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# COMBINED EVALUATION OF THE EUROPEAN UNION'S HUMANITARIAN RESPONSE TO SUDDEN-ONSET DISASTERS (2016-2020) AND OF DG ECHO'S PARTNERSHIP WITH THE INTERNATIONAL FEDERATION OF RED CROSS AND RED CRESCENT SOCIETIES (IFRC)

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**FINAL REPORT**

**VOLUME I – MAIN REPORT**

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## Combined Evaluation of the European Union’s humanitarian response to sudden-onset disasters (Part A) and of DG ECHO’s partnership with the IFRC (Part B), 2016-2020

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## **ABSTRACT**

This combined evaluation covered DG ECHO's response to Sudden Onset Disasters from 2016 to 2020 (Part A), and DG ECHO's partnership with the International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies (IFRC) (Part B). It drew evidence from desk research, data analysis, interviews with stakeholders and beneficiaries, and field missions.

Part A concluded that DG ECHO's tools were well designed to respond to sudden onset disasters, and were complementary in nature. The mix of tools added considerable value to the humanitarian aid architecture. It allowed partners to cover all types of disasters and to provide life-saving support across sectors and geographies. The tools generally enabled partners to target and rapidly address needs of most vulnerable affected populations. Scope for improvement remains notably in awareness on the tools, monitoring, and support for pre-positioning and anticipatory action.

Part B demonstrated that the DG ECHO-IFRC partnership was strongly anchored in common core values. It contributed to improving DG ECHO's humanitarian response. It provided strategic added value for DG ECHO in promoting the localisation agenda, delivering large-scale humanitarian response, and scaling up the use of multi-purpose cash transfer programming. Areas for strengthening the partnership remain notably in terms of strategic dialogue, joint advocacy and lesson-learning.

**PART A: EVALUATION OF THE EUROPEAN UNION'S HUMANITARIAN  
RESPONSE TO SUDDEN-ONSET DISASTERS, 2016-2020**



**LIST OF ACRONYMS**

AAH/ACF	Action Against Hunger
AAP	Accountability to Affected Population
ACTED	Agency for Technical Cooperation and Development
ADRA	Adventist Development and Relief Agency
ALERT	Acute Large Emergency Response
AWG	Assessment Working Group
BARMM	Bangsamoro Autonomous Region in Muslim Mindanao
BHA	Bureau for Humanitarian Assistance
CAR	Central African Republic
CCCM	Camp Coordination and Camp Management
CERF	Central Emergency Response Fund
CFW	Cash for Work
CMs	Crisis Modifiers
COOP	Cooperazione Internazionale Fondazione
Croix-Rouge	French Red Cross
CSWDO	City Social Welfare and Development Office
DACAAR	Danish Committee for Aid to Afghan Refugees
DART	Disaster Assistance Response Team
DG ECHO	Directorate-General for European Civil Protection and Humanitarian Aid Operations
DG INTPA	Directorate General for International Partnerships
DRC	Danish Refugee Council
DRC	Democratic Republic of the Congo
DREF	Disaster Relief Emergency Fund
DRR/DP	Disaster Risk Reduction/Disaster Preparedness
E/RRMs	Emergency or Rapid Response Mechanisms
EAP	Early Action Protocol
EiE	Education in Emergencies
EQ	Evaluation Question
ERCC	Emergency Response Coordination Centre
ESA	Eastern and Southern Africa
eSF	e-Single Form

ESSN	Emergency Social Safety Net
ETB/ET	Emergency Toolbox
EU	European Union
EU Del	European Union Delegation to the United Nations
EU MS	European Union Member State
EU NS	European Union National Societies
FAO	Food and Agriculture Organisation
FbAF	Forecast based Action Fund
FO	FichOps
GAM	Gender and Age Marker
GDPR	General Data Protection Regulation
HAR	Humanitarian Aid Regulation
HC	Humanitarian Coordinator
HCT	Humanitarian Country Team
HH	Household
HIP	Humanitarian Implementation Plan (DG ECHO)
HoA	Horn of Africa
HOPE	Humanitarian Office Programme Environment (DG ECHO Database)
HoO	Head of Office
HoU	Head of Unit
HQ	Headquarters
ICRC	International Committee of the Red Cross and Red Crescent
IDP	Internally Displaced Person
IFRC	International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies
IMF	International Monetary Fund
INGO	International Non-Governmental Organisation
IO	International Organisations
IOM	International Organization for Migration
IR	Islamic Relief
IRC	International Rescue Committee
JC	Judgment Criterion
KRI	Key Result Indicator

LAC	Latin America and the Caribbean
LGA	Local Government Academy
MENA	Middle East and North Africa
MR	Modification request
NEAR	Directorate General for Neighbourhood and Enlargement Negotiations
NFI	Non-Food Item
NGO	Non-governmental Organisation
NNGO	National Non-governmental Organisation
NRC	Norwegian Refugee Council
OAGs	Organized Armed Groups
OHCT	Operational Humanitarian Country Team
PDR	People's Democratic Republic
PIN	People in Need
PRCS	Philippines Red Cross Society
PWD	People with Disabilities
RI	Relief International
SI	Solidarités International
SOD	Sudden Onset Disaster
SOP	Standard Operating Procedure
SST	Small-Scale Tool
STC	Save The Children
ToC	Theory of Change
ToR	Terms of Reference
UN	United Nations
UNDP	United Nations Development Programme
UNHRC	United Nations Human Rights Council
UNICEF	United Nations Children's Fund
OCHA	United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs
USAID	United States Agency for International Development
WASH	Water, Sanitation and Hygiene
WB	World Bank
WFP	World Food Programme

## 1 INTRODUCTION

This is the Final Report for the Combined evaluation of the EU's humanitarian response to sudden-onset disasters from 2016 to 2020 (Part A) and of DG ECHO's partnership with the IFRC (Part B). This independent evaluation was commissioned by DG ECHO to ADE.

This section covers Part A of the combined evaluation: DG ECHO's response to Sudden Onset Disasters (SOD). A separate section covers Part B on DG ECHO's partnership with the IFRC.

This Final Report is the fourth and final main deliverable of the evaluation. The objective of the Final Report is to present:

- The responses to the evaluation questions, with consolidated findings emerging from the different phases of the evaluation based on triangulation of documentary review, interviews with key informants, and surveys.
- The conclusions derived from the findings.
- The recommendations derived from the conclusions.
- The report provides in addition an overview of DG ECHO's response to Sudden Onset Disasters, the theory of change behind it, and a description of the overall methodological approach. An annexes volume provides further details on the people met, documents consulted and selected projects; the case studies; the surveys; and the portfolio analysis.

### 1.1 Purpose of the evaluation

The overall purpose of this external evaluation is to assess the extent to which DG ECHO's tools and instruments provided a relevant, efficient and effective response to sudden onset disasters. More specifically, the evaluation examines:

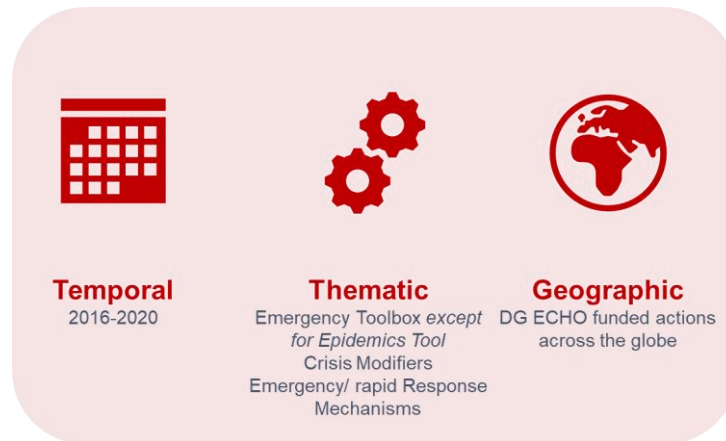
- the performance, added value, and cost-effectiveness of DG ECHO's instruments in the context of the overall humanitarian architecture.
- the strategic, managerial and operational aspects of these instruments including structure and focus, the efficiency and effectiveness of administration, needs assessment, criteria for allocation of funds, monitoring and reporting, and connectedness with other funding sources.
- internal (e.g., operational procedures, allocation methodology) and external (e.g. contextual and political) factors which affected the ability of the above instruments to deliver on their intended objectives;
- the extent to which the three instruments (Crisis Modifiers, Emergency Toolbox, and Emergency Response Mechanism) provided for a coherent and comprehensive response to sudden onset disasters.

The evaluation also served to provide accountability and learning for internal and external stakeholders. These stakeholders include DG ECHO HQ and field level staff, as well as external stakeholders from humanitarian NGOs, international organisations, the United Nations, and governments.

### 1.2 Scope of the evaluation

In line with the TOR, the scope of the evaluation covered all support provided during the period 2016 to 2020 through three instruments: Emergency Toolbox (excluding the Epidemics Tool), Emergency Response Mechanisms, and Crisis Modifiers.

**Figure 1. The scope of the Evaluation**



Source: ADE

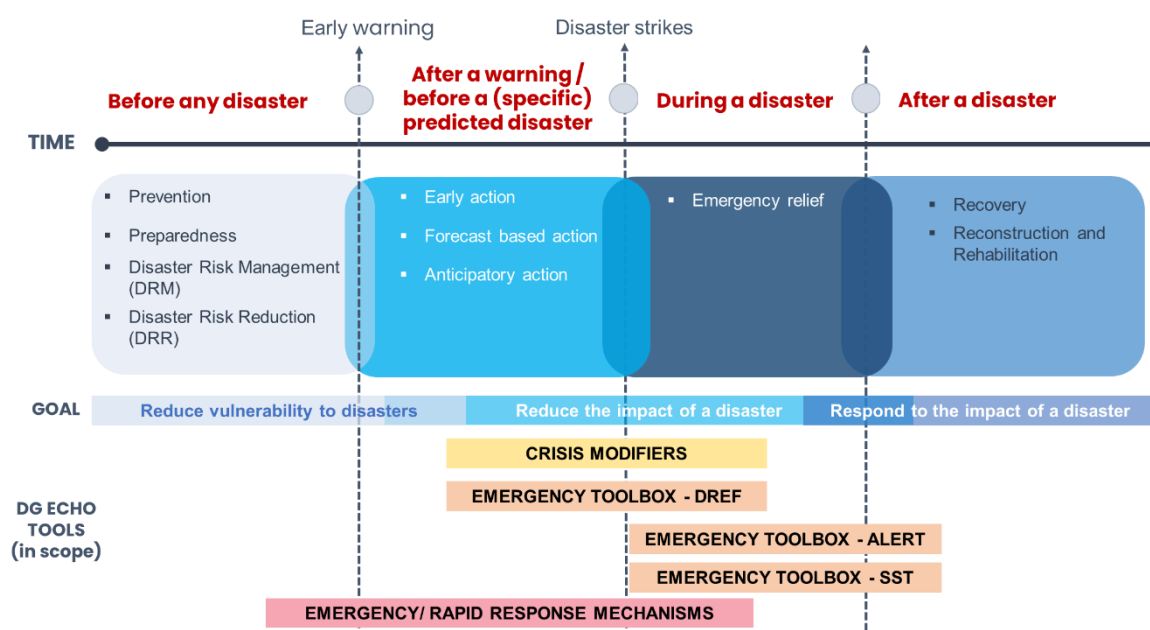
## 2 BACKGROUND

### 2.1 Description of DG ECHO’s Response to Sudden Onset Disasters

Providing a timely and effective response to sudden-onset disasters is an important role of DG ECHO as a global humanitarian actor. With the European Consensus on Humanitarian Aid, the EU is committed to providing an effective, high-quality, needs-driven, and principled response to humanitarian crises. DG ECHO adopts the definition of “disaster” provided by the IFRC as a “sudden, calamitous event that seriously disrupts the functioning of a community or society and causes human, material, and economic or environmental losses that exceed the community’s or society’s ability to cope using its own resources. Though often caused by nature, disasters can have human origins”. The IFRC further defines a sudden-onset disaster as “a single, discrete event that occurs in a matter of days or even hours”. Thus, a sudden-onset disaster presents an unexpected event that calls for a rapid and well-built response to provide for immediate humanitarian needs and limit the negative consequences of the disaster avoiding additional lives and livelihood losses.

To respond as rapidly as possible to unforeseen disasters, DG ECHO has developed a range of tools, corresponding to different temporality of actions (see Figure 2).

**Figure 2. The spectrum of humanitarian response**



Source: ADE, based on Pichon, F (2019) Anticipatory humanitarian action: what role for the CERF? Moving from rapid response to early action, ODI working paper 551

**Table 1. List of definitions on the spectrum of humanitarian response**

There are overlapping concepts in use and no universally accepted definitions of the terms below

- **Early or anticipatory action:** Anticipatory humanitarian actions are actions taken in anticipation of a crisis, either before the shock or at least before substantial humanitarian needs have manifested themselves, which are intended to mitigate the impact of the crisis or improve the response. Anticipatory action is a proactive intervention, which takes place upon issuance of a warning or activation of a trigger. It is based on forecasts/predicted needs
- **Forecast-based action:** These are a type of early action. In literature, the narrower term “Forecast-based Action” is used to refer to actions taken based on scientific forecasts., while “early or anticipatory actions” refer to actions based not only on scientific forecasts, but also broader analyses such as consensus-based decision-making and qualitative expert assessments for triggering a response.

- Emergency relief (early response): Actions taken during or immediately after a disaster in order to save lives, reduce health impacts, ensure public safety and meet the basic subsistence needs of the people affected. It is typically based on actual needs and a faster, more timely than traditional humanitarian response

Source: ADE based on de Wit, S. (2019) Getting ahead of Crises: A Thesaurus for Anticipatory Humanitarian Action

**Crisis Modifiers** (CMs) are used by DG ECHO to enable partners to address immediate and life-saving needs resulting from a sudden-onset crisis and/or an unforeseen deterioration of events (“a crisis within a crisis”). Crisis modifiers are ring-fenced contingency budget lines, built into existing grants. These are set up to be released when agreed early warning triggers of emerging crises are met. Crisis modifiers are thus, designed to provide flexible, early / anticipatory action or rapid response, when no other response mechanisms are yet in place (thus acting as a vital bridge until a humanitarian response arrives).

DG ECHO has also developed a dedicated **Emergency Toolbox** (ET) to respond rapidly to new emergencies and to seriously deteriorating existing crises that could not be foreseen when the Annual Financing Decision was adopted. The Emergency Toolbox contains four instruments: the Acute Large Emergency Response Tool (ALERT), the Epidemics Tool (not included in the scope of this evaluation), the Small-scale Tool (SST), and supports to the Disaster Relief Emergency Fund (DREF) of the International Federation of the Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies' (IFRC) – see table below. ALERT and SST provide funding in the immediate aftermath of a crisis to emergencies that come unexpectedly and could not be anticipated.

Finally, DG ECHO has funded several **Emergency/ Rapid Response Mechanisms** (E/RRM) to enable a coordinated and localised needs-based and fast humanitarian response immediately after a severe sudden onset humanitarian crisis or after a severe deterioration of an ongoing crisis. The delivery mechanism and scope of an E/RRM, however, varies considerably across countries depending on local context.

The table below provides an overview of DG ECHO’s tools:

**Table 2. Overview of DG ECHO’s tools to respond to sudden onset disasters**

<p>Small-Scale Tool (SST) Created in 2015</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Designed to provide assistance on a limited scale (below 100,000 people affected)</li> <li>• Proposal submitted by HoU of a geographical unit to ERCC or on HoU ERCC’s own initiative, consulting HoUs of relevant geographic units</li> <li>• Decision taken by ERCC within 5 working days after the submission of the proposal</li> <li>• Geographical unit manages the contract cycle with partners</li> <li>• Up to EUR 500,000 per action (300,000 before the unified methodology)</li> <li>• Initial duration of the action: up to 12 months</li> <li>• Open to all DG ECHO partners</li> <li>• Simplified Single Forms<sup>1</sup> (or normal Single Forms if over 6 months) to be submitted through APPEL</li> </ul>
<p>Acute Large Emergency Response Tool (ALERT) Created in 2018</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Designed to provide a first response in case of disasters (does not aim to cover all needs)</li> <li>• Activated in case of large-scale natural or technological disasters (100,000 persons or over 50% of the population affected)</li> <li>• Directorate A takes the lead</li> </ul>

<sup>1</sup> As of 2021, the simplified single forms are no longer in use. The same eSF form is used for all proposals (Emergency Toolbox as well as geographical HIP funding). However, there are a number of fields that are not mandatory to fill for the Emergency Toolbox especially when partners have little time to prepare a proposal (in such situations, DG ECHO informally agrees to simplify certain sections of the proposal, mirroring the simplified eSF). Crucial sections can be completed in full details at the later stages. This change is outside the scope of this evaluation.

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Funding fed by the ALERT Assessment Process which provides a rapid assessment of the disaster's expected impact and completed with a needs assessment</li> <li>• The announcement of the allocation decision by the ERCC in APPEL is within 48 hours after the ALERT coordination meeting. Assessment of proposals and signature of contracts using the Simplified Single Forms submitted to DG ECHO through APPEL within 14 days after receipt of the proposals by the geographical unit</li> <li>• Initial duration of the action: up to 6 months</li> <li>• Open to all DG ECHO partners with the capacity to respond immediately on an adequate scale in country</li> </ul>
Support to IFRC's DREF	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Designed to provide support to national Red Cross/Red Crescent National Societies in the immediate aftermath of a small and medium-scale disaster</li> <li>• Owned by the IFRC</li> <li>• Includes an anticipatory action dimension through the Forecast based Action Fund (FbAF)<sup>3</sup></li> <li>• Replenished by DG ECHO for up to EUR 200,000 per action</li> <li>• 20% of DG ECHO's contribution to the DREF may be used towards the FbAF</li> <li>• Publication of a DREF bulletin shared with the geographical units. The geographical units assess it and make a recommendation within 2 working days to the ETB officer. The Head of Unit of the ERCC decides to replenish the operation or not</li> <li>• ETB desk officer, in agreement with HoU ERCC, proposes an amount to IFRC</li> <li>• A "mini FichOps" is prepared for DG ECHO internal use</li> <li>• A confirmation letter is prepared and sent to IFRC through ARES</li> <li>• Maximum duration of individual DREF operations: 6 months</li> </ul>
Epidemics (outside the evaluation scope)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Prevention and response to epidemic outbreaks</li> </ul>
Emergency or Rapid Response Mechanisms (E/RRMs)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Designed to address localized, small-scale emergencies triggered by both on-going conflicts and sudden-onset natural disasters</li> <li>• Country specific: wide range of ERMs</li> <li>• Pooling capacities of different partners, coordination mechanism</li> <li>• Pre-position goods/staff to be able to respond quickly</li> <li>• Separated in 4 different elements: humanitarian surveillance, response coordination, external coordination and ex post coordination</li> <li>• Activation criteria depending on the country</li> <li>• Importance given to timeliness</li> </ul>
Crisis Modifiers	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Designed to respond to more pressing and urgent life- saving needs (not necessarily respond to all needs) and it is typically designed for a limited period of time (average duration observed is generally 1-4 weeks)</li> <li>• Small, quickly activated fund within a larger project budget</li> <li>• Represents 10% of the budget</li> <li>• Can be activated by field offices directly</li> <li>• Activation subject to clearly identified, defined and agreed triggers and thresholds</li> <li>• Can be used to undertake anticipatory action and disaster preparedness</li> </ul>

Source: ADE

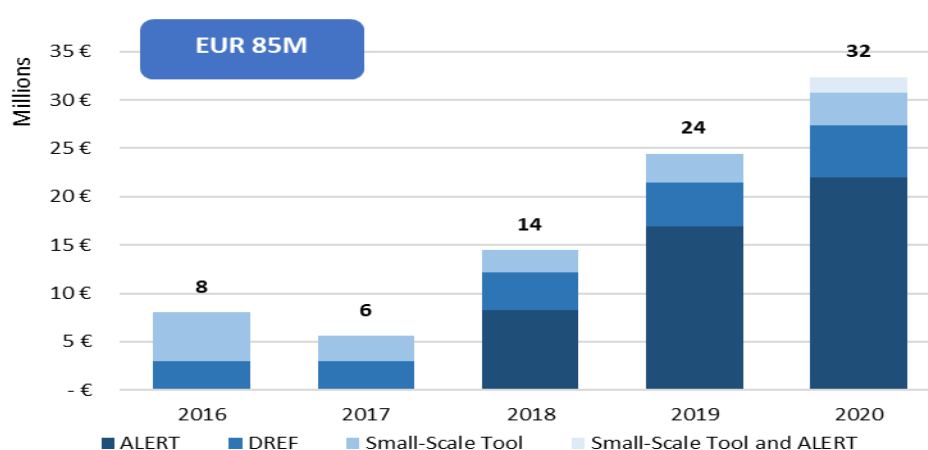


## 2.2 Overview of portfolio 2016-2020

The section below provides an overview of the DG ECHO portfolio in response to SODs. A more detailed analysis is presented in Annex 8.

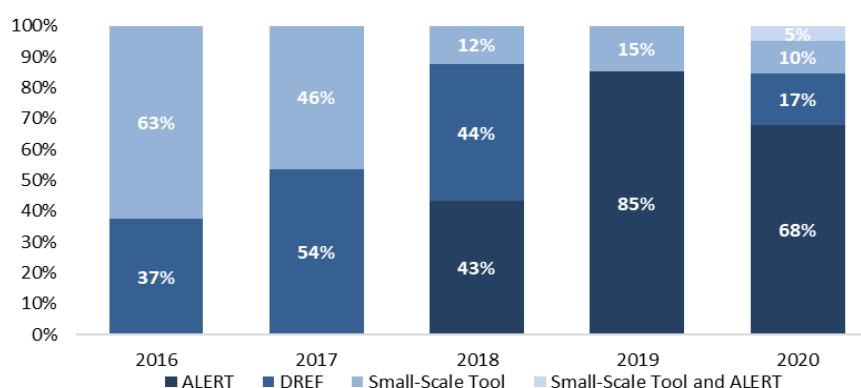
Between 2016 and 2020, the overall budget allocated to humanitarian assistance through the Emergency Toolbox amounted to EUR 85 million.<sup>2</sup> Within the evaluation period, the year 2020 registered a sharp unprecedented increase in the emergency toolbox budget, due to the special amount of resources allocated to the response to Covid-19. Between 2016 and 2019, the total budget allocated through the Emergency Toolbox was EUR 54 million, with yearly variations ranging from EUR 8 million in 2017 to EUR 20 million in 2019. In 2020 alone, the budget allocated to the Emergency Toolbox increased sharply up to EUR 32 million (Figure 3).

**Figure 3. Total budget allocated between 2016 and 2020**



Source: ADE's calculations based on HOPE database

**Figure 4. Share of budget allocated by tools between 2016 and 2020**



Source: ADE's calculations based on HOPE database

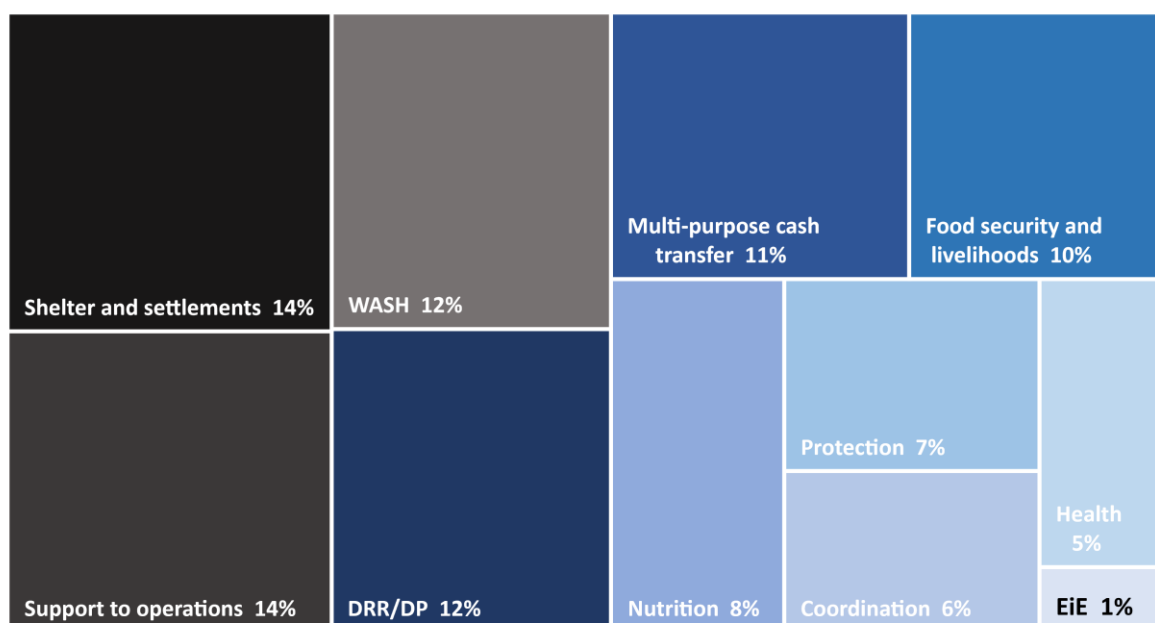
ALERT represents the 56% of the remaining budget, followed by IRFC/DREF with 23% and SST with 19%. Figure 5 shows the share of budget allocation per instrument over the evaluation period, excluding the Epidemic tool.

If we consider the sectorial repartition of the funding, shelter and settlements and support to operations are the most funded sectors with 14% both. They are followed by WASH (12%) and Disaster Risk Reduction/Disaster Preparedness (12%). The less funded sectors are Education in Emergencies (EiE, 1%) and health (5%). For the DREF, WASH is the most important sector with 125

<sup>2</sup> This amount does not include the epidemics tool.

projects (out of 196) having a WASH component. Health (120 projects) and Shelter (120 projects) are the other two most important components of the DREF projects (Figure 5).

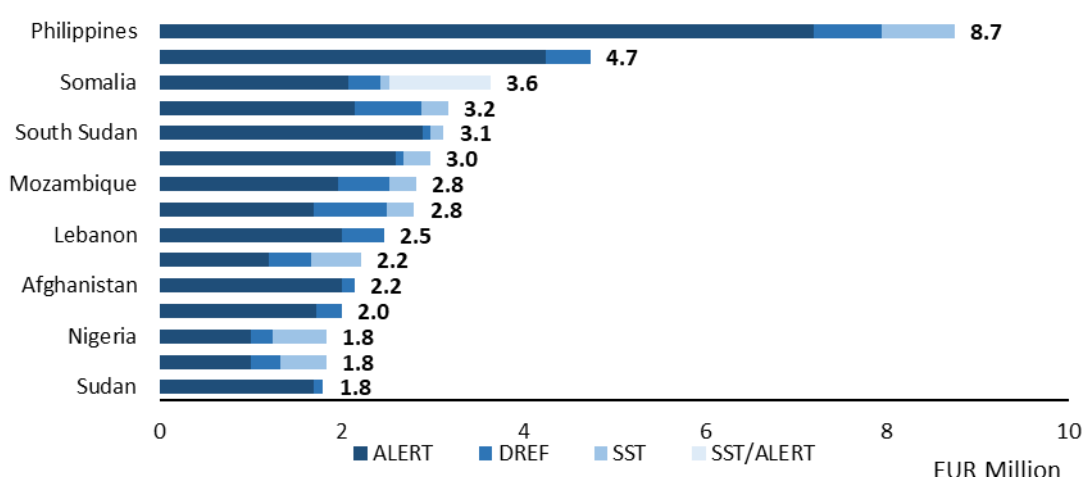
**Figure 5. Sectorial allocation of the funding of the Emergency Toolbox (excluding Epidemics and DREF)**



Source: ADE’s calculations based on HOPE database

If we consider the areas of intervention, in terms of funding, EUR 8.7 million (10%) of the Emergency Toolbox budget over the evaluation period was allocated to the Philippines, EUR 4.7 million (6%) to Ethiopia and EUR 3.6 million (4%) to Somalia. Figure 6 below shows the budget allocation of the Emergency Toolbox for the fifteen main recipient countries (excluding the epidemics tool). It is worth noting that 80% of the total funding of the Emergency Toolbox was allocated between Africa and Asia (40% each). Latin America and Caribbeans countries received 13%.

