

# TARGETING HUNGER IN DISASTER ZONES

*humanitarian aid*



Food aid

EUROPEAN COMMISSION



Humanitarian Aid



## FOOD FOR THOUGHT

- In the time it takes to read this sentence, somewhere in the world a child will have died of hunger.
- Today, at least 854 million people in the world are hungry.
- One in seven people on the globe do not get sufficient food to be healthy and lead active lives.

Hunger and malnutrition are the number one risk to health worldwide — greater than AIDS, malaria and tuberculosis combined.

The frequency and intensity of natural and man-made disasters is on the rise. Vulnerable people in many of the poorest countries are increasingly exposed to the threat posed by these disasters as well as being exposed to economic pressures such as big food price rises. All of this heightens the risk of them falling victim to hunger and malnutrition. The European Commission has a mandate to help needy populations outside its borders in times of crisis. It is an expression of the humanity and solidarity that are among the key principles underlying the European Union.

## RISING TO THE CHALLENGE

The European Commission's Humanitarian Aid department (ECHO) is responsible for the EC food aid budget. In 2007 it allocated over €220 million in funding for food assistance and more than €283 million is foreseen for 2008. Most of the funds are deployed during crises or in the recovery period immediately afterwards. The aim is to save lives and relieve suffering.

The European Commission, in line with its humanitarian mandate, provides funding to:

- Distribute food rations, or the means to purchase food, to people caught up in crises including natural disasters and conflict. For people to remain healthy, the food provided must be of suitable quality, and culturally acceptable to the communities receiving it;
- Identify malnourished children who have suffered from a critical reduction in their consumption of food and nutrients;
- Provide malnourished children, and vulnerable adults such as pregnant and nursing mothers, the elderly and the disabled, with supplementary and therapeutic foods to aid their recovery;
- Support short-term "food-for-work" programmes that provide food, or the means to access food, in exchange for work (often on community projects);
- Help restore basic livelihoods after a crisis so that people can start again growing food for themselves; and
- Strengthen resilience to future shocks in crisis-prone areas by ensuring access to and availability of agricultural and livestock supplies.

## VICTIMS TELL THEIR STORIES

### MANDERA, KENYA

Habibah and her two year old daughter Zulaykha both suffered badly in a recent drought. "The animals died and I couldn't get milk for my baby. All I could give her was black tea", said Habibah. The baby had diarrhoea, lost weight and became dangerously thin. Habibah heard about Islamic Relief's mobile centre set up to tackle malnutrition. She took Zulaykha to the centre and three months later, her daughter is now a lively toddler, full of life and energy.

### GAZA, PALESTINIAN TERRITORIES

The border closure hit civilians hard: goods could no longer be imported or exported, prices skyrocketed, the market collapsed and unemployment shot up. One in two adults had no income. UNRWA (the United Nations Relief and Works Agency) worked with the Commission to get food to those who needed it. 40-year old Najua, who has nine children, has spent her whole life as a refugee. "We have seen hard times before, but this is the worst yet", she said. "We depend on this aid".



### PATUAKHALI, BANGLADESH

Waiting for the next harvest, six months after Cyclone Sidr hit Bangladesh, people were still having to queue for their rations of rice, pulses, salt and oil. The supplies were funded by the European Commission and distributed by its humanitarian partners in the field. Youssouf, a school teacher in the worst-affected district of southern Bangladesh expressed his thanks. "You are giving assistance to those who are genuinely poor".

### KULYAB DISTRICT, TAJIKISTAN

35-year old Abduholok often found it hard to provide for his family as a seasonal cotton picker in Tajikistan. The children became malnourished and vulnerable to common diseases. The family benefited from a seed distribution project, implemented by Mission East and financed by the Commission. The aim was to boost food security. "Thanks to a rich harvest, the garden we planted provided enough to feed the family. We were also able to buy a calf, and provide our children with clothes and stationery for school", said Abduholok.

### PUERTO PASTRAN, COLOMBIA

After severe flooding in Colombia, the Commission funded Acción contra el Hambre, to provide food assistance to the worst affected areas. Libardo Márquez Guerra, a leader of one of the communities that received help explained: "We were up to our knees in water. We had nothing left to eat. The people from ACH were the first to arrive. They began by providing food, and now it is seeds and tools. They have given us the means to start again; to get our lives back together".

### OTASH CAMP, DARFUR

Nasra Suliman, 35, cries quietly as she tells the story of when she fled her village, Goweighin, south of Nyala.

"One day, we were surrounded by armed men and vehicles. They began shooting in the air to intimidate us, and then they attacked us, shot some men, burned farms, and kidnapped girls", she says. Today, instead of growing her own food, Nasra queues up to receive a monthly ration from the World Food Programme supported by the European Commission, just like the other 46,000 people who live alongside her at Otash camp on the outskirts of Nyala, the capital of South Darfur.





## FOOD ASSISTANCE THROUGH PARTNERSHIP

Funds are channelled through Non-Governmental Organisations (NGO's), the Red Cross Movement and United Nations (UN) agencies – including the Commission's largest partner in this sector – the World Food Programme (WFP).

## TARGETING NEEDS

The European Commission funds food aid and other humanitarian support on the basis of need. In 2007, it funded food assistance for more than 18 million people in countries and regions in the grip of crisis. The locations covered by this funding included:

Afghanistan. Algeria (Sahrawi refugees), Burkina Faso, Burundi, the Caucasus, Central African Republic, Chad, Côte d'Ivoire, Democratic Republic of the Congo, East Timor, Ethiopia, Haiti, Kenya, Liberia, Mali, Mauritania, Myanmar/Burma, Nepal, the Palestinian Territories, the Sahel (Niger, Mali, Mauritania, Togo), Somalia, Southern Africa (especially Zimbabwe, Lesotho and Swaziland), Sri Lanka, Sudan, Tanzania and Uganda.



Louis Michel  
European Commissioner for Development & Humanitarian Aid

*"Vulnerable communities in many of the world's poorest countries are increasingly exposed to natural disasters, conflict and economic pressures. In these situations, it doesn't take long for people to go hungry. The European Union has a key role in providing them with food aid, and in restoring food production."*

## EUROPEAN SOLIDARITY WITH THE VICTIMS OF DISASTERS

*The European Commission's Humanitarian Aid department (ECHO) is a service under the direct responsibility of Commissioner Louis Michel.*

*Since 1992, the Commission has funded relief to millions of victims of natural and man-made disasters outside the European Union.*

*Aid is channelled impartially to the affected populations, regardless of their race, ethnic group, religion, gender, nationality or political affiliation.*

## A KEY DONOR

The European Commission is one of the biggest sources of humanitarian aid in the world. In 2007, it provided more than €768 million for humanitarian programmes. This does not include the aid given separately by the European Union's 27 Member States. Commission support went to projects in more than 70 countries. The funds are spent on goods and services such as food, clothing, shelter, medical provisions, water supplies, sanitation, emergency repairs and mine-clearing. The Commission also funds disaster preparedness and mitigation projects in regions prone to natural catastrophes.

### Photo credits:

*Daniela Cavini, Francois Dubocq, Agnes Le Thiec, Malini Morzaria, Thorsten Muench – ECHO; World Food Programme, International Federation of the Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies*

## DG HUMANITARIAN AID (ECHO)

European Commission  
B-1049 Brussels, Belgium  
Telephone: (+32 2) 295 44 00  
Fax: (+32 2) 295 45 72

e-mail:  
echo-info@ec.europa.eu  
Web Site:  
<http://ec.europa.eu/echo>



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