

THEMATIC POLICIES ANNEX

GENERAL PRINCIPLES, POLICIES AND GUIDELINES

This thematic policy annex to the Humanitarian Implementation Plans (HIP) outlines the general principles, policy framework, assistance modalities, crosscutting issues and thematic guidelines that need to be taken into account by DG ECHO partners in the design of humanitarian interventions supported by DG ECHO.

The COVID-19 pandemic will continue to impact humanitarian crises and the provision of humanitarian aid for the foreseeable future. Further to the guidance below, partners are expected to factor in the different elements related to the pandemic as appropriate in the design and implementation of their projects. This includes:

- mitigation measures for the continuation of the provision of safe humanitarian aid;
- considerations to minimise or actively contribute to prevention of spreading of the coronavirus, continuous monitoring of the changing context (closure of public places, border closings, economic consequences, etcetera);
- the revision of project contingency plans to respond to the new context, and;
- adaptability in the implementation of interventions.

GENERAL CONSIDERATIONS

HUMANITARIAN PRINCIPLES OF HUMANITY, NEUTRALITY, IMPARTIALITY, AND INDEPENDENCE: In line with the European Consensus on Humanitarian Aid, respect of these principles and a strict adherence to a "**do no harm**" approach by partners remain paramount.

SAFE AND SECURE PROVISION OF AID: Partners are expected to include details on how the safety and security of staff (including the staff of implementing partners) and assets are considered, as well as an analysis of threats and plans to mitigate and limit exposure to risks. A transfer of risks to local and national responders, particularly in remote management contexts, would not uphold the principle of safe and secure provision of aid.¹ Partners are encouraged to identify and mitigate risks, but also to report specifically on how they have been addressed.

DG ECHO can request the suspension of ongoing actions if the humanitarian context has changed in a way that no longer allows the implementation of the action in accordance with the description set out in the Single Form.

QUALITY OF HUMANITARIAN AID: The quality of any humanitarian aid operation is guaranteed first and foremost by the organisation that designs it and that will carry out its implementation. Partners are expected to take the following aspects particularly into account in the design and implementation of an intervention:

¹ <https://www.dgecho-partners-helpdesk.eu/ngo/actions-implementation/remote-management>

- Identification of beneficiaries and needs through robust, comprehensive and systematic methods conducted in a coordinated manner with humanitarian partners (and whenever possible, participation in and use of joint needs assessment and analysis tools and approaches);
- Identification and analysis of logistic and access constraints and risks, and the steps taken to mitigate them.
- Considerations on how to minimise the environmental footprint of assistance and where possible, on how to contribute to environmental sustainability;
- Consideration of risks and hazards, ensuring adequate protection for operations and vulnerable populations, to fully minimise risk and not increase vulnerability of beneficiaries;
- All interventions should be conflict sensitive and be designed accordingly (i.e. whether they may risk fuelling on-going or underlying tensions or promoting dynamics which may worsen specific dimensions of conflict and fragility such as denial of human rights, shrinking space for civil society, inter-ethnic divisions, land conflicts, gender-based violence);
- Management, monitoring and evaluation of interventions properly facilitated by adequate systems in place, and;
- Monitoring and reporting on activities, outputs and outcomes, through robust and SMART² indicators and capacity to collect and analyse information.

EFFECTIVE COORDINATION can reduce the fragmentation of humanitarian action by joint assessments across sectors (including market analysis), enhanced integrated and multisector approach, common targeting methods, registration, response analysis and monitoring and evaluation. Partners are expected to demonstrate how they support effective coordination as well as their active engagement in reinforcing, not replacing, in-country coordination mechanisms (e.g. Humanitarian Country Team, clusters and technical working groups). Partners are expected to actively engage with the relevant local authorities. When appropriate, partners are expected to share views on issues of common interest with other actors present in the field.

GRAND BARGAIN COMMITMENTS: DG ECHO and most of its main partners have signed up to the Grand Bargain, a set of commitments seeking to bring about substantial changes in terms of aid effectiveness and efficiency. In addition to the commitments covered by thematic sections in this annex (such as the one on cash transfers), partners are strongly encouraged to develop proposals that would enable the implementation of the commitments below:

- **Needs assessments and management costs:** Partners are expected to explore and propose concrete ways of reducing duplication and optimising management costs and contributing to joint and impartial needs assessments. In this context, partners should adopt a context- specific approach to joint needs assessments, demonstrating how they contributed to the exercise via data collection, data sharing and joint analysis.
- **Longer-term funding arrangements:** In crises where it is appropriate to engage in multi-year interventions (i.e. 24 months and longer), actions should be grounded in a longer-term strategy that includes contingencies and crisis modifiers for risks that

² Specific, Measurable, Achievable, Relevant and Time-bound.

may occur over the timeframe.

- **Local organisations and national actors:** Local organisations and service providers have an indispensable role in responding to humanitarian needs. In the majority of cases, DG ECHO funds are translated into services and assistance provided via local actors. Partners are encouraged to work with hubs or networks or civil society organisations involving Red Cross entities, local NGOs, community based foundations and women-led organisations. These partnerships should support the organisational growth of the local organisations, enabling them to invest in core systems. Initiatives led by local actors with an international agency receiving funding and providing a specific type of expertise could be piloted to generate good practices in the areas of access to funding for local and national actors, effective partnerships, organisational sustainability, and enhanced coordination capabilities while linking to broader policy and sectoral objectives.