**Figure 6. Fifteen main recipient countries of ETB funding, excluding Epidemics Tool (2016-2020)**

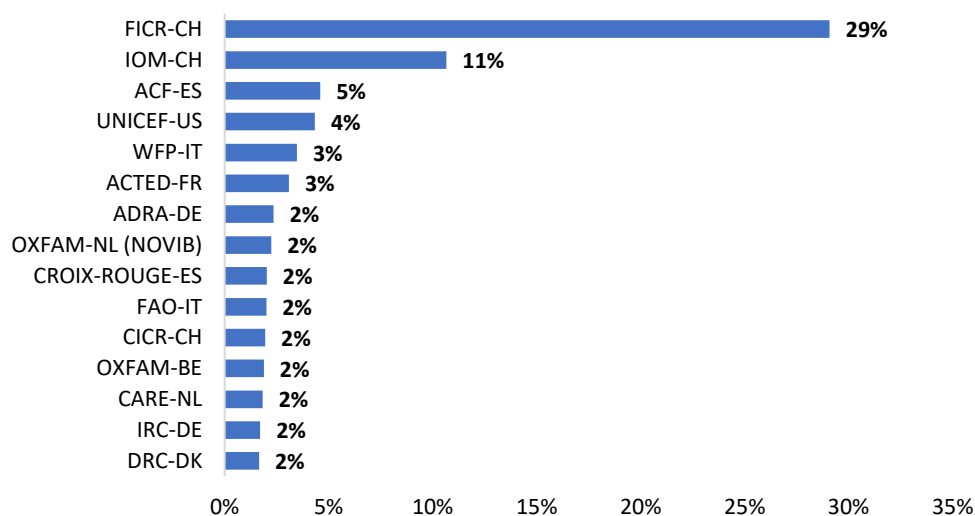


Source: ADE’s calculations based on HOPE database and IFRC/ DREF projects

If we do not consider the Epidemics Tool, the IFRC received by far the largest share of the Emergency Toolbox budget between 2016 and 2020 (29%), followed by the IOM (11%) and ACF-ES (5%). Figure 7 shows the allocations to the fifteen most important DG ECHO partners implementing actions financed through the Emergency Toolbox during the evaluation period. The IFRC stands as the main

DG ECHO partner in the response to sudden onset disasters. ECHO has collaborated with 56 different partners over the period.

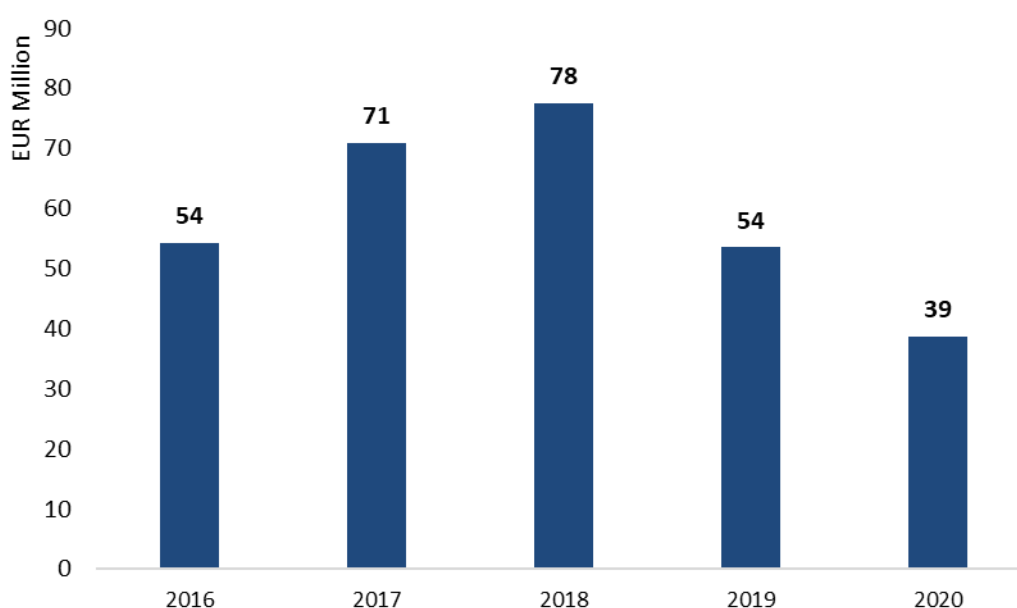
**Figure 7. DG ECHO's main partners as share of the ETB's budget, excluding ET (2016-2020)**



Source: ADE based on HOPE database

Data on E/RRMs were limited due to a lack of centralised system for their monitoring. The Evaluation Team was nevertheless able to retrieve a list of 76 contracts related to E/RRMs contracts over the period 2016-2020.<sup>3</sup> They were put in place in 11 different countries: Afghanistan, Burkina Faso, Cameroon, Central African Republic, Chad, Democratic Republic of Congo, Ethiopia, Iraq, Mali, Niger, and South Sudan Republic. It represented a total amount of EUR 295 million. Based on the extraction, the allocation to ERM/RRMs decreased between 2017 and 2020. It ranged between EUR 39 million (in 2020) and EUR 71 million (2017) (Figure 8).

**Figure 8. ERM/RRMs funding between 2016 and 2020**



Source: ADE calculations based on HOPE

<sup>3</sup> For more details on the methodology used please refer to Annex 8.

The amounts allocated to ERMs/RRMs were the most important by far in Afghanistan with EUR 71 million channelled and 19 contracts signed. It was followed by Iraq with EUR 50 million and Democratic Republic of Congo with EUR 43 million. The most important implementing partner, between 2016 and 2020, was UNICEF with an allocation of EUR 65 million and 15 contracts in 5 different countries. The Norwegian Refugee Council (NRC) and the Danish Refugee Council (DRC) were the two other main implementing partners with, respectively EUR 63 million and EUR 27 million allocated and, respectively, 11 and 8 contracts. They were just followed by the German International Rescue Committee (IRC) with EUR 24 million allocated and 2 contracts. More generally, funds were channelled through 18 different partners.

### 3 METHODOLOGY

This section presents (i) the overall approach; (ii) the evaluation tools; and (iii) the challenges in terms of evaluability.

#### 3.1 Overall Approach

This evaluation of DG ECHO's response to Sudden Onset Disasters has a theory-based design and uses tools and methods for contribution analysis. It is based on a reconstructed Theory of Change (ToC) (see Section 4) and is structured around 7 evaluation questions, associated with a set of judgment criteria and indicators. The EQs follow the standard evaluation criteria as proposed by the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD), ALNAP<sup>4</sup> and the EU. These EQs have been validated by DG ECHO together with a complete evaluation matrix during the inception phase. Table 3 below lists all EQs by evaluation criteria. The detailed Evaluation Matrix is presented in Annex 1.

This part of the evaluation on SOD involved collecting views of more than 250 stakeholders, by conducting 70 key informant interviews; multiple focus group discussions with a total of nearly 100 beneficiaries; and a survey of 58 DG ECHO staff and 86 partner staff. Field visits were conducted in The Philippines and Nigeria. In complement, the evaluation team consulted in total more than 118 documents, including on 30 projects implemented between 2015 and 2020 (out of a total of 78) by 18 different partner organisations. It also conducted a thorough quantitative data analysis of DG ECHO's funding allocation and beneficiaries reached.

#### 3.2 Evaluation Tools

Five main tools were used to collect and triangulate findings in order to provide robust patterns of both quantitative data (document analysis, surveys) and qualitative data (interviews, site observation) to respond to the EQs, judgment criteria and related indicators (see matrix Annex 1). These tools are briefly outlined below.

##### 3.2.1 Interviews

Distance key informant interviews (KIIs) were conducted through various audio-visual tools (Skype/TEAMS/Zoom/WhatsApp/Webex) as well as in-person as feasible given the COVID-19 crisis. The list of informants can be found in Annex 3. This included:

- Key DG ECHO staff at headquarters (A1, A3, B2, B3, B4)
- Key DG ECHO staff at selected country offices
- Representatives from implementing partners.
- Other donors/ aid agencies
- Other stakeholders: coordination mechanisms such as clusters or NGO fora, donors, staff of supported health facilities and schools, concerned national/local authorities, community leaders etc.

The interviews followed semi-structured interview guidelines, based on the EQs, criteria and indicators developed in the matrix. These guidelines ensured coherence when interviews had to be conducted separately by different evaluation team members. Semi-structured guidelines were also used while conducting focus group discussions (FGD) in the field (see below).

A total 71 key informants were interviewed. The interviewees represented a broad range of perspectives from both EU entities in addition to various EU partners and actors working both in the field and in HQs.

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<sup>4</sup> ALNAP (Active Learning Network for Accountability and Performance) aims at increasing learning and accountability in the humanitarian aid sector.

In addition, nearly 100 beneficiaries participated in several focus group discussions: 47 in Nigeria and 52 in the Philippines. The gender ratio was well balanced overall, with women representing 45% of interviewees and 58% of FGD participants.

To supplement the interviews, the evaluation team also developed a mini survey for DG ECHO staff to collect basic information of the use of crisis modifiers and E/RRMs given the absence of a centralised source of information on these tools.

### 3.2.2 Documentary review

The evaluation team engaged in continuous and comprehensive information collection and review of all relevant documentation and materials. This included:

- policy documentation (e.g., thematic policy guidelines)
- programme documentation (e.g., ET methodology and Standard Operating Procedures, DREF annual reports)
- project documentation (e.g., Single Forms and FichOps available on the HOPE database, DREF actions reports from IFRC), presentations, existing evaluations and reviews etc.

Once the existing documents were assembled, the next steps involved reviewing each document, categorising it, and extracting and summarising key data in a central matrix against key themes.

The evaluation team also conducted in-depth reviews of a purposeful sample of 30 projects covering the 3 instruments, and a variety of partners, countries of intervention and types of disasters (see Annex 5 for the full list of projects). Regarding the Emergency Toolbox, the review included 9 ALERT and 4 SST interventions (with both stand-alone actions and top-ups), as well as the overall annual DREF agreements for 2017-2021 which allowed to have a general overview over DREF actions. Additionally, the team analysed internal documents from DG ECHO (i.e., notes on the DREF final reports as well as communications on approval/refusal of DREF actions) and IFRC's public documentation on DREF actions (i.e., Emergency Plan of Actions and final reports). These have not been included in Annex 5 as they are not formally "projects documents". Finally, 6 projects including CMs, and 6 E/RRM interventions were reviewed.

The selection of projects reviewed covers 15 different partners (including 5 IOs and 11 INGOs) and 18 countries including 10 in Sub-Saharan Africa, 5 in Asia, 2 in LAC and Lebanon. Out of the 25 projects covering specific actions (i.e., excluding the DREF overall agreements), 5 actions responded to floods, 3 to Cyclones, 2 to earthquakes, 1 to drought, 1 to a technological disaster (i.e., Lebanon) and 10 to human-induced disasters and the remaining to multiple types of sudden-onset disasters.

### 3.2.3 Literature review

A targeted literature review related to rapid response to sudden onset disasters was conducted to inform the conceptual framework for this evaluation.

### 3.2.4 ToC Workshop

As there was no pre-existing theory of change for DG ECHO's response to sudden onset disasters, the evaluation team developed one from scratch to serve as the backbone of the evaluation. The ToC was developed through an interactive and iterative process. An initial draft was developed based on document review and scoping interviews. A workshop was then organised to facilitate critical and collaborative thinking on the draft ToC. The workshop involved DG ECHO field and HQ staff as well as the evaluation team members. The discussion was useful in ensuring that the ToC developed by the evaluation team is representative of the types and scopes of DG ECHO's tools. Going forward, it might be helpful for DG ECHO to use the ToC developed as part of the evaluation (presented in section 4) to create a log frame to provide the basis for future monitoring and evaluation.

### 3.2.5 Portfolio analysis

The HOPE database provided information on the following:

- Total humanitarian funding to actions funded by DG ECHO
- DG ECHO funding to actions

- Country coverage of actions (funding, number of actions)
- Sectoral coverage of actions (funding, number of actions)
- Transfer modality coverage of actions (funding, number of actions)
- Framework partners operating (funding, number of actions)
- Number of beneficiaries reached by each action
- Type of beneficiaries reached by each action
- Duration of actions
- Direct support costs per action
- KRIs achieved per action
- Gender-Age and Resilience markers

The evaluation team conducted a descriptive analysis of the above data to identify trends and patterns. While the portfolio analysis of the Emergency Toolbox is pretty comprehensive, a complete and accurate picture of the use of CMs and E/RRMs is lacking due the absence of a centralised database.

A brief overview of the portfolio analysis is presented in Section 2.2. The detailed analysis of the portfolio is presented in Annex 8.

### 3.2.6 Online survey

An online survey was administered as part of the desk study. The results of the survey are presented in Annex 7, and relevant findings and conclusions have been integrated throughout the evaluation report against the relevant EQs.

The following groups were targeted by and responded to the survey:

- Selected **DG ECHO partners** who benefited from Emergency Toolbox (ET) funding between 2016 and 2020 in a given country. It was confirmed by DG ECHO that the partners involved in the implementation of the ET were also likely to be involved in RRM and CM activities. Out of the 260 staff from DG ECHO partners contacted, 86 responded to the survey, which corresponds to a response rate of 33%. This is considered as very satisfactory considering that a substantial share of the contact information collected on HOPE was not up to date. Respondents from DG ECHO partners are mainly from INGOs (50 out of 86). It should be noted that a great number of respondents (19) are from UNICEF. Other organisations that are well represented among the respondents are the IFRC, CARE, and Red Cross (i.e., Croix-Rouge), Norwegian Refugee Council (NRC) and Save The Children (STC) with 6-7 respondents. Regarding the localisation of the respondents, the majority of the respondents were located in the field (59 out of 86), mostly in field/country offices (50).
- **DG ECHO staff** involved in the implementation of the different instruments (ET, RRM, CM) between 2016 and 2020, at desk, field and regional level. Out of 327 DG ECHO staff contacted to respond to the survey (i.e., 267 who received only the Survey on SOD and 60 who received both the survey on SOD and on the partnership with the IFRC), 58 replied to the survey. This corresponds to a response rate of around 18% which is acceptable in terms of representativeness from a statistical point of view. The sample of respondents was diverse and ensured that a diversity of perspectives was collected.

### 3.2.7 Case studies

The case studies relied on a mixed-methods approach to provide concrete illustrations of outcomes and supplementary evidence to answer the evaluation questions, as well as to capture lessons that can be useful for replicating good practice. A total of three case studies were conducted on DG ECHO's response to Sudden Onset Disasters: two country case studies and one thematic one. The complete case studies are presented in Annex 6, and relevant findings and conclusions have been integrated throughout the evaluation report against the relevant EQs.

The two country case studies concerned the Philippines and Nigeria and sought to document the process guiding DG ECHO's response overall (including in terms of selection the specific instruments) as well as the effectiveness, relevance, efficiency of the different instruments as implemented in these countries. The selection of country case studies was based on the following criteria:

- Diversity of instruments used in the country (i.e., different tools of the Emergency Toolbox as well as crisis modifiers and ERMs)
- Diversity of humanitarian contexts, notably in terms of natural vs. human-induced disasters (i.e., ensuring that one select country was also concerned by a human-induced crisis in addition to natural disasters)
- Size and frequency of the interventions in the country (i.e., budget allocation and number of interventions)

**The Philippines** was the main recipient of funding to the Emergency Toolbox over 2016-2020, with 10.3% of the total envelope excluding the Epidemics tool. It also received the highest number of funding allocations (11) and was frequently affected by a diversity of natural disasters including typhoons, floods, earthquakes and volcanic eruptions. While the Philippines mainly benefited from ALERT (83% of the ET allocation), it also received DREF and SST allocations. DG ECHO has maintained an office in Manila during the evaluation period and has been known to work through partner consortiums. The country has a well-established National Disaster Risk Reduction and Management Council (NDRRMC), who alongside the Department for Social Welfare and Development (DSWD) dominate the government response mechanism.

**Nigeria** was selected as a case study country for the following reasons: (i) it was among the top-15 recipients of ETB funding, accounting for 2.2% of the total envelope excluding the Epidemics tool (ii) it has benefited from all three tools: ALERT, the DREF and SST; (iii) the humanitarian context in the country is challenging. It is chronically affected by both natural disasters and human-induced crises; (iv) Emergency Response Mechanisms (ERMs) and Crisis Modifiers (CMs) were also utilized in the country alongside the ETB.

**Timeliness of the process** was the object of the thematic case study. Timeliness is a central objective of DG ECHO's response to sudden-onset disasters. The set of instruments and tools are designed to provide a timely response, each with well-established emergency management standard operating procedures. The case study, through an Emergency Toolbox "process tracing" analysis sought to document the chain of events from an unforeseen event until the implementation of the response on the field and identify the main obstacles but also actions facilitating timeliness in the response.

### 3.2.8 Field visits

In the context of the two country case studies, field visits to final beneficiaries and site observations were conducted

- The Philippines: The national researcher visited DG ECHO project intervention sites in Mindanao (March 10-11) and the Bicol Region of Luzon (March 15-18) to talk with ECHO partners (ACF, Oxfam and World Vision), Local Government and Barangay Officials, and beneficiaries. (See Annex 4 for details). A total of 9 FGDs were conducted.
- Nigeria: The national researcher visited DG ECHO project interventions in Kaita and Dankaba in the Katsina state from the 26<sup>th</sup> to the 29<sup>th</sup> of April. A total of 6 FGDs were conducted for different stakeholders: a) the Facility Health Committee; b) the LGA PHC Department, c) Traditional Leaders, d) mothers of children under 5 years old treated for SAM, d) mothers of children under 5 who received health support, e) mothers of children who have received measles treatment.

### 3.3 Limitations – robustness of findings

This evaluation has a considerably **broad scope** relative to the resources available. Firstly, this 'combined evaluation' comprises two very distinct parts somewhat artificially brought together (Part A on SOD and Part B of the evaluation looked at DG ECHO's partnership with IFRC). Secondly, the evaluation covers all countries of DG ECHO's response. Thirdly, the evaluation seeks to address several evaluation criteria (relevance, effectiveness, efficiency, coherence, EU added value and connectedness). All these factors constrained the depth and breadth of research that could be undertaken within the limited resources available for the evaluation. For example, available resources only allowed for two country case studies. The case studies were based on in-person field missions to Nigeria and the Philippines, mitigating some of the limitations encountered by virtual communication. The Nigerian case studies also relied on some virtual interviews for stakeholders



that could not be contacted in person. The case studies were selected according to pre-determined criteria as outlined in the inception report for this evaluation. Whilst the two country case studies are not strictly representative of all countries where DG ECHO operates, the data from these interviews highlight key themes and processes which can be seen to resonate across the broader portfolio.

Another major limitation was that an evaluability assessment had not been conducted prior to the evaluation to determine the **adequacy of data** to answer the EQs in a robust and comprehensive manner. The evaluation team encountered three specific issues in this regard: (a) Centralised data on E/RRMs and crisis modifiers are not available within DG ECHO. Moreover, E/RRMs and actions using crisis modifiers cannot be easily identified on the HOPE database (as there is no identifier or flag for these actions). The evaluation team tried to identify such actions in the database using key words and Key Results Indicators (KRIs). However, the specific KRI related to crisis modifier (“timeliness measure”) is not always used by partners (although this is required as per DG ECHO’s guidelines). The evaluation team also conducted a mini survey of geo-desks to collect this information; however, that survey received limited responses. Consequently, the evaluation team could not compile a definitive list (and hence, form a full picture) of E/RRMs funded by DG ECHO and actions using crisis modifiers. (b) KRIs to measure the timeliness of the responses for both ALERT and SST were not mandatory and were only sparingly used. When used, these were not always properly filled. The limited and inconsistent use of timeliness indicators prevented a systematic analysis of the magnitude of delays in the delivery of assistance. (c) During the evaluation period, simplified eSFs were used for ALERT and SST actions. This limited the scope of information that could be extracted from project documents.

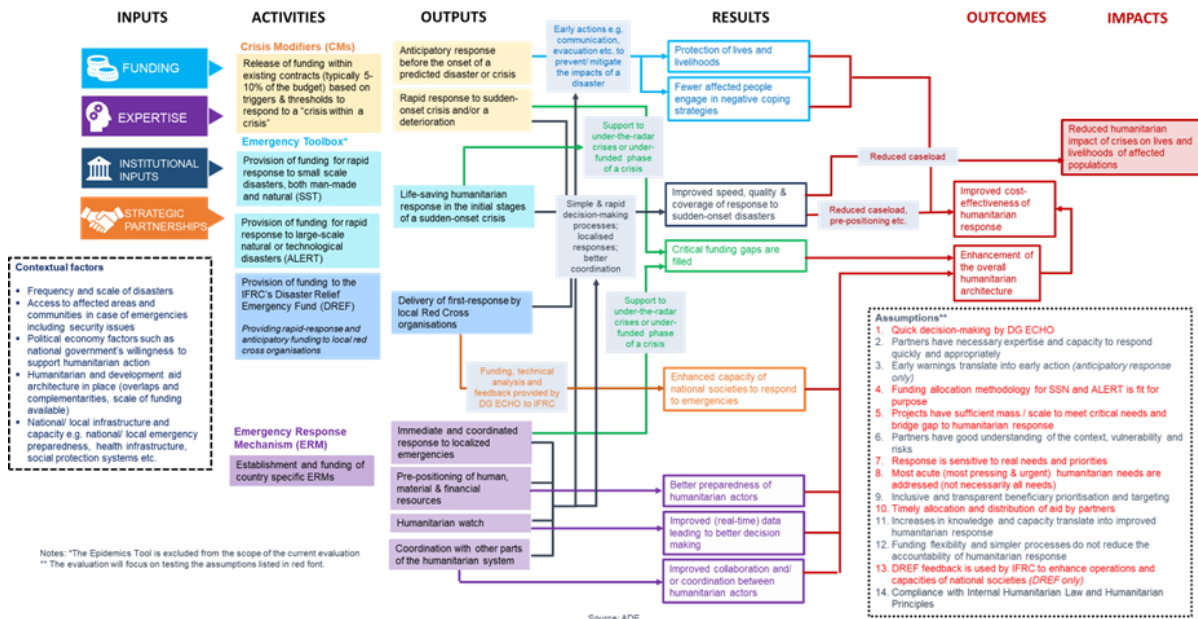
Further issues encountered by the evaluation team concerned the general lack of **awareness** among interviewed stakeholders of DG ECHO’s rapid response tools (apart from the tool used) or similar mechanisms made available by other donors. Moreover, frequent **staff turnover** (given the country context and rotation of humanitarian workers) has resulted in loss of institutional memory on past interventions.

In response to the above limitations, the evaluation team has been cautious in drawing and qualifying findings when warranted. Where significant evidence gaps exist, or where the team was not able to triangulate anecdotal evidence with other sources, it is indicated throughout. The evaluation team also ensured that conclusions drawn are sufficiently supported by the available evidence. Finally, the evaluation contains recommendations for addressing some of the weaknesses with DG ECHO’s monitoring systems.

### 4 THEORY OF CHANGE

The reconstruction of the theory of change for DG ECHO’s response to sudden onset disasters aims at clarifying the EU’s objectives in this respect, by mapping the logical chain from inputs and activities to expected outcomes and impacts. It serves as the backbone for the evaluation, clarifying against which objectives DG ECHO’s response is being assessed. The final agreed version of the ToC diagram is presented in Figure 9 below. It is a generic ToC; in reality, there were inevitably different pathways to change, depending on specific hazard types and local contexts. For a narrative version of the ToC please refer to Annex 9.

**Figure 9. Theory of Change diagram**



## 5 ANSWERS TO THE EVALUATION QUESTIONS

This chapter presents the responses to the 7 evaluation questions (EQ1-EQ7) adapted from the ToR. An overview of the evaluation questions is provided in the table below. Responses for each evaluation question are based on findings drawn from the evidence collected from document reviews, key informant interviews, focus group discussions, responses to surveys, as well as field visits to projects in Nigeria and the Philippines. While not explicitly mentioned, the responses are structured around the judgement criteria and use the indicators agreed on with DG ECHO in the evaluation matrix presented in Annex 1.

**Table 3. Evaluation Questions**

Part A – EU’s humanitarian response to sudden-onset disasters	
Relevance and appropriateness	EQ1 To what extent were the mix of instruments and tools appropriate (i.e., coverage, modalities and budget), timely available and sufficiently flexible to enable DG ECHO to support the partners in providing an adequate response?
Coherence and alignment	EQ2: To what extent DG ECHO’s funded actions in response to sudden-onset disasters: <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>ensured that the needs of the most vulnerable population (i.e., women, children, elderly and persons with disabilities) were accounted for in a context of emergency response,</li> <li>were aligned with DG ECHO’s principled approach (i.e., Hum. Aid Regulation, European Consensus on Humanitarian Aid, Humanitarian principles),</li> <li>were aligned with the relevant sectoral policy guidelines?</li> </ol>
Coordination and added value	EQ3 To what extent was DG ECHO successful in coordinating with other actors (including EU Member States), notably in terms of avoiding overlaps and promoting synergies? What was the added value of DG ECHO’s humanitarian response to sudden-onset disasters in comparison to these actors?
Effectiveness	EQ4 To what extent did the mix of instruments and tools enable DG ECHO to support partners in addressing critical unforeseen humanitarian needs in a timely manner and achieve concrete results?
Cost-effectiveness	EQ5 To what extent did DG ECHO reach cost-effectiveness in its response, what are the enabling/mitigating factors?
	EQ6 Was the EU budget allocated to respond to sudden onset disasters distributed equitably and proportionate to what actions were meant to achieve?
Connectedness	EQ7 To what extent were Emergency Toolbox-funded actions followed by additional Country/Region HIP-funded projects and/or linked to recovery/development projects? What could be further done (enabling factors, tools, mechanisms, change in strategy, etc.) to strengthen links to interventions of development actors?

Source: ADE

### **5.1 EQ1 To what extent were the mix of instruments and tools appropriate (i.e., coverage, modalities and budget), timely available and sufficiently flexible to enable DG ECHO to support the partners in providing an adequate response?**

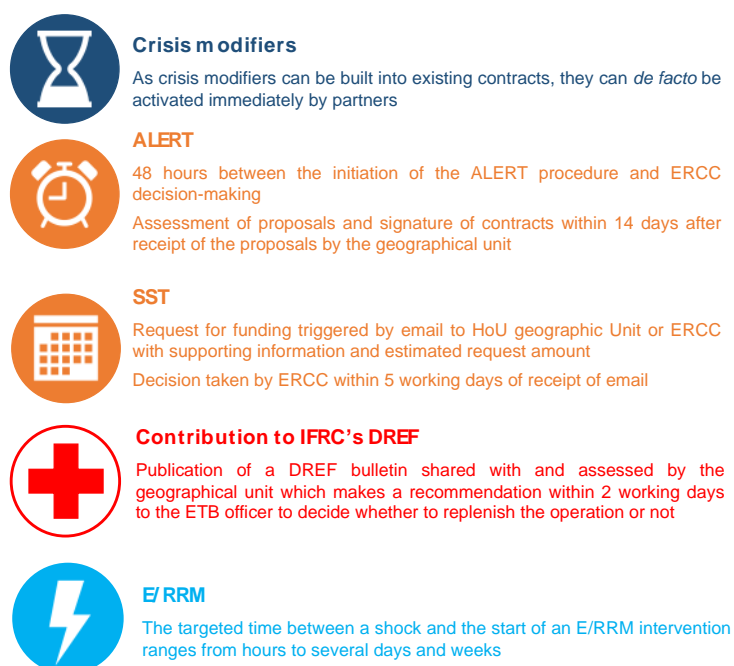
This question assesses the extent to which DG ECHO’s rapid response tools are fit-for-purpose i.e., the mix of tools allows DG ECHO and its partners to (a) provide a timely response, and (b) respond flexibly and adequately to different types of needs and contexts. The question also examines whether the tools are being used in line with their intended purpose and how their use has evolved over time. Although this question is intended to focus on the relevance and appropriateness of the tools, their effectiveness in terms of timeliness is also addressed here. This is done to ensure the coherence and flow of the text, limiting repetitions across EQs. This explains the relatively significant length of this question.

## Summary Response to EQ1

- Collectively, the tools were well designed to enable a rapid response. They provided considerable flexibility and coverage of a range of disaster types and sectors. Each tool had its strengths and weaknesses, but they were overall complementary in their design.
- Crisis modifiers were the quickest tool to deploy. As there was no need for a contract modification request, crisis modifiers enabled partners to respond quickly and flexibly in terms of sectoral and geographic coverage. They provided bridge funding toward a larger and longer-term response when needed. However, resources available through CMs were limited (10% of contracts), implying a limited scale of the response, when used alone. Low levels of awareness/understanding of these mechanisms have also constrained their use, in particular for early/ anticipatory response.
- In certain contexts, including countries facing complex and protracted crisis and where there were access constraints and high severity, E/RRMs were the best available tool to respond to a sudden-onset disaster: they allowed a faster (as compared to the Emergency Toolbox) and bigger response (as compared to crisis modifiers), but they needed to be in place at the time of the disaster. E/RRMs generally had a pre-defined geographic and sectoral focus and embedding Crisis Modifiers in their design was a good practice for improving their flexibility.
- The decision-making times for ALERT and SST were short due to well established Standard Operating Procedures (SOPs) (which are generally respected) and the use of Flanders (DG ECHO's funding allocation algorithm). There however, tended to be delays during contracting and implementation stages. A fast response via the Emergency Toolbox generally relied on the pre-selection of partners (although this undermined transparency) and the presence of partners on the ground with strong needs-assessment capacities and local contacts.
- Investment in Disaster Preparedness and the use of anticipatory actions/ Forecast based Action greatly facilitated a timely response but were limited. Lack of prepositioning of stocks led to several delays across instruments.
- The monitoring of timeliness was too weak to objectively assess and compare the timeliness of assistance delivery for the different tools in a satisfying way. Timeliness Key Result Indicators (KRIs) were only sparingly embedded in projects and DG ECHO did not systematically monitor the length of its decision-making processes.
- There were awareness and perception issues relating to DG ECHO's rapid response tools. This could partly explain why partners were not taking sufficient initiative to deploy these tools or did not use them in their full potential.

