Evaluation and review of DG ECHO financed livelihood interventions in humanitarian crises

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Executive summary

1. In recent years the European Commission has joined a host of other humanitarian actors in seeking to further integrate support for livelihoods into its humanitarian response actions. In accordance with this trend, DG ECHO has endeavoured to ensure that EU humanitarian food assistance has as its principal objective: to save and preserve life, to protect livelihoods, and to increase resilience, for populations facing on-going or firmly forecasted food crises, or recovering from them. To this end, DG ECHO commissioned an evaluation of DG-ECHO-financed livelihood interventions in humanitarian crises, with the overall purpose of improving increasing the coherence, quality, and effectiveness of its livelihood support.

Scope and methodology of the evaluation

2. The scope of the evaluation includes the full range of livelihood support activities funded by DG-ECHO, with a special focus on food assistance, and in particular livelihood interventions undertaken since the creation of the food aid budget line in 2007. In examining DG ECHO’s livelihood support actions across sectors, the evaluation sought to determine the extent to which ECHO and its partners utilize a livelihood framework in assessing needs, designing programmes and monitoring results.

3. The livelihood interventions analysed by this evaluation draw from three field case studies carried out in the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC), Ethiopia and Pakistan, a review of internal and external documents, and interviews carried out with various stakeholders and ECHO staff. The case studies were selected in consultation with ECHO staff and represent a range of livelihoods interventions, actors and contexts. At the request of various stakeholders within ECHO, the evaluation team also undertook a desk review of ECHO’s actions in the Sahel since the creation of the Sahel global plan in 2007. Interviews were carried out with key informants at the headquarters and regional levels and a discussion was held with regional food security advisers at the meeting of the PANIS group in Brussels in September 2011.

Developments in livelihood policy and practice

4. Many humanitarian actors, including DG ECHO, promote adherence to a livelihoods framework as a way to ensure that emergency assistance builds on and protects people’s strategies for survival and well-being. The livelihoods approach has proven applicable within various sectors of response and different types of humanitarian crises, including rapid-onset shocks, slow onset crises and protracted conflicts. Within these varying contexts, livelihood support can have a number of objectives including meeting basic needs (livelihood provisioning), protection and recovery of assets (livelihood protection) and creation of new livelihood opportunities (livelihood promotion). While these objectives can and often do overlap, experience shows that problems occur when objectives are not clearly articulated by donors and/or implementing partners.

ECHO’s livelihood policy and interventions

5. Emergency livelihood interventions designed to reduce food insecurity became more prominent within ECHO following the transfer of the Humanitarian Food Aid budget (from DG AIDCO) in 2007. ECHO’s livelihood support actions are broadly consistent
with its mandate and the humanitarian food assistance policy as defined in the HFA Communication.

6. It was challenging to describe ECHO’s livelihood portfolio due to a lack of documentation on the types of livelihood activities funded in different regions and across sectors. There is evidence, however, that a more diversified toolbox of livelihood interventions is being developed. For example, an analysis prepared by ECHO’s food assistance unit showed that direct distribution of in-kind food aid comprised over 40 percent of ECHO’s food assistance budget in 2010, a decrease from 61 percent in 2007. The percentage of projects utilizing cash and/or vouchers increased from 12 percent in 2007 to 42 percent in 2010. Cash transfers (including cash for work (CFW) and food assistance provided via vouchers) are not necessarily any more livelihoods-friendly than unconditional, in-kind food aid—indeed, food aid, when well-targeted and for an appropriate level and duration, can enhance livelihood security. Overall, however, the greater diversity of modalities being used indicates a promising trend.

7. In addition to in-kind food aid and distribution of cash and/or vouchers, implementing partners in case study countries are carrying out a range of other livelihood interventions adapted to emergency contexts. These include food for work (FFW), cash for work (CFW), support for improved agriculture and livestock production and support for small-scale enterprise. Partners in the Sahel, Ethiopia and Pakistan also demonstrated a commitment to linking humanitarian actions to longer term development initiatives through programming focused on prevention, treatment and monitoring of malnutrition and disaster risk reduction (DRR).

8. Unresolved issues requiring further clarification and policy support include the degree to which ECHO should engage in responses to chronic food insecurity, and which specific activities fall under the categorization of ‘livelihood interventions’. There is wide variety in the programme objectives and types of livelihood activities supported by ECHO in different contexts. Within ECHO, livelihoods programming exists entirely within the food security sector and the provisions of the food assistance budget line and HFA Communication. This is despite the fact that a livelihoods approach can and should be used to inform programming across sectors—in health, education or shelter, for example.

**Needs assessment and response analysis**

9. ECHO has consistently and adequately supported needs assessments, including development of inter-agency assessment tools and processes related to livelihoods. In doing so, ECHO has also contributed to increased capacity for needs assessment and livelihoods analysis among implementing partners. Response analysis remains a notable weakness among ECHO partners, however; in certain instances, programme responses seem pre-determined and not sufficiently connected to needs assessment. ECHO has less frequently provided support for in-depth analysis of livelihoods strategies, or for quantitative baseline studies of food security.

**Monitoring, evaluation and effectiveness**

10. While ECHO and its partners regularly monitor the activities and outputs associated with humanitarian response programs, much less is known about their impacts. This is due in part to the limited time to achieve impact (e.g., 12 months) and the limited technical capacity of staff to adequately conduct impact evaluation. Without access to reliable outcome data, it is difficult for ECHO to answer basic questions regarding the efficiency and effectiveness of different livelihood interventions. Nonetheless, it is apparent that the
ceiling on funding for NGO projects limits the scale at which many partners can undertake emergency livelihood activities. While the decision to lift this restriction in 2012 has been made, it has not yet been implemented. In addition, limited partner capacity to manage larger projects and larger budgets has been a factor in their being awarded. The one-year project timeframe typically imposed by ECHO policy has also limited the effectiveness of ECHO-funded livelihood activities, particularly those implemented in protracted crises. The evaluation also revealed that despite ECHO’s efforts to promote adoption of a more diverse ‘toolbox’ of livelihood interventions, many of its implementing partners continue to rely on default livelihood responses in emergency situations that have not been shown to be effective. In addition, there is a missed opportunity for exchange of good practices across countries and regions; a purposeful mechanism for knowledge management would make better use of evaluation findings and contribute to project effectiveness.

**Linking relief, rehabilitation and development**

11. ECHO faces serious challenges in operationalising its commitments to LRRD in the area of food security. These are mainly structural and often outside ECHO’s direct control. At field level, positive examples of LRRD included ECHO’s response to chronic food insecurity and acute malnutrition in the Sahel, and disaster risk reduction in the Horn of Africa. One risk of ECHO’s commitment to LRRD is that ECHO must take care to speak out for the appropriateness of relief assistance, especially where governments or partners (e.g. in South Asia) may be overly eager to proceed to development initiatives before emergency needs have been adequately met.

12. The EU’s Food Security Thematic Programme (FSTP) will prioritise transition contexts in 2011-2013 and LRRD is a core concern. To strengthen LRRD processes the FSTP introduced the concept of a Joint Humanitarian-Development Framework (JHDF) to help fulfil the third of the three FSTP Strategy Priorities: addressing food security for the poor and vulnerable in fragile situations. The approach involves a holistic analysis in support of establishing resilient livelihoods. Use of the JHDF and linking it to the FINAT and entry/exit decision framework could help to sharpen ECHO’s rationale for its exit and transition decisions in different contexts.

**Advocacy, coherence and coordination**

13. ECHO support for emergency livelihoods activities is well-coordinated with various stakeholders at the field level. ECHO staff regularly engage in open dialogue with implementing partners about conditions on the ground, including the impact of crises on livelihoods strategies and coping mechanisms. There are currently limited opportunities to ensure greater coherence between ECHO livelihoods support and the food security actions of the European Commission. Though it has yet to develop a strategy its advocacy on supporting livelihoods, in all of the cases studied, ECHO was found to be engaging in appropriate and useful advocacy, particularly with regard to: adherence to humanitarian principles; providing better resources to sustainably address malnutrition; and greater use of cash and vouchers where appropriate.

**Conclusions and recommendations**

14. Since the transfer of the EC budget line dedicated to Humanitarian Food Aid, ECHO’s livelihood programming has become much more defined and coherent. ECHO has an impressive and effective team of regional food security advisers who seem to be driving real innovation and change at the country level. There is evidence that a more appropriate and diversified toolbox of livelihoods interventions is being developed, though more needs to be done in moving away from standardised default responses, which are
sometimes questionable in terms of their effectiveness and appropriateness. The livelihood context – investigated and understood through the process of a rigorous livelihoods analysis – should determine the intervention, rather than a process whereby interventions are selected from a prescribed or predetermined menu of options. There are also signs of real progress in the rigour and effectiveness of assessments and these are starting to feed into better analysis of response options, though more effort is still needed. There are still glaring weaknesses in the quality of monitoring and evaluation, and more broadly, in learning and knowledge management.

<table>
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<tr>
<th>Main conclusion</th>
<th>Specific recommendation</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. The HFA and regional food security advisers are making ECHO’s livelihood programming more defined and coherent, improving assessments, and helping to drive innovation.</td>
<td>Continue to invest in hiring and keeping strong regional and food security advisers, and ensure that the HFA and related policies are well understood by all staff.</td>
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<tr>
<td>2. It was not possible to describe ECHO’s portfolio of livelihood actions (by region, country, context, modality, and objectives) with much precision.</td>
<td>Compile more basic descriptive statistics on livelihood interventions based on information currently available</td>
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<td>3. There is wide variety and some inconsistency in ECHO’s livelihood support actions across contexts. This stems from (1) the location of livelihoods within the food sector and differing views on what constitutes ‘livelihoods’ and a lack of definition of the term and (2) a lack of clarity on whether ECHO is well-placed to address chronic food insecurity through its actions.</td>
<td>(1) Define livelihoods in terms that are relevant for ECHO’s actions as a whole and improve on the use of a livelihood lens to inform programming in other sectors (2) Make a strategic decision to either focus on short-term emergency actions only, or commit to tackling chronic food insecurity in creative ways within the provisions of ECHO’s mandate. This evaluation shows that the latter option is very much possible and preferable.</td>
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<td>4. ECHO has provided important support to quality needs assessments at various levels, but less support for more in-depth analysis or quantitative baseline studies. Many of ECHO’s partners remain weak in their capacity for response analysis.</td>
<td>Consider providing support for more in-depth analysis about how specific populations adapt their livelihood strategies in crises. Ensure that different types of needs assessments (qualitative versus quantitative; sample-based versus more comprehensive) are supported as appropriate. Insist that partners make a logical connection between the needs assessment and the proposed response.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. The monitoring and evaluation of livelihoods support interventions is a notable weakness, making it difficult to gauge programme effectiveness. Projects include indicators which are not measured and evaluations are rushed or incomplete due to limited timeframes.</td>
<td>Provide more incentives and opportunities for implementing partners to adequately monitor activities, including through extended project timeframes. Ensure that indicators used are appropriate and feasible. Require independent evaluations when implementing similar projects in the same area over multiple years. Build in regular opportunities for regional staff to exchange</td>
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<td></td>
<td>6. There is a tendency to rely on the same default programming options—such as seeds and tools distributions, income generation projects, cash- and food-forward, vegetable gardening and agricultural training—which have not been clearly demonstrated to be effective.</td>
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<td>7. Many of ECHO’s interventions are seeking to address chronic food insecurity in a 12-month timeframe, which is inappropriate. Certain types of livelihood recovery and protection activities cannot be effectively implemented when tied to an annual programme cycle. Project timelines are also compressed by a long approval process in some cases.</td>
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<td></td>
<td>8. Country and regional staff are of high caliber and country offices receive strong technical support from headquarters and regional offices (notably the food security regional officers). However there are challenges in getting all ECHO staff and partners to ‘see’ and ‘think’ in terms of livelihoods, and not enough opportunities or systematic mechanisms for learning and knowledge exchange.</td>
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<td>9. Implementing LRRD commitments in the area of food security and livelihoods remains a serious challenge, but there are signs of progress in terms of operational processes, funding arrangements and good practice in specific countries. Greater opportunities for emergency livelihoods programming and for linking with development programming result from regional strategic initiatives (e.g., ECHO programming in the Sahel and Horn of Africa). In some contexts, there is a risk of skipping straight to recovery or livelihoods approaches following a disaster, without seeing the need to provide basic relief.</td>
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<td>10. Through the Food Security Thematic Programme, ECHO and its partners are promoting the use of a Joint Humanitarian-Development Framework.</td>
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This is initially specifically for fragile situations and is expected to strengthen processes around situation analysis and the development of resilient livelihoods. The JHDF is an important initiative that needs further support.

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<tr>
<th>11.</th>
<th>ECHO’s advocacy, which has largely focused on the needs of neglected groups, upholding humanitarian principles, and drawing attention to situations of chronic food insecurity, has been useful and appropriate in several contexts, despite the lack of a coherent and defined strategy.</th>
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<td>recommended that ECHO work with its partners to develop a thematic guidance note on programming for resilient livelihoods.</td>
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<td>Expand and improve on advocacy related to emergency livelihoods support, including by identifying ECHO’s strengths and weaknesses and laying out theories of change. Advocacy will be strengthened by supporting research and gathering better evidence on effective livelihood interventions.</td>
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1 Introduction

1.1 Objectives and audience of the evaluation

15. In accordance with the EU Humanitarian Legislation¹ and as justified as part of the EU’s commitment to enhancing aid effectiveness, ECHO commissioned the present evaluation. The evaluation aims to provide an independent structured assessment of DG-ECHO-financed livelihoods support interventions. Its overall purpose is to increase the coherence, quality, and effectiveness of humanitarian aid, and its specific objectives are:

- To provide DG ECHO with a multi-regional evaluation of its activities in the livelihoods support sector;
- To provide recommendations for improving the effectiveness of future actions in livelihoods support; and
- To produce a Review Paper giving a summary overview of key developments within policy institutes, think tanks and other major humanitarian donors with regards to livelihoods support (produced as a separate document).

16. The Review Paper accompanies this evaluation report as a separate document. It provides a summary overview of developments in policy related to humanitarian livelihoods and food assistance programming that complements the evaluation report. It is based primarily on a review of key literature by policy institutes and think tanks on livelihood protection in humanitarian response, and on work being undertaken by ECHO and other major humanitarian donors in this area.

17. The targeted audience and potential users of the evaluation are:
- DG ECHO staff at headquarters, regional, and field levels;
- DG ECHO’s implementing partners;
- Relevant Directorates General and services of the EU;
- Humanitarian donors and agencies; and
- Other stakeholders interested in evaluation findings.

1.2 Scope, methodology and caveats

18. The scope of the evaluation is the full range of livelihood support activities funded by DG-ECHO, with a special focus on food assistance, and in particular livelihood interventions undertaken since the creation of the food aid budget line in 2007. The evaluation’s focus on actions targeting food insecurity was shaped both by the emphasis of the evaluation questions as well as the nature of ECHO’s livelihood support actions, which tend to be funded under the humanitarian food assistance budget line and to have objectives related to food security or nutrition. Alongside this focus, the evaluation also sought to provide insight into the overall portfolio of ECHO’s livelihood support actions across sectors, including the extent to which ECHO and its partners use a livelihood framework in assessing needs and designing programmes.

19. As described in the terms of reference (Annex B), livelihood support can have a number of objectives, including:
- Meeting basic needs and contributing to civilian protection (livelihood provision);

¹ Article 18 of Council Regulation (EC) 1257/96 on humanitarian aid states: “The Commission shall regularly assess aid operations financed by the Community in order to establish whether they have achieved their objectives and to produce guidelines for improving the effectiveness of subsequent operations.”
• Protecting and helping to recover assets (livelihood protection); and
• Creating new livelihoods assets, improving access to markets and services, influencing policy, etc. (livelihood promotion).

20. This evaluation is mainly focused on livelihood protection activities. Nonetheless, there can be significant overlap between the different objectives of humanitarian livelihood activities depending on the context, and in some settings, these objectives are not clearly defined or understood. These issues are discussed in the report.

21. The evaluation was undertaken by a team of four research consultants drawn from three research organisations: Humanitarian Outcomes, TANGO International and the Institute of Development Studies (IDS). A more detailed description of the role of each team member can be found in Annex C.

22. The livelihood interventions analysed by this evaluation draw mainly from three field case studies carried out in the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC), Ethiopia and Pakistan. These case studies were selected in consultation with ECHO staff and represent a range of livelihoods interventions, actors and contexts. In the DRC, a protracted crisis context, the evaluation sought to analyse ECHO-financed livelihood interventions in the whole of DRC, but with a particular focus on the eastern provinces and in particular North Kivu. In Ethiopia, which has experienced repeated slow-onset emergencies and rapid-onset shocks, the research covered ECHO’s emergency programme as well as its Disaster Risk Reduction programme, involving the Drought Cycle Management (DCM) programme. A field visit to Borena focused on partners’ emergency activities. In Pakistan, which has experienced repeated rapid-onset emergencies, the evaluation focused on ECHO support to a group of six international NGOs through the Pakistan Emergency Food Security Alliance (PEFSA) in response to the 2010 floods.

23. In addition to the three case studies described above, the evaluation team carried out a desk review of ECHO's livelihood support actions in the Sahel region. This fourth case study, which looked at the broad scope of ECHO’s ‘Sahel Plan’ implemented since 2007, was added during the course of the evaluation in response to requests from various stakeholders within ECHO and with the approval of the evaluation unit. It consisted of a review of key documents and literature as well as a handful of phone interviews with ECHO personnel, partners and one independent researcher. Given the wide range of countries involved and lack of a field visit, this fourth case study is more limited in scope and does not draw conclusions on all evaluation questions.

24. The evaluation team also conducted 126 interviews with key informants at the headquarters and regional level (see Annex D). One of the team members also led a discussion with the regional food security advisers at a meeting of the PANIS group in Brussels in September 2011. In addition, the team conducted a review of internal programme documentation, other donors and partners’ policies, existing evaluations, studies, papers and external literature. This is summarized in the accompanying Review Paper, and is reflected in the present evaluation report.

25. In order to describe the variations of ECHO’s livelihoods interventions “by region, country, context, modality (in kind/cash), objectives over time”, the team mainly relied on (1) an analysis of spending trends compiled by the food assistance unit, and (2) data and

\[ \text{DG ECHO. 2011a. Analysis of spending trends.} \]
analysis provided by ECHO staff in each of the four case study countries / regions. Both of these sources were limited, however, in that they were not able to provide adequate information about the amount of funding going to different types of interventions. Data on the different types of livelihood support actions conducted within other sectors (e.g., health, water and sanitation, etc.) was also not available. Thus it was not possible to conduct a comprehensive portfolio review that would reveal regional and country differences in the types of livelihoods support provided. The lack of basic data made it difficult for the team to comment on certain aspects of the overall effectiveness of ECHO’s livelihood support actions. These limitations as well as suggestions for improvement are further discussed in the evaluation report below.

26. A final caveat is that, given the broad nature of the evaluation, some of the evaluation questions concerning specific aspects of project implementation were difficult to answer in the absence of a rigorous field evaluation of each project. These include, for example, questions about partners’ ability to correctly disaggregate the needs of different livelihood groups, gender-related differences and other cross-cutting issues, and questions about whether ECHO projects are effectively targeting those in need of livelihood support. The team has nonetheless presented its general impressions with regards to these issues, based on evidence from the four case studies.

27. This section provides a brief overview of some of the key developments in recent years with regards to livelihood support actions in the field of humanitarian response. A more detailed discussion can be found in the Review Paper that accompanies this report.

Definitions and frameworks

28. Before entering into a discussion of livelihoods, it is useful to first distinguish between poverty and vulnerability. Interventions may address poverty and vulnerability at the same time and while the two concepts are often conflated, they are in fact different. Poverty is commonly defined in the international community in terms of income or purchasing power parity, and as existing at different levels (e.g., extreme poor, ultra poor) based on thresholds tied to the US dollar or nationally defined thresholds: the first Millennium Development Goal aims to halve the proportion of the world population living below $1 a day. Poverty is often viewed as a one dimensional static measure or state experienced by a homogeneous and discrete group. However there is usually considerable movement in and out of poverty depending on the natural, social, and economic environments of varying degrees of risks households are embedded in (Azam and Imai 2012). The share of the population that is vulnerable to poverty might be much higher than the aggregate poverty rate. Thus the distribution of vulnerability across different segments of the population might differ significantly from the distribution of poverty.

29. Vulnerability as a concept is not static but dynamic, and reflects not so much how well-off a household is but what its future prospects are (Azam and Imai 2012). It reflects a household’s potential exposure to risk and the ability to cope with risk. An assessment of a household’s vulnerability to poverty tries to figure out who is likely to be poor, how poor they are likely to be, and why they are vulnerable to poverty.

30. An understanding of vulnerability is necessary because ECHO is focused on addressing this in relation to livelihoods. According to a widely used definition, *livelihoods*
“comprise the capabilities, assets (including natural, material and social resources) and activities used by a household for survival and future well-being. Livelihood strategies are the practical means or activities through which people use their assets to earn income and achieve other livelihood goals. Coping strategies are defined as temporary responses forced by food insecurity. A household’s livelihood is secure when it can cope with and recover from shocks, and maintain or enhance its capabilities and productive assets.”

Livelihood security is defined as adequate and sustainable access to resources necessary to meet basic household needs. The level of livelihood security for a community or household is primarily determined by the assets it holds, the strategies it employs to cope with a range of potential shocks, and the livelihood outcomes it is able to achieve.

31. Several different ‘livelihoods frameworks’ have been developed by different humanitarian actors, each of which share many common elements. One comprehensive conceptual ‘sustainable livelihoods framework’ is shown in the figure below. This framework is used as the basis for the analysis in the evaluation. It shows the different factors that influence livelihood strategies and livelihood outcomes at the community and household levels.

Figure 1. Sustainable livelihoods framework


Livelihoods: A programming approach or an area of programming?

32. An increasing number of donors and humanitarian agencies have begun to use a ‘livelihoods framework’ for thinking about people’s survival and well-being, and in designing a wide variety of humanitarian programmes to meet people’s needs. The livelihoods approach has been particularly emphasized within the food security / food

assistance sectors, but it has also been used more broadly in health, water/sanitation, shelter, etc. This change reflects a growing understanding that different kinds of outcomes—in health, education and nutrition, for example—are influenced by the strategies people use to make a living. The use of a livelihoods approach also reflects recognition that even during crises, people continue to seek ways to survive, make an income and protect their assets.

33. Although a livelihoods approach is increasingly used—at least in theory—to inform programming across many sectors, there remains significant work to be done. Within humanitarian response, ‘livelihoods programming’ is still very much located within the food security and (to a lesser extent) nutrition sectors. The term is often used to describe specific interventions such as seeds and tools distributions, cash transfers, cash-for-work and food-for work and livestock restocking / destocking, income generation projects, among many others. The last several years have seen substantial innovation around new types of interventions to support livelihoods, especially cash transfers, efforts to promote market development, and country-level investments in improving analytical capacity. These interventions can be used to improve a range of outcomes—including health, education, protection, etc. (or any combination)—but the extent to which they have been applied outside the food security sector has been limited.

34. For these reasons, opinions vary as to whether the term ‘livelihoods programming’ (or ‘livelihood support actions’, ‘livelihood interventions’ etc.) is a useful one. Indeed, it is not used consistently within or among donors or agencies. In many cases it may be more helpful to focus on defining objectives (within different sectors of programming) according to specific types of livelihood outcomes and through a livelihood ‘lens’. For example, an intervention in the shelter sector may provide bed nets and plastic sheeting, recognising that this will have an impact on habitat security, health security and even potentially food security, if recipient households have more money to spend on producing or accessing nutritious food. No special livelihoods ‘activities’ need be rolled out.

35. Using a livelihoods approach, a comprehensive analysis looking at the vulnerability context, livelihood assets, transforming structures and processes, and livelihood strategies will determine the most appropriate intervention to achieve livelihood outcomes. Thus interventions could be aimed at advancing different types of assets, institution building, advancing income opportunities, a cash transfer through a safety net, or some combination, to achieve these livelihood objectives.

36. Problems can arise when ‘livelihood programmes’ have multiple or ill-defined objectives, or lack adequate clarity about how activities are meant to contribute to objectives. These questions as they relate to ECHO’s policy and practice are discussed below in Section 4 (Policy context).

Types of crises and objectives
37. Just as a livelihoods framework may be employed across different sectors of programming, it can also be used in different types of humanitarian crises. These include rapid-onset shocks, slow-onset crises, and protracted crises where development actors and social services may be absent.

38. Livelihood support can have a number of objectives, including livelihood provision, livelihood protection, and livelihood promotion. It is possible not only for interventions to fulfil multiple objectives simultaneously: a given intervention may serve different
objectives in different circumstances. **Livelihood provision** is a form of immediate relief. It involves providing food aid, cash or other inputs that minimise household expenditure. Such a transfer can actually help people to maintain their assets rather than sell them. It also contributes to civilian protection because it reduces risks to personal security. **Livelihood protection** refers to interventions that assist households to protect, retain and/or recover their assets. Examples include support to rural populations to prevent migration to camps; opportunities for livelihood diversification (e.g., cash, vouchers, production support, income-generating activities); services that assist households to retain their livestock and agricultural assets (e.g., vaccines, veterinary services, agricultural extension services); and assistance with asset recovery, such as agricultural inputs, assets for small businesses, and micro-credit, savings and loans, and cash transfers. **Livelihood promotion** involves introducing new livelihood opportunities, activities and assets such as by teaching new skills; improving access to markets and services (e.g., by building transportation or communication infrastructure, or support to producer cooperatives); or promoting access to information. There are also policy and capacity building components to livelihood promotion, which assist households, communities, civil society and government to improve their livelihood strategies. For example, this could involve awareness raising about land rights and entitlements that helps people exercise their rights or advocate for policy change. It may also involve advocacy for compensation for lost assets or for reforming policies on how remittances are taxed. (Jaspars and Maxwell 2009)

39. In certain contexts, these objectives may be overlapping; indeed it is often possible and desirable to meet people’s basic needs at the same time as help them to recover key livelihood assets. Problems can arise when programme objectives are not fully articulated or acknowledged by donors or their implementing partners. These questions as they relate to ECHO’s policy and practice are discussed below in Section 4 (Policy context).

**Livelihoods as a link between humanitarian and development**

40. The increasing focus on supporting livelihoods within humanitarian response reflects the need to more efficiently and effectively link with development partners, especially in contexts where a humanitarian response can take from three to five years, or even longer. In theory, supporting people’s livelihoods can have positive benefits in terms of empowerment and protection and may also reduce costs, thus allowing limited humanitarian resources to assist a higher number of vulnerable persons.

41. A recent review of the performance of the humanitarian system found that there is an overall lack of adequate support by international organisations in many crises to really enable the recovery or protection of livelihoods during crises. One of the key challenges concerns the types of livelihoods interventions that are appropriate in protracted conflicts, especially in low-income, food-deficit countries. Improving food security in these contexts requires going beyond short-term responses in order to protect and promote people’s livelihoods over the longer term. Ideally this would involve joint efforts by both relief and development actors; however, in practice many of these actors do not work together in a coordinated way.

