

ONE DAY I WANT TO BE...



EUROPEAN COMMISSION



Humanitarian Aid



Liceth
and Jhon
Colombia

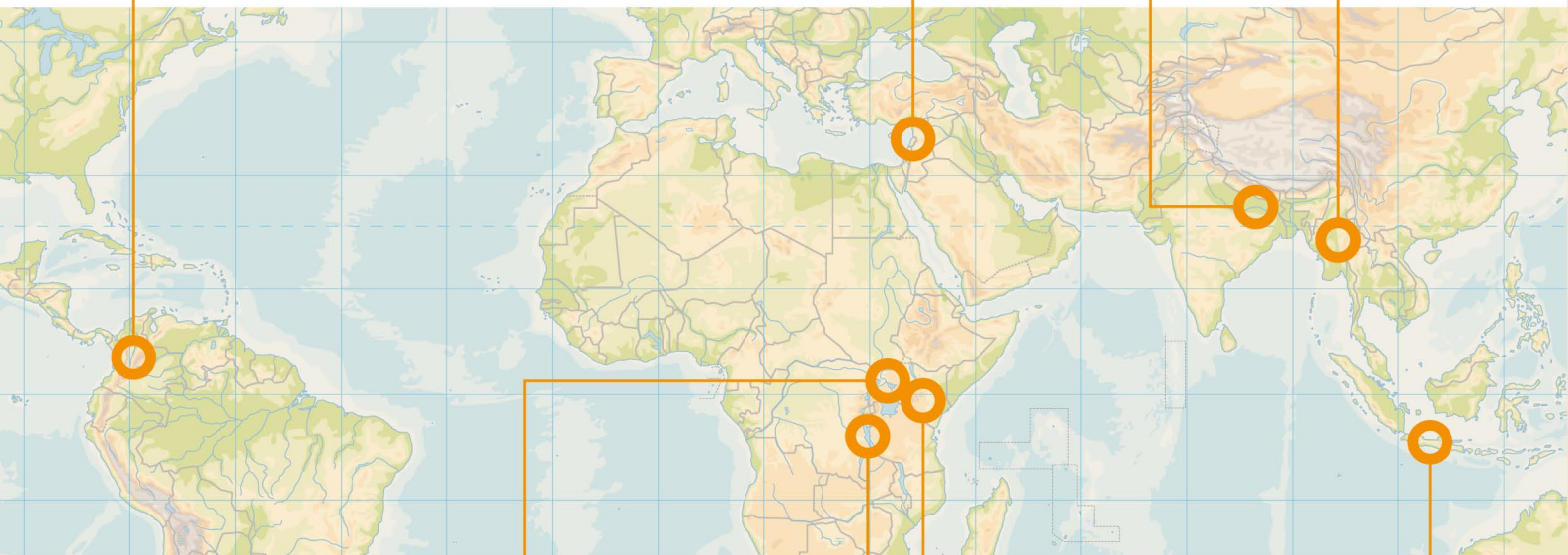


Hassan
Lebanon



Runa Devi
India

Saw Lay Doh
Thailand/
Myanmar



(Anonymous)
Northern
Tanzania



Milus
Congo/
Tanzania



Kuinta
Sharon Akini
Kenya

Lepoldina
East Timor



Introduction

Every year there are more than 400 natural disasters across the globe. Conflicts affect more and more civilians. There are 14.3 million refugees and 24.5 million displaced people in the world today. A billion have no access to drinking water, 24,000 die every day from hunger and hunger-related problems.

And more figures – those showing the money given to providing international humanitarian aid. Every week there are press announcements of funding allocated by the European Commission for its humanitarian actions throughout the world.

Behind all these figures are men, women and children who have lost everything. 40 million uprooted people with so many stories of suffering and waiting.

In this brochure are some of their stories, told in their own words. They are drawn from encounters between victims of humanitarian crises and relief workers: staff from the European Commission Humanitarian Aid department and Non-Governmental Organisations working in partnership with the Commission in the field.

Every story is different, but almost every one ends in hope “One day I want to be ...”.

The goal of humanitarian aid is to save and preserve lives, but it should also bring hope so that people can say “One day I want to be ...”.



Milus, the painter

DEMOCRATIC REPUBLIC OF
CONGO/TANZANIA

"I am a Congolese living in Lugufu Camp in Tanzania.

I am a good artist. I started to paint when I was very young. Now I am old and I am still painting.

I thank God for the talent he gave me.

I thank God for my good health and my work. My art helped me to find a wife and to support my children.

