HUMANITARIAN AID AND CIVIL PROTECTION

Multiple framework contract for the evaluation of humanitarian aid and civil protection activities
Lot 1: Evaluation of humanitarian aid and civil protection activities
ECHO/A3/FRA/2012/04-Lot 1

Mid-term evaluation of ERC Funding

Contract Number: ECHO/ADM/BUD/2013/01204
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The opinions expressed in this document represent the views of the authors, which are not necessarily shared by the European Commission.

Consortium comprising Particip GmbH (consortium leader), Fundación Dara Internacional and Prolog Consult SPRL
Acknowledgements

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We realise that you all helped us to the very best of your ability, often at times when you were under considerable pressure dealing with the serious work of emergencies, and so it may be invidious to single any person or organisation out, but, without the help of the DG ECHO offices in Ethiopia, Kenya, South Sudan, Delhi, Bangkok, Pakistan, Bangladesh, and Manila and their implementing partners, the aid agencies, the ‘clusters’, the RRTs, and many others, the team would have had much more difficulty with meetings, logistics, and general understanding of the situations that we were evaluating.

In all the places that we stayed we were, unequivocally, provided support that in some cases went well beyond the call of normal duty. We are indebted for the briefings and debriefings arranged for us both in Brussels and the ECHO Regional Support Offices, and especially at the ‘grass roots’ locations on the field missions, as well as all the time that was set aside by individual desks and experts to inform, educate, and alert us to specific issues. We are also supremely grateful for all the direction provided from all the other HQs that we spoke to in Geneva, Rome, New York and London.

Throughout the field missions, we encountered nothing but generosity and considerable cooperation. Meetings were very often arranged at short notice, at a time when for many agencies it was extremely busy, in the middle of on-going crises, when the last thing that you want to do is to talk to an evaluation team – but the insight that was provided by talking to experts at the centre of the crisis was invaluable and we hope that it will be reflected accurately in this report.
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<tr>
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<th>Description</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>AAP</td>
<td>Accountability to Affected Populations</td>
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<tr>
<td>AADMER</td>
<td>ASEAN Agreement on Disaster Management and Emergency Response</td>
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<td>ACAPS</td>
<td>Assessment Capacities Project</td>
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<td>ACE</td>
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<td>BBC MA</td>
<td>British Broadcasting Corporation Media Action (partner)</td>
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<td>CaLP</td>
<td>Cash Learning Partnership</td>
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<td>CCCM</td>
<td>Camp Coordination Camp Management (cluster)</td>
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<td>CMAM</td>
<td>Community Management of Acute Malnutrition</td>
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<td>CMCoord</td>
<td>Civil – Military coordination</td>
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<td>CNA</td>
<td>Coordinated Needs Assessment</td>
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<tr>
<td>CwC</td>
<td>Communication with Communities</td>
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<td>DEVCO</td>
<td>Development and Cooperation – Europe Aid</td>
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<td>DFID</td>
<td>Department for International Development UK</td>
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<tr>
<td>DG ECHO</td>
<td>Director General European Commission Humanitarian Aid &amp; Civil Protection Office</td>
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<tr>
<td>DHC</td>
<td>Deputy Humanitarian Coordinator</td>
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<td>DRR</td>
<td>Disaster Risk Reduction</td>
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<td>DSWD</td>
<td>Department of Social Welfare and Development</td>
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<td>EC</td>
<td>European Commission</td>
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<td>EEAS</td>
<td>European External Action Service</td>
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<td>EQ</td>
<td>Evaluation Question</td>
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<td>ERC</td>
<td>Enhanced Response Capacity</td>
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<td>EU</td>
<td>European Union</td>
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<td>FAO</td>
<td>Food and Agriculture Organisation</td>
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<td>Framework Partnership Agreement</td>
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<td>FPI</td>
<td>Foreign Policy Instrument (EC)</td>
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<td>GAM</td>
<td>Global Acute Malnutrition</td>
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<td>Gender Based Violence</td>
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<td>GHD</td>
<td>Good Humanitarian Donorship</td>
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<td>GPC</td>
<td>Global protection Cluster</td>
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<td>Global WASH Cluster</td>
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<td>HC</td>
<td>Humanitarian Coordinator</td>
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<td>Humanitarian Coordination Team</td>
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<td>HIP</td>
<td>Humanitarian Implementation Plan</td>
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<td>HQ</td>
<td>Headquarters</td>
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<td>IASC</td>
<td>Inter-Agency Standing Committee</td>
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<td>IFRC</td>
<td>International Federation of the Red Cross</td>
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<td>IFS</td>
<td>Instrument for Stability</td>
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<td>IHL</td>
<td>International Humanitarian Law</td>
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<td>INGO</td>
<td>International Non-Governmental Organisation</td>
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<tr>
<td>Abbreviation</td>
<td>Full Form</td>
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<tr>
<td>IOM</td>
<td>International Organisation for Migration</td>
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<td>IPC</td>
<td>Integrated Food Security Phase Classification</td>
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<tr>
<td>IRNA</td>
<td>Initial Rapid Needs Assessment</td>
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<tr>
<td>(I)TA</td>
<td>(IASC) Transformative Agenda</td>
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<td>JHDF</td>
<td>Joint Humanitarian-Development Framework</td>
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<td>JMM</td>
<td>Joint Monitoring Missions</td>
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<tr>
<td>JNA</td>
<td>Joint Needs Assessment</td>
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<td>KAP</td>
<td>Knowledge, Attitude and Practices (survey)</td>
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<td>KIRA</td>
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<td>LNGO</td>
<td>Local Non-Governmental Organisation</td>
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<td>LRRD</td>
<td>Linking Relief, Rehabilitation and Development</td>
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<td>MIRA</td>
<td>Multi-Cluster Initial Rapid Assessment</td>
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<td>NDRRMC</td>
<td>National Disaster Risk Reduction and Management Council</td>
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<td>NGO</td>
<td>Non-Governmental Organisation</td>
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<td>Needs Assessment Task Force</td>
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<td>ODSG</td>
<td>OCHA Donor Support Group</td>
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<tr>
<td>QUAMED</td>
<td>Quality Medicine for All (project)</td>
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<tr>
<td>RECA</td>
<td>Regional Emergency (WASH) Cluster Advisor</td>
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<td>RRT</td>
<td>Rapid Response Team</td>
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<td>RSO</td>
<td>Regional Support Office (ECHO)</td>
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<td>SAG</td>
<td>Strategic Advisory Group (cluster)</td>
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<tr>
<td>SF</td>
<td>Single Form (ECHO)</td>
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<tr>
<td>SMART</td>
<td>Standardised Monitoring and Assessment of Relief and Transitions (nutrition)</td>
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<tr>
<td>SST</td>
<td>Sector Support Team</td>
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<tr>
<td>SWOT</td>
<td>Strengths Weaknesses, Opportunities, Threats</td>
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<tr>
<td>TA</td>
<td>(ECHO country) Technical Assistant</td>
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<td>ToR</td>
<td>Terms of Reference</td>
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<td>ToT</td>
<td>Training of Trainers</td>
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<tr>
<td>TWG</td>
<td>Technical Working Group</td>
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<tr>
<td>UNCMCS</td>
<td>United Nations Civil Military Coordination</td>
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<tr>
<td>UNDAC</td>
<td>United Nations Disaster Assessment and Coordination</td>
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<tr>
<td>UNDP</td>
<td>United Nations Development Programme</td>
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<tr>
<td>UNFPA</td>
<td>United Nations Population Fund</td>
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<tr>
<td>UNHCR</td>
<td>United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees</td>
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<tr>
<td>UNICEF</td>
<td>United Nations International Children's Emergency Fund</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>UNISDR</td>
<td>United Nations International Strategy for Disaster Reduction</td>
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<tr>
<td>(UN) OCHA</td>
<td>United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs</td>
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<tr>
<td>UNRWA</td>
<td>United Nations Relief and Work Agency</td>
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<tr>
<td>USAID</td>
<td>United States Agency for International Development</td>
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<tr>
<td>WASH</td>
<td>Water, Sanitation and Hygiene (cluster)</td>
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<td>WFP</td>
<td>World Food Programme</td>
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A. EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

To facilitate the readability of this report, cross-references have been provided between brackets at the end of each paragraph of this Executive Summary, with the corresponding sections of the main report.

Background

i. In May 2008, an external evaluation recommended to ECHO to integrate the previous Thematic Funding (for UN and Red Cross agencies) and Grant facility (for NGOs) into a consolidated funding mechanism aiming at strengthening the global humanitarian system. ECHO accordingly set up in 2010 the new Enhanced Response Capacity (ERC) funding mechanism, which aimed at increasing global impact, facilitating a joint donor approach and providing a longer-term framework for strengthening systems and overall response capacity of both international humanitarian agencies and NGOs. A comprehensive review of humanitarian challenges was carried out with the assistance of key external actors. Seven main needs were identified (see §vii) and listed in the ERC Guidelines. The Guidelines provided also some policy directions, implementation approaches, and a set of nine Principles – all aiming at making humanitarian response more focused and consistent. ERC objectives and Guidelines are further described below under §v-vi. ERC was allocated an annual budget of €24m, and Guidelines would be applied for a period of five years. [§1-3]

ii. The overall objective of the current mid-term evaluation of ERC is to ‘provide an independent structured evaluation of the results of the action’ over the period 2010-2013. Specific objectives include: reviewing how ERC funding has performed as measured against the criteria of the Guidelines; making recommendations on how the Guidelines/strategy could be revised for future application; and reviewing the coherence between ERC and major Commission/ECHO policy documents. These objectives were translated into 16 evaluation questions (EQ). [§4]

iii. The evaluation was conducted between December 2013 and June 2014. Throughout the three phases of the evaluation (desk, field and synthesis), the team has followed a triangulation approach of findings through documentary studies, interviews, regional field visits in the Horn of Africa, South and S-E Asia, and an online survey. [§8-15]

Main findings, conclusions and lessons learnt

Relevance and appropriateness

iv. ERC is regarded by stakeholders as a good and useful financial tool for humanitarian aid. 59 projects have been funded between 2010 and 2013, for a total of €78.7m. ERC has addressed important thematic gaps in the humanitarian space, and enhanced the global humanitarian systems by promoting coordination and consistency – in particular through clusters, OCHA’s leadership function, partnership and networking. It has supported without any political agenda and with due flexibility some risky innovative or historically under-funded areas of work, as well as implementation in key sectors, such as logistics and cash transfers. [§19-98, 109, Annex D]

v. The ERC Guidelines of 2010 are generally appropriate to their task; the comprehensive overview of humanitarian approaches and challenges, which have been captured in the nine ERC Principles¹, still ensure the overall relevance of the initiative. There would however be a need for further clarifications in terms of ‘vision, mission and values’, i.e. definition, objectives (which must be commensurate to the budget), some of the principles, criteria for selecting projects, and updating of the needs identified in 2009. [§19-23, Annex B]

¹ The need to strengthen local capacities; Decision-making on the basis of needs and demand; Focus; Inclusiveness; Sustainability; Measurability; A joint approach; Innovativeness and mainstreaming; Active involvement.
vi. In the Guidelines, the general objective of ERC is to ‘in the longer term – save lives in a more efficient and effective manner’, which is consistent with the Humanitarian Aid Regulation but rather distantly related to a funding instrument that operates primarily at the level of global humanitarian systems. Specific objectives are found scattered in the Guidelines and not clearly designated as such. The ERC definition stated in the Guidelines concerns the expected outcome of ERC rather than the initiative itself. This definition and some of the identified needs appear quite ambitious considering the limited ERC budget; e.g. it is questionable whether the ERC instrument is the most appropriate for strengthening local level preparedness and response. The evaluation has deduced an underlying objective (see Recommendations), which is not explicitly mentioned in the Guidelines and focuses on seed funding and leveraging of other funds for sustainability. [§24-27, 29-31, 85-93]

vii. The objectives of some of the seven identified needs2 have been fulfilled to a significant extent (e.g. Logistics); all needs should be reviewed in the light of new challenges. The annual ERC HIPs (Humanitarian Implementation Plans) funding decisions have accordingly designated areas of priority in 2010 and 2011 but the HIPs for the following years have been almost identical, providing only very broad themes. The HIPs have never specifically targeted the identified needs of local capacity building and quality/accountability in any priority area. [§32-34, 36-37]

EU Added Value, Complementarity and Coherence

viii. Among the various potential aspects of EU added value, the ability to support valuable projects which have no other donor appears quite relevant for ERC. In this respect, ERC has been the exclusive or main funding source to a number of innovative or difficult to fund humanitarian approaches and tools (see under Effectiveness). [§64-70]

ix. ERC has been duly compliant with the provisions of Good Humanitarian Donorship, Linking Relief, Rehabilitation and Development (LRRD) and the EU Consensus - although operational cooperation with EU member States and Civil Protection remains elusive. [§40-52, 55-63, 117-123]

Effectiveness and Impact

x. With ERC funding, important humanitarian tools could be field-tested and rolled out, such as IPC for food security, MIRA and ACAPS3 for coordinated needs assessment, or Rapid Response Teams (RRTs) and surge capacity to allow clusters and tools to better respond to large emergencies. Local capacity building has been targeted directly or indirectly in many ERC-funded projects, although the sustainability of this crucial activity (as well as exit strategies) remains a major challenge in contexts of poor local governance and scarce resources. [§110-115, 127-184]

xi. The support to the Global Clusters system probably corresponds to the single biggest achievement of ERC funding. ERC has strongly promoted a relevant governance structure for the clusters (based on good practice provided by the Global WASH4 Cluster), which paved the way for effective preparedness measures and response tools as detailed below. [§165-184]

xii. The Level-3 response to typhoon Haiyan, which has deployed for the first time the full range of the IASC Transformative Agenda (ITA) instruments, was much more rapid, robust and comprehensive than in previous large disasters. In this context, ERC (co-)funded tools such as RRTs, needs assessments, humanitarian Leadership or civil-military coordination, were prominent and have been effectively deployed. The very positive contribution of ERC to the

---

2 Resources; coordination and roll-out of the cluster approach; (rapid) needs assessment and related methodologies; emergency preparedness, disaster risk reduction, early warning; local capacity building; quality, accountability and respect of humanitarian principles ands laws; logistics and other needs,

3 Respectively: Integrated Food Security Phase Classification; Multi-Cluster Initial Rapid Assessment; Assessment Capacities Project.

4 Water, Sanitation and Hygiene
strengthening of various components of the international response, although not precisely quantifiable, cannot be questioned. [§162, 165-184]

xiii. Supporting **RRTs and surge capacities** (e.g. for the global WASH, CCCM\(^5\) and Nutrition clusters) has brought positive and tangible benefits and is also one of the most concrete and visible elements of ERC funding, together with the successful *civilian-military coordination* in emergency responses. Surge expert pools are however costly to maintain while waiting for new emergencies, and rosters will still be in need of external, longer-term funding support. [§170-2]

xiv. Despite some shortcomings and a further need for rationalisation, the strengthened *humanitarian Leadership* component of OCHA, with its training, mentoring and more rigorous selection processes, has also been beneficial to global response capacity. [§173-175]

xv. The **coordinated needs assessment** (CNA) tools co-funded by ERC (and before by Thematic Funding), either multi-sector and multi-cluster (MIRA managed by OCHA, ACAPS) or sector-based (SMART, REACH\(^6\)), have addressed priority gaps in the emergency humanitarian response, and have significantly contributed to supporting ITA. ERC funding to the ITA and Cluster system (EQ 11) amounted to 53.1% of the total ERC budget over the evaluated period. This investment was called ‘essential’ by all actors who were committed to set it up, although attribution of results in the field is very difficult to achieve due to the large number of donors. All coordinated assessment tools have however not yet reached sustainability (e.g. SMART). [§127-161]

xvi. In the context of Haiyan, MIRA was appreciated for the overall perspective it provided – in particular for donors and HQs – and the high participation to the subsequent Strategic Response Plan. However, many agencies did not perceive its added value for operational purposes, as MIRA merely reproduced some of the data that they had already provided. The urgent MIRA 1 was required to consider additional demands about integrating gender dimensions or specific requests from some agencies, and was released much later than foreseen. It was also not always accurate (nutrition, Gender-Based Violence) and applied a definition of ‘affected people’ much larger than ECHO’s. In parallel, the activation of ACAPS has caused concerns within OCHA about coordination with MIRA. [§134, 138-139]

xvii. Building local capacity and making it sustainable has shown significant progress in the conducive environments of Kenya or the Philippines, but remains a major challenge in a context of poor governance and resources such as South Sudan; the current Humanitarian Aid Regulation does not allow direct funding of local organisations – only through partnership with recognised international actors, and ECHO policy has focused on resilience of affected populations rather than on humanitarian capacities at local level. [§110-115, 140]

xviii. Whilst ERC has contributed to the enhancement of institutional capacity for emergency response to sudden onset crises, the same sort of progress cannot be seen in the long-term chronic emergencies being experienced e.g. in the Horn of Africa (drought, climate change) or South Asia (widespread malnutrition). [§180-184]

**Efficiency**

xix. Within ECHO at the field level, there were commonly held perceptions that involvement and timely consultation of Regional Support Offices (RSO) experts and country Technical Assistants (TA) – which is recommended in the ERC principles of Active Involvement and Joint Approach – as well as their feedback and monitoring, still need to be enhanced despite improved procedures. Level of buy-in from RSOs is low, and TAs still felt that they are not systematically consulted or even informed about ERC projects in their countries. Despite a high level of monitoring reports in the FicheOps, some duplications with operational budgets have been found in the field, and many partners were unaware of the monitoring from ECHO. This situation may

\(^5\) Camp Coordination and Camp Management

\(^6\) Standardized Monitoring and Assessment of Relief and Transitions (nutrition); REACH for shelter is not an acronym.
reduce the effectiveness of ERC and ultimately its potential impact in terms of quality of humanitarian aid delivery under geographic programming. [§96, 210-212]

xx. The ERC Steering Group is duly implementing the overall selection of ERC projects, but there is as yet no definitive, written list of criteria for project selection in the ERC Guidelines (EQ 7). Furthermore, selection procedures and dialogue with partners do not appear fully consistent among all ECHO Technical Working Groups (TWG); examples of good practice were found, which would need to be followed more systematically. [§100-104, 211]

xxi. There is also still a perceived lack of clear strategy, illustrated by the recent HIPs; these should have been based on a ‘rolling annual review’ and an participatory consultation that has not been consistently applied. [§35, 212]

xxii. ERC results are not sufficiently publicised and implementing partners are often unaware of other projects funded by ERC. [§62]

xxiii. At the field level, ERC-funded activities are often not sufficiently visible, in particular in protracted, hidden crises where results of ERC-funded activities have been found scattered. Visibility is higher in rapid onset, large emergencies, although attribution of results remains difficult. [§110, 145, 165, 180-184]

xxiv. Key ERC principles of sustainability, measurability and inclusiveness have been applied to ERC funded projects, and they have contributed to strengthening effectiveness, by connecting outcomes of ERC projects to operational interventions. In particular, ERC support of inclusiveness between UN agencies and NGOs in the Cluster approach has contributed to better coordination, technical support, and a greater pool of experience. The concrete implementation of measurability has progressively improved. Recent ERC projects show indicators that address where relevant outcomes and potential impacts, rather than outputs. Nevertheless, principles are not always applied in a consistent and rigorous fashion because each situation is different, the main objective of ERC – capacity building – is not easy to measure, and the expectations from ERC would need to be backed up by criteria and implementation guidelines. [§170-200]

xxv. The importance of the regional dimension as an intermediary step between global and local levels needs to be outlined. The regional offices of partners in Africa and Asia were able to deliver cost-effective and rapid assistance by experts who were already fully prepared to the local conditions. Although not with ERC funding, MIRA was successfully adapted in some local contexts (KIRA in Kenya, IRNA in South Sudan7). Regional mechanisms for Disaster Risk Reduction (DRR) and resilience8 should play a larger role in the future. RSOs believe that there should be more regional involvement in ERC and anticipate a more useful dialogue and strategy when the Sector Support Team (SST) becomes fully ‘regionalised’. [§37, 111, 140, 172, 175, 211]

Sustainability

xxvi. Many agencies are trying various models for achieving sustainability with varying degrees of success; sustainability of funded capacities is hard to ensure, and it often takes more than one round of funding to develop ownership, and change attitudes and mind sets. For the partners who are implementing innovative projects or working in new areas, it is not always clear on how sustainability will be achieved. [§194-195, 202-207]

xxvii. Overall, international partner agencies have been able to achieve sustainability after initial ERC funding and to enlarge their donors’ base – although generally with significant challenges. This is partly due to the relative flexibility of ERC in allowing in some cases several rounds of successive funding to achieve sustainability, and to the active support of SST members and HQ experts - despite the lack of a consistent exit strategy in the ERC Guidelines. Whilst some agencies and NGOs have been able to institutionalise ERC outputs into core budgets, others are still struggling. [§213-226, 229]

7 Respectively: Kenya Inter-Agency Rapid Assessment; Initial Rapid Needs Assessment
8 Such as the ASEAN Agreement on Disaster Management and Emergency Response (AADMER)
It was found that, through ERC funding, ECHO is in a way ‘double hatted’, as (co-)funding agency for the establishment or strengthening of initiatives and services, and at the same time in its role as a major operational humanitarian donor, being the ‘indirect beneficiary’ of this enhanced capacity. This situation, which promotes efficiency gains, also creates a challenge for exit strategies, since ECHO has a strong interest (together with other humanitarian donors) that proven and value-adding capacities will be maintained. As a result, ERC has been providing seed funding⁹ to support e.g. development, field-testing and roll-out of new and innovative initiatives, but also some continued funding to maintain built capacities pending support from other funding sources. [§ 230-236]

**Key recommendations** (see also chapter B.5 for a complete list of all recommendations; the prioritised recommendations below have kept the same numbers as in chapter B.5)

### Relevance and appropriateness – objectives and priorities of ERC

(R1) The Guidelines should clarify the specific objectives and the definition of the ERC initiative, which must be commensurate with the management resources and the budget. Based on evaluation findings, a new specific objective of ERC should be added: ‘to provide seed money/driver where other funding sources are not adequate and contribute to bring in systemic changes in terms of global humanitarian response capacities, by helping to create an enabling environment, filling gaps detrimental to overall response capacity, funding pilot initiatives, speeding up key processes, and leveraging other funds’. [EQs 1, 6]

(R2) A comprehensive revision of the needs should be carried out with the inputs of key stakeholders, relevant to the strategic dialogue with partners and ECHO’s policy priorities; the list of needs should be revised to focus on the outstanding items among the original list (mostly) and some new ones (see R3), to streamline/reduce the list and corresponding budget spreading. Priority areas of future HIPs should be focused accordingly. [EQs 1, 6]

### 3Cs with Civil Protection, EU Member States, development actors

(R5) Upcoming ERC HIPs should include requests for proposals for the coordination of humanitarian actors with EU Civil Protection organisations or with aid cooperation agencies of EU Member States, some of which are already members of the ECHO FPA. [EQ2]

(R6) ERC should fund simulation L-3 exercises, TRIPLEX-type, with potential high level of visibility for ERC/ ECHO and possibility of monitoring, in disaster-prone countries. Such exercises could include UN agencies, government/local authorities, civ-mil coordination, Civil Protection, EU aid cooperation agencies, regional DRR/resilience mechanisms, and private sector actors. [EQ9]

### Effectiveness – updated support to projects

(R9) The clusters supported so far should be encouraged to continue seeking other sources of funding to support their structural costs at the global level. [EQ11]

(R10) Nevertheless, pending fully workable exit strategies or LRRD with other funding sources, ERC should remain flexible in maintaining (steadily decreasing as feasible) ‘continued funding’ financial support for (a) those clusters which have come later in the process and are still building up their capacities (Health, Shelter); (b) some key and/or particularly expensive components such as the RRTs; and (c) humanitarian Leadership activities. [EQ11]

(R11) In order to continue promoting good practice in terms of governance among the few clusters that may still be in need of further funding and capacity building (such as Early Recovery, crucial for LRRD and resilience), ERC should apply some minimum conditions for funding in terms of

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⁹ i.e. initial investment raised at the outset of a new humanitarian initiative to allow for its development.
lead arrangement and governance –including aspects of ownership, strategic planning, and accountability. [EQ11] (R13) ERC should fund an independent mapping and review exercise (probably OCHA-led) of the global CNA sphere, taking stock of the developments since the first ACE mapping study in 2008 (also funded by ECHO) and highlighting future priorities. Such a study should integrate the lessons learnt from recent L-3 crises but also low-visibility situations; it should address the issues of complementarity of major CNA initiatives and suggest a model for an adequate task division and responsibility sharing of the different initiatives – covering multi- and single sectors. [EQ10] (R15) ERC should stimulate the development of initiatives similar to KIRA in conducive countries or regions, together with a mapping. [EQ10] (R18-19) There is a need to better define what ‘local capacity building’ practically means in the context of ERC objectives and budget capacities. In this framework, ERC should encourage more projects to be submitted which could include budget lines for strengthening local preparedness, with precise identification of what the needs are in capacity building, and a clear strategy to build ownership and link this approach to operational programming (possibly following a HIP priority area). [EQs 1, 8] (R20) In parallel, ERC should support more projects dedicated primarily to defining good practices in matters of fruitful partnerships between international and local NGOs. [EQ8] (R21) ERC should fund (after HIP call for proposals) more projects aiming specifically at enhancing response to chronic crises, or develop relevant components of global projects, in close coordination with geographical funding where feasible. [EQ11] (R22) ERC should find ways to fund regional capacities (DRR bodies, regional emergency coordination advisers, surge capacity, contextual adaptation of global tools such as MIRA, training facilities) where relevant and feasible. [EQ8] 

Efficiency - management

(R23) To carry out an internal advocacy action among field staff (ECHO RSOs and concerned country TAs) to ensure their adherence to the ERC procedures and enhance their buy-in and systematic involvement in the selection and monitoring of ERC projects. [EQs 4, 14] (R24) To ensure that examples of good practice in terms of pre-submission dialogue and selection of ERC projects (e.g. the PANIS Working Group) are applied consistently within ECHO. [EQ14] (R25) There is a need for a comprehensive and flexible list of criteria to be attached to the Guidelines, which would further ensure that the selection of ERC projects is as transparent, consistent, objective, and rigorous as possible (a tentative list of criteria is proposed in Annex L). [EQs 7, 14] (R26) ERC should liaise more closely with the operational desks, to integrate as relevant and feasible some of the most practically usable outcomes of ERC projects into geographical programming. [EQs 4, 8, 14] (R29). The ERC monitoring reports should be better shared between the relevant ERC staff from Brussels, the SST experts, the concerned regional experts in the RSOs (pending regionalisation of SSTs and their integration into RSOs) and the country TAs. The monitoring of ERC should also be more inclusive and involve systematically the concerned RSO experts and country TAs. [EQ14] (R30) ERC needs also to capture systematically information about continued funding of ERC initiatives by ECHO operational budget, in order to monitor impact. [EQs 12, 14] (R31) An appraisal of projects involving training is needed; good practices on professional and effective training approaches and practitioners must be captured and disseminated. [EQ14] (R34) The principle of Sustainability, which in the Guidelines is mostly a collection of activities and means, should be redrafted to propose a definition and the expectations of ERC. [EQ12] (R36) To improve the transparency, visibility and pro-active information policy about ERC objectives and achievements. ERC should be more visible, easily accessible and the list of ERC funded projects should be regularly updated on ECHO’s website. All agencies which have completed an ERC-funded project should contribute to this communication effort by drafting some short fact sheet outlining the achievements, to be posted on ECHO’s website. [EQ3]
**Sustainability, exit strategy and continued funding**

(R38-39) A chapter on the ERC exit strategy needs to be included in the Guidelines; a three-pronged strategy by ERC, ECHO and the partners is recommended, which would include (a) to consider with flexibility the optimum number of funding rounds necessary (possibly with gradually decreasing amounts); (b) to enhance dialogue with other major donors to promote options for longer-term funding and exit strategies; and (c) to request from the partners a *mid-term sustainability / durability plan*, which should outline expected timelines and anticipated capacity to use own funds / core budget to ensure durability. [EQs 13, 16]

(R40-41) ERC should develop the concept of ‘continued funding’, with exit strategy, limited timeline and budget, steadily decreasing as feasible; each proposal should be classified as seed funding or continued funding, and simplified procedures should be applied in the Single Form for continued funding. [EQs 11, 12, 16]
Table 1: Summary Matrix

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Main conclusions</th>
<th>Key recommendations</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>The ERC Guidelines are generally appropriate to their task. There would however</td>
<td>The Guidelines should clarify the specific objectives</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>still be a need for further clarifications in terms of “vision, mission and values”.</td>
<td>and the definition of ERC, which must be commensurate with the management resources and</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>the budget.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Needs identified in 2009 must be reviewed in the light of achievements and new</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>challenges.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>At the field level, ERC-funded activities are often not sufficiently visible,</td>
<td>ERC should be more assertive in communicating publicly; it must be more visible,</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>in particular in protracted, hidden crises. ERC results are not sufficiently</td>
<td>and partners should contribute to outlining achievements.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>publicised. Visibility is higher in rapid onset, large emergencies, although</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>attribution of results remains difficult.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Involvement and timely consultation of RSO experts and country TAs, as well as</td>
<td>To carry out internal advocacy among field staff to ensure buy-in and adherence to ERC</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>field monitoring, is not yet optimum.</td>
<td>procedures.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>The consultative process involving the RSOs and country TAs needs to become more</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>timely, to improve field monitoring, possible cross-fertilisation of projects, and</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>ultimate impact in terms of quality of aid delivery in geographical programming.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>There is as yet no definitive, written list of criteria for project selection in</td>
<td>A comprehensive and flexible list of criteria needs to be attached to the</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>the ERC Guidelines.</td>
<td>Guidelines.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Selection procedures of ERC projects do not appear fully consistent among all</td>
<td>Internal management procedures must be further standardised.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ECHO TWGs and management levels.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The importance of the regional dimension as an intermediary step between global</td>
<td>There should be more regional involvement in ERC.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>and local levels needs to be outlined.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Principles of measurability and sustainability are not always applied in a</td>
<td>Principles must be clarified; examples of good practice in measuring training must</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>consistent and rigorous fashion.</td>
<td>be disseminated; monitoring reports must be better shared between HQ and field</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(sustainability – see below).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ERC is generally regarded as a good and useful financial tool for humanitarian</td>
<td>To continue funding new initiatives with due flexibility; to keep supporting already</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>aid. In particular, key humanitarian tools have been rolled out, and ERC has</td>
<td>funded resources, ITA and clusters only if duly justified and targeted.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>significantly supported ITA and the Cluster system; eight clusters, OCHA’s role,</td>
<td>New strategic priorities must be considered (e.g. selected clusters, local NGOs, EC-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>coordinated needs assessment tools, and surge capacity in large emergencies.</td>
<td>EU coordination, simulation exercises).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>To further analyse preparedness and DRR in the light of ERC objectives and realistic</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>capacities.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Common Needs Assessments and other tools/initiatives have however become</td>
<td>To fund an independent review, probably OCHA-led, about streamlining and coordination</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>numerous and need streamlining – such as the respective roles of MIRA and ACAPS.</td>
<td>between existing tools.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sustainability remains a challenge, especially for local capacity building in</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>contexts of poor local governance and scarce resources.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>There are contiguous challenges of realistic exit strategy and LRRD with other</td>
<td>To support good practices in partnership between INGOs and LNGOs. To enhance LRRD</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>donors after the end of ERC funding.</td>
<td>dialogue with Delegations in the context of JHDF.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>To develop concept of continued funding.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>To follow a three-pronged approach: flexible assessment of numbers of funding</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>rounds required; more discussions with EU and other donors about alternative</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>continued funding; drafting of mid-term sustainability / durability plan by the</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>partners.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
B. MAIN REPORT

1 INTRODUCTION

1. Background to ERC and the evaluation

1. As one of the largest humanitarian donors, ECHO has long recognised its responsibility in contributing to an improved humanitarian response system and providing financial support to the capacities of key humanitarian actors. An important element of the capacity building funding strategy of ECHO has therefore been the contribution of funding originally known as ‘Thematic Funding’ (TF) and ‘Grant Facility’ (GF) allowing respectively the UN and NGO implementing partners to enhance their institutional capacity to respond to humanitarian situations in a more efficient, effective, and sustainable way. The partners were also expected to improve their capacity to avoid gaps in the response, to coordinate more effectively and to ensure that the affected communities are enabled/empowered to develop their own capacities and resilience.

2. In May 2008, an external evaluation report was submitted to ECHO regarding the TF and GF approaches. The evaluation recommended to rename the TF into a ‘Capacity Building’ (CB) programme, so as to better reflect its purpose. Since TF tended to exclude smaller NGO partners who may nevertheless have played an essential role in disaster preparedness and response, it was also recommended to integrate the TF and GF into a consolidated mechanism aiming at strengthening the global humanitarian system, and to develop accordingly a 5-year strategy.

3. ECHO decided to follow the recommendations. Guidelines were prepared after a stakeholders consultation process, and were endorsed in September 2009. These guidelines have been applied from 2010 onwards, for a period of 5 years. In the 2010 Guidelines, the two CB and GF components were combined into the Enhanced Response Capacity (ERC) funding to increase impact, facilitate a joint donor approach, and provide a longer term framework. The ERC was allocated an annual budget of up to €24 million

4. Section 3 of the ERC Guidelines specifies that a mid-term evaluation of the 5-years strategy and programme will be made. The ToR of the present evaluation (chap 3.1) accordingly define the Overall Objective as: ‘to provide an independent structured evaluation of the results of the action in the sector, taking account of: (i) the Regulation (EC) 1257/96 concerning Humanitarian Aid; (ii) the general evaluation and reporting requirements of the European Commission; and (iii) certain cross-cutting aspects’. The scope of the evaluation has covered the ERC-funded projects between 2010 and 2013. In this framework, the ToR have listed three Specific Objectives for the evaluation, as follows:

- to review how ERC/GF/CB funding has performed as measured against the criteria of the 2010 - 2015 Guidelines;
- informed by the evaluation of this performance of ERC/GF/CB funding since 2010 and by the evolutions in the global humanitarian context, to make concrete recommendations for how the Guidelines/strategy could be revised for future application;
- to review the coherence between ERC funding with major Commission/ECHO policy documents for humanitarian aid, and ensure that these inform any recommendations for revisions of the Guidelines/strategy.
1.B. Outline of the report

5. In accordance with the requirements of section 11 of the ToR, the main body of the present report provides the following elements:
   - purpose and scope in chapter 1.1;
   - methodology and challenges in chapter 2;
   - evidence and analysis subdivided by evaluation question in chapter 3;
   - conclusions and recommendations respectively in chapters 4 and 5.