PROGRAMMATIC PARTNERSHIPS: In line with its commitment to the Grand Bargain and efforts to maximise efficiency gains and effectiveness, DG ECHO is testing new ways of working with its main partners through “Programmatic Partnerships” with a limited amount of partners.

On-going and future Programmatic Partnerships are expected to cover several geographic areas, sectors and years of implementation, and to form part of DG ECHO strategy of response in the relevant crises.

DIGITALISATION, INNOVATION AND THE PRIVATE SECTOR: Innovation can play an important role in how effectively and efficiently humanitarian actors can respond to emergencies; the COVID-19 pandemic has also demonstrated the possibility for digital solutions to reduce gatherings and risk of transmission. Digital approaches and solutions built into the design and the proposed implementation of humanitarian actions, with data protection and security measures built in by design, will represent an asset when funding requests from partners are assessed.

Innovative partnerships with the private sector that seek to promote technological innovation, technical skills and leverage local networks are also encouraged as a means to optimise the efficiency and effectiveness of humanitarian actions. Where it is in the interest of the action and without prejudice to the applicable legal framework, DG ECHO encourages partners to seek the increased involvement of a wide range of actors, including the local and international private sector, and to make use of new technologies and innovative practices to address humanitarian challenges.

CROSS CUTTING ISSUES

PROTECTION MAINSTREAMING

Protection mainstreaming in all interventions is of paramount importance and is key for “safe programming”.

What we expect from partners: the four elements of 1) Safety, dignity and avoid doing harm; 2) Meaningful access; 3) Accountability; and 4) Participation and empowerment in the proposals must be reflected in the proposal and monitored throughout the action:

- Safety, dignity and avoid doing harm when describing the risk analysis, response analysis and logic of intervention;
- Meaningful access when describing the response analysis, beneficiaries’ identification criteria, and logic of intervention;
- Accountability when describing the response analysis, beneficiaries’ identification criteria and logic of intervention, and;
- Participation and empowerment when describing the response analysis, involvement of beneficiaries in the design of/an in the action, and logic of intervention.

For these elements to be comprehensively addressed they must be analysed and operationalized according to the different threats, vulnerabilities and barriers faced by different gender, age, disability and contextually relevant diversity groups and taking into account existing capacities and enablers³ of these groups to overcome the threats, vulnerabilities and barriers. Particular attention must be paid to ensure that issues of social exclusion and discrimination are not overlooked, and that the specific needs of groups most often affected by this – people with disabilities, LGBTIs, and very marginalised social groups – are appropriately addressed in interventions design and targeting.

Link to policies and guidance:

- https://ec.europa.eu/echo/sites/echo-site/files/policy_guidelines_humanitarian_protection_en.pdf

ACCOUNTABILITY TO AFFECTED POPULATIONS – PARTICIPATION REVOLUTION

Crisis-affected communities must be considered as partners in crises-responses, not passive recipients of aid. Therefore, their voices need to be taken into account in the decisions that affect them.

Partners should regularly and systematically use beneficiary feedback mechanisms and apply course correction measures where appropriate in order to improve the quality of humanitarian responses.

In line with protection mainstreaming, DG ECHO partners should find ways to consistently communicate with affected people and create opportunities to ensure a meaningful participation of beneficiaries in decisions that affect them. Partners, therefore, should systematically collect, report and act on feedback received while explaining how beneficiary

³ Enablers are external factors that help overcome barriers hindering persons’ access and participation in society on equal basis with others.

views were integrated in all stages of the programming cycle. Information on the level of funding reaching beneficiaries should be reported in a transparent manner to the Financial Tracking System (FTS).

GENDER-AGE MAINSTREAMING (INCLUDING GENDER-AGE MARKER)

Women, girls, boys, and men of all ages are affected by crises in different ways, and emergencies tend to exacerbate gender inequalities. The systematic incorporation of gender and age considerations into humanitarian actions is the main objective of the EU's gender humanitarian policy and a matter of quality programming. It ensures that humanitarian interventions reach the most vulnerable, respond adequately to their specific needs and do no harm. To this end, the needs and capacities of different gender and age groups among targeted populations must be adequately assessed, and assistance must be adapted accordingly.

What we expect from partners: Context-specific gender-sensitive needs assessments and gender analysis must be conducted to avoid vulnerability-related assumptions (for instance, women should not be considered the most vulnerable group by default) and to ensure a more effective targeting.

Based on the identified needs, practical examples of assistance adapted to the needs of different gender and age groups must be provided. Actions targeting one specific gender and/or age group – particularly when one group is clearly more vulnerable than others – may be deemed necessary in some instances. While assistance may specifically target one group, the participation of other groups may prove crucial for reaching the expected impact.

All humanitarian interventions funded by DG ECHO must take into consideration, together with other protection concerns⁴, any risk of sexual and gender-based violence and should develop and implement appropriate strategies to actively prevent such risks.

The Gender-Age Marker tool is aimed at assessing how strongly DG ECHO funded humanitarian actions integrate gender and age considerations. Partners are expected to apply the Marker at proposal, monitoring and final report stage, in accordance to the guidance provided in the Gender and Age Marker Toolkit. Since 2019, an e-learning for DG ECHO partners on the Marker is available on the partners learning platform (see link below).