I fled the war in Congo. I have been a refugee for the past eight years.

And I paint."

Milus, like many other Congolese people, fled DRC in 1997 to escape renewed fighting in the East.

He stayed almost eleven years (almost a fifth of his life), in the refugee camp of Lugufu, Tanzania. The camp was run by the UN Refugee Agency (UNHCR), the Red Cross and World Vision International, with the support of the European Commission Humanitarian Aid department. In October 2007, he took advantage of the UNHCR repatriation programme to go back home with his family to the village of Baraka, DRC.

Through his paintings, Milus shows the world what it means to be a refugee. They show his flight from DRC and the daily camp chores of gathering firewood or fetching water.



Extract from the film edited in 2004 by Yves Horent, Humanitarian Aid Expert – European Commission, on <http://ec.europa.eu/ECHO> (section Media Library)



Lepoldina

EAST TIMOR

Lepoldina de Jesus, aged 17, Motael IDP camp in the centre of Dili, capital of East Timor.

“The nurse has told me she’s worried that I am too young to have a baby. She fears there may be problems when I give birth, but I’m not worried.

We’re not told about contraception. Having a baby now was an accident, but I’m happy.

We came to the camp about a year ago when our house was set on fire and burned down.

I’m not anxious about the birth of my baby. As long as I can give birth in the hospital, I will be OK.

The hospital is five or ten minutes drive away and there is a Ministry of Health ambulance to take me there when I am ready to give birth.

I left school at 12 because my parents were unable to support me. Now I spend my day cleaning the tent, cooking and washing.

We don’t have a bed. We sleep on the floor of our tent which is difficult when you are pregnant.

I want to have a big family and to live in our own house with our family.”

East Timor gained full sovereignty from Indonesia in 2002. Four years later, after a period of relative stability the country experienced civil unrest and communal violence. Around 140,000 people lost their homes. About half of them had nowhere else to go than the camps swiftly set up by the international community.

Story told to Andy Shipley, Plan International
(partner to the European Commission)

Picture: Fabio De Paola

Liceth and Jhon



Liceth: "My name is Liceth Yeamile Castillo."

I am 16 years old and a student of the European Commission Humanitarian Aid/ Diakonie project"

Jhon: "My name is Jhon Esteven Tovar Sanchez."

I am 18 years old. I am a student of the project too."

Liceth: "Here, the rights of children and other people are violated a lot."

There are armed groups and they have their own rules."

Jhon: "In the village they told my father he had one hour to leave or they would wipe out his whole family; they would kill us and burn our house. So all of us left, with only a few necessary things. We arrived at Alto de Cazucá, trying to regain what we had lost."



It is very difficult to survive here. On the one hand, there is pressure by the armed groups. They want to recruit young boys and teenagers and make them part of a conflict they don't belong to.

On the other hand, there is the lack of jobs. Without a job, you can't eat. It is very difficult for all the people living here."

Liceth: *"There are young boys and teenagers here who really want to get ahead. They like to study and work, and very much appreciate the help they are getting. Yes, we want to get out of here, but we also want to do something for our country, for our neighbourhood and for ourselves."*

Jhon: *"The project doesn't just help us to boost our education. It also helps us to protect ourselves through artistic and cultural activities that contribute to our personal development. The idea is that we find alternatives and solutions to the problems that our community is facing. These problems are poverty, displacement and violation of our rights."*

Every month in Colombia thousands of people are driven from their homes by the fighting that has now been going on for 40 years. There are now around 2 million displaced people in Colombia, and hundreds of thousands of Colombians have taken refuge in neighbouring countries.

As always, children are among the main victims of the violence and forced displacement. To meet their specific needs the Commission is financing a project run by the German NGO Diakonie at Soacha in the suburbs of Bogota.

Many of the children and adolescents have been out of school for a long time and are so far behind that they are unable to re-enter the country's education system. The Diakonie project helps them return to school and gives them back their future. It also enables the youngsters to avoid being forcibly recruited by armed groups.



Hassan, the Eagle

LEBANON

"I used to run and jump; people called me 'The Eagle'. But a mine took my right leg away. What kind of Eagle am I, without a wing?"