### 5.1.1 Whether the tools allow DG ECHO and its partners to respond in a timely manner

As indicated in the figure below, DG ECHO's rapid response tools were designed to be activated pretty quickly in response to a crisis. The findings are presented individually for each tool in the sections below:

**Figure 10. Envisaged timeline for activation of DG ECHO's rapid response tools**


Source: ADE

### Crisis Modifiers<sup>5</sup>

On the basis of the projects identified, the evaluation found that the activation of crisis modifiers allowed DG ECHO and its partners to provide a timely response to sudden onset disasters and constituted a bridge toward a larger and longer-term response when needed. As a pre-financed anticipatory tool<sup>6</sup> within larger actions, crisis modifiers provide considerable flexibility which contributes to a rapid reaction for several reasons: (i) reduced administrative-related delays (i.e., immediate shift of resources to respond to a shock); (ii) anticipated needs and interventions approach; (iii) presence of the partners on the ground. Many of the stakeholders interviewed, appreciated the speed and flexibility provided by crisis modifiers.

### Emergency Toolbox (ALERT and SST)

A review of a sample of 18 projects (9 ALERT and 9 SST) within the framework of the case study on timeliness revealed that decision making on ALERT and SST was quick, largely thanks to the well-established Standard Operating Procedures (SOPs) and the use of the FLANDERS algorithm (issues relating to appropriateness of the algorithm are further discussed under EQ6). Nevertheless, delays often occurred during subsequent phases i.e., contracting and delivery. In their responses to the survey, both partners and DG ECHO staff alike highlighted the need to improve the timeliness of the tools.

**Table 4. Case study findings on timeliness of ALERT and SST actions<sup>7</sup>**

	DECISION MAKING	SELECTION & CONTRACTING	DELIVERY OF ASSISTANCE
ALERT	For most reviewed projects, the SOPs were well respected. Decisions could be taken as quickly as 6 hours, with 40 out of 63 decisions (64%) taken	Information on contracting time could be established for 8 out of 9 ALERT projects reviewed	In several cases (6 out of the 9 projects reviewed) there were delays mostly in the beginning of assistance,

<sup>5</sup> A comprehensive list of projects using crisis modifiers is not available. In absence of this data, it was not possible for the evaluation team to determine the extent to which crisis modifiers are actually being used by partners and the contexts in which they are being used. The evaluation team used word searchers and KRIs to identify projects in HOPE where crisis modifiers have been used. As this was not a complete list of projects applying a crisis modifier, it was not possible to draw a representative sample of projects for review. The findings presented here should therefore, be interpreted with caution.

<sup>6</sup> Crisis modifiers often include anticipatory components: not only because by nature they require an anticipation of risks and needs in case of potential shocks, but also because they can include disaster preparedness activities, or they can be "triggered" in case of imminent disaster.

<sup>7</sup> For more details see Annex 6.

	DECISION MAKING	SELECTION & CONTRACTING	DELIVERY OF ASSISTANCE
	<p>in less than 24 hours (between 2018-2020).</p> <p>For 12 out of 63 decisions (19.4%) of ALERT projects between 2018 and 2020, decision-making took more than three days: in one case it took 5 and in another one 10 days.</p> <p>Factors causing delays:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Coordination challenges due to a large number of stakeholders involved the process</li> <li>• Delays in launch of decision-making process by geo units</li> </ul>	<p>In case of 3 projects, the contract was signed in line with the SOP timeframe.</p> <p>For the remaining 5 projects, average time between action start and contract signature was 28 days, with one project taking 57 days. Reasons for delay:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Challenges in completing the eSF which was seen as heavy by partners despite simplification efforts,</li> <li>• Difficulties in coordination across actors</li> <li>• Contextual factors such as security and access.</li> </ul>	<p>depending on the national and crisis context and the implementing partner.</p> <p>Reasons for delays:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The security situation and level of complexity of the crisis</li> <li>• Logistical constraints and procurement delays</li> <li>• Limited capacity of partners operating in highly insecure areas</li> <li>• Delays in cash assistance (where used) due to challenges in the identification and validation of the most vulnerable</li> </ul>
<b>SST</b>	<p>Data on the length of the decision-making process was not systematically recorded by DG ECHO. Although, overall, the decision-making process runs smoothly, anecdotal evidence from interviews led to the identification of extensive delays in decision making for a few projects that were not approved in the end.</p>	<p>Data not available to analyse<sup>8</sup></p>	<p>Reviewed projects did not face significant delays in the delivery of assistance. Interviewed stakeholders attributed the relative speed, to the smaller scale of the crisis, the less challenging context, and the limited number of stakeholders involved</p> <p>Delays where observed, were due to factors outside partners' control e.g., security situation or strikes</p>

Source: ADE

The country case studies, and stakeholder interviews provided some insights on the factors facilitating speed of delivery:

- **Investment in disaster preparedness and in particular in pre-positioning of stocks.** The Philippines is affected by 20-25 typhoons a year, and as such the first line of response is the local government who have stockpiled supplies of food items<sup>9</sup> and relief goods and established identified evacuation centres. They also disseminate information to local communities when there is a need to evacuate.<sup>10</sup> In essence, this is a national emergency response or rapid response mechanism. When necessary, DG ECHO and its implementing partners can tap into government and INGO preestablished mechanisms and utilise their prepositioned stocks. Some examples of this are the World Vision support provided in response to Typhoon Goni, and the SAVE stocks utilised after Typhoon Odette. Thanks to these mechanisms, support items have been delivered in a timely manner, without being affected by procurement delays.
- **Use of anticipatory action and forecast based funding.** In the Philippines, DG ECHO and its partners are becoming increasingly engaged in anticipatory action, piloting some small projects in and around the Bangsamoro Autonomous Region in Muslim Mindanao (BARMM), and forecast based funding. Such approaches facilitate preparations for any expected disasters, as well as the timeliness of the respective responses. One point of concern however is that typhoons have the habit of changing path, and anticipated triggers in certain locations may not

<sup>8</sup> The evaluation team was constrained by the lack of access to information on the date on which the SST processes were launched. The documentation available on HOPE does not allow the identification of this date. As a result, the length of the decision-making process and subsequently the magnitude of delays (relative to the provisions of the SOPs) could not be accurately and systematically assessed and the Team had to rely on anecdotal evidence.

<sup>9</sup> The Dept. Of Social Welfare and Development (DSWD) provides food that is meant to last for six days.

<sup>10</sup> Although the local communities are not always guaranteed to listen, and can be wary of leaving their home for the unknown conditions of the evacuation shelters. (Some family members can also be old and infirm).



take place as expected. A certain amount of flexibility, therefore, needs to be built into such mechanisms for them to function effectively.

- **Capacity of the partner to pre-finance actions.** Delays can be avoided if partners are able to start implementing their actions immediately after the triggering event. DG ECHO allows the use of ‘anticipated’ dates of authorization of action start and eligibility of expenses.<sup>11</sup> However, partners take financial risk in doing so, their capacity to pre-finance actions and their trust in DG ECHO are key in this regard.
- **Integration of ALERT as a top-up** within a broader DG ECHO funded action. When partners are already implementing a response and have the necessary processes in place, they can quickly react to a natural disaster. For example, in the case of IOM-CH (Ethiopia- Floods), ALERT was a top-up (modification request) which led to include a new result in an action with a relatively large scale and scope. The approach of pre-selecting partners has inherent advantages in terms of speed of delivery and reduced administrative burden. However, on the flip side, several DG ECHO officials and partners have expressed concerns about the openness and transparency of this process, arguing in favour of keeping the calls open to all.
- **Reliance on a consortium-based approach** building on a network of highly experienced partners with strong field presence. For instance, in the Philippines, DG ECHO’s trusted consortium members have been working together over a number of years and, are able to quickly undertake assessments and put forward a multi -sectoral proposal to DG ECHO within days of any disaster taking place.
- **Mapping of partners** present in a country on the basis of their geographic and sectoral expertise and capacities. In Niger, for example, DG ECHO has done a mapping of the different partners in each area to determine who has the best of the capacities. This allows for quicker deployment of the ETB.

### Emergency toolbox: DREF

DREF is designed to facilitate a very quick mobilisation of funding in response to small and medium-sized disasters. In theory, it provides (a) rapid response in the case of disasters that are unlikely to attract funding from other sources (forgotten and small-scale crises); (b) first-line funding in the immediate aftermath of a disaster before other EU financial instruments can be mobilised.

As the purpose of the fund is to provide timely lifesaving assistance to the most vulnerable affected by disasters and crises, timeliness of requests is crucial in approving an allocation. This evaluation finds that on average, DREF allocation has been approved within eight days from the request from the National Society (including for slow-onset disasters), for sudden onset disasters this has been reduced to six days. The average number of days from the date of disaster until approval is eleven days. Similar lag times were reported for release of funding from the FbAF. Informants suggested that the average approval time did not constrain response times because National Societies, in most cases, launch their domestic response immediately and then utilize the DREF (once its approved) to replenish the resources used. The new procedures and guidelines coupled with the National Societies’ capacity strengthening initiative for 2019, were designed to facilitate the speeding-up of this process.

Some donors provide multi-year commitments to the DREF, while DG ECHO provides annual funding along with PRM. Given its long-standing support to DREF and IFRC’s ambition to grow the fund, a similar approach to the Programmatic Partnership (annual funding coupled with a letter of intent for multi-year support) should be considered as it could support IFRC to leverage funding from other sources given DG ECHO’s standing among the donor community.

DG ECHO expanded its support to anticipatory action in 2019 by supporting the Forecast Based Action Fund (FbAF) of IFRC through an indirect management funding agreement. This allowed the IFRC to use up to 20 percent of DREF for FbA as laid out in the new procedures for the FbAF. Accessing rapid

<sup>11</sup> This procedure of anticipated eligibility of funds is foreseen in the Technical Annex to the Humanitarian Implementation Plan (HIP and HIPTA) for the Emergency Toolbox, which states that “costs will be eligible from the triggering event”. See Annex 10 for more details.

pre-approved funding prior to a shock and based on pre-agreed triggers is a key step in ensuring that forecast based action is effective.

Funding through the FbAF is contingent on scientifically defined triggers and thresholds detailed in EAP, which when reached automatically generate an allocation from the FbAF which is then replenished by DG ECHO. DG ECHO's contributions are guided by an indirect management agreement. The agreement stipulates specific EU funding eligibility criteria including:

- Allocations from the EU funding to the FbAF can be used to replenish the allocations made to individual trigger based early action in full or in part with a maximum amount of EUR 200 000 per activity and a minimum of 50% of the allocation made by the FbAF, unless otherwise explicitly agreed upon by DG ECHO.
- Trigger based early actions covered by this funding can have a maximum implementing period of three months.
- Anticipatory action has garnered widespread interest within the humanitarian and development sectors as a result of its potential to address resilience objectives (as it straddles the humanitarian-development nexus) in addition to potential efficiency and effectiveness gains from taking actions prior to an emergency, potentially preventing or reducing the costs of response.

## E/RRM

The 2017 review of E/RRMs highlighted that ERMs differ vastly in their temporal scopes: The targeted time between a shock and the start of an ERM intervention varies, and the review did not find one absolute measure or a common logic behind the number of days suggested as "timely." The targets range from 72 hours in Iraq, to 10-12 days in Afghanistan (5-7 days until assessment), to 2-4 weeks in Ethiopia and 30 days in the CAR and the DRC (10 days until assessment). In Afghanistan, the maximum response length is one month. In contrast to this, the maximum duration in the DRC is three months and in Ethiopia, it is six months.

The 2017 review also found that ERM response was often slow in absolute terms. This was mostly due to a conscious choice of partners to prioritize other factors over speed. In the DRC, for example, partners opted to organize non-food items (NFI) fairs with local suppliers instead of providing pre-positioned imported NFI. This slowed ERM response down by two to three weeks, but in turn benefited the local economy and gave affected populations more choice. Another choice lies in prioritizing multi-sectoral response, including "slower" sectors like education in emergencies or health (e.g., in the DRC). In the CAR, the ERM prioritized covering multiple sectors in their assessment, and investing time in coordinating with others, over being the first to respond.

Even where ERMs were slower in absolute terms, partners interviewed as part of the 2017 review noted that it was still the most rapid mechanism in the country. Nine out of ten survey respondents with experience with ECHO's SST and Epidemics Tool noted that the ERM was more suitable for enabling timeliness. According to them, SST was slower because the organization needed to request funds at the outset of a localized emergency, which took about six weeks. Crisis modifiers were deemed quicker for individual organizations because the flexibility is built into an existing contract (an organization can reallocate funds to respond immediately). However, a crisis modifier requires a separate effort for the organization to coordinate with others, something that is built into ERMs.

A sample-based review of E/RRMs (not representative of all E/RRM interventions) however, indicates that DG ECHO was satisfied with the speed of responses, although in some cases there are mentions of delays in the response. This suggests that things have evolved since the 2017 review. Indeed, case study research carried out in Nigeria confirms this pattern – see box below.

### **Box 1. Timeliness of E/RRM support in Nigeria**

E/RRMs are a well-established feature of the humanitarian architecture in Nigeria. Over the period 2016-2020, a total of 15.9 million euros were disbursed to five major partners in the form of ERMs: 45% to Solidarités International (SI-FR), 28% to Action Against Hunger Spain (ACF-ES), 9%



each to Norwegian Refugee Council (NRC-NO) and Danish Refugee Council (DRC-DK), and 8% to Action Against Hunger France (ACF-FR).

Overview of DG ECHO funded E/RRMs in Nigeria during the evaluation period:

Year	Project ID	Partner Short name	Project Title	ECHO contribution
2016	2016/01330	NRC-NO	Multi-sector emergency response to the basic needs of the vulnerable displacement affected population in northeast Nigeria	1.496.333
2016	2016/01327	DRC-DK	Emergency Response in Nigeria - Addressing Critical Humanitarian Needs of IDPs and returnees through a Rapid Response Mechanism in North-eastern Nigeria	1.494.020
2017	2017/00827	ACF-ES	Integrated humanitarian response to assist the most vulnerable populations in Borno and Yobe states, Northeast Nigeria	4.441.663
2018	2018/00091	SI-FR	Improvement of access to basic nutrition, health and wash services for IDPS and host communities in Borno state.	7.200.000
2020	2020/00182	ACF-FR	Integrated Humanitarian Response for the Most Vulnerable Population in Mobbar LGA, Borno State, Northeast Nigeria.	1.297.923

Source: ADE

Nigerian stakeholders provided several examples of how E/RRMs enabled them to respond within 48 hours to an influx of IDPs. It was indicated that the response time to epidemics ranged from 1 to 2 weeks. Examples were provided of response to measles outbreak within a week and response to a cholera outbreak within 2 weeks.

There are, however, several impediments to providing a timely response in the Nigerian context:

- Security and access issues: such as unpredictable changes in security situations or lack of access to insecure areas where there are regular attacks or when the activities can be implemented but it is not safe to gather people. Another issue is that contractors refuse to transport goods to the areas that are insecure
- Bureaucracy: bureaucracy further slows down response: need for authorisations (cash); in Borno, vendors need to be on a vetted list, and it was reported that acquisition of necessary military documents (for military escorts) is a very time-consuming process (4-6 months in Borno State)
- Delays in release of funding: partners reported that there is typically a time lag between declaration of an emergency (e.g., cholera outbreak) and release of funds. The time lag varies from emergency to emergency, but one partner cited the case of cholera outbreak in Yobe in 2021 when it took 2-3 weeks to get the validation for the use of funds.
- Logistical aspects: delays in procurement of drugs, WASH kits etc. or lack of human resources and logistics such as cars. Pre-positioning of supplies and staff capacity were seen as essential for ensuring timeliness of response. Partners mentioned that international orders of NSFI can take up to 2 months to arrive, although sometimes they are able to import supplies from Mali and Lagos in 2 weeks. The extent of pre-positioning is however, limited by funding constraints.

- It was also acknowledged by an interviewed stakeholder that a strong focus on multi-sectoral support can slow down response.

An independent evaluation<sup>12</sup> of the Zimbabwe Disaster Rapid Response Mechanism (ZDRRM) project<sup>13</sup> concluded that the RRM enabled timely delivery of assistance. Timeliness was greatly facilitated by pre-positioning of NFIs in different warehouses which were strategically positioned in Bulawayo, Chipinge and Masvingo, central locations that service disaster prone areas.

A review of RRM in Ethiopia<sup>14</sup> identified three characteristics that drive timeliness of response. These are as follows:

- The availability of pre-positioned supplies. Pre-positioning, in turn, was linked in part to procurement capacity and the predictability of up-front funding to avoid pipeline breaks. Positive response times for ERMs were attributed to instances when they had pre-positioned NFIs for both conflict-related and drought-related responses.
- Rapid approval procedures and flexibility in adapting to changing circumstances - a funding structure that allowed for immediate in-country funding approval following an alert and assessment of a crisis event. The flexibility to make changes in an approved response (e.g., shifting interventions from one woreda to another, or redirecting resources towards another sectoral need) was also noted as crucial for quality responses. In recent years, the ERM (ERM 7 and the forthcoming ERM 8<sup>15</sup>) had put decision making authority for grants with its Steering Committee at the country level, avoiding a lengthy back-and-forth with DG ECHO in Addis or in Brussels. Another important factor contributing to timeliness and flexibility is the extent to which overhead costs for a mechanism (e.g., staffing for the response mechanisms, or back-office functions to assure quick hiring) are covered by donors. INGOs interviewed noted, for example, how crucial it was that DG ECHO and USAID grants allowed them to cover their full (or almost full) operational costs.
- Built-in defined and transparent response targets/indicators for timeliness. Each of the mechanisms examined was tracking the timeliness of its performance to some extent, and those targets forced accountability on both donor and implementing partners. The ERM, for example, has set a time limit for when its Steering Committee should have produced a briefing note to consider following an alert (within 48 hours), for when the Steering Committee should meet and decide on a response (within four days of an event), and for when a response should reach affected people (within nine days). While these targets are often not met for various reasons (often related to logistics and security), they impose a discipline on the mechanism
- An evaluation of the Rapid Response to Population Movement (RRMP) Mechanism - DRC<sup>16,17</sup> found the following factors contributing to improving rapidity of response - pre-positioning of supplies, preventing pre-intervention delays, and applying standardized tools in targeting and reporting of interventions. The evaluation reports that the RRMP has taken several measures to address delays between alerts and interventions. The delays between alerts and interventions (in host communities) have been reduced from an average of 56 days in the RRMP5, to 43 days in RRMP6, to 39 days in RRMP7, and an average of 24 days in the RRMP8. This reduction was partly achieved through improved coordination and elimination of some of the baseline data collection steps (i.e., MSAs and rapid evaluations), and partly by modifying or using alternative tools (i.e., a registration tool to conduct simultaneously MSA/baseline data validation and

<sup>12</sup> Tenda (2021) End of project evaluation survey for the zimbabwe disaster rapid response mechanism.

<sup>13</sup> This ECHO-funded RRM was implemented by Care International Zimbabwe in partnership with, DanChurchAid and Plan International. The specific objective of the action was to establish an innovative mechanism for effective coordination and timely response to rapid onset disasters across Zimbabwe. The action sought to address gaps, weaknesses and limitations in emergency response in Zimbabwe ensuring timely response to rapid onset disasters in a context of widespread ongoing slow-onset food insecurity and deepening financial crises.

<sup>14</sup> Oxford Policy Management (2021) SWAN Evaluation: comparative review of Rapid Response Mechanisms in Ethiopia

<sup>15</sup> ERM 7 refers to the seventh-phase funding of the mechanism—its timeframe is roughly one year, lasting through mid-2021; while ERM 8 refers to the successor

<sup>16</sup> Dara (2018) Final evaluation report

<sup>17</sup> The objective of RRMP has been to deliver large-scale, rapid, multi-sectoral assistance in WASH, health, child protection, education and NFs to recently displaced persons and returned populations (under 3 months or accessible for less than 3 months), the host families and those the most vulnerable among the community members. The RRMP operates in areas where the displaced/returned exert a high pressure (i.e., more than 30 percent of the community members are comprised of populations displaced/returned less than three months) on basic services: water, hygiene, sanitation, health, education/child protection, and protection

interventions (Open Data Kit (ODK); Fast Track for quick updates, and preliminary diagnostic tool (PDT).

### Monitoring of timeliness of response

The evaluation looked at evidence compiled from a variety of sources (in-depth project reviews, interviews, monitoring data extracted from HOPE and case studies) to determine whether the design of the tools permits a rapid response in practice and the factors affecting the timeliness of response. In conducting this analysis, the evaluation team noted several weaknesses in DG ECHO's monitoring systems:

- The specific result related to crisis modifier did not always include indicators with a “timeliness measure” although this is required as per DG ECHO's guidelines.<sup>18</sup> Moreover, where included, this indicator is almost never as specified in DG ECHO's guidance (i.e., time lapse between trigger and response). Where included, they are specified as “percentage of assessments conducted/responses activated within 72h of the alert”.
- Key results indicators (KRIs) to measure the timeliness of the responses for both ALERT and SST were not mandatory and were only sparingly used. When used, these did not show consistency and were not always properly filled. The limited and inconsistent use of timeliness indicators prevented a systematic analysis of the magnitude of delays in the delivery of assistance and limited the generalizability of findings.
- The DREF reviews conducted by DG ECHO (2019, 2020) emphasise the need for IFRC to include information on the timeliness of DREF operations in final reports. The above issues constrained the possibility to conduct a data-driven analysis. The evaluation team, therefore, had to rely considerably on interviews and documentation review.

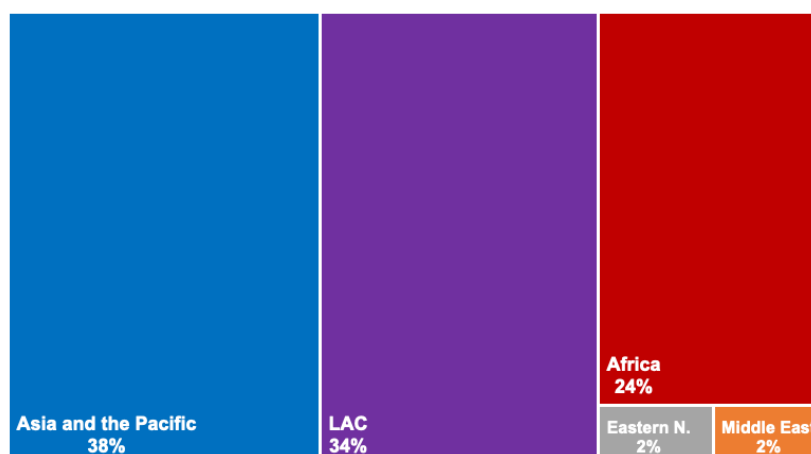
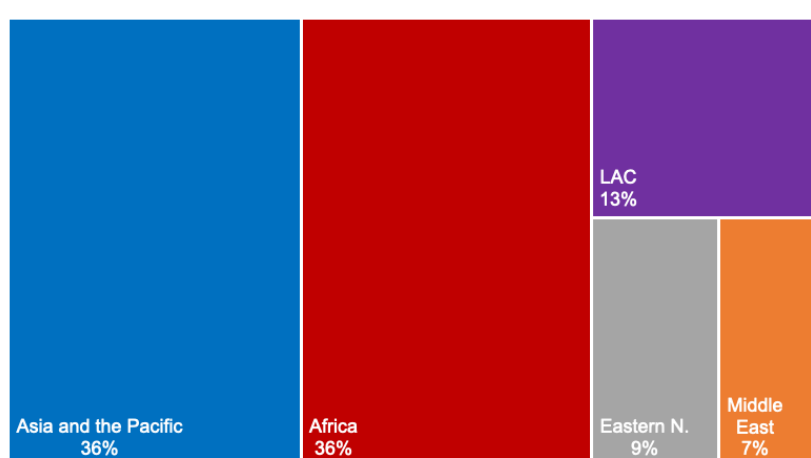
#### 5.1.2 Whether the tools are adequate in terms of their flexibility and coverage

During the evaluation period, the Emergency Toolbox was deployed in 62 countries around the world in a variety of disaster contexts ranging from avalanches to volcanic eruptions. Since its creation in 2018, ALERT has been deployed 69 times in 31 countries. The SST has been used less frequently: 63 times over a five-year period in 44 countries round the world.

**Figure 11. Share of funding allocation across regions by instrument**



<sup>18</sup> According to DG ECHO's guidelines it is important for contracts with crisis modifiers to include an indicator measuring the time lapse between the trigger and the activation of the crisis modifier – for example: number of days between the crisis and such a response (suggestion to generally quantify as 24/48/72 hours between the crisis and the response)

**SST**

**DREF**


Source: ADE analysis of HOPE data on the Emergency Toolbox combined with DREF allocations

**Table 5. DG ECHO allocation by disaster, 2016-2020 EUR millions**

Cluster of disaster	ALERT	DREF	SST	Grand total
Grand Total	32,5	19,8	15,8	68,1
Floods	13,1	8,4	5,0	26,6
Cyclone	12,6	2,6	2,8	17,9
Human-induced	1,0	2,6	4,6	8,2
Earthquake	3,9	1,7	1,9	7,4
Others	2,0	1,6	1,5	5,1
DREF Epidemics	-	2,9	-	2,9

Source: ADE analysis of HOPE data on the Emergency Toolbox combined with DREF allocations.

Note: This analysis focuses on the actions for which the type of disaster was documented in the data and therefore exclude interventions that received Emergency Toolbox funding as top-ups (which were classified as human-induced). This corresponds to 25 actions (20 ALERT, 3 SST, and 2 ALERT and SST) and entirely explains the discrepancy with total funding of EUR 85 million. The actions are classified into 6 major groups as follows: 1. Floods (Floods, Cyclone/Floods, Droughts/Floods); 2. Cyclone (Cyclone, Hurricanes, Typhoon); 3. Earthquake (Earthquake, Earthquake/Tsunami, Tsunami, Landslides, Volcanic); 4. Human-induced; 5. Others (Avalanche, Cold wave, Droughts, Fire, Disaster preparedness, Multi, Blank); and 6. DREF Epidemics.

The most common deployment of ALERT and SST has been in the case of cyclones in the Philippines, followed by floods in Afghanistan and earthquakes in Indonesia and the Philippines. The range of situations addressed by National Societies through DREF resourcing is diverse and spans from weather related disasters, earthquakes and volcano eruptions to social unrest, forced migration and acts of violence.

**Table 6. DG ECHO allocation by disaster for top recipients, 2016-2020, EUR millions**

Country	Cyclone	DREF Epiden	Earthquake	Floods	Man-made	Others	Grand Total
Philippines	6,2	0,3	2,2	0,1	-	-	<b>8,7</b>
Indonesia	-	-	2,2	0,4	0,1	0,5	<b>3,2</b>
Bangladesh	1,0	-	-	1,7	0,3	-	<b>3,0</b>
India	0,8	-	0,2	1,5	0,3	-	<b>2,8</b>
Mozambique	1,4	-	-	1,4	-	-	<b>2,8</b>
Pakistan	-	-	0,4	1,6	-	0,3	<b>2,2</b>
Afghanistan	-	-	-	2,2	-	-	<b>2,2</b>
Nigeria	0,1	0,1	-	1,1	0,6	-	<b>1,8</b>
Vietnam	-	-	0,1	1,5	-	0,2	<b>1,8</b>
Iran	-	-	-	1,6	-	-	<b>1,6</b>
Colombia	-	0,1	-	0,8	-	0,7	<b>1,5</b>
Guatemala, Honduras, Nicaragua	1,5	-	-	-	-	-	<b>1,5</b>
Lebanon	-	-	-	0,2	1,3	-	<b>1,5</b>
Malawi	-	-	-	1,1	0,3	-	<b>1,4</b>
DRC	-	0,2	-	1,1	-	-	<b>1,4</b>
Guatemala, Honduras	1,4	-	-	-	-	-	<b>1,4</b>
Kenya	-	0,2	0,1	0,4	0,1	0,5	<b>1,2</b>
regional	-	-	-	-	-	1,0	<b>1,0</b>

Source: ADE analysis of HOPE data on the Emergency Toolbox combined with DREF allocations.

