

6. CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

7.1. Modalities of project management

In El Salvador it was noted that the response of ECHO and other EC services was swift and conducive to a well co-ordinated, relevant and efficient intervention by partners. However, a problem - land-ownership in the case of in situ reconstruction - modified slightly the class of shelter beneficiaries. Some of the contracts, it was also observed, were implemented in a chaotic fashion.

In Gujarat the response of ECHO and other EC services was swift and conducive to a fairly good intervention by partners. However, limited knowledge of the cultural, social and political context, together with poor communication with other actors reduced the impact of excellent results and did not increase the EU visibility¹. One partner, chosen on the basis of its good reputation, was not aware of the local context and was not able to perform to its best.

In order to improve EC services, as well as the capacity of ECHO and partners to focus on such issues, the mission recommends:

- *creating, in the case of a serious natural disaster, an information and co-ordination emergency cell that includes some EC project personnel, ECHO personnel and personnel from ECHO's traditional partners in the country*
- *dispatching immediately an ECHO officer for planning and monitoring in the country for the whole duration of operations responding to the crisis*
- *improving communication and co-ordination with other international or local actors*
- *investing more in preparedness during and after the post-emergency activities*
- *selecting among the partners those that have a presence in the country, or those connected to local network associates able to operate immediately, and those who have proven experience in the chosen field of activity, plus those who are experienced in emergency situations*
- *paying more attention during the appraisal of projects to the context and to effective targeting*
- *improving monitoring with the use of relevant indicators.*

7.2. Emergency and post-emergency decision

The immediate result of a natural disaster is usually the impairment of local authorities, who are temporarily stunned. Foreign relief in the first emergency phase has to be self-organised in order to be efficient. It therefore needs networks working in parallel with those of the government. The only ECHO partners with these characteristics are the NRCs and INGOs involved in long-term development.

The immediate needs of earthquakes victims are more or less the same whatever the circumstances: health care, drinking water, food, cooking utensils and protection against bad weather.

The secondary needs are also roughly the same - mid-term temporary shelter, continuous access to water, special protection against disease, restoration of livelihood, raising awareness for disaster prevention. However, the response in this case has to meet local ecological, cultural and political circumstances.

The mission recommends that:

- *Decision I allocates funds only to efficient National Red Cross (NRC) partners and/or to INGOs well established in the country suffering from the disaster*
- *Decision I covers only the medical emergency and the immediate needs of victims*
- *Decision II chooses carefully the sectors of intervention, after thorough analysis of the local constraints*

¹ The GoI did not appreciate the €2,1 M funding to an NGO which is perceived in India as being mainly involved in Christian proselytism.

- *Sectors chosen by Decision II should preferably be able of continuity under other EC services funding.*

7.3. Victims of the earthquakes

Many of the victims of the earthquakes have now been given at least a shelter. Many of them have access to minimal water and sanitation. Some have been provided with community social services. But, in many El Salvador communities, as soon as the rescuers moved away, after their task was completed, the basic infrastructures were no longer attended by the local counterpart. The majority of these victims, who belong to the most vulnerable social strata, are at risk of or feel they are at risk of being dispossessed of their newly acquired household, and have not recover any means of livelihood. In Gujarat, although the same minimal conditions were provided, in many vulnerable communities, the livelihood aspect (which was already weak before the disaster) remained hampered because it was not considered an emergency issue.

The mission recommends that, in the case of resettlement in compact communities

- *an agreement should be signed, before delivering the facilities to the local authorities, for a continuation of social services after the departure of ECHO partners*
- *land titles delivery should preferably be granted by local authorities before starting to build shelters in new settlements*
- *a strong advocacy should at least be developed by the EC Delegation encouraging the local governments to deliver the land titles quickly and free of charge.*

The mission recommends also that the issue of restoration of livelihood should be addressed in the post-emergency phase and that it should be linked to mid-term projects to be developed in the rehabilitation phase by other EC services and implemented by local or international CSOs.

7.4. Shelter

In El Salvador a decision was taken, based on sound reasons, to fund temporary or progressive hard shelters. It resulted in all kinds of products, which in some cases resemble new slums.

In Gujarat, three kinds of temporary shelters were delivered. The tarpaulins for collective use were soon replaced everywhere by tents. The tents were not all of the same standard². The semi-permanent or permanent shelters were of different kinds, but carefully chosen according to the needs of beneficiaries.

