

# A note from the Director-General of DG ECHO

DG ECHO's Water & Sanitation Policy Statement



EUROPEAN COMMISSION



Humanitarian Aid

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EUROPEAN COMMISSION  
DIRECTORATE-GENERAL  
FOR HUMANITARIAN AID – DG ECHO

The Director-General

## NOTE TO ECHO'S PARTNERS

Brussels,  
ECHO4/PC/mm/ Ref . D. 9387  
29.08.2005

**Subject: DG ECHO's review of Water and Sanitation issues relating to the funding of humanitarian operations under the EC Humanitarian Regulation.**

In 2005 DG ECHO undertook a review of Water and Sanitation issues relating to humanitarian aid. There were several reasons for undertaking this review. DG ECHO considers that: when compared to developmental matters, there is a relative lack of specialised literature on Water and Sanitation in a humanitarian context; the importance of water and sanitation as positive multipliers in humanitarian interventions can not be underestimated; there is an on-going need to support consistency, coherence and quality in policy matters; and in accordance with the spirit of Good Humanitarian Donorship there is a need to give direction and promote clarity in the design and implementation of humanitarian interventions.

The review is now completed and has resulted in two products, a 'Concept Paper' and a set of 'Model Guidelines'.

The **Concept Paper** consists of eight sections covering: DG ECHO's Mandate and related contextual issues; key external factors and trends; policies and strategies; financing issues; design and selection of projects; the categorisation of interventions; conclusions and recommendations concerning DG ECHO's funding of water and sanitation interventions.

The **Model Guidelines** present lessons learnt and good practice relating to a range of areas of intervention, including technical, institutional and social aspects of service provision, as well as hygiene promotion and behaviour change. Wherever possible the guidelines draw on existing materials and information sources.

You can find these products online at DG ECHO's website at: [http://europa.eu.int/comm/echo/evaluation/thematic\\_en.htm](http://europa.eu.int/comm/echo/evaluation/thematic_en.htm) Copies of the products are available on DVD and may be requested from the e-mail address below.

These products are available only in English at present, but ECHO also intends to make them available in French.

At this time DG ECHO has also produced a statement of its 'Policy for funding of Water, Sanitation and Hygiene Promotion Interventions'. A copy is attached for you to consult.

In completing this work the independent experts consulted with: many of DG ECHO's partners, both INGO's and International Organisations; VOICE, other donors and specialist bodies. I would like to take this opportunity to express my thanks to those persons that gave their time and ideas to this exercise and particularly for the use of their reference materials.

*[signed]*  
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Encl: DG ECHO's Policy for Funding of Water, Sanitation and Hygiene Promotion interventions

C.c.: ECHO Management



EUROPEAN COMMISSION  
DIRECTORATE-GENERAL  
FOR HUMANITARIAN AID – DG ECHO

September 2005

**Subject: DG ECHO's Policy for Funding of Water, Sanitation and Hygiene Promotion Interventions**

Within the context of its needs-based approach, DG ECHO will continue to prioritise funding of water, sanitation and hygiene improvement interventions for both acute and chronic situations, as a contribution to improving the health, social welfare and dignity of those affected by natural disasters or complex emergencies.

DG ECHO considers that water supply projects, wherever possible, should be integrated with sanitation and hygiene promotion interventions. DG ECHO-funded hygiene and sanitation interventions place a high priority on addressing locally assessed risks to public health and on targeting a limited number of the most important high-risk behaviours.

DG ECHO will always take a needs-based approach to prioritising investment in water supply, sanitation and hygiene, both at global level and at sub-national level by targeting populations in greatest need of support; the implications of climate change, environmental concerns and water scarcity, with ever increasing dangers of water related conflicts, will also be taken into consideration when making these decisions.

The design of DG ECHO-funded interventions must be context-specific and any response should be informed by locally collected information on the needs, priorities and capacities of the affected population; wherever possible this information should be disaggregated by gender. DG ECHO is putting increased emphasis on a results based approach with measurable indicators. DG ECHO fully endorses the Sphere Standards in principal and considers them as a universally recognised set of benchmarks. Indicators should be based on Sphere standards, but adapted flexibly and must take full account of the local context, including national standards.

DG ECHO recognises that interventions should be driven by people-centred approaches, in conjunction with appropriate technology selection and sound design. The participation and input of the affected population, especially women and vulnerable groups, is mandatory for any DG ECHO-funded water and sanitation project, although DG ECHO recognises that the level of such participation will vary according to the type of emergency and specific context.

DG ECHO endorses an *operational approach* to linking relief to rehabilitation and development by striving, as far as possible, for higher levels of self-sufficiency following its project interventions, in order to mitigate against the consequences of gaps between humanitarian assistance and longer-term development support in the sector.

Therefore, all DG ECHO-funded water and sanitation interventions must consider addressing long-term issues as soon as possible, including those concerning management capacity, financing of operation and maintenance costs, local standards and norms and linkages with external support mechanisms.

DG ECHO continues to place a priority on support to sector-specific *disaster preparedness* interventions for water supply, sanitation and hygiene promotion. ECHO strongly believes that mitigation measures to better protect physical infrastructure should be incorporated in all phases of a response wherever possible.



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