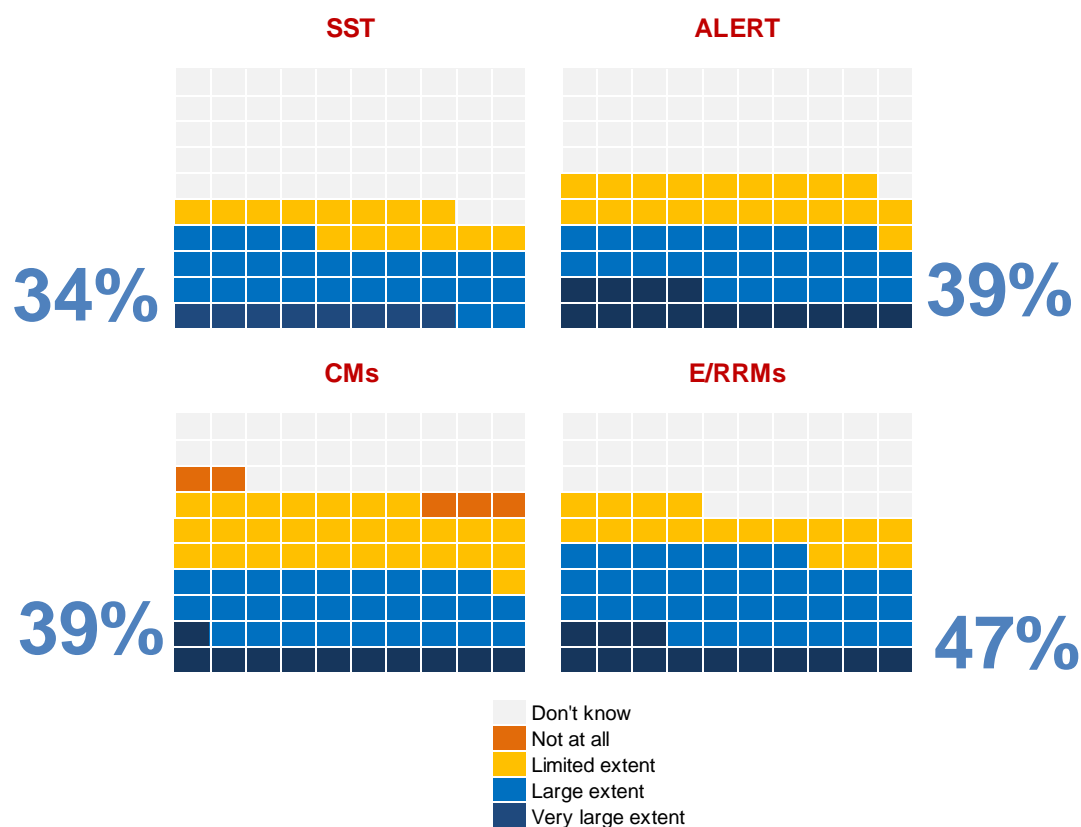
As regards crisis modifiers, anecdotal evidence suggests that crisis modifiers are being used systematically in some regions (LAC, ESA, HoA) but not in all regions; and are relatively focused on human-induced and natural disasters. DG ECHO officials mentioned that the covid-19 pandemic has played a key role in pushing for wider use of crisis modifiers. Interviews suggest that crisis modifiers are considered particularly valuable in providing flexibility in terms of geographic and sectoral coverage. Indeed, for this reason, E/RRMs are increasingly incorporating crisis modifiers to have the flexibility to cover new geographic areas (an E/RRM typically has a pre-defined geographic focus).

DG ECHO has supported E/RRMs in 12 countries, mainly in Africa. There are only two countries with E/RRMs outside Africa namely, Iraq and Afghanistan<sup>19</sup>. Human-induced disasters and emergency needs resulting from forced displacement are the main focus of E/RRMs.

While the top-line data from portfolio analysis shows no obvious gaps, responses to the online survey of partners, however, suggest that DG ECHO tools could improve coverage of under-funded/ under-the-radar emergencies. Less than half of the partners who responded to the survey believe that DG ECHO's tools contribute to funding of under-funded/ under-the-radar emergencies to a large or very large extent.

<sup>19</sup> It must be noted that there is no centralised list of E/RRMs within DG ECHO. The evaluation team used a combination of techniques to identify E/RRMs: key word searches within HOPE database and interviews with DG ECHO officials. However, the list assembled as a result of these efforts cannot be regarded as a definitive list of E/RRMs.

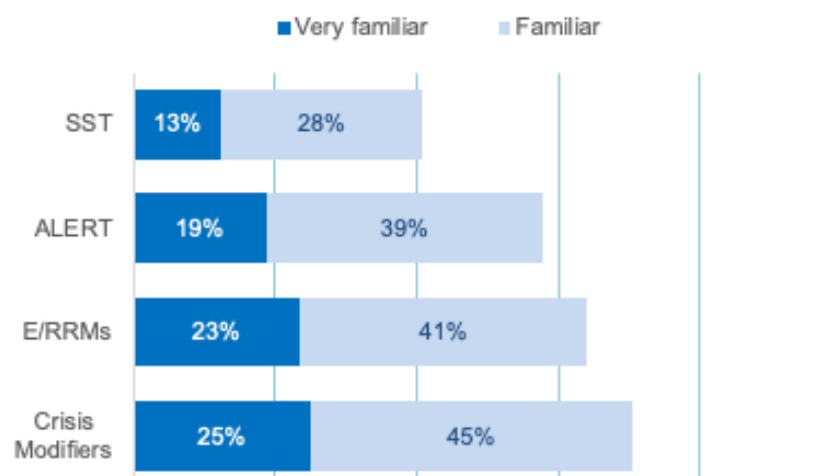
**Figure 12. Partners’ views of DG ECHO’s instruments’ contribution to funding of under-funded/ under-the-radar emergencies**



Source: ADE’s surveys of DG ECHO Partners Staff on sudden onset disasters

Note: Number of observations is 64. The question was: To what extent have DG ECHO’s tools contributed to better overall funding for under-funded / under-the-radar emergencies?

This, however, was partly an awareness and perception issue. DG ECHO’s partners generally lack familiarity with the various tools put in place by DG ECHO to respond to sudden onset disasters and particularly, the Emergency Toolbox. While 40 percent of the partners lack familiarity with ALERT, the SST is known to just 40 percent of the partners. There appears to be better knowledge among partners on the mechanisms regulating the use of CMs and E/RRMs (70 percent and 64 percent respectively). Looking across the tools, a significant percentage of partners lack familiarity with DG ECHO’s tools (ranging from 30 to 60 percent). Also, when conducting interviews, many stakeholders were not able to comment on the tools that they had not used and as such, did not have a full picture as to the extent to which DG ECHO’s tools collectively provided adequate coverage of different types of needs and contexts.

**Figure 13. Levels of familiarity with the tools among DG ECHO Partners**

Source: ADE's survey of DG ECHO Partners on sudden onset disasters

Note: Total number of respondents is 64. The question was: To what extent are you familiar with the following instruments/tools of DG ECHO to respond to sudden onset disasters?

In the Philippines where the Emergency Toolbox has been extensively used, the mix of ECHO tools was found to be adequate to address the needs of beneficiaries in different emergency situations. The mix of support has allowed partners to cover all types of disasters and provide support across a range of sectors and geographical locations. For example, for the Kidapawan earthquake in Mindanao, the eruption near Lake Taal, and the ongoing conflict surrounding BARMM<sup>20</sup> in Mindanao, and has funded sectoral interventions as required, on a needs' basis.

Fieldwork conducted in Nigeria yielded similar findings. Interviews with a range of stakeholders suggest that the overall mix of DG ECHO tools is adequate for responding to sudden onset disasters in Nigeria in a timely and flexible manner. Partners explained that annual programming (under HIPs) is generally able to absorb the peaks in demand as they arise. They explained that the conflict is quite acute with peaks of violence and movements, but the current programming is able to absorb these influxes of people and as such, the Emergency Toolbox has been used to a limited extent in Nigeria. The E/RRM has however, been used on a systematic basis in the country in recent years and is seen as a key element of providing rapid response to localised emergencies. Some stakeholders did mention the limited flexibility of E/RRMs in terms of regions and sectors that can be covered is a constraint. But this constrain can be easily addressed by the use of crisis modifiers within E/RRMs (and indeed this is already happening as previously reported).

"It is important to note that the ERRM is used to respond to an emergency on top of an emergency. For instance, while you are responding to needs of IDPs in camps, you have a new influx of IDPs. We are talking about life-saving interventions. Another example is you have a Cholera outbreak in IDP camps. In this case you need to respond in a very short period of time."

DG ECHO Partner in Nigeria

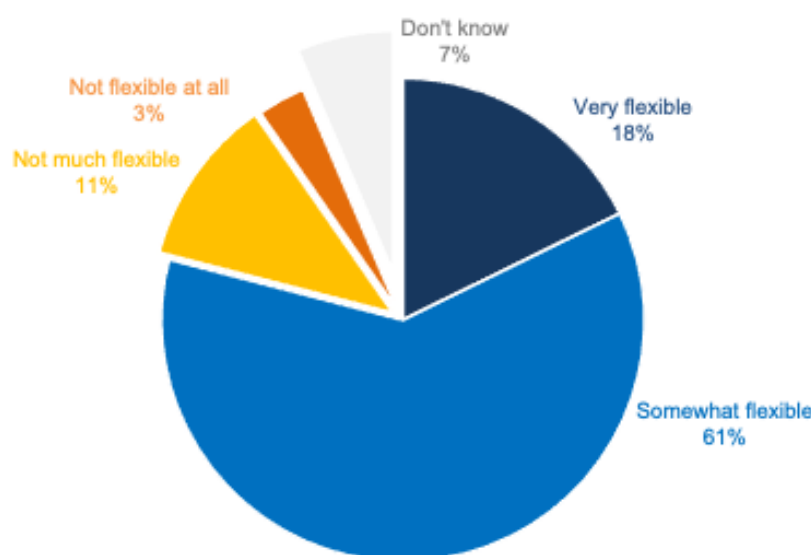
Furthermore, some Nigerian stakeholders were of the opinion that protection and social cohesion considerations were not sufficiently considered by the partners from the very beginning of the E/RRM response. For instance, one of the partners reported that in the context of a project responding to the needs of a new influx of IDPs in a camp, it was decided to provide a different level of support to

<sup>20</sup> For the cases where ALERT is classified as Human-induced disasters: it is either a technological disaster to which ALERT is allowed to respond to (e.g. Beirut explosion) or ALERT is used as a top-up and the classification reflects the type of disaster the initial project intended to address

newly arrived IDPs compared to pre-existing residents of the camp. This resulted in social tension among the two groups. More widely, some interviewed field staff felt that attention to protection and do-no-harm issues at the field level had become more of a ‘check-the-box’ exercise in grant proposals. A similar issue was flagged in the previously cited comparative study of E/RRMs in Ethiopia, wherein staff of the reviewed RRM questioned whether donors were providing adequate funding to ensure that new demands around protection and do-no-harm could be met (considering the sharp increase in conflict-related RRM). The study found that while each of the mechanisms RRM covered by the review had sufficient procedures for incorporating considerations of protection and do-no-harm in their interventions, it was difficult to identify and point beneficiaries towards referral services (in cases where those referral services existed) without greater resources dedicated to protection within NFI, WASH, or cash responses, and without a longer duration of grants.

Finally, more broadly, partners were also asked if DG ECHO’s tools provide sufficient flexibility to enable them to provide anticipatory responses as opposed to (reactive) responses. The majority opinion was that these tools are “somewhat flexible”.

**Figure 14. Partners’ views on the flexibility of DG ECHO’s instruments**

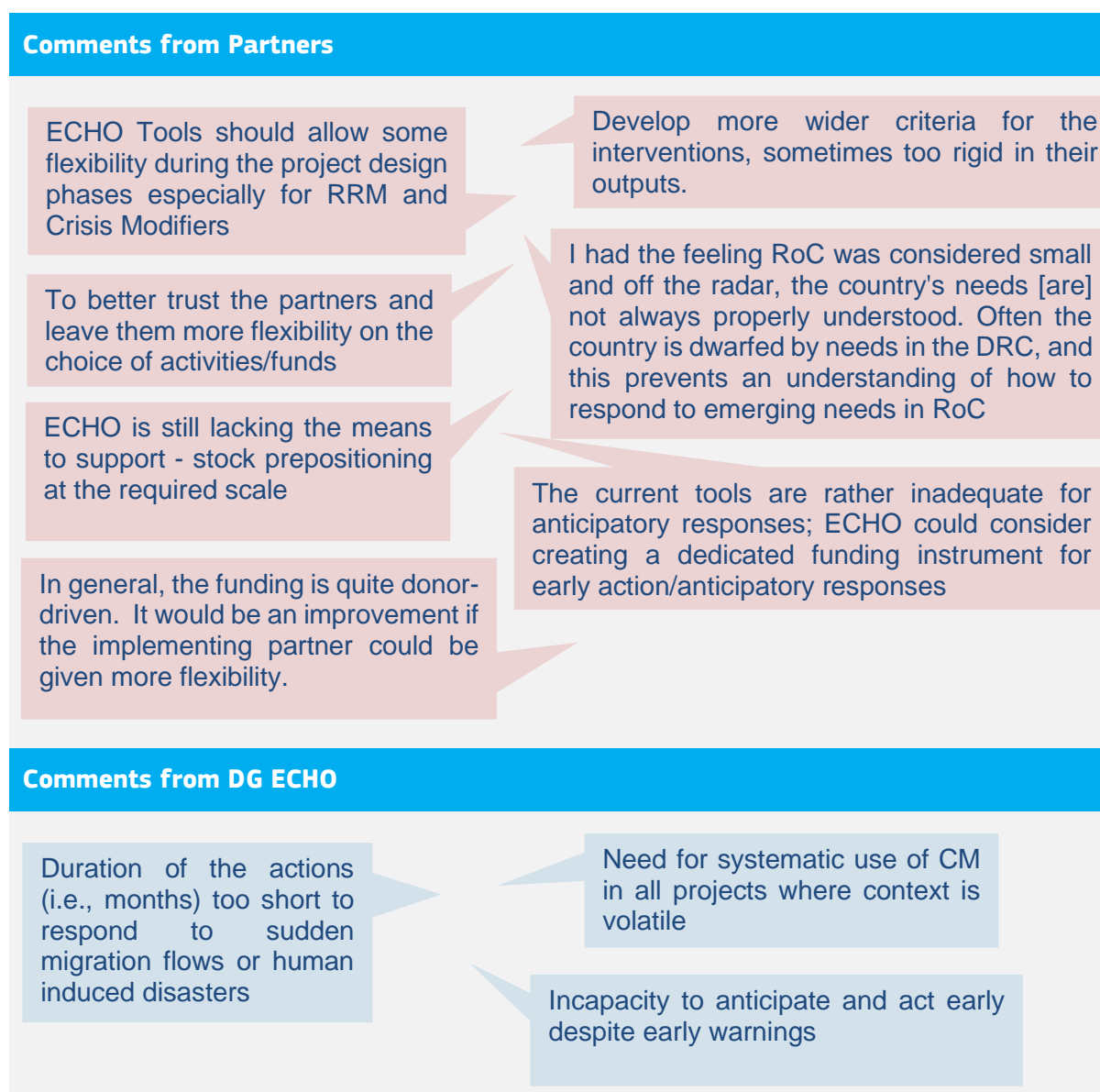


Source: ADE’s surveys of DG ECHO Partners on sudden onset disasters

Note: Number of observations is 64. The question was: To what extent are DG ECHO’s instruments sufficiently flexible to enable you to provide anticipatory responses as opposed to (reactive) responses?

In their responses to the survey, both partners and DG ECHO staff provided the following feedback on gaps in response and lack of sufficient flexibility.



**Figure 15. Comments regarding gaps in response and flexibility**

Source: ADE's surveys of DG ECHO Partners and DG ECHO Staff on sudden onset disasters

Suggestions for improvement included the following:

### Emergency Toolbox

- Design an effective and rapidly available tool to support Anticipatory Action as part of the Emergency Toolbox beyond the DREF
- Create a tool which could be supporting contingency stocks, via clusters at regional level, or even country level
- DREF should be monitored at field level by the Rapid Response Coordinator in order to assess its effectiveness.

### Crisis Modifiers

- Fund all CMs through the Disaster Preparedness budget line (increasing the annual allocation to that purpose) without reducing allocations from the Humanitarian Aid budget line in the beneficiary countries.
- Extend the use and flexibility of Crisis Modifier: make CM systematic in all projects in volatile context
- Improve dissemination of the crisis modifier methodology and funding conditions.

**E/RRM**

- Target beneficiaries on the basis of their status (rather than needs based)
- Introduce a mechanism to include new partners if access is limited for existing partners

**General remarks**

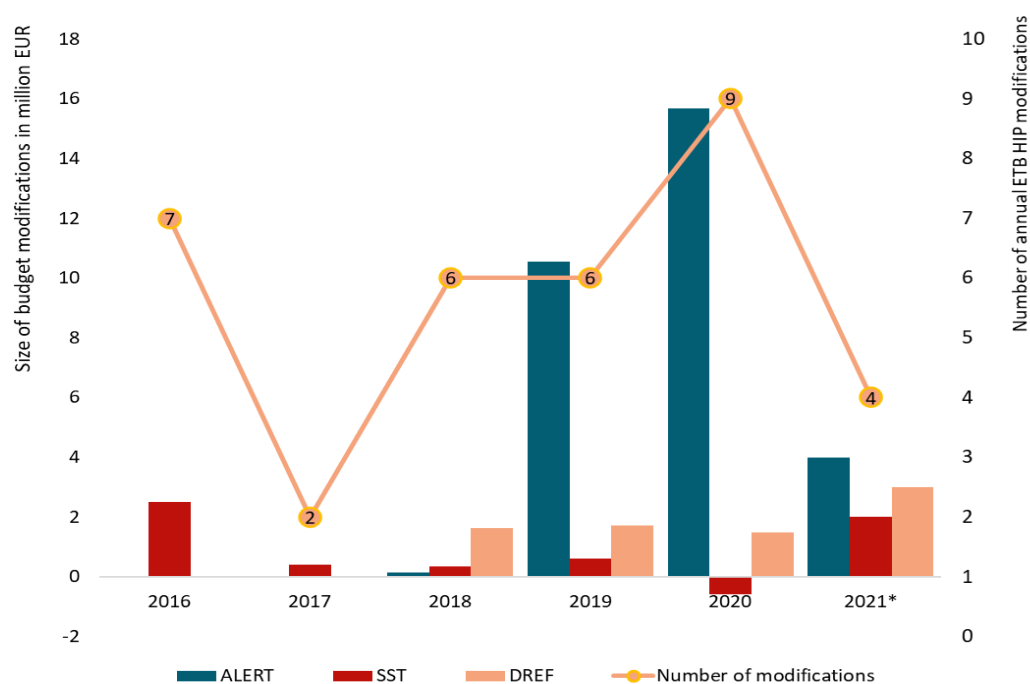
- Improve sectorial and geographical flexibility so that implementing partners can adjust to changing needs/context without requiring amendments and approvals
- Further integration for multi-sector needs (especially WASH with Nutrition, as the major driver of Malnutrition)
- Localisation: Given the need for localization strategies, ECHO might need to also have instruments for national / local NGOs/civil society organisations

**5.1.3 Whether the tools are being used as intended**

In the sample of actions analysed (not representative of DG ECHO's overall portfolio), the use of crisis modifiers was common, and the first tool considered to respond to sudden onset disasters. In particular, the project documents show that crisis modifier activation could be followed by the use of ALERT/SST.

Regarding the Emergency Toolbox, the different tools have mainly been used following their initial objectives: ALERT actions have focused exclusively on natural and technological disasters, while DREF and SST have also been used in case of human-induced disasters. E/RRMs cover a large array of activities and have been mobilised in various ways and approaches (also in line with their respective objectives).

One important issue/question regarding the alignment of the different instruments with the initial objectives is related to the extent to which it aims at responding to unforeseen sudden onset disasters only or whether it should also be used as a back-up/last-resort support when recurrent, sometimes seasonal events take place at a scale too large for the national (and humanitarian) structure already in place to respond. This is also related to the degree of investment and connectedness with disaster preparedness activities and the idea that these instruments should be used when the shocks are too large. In this context, the frequent top-ups to the Emergency Toolbox budget allocation and their recurrent deployment in certain countries has rightly raised the question whether the humanitarian needs of these countries are adequately reflected in their HIPs. A final point raised by several DG ECHO officials is that partners are taking less initiative than they would like to see. The deployment of the Emergency Toolbox is in a lot of instances driven by DG ECHO instead of partners.

**Figure 16. Number and size of budget modifications**


Source: ADE calculations based on HOPE data

**Table 7. Top 4 countries for ALERT deployment**

Country	2018	2019	2020	Total	Disaster types
Philippines	2	2	3	7	Typhoon (5), earthquake (1), volcanic eruption (1)
Bangladesh		2	3	5	Floods (4), cyclone (1)
Ethiopia	1	1	2	4	Human-induced (3), Floods (1 via ERM)
Kenya	2	1	1	4	Droughts (2), Floods (1), both (1)

Source: ADE calculations based on HOPE data

**Table 8. Top 5 countries for SST deployment**

Country	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020	Total	Disaster types
Colombia	1	1			2	4	Flood (2), avalanche (1), covid-19 (1)
Venezuela	1	1	1			3	Human-induced (2), Floods (1)
Philippines	2	1				3	Typhoon (2), Cyclone (1)
Laos			1	1	1	3	Floods

Source: ADE calculations based on HOPE data

**Table 9. Relative strengths and weaknesses of each tool**

Tool	Advantages	Disadvantages
Crisis Modifiers	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Quick and simple activation based on pre-agreed triggers</li> <li>• Designed to give partners flexibility to reshape activities to respond to new humanitarian needs</li> <li>• Improves accountability, as partners are contractually obligated to respond within project area</li> <li>• Potential anticipatory application for fast-onset events</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Limited geographic coverage - often covers only project areas, but not always; for a major shift in context a crisis modifier would not be appropriate instrument</li> <li>• Not suited for slow-onset or protracted events (e.g., droughts)</li> <li>• Resources available are small (10% of budget)</li> <li>• Not globally utilised</li> <li>• Not as timely as anticipated</li> <li>• Lack of reporting on the results of CM activities.</li> </ul>
E/RRMs	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Flexibility - ERMs enable investment in preparedness, prepositioning and in maintaining a presence in areas hit by irregular localized emergencies</li> <li>• Appropriate to countries facing complex and protracted crisis with</li> <li>• numerous small, medium or large-scale emergencies.</li> <li>• E/RRMs have a particular focus on hard-to-reach locations, in areas with a limited or</li> <li>• no access to the population in need.</li> <li>• Evidence of improved quality of assessments and response because of joint reflection and coordination</li> <li>• Focuses on life saving needs.</li> <li>• Avoids negative coping mechanisms</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Expensive</li> <li>• In practice, timeliness is not the primary goal for all ERMs. Some ERMs have over time evolved to prioritize quality-related aspects beyond timeliness</li> <li>• Lack of standardization across E/RRMs leading to lack of clarity on the distinctive features and added value of this instrument vis-à-vis others</li> <li>• Gaps can arise between the RRM response and sectoral follow up.</li> <li>• Tends to cover only a small number of sectoral needs.</li> </ul>
<b>Emergency Toolbox</b>		
ALERT (from Feb 2018)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Funding for the most part quickly released</li> <li>• Fills the gap before more significant funding arrives</li> <li>• Covers a broad spectrum of sectors</li> <li>• Utilises preselected partners</li> <li>• Simplified application process (simplified single form)</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Needs to be administered on an individual basis</li> <li>• Cannot be used for conflicts</li> <li>• No funding for disaster preparedness</li> <li>• DG ECHO decision making can be slower than anticipated</li> </ul>
SST	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Funding for the most part quickly released</li> <li>• Fills the gap before more significant funding arrives</li> <li>• Covers human-induced crises</li> <li>• Covers a broad spectrum of sectors</li> <li>• Utilises preselected partners</li> <li>• Simplified application process (simplified single form)</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Needs to be administered on an individual basis</li> <li>• DG ECHO decision making can be slower than anticipated</li> </ul>

Support to DREF	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Working alongside a trusted partner</li> <li>• Wide geographical reach</li> <li>• Funding quickly released - - very light administrative work on DG ECHO side (it's not necessarily the same on IFRC side)</li> <li>• Covers a broad spectrum of crisis situations and sectors</li> <li>• Easily administered annual funding mechanism</li> <li>• Can also be utilised for disaster preparedness and anticipatory actions</li> <li>• Access to hard-to-reach areas via national societies</li> <li>• National societies are well-placed as a first responder to a disaster in the contexts where sometimes only a few humanitarian organisations are present</li> <li>• Furthers the localisation agenda</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Reliant on the capacity of the in country National Red Cross/Red Crescent society which can be variable.</li> <li>• Can be slower than anticipated</li> </ul>
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Source: ADE

**5.2 EQ2 To what extent did DG ECHO's funded actions in response to sudden-onset disasters a) ensure that the needs of the most vulnerable population (i.e. women, children, elderly and persons with disabilities) were accounted for in a context of emergency response, b) were aligned with DG ECHO's principled approach (i.e. Humanitarian Aid Regulation, European Consensus on Humanitarian Aid, Humanitarian principles), c) were aligned with the relevant sectoral policy guidelines?**

### Summary Response to EQ2

- Addressing the needs of the most vulnerable people caught up in crises is a fundamental principle underlying DG ECHO's interventions.
- Individual projects targeted appropriately the needs of the most vulnerable, thanks to DG ECHO's scrutiny, and rapid and systematic needs assessments by partners. Partner capacity, and presence on the ground, as well as coordination with other actors played an important role.
- The adoption of participatory approaches (involvement of affected communities in targeting, programme design, implementation, and monitoring for a number of projects) also proved key.
- The use of blanket approaches was well justified where there were significant access constraints, acuteness and severity of the crisis, where it was not possible to differentiate people's level of need, and when specific targeting was leading to conflict.
- Overall, there was good alignment with the HAR and humanitarian principles, thanks to careful selection of partners and scrutiny by DG ECHO. Challenges emerged in certain countries, including the imposition by governments of military escorts for humanitarian aid workers and the targeting/ violence against them, in the context of an increased politicisation of humanitarian aid.
- Alignment with DG ECHO's sectoral policy guidelines varied significantly across sectors and partners. However, issues with alignment did not appear to have posed particular constraints and were generally well justified given the specificities of the context of SODs.

#### 5.2.1 Targeting the needs of the most vulnerable population

**Addressing the needs of the most vulnerable people caught up in crises is a fundamental principle underlying DG ECHO's interventions.** As such, in the process of selecting and/or

approving funding for interventions, DG ECHO demands thorough needs assessments and identification of beneficiaries from its partners, with a specific section in the e-SF to identify whether the action targets specific groups or vulnerabilities.

A review of FichOps revealed that **needs assessment and beneficiary targeting were well scrutinised by DG ECHO staff**. For instance, in a few project documents, DG ECHO stressed that the needs assessments were not entirely satisfactory, that reporting by gender and age was not done, or that targeting of the beneficiaries was not always clear. DG ECHO requested additional needs assessments in certain cases and refused to fund actions where the needs assessments were not convincing enough. When not previously available, in depth needs assessments, were often integrated as the first step of the response. Crisis modifiers were reportedly used to carry out needs assessments in some cases allowing for follow-up response with other tools. In the large majority of project documents reviewed, geographic areas with the highest needs were identified, and the actions often targeted vulnerable population in priority (e.g., poor households, with pregnant/lactating women, elderly, female-headed households, etc.). This was found to be the case across the various tools (ALERT, SST, E/RRMs, crisis modifiers).

**Interviewed partners reported that in line with DG ECHO's expectations, their actions were based on needs assessment and targeting of the most vulnerable using established methodologies and participatory approaches.** Several projects have included community involvement in targeting of most vulnerable households such as the ALERT-IFRC-Nigeria-2018 and many DREF activities. The field visit in the Philippines to the ALERT project "Life-saving humanitarian assistance to people affected by the Mindanao Earthquake" implemented by Action Against Hunger (ACH), demonstrated the importance of a participatory approach. During the assessment process, the affected communities, such as Barangay leaders and community health workers, were involved playing an important role in the identification of the most vulnerable households. Furthermore, representatives from the community were present in local disaster response committees and beneficiaries were interviewed in the evacuation shelters in order to ascertain their needs. Finally, feedback processes were enabled both through the Barangay Leader and the relevant consortium partners.