6. In addition, the Annexes to the report integrate the four ‘other tasks’ required in section 3.3 of the ToR, i.e. to “assess how the results of the 2008 evaluation on ‘Thematic Funding’ have been taken into account” (Annex E), the ‘statement about the validity of the evaluation’ (Annex F), the proposal for dissemination of evaluation results (Annex G), and an abstract of 200 words (Annex H).

2 METHODOLOGICAL NOTE

2.A. Overall methodological approach

7. In accordance with the ToR, the evaluation team has performed a significant number of tasks, in a participative approach through regular contacts with the ECHO evaluation manager and the members of the Steering Group, in particular concerning the methodology, selection of field studies, preliminary findings, and four scheduled meetings (discussions about the Inception, Desk, Field and Draft Final reports).

8. Throughout the three phases of the evaluation (desk, field and synthesis), the team has performed a triangulation approach of findings, through documentary reviews, interviews, field visits and online survey. The team has in particular: collected and analysed the documents relevant to ERC and provided by ECHO (Guidelines, HIPs, Single Forms, FicheOps) and most implementing agencies (policies, reports); interviewed key ECHO staff at HQ and during field visits; interviewed representatives of key implementing partners in Brussels and at HQ level in Geneva, Rome and New York; carried out two regional field case studies in the Horn of Africa and in South and South-East Asia; and disseminated an online survey to all ECHO’s FPA and FAFA partners. The collected evidence was deemed appropriate to obtain evidence-based patterns of findings, leading to corresponding conclusions and recommendations.

9. A key tool used by the team has been the evaluation matrix, which has been fined-tuned during the inception period, and which has integrated the 16 main evaluation questions (subdivided as relevant into sub-questions), together with the corresponding judgment criteria and indicators, as well as information sources. The present report is built upon the above mentioned prior work.

2.B. Evaluation team

10. The core team was made of three senior evaluators: Michel Vanbruane – TL, Peter Holdsworth and Michael Kunze. Their expertise was respectively focused on ECHO and EU institutional issues, NGOs and UN partners.

11. The core team was complemented by two short-term international experts: Marie Spaak (IASC Transformative Agenda, cluster system, 2008 evaluation, gender) and Matias Calvo (online survey). In most field visits, the core team was assisted by national experts: Philimon Majwa (Kenya, South Sudan), Abibu Tamu (Ethiopia), and Maria Lourdes Espinoza (Philippines).
2.C. Field visits

12. A triangulation also took place between geographical areas and types of humanitarian situations (conflicts, natural disasters, rapid or slow onset crises, large emergencies of Level-3), high visibility and forgotten crises, where the UN cluster systems has been activated or not). After discussions with the Steering Group, it was decided to conduct two regional visits, as follows.

- **Horn of Africa** from 24th March to 4th April, focusing on Kenya (regional offices of partners, drought of 2011), Ethiopia and Somalia (natural disasters and protracted conflict, slow onset/low visibility crises), South Sudan (sudden onset, conflict, L-3 emergency with mobilisation of surge capacity for all clusters), and the regional perspective from the ECHO RSO in Nairobi.
- **South and South-East Asia** from 22nd April to 6th May, with focus on: chronic / low visibility crises (Pakistan, Bangladesh); RSO perspectives (Delhi, Bangkok); sudden onset – natural disaster: L-3 in the Philippines, with the first-ever complete mobilisation of all IASC Transformative Agenda instruments that have been strongly supported by ERC (OCHA coordination function, surge capacity for clusters, needs assessment tools).

2.D. Online survey

13. Based on a collaborative approach, the survey was launched on 3rd April and closed on 3rd May; it remained open during 1 full month, with two reminders. It was disseminated to all the implementing partners of ECHO, either FPA or FAFA (196 agencies). Despite this wide approach, the return was relatively weak as it provided 56 responses, which represents 28.6% of the recipients but can nonetheless be considered as significant. A

2.E. Limitations and challenges

14. Constraints were met at several levels (see also Annex F):

- The number of ERC projects under review (59 over 4 years), as well as their scope and complexity, led the evaluation to rely regularly on secondary data e.g. for information on impact. However, final reports were sometimes not yet available in the Single Forms for the most recent years; whilst standard monitoring reports can be found in the FicheOps of some 70% of the projects (see §96 and 210), measuring ERC capacity building and training is much more complex than operational aid delivery, and requires follow up. Interviewed ECHO field staff (RSO and country TAs) often felt that the process was not yet adequate and that they had not been sufficiently involved in monitoring performed by ECHO HQ and SST.
- The large number – 16 - of evaluation questions (EQ), many of which had to be subdivided. This reflects the diversity of approaches and interest within ECHO, but represents also a very significant workload for the evaluation, and is not conducive to complying with the ToR requirement to restrict the length of the present report to 50 pages (plus annexes). This was compounded by the request after the first Draft Final Report that each main chapter should be self-standing, which requires a minimum level of duplications (see below), and could be used as a ‘tool’ with distinct conclusions and recommendations.
- Some of the EQs touch also directly or indirectly themes that are similar or contiguous to each other (sustainability, exit strategies etc). References to ‘local capacity building’ are for example to be found under EQs 1 (ERC objectives), 2 (EU Consensus), 3 (Good Humanitarian Donorship), 6 (budget), 8 (local preparedness and response), 10 (needs assessment) and 12 (sustainability and impact). This has entailed a large number of cross-references, which in turn

10 Several studies conclude that the expense of increasing the response rate frequently is not justified given the difference in survey accuracy. One early example of a finding was reported by Visser, Krosnick, Marquette and Curtin (1996) who showed that surveys with lower response rates (near 20%) yielded more accurate measurements than did surveys with higher response rates (near 60 or 70%).
has not favoured the readability and access of the main report. Furthermore, several OECD/DAC criteria are often mixed in the same EQs, which did not allow a higher level alignment of the main chapters into relevance, effectiveness, etc.

- During field visits in Asia, distance assessment (phone conversation with country offices and inputs from ECHO regional experts) had to be performed on Bangladesh and Pakistan, due to denial of visa (Pakistan) and instructions from ECHO (Bangladesh).
- Considering the high levels of commitment and dedication to their tasks by many implementing partners of ERC, the evaluation has often collected opinions, which were sometimes – inevitably - biased and difficult to integrate into balanced judgments.

15. These constraints have however not affected the validity of the conclusions; the statements delivered by the many stakeholders interviewed at HQ and field level could generally be cross-checked. Triangulation of findings through documentary sources and online survey further ensured overall validity. Whilst global humanitarian systems were well covered, this was somewhat less the case for local capacity building, where the collective expertise of the team members was required to compensate scattered evidence.
3 FINDINGS REGARDING EVALUATION QUESTIONS

3.1 Questions (1-6) addressing the overall objective of the evaluation

1. To what extent have the initiative’s general, specific and operational objectives proved relevant to the overall needs in the area of Humanitarian Aid?

1.A. Background

16. The priorities for the global humanitarian system - and thus ERC allocations - over the past few years, have been those set by the mega-crisis of 2010 such as the Haiti earthquake and the Pakistan floods. The years 2013 and 2014 have provided the first major test of how the global system had been improved, in responding to four simultaneous Level 3 (L-3) crises, including typhoon Haiyan in the Philippines.

17. The evaluation has focused a large share of its approach throughout the documentary analysis, HQ meetings, field visits and online survey, in attempting to define the new priorities that may now be emerging, and envisaging how the ERC approach could be revised to best meet those needs.

18. The present general question requires a three-step approach: (1) to analyse the objectives, elements of which appear to be disseminated in several sections of the ERC Guidelines (1.B-C) –; (2) to review the overall humanitarian needs which have been listed in 2009 in the Guidelines, in the light of the achievements of the last four years (1.D-G); and (3) to list new actual or potential overall needs as they emerged from the analysis carried out across the various Evaluation Questions (1.H).

1.B. Appropriateness of ERC Guidelines

19. The ERC Guidelines (see Annex B) must be seen as the ‘mandate’ that validates the annual expenditure of €24 million. Six of the 16 evaluation questions (EQ) therefore relate directly to them: the present one, which examines the overall relevance of the document; EQs 2 (coherence and complementarity with major international initiatives), 7 (selection criteria), 12 (principles), 13 (entry and exit strategies) and 14 (effectiveness, allocation of funds).

20. The Guidelines are generally appropriate to their task, as they successively: highlight the objectives and concrete policy directions of ERC; speak in broad terms about the mechanics; explain the challenges and corresponding needs-driven principles that regulate the types of projects to be funded; and identify a number of overall needs, gaps and activities on which ERC funding should be focused.

21. In particular, the very broad ‘mission statement’ (below) and the comprehensive overview of humanitarian approaches which have been duly captured in the nine ERC principles11, ensure the overall relevance of the initiative.

1.C. Adequacy of ERC objectives (as defined in the Guidelines) to humanitarian needs

22. There would however be a need in the Guidelines for further clarifications in terms of specific and operational objectives (below), definitions (EQ6), transparent criteria for selecting projects (EQ7 and Annex L), better understanding of some of the principles (EQ12), and updating identified needs (below). A SWOT analysis of the Guidelines can be found in Annex I, and the intervention logic (as presented in the technical proposal and amended after evaluation analysis) is attached in Annex J.

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11 The need to strengthen local capacities; decision-making on the basis of needs and demand; focus; inclusiveness; sustainability; measurability; a joint approach; innovativeness and mainstreaming; active involvement.
23. The ERC objectives are mentioned in Section 2, §1 of the Guidelines (‘Policy directions’) but need to be interpreted and complemented by elements disseminated in the other sections and the annexes. They can be assessed as follows.

24. The ultimate (or general) objective of ERC is to ‘in the longer term – save lives in a more efficient and effective manner’. This relates more to a ‘vision’ than a ‘mission statement’ and is properly humanitarian, but quite distantly related to a funding instrument which aims primarily at overall capacity building and ‘impacting on international policies and practices at the level of global systems’ (below). This approach arguably intends to make the ERC initiative consistent with ECHO’s legal basis (the Humanitarian Regulation (EC) No 1257/96) whose first principal objective (Art 2.a) is ‘to save and preserve life...’, even though the said Regulation does not include any provision that specifically mentions capacity building.

25. The next sentence – although this is not described as such – can be seen as a specific objective: ‘Capacity building investments should contribute to strengthening and optimising the global humanitarian preparedness and response capacity’. EQ 6, which looks at elements of cost-effectiveness vs proposed achievements, has assessed the Guidelines from the angle of the definition provided for ERC (Annex I to the Guidelines, §1-2); this definition contains an element that is quite relevant to complement the above: the ‘ultimate ambition’ of ERC is ‘to impact on international policies and practices’, mainly at the level of ‘systems’, which extend beyond the individual and organisational levels (i.e. the two other levels considered) to ‘systems of organisations, their interfaces and the institutions that guide them’.

26. There are no ‘operational objectives’ mentioned as such in the Guidelines. The ERC principles (Annex I to the Guidelines) should be followed ‘stringently’ to ensure that ERC building efforts achieve more impact. The principles are assessed under EQ12, and are all quite relevant to the overall needs of humanitarian aid. Elements of operational objectives can also be found among the Policy Directions (section 2), which insist e.g. on monitoring framework, networking, local capacity building, or support to coordination and clusters.

1.D. Relevance of identified humanitarian needs in the Guidelines

27. Operational objectives should rather be found in the seven generic identified needs (Annex II to the Guidelines). These needs have been identified through a number of consultations with ECHO staff and knowledgeable external partners and stakeholders in 2008 and 2009, as follows.

Table 2: Main Humanitarian Needs identified in ERC Guidelines (needs assessment initiatives)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>(1) Resources</th>
<th>Field leadership, surge capacity, long-term predictable funding.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>(2) Coordination and roll out of the cluster approach</td>
<td>Further strengthening of global clusters and coordination for field roll-out, local clusters, common guidelines and tools, inclusive partnerships UN – NGOs, civ-mil, cooperation with country authorities and regional organisations.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(3) Rapid needs assessment and related methodologies</td>
<td>Classification of severity of disasters, linkages between various assessment initiative</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(5) Local capacity building</td>
<td>Including local government structures, especially in early recovery.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(6) Quality, accountability and respect of humanitarian laws and principles</td>
<td>(Self-explanatory).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(7) Logistics and other needs</td>
<td>Cross-cutting issues such as gender, protection, security; logistics, prepositioning and stockpiling.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
28. The participatory process to the definition of the above needs has ensured that they duly corresponded to humanitarian priorities when the Guidelines were published.

1.E. Cost-effectiveness: objectives, identified needs and ERC budget

29. The ERC budget is limited to €24 million a year, which is commensurate to ‘seed’ funding of carefully targeted priorities but represents less than 1.8% of ECHO’s overall annual budget in 2012\textsuperscript{12}; additional funds would require a specific management decision by ECHO.

30. A detailed analysis of the budget spreading between the above needs over the period 2010 – 2013 can be found in table 4 under EQ6. Shares by decreasing order were as follows: support to clusters has amounted to more than half of the total (53.1%); resources – in particular costs of personnel – has included a variable but significant share of most projects (between 40 and 60%); logistics and ‘other needs’ have accounted for 35.3%; needs assessment tools for 9.5%; DRR for 5.8%; respect of humanitarian laws for 4.3%; local capacity building is not quantifiable as such, being usually included as a component in many ERC projects (see §112).

31. As also highlighted in chapter 6 below, the potential scale of some of the specific priorities (enabling environment for DRR, local capacity building, prepositioning and stockpiling) is hardly compatible with the annual ERC budget, except if the definition of ERC is revised to focus on the leveraging effect that a relatively small funding can achieve, rather than assuming the possibility of larger programmatic or continued funding.

1.F. Coherence of annual ERC HIPs with identified needs in the Guidelines

32. Specific (or operational) objectives can also be found, together with corresponding priority areas of the annual HIPs (Humanitarian Implementation Plans), as shown in the table below. Partners generally depend on HIPs for guidance on submitting their proposals. It should be noted that the ‘principal objective’ for the funding decisions in 2010 and 2011 related to the Guidelines’ specific aim rather than the ultimate/general one.

33. Each of the four ERC HIPs for the period 2010-2013 is compliant with the identified needs outlined in the Guidelines. They also present priority areas that all fall within the global frameworks mentioned above.

34. However, the two identified needs of ‘local capacity building’ and ‘quality/accountability’ have never been specifically targeted in any priority area. Conversely, food assistance and nutrition appears as a major theme in each annual HIP, whilst the sector is only mentioned in the Guidelines as a secondary activity under Emergency Preparedness: this recurrent priority is due to the fact that food assistance has benefitted from a separate budget line, which has allocated €5m to ERC funding decisions throughout the period.

\textsuperscript{12} ECHO’s total annual budget for 2012 amounted to €1344 million; source: annual report, ECHO web site.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>HIP, Period of Implementation and Principal Objective (PO)</th>
<th>Specific Objectives</th>
<th>Priority Areas</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>ECHO/THM/BUD/2010/01000 01/01/2010 – 31/12/2011</td>
<td>To increase the effectiveness and reinforce the capacity of international humanitarian organisations and stakeholders to assess, analyse, prepare and respond to humanitarian needs during man-made and/or natural disasters and their immediate aftermath in a coordinated and inclusive manner.</td>
<td>Humanitarian coordination</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>To reinforce the capacity of international humanitarian organisations and stakeholders to deliver more varied and appropriate forms of food assistance, during emergencies and their immediate aftermath.</td>
<td>Resources – Analysis and implementation capacities</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Coordination in the food sector</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Strengthening nutritional perspectives within food assistance assessments and interventions</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ECHO/ERC/BUD/2011/0100001/01/2011 – 31/12/2012</td>
<td>To increase the effectiveness and reinforce the capacity of international humanitarian organisations and non-governmental organisations to assess, analyse, prepare and respond to humanitarian needs during man-made and/or natural disasters and their immediate aftermath in a coordinated and inclusive manner.</td>
<td>Civil-military coordination and logistics</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>To reinforce the capacity of international humanitarian organisations and non-governmental organisations to deliver more varied and appropriate forms of food assistance, during emergencies and their immediate aftermath.</td>
<td>Food assistance (including support to nutrition-related initiatives)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>To improve the capacity of international organisations and stakeholders involved in disaster risk reduction to deliver advocacy and to elaborate new and improved mechanisms and methodologies to be used by partners for disaster risk reduction purposes.</td>
<td>Disaster Risk Reduction and Climate Change Adaptation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ECHO/ERC/BUD/2012/91000 01/012012 – 31/12/2013</td>
<td>N/A</td>
<td>Enhanced global humanitarian architecture</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PO replaced by a rationale: Investments through ERC funding into the global humanitarian system lead to more rapid and more cost-effective humanitarian responses, allowing a better and a broader coverage</td>
<td></td>
<td>Food assistance and nutrition</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ECHO/ERC/BUD/2013/01000 01/01/2013 – 31/12/2014</td>
<td>N/A</td>
<td>Enhanced global humanitarian architecture (as above)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PO replaced by a rationale (as above)</td>
<td></td>
<td>Food assistance and nutrition (as above)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
35. The guidelines specifically state (first bullet point under Policy Directions) that the focus areas given in Annex II should be ‘annually reviewed against internationally defined and agreed global needs and matched against the Commission’s priorities...’. The guidelines further state (last § of Implementation) that ‘the strategy will be subject to a rolling annual review regarding the priority areas for financing’. This is a commendable and sensible approach, particularly to enable the ERC management structure to take advantage of the changing trends in humanitarian aid through re-examining the seven areas of activity on a regular basis, with the possibility of decreasing – or dropping - some and introducing others, and concurrently to focus on precise elements within each area rather than becoming involved in too many. The approach has been followed in the HIPs in 2010 and 2011, but has been replaced in 2012 and 2013 by similar, generic, objectives and areas of priority. As submitting partners generally expect guidance from the HIPs, this situation has been perceived by some partners as reflecting a lack of strategic vision; ECHO on its part argues that this has allowed to better align some contracts with the 24 months funding cycle of ERC.

1.G. Effectiveness and outstanding issues in the implementation of identified needs

36. Thanks partly to ERC funding, the objectives of some of the needs identified in 2009 have now been fulfilled to a significant extent. Meetings with HQs of partners and field visits have outlined the following results and outstanding issues.

(a) Resources – the humanitarian leadership structure (i.e. Humanitarian Coordinators, their deputies and teams - HC, DHC, HCT) seems to have been adequately funded, although the impact of training is constrained by high staff turnover and OCHA – among others - is still pursuing its efforts to complete its roster with suitable profiles. The very large and adequate surge deployment in response to typhoon Haiyan in the Philippines (approx. 900 UN staff, including 160 from OCHA), whether funded by ERC or other sources, has demonstrated that ‘seed money’ for surge capacities has fulfilled its objective (see EQ11). Follow-up funding should be regarded as a core part of the concerned institutions and should be funded by different means as soon as feasible, except where more capacity is still needed (see clusters below).

(b) Supporting Cluster Approach – eight global clusters have been funded by ERC, with commendable results in the assessed L-3 situations (EQ11). The WASH cluster is a good example of a diversity of actors sharing the work and responsibility, making the response system stronger and enabling the cluster to scale up more easily in times of need for more resources. ERC continued funding should be steadily decreased as much as possible, to encourage these clusters to seek longer-term, programmatic sources of funding to support their structural costs at the global level. Other global clusters which are still building up their governance structures should be supported. Inter-cluster coordination mechanisms need further support, as well as DRR national authorities – linked with national clusters - and DRR regional structures in high risk areas, and some types of effective support structures of global clusters at the regional level, such as the WASH RECA.

(c) Needs Assessment – the needs assessment tools, both multi- and single-sector (see EQ10) have been adequately funded with seed money; the (co)funding has supported both sector-based tools which have become ‘quasi-standards’ in the four targeted sectors, and multi-sector / multi-cluster assessment tools which have been informed and enabled by the single sector tools in a number of instances. However, the 2009 description had outlined a gap that is still largely present and should be further supported by targeted advocacy actions: ‘Initiatives for common (and rapid) needs assessment methodologies and tools exist, but are not (yet, sufficiently) joined up. Duplication, assessment gaps and competition between various assessment initiatives are a logical result’.

(d) Emergency Preparedness, DRR – a very broad field of activities, which is contiguous to DIPECHO’s area of focus and to the global theme of ‘resilience’. An additional analysis (perhaps in the guise of a theory of change) is required about what ERC can realistically expect to achieve with targeted seed funding to enhance DRR capacities.
(e) **Local Capacity Building** – this other crucial but extremely vast issue, which has nevertheless not been targeted in a HIP priority area, would also require as a preliminary a better understanding of what it may mean in the context of ERC objectives and budget capacities. Collecting and disseminating good practices in terms of partnership between international and local NGOs may e.g. represent a valuable approach.

(f) **Quality, accountability and respect of humanitarian principles and law** encompasses quite a broad sector and lacks in some cases in definability - which is perhaps why it has not been translated either into a HIP priority area; where accountability relates to affected populations, the evaluation team saw good efforts being made by OCHA with its communications with communities (CwC) project, by many of the NGOs and by ERC itself through the BBC-MA project. Such approaches may be targeted for further support, although with due coordination with contiguous initiatives.

(g) **Logistical activities** have been adequately funded by ERC and have effectively strengthened the global capacities of WFP and IFRC. They should now be funded from operational budgets and not be part of any future list of ERC priorities, except if duly justified. Among ‘other needs’, gender, protection and security are recurrent humanitarian issues due to new developing crises, new challenges and staff turnover, and are bound to be further funded.

1.H. **Tentative list of updated humanitarian needs to be funded by ERC**

37. Based on the above analysis, and drawing also from conclusions detailed under other EQs (the numbers are indicated below in each case), the tentative list of remaining operational humanitarian needs which could be considered for funding by ERC to implementing partners (this list does not include recommendations on procedures, donor coordination or internal studies) can be summarised as follows.

- **Resources** – such as RRTs and surge capacity, should be funded only if duly justified and targeted (EQ11).

- **Clusters** – to focus ERC support on those clusters who have come later in the process and are demonstrating valuable efforts in building up their governance, strategies and capacities (Health, Shelter – in particular HLP rights, possibly Early Recovery) – EQ11.

- The need identified in 2009 for ‘cooperation with (DRR) national authorities – when they are adequately linked to national clusters - and regional organisations’ in high risk areas, as well as proven/effective global cluster’s regional levels (advisers, surge capacity, contextual adaptation of global tools such as MIRA, training facilities) would also need further support, together with the strengthening of inter-cluster coordination mechanisms (EQs 9, 11).

- **Needs assessment**: to fund an independent follow-up review on needs assessment tools, probably led by OCHA, which could serve as a forward-looking basis on coordination between such tools. There may also be a further need for standard classification, such as a clear definition for ‘affected people’ by disasters (EQ 10).

- **Local capacity building** – to support the collection and dissemination of good practices in partnership between INGOs and LNOGs, through a dedicated priority area in a future HIP. (EQ8)

- **Quality and accountability**: to support new initiatives such as communications with communities (CwC) or consolidation phases of the BBC MA project, in a future HIP priority area – (see 1.G).

- ERC funding has to focus more on enhancing responses to chronic emergencies (EQ11).

- Coordination of humanitarian actors with EU civil protection organisations or with aid cooperation agencies of EU Member States, possibly combined with simulation exercises in high-risk countries (EQs 2, 4, 9).

38. An updated mapping of needs and corresponding ERC funding 2010 – 2013 can be found in Annex M to this report.
**Conclusions**

C.1.1. The Guidelines are generally appropriate to their task, and the comprehensive overview of humanitarian approaches and challenges, which have been captured in the nine ERC principles, ensure the overall relevance of the initiative. However, the general objective relates more to a very broad ‘vision’ than a ‘mission statement’; there are no clear specific or operational objectives mentioned as such in the Guidelines, which could rather be found in the seven identified priorities.

C.1.2. The ERC budget is limited to €24 million a year, which is adequate for ‘seed’ funding of carefully targeted priorities.

C.1.3. The list of identified needs annexed to the Guidelines is still comprehensive, but some of the needs have now been entirely (logistics) or largely fulfilled (clusters, needs assessments). The Guidelines provided for a (annual) comprehensive revision of the needs; this has not formally taken place, although contacts still happen regularly with partners through various other consultations and fora.

C.1.4. The annual ERC HIPs have been consistent with the Guidelines, although priority areas have never included local capacity building or quality/accountability.

C.1.5. In 2012 and 2013, the HIPs have provided only similar and generic objectives and areas of priority, which has been perceived as a lack of strategic guidance by the submitting partners.

**Recommendations**

R.1.1. The Guidelines should clarify their vision and mission statements, i.e. the general, specific and operational objectives, which must be commensurate with the budget (see also EQ6).

R.1.2. A comprehensive revision of the needs should be carried out with the inputs of key external stakeholders; the list of needs should be revised to focus on the outstanding items among the original list (mostly) and some new ones - as tentatively suggested above – to streamline/reduce the list and corresponding budget spreading (see EQ6). Priority areas of future HIPs should be focused accordingly.
2. To what extent has the ERC initiative proved coherent with, complementary and supportive to related major EU initiatives, such as the Consensus, and as well to related main non-EU initiatives? In view of a revision of the ERC Guidelines, how could coherence and complementarity be further improved?

2.A. Background

39. Against a rapidly changing and increasingly complex background of climate change, internal conflicts, IDP flows and IHL violations, the Commission launched in December 2006 a wide-ranging consultation of stakeholders on the main issues confronting the EU -as the world's largest international humanitarian aid donor- and implementing organisations. The outcome of this process was a joint statement entitled ‘The European Consensus on Humanitarian Aid’ signed in December 2007 by the three European Institutions (Council, Parliament and Commission). The Consensus sets out the values, guiding principles and policy scope of EU humanitarian aid, and strengthens the EU's capacity to help people suffering in crisis zones across the globe. The Consensus must be seen in the framework of a number of other international initiatives aiming at addressing such global challenges, such as the IASC Transformative Agenda (ITA) or the Hyogo Framework for Action.

2.B. Coherence and complementarity with EU Consensus on Humanitarian Aid

40. A significant number of articles in the Consensus (art 21, 25, 28, 29, 67, 70, 85, 87, 97, 98) are relevant to a varying extent to the ERC Guidelines. Art 21 and 25 emphasise e.g. the role of partnership in the implementation of humanitarian aid and coordination in promoting a coherent international response, with the added emphasis on the strong support that the EU has provided to the central and overall coordinating role of the United Nations, particularly OCHA (art 63, 71 etc), adding that this role is considerably strengthened when OCHA has an active field presence (and a Humanitarian Coordinator is designated and deployed). Nevertheless, whilst it is clear that ECHO in general is endeavouring to address Consensus objectives, and is quite supportive at ECHO’s top management level of the ITA13, the cluster system and OCHA’s role, a reported lack of communication between the ERC manager and the Global Shelter Cluster coordinators or OCHA may have undermined the aims of clauses 21 and 25 of the Consensus and its efforts to promote in all cases an even, equitable, partnership.

41. The 2012 annual report on the implementation of the Consensus14 has duly listed – without ever naming ERC – funded activities in all of the six areas of the Action Plan, such as: promotion of IHL, needs assessment tools, capacity building and training, partnerships, ITA, civ-mil cooperation, or DRR. The effectiveness of the ERC projects is further detailed in EQs 8-11.

42. It should be noted that with the ERC, ECHO is also stretching to the limit its own mandate, which authorises merely ‘small-scale training schemes’ (Art 4 of Regulation 1257/96). Capacity building is only mentioned as such in Art 45 of the Consensus.

2.C. Coherence and complementarity with non-EU initiatives and NGO related initiatives

43. With respect to the ERC framework, the 2010 ERC Guidelines are coherent and supportive of the Humanitarian Reform and the ITA, as well as the Hyogo Framework for Action. They indicate that the capacity building pursued should ‘contribute to strengthening and optimizing the global humanitarian preparedness and response capacity’ and that the Commission will ‘select and

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13 The 2006 Humanitarian Reform focuses on four pillars: humanitarian leadership, clusters, humanitarian financing, and partnerships (added at a later stage) while the 2011 IASC Transformative Agenda focuses on the three key areas/pillars of Leadership, Coordination and Accountability/Strategic Systems.

annually review focus areas that follow internationally defined and agreed global needs, matched against the Commission’s priorities’. The needs identified by ECHO in consultation with partners in 2008 and 2009 fall into seven broad categories, most of which are directly related to the Humanitarian Reform and/or the ITA (see table 2).

44. The Guidelines also state that the Commission will i) ‘prioritise joint proposals of multiple partners’, ‘encourage cooperation, coordination and networking among NGOs’, and ‘seek to ensure that capacity building through International Organisations also benefits NGOs’, all of which can be seen as strengthening the coordination and partnership pillars of the Humanitarian Reform and the ITA; ii) ‘prioritise specific capacity building support to initiatives that consider local capacity building’ and ‘only invest in capacity building efforts for International Organisations that will benefit response capacity at field level’, and iii) ‘actively encourage NGOs to participate in the cluster approach’, which is another way of strengthening the Humanitarian Reform and the ITA (coordination).

45. The four ERC HIPs for the period 2010-2013 (see table 3) are in line with the ERC Guidelines and therefore coherent and complementary to the Humanitarian Reform and ITA as outlined above. Each of them recalls the identified needs outlined in the Annex II of the Guidelines and presents priority areas that all fall within the global frameworks mentioned above.15

46. The HIPs strongly encourage partnerships between NGOs, UN agencies and international organizations (principle of ‘Inclusiveness’ – EQ12) and more than half of the 59 grants under review (34, or 58%) are provided to projects involving several organisations. The vast majority of the grants went to projects directly falling within the framework and objectives of the Humanitarian Reform and ITA (See also EQ11).

47. Among the 59 projects funded by ERC between 2010 and 2013 and considered by this evaluation, three (implemented by the Danish Refugee Council and IRC in various hotspots) went to an NGO initiative to enhance NGO involvement in the humanitarian reform and partnerships between NGOs (national and international), international organizations and UN agencies. The projects gave the International Council for Voluntary Agencies (ICVA), a Geneva-based network of some 80 NGOs active in the humanitarian field that has been engaged in the rolling out of the humanitarian reform, a key coordination role. They focused on enhancing NGO membership and leadership in Humanitarian Reform forums, strengthening in-country coordination mechanisms, and enhancing the participation of NGOs in policy development. The representation of NGOs, in particular national ones, in clusters and the HCT considerably increased.

48. Consistent with the ERC principle of Inclusiveness (but also for cost-effectiveness reasons), ECHO has been consistently encouraging since 2010 the partnership of NGOs through ‘consortiums’. Consortia are thought to be beneficial for ERC, because they brought a collegial perspective – provided that prior and adequate partnership agreements are functioning within consortiums -, which in turn gave a better sense of ownership, and it is a system where the work could be distributed amongst different agencies according to their expertise, specialisations, and capacity. Consortia brought better governance, strategic planning and vision, and ultimately better outcomes based on the willingness to cooperate, use funding more efficiently and avoid situations where, for example, the priorities of clusters are dominated by the agenda of a particular agency or where the project was mandate driven rather than needs driven. This was also an area of partnership for ECHO where local NGOs could be included.

2.D. Areas for improvement in coherence and complementarity

49. Enhanced relations with some other policies and actors: ERC principle 7 (Joint Approach) and the Consensus agree on the necessary coordination of ECHO interventions with other policies (art 22 of the Consensus) that have not yet received a high degree of priority from ERC, such as early

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15 As shown in Table 1, the priority areas in the HIPs for 2012 and 2013 were very broad – not really specific priorities anymore – and quite similar, which both allowed a wider range of proposals to be submitted, and made their selection or rejection sometimes more questionable to the would-be recipients.
recovery (art 22, 77, 78), civil protection (art 57 - 60), EU Member States (art 84, 87) and ‘consular assistance’ (art 22) – which may include EEAS. Along other recommended approaches (see Eqs 10 and 11), upcoming ERC HIPs may include requests for proposals from corresponding actors, such as strengthening of the governance and strategic approach of the Early Recovery cluster (EQ11), coordination of humanitarian actors with EU Civil Protection or with aid cooperation agencies of EU Member States (EQ9), some of which are already members of the ECHO Framework Partnership Agreement.

50. **Local capacity building:** the 1st ERC principle (‘need to strengthen local capacities’) is adequately complemented by art 53 of the Consensus (‘…Local response to coping with humanitarian crisis is a vital component. Local actors are on the front line when disaster strikes suddenly and increasingly also at the core of the humanitarian response in complex emergencies…’).

51. In most ERC-funded projects for capacity building (Hyogo Framework, GBV, Emergency Capacity Building, IFRC with National Societies, vulnerable categories, IHL violations, NGO Humanitarian Reform Project, Food Security, Field Security Training) there is a component that targets local actors, but these actors are often local cluster members or local staff of international agencies. No ERC project has so far been dedicated primarily to defining good practice in matters of fruitful partnerships between INGOs and LNGOs, an issue that has been outlined both in the art 53 of the Consensus (‘…encourage implementing partners in fostering partnership with local organisations…’) and a recent ECHO evaluation on LNGOs.

52. **Taking stock of ERC achievements so far and streamlining relations between existing ERC-supported mechanisms:** the ERC has been funding a variety of initiatives, tools and mechanisms which were meant to be complementary and were expected to achieve a suitable level of coordination between themselves, such as 8 different clusters or a half-dozen needs assessment tools (MIRA, ACAPS, IPC, SMART, REACH, JIPS…). Documentary studies, field visits and interviews with stakeholders have praised these achievements, but they have also consistently outlined the need to assess how to improve their overall coherence at field level, for example in terms on inter-cluster coordination or achieving closer coordination between needs assessment tools (see EQ10).

### Conclusions

**C.2.1.** The ERC initiative has been quite consistent with the provisions of the EU Consensus on Humanitarian Aid and all six areas of its Action Plan. The 2010 ERC Guidelines are also coherent with and supportive of the ITA and the co-ordinating role of the UN, the NGOs in humanitarian reforms, the inclusiveness of the various actors, and the Hyogo Framework for Action.