42. In recent years, development actors have begun to pay more attention to people’s capacity to cope with and recover from shocks—be they related to natural disasters, conflict or other causes. The concepts of ‘resilience’ and ‘vulnerability’ are gaining special traction

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5 FAO/WFP. 2010. SOFI.
within both humanitarian and development donor circles in the past several years. Vulnerability refers to people’s exposure and sensitivity to shocks and their current and future capacity to prevent, mitigate, cope with, and recover from the impacts of the shocks. Vulnerability may be chronic or transitory. Resilience refers to the extent to which people can cope with and rapidly recover from a shock.\textsuperscript{6} It remains to be seen how these conceptual trends will play out in terms of donor policy and practice. Section 7 discusses LRRD issues with regards to ECHO’s programming.

3 ECHO’s livelihood interventions

Data sources

43. This section seeks to describe the variations in ECHO’s livelihoods interventions by region, country, context, modality (in-kind/cash), and objectives over time. As noted in the introduction, however, the limited availability of data prevented a comprehensive portfolio review. As such, the evaluation team was challenged in arriving at regional and country distinctions regarding the types of livelihood support provided by implementing partners and making conclusions regarding the certain aspects influencing the overall effectiveness of ECHO support for emergency livelihood programming. The primary sources of information for this summary were (1) an analysis prepared by ECHO’s food assistance unit in September 2011,\textsuperscript{7} and (2) data received during the course of the case studies carried out in the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC), Ethiopia and Pakistan and a desk review of ECHO’s livelihood support actions in the Sahel. This was complemented by interviews with key informants familiar with the breadth of ECHO’s livelihood programming.

44. The analysis prepared by the food assistance unit covered approximately 200 ECHO projects (around 60 to 80 percent of the total) supported under the food assistance budget in 2007 and 2010. It looked at spending trends according to the following indicators, which were selected as reflecting or corresponding to the priority key messages within the HFA Communication. Single forms were appraised for the extent to which these indicators were fulfilled or not:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>HFA Policy line / message</th>
<th>Indicator</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Use diversified responses</td>
<td>Percentage of budget on cash/vouchers. Percentage of projects with cash/vouchers (NB implicitly needs-based).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Be needs-based</td>
<td>Percentage of projects using nutrition data in assessments and reports.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Apply HFA entry points</td>
<td>Percentage of projects with livelihoods perspectives in assessments and results.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Prioritise nutrition</td>
<td>Percentage of projects appropriately using outcome indicators in log-frames and reports.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>


\textsuperscript{7}DG ECHO. 2011a. Analysis of spending trends.
45. It is important to note that the evaluation was not able to analyse the extent to which ECHO-funded projects in other sectors (e.g., shelter, water and sanitation, health) incorporate a livelihoods lens. ECHO livelihood support is provided both through the food assistance budget line and other budget lines. The evaluation was designed to focus primarily on food assistance, even though some data on livelihoods programming coming from other sources was also collected.

46. A key finding of this evaluation is thus that there is a need for a more thorough compilation of basic descriptive statistics or information about the different types of programme activities carried out by ECHO’s partners, i.e., what is being funded where. Such a compilation would be a critical step for understanding ECHO’s effectiveness with regards to livelihoods support (or other objectives). As discussed in Section 6 below (on monitoring and evaluation), ECHO should consider compiling a basic summary of its programming and achievements over a year’s time, including a quantitative summary of activities and outputs. This could pave the way to eventually produce more detailed conclusions about effectiveness and impact.

**ECHO’s livelihood interventions**

47. As described above, in recent years ECHO has joined a host of other humanitarian actors in seeking to further integrate support for livelihoods into its humanitarian response actions. This has been particularly true within the food assistance sector (see Section 4, policy context). While a focus on livelihoods was once seen as ‘outside the remit of humanitarian response’, many of ECHO’s implementing partners now make reference to a sustainable livelihoods framework in designing and monitoring programmes. The recent analysis prepared by ECHO’s food assistance unit revealed that over 60 percent of projects funded under the food assistance budget ‘integrated a livelihoods perspective’ into programme design and monitoring systems. This means that programmes collect livelihood data (as opposed to just food security and nutrition data) as part of needs assessments and report on livelihoods indicators in monitoring and evaluation. According to the review, however, this proportion remained the same for the two years analysed, 2007 and 2010.

48. Below is a basic summary of ECHO’s livelihoods ‘toolbox’, based on the documentation available.

**Food aid**

49. Direct distribution of in-kind food aid comprised over 40 percent of ECHO’s food assistance budget in 2010. This represents a significant decrease from the 61 percent of global HFA spending allocated for food aid in 2007 (Figure 2). By offsetting household expenses for the purchase of food, provision of food assistance can help to prevent asset depletion and/or enable asset recovery in the wake of an emergency. The World Food Programme (WFP) distributes by far the most food aid of any of ECHO’s implementing partners. The International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) also distributes a substantial amount of ECHO-funded food aid. Despite trends toward increasing use of cash, in-kind food aid continues to comprise a significant portion of ECHO’s financing for humanitarian needs in each of the case study countries (DRC, Pakistan, and Ethiopia) and to a lesser extent in the Sahel.

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8DG ECHO. 2011b. TOR.
Cash and vouchers

50. Along with other donors, ECHO’s use of cash and voucher transfers has increased in recent years. Figure 3 demonstrates the exponential growth in ECHO’s use of cash/vouchers, both as a percentage of HFA budgets and the number of HFA projects using this modality. ECHO recognises that cash and vouchers are an appropriate response to address food access problems where markets are functional, food availability is good and vulnerable households have access to markets.¹⁰ Cash and vouchers can be used to meet immediate survival needs as well as to support the re-establishment of livelihoods and improve access to basic services. Through its multiplier effects on local economies, cash transfers can also help to address many of the underlying structural causes of vulnerability.

51. ECHO has supported the use of unconditional and ‘lightly’ conditional cash and voucher transfers in a variety of contexts and for a variety of objectives. ECHO has encouraged WFP in their move towards providing food through vouchers. For example, WFP plans to provide food vouchers through ‘smart cards’ in DRC. ECHO also supports the use of vouchers for the purchase of other immediate household needs following displacement, such as plastic sheeting, kitchen items, soap and clothing (e.g., DRC). It has also supported the provision of agricultural inputs (seeds and tools) and livestock through vouchers. In a smaller number of cases, vouchers have also been utilized as a form of payment for school and health fees (e.g., DRC). ECHO has also encouraged its partners to use innovative delivery mechanisms for the provision of cash, such as through mobile phones (as in Niger).

52. In addition to funding cash and voucher interventions, ECHO has attempted to build the capacity of partners to engage in cash-based programming through its support for the Cash Learning Partnership (CaLP) and WFP’s ‘Cash for Change’ initiative. In Pakistan, Oxfam has taken a proactive role in disseminating learning related to cash transfers as a member of the Pakistan Emergency Food Security Alliance (PEFSA).

Figure 3. Cash and voucher support through HFA projects in 2007 and 2010

Source: DG ECHO 2011

Food for work (FFW) and cash for work (CFW)

53. In addition to supporting immediate survival and recovery following emergencies, FFW and CFW are both used to create livelihood assets at the community and household levels (roads, drainage, rehabilitation of agricultural land, market infrastructure). Evidence suggests that FFW and CFW are particularly appropriate for post-disaster contexts in which there is an immediate need for short-term, labour-intensive infrastructure repair (e.g., earthquakes, floods, cyclone, etc.). They can also address long-term needs when used to promote environmental remediation and/or disaster risk reduction. FFW and CFW are in many cases inappropriate for especially vulnerable populations without adequate labour capacity (female headed households, elderly, disabled, chronically ill, etc.). CFW has been supported by ECHO in DRC, Pakistan and Ethiopia.

Agriculture and livestock programmes

54. Provision of seeds, tools, poultry and small livestock (through in-kind distributions and/or vouchers) tends to be the most common form of agricultural intervention funded by ECHO in emergency contexts. These types of activities are particularly appropriate for livelihood systems highly dependent on small-scale agriculture in which production has been severely disrupted by natural disasters (flood, drought, cyclone, etc.) or violent conflict. In such situations, provision of such agricultural support (in-kind or through vouchers) can also be instrumental in preventing further asset depletion and/or enabling asset recovery. ECHO has joined other humanitarian actors in engaging in a wider range of livestock interventions including destocking/restocking, improving access to veterinary services, and support for animal fodder production and rangeland rehabilitation. Among case study countries, ECHO-funded partners in DRC and Pakistan are providing substantial support for agriculture and livestock, primarily through the distribution of seeds and tools, and provision of technical support for improved agricultural techniques.

Livestock interventions are also common as part of ECHO-funded emergency and DRR strategies in southern and eastern Ethiopia.

**Support for small-scale enterprise**
55. Livelihoods and food security during or after a crisis can be protected and promoted through a range of interventions aimed at supporting small-scale enterprise or income generation. Within the portfolio of ECHO-funded projects, this includes non-traditional agricultural activities such as fish and oil production, or post-harvest processing of agricultural commodities including rice and corn. It may also include off-farm income generating activities such as carpentry, sewing, and petty trade such as production and sale of improved cook stoves. In addition to cash grants for small-scale enterprise, ECHO provides support in the form of capacity building (skills training) for participation in income-generating activities. Market assessments provide critical information for the design and implementation of small-scale enterprise interventions. Among case study countries, ECHO-funded partners in DRC reported the largest number of activities aimed at supporting income generating activities.

**Support for improved nutrition**
56. ECHO monitors rates of severe global acute malnutrition as one means of deciding when to initiate emergency food security interventions. In the Sahel, it has explicitly oriented its actions, across different sectors of response, towards addressing the underlying causes of malnutrition. At the programme level, ECHO’s response to malnutrition has often focused on treatment activities aimed at alleviating the short-term consequences of maternal and child malnutrition. A general trend in the treatment of severe acute malnutrition (SAM) is the transition from centre-based treatment to community-based management of malnutrition (CMAM). In an effort to prevent micro-nutrient deficiencies among women and children, ECHO also supports vitamin supplementation to children and pregnant/lactating women, fortification programmes and population level supplementation in the case of nutrient deficiency outbreaks.

**Interventions to support markets**
57. ECHO recognises that in situations where there is a lack of access to food, projects to improve access to, and functioning of, markets in crisis affected areas for disaster-affected populations (e.g., emergency road / bridge rehabilitation, market-information support) may be appropriate. In Ethiopia and Chad, ECHO partners are working to support markets as part of wider livestock destocking / restocking programmes. In Pakistan and DRC, ECHO was supporting the rehabilitation of roads leading to markets as well as markets themselves, but with the primary objective being to inject cash (through cash for work) so as to improve people’s food security. In DRC, the sustainability of the assets produced through cash for work projects (including market repair) was explicitly not a priority. In DRC, some ECHO staff considered other actions to improve access to markets—such as improving farmers’ knowledge of prices, organising transportation, and helping small producers to communicate with other each other—to be outside its mandate.

**Disaster risk reduction (DRR)**
58. ECHO has joined other humanitarian actors in seeking to strengthen the capacity of communities to prevent, prepare for and mitigate humanitarian crises, particularly those with adverse consequences for food and livelihood security. It seeks for its humanitarian food assistance to “consider simultaneous opportunities to reinforce crisis-affected

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12Ibid., p.12.
communities’ resilience to future disasters, and to protect or strengthen their existing capacities to meet their own food needs, as well as the capacities of national systems to sustainably promote and maintain food-security.” This means incorporating a disaster-risk analysis in assessments; reinforcing early warning systems; respecting ‘do no harm’ to make sure that a response does not increase beneficiaries’ risk-exposure, and looking for opportunities to ‘build back better’ during relief and recovery. Investment in early warning has been a significant focus of ECHO’s work in the Sahel.

59. The main component of ECHO’s contribution to global disaster risk reduction is the DIPECHO programme. Operating in eight different disaster-prone regions of the world, DIPECHO-funded projects typically entail capacity building, awareness raising, early warning and forecasting measures. DIPECHO also promotes simple, inexpensive preparatory measures which communities can take to limit damage and save lives in the event of a disaster. Among case study countries, ECHO has provided support to DRR initiatives in Ethiopia and Pakistan. DRR programs in Ethiopia are typically implemented over a longer timeframe (16-18 months) than most emergency programming.

Cross-sectoral interventions

60. Across the four contexts examined, there was evidence of ECHO and its partners identifying linkages across conventional sectors of emergency response. For example, in Ethiopia ECHO has funded multi-sector programmes and has supported five distinct sector ‘packages’ to address the drought emergency. In Pakistan, the use of food assistance for nutrition awareness training serves as another example of multi-sector assistance. In DRC, ECHO has funded many multi-sector projects, including voucher fairs for displaced or recently returned people that allow them to meet a variety of needs related to food, agriculture, shelter, hygiene, education and general dignity.

Differences in ECHO-supported livelihood interventions across contexts

61. While it was not possible within the scope of this evaluation to do a comprehensive portfolio review, case studies and secondary literature did provide some insight into important differences in ECHO-supported livelihood activities in individual countries and regions. Some of these are summarised below. Many of these differences reflected varying opinions among ECHO staff about what activities or approaches are considered appropriate under ECHO’s mandate. There are also notable inconsistencies in the means through which a livelihood lens was applied.

62. In the Sahel, for example, ECHO’s strategy seeks to ensure that annual plans are consistent with a longer-term approach aimed at preventing (rather than simply treating) malnutrition and addressing chronic food insecurity. By contrast, ECHO teams in other countries have shied away from tackling chronic issues. ECHO-funded programming in DRC is not explicitly designed to address underlying food insecurity, for example. Its livelihoods support actions there have all been triggered by short-term shocks (mainly population displacement or return), but their activities and objectives have in effect been aimed at addressing chronic food insecurity, since the two types of need can be difficult to distinguish. Within a short 12-month timeframe these interventions have not been that effective. In the Sahel, there is an active attempt to use malnutrition rates as the entry criteria to shape funding for food security programming, while in DRC there is a tendency to programme in conflict zones and not look at malnutrition indicators across the county.

63. Similarly, ECHO provides direct support for advocacy, operational research, and investment in the capacity for analysis in the Sahel, but it is not making such investments
to the same degree in other regions or countries. For example, ECHO and its partners in Ethiopia have been less engaged in overt advocacy or operational research because a strong central government discourages advocacy efforts and exercises a tight control on research carried out by NGOs. While there was some investment in operational research in Pakistan, ECHO staff in DRC and Ethiopia had not taken advantage of opportunities for greater investment in research or in partners’ analytical capacity.

64. The promotion of cash and vouchers is also not consistent across regions or countries. For example, cash and vouchers are used for livelihood protection in DRC, Pakistan and the Sahel to a greater extent than they are used in Ethiopia. This could be due to the capacity of the partners to implement such programmes and the context where the emergency programmes operate.

65. Lastly, livelihood interventions pursued by ECHO in the Sahel from 2007 to 2011 were supported in large part by a regional strategy (the Sahel Global Plan), an approach which has had significant benefits for coherence and cross-country learning. With some exceptions, most other ECHO support to livelihoods has been country specific.

4 Policy context

**ECHO’s policy guidance on livelihoods**

66. In 2007, the responsibility for the EC budget line dedicated to Humanitarian Food Aid was transferred from DG AIDCO to DG ECHO. Although livelihood support actions had already been financed by DG ECHO prior to the transfer of this budget line, emergency livelihood interventions specifically designed to reduce food insecurity became more prominent in the portfolio of activities managed by the service.

67. ECHO understands livelihood interventions as in line with the main objectives of EU humanitarian aid, as laid out in Council Regulation (EC) No 1257/96 of 20 June 1996.\(^\text{13}\) Although the Regulation does not mention ‘livelihoods’ directly, it defines one of the principal objectives of humanitarian aid operations as:

> “to carry out short-term rehabilitation and reconstruction work, especially on infrastructure and equipment, in close association with local structures, with a view to facilitating the arrival of relief, preventing the impact of the crisis from worsening and starting to help those affected regain a minimum level of self-sufficiency, taking long-term development objectives into account where possible;”\(^\text{14}\)

68. The Regulation thus provides a basis for ECHO to undertake actions, beyond immediate relief, that are designed to help people regain self-sufficiency. Reflecting current thinking at the time, it does not define livelihoods support as an integral part of immediate relief activities themselves, however.

69. The European Consensus on Humanitarian Assistance (2008) provided additional justification for ECHO to undertake actions to support livelihoods. The Consensus refers to livelihoods in the context of food aid, stating that “Linking food aid with other forms of

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\(^{13}\) DG ECHO. 2011b. TOR.

livelihood support helps to enhance the coping mechanisms of the affected populations.”\textsuperscript{15} It also makes reference to “livelihood support” as a sector of humanitarian response.\textsuperscript{16} The Consensus suggested that a policy be developed in the area of food aid,\textsuperscript{17} which led to the Communication on Humanitarian Food Assistance (HFA Communication), released in 2010. It was accompanied by a Staff Working Document, a more operationally-focused paper.\textsuperscript{18} The Communication was released in conjunction with a Communication on food security (“An EU policy framework to assist developing countries in addressing food security challenges”). The two communications were seen as necessary in order to respect the distinction between humanitarian and development objectives in different contexts, and also to ensure coherence and safeguard against uncoordinated overlap.\textsuperscript{19}

70. The HFA Communication states that the main objective of humanitarian food assistance is “to save and preserve life to protect livelihoods, and to increase resilience, for populations facing on-going or firmly forecasted food crises, or recovering from them.”\textsuperscript{20} The protection of livelihoods is thus defined as one of the core objectives of food assistance, alongside the safeguarding of food availability and access when necessary to avoid excess mortality or acute malnutrition. The Communication also confirms that a humanitarian food assistance response can be initiated if “compromised livelihoods or extreme coping strategies… pose, or are firmly anticipated to pose, a severe threat to life, or a risk of extreme suffering…”\textsuperscript{21} In other words, actual or anticipated emergency rates of mortality or acute malnutrition need not be present.

71. At the same time, the Communications makes clear that humanitarian food assistance is not designed to address chronic food insecurity, and should only be used to do so in a limited set of circumstances. These include ‘where non-intervention poses immediate or imminent humanitarian risk of significant scale and severity; where other more appropriate actors, including its own development instruments, are either unable or unwilling to act, and cannot be persuaded to act; and where, in spite of its comparative disadvantages, positive impact can be expected within the time limitations of its intervention.’\textsuperscript{22}

72. The HFA Communication defined entry and exit criteria for ECHO’s food assistance operations in broad conceptual terms. Accordingly, ECHO acknowledged a need to operationalise these concepts of ‘entry’ and ‘exit’ in a “practical, structured and evidence-based way.” In 2011, ECHO began to develop an “Entry / exit decision framework” for humanitarian food assistance, which is still in draft form.\textsuperscript{23} The entry / exit decision framework is meant to be used in combination with another recently developed tool, the Food and Nutrition Insecurity in Humanitarian Crises Needs Assessment Template

\textsuperscript{16} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{18} EC. 2010a. Staff Working Document.
\textsuperscript{19} EC. 2010b. HFA Communication.
\textsuperscript{20} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{21} Ibid., p.7.
\textsuperscript{22} Ibid., p.7-8.
\textsuperscript{23} ECHO. 2011a. Entry/exit framework.
(FINAT). The FINAT is designed to be filled out for each country where ECHO might launch or continue a humanitarian food assistance response. It is intended to aid collection of detailed information on food security, nutrition and livelihood indicators, an analysis of whether the situation is improving or deteriorating across different categories, as well as information about other actors’ response so as to assess ECHO’s comparative advantage. Although FINAT does request an overview of the different livelihoods, their components, key vulnerabilities, main coping strategies and status, is it questionable whether all ECHO country offices will have adequate information to feed into this template.

73. The entry / exit decision framework seeks to build on the annual FINAT by providing more guidance on decision-making. Specifically it guides ECHO to look at the severity of the situation as well as its comparative advantage. Other factors such as strategic interest are also incorporated “particularly to help in an unclear situation.” The idea is to help decision makers “make a technically sound choice that can be defended.”

Implementation and interpretation of ECHO’s policy guidance

74. The portfolio of livelihood support actions, as described in the preceding section, appears to be broadly consistent with ECHO’s mandate, including its humanitarian food assistance policy. The HFA Communication is sufficiently flexible and inclusive, such that a reasonable reading of the document allows for the main interventions funded by the food assistance budget to be well within its provisions.

75. Nonetheless, the evaluation team found significant differences among ECHO staff in their understanding of the Commission’s mandate with regards to humanitarian food assistance and livelihood support actions. These have resulted in some notable variations in programmatic approaches, described above. At a policy level, there are several explanations for these differences. First, the term ‘livelihoods’ often means different things to different people within ECHO. Despite its importance, ‘livelihoods’ is not actually defined within the HFA Communication or the accompanying Staff Working Document. ‘Livelihoods’ is sometimes seen as a sector, or at least an area of programming, and yet it can—and should—be used as an overall approach to programming across sectors. Some of the main ‘livelihood tools’, like the provision of cash and vouchers, are really programme modalities that can be used to address objectives across multiple sectors. For this reason, projects labelled as ‘livelihoods’ are sometimes unclear about their objectives. They may be funded under the food assistance budget, and so in theory have food security objectives, but they may undertake activities that are more appropriate for achieving general income security, for example, which in turn could have knock-on effects on a variety of other household outcomes (nutrition, health, protection, etc.). The linkages between the intervention and the outcomes are often not well defined or articulated.

76. There is a real debate within the Directorate-General as to whether ECHO should scale back and focus on short-term responses only, which could be seen as reflective of their comparative advantage, or try to tackle longer-term issues. The Sahel programme is very telling in that it provides an example of how ECHO can use its comparative advantage (quick response, field presence, knowledgeable staff, good relations with a variety of actors) to tackle longer-term issues on a structural but not really a programmatic level. In DRC, by contrast, ECHO’s programmes have in effect been trying to address chronic

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24 ECHO. 2011b. FINAT.
issues within a 12-month timeframe, an approach that has not proven to be particularly effective.

77. A good deal of the confusion and lack of clarity around ‘livelihoods’ stems from the fact that ECHO’s HFA policy came about because ECHO was working within the particular confines of a food aid budget line and trying to expand that somewhat. This resulted in all of their ‘livelihoods support’ falling within the HFA budget line, which does not actually make sense. ‘Livelihoods’ for ECHO sits squarely within the food assistance policy and budget, and livelihoods concerns are largely dealt with by food assistance staff within ECHO. However, there is no reason why ECHO should not also be incorporating a livelihoods perspective and livelihoods interventions in other sectors of their work.

78. While the objectives of HFA are defined very broadly (including “to protect livelihoods and to increase resilience”\(^{26}\)), the actual activities must “be linked to a food intake intervention logic, and should strive to demonstrate a cost-effective impact on food consumption and/or nutritional status.”\(^{27}\) This makes sense from the point of view of defining appropriate objectives for ECHO-financed food assistance. But when combined with the lack of a stand-alone, cross-sector livelihoods policy (or the elaboration of policies within other sectors defining how livelihoods are to be included) it has resulted in pressure to show that all activities aimed at protecting livelihoods have a ‘food intake logic’. For certain kinds of interventions where the link to food security is a bit more tenuous, such as multi-sector recovery programme following a disaster, ECHO’s emphasis on linking everything back to food or nutrition could have the effect of limiting partners’ articulation of other types of livelihood outcomes, because they are not really supposed to be supporting say, income security.

79. A related confusion with regards to ECHO’s understanding of its role concerns adherence to humanitarian principles. Some people interviewed in the case study countries expressed concerns about the compatibility of an expanded livelihoods toolbox with ECHO’s humanitarian mandate and the core humanitarian principles of neutrality, independence and impartiality. This is often a difficult set of concerns to pin down because the logic of why livelihood programme approaches should compromise the humanitarian mandate has not been well articulated. The concern seems to be partly that anything which is not narrowly lifesaving is not humanitarian by definition and partly that different approaches may require working differently and more closely with governments in ways that might compromise independence. While these are real concerns and need to be monitored on a case by case basis, the evaluation team saw little evidence and a lack of logic behind the premise that an expanded toolbox of livelihoods activities cannot be humanitarian. As with any other type of programming, maintaining humanitarian principles is about how you work in a given context and how you relate to governments and armed actors. An expanded livelihoods toolbox, whose application is informed by a context-specific livelihood analysis, can be programmed in just as principled and humanitarian manner as more traditional activities such as food aid and seed distributions.

80. Finally, the FINAT and the entry / exit decision framework tools appear to be comprehensive and well-constructed, and show a lot of potential to help better guide ECHO’s allocations of food assistance. This could help to contribute to a more coherent and appropriate distribution of limited resources across contexts. However, they are to a

\(^{26}\) EC. 2010b. HFA Communication.
large extent dependent on quality data being available; they also require extensive input and effort from country teams. It remains to be seen how effectively they can be rolled out.

5 Needs assessment and response analysis

ECHO’s understanding of livelihood capacities and needs
81. As described in the preceding section, several of ECHO’s core policy documents now make clear that livelihoods perspectives are to be integrated into ECHO’s humanitarian response. The HFA Communication states that humanitarian food assistance can be used [inter alia] “to protect and strengthen the livelihoods of a crisis-affected population, to prevent or reverse negative coping mechanisms (such as the sale of productive assets, or the accumulation of debts) that could engender either short-term or longer-term harmful consequences for their livelihood base.” The accompanying Staff Working Document states that: “The Commission and its partners will specifically prioritise the integration of nutritional perspectives, and livelihoods perspectives, into their emergency food needs analyses and into the design of their humanitarian food assistance responses.”

82. At the level of its decisions and activities, ECHO has demonstrated a high level of understanding of the concepts behind a livelihoods framework. Many core methodologies and standards related to livelihoods that have been developed by humanitarian practitioners have made their way into ECHO programming. For example, ECHO has recently started to provide ‘operational recommendations’ for its partners to accompany the country-specific Humanitarian Implementation Plans (HIPs). These documents encourage partners to design their food aid and livelihood interventions in line with ECHO’s own policies as well as other core international standards, such as the Livestock Emergency Guidelines and Standards (LEGS), Sphere and those developed by the UNICEF and the Standing Committee on Nutrition. ECHO’s own “Funding Guidelines of the use of Cash and Voucher in Humanitarian Crises”, released in 2009, also reflect extensive knowledge of good practice with regards to effective support to livelihoods.

83. ECHO is generally ahead of, or at least equal in capacity to, its partners on the ground and other donors in its level of understanding of the impact of crisis situations on people’s livelihood strategies and needs, and of how humanitarian assistance can effectively support livelihoods. This can be attributed to several factors: the high calibre of ECHO staff, which was seen in each of the four case study contexts as well as at the regional level; a culture and practice within ECHO that encourages its staff to make frequent field visits; the strong technical support that country offices receive from headquarters and regional offices (notably the food security regional officers); and the policy direction and advice received from headquarters. Understanding livelihoods strategies and designing programmes to support them is still a relatively new approach for humanitarian actors, however, and this evaluation found that while there have been many improvements, there is still a long way to go. Fortunately ECHO is in a good position to continue to lead in this work. A particular challenge is how to fully translate the high level of expertise and innovation of the regional food security advisers to ECHO representatives at the country level, and in turn to ECHO’s partners.

28 EC. 2010b. HFA Communication. p.3-4.
84. A related challenge is getting all ECHO staff and partners to ‘see’ and ‘think’ in terms of livelihoods. Supporting people’s livelihoods during crisis is an objective that cuts across sectors. A person’s health, education, and access to water and sanitation, for example, each can be influenced by the strategy he or she uses to make a living. For this reason, many types of ECHO’s programming will need to apply a livelihoods ‘lens.’ This is similar to the way in which the causes of undernutrition are multi-sectoral and multi-layered, and malnutrition can be tackled effectively only if action is taken in all relevant sectors. A recent draft memo on ‘Applying nutrition lens: While designing your programme, have you thought about…?‘ suggests one way to encourage ECHO and its partners to look at livelihood outcomes at the household level, in a cross-sectoral way, when conducting needs assessments and designing programmes.

