
HUMANITARIAN IMPLEMENTATION PLAN (HIP)

Central America/DIPECHO

The activities proposed hereafter are still subject to the adoption of the financing decision ECHO/WWD/BUD/2014 /01000

AMOUNT: EUR 10 747 000

1. CONTEXT

Central America is one of the most disaster prone regions in the world, in terms of recurrence of hazards, their severity and scope and the significant potential for major disasters. The region has also large populations living in poverty and insecurity and is increasingly suffering due to the elevated impact of disasters constantly eroding their coping mechanisms.

Humanitarian actions in Central America focus mainly on El Salvador, Guatemala, Honduras and Nicaragua, and to a lesser extent on Costa Rica and Panama. The first four countries are situated in the middle income group of countries, ranking 107, 133, 120 and 129 respectively. The latter two are situated in the high income group of countries, ranking 62 and 59 respectively¹.

This ranking hides however very significant regional and socio-economic disparities in countries that are among the most unequal in the world in terms of income, access to education, health, water, electricity and opportunities. Social inequalities are deepest in Honduras and Guatemala².

In DG ECHO³'s Global Needs Assessment El Salvador, Guatemala and Honduras have a vulnerability index of 2 and a crisis index of 3, due to the high level of organized violence affecting these countries, which have homicide rates among the highest in the world⁴. Nicaragua has a vulnerability index of 2 and a crisis index of 1. Panama has a vulnerability index of 2 and Costa Rica of 1.

ECHO's Integrated Analysis Framework for 2013-14 identified high humanitarian needs in El Salvador, Guatemala, Honduras and Nicaragua. The vulnerability of the population affected is assessed to be very high or high according to the country and the type of crisis (natural disasters, impact of violence and/or food insecurity).

The six countries have a total population of 43.6 million. In some countries, it is estimated that up to 84% of the local population lives in risk areas⁵.

Hydro-meteorological events have been predominant over the last decades, where floods and landslides have affected more than 3.6 million people since 1990⁶. Over the same period, more than 5.8 million people have been hit by windstorms, most notoriously by Hurricanes Mitch⁷, Stan⁸, Felix and Tropical Storms Agatha⁹ and 12-E¹⁰ in 1998, 2005, 2007, 2010 and

¹ UNDP, Human Development Index, 2012

² World Bank 2012, Gini coefficient – Nicaragua 40.5, Costa Rica 50.7, El Salvador 48.3, Panama 51.9, Honduras 57, Guatemala 55.9

³ Directorate General for Humanitarian Aid and Civil Protection of the European Commission

⁴ UNODC, Global Study 2012, by 100.000 inhabitants, 91.6 in Honduras, 69.2 El Salvador, 38.5 Guatemala

⁵ World Bank, "Natural Disasters Hotspots: A Global study, 2005", 84.1% of the population of El Salvador lives in areas at risks, 83.4% in Guatemala, 77.9% in Costa Rica

⁶ Centre for Research on Epidemiology of Disasters (CRED), Emergency Events Database (EM-DAT)

⁷ Hurricane Mitch is a benchmark in Central America disasters history

⁸ In Guatemala alone, Hurricane Stan caused damage of over EUR 800,000,000 (equivalent to more than 3% of GDP) and affected 0.5 million people (4% of the population)

2011 respectively. Hydro-meteorological events are the cause of 88% of the total of human lives lost in all types of disasters over the period 1990-2012 in the region¹¹.

Droughts affected over 4 million people in the past twenty-two years¹², compounded by deforestation and events such as the El Niño phenomenon. The drought of 2001 was one of the worst episodes with 1.4 million people who lost their crops. The total amount of losses accounted for USD 189 000 000¹³. Also, and as seen recently in Guatemala, the irregularities in rainfall are causing severe damage to agriculture, combining periods of intense drought with episodes of flooding, increasing the vulnerabilities of small scale farmers and their families, through the loss of their livelihoods.

