strategic* level, as well as enhancing its institutional and technical capacity to do so (e.g. demonstrating projects cost-efficiency would require to substantially develop the DG ECHO knowledge and capacity in applying cost-benefit analysis in humanitarian sector etc.)

## Recommendation

R51. The DG ECHO should continue backing its advocacy work with the major development donors by its field-based experience and technical expertise in implementing DP and DRR projects at the grass-root level. Financing and implementing DIPECHO projects at the community level, however, would become at this stage mainly a source of technical expertise, rather than an operational goal on its own.

### 4.9. Considerations for DIPECHO phasing down

215. Assessing how far DIPECHO programme in Central Asia is from achieving the above objectives could therefore provide indicators for identifying the short- and mid-term strategy for DIPECHO in Central Asia, as well as for its possible phasing down.

216. Most of the measures contributing to achieving objective (i) – i.e. increasing the *general population* awareness - are described in the previous sections of the report. While this can be started already during the current DIPECHO V cycle, *at least one - and most probably two - other DIPECHO cycles* will be necessary to re-orient the programme successfully from the current, predominantly quantitative, approach to the *quality*-oriented one. Recognising that this exercise is intrinsically difficult, especially in Central Asia, the team however, believes that the speed of this process will mostly depend on the quality of the DG ECHO selecting and monitoring of respective DIPECHO projects.

217. Objectives (ii) and (iii) – increasing the DIPECHO partners' and host governments' awareness - can generally be reached by the end of DIPECHO V (DIPECHO partners) or DIPECHO VI (governments). With these two groups the DG ECHO could mainly focus on mainstreaming of DP/DRR into their activities and projects.

218. As regards objective (iv) - development donor awareness – until now DG ECHO has done fairly little about it. It appears that the DG ECHO has never seriously considered this group as a potential target audience for its DP and DRR advocacy work in Central Asia. Apart from working with the UN agencies (mainly UNDP, UNICEF and UNISDR) DG ECHO seems to have little contact with other major international donors involved in DRR (e.g. GFDRR, WB, ADB). It appears that even inside the European Commission the level of knowledge and understanding of each other's programmes and approaches – in particular in relation to DP and DRR - between DG ECHO and DG AIDCO and DG RELEX is clearly insufficient. In the view of the team, the DP/DRR advocacy aimed at the major development donors could become one of the major axis of advocacy to be undertaken directly by DG ECHO. Taking into account that this work is only starting, to achieve any tangible results in this area would require at least two more DIPECHO cycles.

## Recommendation

R52. In the view of the evaluation team, at this stage it would be realistic to start any phasing down of DIPECHO programme in Central Asia by the end of DIPECHO VII at the earliest. Should, however - as a result of the active DIPECHO advocacy - more

development donors and other actors start actively integrating/mainstreaming DP/DRR into their activities, an earlier phasing down of DIPECHO in Central Asia could be considered.

#### 4.10. DIPECHO and climate change

219. During the evaluation mission, both DG ECHO and some of the partners mentioned the issue of climate change and its potential impact on DIPECHO programme; all the National Conferences attended by the team, for instance, included presentations on the climate change impact in Central Asia.

220. Dealing with the consequences of climate change involves attenuation (limiting the carbon footprint) and adaptation to it. Generally most of DP and, in particular, DRR programmes are often dealing with the consequences of the environmental changes that could be attributed to climate change. As long as an adequate response and adaptation to such consequences involve DP and DRR, DIPECHO programme could be linked to and – consequently - funded from the budgets allocated to dealing with the climate change.

221. At the same time, getting more directly involved in dealing with the climate change might have its pitfalls. It might, for instance, somewhat jeopardise the original idea and identity of DIPECHO. Activities linked to adaptation to climate change - although hard to budget - can quickly turn out to be very expensive, far beyond the financial capacity of DG ECHO. Assuming that climate change happens (the consultants here follow the 2007 IPCC conclusions), it is however difficult to claim that a given disaster (e.g. a flood, a mudslide, and avalanche) is climate-change- or environmentally “induced”: experience proves that all such events are caused by a multitude of factors, the climate change being only one - though often an important underlying one - of them. Climate change might be – and often is - at the origin of other direct factors “producing” the emergencies DIPECHO deals with. As such, it represents more of a global, transversal, cross cutting issue which requires integration into other programmes.

222. Climate change is a large and complex topic. It requires a certain amount of expertise to deal with it in an integrated way. No donor – no matter how big - can “single-handedly” address all its aspects. The DG ECHO current mandate, financial means and institutional constraints suggest that it could meaningfully be involved mostly in adaptation to climate change at the local and community level. In the view of the team, this is where also lies its added value compared to other major donors.

223. Since climate change involves a lot of aspects, it could become a formidable opportunity to expand the scope of DG ECHO DP and DRR activities and to cooperate closely with other major actors in this field. DG ECHO may be at an advantage to, during advocating DP/DRR actions through DIPECHO to donors, exchange information as to how DG ECHO may be able to best fill a niche in the Climate Change sector, given its specialities.

224. At the same time, to deal effectively with the climate change, DG ECHO should start by investing in developing its knowledge base and expertise in the matter. Addressing the consequences of climate change “at the local level” (as referred to in A4 strategy paper) requires

specialised knowledge about it. The current climate change models used by IPCC are global: they rarely take into account the local topography which makes an important difference for climate at the local level. This involves serious down-scaling studies, which can only be funded by major development donors. Also, since DG ECHO works within a short- medium-term time span (5 to 10 years), shorter-term trends in climate change are much harder to observe and need specialised studies, which are currently beyond DG ECHO capacity.

225. “Climate change” and obtaining the related funding is currently much of a “fashion” in the aid sector. Other donors, such as ADB, are currently researching what they can possibly contribute to climate change. In the view of the team, it is important that the DG ECHO addresses it professionally, rather than as simply another “buzzword” for increasing its budget. Should DG ECHO decide to get professionally involved in addressing the issues related to climate change, it would need to define a clear *strategy* based on a technical and institutional mapping of all the climate change related issues. Clearly defining its specific role, positioning themselves vis-à-vis other donors and identifying its own specialised “niche” (as earlier with DIPECHO programme) would contribute to increasing efficiency and effectiveness of its possible future involvement in dealing with the consequences of the climate change.

226. Should DG ECHO - through its DIPECHO programme or other instruments - keeps expanding its DRR activities (e.g. adding climate change etc.) it might consider the possibility of increasing its technical capacity at the DG ECHO, Brussels.

### Recommendations

R53. To be able to deal effectively with the climate change, DG ECHO should start by investing in developing its knowledge base and expertise in the matter.

R54. Should DG ECHO decide to get involved in addressing climate change, it would need to define its own strategy. The strategy should, in particular, define its specific role in addressing climate change vis-à-vis other donors.

R55. Should DG ECHO keeps expanding its involvement in DRR activities (by i.a. including climate change) it could consider possibility of establishing a permanent DRR technical unit at the DG ECHO, Brussels. This unit could follow up all the developments in the field of DRR, formulate proactive policies and develop appropriate expertise required to successfully implement the DG ECHO DRR strategy (e.g. in advocacy, mainstreaming DRR into other programmes etc.).