"A few years ago my cousin asked me if I was ready to move to Africa to work, and I said no because I wanted my daughters to grow up in Lebanon. I have three daughters so I'm a rich man. But I have also lived in Europe, I know what it means to live in peace; the people of my village do not know. They think this situation is normal. That's why it is so hard for me to accept what is going on here; to face the prospect of another war. We live almost on the border with Israel, and we could be killed at any time. But I'm just a simple Lebanese from Yatar. I love life, and I wish I could have my life back. I'm sure that if the people who drop bombs and mines were able to see the consequences of their actions, they wouldn't do it. How could they do it, if they knew that I was able to run from here to the end of my village in two minutes, and now it takes me two hours with these crutches?"

With only one leg, Hassan can no longer be a builder. He lost his job, and his olive grove too when around 150 trees were destroyed during the war. He was selected for an emergency "cash for work" scheme run by the French non-governmental organisation Première Urgence in the Marjayoun, Beint Jbel and Tyre municipalities. Thanks to funds provided by the European Commission's Humanitarian Aid department, vulnerable seasonal or daily workers who lost their jobs because of the conflict, can put their skills to use and earn an income for three months. Different teams are organised to build small retaining walls or pavements, to clean public places and to plant trees.

"I heard about this programme, and when I was selected I was very happy. While I'm working, I feel good, as if things were normal. If I didn't have this job, I would have had to borrow more money, and wait for help. My savings are gone, and life is so difficult here."

Watch Hassan's story on
<http://ec.europa.eu/ECHO>
(section Media Library)



RUNA DEVI

INDIA

“My husband and I run a small stall. When the water started pouring in, our first reflex was to save the stall and we both clung to it trying to save our goods. It’s all we had. Unfortunately, everything was ruined by the water.

Our village was submerged for several weeks. During that time, we lived in temporary shelters. We would not have survived had it not been for emergency aid reaching us by boat.”

Bihar is one of four states in India to receive European Commission emergency aid after the 2007 floods. With its population of 87 million and high poverty levels, the families living in low-lying areas were the most severely affected. These people are also the poorest of the poor, making the impact of such a catastrophe even more dramatic.

The houses are now being rebuilt with the assistance of the European Commission Humanitarian Aid partner, Oxfam UK.

“What we need now are seeds and tools, but with the sand deposits we are concerned that the crop will not grow.”

For this reason, the Commission’s partners are planning to distribute crop varieties that grow better in sandy soil. This will help communities to get back on their feet and not rely solely on food distribution, or worse, money lenders.

When asked how she saw the future, Runa Devi replied: *“I hope that my three sons learn how to read and write so that they will have a chance of a better life”*.

Testimony and picture by Claire Barrault – Regional Information Officer for the European Commission.

Full witness account of Runa, as well as others, are on

<http://ec.europa.eu/echo> (Section Aid in Action)



(Anonymous)

NORTHERN UGANDA

“They kidnapped us and told us they would kill us with the “panga, panga” if we tried to escape. Then one day they ordered me to kill one of my friends as an example to everyone who might try to escape. They told me that if I refused they would kill me instead. I had to take a stick and kill my friend, and then other people as well.

Now I have nightmares and bad dreams all the time. In the first few days I kept dreaming that they were giving me more and more people to kill. And now I wake up screaming because the people I killed come back to me in my dreams.

I am going to the hospital to sleep because I fear the rebels.”

About the future

“I really want to be a pilot for the United Nations.”

For years the Italian NGO AVSI has been running a centre for the psychological rehabilitation of child soldiers who escaped their captors and found refuge there.

Even though they were forced to commit these indescribable crimes, they still have a sense of guilt that is very hard to dispel. The local people are afraid of the forced ex-rebels, and so here in this centre, they are learning a skill that will help them to overcome and regain their place in society.

Picture: Monica Maggioni, an Italian journalist,
visits the centre run by AVSI



Saw Lay Doh

THAILAND/MYANMAR

"I am in Grade Five and my favourite subject is English. At school I also learn other subjects like Karen, Burmese, maths, geography, history and science.

I have been here in the camp since 1997, when I was two. I am with my parents, two brothers and two sisters. I have never been outside the camp.

My eldest brother and sister are already resettled in the US. As for the rest of us, my parents told me that we had passed the interview and medical check up in July 2007. We are still waiting and waiting.

When I'm older, I would like to be a teacher.

