



Emergency Humanitarian Aid Decision
F9 (FED9)

Title: Emergency response to populations affected by the eruption of the Karthala volcano

Location of operation: COMOROS

Amount of Decision: EUR 600,000

Decision reference number: ECHO/COM/EDF/2005/02000

Explanatory Memorandum

1 - Rationale, needs and target population.

1.1. - Rationale :

The Karthala Volcano (2,360 metres) forms most of the landmass of Grande Comore (also called Ngazidja), the main island of the Union of the Comoros (250 km. off East Africa). This is one of the largest volcanoes in activity in the world, with an eruption every eleven years on average. Before this year, the last eruption was reported in 1991. The majority of the eruptions were magmatic, resulting in lava flow on both sides of the island. However, phreatic eruptions have also occurred, projecting vapour, gas and rocks in the periphery of the summit. During 2005, the volcano has demonstrated very unusual constant activity, resulting in two eruptions, one in April, followed by the second – of the phreo-magmatic type (without gas release, but with formation of lava) - on 24th November. Subsequent to the April eruption, DG ECHO made available emergency funding of EUR 500.000, which enabled UNICEF to provide trucked water, and to clean and cover more than 700 cisterns over a six-month period.

This latest eruption began with projections of ashes and smoke, which spilled volcanic debris over extensive areas of Grande Comore island, and was accompanied by loud explosions. Although the projections receded the following day, the Karthala Vulcanologic Observatory warned that levels of seismic activity remained high, and that a lava lake was in formation in the caldera (crater). These high levels of seismic activity continued for more than a week. Not only was the second eruption heavier in terms of emissions than the previous one, but the wind changed during the course of the eruption, with the result that a much larger geographical area in the south-east and south-west was affected by the deposits of ash and

volcanic debris, including the capital Moroni and areas that had been affected by the last eruption.

Approximately 2,000 people who had fled from their villages to seek refuge in less exposed areas, have reportedly returned to their homes.

1.2. - Identified needs :

With a similar scenario to that which was played out in April, by far the most urgent and pressing need as a result of this eruption is clean water. On an island where water supplies have been fouled, and where cholera is endemic, potable water needs to be distributed and cisterns have to be cleaned and covered. According to initial assessments, 76 villages with a combined population of 245,000 (70% of the total population of Grande Comore) are in the areas exposed to ashes and smoke, of whom an estimated 175,000 have inadequate access to potable water due to the contamination of up to 6,500 cisterns .

Immediately after the eruption, the authorities launched an emergency plan to distribute potable water, clean volcanic debris from streets and public facilities, and assess the situation of domestic and community water tanks. As part of this plan, subterranean water is collected in Moroni and transported by truck to the villages. The authorities have made 15 trucks available, covering part of the fuel costs. UNICEF supports this operation by providing water tanks, fuel and operational costs, as well as the cleaning and safe water supply of schools. In this way, an average of 200.000 litres of water has been delivered each day during the first phase of the emergency operation. UNICEF is further mobilising resources to support the cleaning and covering of water tanks and to sensitise populations on safe water utilisation and disease prevention. The DG ECHO-funded intervention earlier this year has demonstrated that covering water tanks is effective, but has also enabled UNICEF to improve their capacity in terms of rapid implementation on the ground.

WHO is providing technical expertise to the authorities to assess public health and water and sanitation conditions, whilst the French Red Cross Society's Regional Intervention Platform for the Indian Ocean (PIROI) sent an emergency team of engineers and doctors from La Réunion in support of the Comoros Red Crescent Society, which in turn has mobilized a team of about 60 volunteers to participate in the assessments. PIROI has furthermore mobilised water equipment which has been pre-positioned in the Comoros since the April eruption, and sent a kit of essential drugs. Additional supplies, including water tanks, tarpaulins, tents, drugs and medical material, were transported by French military aircraft on 3rd December.

The water needs are aggravated by the fact that water tables were already very low due to the delayed seasonal rains. Heavy rain on 5th December did not fully compensate, though it did help to clear the ash.

In the meantime, water samples tested in the field a few days after the event show high concentrations of nitrate and chloride, up to 7 times the normal levels, higher than after the April eruption.

1.3. - Target population and regions concerned :

Up to 245,000 people may have been affected by the eruption in the densely populated regions of Bambao, Itsandra, Hambou, Dimani, Oichili and Domba in the southern part of the island, and the capital, Moroni. Of these, 175,000 are thought to have insufficient access to safe potable water.

1.4. - Risk assessment and possible constraints :

The authorities remain on alert as the reduction of the activity of the volcano does not mean that the eruption is over. Vulcanological assessments are still ongoing.

2 - Objectives and components of the humanitarian intervention proposed:

2.1. - Objectives :

Principal objective: To assist the population affected by the eruption of the Karthala volcano to regain their normal livelihood

Specific objectives:

- To provide safe drinking water in the villages affected by the eruption of the Karthala volcano

2.2. - Components :

- o To support the implementation of the water trucking system to the affected villages and to set up temporary structures for the distribution of safe drinking water.
- o To clean and rehabilitate the village water tanks that have been polluted by the ashes and debris projected by the volcano.

A recent DG ECHO assessment mission to the Comoros in the wake of the eruption has confirmed that support to such components, and particularly the covering of tanks, has been effective in protecting water supplies this time around. This conclusion is expected to be backed up by the results of a scientific comparison of samples taken from covered and non-covered wells. For this reason, similar emergency components are proposed.