**ECHO’s support for needs assessments**

85. Several partners noted that ECHO was highly supportive of needs assessment in general, across programmes, sectors and countries, including allowing partners in the field a reasonable amount of funding for assessments to be conducted. In many of its country operations, ECHO effectively encourages its partners to develop a greater understanding of people’s livelihood strategies. This mainly happens during the project proposal review period, during which ECHO staff and partners have extensive discussions regarding how the planned intervention will respond to the assessed needs. In some countries (e.g., in DRC, Chad and for the Sahel region), this process has been reinforced by country-specific operational recommendations which specifically state that partners’ choice of intervention is to be determined based on assessed needs.

86. At the inter-agency level, ECHO has also played a key role in encouraging the development of joint assessment tools and processes related to livelihoods. This includes tools and approaches developed at the regional and global levels, such as i) working with partners (FAO, WFP, Save the Children, *inter alia*) to develop and disseminate the Integrated Food Security Phase Classification (IPC) tool (with EU funding); ii) Household Economy Analysis (HEA) (while ECHO had little role in the initial development and roll-out of HEA, it is starting to support HEA trainings and dissemination); iii) the Emergency Market Mapping and Analysis Tool (EMMA); and iv) support to WFP and FAO at the global level for improved needs assessment and response analysis, and support to the Cash Learning Partnership (CaLP). In the Sahel, improving needs assessment and early warning has been a core part of ECHO’s strategy since 2007; particular emphasis has been given to HEAs and SMART surveys. In DRC, ECHO has consistently encouraged partners to carry out effective needs assessments, and in particular to improve their understanding of markets. In Pakistan, likewise, ECHO supported its partners to conduct five EMMA reports. In Ethiopia, by contrast, the ECHO office was not able to give much support to improving needs assessments largely because it was significantly understaffed.

87. ECHO varied in its support for more in-depth analysis of livelihoods beyond that of basic or one-off needs assessments. In the Sahel, ECHO supports in-depth analysis through operational research, coordinated and regular needs assessments (e.g., HEAs), and joint advocacy approaches. By contrast, ECHO has not been able to realize more extensive

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30 ECHO, 2012 (draft) ‘Memo: Applying nutrition lens: While designing your programme, have you thought about…?‘

31 See Review Paper connected to this evaluation for more details.
research with its partners in other regions (e.g., DRC, Ethiopia), despite a demonstrated need for it.

88. Lastly, ECHO may over-emphasize the HEA over other types of analyses. The main advantages of HEA are i) it can be linked to early warning, so you do not have to wait until the food security situation degrades to know what will happen in a zone; ii) it facilitates household targeting by supplying easily acceptable criteria developed together with communities, iii) it has a participatory component, which establishes dialogue with the community and promotes community empowerment; iv) it incorporates concrete definitions of “survival threshold” and “livelihood protection threshold,” which can also be used for defining monitoring indicators; and v) the inside workings of household economies at different levels of a wealth continuum. However, while HEA has some quantitative aspects, it is more of a qualitative approach that is not as representative as other types of analysis, such as Comprehensive Food Security and Vulnerability Analysis (CFSVA). Unlike the HEA, the CFSVA is a baseline survey that provides an in-depth picture of the food security situation and the vulnerability of households in a given country, and it is conducted at normal times, not during a crisis. Surveys such as the CFSVA are highly useful in adjusting and improving targeting over the long term because they use representative samples and are repeated periodically and systematically. In certain contexts where there is an ongoing high level of vulnerability, ECHO should consider providing more support to larger, more representative baseline assessment tools such as the CFSVA. This is particularly true where the emergency continues through time and a more representative sample could help improve targeting.

Capacity of ECHO’s partners with regards to needs assessment

89. Several of the questions set out in the evaluation terms of reference concern whether ECHO’s partners have correctly disaggregated the needs of different livelihood, gender, and social groups. As noted in the introduction to this report, the methodology for this study could not provide a detailed analysis of these questions, which are best answered by detailed evaluations of individual projects. Nonetheless, the researchers were able to gather impressions from discussions with project field staff and accompanying documentation.

90. In the three field level case studies conducted, the researchers found that ECHO’s partners generally demonstrated a strong understanding of the needs of the communities they work with. This included the needs of women versus men, as well as different social groups (children, older persons, persons with disabilities, persons with HIV/AIDS, etc.). It is rare to find an ECHO partner that appears to have implemented a gender insensitive program, i.e., one that doesn’t take into account the unique needs of women and men in terms of livelihood strategies or which has had known negative impact on women or gender dynamics. In Ethiopia, ECHO’s multi-sectoral approach to funding helps identify vulnerable groups and cross-cutting issues; inter-agency rapid needs assessments also examine gender issues. Pakistan’s PEFSA partners also demonstrated clear attention to cross-cutting issues including child protection and gender mainstreaming, and there was a special attempt to develop innovative programming for women. Likewise, in DRC one of ECHO’s key partners, UNICEF, has shown consistently high attention to gender issues, including encouraging other organisations to distribute female hygiene kits and ‘pagnes’ (cloth for women’s clothing).

91. ECHO’s partners routinely conduct needs assessments, and increasingly these include questions and indicators related to people’s livelihood strategies. However, partners’
capacity in this regard was found to be limited in three broad areas: 1) specific livelihood strategies and decision-making at the household level (household economy); 2) the role of markets; and 3) assessing the needs of livelihood groups outside those of the normally targeted population.

92. ECHO’s partners have undoubtedly demonstrated improvement in their understanding of household economies. The HEA is a very useful tool not only for understanding the dynamics of individual household economies, but also for generating (through a participatory methodology) agreement within a community as to which people suffer from the most critical survival or livelihood protection deficits. This in turn can be the main entry point to decide who receives assistance. In the Sahel region, ECHO has provided effective support for inter-agency HEA surveys, notably surveys conducted by Save the Children UK, as well as for projects to build the capacity of various actors to carry out HEA surveys, through the training of trainers. A recent study concluded that these HEAs were one of the significant steps taken by international NGOs since 2005 to help deepen understanding of livelihoods and the root causes of food and nutrition insecurity. There is still felt to be a lack of understanding of household dynamics in the Sahel, however, particularly with regards to the connections between income, access to food and childhood nutrition. In the DRC, ECHO’s partners still sometimes lack an adequate understanding of the coping strategies and household economies of the livelihood groups they target. Many partners did not seem to have a good understanding of people’s expenditure on things like rent for land; informal payments to host families; school, health or water fees; local taxes; informal payments to armed groups or elites; and debts, for example. Overall, however, ECHO’s partners’ understanding of household spending patterns is generally improving.

93. With regards to the role of markets, ECHO’s partners have also demonstrated an increasing sophistication in their understanding. In DRC, for example, WFP has begun to conduct regular market assessments, as part of their preparations to scale-up voucher programming. In Pakistan, the PEFSA has a strong focus on market assessment and aims at producing a strong response analysis to promote alternative programming approaches to in-kind assistance. In the Sahel, ECHO has prioritized improvements in its partners understanding of markets, especially regional trade, since gaps in this area were felt to contribute to the poor 2005 response. The greater availability of assessment tools like EMMA has helped improve and increase the number of market assessments. Across most contexts, however, there remains considerable room for improvement in terms of partners’ abilities in this area. In Ethiopia, the evaluation found that few NGOs seemed to understand market dynamics, and few were carrying out market studies, with the exception of those NGOs involved with seeds and destocking (both of which involve use of vouchers). In DRC, ECHO-funded income generation projects sometimes suffered from a lack of sustainability due to insufficient understanding of local economic dynamics.

94. Partners’ understanding of the specific needs of different livelihood groups could be improved. Generally, partners that work with a particular livelihood group (e.g., farmers or pastoralists) were knowledgeable about their basic livelihood capacities and needs. However, partners’ capacity tended to be limited to one or two groups, and the needs of other groups on the ‘periphery’ were less well understood. This included the needs of urban populations (across contexts), or pastoralist drop-outs (in Ethiopia). In DRC, livestock interventions sometimes suffered due to a lack of understanding of animal care

or animal market systems. In Ethiopia, it was felt that partners should carry out a more comprehensive livelihood assessment to understand the livelihood systems in the area, and to identify areas in which sustainable livelihoods may no longer be possible due to conflict or severe degradation of the landscape.

**Capacity of ECHO’s partners with regards to response analysis and innovation**

95. Response analysis remains a notable area of weakness for ECHO’s partners. Even when partners succeed in conducting a nuanced and appropriate needs assessment, they do not always select an appropriate response option, in the view of ECHO staff and also in the view of evaluation team members. There is a sense in some contexts that the programme response option is almost pre-determined and not sufficiently connected to the needs assessment in a logical way; some of ECHO’s partners seem to be ‘stuck in a rut’ with regards to programming options. In Ethiopia, many of the programs were found to be very similar, and there did not seem to be as thorough a consideration as possible of livelihood alternatives in pastoral areas. There was also very little use of cash and vouchers in Ethiopia, and no examples of income generating activities or market access interventions, which the situation would seem to call for. In DRC, the evaluation found that ECHO’s partners did not always base their choice of response option on a clearly articulated understanding of the context and a logical justification; there was a sense of some activities as the default option. In DRC, this has resulted in use of interventions with questionable appropriateness, such as certain kinds of in-kind seeds and tools distribution, agricultural technical support, cash and food for work, and income generation projects.

96. In some contexts, ECHO’s partners have not considered how to design livelihood responses in ways that met protection needs. For example, in situations of ongoing conflict and violence against civilians, as in eastern DRC, many people’s livelihood strategies are directly shaped by protection threats. There, ECHO’s partners showed a good understanding of how people are affected by conflict generally (especially following displacement) but less understanding of the many areas of overlap between livelihoods and protection. There were virtually no programmes designed to help farmers overcome severe difficulties (due to protection threats) in accessing their fields or in accessing markets, for example. Similarly, in Ethiopia, it was felt that ECHO’s partners’ choices of livelihood interventions were not grounded in an analysis of protection dynamics as much as could be, mainly with regards to ensuring safe access to firewood or other natural resources in areas of conflict.

**Targeting of beneficiaries**

97. As described in a recent review of good practice, targeting is “the process of ensuring that people who need assistance receive what they need, at the time they need it, in the amount that they need – and that those who do not need the assistance do not receive it. The main reasons for the necessity of targeting are: humanitarian (to ensure that assistance is received on the basis of need); efficiency (to maximise the impact of scarce resources); and minimising negative side-effects.”

98. The evaluation team tried to address targeting in the case studies as much as possible. However the methodology of the study made it difficult to get a precise sense for the quality of each ECHO project’s targeting. ECHO has done a good job of using the HEA and other joint needs assessments to identify and target vulnerable groups. While exclusion errors occur, many of these are beyond ECHO’s control due to government-

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imposed constraints. For example, in Ethiopia and Pakistan, government partners did not agree with ECHO’s targeting; as a result, targeted groups or households that were included under ECHO criteria did not participate in programming. In contrast, exclusion errors occur less when working with NGO partners because there is more flexibility in defining targeting criteria and making final decisions about program participation.

99. With regards to the needs-basis of ECHO’s interventions, there were several issues raised, particularly on food assistance. In Pakistan, ECHO advocated successfully with WFP to ensure that their targeting was more in line with humanitarian principles of impartiality and neutrality. WFP had been restricting their distributions to people who had national identity cards issued by the national government, and certain tribal minority groups were not getting cards. In DRC, ECHO has also urged WFP to employ a more needs-based approach in its targeting, by basing food distributions on broader food security and vulnerability criteria rather than on a person’s status as ‘displaced’ or ‘recently returned’.

100. A lack of data and needs assessments sometimes impeded the efficient targeting of a limited amount of assistance across broad geographic areas. In Ethiopia, for example, there was a certain dilution of assistance due to over-extended coverage, which better targeting could have helped to improve. In DRC, there is a general paucity of data on certain key indicators of food security and nutrition in many parts of the country, making it difficult for ECHO to make a truly informed choice about the targeting of its food assistance.

101. With regards to minimizing negative side effects, ECHO’s partners were found to generally show a good understanding of the principles and practice of ‘do no harm’ in the way they target interventions. This was true for each of the three case studies. In DRC, for example, ECHO’s partners routinely consider the potential negative effects of distributions of food or non-food items (in terms of possible abuse of civilians) when responding to displacement.

102. Lastly, it is worth noting that ECHO’s partners have employed community-based targeting successfully in two of the cases studied, Pakistan and the Sahel (Niger). In Pakistan, careful attention was paid by all partners to targeting, usually using community-based approaches, and this was instrumental in selection of beneficiaries and of specific types of support provided. In Niger, community-based ‘self-targeting’, combined with the use of an HEA framework, was found to be effective. In one instance, this approach involved using graphic explanations of vulnerability criteria to lead village communities through a self-selection process. Such a process improved both the accuracy of targeting and communities’ acceptance of the programme.34

6 Monitoring, evaluation and effectiveness

Overview of ECHO and its partners’ monitoring and evaluation capacity

103. To really understand whether the portfolio funded by ECHO does in fact deliver against a livelihoods’ protection mandate, information is required through monitoring of activities and evaluation of outcomes. ECHO staff spends a lot of time in the field reviewing the monitoring activities of partners and undertaking their own monitoring. As a result a lot is

known by ECHO staff about what is delivered and the timeliness of programme implementation in relation to programme timetables. Much less is known about impact.

104. There are a number of reasons for this. First, the timeframe of ECHO projects is often too short to adequately measure impact. This was pointed out as an issue by both implementing partners and ECHO field staff. Although implementing partners supply a range of outcome indicators in their proposals, in most cases these are not measured. Second, the skills and capacity of partners to do good impact evaluation is also lacking. This skill deficit is exacerbated by the high staff turnover among partners. ECHO provides considerable resources in capacity development around assessments, but much less for M&E except in the Sahel. Third, partners do a relatively good job of monitoring outputs, but evaluation is done in an ad hoc manner.

105. One of the biggest problems associated with ECHO monitoring and evaluation is the poor documentation of results. A key issue highlighted by some implementing partners is that proposed outcome indicators are often too ambitious to be measured within the timeframe of most ECHO-funded projects. For example, crop production indicators are identified that are never measured because the project ends before the harvest. This makes M&E very challenging. If ECHO is signing off on indicators that they know can’t be measured then this is bad M&E practice and should not continue. Partners and ECHO need to work on indicators that can be measured within the timeframe and/or fund impact analysis over a longer timeframe to determine long term impact. Partners need to be held accountable for the indicators they have committed to.

106. Partners also need to provide a more systematic write up of monitoring reports and final reports. The new FINAT template provides a useful summary of the food security situation based on assessments. There is a need for an equivalent summary of what ECHO programming has done over a year and what has been achieved. Ideally this would say something about impact, but just a basic summary of outputs would be useful. If ECHO could start doing the basics of analyzing and reporting on the monitoring that is already taking place then getting to analysis of impact would be less daunting.

**Indicators used to monitor the performance of livelihood projects**

107. ECHO uses a range of indicators to monitor performance of livelihood projects. Although most of the projects use output indicators to track performance, there is a range of outcome indicators specified in proposals (but rarely measured) that have been identified by implementing partners to measure impact. These include indicators to measure changes in income (percent of households experiencing increases in income, changes in purchasing power) or access to assets; changes in food production (crop yield, percent of food needs covered by own production; ability to demonstrate improved agricultural techniques); and changes in food consumption (number and variety of daily meals consumed, diet diversity score, perception of food security status).

108. The Panis group of Food Assistance Technical Advisors has drafted a document on core outcome indicators for use in ECHO-funded projects.\(^{35}\) There is some debate as to whether these indicators should be statistically valid or more participatory. While the evaluation team agrees that it is useful for ECHO to identify a set of core outcome indicators, the more important issue is how to ensure that outcomes are actually measured.

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and reported on in ECHO projects. While many of the indicators in the guidance document are valid, the majority of indicators listed require measurement over the long term to be meaningful. In particular, indicators concerning production, behaviour change (such as in maternal and child health and dietary practices) and consumption, need more than a six- to nine-month timeframe to show results. For example, production indicator measures should be averaged over multiple years to illustrate true impacts, because of the high variability of rainfall. In sum, it is problematic to approve log frames containing indicators when neither the project duration nor the measurement period are long enough to achieve and demonstrate results.

109. Finally, the specific benefits derived from strengthening livelihoods are only partially addressed in the Objectively Verifiable Indicators (OVIs) identified in the single form logical frameworks. Much more could be done, using a livelihoods framework, to develop more concrete evidence on the impact of interventions. For example, measures of resilience may address food intake but rarely capture asset diversification, savings and other variables that together provide a more rounded picture of the capacity of households to withstand shocks and avoid the need for further emergency support. Knowledge about such impacts is crucial if the appropriateness to ECHO’s mandate of different portfolios is to be meaningfully assessed.

Nutrition indicators

110. There has not been a big push by ECHO to incorporate nutrition indicators into food security interventions across all regions. For example ECHO discouraged Save the Children from putting nutrition indicators in PEFSA project activities in Pakistan. The reason cited was that measurement of nutrition indicators is difficult and expensive. It may be possible to overcome these obstacles through better coordination between partners, or joint food security / nutrition programmes (joint MSF/ACF projects, for example). In Ethiopia it is difficult for partners to measure nutrition outcomes because the government has placed restrictions on what nutritional surveys can be conducted, based on perceived negative publicity associated with past surveys.

111. In the Sahel, by contrast, nutrition indicators are more routinely used by ECHO’s partners to measure nutritional outcomes of nutrition treatment activities, as well as other interventions intended to improve food security. Anthropometric indicators used to determine the prevalence of malnutrition include height for age and weight-for-age z scores, as well as weight-for-height z scores. ECHO has also funded research aimed at developing and testing additional nutritional indicators that could be used for non-nutrition projects. For example, FAO has developed the diet diversity score and tested this in Mauritania.

112. In at least two cases, ECHO has funded evaluations to demonstrate the impact of cash transfers of food security and nutrition outcomes. The first was a Save the Children Project in Niger in 2007-2008. Although food consumption outcomes improved, nutrition status of children under 5 actually worsened between the 2nd and 3rd round of cash distribution. This coincided with seasonal increases in malaria and diarrhoea. Similarly, a 2010 evaluation of a multi-sectoral project implemented by Concern in Niger was not able to demonstrate that cash distribution had an impact on nutritional status.

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113. ECHO’s experience in trying to show that food security interventions can have a positive impact on nutrition demonstrates the need for caution. While it is tempting to show that cash and vouchers can have a positive impact on nutritional outcomes, it can be difficult to do so through operational research for a host of methodological reasons. Not being able to demonstrate impact does not mean that no impact took place, not least because many different factors influence nutrition outcomes. It would therefore not be wise to base a shift in strategy on the outcome of a small number of studies. In addition, it is worthwhile to recall that livelihood and food security interventions do not automatically improve nutrition security. Nutrition impacts and outcomes can only be expected if in a given project there is intentional nutrition sensitivity in the design and implementation. However, indicators need to be seen in the context of a proper nutrition situation analysis and the respective response analysis.

Cost effectiveness, coverage and scale

114. Without good monitoring and evaluation and access to outcome data, it is difficult for ECHO to answer basic questions about programme effectiveness. In addition it is difficult to talk about the cost effectiveness of different interventions. We may know the cost of different livelihood interventions but we cannot tell which is the most cost effective to support livelihood recovery. As the recent evaluation of ECHO-funded disaster risk programming in Southern Africa also found, absent programme evaluation, there is insufficient basis for determining which activities to scale up (ECHO 2011c). ECHO needs to improve its monitoring and evaluation to enable its staff to develop objective criteria for judging the quality of projects and to assess the performance of its partners.

115. The coverage and scale of ECHO projects is affected by the capacities of its implementing partners and by budget limits imposed by ECHO, though there is some nuance as to whether these “limits” are a function of ECHO policy or discretion, and regarding how NGOs perceive the constraints on their access to ECHO resources. ECHO requires that partners implementing large, complex programmes demonstrate not only the appropriate technical and logistical expertise, but the requisite management capacity for handling larger budgets. So while at headquarters level, ECHO is open to funding higher amounts, in most cases it does not fund NGO projects for more than €1 million. This limits the number of people that can be reached by any of the NGO partners in terms of livelihood recovery. Thus most livelihood programming is small scale. WFP is one of the few partners that can operate at scale but funding to WFP from ECHO has tended to be for short-term emergency food assistance and not for livelihood recovery. One way to achieve greater scale is to fund consortia, or alliances, of NGOs operating in contiguous areas. For example, the Pakistan Emergency Food Security Alliance (PEFSA) is providing interventions that support livelihood recovery in the context of a rapid shock. Six NGOs (ACF, ACTED, CARE, IRC, Oxfam, and Save the Children) came together and shared a Single Form, a common strategic framework and common approaches to respond to the needs of a flood affected population. This approach was viewed by ECHO as successful and considered a model to try elsewhere. The consortium approach was also commended in a recent evaluation of ECHO-funded disaster risk reduction programmes in Southern Africa and the Indian Ocean, for the advantages it offers in scale-up and in reducing competition among NGOs (ECHO 2011c).

37 The budget discussion shall be elaborated further in the section below on policy and administrative constraints.
Innovation and decision-making based on evidence of effectiveness

116. Despite some notable progress in promoting a more diverse ‘toolbox’ of livelihood interventions, many of ECHO’s implementing partners continue to rely on default livelihood responses in emergency situations. Based on available evidence, there is an over-representation of certain types of emergency responses within ECHO’s global portfolio. These include food aid, the provision of seeds and tools, certain types of agricultural support (e.g., community gardens and vegetable gardens), and small-scale income generation projects.

117. Findings from the case studies demonstrate that partners’ livelihood responses are not always well informed by appropriate livelihood analyses. For example, many of the ECHO-supported programmes implemented in Ethiopia are very similar. This may be due to the particularly challenging context for livelihood programming in pastoral areas, but without better livelihoods analysis, implementing partners were unable to identify viable alternatives for intervention. Likewise, in DRC, partners were found to be largely reliant on default response options—such as seeds and tools distributions, cash for work, and income generating projects—for which there has been little attempt to investigate impact over the past decade. At the same time, ECHO partners in DRC have not sufficiently considered broader protection needs in the design of livelihood interventions. This is a noteworthy omission given the way that violence by armed groups constrains people’s access to land and markets.

118. The evaluation identified two potential constraints to innovation among ECHO-funded livelihood activities. First, the lack of clarity within ECHO regarding the types of activities that ECHO can legitimately fund under the HFA budget line (see Section 3) has the potential to constrain innovation. It is not always clear what types of interventions are part of the ECHO livelihood ‘tool box’. This is particularly true with regards to income generation and agricultural support projects, among others. A second constraint is the tendency to view ECHO’s support to pilot projects or operational research as a ‘luxury’ which can be eliminated in difficult budgetary environments, in favour of programming options that are seen as safe and known. Ultimately, however, it is difficult to accurately determine the relative extent to which more innovative and effective activities are represented within ECHO’s global portfolio in the absence of better data on interventions.

119. ECHO needs to seriously consider looking beyond standard project monitoring to think about how they could better support learning and knowledge management. There is a fundamental problem with expecting partners to monitor themselves when all of the incentives are to focus on implementation. As a result monitoring and evaluation often slips. ECHO needs to be more creative on how it might support learning and knowledge development. Given the strong team of advisers in place at the regional level, this could be initiated by them. First, ECHO could provide separate funding for independent monitoring as well as ask partners to monitor their projects. A good example of this is the independent monitoring unit of the Hunger Safety Net in Kenya. Second, they could support peer to peer learning between partners. For example, national staff from Oxfam could learn about M&E techniques used by CARE, or WFP staff could learn HEA techniques from Save, and Save staff could learn about CFSVAs. Third, longer term partnerships between ECHO and academic institutions could be established to enable better documentation of learning and testing of programme approaches. For example, ECHO could partner with J-PAL at Princeton or IFPRI to conduct rigorous randomized control trials of different approaches to seed distribution.
120. At a more fundamental level it is difficult to determine whether ECHO funded projects are meeting their own objectives. It is not clear whether the objectives are sensibly defined and there appears to be some inconsistency in terms of different types of objectives and activities being pursued. As noted in Section 3, there is a wide variety of interventions being funded with different types of objectives in different regions. In some countries funding actions are designed to address chronic issues (e.g., DRC) while others see this as outside ECHO’s mandate (e.g., Ethiopia). This reflects strategy confusion about ECHO’s mandate/role. There is a real debate within the Directorate-General as to whether ECHO should scale back and focus on short-term responses only, which could be seen as reflective of their comparative advantage, or whether to tackle longer-term issues. The Sahel example is very telling, because it shows how ECHO can use its comparative advantage (quick response, field presence, knowledgeable staff, good relations with a variety of actors) to tackle long-term issues on a structural but not really a programmatic level. In DRC, by contrast, ECHO’s programmes have in effect been trying to address chronic issues within a 12-month timeframe and not doing this very well.

**Policy and administrative constraints on effectiveness**

121. Case study findings show that ECHO-funded partners have made progress in designing and implementing appropriate livelihood interventions in emergency contexts. However, in their efforts to improve the efficiency and effectiveness of ECHO-funded livelihood interventions, implementing partners have encountered several common constraints. Some of these constraints are the results of policy decisions made by DG-ECHO headquarters in Brussels while others are more directly related to the particular contextual challenges presented by different regions and types of emergencies.

122. On the policy front, internal and external stakeholders consistently point out the challenges created by the typical 12-month timeframe of ECHO-funded projects, and ECHO’s prohibition (currently undergoing a policy change) of unconditional cash transfers by NGOs in amounts exceeding €100,000. Given the high cost of emergency operations, and the front-loaded investment in training and infrastructure required by many livelihood activities, the ceiling on unconditional cash transfers is viewed by many implementing partners as a real limitation. Internal stakeholders have reported that the €100,000 ceiling on unconditional cash transfers has long been a matter of contention and that the restriction has been lifted for 2012, however as of February 2012, this change has not been implemented. As noted earlier, the question of the role of budgets in limiting coverage and scale is closely related to partners’ capacity to manage large budgets, therefore not necessarily a matter of policy restrictions or budget ceilings *per se*. ECHO funding for PEFSA in Pakistan is a good example of funding that exceeds €100,000, however it is important to note that the consortium model, presumably including management structure, is one that ECHO has deemed necessary to demonstrate the capacity to absorb and manage a large budget effectively. The role of the country office in funding decisions should also be noted for the influence and discretion it has in approving or recommending higher-cost projects, in that the country office is well-positioned to make a determination as to partners’ management capacity.

123. Others point out that in light of ongoing protracted crisis in several regions of the world, and the range of complex factors contributing to food security emergencies (e.g., climate change, food price increases, inter-ethnic and cross-border conflict), the one-year project timeframe typically adhered to by ECHO is arbitrary and ineffective. This is particularly true in situations where disasters or shocks only exacerbate underlying, chronic food insecurity. Indeed, a key finding of another recent evaluation of DG ECHO actions in
disaster risk preparedness and disaster risk reduction actions was that project timeframes were too short to reasonably expect to see impacts (ECHO 2011c). Inevitably, much of the first year of any emergency project is dedicated to meeting immediate survival needs and strengthening logistical and technical capacity for implementation at the ground level. Once assessments have been carried out and livelihood interventions designed, this leaves precious few months for implementation. In such contexts, adherence to such an abbreviated timeline for emergency livelihood response ultimately limits innovation, sustainability and most importantly, impact of ECHO-funded livelihood interventions. Others note that it is not so much the 12-month program window that is problematic but the often slow process of vetting proposals and allocating funds at the HQ level. For instance, while securing one-year ECHO funding for emergency relief interventions may be accomplished in a matter of weeks, acquiring funding for follow-up livelihood interventions may require several months. This disjuncture creates obvious problems for the efficient transition from a one-year emergency response toward longer-term development initiatives.