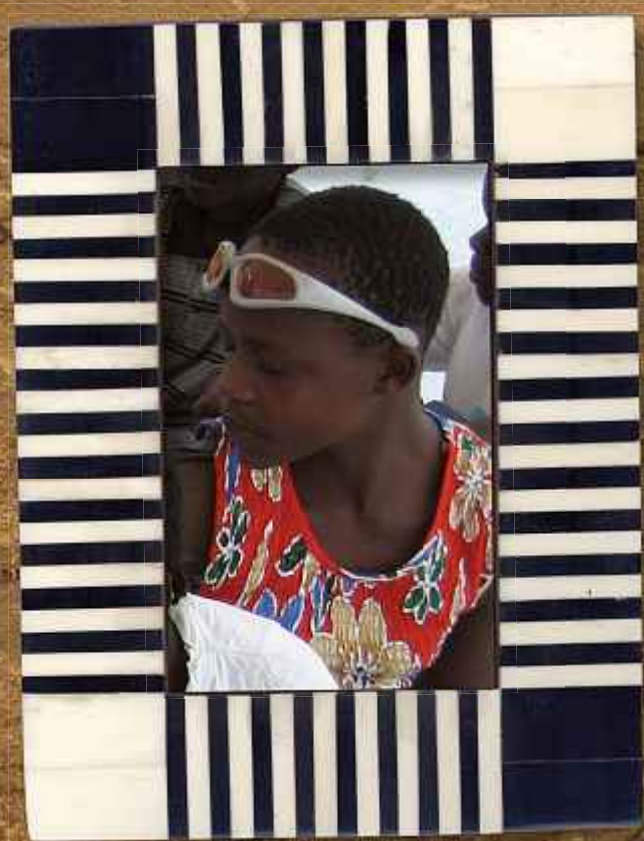
We receive food from one NGO. Another has set up water taps next to our house which we share with several families.

My sister finished high school here in the camp and she is now working as a community health worker for one of the NGOs here. She receives a monthly payment. It's not a lot but with this we buy extra food like vegetables and curry paste."

For years, people in Myanmar have been fleeing violence and insecurity, particularly in the border areas. Many have fled into neighbouring Thailand where about 140,000 people are living in nine camps. Some of them have been there for more than 20 years. They cannot leave the camps legally to find work in Thailand and therefore cannot provide for themselves. They depend almost entirely on international aid for food, water, medical care and education. The European Commission is the largest relief donor in this crisis.

An ongoing resettlement programme to 10 western countries offers the refugees a chance to start a new life. For those who do not want to leave the region, the future is bleak.

Testimony and picture by Onpreeya Visessiri, European Commission's Regional Programme Assistant
More info on Burmese refugees or on the recent humanitarian crisis in Burma on the website
<http://ec.europa.eu/echo>



Kuinta Sharon Akini

KENYA

“My name is Kuinta Sharon Akini and I am fourteen years old.

When the violence started in January, I was in a boarding school in Nakuru in Rift Valley Province. The school told us that because of the fighting, they wanted us to go to our homes, where we would be safer. The school would close until further notice. My mother, brothers and sisters live in Kibera, in Nairobi, so I took the bus to join them. It was a three hour journey. When I reached my home, I saw there was nothing left but rubble. The house had been burnt down. I was very upset. Where was my family? I talked to neighbours and people on the streets, but no-one could help. Then I met a well-wisher, a mazungu [foreigner], who took me to the camp in Jamhuri Park in Nairobi.

I looked for my mother at her workplace; she is a domestic worker with a Kenyan family. My mother's employers shouted at me saying that they had fired her because 'her type was not welcome in their home' and neither was I. She had worked there for four years raising their children, cooking, cleaning - everything! I went back to the camp and we were given transport to Kisumu so I came here, to the transit centre. It was meant to be for a few days, but I do not know where my family is, how will I find them? I just want to wake up from this nightmare and be in school again, and to see my family and be normal. When will this be over? What will I do now? I have no other family. I do not know where to go. I want to go back to school and my dream is to be a pilot.”

Following the Kenyan elections on 27 December 2007, many parts of the country experienced an unprecedented scale of violence resulting in the displacement of an estimated 300,000 people and the destruction of millions of euros worth of property, affecting mostly the poor.

Testimony and picture: Malini Morzaria - Regional Information Officer - European Commission



"We ex-Gaza refugees do not enjoy full rights such as voting, working for the government, and benefiting from government services or licenses. I'm really afraid my son will end up stuck here, in this camp, without a real life, without a professional future. Education is the most important thing, but I'm afraid I won't be able to provide it for my children..."

Khalil Hadi Ali Muthili

refugee in Jerash Camp, Jordan

(Meeting with Daniela Cavini/European Commission)

"What was really hard is not that I had to return to work in a factory at my age [to earn money to pay the debt on her house destroyed by the earthquake]. It was that I had no home to go back to when I finished work."