**C.2.2.** ERC-funded projects have however not provided significant support so far to cooperation with EU Member States or Civil Protection. Improvements are also needed in defining good practice in matters of fruitful partnership between INGOs and LNGOs, for local capacity building purposes.

### Recommendation

**R.2.1.** Upcoming ERC HIPs should include requests for proposals for the coordination of humanitarian actors with EU civil protection organisations or with aid cooperation agencies of EU Member States (EQ9), as well as projects dedicated primarily to INGO-LNGO partnerships (EQ8).

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16 See e.g. the recent ECHO evaluation “Working directly with local NGOs”
3. To what extent is the ERC initiative consistent with the objective of LLRD (Linking Relief Rehabilitation and Development) and with the 23 principles and Good Practice of Good Humanitarian Donorship?

3.A. Background

53. In 1995, with a view to enhancing the effectiveness of EU cooperation and filling in the gap between emergency humanitarian aid and longer-term development, the Commission undertook a wide-ranging internal and external consultation. The process has ultimately led to a Communication published in April 2001 on ‘Linking Relief, Rehabilitation and Development’ (LRRD). The Communication is also meant to provide a broader view of the problems involved in assisting developing countries, taking account of the types of crises, the various international actors, and the risk of structural dependence.

54. In June 2003, a group of 17 donors – including the Commission – and other key stakeholders have endorsed the 23 Principles and Good Practice of Good Humanitarian Donorship. The Principles have since provided both a framework to guide official humanitarian aid, and a mechanism for encouraging greater donor accountability. These were drawn up to enhance the coherence and effectiveness of donor action, as well as their accountability to beneficiaries, implementing organisations and domestic constituencies, with regard to the funding, co-ordination, follow-up and evaluation of such actions.

3.B. Coherence with the objectives of LRRD

55. The review of the documentation related to LRRD issues in funded projects showed that most of the ERC grantees addressed in one or the other way the linkages of their projects to rehabilitation and development. Due to the high variations in project types, statements dedicated to LRRD in section 5.2 of the partners’ Single forms (SF), but also to related issues of ‘sustainability’ (see EQ12) and ‘implementing partners’ in sections 5.1 and 7 of the SF, remained often quite vague, such as ‘impact expected beyond the relief phase’, or ‘IHL and humanitarian principles are not only relevant during conflicts’.

56. Conversely and as further detailed in EQs 12 and 13, some comprehensive LRRD approaches were also developed. Without necessarily defining their projects as containing elements of LRRD, some agencies have effectively attempted to include the principles of LRRD; good examples can be found in the QUAMED, CMAM and GBV projects. More relevantly, a few partners are following dedicated LRRD strategies: UNICEF’s early recovery is founded on 7 guiding principles; UNHCR/CCCM consider LRRD as their core responsibility and seek actively options for exit strategies and safely closing camps. Finally, in some cases LRRD is expected to ensue as a matter of course from the nature of the project. DRR is embedded in the Hyogo Framework for Action’s implementation by UNISDR, which concerns all continuum actors and receives also DEVCO funding. The IPC integrated food security project, which was initially funded to FAO by ERC in 2011, today receives long-term DEVCO and DFID funding.

57. At field level, it appears that LRRD opportunities depend also strongly from the political context. In Pakistan, Bangladesh and India, beyond the façade of development, there are complex humanitarian situations characterised by severe malnutrition among the marginalised landless rural populations, and aggravated by chronic natural disasters. There is however also regular denial of the situation by the concerned governments, and growing opposition to ‘Western’ humanitarian aid. In such contexts, opportunities for humanitarian impact and LRRD are minimal.

58. In sharp contrast, the highly developed institutional DRR framework of the Philippines, where all clusters have been co-led by the government since 2006 and responsible Departments such as DSWD (Social Welfare and Development) have a wide network of local antennas down to the village level, has not always been fully considered by the international community in its response to typhoon Haiyan. Concerned Departments and national cluster coordinators were not adequately informed about ITA procedures such as common needs assessment, rapid response teams or inter-
cluster coordination. Despite some shortcomings (poor capacity at village level, politisation, lack of skilled managers at the top), optimum use must be made of existing local resources, and international efforts must be coupled to local structures and handed over as soon as feasible to ensure ownership.

59. Considering the autonomy that EU Delegations now have (managing e.g. DEVCO and IfS projects for local actors), they also have an important role in LRRD, and most agencies on the ground are becoming more aware of how they can implement some sort of LRRD through additionally obtaining development funding. As stated above, DEVCO has been funding a few ERC-supported projects such as IPC or the Hyogo Framework. However, very few of the partners interviewed were e.g. informed about IfS (Instrument for Stability), in particular about possibilities under Art 4.3 of the IfS Regulation\(^\text{17}\). Sustainability of locally built capacity in under-resourced countries is still an unresolved challenge after - or rather between - crises. Some LRRD minimum ‘care and maintenance’ funding for local actors would e.g. be quite helpful, where relevant and feasible. It should be noted that, in the field, the EU Delegations in Nairobi and Bangkok, where ECHO RSOs are also located, have implemented a ‘pilot’ cooperation with ECHO for the last 2-3 years, the “Joint Humanitarian-Development Framework” (JHDF). Relations are good, and discussions are held regularly with DEVCO but also sometimes with the IfS Desk Officer, e.g. in Bangkok.

3.C. Coherence with the objectives of Good Humanitarian Donorship (GHD)

60. The ERC Guidelines are fully consistent with the GHD principles, in particular in terms of overall objective (‘saving lives’), supporting key humanitarian actors (UN, Red Cross, TA reforms and clusters), strengthening local capacities, overall coordination and response, as well as learning. The study of partners’ proposals, fiches, and field visits have demonstrated that the GHD principles are generally attended to, such as principles:

- 4 (respect and promotion of humanitarian laws);
- 8 (local capacity building);
- 10 (support to UN leadership);
- 12 (dynamic and flexible response – although predictability of further ERC funding rounds should be streamlined),
- 18 (support to mechanisms for contingency planning...).
- 19 and 20 (support to civ-mil cooperation);
- 21 (support to learning and accountability initiatives).

61. ERC funding has slightly less coherent with principles 23 (‘transparency in donor reporting on official humanitarian spending’) and 9 (‘support of recovery, livelihoods, and transition to development’), as explained below.

62. In terms of transparency in donor reporting, most interviewed agencies did not feel to have been adequately informed about other ERC funded projects – their objectives, implementing partners, results - and would be much interested in knowing ‘who is doing what’ under ERC funding. There is a general consensus on the fact that ECHO should be much more assertive in communicating publicly about the outcomes of a very useful investment worth €24 million per year. In the new ECHO web site, information about the Enhanced Response Capacity is not much detailed (see also EQ14); the previous list of 17 funded projects with a very short summary for the year 2011 only has disappeared. The acronym ERC itself is often confused with other humanitarian mechanisms

\(^{17}\) Art 4(3) of the Regulation (EC) No 1717/2006 of November 2006 is dedicated to pre- and post-crisis capacity building, i.e. support for long-term measures aimed at building and strengthening the capacity of international, regional and sub-regional organisations, state and non-state actors. An exception was e.g. UNISDR, which has managed a DRR contract (IFS-RRM-2011/276-428, ‘Strengthening Capacities of Regional and National ISDR System Partners for Disaster Risk Reducing Recovery Planning and Programming’).
or actors\textsuperscript{18}. All concerned agencies would be ready to contribute to this communication effort by drafting some ‘golden paragraphs’ or fact sheet about the achievements of their own projects.

63. The Early Recovery cluster, crucial for the above LRRD and resilience, is one of the few clusters (with Emergency Telecommunications and Education) that have not been targeted so far in the ERC HIPs. This situation may be due to the weakness of the cluster itself, which has been demonstrated in the context of typhoon Haiyan, where Early Recovery was found struggling to adapt to dynamic transition process (see EQ11).

### Conclusion

C.3.1. ERC has considered, to the extent possible, LRRD among its principles (Sustainability through ownership, Joint Approach with other donors), and GHD throughout the range of funded activities. This approach is reflected in all the ERC project documents, which duly acknowledge LRRD and GHD. There seems however to be various interpretations of LRRD and how it should be implemented.

C.3.2. ERC and ECHO is not sufficiently communicating publicly about the outcomes of a very useful investment worth €24 million per year.

C.3.3. Very few partners are informed about potential LRRD linkages with IfS funding for local capacity building purposes.

### Recommendation

R.3.1. The ERC Guidelines should clarify the expectations in terms of LRRD in the SF, i.e. practical options to link the activities – as relevant and feasible – with development actors and donors, rather than general and vague statements.

R.3.2. To improve transparency, visibility and pro-active information policy about ERC objectives and achievements, in particular by publishing the list of funded projects and partners, and asking the partners to contribute by a short description of their achievements. ERC should be presented among the topics of the annual ECHO Partners’ Conference; alternatively, periodical ‘round table’ seminars (about e.g. priorities and processes) could be organised with a wide range of stakeholders.

R.3.3. In the context of JDHF with EU Delegations, LRRD dialogue should be promoted with IfS, e.g. to seek ways to provide some minimum ‘care & maintenance’ funding after or between crises for support and monitoring of built local capacity (often voluntary) in severely under-resources countries such as in sub-Saharan Africa.

\textsuperscript{18} For example the (OCHA) Emergency Response Coordinator, or the new European Emergency Response Capacity.
4. What has shown to be the EU added value of the ERC initiative?

4.A. Background

64. The ‘EU added value’ can cover numerous aspects, according to the policies and sectors concerned (EU integration, external trade etc). The EU overall comparative advantage is generally thought to be linked to its global field presence, wide-ranging expertise, supranational nature (above Member States), its role as facilitator of coordination, and potential economies of scale. Added values in EU external relations are listed e.g. in the 2011 Communication on ‘Global Europe’19. In terms of development cooperation, a recent evaluation of the conflict prevention component of IfS20 provided an overall conclusion – relevant to ERC - to the effect that ‘EU’s particular added value includes the ability to support valuable projects which has no other donor’.

65. As regards more specifically humanitarian aid, which must remain neutral and impartial, §81-87 of the EU Consensus on Humanitarian Aid outline five key comparative advantages or added values, as follows:

- global presence through network of field experts and RSOs;
- coherence in Community policies with the support of Member States, in particular regarding LRRD, DRR and preparedness;
- promotion of good humanitarian practice;
- ability to intervene in politically sensitive situations more flexibly; and
- facilitating coordination, including with the UN system.

4.B. Main added values

66. In line with the added value identified for IfS, ERC has been the exclusive or main funding source to a number of innovative approaches and tools. The highly successful IPC could originally not find other donors, and ERC (and ECHO) were key supports of the cash transfer approach; one partner has called the ERC initiative ‘unique’.

- Non-typical partners/underfunded sectors: ERC funding has provided additional value by engaging in a new form of humanitarian partnership. The initiative has supported projects with agencies that are not first and foremost humanitarian – e.g. UNFPA and BBC MA, although both agencies have humanitarian connections – in the case of UNFPA a humanitarian wing, and in the case of BBC MA a humanitarian advisory desk section. It also might suggest that ECHO is bold in its approach with ERC funding, recognising that a more holistic perspective is required in many humanitarian situations. In both the case of BBC and UNFPA, these organisations have areas of expertise that are contiguous with, and play an important role in humanitarian aid – the BBC with their expertise in communications and UNFPA with their expertise in GBV.

- Flexibility: ECHO has demonstrated much flexibility with ERC funding; the initiative was prepared to support project approaches that have never been attempted before in areas of work such as CMAM, QUAMED, or GBV or the FSD/CH project for improving humanitarian space through engagement with armed non-state actors.

67. ERC has consistently promoted ‘mainstreaming’ of humanitarian approaches, such as good humanitarian practices (principles, IHL, vulnerable groups, accountability, security) and overall coordination mechanisms (OCHA, clusters). Coherence with other EU policies and Member States, which is reflected in the ERC principles (Joint Approach) is only to be found to a certain extent so far in the support provided to the Hyogo Framework for Action (DRR, climate change).

ERC has strongly promoted humanitarian leadership and civ-mil relations, which are potentially relevant in politically sensitive situations.

68. Many implementing agencies have commented that a key added value that ERC offers is the expertise of their staff, and in particular the field staff (SST, RSO regional experts, in some cases country experts) in every crisis and at many levels – from involvement with clusters and consortiums to experience and knowledge on such issues as nutrition and WASH. However, feedback from the field missions (EQ14) have highlighted a certain lack of involvement from RSO regional experts country – and more generally from country Technical Assistants - in selecting and monitoring ERC projects.

69. At the same time, there are also concerns that there were gaps in in-house technical knowledge in some sectors such as GBV, IT or shelter21 – which was expressed as a concern in the ERC Focus principle. Whilst the highly technical JIPS project has sustained setbacks - the in-house IT expertise of UNHCR was also unable to cope adequately, significant progresses have been registered in the field of GBV or in setting up the Shelter Cluster. Furthermore, in its role of main international humanitarian donor dealing with all types of crises and working with the most professional implementing partners, ECHO – and ERC - cannot afford to ignore some sub-sectors which could make a difference in resolving a situation, when external expertise can also be found.

4.C. Secondary added values

70. In addition, some other added values have been found during the evaluation work.

- **Enhanced partnership**: the ERC funding, although quite limited if compared with the annual operational budget of the main UN agencies and IOs supported, has a strong impact on the institutions’ systemic capacities and their collaborative partnerships, as the ERC funding focuses on some key priorities and approaches that are meant to ‘make a difference’ where other funding sources are not sufficient or not available (see also §88). This finding was confirmed by IOM (‘creation of a positive momentum towards intensified partnerships’), WHO (‘stimulation of institutional change with respect to partnerships and future response strategies’), IFRC, WFP, UNICEF and several other organisations. This pro-active involvement22 which is strongly advocating for partnerships23 has clearly led to high recognition of ECHO – and ERC, enabling the organisation to influence the shaping of the humanitarian response capacity and to contribute to policy making.

- **‘Seed’ and catalytic funding**: several partners underlined the essential role played by the ERC in terms of enabling them to kick-start a project or a capacity building effort and leveraging further funding from donors at global and country levels (e.g. the Food Security cluster, ACAPS).

- **Longer project cycles – moving further into the grey zone between humanitarian aid and development**: all the partners have commented on the longer project cycles – in comparison with normal ECHO funding cycles. Also, although it does not make a strong point on the issue by supporting some of the ERC funded projects, ECHO has made a discernible shift into the so-called ‘grey zone’ between emergency and development. This is commendable, although a topic for discussion would probably be the extent to which ECHO adds to its primary role of emergency aid and the extent to which other, longer-term Commission instruments are prepared to meet ECHO in the grey zone, benefiting from the global presence of EU Delegations (see §59).

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21. In the latter case, the current primarily WASH experts are meant to be upgraded after training into ‘WATHAB’ ones.

22. ECHO headquarter staff and experts participate frequently at cluster meetings and events such as RRT retreats reported by the Cluster Lead Agencies.

23. It should however be noted that in some cases, the funding by ERC of similar capacities for different agencies did not automatically result in partnership at all levels. For example, whilst cash transfer activities are usually well coordinated at field level, IFRC has noted that it was difficult to define a MoU with WFP on this issue at HQ level.
Conclusion

C.4.1. ERC has been the exclusive or main funding source to a number of innovative and useful humanitarian approaches and tools. A key added value should be the expertise of the staff, although the involvement of RSO experts and country TAs in selecting and monitoring ERC projects has not been optimum up to now. There are also concerns that there were gaps in technical knowledge in some sectors such as GBV, IT or shelter.

Recommendations

R.4.1. To use optimally the main added value of ECHO – its very knowledgeable field staff – by involving more systematically the RSO experts and country TAs in the selection and monitoring procedures (see also EQ14). An in-house and resource neutral (implemented e.g. by an external communication consultant) advocacy campaign for enhancing buy-in is recommended.

R.4.2. To complement possible shortcomings of in-house expertise in some sectors by contracting ad-hoc, external experts for short-term inputs such as project selection and monitoring, as necessary.
5. Is the capacity built in various sectors adapted to the specific needs and capacities of women, girls, boys, men and elderly persons (contribution to mainstream gender and age sensitive assistance)?

5.A. Background

71. Mainstreaming gender- and age-sensitive approaches in humanitarian projects is a key policy issue for ECHO. In line with the Consensus and building on the recommendations from the 2009 Gender Review, ECHO-funded projects are expected to follow the guidance outlined in the Staff Working Document on ‘Gender in Humanitarian Assistance’ (2013). In 2014, ECHO introduced a Gender-Age marker as a quality tool to assess to promote and track gender- and age-sensitive humanitarian interventions. Although gender and aged-sensitive issues are not specifically mentioned as such among the principles and identified needs in the ERC Guidelines, gender was one of the priority areas highlighted in the first ERC HIP in 2010.

5.B. Relevance of ERC projects with Gender and Age focus

72. ERC has appropriately supported the Global Protection Cluster (UNHCR) and the related sub-clusters of gender-based violence (GBV) and Child Protection (UNFPA, UNICEF). These clusters have the clear mandate to mainstream gender and age sensitive assistance. ERC has also funded NGOs/IOs specialised in the protection of vulnerable groups, such as HelpAge and IRC UK, or in the protection against IHL violations (FSD-CH, Finnish RC, ICRC more recently).

73. All of the partners’ projects documents suggest that the ERC initiative has positively tried to incorporate the specific needs and capacities of women and children. For example, through funding UNFPA for its project they have also tried to incorporate those affected by GBV – a group to whom inadequate attention has been paid in the past, particularly during humanitarian crises where GBV tends to increase and less attention is paid to it, such as in South Sudan (below).

74. The project documentation reviewed for UN agencies and IOs (in particular sections 4.2 and 5.3 of the SF) contains for almost all projects indications on how gender and age sensitive issues are addressed, to different degrees and depth of analysis, varying with the particular importance and relevance to a specific ERC funded project. Only one project (WHO nutrition guidelines development) did not contain any indication, which is understandable as this project produced a technical guideline as main output. An often indicated measure to assure that gender and age sensitive assistance is provided was the involvement of GenCap Advisors24. UNICEF host a GenCap Advisor who is continuously working with the global clusters and Areas of Responsibilities to ensure that gender is addressed in their efforts. The global Food Security Cluster lead by WFP/FAO involves GenCap and ProCap25 Advisors, working to support programming at country level. WHO for example has endorsed the IASC Gender Marker26, which was developed to ensure that humanitarian projects respond to the distinct needs and interest of women, girls, boys and men. Conversely, a complete gender balance has sometimes become more difficult for e.g. men and boys, because of the assertive pushing of the agenda for women, girls and children, in situations dealing, for example, with food where local culture dictates that men are the

24 The Gender Standby Capacity Project (GenCap) – an IASC initiative created in 2007 in collaboration with the NRC and 7 UN host agencies (OCHA, UNFPA, UN Women, UNHCR, FAO, UNICEF and WFP).
25 The Protection Standby Capacity Project (ProCap) – an inter-agency initiative created in 2005 in collaboration with the NRC and 4 UN host agencies (UNHCR, UNICEF, WFP and OCHA).
26 The IASC Gender Marker is a tool that codes, on a 0-2 scale, whether or not a humanitarian project is designed well enough to ensure that women/girls and men/boys will benefit equally from it or that it will advance gender equality in another way.
‘breadwinners’ and should take the lead in food matters - whereas NGOs would promote the role of women.

75. The elderly and disabled are not systematically mentioned in project documents, although there is no basis to infer that these groups are discriminated against in the physical implementation of projects.

5.C. Effectiveness of ERC projects with Gender and Age focus

76. Apart from the projects which were specifically targeted at building capacity for protecting vulnerable gender and age categories, ERC funding has contributed to mainstreaming gender and age sensitive assistance in activities that are widely used in humanitarian interventions such as cash transfer (‘how cash can be used to empower women’ in CaLP, IFRC and WFP guidelines) or various needs assessment (tools for nutrition, IPC for food security, REACH in the shelter sector). NGO capacity building projects such as Emergency Capacity Building by CARE have also outlined the importance of gender and age-sensitive approaches, e.g. in CARE’s ‘Good Enough Guide’, although the extent to which such a project has impacted on the wider humanitarian community beyond the few targeted countries and beneficiary organisations, could not be ascertained by this evaluation.

77. Some projects show an imbalance of the men/women ratio, especially in sectors that are heavily male orientated such as civ-mil coordination and security. CMCoord, for example, undoubtedly tries to do its utmost to ensure that there is a suitable proportion of women on the ERC funded courses, but they never reach anywhere near 50%. Similarly for the security courses, the percentage of women attending the courses did not reach much more than 20%. These two examples, however, do not stem from a lack of effort on behalf of the agency to ensure that a) there are a reasonable proportion of women, b) that the courses were adapted to allow for women, and c) that messaging made it clear that women should be encouraged to attend.

78. Protection of vulnerable categories was duly present in the L-3 situations reviewed during the field missions.

79. In South Sudan, UNFPA (supported by ERC in 2010 and 2012) was making ‘good progress’ before the new conflict which erupted in mid-December 2013, but it has since then lost more than 50% of its previous capacity and local assets. Rapid Response Teams (RRTs) were sent to the field, but there is a general lack of GBV experts in emergencies, and no longer-term deployments were available to follow up.

80. Child protection is a very large and complex issue in the country, but ERC and ECHO support before the crisis has funded the position of sub-cluster coordinator, which allowed to use the savings for deployment of 3 new consultants’ positions, who were all in place before the crisis. There are however only a few INGOs involved in child protection, and these are further limited by access and risks to reach grassroots LNGOs and CBOs. Further challenges have appeared in the reported lack of priority given by the UN Humanitarian Coordinator to child protection and GBV, and in the poor adequacy of MIRA/IRNA for protection purposes. This was also the case in the Philippines: a recurrent issue for GBV (especially in the case of MIRA) is the difficulty to provide rapidly figures/numbers: GBV services must first be put in place, and then victims arrive – although numbers are always under-reported.

81. Thanks to ERC capacity building, the GBV sub-cluster was able to set up an effective training scheme for local partners in South Sudan in 2013. The scheme was made sustainable (at least until the end of the crisis and the budgets) through training of trainers (ToT) and selected ‘master trainers’, who were in turn able to help UNICEF in various isolated States of South Sudan after the new crisis.

82. In the framework of typhoon Haiyan in the Philippines, GBV and Child Protection RRTs could also be deployed and have been extremely useful due to the lack of local expertise on these issues. Protection gaps tend to become more exposed in case of disasters, even if the Philippines can definitely be considered as a case of good practice, considering the government involvement,
extent of existing structures and accountability to local population / beneficiaries. RRTs have also been able to help the cluster coordinator in complying with all ITA coordination procedures.

83. More efforts will nevertheless be needed to fully integrate GBV in the MIRA approach and sensitise the field humanitarian leadership. That is also the case for the protection of the elderly; as HelpAge has stated in the conclusions of their only ERC-funded project, in 2011: ‘While it was never possible that the project would completely address the needs identified for capacity support within the humanitarian system, it is clear that progress has been made. This said, there is clearly an enormous amount of work still to be done to continue to develop and build the understanding amongst humanitarian partners of the needs of vulnerable groups in humanitarian crises, and to support their capacity to respond’.

Conclusions

C.5.1. Although gender and age-sensitive assistance are not explicitly mentioned in the ERC Guidelines, ERC has appropriately supported the clusters and sub-clusters (Global Protection, GBV, Child Protection) and specialised NGOs (HelpAge), which have the clear mandate to mainstream gender and age sensitive assistance. Desk and field assessments have outlined the progress (not attributable to ERC only) made by the concerned clusters and sub-clusters in L-3 situations (South Sudan, Philippines).

C.5.2. Nevertheless, some limitations were also found in the mainstreaming efforts of these organisations: there is a general lack of GBV experts in emergencies and the effect of RRTs was limited; the emergency modules of MIRA (and its by-product IRNA) are still poorly adapted to GBV and protection purposes; up to the time of the evaluation’s field visits, there was a reported lack of priority given by the UN Humanitarian Coordinator to child protection and GBV in South Sudan, which has curtailed coordination and mainstreaming.

C.5.3. ERC has also contributed to mainstreaming gender and age sensitive assistance in activities that are widely used in humanitarian interventions such as cash transfer (IFRC and WFP guidelines) or various needs assessment (tools for nutrition, IPC for food security, REACH in the shelter sector). Gender and age-sensitive approaches were also present in NGO capacity building projects such as CARE’s Emergency Capacity Building, but the mainstreaming effect of a project focused on a few targeted countries and beneficiary organisations, could not be ascertained by this evaluation.

Recommendations

R.5.1. ERC should support efforts to fully integrate GBV in the MIRA approach, and to sensitise the field humanitarian leadership in order to better mainstream gender and age sensitive approaches in cluster coordination.

R.5.2. As illustrated by gender and age-sensitive projects but applicable more generally, the opportunity of funding a ‘Phase II’ after a successful 1st project must be more carefully considered by ERC, to achieve mainstreaming beyond pilot initiatives.
6. Is the size of budget appropriate and proportionate to what the initiative is set out to achieve? Is it sufficient for reaching a critical mass of impacts? Could the same results have been achieved with less funding?

6.A. Background

84. As outlined under EQ1, the ERC objectives are not clearly spelled out in the Guidelines, a fact that does not promote a clear assessment of effectiveness and – considering the limited ERC annual budget and the very large potential scope of work - cost-effectiveness. Another approach to ‘what the initiative is set out to achieve’ can be attempted through the analysis of the ERC definition as it can be found in the Guidelines, in order to assess whether the finding of the 2008 Thematic Funding evaluation has been corrected:‘…a lack of a clear and a priori definition of what was to be achieved resulted in too many topics covered in different domains with a lack of consistency or cross-fertilisation between the different projects…’.

6.B. Appropriateness of ERC definition in the Guidelines

85. In the first Annex to the Guidelines (page 5, §1), ERC is defined as ‘a process whereby people, organisations and the international humanitarian community as a whole unleash, strengthen, create and maintain capacity to identify and meet humanitarian needs in a timely, efficient and effective manner’.

86. Even though inspired by OECD/DAC, this definition can be considered as quite ambitious and concerns the expected outcome of ERC rather than the initiative itself, which would merely ‘contribute to’ such a process. Furthermore, the objective of “maintaining” the capacity of the international humanitarian community to identify and meet needs is quite beyond the means of a budget limited to €24 million per year, except through some targeted ‘continued funding’ (see EQ16) pending the expansion of the donors’ base, and exit strategy. Indeed, the ERC principles, identified needs and all the priority areas of the ERC HIPs concern crucial issues for the global humanitarian system, such as: needs assessment, coordination and clusters, reforms, logistics, food aid and nutrition, civ-mil relations, DRR, or most vulnerable groups. Considering the scale of the task – for example the very challenging Local Capacity Building (principle 1 and identified need n°5) and the recurrent difficulties in finding longer-term funding to sustain the results, defining priorities every year – and within these selecting projects – is a daunting task.

87. What exactly ERC is ‘set out to achieve’ must therefore be put into perspective, although the ‘ultimate ambition’ (as also expressed in the Annex to the ERC Guidelines) to ‘impact on international policies and practices at the level of systems’ would appear much more realistic.

88. Before assessing the appropriateness of the budget size, one should agree on an appropriate definition of ERC. Based on SWOT statements collected from ERC actors (see §70) and on the analysis of projects’ results, the definition should probably outline that the initiative provides:

"seed money/driver to ‘make a difference’ where other funding sources are not adequate and contributes to bringing in systemic changes in terms of global humanitarian response capacities, by helping to create an enabling environment, filling gaps detrimental to overall response capacity, funding pilot initiatives, speeding up key processes, and leveraging other funds".

27 This limit has been set by an ECHO management decision, which has reportedly not been based on in-depth cost-effectiveness assessment; increases are subject to new management decisions.
6.C. Efficiency: the spreading of ERC budget

89. In the framework of this assumed new definition, which helps to scale down the focus to the project level, the desk study and field visits have not collected any indications or complaints about inadequacy of ERC funding to achieve project objectives – but rather about budget spreading or the numbers of funding rounds (see EQs 13-16).

90. The 2008 evaluation had already calculated that the Thematic Funding and Grant Facility (“TF”) combined had provided a yearly average of €21 million of ECHO funds to 11 projects, and had concluded that the initiatives lacked in a clear definition of what was to be achieved, with subsequent lack of consistency and cross-fertilisation between projects. Roughly the same situation can be expected if ERC wants to adhere to its nine principles and respond to the seven identified (generic) needs in the Annex II of the Guidelines, as outlined below and in table 2.

91. ‘Resources’ is the first among the identified needs; many (the majority) of the ERC-funded projects revolve around training in one form or another; others have funded RRTs for surge capacity, and generally all of the budgets are heavy on costs for personnel. Although difficult to disaggregate in any detail, the costs for personnel fall overall between 40 and 60% - in some case as high as 82% or as low as 22% (UNHCR for the Shelter cluster strengthening) - and some of those personnel are employed by the agency itself on a permanent basis.

92. The second identified need concerns the ‘coordination and roll out of the cluster approach’, which can be combined with ITA. Strengthening of two components of OCHA’s mandate (leadership and civ-mil, MIRA being under needs assessment) and eight global clusters (the Protection cluster is further subdivided into Child Protection and GBV sub-clusters) in terms of structures, strategies, resources for coordination, and surge capacities as appropriate, have attracted the majority of the ERC budget: €33.88 million out of a total of €78.71 million for the 59 projects under review, or 43.1% of the ERC budget. If one adds to this the 2 large projects in support to WFP logistics (which arguably went also to cluster strengthening but are to be considered separately under the identified needs), the total amounts to €41.78 million, or 53.1%.

93. The other identified needs have been provided with lower shares of the ERC budget, but have significantly contributed to the spreading.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Identified need</th>
<th>Nr of projects</th>
<th>Total amount</th>
<th>% of total ERC budget</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Resources</td>
<td>Staff costs and training of staff present in most ERC projects</td>
<td>N.A.</td>
<td>Betw. 40% and 60% of project costs</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Clusters/ ITA support</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>€41.78m</td>
<td>53.1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Needs assessment tools</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>€7.57m</td>
<td>9.5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>DRR (mainly the UNISDR projects for the Hyogo Framework of Action)</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>€4.62</td>
<td>5.8%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Local capacity building</td>
<td>not quantifiable as such, being usually included as a component in many ERC projects</td>
<td>N.A.</td>
<td>N.A.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Respect of humanitarian laws and principles</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>€3.4m</td>
<td>4.3%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

28 The Thematic Funding had provided €119m between 2002 and 2007-8 to 32 projects from 7 UN and RC partners; the Grant facility had provided €5.4m between 2000 and 2007-8 to 50 projects from 36 NGOs.

29 Items such as ‘translation’ – which would include the cost of translators, ‘travel’ or ‘training’ come under different budget lines.

30 This need, identified in 2008 – 2009, is somewhat at odds with the expectations of the international community that the 2 appeals of 2006 and 2007 would be sufficient to establish the capacity of the global clusters.
### 6.D. Cost-effectiveness: less funding for same results

94. The effectiveness of funded actions has been summarised in chapter 1.G; there is however *no concrete evidence* (supported by figures) that the same results could have been achieved with less funding, to the exception of anecdotal ex-post indications in Pakistan\(^{31}\) (when the country TAs were belatedly informed about ERC projects being implemented in their country of responsibility) that some duplications had probably taken place between ERC and operational activities, e.g. for security training. The funding of two WFP helicopters in Uganda may also have been too ‘operational’ for ERC and may have entailed larger expenses than otherwise required by seed funding. As outlined under EQ14, the lack of involvement of ECHO field staff in the monitoring of ERC projects has probably led to missed opportunities to clarify such issues.

95. Unsurprisingly, 100% of the respondents to the online survey outlined that they could not have done it with less funding. In the cluster roll-out sector (the largest share of the budget), the level of ERC support to e.g. successfully setting up the global Food Security cluster corresponds to the average ($2.5 million per annum) deemed necessary by other global clusters for their inception, and the cluster coordinator outlined that the leverage effect entailed by the ERC funding was much more important than the initial funding itself. Global clusters’ lead agencies are UN or RC organisations and their staff costs rank amongst the highest in the humanitarian sector; staff costs is the most important single expenditure in the context of global coordination and surge capacity, therefore the costs are necessarily higher when compared to INGO operations. However, in cases where intensive inclusiveness is applied and several INGOs contribute to the response system (e.g. WASH cluster) the staff costs go significantly down when deploying INGO staff members (estimated at -30% by the Global WASH cluster coordinator).

### 6.E. Critical mass of impact

96. Reaching a ‘critical mass of impacts’ (although no definition exists to measure such a situation in development terms, as it would in physics) or a ‘tipping point’ would suggest that this would provide the momentum for the impact of the projects to spread throughout the humanitarian community, or would become self-sustaining with, possibly, no further funding from ERC. However, there are two strong constraints that currently prevent such an objective.

- In accordance with the principle of Joint Approach and due to the limited ERC budgets and time schedule for implementation, ERC projects would generally only *contribute* to reaching an impact, together with inputs from a number of other donors and factors of effectiveness.
- ERC projects are subject of regular monitoring visits by ECHO staff. The HOPE database (which started up in 2011) is listing monitoring reports in the FicheOps of 30 ERC projects out of the 52 projects funded in 2011-2013 (see also §210), basically covering projects for which specific monitoring visits took place. As for joint project monitoring missions during the period

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\(^{31}\) A country, to which the assigned evaluation team member was denied a visa.
(e.g. for the WASH cluster) no separate monitoring reports were established – according to ECHO HQ staff – but the records of the mission were instead integrated in the project Final Reports. However, although monitoring of ERC projects appears overall to be have been carried out to a satisfactory extent, it was often perceived as weak by the ECHO RSOs and TAs interviewed in the field, who reported that their involvement in this process had been low (see EQ14).

97. One RSO suggested that a critical mass of ERC projects (i.e. sufficient to make a difference in the overall quality of response) could be reached if the ECHO field technical experts (RSOs, interested TAs) were more involved in the selection of target/priority countries for the implementation of ERC activities. Projects could therefore be concentrated in designated countries, where monitoring would be more effective and where contiguous/inter-related ERC-funded sectors would be better able to cross-fertilise each other and achieve overall impacts.