Geological events and more specifically earthquakes generate the most significant economic losses. For example, the two earthquakes which hit El Salvador in 2001 affected a total of 1.5 million people¹⁴. More recently, the earthquake of 7.2 on Richter scale which hit Guatemala in November 2012 affected 1.3 million people and killed 44. These earthquakes can also trigger tsunamis, as it was the case in 1992 in Nicaragua, when a tsunami killed at least 170 people¹⁵. The region is also prone to volcanic eruptions with more than 30 active volcanoes; ultimately the Pacaya and Fuego Volcanoes in Guatemala have been the most active and affected thousands of people only during the period 2010-2012.

Studies have shown that despite the many efforts made in the region, the impact of disasters has gradually increased over the last thirty years and for Central America, the cost of disasters during 1970-2008 represented 10.35% of the 2008 GDP¹⁶. Central America also experiences frequent small-scale events, often not registered in international databases as they may not trigger a declaration of emergency, but which however affect a significant number of communities and recurrently undermine the fragile livelihoods of those affected, with an inadequate level of response.

This combined with other factors such as high population density especially in cities, increased lack of urban planning, fast demographic growth, inequality and great poverty results in highly vulnerable communities, with few coping capacities in the event of disaster. Moreover, climate studies have shown that climate patterns are changing, with global warming and shorter but more intense rainfall, which is likely to negatively affect disaster trends in the region and generate cumulative stresses and shocks.

Despite the increasing awareness about the importance of Disaster Risk Reduction measures in the region, with new laws, policies and plans being developed and adding to the existing framework, local communities in disaster prone areas are still exposed to risks. There is insufficient capacity and/or resources to tackle these issues and implement the policies. Strong political commitments translated into appropriate funding are still lacking to implement effective DRR programmes that reach the communities and local actors.

Last but not least, the countries of the region suffer from the humanitarian consequences of the intensification of the so-called "other situations of violence" (OSV). Free movement of goods and access to basic services are hindered by illegal armed groups, also affecting the

⁹ DG ECHO responded through a EUR 3,000,000 Primary Emergency Decision

¹⁰ DG ECHO responded through a EUR 4,000,000 Emergency Decision

¹¹ Centre for Research on Epidemiology of Disasters (CRED), Emergency Events Database (EM-DAT)

¹² DG ECHO responded to drought through several funding decisions since 2001, the last one in 2012

¹³ CEPAL (Comisión Económica para América Latina y el Caribe)

¹⁴ DG ECHO responded to the earthquakes through 3 funding decisions which amounted to EUR 10,500,000

¹⁵ Fernandez et al. 2001; During the period 1593 -2000, 49 tsunamis occurred in Central America

¹⁶ Source: CEPAL – Study Disasters and Development – impact 2010

delivery of humanitarian aid. Trends indicate that the situation will deteriorate and increase the population's vulnerability to other shocks, thereby further undermining their resilience.

2. HUMANITARIAN NEEDS

1) Affected people/ potential beneficiaries

The DIPECHO programme will focus on communities in disaster prone areas and on institutions involved in disaster risk reduction. Priority will be given to those communities in rural, peri-urban and urban settings, with the highest exposure and risk levels, and the lowest coping capacities. Also, the program will aim at developing linkages between local, national and regional authorities, for the integration of best practices in government development plans. It will focus on advocacy towards actors in order to integrate an effective risk management approach.

The following countries will be targeted: El Salvador, Honduras, Guatemala, Nicaragua, and to a lesser extent, Costa Rica and Panama. Although the whole region is prone to natural events, not all countries/regions have the same vulnerability or degree of exposure. Trans-boundary actions between the countries above-mentioned and between Mexico, Guatemala and Belize could also be targeted as risks scenarios are shared. New areas and populations will be targeted, although in some cases consolidation of previous actions may be considered. The estimated number of direct beneficiaries is approximately 800 000 people.

2) Description of the most acute humanitarian needs.

