

HUMANITARIAN IMPLEMENTATION PLAN (HIP) ENHANCED RESPONSE CAPACITY

AMOUNT: EUR 9 000 000

The present Humanitarian Implementation Plan (HIP) was prepared on the basis of financing decision ECHO/WWD/BUD/2021/01000 (Worldwide Decision) and the related General Guidelines for Operational Priorities on Humanitarian Aid (Operational Priorities). The purpose of the HIP and its annexes¹ is to serve as a communication tool for DG ECHO's² partners and to assist in the preparation of their proposals. The provisions of the Worldwide Decision and the General Conditions of the Agreement with the European Commission shall take precedence over the provisions in this document.

1. CONTEXT

Humanitarian aid is facing an unprecedented set of challenges, exacerbated by the COVID-19 pandemic. Humanitarian needs are at an all-time high, driven largely by the resurgence in conflicts, combined with the impact of climate change, environmental degradation, global population growth and failed governance. Yet, the gap between humanitarian needs and the resources available globally is increasing. Basic norms and principles are being challenged as rarely before, making the delivery of aid more difficult and dangerous.

The United Nations (UN) estimates that almost 235 million people – 1 in 33 people worldwide – will need humanitarian assistance in 2021. This is an increase of 40% from 2020 estimated needs (prior to COVID-19) and a near tripling since 2014.

As outlined in the Commission *Communication on the EU's humanitarian action: New challenges, same principles*³, strong support for the enabling environment for the delivery of principled humanitarian aid is crucial. With the Enhanced Response Capacity, DG ECHO dedicates part of its budget to support initiatives which seek to increase the capacity of the humanitarian community to respond to crises in the most effective and efficient manner. The initiatives have to be global and strategic in their conception and inclusive in their approach in order to contribute to humanitarian system-wide change.

The Enhanced Response Capacity (ERC) focuses on initiatives which would not have emerged or would not have the same systemic impact without dedicated funding, and which cannot be covered by DG ECHO geographic funding envelopes or other tools. At the same time, approaches and methods developed under the ERC strengthen the overall enabling environment, and thus support direct implementation of certain priorities on the ground.

2. HUMANITARIAN NEEDS

Given the strain on humanitarian financing, it is imperative to continue building capacity of the humanitarian actors at global level, in order to continuously adapt to ever changing

¹ Technical annex and thematic policies annex

² Directorate-General for European Civil Protection and Humanitarian Aid Operations (ECHO)

³ COM(2021) 110 final.

circumstances and incentivise innovation. For the year 2021, DG ECHO has identified several areas in which global capacity interventions are particularly likely to contribute to an overall improvement of humanitarian action. These are topics on which DG ECHO expects progress to accelerate through targeted funding and where DG ECHO considers continued support is required.

Innovative Financing

The humanitarian financing gap between rising needs and resources is well acknowledged. As one means of addressing this challenge, the Communication on humanitarian action proposes the piloting of blended finance solutions – using humanitarian grants to catalyse, de-risk and draw in additional financing to support investments aimed at a humanitarian caseload and addressing existing humanitarian needs.

International humanitarian law

Violations of international humanitarian law constitute one of the most critical challenges for the protection of civilians in today's conflicts and heavily impact on the EU's efforts to meet the humanitarian needs of affected populations. As such, ensuring respect for international humanitarian law by state and non-state actors will remain an essential objective of the EU's humanitarian aid policy.

Digitalisation

The use of digital tools and processes to drive efficiency and effectiveness gains in humanitarian assistance is increasingly common. Extending the use of digital tools is one of the core priorities of the Communication on humanitarian action, but there are still many barriers to their widespread adoption by humanitarian organisations and their systematic use in DG ECHO financed actions. Supporting the development of non-proprietary and interoperable systems, which facilitate the secure sharing of data and improve humanitarian programming, is a key challenge and the immediate focus area for DG ECHO's support to digitalisation.