98. An illustration could be found in the international response to typhoon Haiyan in the Philippines, where the very positive contribution of ERC to the strengthening of various components of the IASC Transformative Agenda (ITA), although not precisely quantifiable or traceable at field level, cannot be questioned. The L3 response of the international humanitarian community, which has deployed for the first time the full range of the ITA instruments, was much more rapid, robust and comprehensive than in previous large disasters, considering the initial destructions and lack of access. A large number of ERC-funded tools have been effectively deployed, such as Rapid Response Teams (RRT), OCHA leadership for cluster coordination, civ-mil cooperation, and needs assessment tools (MIRA, ACAPS, SMART, REACH), which together have contributed to the positive impact (see also EQ11).

Conclusions:

C.6.1. The potential scale of some of the specific priorities (enabling environment for DRR, local capacity building, prepositioning and stockpiling) is hardly compatible with the ERC budget, which is limited to €24 million a year. The listing of needs poses also the question of further clarifying specific objective(s) of ERC, i.e. whether it should restrict itself to contribute to strengthening the global response capacity through ‘seed money’, leverage and pilot projects - which is commensurate with its budget, or initiate quasi-programmatic activities such as funding resources on the longer term or prepositioning and stockpiling for logistics.

C.6.2. Consistent with the findings of the 2008 TF evaluation, there were no indications about inadequacy of ERC funding to achieve project objectives – but rather concerns about budget spreading among the seven main identified needs and their various sub-issues, as well as about the numbers of funding rounds.

C.6.3. There is no concrete evidence that the same results could have been achieved with less funding; anecdotal indications – which could not be monitored or verified - point out at some possible duplications with operational budgets.

C.6.4. A critical mass of ERC projects (i.e. sufficient to make a difference in the overall quality of response) could possibly be reached if the ECHO field staff (RSO, TAs) were better involved in the selection of target/priority countries for the implementation of ERC activities, where monitoring and cross-fertilisation could achieve overall impacts.

Recommendations:

R.6.1. The ERC definition should be revised, tentatively as "seed money/driver to ‘make a difference’ where other funding sources are not adequate and to contribute to bringing in systemic changes in terms of global humanitarian response capacities, by helping to create an enabling environment,
filling gaps detrimental to overall response capacity, funding pilot initiatives, speeding up key processes, and leveraging other funds”.

**R.6.2.** To revise the list of identified needs in 2010 through a comprehensive consultation to reduce the spreading of budget (see also EQ 1); to upgrade exit strategies by e.g. considering more carefully the number of funding rounds necessary to achieve sustainability and leverage (see also EQs 13, 15, 16).

**R.6.3.** To involve more closely the ECHO field staff in designing and monitoring ERC projects (see also EQs 4, 8, 14).
3.2 Questions (7-16) addressing the specific objectives of the evaluation

(For a list of specific objectives, see §4 and Annex A)

7. How relevant, coherent, consistent and transparent are the criteria used to prioritise the selection of ERC/GF/CB grants and how can these criteria be improved in future?

7.A. Background

99. The first of the Specific Objectives of the evaluation was to ‘review how ERC/GF/CB funding has performed against the criteria of the 2010 – 2015 Guidelines’; the present EQ7 further requests a specific analysis of such criteria.

7.B. Efficiency of current selection process

100. There is as yet no definitive, written list of criteria in the ERC Guidelines. The evaluation found that, although ERC funding has duly supported projects that are highly relevant to the ERC principles and the identified needs in Annex II to the Guidelines, the perception from many agencies submitting bids in accordance to the HIPs – and from most ECHO field staff interviewed - is that the transparency and consistency of the process of selection should be improved, in particular by using a list of relevant criteria, which agencies can refer to when shaping an application for ERC funding. Examples of good practice were also found, though, such as for the Food Security ‘PANIS’ Technical Working Group, which follows a set of selection criteria\(^{32}\) and carries out preliminary discussions – prior to submission of proposal - between concerned partners and ECHO SST or HQ staff (see also EQ14).

101. As mentioned in the 2008 evaluation, ECHO had decided in 2004 to apply a set of seven criteria for the appraisal and selection of activities to be supported by Thematic Funding (i.e. only for UN and RC agencies). These were however quite generic in nature and may not have been fit by themselves to select the best proposals among many: likely impact on effective delivery, relevance to mandate, expected improvement or innovative nature, feasibility and risks involved, the partner’s demonstrated capacity, or its willingness to share the project benefits with the humanitarian community.

102. The selection of projects by the ERC Steering Group members is currently based on the quality of the proposal, the ‘good common sense’ and expertise of the highly knowledgeable members of the Steering Group in interpreting the nine Principles and the policy directions from the ERC Guidelines, the HIP priorities and ECHO annual strategy, some of the generic policy documents that guide ECHO and humanitarian actions in general – i.e. GHD, Consensus, papers on LRRD, Sphere, and Do No Harm. This gradual appraisal process results in a ‘yes/no/maybe’ classification and involves consultation with the RSOs before any final decision is taken.

103. In particular, the ERC principles contain explicitly or implicitly a number of elements that can be used as proxy for selection criteria: involvement of local actors, authorities and communities, quality of prior needs analysis, in-house technical capacity and involvement of field staff, inclusiveness of various types of partners, interest by other donors for sustainability, or quality of monitoring indicators.

104. A key factor when selecting projects is that proposals are submitted by a consensus agreement usually represented by a group of humanitarian agencies – i.e. a cluster, members of a sector (in agreement with their cluster), or a consortium. This group, which follows the principle of inclusiveness, may have recognised a gap in the humanitarian system and jointly agreed that it

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32 Such as: compliance with the priorities of the PANIS group (strategy / policy); global significance of the action; linkages to the (global) food / food security cluster; presence of a strong capacity building component; may not be internal to the applying agency, except if duly specified; beyond agency staff, also including local staff where possible and feasible; measurable impact of capacity building, through change of behavior; innovative, ‘cutting edge’ proposal; inclusiveness (multiple actors involvement / targeting).
needs to be met; this form of collegial understanding is thus not led by drivers such as mandate, political agendas, or media pressure. Another – internal – important factor is the ability of the various ECHO HQ and SST experts in charge of specific sectors and cross-cutting issues to promote their own approaches during the selection process.

**Conclusion**

C.7.1. There is as yet *no definitive, written list of criteria*, which are used consistently by all Technical Working Groups. Whilst the selection of Food Security projects is based on established criteria, in other cases it is made e.g. on the quality of the proposal, contacts between partners and Thematic Working Groups, or the expertise of the Steering Group members and their ‘good common sense’ in interpreting the Principles and the policy directions from the ERC Guidelines.

**Recommendation**

R.7.1. There is therefore a need for a comprehensive and flexible list of criteria that would further standardise the above processes, complement the stated HIP priorities and Principles, and ensure that the selection of ERC projects is as transparent, consistent, objective, and rigorous as possible. A tentative list of criteria is proposed in Annex L.
8. To what extent has ERC/GF/CB contributed to improve the global humanitarian system? What effects on humanitarian response at the operational level can be attributed to the ERC initiative? To what extent does the global capacity building contribute to strengthening local level preparedness and response?

8.A. Background

105. ERC Guidelines firmly outline that the primary focus of the initiative is on capacity building of global humanitarian systems; this approach can for example be found under ERC’s ultimate objective (‘Capacity building investments should contribute to strengthening and optimising the global humanitarian preparedness and response capacity’) and in the ERC definition (‘Ultimately it is the Commission's ambition to impact on international policies and practice and thus to consider the level of systems as the most important…’).

106. In complementarity to the above – and stressing the need for partnerships, considering the legal inability of ECHO to fund directly local actors -, the Guidelines also highlight the need to support humanitarian actors at the local level, such as in the principles of needs-based decision-making (‘Capacity building efforts should focus on impact on the ultimate beneficiaries of humanitarian aid and ensuring the necessary ownership for obtaining results, especially regarding change processes’) and sustainability (‘Without local ownership, capacity building efforts will not be sustainable at field level’).

107. Nevertheless, much remains to be done in terms of strengthening local preparedness and response, especially through global capacity building. A recently published report by ICVA states for example that: ‘The HCT is very much dominated by Northern actors, with little room given to national and local NGOs to play a role. If anything, there is less space now for national and local NGOs to play a role in response given concerns over risk, both by UN agencies and donors. Little efforts are made to improve the capacity of national and local NGOs to respond, which would require time and resource commitments’.

108. The EQ has been subdivided into two sub-questions, one dealing with the global humanitarian system, and the other with the local level; the effects of ERC funding at the operational level have already been detailed in Chapter 1.G.

8.B. Effectiveness of ERC support to improving the global humanitarian system

109. As other EQs in this report are dealing more specifically with various aspects of ERC’s contribution to improving the global humanitarian system (e.g. EQ1 for overall relevance and effectiveness, EQ5 regarding the most vulnerable categories, EQs10 and 11 respectively for needs assessment, ITA and clusters) the following list will briefly summarise some of the main areas, where such contribution was most discernible and effective.

- Supporting the IASC Transformative Agenda (ITA) in general.
- Providing funding to support the global cluster system and the mechanics and tools that make it run more smoothly - such as clusters’ governance, Strategic Advisory Groups and surge capacity, and providing technical expertise and strategic dialogue to key clusters.
- Supporting approaches for co-ordinated joint needs assessments and sector-specific assessment tools.
- Strongly investing in tools and approaches that would tangibly ‘make a difference’ in humanitarian response, such as logistics and cash transfer.
- Promoting the coordination role of OCHA, which benefits also from ECHO’s strategic support in the context of the OCHA Donor Support Group (ODSG). This approach has included

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33 NGO Perception on the State of Humanitarian Leadership, Coordination and Accountability, ICVA Survey 2014.
sponsoring the drive to improve humanitarian leadership, and has strongly supported Civ-Mil Coordination.

- In their support for both clusters and consortia in the framework of the principle of inclusiveness, ERC and ECHO have strongly promoted the concept of ‘consensus’ by which the groups of agencies involved in the cluster or consortium strive for common agreement on where gaps in aid might be, the best strategy for addressing the needs, and sharing expertise and resources to do so. Such consensus was considered to be a major contributory factor towards improving the global humanitarian system (although the donors amongst themselves were not always recognised as being the best example of following the practice).

8.C. Effectiveness of global capacity building in strengthening local preparedness and response

110. Field findings have pointed out to fact that the closer one goes to the field level, the less visible and traceable ERC activities become. This situation is probably due to the nature of the ERC funding so far, which has mainly aimed at supporting global mechanisms and rarely local capacity building specifically (as indicated in EQ1, local capacity building has not been targeted in any ERC HIP priority area). Strengthening of local preparedness and response was generally expected to trickle down ‘naturally’ from capacity building of international humanitarian actors at the global level and training of cluster members and their field staff, as indicated by the partners in their proposals. It should be noted that, as also outlined in a recent evaluation report (see §51), the current Humanitarian Aid Regulation does not allow ECHO to fund directly local actors, who can only benefit indirectly from ECHO funding through partnerships with duly agreed members of the ECHO Framework Partnership Agreement. The contributions and capacities of local actors – who often carry out most of the field work - are not systematically considered or recorded. In recent year, ECHO policy has focused on resilience of affected populations rather than building humanitarian capacities at local level. In the context of responses to crises, some national clusters have e.g. benefited from the expertise of RRTs from global clusters in terms of technical capacity and inter-cluster coordination.

111. The evaluation team heard a wide range of explanations, during the field missions, on how agencies were addressing local preparedness and response through building local capacity and concluded that 1) there were many different understandings of what local level capacity building consisted of – lacking also a clear ECHO policy on this matter, 2) an equally large number of ways of implementing local level capacity building, most of which translated into training for the agencies’ own staff – as opposed to the staff of local NGOs and local authorities, although there were some notable exceptions (see below). It was encouraging, however, to see participation of some local NGOs in the cluster system in the Philippines and in Ethiopia, and most regional offices both of ECHO and the UN agencies considered that progress had been made at regional levels in capacity building. They also felt that they were better placed at a regional level (together with regional DDR organisations, see EQ9), rather than HQ level or local level to promote capacity building.

- Neither during the desk phase nor the field missions did the evaluation team discover many projects that demonstrated effective correlation between global capacity building and local preparedness, possibly because the ERC selection process unconsciously filters out these projects or because the agencies do not submit viable projects in the first place. Exceptions could be found, though. The focus of some projects such as those listed below is not only on local capacity building but on developing local capacities for better preparedness and response:

34 For example the national WASH cluster in the Philippines, which was appropriately supported by highly knowledgeable UNICEF experts in the context of typhoon Haiyan.

35 The emphasis of the UNFPA project was, for example, on teams of in-country ‘Capacity Promoters’ representing government, civil society, and national staff of UN entities and INGOs. A subsequent online survey found that 71% (58 respondents) of those surveyed felt that GBV capacity had ‘improved’ due to the enabling environment created by
- CARE UK (Emergency Capacity Building),
- DanChurchAid (security training),
- FSD (IHL),
- Helpage (most vulnerable categories),
- DRC/ICVA (Humanitarian Reform Project),
- UNFPA (GBV),
- UNISDR (Hyogo Framework for Action), or
- WFP (cash and vouchers).

A small IRC/ICVA project in 2013 aimed also specifically at ‘strengthening NGO partnership, practice and policy’.

112. Furthermore, the lack of systematic involvement in- and awareness of ERC projects reported by most ECHO field staff interviewed at RSO and country level (EQ14) has weakened the regular monitoring carried out by the partners and the ERC management, and has resulted in a potential lack of integration of some of the most practically usable outcomes into geographical programming at local level.

113. In the absence of sufficient secondary evidence from existing monitoring reports - especially when visits by HQ and SST experts or Joint Monitoring Missions did not take place, the extent to which global capacity building and the inputs of ERC have contributed to strengthening local level preparedness and response would be difficult to measure, particularly if the factor of sustainability (see EQs 11 and 12) is also considered. It is still apparent from multiple evaluation reports that local capacity very often ‘runs out of steam’ when the international NGOs or the funding have departed.

114. Nevertheless – and in addition to the above-mentioned ‘exception’ projects - some areas in which local capacity building has probably occurred indirectly as a result of ERC funding of global capacity building can be listed as follows.
- The KIRA needs assessment tool (which was not intended by ERC) in the conducive environment of Kenya, or ACAPS absorbed into local preparedness in Bangladesh.
- The ITA recognises the importance of strengthening local systems at national, regional and community levels.
- Many of the global clusters (such as UNHCR) have actively employed new tools that offer support to cluster coordinators in the field (including cluster performance monitoring, modified CAP process, CCRM, Needs Assessment methodologies and capacities, performance monitoring tool). All of this may in varying degrees have been assimilated by local NGOs and government bodies participating in the cluster approach.
- By supporting consortiums – which may include local NGOs – and advocating the principle of ‘inclusiveness’ (see EQ12), ERC has also contributed to demonstrate that involving together international actors – UN and INGOs - together with local actors and expertise, has led to capacity building amongst local NGOs and concerned authorities.
- The consensus approach promoted by ECHO not only provides more efficient delivery of humanitarian aid but also embraces the local NGOs, who through their forum contact with other agencies strengthen their capacities, which is another element of local capacity building.

advocates of this project. DanChurchAid, however, did not find that their global capacity building courses on security were so successful in promoting local preparedness.

36 The reports of which were not provided to the evaluation team, despite requests.

• *The Civ-Mil* Coordination, which with its wide base of training attendees – i.e. everybody from local NGO and government staff to senior military commanders and HCs - has significantly promoted global humanitarian capacity building at local level and response preparedness.

**Conclusions:**

C.8.1. ERC, whose primary focus is on capacity building of global humanitarian systems, has accordingly and essentially funded the strengthening of global capacities and mechanisms – such as the ITA, global clusters, coordination, needs assessment tools, logistics, cash and vouchers, or RRTs.

C.8.2. Although recognised as crucial in the Guidelines, local capacity building has often not been specifically targeted so far – with a few exceptions. In line with the Humanitarian Aid Regulation which prevents ECHO from funding directly local actors, strengthening of local preparedness and response was generally expected to trickle down from capacity building at the global level, as indicated by the partners in their proposals. Indeed, projects that focus on global emergency response do not have to be mutually exclusive of local capacity building or can shape their projects to include or mainstream local capacity building.

C.8.3. Regional Offices were often better placed, rather than HQ or national levels, to promote local capacity building, plan rapid response with knowledgeable experts, and prepare future interventions with regional DRR organisations.

C.8.4. It is also questionable as to whether the ERC instrument is the most appropriate for strengthening local level preparedness and response. Both DIPECHO and the geographical/operational desks within ECHO are in a better position to pursue this sort of strategy rather than an instrument that focuses on global systemic changes, although ECHO field staff has often not been properly involved in ERC projects so far.

**Recommendations**

R.8.1. ERC should continue funding primarily global humanitarian systems, but should encourage more projects to be submitted which could include budget lines for strengthening local preparedness, with precise identification of what the needs are in capacity building, and a clear strategy to implement this approach (possibly following a HIP priority area – see also EQ1).

R.8.2. In parallel, ERC should support more projects dedicated primarily to defining good practices in matters of fruitful partnerships between international and local NGOs.

R.8.3. Setting up regional capacities wherever relevant and feasible, might be an adequate intermediary step between the global and national or local levels in capacity building that would strengthen local response and preparedness.

R.8.4. ERC should liaise more closely with the operational desks or DIPECHO, to integrate as relevant and feasible some of the most practically usable outcomes of ERC projects into geographical programming at local level (see also EQs 4 and 14).
9. How could ERC funding contribute to improve the joint capacity of humanitarian aid with the civil protection mechanism?

9.A. Background

115. The main role of the EU Civil Protection (EUCP) mechanism is to facilitate cooperation in civil protection assistance interventions in the event of major emergencies or situations of imminent and major threat, in the EU and outside. The EUCP underwent several key changes in recent years. In 2007, a new financial instrument was adopted, which aims at coordinating, supporting and complementing the efforts of Member States for the protection, primarily of people, but also of the environment and property, including cultural heritage, in the event of natural and man-made disasters, acts of terrorism and technological, radiological or environmental accidents. In 2010, EUCP was integrated within DG ECHO. A revised legislation was also elaborated at the end of 2013, which aims at responding more effectively and flexibly to disasters. The new legislation allows e.g. the EUCP to be activated together with the UN and not only upon request from a host country (although CP’s intervention must still be accepted by the host country). This provision was applied in the context of typhoon Haiyan, which was the biggest deployment of EUCP in 2013 (see below).

9.B. Effectiveness of joint capacity in the field

116. Most of the ERC implementing agencies spoken to were unaware of the activities and cooperation potential offered by the EUCP mechanism, even partners specialised in international logistics such as IFRC. In Africa, a unique example of cooperation was found in the 2 ERC-funded helicopters based in Uganda by WFP, which have been used for civil protection purposes in the area of Goma, Eastern DRC. During the field mission, WFP had however not yet started discussions with the civil protection mechanisms at an institutional level. Some NGOs explained furthermore that they were strong supporters of neutral, impartial, and independent humanitarian assistance, and were therefore rather wary of the intervention of civil protection actors, who used to respond to requests from governments and bear a name still reminiscent in many countries of the civil defence branch of the military structure.

117. A closer cooperation took place during the emergency response to typhoon Haiyan in the Philippines. Initially, there was no automatic / systematic exchange of reports between EUCP and ECHO Humanitarian Aid; EUCP did not establish contacts with the EU Delegation or the ECHO office in Manila, and carried out their own needs assessment in parallel to humanitarian aid and MIRA. Lines of communication were however rapidly established. The EUCP team focused on Tacloban in the first days following the disaster and was adequately supported by the RSO Logistics Coordinator, the Country Office, and the Regional Security Officer.

118. EUCP rapidly teamed up with UNDAC in Guiuan and started managing the OSOC, collected information about local aid structures and needs, and started working as soon and efficiently as possible. The OCHA Regional Office in Bangkok stated that they did not know at first about EUCP, but that they were positively surprised by their effectiveness.

119. It should be outlined that, in the aftermath of the response, the humanitarian aid and civil protection components of ECHO have performed a useful lessons learning exercise, at the end of March 2014. The issue of joint needs assessment that would benefit to humanitarian response and EUCP Participating States was duly considered (‘…whether ECHO needs analysis could draw on new approaches (e.g. upstream risk modelling) and additional resources (e.g. information from Participating States to the EUCP mechanism) to produce needs analysis…’). Logistics was also discussed (‘…there is an opportunity for the EUCP mechanisms to be used as a tool by States to provide more strategic, pre-planned logistical approach that… could potentially provide a major service to the entire humanitarian community… Also the collaboration with the logistics cluster was enhanced and demonstrated the potential impact ECHO could have though its participation on more efficient and coordinated logistics aspects for our partners and to the profit of the beneficiaries’).
9.C. ERC Contribution to joint capacity

120. Indirectly, ERC funding does contribute to improving the joint capacity of humanitarian aid with the EUCP mechanism through the funding of OCHA civilian-military coordination (CMCoord), which a) tries to work closely with EUCP in responses to emergencies and very often are to be found jointly situated at the OSOCC (On-Site Office Coordination Centre), and b) promotes knowledge about EUCP through the CMCoord courses – see question 11 below.

121. At the international and local level, some ERC funded projects have also included links with non-EU civil protection mechanisms. The CCCM Cluster support project (UNHCR/IOM) shows a joint effort of international CP actors (15) having developed ‘Guidelines for mass evacuations in natural disasters’38. Furthermore, this particular project has included local training components for some local civil protection bodies (i.e. staff of DSWD in the Philippines). Another example for supporting interaction between humanitarian and civil protection actors is the funding of UNISDR, organising a biennale platform event (Global Platform) which sees participants from both humanitarian, development, and civil protection fields exchanging on DRR (disaster risk reduction) and resilience building issues.

122. As reflected by both humanitarian aid and EUCP staff in the field (Bangkok RSO) and at HQ level, lessons learnt from typhoon Haiyan in terms of potential future contribution of ERC to improving joint capacity include the funding of TRIPLEX-type simulation exercises that could be led by OCHA and would involve various categories of actors (UN, NGOs, local authorities, humanitarian and civil protection); support to regional DRR structures (as it is not possible to predict in which country a natural disaster such as a typhoon will strike next time, organisations with wider regional coverage are quite relevant) – cooperation with ASEAN for the implementation of AADMER (ASEAN Agreement on Disaster Management and Emergency Response) was e.g. mentioned in the 2012 report on the EU Consensus Action Plan; and further improving early warning systems for natural disasters.

Conclusion

C.9.1. ECHO humanitarian aid partners have generally not been aware about opportunities of cooperation with EUCP. ERC funding has only contributed indirectly to such cooperation between humanitarian aid and civil protection activities (OCHA civ-mil coordination, CCCM cluster, UNISDR), although not with EUCP specifically. An opportunity for constructive lesson learning was found recently in the context of the joint response to typhoon Haiyan.

Recommendation

R.9.1. Lessons learnt from Haiyan have pointed out possible ERC contributions to improving joint capacity through TRIPLEX-type simulation exercises, support to regional DRR structures, and further improving early warning systems for natural disasters.

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38 IOM highlighted this case as the first of its kind and called it good practice.
10. A number of projects funded under the ERC initiative have addressed the needs assessment and analysis (information management and data collection). To what extent have these projects contributed to establishing a coordinated needs assessment approach?

10.A. Background

123. Since the 1990s, after the humanitarian disasters in the Balkans and the Great Lakes, when humanitarian aid first started to be delivered on an industrial scale, the humanitarian and donor communities understood that there was a need for much greater coordination. In particular, the donors, justifiably, wanted evidence of greater efficiency in the use of the funding they provided, especially when estimates of affected populations could be so wildly different. Whilst many elements of humanitarian aid did become more closely coordinated and efficient after the tsunami and the Pakistan earthquake of 2005, the mega-disasters of 2010 - floods in Pakistan and earthquake in Haiti - illustrated that the humanitarian community (as well as all the other bodies that they might work with, such as government, militaries, and corporations) were still far from achieving one of the most important coordination elements of all – a harmonised approach to needs assessment. Without such a coordinated approach there was often great inefficiency in the delivery of humanitarian aid, manifested by overlap and poor targeting, often resulting in a surplus in some areas and nothing in others, and generated by ill-informed, lack of evidence-based decision making.

124. Challenges to joint and coordinated needs assessments - Part of the difficulty has been caused by a dearth of trained human resources; part by technical expertise being compartmentalised; by mandate driven approaches; by international, national, local and internal political and fund raising agendas; by supply-driven approaches whereby agencies intervene according to their pre-determined models; and by lack of awareness. Whilst individual bodies, agencies, and institutions involved in humanitarian crises have all separately developed, at considerable time and effort, various methodologies to collecting and analysing data on humanitarian needs, they have not invested the same energy towards ensuring that there is coordination, or synergy between them. Even today, when there has been a substantial recognition that this is a major failing, there are, within the humanitarian community alone, several different needs assessment systems.

125. A study conducted in 2008 by OCHA and funded by ECHO mapped the different needs assessment initiatives, and paved the ground for heading towards a more coherent and complementary approach for humanitarian needs assessments. Recognising the identified weaknesses in 2009, the IASC created the Needs Assessment Task Force (NATF), which in turn developed the present MIRA approach. It represents a mutual humanitarian aspiration (although it has not necessarily been adopted by all actors present in a disaster) of what is both methodologically sound and realistically viable in the highly challenging environment.

10.B. Relevance of ERC funding of needs assessment initiatives

126. Needs assessment in ERC Guidelines: the stakeholder consultation in preparation of the ERC Guidelines in 2009 identified essential needs or gaps in the global humanitarian system, one of which was the need for improving the (rapid) needs assessment processes and related methodologies (need n°3). The requirement for improved joint needs assessments is deeply – and correctly - embedded in the ERC guidelines, particularly in the principles of Inclusiveness, Joint Approach and Active Involvement. In response to this need, ERC has accepted several proposals to

39 E.g. the initial estimates, from the government, for those affected by Typhoon Haiyan was over 12 million – subsequently more realistically estimated at 4 million after MIRA was implemented
40 OCHA, Mapping of Key Emergency needs Assessment and Analysis Initiatives, February 2009
41 IASC Document 10, Multi-Cluster / Multi-Sector Initial Rapid Assessment (MIRA).
address joint needs assessment, including overarching Multi-Sector / Multi-Clusters initiatives from OCHA and ACAPS.

127. **Types of initiatives (co-funded by ERC)** - the ERC support to joint needs assessment initiatives can be distinguished into two different areas:
- Support to multi-sector / multi-cluster needs assessment initiatives.
- Support to sector needs assessment initiatives.

128. The ERC support to sector needs assessment has focussed on the thematic technical issues, actors and cluster of four specific sectors: Food Security, Nutrition, Shelter and IDPs/refugees. These initiatives have contributed to establishing quasi-standards for the concerned sectors and clusters. Their results have informed and supported the multi-sector / multi-cluster assessments in a number of instances and had as such an enabling function (see Complementarity section below).

129. In terms of overarching multi-sector / multi-cluster needs assessment initiatives, ERC co-funded OCHA and ACAPS in implementing their respective strategies in this respect, together with numerous of other donors / funding organisations. The following table shows the overall funding contribution of ERC to the different initiatives.

### Table 5: ERC funding contributions (needs assessment initiatives)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Agency / Project / Sector</th>
<th>Activity focus (needs assessment component)</th>
<th>ERC funding</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>NRC (ACAPS project phase I)</td>
<td>Establishment of the global network of trained and deployable assessment specialists and deployment of these experts</td>
<td>€0.4m</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NRC (ACAPS project phase II)</td>
<td>Maintenance of a global network of trained and deployable assessment specialist and deployment of these experts</td>
<td>€0.5m</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>OCHA (Support to strategy 2010 – 13) – I</td>
<td>Strengthening of the coordination of multi-cluster / multi sector assessments Multi-sectoral information consolidation (Humanitarian Dashboard and other tools)</td>
<td>€0.94m</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>OCHA (Support to strategy 2010 – 13) – II</td>
<td>Capacity building / preparedness of HCTs / Host Governments in applying IASC NATF operational guidance and tools (MIRA, Humanitarian Dashboard)</td>
<td>€2.12m</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Total** €3.96m

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Agency / Project / Sector</th>
<th>Activity focus (needs assessment component)</th>
<th>ERC funding</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>FAO (IPC roll-out)</td>
<td>Integrated Food Security Phase Classification (IPC) in Asia: Special focus to strengthen IPC Capacity in four countries (Bangladesh, Myanmar, Nepal, Pakistan), Philippines added</td>
<td>€1.3m</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ACF Spain (SMART assessment)</td>
<td>Improvement of the inter-agency coordination and management of emergency nutrition assessment information through SMART (assure continuity)</td>
<td>€0.48m</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ACTED (IMPACT / REACH)</td>
<td>Enhancing the effectiveness of emergency shelter interventions by strengthening the targeting, coordination and planning capacity of the shelter cluster – by strengthening the shelter cluster's assessment and mapping capacity, leveraging and building on existing shelter-cluster or inter-cluster initiatives.</td>
<td>€0.66m</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>UNHCR (JIPS 1)</td>
<td>To improve the humanitarian community’s access to and use of more consistent, reliable and accurate core information on displacement-affected populations.</td>
<td>€0.57m</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>UNHCR (JIPS 2)</td>
<td>Follow-up action to address persisting gaps after JIPS 1 implementation (field worker capacity building, etc.)</td>
<td>€0.60m</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Total** €3.61m

42 Initiatives: FAO IPC, ACF SMART, ACTED IMPACT/REACH and UNHCR JIPS.

43 The component „Software development PROGRES“ included in the contract not included (un-typical activity)
130. The ERC funding of needs assessment initiatives consequently represents around €7.57m, or 9.5% of the overall ERC funding over the period covered by the evaluation (2010 – 2013).

131. The importance of ERC contributions to ACAPS and OCHA’s Strategic Framework 2010-2013 (in which joint needs assessments were addressed under Goal 2 / Chapter 2.4) should also be put in perspective, as demonstrated in the table below.

Table 6: ERC contribution in perspective

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>ACAPS Project Phase</th>
<th>Total budgeted</th>
<th>ERC contribution (DG ECHO)</th>
<th>Main supporters</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>ACAPS I (2010 – 2012)</td>
<td>€5.3m</td>
<td>€0.4m or about 7.5%</td>
<td>SIDA, DFID, OFDA (plus 5 others)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ACAPS II (2013 – 2014)</td>
<td>€5.8m</td>
<td>€0.5m or about 8.5%</td>
<td>SIDA, MFA Norway (plus 6 others)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>OCHA ERC grant</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>OCHA – I, PN: 2010/01001</td>
<td>€1.3m</td>
<td>€0.94m, or 72.5%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>OCHA – II, PN: 2012/91006</td>
<td>€7.675m</td>
<td>€2.21m, or 27.7%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

10. C. Effectiveness of multi-sector / multi-cluster initiatives

132. Transformative Agenda and ERC funding to OCHA (Common Needs Assessment – CNA approach and tools) – more than half of the ERC funding went into the support of the three different pillars of the IASC Transformative Agenda (ITA). The joint and common needs assessments initiatives fall under the accountability pillar of the ITA. In this context ERC funding supported in two successive funding rounds the work of OCHA to develop related tools and to undertake advocacy work and capacity building in applying common needs assessments in rapid-onset disasters (based on the MIRA approach). The development of MIRA and the related tools was an IASC initiative, supported by its principals and based on confirmed need, addressing the global gap of not having had a common needs assessment mechanism in place. Therefore, the ERC support appears quite relevant in the sense that one of the largest humanitarian donors (ECHO) is contributing to this global initiative – see findings below.

133. The MIRA approach has been applied in two level 3 (L-3) emergencies so far (Philippines and CAR) and in several other crises to facilitate and to provide joint needs assessments. The different exercises were adapted to the specific situations of the emergencies covered. OCHA considers the two successive funding cycles of ERC funding ‘essential’ and highlights in particular that earmarked ERC funds made it possible to develop the components, tools and processes of the Humanitarian Programme Cycle as they stand today (MIRA, Humanitarian Dashboard and others).

134. General findings - By supporting the work of the IASC NATF working group in developing concepts tools for multi-sector / multi-cluster needs assessments and capacity building for its application, the ERC funding has addressed clearly identified needs of the global humanitarian system. A very high proportion of the respondents to the online survey confirmed that ERC has ‘well or very well’ contributed to establishing the coordinated needs assessment approach.

135. The OCHA Humanitarian Dashboard – of which the development and field testing have been funded by ERC, is widely used, implemented as an essential general information tool in the Humanitarian Programming Cycle, and recognised as a rapid and easy to access orientation and information tool. The ‘IASC / NATF Operational Guidance for Coordinated Assessments in Humanitarian Crises’, published in 2012, provides the foundation for helping to realize better quality and more timely assessments through coordinated processes. The document is highly appreciated by the humanitarian community as a central effort in supporting common needs.

45 Goal 2: „A more effective humanitarian coordination system” / Chapter 2.4: A more systematic programme cycle (needs assessment and analysis...joint planning, fundraising and resources allocation and M & E”
46 TA pillars: Humanitarian Leadership / Coordination / Accountability
47 Afghanistan, Chad, Colombia, Ethiopia, Haiti, Kenya (KIRA), Mali, Pakistan, South Sudan (IRNA), Syria (JJ), and Yemen (further information under: https://assessments.humanitarianresponse.info/field-activities)
assessments. These are however only two components among several – as ERC is one funding sources amongst many other donors contributing to the implementation of OCHA’s strategy.

136. **Support to strengthening evidence-based decision making (components of grant 2)** - The second grant to OCHA has targeted guidance to HTCs in applying IASC NATF Operation Guidance and tools, training on coordinated assessments for HCTs and host governments, OCHA staff and clusters. The mid-term review reports on CNA trainings in 9 countries, for OCHA staff in 4 countries and training directed to national clusters in 2 countries. The evaluation could not trace back any of these during its field visits (reportedly no training /induction in the Philippines) and therefore can only state indirectly on the effects (in the case of MIRA application: Philippines, Kenya and South Sudan).

137. **Key field findings on MIRA** - It should be noted that, even though MIRA as such has only attracted a relatively small share of ERC funding (see above tables), its effects were most visible during the field visits due to their wide multi-sector scope - a pattern which is reflected below. In the Philippines, the timely implementation of MIRA in response to the Haiyan (or Yolanda) emergency was partly hampered by lack of understanding of the procedures by national authorities (even though they have been co-leading clusters since 2006), and by local clusters coordinators. It was reported that the MIRA implementation experienced a few days of delay due to necessary negotiations with local authorities, not having been fully aware about MIRA and its application in L-3 situations. This experience calls for better preparedness in terms of information and training/simulation in high-risk countries.

