

EVALUATION REPORT

ECHO-funded drought relief programme in Afghanistan

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

a. Evaluated Action

The evaluation relates to ECHO actions as a response to serious drought conditions in Afghanistan, over a period of three years (2000 –2002).

b. Date of the Evaluation

The evaluation was carried out from August 2nd to August 14th 2002.

c. Consultants

- Mr. Stephane Pellegrini, Team Leader and Logistics Consultant
- Mr. Diethard Wendt, Nutrition Consultant

d. Purpose and Methodology

Purpose of the evaluation

- To assess ECHO's contribution as response to a variety of needs in Afghanistan
- To analyse the planning and implementation of ECHO's intervention and to analyse its integration with local conditions and customs
- To analyse the degree to which objectives were met
- To assess the effectiveness of the means employed
- To quantify the relevance and impact of ECHO's actions
- To analyse the links between Emergency, Relief, Rehabilitation and Development in terms of sustainability
- To examine beneficiary population participation
- To verify the visibility of ECHO

Methodology of the evaluation

As specified in the Terms of Reference, a team of two consultants (Team leader – Logistic consultant and Nutrition consultant) travelled to Afghanistan to analyse and assess ECHO's actions as a response to serious drought conditions.

For that purpose the evaluation was organised as follows:

Briefings and meetings took place in Brussels and in Kabul with the EC delegation and ECHO representatives¹, implementing partners², UN agencies³ and donors⁴. The selection of partners and UN agencies was related to the drought aspect in Afghanistan. The donors were selected according to funding.

¹ M. Karl Harbo Head of EU Representative Office, M. Cauchois Arnaud Food Security Expert, M. John Hayward ECHO Representative

² MEDAIR, CONCERN, Mercy Corps, Madera, ACBAAR, Ockenden, ACF, DACA

³ WFP, UNICCEF, FAO, UNAMA

⁴ DFID, USAID

Due to time constraints –the team could only spend ten days in Afghanistan- only a joint meeting with NGOs took place in Kabul. The meeting was split into two groups, one regarding logistic issues, one regarding nutrition. The team could not interview beneficiaries systematically. Only limited data is available in Afghanistan, so not all desired information could be obtained during this mission. Additionally, there was only limited time available for the preparation of the mission, and the consultants had to leave on short notice because of the coordination with another evaluation going on at the same time.

Field visits were organised to two regions of Afghanistan: Herat, in the West, and Kandahar, in the South. It was not possible to visit all locations of intervention of the different partners of ECHO. The choice of the field visits was determined by the following criteria:

- Location where the drought had been severe and intervention high but now phasing out, as in Herat
- One region where the drought situation might cause an emergency situation, as in Kandahar⁵

This approach should give a current perspective of the emergency approach in order to evaluate the effect of the humanitarian actors in the intervention. It does not allow a full comprehensive overview and thus the consultants have to base some of their comments on their general perception and conclusions drawn from other experiences.

A debriefing with the ECHO representative and a general presentation at the end of the evaluation was organised in Kabul. The detailed visiting schedule can be found in Annex 2. Due to the high level of insecurity, the evaluation was organised in close cooperation with the ECHO representative in Kabul and depended on the availability of ECHO flights. In the following, the main conclusions are summarised. Details can be found in the main part. The structure follows the ECHO evaluation guidelines.

e. Main conclusions

i) Relevance

- In the year **2000 and 2001 (Phase 1)**, the objective of providing emergency food security assistance in the areas of irrigation, health and nutrition was relevant, and ECHO had the right strategy within the long-term crisis. ECHO concentrated its actions according to its mandate and in extension of the 1999's operation. The office has reinforced the on-going programme in order to permit the implementing partners to consolidate their programmes.
- From **September 2001 to the beginning of 2002 (Phase 2)**, the relevant intervention was the immediate reaction to drought-affected areas and IDPs through free food distribution, provision of shelter, health and nutrition. ECHO adapted its strategy and operated from Pakistan after the evacuation of all expatriate staff from Afghanistan.
- The objective for the **present situation (Phase 3)** still is assistance to food security and assistance to IDPs, which is appropriate and relevant in order to permit the resettlement of the population and to prepare the movement of the returnees.

⁵ See geographic and food situation maps in Annex 1

- ECHO targeted about 4,5 million people in 2000 and up to 7,5 million beneficiaries at the beginning of 2002. Presently, ECHO's assistance reaches about 9,8 million people directly or through co-funded activities.
- At present there is no finalised EC strategic plan, which includes mid- and long-term perspectives.

ii) *Coordination, Coherence and Complementarity*

- Coordination with other donors is informal but well functioning. Presently, however, the apparent lack of an overall donor strategy causes problems with regard to coherence and complementarity.
- Coordination with implementing partners is based on individual relations and irregular coordination meetings. The high number of NGOs, the limited possibilities to undertake field visits, the size of the area of operation, and the staffing situation has negative effects on the coordination.
- The co-financing of WFP activities causes difficulties in cases where performance deficits occur.

iii) *Effectiveness*

- Regarding nutrition it can be stated that the large-scale food distribution had positive effects for a significant number of people in need.
- The health situation improved due to the intervention through mobile clinics, health posts, and Internally Displaced Persons/refugee camps.
- Migration is reduced because of successful food security initiatives.
- Although there are still numerous tasks to face, the infrastructure improved because of road repairs and logistic access.
- Other constraints include the severe insecurity, the lack of monitoring and sharing of information, and the performance problems of the logistic pipeline of WFP.