Link to policies and guidance:

- http://ec.europa.eu/echo/files/policies/sectoral/gender_thematic_policy_document_en.pdf
- http://ec.europa.eu/echo/what/humanitarian-aid/gender-sensitive-aid_en
- http://ec.europa.eu/echo/files/policies/sectoral/gender_age_marker_toolkit.pdf
- [http://else.dgecho-partners-helpdesk.eu/learn_\(for_e-learning_DG_ECHO_Gender-Age_Marker\)](http://else.dgecho-partners-helpdesk.eu/learn_(for_e-learning_DG_ECHO_Gender-Age_Marker))

⁴ See 'protection mainstreaming' on page 4.

DISABILITY INCLUSION

In line with the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities and the Charter on Inclusion of Persons with Disabilities in Humanitarian Action, partners are expected to pay specific attention to the measures ensuring inclusion of people with disabilities in proposed actions. All suggested actions should comply with DG ECHO Operational Guidance on The Inclusion of Persons with Disabilities in EU-funded Humanitarian Aid Operations.

What we expect from partners: Partners are expected to demonstrate how they plan to identify, remove, reduce and mitigate barriers preventing meaningful access to and full and effective participation of people with disabilities in EU-funded humanitarian assistance and protection programming. It is recommended to actively use the four aspects of protection mainstreaming (safety, dignity, avoid causing harm; meaningful access; accountability; and participation and empowerment) to address the identified barriers and strengthen the enablers and capacities to overcome these.

Link to policies and guidance:

- https://ec.europa.eu/echo/sites/echo-site/files/dg_op_guidance_inclusion_gb_liens_hr.pdf

RESILIENCE MAINSTREAMING (INCLUDING THE RESILIENCE MARKER)

DG ECHO's objective is to respond to the acute humanitarian needs of the most vulnerable and exposed people while taking opportunities to increase their resilience. By doing so, DG ECHO fully aligns with the EU's resilience approach, which was expanded over the last years to address state, societal and community resilience by placing a greater emphasis on addressing protracted crises, the risks of violent conflict and other structural pressures including environmental degradation, climate change, migration and forced displacement.

What we expect from partners: Partners are expected to use resilience-building opportunities to the greatest extent possible, without compromising the humanitarian principles. Four steps are key:

- Conduct an analysis of risks, hazard threats, vulnerabilities and their causes;
- Be risk-informed (for example ensure that activities do not aggravate risks or vulnerabilities, do no harm and are prepared for likely hazards and threats);
- Contribute to building local capacities so that the most vulnerable can cope better with shocks, and;
- Include a deliberate Nexus strategy to reduce future humanitarian needs.

The Resilience Marker ensures a systematic attention to conflict, environment and climate risks as well as considerations on the environmental impact of humanitarian actions and inclusion of corresponding preparedness and resilience building measures in project proposals, implementation and assessment. Partners are expected to use the marker for all projects.

Link to policies and guidance:

- http://ec.europa.eu/echo/files/policies/resilience/resilience_marker_guidance_en.pdf

PREPAREDNESS FOR RESPONSE AND EARLY ACTION

Risk reduction and disaster preparedness are an integral part of the EU approach to resilience and are embedded in the majority of DG ECHO funded Humanitarian Aid programmes. More specifically, the approach to disaster preparedness and early action is multi-hazard and needs to take into account the growing importance and interaction of factors such as climate, fragility, conflict and epidemics work streams and help countries most exposed to climate change adapt and boost their resilience.

The consequences of climate change increase the needs for humanitarian aid. Climate shocks are also already aggravating existing vulnerabilities and inequalities, particularly for the most vulnerable populations in conflict-affected areas. It is therefore critical to prepare for and reduce the suffering from the impact of climate related disasters on the most vulnerable people, including those experiencing a double vulnerability from conflict and climate risks. Mainstreaming disaster preparedness, starting by adapting humanitarian responses to current and future climate risk, can contribute to climate change adaptation.

An emphasis on early action and anticipation is equally important: not only will it reduce the impact of shocks on vulnerable people and their livelihoods, but it will simultaneously improve the effectiveness of emergency preparedness, response and recovery efforts. It will thus globally reduce humanitarian needs and allow for a more efficient and flexible humanitarian response.

What we expect from partners: Partners are expected to take the following elements into account when planning:

- A needs-based approach that consistently integrates risk analysis must be adopted. This approach can prove particularly effective to pre-empt the impact of climate related events through accurate forecast;
- Early action and predictability of response can only be achieved if local⁵ preparedness and response capacities are in place and reinforced. The core objective of the interventions must be to strengthen in a sustainable way the in-country response capacity and preparedness systems to act as locally and early as possible. To this end, partners are encouraged to take a system approach, by strengthening national and local government capacities for preparedness on top of its community-based actions.

Different and complementary ways of implementation can be considered:

- Mainstreaming disaster preparedness and early action into DG ECHO's humanitarian actions, to integrate progressively preparedness in all humanitarian programmes, except in unpredictable and justified cases.
- The Disaster Preparedness Budget Line identifies a limited number of priorities for a five-year cycle, in order to maximise coherence with DG ECHO's Disaster Preparedness approach.⁶
- Cooperation with the Union Civil Protection Mechanism (UCPM): the Union Civil Protection Mechanism, as well as civil protection actors are active in disaster preparedness. There is space for mutual reinforcement and synergies. The UCPM

⁵ *Local* refers to both national and local government actors, civil society, academia, private sector and communities. It also includes international partners working in country in support of preparedness and response systems.