138. MIRA was appreciated for the overall perspective it provided – in particular towards donors and HQs – and the number of participants involved into the subsequent Strategic Response Plan (14 UN agencies and 39 INGOs). However, many agencies (and clusters representatives) did not perceive its added value for operational purposes, as MIRA merely reproduces some of the data that they had already provided. The first phase of MIRA (community level assessment) received some critical comments from agencies as it did not incorporate gender dimensions and was not always accurate (e.g. for nutrition and GBV). It was also published rather late, after 6 weeks, and the definition of ‘affected people’ adopted by the UN (following government request) was quite broad – extending well beyond the area most affected by the typhoon path: MIRA could therefore not have been co-used as such by ECHO for emergency assessment. The second phase was estimated a more useful assessment as it went down to household level. This first implementation of MIRA in a L-3 emergency has provided the opportunity for a number of review exercises by various stakeholders – including OCHA, which would in turn call for an independent meta-review.

139. In South Sudan (IRNA) and in Kenya (KIRA), the evaluation observed locally adapted versions of the MIRA mechanism, which can both be called good practice. Particularly the KIRA (Kenyan Initial Rapid Assessment Mechanism) – which benefited from the support of ACAPS - is widely accepted and is planned to be handed over to local actors after having been funded and managed by international sources (including by ECHO operational funds) since 2011. The level of information about MIRA in Kenya and the adaptation process to local requirements functioned very successful, indirectly hinting to good induction / information measures implemented by OCHA in this case.

140. **ACAPS** - The ACAPS project started in 2009 as the initiative of a consortium of three NGOs (HelpAge, Merlin, and NRC) to improve coordinated needs assessments and methodologies. The enterprise sprang from the realization that existing approaches – multiple, independent and uncoordinated assessments – did not provide a coherent picture of humanitarian requirements. They were therefore unable to effectively inform and support needs-based decision making, and many HCTs did not have the human resources necessary to lead coordinated multi-sectoral assessments. ECHO made three contributions to ACAPS through a TF grant in 2009 to HelpAge, and two ERC grants to NRC (see above).

141. **ACAPS** - The ACAPS project encompasses working on policies, methodologies and tools, developing a network of specialists, and has tried so far to improve coordinated multi-sectoral assessments in 14 crisis contexts through the deployment of assessment specialists and continuous operational learning. The ERC grants contributed to the latter through roster development and maintenance,
and deployments to provide operational support. Furthermore, ACAPS has contributed to the normative work of the NATF and provided training to it. The NATF work plan for 2012 included the testing of the MIRA in the field and drawing lessons from the use of the Operational Guidance, in which ACAPS played a key role. Due to its integration in NATF and its undoubted expertise in conducting multi-sectoral assessments, deployed ACAPS experts were able to fill gaps, supporting national clusters with in-depth secondary data analysis works in absence of own resources\textsuperscript{48}.

142. **Key field findings on ACAPS** – Whereas the technical ability of ACAPS is widely appreciated, findings on its role are mixed. On the positive side, ACAPS was instrumental in supporting OCHA to adapt MIRA to the local context of Kenya and set up KIRA; it also cooperates intensively with IFRC, e.g. for DRR training in urban environment. In the Philippines, ACAPS was called in by the UNICEF co-led clusters and UNHCR to undertake secondary data analysis on their behalf in the MIRA framework, as the clusters were short of own resources. Overall, ACAPS was assessed as quite effective, and the OCHA Regional Director considered that the ACAPS Secondary Data Analysis\textsuperscript{49} (SDA) was ‘good quality work’, which complemented the weak secondary/baseline data provided by the government (see SMART below).

143. However, in some cases the activation of ACAPS assessments and support services is not completely clear. The usual procedure of ACAPS activation is the request by multiple clusters or actors for support, whereas in South Sudan for example the brief presence of ACAPS was reportedly based on an exchange with the ECHO field staff, at which point it started offering its services to the activated clusters. The involvement of ACAPS in the Philippines raised also some concerns at OCHA HQ level, which perceived that ‘the work of OCHA and ACAPS is not always complementary; in the Philippines, where OCHA expected the clusters to conduct secondary data analysis / continuous review of their data, some clusters commissioned ACAPS with these tasks’. Furthermore, the branding of ACAPS’ SDA in the Philippines did no clearly indicate its integration into the overall humanitarian system in place. In the future this type of polemic should be prevented by OCHA and ACAPS agreeing on a modus operandi in situations where both organisations work in response to the same disaster. As demonstrated in Bangladesh, ACAPS has also a wide role to play where OCHA’s presence is minimum and clusters are not activated.

144. **Challenges in attributing change to ERC funding**: as also outlined in the findings above, attributing specific changes in joint needs assessment approaches to ERC in quantitative terms is however not feasible in the framework of this global evaluation, due e.g. to the large number of supporters to such initiatives (ACAPS alone is funded by more than 7 donors, whereas ECHO funding accounts for less than 10% - see tables below), or the complexity of any tracing and measurement in this respect. ERC contributed however to the overall results and impact, both downstream in the global performance of the co-funded initiatives, and upstream through the dedication shown by one of the largest humanitarian donors to pro-actively promoting their establishment.

10.D. **Effectiveness of sector-based needs assessment initiatives**

145. **IPC - ERC** has strongly supported the introduction and mainstreaming of the Integrated Food Security Phase Classification (IPC) in Asia through a 14-months grant provided in 2010; the concept had previously been rejected by other donors (USAID, AusAid, NZAid). IPC is a truly multi-agency initiative, which has developed the standard for continuous food and nutrition security assessments and monitoring.

146. **IPC** was developed by FAO for Somalia and has been adapted for use in different countries\textsuperscript{50}. In Asia, the initial focus countries were Bangladesh, Myanmar, Nepal, and Pakistan, which have

\textsuperscript{48} One recent case is the assistance at request of UNICEF co-lead clusters and UNHCR in the Philippines (Yolanda Response, 2013/14).

\textsuperscript{49} “Secondary Data Review – Philippines Typhoon Yolanda”, ACAPS 2014

\textsuperscript{50} Seven lead organizations are involved in the Global IPC Partnership: CARE International, EC Joint Research Centre, FAO, FEWSNET, WFP, Oxfam GB, and Save the Children.
147. IPC comprises a set of standardized tools and procedures to classify the magnitude and severity of food insecurity situations and provides actionable knowledge for strategic decision-making. It integrates available food security, nutrition and livelihood information and builds technical consensus. The rationale for introducing it to Asia is that food insecurity and the number of undernourished (although not the global percentage) are growing and food security information and analysis are provided by a myriad of different sources using different methodologies and indicators. There is thus a need for a common methodological approach in the region to help decision makers perform their work. In order to increase capacity in the region, training was provided to 232 food security analysts who were certified in IPC analysts and to 18 food security experts in the region, who were certified as IPC trainers. Study tours were also organized between countries to enhance the understanding of the IPC and promote co-regional coherence.

148. IMPACT/REACH - ERC has supported the IMPACT/REACH initiative led by ACTED in 2011. The tool aims at enhancing the effectiveness of emergency shelter interventions by strengthening the targeting, coordination and planning capacity of the Shelter cluster. The initiative was closely coordinated with major relevant actors, including UNHCR and UNOSAT for implementation, as well as OCHA, JRC, ICVA and numerous NGOs.

149. REACH has already been deployed to support the shelter cluster in Libya, the Philippines (several tropical storms and typhoon Haiyan in support to NATF and MIRA), Central African Republic, Peru, Somalia, and Mali. REACH has also provided support to other clusters: Health in Somalia, WASH in Somalia and the Philippines, or Education in Mali. In Jordan however, a REACH survey of the Syrian refugees in private accommodations was stopped by the government, as it proved to be too political sensitive.

150. At global level, the action has engaged with Global Shelter Cluster coordinators and members (2011 and 2012 global retreats), as well as regularly participating to NATF meetings and engaging with other key actors (such as ACAPS) and clusters (Food Security). It should be noted that the UN Operational Peer Review of February 2014 outlined the delays in defining a shelter cluster strategy for transition after Haiyan, despite such a tool; REACH was indeed late in this context (March 2014), but this was reportedly due to its experts being first mobilised for MIRA purposes.

151. JIPS - ERC has co-funded JIPS (the Joint IDP Profiling Service, housed by UNHCR) over two successive funding phases. JIPS is an inter-agency service and was set up in 2009. Based in Geneva, JIPS is supervised by a Steering Committee comprised of the Danish Refugee Council (DRC), the Internal Displacement Monitoring Centre – Norwegian Refugee Council (NRC-IDMC), IOM, the Office of the Special Rapporteur on the Human Rights of IDPs, UNHCR, OCHA and UNFPA. The need to establish an inter-agency framework of system-wide collection and analysis of IDP-related information has been underway for a long time with particular emphasis since an IASC working group in 2004 included it on its agenda and commissioned specific guidelines on the topic. ERC supported JIPS in consolidating their efforts in terms of delivery scope and quality as well as in strengthening JIPS in order to attract the buy-in of other agencies and donors. In this respect, UNHCR confirmed that the two stage funding approach by ERC clearly resulted in attracting additional funding agencies (BPRM, the Norwegian Government, USAID, SIDA and AUSAID) and making the initiative more durable. In Kenya, JIPS was implemented by WFP (not by UNHCR) for needs assessment of food aid and has shown great success in rationalising food distribution in two Somali refugee camps.

152. SMART - the ‘Standardized Monitoring and Assessment of Relief and Transitions’ tool is an inter-agency initiative launched in 2002 by a network of organizations and humanitarian practitioners, led by ACF. SMART advocates a multi-partner, systematized approach to provide critical, reliable information for decision-making, and to establish shared systems and resources for host government partners and humanitarian organisations. SMART is a set of tools that is used...
globally to conduct quality anthropometric nutrition survey, used by many international nutrition actors such as UNICEF and Global Nutrition Cluster, which makes it truly inclusive. National ministries of Health often adopt SMART in their protocols, which also contributes to local capacity building. Although about 55% the SMART funding came from OFDA, ERC contribution was essential to support the continuity of the initiative as well as its roll-out in Asia and Latin America. Quality nutrition needs assessments are however quite expensive and ACF indicates that for the moment no continued funding is assured for the global SMART services\(^51\).

153. SMART was activated in response to typhoon Haiyan at the request of UNICEF in January 2014, as the Nutrition cluster was weak in nutrition assessments. The SMART assessment helped to get solid and reliable figures on malnutrition rates, and showed that initial MIRA figures (based on secondary data from the government) indicated malnutrition rates that were far too high. According to the RSO in Delhi, the SMART training in India was of high quality and an example of good practice (adapted to the context and well-targeted), although the tool is challenged by political constraints.

10.E. Complementarity with Global Clusters and Information Management support

154. ERC has supported the development of Rapid Response Teams at the level of several global clusters. Successively, the surge teams have been expanded by including Information Management (IM) experts for IM training of local (and international) staff and surge missions, based on the recognised importance of IM support in response to rapid onset disasters, which was repeatedly mentioned as essential and value-adding to the evaluation\(^52\).

155. Particularly in the Philippines, the UNHCR (Protection), UNICEF (WASH) and CCW (Child Protection) reported on substantial support received by global IM experts, who introduced data collection tools and instruments that helped also to enable the national clusters to comply with MIRA requirements. In the Horn of Africa, additional good practice examples can be mentioned such as the support to the national Nutrition cluster for Somalia by an IM mission, which proved crucial to improving the quality of response.

10.F. Complementarity and potential duplications between global and sectoral initiatives

156. Support to multi-sector / multi-cluster initiatives: ERC funding has supported two major multi-sector / multi-cluster needs assessments initiatives, IASC NATF (MIRA) and the ACAPS project. In theory, the two initiatives should be able to complement each other adequately. OCHA has been provided with a tool set and concept to implement common needs assessments in rapid onset disasters (MIRA). ACAPS is meant to focus on developing the capacity and structured processes to conduct secondary data collection and analysis, and to set up and maintain a pool of highly qualified IMs / Needs Assessment Experts in rapid onset disasters.

157. In practice however, due to the absence of a commonly accepted, clear institutional agreement on responsibilities and task sharing where both organisations respond to a particular emergency, irritations were observed in the Haiyan response in the Philippines and in South Sudan (see above). Although ERC cannot be held responsible for the situation, it can contribute to promoting the necessary cooperation agreement.

158. Support to (global and multi-agency) sector needs assessment initiatives: the complementarity of ERC-funded sector needs assessments is relatively high, since in most field findings the results of these needs assessments clearly contributed to the multi-sector / multi-cluster exercises. OCHA confirmed the situation by stating e.g. that JIPS and IMPACT/REACH are highly complementary to their MIRA exercises.

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\(^{51}\) According to AFC CN, the responsible desk officer in ECHO indicated that the ERC funding of SMART is to be seen as on-off support to the initiative.

\(^{52}\) The importance of IM support was outlined e.g. by GWC, GSC, GCP, GNC and GPC.
159. When looking at the different sector needs assessment initiatives supported by ERC, no evidence was found for duplications of efforts. As stated earlier, results of these initiatives informed the common needs assessment efforts in many of the practice cases. However, the evaluation also observed that sector actors somehow doubted the overall added value and usefulness of the multi-sector / multi-cluster initiatives for their own operational planning and priority setting (e.g. in the Philippines), as the MIRA report basically contained information just provided by them – and sometimes in their view overly synthesised. This finding highlights a prevailing challenge of linking sector based needs assessments with overarching common needs assessments and later on leading to priority decision making (mitigating at best the particular interests of sector focused agencies). Confirming this finding, OCHA states that ‘the major challenge of applying the MIRA today is to create a wide acceptance of all stakeholders to contributing to the process in a sudden-onset emergency, materialising a joint needs assessment supported by all stakeholders without timely delays’.

10.G. Observed gaps in the global needs assessment sphere

160. The limited scope of the evaluation and also the EQ with respect to needs assessments does not allow for comprehensive overall statements on gaps in the global system. Chapters 1.G and 1.F provide a tentative list of outstanding operational gaps and recommended focus for ERC decision making in future grant applications, but this would need to be completed by the scheduled (annual) revision of humanitarian needs. As stated also earlier, over the past four years concepts and mechanisms have been developed to implement common needs assessments and to link these with the different sector needs assessment initiatives. In the practical application of CNA approaches however, some gaps and needs for improvement (listed below) became obvious, even though it must be stressed again that the humanitarian system is not a centralised managed response body, but represents a large diversity of individual actors. Therefore, an optimal situation (e.g. timely and fully efficient, evidence based priority setting and response) cannot be realised to the theoretical optimum.

- There is still a partly limited acceptance amongst the stakeholders in an emergency to fully contribute to coordinated / common needs assessment initiatives in a timely manner.
- Decision-making on priorities in emergencies based on common needs assessments can be improved in order to mitigate individual actors’ interests to follow their own fund-raising interests and standard intervention models.

In situations where the preparedness measures have not been sufficient, irritations and delays in common needs assessment mechanism implementation are likely to occur. In contrast, where preparedness measures have been implemented, well-functioning common needs assessment system can be observed at national level (e.g. KIRA in Kenya). In this context the level of preparedness in high risks countries need to be improved.

Conclusions

C.10.1. Overall, the needs assessment initiatives funded by ERC all address clearly identified (global or regional) needs and comply to a large degree with the ERC Guidelines and principles. The evaluation concludes that ERC funding to needs assessment initiatives has significantly contributed to the establishment of common and coordinated needs assessment approaches, which is confirmed by the positive results assessed in the framework of recent L-3 emergencies, by effective national

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53 As stated in the Background, an inherent systemic challenge is clearly the fund-raising agenda of individual agencies and the tendency of agencies to intervene according their pre-determined model.

54 The related evaluation question is very narrow: “To what extent have (ERC) projects contributed to establishing a coordinated needs assessment approach”
adaptations such as KIRA (although this was not intended by ERC), and by a large majority of the respondents to the online survey.

**Multi-sector / multi-cluster needs assessments (co-)funded by ERC**

**C.10.2.** With its funding of OCHA and ACAPS, ERC has supported the Transformative Agenda (‘accountability’ pillar) and has aimed directly at establishing and applying common multi-sector and multi-cluster needs assessments in humanitarian emergencies. Both OCHA - as full member of the IASC - and ACAPS - as “technical service provider” - are essential contributors to the continuous development and improvement of the overall CNA approaches. The budget allocated to these initiatives amounts to €3.96m, or about 5% of the overall ERC funding over the evaluated period, although the extent to which ERC funding has contributed effectively to the development of these tools cannot be accurately calculated, as ERC is only one of many supporters to the process.

**C.10.3.** Several shortcomings and challenges could be noted in the implementation of the CNA operations, such as high demand on resources, tense timelines, or lack of preparedness by national authorities and clusters resulting in some initial confusion, delays, and a very broad definition of ‘affected people’ - which call for a comprehensive/meta and independent lesson learning exercise, as well as more simulations in high risk countries.

**C.10.4.** As demonstrated in Bangladesh and the Philippines, a particularly important challenge concerns the definition of the role that ACAPS can play as service provider to the humanitarian actors, both in situations where OCHA’s presence is weak and where no clusters are activated, and where OCHA is duly present and clusters are activated. ACAPS work would need be integrated in the established overall humanitarian system, e.g. acting upon request of under-resourced actors and on their behalf.

**Joint sector needs assessment initiatives (co-)funded by ERC**

**C.10.5.** During the period covered by the evaluation, ERC has supported four (joint) sector needs assessment initiatives, amounting to €3.61m or (as for the multi-sector ones) about 5% of the ERC total funding. The initiatives have addressed the needs assessment capacities of four sectors (Food Security, Nutrition, Shelter and IDPs/refugees) and have contributed to establishing quasi-standards for the concerned sectors and clusters. Their results have informed and supported the multi-sector / multi-cluster assessments in a number of instances.

**C.10.6.** However, these sectoral investments are sometimes led by NGOs who do not have the core resources to establish firmly their durability. Whereas UNHCR confirmed that after two successive rounds of ERC co-funding JIPS has attracted sufficient sources of funding, ACF (SMART) indicates that funding beyond the ERC funding period is not assured.

**Recommendations:**

**R.10.1.** ERC should continue supporting the CNA process through the funding of initiatives – such as agreements/MoUs between CNA actors, guidelines on CNA collaboration and joint simulation / preparedness exercises in high-risk countries (see also recommendation to fund TRIPLEX simulation exercises under EQ9) - leading to improved levels of acceptance (see ‘observed gaps’) and continuous improvement of CNA mechanisms and processes.

**R.10.2.** If this has not already been done, ERC should contribute to funding an independent (and probably OCHA-led) meta-review of CNA lessons to be learned in the aftermath of a number of recent L-3 crises, such as the Philippines, CAR or South Sudan, in order to solve identified problems and challenges, and address gaps.

**R.10.3.** This exercise should be coupled with a wider independent mapping and review exercise of the global needs assessment sphere, taking stock of the developments and evolutions since the first
mapping study conducted in 2008 (also funded by ECHO)\textsuperscript{55} and highlighting the priorities to be addressed in this field in the future. Such a study would also need to address the issues of complementarity of major CNA initiatives and possibly suggest a model for an adequate task division and responsibility sharing of the different initiatives – covering multi- and single sectors - to the benefit of the humanitarian system.

\textbf{R.10.4.} ERC should support improved standard classification, such as a clear definition for ‘affected people’ by disasters.

\textbf{R.10.5.} More specifically, in crisis situations where OCHA is duly present and clusters are activated, ERC should contribute to the definition a modus operandi agreement, following which ACAPS work could be fully integrated in the established overall humanitarian system, e.g. acting upon request of under-resourced actors and on their behalf.

\textbf{R.10.6.} Selective support to specific (joint) sector needs assessment initiatives is recommended to be continued to cover gaps which might not be addressed by other funding sources, such as the expansion of IPC to new regions or the continuity of SMART.

\textbf{R.10.7.} Based on the good practice example of KIRA in Kenya, which combines the global approach of MIRA and the national requirements for addressing CNA in both slow- and rapid-onset crises, ERC should stimulate the development of similar initiatives in other countries or regions which are conducive for such an effort. ERC could possibly fund a mapping for the assessment of suitable countries or regions, to be closely coordinated with ECHO geographical programming.

\textsuperscript{55} Assessment and Classification of Emergencies (ACE) Project, ‘Mapping of key emergency and needs assessment and analysis activities’, 2009, funded by ECHO.
11. A set of projects funded (see e.g. 2013 HIP) under the initiative aim at further strengthening institutional capacity to ensure effective implementation and functioning of the Transformative Agenda and the Cluster approach and other coordination mechanisms. To what extent have these projects contributed to this objective?

11.A. Background

161. The UN Humanitarian Reform process was initiated in 2005 by the Inter-Agency Standing Committee (IASC) to improve the effectiveness of humanitarian response through greater predictability, accountability, responsibility and partnership. In that framework, the IASC Transformative Agenda (ITA) was launched in 2010 after the mega crises in Haiti and Pakistan. The ITA is a series of concrete actions that aim at transforming the way in which the international humanitarian system responds to a crisis. It focuses on improving the timeliness and effectiveness of the collective humanitarian response through e.g. better leadership and improved coordination structures – including in the latter case the system of sectoral Clusters of UN agencies and NGOs.

162. As a follow up to the Thematic Funding which had already supported OCHA and some cluster lead agencies, the ERC Guidelines have identified ‘Coordination and roll out of the cluster approach’ as the 2nd main humanitarian need. The principle of inclusiveness also promotes joint involvement of UN agencies and NGOs in clusters’ work, and highlights the overall coordination role of OCHA.

163. As outlined in chapter 6.C, the 25 ERC projects (out of 59 under review) dedicated to strengthening eight of the 11 global clusters and two components of OCHA’s mandate (leadership and civ-mil coordination – see below) amounts to €41.78 million, or 53.1% of the total budget over the period 2010 – 2013. In addition, ERC has also supported the needs assessment tool MIRA under OCHA’s management, which is assessed under EQ10.

11.B. Effectiveness of ERC support to Cluster approach and other ITA mechanisms

164. The large ERC support to the enhancement of the global humanitarian architecture and ITA was primarily focused on strengthening the Global Clusters which, after setting up appropriate governance structures, could effectively implement preparedness initiatives (strategic plans or regional expertise such as the WASH RECs – see below) and deploy response tools such as needs assessment, surge capacity, humanitarian leadership and civ-mil coordination. This approach has undoubtedly contributed to strengthening institutional capacity and has helped to provide more effective implementation of the ITA and coordination mechanisms in recent L3 emergencies. This was especially visible at field level in the robust and successful deployment to the Philippines in the context of Typhoon Haiyan: ‘Overall, in terms of information, communication and coordination, the response was called the best seen so far to a disaster of that level – indirectly proving the positive effect of the Transformative Agenda’. No less than 69% of the respondents to the evaluation’s online survey confirmed that ERC has contributed ‘well or very well’ to the Cluster system.

165. The same sort of impact, however, cannot be seen in some of the on-going, long-term chronic emergencies being experienced in the Horn of Africa or South Asia. Reasons for such lower impact are complex, though (see 11.B.6); just as the improvement to the response to sudden onset emergencies cannot be attributed solely to the ERC instrument, neither can the weak responses to

56 The 11 clusters are as follows: Protection, Camp Coordination and Management, WASH, Health, Shelter, Nutrition, Emergency Telecommunications, Logistics, Early Recovery and Livelihood, Education and Food security.

57 Comment from meeting with Head of UN-OCHA regional office in Bangkok
long term humanitarian situations be ascribed only to the lack of funding or advocacy from donors. The components of ERC support to Global Clusters and their key tools are detailed below.

11.B.1. Promotion of governance mechanisms for Global Clusters

166. Considering that the structure adopted by the successful Global WASH Cluster (GWC) led by UNICEF - which leads or co-leads three Global Clusters - could be proposed as an example of good practice in terms of performance and accountability to other clusters (which regularly tended to emphasise constraints of working by minimum consensus and lack of resources for coordination), ERC has strongly supported GWC and promoted a comparable approach towards other Global Clusters.

167. The governance system and core cluster functions of GWC currently include:

- Cluster coordination team;
- Strategic Advisory Group (SAG) made of seven agencies and NGOs members of GWC;
- Cluster Advocacy and Support Team (CAST) acting as supervisory body and secretariat;
- Project Steering Groups monitored by Peer Review Groups and CAST;
- Field Support Teams (FST) which includes Rapid Response Team experts (RRT), a Rapid Assessment Team (RAT), and Regional Emergency Cluster Advisors (RECA) in 6 regions most at risk;
- Multi-annual (5 years for the GWC) strategic plan with a mid-term review;
- annual work plans;
- annual reports;
- a charter/statement of principles.

168. Following the ERC efforts of advocacy, the Global Shelter Cluster, co-led by IFRC and another key agency – UNHCR, which also leads or co-leads three Global Clusters – has for example decided at the end of 2012 to also set up a SAG and to adopt a five year strategic plan as from 201358.

11.B.2. Rapid Response Teams (RRTs)

169. A tangible evidence of ERC funding to Global Clusters has been the improvement of the surge capacity tool. This could be discerned in a number of sectors and traced down to field level in the Philippines where, for example, both the WASH cluster coordinator and the Shelter cluster coordinator were deployed as RRTs with the help of ECHO ERC funding. The Desk study already found that there had been significant development in this area and the field missions showed that this was, indeed, the case. It was apparent that much work had been done in building up rosters, training, preparing guidance for clusters, and guaranteeing that technical support is available. ERC funding was appropriately invested in this.

170. The most visible and successful part at field level of the cluster support is the achievement of the RRTs. When comparing the approximate number of RRTs from Global Clusters (approximately 10 to – 2059) with the large number of surge experts from the UN as a whole (>800) it is difficult to estimate the share of the impact of the RRTs in this overall effort - and this would require a major study beyond the scope of the evaluation. Most importantly, the RRTs from all the concerned Global Clusters were always described as extremely competent, helpful and ‘low key’, whilst many interviewees expressed doubts as to the needs-based deployment of so many other ‘fast and furious’ international staff, who were taking over tasks from local staff. Although

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58 The governance structure of the Global Clusters is not (yet?) standardised; whilst some ERC-supported clusters (Protection, Nutrition) have also established a SAG and strategic plan, others would rather use a strategic framework and working groups (Health), or a ‘support cell’ (Logistics)

59 No comprehensive information available. Available information based on interviews with global clusters and national clusters during field missions.
not all of the RRTs have originated from ERC-supported schemes, this is a sector in which ERC funding can demonstrate a positive and direct impact.

171. Some of the benefits and difficulties of the RRT approach can be listed as follows.

- The support of RRTs from global clusters was highlighted as particularly helpful in terms of Information Management, inter-cluster coordination and adherence to L3 procedures.
- RRTs could relieve resident staff from dealing with some of the peripheral but essential issues, enabling them to concentrate on direct response activities (WASH, Health, IDPs) or in some cases (South Sudan), allowing highly knowledgeable regional resident staff to be deployed whilst RRTs fill in positions at the regional office.
- Given that surge capacity systems, to which ERC has contributed, has allowed for a quicker deployment of personnel, there is now a need to ensure that deployments in the future are more ‘structured’ – i.e. that there is not a ‘front heavy’ rush but rather a planned, even disposition of personnel ensuring that those with the correct skill sets are deployed at the right time. This is particularly necessary given the drain on overall resources and pool capacity that such a deployment has, as well as the impact that it has on tackling long-term complex emergencies.
- Financial sustainability of RRTs is still an issue. Many agencies are reluctant to institutionalise this component, as maintaining RRTS and rosters while waiting for new crises to happen is expensive. Thus, a continued donor support is needed.

11.B.3. Humanitarian Leadership

172. Management and leadership skills are highlighted in the ERC Guidelines and in the 2013 HIP as being essential for an enhanced emergency response. Recently, at an ODSG (OCHA Donor Support Group) meeting in Geneva, the Director General of ECHO pointed out the considerable progress made concerning humanitarian leadership in the last few years and recognised the improved calibre of the Humanitarian Coordinators (HC). This positive opinion was confirmed by two recent surveys, one sponsored by ECHO60 and the other carried out by ICVA61.

173. During the field missions the evaluation team found examples of improved humanitarian leadership in Ethiopia and - most visibly - in the Philippines (below). There were also counterproductive exceptions. In South Sudan, the contested leadership from the HC and a weak HCT may have been responsible for the very late declaration of an L3 emergency. In Pakistan the humanitarian community complained strongly of the weak humanitarian leadership of the RC/HC while facing uncooperative government policy.

174. Improved humanitarian leadership was most evident in a number of ways in the response to Typhoon Haiyan and some of this improvement can be indirectly traced to ERC funding. Good humanitarian leadership was demonstrated by the regional UN offices, in particular OCHA, who

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60 The ECHO sponsored ‘Joint Donor Field Survey’60 – ‘Humanitarian Effectiveness’, July 2014. This was a joint exercise undertaken by 10 key donors to monitor the implementation of the IASC Transformative Agenda and the performance of the UN and the wider humanitarian system in a selection of priority countries facing humanitarian crises. The survey found that there was an ‘overall positive feedback on individual HCs’ capacity to fulfil the leadership role. Several respondents report individual HCs with solid humanitarian background and experience’.

61 ‘NGO Perception on the State of Humanitarian Leadership, Coordination and Accountability’, ICVA Survey, 2014. This survey on NGO perceptions of the state of humanitarian leadership, coordination and accountability was conducted between 10-30 June 2014 with responses from 244 NGO field workers in 21 different humanitarian crises across the world. The objective of the survey was to gather international and national NGO perceptions of the state of humanitarian leadership, coordination and accountability to affected populations in ongoing humanitarian crises. The survey globally concluded that ‘there has been improvement in the HC/HCT leadership in several of the surveyed countries. In many countries the HCs are demonstrating solid leadership in the strategic planning and humanitarian response as well as taking the lead in advocacy on access issues, and principled humanitarian action’.
decided to pro-actively deploy the most experienced regional staff to areas most likely to be hit by the typhoon; the UNDP RC, who assumed the double hat of HC despite limited experience of major humanitarian operations (this was made possible, in her opinion, by the quality HC training and the mentoring provided by OCHA); the improved quality of the Humanitarian Country Team (HCT) and leadership at inter-cluster and cluster levels. Better leadership was also evident in many of the clusters themselves, where the cluster coordinators were selected for their management skills as well as their technical expertise. Nevertheless, the evaluation found that the improvement in humanitarian leadership is not yet fully consistent – for example, in the Philippines the NGOs sometimes considered OCHA to be too authoritarian and that much greater efforts to engage international and local NGOs as equal partners are warranted.

11.B.4. Civil-Military Coordination

175. An important element of ERC funding goes towards civ-mil coordination including surge capacity, to enable civ-mil experts to be deployed to emergencies but also in humanitarian situations where there is a need for greater civ-mil awareness, as a result of the many courses that have been run by the Civil Military Coordination Section (CMCS) of OCHA. For both the Philippines and South Sudan OCHA deployed strong teams, although their roles were quite different (liaising with military help from various nationalities, and improving awareness on humanitarian principles). In Pakistan, however, where there is possibly the greatest need for civ-mil coordination, and although OCHA has a senior CMCS officer present, the agencies, especially the NGOs do not consider that civ-mil coordination has been successful in upholding humanitarian principles.

176. The training that is carried out by CMCS for civ-mil coordination takes into account local personnel as well as internationals. The local personnel include staff from NGOs and from government, military and police. The training takes place in many different countries and usually involves presentations from national and regional personnel, which makes the training inclusive and leads to considerable improvement in the understanding of humanitarian principles and in coordination. Recently in the Philippines, civ-mil coordination held a disaster preparedness workshop and simulation exercise that included local personnel as well as international, and involved military and humanitarians. ERC funding also allowed CMCS to organise courses in Kenya, Uganda, Argentina and Haiti.

11.B.5. Extent of ERC contribution to the improvement of ITA and the Cluster system

177. As already hinted, the ERC contribution in the above achievements is not precisely quantifiable or exclusive. OCHA is for example supported by numerous other donors: there were 39 donors listed in 2012, amongst which the European Commission is ranked 4th after UK, Sweden and USA; the ODSG comprises 25 members. Furthermore, other important factors contributing to improvements such as in the response to Haiyan should not be overlooked, for example: technical improvements (e.g. meteorological tracking systems), simulation exercises (in 2012), or the streamlining of UN administrative procedures and the ‘no regrets’ policy.

178. Conversely, a counterfactual indicator of ERC successful support can arguably be found in the poor performance in the Philippines of the Early Recovery cluster, which has not been supported so far by ERC – due to a still ‘informal’ governance structure62 – and which has been struggling to keep up with the dynamic LRRD situation in the aftermath of typhoon Haiyan.

62 Eight key partners of this cluster, led by UNDP, are engaged in a SAG, but this is however currently still an ‘informal arrangement until approved at the IASC Principals level’.
11.B.6. Response to sudden onset and chronic emergencies

179. The evaluation missions to the L-3 emergencies – the response to Typhoon Haiyan and the conflict in South Sudan, as well the missions to areas of chronic emergency (Ethiopia, Kenya, Somalia, Pakistan and Bangladesh) illustrated two contrasting points. On the one hand, ERC is contributing to a further strengthening of the ‘global humanitarian architecture’ by funding institutional capacity, enhancing the implementation of the ITA and significantly improved responses of the global humanitarian system to sudden onset emergencies. Six months after Typhoon Haiyan, the evaluation was still able to witness the impact of some of the changes.

180. Contrasting this and possibly therefore diminishing the impact of ERC initiative, there was little evidence seen of major improvements in the overall humanitarian response systems to the chronic emergencies in places such as Kenya (to the exception of KIRA), Somalia and to a lesser extent Ethiopia.

181. The deployments for the recent L-3 emergencies (four in a row) have also had an impact on the responses to long-term chronic emergencies, where staff engaged in these crises have been deployed to the sudden onset disaster. The OCHA Regional Offices in Nairobi and Bangkok both outlined that the staff deployed respectively to South Sudan and the Philippines had severely depleted their capacities to respond to a drought in the Horn of Africa, or the still complex situation in Myanmar.