Needs assessment in terms of preparedness has been an ongoing process in the Central American region. With DIPECHO Action Plans covering the region since 1998 and in order to take stock of the lessons learnt from previous actions, Governments and partners, through the support of DG ECHO, have driven an extensive consultation process in October/November 2013, involving over 400 DRR experts representing DRR partners, relevant national and local authorities, scientific community, other European Commission services and local and international organizations. Four national consultative meetings as well as one regional seminar have been held and these, together with the results of the Consultative Forum on the Risk Management Regional Policy for Central America (PCGIR) of June 2013, are the basis to prepare the ground for the 2014-2015 DIPECHO Action Plan in Central America.

There is a need to better prepare communities in a comprehensive manner, for them to be able to trigger adequate mechanisms ahead of an event or respond adequately to disasters and recover from them.

More concretely, the following actions are necessary:

- Local disaster management components, targeting local actors in disaster prone areas: early warning systems, mapping and data computerization, local capacity-building, training.
- Institutional linkages and advocacy, targeting institutions involved in disaster management/ DRR, in particular at regional, national and sub-national levels with special emphasis on municipalities: advocacy, facilitation of coordination, institutional strengthening.
- Information, Education and Communication, targeting direct and indirect beneficiaries: awareness-raising among the general public, education and dissemination
- Small-scale infrastructure and services, at community level: infrastructure support and mitigation works, reinforcing critical infrastructure, operation and maintenance systems; non-structural mitigation activities.
- Stock-building of emergency relief items, targeting the reinforcement of the response capacity of local actors and institutions in disaster-prone areas with the aim to contribute to

ensuring an adequate response to disasters by strengthening the response capacity in the early hours and days of an event.

- Livelihoods and economic assets protection: supporting direct and indirect beneficiaries to adapt, prepare or protect their livelihoods from disasters.

Additionally, mainstreaming of basic **protection** principles in traditional assistance programmes is key to DG ECHO. This approach is closely interlinked with the 'do no harm'-principle, but adds hereto the commitment of safe and equal access to assistance as well as the need for special measures to ensure access for particularly vulnerable groups. Also, targeted protection activities will be included in DRR actions when feasible and appropriate, especially in El Salvador, Honduras and Guatemala.

Ensuring **gender-age** mainstreaming is also of paramount importance to DG ECHO, since it is an issue of quality programming. In compliance with the EU humanitarian mandate, principles and commitment, all project proposals must demonstrate integration of gender and age in a coherent manner and the use of the gender-age marker. Partners should also be aware of the **resilience** approach promoted by the EU.

3. HUMANITARIAN RESPONSE

1) National / local response and involvement

In general, DRR is high on the political agendas of the Central American countries. As an indication of the vital importance of the issue, most countries of the region have adopted disaster management legal frameworks, addressing DRR in accordance to the PCGIR adopted in 2010 by all the members of CEPREDENAC¹⁷. In July 2011 and June 2013, the Presidents of Central American countries have agreed to concentrate efforts and actions in DRR at national, regional and international levels.

However, despite this momentum, much remains to be done to promote an effective implementation, and capacities are still in most cases very limited, in particular in terms of support at sub-national/local level. This is due to the lack of human and financial resources as well as limited technical capacity, preventing communities from benefitting from progresses made in DRR at national level.

2) International Humanitarian Response

Coordination with other donors such as Australia, IADB¹⁸, Japan, Spain, Switzerland, USAID/OFDA¹⁹, World Bank, etc. will continue and be further promoted. The aim is to reinforce synergies and create conditions for scaling-up of outputs from demonstrative activities, while avoiding overlapping. However, the presence of traditional bilateral donors is globally decreasing in the region and most of these donors tend to focus more on central and sub-national levels than on community level.

The Swiss Agency for Development and Cooperation (SDC) in its strategy 2013-2017 for Central America is focusing mainly on Nicaragua and Honduras and on regional actions. One of the three pillars of its strategy is to reduce vulnerabilities caused by climate change and disasters. USAID/OFDA through its DRR action plan for 2012-2014 is giving priority to protecting livelihoods, preventing the loss of roofs, strengthening capacities in DRR and has a program of small grants to diverse projects in Guatemala and Panama. Japan is also supporting different initiatives to strengthen DRR capacities. Spain has several operations

¹⁷ Centro de Coordinación para la Prevención de los Desastres Naturales en América Central

¹⁸ Inter American Development Bank

¹⁹ United States development cooperation agency

going on in the region, oriented mainly towards information management about disaster response and DRR, but is currently reducing its level of funding in the region. Australian Aid is also supporting DRR actions at regional level. New donors start to invest in DRR in Central America, including Venezuela, Mexico and Russia.