124. The 12-month timeframe for ECHO-funded livelihood interventions highlights a number of other key considerations for the purposes of this evaluation. Experience has shown that while existing livelihood systems may be ‘re-established’ in a fairly short timeframe (12 months) following a natural disaster, much more time may be required to establish and support new and more sustainable livelihood strategies. People may be required to start new livelihoods in response to a slow-onset crisis, such as persistent drought caused by climate change, or upon return or reintegration following displacement. At the same time, the one-year timeframe for ECHO livelihood activities creates certain challenges for selection of performance indicators and measurement of program impact (as noted above). Finally, while ECHO does have comparative strengths in some aspects of livelihoods programming (e.g., cash distribution), many feel that it risks losing any comparative advantage it might have by not allowing sufficient time for proper implementation.

125. If ECHO cannot extend the timeline for project implementation, it should reconsider what it can most appropriately fund given its mandate versus what is most appropriately funded by donors that can support longer-term projects. If the 12-month mandate is adhered to, then ECHO should narrow the toolbox that is acceptable, dropping interventions that require intensive training, skill building or attitude changes that are associated with longer-term projects. The success of these shorter-term projects would be contingent on rapid decision making, separate funding of assessments so that enough time is left for project implementation, willingness to consider follow-on funding in protracted crisis, and the ability to link to other donors so ECHO’s 12-month timeframe can kick-start a longer-term process.

7 Linking relief, rehabilitation and development

126. Emergency and development needs may succeed each other in a “continuum” or may coexist as “contiguous” events. In either case, humanitarian food assistance operations

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38 USAID OFDA, for example, uses the rule of thumb that if households are being supported to return to livelihoods that they are already familiar with, then the timeframe can be 12 months. If they are introducing new livelihoods to households, then the timeframe needs to be longer.
and food security development interventions should be designed and implemented in such a way that together they ensure an optimal coverage of these different needs. To achieve this, the EU has committed that its humanitarian food assistance will uphold Linking Relief Rehabilitation and Development (LRRD) principles and facilitate LRRD objectives.  

127. The 2001 EC Communication on Linking Relief to Rehabilitation and Development defined LRRD as the transition between the provision of emergency relief aid and the implementation of development assistance. The 2007 European Consensus on Humanitarian Aid committed the EU to linking emergency aid, rehabilitation and long-term development and stressed that the EU should promote a more coherent, consistent and comprehensive approach to humanitarian aid. The Communication on HFA explains that “effective integration of humanitarian and development assistance will be promoted through LRRD, ensuring that the international aid system operates consistently, coherently and transparently to address hunger and vulnerability.” The accompanying Staff Working Document further specifies that LRRD “should be pursued to the end of ensuring optimal impact for shared beneficiaries, and not solely to provide humanitarian actors with a handover- / exit-strategy. Accordingly, LRRD should be undertaken through effective cooperation between the Commission and all development actors, including national authorities and other donors, and not just internally between Commission services.” This should include “joint working between humanitarian and development actors through the entire project cycle, especially through joint needs assessments, and joint programming exercises.”

Implementation of LRRD

128. Across the four contexts studied and based on interviews with key stakeholders, implementing LRRD commitments in the area of food security and livelihoods is a serious challenge. This is largely due to a number of structural issues. First, by design, ECHO seeks to provide food assistance and support for livelihoods to populations who are difficult to access and not being served by other actors (humanitarian or development). This often makes it extremely difficult to find development partners who can fund activities following ECHO’s emergency response, as was the case in Ethiopia and DRC. ECHO teams differ in the extent to which they take specific actions to enable partners to secure longer-term funding. In Pakistan, the linkage between relief and development was often more serendipitous than strategic, depending crucially on the capacities and vision of implementing partners, in the absence of specific actions by ECHO.

129. Second, development agencies tend to work more closely with governments while ECHO’s priorities do not always coincide with those of the government; this can be problematic if the government is basing its decisions on factors other than humanitarian need, as was the case in some areas in Pakistan, for example. Third, it takes a lot longer to design a development response than an emergency response and the bidding process for implementing partners takes longer; this can create a gap in funding. Fourth, development activities implemented by the EU Delegation may be operating at a larger scale than ECHO projects, which can also have implications for transitions, as is the case in Ethiopia.

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40 EC. 2010b. HFA Communication. Section 5.3, paragraph 3.  
42 Ibid.
130. Lastly, development funding tends to be more structured and less flexible than ECHO funding, making it more difficult to shift back to a humanitarian response if needed. To address this, ECHO’s DRR programme in the Horn of Africa has a built-in contingency planning mechanism called a “crisis modifier” that enables the project to shift focus to a humanitarian response should conditions change significantly. It relies on a localised early warning system that indicates when the project should shift focus.

131. ECHO also faces challenges related to partners’ capacity in LRRD. This capacity varies by organisation and also between different country programmes of a single organisation. Where securing transition to development funding is likely to be important, ECHO may wish to seek partners with a known ability to access such funds.

132. The evaluation noted several other examples of ECHO and its partners making successful linkages between emergency and long-term support to livelihoods. In the Sahel, LRRD is a core part of ECHO’s strategy, where it has worked for better articulation of the role for short-, medium- and long-term aid instruments in achieving a sustainable reduction of malnutrition. Specifically, this involves encouraging governments and development donors to give greater priority to nutrition; the last four years have shown considerable improvements in this regard. In the Horn of Africa, ECHO’s Drought Cycle Management programme, financed by DIPECHO, has allowed ECHO partners to undertake slightly longer-term DRR programmes while still allowing for emergency response. Partners in the DRR programme have a good chance of linking with other development programs. The EU Delegation has also provided resources through the FSTP in Ethiopia to follow up on some ECHO interventions, but overall, partners there are challenged in linking emergency programming with development funding.

133. It is important to note that in some regions, notably South Asia, there is a risk of over-emphasising the linkages with development assistance. Some of ECHO’s partners, as well as governments, may want to skip straight to recovery or livelihoods approaches following a disaster without seeing the need to provide basic relief to support people and enable them to get back on their feet. This tendency may be reinforced by concerns that ‘hand-outs’ have negative impacts and create dependency. A recent evaluation of WFP’s livelihood recovery interventions found that the biggest livelihoods impact is often continuing to provide basic relief, i.e., in providing a foundation that enabled people to invest in their own livelihoods recovery. As was the case in Pakistan, ECHO has the ability to act as a strong voice for humanitarian principles and has the capacity to defend the need for relief, when appropriate, as part of a broader livelihoods framework.

New Initiatives Promoting LRRD

134. The Food Security Thematic Programme (FSTP), first implemented in 2007-2010, has set its objective for 2011-2013: “to improve food security in favour of the poorest and the most vulnerable…through a set of actions which ensure overall coherence, complementarity and continuity of EU interventions, including in the area of transition from relief to development as well as in particularly fragile situations.” The FSTP is seen as a major advance in allowing for country-specific LRRD strategies that would facilitate exit strategies for ECHO, particularly with the renewed focus on the poor in the most fragile and vulnerable contexts. The FSTP strategy highlights that the links to

43 Harvey et al. 2009b. Effectiveness of WFP livelihood interventions.
development may not always be directly through livelihoods protection and promotion, but may involve transition to safety nets and social welfare programmes run by international donors or by the state. This raises a rather different set of transitions issues with which ECHO will need to engage.

135. To further operationalise these commitments, the FSTP introduced the concept of a Joint Humanitarian-Development Framework (JHDF) to help fulfil the third of the three FSTP Strategy Priorities: addressing food security for the poor and vulnerable in fragile situations. This is an important emerging initiative for which headquarters staff have prepared a ‘Rough Guide’ to providing a comprehensive analysis from the level of the individual’s food security needs through household, community, regional, national and supra-national level interventions that contribute towards this food security goal. It seeks to promote a process linking ECHO and EU country programming and, eventually, working with other development partners to develop an analytic and well-coordinated approach to food security. Country programmes that benefit from the FSTP are obliged to do a JHDF. ECHO is expected to focus on humanitarian inputs at the individual, household and sometimes community-level, as per its mandate, but to do so in ways that are cognizant of and contribute towards the LRRD agenda. This will usually require ECHO inputs beyond immediate food assistance and the JHDF seeks to avoid any sense of parallel or separate mechanisms for food assistance programming. Initial practical work in country with the JHDF, such as in Burkina Faso, have used a variant of the livelihoods framework in which health, education, shelter and finance inputs at household and individual level are identified as key elements in achieving livelihood and food security. The JHDF is about process, promoting an holistic analytic approach and building improved ways of working in partnerships.

136. The JHDF has been identified in the FSTP for development initially in countries in fragile situations where ECHO has typically been involved in protracted humanitarian assistance. By trying to develop a more coordinated and integrated approach this third Strategic Priority of the FSTP is explicitly seeking to strengthen resilience – the ability to withstand shocks whether at the household, community or higher levels - that will allow vulnerable people to avoid this dependence on humanitarian support. The logic is clear with food security dependent on successful and sustainable livelihoods which requires the analysis of interventions to focus through all levels on what contributes to their resilience. Resource scarcity aside, a key reason for protracted humanitarian interventions is because the integrated approach of the JHDF has not been pursued and LRRD has been lacking. LRRD challenges are significant for well known reasons and the JHDF is at a testing stage as a fresh approach to LRRD. The resilience of livelihoods lies at its heart but more guidance is needed to develop the JHDF process. Building on the existing documentation and early experiences it is recommended that ECHO work with its partners to develop a thematic guidance note on programming for resilient livelihoods.

137. Consistent with the JHDF approach, ECHO has defined its exit strategies with regards to humanitarian food assistance in such a way that ECHO can easily continue to play a key role in many types of situations of ongoing food insecurity. The HFA Staff Working Document explains that the Commission “will consider exiting or phasing out its humanitarian food assistance interventions ‘when indicators of acute malnutrition, mortality and extreme coping (linked to inadequate food consumption or poor food...
utilisation), are stable below emergency levels, or are expected to stabilise below such levels. This should result from the majority of the crisis-affected population achieving, for a sustained period and for the foreseeable future, improvements in food consumption and food utilisation, without resorting to detrimental coping strategies’, and independent of any Commission humanitarian support. This could imply that persisting needs are met either by other humanitarian donors, or by development or state actors.”

138. ECHO’s recently developed draft ‘Entry / exit decision framework for humanitarian food assistance’ provides detailed guidance for country programmes on how to make a planned exit, including working with transitional funding instruments. At the broader policy level, ECHO is also seeking to ensure that the financial instruments being designed by DEVCO for its 2014-2020 funding are sufficiently flexible to allow EU development to come in earlier and in a more structured way as envisioned in the JHDF approach.

139. This evaluation did not include a global analysis of each decision ECHO has taken in recent years to exit a country or scale-down its livelihood support actions. Nonetheless, the case studies and interviews suggest that ECHO’s exit decisions are sometimes driven by factors other than key food security indicators being “stable below emergency levels” as specified in the HFA Communication. In practice, budget constraints, limitations in partner capacity, and government or access restrictions all play a role in shaping ECHO’s decision to exit from a country or sub-region. In Pakistan, ECHO has exited from parts of Sindh where GAM rates remain at emergency levels but where the government has determined that emergency support is no longer required. In the Sahel, the extent to which ECHO may be planning a scale-down in 2012 and beyond was not clear, but the severity of food insecurity there would seem to indicate that a full exit by ECHO from the Sahel at this time would not be consistent with the HFA Communication and related decision-making tools. Use of the JHDF and linking it to the FINAT and entry/exit decision framework could help to sharpen ECHO’s rationale for its exit and transition decisions in different contexts.

8 Advocacy, coherence and coordination

Coordination of livelihoods assistance

140. Evidence from the four case studies as well as interviews suggest that ECHO support for emergency livelihoods activities is well-coordinated with various stakeholders at the field level. In most contexts (with the notable exception of Ethiopia), ECHO benefits from an adequate number of staff and an extensive field presence. ECHO staff were found to generally be highly qualified and committed, and to engage in regular and open dialogue with their implementing partners about conditions on the ground, including the impact of crises on livelihoods strategies and coping mechanisms. This allowed them to participate actively and productively in various coordination bodies as well as various inter-agency assessment processes.

141. In some contexts, ECHO has provided varying funding to support formal coordination structures, including OCHA and the food security and nutrition clusters, depending on funding gaps and ECHO’s perceptions of its potential effectiveness in particular settings. Because supporting livelihoods is an objective that cuts across sectors, the cluster system is not well suited to support programmatic learning and innovation in this area. In some contexts, clusters other than food security or nutrition have shown the most innovation on

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47 See for example, ECHO 2011 Entry/Exit Framework.
supporting livelihoods, as in DRC where the shelter / non-food items cluster has led a major push for greater use of cash and vouchers.

**Coherence of ECHO support with other services of the Commission**

142. As discussed in the LRRD section, there are currently still limited opportunities for linkages between ECHO livelihoods support activities and the food security actions of the European Commission. This is a rapidly evolving and high priority area, however, with several promising developments underway with regards to funding, policy and operational tools.

**ECHO’s advocacy on livelihoods**

143. In all of the cases studied, ECHO was found to be engaging in appropriate and useful advocacy towards improving livelihoods support. This advocacy seemed to be strongest on three broad issues: adherence to humanitarian principles and specifically meeting the needs of forgotten populations or groups; providing better resources to sustainably address malnutrition; and greater use of cash and vouchers where appropriate. In several cases, this advocacy was geared toward other aid actors rather than the host government because the government was seen as unreceptive to advocacy. This was the case in Ethiopia, for example, where the government is thought to under-estimate the numbers of people to be targeted for food assistance.

144. A focus on humanitarian principles and the needs of forgotten groups was evident in Pakistan, where ECHO lobbied to ensure that excluded minority groups were included in food distributions; in DRC, where ECHO consistently encourages a focus on hard-to-reach populations; and in Ethiopia, where it encourages attention to neglected pastoral groups.

145. With regards to the second issue area, since the transfer of the food aid budget in 2007, ECHO has taken a pro-active role in strengthening its own approach to food security, which has also translated into advocacy for improved system-wide approaches. The regional food security advisers in particular have been important resources in strengthening country programming approaches so as to take greater cognizance of the linkages between emergency relief and longer-term food security, including addressing chronic undernutrition. This was demonstrated in all four case studies. In DRC, for example, ECHO staff lobbied development donors to allocate their funding based on malnutrition rates in different provinces. In the Sahel, where advocacy has been a core part of ECHO’s strategy, ECHO has lobbied governments, civil society and development partners to put food and nutrition security higher up on the agenda. This advocacy appears to have had a real impact on changing government and donor priorities, albeit slowly.48 Across contexts, it remains difficult for development donors to fund support for governments to improve their capacity in nutrition treatment programming, including CMAM interventions.

146. Finally, at the global level and in some of the contexts studied (e.g., the Sahel and DRC), ECHO has engaged in advocacy to promote greater use of cash and vouchers. This has taken the form of providing funding for inter-agency learning and capacity building; networking with NGOs and donors to gather evidence; and participating in policy discussions to promote this modality. ECHO’s advocacy on this issue is viewed positively by partners and other donors interviewed.

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**ECHO’s advocacy strategy**

147. ECHO has not defined an advocacy strategy specifically with regards to livelihood support. More broadly, there does not seem to be a clear definition of ‘advocacy’ within ECHO and the team found no evidence of country-level advocacy strategies, with the notable exception of the Sahel region.

148. Nonetheless, the European Commission has taken steps to provide a broad direction for its advocacy. The EU Consensus on Humanitarian Aid Action Plan\(^{49}\) specifies six ‘action areas’ for the EU, one of which is ‘advocacy, promotion of humanitarian principles and international law.’ A recent ‘Mid-term review’ of the Action Plan reports on ECHO’s actions in this area.\(^{50}\)

149. The Commission has recently taken important steps to define its advocacy around food assistance via the 2010 HFA Communication and Staff Working Document. These define for the Commission “an obligation and an operational requirement to advocate on behalf of the chronically poor and food insecure.”\(^{51}\) More specifically, the Communication states that “advocacy will be directed to state actors to fulfil their fundamental responsibility in safe-guarding the food-security of their people. Advocacy will also be directed at development actors (including governments) specifically in relation to the developmental needs of populations in crisis contexts”. The Commission “will also contribute to the EU framing a global agenda… including the use of varied food assistance response options, according to the needs.” Furthermore, the Commission will “engage in advocacy to secure the complete untying of food aid” and for “chronic needs in stable contexts to be met with predictable, multi-annual resources (and not, by implication, humanitarian resources) delivered preferably through national government-led social protection and safety net programmes… and other long-term actions.”\(^{52}\)

150. It is not clear, however, that these documents have translated into changes in practice at the field level. A broader strategy—where ECHO mapped the stakeholders it is trying to influence, identified its relative strengths and weaknesses, and laid out a theory of change for the shifts it would like to see in policy or practice through its advocacy—has not been put in place. Building on the example set by the Sahel region, there appears to be considerable scope for ECHO to expand and improve on its advocacy work. The focus of ECHO’s advocacy could be strengthened by greater emphasis on gathering evidence for better identifying effective livelihood interventions across different sectors and modalities.

9 **Conclusions**

151. Since the EC budget line dedicated to Humanitarian Food Aid was transferred to ECHO, ECHO’s livelihood programming has become much more defined and coherent. ECHO has an impressive and effective team of regional food security advisers who seem to be driving real innovation and change at the country level. There is evidence that a more appropriate and diversified toolbox of livelihoods interventions is being developed, though more needs to be done in moving away from standardised default responses, which are sometimes questionable in terms of their effectiveness and appropriateness. The

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\(^{50}\) EC. 2010d. Mid-term review: Assessing progress and priorities.


\(^{52}\) Ibid., p.25.
livelihood context – investigated and understood through the process of a rigorous livelihoods analysis – should determine the intervention, rather than a process whereby interventions are selected from a prescribed or predetermined menu of options. There are also signs of real progress in the rigour and effectiveness of assessments and these are starting to feed into better analysis of response options, though more effort is still needed. There are still glaring weaknesses in the quality of monitoring and evaluation, and more broadly, in learning and knowledge management.

152. The following specific conclusions and lessons learned emerged from the synthesis of stakeholder interviews, case studies in the DRC, Ethiopia, Pakistan and the desk review of the Sahel, and review of the literature and relevant documents.

**Livelihoods policy and interventions**

153. The 2010 Communication on Humanitarian Food Assistance (HFA) and the accompanying Staff Working Document provide sufficient and high quality guidance for ECHO’s use of food assistance to protect the livelihoods of crisis-affected populations, as well as to sustain and improve food security and nutritional status. As a policy document, the HFA Communication is sufficiently flexible and inclusive, and allows for the main interventions funded by the food assistance budget to be well within its provisions. Many stakeholders felt that the HFA will only maintain its usefulness by the extent to which it supports flexibility. Related tools, including the Food and Nutrition Insecurity in Humanitarian Crises Needs Assessment Template (FINAT) and the entry / exit decision framework, show a lot of potential to help better guide ECHO’s allocations of food assistance. These tools, as well as the HFA Communication, are not necessarily well known or used by country-based ECHO staff, however.

154. It was not possible to describe ECHO’s portfolio of livelihood actions (by region, country, context, modality, and objectives) with much precision. Some basic descriptive information about the amount of funding going to different types of programme activities has not been compiled, which makes it difficult to gauge the general direction or effectiveness of ECHO’s livelihoods support.

155. There is wide variety in the programme objectives and types of livelihood activities supported by ECHO in different contexts. Staff hold differing and sometimes inconsistent views of what constitutes ‘livelihoods’, and what is appropriate within ECHO’s mandate. For example, in the Sahel, ECHO has devised a strategy to tackle long-term issues on a structural level through improved early warning and analysis, advocacy with governments and donors, and supporting innovative pilot programmes. In contrast, ECHO in the DRC has only initiated livelihoods activities in response to conflict-related shocks and have been attempting to address chronic issues with a short-term approach, without much success.

156. These inconsistencies can be explained by two broad factors: first, within ECHO, livelihoods programming exists entirely within the food security sector and the provisions of the food assistance budget line and HFA Communication. This is despite the fact that a livelihoods approach can and should be used to inform programming across sectors—in health, education or shelter, for example. ECHO has not formally defined ‘livelihoods’ and ECHO staff use the term to refer to different things. Some of ECHO’s ‘livelihood programmes’ have multiple or ill-defined objectives and lack adequate clarity about how activities contribute to objectives.
157. Second, ECHO appears to be undecided as to whether and how to address situations of chronic food insecurity through its aid instruments. The HFA Communication allows for an appropriate degree of flexibility in this regard. Some actors within the Directorate-General feel that ECHO should focus only on emergency programmes with short-term objectives. The example of ECHO’s strategy in the Sahel, however, demonstrates that it is possible to effectively combine emergency programming with actions aimed at encouraging long-term, structural changes in ways that take advantage of ECHO’s comparative advantages.

Needs assessment and response analysis

158. ECHO is highly supportive of needs assessment in general, across programmes, sectors and countries. At the inter-agency level, ECHO has played a key role in encouraging the development of several joint assessment processes related to livelihoods. ECHO has varied in its support for more in depth-analysis, however, beyond basic needs assessments. There was some question as to whether ECHO may over-emphasize qualitative approaches over more comprehensive or quantitative sample-based approaches; both are useful in different contexts.

159. ECHO is generally ahead of its partners on the ground and other donors in its level of understanding of the impact of crisis situations on people's livelihood strategies and needs. In some regions, ECHO’s partners lack capacity to conduct thorough livelihoods assessments. A lack of data from needs assessments sometimes impeded the efficient targeting of a limited amount of assistance across broad geographic areas. A notable area of weakness for ECHO’s partners remains response analysis. In some contexts the programme response option seems to be pre-determined and not sufficiently connected to the needs assessment in a logical way.

Monitoring, evaluation and effectiveness

160. ECHO appears to devote considerably more time and effort to supporting the design and implementation of livelihood activities than it does to monitoring their outcomes and impacts. Many ECHO-funded projects with livelihoods objectives include indicators which are not measured. In many cases this results from rushed or incomplete monitoring and evaluation, due to short project timeframes. Partners have an incentive to focus on implementation instead of monitoring, which tends to slip. Weaknesses in monitoring and evaluation make it difficult to gauge programme effectiveness.

161. Partly as a result, ECHO and its partners tend to rely on the same default programming options—such as seeds and tools distributions, income generation projects, cash- and food-for-work, vegetable gardening and agricultural training. Many of these have not been demonstrated to be effective or are known to be appropriate only in very specific circumstances. ECHO has in some contexts funded the same intervention in the same area for many years without conducting a rigorous evaluation to determine if it is really having an impact.

162. The narrow range of livelihood programming can be partly explained by limitations in ECHO’s partners’ capacity as well as contextual challenges such as government preference for certain types of aid activities. However, it is also due to the compressed timeline (generally a maximum of 12 months) within which activities must take place. Many of ECHO’s interventions are seeking to address chronic food insecurity or to introduce new sources of income in a 12-month timeframe, which is inappropriate. Furthermore, certain types of livelihood recovery and protection activities cannot be
effectively implemented when tied to an annual programme cycle because of seasonal factors related to planting, harvesting or livestock management. Project timelines are further compressed by long approval processes in some cases. More flexible programming approaches that show promise include ECHO’s DRR programming in the Horn of Africa, which allows for longer timeframes and includes a ‘crisis modifier’ in case of emergencies.

163. ECHO’s limited programme toolbox can also be explained by the perceived need for livelihoods activities to be linked to a ‘food-intake intervention logic’. ECHO has made considerable progress to institute more livelihood programming into humanitarian food assistance, notably through greater use of cash and vouchers. But other sectors have not benefitted from the same livelihood approach. For example, cash and vouchers show great potential as a modality to achieve objectives across sectors, not just within food security. There may also be organisational reasons that ECHO continues to support the same kinds of interventions. These include programme staff (who tend to be ‘generalists’) being more familiar with these interventions, and which may have a better cost-per-beneficiary ratio.

164. A final relevant point is that knowledge gained from evaluation exercises is insufficiently shared across counties and regions; there are few opportunities for exchange of experience and better practices. Similarly, tools developed at the headquarters level are good, but they are not rolled out systematically and countries are thus not aware of them.

**Linking relief, recovery and development (LRRD)**

165. ECHO’s commitment to LRRD has been spelled out in many policy documents, notably in the HFA Communication with regards to food security. The case studies revealed serious challenges were noted in LRRD, mainly due to persistent structural issues. These included a lack of development donors in some of the specific regions where ECHO works; conflicts with government priorities; and slower, less flexible development funding structures, among others.

166. A number of promising initiatives are underway to improve LRRD and the issue is being given a high priority overall. These include the EU’s Food Security Thematic Programme (FSTP)’s prioritisation of transition and, through that, the launch of a process called the Joint Humanitarian-Development Framework (JHDF) to bring together ECHO and EU Delegation representatives to devise common country strategies. ECHO is also taking steps to better define its own exit decision-making.

167. Even with ECHO’s growing commitment to linking relief, recovery and development, its core commitments are obviously to relief and recovery. In some contexts there may be a risk of skipping straight to recovery or livelihoods approaches following a disaster without seeing the need to provide basic relief.

**Advocacy, coherence and coordination**

168. In the contexts studied, ECHO staff have taken advantage of their extensive field presence and knowledge to very effectively coordinate and liaise with other humanitarian actors. They were also actively engaged in advocacy around several issues related to livelihoods. These included urging a greater focus on neglected groups (e.g., pastoralists or those in hard-to-access areas); upholding humanitarian principles; promoting cash and vouchers where appropriate; and drawing attention to situations of chronic food insecurity. In

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several countries, notably in the Sahel where ECHO’s advocacy strategy is most
developed as well as in Ethiopia and DRC, ECHO has pushed development donors and
governments to provide more funding for actions to address undernutrition in sustainable
ways. Despite the recent articulation in the HFA Communication of ECHO’s advocacy
goals with regards to food assistance, ECHO’s work on advocacy related to livelihoods
appears to be in its nascent stages.

10 Recommendations

169. The following recommendations to ECHO emerged from the synthesis of stakeholder
interviews, case studies in the DRC, Ethiopia, Pakistan and the desk review of the Sahel,
and review of the literature and relevant documents.

Livelihoods policy and interventions

1. Continue to invest in hiring and keeping strong regional and food security advisers,
and ensure that the HFA and related policies are well understood by all staff.

2. Compile more basic descriptive statistics on livelihood interventions based on
information currently available.

3. Contribute to greater consistency and coherence in ECHO’s support to livelihoods by:
(a) Defining ‘livelihoods’ in terms that are relevant for ECHO’s actions as a
whole and improving on the use of a livelihood lens to inform programming in
other sectors; and
(b) Making a strategic decision to either focus on short-term emergency
actions only or commit to tackling chronic food insecurity in creative ways
within the provisions of ECHO’s mandate. This evaluation shows that the
latter option is very much possible and preferable.