⁶ See Technical Annexes for the various regional HIPs for further information.

includes a tool that is of particular relevance in this regard: prevention and preparedness missions. In addition to this specific tool, more interaction with other prevention and preparedness instruments and programmes will be sought.

- Cooperation with development counterparts in a humanitarian-development-peace Nexus approach.⁷

Link to policies and guidance:

- https://ec.europa.eu/echo/files/policies/prevention_preparedness/DRR_thematic_policy_doc.pdf

MAINSTREAMING ENVIRONMENTAL CONSIDERATIONS

The gravity of environmental and climate-related challenges coupled with the dependency of affected populations on natural resources call for a collective responsibility for humanitarian actors to reduce their programmes' environmental and carbon footprint. The greening of the humanitarian response, among others the greening of logistics and sectors like food assistance, shelter, water and health, by introducing environmentally sustainable alternatives, could directly contribute to the ambitions of the overall implementation of the European Green Deal.⁸

What we expect from partners: partners are expected to mitigate the project's potential environmental impacts in key areas including by:

- choosing materials with a lower carbon footprint;
- providing clean energy solutions;
- considering the energy factor in food assistance programmes;
- promoting sustainable agricultural practices;
- avoiding plastic where possible;
- implementing a robust waste management system;
- greening the organisation's logistics or supply chain, or working more closely with local actors to decrease intercontinental transport.
- By pre-positioning of stocks, and increasing efficiency of operations, partners not only contribute to disaster preparedness but also can significantly reduce their carbon emissions, thereby contributing to the environmental priority.

HUMANITARIAN – DEVELOPMENT – PEACE NEXUS

The main objective of EU humanitarian aid is to respond to the needs of the most vulnerable people in a principled way. In so doing, opportunities should be seized to increase resilience by applying a Humanitarian-Development-Peace (HDP) Nexus approach.

Whenever feasible, EU humanitarian aid funded interventions should contribute to longer-term strategies. This requires tackling needs in a more predictable and sustainable way in collaboration with development and peace actors (when relevant). The HDP Nexus approach is about working in complementarity based on the comparative advantages of

⁷ See section on 'Humanitarian – Development – Peace Nexus' on this page.

⁸ https://ec.europa.eu/info/strategy/priorities-2019-2024/european-green-deal_en

each, while fully respecting humanitarian principles.

The active promotion of peacebuilding and conflict prevention falls outside of DG ECHO's mandate. Central to the peace element of the Nexus for DG ECHO is to ensure that activities "do-no-harm" and are conflict-sensitive.⁹ For example, linking humanitarian actions and social protection systems can bridge the humanitarian-development divide. Scaling up social assistance ahead of/in response to shocks and crises has been identified as one of the best ways to enhance resilience and empower people. This includes supply of predictable and accessible essential services to crises-affected population and its hosts.

What we expect from partners: Whenever feasible, partners are expected to apply a HDP Nexus lens throughout the whole project cycle, in full respect of humanitarian principles and International Humanitarian Law. DG ECHO's Resilience Marker will contribute to a systematic assessment of project's proposals in this regard.¹⁰ In practice, an HDP approach should include:

- sharing information and building evidence to strengthen analyses and response;
- being actively involved in joint context analyses with development and peace actors;
- engaging in a 'people-centred' dialogue with a view to addressing risks and vulnerability, in order to decrease humanitarian needs over time;
- ensuring a conflict-sensitive approach throughout the project cycle;
- engaging in humanitarian advocacy and mediation in relation to humanitarian access, whenever relevant.

DG ECHO's partners should support local responders to strengthen their leadership and response capacities in humanitarian assistance, including in preparedness. Partners are also expected to assess the opportunity to support or complement national systems at different levels in relation to direct cash transfers to households (or vouchers/in-kind), basic social services (health, nutrition, WASH, education) and social care and protection.

Without compromising the humanitarian principles, partners should consider if it is appropriate to deliver humanitarian assistance through national social safety nets, or if it is possible to use the humanitarian response to trigger investments in the development of "nascent" social protection systems. Strengthening national social protection systems can also imply aspects of social care (such as case management, psychosocial support and general protection services).

Humanitarian partners have an important role to conveying expertise and knowledge to development actors in fragile and conflict contexts to trigger investment in partnership with government and the private sector, for example linked to the creation of jobs and to digitalisation.

Link to policies and guidance:

- Council Conclusions on Operationalising the Humanitarian-Development Nexus, May 2017: <https://www.consilium.europa.eu/media/24010/nexus-st09383en17.pdf>
- Joint Communication on "A Strategic Approach to Resilience in the EU's External

⁹ See 'General considerations', 'Quality of humanitarian aid', page 2.

¹⁰ See 'Resilience mainstreaming – including Resilience Marker', page 6.

Action”, June 2017:

https://eeas.europa.eu/sites/eeas/files/join_2017_21_f1_communication_from_commision_to_inst_en_v7_p1_916039.pdf

- Communication on “Lives in Dignity: from Aid-dependence to Self-reliance”, April 2016: http://ec.europa.eu/echo/files/policies/refugees-idp/Communication_Forced_Displacement_Development_2016.pdf and accompanying Staff Working Document: http://ec.europa.eu/echo/files/policies/refugees-idp/Staff_working_document_Forced_Displacement_Development_2016.pdf
- Guidance Package on Social Protection across the Humanitarian-Development Nexus (“SPaN”) Feb. 2019, including a Supplementary Volume of Operational Notes, May 2019: <https://europa.eu/capacity4dev/sp-nexus/wiki/guidance-package-span-resources>

CIVIL-MILITARY RELATIONS

Humanitarian Civil-Military Coordination (CMCoord) is the essential dialogue and interaction between civilian and military actors in humanitarian emergencies. It is necessary to: protect and promote humanitarian principles; avoid competition; minimise inconsistencies, and; when appropriate, pursue common goals. Coordination can be challenging and always depends on the specific context.