iv) *Cost-Effectiveness*

- The consequences of twenty-two years of war and three years of extreme drought justify the high budget for the operation.
- The security situation makes high expenditures of security matters necessary.
- The health sector with only 12 % of the total budget is not considered a high priority.
- There are discrepancies in the costs of the food distribution undertaken by WFP - partly co-funded by ECHO- and the food distribution managed by other NGOs.

v) *Efficiency*

- The operational capacity of NGOs has been well adapted to the specific context of the country. ECHO's partners have a long experience in the country, employ qualified local staff, and react with respect to the local customs. The number of NGOs in Afghanistan is very high, currently about 200.
- There is appropriate cooperation between NGOs and local authorities, where they exist and function.

- Difficulties in the WFP food distribution caused problems in ECHO co-funded operations. Some NGOs set up their own distribution pipelines, but they are limited to certain regions.
- The monitoring system in Afghanistan is very weak, and, until this summer, monitoring was mainly done by different organisations without the exchange of information. Only since May 2002 a Food Security/Nutritional Surveillance System divided into sub geographical groups has been set up in order to centralise all the information related to food issues. One of the additional objectives of this group will be to implement a standard methodology for monitoring.

vi) Impact

- ECHO's intervention has reduced the rural exodus.
- ECHO's food security intervention combined with the rainfall in Western Afghanistan has increased the food self-sufficiency of the population.
- The Global Acute Malnutrition Rate seems to be reduced in the areas covered by ECHO's intervention. As no reliable nationwide impact assessment has been carried out, the overall impact cannot be quantified in detail.
- Access to safe drinking water has increased and the ownership of the water and irrigation project has resulted in a higher degree of self-sufficiency of the community (direct and indirect beneficiaries).
- ECHO's intervention has increased the medical coverage of the population and seems to have reduced the Crude Mortality Rate.
- Access to remote and isolated communities has increased through the logistical support.

vii) Cross-Cutting Issues

- Water, sanitation, irrigation canal rehabilitation activities, and livestock projects have a strong impact in terms of sustainability and LRRD. The rehabilitation of the irrigation systems and the distribution of seeds and agricultural tools have permitted the communities to increase their crop production and to reduce the dependency on food assistance. Also, the rehabilitation of the roads and the access to the isolated areas have developed the trade market and the income of beneficiaries.
- After the massive emergency intervention, which commenced in October 2001, donors have still not developed a global strategy towards long-term development. Therefore the achievements and the LRRD initiatives are put at risk.
- Although gender components are integrated into programmes where possible, impact is very low, especially in rural areas.

viii) Visibility

- Countrywide the ECHO visibility is very well respected through stickers, flags, and for each implemented and fulfilled project, a board is placed indicating the financial support of ECHO. Nevertheless, there is still confusion about the relationship between ECHO and the EC and their different mandates. It appears that some times ECHO and the European Commission have been considered as two completely different institutions.

f. Recommendations

i) Relevance

- Develop a comprehensive strategy integrated into the mid- and long-term planning for Afghanistan.
- At the beginning of an emergency, organise a task force group inside the European Commission with a representative from each department concerned.

ii) Coordination

- At the beginning of a very large emergency operation, increasing of the number of ECHO representatives in order to enhance the coordination between ECHO and its partners through the organisation of a higher number of regular coordination meetings and regular field missions, has to be considered.
- Increase information sharing between ECHO and ECHO partners through e.g. the editing of an ECHO newsletter and/or e-mail information.
- Increase the coordination and comprehensive approach between donors through the organisation of a regular and official donor meeting.

iii) Effectiveness

- In close cooperation with the Steering Group of the Nutritional Surveillance System, design and carry out an in-depth multi sector assessment of the present situation.
- Develop a guideline on the standardisation of criteria on the methodology of the selection of the beneficiaries and the impact of the operation.

iv) Efficiency

- Increase the capacity of NGOs to provide and organise their own food pipelines.
- Increase the implementation of the local and afghan organisations through an international NGO acting as lead agency.
- Increase the collaboration between the departments and instruments of the European Commission, such as the Food Security Unit, and share the information with ECHO members.

g. Lessons Learned

- The financial and administrative structure of ECHO as part of the European Delegation in Afghanistan is, with some exceptions, well adapted to provide support in a quick and significant way within an emergency context like Afghanistan. Better results could be achieved with more staff and institutional coordination bodies with other EC departments.
- Afghanistan is still a country where the humanitarian emergency intervention is needed. This situation is the result of two different main factors:
 - Drought
 - War conflictThe main consequence of this situation is the need for reconstruction and resettlement.

Therefore the office should focus its actions on:

- Food security
- Health
- Rehabilitation
- In the specific long-term emergency context with war and drought issues, it is extremely important to have a very good understanding of the Afghanistan society at social and cultural levels. Therefore, the implementing partners should have significant experiences in the country and region.
- Especially in a changing long-term crisis, it is very important to integrate all different programmes of the European Commission for the elaboration of the strategy plan or the operation plan.
- ECHO has to create a standard methodology of targeting the beneficiaries in order to avoid disparity between NGOs and populations receiving support.