182. Notwithstanding the early warnings of famine in Somalia in 2011 the response from the international community was slow, despite being a disaster on a much greater humanitarian scale than Typhoon Haiyan. Furthermore, there are grave warnings that this could happen again. In the context of the ERC instrument, HIP 2013 explicitly states that food assistance and nutrition should be prioritised – to support initiatives, ‘…which further the implementation of the European Humanitarian Food Assistance Policy and coordination in this respect. Furthermore, in line with the on-going nutrition policy development, it is planned to continue and widen support to nutrition-related initiatives…’. None of these initiatives appear yet much evident in addressing effectively the dire food-related emergency in Horn of Africa. In the severe malnutrition situations prevailing in Pakistan, Bangladesh and India, ERC funded tools and international humanitarian aid in general - have often been prevented from operating by the protectionist policies of the local governments.

183. Whilst ECHO’s policy aims also at tackling forgotten crises and it is unfair to expect ERC to be able to address such complex issues happening on scales of such magnitude, the bulk of ERC funding so far has focused on – much needed - capacity building for sudden-onset emergencies (emergency assessment and response tools managed by global actors who tend to react to emergencies where their actions are most visible). Few projects were specifically dedicated to slow onset crises (an Oxfam project in 2012 appears to be an exception) but components of ERC funding (multi-annual strategic plans by global clusters, support to GBV and most vulnerable categories, food security etc) could probably be further developed in that respect.

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63 The Humanitarian Coordinator’s and OCHA’s leadership in Ethiopia have helped to mitigate some of the humanitarian problems now and during the 2011 drought, as well as ECHO Ethiopia’s own far sighted implementation of ‘resilience’ programmes, which may alleviate future humanitarian problems.
Conclusions

C.11.1. The enhancement of the global humanitarian architecture is a major objective of ERC, which has been pursued primarily by supporting the ITA in general and the Global Clusters system in particular - possibly the single biggest achievement of ERC funding. ERC has strongly promoted a relevant governance structure for the clusters (based on good practice provided by the Global WASH Cluster), which paved the way for effective preparedness measures and response tools such as needs assessments, surge capacity/RRTs, humanitarian leadership and civ-mil coordination. This consistent approach has undoubtedly contributed – to an extent that cannot be accurately attributed or quantified - to strengthening institutional capacity and has helped to provide more effective implementation and functioning of the ITA and coordination mechanisms in recent L3 emergencies, especially in the robust and successful deployment to the Philippines.

C.11.2. Whilst efforts at strengthening Global Clusters have achieved suitable results in a number of cases, the issue of financial sustainability sometimes still remains, for example for the expensive RRTs which cannot rely entirely on core institutional funding. Civ-mil coordination, which would need to deploy greater numbers of properly experienced personnel as the types of conflict that lead to chronic humanitarian situations evolve, is currently well supported by other donors and would not be left stranded if ERC discontinued its support - although supporting CMCS also allows privileged strategic dialogue for the civil protection side of ECHO.

C.11.3. In the sector of humanitarian leadership, examples of improved practices by the HCs and HCTs were found in Ethiopia (besides the Philippines), but some poor performances were also reported in South Sudan and Pakistan. Although not without difficulties, advances in training, mentoring and a more rigorous selection process have all been beneficial. Humanitarian leadership however still needs further rationalisation in order to satisfactorily build up the pool of candidates.

C.11.4. Whilst the ERC instrument has clearly contributed to the enhancement of institutional capacity for emergency response to sudden onset crises, the same sort of progress cannot be distinguished in the long-term chronic emergencies being experienced e.g. in the Horn of Africa (drought, climate change) or South Asia (widespread malnutrition). This could possibly diminish the overall impact of the ERC initiative, which does not focus only on sudden-onset emergencies.

C.11.5. The Early Recovery cluster, although crucial for LRRD and Resilience, is still in need as a prerequisite of a more formal governance structure that could support its development with ERC funding.

Recommendations

R.11.1. ERC should continue encouraging the clusters supported so far to seek other sources of funding to support their structural costs at the global level (see R.16.2 and below), to the exception of those who have come later in the process and are still building up their capacities (Health, Shelter).

R.11.2. In order to continue promoting good practice in terms of governance among the few clusters that may still be in need of further funding and capacity building (such as demonstrated in the Philippines by the poor performance of the Early Recovery cluster), ERC should apply some minimum conditions for funding in terms of lead arrangement, governance – including aspect of ownership, strategic planning, accountability, etc. A prime criteria for ERC funding could e.g. be ‘core cluster functions (not just clusters) that directly support the delivery of humanitarian aid at operational level) either proven or expected’. A set of secondary criteria could also be developed, to distinguish between ‘clusters that have already been funded for more than x rounds’ and ‘clusters that have not been’. For the first type an exit strategy for funding could be devised, in a way that would see ERC’s (and ECHO’s) share gradually decrease in successive rounds and that is manageable for both ERC and the concerned cluster (with a decrease that should not be necessarily aim for zero funding, for obvious sustainability and political/leverage reasons). Such strategy could be included as a component of the already existing multi-annual strategic framework of some global clusters and should include key
fund-raising/advocacy activities that should be supported by ERC and ECHO at relevant levels (GHD, etc.).

**R.11.3.** Pending exit strategies or LRRD with other funding sources, ERC should maintain (steadily decreasing as feasible) financial support to RRTs.

**R.11.4.** ERC should also maintain (steadily decreasing as feasible) financial support for humanitarian leadership activities, in order to continue building up an adequate pool of suitable people and to continue the activities in training, mentoring, and enhancing their experience.

**R.11.5.** ERC should fund (after call for proposals) more projects aiming specifically at enhancing the response to chronic emergencies, or developing relevant components of more global projects.
12. To what extent have the principles of the 2010–15 Guidelines – particularly 'Measurability', 'Sustainability', and 'Inclusiveness' – been applied to the Enhanced Response Capacity funding, and to what extent has this contributed to strengthening the impact of Humanitarian Aid delivery?

12.A. Background

184. The nine ERC principles, which should be followed to tackle humanitarian challenges, are listed as follows in Annex 1 to the Guidelines.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Table 7: ERC principles</th>
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<tr>
<td>(1) The need to strengthen local capacities</td>
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<td>(2) Decision-making on the basis of needs and demand</td>
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<td>(3) Focus</td>
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<td>(4) Inclusiveness</td>
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<td>(5) Sustainability</td>
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<td>(6) Measurability</td>
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<td>(7) A joint approach</td>
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<td>(8) Innovativeness and mainstreaming</td>
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<td>(9) Active involvement</td>
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185. Among the principles, most are already considered directly or indirectly in other EQs, such as strengthening of local capacities (EQ8), needs and demands (EQ10), joint approach (EQs 2 and 3), mainstreaming (EQ6) or active involvement (EQs 3, 4, 11). Three of the remaining key principles are specifically assessed under the present EQ, although ‘Measurability’ is closely linked to some aspects of EQs 11 and 14 (monitoring), and ‘Sustainability’ is complemented by EQs 13 and 16 (exit strategies and sustainability).

186. As stated in the Guidelines, ERC projects need to be measured ‘as concretely as possible to allow discussion on progress...The Commission therefore insists on a detailed overview of results, activities and indicators allowing the monitoring of progress and ability to steer’. The definition of Sustainability in the Guidelines describes rather a range of various (and somewhat disparate) activities and means, which outline the perceived difficulty to tackle this issue: cooperation on good humanitarian donorship principles, coordination of efforts, identification of needs and gaps, realistic time-frame, institutional and local ownership. Regarding Inclusiveness, the Guidelines correctly argue that ‘Including the major actors in a humanitarian response will facilitate impact and promote effective coordination. This is exemplified by the cluster approach...NGOs are expected to participate as cluster leads and to provide staff’.
12.B. Overall compliance of ERC projects with the principles

187. During the desk phase of the evaluation, the team assessed the compliance of the ERC funded projects with the nine Principles defined in the ERC Guidelines (a compliance fiche was filled in for key projects). Purely based on the information contained in the Single Forms, the degree of compliance was high and all applications complied with the principles, with the partial exception of Sustainability. Nevertheless, the evaluation concluded that although these elements were conscientiously reflected in most of the projects implemented under ERC funding, it is questionable whether expectations of ECHO for Measurability, Sustainability, local capacity building and Inclusiveness were adequately met. This can be partially attributed to many agencies having different interpretations on how to achieve these principles in their projects, and partially to insufficient precision on what was expected under these terms. The larger UN organisations and NGOs tended to have a more pragmatic approach and expected these elements to fall into place as part of the natural progression of their larger projects.

188. Whilst being aware of the ERC Guidelines, many partners’ HQ staff, responsible for the design of the projects, did not know or had not read them in much detail. They did however know the HIPs quite well, and the HIPs make reference to the principles. The principles were, therefore, largely reflected in projects - especially Inclusiveness - if not always in a substantial way.

12.C. Efficiency of Measurability in ERC projects

189. The evaluation team found that the concrete implementation of Measurability in an efficacious manner was somewhat elusive in earlier years but has progressively improved. Whilst the importance of Measurability was acknowledged by most of the agencies, it was originally often implemented in ways that were focussed on outputs or those outcomes that could be observed immediately at the end of the project, and that would satisfy donors rather than to demonstrate lasting impact. However, the logframes for the ERC projects funded e.g. in 2013 have all included theoretically (no results are yet available) valid outcome and impact indicators.

190. The approach to measurability in the overall context of humanitarian aid delivery is not much dissimilar to ERC, as the basics of the methodology are equally relevant whether applied to deliverable goods or to more abstract aspects such as training. A key challenge for implementing agencies, given the complexity and volatility of humanitarian situations and their different mandates, is always to introduce indicators that can be used to measure results in many different situations and against different timeframes, varying e.g. from sudden onset disasters to complex crises for delivery, or from HQ to local levels for the ownership of an ERC-funded training (see below). The strong demand for measurability puts pressure on the aid agencies to find material ways to demonstrate it quickly in their projects and proposals.

191. All the documentation reviewed on the projects included objectively verifiable indicators (OVI) linked to the results in the logical frameworks. Logically, there are some outputs and outcomes that are easier to measure than others. SMART indicators related e.g. to the establishment of guidelines (‘documents approved and published’) or surge capacity (‘experts trained and available on a roster’; ‘response teams deployed within X hours’) are much easier to define than those addressing local capacity building issues (e.g. improved knowledge of participants from training, increased awareness of communities, etc.) and which need to demonstrate lasting impact. The respective FicheOps often show intense discussions and dialogue with the applicant on the OVIs – a clear effort on the part of ECHO to ensure that the indicators were appropriate and measurable. This process is however not helped by the fact that the Single Form (art 4.3) does not adequately stress the importance of focusing on outcomes in the ‘results based approach’.

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64 For example: ‘Results are usually the ‘products and services’ provided by the Action – or the output envisaged to achieve the Specific Objective’ (Single Form, 4.3.1).
Although results are generally not yet available, recent ERC funded projects (e.g. in 2013) all show indicators that correctly address where relevant outcomes and potential impacts: increased understanding, commitment, traceable operational effect, but only one Knowledge, Attitude and Practice – KAP – survey by IOM. Previously, agencies would often propose ‘self-serving’ indicators that are easily quantifiable, short-term, measuring outputs rather than outcome (e.g. BBC-MA in 2012) or aspirational rather than realistic (e.g. UNFPA in 2010).

12.D. Efficiency of Sustainability in ERC projects

Sustainability as it is understood by agencies can differ in many ways and is not rigorously applied. It varies from lip-service statements to established institutional strategies. In many cases it was not really clear how the applicant understands sustainability (see also EQs 13 and 16) and what concrete measures are taken to assure sustainability. The 2008 Thematic Funding evaluation already outlined the same issue ‘Partners are expected to develop a sustainability strategy for the continuation of activities either by mainstreaming them into their regular budget or finding alternative support’.

Indeed, many implementing partners have (a) difficulties to understand the concept of sustainability as it applies to ERC – the principle would benefit from some redrafting in the Guidelines – and (b) often have problems to argue how their activities could be made ‘sustainable’, especially if they need further, recurrent donor funding. The idea of sustainability is approached in a number of different ways, as follows (see also EQs 13, 15, 16).

- Seeking funding from other donors: most ERC partners, either UN agencies, IOs or NGOs, have been working with varying success at attracting funds from other parts of the European Commission, other donors, and expanding their donor base.
- Using core budget for sustainability, often by institutionalising management positions for ERC-funded projects – i.e. for established response capacities. This has happened with some NGOs (ACTED has co-funded continued support to clusters since the beginning of its ERC funding), but most often within UN and RC agencies. UN Global Cluster coordinators are e.g. funded from UN budget since 2012, although institutional funding situations vary amongst the agencies and some are more advanced than others, as listed below.
  - UNICEF for example is quite used to raising funds and is spearheading the process of defining a sustainability concept for its global response capacity. The ERC-funded CMAM nutrition project has been institutionalised within UNICEF;
  - UNHCR has also made significant efforts on this issue: a core post, covered by core funds has been created for JIPs; for ProGres, a number of positions were created or dedicated to the project work, and more will be in 2014/15; at the end of the first round of CCCM funding (in 2015), personnel costs along the lines implemented under the ERC grant will be allocated additional core funding; a core post for Protection will be created in 2014 to lead on Protection Information Management.
  - IFRC and FAO have both institutionalised ERC outputs (management of cash transfer, logistics, cluster coordination) but recognise a ‘dipping momentum’ after the end of ERC funding;
  - IOM has established a RRT position from institutional budget;
  - WHO however indicated lack of experience in fund raising and do not yet having the resources to do so.

65 Many NGOs admitted that their ideas on achieving sustainability were disjointed, or aspirational, especially those involved in projects that covered new territory such as GBV, or media communications project.
66 There are many examples: RRT rosters for surge capacity, implementation of the Hyogo Framework for Action, Global Response Capacity, Continued dissemination of tools and guidelines developed, up-dating of tools and guidelines, continued local capacity building, etc.
67 IFRC collected only a fraction of the programmed cash transfer funds from internal donors; expectations from cost recovery for logistics are also below expectations.
• Hiring more national or regional staff; many of the offices of larger NGOs in particular countries are already run entirely by national staff, which should hopefully be both sustainable and cost-effective.
• Integrating national/local government bodies – such as it happens in Bangladesh or in the Philippines with the cluster system (see also Inclusiveness).
• Subscription: where projects have a conglomerate aspect - such as QUAMED, sustainability can potentially be achieved by seeking a subscription for the use of the services.

12.E. Efficiency of Inclusiveness in ERC projects

195. Many agencies have found the concept of Inclusiveness to be a ‘driving factor’ for their projects and they have undoubtedly included a spectrum of actions that can be described as inclusive. Some examples of frameworks for Inclusiveness can be listed as follows.

• The Cluster approach: supporting the Cluster system automatically supports a system that encourages Inclusiveness in the co-leadership of clusters by both UN agencies and NGOs, as well as in the various working groups.
• Consortiums: Inclusiveness is very much to the fore in all aspects of consortiums, from including local NGOs, to planning, sharing equipment, sharing experience and sharing capacity. ERC-funded consortiums have been led either by NGOs, IOs or UN agencies, and often include all types of partners.
• Inter-UN agencies cooperation: although more UN-specific, it is arguably also a form of inclusiveness considering the fragmentation of mandates. A good example is that mentioned by UNFPA with the GBV project, where UNICEF, UNHCR, and UNFPA agreed to work together and where their collaboration proved to be successful.
• National Inclusiveness can also be listed in the extent to which local/national inclusiveness is embraced, or the way in which the national cluster system may have been adapted, such as in the Philippines where key clusters have been co-led by government agencies for several years already (see also effectiveness below). Conversely, Inclusiveness is not always possible where governments are reluctant to share coordination with the humanitarians, such as in Pakistan.

12.F. Effectiveness of contribution of ERC principles to strengthening impact of humanitarian aid delivery

196. As assessed in EQs 1 and 6 and repeatedly stated throughout the Guidelines, ERC aims at impacting both on systems at the global level, and (ultimately) on delivery at field level for the benefit of local actors. This dual – almost antagonistic – approach is reflected in the Measurability principle: ‘In order to ensure that capacity building is linked to the delivery of specific results and outcomes in humanitarian activity at global, institutional and operational level, a capacity building strategy should be developed by the partners and integrated into the design of the project’. This approach impacts in its turn on the design of project indicators, which must capture realistic outcomes at the proper level.

197. At the level of humanitarian aid delivery, ERC projects generally aim at generating relevant tools, capacity building/training for national clusters or local NGOs, and field-tested pilot initiatives. The outputs of such projects need to be practically usable and used by field operations - ECHO geographical programming or other donors, which should probably be used as an outcome indicator. The extent to which ERC outcomes have then contributed to strengthening

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68 Although two NGOs in Ethiopia who had been advised to use QUAMED by ECHO for sourcing their medicines were unhappy that they could not use ECHO project funds to pay for this.
69 This situation is recognised in the ERC principle of Sustainability, which states (last §) that ‘Sustainability will be further increased by financing the costs of clusters coordination and capacity building as part of geographical operations’.
humanitarian aid delivery should be seen as an impact. The lack of systematic linkages with geographical Units and subsequent monitoring (see EQ14) did however not allow to evaluate in how far ERC funding has contributed to such impacts70.

198. It is also important for ECHO/ERC to acknowledge what should be expected from ‘sustainability’. If ECHO believes - as a strong advocate for LRRD - that many ERC projects, such as those connected with the Global Cluster system - will continue to require some limited funding after the end of the initial ‘seed’ ERC funding and pending involvement of other funding sources, then ECHO and ERC probably need to adjust their expectations from sustainability and envisage more clearly the concept of ‘continued funding’, as relevant and necessary, in the aftermath of ‘seed funding’ (see EQ16).

199. Examples of effectiveness of ‘Inclusiveness’: in the response to typhoon Haiyan in the Philippines, a number of relevant illustrations of effective inclusiveness could be found. In the case of the Shelter cluster in Tacloban, it was clear that inclusiveness was essential in addressing the shelter problems following the typhoon. This involved international agencies, government, local NGOs and CBOs, and a wide spectrum of expertise, which were represented and worked together in the cluster. In the WASH cluster support, durability and inclusiveness went hand-in-hand as several partners were working together intensively and sharing the load of global response requirements (i.e. UNICEF, 8 international and local NGOs, one IO and one EU civil protection body), funded by ECHO, OFDA, the Norwegian and Swedish governments, and UNICEF funds from other sources. Inclusiveness also manifested itself in the Philippines and in other L3 crises in the way in which some clusters jointly shared the cluster lead. The Humanitarian Coordinator with the HCT in the Philippines adopted a more inclusive approach by, for example, including cluster coordinators, such as the Shelter Cluster Coordinator as part of the team. On the other hand a lack of inclusiveness was apparent in South Sudan, where the Humanitarian Coordinator considered that certain agencies (e.g. UNFPA) were not strongly relevant in the situation; inclusiveness depends therefore also on personality and leadership.

Conclusions:

C.12.1. Partners’ staff are often not familiar with the ERC Guidelines but rather with the HIPs, which are compliant with the principles. Although the key principles of Measurability, Sustainability, and Inclusiveness were conscientiously reflected in most ERC projects, it is questionable whether the expectations of ERC and ECHO were adequately met – to the positive exception of Inclusiveness. This can be partially attributed to many agencies having different interpretations on how to achieve these principles in their projects and partially to insufficient precision on what was expected under these terms.

C.12.2. The concrete implementation of Measurability in an efficacious manner was somewhat elusive in earlier years but has progressively improved. Recent ERC projects show indicators that address where relevant outcomes and potential impacts, rather than outputs. The main objective of ERC – capacity building – is however not easy to measure. As ERC aims at impacting both on systems at the global level, and (ultimately) on delivery at field level for the benefit of local actors, this dual – almost antagonistic – approach, which is also reflected in the Measurability principle, impacts in its turn on the design of project indicators, which must capture realistic outcomes at the proper level.

C.12.3. Sustainability is an ideal and should be encouraged, but in the volatile world of humanitarian aid, its understanding and application in ERC projects differed in many ways, from lip service to integrated strategies (see also EQs 13 and 16).

70 It should be noted that an important effort is being made by some of the UN agencies in finding new ways of monitoring and measurability; to move beyond measuring immediate output and to adopt a system of strategic level monitoring and reporting. It is not clear how this will be achieved, but in attempting to do this, there is recognition that the current system of monitoring is restricted both in timeframes and in terms of understanding the meaning of success in humanitarian aid. This is an aspect that ERC funding could also consider.
### C.12.4. It is important for ERC to acknowledge what should be expected from Sustainability, and to consider the concept of ‘continued funding’, as relevant and necessary, in the aftermath of ‘seed funding’ (see EQ16).

### C.12.5. Inclusiveness is undoubtedly one of the concepts that has been more successfully implemented in ERC projects. Inclusiveness as it has been promoted by ECHO and ERC motivates the different type of partners into working together (UN agencies, IOs, international and local NGOs), especially through the Cluster system and consortiums. This approach has contributed towards better coordination, technical support, capacity building and a greater pool of experience.

### Recommendations

**R.12.1.** The ERC Guidelines should collect in an annex some examples of good practice in terms of measuring - through output, outcome and impact indicators - the results of ERC projects at global, institutional and field levels. The guidelines should also define a systematic monitoring approach (see also EQ14).

**R.12.2.** The principle of Sustainability, which in the Guidelines is mostly a collection of activities and means, should be redrafted to propose a definition and the expectations of both ERC and ECHO.

**R.12.3.** ERC and ECHO should develop the concept of ‘continued funding’, with exit strategy, limited timeline and budget, steadily decreasing as feasible (see also R.11.2).
13. How do the Guidelines / strategy currently support the development of entry and exit strategies? How should the Guidelines/strategy be adapted in this respect for the future to ensure that current evolutions in the global humanitarian context are properly taken into account?

13.A. Background

200. ERC is a grant scheme, which addresses gaps in the global humanitarian system. This global system is not consistent but strongly diversified, represented by a multiplicity of actors responding to a range of humanitarian situations worldwide. A grant scheme addressing global gaps effectively and efficiently in this diversified area needs clear principles and indications for decision making on grants, and continuous dialogue with major actors to ensure that entry strategies (identification of needs and selection of initiatives for funding) and exit strategies (discontinuity of funding if relevant capacities have been built and durability is assured) are appropriate. In this respect, ERC has established Guidelines which are expected – in conjunction with the annual HIPs - to enable the management to take relevant decisions.

13.B. Effectiveness of ERC Guidelines and strategy in supporting entry and exit strategies

201. The ERC guidelines, as they stand today, provide a wide framework of Principles and identified needs which allows to invest in almost every type of global capacity building initiatives, based on the request of eligible organisations (ECHO partners and ‘possibly other stakeholders’). This flexibility and the large mandate (definition and objectives of ERC, see EQs 1 and 6) ensure that the initiative can react to evolutions in the humanitarian system, despite that fact that the list of identified needs has not been revised since 2010 and still include issues (such as Logistics) which have now been adequately funded. No major gaps relevant to current humanitarian concerns could be found.

202. At the same time, the flexibility comes at a price for the grant management in DG ECHO. The ERC team has to decide on priorities in a vast sphere of possible activities (entry decision) and, having decided on supporting a particular capacity building initiative, the next challenge is to decide on the time needed for the successful completion of the capacity building support (exit decision).

203. As also discussed in EQs 12 and 16, the special character of the ERC funding creates a sustainability (or durability) challenge. ECHO partly funds initiatives to establish capacities and if these prove relevant, needed and effective after a ‘kick-off funding period’, they might develop into an important part of the humanitarian system. The establishment of the surge capacity at Global Cluster level is a good example. Investing in surge capacity proved relevant and necessary, and reportedly effective in responding to L-3 emergencies. Once established these ‘system relevant’ capacity will however need recurrent funding on the longer term.

204. The entry strategy is based on the nine defined principles and the seven identified global needs, or gaps. Furthermore, ERC publishes annual funding decisions (HIPs), which are meant to formulate priority areas, based on a rolling annual review. This concept appears in theory adequate and sufficiently evolved to define the entry for funding of ERC grants, if appropriately applied by the ERC management.

205. In terms of application however, the HIP formulation could receive more attention by ECHO (see also EQ 1). More work could be invested to highlight the results of the ‘ERC rolling annual review’, the ‘ongoing donor coordination and stakeholder coordination’71 and linking it logically to funding priorities indicated in the annual HIPs. The HIPs for 2012 and 2013 appear to be rather more cut-and-pastes than in-depth reflection on funding priorities. Better prepared HIPs would also help to inform and guide more appropriately the agencies in their proposals.

71 Both, “rolling annual review” and “ongoing donor coordination and stakeholder coordination” are parts of the policy directions defined in the ERC guidelines.
206. In terms of exit strategies, the ERC guidelines as they stand today do not include much concrete indication (see EQ 12 on Sustainability). Only 20% of the respondents to the online survey thought that ERC has contributed ‘well or very well’ to exit strategies and LRRD, whilst 30% estimated that this was done ‘poorly or very poorly’. Indirectly, the Policy Directions of the Guidelines address several issues which are likely to enable ERC to exit from funded initiatives (e.g. condition to fund multi-donor supported initiatives, strong focus on joint initiatives and inclusion). However, no concrete indications are provided to guide ERC managers to determine under which (optimum) conditions the funding can be gradually decreased or discontinued at some stage (e.g. after X funding rounds for a specific capacity building effort).

207. The advantage of absence of any indication in respect to ERC exit is the level of flexibility, and the freedom for the ERC management to decide ‘based on the situation’. The critical aspect is that grantees are bound to be concerned about – from their perspective - inconsistent information and funding decisions. Several grantees stated that they had received the message from ERC that the project is a one-off support, which they could not understand because this limitation is not documented anywhere and formally any eligible organisation has the right to request further ERC funding if they judge that an activity requires it. At the same time, other grantees (e.g. UNISDR) receive continuous funding dedicated to implement their strategy (i.e. Hyogo Framework for Action) and some global clusters receive continuous support to provide global surge services (e.g. GWC) while others do not (e.g. GPC).

Conclusions:

C.13.1. The nine basic principles and seven identified needs in the 2010 ERC Guidelines still provide a wide and flexible guidance for the entry strategies of the grant requesting organisations; whilst some of the original needs could now be deleted (e.g. Logistics), all current humanitarian priorities are directly or indirectly mentioned. The annual funding decisions (HIPs) are meant to focus on funding priorities based on a ‘rolling annual review’ and an ‘ongoing donor and stakeholder coordination’. This adequate concept of stakeholders consultation has however not been consistently applied, and has resulted in a lack of precise annual guidance for strategic priorities - and corresponding targeted entry strategies - in the formulation of the recent ERC HIPs.

C.13.2. Regarding exit strategies, the Guidelines do not include sufficient concrete indications for either the ERC management or the grantees.

Recommendations:

R.13.1. It is recommended to expand the work on the HIPs, documenting the ‘rolling review process of ERC’ and linking its results to the established funding priorities defined in the HIPs in order to increase the understanding and orientation for entry strategies at the level of the grant applicants. This comprehensive approach should synthesise and complement as relevant the bilateral discussions that are being held with partners through e.g. sector experts and Global Clusters.

R.13.2. A chapter on the ERC exit strategy needs to be included in the future Guidelines. It should include the requirement for a mid-term durability plan in order to obtain a solid basis for exit decisions from ERC funding (see also EQ16). Mid-term durability plans should define:

- the expected duration to develop the response capacity in a specific area;
- the estimated funding needs to maintain the established response capacity to the benefit of the global system; and
- the anticipated sources for funding (donors / other sources envisaged) to achieve durability.

Such durability plans are recommended to be requested from the grant applicants as mandatory component of their concept papers. However, it does not mean that innovation funding should not be provided if further support is not confirmed right from the start - but the definition of a durability concept will trigger higher attention to durability aspects and provide ERC management with an insight to the risks and challenges right from the start (the plan can be monitored during implementation and might be modified according to changed situations).
14. Where might the processes for the allocation of future ERC funding be improved to increase the effectiveness of this funding? How do ECHO’s partners perceive the allocation of ERC/GF/CB funding as compared to the ERC Guidelines and annual Humanitarian Implementation Plans (HIPs).

14.A. Background

208. As assessed under EQs 1 and 6, the comprehensive overview of humanitarian approaches and challenges - which have been captured in the nine ERC principles, as well as the list of identified gaps annexed to the Guidelines - which is still globally relevant to the current humanitarian needs, ensures the overall relevance of the ERC initiative. Beyond appropriateness of funding allocations, this chapter will look at aspects of efficiency of the allocation process.

209. It should be noted that the second part of the EQ specifically requests the perceived opinion of the partners, which may only provide a partial overview of the concerned issues (dialogue with ECHO staff, reasons for rejection of proposals, ERC strategy, allocation of funding) considering that many partners have not been much informed so far about other ERC funded projects (see §62).

14.B. Increasing the effectiveness of ERC by improving the efficiency of funding allocation and internal management

210. Notwithstanding the systematic appraisal process carried out by the ERC Steering Group, there is a number of areas where the processes for the allocation of ERC funding would benefit from some further adjustment, and where the current system could be refined and become more effective, such as: definition of a set of standard criteria to be used by the ERC Steering Group in the selection of projects (see EQ7); more streamlined internal management process among the Technical Working Groups (TWG), and more consistent involvement of the ECHO field staff in project selection (and field monitoring); regular analysis of changing trends in humanitarian aid; a review of the appropriateness of training that is implemented with ERC funding; and more focused strategy.

- Within ECHO there were common perceptions that systematic and timely consultation of field RSO and TA staff, links between SST and RSOs, Directorates A and B, feedback and monitoring are not yet optimum, as discussed below and in chapter 14.C. Although improved in 2013, the consultation process with the field RSOs for funding allocations still requires internal advocacy – as new procedures for consultation are not always followed by the field. Due to the frequent ignorance of ERC projects by TAs, some duplications with operational budgets were found e.g. in Pakistan (DCA security training, SCF nutrition, FAO IPC).

RSOs anticipate a more useful dialogue and strategy when the SST becomes fully ‘regionalised’.

72 Through the ERC Steering Group, operational units have access to all proposals; a summary of all ERC projects funded is circulated to all operational units, and in parallel to all RSOs (using a format proposed by HRSOs); in addition, Thematic Working Groups are engaged in project selection and monitoring of projects in their sectors of expertise.

73 In some cases, with the agencies being funded by ECHO operations and ECHO ERC, different parts of the agencies handled different parts of the funding from ECHO. One of the examples that was given concerned SCF where from ECHO both the operational unit and ERC were providing funding that went towards nutritional programmes, but because a different part of SCF handled the ERC funding neither part knew what each other was doing.

Another example that demonstrated limited co-ordination/exchange of information between ERC and the field concerned MDM QUAMED, where it was explained that had the field office known that ERC was funding QUAMED they could have warned ERC that there were some transparency issues with them (although to emphasise, as far as the evaluator knew this did not affect ECHO projects) and, from the conversation that the evaluator had with ECHO this only affected one individual from QUAMED.
• Management efficiency is central to increasing the effectiveness of the ERC instrument. As hinted above, and although it is clear that the ERC Steering Group and managers have attempted with the resources available to ensure that there was extensive dialogue and involvement within ECHO, there is a perception that the management of the significant ERC funds has not always followed a fully uniformly structured approach among the various ECHO TWGs. There is also a perception – at least until the end of 2013 when the HQ resources for ERC management were reinforced – that the time schedule for the flow of information and consultation with the operational units and the ECHO field representatives might have been more appropriate, to develop and maintain a sense of buy-in, ownership, and participation. This lack of coordination potentially reduces the strategic leverage and field impacts of ERC funding and may also reduce synergies or reciprocal advantages to be gained between geographical/operation projects and ERC projects.

• Given the emphasis on ‘monitoring’ in the ECHO strategy for 2014, where it is stated that ‘…systematic monitoring of implementation, using key results indicators and specific markers will be ensured to the largest extent possible…’ the monitoring of ERC projects was an issue that was consistently raised during the field missions by ECHO staff and implementing partners. For the cases where project-specific monitoring missions had taken place (see also §96), the HOPE database duly shows that standard monitoring had been performed for 14 projects (monitored at least once) out of the 18 projects funded in 2011. For 2012 the figures are 10 projects out of 16. However, ERC projects involve mainly capacity building and training activities (see below), the results of which can be significantly more difficult to measure than operational aid delivery (see §190-191) and would require both examples of good practice and follow-up after the projects. During field visits two different ECHO approaches were found: on the one side, some monitoring of ERC projects is performed by SST and HQ experts, who also carry out joint monitoring missions (JMM) 74 – although not always with the participation of the concerned ECHO field staff 75. There are some very engaged examples of monitoring such as that of the actions of OCHA in Somalia, Kenya and Yemen, JMMs in the Philippines and Bangladesh, or the monitoring of the CMAM, QUAMED and BBC MA projects (in the later case in India only). At the other end of the scale, however, there were some cases of, apparently, minimal monitoring – if any 76, and several agencies that had received funding for ERC were unaware of any monitoring missions from ECHO. ERC is using ‘monitoring profiles’ for the grants, although these were perceived by the ECHO field staff as often containing insufficient information to make an objective judgement on the efficacy of the project.

• Much of the allocation of ERC funding for projects eventually translates into training. Although training is an important way for enhancing capacity and ownership, quality and cost of training can vary significantly, even for the same sectors of training. Studying the documents for training projects and talking to stakeholders, the evaluation team is not convinced of the consistency of training both in terms of expense, quality, and measurability of outcome. Training only has an impact if it is well targeted and prepared, conducted

74 The evaluation did however not have access to the complete list of such missions or to the subsequent reports.

75 ECHO country TAs were not always aware of monitoring that took place in their country. One TA, for example, complained that the first they knew about a monitoring visit was when they read the mission report and another only discovered that an ERC monitoring mission was taking place when he met the person conducting the monitoring seated on the same aeroplane destined for his country. Another TA, the Regional WASH expert, could not participate in the ECHO/UNICEF joint monitoring of the ERC UNICEF global Wash Cluster support project, because he was not granted permission to travel from HQ Brussels.

76 In some cases, where ECHO representatives were invited to monitor the quality of training courses, they either declined or were only present for such a short period of time as to make the monitoring invalid. This was often disappointing for agencies anxious to obtain feedback from ECHO.
professionally\textsuperscript{77}, and aiming at sustainability (e.g. though Training of Trainers) to keep up with the rapid turnover of humanitarian personnel. Examples of good practice by professional trainers were also found (Austrian Red Cross, RedR, UNICEF regional training in Eastern Africa), which can be captured and disseminated.