Disability inclusion

The Communication on humanitarian action mentions the need to improve the quality of response among traditional sectors and strengthen the protection of the most vulnerable. Despite gaining prominence over recent years, disability inclusion in humanitarian action remains insufficient and partners' capacity to include persons with disabilities in the response uneven.

Mental Health and Psychosocial Support (MHPSS)

Evidence-based data on growing mental health issues in humanitarian contexts has led to increased awareness of the importance of MHPSS over the past years, among international organisations and civil society actors. In addition, the COVID-19 pandemic and other outbreaks (such as Ebola) have highlighted the need to integrate MHPSS into the wider public response to health emergencies for better and holistic recovery of the populations affected. The Communication on humanitarian action also emphasises the importance of MHPSS in emergencies.

Addressing environmental degradation in humanitarian settings

Environmental considerations are increasingly integrated in all humanitarian interventions in recognition of the need to protect the natural environment and to reduce

the risk posed by environmental degradation to the most vulnerable populations. DG ECHO is also committed to reducing the environmental footprint of its activities and supports and encourages the efforts of its partners in that regard. Progress has been made in recent years (most notably in supporting clean energy, and solarised water pumping), but important gaps remain.

Anticipatory Action as a way to address the impact of climate change

Anticipatory approaches to humanitarian action can bolster the resilience of communities, including forcibly displaced groups, in vulnerable and disaster-prone regions. The effectiveness of such approaches depends on having in place sufficiently reliable information and tools through early warning systems, including indicators or other criteria to trigger action. Evidence gathering in this respect is critical. In line with the Communication on humanitarian action, DG ECHO focuses on increasing the capacity for anticipation as an effective way to reduce the humanitarian impact of climate change. Looking at ways to address the multiplier effect of climate change in situations of conflict or fragility via more preparedness and anticipatory action is a key priority for DG ECHO.

3. ENVISAGED DG ECHO RESPONSE AND EXPECTED RESULTS

This section outlines how DG ECHO intends to address the gaps identified above and provides more concrete guidelines to partners on potential initiatives to be submitted.

a) Innovative Financing

DG ECHO will support pilot projects on humanitarian blending, which demonstrate the use of a humanitarian grant to leverage additional finance. Proposals should combine a grant from DG ECHO with private capital or loans from International Financial Institutions (IFIs) or the private sector, to address humanitarian needs. Preparatory or technical assistance projects which support the creation or operation of a blended finance project may also be considered. The project should be consistent with DG ECHO's legal framework, including with respect to eligible partners, and demonstrate that it addresses humanitarian needs, in line with the humanitarian principles. The project must furthermore use the DG ECHO contribution as a grant, non-reimbursable, and without contingent liabilities attached to its use. The aim of the pilots is to establish the viability of blended finance as a modality for humanitarian aid. Proposals should therefore foresee a means to demonstrate the leveraging impact of the DG ECHO grant contribution, and should be rapidly deployable (in accordance with the emergency nature of humanitarian aid), with mature actions - those demonstrating concrete humanitarian impact within the timeframe of the project - being favoured.

b) International humanitarian law

DG ECHO will support initiatives that aim at addressing gaps in the promotion, dissemination of and ensuring compliance with international humanitarian law (IHL). Among others, it may support actions such as:

- Initiatives on the protection of humanitarian and medical workers in armed conflicts, including strengthening the evidence base on attacks;
- Initiatives to strengthen the monitoring mechanisms of violations of IHL;
- Initiatives at global level that aim to promote IHL and the protection of civilians in the context of urban warfare;

- Initiatives at global level to prevent and end grave violations against children affected by armed conflict, building on the new EU Strategy on the rights of the child;
- Research, capacity building, and IHL dissemination actions, among others to non-state armed groups.