Coordination strategies range from co-existence to cooperation:

- co-existence, focusing on de-confliction and on minimising inconsistency, which is typical of conflict settings with military actors involved in active combat;
- cooperation, focusing on harmonising a combined effort, could be adopted in natural disasters, as appropriate.

The military community has access to niche capabilities that may be required during humanitarian emergencies and natural disasters. If the humanitarian community has exhausted its capacity, it might request specific assistance by the military, based on compelling humanitarian needs, as last resort, and according to internationally agreed civil-military guidelines (such as the Oslo Guidelines and the MCDA Guidelines on the Use of Military and Civil Defence Assets to Support UN Humanitarian Activities in Complex Emergencies) and recommended practices. In January 2019, the EU Military Committee approved the “EU Concept on Effective CIVMIL Coordination in Support of Humanitarian Assistance and Disaster Relief”.¹¹ The concept provides operational guidance, lessons learnt and best practices from the interaction of humanitarians and the military in the EU, including the use of military assets.

Link to policies and guidance:

- <http://ec.europa.eu/echo/en/what/humanitarian-aid/civil-military-relations>
- <https://data.consilium.europa.eu/doc/document/ST-5536-2019-INIT/en/pdf>

¹¹ EEAS(2018) 1293 REV 5

ASSISTANCE MODALITIES AND APPROACHES

CASH TRANSFERS

DG ECHO endeavours to increase the use of cash transfers, when appropriate, in the interest of the affected populations, of cost-efficiency and of effectiveness. The use of cash transfers offers beneficiaries dignity, choice and flexibility. Given its multi-purpose nature, cash is also central to a Basic Needs Approach.¹²

Where possible, cash programmes should link with existing social protection interventions or build the blocks of future longer-term assistance from the outset.¹³

What we expect from partners:

- Anticipate potential needs and consider anticipatory and preparedness measures;
- Enhance price monitoring to adapt the cash amounts as markets fluctuate;
- Build own capacity in terms of equipment, digital systems and supply chain, and;
- Get the momentum to coordinate/strengthen safety nets;
- Provide adequate information on the reasons behind the choice of a specific transfer modality over another through the mandatory response analysis, taking into account all relevant contextual factors and including an analysis of the market situation in the affected area;
- Indicate, from the outset, the amount of assistance that will be delivered in the form of cash transfers. This is important in tracking the EU's international commitments on the use of cash.

Partners are encouraged to consider multipurpose cash transfers first where assessments and response analysis demonstrates that multiple basic needs can be met through a single cash transfer. Cash transfers frequently need to serve as a complement to, or be complemented by other assistance modalities that help to meet needs that cannot be met by cash.

The value of a transfer should be based on a Minimum Expenditure Basket in a coordinated way (through Cash Working Groups), while taking into account the contribution made by households, and available resources. Unless duly justified by operational concerns, DG ECHO will favour cash delivery systems based on an interoperable registry of eligible beneficiaries, regularly verified and updated. Cash programmes where people receive a single payment (whether a one-off or more) that is designed to cover multiple basic needs will be favoured. The principles of coordination and harmonisation outlined in DG ECHO's Large-Scale Cash Guidance Note should be taken into account regardless of the size of the operation.

In line with the Grand Bargain commitment to increase the use and coordination of cash, and the need for “harmonize and simplify reporting requirements”, partners are encouraged to use the crosscutting pilot multipurpose cash outcome indicators as identified by the Grand Bargain Cash Workstream.¹⁴

¹² See ‘Basic Needs Approach’, page 10.

¹³ See ‘Humanitarian – Peace – Development Nexus’, page 8.

¹⁴ See: <https://www.calpnetwork.org/publication/multipurpose-cash-outcome-indicators-final-draft-for-testing>

Links to policies and guidance:

- https://ec.europa.eu/echo/files/policies/sectoral/them_policy_doc_cashandvouchers_en.pdf

BASIC NEEDS APPROACH (BNA)

DG ECHO will prioritise an integrated multi-sectoral or cross-sectoral approach to the design of interventions that aims to meet or contribute to the basic needs¹⁵ of affected populations. Addressing people's needs in a coordinated and demand-driven way puts people back in the centre of interventions and can improve aid effectiveness, especially where beneficiaries are empowered to make choices that enable them to closely tailor the assistance to meet their individual needs. This way we seek to maximize impact, synergies, cost-efficiency and effectiveness. Using this approach should ensure the best assistance modality or combination of modalities is applied in each context. A basic needs framework is a well-coordinated complete response, using cash where possible, benefiting from sector specific expertise to ensure quality and strengthen an overall coherent response, avoiding a series of uncoordinated and sub-optimal responses that often focus on narrow sectoral outcomes.