Needs assessment and response analysis

4. Consider providing support for more in-depth analysis about how specific populations
adapt their livelihoods strategies in crises. Ensure that different types of needs
assessments (qualitative versus quantitative; sample-based versus more
comprehensive) are supported as appropriate. Insist that partners make a logical
connection between the needs assessment and the proposed response.

Monitoring, evaluation and effectiveness

5. Invest in research to rigorously evaluate the effectiveness of frequently implemented
programming options. Provide incentives for partners to devise innovative approaches
and support peer-to-peer learning.

6. Provide more incentives and opportunities for implementing partners to adequately
monitor activities, including through extended project timeframes. Ensure that
indicators used are appropriate and feasible. Require independent evaluations when
implementing similar projects in the same area over multiple years.

7. Extend the timeframe of many types of livelihood interventions, particularly those
aimed at addressing chronic issues or helping people rebuild new livelihoods, to 18 or
24 months. Streamline and speed up the approval process, in particular for slow onset
crises.
8. Establish a mechanism for regular knowledge management that involves regional staff in order to exchange information and better practices across countries and regions. More events such as the annual PANIS meeting could be planned for knowledge sharing as well as for introducing and training regions on new tools.

**Linking relief, recovery and development**

9. Look for ways to expand upon the promising approaches to LRRD seen in the Sahel Plan and the DRR programme in the Horn of Africa, including more regional approaches to supporting livelihoods programming and LRRD. Take care to defend a role for appropriate relief assistance when needed.

10. Building on the existing documentation and early experiences with the Joint Humanitarian-Development Framework and to support its effectiveness it is recommended that ECHO work with its partners to develop a thematic guidance note on programming for resilient livelihoods.

**Advocacy, coherence and coordination**

11. Expand and improve on advocacy related to emergency livelihoods support, including by identifying ECHO’s strengths and weaknesses and laying out theories of change. Advocacy will be strengthened by supporting research and gathering better evidence on effective livelihood interventions.
Annex A: Summary of findings from field studies

Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC)

DRC context
Despite an abundance of natural resources including arable land, savannah for livestock, extensive forest and mineral wealth, a very high percentage of the Congolese population is chronically food insecure. A high percentage also suffers from chronic and acute malnutrition. Throughout the country, the reasons for this include under-investment in all areas of the economy, poor or non-functioning roads and market facilities, poor cultivation practices, a lack of basic services (water, health, education), disease outbreaks, illegal taxes and exploitation by armed groups or government authorities, and inequitable land tenure systems. In the areas of DRC that are directly affected by ongoing armed conflict (mainly in the eastern provinces), these problems are also caused by harassment and abuse by armed actors and repeated forced displacement, as well as greater pressure on limited land supply in some areas. In the past several years, food insecurity has been exacerbated by the deterioration of the mining sector (due to the global economic crisis) and high food prices.

Description of ECHO’s interventions
The Democratic Republic of Congo is one of ECHO’s largest country programmes. In 2011, ECHO’s Humanitarian Implementation Plan (HIP) for DRC was its sixth largest worldwide. The annual operational budget of ECHO in DRC has been around €40-45 million since 2006. Within DRC, ECHO was the second largest humanitarian donor in 2010. Food aid and food security programming has tended to comprise a significant portion of ECHO’s financing to humanitarian needs in DRC. In 2010, approximately 41 percent of ECHO’s budget in DRC went to food aid (12 percent) or food security (29 percent). In 2012, ECHO will spend approximately €37 million from general humanitarian budget and €7 million from the food assistance budget.

The main activities pursued by ECHO’s partners in DRC include:

- Direct **food aid**, mainly to displaced or recently returned populations and host communities;
- **Food for work** and **cash for work**, with the main objective being cash/food transfer and projects including road rehabilitation, field clearing, small bridge construction and market repairs;
- Provision of **seeds and tools**, either through in-kind distributions or fairs using vouchers;
- **Training and support on agricultural techniques**, for both staple crops and vegetables, through demonstration fields, community gardens, seed multiplication, etc.
- In support of the above two activities, discussions with the population, local leaders and land-owners for **access to land** for vulnerable households;
- Support to **income generation projects**, such as oil production, rice processing, fish farming, production of improved cook stoves, etc; and
- (Limited) in-kind distributions of **livestock** such as goats, rabbits and guinea pigs, along with some basic veterinary care for these animals.

Direct food aid, food for work, and direct seeds and tools distributions are all becoming less prevalent. In the past three to four years, a growing number of ECHO’s interventions use cash and vouchers to provide assistance that was previously delivered in-kind. Spending by DG-ECHO’s NGO partners on cash/vouchers increased from 7 percent in 2007 to 39 percent in 2010. In 2010, 44 percent of WFP’s projects and 43 percent of FAO’s projects supported cash
vouchers, compared with 0 percent in 2007. The percentage of WFP and FAO’s budgets spent on cash and vouchers is still quite small, however, at 8 and 7 percent respectively in 2010. Notably, cash and vouchers have been most used in the ‘non-food item’ (NFI) / shelter sector, in particular items provided through the ‘Rapid Response to Population Movement’ (RRMP) programme, funded by ECHO. ECHO has been encouraging WFP to more rapidly begin its planned voucher programming. A small number of programmes funded by ECHO have experimented with providing payment for school and health fees through vouchers, but only at a small scale.

**Policy context**
The focus of DG-ECHO’s food assistance in DRC is on several conflict-affected provinces in the eastern part of the country. As with other humanitarian donors, ECHO first began to engage in DR Congo in response to humanitarian needs arising from armed conflict in the eastern provinces. It is in these areas that the most visible needs persist—mainly those stemming from forced displacement and abuse by armed groups. At the global level, ECHO has only recently begun to more clearly define criteria for decisions on how to allocate its food assistance funding, including when to enter or exit a particular crisis. At present, key indicators data upon which such a decision depends (e.g., acute malnutrition, crude mortality rate, under-5 mortality rate, food consumption, dietary diversity, water access and availability, etc.) are unavailable for many areas of the country. There is also a shortage of ECHO partners with the capacity to set up short-term food security interventions in certain zones. These limitations, however, should not preclude a more considered decision on whether it may be appropriate for ECHO to increase its food assistance programming in ‘non-conflict’ provinces.

ECHO’s livelihood support actions in DRC are generally triggered by a conflict-related shock. However, the interventions themselves have tended to also seek to address underlying and chronic food insecurity. Even within a 12-month project, this is seen as necessary mainly because chronic vulnerability and shocks caused by conflict can be difficult to distinguish from one another, and treating each separately can be impractical. The livelihoods of individuals and communities in eastern DRC are affected by a myriad of chronic problems, which may have conflict dynamics at their root, but are not ‘shocks’ as such. Thus even a relatively short-term intervention (6 to 12 months) will often attempt to deal with chronic problems. For example, providing vegetable seeds will often be accompanied by training on how to plant, care for and harvest the crops. There is potentially some uncertainty regarding whether such actions are legitimate under the Communication on Humanitarian Food Assistance. However, the evaluation concluded that these actions are consistent with the Communication and with ECHO’s mandate in general.

It is an open question, however, as to whether the strategy of seeking to address chronic issues within a 12-month project timeframe is the most appropriate one, given limited resources and ECHO’s comparative advantages. As described below, there is limited evidence for the impact (particularly in the medium to long-term) of many of short-term interventions in DRC that seek to address chronic food insecurity: for example, income generation projects and agricultural training. ECHO in DRC thus may wish to decide whether (1) to focus solely on responding to short-term shocks to food insecurity, or (2) to also seek to address chronic food insecurity. Both options are feasible; a concerted decision may help to focus ECHO’s limited resources (in terms of its technical capacity and support to partners) on where it can have the most difference. If the latter option is pursued, ECHO will need to give greater attention as to

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54 See for example, ECHO 2011 FINAT and ECHO 2011 Entry/Exit Framework.
how funding modalities (timeframes, eligibility of certain interventions within the HFA) can be adopted to this strategy. It will also need to pursue greater attention to finding linkages between its partners’ interventions and development donor funding.

**Needs assessment and response analysis**

The ECHO staff in DRC with whom the consultant met demonstrated a good understanding of the different livelihood strategies of target populations, and of relevant frameworks and core methodologies. Through discussions with individual partners as well as its active participation in various inter-agency decision-making bodies, ECHO has encouraged its partners to make greater use of livelihood frameworks and assessment methodologies, in an effort to encourage better needs assessment and response analysis. With regards to cash and vouchers, DG-ECHO has tried to convey the message that it wants it merely wants its partners to do a thorough response analysis which includes these mechanisms, rather than that it is pushing for cash and vouchers as such. This nuanced message is well understood by some partners, but less so by others.

At a general level, ECHO’s partners in DRC were well equipped to identify and assess livelihood needs. This included a good understanding of gender issues and the needs of different livelihood groups. Many of ECHO’s partners had been working in the same areas for several years, and demonstrated strong knowledge of the community’s basic needs and specifically to the experiences of women and to gender dynamics. ECHO’s partners were also generally sensitive to potential negative impact of their projects and seemed to be implementing a ‘do no harm’ approach in their projects (considering the possible protection risks involved in distributing certain items, or when setting targeting criteria etc.). It should be noted, however, that the evaluation did not involve the type of detailed assessment of individual projects that would be necessary to completely answer these questions.

ECHO’s partners sometimes appeared to lack a full comprehension of the coping strategies and household economies of the different livelihood groups they targeted, however. For example, some partners did not seem to have a good understanding of people’s expenditure on things like rent for land, informal payments to host families, school / health / water fees, local taxes, informal payments to armed groups or elites, and debts. ECHO’s partners have recently increased their understanding of the impact of crisis situations on market dynamics, as is evident through an increased number of market assessments and through monitoring of cash and voucher programmes. However, they also do not always ground their choice of interventions in an analysis of protection dynamics, which are often intimately linked with livelihood strategies. For example, few partners had considered programmes that could help people address protection issues that are key barriers to sustainable livelihoods—such as illegal taxes, road barriers, exploitation, physical abuse on the way to and from fields and markets, etc.

With regards to targeting, DG-ECHO encourages its partners to use targeting approaches that are based not only on individual status as a ‘displaced’ or ‘recently returned’ person alone, but also on general vulnerability. Despite widespread acknowledgement that ‘vulnerability targeting’ is preferable, and the widespread use of this approach by most partners, WFP (the largest provider of food aid) is only recently trying to do more of its targeting based on food security criteria rather than displacement status.

With regards to timeliness, ECHO has encouraged more rapid responses through its funding of a parallel food security component to the Rapid Response to Population Movement (RRMP) mechanism. As noted above, if ECHO decides to continue to fund programmes
aimed at addressing chronic food insecurity, especially those which aim to help people rebuild new livelihoods, it may wish to consider extending the project cycle beyond 12-months. This could allow for longer-term interventions that may be more appropriate (e.g., on manioc, which usually has an 18-month planting cycle) as well as more time to carefully evaluate programme impact.

**Monitoring, evaluation and effectiveness**

Indicators used to monitor the performance of ECHO’s livelihood projects are varied and include those related to income (e.g., percentage of households experiencing increase in household income), food production (percentage of seeds planted, size of harvest, percentage of food needs covered by one’s production, ability to demonstrate agricultural techniques), food consumption (number and variety of daily meals), knowledge of agricultural techniques, outputs of income generation projects (amount of fish caught, oil sold, etc.). Many of ECHO’s livelihood interventions include improved nutrition as an expected outcome, and project proposals generally include appropriate indicators to measure this outcome. However, the ability of ECHO’s partners to actually monitor and evaluate the impact of livelihood interventions on nutrition is limited, due to lack of staff capacity, project implementation delays, and difficulties in data collection.

Cash and voucher livelihood projects have produced strong evidence of effectiveness relative to in-kind distributions of assistance, when the objective is to provide for immediate livelihood needs. In most contexts where they have been tried, cash and vouchers have been found to offer greater choice to beneficiaries, help support local markets, and be more efficient than in-kind aid. It is worth noting that cash and vouchers have been used primarily as a modality for *livelihoods provision* (i.e., immediate relief) and to a limited extent for *livelihoods protection* or *livelihoods promotion*.

There is a lack of sufficient evidence of effectiveness for some of ECHO’s livelihood interventions. This includes activities seeking to address chronic food insecurity (e.g., income generation projects, and agricultural support and training) as well as those seeking to respond to immediate needs (e.g., in-kind seeds and tools distributions and certain types of food assistance, including food for work). For example, the distribution of agricultural tools (hoes, machetes, etc.) is a popular option among both agencies and beneficiaries. The latter tend to request tools, but it may be mainly because they know agencies are likely to provide them. Tools do tend to wear down after a few years, and an unneeded hoe can always be resold or traded. However, in any setting where hoes are available on the market, it is more appropriate to give people the option to purchase them themselves. Thus while there seems to be no great harm in distributing tools, it would likely be more cost effective and empowering to allow people to purchase them themselves if needed.

Similarly, there is limited evidence as to whether agricultural training implemented by agencies within a short timeframe (e.g., 12 months) has any impact beyond the first year. Few if any follow-up studies appear to have been done in DRC. Some communities are eager to adopt the techniques taught (i.e., plant-hanging, stocking, spacing, terracing, weeding etc.) while others are not. This is due to variety of factors, such as a lack of trust in the community due to conflict dynamics, or a dislike of agricultural techniques, such as terracing. In some areas, it can be difficult to find staff with agricultural skills who speak the local language, which can impact on the quality of trainings as well as communication with project managers. There was no evidence that ECHO’s partners were drawing on best practice from the development sector, or linking with other actors (i.e., from the local government or private sector, such as commodity traders) to make training more sustainable.
ECHO’s partners in DRC have sought to implement a wide variety of income generation projects in a short timeframe. These usually involve organising people into ‘associations’ (if they are not already) and providing some training and providing or constructing some basic equipment, such as an oil press, improved stoves, rice processing equipment, fish tanks etc. Some livestock distributions have also been tried. Decisions as to the types of projects to support appear to be broadly justified, however their sustainability is highly questionable. Beneficiaries often have little knowledge of how to manage revenues, and cost recovery is a major challenge. Trust within the group is often difficult to establish, where people can be used to fending for themselves. Local authorities or armed actors sometimes tax or exploit these small sources of income, if not directly loot them. In general, it was felt that the above types of income generation projects would ideally have much more time and investment to properly support.

Food for work is appropriate when there are problems with food availability because markets are not functioning well and where there are security concerns with cash distributions. However, in practice, it is not clear that analyses of these conditions have always driven decisions. In some cases, agencies appear to be overly cautious regarding the potential dangers of distributing cash directly rather than in exchange for work, when it is not in fact clear that one is more dangerous than the other. ECHO may also wish to consider whether its cash for work (or food for work) programmes should be better supported with enough resources and technical skills to build proper (sustainable) assets, which is not currently the focus.

**Linking relief, rehabilitation and development (LRRD)**

DG-ECHO’s livelihood interventions in conflict zones are generally not well linked with efforts by development donors to improve food security. This is mainly because of a lack of development donors willing to operate in what are still insecure environments, where stability and relative calm are in no way guaranteed. There are few largest humanitarian donors interested in funding transitional programming.

The budget lines of the European Commission in DRC do not include food security, but rather focus on governance, roads and health. The EU’s Food Security Thematic Programme (FSTP) will fund a new round of food security initiatives, to be managed by DEVCO, with the next round of around €10 million per year for three years through 2013. A call for proposals is currently underway, but for various reasons, it appears unlikely that any of ECHO’s partners in the eastern provinces will be funded this round. ECHO and the EU Food Security Thematic Programme (FSTP) have coordinated a programme to address malnutrition in some of the central provinces in DRC, which is seen as a promising approach.

**Advocacy, coherence and coordination**

DG ECHO actively collaborates and coordinates with other donors and partners in-country towards improved humanitarian response. Its extensive field presence and dynamic participation in many inter-agency fora is viewed very positively by other humanitarian actors in DRC, including other donors. DG-ECHO is advocating with development donors to think about how they can programme according to malnutrition rates, which is appropriate and useful.
**Ethiopia**

**Ethiopia context**

Ethiopia is plagued by chronic, cyclical and transitory food insecurity, where 85 percent of its 91 million people rely – as producers or labourers – on rain-fed agriculture. Such heavy reliance on agriculture as a primary livelihood strategy results in high vulnerability to shocks from natural disasters, especially droughts or floods, for the vast majority of the country’s population. Regional instability and conflict exacerbate this already fragile state of affairs; significant refugee populations have been flooding into Ethiopia from conflict-ridden Somalia and Sudan. Since 2007, Ethiopia has suffered two major droughts, affecting more than 6.4 million people. Drought and conflict in Somali region have created an emergency situation for another 2 million people.

**Description of ECHO’s interventions**

ECHO supports humanitarian efforts in Ethiopia in response to direct appeals from the Government of Ethiopia. Thus, ECHO’s portfolio involves supporting emergency programming – developed with a livelihood lens where feasible – in the face of shocks. With an annual average budget of approximately €50 million, ECHO supports two types of programming that are implemented by NGOs, INGOs, and UN agencies: emergency programming and a regional Disaster Risk Reduction programme, involving Drought Cycle Management (DCM), and promotes linkages between emergency and DRR activities.

The ECHO-supported DRR programme in Ethiopia receives €5-6 million annually and funds pilots aimed at building resilience, which typically focus on livestock, improving water access, improving grazing resources through cash for work, animal health, and promoting cooperatives and savings groups. Early warning and contingency planning is also important. The DRR programme is managed as a consultative process with implementing partners to identify priorities, capture better practices for scaling up, and encourages participatory community approaches. These programmes are implemented over a longer timeframe (16-18 months) than most emergency programming (~ 12 months). The main partners in the DRR programmes are Save the Children, ACF, DCA, CARE, FAO, GOAL and CORDAID. Other partners, such as Oxfam-GB, CORDAID, CARE, COOPI, and VSF-Germany implement DRR activities specifically related to cross-border issues.

Emphasizing a multi-sectoral approach and use of better practices, the ECHO country strategy involves five intervention “packages” in its emergency programming: 1) a livestock package, 2) a nutrition package, 3) a seeds and agriculture package, 4) a water rehabilitation package, and 5) a food aid package. Some ECHO partners implement more than one package (e.g., GOAL implements both nutrition and food security programming) while other partners focus on only one package (e.g., WFP implements direct food assistance). While ECHO promotes cooperation with other emergency donors such as OFDA, HRF and CERF, the links between its implementing partners that conduct activities in different sectors could be improved.

The multi-sectoral approach to ECHO’s funding strategy helps identify vulnerable groups and cross-cutting issues such as gender and HIV/AIDS. The palette of interventions practiced by ECHO implementing partners generally represents the results of good needs assessments and identification of appropriate responses. However, many ECHO-financed partners lack experience in conducting thorough livelihoods assessments or implementation of a range of livelihood interventions (e.g., various income-generating activities). For example, large numbers of ex-pastoralists who lost their animals as a result of successive years of drought
have been migrating to urban and peri-urban centres, where livelihood options are often more limited. Currently, few ECHO-funded partners focus significant programme activities on issues related to migration of pastoral drop-outs and their effects on urban environments as new vulnerable populations.

In contrast, nutrition programming (i.e., CMAM and supplemental feeding) provided by ECHO partners involves appropriate interventions to combat malnutrition resulting from shocks. However, as a primarily emergency-based response, these interventions treat only the symptoms of malnutrition rather than the underlying causes.

One of the main challenges resulting from ECHO’s focus on working with NGOs and UN organizations rather than directly with the GoE is that the government is most interested in programme activities that build capacity within government institutions and that have longer-term impacts. ECHO’s programme activities are primarily attempting to address emergency situations (and within a relatively short timeframe) and thus do not typically promote the longer-term investments preferred by the GoE. Thus, NGOs feel caught in the middle of an untenable position – needing to respond to the immediacy of saving the lives of vulnerable populations as well as building capacity of government staff.

According to ECHO Ethiopia staff and stakeholders, ECHO-supported implementing partners in Ethiopia have faced certain common challenges, including a lengthy approval process (by both ECHO and GoE), poor synchronicity between the funding cycle and needs on the ground (e.g., agricultural cycle), inability to adapt to unexpected situations (both challenges and opportunities), strict adherence to programme design and interventions (i.e., inflexibility), and limitations imposed by the ECHO audit process (e.g., more focus on stated programme objectives and activities than on impact). Underscoring these issues is the lack of staff in the ECHO Ethiopia office. A fully functioning office for a similar sized portfolio (~ €50 million per year) in other countries involves more than 10 staff members; there are currently two staff in the Ethiopia office, which undermines ECHO’s ability to engage local partners in effectively responding to emergencies and shocks as well as limiting staff ability to coordinate with partners, make better use of evaluations to inform best practices, streamline the approval process of partner proposals, and improve the timeliness of interventions.

**Policy context**

ECHO’s portfolio in Ethiopia is very consistent with DG ECHO’s mandate and aligns with the Humanitarian Food Assistance Policy by recognizing certain aspects of food security as a humanitarian concern, which allows including livelihood protection in the humanitarian agenda. ECHO’s portfolio in Ethiopia involves supporting emergency programming – developed with a livelihood lens where feasible – in the face of shocks.

In Ethiopia, severe droughts occur frequently in lowland pastoral and agro-pastoral areas, where ECHO is one of the main donors and focuses much of its resources. ECHO funding in Ethiopia is targeted to NGOs, INGOs, and UN agencies rather than to the government. This presents a challenge in that the government is most interested in programme activities that build capacity within government institutions and that have longer-term impacts. In contrast, ECHO’s programme activities are primarily attempting to address emergency situations (and within a relatively short timeframe) and thus do not typically promote the longer-term investments preferred by the GoE. According to some NGOs, they are being asked to respond to the immediate need of saving the lives of vulnerable populations as well as build capacity

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of government staff. Trying to do both on a limited budget is not always easy and takes more time than is available. As a result, NGOs feel caught in the middle of an untenable position.

The capacity of some NGOs to implement livelihood interventions in the context of emergencies is limited, creating another level of challenge for ECHO.

**Needs assessment and response analysis**

Thorough livelihoods assessments need to play a more prominent role in ECHO-supported activities, and would result in improved targeting of beneficiaries. Such assessments will help identify appropriate alternative income-generating opportunities and other livelihood interventions, as well as areas in which sustainable livelihoods may no longer be possible due to conflict or severe environmental degradation. Likewise, more livelihood and response analysis should be included during the design phase, as programme support that significantly enables recovery or protection of livelihoods during crises is principally lacking. A more holistic approach, including emergency nutrition interventions that address the underlying causes of malnutrition (e.g., food and/or livelihood insecurity) rather than just treating its symptoms, requires going beyond short-term responses. This includes expanding urban programming for vulnerable populations of ex-pastoralists that migrate to urban areas when pastoralism is no longer a viable livelihood option. Applying lessons learned (e.g., contingency planning, crisis modifications, capturing best practices for scaling up, encouraging participatory community approaches) from the drought preparedness initiative could help enhance ECHO’s emergency programming.

**Monitoring and evaluation**

The majority of ECHO funded projects measure output level indicators as part of their monitoring evaluation activities. Although outcome indicators are identified in the project proposals, these are rarely measured due to the lack of adequate baselines and end-line surveys, and because projects end before these impact measures can be realized. For example, crop production data is proposed but rarely measured, in large part because the programme ends before the harvest is completed. Nutrition outcomes are often difficult to measure because the government must approve all nutrition surveys (GoE estimates of malnutrition and food insecurity are typically underestimated and therefore under represent the real scope and scale of the problem, which also contributes to a dilution effect of many interventions).

The short timeframes for both types of ECHO-supported programming present challenges in terms of monitoring and evaluation. Outcome indicators identified in proposals are rarely measured due to a lack of appropriate baseline and end-line surveys with which to compare results, and the lack of sufficient time required for impacts to be realized. The short duration of emergency and DRR programmes makes it difficult to determine if livelihoods have been protected or improved in the long run.

**Linking relief, recovery and development (LRRD)**

Because severe droughts occur frequently in lowland pastoral and agro-pastoral areas, ECHO focuses much of its resources – and is one of the main donors – in these regions. Though ECHO puts great effort into linking its emergency programming with development funding, there are few donors supporting development programming in the regions where it focuses most of its emergency support. Thus, in some of the most shock-prone and vulnerable parts of the country (i.e., the lowland pastoral and agro-pastoral areas), there are few development actors present to follow up after emergency programming. Where possible, ECHO encourages linkages with the EU Delegation and other bilateral donors that are supporting NGOs and UN agencies. For example, the EU Delegation has provided development resources to follow up
on some ECHO interventions through the EU Food Security Thematic Program, and ECHO was able to link with the EU Delegation as part of its drought response in the form of €13 million. ECHO also tries to encourage linkages between its emergency programming and its DRR activities, and seeks opportunities to mainstream disaster preparedness, mitigation and prevention.

Advocacy, coherence and coordination
In general, there are limited opportunities for advocacy by ECHO or other donors within Ethiopia. Within regulatory censorship constraints imposed by the GoE, ECHO does advocate with development donors (e.g., the EU Delegation) and partners to emphasize improving livelihood responses, and especially encourages key partners to focus on pastoral areas and nutrition programming. There are currently limited opportunities for linkages between ECHO livelihoods support activities and the food security actions of the European Commission because they support partners and programming in different areas; ECHO focuses on the pastoral and agro-pastoral lowlands and the EU Delegation and other donors focus on the high-productivity highland areas.

A philosophical difference in approach exists between an ECHO-supported mandate and that of the Ethiopian government. ECHO’s main emphasis is on shorter-term emergency responses than those more characteristic of long-term development activities. In contrast, the government is more interested in, and therefore more likely to approve, programmes that build government capacity to deal with food insecurity, nutrition, livelihood and other challenges faced by Ethiopia’s vulnerable populations. For example, the GoE emphasizes programmes lasting at least two years in duration; most ECHO-supported emergency programming is for no more than 12 months. The longer timeframe of DRR programmes (16-18 months) is still not enough, particularly if new livelihood activities are being introduced; it takes a longer period of time for beneficiaries to learn/adopt activities that were previously unknown or unfamiliar to them and their communities.

Pakistan
In response to the 2010 floods in Pakistan, ECHO has supported a group of six international NGOs – the Pakistan Emergency Food Security Alliance (PEFSA) – providing livelihood protection in the context of a rapid onset shock. PEFSA is of central importance for ECHO since it raises many of the most fundamental issues concerning the ways in which food assistance for livelihood recovery activities mesh with their humanitarian mandate. For rapid onset shocks, PEFSA may well offer the foundations of a more widely replicable model for ECHO food security and livelihoods programming.

Pakistan Context
In July 2010, torrential rains caused unprecedented flooding across Pakistan. According to the National Disaster Management Authority (NDMA), over 20 million people were directly affected, 1,980 people died and over 1.6 million homes were destroyed. The floods impacted some of Pakistan’s most fertile and productive lands, and devastated the livelihoods of small traders, subsistence farmers and herders. Floodwaters damaged or destroyed more than 7.9 million acres of crops, sweeping away whole swathes of agricultural land along the river banks. The disaster crippled an already struggling Pakistani economy. Agriculture provided approximately 80 percent of the livelihoods opportunities in flood affected areas and the impact to this sector alone represented a significant loss of income-generating opportunities. Infrastructural damages, such as damaged power supply lines and shops, impacted casual labour access to employment opportunities.
ECHO in Pakistan
An ECHO office was re-established in Pakistan in 2010 in response to the floods; operations prior to that had been managed in recent years by their Kabul office. As described in their operational dashboard they had a total budget for 2010 of €150 million, €110 million of which was granted in response to the 2010 flood. A total of 43 projects were undertaken by 25 partners, including six UN partners. Only three partners had individual projects of €10 million or more; WFP received over €17 million in ECHO funding and was their largest grant recipient. In 2011 ECHO had a budget of around €92 million in Pakistan, representing an initial allocation of just over €73 million including DIP ECHO and two further allocations in response to the 2011 floods. Of this, food assistance has the largest share.