The mission recommends that:

- *a thorough analysis of personnel and cultural family needs should be carried out before any planning of shelter construction*
- *minimal standards on prices, material and space provided should be imposed on partners involved in the building process*
- *tents should be standardised in order to cope with bad weather and to give ample shelter to families.*

7.5. Water and sanitation

In El Salvador, the emergency water supply and sanitation in temporary settlements were of a volatile nature. However, their provision in definitive settlements, in the case of water, was not carried on everywhere after the installation. The sanitation structures provided were not delivered with the necessary long-term education package. In Gujarat, the emergency water supply and the restoration of the sources and network were efficiently addressed by the local institutions. Addressing the problem of scarcity, which was recurrent because of the drought,

² Some tents of lower quality, which were distributed late, were not unfolded by many beneficiaries before the end of the rainy season; they found the tarpaulins were more water-proof and more convenient for their space.

is a development objective that has no linkage to the disaster and has to be integrated to development programmes. The same can be said about the sanitation, especially in the case of rural India.

The mission recommends that:

- *a commitment should be required from local authorities to carry on the water provision in compact resettlements' water networks*
- *the latrines provided in definitive settlements should be designed for the long-term and therefore of good quality and fully completed*
- *the hygiene education provided should be extended through the education system and the development of awareness in community groups.*

7.6. Health

The greatest impact in ECHO's funded health package was obtained in the treatment of trauma directly resulting from the earthquakes. The other health activities in post-emergency are not really connected to the relief of the victims.

The mission recommends in the case of earthquakes:

- *generalising the funding of Emergency Response Units (ERU), as set up through the co-operation of European NRCs*
- *extending psychological support through training and dissemination of psychological assistance methods to community workers or local Red Cross volunteers in the framework of DIPECHO mitigation activities*
- *focusing on selective and specialised health interventions.*

7.7. Linking relief to rehabilitation and development

In El Salvador, the LRRD was partially and swiftly addressed with the reorganisation of an ALA project priority³ and the release of fresh AIDCO funds to a partnership - specific programme of reconstruction. However, some of the partner CSOs - who had been part of Decision I and who tried hard to get involved in this phase with specific proposals - were discouraged by the complexity of AIDCO and gave up. In Gujarat the presence of the LRRD question in the minds of the EC services during the relief operations failed to generate any result, although the Delegation took some steps towards action. This vacuum can be attributed to weak communication channels between partners (inside of the EC local services or between EC services and other local partners), the slowness of the AIDCO ad hoc administration, and the absence of an appropriate instrument at the level of ECHO or AIDCO. In the case of natural disasters a good linkage could be achieved by emergency relief projects that succeed in becoming mid-term rehabilitation programmes - thanks to implementation by international or local CSOs already present during the relief phase, something which could be decided without time consuming feasibility studies and tenders. This linkage would require a stronger interaction between ECHO and the other EC services, and a shared planning of actions.

For that purpose, the mission recommends:

- *improving the communication channels between ECHO and other EC services, and especially the Delegation*

³ San Vicente Productivo project plans were rescheduled, in order to focus more on the reconstruction in the project area.

- *planning of relief projects, with good synergy between EC services, and in accordance with local specifications and constraints, that can be continued in the rehabilitation phase*
- *funding CSOs already present in the relief operations with mid-term rehabilitation projects*
- *improving the quality and swiftness of AIDCO response in the case of post-disaster rehabilitation proposals, or creating a new instrument, at the level of ECHO or AIDCO, able to respond quickly to rehabilitation programme proposals*
- *planning at AIDCO level of long-term development programmes following that wave.*

7.8. Visibility

The visibility of donors is not just a question of details (such as putting stickers on tents, panels at the gates of villages, or sending out press releases). It should be considered a strategic issue and broadened by an active and transparent presence at all levels of co-ordination in the action, and by an improvement in the communication channels at a higher level, especially with the government authorities and international partners.

One of the mission's most paradoxical findings is that almost all beneficiaries and local partners knew ECHO, as a donor, and considered it to be equivalent to a CSO partner, as if it were a brand commodity offering relief as part of an advertising campaign. But they were unable to identify the link with the EU and some even had no knowledge of the EU as a political entity.

The consultant recommends:

- *improving the EC services' communication channels with all partners*
- *increasing the presence of EC experts at all levels of co-ordination*
- *replacing the ECHO sign with the EU flag*
- *avoiding decisions that could be perceived by local or national authorities as a link or an incentive to any kind of crusade⁴.*

⁴ See note 67.