What is expected of partners:

- Partners are encouraged to use common delivery platforms as well as joined up assessments, targeting, registration, Monitoring & Evaluation frameworks and independent accountability systems;
- Partners are requested to provide information on how their actions are integrated with those of other actors present in the same area, through joint and multi-sector assessments, identification of causes, problems and risks, as well as combined solutions.
- Protection-sensitive vulnerability targeting¹⁶ (see more under "Protection") is an essential element of BNA, and targeting should never be dependent on status (such as registration or displacement).

COMMUNITY-BASED APPROACH

All interventions should adopt, wherever possible, a community-based approach defining viable options to effectively help to increase resilience and meet basic needs among the most vulnerable. Community inclusion should be considered at all stages of design and implementation. Community ownership of the process is encouraged and makes any intervention more effective. This includes the identification of critical needs as prioritised by the communities, and the transfer of appropriate knowledge and resources. Based on a sound context analysis, specific attention should be put to the inclusion of extremely vulnerable and/or marginalised groups.

¹⁵ Basic needs are the essential goods, utilities, services or resources required on a regular or seasonal basis by households for ensuring long-term survival and minimum living standards, without resorting to negative coping mechanisms or compromising their health, dignity and essential livelihood assets.

¹⁶ See 'Protection mainstreaming', page 4.

SPECIFIC SECTOR POLICIES

In the design and implementation of interventions dealing with specific sector policies, partners should demonstrate how they address the abovementioned considerations, cross cutting issues, assistance modalities and approaches. Partners are expected to take a multi-sectoral or integrated approach, to improve the quality of interventions. Interventions should be evidence-based –partners are expected to carry out needs assessments, context and response analyses, monitor progress and adjust interventions if needed. Partners must provide a humanitarian response complying with internationally recognised minimum standards of quality, such as the Sphere standards.¹⁷ Additionally, partners should take into account sector specific issues elaborated below.

FOOD ASSISTANCE

The main objective of the EU's Humanitarian food assistance policy (HFA) is to save lives and preserve life, to protect livelihoods, and to increase resilience for populations facing food crises, or recovering from them. It intends to ensure the availability of, access to, and consumption of safe and nutritious food for the hungriest and most vulnerable people in anticipation of, during and in the aftermath of humanitarian crises around the world. HFA also aims to protect and strengthen the livelihoods of a crisis-affected population, to prevent or reverse negative coping mechanisms that could engender harmful consequences for their livelihood base, their food-security and nutritional status.

What we expect from partners:

- Humanitarian food assistance interventions should be well targeted so that it is used only where it is most urgently required by those that need it most, on the basis of food security vulnerability;
- Nutritional perspectives should be incorporated into all HFA needs assessments and responses, paying particular attention to nutritional needs of specific groups (including of children under-two and pregnant and lactating women);
- Emergency livelihood activities should be considered in the response as long as they are prompted by emergency needs, meet humanitarian objectives, and support strategies for self-reliance and livelihoods protection for the most vulnerable.
- The feasibility and appropriateness of the interventions, including seasonality factors, should be carefully considered and documented, and should not be confined to agricultural and pastoral livelihoods.

Links to policies and guidance:

- http://ec.europa.eu/echo/files/policies/food_assistance/them_policy_doc_foodassistance_en.pdf
- <http://ec.europa.eu/echo/en/what/humanitarian-aid/food-assistance>

¹⁷ The Sphere standards are a set of principles and minimum humanitarian standards including in the four technical areas of humanitarian response (WASH, food security and nutrition, shelter and settlement, and health), but also wider, for instance in Child Protection, aiming to improve the quality and accountability of the humanitarian sector. <https://spherestandards.org>

NUTRITION

The main objective of the EU's humanitarian nutrition policy is to avoid excess mortality and morbidity due to undernutrition in humanitarian situations and to address the immediate and underlying causes of undernutrition.

What we expect from partners: When designing a nutrition intervention, the overriding aim should be to treat and prevent undernutrition based on needs assessment of the target population and at individual level, and look at nutrition outcomes from a multisector and integrated approach.

Nutrition interventions have to consider the response to defined humanitarian risks, which have an impact on vulnerable people more prone to mortality and morbidity related to undernutrition (children under five years old, pregnant and lactating women, elderly and chronically ill people).

In populations affected by emergencies, the priority focus is on acute undernutrition, which is associated with higher risk of mortality and morbidity. Nutrition interventions should align with the following objectives:

- Respond to the needs of the individuals most vulnerable to undernutrition: mothers and children under 5;
- Treatment of both moderate acute malnutrition and severe acute malnutrition;
- Use methods and tools, which have demonstrated their efficiency and cost-effectiveness (e.g. simplification of approaches or innovative methods), and;
- Respond to well-defined humanitarian risks as well as immediate emergency needs.

In light of the complexity posed by fragile contexts and emergencies, nutrition interventions have to include a resilience component, to build local capacities in low-resources areas and to prepare communities for potential seasonal peaks of undernutrition rates and other crises.

The nutrition interventions need to take into account the structure of the health system in place at all levels (to the extent possible) and strive to integrate nutrition services within the healthcare system, avoiding the creation of stand-alone programmes. It is always important to analyse the existing national policy on health and nutrition.

DG ECHO promotes Infant and Young Child Feeding Practices activities as best practices on the prevention of undernutrition.