The ECHO portfolio is very large by comparison with other country programmes. Given the scale of needs, ECHO’s support is relatively modest in relation to domestic and international humanitarian support in response to the 2010 floods, representing about 7 percent of the total. However, it has a very good reputation and their staff spends a great deal of time out monitoring the quality of spending. ECHO staff in Islamabad have a strong humanitarian background from ICRC and the INGOs and have been particularly strident in seeking to ensure their partners pursue good humanitarian practice. This has been a source of tension in 2010 with their biggest partner, WFP, in relation to targeting. Through ECHO’s advocacy, changes were made and ECHO have justifiably been identified as an upholder of humanitarian principle.

The Pakistan Emergency Food Security Alliance
A significant portion of the support provided by ECHO in response to the 2010 floods went to a consortium of six INGOs, or PEFSA, including Fundación Acción contra el Hambre (ACF), ACTED, CARE, International Rescue Committee, Oxfam GB, and Save the Children. They formulated a joint submission entitled Emergency food security and livelihood support to flood affected populations in Pakistan. They shared a joint Single Form, with a shared justification and description of the purpose. Each then submitted their own version of this with the specific details of where they planned to work and what scale of programme they could operate but shared a common strategic framework and common approaches to respond to the needs of flood affected population in the area of food security and livelihood protection.

The process was not straightforward and they were helped considerably in the development of the concept and the formulation of activities by the Regional Food Specialist from New Delhi as well as by major effort from ECHO Islamabad staff. The original idea may have been to save on transactions costs and, at least for this first use of this approach, that was hardly achieved. However, real benefits were achieved, as we discuss below, and ECHO’s satisfaction seems evident with funding for a second phase at very similar levels of support—see figure below— but over a nine month period.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>PEFSA Two July 2011 (Euros)</th>
<th>PEFSA One September 2010 (Euros)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>OXFAM 1,900,000</td>
<td>OXFAM 2,663,889</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SCI 4,500,000</td>
<td>SC-UK 2,611,880</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ACH (ACF) 2,000,000</td>
<td>ACF 2,510,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ACTED 1,900,000</td>
<td>ACTED 2,710,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>IRC 1,400,000</td>
<td>IRC 3,000,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CARE 2,000,000</td>
<td>CARE 2,504,231</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Within the overall specific objective of improved food security, asset protection and recovery there were three agreed results:
• Targeted households receive an appropriate level of resources transferred through a proper modality, in a timely manner to ensure access to sufficient food to meet their daily consumption needs.

• Targeted households receive an appropriate level of support through proper modalities, in a timely manner to minimise asset depletion and where possible to preserve or increase the asset base.

• Best practices in cash transfer programming during the flood response in Pakistan are identified, documented and disseminated.

The districts selected were amongst those which had been identified as worst hit by the OCHA initial needs assessment. Though cash was the predominant mode of provision a wide variety of inputs (food vouchers, seeds, water pumps and livestock) were provided through the programme based on local needs assessment carried out by each PEFSA member together with their local partners during August and contracts were agreed in September. In most areas the INGO had existing programmes which really facilitated the linkages between addressing the emergency food security needs and early recovery.

Within PESFA there was clear attention to cross-cutting issues – child protection, gender mainstreaming, DRR, Environmental Impacts and Advocacy, which was both at the level of the community and broadening out to other stakeholders including other implementing partners and donors. The single forms also underline the importance of coordination with other humanitarian actors, especially WFP, and of staying in touch with government officials especially at local and district level.

One immediate benefit of the PEFSA was the plan, from early in the PEFSA design work, to have specific partners take lead responsibility for particular aspects of humanitarian programming.

In the PEFSA II:

• ACH is lead in nutrition guidance and mainstreaming.

• SCF is the lead agency for Monitoring, Evaluation, Accountability & Learning (MEAL).

• OXFAM is the lead agency for cash and has proposed a focal point that will be available for all the PEFSA partners.  

• OXFAM will also be in charge (as for the previous round of funding) of documenting the lessons learned from the PEFSA I initiative in terms of cash transfer and will inform the CaLP initiative (Cash and Learning Partnership) accordingly.

• ACTED is lead for the GIS web-based mapping.

The experience with PEFSA has been a challenge for all but there was such strong commitment to the ideas of improved coordination, better learning, lower transactions costs (eventually) and as a consequence doing a better job that all parties have stayed with it and PEFSA II is up and running. The PEFSA II alliance has been able to incorporate some of the lessons learned from the PEFSA I and the longer timeframe should enable partners to implement a more comprehensive, well-structured action. It has been renamed: PEFSA Emergency Food Security and Nutrition Support to Flood Affected Populations in Pakistan reflecting the growing concerns with nutritional standards that have emerged as a consequence of the 2010 flood monitoring and impact studies. It is almost entirely cash-

56 The PEFSA has been an important learning experience on cash-based transfers.
based but partners have a requirement to programme according to need. There was slightly more time to prepare for this second round and opportunity for ECHO to examine proposals in more depth in the context of using food assistance for livelihoods protection in a contest of continuing emergency in some areas and recovery situations in others. This did allow for better preparatory work such as the Food Security, Livelihoods and Nutrition Analysis: Flood Response prepared by the PEFSA in March 2011.

ECHO Islamabad supported a lesson learning assessment of PEFSA I which made a number of recommendations, both to the PEFSA members and to donors but they clearly see great potential in this approach as a new way of doing business. IRC conducted its own assessment and their results were equally positive; the conclusion of that review states ‘the communities were more than satisfied with the assistance they received and the processes for selection and distribution; their food consumption improved and the project empowered individuals to take control of their lives and created a strong foundation on which to build income-earning opportunities to support their families in the longer term.’

There seems little doubt from the PEFSA experience that livelihoods protection is inseparable from effective emergency programming and that with the right partners – those that do have a geographic commitment that incorporates both humanitarian and development activities – there are opportunities to exit when humanitarian needs have been addressed. This study suggests that ECHO also has to rely on choosing partners who can help them make their humanitarian support effective by linking it to longer-term development programming. PEFSA partners provide a Joint Humanitarian-Development pathway.

**Sahel region**

**Sahel context**

The humanitarian response to the 2005 food crisis in the Sahel region is widely agreed to have been insufficient. The following year, ECHO, along with other donors, began to look closely at what lessons could be drawn. One key conclusion was that aid actors had demonstrated a ‘tolerance’ for recurrent acute malnutrition in the Sahel, where rates of global acute malnutrition (GAM) were often far above the emergency threshold limit. In ‘any other zone’, ECHO concluded, such rates would ‘already have triggered an appropriate humanitarian response.’

ECHO determined that ‘this was a sustained and chronic emergency which required a pro-active rather than re-active approach.’ It commissioned a study in 2006 that ‘confirmed the multi-stressor nature of the problem, found too many presumptions and too few hard facts and little real analysis about the causes and long-term effects of continued high levels of vulnerability… Existing early warning systems were considered to be too focused on food availability and not sufficiently on food accessibility. Crop forecasts gave an indication of potential market availability but not on price and access and did not take into sufficient consideration the dynamics of local and regional trade.’

A ‘lack of awareness and training on nutrition protocols amongst health workers [also] slowed the identification of a major nutrition crisis.’

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57 The 2011 floods led to some disruption and reorientation in those few districts in the PESFA programme that were affected by this year’s floods. Although some proposals state that they will divert resources when more urgent needs arise there was some difficulty with the precise modalities for doing this but it appeared to be largely a communication gap rather than an actual obstacle.


A recent study commissioned by the Sahel Working Group\(^{61}\) analysed the extent to which lessons from the 2005 crisis were applied during the crisis of 2010. It found that there have been some improvements in policy and practice, mainly: improved analysis for program design, including a shift away from looking at production to looking at livelihoods; greater efforts to support pastoralists; greater NGO initiatives to reduce people’s risk of disasters and build resilience; and an exponential growth in cash transfers and social protection programmes. Challenges that remain, however, include: early warning systems that are still based too much on models of food production and insufficiently linked to early response; an over-emphasis on food aid; insufficient government capacity to manage more aid; lack of government commitment to social protection; and a continued lack of integration of humanitarian and development donor funding. The report, which was based on 70 interviews and extensive travel to the region, also draws conclusions regarding the effectiveness of different donors in the Sahel, including ECHO, and it was well-regarded by several NGOs, ECHO and at least one other donor.\(^{62}\) As such, it forms important source of information and analysis for this case study.

**Description of ECHO’s interventions**

In response to these shortcomings, ECHO launched its first ‘Sahel Global Plan’ in 2007.\(^{63}\) Each year since then, ECHO has continued to pursue the same broad approach to its work in the Sahel. For 2011, ECHO’s main objectives in the Sahel were:

- **Expanding the knowledge base** of the multi-sector causes of malnutrition and supporting measures to improve early warning mechanisms.
- **Demonstrating through the funding of pilots**, innovative and replicable activities that malnutrition can be treated in a sustainable and cost-effective way.
- **Advocacy** with governments, civil society and development partner to put food and nutrition security higher up the political and development agenda.

The Plan covers the Sahel regions in Niger, Burkina Faso, Mali, Chad, Mauritania, Chad, Nigeria and Cameroon, as well as a few other countries. The total amount of the annual decisions has varied between around €17 million (in 2008) up to a maximum of €74 million (for the spike in the crisis in 2010). In 2010, ECHO allocated around €55 million to the Sahel countries and has budgeted €35 million in 2012. Since 2007, approximately one-half to two-thirds of ECHO’s Sahel funding has tended to come from the food assistance budget, with the rest coming from the general humanitarian budget.

Looking at the 2010 and 2011 HIPs, as well as the drought emergency decisions for these years, the largest amount of funding went to UNICEF (16 percent), WFP (15 percent), followed by the international NGO Save the Children UK (10 percent) and 21 other international NGOs and European Red Cross societies, as well as small percentages to ICRC, UNHAS, FAO, WHO and OCHA. Of the total amount of funding awarded through the 2011

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\(^{61}\) Gubbels, 2011. Escaping the Hunger Cycle. The Sahel Working Group (SWG) is an informal inter-agency network, focusing mainly on Niger, Mali and Burkina Faso. It was formed to identify and implement solutions to the chronic vulnerability and hunger of communities, as highlighted by the chronic food crises in 2005 and 2010. The SWG shares information, commissions research and coordinates programming and advocacy messages. The participating agencies that jointly commissioned the report are: Christian Aid, CARE International UK, Concern Worldwide, Oxfam GB, CAFOD, Plan UK, Save the Children UK, Tearfund, and World Vision UK.


HIP, through 45 projects, the following percentages of funding went the following types of assistance.

Table 2. Percent funding of ECHO’s 2011 Sahel HIP by type of assistance.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Types of assistance</th>
<th>Percent of funding</th>
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It should be noted that the activities for 2011 are not necessarily representative of other years, however. A breakdown of funding amounts by activity was not available for previous years.

It is known that in the past several years, there has been a rapid and exponential growth in cash operations in some parts of the Sahel, a development in which ECHO has played a key role. For example, approximately 15 different agencies used cash and vouchers in response to the crisis in Niger in 2010, serving over 1 million people, or 7 percent of the population.

For 2012, ECHO has issued operational recommendations as an annex to the 2012 Sahel HIP, which give some indication of the types of activities to be prioritized going forward.

1. Response and prevention
   a. **Treatment of malnutrition**: The principal objectives are to integrate the treatment of acute malnutrition within the existing health system, and to increase coverage in terms of the number of children effectively treated.
   b. **Actions to prevent malnutrition**: Although actions to treat malnutrition can contain preventative elements, this aspect will consist solely of limited pilot actions aimed at demonstrating an impact in terms of reducing the prevalence of malnutrition. Results must be collected rigorously and shared widely. Projects could involve improving access to health services (exemption from health fees); improving access to enriched nutritional products; food aid; WASH; health or family planning

2. Information, assessment and advocacy
   a. **Information systems** (SMART surveys, coverage surveys, HEAs and coordination)
   b. **Monitoring and evaluation**: Increased ECHO capacity for monitoring and evaluation of nutritional treatment projects funded under the HIP
   c. **Advocacy**: Continued advocacy by ECHO and its partners for greater attention to malnutrition

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65 Cash Learning Partnership (CaLP) website, as cited in Ibid., p.36.
The above seems to indicate that prevention (mitigation) activities may receive less funding in 2012 than in years’ past (see item 1b) but this was difficult to determine in absence of a breakdown by budget. The 2011 HIP indicates that ECHO will give priority to ‘operations that give emphasis to disaster risk reduction’, and aim to assist people ‘to strengthen their coping mechanisms and resilience.’ By contrast, the 2012 HIP does not specifically emphasise these objectives, instead giving more priority to the treatment severely malnourished children, including a caseload arising from the after-effects of the 2010 crisis.

**Policy context**

The approach to livelihood interventions pursued by ECHO in the Sahel differs from that ECHO’s approach in other contexts in several ways: first, the strategy is very much a regional one, whereas other ECHO programmes tend to be country specific; second, it takes more active approach to pursuing LRRD than ECHO does in other contexts, including advocacy with governments and development donors as an explicit activity; and third, it provides more direct support for data and information systems, and for research on innovative and effective humanitarian interventions. Taken as whole, ECHO’s strategy in the Sahel is an annual plan with a long-term approach, aimed at mobilizing interest and resources for preventing acute malnutrition (rather than only treating it), and it provides for considerable flexibility for helping to address structural causes.

Given these differences, one could question whether ECHO’s strategy in the Sahel is consistent with ECHO’s emergency mandate and specifically with the Humanitarian Food Assistance Communication. The Communication states that ‘In principle, it will not use humanitarian food assistance to address chronic food insecurity…’. The exceptions, however, include ‘where non-intervention poses immediate or imminent humanitarian risk of significant scale and severity; where other more appropriate actors, including its own development instruments, are either unable or unwilling to act, and cannot be persuaded to act; and where, in spite of its comparative disadvantages, positive impact can be expected within the time limitations of its intervention.’ All of these conditions can be said to be met in the Sahel region. In addition, all three of the specific objectives of humanitarian food assistance as defined in the Communication are being pursued in the Sahel.

This desk review concludes that ECHO’s approach in the Sahel is broadly perceived to have been highly effective and appropriate. For these reasons and in light of the above analysis of the HFA, ECHO’s portfolio of livelihood interventions in the Sahel should be understood as consistent with its mandate, as well as duly considerate of its comparative advantage with other donors.

**Needs assessment and response analysis**

One of the key weaknesses identified that led to the formation of ECHO’s Sahel global plan was an inadequate understanding on the part of many humanitarian actors of the nature of the problem of malnutrition in the Sahel. Specifically, early warning systems were giving too much emphasis to food production and food availability rather than food accessibility—failing to recognize the fact that many households purchase a large percentage of their food. The role of price fluctuations and the dynamics of local and regional trade were not well understood.

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66 EC. 2010b. HFA Communication.  
67 Ibid., p.7-8.  
68 Ibid., p.5.  
The identification of these analytical deficits led ECHO to pursue several improvements in the ability of their partners to carry out adequate needs assessment and response analysis. These include funding partners to conduct household economy analysis (HEAs), Standardized Monitoring and Assessment of Relief and Transition (SMART) surveys, and market studies using the Emergency Market Mapping and Analysis (EMMA) tool, as well as providing support for the Cadre Harmonisé/IPC system. ECHO has supported a training of trainers on HEAs, in order to build the capacity of various actors. In its funding decisions, ECHO requires that its partners base their choice of intervention upon a good understanding of the crisis. For example, ECHO’s framework for its current 2012 emergency decision for the Sahel, which is for targeted resource transfer targeting households at risk of survival deficit in coming months, requires that the modality (e.g., cash or in-kind) be chosen according to a market analysis and that a HEA framework be used to target recipient groups. Despite these efforts, partners’ capacity to identify and assess livelihood needs, and to design and implement programmes accordingly, remains mixed. Some of ECHO’s partners in the Sahel lack staffing continuity, are unable to expand operations in remote or insecure areas, and/or do not take a truly regional approach to their work.

**Monitoring, evaluation and effectiveness**

The fundamental objective of ECHO’s Sahel plan has been to achieve a sustainable reduction in malnutrition rates, especially in children under 5. At the centre of the plan are efforts to assess the effectiveness of interventions, and prioritise them accordingly. Accordingly, ECHO has given particular focus to measuring the impact of its interventions on nutrition outcomes—not only for nutrition treatment programmes but also for mitigation and food security programmes. Indicators used to measure projects’ nutritional outcomes have included the prevalence of malnutrition; height-for-age and weight-for-age z-scores; wasting z-scores (weight-for-height); however, these tend to be possible mainly for programmes with both a treatment and a mitigation component. Other indicators used include household food consumption and purchasing power. ECHO has funded initiatives aimed at testing and adapting additional nutritional indicators, such as a dietary diversity score, which was piloted by FAO in Mauritania. Although there exist considerably more detailed nutrition impact indicators that ECHO’s partners could use, it is not clear that they would be appropriate or feasible.

ECHO has funded several research initiatives aimed at demonstrating the impact of its partners’ interventions, particularly cash transfers, on food security and nutritional outcomes. This research has not always been able to demonstrate a nutritional impact. For example, a project involving cash transfers implemented by Save the Children UK in Niger was found to have resulted in a substantial improvement in food consumption, but households still lacked micronutrients, particularly those found in animal products. Nutritional status (measured by weight to height) of children under 5 years also worsened between the second and third distributions, which coincided with the seasonal increase in malaria and diarrhoea. Another recent evaluation of a multi-sector programme implemented by Concern in Niger, was not able to conclusively demonstrate that cash distributions had an impact on nutritional status.

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71 Ibid., p.64.
It is important to note, however, that operational research can be difficult to conduct and that the results do not mean that no impact exists, only that it could not be demonstrated. ECHO’s support to innovative approaches in the Sahel, and to measuring their effectiveness, is widely appreciated within the humanitarian community. Among other things, they have helped to demonstrate many types of good practices, including those related to cash and vouchers (e.g., mobile phone transfers); targeting (e.g., supporting SMART surveys and HEAs to improve targeting, as well as community-based ‘self-targeting’ methodologies); and the management of malnutrition (e.g., providing surge support to ministries of health).

Certain types of interventions remain over-represented in the Sahel, however, mainly food aid. A recent report concludes that ‘despite its growing adoption, cash transfers and vouchers remain under-utilised, particularly by national agencies for preventing and managing food crises and by the WFP.’

**Linking relief, rehabilitation and development (LRRD)**

As described above, LRRD is a core part of ECHO’s Sahel strategy. ECHO has worked for a better articulation of the role for short, medium and long-term aid instruments to achieve a sustainable reduction of malnutrition. Specifically, this involves encouraging governments and development donors to give greater priority to nutrition. In the last four years, there have been considerable improvements in this regard. Governments have begun to show greater political will to acknowledge and address the nutrition crisis, and development donors are beginning to allocate funds efforts to prevent malnutrition, including social protection programmes. ECHO is hopeful that food and nutrition security will be included as a sector of concentration or as a strategic objective in the Sahel 11th EDF programming. Many observers have concluded that ECHO has played a key role in convincing government and development partners in the region to give increased importance to food and nutrition security in the Sahel.

ECHO has also made LRRD a principle to be respected during the assessment of proposals. Partners are ‘invited to clearly illustrate how they hope to achieve the transfer/integration of their short-term humanitarian action with local structures and institutions.’

Taken as a whole, ECHO in the Sahel has demonstrated many good examples of effective LRRD and coordination with development actors.

ECHO has articulated its own exit strategy in different ways. In the 2011 HIP, ECHO describes the exit strategy for humanitarian aid in the fight against malnutrition to be “when food and nutrition security is fully mainstreamed into public policy and there is a sustainable long-term allocation of resources by both governments and development partners to maintain action to prevent and treat malnutrition.” The 2012 HIP appears to be more optimistic regarding the timing of such an exit, however, noting that “the increased allocation of resources from the 11th EDF to support national commitments to improve food and nutrition security will permit the gradual exit for humanitarian funding from the food and nutrition

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73 Ibid.
74 Ibid.
76 Ibid., p.9.
77 EC. 2012. West Africa Sahel Region HIP. p.5.
80 Ibid., p.4.
security sector.” As of January 2012, however, there were fears of another significant spike in the food crisis in 2012, raising complications for such an approach.

It was not clear to the evaluation team the degree to which ECHO’s approach in the Sahel will shift in 2012 and the coming years. There is some indication that ECHO will concentrate its resources on the treatment of severe acute malnutrition and related advocacy and attempt to hand over its other activities. In considering its exit strategy in the Sahel, the key question, as laid out in the HFA Communication, should be whether “indicators of acute malnutrition, mortality and extreme coping (linked to inadequate food consumption or poor food utilisation), are stable below emergency levels, or are expected to stabilise below such levels. This should result from the majority of the crisis-affected population achieving, for a sustained period and for the foreseeable future, improvements in food consumption and food utilisation, without resorting to detrimental coping strategies” and independent of any Commission humanitarian support. As noted in the accompanying staff working document, “This could imply that persisting needs are met either by other humanitarian donors, or by development or state actors.” While there is some room for interpretation in the above criteria, taken as a whole and based on current food security indicators, a full exit by ECHO from the Sahel at this time would not appear to be consistent with the HFA Communication and related decision-making tools.

Advocacy, coherence and coordination
ECHO’s approach in the Sahel has been especially coherent and coordinated. ECHO has funded multi-sector emergency response programmes, and given specific attention to linkages across conventional sectors in multiple ways. For example, it has encouraged the use of many cross-sectoral assessment tools (like market analysis and household economy assessments) and encouraged partners to consider, where appropriate, cash or vouchers, which is itself often a multi-sector intervention. ECHO has been able to play a key role promoting coherence between various actors—governments, development donors (including the other services of the Commission), humanitarian donors, non-governmental organisations—because it has made such efforts a core part of its strategy. More specifically it has benefitted from the high level of knowledge of its staff and its presence and field travel to many different countries in the region. It has appropriately identified and used opportunities for advocacy purposes and, although difficult to confirm with certainty, this advocacy appears to have had a real impact on changing government and donor priorities, albeit slowly.

81 EC. 2012. West Africa Sahel Region HIP. p.5.
82 EC. 2010b. HFA Communication. Section 5.1, paragraphs 5 and 6.
84 See for example, ECHO 2011 Entry/Exit Framework.
Annex B: Terms of Reference

EUROPEAN COMMISSION
DIRECTORATE-GENERAL HUMANITARIAN AID AND CIVIL PROTECTION - ECHO

Directorate A - Policy and coordination
Unit A/1 - Strategy, Coordination and Inter-Institutional Relations

ANNEX I

TERMS OF REFERENCE

FOR THE EVALUATION AND REVIEW OF DG ECHO FINANCED LIVELIHOOD INTERVENTIONS IN HUMANITARIAN CRISSES

CONTRACT N°: ECHO/ADM/BUD/2011/01203
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1 Background / Introduction

1. **Livelihoods** comprise the capabilities, assets (including natural, material and social resources) and activities used by a household for survival and future well-being. Livelihood strategies are the practical means or activities through which people access income, while coping strategies are temporary responses forced by food insecurity. A household’s livelihood is secure when it can cope with and recover from shocks, and maintain or enhance its capabilities and productive asset base.¹

2. In 2007, the responsibility for the EC budget line dedicated to Humanitarian Food Aid was transferred from DG AIDCO to DG ECHO. Although livelihood support actions had already been financed by DG ECHO prior to the transfer of this budget line, emergency livelihood interventions specifically designed to reduce food insecurity became more prominent in the portfolio of activities managed by the service.

3. Livelihood interventions are in line with the main objectives of EU humanitarian aid, as laid out in Council Regulation (EC) No 1257/96 of 20 June 1996. This states that the main objective of humanitarian food assistance is to save and preserve life to protect livelihoods, and to increase resilience, for populations facing on-going or firmly forecasted food crises, or recovering from them.

4. The recently published Communication on Humanitarian Food Assistance² confirms that humanitarian food assistance may be used inter alia to protect and strengthen the livelihoods of a crisis-affected population and to prevent or reverse negative coping mechanisms (such as the sale of productive assets or the accumulation of debts) that could entail either short-term or longer-term harmful consequences for their livelihood base, their food-security status or their nutritional status.

5. Humanitarian interventions with livelihood support components have increasingly become a feature of humanitarian response. This reflects the need for managing in an efficient and effective way humanitarian response that can take from three to five years, or even longer provided that efforts (including advocacy) are carried out for a progressive handover to development partners. Livelihood support may have positive benefits in terms of empowerment and protection and may also reduce costs, thus allowing limited humanitarian resources to assist a higher number of vulnerable persons. Livelihood support can have a number of objectives which may include the following:³

- Meeting basic needs and contributing to civilian protection (*livelihood provision*);
- Protecting and helping to recover assets (*livelihood protection*); and
- Creating new livelihoods assets, improving access to markets and services, influencing policy, etc. (*livelihood promotion*).

6. This evaluation is mainly focussed on *Livelihood Protection* activities. Livelihood Promotion activities (more development oriented) and Livelihood Provisioning activities (which overlap with immediate relief activities) are not the primary focus of this evaluation.

¹ Adapted from 'Chambers and Conway', 1992.
2 Justification and timing of the evaluation

7. Article 18 of Council Regulation (EC) 1257/96 on humanitarian aid states: "The Commission shall regularly assess aid operations financed by the Community in order to establish whether they have achieved their objectives and to produce guidelines for improving the effectiveness of subsequent operations".

8. According to the follow up of the EU Humanitarian Consensus, this evaluation/review is justified as a part of the EU's commitment to enhancing aid effectiveness. In this regard, the evaluation will provide recommendations for improving the effectiveness of livelihood-related operations on the ground in humanitarian contexts.

9. Finally, the evaluation will feed into the ongoing process of reflection concerning the Commission's Humanitarian Policy.

3 Purpose, objective and scope

3.1 Purpose and objectives

10. The overall purpose of this evaluation exercise is to have an independent structured evaluation of the results of the livelihoods support interventions undertaken in line with Regulation 1257/96, to improve performance through lessons learning and accountability.

11. Specific objectives of the evaluation exercise are as follows:

- **To provide DG ECHO with a multi-regional evaluation of its activities in the livelihoods support sector.** The evaluation will cover the entire range of livelihoods support activities financed across the spectrum of humanitarian interventions;

- **To provide recommendations** for improving the effectiveness of future actions in livelihoods support; and

- **To produce a Review Paper** giving a summary overview with recommendations from the key literature by policy institutes and think-tanks and of work initiatives being undertaken by other major humanitarian donors.

12. Conceptually, the scope of the evaluation/review covers the entire range of livelihoods support activities financed across the spectrum of humanitarian interventions with a particular focus on food assistance.

13. In practical terms, this will involve analysing a selection of DG ECHO funded livelihood interventions or interventions with livelihoods support components undertaken since the creation of the food aid budget line in 2007 (although the evaluation will not be exclusively limited to livelihoods support actions targeting food insecurity).