3 - Duration expected for actions in the proposed Decision:

The duration of humanitarian aid operations shall be 6 months.

The expenditure under the current decision is eligible from 24th November 2005.

If the implementation of the actions envisaged in this Decision is suspended due to *force majeure* or any comparable circumstance, the period of suspension will not be taken into account for the calculation of the duration of the humanitarian aid operations.

Depending on the evolution of the situation in the field, the Commission reserves the right to terminate the agreements signed with the implementing humanitarian organisations where the suspension of activities is for a period of more than one third of the total planned duration of the action. In this respect, the procedure established in the general conditions of the specific agreement will be applied.

4 - Previous interventions/Decisions of the Commission within the context of the current crisis

List of previous ECHO operations in COMOROS				
Decision Number	Decision Type	2003 EUR	2004 EUR	2005 EUR
ECHO/COM/EDF/2005/01000	Emergency			500,000
	Subtotal	0	0	500,000
	Grand Total	500,000		

Dated : 09/12/2005
Source : HOPE

5 - Other donors and donor co-ordination mechanisms.

During a Donor Conference in Mauritius on 7-8th December 2005, at which representatives of the European Commission were present, a total of EUR 200 million was pledged in support of the Comoros Poverty Reduction Strategy, for development activities over the next four years. In terms of LRRD, and in view of the extremely precarious situation with regard to water supply on the islands, this could and should be a sector to benefit from a rational, long-term structural approach. Furthermore, the Comoros are subject to a number of humanitarian threats through natural disasters, volcanic eruptions, cyclones and diseases such as cholera, as well as the consequences of diminished rainfall in a place which depends almost entirely on rainfall for its water supply. The existing detailed disaster preparedness plan might also benefit from a boost in funding in order to increase the capacity for its implementation.

6 - Amount of decision and distribution by specific objectives:

6.1. - Total amount of the decision: EUR 600,000

6.2. - Budget breakdown by specific objectives

Principal objective: <i>To assist the population affected by the eruption of the Karthala volcano to regain their normal livelihood</i>			
Specific objectives	Allocated amount by specific objective (EUR)	Geographical area of operation	Potential partners¹
Specific objective 1: To provide safe drinking water in the villages affected by the eruption of the Karthala volcano	600,000	Southern part of Grande Comore island	- UN - UNICEF - BEL
TOTAL:600,000			

¹ UNICEF

COMMISSION DECISION
of
on the financing of emergency humanitarian operations from the 9th European
Development Fund in
COMOROS

THE COMMISSION OF THE EUROPEAN COMMUNITIES,

Having regard to the Treaty establishing the European Community,
Having regard to the ACP-EC Partnership Agreement signed in Cotonou on 23 June 2000, in particular Articles 72 and 73 thereof,

Having regard to the Internal Agreement of 18 September 2000 on the Financing and Administration of the Community Aid under the Financial Protocol to the Partnership Agreement between the African, Caribbean and Pacific States and the European Community and its Member States signed in Cotonou (Benin) on 23 June 2000, in particular Article 25².

Whereas:

- (1) On Thursday, 24th November, the Karthala volcano erupted for the second time this year, spewing clouds of ash and smoke over a number of villages in the Grand Comore Island, as well as the capital, Moroni.
- (2) Though the eruption remitted a few days later, with no major lava flow, the rain-fed water supply systems of an estimated 76 villages have been polluted, making the quality of water inadequate for human consumption.
- (3) Around 175,000 people are in need of safe drinking water to avert the risks of water-related health complications.
- (4) An assessment of the humanitarian situation leads to the conclusion that humanitarian aid operations should be financed by the Community for a period of 6 months.
- (5) It is estimated that an amount of EUR 600,000 from the 9th European Development Fund, representing less than 25% of the National Indicative Programme, is necessary to provide humanitarian assistance to populations directly affected by the natural disaster.
- (6) The use of the 9th EDF is necessary as all the funds allocated for ACP countries in the general budget are entirely depleted.
- (7) The Commission will inform the EDF Committee set up by the Internal Agreement with ex post information according to the criteria laid down in Article 25.3 of the Internal Agreement.

² OJ L317 of 15 December 2000
[ECHO/COM/EDF/2005/02000](#)

HAS DECIDED AS FOLLOWS:

Article 1

1. In accordance with the objectives and general principles of humanitarian aid, the Commission hereby approves a total amount of EUR 600,000 from the 9th European Development Fund for humanitarian aid operations to assist vulnerable people directly affected by the volcanic eruption in COMOROS.

2. In accordance with Article 72 of the ACP-EC Partnership Agreement, the humanitarian operations shall be implemented in the pursuance of the following specific objectives:

- To provide safe drinking water in the villages affected by the eruption of the Karthala volcano.

The total amount of this decision is allocated to this objective.

Article 3

1. The implementation of humanitarian aid operations funded by this Decision shall have a maximum duration of 6 months from their starting date.

2. Expenditure under this Decision is eligible from 24th November 2005.

3. If the operations envisaged in this Decision are suspended due to *force majeure* or comparable circumstances, the period of suspension will not be taken into account for the calculation of the duration of the humanitarian aid operations.

Article 4

The decision shall take effect on the date of its adoption.

Done at Brussels,

For the Commission

Member of the Commission