Links to policies and guidance:

- http://ec.europa.eu/echo/files/media/publications/tpd04_nutrition_addressing_undernutrition_in_emergencies_en.pdf
- http://ec.europa.eu/echo/files/media/publications/2014/toolkit_nutrition_en.pdf

HEALTH

The main objective of the EU's humanitarian health assistance policy is to limit excess preventable mortality, permanent disability, and disease associated with humanitarian crises. The EU's humanitarian health assistance policy also encompasses medical and psychosocial assistance to victims of violence.

What we expect from partners: Humanitarian health interventions should align with the following specific principles of the sector:

- High quality assistance should be provided to those most in need. A quantitative health needs assessment should be conducted as soon as possible and repeated frequently due to changes in evolving circumstances;
- Health interventions should be based on the best possible existing evidence of their effectiveness, to potentially save more lives in a timely manner. Other factors like feasibility and cost should also be criteria taken into account for the choice of intervention;
- Health assistance can be given as a support to an existing weakened or disrupted health system or in the form of a parallel additional healthcare provider, as required by the circumstances specific to the emergency or crisis;
- Health services must be provided to all crisis-affected individuals without discrimination and to all segments of the population (including refugees, internally displaced persons, migrants and third-country nationals). All obstacles to accessibility (such as geographic, economic and socio-cultural) should be addressed.

All health interventions should comply with recognised international standards such as those endorsed and promoted by WHO, the Global Health Cluster, or equivalent norms. All efforts to ensure the safety of health staff and supporting personnel need to be implemented.

In the context of health interventions, it is important to be aware of the presence of a Basic Package of Health Services in the country, to appraise its relevance and level of implementation throughout the health system, especially with regard to the presence and level of personnel, medicines and equipment.

Links to policies and guidance:

- <http://ec.europa.eu/echo/en/what/humanitarian-aid/health>

WATER, SANITATION AND HYGIENE (WASH)

The main objective of the EU's WASH policy is to save and preserve life and alleviate the suffering of populations facing severe environmental health risks and/or water insecurity in humanitarian crises.

What we expect from partners: when designing and carrying out WASH interventions (either stand-alone interventions in acute crises where the objective is the (re)establishment of WASH services, or otherwise, in support of other sector interventions or as part of integrated programming) partners are expected to take the following into account:

- When carrying out a vulnerability and coping capacity analysis, the targeting of humanitarian WASH programming should be based on priority humanitarian needs rather than on coverage of WASH services;
- Sustainability of WASH services should be taken into account from the offset: using locally appropriate technologies and designs, and considering covering costs of operation and maintenance (for instance through fee based service provision);

Links to policies and guidance:

- http://ec.europa.eu/echo/files/policies/sectoral/WASH_policy_doc_en.pdf
- <https://www.consilium.europa.eu/media/37022/st13991-en18.pdf>

SHELTER AND SETTLEMENTS

The main objective of the EU's humanitarian Shelter and Settlements (S&S) assistance is to preserve life and alleviate suffering, for disaster-affected populations in need of basic shelter in secure and appropriate settlements, where conditions have significantly deteriorated and fallen below commonly-accepted minimum humanitarian standards, or are anticipated imminently to do so.

What we expect from partners: partners are expected to take into account the following principles in the design and implementation of S&S interventions:

- Interventions should focus primarily on enabling and assisting household self-recovery: partners can provide support but they must avoid anything best undertaken by crisis affected populations themselves;
- The recovery process (both from natural disasters as in conflict) is a continuous process, rather than a set of isolated actions involving the delivery of tangible products;
- When conducting a risk analysis, the “build back safer” principle should be taken into account.

Links to policies and guidance:

- https://ec.europa.eu/echo/sites/echo-site/files/doc_policy_n9_en_301117_liens_bd.pdf

EDUCATION IN EMERGENCIES

The main objectives of the EU's Education in Emergencies (EiE) policy are to restore and maintain access to safe and quality education during humanitarian crises, and to support out of school children to quickly enter or return to quality learning opportunities. DG ECHO works towards four EiE objectives focussed on access, quality, protection and capacity development. EiE actions must be tailored to the different needs of children based on their age, gender and other specific circumstances.

What we expect from partners: EiE actions should focus on children and young people (up to eighteen years) most in need, based on a strong needs and risk analysis. Relevant vulnerabilities are likely to include out-of-school girls and boys and those at risk of having their education disrupted, including:

- forcibly displaced children (refugees and internally displaced);
- children in host communities and returnees;
- children in hard-to-reach areas;
- children in active conflict zones and those living in areas with fragile education systems, and;

- vulnerable and disadvantaged groups, including girls and children with disabilities.

EiE responses may include non-formal and formal education to prevent and reduce disruptions in education, to develop learners' skills and competences, and to support authorities to resume education services during or after a crisis. Actions should focus EiE support on the levels of education that are covered by State commitments to free and compulsory basic education - usually primary, lower and upper secondary levels of education.

Child protection must be considered as both a core component and key outcome of EiE response, and all actions must ensure that child safeguarding mechanisms are in place. In conflict-affected contexts, protecting education from attack and providing safe learning spaces with psychosocial support for children is essential.

All EiE actions are expected to be designed and implemented with due regard to the INEE and IASC Minimum Standards¹⁸ to the principles of conflict sensitive education. EiE actions should promote an integrated approach with relevant sectors to ensure holistic responses to children's needs. Furthermore, they should also promote innovative approaches, child participation, and alignment across the humanitarian-development nexus, as relevant.