Esther Atúncar de Magallanes

70 years old, Tambo de Mora, Peru

(Meeting with Susana Perez Diaz/European Commission)





"People came on camels and horses and started shooting. We ran off in all directions. My two sons, my sister's husband and their two boys are all gone. I have had no news since. In Kalma we weave mats and the neighbours share their food with us. We have decided not to move from here because we feel more secure. We will register and then the NGOs will give us food and assistance and the children will go to school."

Ismaël

The Wad El Bashir camp, on the outskirts of Khartoum
(Meeting with Malini Morzania/European Commission)

"We have received food, jerry cans to store water and soap from the Indonesian Red Cross and from relatives who were not affected by the earthquake. Today we received a family tent which we will set up on the foundations of our house. We have already cleared a bit of space. Finally we will have a roof over our heads again. In the next few days I can return to my job in a nearby factory. What I really want to do is clear up the mess and rebuild the house. But I will need help with this."

Asnuri

Karte, Java, Indonesia
(Meeting with Heinke Veit/European Commission)





"The children were so scared, they were screaming. The rain and the wind made an incredible noise. Just before the roof of our house was torn off, we ran for shelter to the family next door who lived in a concrete house."

Belinda Tapit

San Andres, Catanduanes, Philippines

(Meeting with Heinke Veit/European Commission)

"Our kids go to school on empty stomachs. Tell me, why?"

Najua Abu Sultan, 40 years old

West Bank, Palestinian Territories

(Meeting with Daniela Cavini/European Commission)

"Sometimes it's not the aid itself that is important – it's when it arrives! It helps us to believe that we have a future and to think of others"

Armando Loza, Headmaster at the school in Chincha Alta, Peru

After the earthquake in August 2007

(Meeting with Susana Perez Diaz/European Commission)

"Being displaced shatters dreams. The communal work takes up a lot of time but we can all dream together of a different and better world. United we are strong."

Yajaira

Turbaco, Colombia

(Meeting with Susana Perez Diaz/European Commission)

Year after year, humanitarian crises create a level of human distress to which the European Union and its citizens cannot remain indifferent. Responding to its founding principles such as solidarity, respect for human dignity and tolerance, the European Union plays a prime role in the task of assistance, both through actions undertaken by its Member States as well as through the implementation of the Community's humanitarian aid.

Above all, the European Commission has committed itself to relieving human suffering by providing unconditional aid to the populations affected by disasters, both natural and man-made. Today it is one of the largest donors of humanitarian aid.

The Directorate-General for Humanitarian Aid is responsible for the implementation of the European Commission's humanitarian aid. Its mandate defined in the Council Regulation of 20 June 1991, gives it the task of providing the response to humanitarian crises. Concretely, its prime role is to 'save and preserve life' in situations both of sudden emergency as well as of longer-term duration. Over the years, the European Commission's Humanitarian Aid department has built up a well established reputation in the humanitarian scene, not only for having become one of the principle donors of humanitarian aid but also for the objectivity and coherence of its approach. This is because the provision of humanitarian aid is done solely as a response to the real needs of the affected populations according to the international humanitarian principles of humanity, independence, impartiality, and neutrality. The Commission supports a multilateral approach and initiatives which encourage the principles and good practices in humanitarian actions, e.g. the Good Humanitarian Donorship Initiative.

The humanitarian service of the European Commission must continually maintain a watch to ensure the effectiveness, speed and quality of the aid provided.

Extract from the ECHO 2008 Aid Strategy. The complete document can be found at the following link:
<http://ec.europa.eu/echo> (section Policies)



"It's wonderful. We received help and now we can give help. I get tremendous satisfaction from working for my Community."

Luis Edoardo Fruto

21 years old, Palenque, Colombia



"It is not the impossible which gives cause for despair, but the failure to achieve the possible."

"This assertion is a belief I hold personally. The world in which we live is far from perfect. Too many human beings suffer. Too few are offered a vision for their future. But what is really unbearable is that for a large number of people even their basic needs are not fulfilled. Sometimes we fail in our basic duty to our fellow men. And we avoid doing that small amount which it is quite possible for us to do to help."

Louis Michel

European Commissioner for Development and Humanitarian Aid

**European Commission
Humanitarian Aid (ECHO)**

B-1049 Brussels, Belgium

Tel.: (+32 2) 295 44 00 Fax (+32 2) 295 45 72

E-mail: echo-info@ec.europa.eu

Website: <http://ec.europa.eu/echo>

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