Moreover, in the case of ALERT and SST, partners are typically pre-selected on the basis of their presence in the field and capacity to conduct rapid and frequent assessments. For example, in the Philippines, DG ECHO has benefitted from previously established consortium partner contacts with local NGOs and government officials (they are invariable already active in the region). DG ECHO's consortium partners and local authorities are well experienced in conducting rapid assessments. In the Philippines context, with an attempt to include all of those areas seriously affected. This was particularly the case for shelter damage assessments. And specifically in the case of the Philippines, interviewed stakeholders consistently emphasised DG ECHO's proactive role in ensuring that the needs of the most vulnerable were targeted with its approach being described as "to go where it matters most, to go to the last mile, the most isolated areas, and to go to those with the least," all within an overriding emphasis on targeting support to those who are physically, socially and politically challenged.

**Additionally, specific attention was paid to ensuring that the specific needs of women and children were well accounted for, in particular with the incorporation of the Gender and Age Maker (GAM).** A systematic analysis of GAM scores also confirmed this. Only a small number of SST projects (6%) failed to meet at least two of the four GAM criteria (see table 10 below).

E/RRMs outperformed other instruments including DG ECHO tools employed outside of the SOD context. A possible explanation for this could be that E/RRMs are typically focused on specific geographies and sectors which allows the partners to have a more granular understanding of vulnerability of affected populations.

**Table 10. Distribution of GAM Scores by tool, 2015 -2020**

Instrument	0	1	2	N/A	Marker not filled
ALERT	0%	16%	9%	75%	0%
Small-Scale Tool	6%	33%	17%	44%	0%
E/RRMs	0%	25%	63%	0%	13%
Other DG ECHO tools	2%	42%	40%	13%	2%
Grand Total	2%	41%	39%	16%	2%

Source: ADE calculations based on HOPE data

Note: The GAM score is calculated on the basis of four criteria: a) Does the proposal contain an adequate and brief gender and age analysis?; b) Is the assistance adapted to the specific needs and capacities of different gender and age groups?; c) Does the action prevent/mitigate negative effects?; and d) Do relevant gender and age groups adequately participate in the design, implementation and evaluation of the action? The scores are assigned as follows: N/A - The action does not deal directly with affected populations; 0- The action meets none or only one criterion; 1- The action meets 2 or 3 criteria; 2 - The action meets all 4 criteria.<sup>21</sup>

**Table 11. Share of projects meeting individual GAM criteria by tool, 2015-2020**

GAM Criteria	ALERT	SST	E/RRMs	Other DG ECHO tools
The proposal contains an adequate and brief gender and age analysis	6%	31%	88%	67%
The assistance is adapted to the specific needs and capacities of different gender and age groups	9%	42%	100%	75%
The action prevents/ mitigates negative effects	16%	33%	88%	68%
Relevant gender and age groups adequately participated in the design, implementation and evaluation of the action	13%	33%	63%	57%

Source: ADE calculations based on HOPE data

**Some interventions included specific approaches to involving women and children.** e.g., recruitment of 50% female staff (ALERT-Oxfam-Bangladesh-2019). In the case of the E/RRM-DACAAR DK - Afghanistan - 2016, additional female workforce was recruited during the course of the project with the inclusion of more female hygiene promoters and hiring of a new female Emergency WASH Adviser. For example, in the E/RRM-DACAAR DK - Afghanistan - 2016, women were involved in decision making processes as far as possible (selection of new water point and bath and latrine locations). In the ALERT- IOM CH - Sudan - 2017, members of the community including unaccompanied minors, people with special needs, women and girls were separately consulted and encouraged to be fully involved in the provision of ES/NFI. For the rehabilitation of the water points, community committees were set up comprising of 60% women in order to identify the water points to be rehabilitated to suit the needs of women and children as they are the ones collecting water on a daily basis.

**DG ECHO systematically prioritised vulnerability-based targeting across sectors in line with its sectoral guidelines.** However, blanket targeting (i.e., no targeting) was pursued by partners

<sup>21</sup> For more details refer to <https://www.dgecho-partners-helpdesk.eu/mssa/action-proposal/fill-in-the-single-form/6-gender-and-age-marker#:~:text=The%20Gender%20Age%20Marker%20creates.ages%20and%20increase%20its%20quality>.



in a number of cases as revealed by documentary review and interviews with partners. This was largely justified by the context of emergency response, including the need to prioritise the speed of delivery, significant access constraints, acuteness and severity of the crisis, and in some instances impossibility to differentiate people's level of need. For instance, under ALERT- Red Cross UK- Kenya-2018, a blanket approach was used for the provision of Shelter/NFI and WASH services. Nevertheless, elements were integrated into the activities to address specific needs of women and children, such as psychosocial support for children. A blanket approach was also justified when protection risk analysis identified the risk of increased violence resulting from specific targeting. Anecdotal evidence from Nigeria, revealed that a differentiated approach under an E/RRM to newly arrived and older IDPs at a camp strengthened social tensions and violence amongst the groups.

Despite the strong emphasis on systematic needs assessments, the evaluation identified some issues and challenges:

- Some **DREF** operations were found to have not conducted vulnerability analysis and adapted their targeting accordingly (e.g., India). A review of a selection of DREF replenishment applications to DG ECHO also flagged concerns relating to weak needs assessment and lack of adequate clarity on targeting.
- The **gender and age analysis at the proposal stage** tended to be weaker in particular for ALERT projects. This was however generally justified by the need to streamline the process to ensure the timeliness of response. The document review also revealed that reporting often improved over time.
- Across instruments, **access constraints** systematically limited the capacity to target the most vulnerable. In hard-to-reach areas, response was in some cases driven by what is feasible rather than what was most needed.
- Document review suggested that **CMs** tended to be less well adjusted to the specific needs of the most vulnerable population as compared to ALERT/SST. CMs were often related to the type of support already provided by the partner on a larger scale. There was more time (and requirements) for designing a specific approach for ALERT/SST actions in comparison to CM - which is primarily focused on providing a rapid / bridging response - resulting in relatively lower quality targeting by CMs.
- During beneficiary focus group discussions conducted in Philippines, households complained not receiving the expected and necessary support. This happened because during the **needs assessments** not all households were present, and some favouritisms occur. The errors, once identified, have been modified and other people found support from a different source.<sup>28</sup> The beneficiary list was in some cases often undertaken in cooperation with local government departments, Barangay Health Workers, and Barangay Leaders. DG ECHO acknowledges also the fact that local governments or politicians in the Philippines can sometimes fund one community over another.

### 5.2.2 Alignment with DG ECHO's principled approach (i.e., Humanitarian Aid Regulation, European Consensus on Humanitarian Aid, Humanitarian principles)

**Protection and respect for humanitarian principles are integral to all DG ECHO funded interventions with DG ECHO having established sufficient procedures for incorporating such considerations in their interventions, including in proposal submission.** Partners implementing DG ECHO funded interventions must respect the applicable national, international, and EU law (in particular the EU Humanitarian Aid Regulation 1257/96 and the European Consensus on Humanitarian). During implementation, they are expected to accomplish the fundamental humanitarian principles (complemented, in situations of armed conflict, by international humanitarian law) of humanity, impartiality, neutrality and independence. Although compliance with humanitarian principles lies with the partners, DG ECHO plays an important control/monitoring function throughout the project cycle from design to implementation.

**Overall, the HAR, Consensus and humanitarian principles, were well respected by DG ECHO projects although these issues were not extensively documented in project documents.** DG ECHO INGO partners, in particular in the context of E/RRMs, tended to be international leaders on these issues and had strong institutional commitment and safeguards ensuring compliance. This



included requiring codes of conduct, a minimum level of staff training on issues such as prevention of sexual exploitation and abuse, and in some cases (e.g., IRC, SCI, and NRC) protection-specific expertise within their agencies.

In some country contexts however, **the upholding of humanitarian principles proved challenging**. A recurrent issue was the imposition by governments of military escorts for humanitarian aid workers and the targeting/ violence against them, in the context of an increased politicisation of humanitarian aid.

In Niger, for instance, issues emerged as the government-imposed escorts by armed forces to ensure the protection of humanitarian actors. As the interventions were being conducted in areas where the radical Islamic forces were active and as Nigerien armed forces were targeted by the Islamic forces, the escorts led to an association of humanitarian actors with a part of the conflict, to a loss of acceptance from the local communities, and radicalisation. There was lengthy dialogue and negotiations to try to change but this really affected the timeliness of delivery. In Ethiopia, activities were also significantly delayed due to the difficulty that the partners faced to proceed to an independent, anonymous targeting of beneficiaries.

As previously reported in the Philippines, beneficiary lists were in some cases undertaken in cooperation with local authorities/ community leaders which often exhibited favouritisms over certain communities. Issues also emerged in supporting indigenous populations in the country. DG ECHO paid attention to ensure the sufficient targeting of indigenous populations which often lived in remote mountainous or insecure areas that are hard to reach and less well supported by government services. However, as these marginalized communities were at times in conflict with governmental authorities, assistance often led the organisations and the people involved to be “red tagged”.<sup>22</sup> ICRC managed negotiated an exemption with the government for humanitarian agencies in order to avoid such governmental labelling.

The 2020 DREF review mentioned that in some instances, in violation of humanitarian principles, relief items were not distributed directly to the beneficiaries by the National Societies but handed over to the community leaders to be distributed, due to COVID-19 restrictions and limited interface with the affected population. The 2019 DREF review highlighted instances of political use of national Red Cross society assistance (Philippines).

In the face of such challenges, several stakeholders highlighted the need for DG ECHO to strengthen its advocacy role to strengthen the timeliness and overall quality of its response. DG ECHO was seen as having played an important role in coordinating with OCHA and pushing for increased access with national authorities, although existing action was reportedly insufficient in most contexts (see EQ3 for more details).

### 5.2.3 Alignment with thematic policies

**Both awareness of and alignment with thematic policies varied significantly across partners and sectors**, with some interviewed partners reporting having attended and/or organised relevant trainings and workshops for their staff, while others indicated not being aware of any or most of them. In some cases, partners reported pursuing their own thematic guidelines which were to varying extents aligned with DG ECHO’s policies. Overall, the alignment with thematic guidelines was not well documented and appeared to be of more limited concern for DG ECHO in the context of emergency response.

**Although partners could benefit from increased awareness of DG ECHO’s thematic policies, issues with alignment did not appear to have posed particular constraints, given the specificities of the context of SODs.** For instance, regarding EiE, the focus of interventions was mostly on protection components (and rightly so) which may not entirely be in line with the guidelines which stress the importance of learning (but would not be very relevant in an emergency setting). Regarding cash assistance, blanket targeting rather than was used in several cases, but this

<sup>22</sup> In line with the communist label attached to the National People’s Army (NPA) who are largely associated with the indigenous population areas. The NPA is considered a terrorist organisation by the Philippine’s Government

However, the use of cash vs. voucher in DREF appears to have been problematic in some cases (e.g., lack of training provided to the national societies, use of Cash Based Transfer not adapted to emergency needs e.g. cumbersome procedures in the Philippines).

### **5.3 EQ3 To what extent was DG ECHO successful in coordinating with other actors (including EU Member States), notably in terms of avoiding overlaps and promoting synergies? What was the added value of DG ECHO's humanitarian response to sudden-onset disasters in comparison to these actors?**

Effective coordination – both internal and external – is an essential aspect of rapid response to emergencies as it can save lives, time, and resources. In line with the ToR requirements, this EQ focuses on external coordination. More specifically, this question examines how well DG ECHO was able to co-ordinate its funding for sudden onset donors with other donors so as avoid duplication and to generate complementarity, therefore avoiding a situation whereby some crisis (or sectors within a crisis) are overfunded while other face funding shortfalls. This question also looks at the support or expertise DG ECHO was able to deliver during humanitarian responses beyond the actual funding itself. Finally, the evaluation examines the comparative advantage of DG ECHO's approach compared to other donors from the perspective of relevant stakeholders and implementing partners, noting how it has evolved over time.

#### **Summary Response to EQ3**

- DG ECHO's careful selection of the activities and review of the proposals, combined with its field presence, ensured that for the most part the funded activities did not overlap with other activities.
- DG ECHO sought to foster coordination and synergies by systematically considering the implication of the partners in coordination structures when selecting proposals. It also participated in a number of fora/ coordination mechanisms.
- CMs and RRM performed generally better than the ETB in terms of coordination and synergies.
- Case studies and interviews suggested that both the coordination mechanisms as well as the extent of coordination were very country specific.
- DG ECHO added value in a number of ways including funding, speed and flexibility. Its instruments were amongst the fastest relative to those of other donors and were able to provide a much broader coverage, in terms of geography, sectors, and types of crises.
- DG ECHO's global field presence, sectoral expertise, large network of established partners, principled approach and role in advocacy for access also contributed to the quality and speed of response
- DG ECHO is already appreciated for its role in access advocacy and coordination. Its added value could be strengthened even further by strengthening its actions on these issues.

#### **5.3.1 Coordination with other actors**

**DG ECHO sought to foster coordination and synergies** Project documents showed how DG ECHO considered the implication of the partners in coordination structures when selecting the partners (i.e., in sector/regional clusters, when the partners already have collaboration with other partners or with local/national governmental bodies). A specific section is dedicated to the assessment of the “policy coherence” of the action in the FichOp. Coordination and synergies are less documented for ALERT and SST (the lighter approach to documentation is understandable). On the other hand, coordination mechanisms and synergies with other humanitarian actors were observed to be particularly strong in the sample of CM and RRM reviewed. In CM as it often benefits from the coordination aspects that are related to the main component of the intervention, and in RRM for obvious reasons.

**Overall, DG ECHO managed to ensure that its actions were not overlapping with other activities** (in terms of geographic localisation and sectoral response to the needs), as revealed by in-depth documentary review. DG ECHO's careful selection of the activities and review of the proposals, combined with its field presence, ensure that for the most part the funded activities do not overlap with other activities. Yet, the coordination is not perfect and, in some cases, (particularly

RRMs among the actions selected for an in-depth review) the monitoring of actions revealed sub-optimal allocation of resources/activities. For instance:

- Overlaps in term of support to some areas (RRM-COOP-Niger-2019)
- Insufficient coordination between the RRM Health and the multi-sectoral RRM (RRM-COOP-Niger-2019)

In their responses to the surveys, some respondents called for better coordination between DG ECHO's tools and other mechanisms (e.g., CERF and other unearmarked emergency funds).

**Case studies and interviews suggest that both the coordination mechanisms as well as the extent of coordination are very country specific:**

In the case of the Philippines, DG ECHO successfully coordinated with other donors. There was good coordination and joint leadership with USAID/BHA, the largest donor in the Philippines. This was due to their longstanding positive working relationship in terms of coordinating funding for implementing partners both for sudden onset disasters and resilience building or developmental activities. The coordinating role of DG ECHO was further strengthened by the recognized reputation of DG ECHO's Representative within the humanitarian community. Although no official forum for donors' coordination exists in the Philippines, there was some level of information sharing between DG ECHO and other donors. It has been reported that donors would gather together and circulate information about funding availability prior to any impending super typhoon.

Coordination between DG ECHO and other actors on the ground (INGOs and UN entities) was also overall positive, although the level of exchanges could be increased in some cases. DG ECHO has been coordinating effectively with UN agencies in the Philippines. For instance, sharing of analysis, assessments and information from the field took place with OCHA. Albeit UN agencies are generally not included in the consortia, the recent typhoon Odette response saw DG ECHO donating funding to WFP for logistics support, notably as the remoteness of some of the affected areas required additional capacity and expertise. Coordination with UN agencies was also fostered as DG ECHO's sits in the Humanitarian Country Team (HCT)<sup>23</sup>. On the other hand, there was limited coordination between DG ECHO and the IFRC/PRCS, despite both parties having expressed a willingness to work together in the future. Only some interaction took place between DG ECHO and the Spanish and German participating national societies, leaving room for improvement.

In Nigeria, OCHA played a key support role for coordination of response, including a critical role in the humanitarian civil-military coordination structure (CMCoord), as well as assisting the Humanitarian Coordinator (HC) in the management of the Nigerian Humanitarian Fund (NHF). An active INGO Forum exists for coordination and information sharing purposes, commonly referred to as the NIF (Nigeria INGO Forum) and donors are regularly invited for updates. The UN's leadership in the response was however, questioned repeatedly during this research, particularly regarding their weak advocacy to the government. Specific issues flagged by stakeholders are as follows:

- The Humanitarian Country Team (HCT) and Operational Humanitarian Country Team (OHCT) are not meeting regularly as designed. Therefore, discussions at ISCG level are not feeding into the OHCT and HCT level in Abuja. As a result, the humanitarian response in Nigeria is not joined-up.
- Lack of effective coordination of the Assessment Working Group (AWG) by OCHA. Flexible funding needs to be accompanied with strong advocacy to improve access to humanitarian space in order to provide an effective rapid response.
- Lack of strong leadership / humanitarian representations from the UN to coordinate and advocate with the Borno state government.
- Lack of strong initiatives and actions (beyond verbal communication) to effectively improve access.

DG ECHO was one of the most active donors in terms of humanitarian access advocacy and advocacy for improving the humanitarian response in the country. This was highly appreciated by partners.

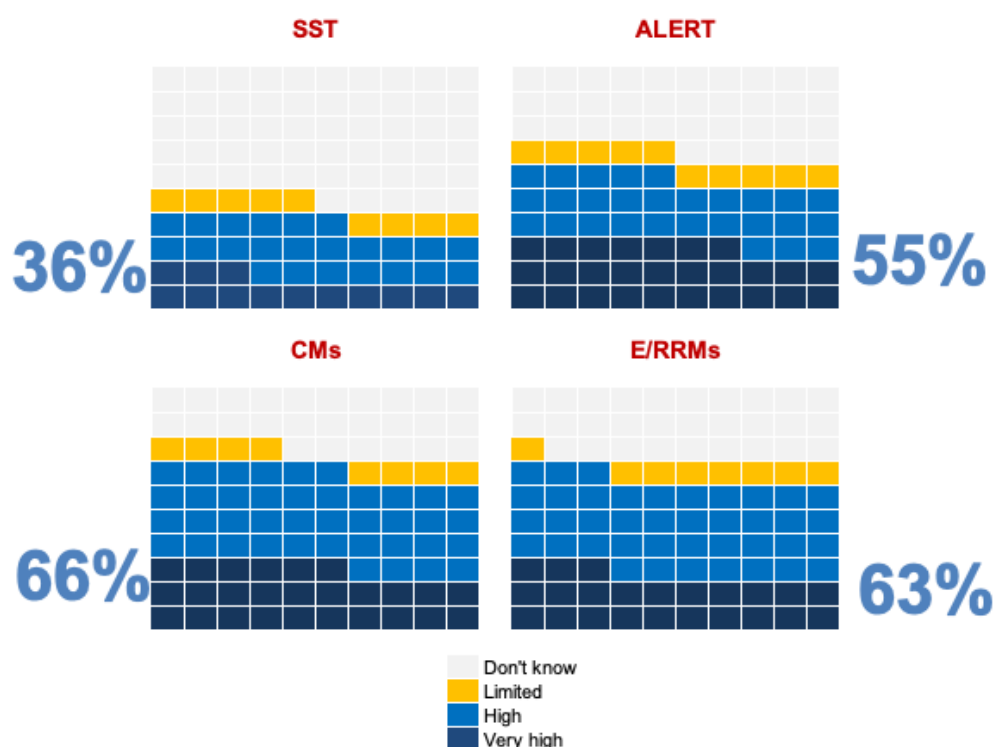
<sup>23</sup> The Humanitarian Country Team is composed of organizations that undertake humanitarian in-country actions and that commit to participate in coordination arrangements. It should include UN agencies, OCHA, NGOs, and components of the International Red Cross and Red Crescent Movement.

Given the persisting access constraints however, it was suggested by partners (INGOs) that DG ECHO, along with other UN members and donors, should strengthen their actions to hold OCHA accountable for its efforts to tackle major challenges on humanitarian access and coordination.<sup>24</sup> Some partners even suggested that DG ECHO takes leadership in humanitarian advocacy given OCHA's limitations, but this goes beyond DG ECHO's mandate.

### 5.3.2 Added value of DG ECHO's response

In the online survey, partners were asked to rate the added value of DG ECHO's emergency response tools in comparison to available instruments across humanitarian actors. While the added value of crisis modifiers and E/RRMs was perceived to "high" or "very high", the majority of the respondents could not rate the added value of SST.

**Figure 17. DG ECHO partners' perception of DG ECHO added value of the different instruments**



Source: ADE's surveys of DG ECHO Partners on sudden onset disasters

Note: Number of respondents is 64. The question was: How would you rate the added value of DG ECHO's emergency response tools in comparison to available instruments across humanitarian actors?

The added value of DG ECHO's rapid response tools was further explored as part of country case studies.

In the Philippines, **DG ECHO's added value consisted in quickly providing funds to the most vulnerable and remote areas while upholding humanitarian principles.** Stakeholders stated that DG ECHO was able to provide sizeable funding within 2-3 days of the onset of a disaster. The tools at the disposal of the antenna DG ECHO office facilitate efficiency and timeliness of the response in that they are set up to be administered quickly, i.e., the SST/ALERT, the inbuilt contract crisis modifiers, and the support they can provide to the DREF, if considered appropriate.

<sup>24</sup> It must however be noted that according to DG ECHO staff, DG ECHO already regularly requests OCHA to strengthen its engagement and leadership during dialogues with OCHA management for specific country/regional contexts (e.g. between ECHO field offices and OCHA Country Offices or at HQ level), as well as through DG ECHO representation in the meetings of the informal OCHA Donor Support Group (ODSG).

**DG ECHO's additionality also rested on the mobilized local knowledge and technical expertise grounded in the partnership with local and international INGO/NNGOs, but also in ECHO's staff longstanding experience.** DG ECHO's knowledge of the INGO/NNGO community capacity and resources available, the knowledge and experience that its consortium partners bring to the response, its understanding of the local context, its rapid deployment to the field are all regarded as key distinguishing characteristics. Furthermore, the technical expertise of the incumbent Head of Office, both in terms of process management, as well as implementation monitoring, is well renowned. Further specific technical expertise is provided by back up staff in Bangkok and Brussels when required.

In the case of Nigeria, key elements of added value of DG ECHO's rapid response were found to be as follows:

- Although other donors also have mechanisms to provide rapid response (e.g., UN-CERF, NHF, USAID/BHA, SIDA), stakeholders believe that none of them can provide response in such a rapid fashion as ALERT.
- Multisectoral approach inherent within the consortium approach to E/RRMs which fostered synergies and complementarities across actors. Different partners were mobilized to cover specific issues linked to their areas of expertise (e.g., ALIMA involved in a number of different projects to address food security).
- Finally, DG ECHO's close monitoring and assessment mechanisms were seen as positively contributing to learning, with partners describing DG ECHO as "tough but fair".

A review of existing evaluations of RRM's provides a similar picture. For example, an evaluation of the ZDRRM's concludes that it addresses a critical gap by responding to localised disasters that were ignored or not attended to by existing national response mechanisms. Likewise, the RRMP mechanism (funded by DG ECHO) was found to have a clear added value in the DRC humanitarian crisis context. Although the RRMP in DRC is no longer the unique rapid response, as other rapid mechanisms exist in the country (Agence d'Aide à la coopération technique et au développement (ACTED), NRC and Solidarités45, and Médecins Sans Frontières (MSF) for rapid response in the health sector) the evaluation found a firm consensus among stakeholders that the RRMP is the only mechanism that brings together many characteristics adapted to the size, the type, and the geographical spread of the crisis including the hard to reach areas. The RRMP was valued for its rapid and permanent response capacity. Moreover, it is the only humanitarian mechanism in DRC that offers a multisectoral response in all eastern and southern territories. The pre-positioning of resources (financial, material and human) remains a crucial RRMP asset given that most other partners no longer have enough resources to deploy on time - with some exceptions often cited by interviewees such as MSF or International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC).

#### **5.4 EQ4 To what extent did the mix of instruments and tools enable DG ECHO to support partners in addressing critical unforeseen humanitarian needs in a timely manner and achieve concrete results?**

This question assesses the overall effectiveness of DG ECHO's support to meeting sudden onset humanitarian needs, measuring programmatic success compared to individual project quantitative and qualitative objectives and indicators, illustrating how vulnerabilities and needs have been addressed. Although timeliness is a key aspect of DG ECHO's emergency response effectiveness, this has been addressed by EQ1.

#### **Summary Response to EQ4**

- Overall, DG ECHO's mix of instruments and tools enabled partners to quickly and effectively respond to critical beneficiary survival needs that arose within the first few days of Sudden Onset Disasters.
- Each of the tools presented unique strengths and weaknesses, and had distinct scopes which affected the types of results they achieved.
- Most of the projects achieved or overachieved their intended results, as well as their beneficiary targets.

- The tools were most successful in contexts where sufficient disaster preparedness had taken place (including the establishment of early warning systems, development of contingency plans and Standard Operating Procedures, emergency prepositioning of stock, etc.).
- Timeliness of response and capacity of partners proved key for achieving results. The effectiveness of DREF was particularly dependent on the capacity of different NRCS, with large variations across countries.
- A recurrent issue was the lack of prepositioning, which affected the quality of response and resulted in significant delays in the implementation of activities (see also EQ1). Security and access constrained also undermined results, with E/RRMs tending to be the most well adjusted to respond in such contexts.

## ALERT & SST

ALERT and SST activities successfully provided life-saving support to population affected by sudden onset disasters through relatively timely and appropriate actions in a broad range of sectors depending on the identified needs and type of crisis (see also EQ1). ALERT focused primarily on shelter, DRR/DP, Multi-purpose Cash Transfers and WASH while SST focused primarily on WASH, Food Security and Livelihoods, Health, and Shelter in line with the different contexts and types of crises in which they operated.

In terms of the delivery of necessary outputs and contributing to planned outcomes, most of the ALERT and SST projects have achieved all or most of their expected results (see examples in Box 2 as well as figure 19 below). Portfolio analysis confirmed that the vast majority of KRIs for SST and ALERT actions were achieved or overachieved. There are, however, some sectoral variations (see Table 12) with only 43% of health related KRIs for ALERT were achieved. ALERT and SST projects systematically overachieved their beneficiary targets (see Table 13), especially in recent years.

Projects not achieving their KRIs were concentrated in countries with challenging contexts and significant access and security constraints such as Nigeria and Afghanistan. For instance, in one of the ALERT projects in Afghanistan, it was reported that there were many issues with the monitoring of this action which was not satisfying from the partner. However, activities conducted in areas inaccessible to other partners.

A recurrent issue was the lack of prepositioning, which affected the quality of response and resulted in significant delays in the implementation of activities (see also EQ1). The tools were most successful in contexts where sufficient disaster preparedness had taken place ((including the establishment of early warning systems, development of contingency plans and Standard Operating Procedures, emergency prepositioning of stock, etc.). Timeliness of response and capacity of partners proved key for achieving results.

**Table 12. Share of KRIs achieved/ overachieved by tool and sector (2016-2020)**

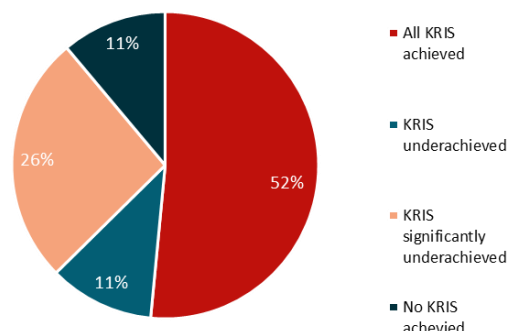
Sector	ALERT	SST	SST and ALERT
WASH	79%	77%	80%
Shelter and settlements	72%	67%	71%
Protection	68%	81%	73%
Food security and livelihoods	71%	77%	74%
Disaster Risk Reduction / Disaster Preparedness	75%	88%	81%
Multi-purpose cash transfer	74%	88%	76%
Health	43%	76%	61%
Coordination	89%	100% <sup>25</sup>	89%
Support to operations	75%	77%	76%
Education in emergencies	100%	67%	93%
Nutrition	80%	67%	68%
<b>Grand Total</b>	<b>74%</b>	<b>77%</b>	<b>75%</b>

<sup>25</sup> Results based on only one KRI



Source: HOPE database. ADE Analysis. N= 4038 KRIs analysed. For each KRI of each action, the final value was compared the final value to the initial target. Achieved/overachieved signifies that at least 100% of the target was achieved.

**Figure 18: Share of ALERT and SST projects by level of KRI achievement, 2016-2020**



Source: HOPE data (ADE analysis). Document: Key Results Indicators. KRI target achieved: N = Number of actions = 111. Then we classified each KRI, following the defined intervals described in the introductory note to EQ4 for the following categories: “Achieved, Underachieved, Significantly Underachieved and no achieved”. Finally, we calculated the share of KRIs that fell under each category, namely: Achieved if more or equal than 100% of the target was reached, underachieved if between 75% and 99.9%, Significantly underachieved if between 0.1% and 74.9%, and No KRIS achieved if equal 0%.