Links to policies and guidance:

- http://ec.europa.eu/echo/files/news/Communication_on_Education_in_Emergencies_and_Protracted_Crises.pdf
- https://ec.europa.eu/echo/files/news/eie_in_humanitarian_assistance.pdf

PROTECTION

The overall aim of the EU's Protection policy is to prevent, reduce, mitigate and respond to the risks and consequences of violence, coercion, deliberate deprivation and abuse for persons, groups and communities in the context of humanitarian crises.

Protection is viewed as a single sector, encompassing all aspects of protection, including e.g. child protection, Sexual and Gender-Based Violence (GBV), Housing, Land and Property (HLP) and mine action. This stems from the perspective that a comprehensive analysis is needed in order to determine the most appropriate response "package" in a given context.

What we expect from partners: The design and targeting of all interventions should be based on a clear analysis of threats, vulnerabilities and capacities of the affected population using if possible the risk equation model as a tool for this analysis.¹⁹ The analysis should bring out external and internal threats, including from issues such as freedom of movement restrictions, as well as the coping strategies adopted to counteract these threats. It should take into account the protection concerns of individuals and groups based on:

- the risk of exposure to harm, exploitation, harassment, deprivation and abuse, in relation to identified threats;
- the inability to meet basic needs;

¹⁸ 'INEE Minimum Standards for Education: Preparedness, Response, Recovery', <https://inee.org/resources/inee-minimum-standards>, and 'IASC Minimum Standards for Child Protection' <https://spherestandards.org/resources/minimum-standards-for-child-protection-in-humanitarian-action-cpms/>

¹⁹ The model stipulates that Risks equals Threats multiplied by Vulnerabilities divided by Capacities, and the way to reduce risks is by reducing the threats and vulnerabilities and increasing the capacities.

- limited access to basic services and livelihood or opportunities to generate income;
- the ability of the person or population to cope with the consequences of this harm, and;
- due consideration for individuals with specific needs.

In order to address protection issues fully, it is also necessary to consider the relevance and feasibility of advocacy (structural level) interventions aimed at stopping the violations by perpetrators and/or convincing the duty-bearers to fulfil their responsibilities. Opportunities for more effective advocacy should also be sought in the framework of the Humanitarian-Development-Peace Nexus approach.

Partners are expected to prioritise the establishment of quality, comprehensive and safe SGBV response services since the onset of emergencies, ensuring that survivors' wishes, safety and dignity remain at the centre of the response. In line with the multi-sectorial approach, response should include medical care, mental health- and psychosocial support, referral to legal services and, opportunities for the provision of quality socio-economic assistance should be sought. In relation to safety concerns, concrete actions to ensure survivors' physical safety should also be identified. Services should be accessible to all survivors, in line with the principle of non-discrimination, and efforts made to provide support to secondary victims who have witnessed or been forced to perpetrate violence.

SGBV prevention and response interventions should be built upon a solid knowledge of the context of intervention and respect of ethical and safety considerations regarding the collection, storage and sharing of data must be demonstrated. Moreover, sensitisation and awareness-raising strategies must be pursued to enhance knowledge of SGBV cause and consequences as well as available service provision, with the ultimate aim to enhance help-seeking behaviours, and to fight stigma against survivors.

Link to policies and guidance:

- http://ec.europa.eu/echo/sites/echo-site/files/staff_working_document_humanitarian_protection_052016.pdf
- http://ec.europa.eu/echo/files/policies/sectoral/gender_thematic_policy_document_en.pdf

OTHER ISSUES

DG ECHO VISIBILITY

Partners shall ensure full compliance with visibility requirements and acknowledge the funding role of and partnership with the EU/DG ECHO, as set out in the applicable contractual arrangements.²⁰

What we expect from partners: Partners are obliged to fulfil their contractual obligation regarding visibility through:

- standard visibility in the field, including prominent display of the EU humanitarian aid visual identity on EU-funded relief items and equipment; alternative arrangements are justified where visibility activities may harm the implementation of the action or the safety of the staff of the partner, staff of the implementing partners, the safety of beneficiaries or the local community and provided that they have been explicitly agreed upon in the individual agreements, and;
- standard visibility recognizing the EU funding through activities such as media outreach, social media engagement and provision of photos stories and blogs; alternative arrangements are only justified only when based on security concerns.

For standard visibility activities, partners may, in principle, allocate a budget of up to 1% of the direct eligible costs of the action with an absolute ceiling of EUR 10 000. However, for individual agreements equal or above EUR 5 million no absolute ceiling applies. Hence, in such cases, the standard visibility budget may go up to 1%, even when this amount exceeds EUR 10 000. In the latter case, partners must provide a dedicated communication plan prior to signature.

The partner can also opt for "above-standard visibility". The purpose of these more elaborate communication activities is to raise awareness of humanitarian issues among defined audiences in the EU Member States, and to highlight the results of the partnership with DG ECHO.

DG ECHO can provide budget exceeding 1% of the direct eligible costs, when a partner wishes to engage in above-standard actions. To this end, a separate communication plan must be submitted to and approved by DG ECHO prior to the signing of the agreement. The plan must be inserted as an annex. A standard template is available on the visibility webpage.

Further explanation of visibility requirements and reporting as well as best practices and examples can be consulted on the dedicated DG ECHO visibility page.²¹

²⁰ The full text of relevant documents, such as the Model Grant Agreement and the Single Form, will be available at a later stage.

²¹ <https://www.dgecho-partners-helpdesk.eu/reference-documents-visibility>