14. In the livelihoods protection framework, the evaluation shall acknowledge the different contexts in which emergency livelihood projects can be employed including: (a) livelihood recovery after a rapid-onset shock; (b) livelihood protection in a slow-onset crisis; and (c) livelihood promotion in a protracted crisis where development actors may be absent. The answers to each of the evaluation questions may need to be broken-down for each of these contexts.

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15. The evaluation will consider the whole range of DG ECHO's emergency livelihood interventions with impact on a variety of livelihood assets and outcomes, specially focussed on food security and nutrition. However, particular attention will be paid to the predominant livelihood interventions funded by DG ECHO (e.g., an assessment of seeds and tools distribution projects, livestock interventions, etc).

16. The evaluation should also assess the extent to which the livelihood framework has been used in the analysis of needs and identification of appropriate response options, including respect for the principle of ‘do no harm’. This has implications for both the identification and prioritisation of needs and specific response options (for instance, working through local markets to channel assistance).

17. The key users of the evaluation report include inter alia DG ECHO staff at HQ, regional and field level, the implementing partners, relevant DGs and services of the European Union (DEVCO, Delegations of the European Union (DUE)), other stakeholders with an interest in the evaluation findings and other humanitarian donors and agencies.

18. The information requested in the evaluation questions listed in chapter 3.2 is the main subject of this evaluation. When addressing the evaluation questions, and whenever feasible/applicable, the evaluators will take due account of

- the OECD/DAC evaluation criteria: relevance/appropriateness, connectedness, coherence, coverage, efficiency, effectiveness and impact of this action;\(^5\)
- the 3Cs\(^6\) - complementarity, coordination and coherence;
- cross-cutting issues;\(^7\)
- the objective of LRRD (Linking Relief, Rehabilitation and Development);\(^8\)
- and the 23 Principles and Good Practice of Good Humanitarian Donorship (GHD).\(^9\)

3.2 Evaluation questions

19. The evaluation will be based on a set of evaluation questions. These questions reflect the Commission's needs in terms of information with a view to accountability and improved performance of humanitarian actions.

20. The evaluation questions will be further discussed and validated at the briefing phase and other questions may be added at that stage.

21. The evaluation will address the following questions:

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\(^5\) For further explanation of these evaluative criteria consultants are advised to refer to the ALNAP guide "Evaluating humanitarian action using the OECD-DAC Criteri. An ALNAP guide for humanitarian agencies", ODI, 2006. Consultants should also refer to the "Evaluation of humanitarian aid by and for NGOs. A guide with ideas to consider when designing your own evaluation activities", Prolog Consult, 2007 (http://ec.europa.eu/echo/evaluation/thematic_en.htm#eval_guide).

\(^6\) http://www.three-Cs.net

\(^7\) For example: gender, children HIV-AIDS, environment, protection, climate change, etc.

\(^8\) A communication from the European Commission to the European Council and European Parliament on LRRD policy can be found at: http://ec.europa.eu/development/icenter/repository/COM_LRRD_en.pdf

(i) **Relevance:** What variations of livelihoods interventions are there by region, country, context, modality (in kind/cash), objectives over time? Are different livelihood groups/gender related differences well identified and their related needs correctly disaggregated? How consistent is the portfolio with DG ECHO's mandate? Are certain types of livelihood interventions under/over-represented given the available evidence on effectiveness? How well understood is the impact of crisis situations (natural disaster or man made conflicts) on livelihood strategies and markets?

(ii) **Coherence:** To what extent has DG ECHO integrated in its policies, decisions and activities: (1) the different livelihood strategies; (2) the use of livelihoods frameworks and core methodologies; and (3) of minimum standards for analysis? What indicators are used to monitor the performance of livelihood projects? Which good practices can be identified? When appropriate nutrition is an expected outcome, are adequate strategies developed to reach it, as well as appropriate indicators used to achieve this outcome?

(iii) **Operational response:** In light of the Humanitarian Food Assistance Communication, on what basis are livelihood interventions initiated? How appropriate is the identification, choice and prioritization of the different response options, as well as the timeliness of the intervention and the targeting of the beneficiaries? What evidence of innovation and participation exist across the range of interventions: a) income and employment, b) market access and c) primary production, (including risk assessment / sensitivity to potential negative impact of various response options)?

(iv) **Complementarity:** To what extent has DG ECHO identified linkages both across conventional emergency response sectors and in the context of LRRD? To what extent are exit strategies identified in advance? What good examples can be identified in terms of LRRD and coordination with development actors/donors? How consistent are the entry and exit decisions with those defined in the Humanitarian Food Assistance Communication and Staff Working Paper – including comparative advantage? How do ECHO's livelihood interventions relate to interventions funded via development instruments (e.g., Ethiopia)?

(v) **Capacity Building:** How well equipped are DG ECHO's partners to identify and assess livelihood needs? And to design, implement and evaluate at various levels?

(vi) **Advocacy:** Have the identification and use of opportunities for advocacy purposes been appropriate?

(vii) **Coordination:** To what extend has DG ECHO support been coordinated and is complementary with other services of the Commission and the various stakeholders (donors, partners, etc) on livelihoods (e.g., market assessment, analysis, response, impact assessment, advocacy, etc.)?

(viii) **Comparative Advantage:** How appropriate are livelihood interventions within the context of DG ECHO’s emergency mandate? Based on a desk analysis of key documentation, records, country case studies and field visits, how effective have livelihood projects been in meeting their objectives?

(ix) **Cross Cutting Issues:** Have cross cutting issues been taken into account when defining livelihoods actions, such as gender and social difference, protection, etc?

22. On the basis of the answers to these evaluation questions, and any other relevant information collected during the evaluation, the evaluator will provide practical, operational recommendations for future adjustments and actions.
3.3 Tasks to be accomplished

23. The consultants shall accomplish the following tasks as a basis for their report:

- **Documentation review** of internal programme documentation, other donors and partners policies, existing evaluations, studies, papers and external literature.

- **Field visits** to evaluate relevant projects. At the inception phase the list of countries to be visited will be established (minimum of three). Countries to be considered for the field visits could include: Sudan / DRC (protracted crisis) or Ethiopia (repeated emergencies / protracted crisis), 1 country in West Africa, Pakistan or Bangladesh. If possible the consultant/s responsible will also visit DG ECHO's regional office in Nairobi and will meet with DG ECHO Sectoral Support Team (SST).

- **Interviews** of involved staff at DG ECHO HQ and field level, partners, donors, think-tanks and beneficiaries in different key regions.

4 Methodology, outputs and schedule

24. In their offer, the tenderers will describe in detail the methodological approach they propose in order to tackle the evaluation questions listed above, as well as the tasks requested.

25. This will include a description of one or more indicative judgment criteria\(^\text{10}\) that they consider useful for addressing each evaluation question. The judgement criteria will be discussed and validated with the contractor during the briefing phase.

26. This should also include a clear description of the methodology that the tenderer intends to use during the field visits mentioned in point 4.2. To the extent possible, the methodology should promote the participation in the evaluation exercise of all actors concerned, including beneficiaries and local communities when relevant and feasible. The methodological approach will be refined with, and validated by, the Commission during the briefing phase.

4.1 Deliverables

27. As a result of the evaluation work, the contracts will provide the Commission with the following deliverables:

- a multi-regional **evaluation report** of DG ECHO's activities in the livelihoods support sector; and

- a **review paper** giving a summary overview of the key literature by policy institutes and think-tanks and of work initiatives being undertaken by other major humanitarian donors. The paper should also build on the findings of the literature review through interviews with other key donors and implementing partners at headquarters and field levels. The Review Paper is intended to allow the consulting team 'intellectual space' to provide an overview and indication on existing and

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\(^{10}\) A judgement criterion specifies an aspect of the evaluated intervention that will allow its merits or success to be assessed. E.g., if the question is "To what extent has DG ECHO assistance, both overall and by sector been appropriate and impacted positively the targeted population?", a general judgement criterion might be "Assistance goes to the people most in need of assistance". In developing judgment criteria, the tenderers may make use of existing methodological, technical or political guidance provided by actors in the field of Humanitarian Assistance such as HAP, the Sphere Project, GHD, etc.
future policy development relevant to humanitarian food assistance which would not fit within the framework of the evaluation report.

4.2 Documentation and Briefing phases

28. From the outset of the contract, the consultants will carry out a documentation study to examine and analyse available documents to allow careful planning of the activities/visits to be undertaken in the field. The documentation phase is considered to be an on-going effort throughout the evaluation and should start before the briefing, i.e., upon signature of the contract.

29. The briefing phase will deal with the finalisation of the itinerary and schedule, the final definition of the methodology, the planning of the reports and the consolidation of the Terms of Reference that shall be considered indicative throughout the evaluation, i.e., whenever necessary the consulting firm shall endeavour to accommodate DG ECHO’s requests that may arise during the evaluation such as travel adjustments, etc..

30. The briefing meeting with the steering group will take place in Brussels at DG ECHO headquarters. During the meeting further documents available for the mission and necessary clarifications will be provided by the requesting service and other services of the Commission. During the meeting, the consultants will present their understanding of the terms of reference. In order to ensure a coherent approach between the Commission and the contractors, they will also present briefly their understanding of the logic behind the intervention, which will be discussed and validated during the meeting.

31. After the briefing phase an inception note of maximum 10 pages based on the meetings, reviews and interviews conducted will be produced. This inception note should demonstrate the consultants’ clear understanding of the Terms of Reference and of the deliverables required and contain detailed proposals in terms of work processes, as well as a clear description of the scope and methodology of the evaluation, judgement criteria and tools for addressing each evaluation question. The inception note must be submitted by the consultants to DG ECHO Evaluation Sector the day after the finalisation of the briefing phase and will need to be formally approved by the Evaluation Sector.

4.3 Field phase

32. Following the formal approval of the inception note, the consultants shall undertake at least three field visits to evaluate relevant projects and to discuss with relevant stakeholders (the consultants can conduct the field visits jointly or separately).

33. Countries to be considered for the field visits will need to include DG ECHO financed actions in protracted crisis or repeated emergency situations. The budget should allow for visits to at least three countries. The programme of field work will have to be determined and presented as a part of the inception paper. The consultant firms can propose the field visits they consider relevant to this exercise, however examples of countries to be visited include: Sudan (Darfur), DRC (protracted crisis) or Ethiopia (repeated emergencies / protracted crisis), oPt, Pakistan or Bangladesh. In any case, the evaluation team will need to schedule early in the field work a meeting with the Sector Support Team and other Technical Assistants responsible for Food Assistance in Nairobi (Kenya).
34. The list of projects to be visited will be established jointly by DG ECHO Evaluation Sector, the responsible desk and the consultants. The consultants must work in co-operation with the relevant EU Delegation, DG ECHO experts, DG ECHO partners, local authorities, international organisations and other donors.

35. If, during the course of the field phase, any significant change from the agreed methodology or scheduled work plan is considered necessary, this should be explained to and agreed with DG ECHO Evaluation Sector, in consultation with the responsible desk.

36. The NGOs/IOs responsible for the projects studied during the field phase should have received the results of the technical appreciation (see Annexes IV and V of the invitation to tender) before the evaluators leave the field. The consultants are required to share their findings with the NGOs/IOs evaluated to allow them to comment upon these findings. The evaluators may adapt the format of the technical appreciation in consultation with the operational desk and technical assistant concerned. The purpose of the document is to promote dialogue, mutual learning and ownership and to build capacity of DG ECHO’s partners.

37. At the end of each field trip the team leader should ensure that a summary record (‘aide mémoire’) of maximum 10 pages is drawn up and transmitted to DG ECHO Evaluation Sector. It should describe in detail the evaluation activities carried out, notably those of a participatory nature, and briefly present the main findings, conclusions and preliminary recommendations of the mission.

38. A final workshop in the field, with the participation of the EU Delegation, DG ECHO representatives and partners, shall be organised before leaving.

39. As a reminder, even if the evaluation will assess individual projects, conclusions and recommendations must be drafted on the basis of the evaluation questions and regarding the overall action as described in chapters 1, 2 and 3 above.

4.4 Report drafting phase and debriefing in Brussels

40. The first draft reports (maximum 30 pages for the evaluation report and 20 for the review report) in accordance with the format given in section 11.6 of these Terms of Reference shall be submitted by electronic transmission to DG ECHO Evaluation Sector not later than 15 calendar days after the consultants’ return from the field.

41. A debriefing will be organised in Brussels after the submission of the first draft report. The consultants shall make a PowerPoint presentation to DG ECHO and key staff of main findings, conclusions and recommendations of the evaluation. The starting date for this debriefing will be decided by DG ECHO Evaluation Sector in agreement with the consulting firm and the relevant desk.

42. Prior to the meeting, DG ECHO Evaluation Sector will provide consolidated written comments on the first draft report to the consultants within 10 calendar days from the receipt of the draft reports.

43. On the basis of the results of the debriefing and taking into due account the comments received before and during the meeting, two draft final reports will be submitted to DG ECHO Evaluation Sector not later than 10 calendar days after the debriefing. DG ECHO
Evaluation Sector should mark its agreement within 10 calendar days or request further amendments.

4.5 Final reports

44. On the basis of the comments made by the DG ECHO, the consultants shall make appropriate amendments and submit the final report (maximum 30 pages for the evaluation report and maximum 20 for the review) within 10 calendar days. If the evaluators reject any of the comments they shall explain and substantiate the reasons why they do so in writing.

45. The evaluation will result in the drawing up of a single report with annexes. The report shall strictly reflect the structure outlined in section 11.6 of these Terms of Reference.

46. While finalising the report and its annexes, the consultants will always highlight changes (using track changes) and modifications introduced as resulting from the debriefing and the comments received from DG ECHO Evaluation Sector.

47. To facilitate dissemination, together with the final report, the evaluators will provide a Power Point presentation in electronic form, with the main conclusions and recommendations of the evaluation. Before the expiration of the contract, the contractors may be required to present briefly DG ECHO's staff or stakeholders with the results of the evaluation.

4.6 Dissemination and follow-up

48. The evaluation report is an extremely important working tool for DG ECHO. The evaluation report is the primary output of the consultants and once finalised the executive summary and/or the entire final report will be placed in the public domain on the Internet. The report is to promote accountability and learning. Its use is intended for DG ECHO's operational and policy personnel, Humanitarian beneficiaries, EU Member States and citizens, other donors and humanitarian actors. Whenever applicable, the executive summary and/or the final report shall be translated into relevant languages for dissemination purposes.

49. Following the approval of the final report, DG ECHO Evaluation Sector will proceed to the dissemination of the results (conclusions and recommendations) of the evaluation. Therefore, whenever applicable the consultants shall provide a dissemination plan.

5 Management and supervision of the evaluation

50. DG ECHO.A.1 bears the responsibility for the management and the monitoring of the evaluation, in consultation with the responsible desk. DG ECHO Evaluation Sector, and in particular the internal manager assigned to the evaluation, should therefore always be kept informed and consulted by the consultants and copied on all correspondence with other DG ECHO staff.

51. The DG ECHO Evaluation manager is the contact person for the consulting team and shall assist the team during their mission in tasks such as providing documents and facilitating contacts.

5.1 Steering group

52. DG ECHO.A.1 will be assisted in this evaluation by a Steering Group, made of relevant Commission and EU staff. The group will assist the evaluators, contribute to the definition of
the evaluation work, follow-up the evaluators' work and make remarks on the deliverables received. The group will participate in the meetings foreseen in these Terms of Reference.

6 Evaluation team

53. This evaluation will be carried out by a team of [a minimum of 2 experts] (this is an indicative number) with experience both in the humanitarian field and in the evaluation of humanitarian aid. These experts must agree to work in high-risk areas. It is therefore recommended that the team should include national consultants whenever possible.

54. Proficiency in English and French is compulsory. Knowledge of local language(s) would be an advantage.

55. The consultants’ profiles should include solid knowledge and experience in:
   
   (1) Implementing/evaluating livelihoods interventions in various contexts (rapid-onset crisis, slow onset crisis and protracted crisis) at field level;
   
   (2) Food assistance;
   
   (3) Poverty, Vulnerability and Social Difference (preferably degree discipline and relevant professional background of the experts);
   
   (4) Evaluating humanitarian policies, strategies and operations.
   

56. At least one of the team members should be a woman.

57. Guidelines for the evaluation team are provided in section 11.4 of these Terms of Reference.

7 Amount of the Contract

The maximum budget allocated to this study is € 124,999.99.

8 Timetable

58. The work must be completed within 7 months from the date of the briefing meeting. The contractor is expected to start the work immediately after the contract has been signed.

59. At the latest, the final report and the review will be delivered by the end of the 6th month after the briefing meeting. Unless explicitly authorised by the Commission in written form, this deadline has to be strictly respected.

60. The evaluation starts at the actual signature of the contract and by no means any contact and/or expense may occur before it. The largest part of relevant documents will be provided after the signature of the contract and before the briefing phase.

61. The following is an indicative schedule that must be completed by the tenderer in their offer, without changing the dates already fixed:
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Dates</th>
<th>Evaluation Phases and Stages</th>
<th>Meetings</th>
<th>Deliverables</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>D</td>
<td>Briefing Phase</td>
<td>Briefing</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Briefing note</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Field Phase</td>
<td>Workshop</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>'Aide mémoire'</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Report writing phase</td>
<td></td>
<td>Draft report</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>D + 6 months</td>
<td></td>
<td>Debriefing</td>
<td>Final Report and Review</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### 9 Award

62. The contract will be awarded to the tender offering the best value for money on the basis of the following criteria:

1. **Quality**
   
   a) **Quality criterion 1 (max. 50 points): The appropriateness of the proposed team.**
   
   b) **Quality criterion 2 (max. 50 points): The tenderer's understanding of the tasks and the quality of the methodology proposed.**

2. **Price**

### 9.1 Technical evaluation

63. Quality criteria a) and b) will be evaluated on the basis of the information provided in the tender.

64. Only those tenders with a mark higher than 25 points for each quality criteria a) and b), and higher than 60 points for the overall rating, will be considered for the award of the contract.

### 9.2 Financial evaluation

65. For the purpose of evaluation and comparison of the financial offers, the Commission will use the price as submitted in the financial proposal of the bidder. The tenderers will formulate their proposed priced exclusively using the template in Annex 3 to this Invitation to Tender.
9.3 Award of the contract

66. The contract will be awarded to the tender achieving the highest score obtained by applying the following formula:

\[
\text{Score for tender } X = \frac{\text{Cheapest price}}{\text{Price of tender } X} \times \text{total quality score (out of 100) for all criteria of tender } X
\]

10 Complementary information

67. DG ECHO's related policy documents:

- Food assistance: [http://ec.europa.eu/echo/policies/food_assistance_en.htm](http://ec.europa.eu/echo/policies/food_assistance_en.htm)

11 Guidelines for the consultants

11.1 Regulatory basis

68. The Regulatory basis for the evaluation of the aid provided by DG ECHO is established in Article 18 of Regulation (EC) 1257/96 concerning humanitarian aid, which states "the Commission shall regularly assess humanitarian aid operations financed by the Community in order to establish whether they have achieved their objectives and to produce guidelines for improving the effectiveness of subsequent operations".

69. Article 27 of the Council Regulation (EC, Euratom) 1605/2002 laying down the rules for the establishment and implementation of the general budget of the European Union states that: "In order to improve decision-making, institutions shall undertake both ex ante and ex post evaluations in line with guidance provided by the Commission. Such evaluations shall be applied to all programmes and activities which entail significant spending and evaluation results disseminated to spending, legislative and budgetary authorities".

11.2 Terms of Reference

70. The Terms of Reference set out the scope of the evaluator's mission, the issues to be considered and the evaluation timetable. They allow those commissioning the evaluation and/or the review to express their needs (guidance function) while providing the consultant(s) with a clear idea of what is expected from them (control function).

11.3 Scope of the evaluation and topics of study

71. In addition to the initial information contained in the ToR, the first briefing session in Brussels provides everyone involved in the evaluation (DG ECHO requesting service and particularly the responsible desk, DG ECHO Evaluation Sector, the consultants and other Commission services) with the opportunity to discuss the contents of the ToR and to establish
priorities for the evaluation. This meeting should also allow the consultants to clarify any doubts they might have about the scope of their mission. Any important remark or comment on the content of the ToR at this stage will be considered an integral part of these and will be set out by the team leader in the inception note that must be submitted to DG ECHO Evaluation Sector at the end of the briefing session, and before the team's departure to other locations in Europe and elsewhere.

72. During the process of the evaluation the consultants must try to follow all the items listed in the Terms of Reference. Their treatment, the importance given to them and their coverage in the final reports will depend, however, on the consultants' own opinion as a result of the information found, both during the documentation phase and in the field. Any decision not to cover one or more of the main task assignments described in the ToR will have to be justified in the text of the reports, if inappropriately justified DG ECHO may choose to not accept the final report.

11.4 The evaluation team

73. Each team member is jointly responsible for the final accomplishment of the tasks; however, the separate elements of work necessary for the accomplishment of the tasks may be allocated between the consultants. The members of the team must work in close coordination.

74. A team leader shall be named who shall have the added responsibility of the overall coordination of the tasks to be completed, of the elaboration of Executive Summary and of the final coherence of the report and other works both in terms of content and presentation.

11.5 Methodological and professional guidelines

75. The consultants are required to carry out their work in accordance with international standards of good practice in approach and method. All conclusions must be substantiated with adequate data. All recommendations must be adequately based on evidence-based conclusions.

76. In the conduct of their work the consultants should use a multi-method approach and triangulate between different sources of information. These information sources should include non-beneficiaries, primary stakeholders (specifically humanitarian beneficiaries, members of the host communities), local government (or equivalent such as group/tribal leaders), international agency staff, partners (both expatriate and local employees of partners), DG ECHO experts, EU Delegation and main actors - other donors and humanitarian agencies, etc.

77. In order to substantiate evaluation findings the numbers, sex, ethnicity etc of primary stakeholders should be noted, as well as ways in which confidentiality and dignity have been assured in the interview process. In this consultation, the evaluation team is encouraged to use participatory techniques.

78. In carrying out their work, the consultants should be vigilant as to any non-respect of international humanitarian law and principles, standards and conventions, UN protocols, Red Cross codes, and declarations, such as the Madrid declaration. The consultants should report any non-respect of such matters by DG ECHO-financed entities to DG ECHO in a duly substantiated form.
79. During the contract, consultants shall refrain from any conduct that would adversely reflect on the European Commission or DG ECHO and shall not engage in any activity that is incompatible with the discharge of their duties. Consultants are required to exercise the utmost discretion in all matters during their mission.

11.6 The report

80. By commissioning an independent evaluation and/or review DG ECHO expects to obtain an objective, critical, easy to read and transparent analysis of its policy. This analysis should contain policy recommendations on future courses of action. Above all, the report should be a document that can function as a learning tool. Therefore, while writing it, the consultants should always bear in mind why the report is done, for whom, and how the results will be used.

81. Furthermore, the report is a working tool of value to DG ECHO only as long as it is feasible and pragmatic, keeping in mind DG ECHO's mandate constraints and it clearly reflects the consultant's independent view. DG ECHO's concern is to respect this independence.

82. The evaluation methods should be clearly outlined in the report and their appropriateness, focus and users should be explained pointing out strengths and weaknesses of the methods. The report should briefly outline the nature (e.g., external or mixed) and make up of the team (e.g., sectoral expertise, local knowledge, gender balance) and its appropriateness for the evaluation. It should also briefly outline the evaluators’ biases and/or constraints that might have affected the evaluation and how these have been counteracted (past experiences, background, etc.).

83. The report shall be written in a straightforward manner in English with an Executive Summary at the beginning of the document. Final editing shall be provided by the consulting firm. The report should be in the font Time Roman 12, have single line spacing and be fully justified. Paragraphs must be sequentially numbered.

84. The final report should contain:

- An Executive Summary of maximum 5 pages.
- The main report.
- Technical annexes, including individual appraisals of NGOs/IOs & a summary table of results (confidential).
- Other annexes as necessary.

This report format should be strictly adhered to:

- **Cover page** (a template is provided at the end of this annex)
  - title of the evaluation report;
  - date of the evaluation;
  - name of the consultant(s) and the company;
  - cost of the report in € and as a percentage of the budget evaluated;
  - the contract number
  - indication that “the report has been financed by and produced at the request of the European Commission. The comments contained herein reflect the opinions of the consultant only,”
**Table of contents**

**Executive Summary**
A tightly-drafted, to-the-point and free-standing Executive Summary is an essential element. It should be short, no more than 5 pages. It should focus on the key purpose or issues of the evaluation, outline the main points of the analysis, and contain a matrix made of two columns clearly indicating the main conclusions and specific recommendations. Cross-references should be made to the corresponding page or paragraph numbers in the main text. EU Member States receive each Executive Summary, which is also published on DG ECHO website. The consultant should take this into account when drafting this part of the report.

**Main body of the report**
The report should include at least a description of
- the purpose of the evaluation
- the scope of the evaluation
- the design and conduct of the evaluation, including a description of the methodology used
- the evidence found
- the analysis carried out
- the conclusions drawn, in the form of answers to the evaluation questions. Conclusions should be fully substantiated
- recommendations for future initiatives. Recommendations should be clearly linked to the findings and conclusions and as realistic, operational and pragmatic as possible; that is, they should take careful account of the circumstances currently prevailing in the context of the implementation of humanitarian activities, DG ECHO's mandate and of the resources available to implement it both locally and at the Commission level. Recommendations should be prioritised, directed at specific users and where appropriate include an indicative timeframe.

The report should have separate sections for the evaluation work in each of the regions visited.

**Annexes of the report:**
- Annex A: Technical appraisals of NGOs/IOs (confidential);
- Annex B: Terms of Reference;
- Annex C: A detailed description of the methodology implemented and the tasks carried out by each expert.
- Annex D: List of persons interviewed and sites visited;
- Annex E: Map of the areas covered by the operations financed under the action;
- Annex F: Abbreviations and Acronyms.