- The 2008 evaluation commented that the “…lack of a clear and ‘a priori’ definition of what was to be achieved resulted in too many topics covered in different domains…” This still appears to hold true to a large extent - as highlighted in chapter 6.C – even though all 59 projects under review fall into the seven priority areas defined in the ERC Guidelines; however, these priority areas have not been subject to an in-depth review as envisaged in the Guidelines (chap. 1.F), which may have tightened their focus. Chapter 1.H provides a tentative list of updated operational humanitarian needs that could potentially be funded by ERC. Whereas the HIPs define an annual plan for ERC, it is also important that their areas of priority fit with ECHO’s overall and annual policy priorities.

14.C. Efficiency of ERC funding allocations as perceived by the partners

211. The processing of submissions is felt by the partners to be in need of greater transparency in terms of more dialogue (this does not concern the key partners already involved in strategic dialogue with ECHO) and feedback in the consideration of bids and rejections, greater clarity on some concepts/definitions, and on the long term strategy of ERC. There is also a need to bring ERC closer to the area where it should have the greatest impact – on the ground. The lack of communication between the ERC partners (most partners ignore who and what ERC has been funding out of their own projects) - compounded by the low visibility of ERC\textsuperscript{78} - also restricts the possibilities to achieve a consolidated overview of these issues.

- **Dialogue before submissions:** although there are some good practices (e.g. the PANIS Food Security Working Group) which are similar to the detailed discussions that are held with partners submitting projects to the geographical units (where both the desk and the ECHO TA would be heavily involved in refining the project before final submission to Brussels), most RSO experts – and in some cases SSTs - do not yet perceive that they are systematically and/or adequately involved, despite improved procedures. Where ERC projects focussed on particular geographical areas or countries, the relevant RSO experts have received requests for feedback among the flow of information from Brussels, but timelines have reportedly been quite short, and the decision process seemingly almost completed already at HQ level. The ECHO country TAs often know little of the projects at the selection stage.

- **Feedback:** where proposals were rejected, the reasons for rejections stated in the ECHO response letters would rarely provide sufficient information to allow the agencies to improve the quality of their future proposals. Topics that had been previously discussed informally with ECHO and found relevant and consistent with the HIPs priorities would, for example, be rejected as not conforming with criteria (although no concrete list of criteria exists), without much further explanation.

- **Adhering to a longer-term strategy:** as outlined under EQ1, the longer-term strategy in ERC funding can be questioned, particularly because the specific objectives and selected priority areas defined in the HIPs for 2010 and 2011 have been replaced in 2012 – 2013 by identical

\textsuperscript{77} A field security training was e.g. carried out in several fundamentalist-prone Muslim countries by a Christian faith-based NGO, which was deemed a liability by the participants.

\textsuperscript{78} On the ECHO web site, references to Enhanced Response Capacity funding need to be searched among the many HIPs; a brief summary and a link to the Guidelines can be found under the ‘capacity building’ indent in the “What We Do” thematic. There are however no lists of funded projects or other publications.
generic rationale and priority areas. There is also a perception that strategy, in some cases, is defined by the personality and technical background of individual ECHO staff in charge. Some actors (out of the cluster system) have furthermore stressed that the strong ERC support to the clusters, although much appreciated, is seemingly at odds with a previous consensus among donors to the effect that, after the initial roll out of the cluster system and two successive appeals in 2006 and 2007, global cluster costs should be fully covered by core funds of cluster lead agencies.

- ERC funding uses the single form (SF), basically designed to handle ‘conventional’ humanitarian funding of operations, without being adapted to (additional) requirements of ERC funding – see also chapter 3.B. Many of the interviewees indicated that the SF for them does not appear to be adequate for ERC funding (e.g. they often struggle with defining direct beneficiaries - which often is not an adequate measure for ERC funded projects). Nevertheless, most of the information captured by the SF is essential and it would certainly be inadequate (if administratively possible) to replace it.

- Uneven allocation of funding: many of the smaller partners were concerned that the funding was unevenly distributed – that the biggest agencies, whether UN or NGO stood the best chance of receiving the bulk of ERC funding. It was also perceived that whereas many of the UN agencies receiving a grant from ERC absorbed it into budgets for funding projects that they were already committed to whether or not they received the ERC funding, for the smaller NGOs (or small UN agencies such as UNFPA) it was a meaningful sum that would make a considerable difference. The evaluation team considered however that some of this perception was misguided: it is inevitable that if the intention of ERC is to build global capacity then the bulk of the funding will go to organisations best fitted to fulfil that role.

**Conclusions:**

C.14.1. The evaluation considers that, broadly, the process for the allocation of ERC funding remains appropriate and has successful outcomes. However, management issues both internally (lack of consistency between sector TWGs, lack of selection criteria, perceived limited involvement of ECHO RSO experts and country TAs in project selection - despite improved procedures – and in monitoring – most interviewed ECHO field staff were not aware of the monitoring carried out, of wider consultation for the HIPs, need to refocus the identified gaps) and externally (perceived lack of dialogue before submission in some cases, lack of feedback, lack of visibility, unclear strategy, specific issues in the SF) are detrimental to transparency and may potentially reduce the impact and strategic leverage of the ERC instrument.

C.14.2. A very large proportion of ERC funding for enhancing capacity goes into training. The evaluation has however collected examples of both good and poor practices, and the monitoring of training activities does not appear to have been systematic or always adequate.

**Recommendations**

R.14.1. To ensure that examples of good practice in terms of pre-submission dialogue and selection of ERC projects (e.g. the PANIS Working Group) are applied consistently within ECHO; to define a comprehensive list of selection criteria (see also EQ7 and Annex L); to provide also clear rejection notices to the applicants.

79 The development of global cash and vouchers capacities by IFRC, was, for example, requested to shift to livelihood – cash becoming merely a tool for livelihood support – following the designation of a new food aid advisor at ECHO, who was a livelihood expert.

80 In order to establish the capacity of the global clusters, 2 appeals were launched in 2006 ($39m) and 2007 ($63m), to which ECHO contributed through the Thematic Funding.
R.14.2. To ensure that the current procedures are involving in the most appropriate and timely manner the ECHO RSOs and concerned country TAs (EQs 4, 6, 8); in parallel, to carry out internal advocacy among field staff to ensure their adherence to the procedures.

R.14.3. The ERC monitoring reports should be better shared between the relevant ERC staff from Brussels, the SST experts, the concerned regional experts in the RSOs (pending regionalisation of SSTs and their integration into RSOs) and the country TAs.

R.14.4. Building on examples of good and bad practice established under this evaluation, a more rigorous in depth appraisal of projects involving training is needed (although this may require a separate study/evaluation), and good practices on professional and effective training approaches and practitioners must be captured and disseminated.

R.14.5 In order to measure empowerment and ownership of recipients (at international and local levels) of ERC-funded capacity building and training projects, partners should be instructed to use – as a follow up to the projects - some ex-post KAP-type (Knowledge, Attitude and Practices) survey tools to complement the often-used satisfaction surveys.

R.14.6. The FPA helpdesk and FAQs should provide specific information on the criteria, and on how to complete the SF for ERC proposals, addressing the most commonly observed questions such as number of direct beneficiaries / sustainability / importance to indicate local partners and their involvement / lack of a section on training/ capacity building in the SF, etc.

R.14.7. To enhance the annual consultative process for preparing the ERC HIP and its priority areas; the issue could e.g. be discussed during the annual ECHO Partners’ Conference; to engage also into a more comprehensive consultative process to review the identified gaps in the Guidelines and refocus the scope of priorities (see also EQs 1, 6, 13).
15. To what extent have partners been able to obtain support for their initiatives after the initial ECHO funding for global capacity building? To what extent have global initiatives, which received ERC (formerly Capacity Building and Grant Facility) funding for their start-up phase at global level, then received subsequent support from the operational budget in response to a specific crisis? Is the building up of capacity (partner or system based) durable and what is DG ECHO's record in terms of 'capacity backstopping' and 'capacity building'? What are the main enabling conditions for enduring capacity building gains?

15.A. Background

By definition, capacity is the ability of people, organisations and society as a whole to manage their affairs successfully, and capacity building is the process whereby people, organisations and society as a whole unleash, strengthen, create, adapt and maintain capacities over time. In this respect, it is of central importance to be clear about the ‘affairs’ to be managed (efficient and effective humanitarian response through the global humanitarian system), and in which processes to invest to develop and to maintain capacities for doing so. The indicators implicitly contained in EQ15 focus on the particular aspect of ‘(expected) maintenance of capacities over time’. This complex EQ needs to be subdivided into 3 sub-questions, as follows.

15.B. Effectiveness of support to the partners for their initiatives after the initial ERC funding for global capacity building

212. The ERC Guidelines in general and particularly the Policy Directions and the Principles result in a relatively high probability that ERC co-funded initiatives will attract further funding, by adopting e.g. a multi-donor requirement for funding, focus on inclusiveness, and prioritisation of joint proposal by multiple implementing partners. This finding was confirmed as the evaluation observed a significant number of ERC funded initiatives, which have successfully expanded their supporter base or maintained the capacity built after the end of ERC funding (confirmed by 83% of respondents to the online survey). Some important cases for donor base expansion and post-ERC funding situation with confirmed durability are presented hereunder; all concern large UN and RC agencies.

Table 8: Selected examples for donor base expansion and post-ERC funding situation

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Agency /Project</th>
<th>Remark</th>
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<tr>
<td>UNICEF (WASH Cluster, Surge Capacity):</td>
<td>Currently supported by 4 donors other than ECHO (OFDA, Norwegian government, SIDA, UNICEF); furthermore, the GWC intensively works on expanding its partnership concept (involvement of multiple actors in their service provision).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>UNHCR / IOM (CCCM Cluster, Surge Capacity):</td>
<td>After initial ERC funding, the surge capacity has been maintained - members of the 2 RRTs are funded by IOM (own funds, one staff position institutionalised) and 2 members of UNHCR funded by the Norwegian government.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>UNHCR (funding for JIPS):</td>
<td>ERC funding to JIPS in two successive cycles was essential to first test the approach and at the same time starting to present it to other donors; the second ERC funding helped to further prove the concept, which allowed to attract other donors to buy in (today funded by: MPRM, Norwegian government, USAID, SIDA and AUSAID)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>WFP (C&amp;V – C4C/ Cash for Change)</td>
<td>ERC was instrumental, a ‘key catalyst’; C&amp;V budget should be multiplied 20 times between 2008 ($40 million) and 2014 ($1.2 billion) – although most of this amount goes to the Syrian crisis. There are C&amp;V officers in every regional office. WFP has now the ambition to become the C&amp;V lead agency for all the humanitarian</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

81 OECD/DAC Definition, Perspective Note Capacity Building and Civil Society Organisations, 2011 (remark: the evaluation refers to this particular definition, since it contains the time / durability perspective)
### Agency /Project | Remark
--- | ---
**IFRC C&V** | ECHO has been a ‘unique’ donor in its commitment to the Red Cross C&V and has also supported the work of CaLP, the key global actor in this sector. The ERC momentum has been maintained, but process has slowed down. 60% of programmed C&V budget has been funded, mostly with earmarking. Some donors and many local authorities are hesitant about the lack of visibility of C&V compared to physical food and NFI distribution. Internally, the process needs also to be continued: only 20 RC National Societies are convinced ‘champions of cash’, out of 187.

**WFP (Logistics)** | ERC stopped its funding ‘too soon’ despite WFP requests to continue, but sustainability was nevertheless partly ensured through cost-recovery (renting assets such as helicopters for fees to other actors).

213. Several cases can be noted where ERC grantees invested significantly in expanding their supporters’ base over the time (e.g. Global Wash Cluster, ACAPS), being aware that only such an expansion could assure the durability of established capacities. In the specific case of ACAPS, about 20% of the projects’ income is already generated by providing services to humanitarian agencies such as e.g. UNICEF, UNHCR, or IFRC. UNICEF’s led or co-led clusters all stated that they are intensively working on sustainability plans for their global services, centred around increasing their supporters base and expanding the partnership component in global cluster service provision.

214. Initial ERC funding has effectively helped some agencies to leverage funding from other donors after the initial development and test phases, such as the Global Food Security Cluster that other donors initially did not want to support (below), or UNHCR which called the ERC ‘seed funding’ for the two stages essential to get JIPS up and running, and to attract sufficiently large supporter base to maintain the services.

215. Although UN agencies have generally been able to achieve sustainability after initial ERC funding and/or to significantly enlarge their supporters base (NGOs were often less able to do so - see §195), they have often met with significant challenges. The Global Food Security Cluster (co-led by FAO and WFP), which has received nearly 45% of its funding from ERC during the first two years of its launching, reported on a ‘dipping momentum’ after the end of the funding and had to spend a significant amount of time and resources on chasing new donors. This challenge is true for most of the cluster lead and key agencies – partners have almost all indicated that in the case of projects requiring qualified human resources on a permanent basis (such as surge capacity) or continued refinement of tools – which should be seen as ‘global tools’ that support the work of clusters and provide more efficient use of donors’ funding, complete financial sustainability could not be envisaged.

15.C. Effectiveness of subsequent support to ERC partners from the operational budget in response to a specific crisis

216. As detailed under EQ6, up to 53,1% of ERC funding over the period 2010-2013 was dedicated to supporting the Transformative Agenda, strengthening the governance structures, strategic approaches and capacities of global clusters; such initiatives at the overall level were not by nature meant to receive much direct support from operational budgets at field level; they have nevertheless achieved durability through other funding sources.

217. The extent to which other ERC seed-funded projects have been funded by the Commission or other donors in specific operational contexts is not systematically documented – partly due to the lack of involvement of the ECHO field staff and cannot be assessed in a holistic way.

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82 In the sense of “maintaining of global services and tools without external donor support”.
218. The desk and field studies have however observed a few cases where ERC funded global initiatives have attracted operational funding from ECHO or longer-term development instruments of the Commission, as follows (see also §56 and 59).

- As also mentioned in the above table on donors’ base expansion, the Cash for Change (C4C) programme of WFP is a successful example of an ERC-(co)funded project which has attracted subsequent operational budgets. Particularly in response to the large Syrian crisis, C4C’s budget is expected to be multiplied 20 times between 2008 and 2014, to some $1.2 billion, partly from ECHO operational budget.

- The coordination role of OCHA in emergencies is regularly funded by ECHO and many other humanitarian donors, including the ERC-supported activities (leadership, civ-mil relations, needs assessment). In that context, the MIRA coordinated needs assessment tool has also been used as the conceptual basis for KIRA, which receives some ECHO operational budget in the national context in Kenya.

- IPC in Asia has been funded by ECHO operational budgets in Bangladesh and the Philippines, as well as by DEVCO in Nepal.

- UNISDR with the accelerated implementation of the Hyogo Framework for Action, which was the only ERC project so far to receive also funding from IfS.

219. Conversely, some initiatives have met with a more limited success, such as the IFRC logistics hubs which must face the strong competition of private logistics operators, including for transportation on behalf of Red Cross National Societies.

15.D. Durability of the building up of capacity by ERC

15.D.1. Definitions

220. When looking at the durability of the ERC funded initiatives, it is important to be clear on:

(a) how durability is defined in this context; and

(b) to understand what influence ECHO can have on the durability of co-funded initiatives.

221. The evaluation understands durability as ‘the capacity of an partner organisation or a group of partners to maintain the capacity built with support of ERC funding, beyond the ERC funding period’. The direct influence of ECHO on the durability lies in the type of ERC grant scheme concept applied, and the project cycle management in accordance with the policy directions, guiding principles, selection procedures, and the capacity to monitor the funded initiatives.

222. It should be noted that in the OECD DAC glossary of evaluation terms, the term Sustainability applies to the outcome of the project itself rather than to the partner or system, and is defined as ‘The continuation of benefits from a development intervention after major development assistance has been completed’ and/or ‘The probability of continued long-term benefits. The resilience to risk of the net benefit flows over time’.

15.D.2. Effectiveness of building up of capacity

223. As discussed before, most initiatives funded by ERC have showed the tendency to achieve durability. The majority of the ERC funding went into the support of the Transformative Agenda and can be assessed as durable, such as global clusters and common needs assessment initiatives. The Transformative Agenda is also supported by all major international humanitarian actors, which gives this investment the highest plausibility to reach durability. The following table shows some examples of ERC funded initiatives with a high probability to remain durable in the defined sense.

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83 In terms of durability, the global clusters indicated that the positions of all the global cluster coordinators in the UN have been institutionalized in 2012 (UN staff members)

84 OCHA Geneva states that they are dedicated to the TA and see the respective parts of their strategy funded by ERC as durable (even if this funding would be discontinued in the future).
Table 9: ERC supported initiative and Background

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>ERC supported initiative and Background</th>
<th>Background</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Transformative Agenda</td>
<td>Overarching systemic venture of the international humanitarian community, perceived as the right way to go in its direction and concept. It is supported by major humanitarian actors and its durability is ‘assured’ by relevant UN agencies.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ACAPS project</td>
<td>Supported by numerous donors (9 in 2014) and integrated in the IASC fora for needs assessment. However ACAPS is threatened by poor institutional relations with OCHA (roles, responsibilities and modus operandi in situations responding to the same disaster / emergency).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>FAO - IPC</td>
<td>High recognition amongst humanitarian actors, and standard in food security assessment and monitoring (embedded at national level in the Horn of Africa)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ACF - SMART</td>
<td>International “quasi standard” for nutrition assessments and supported by major international humanitarian actors. However, continuous funding for international services (e.g. Essential Survey Support) is not yet assured.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>UNISDR – Hyogo Framework Implementation support</td>
<td>International effort to mitigate the negative impact of climate change, supported by &gt; 35 donors / organisations and the signatory states to the Hyogo Framework.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Remark: ERC support to the above-listed initiatives accounts for more than 60% of the overall ERC budget in the evaluation period 2010 – 2013.

224. As already stated, another important factor supporting the durability of the global cluster response capacity is the deep involvement of ECHO HQ and SST technical experts in global cluster activities (e.g. annual retreats, review exercises and joint monitoring missions), which is mitigated by reporting procedures which are often felt as cumbersome, ‘heavy-handed’ approaches in some cases, and a lack of internal communication with the ECHO field staff. Nevertheless, the knowledge and experience that ECHO can bring (except in some rare technical fields) is usually highly regarded: ‘…ECHO brings more than just money, but also brought invaluable expertise…’.

15.D.3. Enabling conditions for durability

225. The following list shows the most important enabling factors for enduring capacity building gains as observed by the evaluation:

- ERC Guidelines (policy directions / principles / requirements for funding), which request a high degree of inclusion and put strong priority on multi-donor / multi-actor initiatives.
- ERC management procedures (ERC grant cycle management) – the selection of grant proposals adhered to the above principles laid out in the ERC Guidelines.
- Degree of support for a specific initiative by the international humanitarian community
- Confirmed (global) relevance of the initiative / action.
- Relative strength (in terms of fundraising and system wide recognition) of the initiative’s driving actor(s).
- Level of support by other actors (involvement) and other sources of funding (multi donor venture), right from the beginning.
- Quality of project design.
Conclusions

C.15.1. Overall, ERC funded organisations have generally been able to achieve sustainability after initial ERC funding and/or to significantly enlarge their supporters base, although often with significant challenges.

C.15.2. In several cases, ERC-funded global initiatives have received subsequent support from ECHO (and other donors’) operational budget sources, including for adaptations to regional / national contexts (e.g. KIRA / IPC Asia). However, this information is not systematically captured in ERC documentation and the evaluation could not gain consistent information on this issue.

C.15.3. The ERC Guidelines (policy directions and defined principles) duly support durability of initiatives through their requirement for multi-donor, multi-actor initiatives, and inclusion. The grant management cycle, which is consistent with the Guidelines, is another enabling factor. This all concentrates the selection on those applications, which show a high probability to remain durable beyond ERC funding. More than half of ERC funding during the period of reference went into the support of the UN Transformative Agenda, which is supported by the majority of the international humanitarian community and which therefore can be expected to be durable.

C.15.4. In terms of capacity backstopping, ECHO did reportedly well in the case of global cluster support. ERC staff and ECHO technical experts (HQ and SST) got intensely involved in global cluster activities, participating e.g. to core events, although this very constructive approach was mitigated by the lack of optimum involvement of the ECHO field experts (RSO and TAs).

Recommendation: (relevant to this EQ only)

R.15.1. ERC (and ECHO in general) – in line with the principles of Sustainability, Joint Approach and Active Involvement – should enhance the dialogue with other major donors concerned to promote options for longer-term funding and exit strategies, were relevant and feasible, for ERC ‘seed’-funded projects, and inform partners accordingly.

R.15.2. The ERC management needs to capture regularly and systematically information about continued funding of ERC initiatives by ECHO operational budget.
16. Based on experience gained in relation to exit strategies, in what cases is it appropriate to terminate ERC funding to partner entities once capacity has been built, and when is continued funding necessary to ensure sustainability? If funding is continued, should it be explicitly linked (and if so, how?) to conditions on maintenance of good performance and relevance?

16.A. Background

226. As expressed by some partners, ERC is a ‘unique’ initiative, which usually entails a ‘dipping momentum’ when ERC funding is terminated or reduced (see § 66, 195, 213, 216), due to the lack of other ready funding sources – notwithstanding the principle of Joint Approach. The LRRD Communication of 2001\(^5\) has explained such a recurrent situation – valid for humanitarian operations but also for capacity building – as follows: “Donor co-ordination is often insufficient...The main factors explaining the weakness or lack of co-ordination include... donors' diverging national interests; different assessments of situations and objectives, or political analyses; the difficulty of mobilising funds in an appropriate and timely manner due to inadequate operational tools and instruments; slow and centralised decision-making procedures...In addition, once the political momentum wears off..., particularly from the media, donor interest, and 'donor incentive', tends to subside”.

16.B. Appropriateness of ERC time frame

227. In an ideal situation, a gradual diminishing or a termination of funding from the ERC instrument is appropriate when a) partners’ capacities and performances have been developed to the degree that they can ensure internal ownership and/or interest of external operational actors, b) ECHO programming or other longer term instruments of the Commission are willing and able to take over, and/or c) other donors are able to supplement the projects. As stated above, this situation is still often difficult to achieve in practice, due to a lack of donors’ coordination, weak synergy with field programming, and the varying nature of ERC funded projects, which may require different durations before exit can be envisaged.

228. The ERC time frame of 2 years generally proves sufficient for some types of generic capacity building at the HQ level (training procedures, tools, key staff) or even for supporting a cluster (2 years are e.g. enough to set up a global cluster - such as Food Security - and initiate its main structures), but often not for more in-depth capacity building at regional or local level, or for changing accordingly the mentalities in order to achieve empowerment/ ownership and become really sustainable (see EQ12). Furthermore, sustainability of local capacities in a resource-poor environment such as Africa is still essentially an unsolved challenge. A positive example among many is the WFP ‘Cash for Change’ programme which, after 2 rounds of ERC funding with decreasing amounts (€2m in 2011 and €1m in 2013) has reportedly succeeded in transforming in-depth the procedures, structures and attitudes at all levels within the agency.

16.C. Efficiency of coordination of ‘seed’ and ‘continued’ funding

229. In the context of ERC, the question related to the exit strategy and the termination or continuation of funding has actually two dimensions. If the funding instrument would address only, based on evidence, well-identified gaps in the humanitarian system such as tools, the question of exit would be relatively easy to manage. The 2008 Thematic Funding (TF) evaluation had already concluded that ‘....(mainstreaming a sustainability strategy) has been easier to achieve when TF has supported the development and roll out of concrete tools (e.g. UNHCR Project Profile) than when TF has supported processes and institutional change (e.g. WHO HAC, WFP SENAC)’.

230. Provided that an ERC funded project is carefully planned, its results are measurable and the gap is effectively filled in, the exit stage would merely be the end of funding (one-off). One (rare)

In this respect, ERC has been quite supportive in its seed funding, allocating significant shares of the total project costs to large UN agencies when this was requested (e.g. in case of different UNICEF projects +/-40%), and reaching the threshold of 85% for smaller NGO projects (10 projects of 59). The overall value of the ERC funded projects account for about €140m, out of which ECHO has funded roughly 56% (€78.7m), whilst about 46% originate from co-funding sources (e.g. own institutional funding of the grantee, or other donors).

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The ERC Guidelines briefly evoke the need to ‘maintain capacity’ and ‘enhance continuity of efforts’ in their definition and principle of Sustainability, although the limited budget and lack of clear exit strategy do not allow to provide appropriately ‘continued funding’ of running costs to maintain the enhanced capacities or service provisions to the humanitarian system. Some form of continued funding may indirectly happen for example through support to new initiatives from some clusters (surge or regional capacities, new tools); a clarified and more structured approach – although not ‘conditions’ - would be needed.

It should e.g. be noted that, in case of continued funding aimed at maintaining built capacities, the same application and documentary procedures - that can be in some cases rather lengthy - are required in the Single Form as for the “new” initiatives receiving seed funding.

The findings and conclusions made about Measurability under EQ12 would adequately apply as a condition to providing continued funding, in particular in terms of using the additional time to measure the progress of impacts of the projects at the levels of global systems and field delivery.

Conclusions

C.16.1. Financial sustainability of service provisions to the global humanitarian system cannot be ensured due to the fact that most of such services do not generate direct income and will require continuous funding from the donor community. The ‘ideal’ situation where ERC funding can be appropriately terminated when a completed project is taken over by other funding sources is however often difficult to achieve in practice, due to a lack of donors’ coordination, weak synergy with field programming, and the varying nature of ERC funded projects - which may require different durations before exit can be envisaged.

C.16.2. Through ERC funding, ECHO is also in a way ‘double hatted’, as (co-)funding agency for the establishment or strengthening of initiatives and services, and at the same time in its role as a major

86 The evaluation made in 2012 of the 2008 ECHO FPA found e.g. that ‘The duration of the project approval period from the submission stage to the signature of the agreement takes on the average 3-5 months’. http://ec.europa.eu/echo/files/evaluation/2012/fpa2008_en.pdf
operational humanitarian donor, being the ‘indirect beneficiary’ of this enhanced capacity. This situation, which promotes efficiency gains, also creates a challenge for exit strategies, since ECHO has a strong interest (together with other humanitarian donors) that proven and value adding capacities will be maintained.

C.16.3. As a result, ERC has effectively been providing two distinct types of funding: (a) seed funding which basically supports new and innovative initiatives or invests in further development of proven, existing initiatives at global level; and (b) – to a much lower extent and indirectly - continued funding of global capacities built with the assistance of ERC – despite its limited budget, to maintain these capacities to the benefit of the global humanitarian system pending support from other funding sources.

C.16.4. This situation would need to be clarified and structured, applying e.g. simplified procedures for continued funding. There would also be a need to define the boundaries and responsibilities of ERC – and ECHO programming, and to make ERC-funded initiatives as practically usable as possible at field level, to ensure their sustainability through operational funds.

**Recommendations**

**R.16.1.** ERC should earmark / categorize each accepted proposal either as seed funding or continued funding. It should also apply simplified procedures in the Single Form for application, documentation and supervision for continued funding; thorough monitoring of good performance needs to remain mandatory in all cases, with a focus on impact which could become better measurable in the longer term framework of continued funding.

**R.16.2.** In parallel, continued funding should be as much as possible decreasing from cycle to cycle, and be closely coordinated within ECHO (programming) and outside, through linkages with other humanitarian donors and LRRD with concerned development donors. A closer involvement of ECHO field – and geographical HQ - staff from the design stage should promote an optimum practical use of ERC-funded initiatives and their continued funding from operational budgets where relevant and feasible.

**R.16.3.** The outside approach would probably require a three-pronged strategy by ERC, ECHO and the partners (see also the proposed ‘durability plan’ in EQ 13).

1. ERC needs to consider carefully (and partners’ proposals must expose their arguments clearly on this point) the necessary number of rounds that projects would require for development of methodology and internal ownership, field testing and initial roll out before being able to attract new donors, with possible gradual decrease of ERC funding throughout this period.

2. ERC and ECHO need to promote, discuss with other donors and advertise to partners the potential sources of alternative sources of funding to support projects after the end of the ERC cycle.

3. Implementing partners must – as stated in the 2008 TF evaluation report ‘…develop a sustainability strategy (or at least a mid-term durability plan) for the continuation of activities either by mainstreaming them into their regular budget or finding alternative support’. The variety of approaches to LRRD that ERC partners are still currently following is outlined in EQ3.
4 CONCLUSIONS

For readability purposes of the consolidated conclusions drawn from the 16 Evaluation Questions (EQ) – cross-references have still been provided in each case, this chapter has been subdivided according to the OECD/DAC evaluation criteria and their adaptation to humanitarian aid, as well as some additional ones that were specifically applicable in the context of this evaluation.

4.A. Relevance and Appropriateness

ERC, whose primary focus is on capacity building of global humanitarian systems, has addressed important thematic gaps in the humanitarian space, and has contributed to enhance the systems and the IASC Transformative Agenda (ITA) by promoting coordination and consistency – in particular through governance and strategy of Global Clusters, OCHA’s leadership function, consortiums, partnership and networking. 59 projects have been funded between 2010 and 2013 – the period covered by this evaluation - for a total of €78.7m (EQ1).

ERC has provided substantial, (relatively) longer-term funding not only to set up systems and tools, but also to support humanitarian principles, accountability, and vulnerable categories with due flexibility and without any political agenda attached (EQ1).

ERC has also supported some risky innovative or historically under-funded areas of work, and has encouraged greater technical awareness and better implementation in key sectors, such as logistics and cash transfer (EQ8).

With ERC funding, important humanitarian tools could be field-tested and rolled out, such as IPC (the Integrated Food Security Classification) and needs assessment tools - either multi-sector (MIRA, ACAPS) or more focused (SMART, REACH). Surge capacity (RRTs) to allow clusters to respond to large emergencies and support to civilian-military coordination (CMCoord) have been particularly useful in the recent L-3 crises (EQs 10, 11).

ERC Guidelines and objectives

The ERC Guidelines of 2010 are generally appropriate to their task, and the comprehensive overview of humanitarian approaches and challenges, which have been captured in the nine ERC principles, ensure the overall relevance of the initiative (EQ1).

However, the ultimate (or general) objective in the Guidelines relates more to a very broad vision than a mission statement: ‘– in the longer term –(to) save lives in a more efficient and effective manner’ is properly humanitarian but quite distantly related to a funding instrument that operates primarily at the global level. Elements of the specific objective (capacity building of global humanitarian systems) are found scattered in the Guidelines and are not clearly designated as such. There are no operational objectives mentioned as such in the Guidelines, which should rather be found in the seven identified priorities and in the HIPs. The current ERC definition is also quite ambitious for a budget of €24m per year (less than 1.8% of ECHO’s overall annual budget in 2012, which is commensurate with seed funding) and concerns the expected outcome of ERC rather than the initiative itself (EQs 1, 6).

The evaluation has deduced an underlying, implicit objective, which is presented in chapter 5.A. The new recommended objectives is not explicitly mentioned in the Guidelines and focuses on seed funding and leveraging of other funds for sustainability. These aspects are not sufficiently understood by some actors who still see ERC – as they did with the previous Thematic Funding although this is not permitted by ECHO’s Regulation - as core funding for their mandate (EQ6).

Humanitarian needs

87 Evaluating humanitarian action using the OECD-DAC criteria – An ALNAP guide for humanitarian agencies’ ALNAP/ODI, 2006
The priorities for the global humanitarian system - and thus ERC allocations - over the past few years, have been those set by the mega-crisis of 2010 such as the Haiti earthquake and the Pakistan floods (EQ1). The list of seven main identified needs annexed to the Guidelines is still comprehensive in view of the current humanitarian situation, but some of the needs have now been entirely (logistics) or largely fulfilled, such as global clusters or common needs assessments tools (EQ1).

Although recognised as crucial in the Guidelines, local capacity building has often not been specifically targeted so far – with a few exceptions. Strengthening of local preparedness and response was generally expected to trickle down from capacity building at the global level, as indicated by the partners in their proposals (EQ8).

It is questionable as to whether the ERC instrument is the most appropriate for strengthening local level preparedness and response. Both DIPECHO and the geographical/operational desks within ECHO are in a better position to pursue this sort of strategy rather than an instrument that focuses on global systemic changes (EQ8).

The nine key principles considered in the Guidelines to tackle the identified humanitarian challenges and needs still provide a wide and flexible guidance for the entry strategies of the grant requesting organisations, although some principles would require clarifications – see under Efficiency below (EQs 12, 13).

**Humanitarian Implementation Plans (HIP)**

The annual ERC HIPs funding decisions have been consistent with the Guidelines, although priority areas have never included local capacity building or quality/accountability (EQ1). The HIPs are meant to focus on funding priorities based on a ‘rolling annual review’ and an ‘on-going donor and stakeholder coordination’. This participatory concept of stakeholders consultation has however reportedly not been consistently applied for the most recent HIPs – although regular contacts between ECHO and its partners still happen through various other consultations and fora, and has resulted in a lack of precise annual guidance for strategic priorities - and corresponding targeted entry strategies - in the formulation of the ERC HIPs for 2012 and 2013 (EQ1).

**4.B. EU Added Value, Complementarity and Coherence**

**Added value of ERC**

Among the various potential aspects of EU added value, the ability to support valuable projects which have no other donor appears quite relevant for ERC. In this respect, ERC has been the exclusive or main funding source to a number of those humanitarian approaches and tools that need either innovation, training or capacity building, which are consistently difficult to fund or difficult to justify in short term emergency humanitarian terms, but which may pay dividends in the long term (see also under Relevance above).  

Another key added value should be the expertise of the ECHO staff, although the involvement of field RSO experts and country TAs in selecting and monitoring ERC projects has not been optimum up to now (EQ14). There are also concerns that there were gaps in in-house technical knowledge in some sectors such as GBV, IT or shelter (EQ4).

**Complementarity with EU Civil Protection and Member States**

Operational cooperation of ERC with aid cooperation agencies of EU Member States, members of ECHO FPA (EQ2), and with the EU Civil Protection – which was not integrated within ECHO when the Guidelines were drafted - (EQ 9) remains elusive.