**Table 13. Share of beneficiaries reached by instrument and year**

Instrument	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020
ALERT	-	-	124%	254%	170%
Small-Scale Tool	114%	131%	128%	133%	162%
E/RRMs	140%	149%	235%	207%	49%

Source: ADE calculations based on HOPE data

## DREF

**DREF operations have enabled DG ECHO to respond to small-scale crises and health emergencies it would not otherwise cover, playing an important role in expanding DG ECHO’s coverage of under-the-radar and forgotten crises.**<sup>26</sup> Annual reviews suggest that DREF operations have generally achieved their objectives in a timely way, while also contributing to the capacity building for National Red Cross Societies and to the localisation of the response, in line with DG ECHO’s Grand Bargain Commitments. DREF’s contribution to local capacity building was most valued by DG ECHO field staff. For a very large majority of DREF projects, the number of targeted beneficiaries was reached and, when collected, the level of satisfaction from the beneficiaries was rather high. For most DREF operations, activities were fully completed, and the budget spent. The main systematic shortcomings in the execution of DREF operations by some National Societies included: underspending (systematic issue in Asia), poor timeliness, weak needs assessment, inappropriate choice of transfer modality (reluctance to operationalise cash in some regions – Indonesia; use of cash not adapted to emergency needs – Philippines, Sri Lanka; use of cash inappropriate in a country/market/context – Ethiopia, Madagascar; good use of cash – Vietnam, Bangladesh), poor cost effectiveness and cost efficiency, difficulty to organise ECHO visit to the project (e.g. Nigeria, Algeria), some instances of political use of assistance (e.g. Philippines) and lack of adapted targeting of beneficiaries (e.g. India).

**In recent years, DREF operations have also contributed to the strengthening of IFRC’s Forecast based Action.** Following DG ECHO’s support for the IFRC’s Forecast Based Action Fund

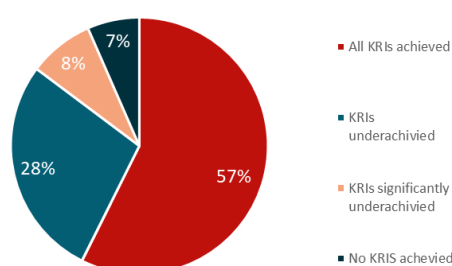
<sup>26</sup> DREF is the only tool focusing on under-the-radar and forgotten crisis that DG ECHO directly funds. DG ECHO does not fund the UN CERF for instance.

(FbAF) through an indirect management funding agreement in 2019,<sup>27</sup> DREF has been used to provide access to rapid pre-approved funding prior to a shock. This has been a key step in ensuring that forecast based action is effective and is in line with the 2022 G7 commitments on Strengthening Anticipatory Action in Humanitarian Assistance<sup>28</sup>.

## E/RRMs

E/RRMs, when in place have enabled DG ECHO to respond to both sudden and slow-onset disasters across the world in a timely and appropriate fashion through emergency assistance in WASH, nutrition, health, shelter/non-food items (NFIs), and education sectors. They were better tailored to provide a response in contexts with significant access constraints and high severity/ acuteness of crisis relative to ALERT and SST. This was largely thanks to the incorporation of activities focusing on pre-positioning of human, material and financial resources, Humanitarian Watch (rather than Early Warning System), and Multi Sectoral Assessments (MSA) including monitoring of humanitarian situation, and post distribution monitoring. They were particularly valued for their multi-sectoral coverage and for fostering coordination with other parts of the humanitarian system (see also EQ1 and EQ3). Beyond the constraints identified for ALERT and SST, their effectiveness was limited by a lack of flexibility in terms of geographic and sectoral coverage in contexts with rapidly and unexpectedly evolving needs. Embedding CMs in E/RRMs has helped address this shortcoming. A portfolio analysis confirmed that the vast majority of projects achieved all or most of their KRIs (see Figure 20 below) and that beneficiary targets were systematically overachieved (see Table 13). Reporting of results was also found to be more systematic and thorough.

**Figure 19. Share of E/RRMs by level of KRI achievement, 2016-2020**



Source: HOPE data (ADE analysis). Document: Key Results Indicators. KRI target achieved: N = Number of actions = 72. Then we classified each KRI, following the defined intervals described in the introductory note to EQ4 for the following categories: "Achieved, Underachieved, Significantly Underachieved and no achieved". Finally, we calculated the share of KRIs that fell under each category, namely: Achieved if more or equal than 100% of the target was reached, underachieved if between 75% and 99.9%, Significantly underachieved if between 0.1% and 74.9%, and No KRIS achieved if equal 0%

## Crisis Modifiers

The effectiveness of crisis modifiers was challenging to assess due to a lack of reporting on the results of activities funded through CMs. As the CMs were often a minor part of a much larger intervention, they tended to not be monitored extensively nor specifically (i.e., in light of its specific objective of providing an emergency response/bridge funding). It was, therefore, very difficult to get an idea of the overall success of including and activating a CM except from the output indicators documented. Nevertheless, both interviews and surveys with both partners and DG ECHO staff confirmed that **crises modifiers were seen as highly effective, and as the most rapid and flexible tool allowing partners to provided immediate support in sudden onset disasters.**

<sup>27</sup> The agreement allows the IFRC to use up to 20 percent of DREF for Forecast based Actions and stipulates a number of specific EU funding eligibility criteria including: Allocations from the EU funding to the FbAF can be used to replenish the allocations made to individual trigger based early action in full or in part with a maximum amount of EUR 200 000 per activity and a minimum of 50% of the allocation made by the FbAF, unless otherwise explicitly agreed upon by DG ECHO ; Trigger based early actions covered by this funding can have a maximum implementing period of three months.

<sup>28</sup> G7 Foreign Ministers' Statement on Strengthening Anticipatory Action in Humanitarian Assistance, Press release, 13 May 2022. Available [here](#)



**Although their scope was limited (max 10% of contracts), they proved an important element of early action, providing initial and bridge funding to address unforeseen needs.**

They enabled DG ECHO to capitalise on the pre-positioning of its partners and occasionally served as a tool for needs assessments allowing for follow-up with other instruments/projects (See Box 2). A key constraint however was the lack of familiarity and limited use, with large variation across countries (see EQ1).

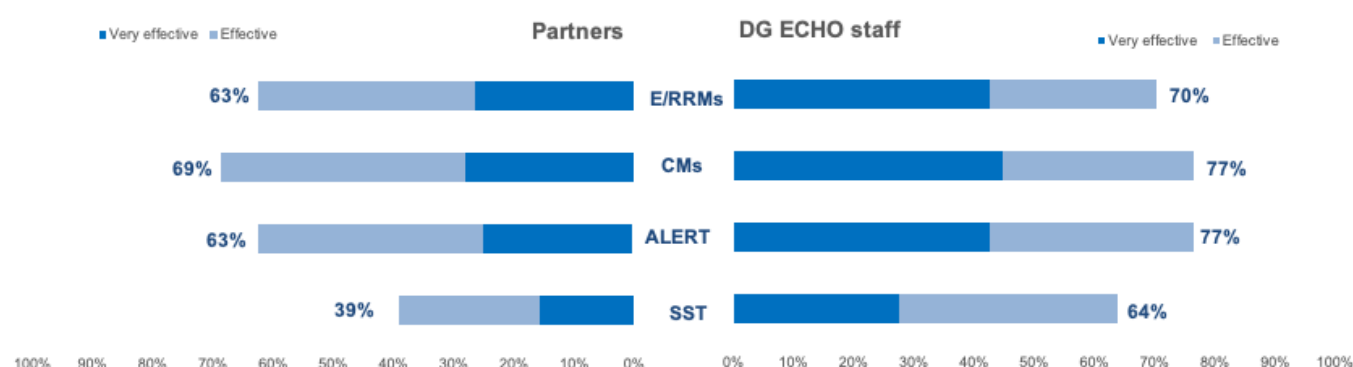
**Box 2. Examples of results/achievements across the different instruments**

<b>ALERT</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Bangladesh-Oxfam-nl-2019:</b> “Oxfam Consortium with Christian Aid were able to reach more than the approved numbers of beneficiaries (approved target was 129,600 individuals and finally Oxfam reached 139,325 individuals) within the stipulated timeframe. All the results were fully achieved.</li> <li>• <b>Indonesia-ACTED-FR-2018:</b> Despite (...) challenges, ACTED completed the project on time and contributed to bring relief to the affected populations at a critical time, where they needed the most.” “The project was very well accomplished. All the results/indicators have been achieved with a very good quantitative performance”</li> <li>• <b>Mozambique-WFP-IT-2019:</b> “The action reached its objective and achieved its result.” “The coordination out of Beira airport - where a temporary office was set up in the arrival / departure hall - was very efficient with over 70 organisations benefitting from the service.”</li> <li>• <b>Afghanistsan-IFRC-2018:</b> “Results partially achieved; they did not reach the planned number of beneficiaries.” Many issues with the monitoring of this action which was not satisfying from the partner. However, activities conducted in areas inaccessible to other partners. With food and NFIs coming late, increased lending may jeopardize family positive survival.”</li> </ul>
<b>SST</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Congo-WFP-2017 (ECHO/DRF/BUD/2017/91009): Late confirmation of funds (from other donors) affected timeliness; choice of mobile money system has also generated delays in the response in areas with weak connection. Security issues also impeded access to some districts. Not all indicators were reached. Post-operation assessment indicated that food security situation of displaced households has improved but still rely on WFP assistance for daily food consumption (due to lack of access to productive assets). 82% of the planned target population has been reached.</li> <li>• Pakistan-Islamic Relief-2018: and the action even overachieved some of the objectives: “The partner initial proposition was the cash support to 250 HHs in repairing their shelters but due to currency exchange gains 90 more cash beneficiaries were added”; “the community has very much appreciated the support of IR-DE”</li> <li>• Haiti-IFRC-2016: “All indicators have been overachieved.” “Effectiveness of the action could have been increased if the partner had been more coordinated with stakeholders from other sectors”</li> </ul>
<b>E/RRMs</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• RRM-WFP-IT_Cameroon_2020: overall positive outcome of the intervention, WFP delivered on most of their commitments by the end of this action, despite significant funding shortages. the provision of food assistance to the different categories of beneficiaries in all three crises considered represented a vital lifeline.</li> <li>• RRM-ACF_Nigeria_2020: 124% of beneficiary outreach (21,000 reached vs 16,900 initially targeted). Provision of quick lifesaving essential services to IDPs including hygiene, NFI and emergency shelter kits.</li> <li>• RRM_CARE-DE_Zimbabwe_2019: “Disaster Rapid Response Mechanism responded to 38 of the 40 disaster alerts during the project lifespan reaching a total of 33464 (16 397 males ,17 067 females) direct beneficiaries.” “98% of the respondents (beneficiaries) reported humanitarian assistance having been delivered in a timely, safe, accessible, accountable, and participatory manner. (Equal proportion of men and</li> </ul>

	women)” “. 83 % of rapid onset disasters arising during the action responded to within 48 hours of notification over the 80% anticipated.” But monitoring visit raised issues: “Lack of clarify of the mechanism definition: scope, functionality, etc. and urgent needs to strengthen the understanding of the expected outcome by partners.” “Serious delays in responding to localized emergencies (schools affected by rainy season)”
<b>CMs</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Philippines_CARE-NL_2019: Through the application of the crisis modifier, the consortium was able to shift allocated resources and respond to new displacements arising from conflict various locations in Maguindanao, Bukidnon and Agusan del Sur provinces.</li> </ul>

The survey results generally confirmed the effectiveness of all DG ECHO tools in (i) providing a rapid response to sudden onset disasters; (ii) providing initial and bridge funding to address critical and unforeseen needs and (iii) responding to the most pressing needs of beneficiaries amongst both DG ECHO staff and partners.

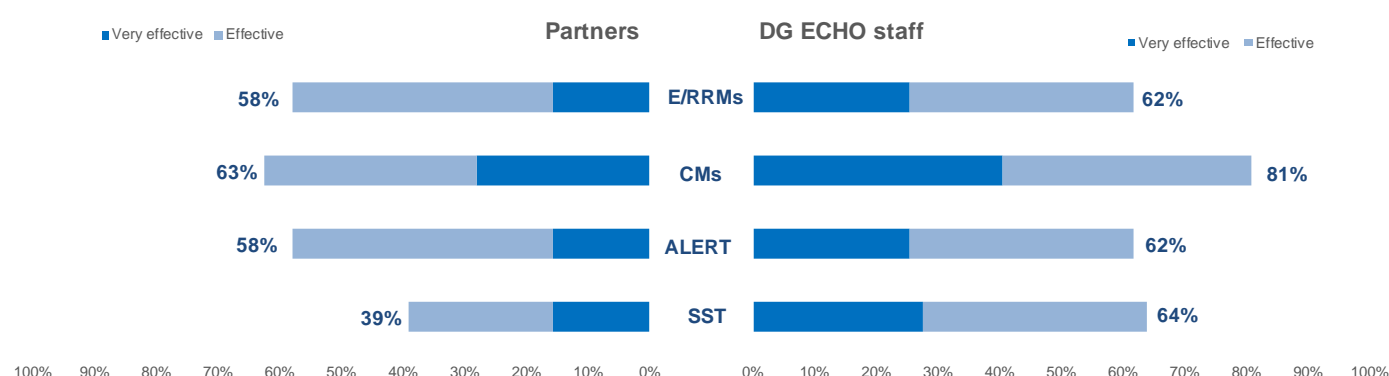
**Figure 20. Share of respondents rating DG ECHO’s tools as “effective” or “very effective” in providing a rapid response to sudden onset disasters**



Source: ADE’s surveys of DG ECHO Partners and DG ECHO Staff on sudden onset disasters

Note: Number of observations is 64 for DG ECHO partners and 47 for DG ECHO Staff. The question was: How effective have the following instruments/tools been in providing a rapid response to sudden onset disasters?

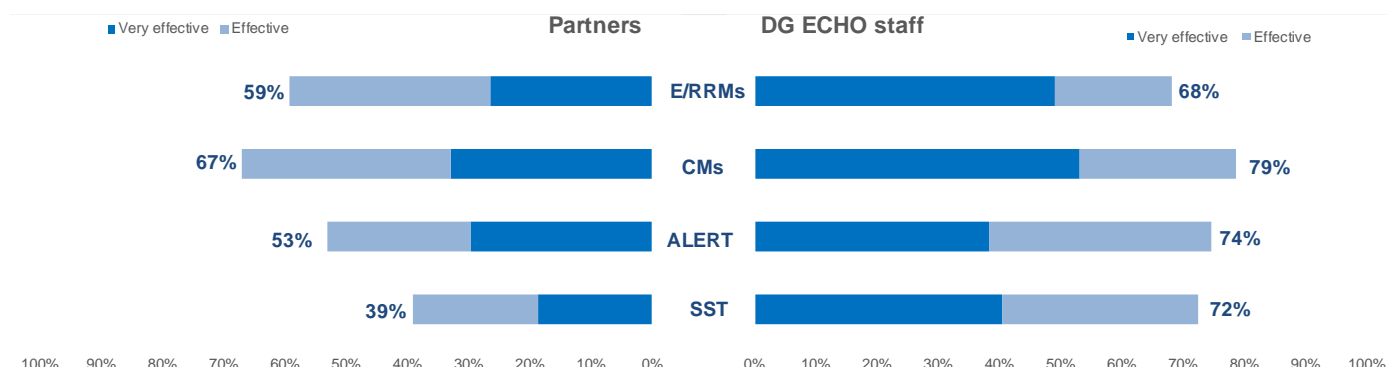
**Figure 21. Share of respondents rating DG ECHO’s tools as “effective” or “very effective” in addressing critical and unforeseen needs**



Source: ADE’s surveys of DG ECHO Partners and DG ECHO Staff on sudden onset disasters

Note: Number of observations is 64 for DG ECHO partners and 47 for DG ECHO Staff. The question was: How effective have the following instruments/tools been in providing initial and bridge funding to address critical and unforeseen humanitarian needs?

**Figure 22. Share of respondents rating DG ECHO’s tools as “effective” or “very effective” in responding to the most pressing needs of beneficiaries**

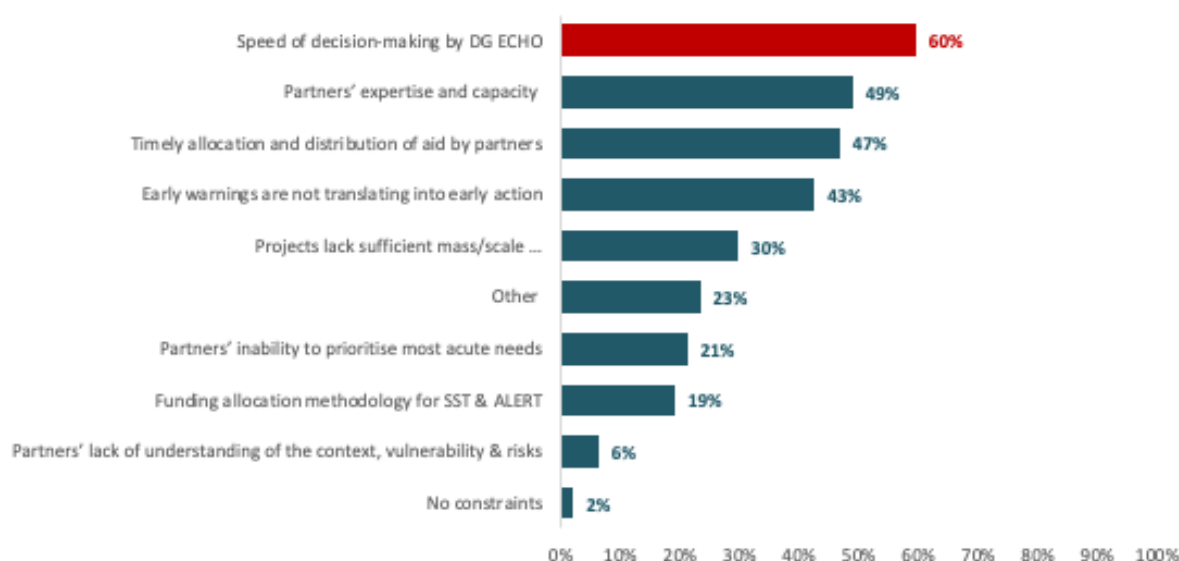


Source: ADE’s surveys of DG ECHO Partners and DG ECHO Staff on sudden onset disasters

Note: Number of observations is 64 for DG ECHO partners and 47 for DG ECHO Staff. The question was: How effective have the following instruments/tools been in responding to the most pressing needs of beneficiaries?

In the survey DG ECHO staff were asked to identify the factors constraining the effectiveness of its response. The most frequently picked factors was the speed of decision making by DG ECHO followed by partners’ expertise and capacity as well as the speed of their response, in line with the evidence from the documentary review.

**Figure 23. Factors constraining effectiveness**



Source: ADE’s surveys of DG ECHO Partners on sudden onset disasters

Although the toolbox was generally seen as comprehensive, providing support across sectors, countries, and disaster types, a gap was identified in the ETBs capacity to respond to human-induced disasters of over 100,000 people. This is because ALERT cannot be used for human-induced crises and SST is limited to under 100,000 people. In some cases of large population displacements, there were efforts to use multiple SSTs simultaneously to address the gap, but the process proved administratively cumbersome, and projects tended not to materialise.

**DG ECHO’s close monitoring and assessment mechanisms positively contributed to generating learning for greater achievements of results.** DG ECHO conducted frequent high-level monitoring to ensure interventions are going as planned. Performance feedback from ECHO was quoted as being “tough but fair” and educational. The sectoral expertise of the DG ECHO technical staff was also appreciated by the consortium members that could benefit from it. DG ECHO also organised debriefing workshops, follow-up assessments for each program, coupled with some mid-

term reviews, which enhanced lessons learnt. On DREF, monitoring by DG ECHO could be strengthened with most NRCS being receptive to increased monitoring and field visits (challenges encountered only in Nigeria and Algeria).

### 5.5 EQ5 To what extent did DG ECHO reach cost-effectiveness in its response, what are the enabling and mitigating factors?

This question aimed at assessing if DG ECHO support was cost-effective, while identifying the explanatory factors that affect success or failure. According to the Cost-effectiveness guidance for DG ECHO evaluations developed by ADE in 2016, cost-effectiveness is defined as “the achievement of intended outcomes in relation to costs”. Following this guidance, the evaluation split the analysis into two parts:

- The cost-effectiveness of DG ECHO as a donor: Three components of the overall cost-effectiveness of DG ECHO’s response, timeliness, synergies and lack of duplication, an adequate budget allocation, and connectedness with a longer-term response, are analysed respectively in EQ1, EQ3, EQ6 and EQ7. This question focused on DG ECHO’s attention to cost-effectiveness in making strategic choices about its portfolio of assistance throughout the response period. This included assessing the attention to cost-effectiveness when selecting partners and interventions (including in terms of the choices of transfer modalities). It also examined whether DG ECHO’s processes were geared toward cost-effectiveness, i.e., minimising transaction costs and administrative burden (including for the partners), measures to monitor the cost of interventions and support efficiency implementation, while ensuring their quality.
- The cost-effectiveness of DG ECHO funded actions i.e., assessing if the humanitarian actions funded by DG ECHO were efficient (i.e., how well were inputs converted into outputs) and then if they were cost-effective (i.e., achievement of intended outcomes in relation to costs). It also includes the identification of lessons learned, notably in terms of explanatory factors and good transferable practices.

#### Summary Response to EQ5

- As a donor, DG ECHO took several measures to ensure cost-effectiveness, especially evident in the use of well-structured analysis and reporting process (the Single Forms) and the flexibility applied by DG ECHO to adapt this process to the specificities of the Sudden Onset Disaster Context.
- DG ECHO’s portfolio choices were systematically based on assessment of cost in relation to timeliness and effectiveness. DG ECHO has encouraged the use of cash when feasible in line with its policies and sectoral guidelines.
- Several projects however, faced significant inefficiencies. Beyond contextual constraints, the lack of prepositioning proved the biggest issue, resulting in delays and very costly procurement.
- Several areas for improvement were identified including increasing investments in disaster preparedness, decreasing administrative burden, and strengthening the use of Crisis Modifiers to enhance flexibility.

#### 5.5.1 Cost-effectiveness of DG ECHO as a donor

**DG ECHO took a number of actions to promote the cost-effectiveness of its interventions. Key factors in ensuring cost-effectiveness in implementation were the well-structured analysis and reporting process (the Single Forms) and the flexibility applied by DG ECHO to adapt this process to the specificities of the Sudden Onset Disaster Context.**

The efficiency and cost-effectiveness of the interventions were systematically analysed by DG ECHO when selecting the interventions, based on some key criteria. A specific section of the analysis of proposals was about cost-effectiveness and several DG ECHO field staff reported using a cost-benchmarking approach for the approval of applications, relying on past projects implemented in the

country/sector. Various aspects of cost-effectiveness have been mentioned in the project documents and interviews, including:

- Distribution of the costs across activities and unit costs of specific items/services (e.g., share of support, staff, transport costs)
- Logistics capacity of the partners, procurement strategies and considerations related to the distribution modality for food assistance
- Presence and access of the partners in specific areas and working relationship with authorities which can be determinant in ensuring a swift reply and reduce administrative burden Proposals where the partners' presence on the ground field was not sufficient could be rejected. This process led to the rejection or revision of several proposals which were not deemed sufficiently cost effective.
- Efficiency of the partners (i.e., quality/working efficiency)
- Underspensing of the partners which is not justified (i.e., related to lower number of people in needs for example)
- Existence of synergies with other partners/activities, leading role of the partners in coordination mechanisms and experience running similar types of interventions in the country.

**In terms of transfer modalities, DG ECHO has promoted the increased use of cash alongside other alternatives, as a means of strengthening the efficiency and effectiveness of its response, in line with its Grand Bargain commitments.** According to its 2022 Cash Transfer Thematic Policy<sup>29</sup> *“the use of cash transfers is now widely recognised as **the most efficient and effective way** of getting humanitarian assistance to people affected by conflicts or disasters, whenever possible and appropriate”.*

**Table 14. Evolution of share of funds Multi-Purpose Cash Transfers, by instrument (2015-2020)**

	E/RRMs	ALERT	SST	Other DG ECHO tools
2015	0%	-	-	0%
2016	0%	-	7%	8%
2017	15%	0%	0%	25%
2018	18%	7%	0%	16%
2019	30%	22%	8%	23%
2020	12%	5%	0%	2%
Total	14%	16%	2%	15%

Source: ADE calculations based on data extracted from HOPE

The use of multi-purpose cash transfers has consistently increased over the years (see Table 14 above), with the exception of 2020, largely due to the specificities of the COVID-19 pandemic. The use of cash relative to vouchers has also overall increased in DG ECHO's response in most sectors, although a less clear trend was observed over the years. The choice of transfer modalities was found to be systematically dependent on market and contextual analyses and relevant sectoral guidelines. The project documentation review also led to the identification of several examples whereby the

<sup>29</sup> ECHO (2022). Thematic Policy Document N°3: Cash Transfers

choice of transfer modalities was based on a consideration of cost in relation to effectiveness and timeliness (see Box 3 below).

### Box 3. Examples of considerations in the selection of transfer modalities

- **SST – WFP IT- Congo – 2017:** The project relied on Cash based Transfers following a reassessment of market conditions. Although food distribution was found to be more efficient than cash-based-transfers in some remote areas, CBT remained overall more efficient.
- **ALERT-OXFAM NL – Bangladesh – 2020:** For Shelter, the project relied on Hand Cash Delivery Mechanism to make the process faster. Support was originally planned to be provided in kind, but because of the disasters, it was easier to provide cash so that people use it according to their needs. For food assistance, a Mobile Money Transfer modality was employed because of the pandemic and to go faster.
- **ALERT – ACF ES- Philippines -2019:** The shelter response included both cash and in-kind support. In kind support was integrated as it was preferred by beneficiaries because of distance from the site to available markets and construction suppliers.
- **ALERT – IOM – Ethiopia – 2018:** Vouchers modality was found not suitable. The project relied on cash but in-kind assistance was also provided where markets were not favourable to cash or where in kind assistance was the only option available at the time of the intervention.

Source: ADE

**Across transfer modalities, the importance of investments in disaster preparedness to support a timely and cost-effective response was repeatedly referenced.** This was seen as a particular issue for the use of cash transfers and vouchers. When agencies lacked prior experience, it was very costly and even impossible to set up the necessary cash/voucher delivery mechanisms in the context of SODs. A clear need for increasing relevant DP in advance of disasters, as well as anticipatory action to support market conditions prior to their collapse were identified. For in kind assistance, DP in the form of prepositioning of costs was key for cost-effectiveness. Lack of prepositioning resulted in delays and very costly procurement. Stakeholders referenced the need for increased DG ECHO action on this area, including cooperation with other actors for mass procurement to strengthen cost-effectiveness.

**DG ECHO made some efforts to reduce the administrative requirements associated with the response to SOD but areas for improvement remained.** It allowed simplified “Light” reporting in the single forms, but this has been stopped from 2020 onward; the partners did not have to fill in in details all the different sections of the single forms (e.g. resilience markers) and in practice there are examples of actions that have been funded/approved even if all required information was not provided in order to guarantee a rapid response. Nevertheless, partners considered the application procedures and monitoring as too heavy (although they recognised the efforts to simplify) with too much information requested at an early stage when information was not easily available. Partners also stressed that the decision making was too lengthy and resource-intensive with much back and forth to fill in the rigid eSF/Logical Framework, etc. (notably for ALERT) prior to contract signing.<sup>30</sup>

**The inclusion of CM within existing action was a good practice for efficiency,** but it is still too rigid and does not come with its own funding (which creates frictions when it has to be used as it still requires to find an agreement on how the re-allocation of resources is done, resources that are actually necessary in any case). Awareness of CMs was also not sufficient and their integration in projects remained limited, with significant variation however across regions. Overall, the functioning of the different tools was not entirely clear to all partners (see EQ1), which may have resulted in suboptimal use of the tools and inefficiencies. **The pre-agreement with IFRC and pre-financing of actions in the context of DREF was also seen as a good practice for reducing administrative burden, with some stakeholders arguing for the expansion of this model to other partners.** In practice, however decision making over DREF was not always smooth. In a few cases, it entailed lengthy discussions and delays (see Part B).

<sup>30</sup> Refer to the timeliness case study for more details.