Additionally, multilateral institutions such as the World Bank (WB) and IADB are increasing their support to the region, with different portfolios on DRR. The EU is financing the WB Global Facility for Disaster Reduction and Recovery with EUR 60 million for the period 2011-2017, with several projects implemented in the region.

3) Constraints and DG ECHO response capacity

As most of the activities proposed have a grass-root-level orientation, their successful implementation depends on the willingness of the identified communities to co-operate. In addition to this, disaster preparedness (DP) projects depend on the link that partners establish with the relevant authorities and communities, who need to be involved in the project from its inception to ensure that the objectives can be met and that results are sustainable. In order to build a project on a strong basis, DG ECHO requires organizations and agencies interested in submitting a project to have previous experience in the region, preferably on DP programmes and to have already developed relations with local communities and authorities on the ground.

Access to the areas of intervention presents the following constraints:

- Criminality in urban, peri-urban and rural areas of Central America is very high, and the situation shows a deteriorating trend. Activities planned in these areas imply risks for the partners' staff. Considering that some of the most violent areas are among the most vulnerable to disasters, operations foreseen in these areas should factor in issues related to access problems (which have been recurrent during the 2012-2013 period). Specific measures should be adopted by partners to ensure proper acceptance and security. The presence of gangs in the region may also affect/impede the normal implementation/monitoring of the actions.

- In a region with frequent natural hazards, the likelihood that disasters will occur during the implementation of DG ECHO-funded disaster preparedness projects is high. While in the event of a disaster ongoing DIPECHO projects may already prove their life-saving effect, delays in implementation are likely because partners will need to respond to emergencies.

Also, frequent political turnover, political and social instability in the region can hamper the effectiveness and sustainability of some actions which require the involvement of local and national authorities, disrupt the projects and result in suspensions. In particular, the national elections in Honduras (November 2013), in El Salvador (March 2014) and in Guatemala (September 2015) may affect the sustainability of the Actions due to the possible high turnover of the staff in municipal and national institutions after the elections.

In the region, there are sufficient potential partners with appropriate technical and operational capacity to carry out the activities foreseen to achieve the objectives of the Action Plan. The absorption capacity does not seem therefore to present much problem considering the level of needs and demand, compared with the existing capacities on the ground.

4) Envisaged DG ECHO response and expected results of humanitarian aid interventions.

The added value of DG ECHO interventions in Central America can be summarized as follow:

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- Direct support to local communities and their basic organizations. Bottom–up approach, combined with top-down measures, has proven to be the most effective way for immediate reinforcement of coping and resilience capacities in a participatory way. The DIPECHO programme has had an impact in different disasters where the affected communities were able to react through the activation of the committees supported and the timely evacuation of the population to avoid loss of lives.
 - Strengthening the articulation of communities with local, regional and national authorities.
 - Promoting replication and scaling up of good practices at regional level and facilitating exchanges among beneficiary countries.
 - Complementing and supporting efforts of national authorities and processes at local, national and regional levels.
 - Action plans consist of a balance between national and regional projects, which means that the experience gained at community level can be transmitted to national and regional levels and vice-versa.
 - DIPECHO projects provide a forum for exchange of best practices and lessons learned and common approaches, which is otherwise lacking.

For further details on sectors of intervention and priorities, please refer to information provided under section 2 and in the “Operational Recommendations for DG ECHO potential partners wishing to submit proposals for the DIPECHO Action Plan 2014-2015 for Central America”.