85. All confidential information shall be presented in a separate annex.

86. Each report and all its annexes shall be transmitted in electronic form to DG ECHO – To the attention of DG ECHO A1/Evaluation sector, AN88 04/05, B-1049 Brussels, Belgium.
87. The final report should be sent by email to DG ECHO Evaluation Sector (ECHO-EVAL@ec.europa.eu) in three separate documents in PDF format each containing: the executive summary, the report without its annexes (also removed from the table of contents) and the report with its annexes.¹¹
The report has been financed by and produced at the request of the European Commission. The comments contained herein reflect the opinions of the consultant only.
Annex C: A detailed description of the methodology implemented and the tasks carried out by each expert

The roles and responsibilities of evaluation team members are summarized below.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name</th>
<th>Position</th>
<th>Roles/Responsibilities</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Tim Frankenberger</td>
<td>Team Leader, lead on</td>
<td>Oversee and coordinate all evaluation activities Primary interface with DG-ECHO in DG-ECHO HQ introductory and final meetings and all evaluation-related communications; presentation of results Lead case study (Ethiopia): fieldwork, in-country workshop, aide memoire Lead literature/document review; chief writer for Review Paper</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TANGO International</td>
<td>Review Paper;</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Case Study Leader (Ethiopia)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Katherine Haver</td>
<td>Case Study Leader</td>
<td>Conduct case study (DRC): fieldwork, in-country workshop (participation via telecom), aide memoire Literature/document review Administrative liaison for Humanitarian Outcomes Quality assurance of all deliverables</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Humanitarian Outcomes</td>
<td>(DRC)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Martin Greeley</td>
<td>Case Study Leader</td>
<td>Participate in DG-ECHO HQ introductory and final meetings Lead case study (Pakistan): fieldwork, in-country workshop, aide memoire Presentation of results Literature/document review</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>IDS</td>
<td>(Pakistan)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Paul Harvey</td>
<td>Researcher, Editor</td>
<td>Literature/document review Report synthesis and editing Quality assurance of all deliverables</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Humanitarian Outcomes</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Annex D: List of persons interviewed

**Headquarters / regional personnel**
Helene Berton, Regional Food Assistance Expert (Jordan), ECHO
Genevieve Boutin, Chief of Humanitarian Policy Section, Office of Emergency Operations, UNICEF
Claire Chastre, Team Leader, European Commission Nutrition Advisory Service, DEVCO
Nick Crawford, Senior Advisor TCE, Emergency Operations and Rehabilitation Division, FAO
Agnes Dhur, Head, Economic Security Unit, ICRC
Daniele Donati, Service Chief, TCES, FAO
Henning Envall, Section for Humanitarian Policy, Department for Multilateral Development Cooperation, Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Sweden
Rosie Jackson, Food Security and Livelihoods Adviser, Humanitarian Technical Unit, Save the Children UK
Bernard Julier, Head of unit, External Resources Division, ICRC
Andrea Koulaïmah, Head of ECHO B2 (CAR, Sudan, South Sudan, DRC, Chad, Burundi), ECHO
Patrick Lambrechts, Desk Officer, DRC, ECHO
Joyce Luma, Head of the VAM Unit, WFP
Abigail Mansfield, Regional Food Security Adviser, South Asia, ECHO
Laura Meissner, Programme Officer, Office of Foreign Disaster Assistance, USAID
Sara McHattie, Regional Food Assistance Expert (Nairobi), ECHO
Cullum Mclean, Technical Officer (Nairobi), ECHO
Claudie Meyers, Emergency Food Security and Livelihoods Adviser, Oxfam GB
Nick Muander, Senior Policy Advisor, Central, Eastern and Southern Africa Support Office (Nairobi), ECHO
Elizabeth Narrowe, Senior Programme Officer, Humanitarian Division, SIDA
Maureen Philippon, Food Assistance Unit, ECHO
Jacques Prade, Food Assistance Unit, ECHO
Luca Russo, ESA, FAO
Jessica Saulle, Emergency Food Security and Livelihoods Adviser, Save the Children
Jeremy Shoham, Head, Emergency Nutrition Network
Matteo Sirtori, Policy Directorate LRRD, ECHO
Annabelle Vasseur, Desk Officer, DRC, ECHO
Devrig Velly, Food Assistance Unit, ECHO
Paul Wagstaff, Agricultural Advisor and acting NRM Advisor, Social and Economic Development Unit, Strategy, Advocacy & Learning (SAL) Directorate, Concern Worldwide
Silke Pietzsch, Senior Food Security & Livelihood Advisor, ACFUS

**Democratic Republic of Congo**
Andrea Ambroso, Head of Mission for the Kivus, ACF
Donat Bagoula, Head of Sub-Office (Goma), FAO
Andrea Bianchi, Chef de Mission, AVSI
Frédéric Bonamy, Technical Assistant, Goma Office, ECHO
Marco Buono, Chef de Bureau / Grand Nord-Kivu, NRC
Jean-François Dubuisson, Community Development Specialist, UNDP
Emma Fanning, Protection Coordinator, Oxfam GB
George Gigiberia, Country Representative, IFRC
Wako Godana, Food Facility Project Officer, GAYO
Liben Gollo, Seed Project Officer, GOAL
Melkamu Gulima, Seed Project Officer, GOAL
Eyasu Jember, Country Director, DCA
Mekonnen Kebede, Field Coordinator, FAO
Nellie Kingston, Emergency Adviser, Concern
Angelique "Lika", Deputy Country Director, ACF
Iain Logan, Head of Operations, IFRC
Tim Mander, Humanitarian Response Fund Manager, OCHA
Meseret Mengistu, Livelihood Coordinator, GOAL
Stephene Moissiaing, Country Director, Merlin
Peter Muttangi, Head of Hunger Reduction, Save the Children UK
Roberto Orlando, Country Director, COOPI
John Rynne, Country Director, GOAL
Ayele Sebaro, Seed Project Manager, GOAL
Ruchin Sharma, Project Coordinator, Merlin
Birhanu Tafete, Emergency Program Coordinator, Concern Worldwide
Jose Tamarit, Head of Office, DG ECHO
Duba Teche, Seed Community Facilitator, GOAL
Peter Vendall, ALD System, GOAL
Gilma Wako, Humanitarian Programme Coordinator, GAYO
Guyo Wario, Seed Community Facilitator, GOAL
Shebru Wordofa, Head, Zone Administration
Dejen Zewdu, Food Security and Climate Change Program Coordinator, Ethiopia Red Cross Society

Pakistan
David Sevcik, Head of Office, ECHO
Branko Golubovic, Technical Assistant, Food Security Specialist, ECHO
Lars Oberhaus, Technical Assistant, Food Security Specialist, ECHO
Abigail Masefield, Regional Food Coordinator, ECHO
Fawad Raza, Program Officer, WFP
Arshad Ayyub Jadoon, Program Officer, WFP
Julius Jackson, TCE, FAO
Neil Marsland, TCE, FAO
Sarfraz Lashari Khan, Adviser, National Disaster Management Authority
Hidayat Ullah Khan, Program Officer, UNDP
Shakeel Ahmad, Program Officer, UNDP
Dirk Swillens, Deputy Head of Operations, EU Delegation
Philippe Gatineau, Food Facility, EU Delegation
Representative from ACTED
Representative from Oxfam
Representative from Save the Children
Representative from ACH (ACF)
Representative from IRC
Representative from CARE-UK

Sahel desk review
Jan Eijkenaar, West Africa humanitarian officer (Dakar), ECHO
Mira Gratier, Head of Office, ECHO Chad
Peter Gubbels, Coordinator for West Africa, Groundswell International
Sigrid Kuehlhe, Regional Food Assistance Adviser (Dakar), ECHO
Annex E: Maps of the areas covered by the operations financed under the action

[Map of Pakistan - Flood 2010]
**Annex F: Abbreviations and Acronyms**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Acronym</th>
<th>Description</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>ACF</td>
<td>Action Contre la Faim</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ACTED</td>
<td>Agency for Technical Cooperation and Development</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ALNAP</td>
<td>Active Learning Network for Accountability and Performance in Humanitarian Action</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CaLP</td>
<td>Cash Learning Partnership</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CARE</td>
<td>Cooperative for Assistance and Relief Everywhere</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CERF</td>
<td>Central Emergency Response Fund</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CFSVA</td>
<td>Comprehensive Food Security and Vulnerability Analysis</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CMAM</td>
<td>Community-based management of acute malnutrition</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>COOPI</td>
<td>Cooperazione Internazionale</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CORDAID</td>
<td>Catholic Organization for Relief and Development Aid</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>DCA</td>
<td>DanChurchAid</td>
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<tr>
<td>DCM</td>
<td>Drought Cycle Management</td>
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<tr>
<td>DEVCO</td>
<td>Development and Cooperation - EuropeAid</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>DFID</td>
<td>Department for International Development</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>DIP ECHO</td>
<td>Disaster Preparedness ECHO</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>DRC</td>
<td>Democratic Republic of Congo</td>
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<tr>
<td>DRR</td>
<td>Disaster Risk Reduction</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>DUE</td>
<td>Delegations of the European Union</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>EDF</td>
<td>European Development Fund</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>EMMA</td>
<td>Emergency Market Mapping and Analysis</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ESA</td>
<td>Agricultural Development Economics Division</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>EWS</td>
<td>Early Warning System</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>EU</td>
<td>European Union</td>
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<tr>
<td>FAO</td>
<td>United Nations Food and Agricultural Organisation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>FINAT</td>
<td>Food and Nutrition Insecurity in Humanitarian Crises Needs Assessment Template</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>FSTD</td>
<td>Food Security Thematic Programme</td>
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<td>GAM</td>
<td>Global Acute Malnutrition</td>
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<td>GHD</td>
<td>Good Humanitarian Donorship</td>
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<tr>
<td>HAP</td>
<td>Humanitarian Action Plan</td>
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<tr>
<td>HEA</td>
<td>Household Economy Analysis</td>
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<td>HFA</td>
<td>Humanitarian Food Assistance</td>
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<tr>
<td>HIP</td>
<td>Humanitarian Implementation Plan</td>
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<td>HRF</td>
<td>Humanitarian Response Fund</td>
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<tr>
<td>ICRC</td>
<td>International Committee of the Red Cross</td>
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<tr>
<td>IFRC</td>
<td>International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies</td>
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<tr>
<td>(I)NGO</td>
<td>(International) Non-governmental Organization</td>
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<tr>
<td>IPC</td>
<td>Integrate Phase Classification</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>IRC</td>
<td>International Rescue Committee</td>
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<tr>
<td>JHD</td>
<td>Joint Humanitarian-Development Framework</td>
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<tr>
<td>LRRD</td>
<td>Linking relief, rehabilitation and development</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>MEAL</td>
<td>Monitoring, Evaluation, Accountability and Learning</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>MSF</td>
<td>Médecins sans Frontières</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NDMA</td>
<td>National Disaster Management Authority</td>
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<tr>
<td>NFI</td>
<td>Non-food Item</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>OCHA</td>
<td>United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>OECD</td>
<td>Office for Economic Co-operation and Development</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>OFDA</td>
<td>Office of Foreign Disaster Assistance</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PEFSA</td>
<td>Pakistan Emergency Food Security Alliance</td>
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<tr>
<td>RRMP</td>
<td>Rapid Response to Population Movement</td>
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<tr>
<td>SC UK</td>
<td>Save the Children United Kingdom</td>
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<tr>
<td>SCF</td>
<td>Save the Children Fund</td>
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<td>Acronym</td>
<td>Description</td>
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<tr>
<td>SMART</td>
<td>Standardized Monitoring and Assessment in Relief and Transitions</td>
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<td>SWG</td>
<td>Sahel Working Group</td>
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<tr>
<td>TCE</td>
<td>FAO Emergency Operations and Rehabilitation Division</td>
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<tr>
<td>TCES</td>
<td>FAO Emergency Operations Service</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>UNDP</td>
<td>UN Development Programme</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>UNHAS</td>
<td>United Nations Humanitarian Air Service</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>UNHCR</td>
<td>United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees</td>
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<tr>
<td>UNICEF</td>
<td>United Nations Children's Fund</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>USAID</td>
<td>United States Agency for International Development</td>
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<tr>
<td>USAID/OFDA</td>
<td>USAID Office of Foreign Disaster Assistance</td>
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<tr>
<td>WASH</td>
<td>Water, Sanitation and Hygiene</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>WFP</td>
<td>United Nations World Food Programme</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>WHO</td>
<td>United Nations World Health Organisation</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Annex G: References


———.2011b. Terms of Reference (TOR) for the evaluation and review of DG ECHO financed livelihood interventions in humanitarian crises.


ECHO. 2011b. Food and nutrition insecurity in humanitarian crises needs assessment template (FINAT).


Ismail A. 2011. Strengthening pastoralists livelihoods in the drylands of Ethiopia. Powerpoint presentation at the “Enhancing Resilience in the Horn of Africa: An Evidence-based


## Annex H: Evaluation matrix: Questions and summary of findings

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Questions from the terms of reference</th>
<th>Summary of findings</th>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Variation in ECHO’s livelihood interventions</strong></td>
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</table>
| What variations of livelihoods interventions are there by region, country, context, modality (in kind/cash), objectives over time? | - Lack of a comprehensive database of ECHO-funded livelihood activities made it difficult to determine whether livelihood interventions varied markedly between regions, countries, or context. To the extent a trend was discernible, there appears to be an expanding scope of livelihoods interventions in recent years with more use of cash in particular.  
- Small differences in modality were noted, primarily as a result of under-use of cash interventions in Ethiopia compared to other areas.  
- Further analysis is clearly needed and would be greatly facilitated by a searchable database of ECHO-supported projects. |
| **Policy context** | |
| How consistent is the portfolio with DG ECHO’s mandate? | - The portfolio of livelihoods interventions in the case study countries was broadly consistent with DG ECHO’s mandate of providing humanitarian assistance to populations affected by shocks (e.g., conflict, drought, flooding) and to a limited degree chronic food insecurity (e.g., the Sahel and DRC). |
| In light of the Humanitarian Food Assistance Communication, on what basis are livelihood interventions initiated? | - DG-ECHO’s livelihood interventions in the case study countries were broadly consistent with the approach set forth in the Humanitarian Food Assistance Communication.  
- The fact that livelihoods programming is largely seen as sitting within the HFA and the lack of other policies does create problems. It’s not clear that a livelihoods lens is being used to inform other areas of programming. Ultimately the division of budget lines between HFA and everything else creates false divisions. Further policy development is needed to embed livelihoods perspectives across ECHO’s work. |
| How appropriate are livelihood interventions within the context of DG ECHO’s emergency mandate? | - DG-ECHO’s livelihood interventions in the case study countries were appropriate within the context of its emergency mandate (i.e., to ensure access to and availability of food, and restore/protect the livelihoods of populations experiencing or in imminent threat of natural or man- |
### Questions from the terms of reference

#### (comparative advantage)

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<th>Summary of findings</th>
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<tr>
<td>made shocks/crises) and its comparative advantage with other donors.</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>As one of the main donors in drought-affected agro-pastoral areas of Ethiopia, ECHO provides support to livelihood interventions that are appropriately focused on livestock, pasture and water sources and utilizes DCM as its main DRR activity.</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>If food assistance after the 2010 floods in Pakistan had not supported livelihood recovery, it would have taken communities longer to recover, prolonging their return to normalcy and possibly encouraging “aid dependency”</strong>.</td>
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### Needs assessment and response analysis

#### Are different livelihood groups/gender related differences well identified and their related needs correctly disaggregated?

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<th>Summary of findings</th>
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<tr>
<td>The choice of project types pursued by ECHO’s partners are generally based on a good understanding of gender issues and the needs of different livelihood groups. For example, PEFSA partners undertook rapid needs assessments in their respective intervention locations rather than rely entirely on larger-scale needs assessments (e.g., McRAM) undertaken by the government and/or INGOs.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>ECHO’s partners sometimes lack an adequate understanding of the coping strategies and household economies of the livelihood groups they target.</strong></td>
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#### Have cross cutting issues been taken into account when defining livelihoods actions, such as gender and social difference, protection, etc?

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<th>Summary of findings</th>
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<tr>
<td><strong>ECHO’s partners generally define livelihood actions based on a good understanding of gender issues, but it was not possible to draw conclusions on the degree to which different social groups (elderly, disabled, etc.) were taken into account.</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>ECHO’s partners’ choice of livelihood interventions is not grounded in an analysis of protection dynamics as much as it could be.</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>PEFSA relies on the specific expertise/comparative advantages of their partners to address cross-cutting themes.</strong></td>
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#### How well understood is the impact of crisis situations (natural disaster or man-made conflicts) on livelihood strategies and markets?

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<th>Summary of findings</th>
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<tr>
<td><strong>ECHO’s partners have recently increased their understanding of the impact of crisis situations (man-made conflict) on people’s livelihood strategies and on markets; this is evident through an increased number of market assessments and through monitoring of cash and voucher programmes.</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>However, household economic strategies are still not sufficiently understood, nor are markets, in particular how they relate to protection dynamics. Use of market analysis varies by region; ECHO-supported EMMA analyses have occurred in both Pakistan and the Sahel, and ECHO partners</strong></td>
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### Questions from the terms of reference

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<th>Summary of findings</th>
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<td>involved with seeds/tools in Ethiopia also consider markets.</td>
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<tr>
<td>The ECHO-funded DRR programme being implementing in Ethiopia uses a good analysis of the drought cycle and its effects on livelihood strategies. Several NGOs are using a DRR approach and incorporating an early warning system to anticipate how crisis events will impact livelihoods. The major problem facing NGOs is the timeframe – it’s too short for implementing an appropriate response.</td>
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<tr>
<th>To what extent has DG ECHO integrated into its policies, decisions and activities: (1) the different livelihood strategies; (2) the use of livelihoods frameworks and core methodologies; and (3) of minimum standards for analysis?</th>
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<tr>
<td>ECHO staff generally demonstrate a good understanding of the different livelihood strategies of target populations, and of relevant frameworks and core methodologies. In Pakistan, a wide range of interventions were utilized in response to the diversity of livelihoods affected by the floods. However, some ECHO partners (e.g., in Ethiopia) may not have this same breadth of understanding regarding livelihoods.</td>
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<tr>
<td>ECHO has encouraged its partners to make greater use of livelihood frameworks and assessment methodologies, in an effort to encourage better needs assessment and response analysis, an approach which is appropriate for the context. However, livelihood frameworks are often implied rather than explicitly utilized (e.g., in Ethiopia and Pakistan).</td>
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<tr>
<td>Generally, better response analysis is needed, as well as better data collection, particularly for baseline and end-line surveys. In Pakistan, analysis was enhanced through familiarity with and knowledge of an area by individual partners.</td>
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<tr>
<th>How appropriate is the identification, choice and prioritization of the different response options, as well as the timeliness of the intervention and the targeting of the beneficiaries?</th>
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<tr>
<td>ECHO’s partners do not always base their choice of response option on a clearly articulated understanding of the context and a logical justification. There is a sense that some activities are implemented as a ‘default’ option. Lack of evidence on the effectiveness of many “default” options may lead to implementation of inappropriate interventions, undercutting intended programme impact.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Timeliness of ECHO’s livelihood interventions varies by area; in Ethiopia, timely interventions are negatively impacted by a lengthy approval process. Some partners are able to mobilize resources on their own while awaiting ECHO monies. However, this may not be possible or desirable in all cases. ECHO has encouraged more rapid responses through its funding of a parallel food security component to the rapid response mechanism.</td>
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<td>More synchronicity is needed between the budget cycle in Brussels and seasonality of</td>
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<tr>
<td>Interventions. For example, seeds may be distributed too late to be planted, animals may be too weak/wasted before destocking occurs or animals may die of thirst before water holes become rehabilitated/accessible.</td>
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<tr>
<td>What evidence of innovation and participation exist across the range of interventions: a) income and employment, b) market access and c) primary production, (including risk assessment / sensitivity to potential negative impact of various response options)?</td>
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<tr>
<td>How well equipped are DG ECHO’s partners to identify and assess livelihood needs? And to design, implement and evaluate at various levels?</td>
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<td>Questions from the terms of reference</td>
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<td><strong>Monitoring, evaluation and effectiveness</strong></td>
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| What indicators are used to monitor the performance of livelihood projects? | - Indicators used to monitor the performance of livelihood projects are varied and include those related to income (e.g., percentage of households experiencing increase in household income), food production (e.g., percentage of seeds planted, size of harvest, percentage of food needs covered by one’s production, ability to demonstrate agricultural techniques), food consumption (e.g., number and variety of daily meals), knowledge of agricultural techniques, outputs of income generation projects (e.g., amount of fish caught, oil sold, etc.).  
- The majority of the ECHO-funded projects measure output level indicators as part of their monitoring and evaluation activities. ECHO-funded proposals also include outcome indicators, though they are rarely measured due to: 1) the lack of adequate baselines and end-line surveys, and 2) the termination of projects before impact measures can be realized (e.g., crop production data). |
| Based on a desk analysis of key documentation, records, country case studies and field visits, how effective have livelihood projects been in meeting their objectives? | - Cash and voucher livelihood projects have produced strong evidence of effectiveness relative to in-kind distributions of assistance, including food assistance and non-food items (e.g., seeds and tools).  
- There is a lack of sufficient evidence of effectiveness for some of ECHO’s interventions seeking to address chronic food insecurity, including seeds and tools distributions (in-kind rather than through cash or vouchers), income generation projects, and agricultural support and training.  
- Lack of data on outcomes due largely to insufficient implementation timeframes (see previous question), makes it difficult to determine whether livelihoods have been protected or improved in the long run generally. While nutrition programs typically have an immediate effect, it is not clear if these gains can be sustained without proper systems being in place (i.e., improved government capacity to address underlying causes). Capacity strengthening interventions are implemented more in some regions (e.g., the Sahel) and less in others (e.g., Ethiopia). |
| Are certain types of livelihood interventions under/over-represented given the available evidence on effectiveness? | - Given the available evidence on effectiveness, there is an over-representation of in-kind food assistance (including food for work), in-kind distribution of seeds and tools, support to income generation projects (in some areas), and agricultural support and training.  
- In Ethiopia, the limited use of cash and voucher programs, and heavy reliance on in-kind food assistance may be appropriate given the high inflation rate (30 percent).  
- In Pakistan, familiarity of PEFSA partners with their areas of operation typically resulted in design
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| Which good practices can be identified? | - Many types of cash and voucher livelihood projects have produced strong evidence of effectiveness, including for example the provision of relief items, food and agricultural inputs through vouchers and fairs in DRC.  
- The DRR programme being implemented in Ethiopia as part of the Regional Drought Cycle programme is promoting a number of good practices including being managed as a consultative process with implementing partners to identify priorities, capturing better practices for scaling up, and encouragement of participatory community approaches. Lessons learned from the DRR programme could be applied to emergency programming.  
- The CMAM nutrition programme being implemented under emergency funding has a lot of promise and is a good example of ECHO taking the lead to act as a catalyst follow-up by development agencies.  
- The PEFSA model serves as a significant achievement in coordinating the humanitarian effort in Pakistan and could be used in other regions. Its flexibility in choice of partners, geographic targeting, and in particular, the identification of specific roles for each partner are clear good practices and represent important innovations. |
| When appropriate nutrition is an expected outcome, are adequate strategies developed to reach it, as well as appropriate indicators used to achieve this outcome? | - Where ECHO’s livelihood interventions include improved nutrition as an expected outcome, project proposals generally include appropriate indicators to measure this outcome.  
- The ability of ECHO’s partners to monitor and evaluate the impact of their livelihood interventions on nutrition is limited, however, due to lack of staff capacity, project implementation delays, and difficulties in data collection (e.g., government restrictions in Ethiopia due to perceived negative publicity associated with poor nutrition rates).  
- The CMAM and supplemental feeding strategies employed by ECHO partners are appropriate in addressing acute malnutrition. However, tension derived from trying to respond quickly to the acute malnutrition situation but also responding to the government’s need for building capacity of its health system means NGOs are often caught in the middle and must try to do both in order to get projects approved by the government (Ethiopia).  
- The effectiveness of ECHO partners in addressing the underlying causes of malnutrition are limited; funding cycles are often too short to build capacity and to have significant community
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<td><strong>Linking relief and development</strong></td>
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| To what extent has DG ECHO identified linkages both across conventional emergency response sectors and in the context of LRRD? | • ECHO has identified linkages across conventional emergency response sectors through the funding of multi-sector programmes.  
• ECHO’s emergency livelihood interventions in conflict zones are generally not well linked with longer-term efforts to improve food security funded by development donors.  
• ECHO promotes cooperation with other emergency donors (e.g., OFDA, HRF, CERF) and encourages linkages between its DRR activities and its emergency programming, and with the EU Delegation and other bilateral donors. For example ECHO was able to link up with €13 million form the EU Delegation as part of its drought response in Ethiopia.  
• LRRD activities are often “built-in” to ECHO-funded emergency responses due to generally high poverty levels among crisis-affected populations, such as in all four case studies. DRR and non-food sector interventions (e.g., WASH) are linked to livelihoods through food assistance.  
• In Pakistan, an emergency-to-recovery transition plan was developed through a government and donor partnership but did not necessarily involve a conscious LRRD strategy. |
| To what extent are exit strategies identified in advance? | • ECHO takes initiative to try to enable its partners to obtain development funding for livelihoods interventions where appropriate, but this is not usually possible given the lack of development donors present.  
• An noted in several case studies (e.g., Pakistan, Ethiopia), ECHO’s exit strategies are tied to an annual planning horizon and response to shock but do not necessarily make sense in areas with high levels of chronic food insecurity and malnutrition. Rather, continued development of joint humanitarian-development frameworks would help ensure more meaningful exit strategies relative to longer-term development issues. |
| What good examples can be identified in terms of LRRD and coordination with development actors/donors? | • ECHO and the EU Food Security Thematic Programme (FSTP) have coordinated a programme to address malnutrition in some of the central provinces in DRC and in Ethiopia, which is seen as a promising approach.  
• In some instances, ECHO’s partners are able to get development funding from a European |
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| government donor after operating with ECHO funding; however, such transitions are rare. | • DG-ECHO is actively advocating with development donors in several contexts to think about how they can programme according to malnutrition rates.  
• The DRR programme being implemented in Ethiopia by ECHO has a good chance of linking with other development programs such as USAID-supported Title II programs. Save the Children has been effective at linking development funds with its DRR activities.  
• Under the new PEFSA II proposal, Europe Aid would work with PEFSA partners, particularly in nutrition. |
| How consistent are the entry and exit decisions with those defined in the Humanitarian Food Assistance Communication and Staff Working Paper - including comparative advantage? | • ECHO’s entry and exit decisions appear to be broadly consistent with those defined in the Humanitarian Food Assistance Communication and Staff Working Paper, but they would benefit from greater evidence (e.g., from better livelihoods assessments) and structured decision-making, particularly regarding the balance of food assistance programming between conflict-affected and other areas.  
• Opportunity exists for ECHO to accommodate its “partners’ multi-annual strategies and planning horizons in protracted crises” in order to prevent undermining of its humanitarian efforts due to disruptions in funding while other donors/governments can be brought on-line. |
| How do ECHO's livelihood interventions relate to interventions funded via development instruments (e.g., Ethiopia)? | • ECHO’s emergency livelihood interventions are generally not well linked with longer-term efforts to improve food security funded by development donors.  
• In Ethiopia, this is due largely to a lack of active donors in the areas in which ECHO focuses its support (e.g., the EU Delegation and other development donors target highland areas in Ethiopia while ECHO targets lowland pastoral areas).  
• In Pakistan, PEFSA partners “are aware of the potential linkages of the proposed intervention with future EU funding mechanism including the Food Security Thematic Programme and aim at linking relief, recovery and development.”  
• Through the Food Security Thematic Programme, ECHO and its partners are promoting the use of a Joint Humanitarian-Development Framework. This is initially specifically for fragile situations and is expected to strengthen processes around situation analysis and the development of resilient livelihoods. The JHDF is an important initiative that needs further support. |

**Advocacy, coherence and coordination**
### Questions from the terms of reference

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<th>Summary of findings</th>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Have the identification and use of opportunities for advocacy purposes been appropriate?</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td>• DG-ECHO is actively advocating with development donors in several contexts to think about how they can address malnutrition, which is appropriate and useful.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• DG ECHO has been a significant influence in areas where humanitarian principles have been threatened (e.g., in Pakistan) and ECHO has been firm in ensuring such principles are upheld vis-à-vis their efforts.</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>To what extent has DG ECHO support been coordinated and is complementary with other services of the Commission and the various stakeholders (donors, partners, etc.) on livelihoods (e.g., market assessment, analysis, response, impact assessment, advocacy)?</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• DG ECHO actively collaborates and coordinates with other donors and partners on improved livelihoods responses, including through encouraging key partners and cluster actors to pursue better assessments and analysis.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• There are currently limited opportunities for linkages between the ECHO livelihoods support and the food security actions of the European Commission.</td>
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