**When it comes to monitoring intervention costs, DG ECHO was a demanding donor, with high expectations in terms of standards contributing to ensure the cost-effectiveness of the partners.** For example, in terms of Multiple Purpose Cash Assistance, DG ECHO was strict on the acceptable cost ratio (that is, the % of total budget transferred to beneficiaries should be around 80%-85%). Similarly, for indirect costs DG ECHO insisted on the 7% upper limit. DG ECHO's monitoring and assessments of the activities pushed the partners to improve their approach. As highlighted in the context of the Philippines case study, this firmness was generally perceived positively by the partners who generally described DG ECHO as "tough but fair". DG ECHO's monitoring was seen as a way to challenge them to provide the most relevant responses, ensure high quality monitoring and foster strategic thinking. DG ECHO's rigour was balanced with enough flexibility to ensure that the activities could be pursued in a timely manner depending on circumstances. DG ECHO's field and technical knowledge allowed them to avoid lengthy debates when modifications were necessary and accept no-cost extensions. There were some caveats, however. A few partners perceived DG ECHO as too rigid and demanding, and not flexible enough given the difficult circumstances in an emergency context. For some, DG ECHO could do better in "contextualising the costing rules", as DG ECHO was demanding but at the same time did not want to finance support costs which were perceived as high given the SOD context.

**Figure 24. Comments regarding efficiency and administrative burden**

### Comments from Partners

It can take a long time for proposals to be approved, with significant back and forth on details and long waits for feedback, thus delaying the start of implementation. If this could be simplified/sped up, it could mean faster and therefore more effective humanitarian action

ECHO still is late in allocating fund for rapid response or anticipatory action.

Ensure quick allocations specially in terms of ALERT - SPEED UP administrative process (amendment of contracts already in place...)

The eSF sometimes slows things down as it requires a lot of work so maybe a fast-track application system can be developed (amendment of contracts already in place...)

Single form for rapid response is still a big document and need to simplify and brief for quick review and decision.

In terms of ALERT in some contexts timing for final confirmation of funds takes longer that expected.

### Comments from DG ECHO

... The eSF is becoming longer and longer, and less and less operational. Today, ECHO is not able to respond quickly. Most humanitarian donors can be quicker if needed.

ECHO's speed in decision making (process became slower): too many interlocutors/back-up persons not really in a position to advance the file

Approval process is too long

Simplify and merge the emergency processes and tools in order to make resources available timely.

Source: ADE's surveys of DG ECHO Partners and DG ECHO Staff on sudden onset disasters

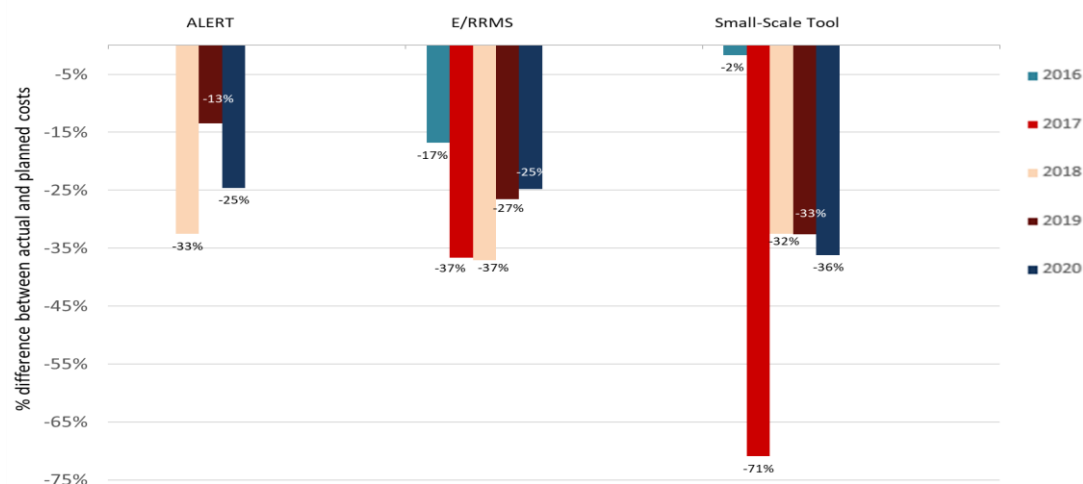
## 5.5.2 Cost-effectiveness of DG ECHO funded actions

**There are indications that DG ECHO-funded activities were cost-effective overall**, although providing clear-cut evidence on cost-effectiveness proved difficult as it was often not directly observable.

A measure of cost effectiveness could for instance be found in the fact that for the majority of projects across instruments, DG ECHO achieved lower cost per beneficiary on average than initially

planned. Figure 25 below demonstrates a systematically lower cost per beneficiary than planned in the proposal over the 2015 to 2020 period. The achieved cost per beneficiary of food security activities was 69% of the planned cost overall (EUR 37 per beneficiary against the EUR 53 planned). This greatly contributed to the overall cost-effectiveness of DG ECHO-funded interventions.

**Figure 25. Planned vs. achieved cost per beneficiary, by instrument (2015-2020)**



Source: ADE's calculations based on data extracted from HOPE

It should be stressed here that this measure of cost-effectiveness should be interpreted with caution as it is likely that the measure of the number of beneficiaries was not consistent across interventions and subject to inaccuracies and mistakes. Moreover, the cost per beneficiary was computed based on the data provided by HOPE, which were not always accurate as they were manually inserted by the partners and therefore prone to mistakes, with frequent variations observed in the reported costs across documents.

Another measure could be found in the share of direct support costs, which for most of the projects reviewed in depth were lower than anticipated.<sup>31</sup> Three out of the 15 ALERT and SST projects reviewed exceeded its planned support costs, but this was justified by a change in the activities implemented. Large variation in support costs was observed, driven by contextual factors and no clear evolution trends could be identified.

**Illustrations were also found in the fact that some preferred delivery modalities contributed to cost-effectiveness**, such as the integration of ALERT as a top-up within a broader DG ECHO funded action. When partners were already implementing a response and have the necessary processes in place, they could quickly and efficiently react to a natural disaster, using the assessment and delivery mechanisms already in place. Related to this, the pre-selection of partners on the basis of their local presence, capacity, expertise and track record, was also a good practice (although there are concerns about openness and transparency, see EQ1)

As regards DREF, it was not possible to assess the cost effectiveness of these operations with the limited information available on project implementation as DG ECHO field officers do not officially monitor DREF projects (as the implementing partner – the National Societies – are not DG ECHO partners). Every DREF operation has a budget line for monitoring and evaluation and lessons learnt workshop at the end is always encouraged.

**The interventions funded by DG ECHO encountered frequent and various obstacles. Access-related constraints were the more frequent, with potentially the greatest effect on cost-effectiveness.** Document review revealed that several interventions had, at least at one point, to suspend part of their activities due to access constraints. All types of access constraints affected the

<sup>31</sup> Data are based on a review of an in depth review of the financial data for the projects in It was not possible, and da Final Report - Part A (SOD)



delivery of DG ECHO-funded action but administrative obstacles and interference in the implementation of the activities were the most prevalent among partners. Security issues (e.g., in Nigeria) and supply chain obstacles (such as difficulties in accessing required inputs due to the collapse of markets due to the SODs) were also observed frequently. Lack of prepositioning resulted in very expensive last-minute procurement, in particular in the context of collapsed local or even national markets, undermining cost-effectiveness for a number of projects.

**DG ECHO's engagement in advocating in favour of the humanitarian space, notably at the project level contributed to cost-effectiveness by mitigating access constraints.** A partner mentioned that DG ECHO contributed to accelerating access to the population through several others praised DG ECHO's help in obtaining agreements from local authorities, including through face-to-face meetings. DG ECHO was a key supporter in ensuring that supplies were available at field level. Such contributions to cost-effectiveness were, however, difficult to quantify as they consisted of responding to emergency needs as rapidly as possible and saving recurrent costs. As a result, DG ECHO's interventions contributed to reducing administrative delays in obtaining work agreements or supplies from the authorities.

**DG ECHO's role in programming and coordination with other actors on the ground also contributed to cost-effectiveness,** notably by avoiding gaps and overlaps and fostering synergies across interventions. The sharing of analysis, assessments and information from the field across actors (in particular OCHA) were key for the effectiveness and efficiency of the response, as highlighted by the country case studies. In addition, DG ECHO systematically encouraged partners to consider the actions and presence of other actors in the response. However, although coordination between ECHO's and other actors on the ground was overall positive, the level of exchanges could be increased in some cases to further strengthen synergies. (See EQ3 for more details.) The issue of joint programming with EU MS was raised.

### **5.6 EQ6 Was the EU budget allocated to respond to sudden onset disasters distributed equitably and proportionate to what the actions were meant to achieve?**

The Humanitarian Consensus clearly identifies "budget adequacy" as an objective of the EU. This means that the EU should "aim to demonstrate its commitment to humanitarian response by mobilising adequate funding for humanitarian aid based on assessed needs" (Art. 38). While DG ECHO cannot be expected to address all needs, this question sought to assess whether DG ECHO's funding to sudden-onset disasters was sufficient to address immediate needs of people affected by crises and to bridge the gap until further support arrived.

#### **Summary Response to EQ6**

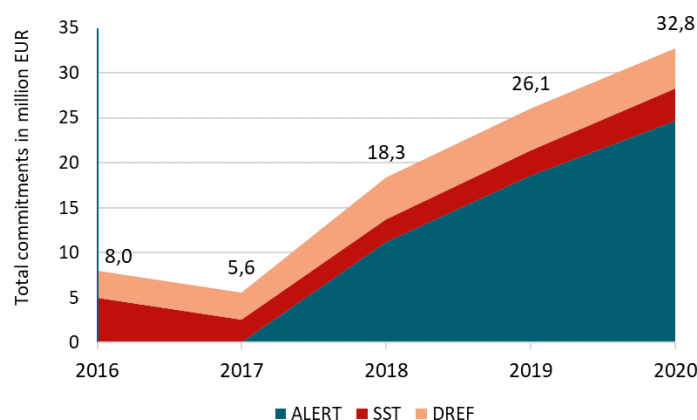
- DG ECHO was amongst the biggest contributors to the response to Sudden Onset Disasters providing support across sectors and types of disaster. It was the third biggest contributor to UN Flash Appeals.
- DG ECHO decided its level of funding based on needs assessments and a systematic consideration of the activities of other donors.
- Recent modifications in the algorithm used for the decision on funding levels, led to significant improvements in allocations. However, challenges with the algorithmic estimates remained, highlighting the importance of supporting evidence from field assessments.
- Some stakeholders (namely DG ECHO HoO) also raised concerns that in a few cases ETB allocations were also driven by strategic and visibility considerations.
- Overall, budgets at the project level proved modest relative to needs, targeting only a small minority of people in need.

**DG ECHO provided a significant budget to respond to sudden onset disasters. For the period 2016 to 2020, DG ECHO committed EUR 85 million to the ETB.<sup>32</sup> It also channelled at**

<sup>32</sup> The amount does not include funds channelled through the Epidemics Tool which was not covered by the evaluation.  
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least an additional EUR 295 million to SODs through E/RRMs.<sup>33</sup> Finally, through the use of CMs it provided partners with the flexibility to use up to 10% of existing contracts to respond to SODs<sup>34</sup> The ETB funding increased significantly over time from EUR 8 million in 2016 up to EUR 32 million in 2020.<sup>35</sup> As outlined in the response to EQ1, the ETB HIPs were revised multiple times each year and additional funding was provided to respond to emerging needs, when pre-allocated resources were exhausted.

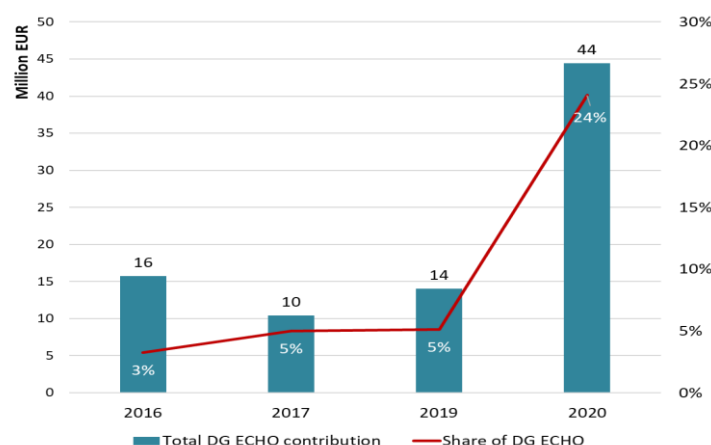
**Figure 26. Evolution of ETB HIP by instrument, 2016-2020**



Source: ADE's calculations based on ETB HIP data

**According to the FTS data, DG ECHO was the third largest contributor to UN Flash Appeals<sup>36</sup> between 2015 and 2020**, contributing over 7% of total funds (USD 85 million) through its different emergency response tools. The share of DG ECHO's funding in the flash appeals remained around 4% to 6% over 2015-2020 despite the increase in overall funding as the funding of the other contributors also increased substantially. Over the same period, the USA were the main contributors with a total amount of USD 500 million (44% of the total funding) followed by CERF with USD 101 million (9%) and the UK (USD 85 million or 7%). Germany was the largest EU member state donor, contributing USD 53 million (3.8%). Overall, partners appreciated the relative support from DG ECHO and described it as critical for ensuring that sufficient levels of funding were achieved.

**Figure 27: DG ECHO Contribution to UN Flash Appeals between 2016-2020**



Source: ADE Calculations based on UN OCHA FTS data

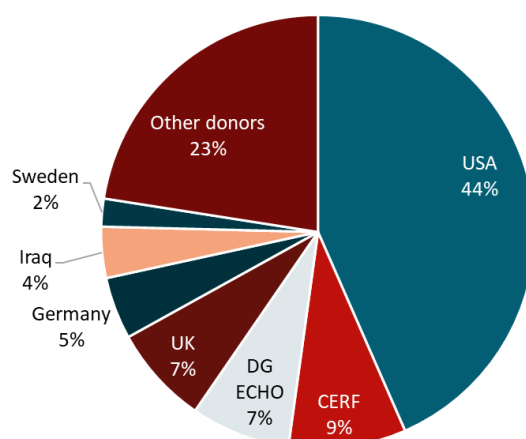
<sup>33</sup> It must be noted that there is no centralised list of E/RRMs within DG ECHO. The evaluation team used a combination of techniques to identify E/RRMs: key word searches within HOPE database and interviews with DG ECHO officials. However, the list assembled as a result of these efforts cannot be regarded as a definitive list of E/RRMs.

<sup>34</sup> This amount does not provide a complete image of the funds channelled through CMs. As there is no centralised reporting for CMs, the ET manually compiled a list of CMs, which however is not comprehensive.

<sup>35</sup> The amount does not include funds channelled through the Epidemics Tool which was not covered by the evaluation.

<sup>36</sup> UN Flash Appeals are a planning tool used in the case of major sudden onset disasters that require a coordinated response beyond the capacity of the government plus any single UN agency to respond to.

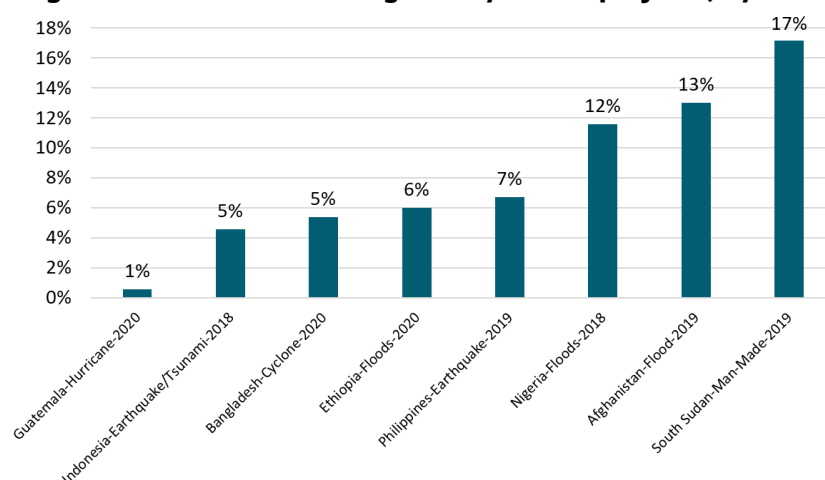
**Figure 28. Share of DG ECHO contribution for selected crises**



Source: ADE Calculations based on UN OCHA FTS data

**DG ECHO's budget remained modest in comparison to the needs of the most vulnerable in the context of sudden onset disasters.** While the available budget allowed DG ECHO to appropriately contribute to the response, it remained relatively small in comparison to the needs. For the period 2016-2020, 31% of the funding requirements (USD 513 million) for UN Flash appeals was not covered. Moreover, an in-depth review of ALERT projects revealed that in most cases less than 15% of people in need were targeted by the projects (**Figure 29**). The coverage of needs at the sectoral level also revealed the limited (although not negligible) scale of DG ECHO's funded interventions. For human-induced crises the exclusive reliance on SST (less than 100, 000 people) de facto constrained the people in need that could be supported.

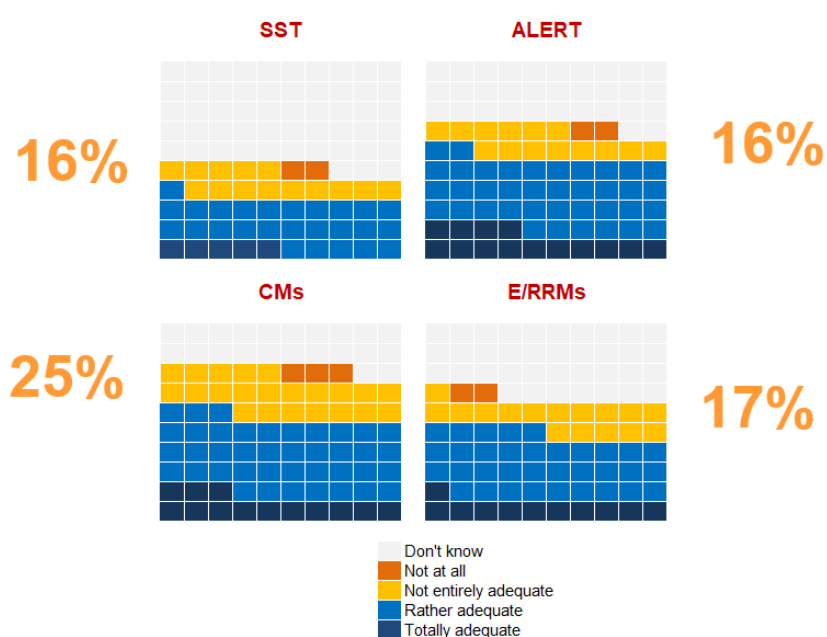
**Figure 29. Share of PIN targeted by ALERT projects, by crisis**



Source: ADE's calculations based on DG ECHO's data on served beneficiaries and OCHA's HNOs on PINs for different crises

The inadequacy of funds in certain contexts was highlighted by a large share of partners and DG ECHO field staff, both through interviews and surveys (see Figure 30 below). This was particularly the case for CMs, which are limited to 10% of the contract funding and do not come with their own funding but require a reallocation of funding within an existing contract. For ALERT and SST, limitations in the funding were largely attributed to the assessment methodologies as well as to the low overall levels of ETB funding (see Figure 30).

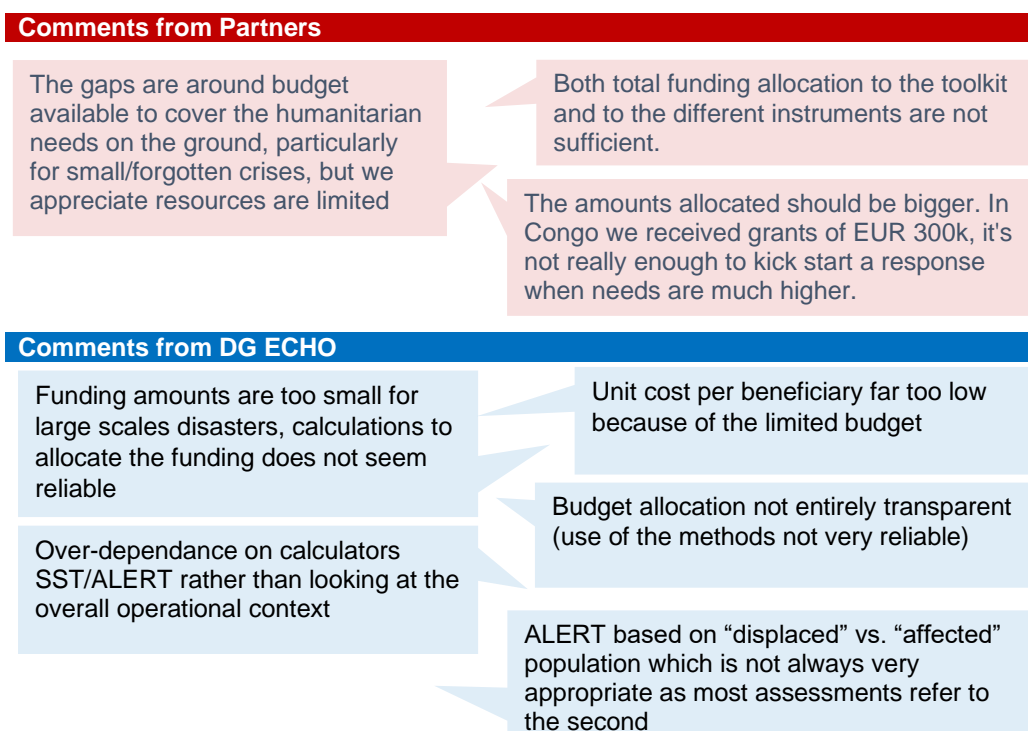
**Figure 30. Partners’ view on adequacy of funding, % of partners considering funding to be not at all or not entirely adequate**



Source: ADE’s surveys of DG ECHO Partners on sudden onset disasters

Note: Number of observations is 64 for DG ECHO Staff. The question was: Is the funding available through the following tools adequate to meet critical needs and bridge the gap to humanitarian response?

**Figure 31. Comments regarding the sufficiency of funding**



Source: ADE’s surveys of DG ECHO Staff and Partners on sudden onset disasters

**DG ECHO’s process for allocating funding across sudden onset disasters through the ETB guarantees a certain degree of objectivity across contexts.** To define the size of the budget allocated for a response to a sudden onset disaster, DG ECHO follows a clear procedure and well-defined criteria, with the aim of providing as objective an assessment as possible, in as short a period of time as possible (within +/-24h of an event) and avoiding politicisation of humanitarian aid. The procedure involves two key steps:

- The use of an algorithm to give a baseline estimate of funding: The algorithm relies primarily on the following information: a) number of people potentially in need (PIN) –before field data; b) Vulnerability of the country; and c) Percentage of total population.
- Consultations with Desk and Field officers: The information provided through the algorithm is complemented with information from relevant DG ECHO staff and field assessments if available. The availability of funding under the ETB HIP, the presence of other donors, and access difficulties are also systematically considered.
- Other parameters, decided ad hoc, are also considered on individual basis such absorption capacity, available funding, and other considerations.

**The algorithm has improved significantly since 2019 with the introduction of the Unified Methodology.** The discrepancy between the maximum amount that could be allocated to SST (EUR 300,000) and the minimum amount for ALERT (i.e. EUR 500,000) generated a significant and unjustified jump in funding per “potential person in need” at the point where the SST transitioned to ALERT (from 100,000 to 100,001 people affected, everything else equal in terms of type of disaster, degree of vulnerability, etc.). More precisely, depending on the context, the suggested budget allocation would jump at least from 3 euros per estimated affected person to 5 euros when the scale of the hazards crossed the 100,000 people line. The jump could in some cases be as big as from 3 to 30 euros per person. This resulted in an inequitable allocation based on the type of instrument used. According to DG ECHO field staff, this pitfall created incentives and opportunities to manipulate the threshold of 100,000 people, resulting in misreporting of people in need close to the threshold. However, concrete examples of such incidents could not be identified. This flaw in the design of the budget allocation mechanism was solved in April 2019, by increasing the maximum amount that could be allocated to the SST to EUR 500,000 and by using the same methodology for budget allocation for both tools, therefore ensuring a continuity with ALERT at the threshold of 100,000 people.

**A number of issues however persisted. These included the inaccuracy of PIN estimates in certain crises contexts, the dependence of estimates on the availability of ETB HIP funds, and the low estimates for the cost per beneficiary for large scale crises.** DG ECHO field staff have repeatedly highlighted the necessity to accompany the algorithmic estimates with field assessment, with a trade-off emerging between accuracy and timeliness of decision-making.

#### Box 4: Overview of challenges with algorithmic estimates of funding

##### PIN Estimates

Overall, the accuracy of PIN estimates was high and improved over the years largely thanks to improved quality of satellite data and the development of new assessment methodologies. A methodology based on physical hazard indicators and population data to estimate people potentially in need was generally employed. For floods, direct information on displaced population were used over the evaluation periods

Existing approaches appeared to have worked generally well for tropical cyclones with few exceptions but tended to overestimate the PIN for earthquakes (see Table 16 below). Underestimation was very rare according to interviewed stakeholders from DG ECHO. The identification of recurrent trends in terms of misestimations has allowed for systematic ex-post adjustments by relevant stakeholders.

For floods, there was general dissatisfaction over DG ECHO’s reliance on the number of displaced people as a metric of PIN. This was seen as underestimating the affected populations and was misaligned with approaches adopted by other actors.

**Table 15. Accuracy of PIN estimates for selected crises**

Country / event	Year	PIN	Actual PIN	Accuracy of estimate
EARTQUAKES				
Indonesia	2018	900 000	400 000	Overestimated

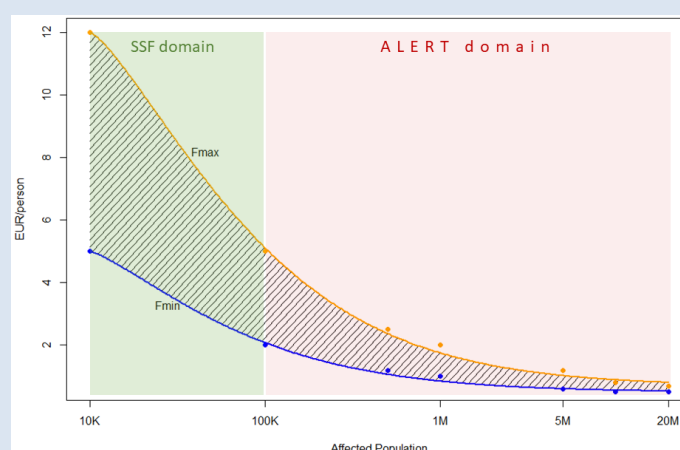
Indonesia	2018	1 900 000	430 000	Significantly Overestimated
Philippines	2019	600 000	200 000	Significantly Overestimated
Indonesia	2021	110 000	30 000	Significantly Overestimated
Nepal	2015	5 500 000	400 000 000	Overestimated
Pakistan	2013	150 000	120 000	Accurate
TROPICAL CYCLONES				
Philippines (Mangkhut)	2018	1 300 000	1 000 000	Accurate
Mozambique (Idai)	2019	1 000 000	1 800 000	Underestimated
Moz Comoro (Kenneth)	2019	300 000	380 000	Accurate
Philippines (Kammuri)	2019	9 700 000	2 000 000	Significantly Overestimated
Bahamas (Dorian)	2019	70 000	70 000	Accurate
India (Amphan)	2020	600 000	660 000	Accurate
Philippines (Goni)	2020	5 000 000	1 000 000	Significantly Overestimated
Nicaragua (Iota)	2020	160 000	200 000	Accurate
Fiji (Yasa)	2020	180 000	90 000	Overestimated

Source: DG ECHO A1

### Low cost-per beneficiary for large scale crisis

The estimated cost per beneficiary was dependent on the scale of the crisis. As a starting point, the algorithm used a maximum and minimum amount of funding per person, which decreased as the number of people affected increased (see Figure 32 below). Subject to the vulnerability and share of affected population, the cost per beneficiary estimated by the algorithm ranged from EUR 12 for 10k of affected people to less than EUR 2 for crises with over 1M affected people. Both surveyed and interviewed stakeholders highlighted how in most cases the amount per beneficiaries in large scale crises was insufficient.