c) Digitalisation

DG ECHO will support initiatives that address the challenge of secure data sharing between humanitarian organisations. In particular, solutions should be non-proprietary and aim to promote the interoperability or integration of systems supporting data exchange amongst as wide a range of organisations and mandates as possible. The applicability of the solution proposed, both for a specific context as well as its potential for replicability in other contexts, should be demonstrated - with a view to any solution financed contributing towards the establishment of global standards on interoperable systems.

d) Disability inclusion

In order to address persisting gaps in capacity of humanitarian organisations to effectively promote and address the inclusion of persons with disabilities into the design and implementation of the humanitarian response, DG ECHO will support initiatives aiming in particular at:

- Strengthening the coordination and data collection tools related to persons with disabilities affected by humanitarian crises in line with the Inter-Agency Standing Committee guidelines on the inclusion of persons with disabilities in humanitarian crises;
- Strengthening the intersectionality aspect of humanitarian response, addressing the notion that vulnerabilities are often interlinked with, *inter alia*, disability, gender, age, race, religion, sexual orientation.

e) Mental Health and Psychosocial Support

DG ECHO encourages MHPSS services to be integrated as much as possible within primary healthcare services, when possible, and to address the specific needs of the most vulnerable groups. MHPSS furthermore features prominently as part of the broader framework of protection services, including regarding child protection and prevention, mitigation and response to gender-based violence and violence as a consequence of the shock from human-made or natural disasters.

In order to contribute to policy developments and operational quality programming on MHPSS, DG ECHO will aim to support initiatives that:

- Improve the collection of quality data and needs assessment to better plan, implement and measure MHPSS activities at different levels of service provision;
- Integrate MHPSS across sectors (i.e. health, protection and education) to address the needs of crisis-affected populations in a comprehensive and holistic way;
- Develop policy and operational tools to implement MHPSS activities in humanitarian contexts;
- Disseminate and share knowledge, building capacity of implementing organisations about MHPSS, through collection of experience, good practices and research undertaken at field level.

f) Addressing environmental degradation in humanitarian settings

DG ECHO will continue supporting green innovation, capacity building efforts and technical assistance in order to bridge existing gaps in addressing environmental impacts of humanitarian action, which should provide benefits to the humanitarian sector as a whole. In this context, the following activities proposed in the roadmap of the Joint Initiative on Sustainable Humanitarian Packaging Waste Management⁴, of which DG ECHO is an active member, could be supported:

- Life Cycle Assessments/commodity assessments of highest volume packaging items/most commonly delivered items per country/region;
- Creation of database/catalogue of sustainable packaging technologies and options (including biodegradable materials/plastic alternatives; including distribution options).

g) Anticipatory Action as a way to address the impact of climate change

In order to collect more evidence and test tools further, DG ECHO will support initiatives that improve the capacity of the humanitarian system to increase the use of anticipatory action to reduce the humanitarian impact of climate change, in the following areas:

- Testing the implementation of anticipatory tools in conflict and/or urban settings in order to scale them up;
- Exploring early warning, early action and anticipatory action in the field of displacement.
- Alternative risk transfer mechanisms, with a specific focus on the community level;

Disaster preparedness and Anticipatory Action were also selected as key themes for some of the Programmatic Partnership Pilots (PPPs) with International Organisations in 2021. While the geographical components of the PPPs will be financed through geographical HIPs, the global components of the PPP with the International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies (IFRC) which are in line with ERC priority g) will be financed through the ERC HIP.

IFRC's Action will support National Societies to complement and reinforce community-led early warning and early action; increase the reach of forecast-based action systems delivering at the local level; reinforce readiness at local and national levels through multi-hazard contingency plans and stock pre-positioning; implement innovative data and information management approaches; and help support the development of integrated legal frameworks for disaster risk management that are climate-smart and adequately address domestic preparedness. EUR 500 000 from the overall allocation to the ERC HIP will be assigned to this end.

⁴ <https://ecentre.org/2017/01/01/the-joint-initiative/>