The expected results of the humanitarian aid interventions will be:

- **Communities are better prepared and the capacities of local, regional, national institutions to face disasters are strengthened, thus increasing the resilience of the most vulnerable populations.**
- **Awareness and advocacy regarding the benefits of adopting preventive approaches to disaster management are enhanced.**
- **Replication and scaling-up of successful community DP achievements are promoted.**

When relevant, multi-hazard projects will be encouraged. DG ECHO will promote joint initiatives, alliances, synergies, multi-countries and regional operations and consortia of its partners, if appropriate. Partners will be encouraged to build synergies with development initiatives funded by the EU and other donors which target the same geographical areas or address similar hazards. All actions must be aligned with national and/or regional DRR/Disaster Management legal, policy and planning frameworks and contribute to their implementation and consolidation.

In this regard, close coordination and initiatives with key sub-regional actors such as the CEPREDENAC²⁰ and other institutions of the SICA²¹ will be encouraged. As in previous Action Plans, strategies of projects which receive DG ECHO support must contribute to the "Hyogo Framework for Action (HFA) 2005-2015: Building the Resilience of Nations and Communities to Disasters" as well as to the CEPREDENAC's regional plan for Disaster Risk Reduction. They should also aim to support the implementation of the PCGIR. The programme will also continue supporting the implementation at country level of global strategies such as the Campaign on Resilient Cities, Safe Hospitals, Safe Schools. DRR components of Climate Change Adaptation strategies will also be further explored.

²⁰ Regional coordination centre for preparation to natural disasters in Central America

²¹ System for the regional integration in Central America

The present HIP will support a clear entry-exit strategy focusing on community-based pilot actions where appropriate. It will also support the scaling-up measures for actions with a demonstrative effect, already existing, and their integration into development programmes. A priority will also be given to the documentation and, above all, dissemination of the lessons learnt, good practices and DRR tools within Central America.

For DIPECHO the main measure for success is replicability. To the extent possible the results of the programme should be incorporated into national and regional DRM planning. This needs to be a key element of project design.

ECHO is in the process of reviewing the DIPECHO programme with the intention of developing it in a more strategic manner and building on the experience from previous exercises. This review will be completed in 2014 and projects may need to be re-assessed in light of the conclusions of this exercise.

Effective coordination is essential. ECHO supports the **Inter-Agency Standing Committee's Transformative Agenda (ITA)** and encourages partners to demonstrate their engagement in implementing its objectives, to take part in coordination mechanisms (e.g. Humanitarian Country Team/Clusters) and to allocate resources to foster the ITA roll-out.

Partners will be expected to ensure full compliance with **visibility** requirements and to acknowledge the funding role of the EU/ECHO, as set out in the applicable contractual arrangements.

4. LRRD, COORDINATION AND TRANSITION

1) Other DG ECHO interventions

In 2012-2013, DG ECHO allocated EUR 10 025 000 for the 2012-2013 Action Plan in Central America (up to December 2013), EUR 1 500 000 for Drought Resilience initiative in the region (up to December 2014); EUR 2 000 000 to respond to the earthquake of November 2012 and drought in Guatemala (up to November 2013); two Small Scale Response projects to respond to a) the Guatemala Earthquake of 2012 for a total of EUR 200 000 (finished) and b) Coffee Rust in Guatemala, Honduras and Nicaragua of EUR 300 000 (will end January 2014); EUR 500 000 with the Epidemics HIP to respond to dengue outbreaks in Honduras and Mexico (will end December 2013); and finally, EUR 486 529 through the DREF for different events in Panama, Honduras, El Salvador, Costa Rica and Guatemala. Another EUR 2 000 000 were allocated to attend the humanitarian consequences of other situations of violence in the Northern Triangle of Central America and Mexico (will finish end of 2014).

Complementarities between the 2014 DIPECHO Central America HIP and the HIP on other situations of violence will be sought, looking at better integrating protection activities into DRR actions. As such, operational exchanges between partners will be promoted. Complementarities between the Drought Resilience initiative and the DIPECHO HIP will be ensured through regular meetings between partners and dissemination of good practices to address the consequences of drought as well as joint advocacy measures. Complementarities with the dengue response will be sought through the dissemination of models of intervention regarding epidemics preparedness to be better connected with the DP activities to be carried out through the DIPECHO.