ECHO humanitarian aid partners have generally not been aware about opportunities of cooperation with EU Civil Protection. ERC funding has only contributed indirectly to such cooperation between humanitarian aid and civil protection activities (OCHA civ-mil coordination, CCCM cluster, UNISDR), although not with EUCP specifically. An opportunity for constructive lesson learning was found recently in the context of the joint response to typhoon Haiyan in the Philippines (EQ9).
Coherence with EU policies and other key global initiatives

The ERC initiative has been quite consistent with the provisions of the EU Consensus on Humanitarian Aid and all six areas of its Action Plan. The ERC Guidelines are also coherent with and supportive of the ITA and the co-ordinating role of the UN, the NGOs in humanitarian reforms, the inclusiveness of the various categories of implementing partners, and the Hyogo Framework for Action (EQ2).

ERC has considered, to the extent possible, LRRD among its principles (Sustainability through ownership, Joint Approach with other donors), and GHD throughout the range of funded activities. This approach is reflected in all the ERC project documents, which duly acknowledge LRRD and GHD. Despite good relations with EU Delegations, few ERC partners are informed about potential LRRD linkages with IfS funding for ensuring stability of built local capacity (EQ3).

4.C. Effectiveness and Impact

ERC’s involvement and support to the ITA in general and the cluster system in particular (53.1% of funding – see EQ6) have clearly contributed to the current positive achievements, although not in an exclusive and often not attributable or measurable manner due to the number of donors and actors involved. The years 2013 and 2014 have provided the first major test of how the global system had been improved, in responding to four simultaneous Level 3 (L-3) crises (EQ1). The lack of optimum engagement of the ECHO field staff (RSO, TAs) in the selection of target/priority countries for the implementation of ERC activities may have been detrimental to the overall effectiveness of ERC projects. A ‘critical mass’ of projects (i.e. sufficient to make a difference in the overall quality of response) could possibly be reached in a country or region where a number of simultaneous ERC-funded projects would benefit from consistent monitoring and cross-fertilisation. This approach could ultimately achieve some impact in operational programming (EQs 6, 14).

Global Clusters and humanitarian Leadership

The support to the Global Clusters system probably corresponds to the single biggest achievement of ERC funding. ERC has strongly promoted a relevant governance structure for the clusters (based on good practice provided by the Global WASH Cluster), which paved the way for effective preparedness measures and response tools such as needs assessments, surge capacity/rapid response teams (RRT), humanitarian leadership and civ-mil coordination. The Early Recovery cluster, although crucial for LRRD and Resilience, has not yet adopted such a structure; this improvement in governance would be considered as a prerequisite to support the cluster’s development with ERC funding (EQ11).

This consistent approach has undoubtedly contributed – to an extent that cannot be accurately attributed or quantified - to strengthening institutional capacity and has helped to provide more effective functioning of the ITA and coordination (global and inter-cluster) mechanisms in recent L-3 emergencies, especially in the robust and successful deployment to the Philippines (EQ11). Supporting RRTs and surge capacities (e.g. for the WASH, CCCM, Protection or Nutrition clusters, but also for needs assessment tools such as SMART) has brought positive and tangible benefits and is one of the most concrete and visible elements of ERC funding. However, the current RRT experts’ pool still tends to dry up quickly. Typhoon Haiyan was only the first of a series of almost simultaneous L-3 emergencies, and this huge effort could not be matched in South Sudan, where RRTs came ‘too late, too few’. Similarly, recent L-3 emergencies have demonstrated the need for more experienced, vigorous Civil-Military Coordination. Agencies are not keen to maintain costly emergency specialists while waiting for new crises to happen. Most RRTs do need external funding support because they cannot, currently, rely on core institutional support (EQ11).

In the sector of Leadership, examples of improved practices by the Humanitarian Coordinators (HC) and their teams (HCT) were found in Ethiopia (besides the Philippines), but some poor performances were also reported in South Sudan and Pakistan. Although not without difficulties, advances in training, mentoring and more rigorous selection process of HCs and HCTs have all been beneficial. Humanitarian leadership however still needs further rationalisation and gender balance to satisfactorily build up the pool of candidates (EQ11).
Common Needs Assessments (CNA)

ERC funding to CNA initiatives has significantly contributed to the establishment of common and coordinated needs assessment approaches, which is confirmed by the positive results assessed in the field (below), and by a large majority of the respondents to the online survey (EQ10).

With its funding of MIRA (through OCHA) and ACAPS global assessment tools, ERC has supported the ITA (“accountability” pillar) and has aimed directly at establishing and applying common multi-sector and multi-cluster needs assessments in humanitarian emergencies. Both OCHA as full member of the IASC and ACAPS as ‘technical service provider’ are essential contributors to the continuous development and improvement of the overall CNA approaches. The budget allocated to these initiatives amounts to €3.96m, or about 5% of the overall ERC funding over the evaluated period (EQ10).

ERC has also supported four sector-based CNA initiatives, which have addressed the needs assessment capacities of Food Security, Nutrition, Shelter and IDPs/refugees, and have contributed to establishing quasi-standards for the concerned sectors and clusters. Their results have informed and supported the multi-sector / multi-cluster assessments in a number of instances (EQ10).

The ERC funding in this respect was called ‘essential’ by all actors, although the extent to which this funding impacted the development is hard to establish as ERC is only one of the many supporters to this process. The evaluation could identify several good practice examples which can be called ‘outcomes’ of the ERC engagements: the response to typhoon Haiyan, which for the first time applied MIRA in a L-3 emergency and assured a common multi-sector / multi-cluster needs assessment, but also unintended effects such as some successful context-adapted versions of MIRA: KIRA in Kenya and IRNA in South Sudan (EQ10).

The overall CNA concept and the operational guidelines proved to be a relevant approach; in the context of Haiyan, MIRA was appreciated for the overall perspective it provided – in particular for donors and HQs – and the high participation to the subsequent Strategic Response Plan. Nevertheless, some shortcomings were noted in the implementation: the approach was very resource demanding, and suffered from delays despite tense timelines putting pressure on all actors. There was a perceived lack of added value by many agencies as MIRA merely reproduced some of their own data, a lack of accuracy in some sectors, and a definition of ‘affected people’ that was much broader than ECHO’s (EQ10).

In some cases (Haiyan, South Sudan), the activation of ACAPS has not been completely clear and has caused concerns within OCHA about coordination with MIRA. As demonstrated in Bangladesh however, ACAPS has a wide role to play where OCHA’s presence is minimum and clusters are not activated. (EQ10)

Lessons learned from the MIRA exercise in the Philippines point to the need for strengthened preparedness measures to better align MIRA and the local DRR mechanisms, information about MIRA and other ITA procedures, mapping of local needs assessment and data collection systems; and ex-ante agreements with relevant national and international actors.

Local Capacity Building

As hinted under Relevance, local capacity building has rarely been directly targeted as such in ERC funded projects; there may be different reasons for this fact, such as the magnitude and variety of the task, or the lack of an ECHO policy on this issue (the current Humanitarian Aid Regulation does not allow direct funding of local partners; the ‘Resilience’ approach of affected population has been preferred to the building of capacities of local humanitarian actors). Whilst there have been examples of improved humanitarian response and preparedness filtering down to the local level - and some projects whose focus was on developing local capacities (see §112), the result is not to the extent that would be expected from the emphasis in the ERC Guidelines. Building local capacity and making it sustainable has shown significant progress in the conducive environments of Kenya (integration of KIRA in the Red Cross National Society) or the Philippines (high level of institutional DRR involvement), but remains a major challenge in a context of poor governance and resources such as South Sudan (EQ8).

Some of the shortcomings are a consequence of the agencies’ interpretation of capacity building and how it should be integrated into their projects. In other cases, a closer scrutiny of proposals by ECHO...
field staff would probably have improved the project design in this respect, as further work is needed in defining good practice in matters of fruitful partnership between INGOs and LNGOs, for local capacity building purposes (EQs 2, 8, 14).

**Longer-term chronic crises**

Whilst ERC has contributed to the enhancement of institutional capacity for emergency response to sudden onset crises, the same sort of progress cannot be seen in the long-term chronic emergencies being experienced e.g. in the Horn of Africa (drought, climate change) or South Asia (widespread malnutrition) - (EQ11).

**The regional dimension**

The importance of the regional dimension as an intermediary step between global and local levels needs to be stressed. The regional offices of partners in Nairobi were able to deliver cost-effective and rapid assistance to South Sudan with experts who were already fully prepared to the local conditions. Regional Offices often felt that they were better placed, rather than HQ or national levels, to promote local capacity building. Tools such as IPC and MIRA were successfully adapted to local contexts with support from regional offices. Regional DRR tools such as ASEAN’s AADMER could play a much larger role in the future (EQ9). OCHA also reckon that their regional office in Bangkok played a vital role in surge capacity, particularly because they pre-deployed people who already knew the region, who had local contacts, and who understood how systems worked in the Philippines. The ECHO RSO in Bangkok was itself able to carry out very rapid needs assessment field missions in the immediate aftermath of typhoon Haiyan; RSOs believe that there should be more regional involvement in ERC and anticipate a more useful dialogue and strategy when the SST becomes fully ‘regionalised’.

**4.D. Cost-Effectiveness**

Consistent with the findings of the 2008 Thematic Funding evaluation, there were no indications about inadequacy of ERC funding to achieve project objectives – but rather concerns about budget spreading among the seven main identified needs and their various sub-issues in the Guidelines, as well as about the numbers of funding rounds (EQ6).

Clarification of the ERC objectives would be required in terms of seed funding and continued funding (see also under Sustainability below), i.e. whether ERC should restrict itself to contribute to strengthening the global response capacity through seed money, leverage and pilot projects - which is commensurate with its budget, or initiate quasi-programmatic activities such as funding resources on the longer term for potentially extremely large issues such as clusters or local capacity building (EQs 6, 16).

There is no concrete evidence that the same results could have been achieved with less funding; however, some anecdotal indications point at some duplication with operational budgets, such as in Pakistan (see under Management below) - (EQ6).

**4.E. Efficiency**

**ERC management**

Within ECHO, there were commonly held perceptions that timely consultation of field staff at the level of RSO experts and country TAs – which is recommended in the ERC principles of Active Involvement and Joint Approach, for ERC project selection and monitoring (see also below), still need to be strengthened despite recently improved procedures and the work of the ERC Steering Group. This committee provides operational Units and RSOs with lists of project proposals and summaries, and Thematic Working Groups are also involved in project selection and monitoring. Nevertheless, due to some continuing disconnects, duplications with operational budgets were found e.g. in Pakistan (DCA security training, SCF nutrition, FAO IPC) – See also EQ 14B, paragraph 210 and footnotes. There is no established list of selection criteria, and selection procedures of ERC projects do not appear consistent among all of ECHO Technical Working Groups (TWG) and management levels. Alignment with policy, dialogue between SST and partners, and tendering procedures (concept note,
identification in APPEL) appear e.g. adequate for the ‘PANIS’ food security TWG, but may need to be strengthened in other cases (EQs 7, 14). There is also a need of wider consultation for the HIPs and to refocus the identified gaps, to complement as relevant expert discussions that are being held bilaterally with some partners and through Clusters (EQ1).

In terms of capacity backstopping, ECHO did reportedly well in the case of Global Cluster support. ERC staff and ECHO technical experts (HQ and SST) got intensely involved in global cluster activities, participating e.g. to core events (EQ15).

Externally, there is a perceived lack of dialogue before submission in some cases, lack of feedback, unclear strategy and specific issues in the Single Form, which are detrimental to transparency and may potentially reduce the impact and strategic leverage of the ERC instrument (EQs 1, 7, 14).

**Monitoring**

Whilst standard monitoring reports can be found in the FicheOps of up to 70% of the ERC projects (in 2011 and 2012), perceptions varied. Most interviewed ECHO field staff (RSO and country TAs) felt that they had not been sufficiently involved in the ERC monitoring performed by ECHO HQ and SST. Many of the agencies interviewed in the field also stated that they were not aware about the monitoring performed by ERC (EQs 6, 12, 14).

Much of the allocation of ERC funding for projects eventually translates into capacity building and training, the results of which are significantly more complex to measure than operational aid delivery, and require follow up. The evaluation has collected examples of both good and poor practices, but the monitoring of training activities does not appear to have always been adequate (EQ14).

In several cases, ERC-funded global initiatives have received subsequent support from ECHO’s (and other donors’) operational budget, including for adaptations to regional / national contexts (e.g. KIRA / IPC Asia). However, this information is not systematically captured in ERC documentation and the evaluation could not gain consistent information on this issue (EQ15).

**Application of ERC Principles**

Partners’ staff is often not familiar with the ERC Guidelines but rather with the HIPs, which are compliant with the Principles. Although the key principles of Measurability, Sustainability (see also below) and Inclusiveness were conscientiously reflected in most ERC projects, it is questionable whether the expectations of ERC and ECHO were adequately met – to the positive exception of Inclusiveness. This can be partially attributed to many agencies having different interpretations on how to achieve these principles (but also concepts such as LRRD) in their projects and partially to insufficient precision on what was expected under these terms (EQs 3, 8, 12).

The concrete implementation of Measurability in an efficacious manner was somewhat elusive in earlier years but has progressively improved. Recent ERC projects show indicators that address where relevant outcomes and potential impacts, rather than outputs. The main objective of ERC – capacity building – is however not easy to measure (EQ12).

Inclusiveness is undoubtedly one of the concepts that has been most successfully implemented in ERC projects. Inclusiveness - as it has been promoted by ERC - motivates the different type of partners into working together (UN agencies, IOs, international and local NGOs), especially through the Cluster system and consortiums. This approach has contributed towards better coordination, technical support, capacity building and a greater pool of experience (EQ12).

**Visibility**

ERC and ECHO are not sufficiently communicating publicly about the outcomes of an overall very useful investment worth €24m per year. Although the ERC concept, principles, and approach were acknowledged by all stakeholders to be well-intentioned and a far-sighted gap filler in humanitarian aid mechanisms, a lack of visibility often prevails in the field, compared e.g. to ECHO’s geographical programming. ERC results are not publicised (ECHO’s website only provides a brief description of ERC, the Guidelines and the HIPs), and implementing partners generally ignore the other projects that ERC has been funding. In the present situation where ECHO field staff is not adequately involved, the closer one goes to the field level, the more anonymous / less traceable the impacts of ERC-funded activities become – which is not in accordance with the intended EU added value (EQs 3, 4, 14).
Some elements of funded projects can be traced in slower onset, protracted and low-visibility crises such as Pakistan, Bangladesh or Ethiopia (MDM QUAMED, DCA security training, ACAPS, BBC MA, IPC, RECA, some OCHA leadership) – EQs 8, 11.

Visibility is higher in rapid onset, large emergencies, although attribution of results remains difficult. In the context of typhoon Haiyan, ERC (co-)funded tools were prominent and have been effectively deployed (RRTs, MIRA, ACAPS, humanitarian leadership, CMCoord); the very positive contribution of ERC to the strengthening of various components of the international response, although not precisely quantifiable, cannot be questioned (EQs10, 11).

4.F. Sustainability

Durability and exit strategies
Overall, ERC funded agencies have been able to achieve sustainability after initial funding (as confirmed by 83% of respondents to the survey) and to enlarge their donors’ base – although generally with significant challenges (EQ12).

For example, financial sustainability still remains an issue in some cases for Global Clusters, such as the expensive RRT, which cannot rely entirely on core institutional funding. Investments in sector-based CNA approaches are sometimes led by NGOs who do not have the core resources to establish firmly their durability (i.e. their own capacity to maintain an investment). Whereas UNHCR confirmed e.g. that after two successive rounds of ERC co-funding JIPS has attracted sufficient sources of funding, ACF (SMART) indicates that funding beyond the ERC funding period is not assured (EQs 10, 11, 12, 13, 15, 16).

ERC has applied a relative flexibility in allowing sometimes several rounds of funding to achieve sustainability. The ERC Guidelines (policy directions and defined principles) also indirectly support durability of initiatives through their requirement for multi-donor, multi-actor initiatives, and inclusion. The grant management cycle, which is consistent with the Guidelines, is another enabling factor. This all concentrates the selection on those applications, which show a high probability to remain durable beyond ERC funding. More than half of ERC funding during the period of reference went into the support of the UN Transformative Agenda, which is supported by the majority of the international humanitarian community and which therefore can be expected to be durable (EQ15).

However, the understanding and application of sustainability in ERC projects has differed in many ways - from a mere declaration of intent to integrated strategies - and the Guidelines do not include sufficient concrete or direct indications about sustainability and exit strategies for either the ERC management or the grantees (EQ12).

It is important for ERC to acknowledge what should be expected from Sustainability – the definition in the Guidelines is mostly a collection of activities and means - and to consider the concept of ‘continued funding’, as relevant and necessary, in the aftermath of ‘seed funding’ (EQs 12,16).

Continued funding
ERC has been providing two distinct types of funding: (a) seed funding which basically supports development, field-testing and roll-out of new and innovative initiatives, or invest in further development of proven, existing initiatives at global level; and (b) continued funding of global capacities built with the assistance of ERC – despite its limited budget, to maintain these capacities to the benefit of the global humanitarian system pending support from other funding sources (EQ16).

Through ERC funding, ECHO is also in a way ‘double hatted’, as (co-)funding agency for the establishment or strengthening of initiatives and services, and at the same time in its role as a major operational humanitarian donor, being the ‘indirect beneficiary’ of this enhanced capacity. This situation, which promotes efficiency gains, also creates a challenge for exit strategies, since ECHO has a strong interest (together with other humanitarian donors) that proven and value-adding capacities will be maintained. It also leads to the need to define the boundaries and responsibilities of ERC and ECHO programming, and to make ERC-funded initiatives as practically usable as possible at field level, to ensure their sustainability through operational funds (EQ16).
4.G. Gender and Age-Sensitive Issues

Although gender and age-sensitive assistance are not explicitly mentioned in the ERC Guidelines, ERC has appropriately supported the clusters and sub-clusters (Global Protection, GBV, Child Protection) and specialised NGOs (HelpAge), which have the clear mandate to mainstream gender and age sensitive assistance. Desk and field assessments have outlined the progress (not attributable to ERC only) made by the concerned clusters and sub-clusters in L-3 situations such as South Sudan and the Philippines (EQ5).

Nevertheless, some limitations were also found in the mainstreaming efforts of these organisations: there is a general lack of GBV experts in emergencies and the effect of RRTs was limited; the emergency modules of MIRA (and its by-product IRNA) are still poorly adapted to GBV and protection purposes; there was a reported lack of interest of the UN Humanitarian Coordinator for child protection and GBV in South Sudan, which has curtailed coordination and mainstreaming (EQ5).

ERC has also contributed to mainstreaming gender and age sensitive assistance in activities that are widely used in humanitarian interventions such as cash transfer (IFRC and WFP guidelines) or various needs assessment (tools for nutrition, IPC for food security, REACH in the shelter sector). Gender and age-sensitive approaches were also present in NGO capacity building projects such as CARE’s Enhanced Capacity Building, but the mainstreaming effect of a project focused on a few targeted countries and beneficiary organisations, could not be ascertained by this evaluation (EQ5).
5 RECOMMENDATIONS

Under each section of this chapter, the recommendations - which are all addressed at ERC and ECHO - have been numbered and prioritised as requested in the ToR; key priority recommendations are presented also in the Executive Summary, with the same sequential numbers as below.

5.A. Relevance and appropriateness

ERC Guidelines and objectives

- **R.1.** The Guidelines should clarify their vision and mission statements, i.e. the general, specific and operational objectives of ERC. In particular, the definition should be more explicit regarding the underlying objective of ERC as this has been understood by the evaluation based on the desk and field reviews (EQs 1, 6).

> ‘Providing seed money/driver where other funding sources are not adequate and contributing to bring in systemic changes in terms of global humanitarian response capacities, by helping to create an enabling environment, filling gaps detrimental to overall response capacity, funding pilot initiatives, speeding up key processes, and leveraging other funds’.

Updated humanitarian needs

- **R.2.** A comprehensive revision of the needs should be carried out with the inputs of key external stakeholders; the list of needs should be revised to focus on the outstanding items among the original list (mostly) and some new ones, to streamline/reduce the list and corresponding budget spreading. Priority areas of future HIPs should be focused accordingly (EQs 1, 6).

- **R.3.** Drawing from conclusions detailed under relevant EQs, the tentative list of remaining operational humanitarian needs which could be considered for funding by ERC to implementing partners (this list does not include recommendations on procedures, donor coordination or internal studies) can be summarised as follows (EQ1). Some of these needs duplicate recommendations listed under other specific headings below.
  - **Resources** – such as RRTs and surge capacity, should be funded only if duly justified and targeted (EQ11).
  - **Clusters** – to focus ERC support on those clusters who have come later in the process and are demonstrating valuable efforts in building up their governance, strategies and capacities (Health, Shelter, possibly Early Recovery) – EQ11.
  - The need identified in 2009 for ‘cooperation with (DRR) national authorities – when they are adequately linked to national clusters - and regional organisations’ in high risk areas, as well as proven/effective global cluster’s regional levels (regional advisers, surge capacity, contextual adaptation of global tools such as MIRA, training facilities) would also need further support, together with the strengthening of inter-cluster coordination mechanisms (EQ9, 11).
  - **Needs assessment:** to fund an independent follow-up review on needs assessment tools, probably led by OCHA, which could serve as a forward-looking basis on coordination between such tools. There may also be a further need for standard classification, such as a clear definition for ‘affected people’ by disasters (EQ 10).
  - **Local capacity building** – to support the collection and dissemination of good practices in partnership between INGOs and LNGOs, through a dedicated priority area in a future HIP. (EQ8)
  - **Quality and accountability:** to support new initiatives such as communications with communities (CwC) or consolidation phases of the BBC MA project, in a future HIP priority area – EQ1.
  - ERC funding has to focus more on enhancing responses **to chronic emergencies** (EQ11).
– Coordination of humanitarian actors with EU civil protection organisations or with aid cooperation agencies of EU Member States, possibly combined with simulation exercises in high-risk countries (EQs 2, 4, 9).

**HIPS**

- **R.4.** It is recommended to ERC to implement the (already foreseen in the Guidelines) periodical ‘rolling review process of ERC’ with key internal and external stakeholders, and to use the results of this process to define new areas of priorities in the HIPs (EQ13).

### 5.B. Added Value, Complementarity and Coherence

**Complementarity with EU Civil Protection and Member States**

- **R.5.** Upcoming ERC HIPs should include requests for proposals for the coordination of humanitarian actors with EU Civil Protection organisations or with aid cooperation agencies of EU Member States, some of which are already members of the ECHO FPA (EQ2).

- **R.6.** To fund simulation L-3 exercises, TRIPLEX-type, with potential high level of visibility for ERC/ ECHO and possibility of monitoring, in disaster-prone countries. Such exercises could be focused on response and resilience, and include UN agencies, government/local authorities, civ-mil coordination, Civil Protection, EU aid cooperation agencies, regional DRR/resilience mechanisms (such as AADMER for the ASEAN), and private sector actors. The exercises could also aim at further improving early warning systems for natural disasters (EQ9).

**Coherence with EU policies**

- **R.7.** The ERC Guidelines should clarify the expectations in terms of LRRD in the Single Form, i.e. practical options to link the activities – as relevant and feasible – with development actors and donors, rather than general and vague statements (EQ3).

- **R.8.** In the context of JDHF with EU Delegations, LRRD dialogue should be promoted with IfS, to seek ways to stabilise built local capacity after crises in severely under-resources countries (EQ3).

### 5.C. Effectiveness and Impact

**Global Clusters and humanitarian Leadership**

- **R.9.** ERC should continue advocating the clusters supported so far to keep seeking other sources of funding to support their structural costs at the global level (EQ11).

- **R.10.** Nevertheless, pending fully workable exit strategies or LRRD with other funding sources, ERC should remain flexible in maintaining (steadily decreasing as feasible) ‘continued funding’ financial support for (1) those clusters which have come later in the process, and are still building up their capacities (Health, Shelter); (2) some key and/or particularly expensive components such as the RRTs; and (3) humanitarian Leadership activities, in order to continue building up an adequate pool of suitable people together with training and mentoring activities (EQ11).

- **R.11.** In order to continue promoting good practice in terms of governance among the few clusters that may still be in need of further funding and capacity building (such as demonstrated in the Philippines by the poor performance of the Early Recovery cluster, although crucial for LRRD and Resilience), ERC should apply some minimum conditions for funding in terms of lead arrangement, governance –including aspect of ownership, strategic planning or accountability. A prime criterion for ERC funding could e.g. be ‘core cluster functions (not just clusters) that directly support the delivery of humanitarian aid at operational level, either proven or expected’ (EQ11).
• **R.12.** A set of secondary criteria could also be developed, to distinguish between ‘clusters that have already been funded for more than x rounds’ and ‘clusters that have not been’. For the first type an exit strategy for funding could be devised, in a way that would see ERC’s (and ECHO’s) share gradually decrease in successive rounds, and that is manageable for both ERC and the concerned cluster (with a decrease that should not be necessarily aim for zero funding, for obvious sustainability and political/leverage reasons). Such strategy could be included as a component of the already existing multi-annual strategic framework of some Global Clusters and should include key fundraising/advocacy activities that should be supported by ERC and ECHO at relevant levels (GHD, donor coordination mechanisms etc.) – EQ11.

**Common Needs Assessments (CNA) tools**

• **R.13.** ERC should contribute to funding an independent mapping and review exercise (probably OCHA-led) of the global CNA sphere, taking stock of the developments and evolutions since the first ACE mapping study conducted in 2008 (also funded by ECHO) and highlighting the priorities to be addressed in this field in the future. Such a study should integrate the lessons learnt from recent L-3 crises but also low-visibility situations; it should address the issues of complementarity of major CNA initiatives and possibly suggest a model for an adequate task division and responsibility sharing of the different initiatives – covering multi- and single sectors - to the benefit of the humanitarian system (EQ10).

• **R.14.** More specifically, in crisis situations where OCHA is duly present and clusters are activated, ERC should contribute to the definition a modus operandi agreement, following which ACAPS work could be fully integrated in the established overall humanitarian system, e.g. acting upon request of under-resourced actors and on their behalf. ERC should also support the definition of agreements/MoUs between CNA actors, guidelines and joint simulation exercises in high-risk countries (see also recommendation to fund TRIPLEX simulation exercises) - leading to improved levels of acceptance and continuous improvement of CNA mechanisms and processes. (EQs 9, 10).

• **R.15.** Based on the good practice example of KIRA in Kenya, which combines the global approach of MIRA and the national requirements for addressing CNA in both slow- and rapid-onset crises, ERC should stimulate the development of similar initiatives in other countries or regions, which are conducive for such an effort. ERC could possibly fund a mapping for the assessment of suitable countries or regions, to be closely coordinated with ECHO geographical programming (EQ10).

• **R.16.** Selective support to specific sector-based CNA initiatives is recommended to be continued to cover gaps which might not be addressed by other funding sources, such as the expansion of IPC to new regions or the continuity of SMART (EQ10).

• **R.17.** There is also a need for further standard classification, such as a clear definition for ‘affected people’ by disasters, which may be supported by ERC (EQ10).

**Local Capacity Building**

• **R.18.** ERC should achieve a better understanding of what the crucial and extremely vast issue of ‘local capacity building’ may mean in the context of ERC objectives and budget capacities (EQ8).

• **R.19.** In this framework, ERC should encourage more projects to be submitted which could include budget lines for strengthening local preparedness, with precise identification of what the needs are in capacity building, and a clear strategy to implement this approach (possibly following a HIP priority area) – EQs 1, 8.

• **R.20.** In parallel, ERC should support more projects dedicated primarily to defining good practices in matters of fruitful partnerships between international and local NGOs, an issue that has been outlined both in the Art 53 of the Consensus (‘…encourage implementing partners in fostering partnership with local organisations…’) and the recent ECHO evaluation on LNGOs (EQ8).
Longer-term chronic crises

- **R.21.** ERC should fund (after HIP call for proposals) more projects aiming specifically at enhancing the response to chronic emergencies, or developing relevant components of more global projects (EQ11).

Regional dimension

- **R.22.** ERC should consider funding regional capacities (DRR bodies, advisers such as RECAs, surge capacity, contextual adaptation of global tools such as MIRA, training facilities) wherever relevant and feasible, as an adequate intermediary step between the global and national or local levels in capacity building that would strengthen local response and preparedness, in a cost-effective approach (EQ8).

5.D. Efficiency

ERC management

- **R.23.** To carry out a resource-neutral – e.g. through an external communication consultant - internal advocacy action among field staff (ECHO RSOs and concerned country TAs) to ensure their adherence to the ERC procedures and enhance their buy-in and systematic involvement in the selection and monitoring of ERC projects (see also EQs 4, 14).

- **R.24.** To ensure that examples of good practice in terms of pre-submission dialogue and selection of ERC projects (e.g. the PANIS Working Group) are applied consistently within ECHO; to provide also clear rejection notices to the applicants (EQ14).

- **R.25.** There is a need to define a comprehensive and flexible list of criteria that would further standardise the above processes, complement the stated HIP priorities and Principles, and ensure that the selection of ERC projects is as transparent, consistent, objective, and rigorous as possible. A tentative list of criteria is proposed in Annex L (EQ7).

- **R.26.** ERC should liaise more closely with the operational desks or DIPECHO, to integrate as relevant and feasible some of the most practically usable outcomes of ERC projects into geographical programming at local level (see Monitoring below) - EQs 4, 8, 14.

- **R.27.** To complement possible shortcomings of in-house expertise in some sectors by contracting ad-hoc, short-term external experts for project selection and monitoring, as necessary (EQ4).

- **R.28.** The FPA helpdesk and FAQs should provide specific information on the selection criteria, durability plan (see under Sustainability) and on how to complete the Single Forms for ERC proposals, addressing the most commonly observed questions such as number of direct beneficiaries / local partners and their involvement / description of training/ capacity building activities, etc (EQ14).

Monitoring

- **R.29.** The ERC monitoring reports should be better shared between the relevant ERC staff from Brussels, the SST experts, the concerned regional experts in the RSOs (pending regionalisation of SSTs and their integration into RSOs) and the country TAs. The monitoring of ERC should also be more inclusive and involve systematically the concerned RSO experts and country TAs (EQ14).

- **R.30.** The ERC management needs to capture regularly and systematically information about continued funding of ERC initiatives by ECHO operational budget, in order to monitor impact (EQ14).

- **R.31.** A rigorous in-depth appraisal of projects involving training is needed (although this may require a separate study/evaluation), and good practices on professional and effective training approaches and practitioners must be captured and disseminated (EQ14).

- **R.32.** The ERC Guidelines need to emphasise more the importance of outcomes (or immediate impact), as this is a realistically measurable level of analysis (EQ12).
• **R.33.** In parallel and in order to measure empowerment and ownership of recipients (at international and local levels) of ERC-funded capacity building and training projects, partners should be instructed to use – as a follow-up to the projects - some ex-post KAP-type (Knowledge, Attitude and Practices) survey tools to complement the often used satisfaction surveys (EQs 12, 14).

**Application of ERC Principles**

• **R.34.** The principle of Sustainability, which in the Guidelines is mostly a collection of activities and means, should be redrafted to propose a definition and the expectations of both ERC and ECHO (EQ12).

• **R.35.** The ERC Guidelines should collect in an annex some examples of good practice in terms of Measurability - through output, outcome and impact indicators - the results of ERC projects at global, institutional and field levels. (EQs 12, 14).

**Visibility**

• **R.36.** To improve the transparency and pro-active information policy about ERC objectives and achievements, ERC should become more visible, easily accessible and the list of ERC funded projects should be regularly updated on ECHO’s website. All agencies which have completed an ERC-funded project should contribute to this communication effort by drafting some short fact sheet outlining the achievements, to be posted on ECHO’s website (EQ3).

• **R.37.** A step towards enhancing ECHO’s ambition to impact on international policies and practice through ERC would be to include the topic in the annual Partners Conference; alternatively, periodical ‘round table’ seminars (about e.g. priorities and processes) could be organised with a wide range of stakeholders. (EQ3).

5.E. Sustainability

**Durability and exit strategies**

• **R.38.** A chapter on the ERC exit strategy needs to be included in the future Guidelines. ERC should require from the partners – with due flexibility and derogations as needed for innovative approaches - to present a *mid-term durability plan* with their proposals (see last point of the 3-pronged strategy below). This requirement is aligned with the proposed list of selection criteria in Annex L (EQs 7, 13, 16).

• **R.39.** A three-pronged strategy by ERC, ECHO and the partners is recommended (EQs 13, 16).
  1. ERC should consider with all due flexibility the optimum number of funding rounds (possibly with gradually decreasing amounts) which are deemed necessary by the partners – who must in this case provide arguments and timeline – to develop, achieve internal buy-in, field-test and be ready to leverage operational funds (EQ5).
  2. ERC (and ECHO in general) – in line with the principles of Sustainability, Joint Approach and Active Involvement – should enhance the dialogue with other major donors concerned to promote options for longer-term funding and exit strategies, were relevant and feasible, for ERC ‘seed’-funded projects, and inform partners accordingly (EQ15).
  3. In order to obtain insights on the risks and challenges from the onset and a more concrete basis for exit decisions from ERC funding, the ERC management should require the implementing partners to present with their proposals a *mid-term sustainability / durability plan*, to explain:
     - the expected duration to develop and validate the response capacity in a specific area;
     - the estimated time and funding needed until leverage of other funds can be achieved;
     - the anticipated capacity to use own funds / core budget to ensure durability.

**Continued funding**
- **R.40.** ERC and ECHO should develop the concept of ‘continued funding’, with exit strategy, limited timeline and budget, steadily decreasing as feasible (EQs 11, 12).

- **R.41.** ERC should earmark / categorize each accepted proposal either as seed funding or continued funding. It should also apply simplified procedures in the Single Form for application, documentation and supervision for continued funding, although thorough monitoring of good performance needs to remain mandatory in all cases (EQ16).

- **R.42.** In parallel, continued funding should be as much as possible decreasing from cycle to cycle, and be closely coordinated within ECHO (programming) and outside, through linkages with other humanitarian donors and LRRD with concerned development donors. A closer involvement of ECHO field – and geographical HQ - staff from the design stage should promote an optimum practical use of ERC-funded initiatives and their continued funding from operational budgets where relevant and feasible (EQ16).

5.F. Gender and Age-Sensitive Issues

- **R.43.** ERC should support efforts to fully integrate GBV in the MIRA approach, and sensitise the field humanitarian leadership in order to better mainstream gender and age sensitive approaches in cluster coordination (EQ5).