In addition to the DIPECHO programme, DP/DRR mainstreaming will be a constant priority for DG ECHO's intervention in the region, in particular when responding to a disaster.

2) Other services/donors availability (such as for LRRD and transition)

The main donors interested in investing on DRR in the region are Spain (AECID), AusAid, Switzerland (SDC), IADB, USAID/OFDA, WB and Japan (JICA) with whom DG ECHO has permanent contact. DG ECHO also supports the donor coordination roundtables and efforts in all the countries of the region and at regional level in order to create additional opportunities for LRRD and increase complementarities, as well as promote joint dialogues with authorities.

LRRD opportunities similar to previous successful experiences with SDC, AECID and USAID/OFDA will be looked for again. Increased complementarities will also be sought through – for example - the use of similar tools such as the local capacity matrix to monitor progress on DRR, developed under DIPECHO and used by other donors like SDC and JICA.

Regular coordination happens between ECHO partners and projects financed by WB and IADB, agencies with whom agreements already exist in the region, in order to ensure complementarities of actions and sustainability of processes.

Mainstreaming of the results of the programme is likely to require a long-term strategic engagement with national and regional authorities. For this reason financial support for mainstreaming is likely to be most appropriate from development donors and engagement with these donors should be sought from an early stage.

3) Other concomitant EU interventions

DG ECHO is working closely with other EU services in order to better integrate DRR in the 2014-2020 programming and discussions in this regard have been held in four countries of the region. It is foreseen that Climate Change Adaptation and DRR will be part of the strategic priorities of the EU Delegation at regional level, as well as in El Salvador and Nicaragua, allowing specific resources to be allocated to this issue in the near future.

Additionally, several initiatives offer positive possibilities for complementarities with DG ECHO projects (Global Public Goods and Challenges initiative, EUROCLIMA, PRESANCA, Instrument for Stability, among others). Also, bi-lateral funding still exists in four countries of the region (Nicaragua, Honduras, El Salvador, Guatemala) but ended in Costa Rica and Panama. However, in the entire region thematic lines such as the Non State Actors and sector programmes have potential to build synergies and increase the sustainability of DG ECHO actions. Climate change funding can also be a good entry point to upscale good practices developed in DG ECHO projects.

4) Exit scenarios.

As stated in an external evaluation of the DIPECHO programme in Central America carried out in 2007, "support for community based Disaster Preparedness in Central America has been and remains very relevant in the national and regional contexts. The programme's overriding objective of reducing risk by better preparing vulnerable populations in the most disaster prone areas maintains a high level of pertinence. DP remains a key factor to saving lives and ensuring an appropriate response in disaster prone areas of Central America. The programme continues to fill the gap taken up on by very few other agencies, and this does not provide a basis for phasing out in the short or even medium term".

At this point in time, the programme is still addressing the existing gaps and needs and it is not feasible to plan for an early exit strategy due to the fact that there is still a great variety of hazards and risks which have not been properly addressed at local, national and regional level, and only few donors. Also, after assessing the variables, international support remains necessary to accompany this process. In the last few years, the actions financed allowed

important milestones in the region, and constituted a laboratory for lessons learned and best practices on DRR.

Given the constant changes and new trends in the humanitarian situation in Central America, and in order to better define an exit strategy, DG ECHO will need to analyze in depth the degree of risk and the coping capacities of the countries versus the interest and capacities of our partners, other developmental donors or EU Services to continue addressing these themes. In this respect, DG ECHO will continue advocating for a deeper integration of DRR issues in policies in order to enhance synergies between programmes.

However, there are certain geographical areas where DG ECHO has started focusing on phasing-down strategies, either after implementing several actions in the same area, or where specific hazards have been successfully approached, or where successful DRR strategies have been developed through DIPECHO and which now require little DG ECHO support, while having a potential to be replicated or promoted at national and regional level.

In any case, DG ECHO partners' enhanced strategic thinking in DRR, including new trends on humanitarian issues, together with a gradual handover of expertise and responsibilities to a wide range of national government and non-government stakeholders are part of the exit strategies and this will be promoted during this Action Plan through different innovative measures.