**Figure 32: Model for algorithmic estimates of the cost per beneficiary under the Unified Methodology for ALERT and SST**



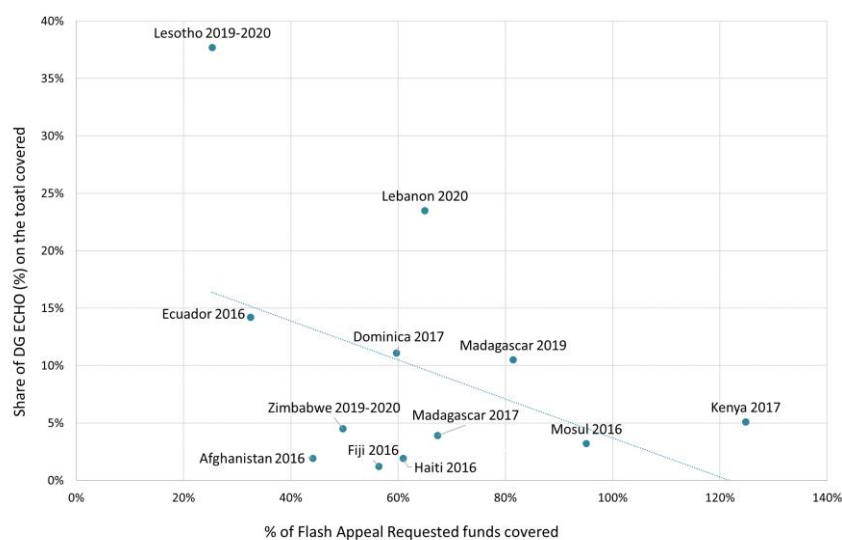
Source: DG ECHO A1

Source: ADE

A few interviewed DG ECHO staff (mainly HoOs) raised concerns that in a few cases funding was also driven by strategic considerations (visibility and external policy). They provided anecdotal evidence whereby SST requests from the field for low-visibility crises did not receive an immediate response

by HQ. An analysis of UN Flash Appeals data also revealed that DG ECHO provided very modest levels of funding to some under-funded crises such as Afghanistan 2016 (human-induced), Fiji 2016 (Tropical Cyclone), Haiti 2016 (Hurricane) and Zimbabwe 2019-2020 (cyclone). In other cases, however such as Lesotho 2019-2020 (Drought and Covid-19), and Ecuador 2016 (Earthquake), which also received limited global coverage, DG ECHO support was critical.

**Figure 33. Share of DG ECHO's contribution to UN Flash Appeals relative to international coverage**



Source: ADE's calculations based on extraction of data from UNOCHA FTS

**5.7 EQ7 To what extent were Emergency Toolbox-funded actions followed by additional Country/Region HIP-funded projects and/or linked to recovery/development projects? What could be further done (enabling factors, tools, mechanisms, change in strategy, etc.) to strengthen links to interventions of development actors?**

**Summary Response to EQ7**

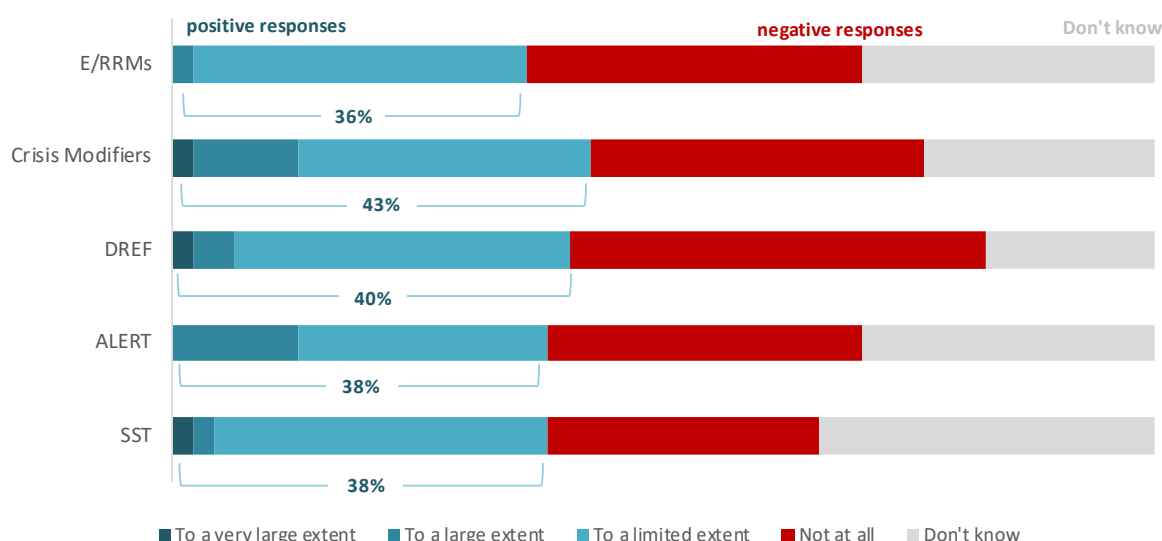
- Over the evaluation period, only a minority of projects included resilience objectives. The Sudden Onset Disasters context (acuteness and severity of crises, security and access constraints, need for immediate response) was not conducive to the pursuit of resilience objectives and for the implementation of a nexus approach, and partners were significantly constrained in their capacity to act.
- Despite acknowledging these constraints and the need to prioritise the speed of life-saving response, areas for strengthening linkages and resilience exist. This is especially the case for E/RRMs, CMs, and DREF. Indeed, E/RRMs were more likely to support resilience thanks to the inclusion of disaster preparedness and capacity building components. DREF was also generally valued for its support to local capacity building and anticipatory action. CMs also provided the opportunity for anticipatory action but were not used as such.
- According to partners, their capacity to pursue resilience and disaster preparedness objectives was significantly constrained by the lack of flexibility in the duration of grants, especially for ALERT.

**Resilience objectives were only to a limited extent pursued by DG ECHO funded actions responding to SODs.** This was largely justified by the need to ensure the timeliness of life-saving support. Moreover, the abilities and opportunities of humanitarian actors to integrate resilience in their activities are significantly constrained in the response to SODs. This is particularly the case in the context of conflict settings, protracted emergencies, and in situations with weak local capacities. Notwithstanding the contextual constraints and need for rapid response, DG ECHO could have been



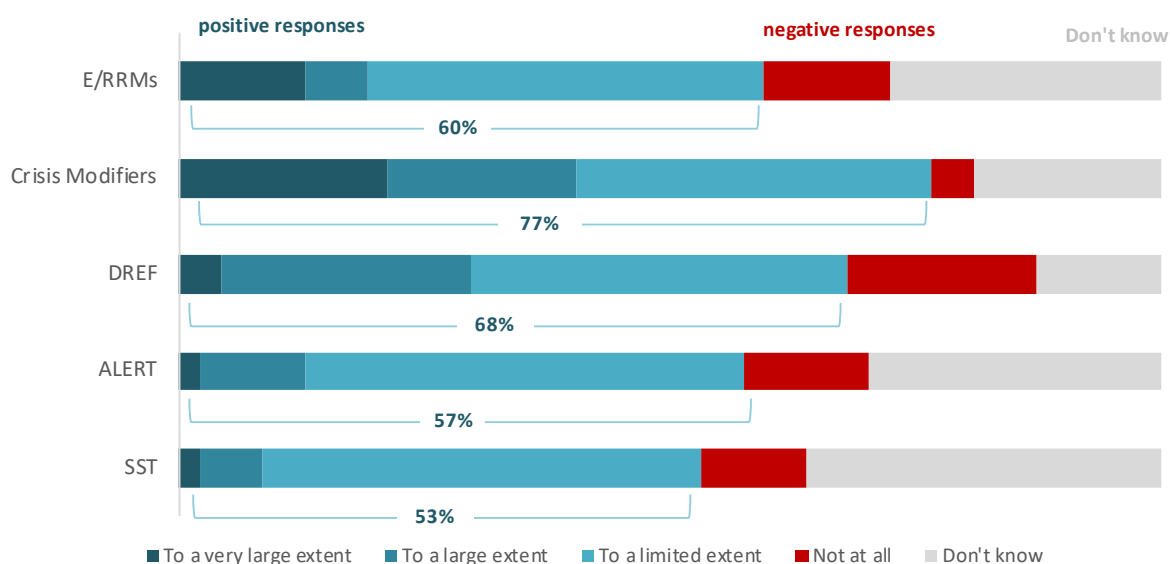
more proactive in supporting and encouraging partners to establish links between rapid response and DRR/DP on the one hand, and with recovery and longer-term development programmes on the other. Both interviewed and surveyed DG ECHO staff and partners agreed on the limited nature of existing links (see Figure 34 and Figure 35 below). This was the case across instruments. Indeed, the 2017 Review of E/RRMs and the review of RRM in Ethiopia had highlighted the need to further strengthen connectivity with follow-up response.

**Figure 34. DG ECHO staff perception of the links with recovery and longer-term development programmes<sup>37</sup>**



Source: ADE's surveys of DG ECHO Staff on sudden onset disasters

**Figure 35: DG ECHO staff perception of the links with DRR and preparedness programs<sup>38</sup>**



Source: ADE's surveys of DG ECHO Staff on sudden onset disasters

Indeed, an in-depth review of a select sample of projects shows that resilience was not a major objective of the urgent actions. Urgent actions and actions funded under emergency decisions that

<sup>37</sup> Note: Number of observations is 47 for DG ECHO Staff. The question was "To what extent have the actions funded via the following instruments/tools made links with recovery and longer term development programmes?"  
<sup>38</sup> Note: Number of observations is 47 for DG ECHO Staff. The question was: To what extent have the actions funded via the following instruments/tools made linkages with disaster risk reduction and preparedness programmes?



used a simplified single form (i.e. as for ALERT/SST and CM/RRM at least for some time) did not have to fill out the resilience marker at proposal stage (to speed up the process).<sup>39</sup> As a result, only a minority of ALERT and SST projects had the marker filled in at the proposal stage (see Table 17 below). Given the rapid response context, DG ECHO expectations towards partners were limited in terms of establishing these links.

Resilience considerations were strengthened during the implementation phase, but the share of ALERT and SST projects meeting the resilience marker criteria was low relative to other DG ECHO tools. This was particularly the case for ALERT, with only 16% of ALERT projects considered as sufficiently contributing to “strengthening local preparedness capacities to respond or adapt to identified risks” and only 9% as “having a deliberate strategy to reduce future humanitarian needs, underlying vulnerabilities and risks and identifying modalities to link-up with ongoing development interventions” (see Table 18 below). E/RRMs performed significantly better than the ETB, with 63% considered as having strengthened local preparedness capacities.

**An in-depth documentary review revealed that several projects relied on quick fixes as compared to sustainable solutions.** Although this was generally justified by the need for immediate response and in some cases by access constraints, a number of partner and DG ECHO staff described the futility of such quick-fix interventions including emergency WASH or temporary shelter/NFIs, which do little to contribute to durable solutions. This becomes particularly problematic in contexts where communities suffer recurrently from drought or flooding and other natural disasters, such as in the Philippines. Such quick fixes leave populations vulnerable to future shocks and result in inefficiencies in the response. Likewise, in contexts like Nigeria and Ethiopia, where populations suffer at once from chronic poverty and food security and that are regularly beset by additional shocks (“crises on top of crises”), addressing only needs emerging from new and acute crises, was described as an artificial distinction.

**In some cases, short-term lifesaving ETB interventions have incorporated resilience building activities such as shelter repair, livelihood programming and capacity building for local actors.** A number of such examples were identified in the context of the Philippines case study. Firstly, PRCS reported that DREF funds were used to support capacity building activities and led to increased branch level logistical capacity. This contributed to improving PRCS response capacity and consequently national disaster response capacity. Secondly, thanks to the participatory approach embedded in several ETB projects, community level leaders and local response structures have also benefited from the experience of responding to a disaster, with lessons learning activities enabling them to do better next time. Local level contingency plans have been updated. Beneficiaries themselves have participated in trainings, for example, on shelter, improving their preparedness levels. Some Indigenous populations have been rehoused in permanent shelters away from their high-risk landslide prone former settlements. Consortium partner activities have included an element of “build back better” within their sectoral programmes, notably in terms of shelter and WASH activities, as reported during the field visits. SAVE was able to merge their emergency activities into the ongoing health and education in emergencies programming. However, despite the inbuilt resilience building activities, affected communities still remained vulnerable to future typhoons or other natural disasters. DG ECHO field staff reported an isolation among the partners working on emergency response and those focusing on preparedness. Beyond the Philippines, a minority of ETB projects incorporated resilience building activities or indirectly supported local capacity building thanks to the adoption of a participatory approach to the design and implementation of projects. For instance, the **SST- COOPI IT- Paraguay- 2016**, contributed to improving local resilience through activities incorporating the principle of longer-term sustainability. Sanitation facilities were installed in key areas in the communities, such as schools and health centres. Hygiene education and awareness raising at community level will contribute to lowering water borne diseases in the long run.

<sup>39</sup> The marker provides information on four key resilience aspects including a) the analysis of risks and vulnerabilities, b) the adoption of a do no harm and conflict sensitivity approach, that addresses and does not aggravate the identified risks and any environmental impacts, c) the strengthening of local preparedness capacities to respond or adapt to identified risks, and d) the development of a deliberate strategy to reduce future humanitarian needs, underlying vulnerabilities and risks and identifies modalities to link-up with ongoing development interventions.

**Attention to disaster preparedness and anticipatory action was strengthened over the years but investment in these remained limited.** DREF supported the capacity building of national societies, contributing to the localisation agenda. It was also the channel through which DG ECHO supports IFRCs Forecast-based- Action (FbA). E/RRMs were focused on early action and were more likely to include disaster preparedness results and capacity development activities to local emergency response actors. CMs could also be used for anticipatory action. However, they were underused as such, mostly due to limited awareness. They were also constrained by their size (10% of contracts). DG ECHO has recognised the need to strengthen its anticipatory action, and has decided to develop an anticipatory action tool, which will possibly be embedded in the ETB. DG ECHO has also committed to strengthening its work on disaster preparedness and to promoting a risk-informed approach to humanitarian action in complement to its needs-based action (DG ECHO Disaster Preparedness Guidance Note, 2021). This is to be achieved by mainstreaming a preparedness and risk-informed approach in all its response operations, including the rapid response, as well as by encouraging targeted preparedness actions.

**Partners were able in some cases to establish linkages between DG ECHO’s emergency response and DRR/DP activities including DIPECHO projects. However, such linkages were overall limited.** For instance, the **SST – ACF-ES - Colombia – 2017** did not target resilience objectives. It triggered however the intention of the partner of presenting to DG ECHO a DIPECHO Action. This aimed at reinforcing community and local DRM capacities. Similarly, the **SST - FAO IT-COLOMBIA-2016** relied on community promoters of agroclimatic risk management from a DIPECHO project for the dissemination of information on project activities, goals and progress for the community at-large.

**The short duration of projects was an important constraint to the pursuit of linkages by partners with follow-up response. When possible, partners tried to build connections with the other country activities, or follow-up their activities with additional ECHO HIP-funded actions.** However, many of the interviewees reported that the short duration of projects constrained such an approach (See case study on timeliness for details). They argued that more flexible duration in grants, in the absence of greater systemic linkages with development actors and resources, could help soften rapid exits. Indeed, the duration of interventions was very short, even by emergency response standards, with ETB contracts lasting on average for 7 months. In depth review of some projects, revealed better integration of resilience objectives when contract duration was extended. In the context of E/RRMs, the recent integration of a CM approach, which can allow for larger and more lengthy follow-up grants to implementing partners, was also seen as a good practice.

**Table 16: Duration of ALERT and SST contracts (in months), 2016-2020**

	ALERT	SST
Average	7	7
Min	1	3
Max	32	12

Source: ADE’s calculations based on data extracted from HOPE

**The lack of connectedness between DG ECHO and the EU institutions involved in development activities (DG INTPA, EU Delegations) and EU MS regarding the humanitarian-development nexus has been stressed by DG ECHO staff as a clear limit of the effect of its interventions.** This was partly attributed to the limited capacity of DG INTPA to mobilise resources quickly. Coordination with non-EU development actors was also limited. There was large variation across countries, but DG ECHO generally participated in a number of fora where nexus discussions took place such as the UN Country Team, the Humanitarian Country Team, and the Humanitarian and Resilience Donor Group among others. However, their on-the-ground activities were rarely connected to investments that could help resolve root causes of humanitarian needs. The challenges were linked to a lack of capacity among development agencies to understand the needs of those affected, but also weaknesses in the overall system (disputes regarding who is in charge of recovery, where the resources should come from etc.).

**Table 17. Resilience maker score at proposal stage by instrument, 2016-2020**

Instrument	0	1	2	Marker not filled
ALERT	0%	3%	3%	94%
Small-Scale Tool	0%	22%	17%	61%
ERMs	0%	63%	25%	13%
Other DG ECHO tools	1%	39%	44%	15%
Total	1%	37%	41%	20%

Source: ADE calculations based on HOPE data

**Table 18. Share of projects reported as having sufficiently met the Resilience Marker Criteria (final report stage), 2016-2020**

Resilience Marker Criteria	ALERT	SST	E/RRMs	Other DG ECHO tools
Analysis of risks and vulnerabilities	16%	36%	88%	77%
The project adopts a do no harm and conflict sensitivity approach, addresses and does not aggravate the identified risks and any environmental impacts	19%	39%	100%	73%
The project strengthens local preparedness capacities to respond or adapt to identified risks	16%	31%	63%	74%
A deliberate strategy to reduce future humanitarian needs, underlying vulnerabilities and risks and identifies modalities to link-up with ongoing development interventions	9%	22%	25%	57%

Source: ADE calculations based on HOPE data

**Figure 36. Survey comments on gaps related to linkages with DRR and development/recovery**

**Comments from Partners**

I think one important gap is that they do not fully connect with ECHO's larger funding tool which is the HIP. I think it would be valuable if, for example, an ALERT project could be topped up during the HIP without having to define a whole new project

**Comments from DG ECHO**

Lack of Coordination with DG INTPA and development colleagues (but attributable to DG INTPA as it cannot mobilization resources quickly

Post RRM insufficiently addressed in emergency response tools

Budget allocation not entirely transparent (use of the methods not very reliable)

Lack of real involvement of EU Del and EU MS (advocacy, flexibility with their programming to tackle the roots cause)

Better/stronger integration/adoption in other EU funding beyond ECHO grants (e.g., MIPs, EDFs, etc.) of CM, RRM, etc. through a systematic mainstreaming of disaster risk reduction activities in development work

Team Europe approach (combining hum. Assistance and civil protection)

Source: ADE's surveys of DG ECHO Staff and Partners on sudden onset disasters

## 6 CONCLUSIONS

This section presents the conclusions emerging from the evaluation's analysis on DG ECHO's response to Sudden Onset Disasters. They are based on the findings presented under related evaluation question (EQs). The conclusions are structured along the six evaluation criteria: a) relevance and appropriateness, b) coherence and alignment, c) coordination and added value, d) effectiveness, e) cost-effectiveness, and f) connectedness. Cross-references are provided with EQs.

### ON RELEVANCE AND APPROPRIATENESS

**Conclusion 1: DG ECHO's rapid response tools were mostly fit-for-purpose providing rapid, flexible, and appropriate response to Sudden Onset Disasters. Areas for strengthening the timeliness and flexibility of response remain, however. Limited familiarity with the tools proved to be a challenge.**

**DG ECHO's tools were well designed to be activated quickly. However, in reality there were several impediments to providing a rapid response with the ETB and E/RRMs.** In the case of the ETB (specifically ALERT and SST), DG ECHO has well established processes and systems (the Standard Operating Procedures and Flanders algorithm) which ensure quick decision making. However, delays often occurred during the contracting and implementation stages. For instance, challenges in completing the simplified eSF and coordinating response across actors has led to delays in signature of contract. Furthermore, implementation delays (for both ETB actions as well as E/RRMs) have been caused by external factors (e.g., security and access issues, strikes), procurement delays and delays in identification and validation of the most vulnerable sections of the affected population. While some of these factors are outside DG ECHO's sphere of influence (e.g., security constraints), some of the issues causing delays can be better managed. For example, investment in pre-positioning of critical supplies has been a key enabling factor in several cases, but the use of pre-positioning remained limited. Finally, the monitoring of timeliness was limited, objectively assess and compare the timeliness of assistance delivery for the different tools in a satisfying way.

**While each tool has its relative strengths and weaknesses, they are overall complementary in their design.** Normally crisis modifiers are the quickest tool to deploy as there is no need for a contract modification request. Crisis modifiers thus enable partners to respond quickly and flexibly to an emergency in terms of sectoral and geographic coverage, but the funds available are limited (normally 10% of the contract value). In certain contexts, such as acute and ongoing/recurrent crisis contexts, E/RRMs are the best available tool to respond to a sudden-onset disaster as they allow a faster (as compared to the ETB) and a bigger response (as compared to crisis modifiers). E/RRMs however, usually have a pre-defined geographic and sectoral focus which limits their flexibility to respond to new needs. Embedding crisis modifiers within E/RRMs thus enhances their geographic and sectoral flexibility. Recognising the benefits of this approach, DG ECHO has been encouraging partners to increasingly embed crisis modifiers within E/RRMs.

**Moreover, the mix of tools allows partners to cover all types of disasters and provide support across a range of sectors and geographical locations.** During the evaluation period, the Emergency Toolbox was deployed in 62 countries around the world in a variety of disaster contexts ranging from avalanches to volcanic eruptions. Likewise, DREF resources have been used to respond to a range of emergencies (weather related disasters, earthquakes and volcano eruptions to social unrest, forced migration and acts of violence).

**Some shortfalls and gaps can, however, be noted in the use of DG ECHO's tools.** Firstly, low levels of awareness/understanding of these tools have constrained their use, particularly for crisis modifiers. The latter had not been systematically used by partners during much of the evaluation period. Moreover, the evaluation also identified a gap in the ETBs capacity to respond to human-induced disasters of over 100,000 people.

EQ1, EQ4

## On coherence and alignment

**Conclusion 2: DG ECHO's emergency response was well aligned with DG ECHO's principled approach and targeted the needs of the most vulnerable populations.**

**DG ECHO and partner approaches generally ensured that emergency response targeted the most vulnerable and corresponded to their most pressing needs.** DG ECHO systematically prioritised vulnerability-based targeting across sectors in line with its sectoral guidelines; blanket targeting where used, was well justified. Individual projects targeted appropriately the needs of the most vulnerable in most cases thanks to (i) thorough scrutiny of partners' needs assessment by DG ECHO; (ii) systematic needs assessments by partners using established methodologies and participatory approaches; (iii) pre-selection of partners with capacity and presence on the ground and (iv) tailored approaches to engaging women and children. Only in a few, isolated cases, some issues were identified. For example, in the case of some DREF operations, DG ECHO flagged issues relating to weak needs assessment and lack of adequate clarity on targeting. Also in some difficult contexts, response was sometimes found to be driven by feasibility rather than what was most needed.

**DG ECHO funded actions were largely aligned with HAR, Humanitarian Consensus, Humanitarian Principles and DG ECHO's thematic policies.** Nevertheless, some practical challenges were encountered in ensuring compliance with these principles in certain contexts. These included the following: (i) increased military involvement in the delivery of humanitarian aid e.g. in Nigeria, military is positioned as a security provider and gatekeeper for humanitarian actors; (ii) beneficiary lists were in some cases undertaken in cooperation with local authorities/community leaders who exhibited favouritism (e.g. Philippines); (iii) relief items not being distributed directly to the beneficiaries by the National Societies but handed over to the community leaders (DREF 2020 review).

EQ2, EQ6

## On Coordination and EU added value

**Conclusion 3: DG ECHO's response added significant value in terms of timeliness, coverage, and quality of response.**

DG ECHO added value in a number of ways:

- Funding: DG ECHO's funding was critical in achieving sufficient levels of funding. DG ECHO was the third largest contributor to UN Flash Appeals.
- Speed and flexibility: Its instruments were amongst the fastest relative to those of other donors and were able to provide a much broader coverage, in terms of geography, sectors, and types of crises.
- DG ECHO's global field presence, sectoral expertise, and large network of established partners contributed to the quality and speed of response.
- DG ECHO's principled approach and role in advocacy for access.
- Coordination with other actors helped avoid duplications with DG ECHO systematically considering the actions of other donors.

EQ1, EQ2, EQ3, EQ6



## On effectiveness

**Conclusion 4: Overall, DG ECHO's rapid response tools have been largely effective in saving lives, reducing suffering, and providing human dignity for people affected by sudden onset disasters. Beyond contextual factors, sufficient disaster preparedness, prepositioning of stocks and partner capacities were key for effectiveness.**

**Projects funded under the Emergency Toolbox (ETB) and DG ECHO funded Emergency/Rapid Response Mechanisms (E/RRMs) have by and large delivered the expected results<sup>40</sup>** and have in most cases, surpassed the target number of beneficiaries. DG ECHO's tools were found to be particularly successful in responding to emergencies in areas where disaster preparedness had taken place (including the establishment of early warning systems, development of contingency plans and Standard Operating Procedures, etc.) and there was sufficient pre-positioning of emergency items and staff capacity (e.g., the Philippines). Timeliness of response and capacity of partners proved key for achieving results. The effectiveness of DREF was particularly dependent on the capacity of different NRCS, with large variations across countries. Security and access constrained also undermined results, with E/RRMs tending to be the most well adjusted to respond in such contexts.

**DG ECHO funded DREF operations have additionally contributed to the localisation agenda and promoting anticipatory action.** By building the capacities of National Red Cross Societies, DG ECHO funded DREF operations have contributed to furthering its commitments to the localisation agenda (as part of the Grand Bargain commitments). Via its contributions to DREF, DG ECHO has also supported the strengthening of IFRC's Forecast based Action,<sup>41</sup> in line with the recent G7 commitments on Strengthening Anticipatory Action in Humanitarian Assistance<sup>42</sup>. There is, however, currently limited flexibility and resources within DG ECHO's rapid response toolset to invest in anticipatory action.

EQ1, EQ5, EQ6, EQ2

## On cost-effectiveness

**Conclusion 5: DG ECHO's flexibility in approach, and systematic monitoring supported the cost-effectiveness of its rapid response. However, a number of projects faced significant inefficiencies, due to access and securities constraints, as well as delays and administrative challenges. Several areas for improvement were identified.**

**As a donor, DG ECHO took several measures to ensure cost-effectiveness,** especially evident in the use of well-structured analysis and reporting process (the Single Forms) and the flexibility applied by DG ECHO to adapt this process to the specificities of the Sudden Onset Disaster Context.

**Several projects however, faced significant inefficiencies.** Beyond contextual constraints, the lack of prepositioning proved the biggest issue, resulting in delays and very costly procurement. Several areas for improvement were identified including increasing investments in disaster preparedness, decreasing administrative burdens, and strengthening the use of Crisis Modifiers to enhance flexibility.

EQ1, EQ5, EQ6, EQ2

<sup>40</sup> Projects not achieving their Key Result Indicators (KRIs) were concentrated in countries with challenging contexts and significant access and security constraints such as Nigeria and Afghanistan

<sup>41</sup> DG ECHO expanded its support to anticipatory action in 2019 by supporting the Forecast Based Action Fund (FbAF) of IFRC through an indirect management funding agreement. This allowed the IFRC to use up to 20 percent of DREF for Forecast based Actions.

<sup>42</sup> G7 Foreign Ministers' Statement on Strengthening Anticipatory Action in Humanitarian Assistance, Press release, 13 May 2022. Available [here](#)



**Conclusion 6: DG ECHO funding was critical for ensuring sufficient coverage of Sudden Onset Disasters. However, budgets at the project level remained modest relative to needs. While acknowledging that DG ECHO faces funding constraints and cannot meet all needs, areas for improving the process of allocating funds and strengthening cost-effectiveness remained.**

**DG ECHO was amongst the biggest contributors to the response to Sudden Onset Disasters providing support across sectors and types of disaster.** The ETB HIPs were revised multiple times a year to account for evolving needs. However, budgets at the project level proved modest relative to needs. While acknowledging that DG ECHO has funding constraints and cannot meet all needs, areas for strengthening cost-effectiveness and improving the allocation of funds remained.

**The use of the Flanders algorithm has improved the objectivity and speed of ETB funding allocations, but challenges have persisted.** The algorithm has gone through iterations and improvements overtime, including the introduction of the Unified methodology for SST and ALERT. However, some challenges remained: (i) inaccuracy of PIN estimates in certain cases e.g., earthquakes; (ii) inappropriateness of PIN estimates in certain crisis contexts e.g. displaced vs affected for floods; and (iii) the low estimates for the cost per beneficiary for large scale crises. Despite these limitations, the algorithm remains a useful tool when used alongside with field inputs. Beyond issues with algorithmic estimates, there was a perception among a few stakeholders that DG ECHO funding was in a few cases driven by strategic considerations such as visibility and external policy objectives.

EQ1, EQ5, EQ6, CCL 5

## On resilience-building and connectedness of response

**Conclusion 7: DG ECHO's response to Sudden Onset Disasters was not sufficiently resilience-oriented and linkages with recovery/ development activities were limited. Although the emergency response context de facto limited opportunities for linkages, areas for improvement remained.**

Over the evaluation period, only a minority of projects included resilience objectives. The Sudden Onset Disasters context (acuteness and severity of crises, security and access constraints, need for immediate response) was not conducive to the pursuit of resilience objectives and for the implementation of a nexus approach, and partners were significantly constrained in their capacity to act.

Despite acknowledging these constraints and the need to prioritise the speed of life-saving response, areas for strengthening linkages and resilience exist. In some cases, short-term lifesaving ALERT and SST interventions have incorporated resilience building activities such as shelter repair, livelihood programming and capacity building for local actors. E/RRMs also offered opportunities support resilience thanks to the inclusion of disaster preparedness and capacity building components. DREF was also generally valued for its support to local capacity building through Red Cross National Societies and anticipatory action. This demonstrates that resilience can be addressed even via rapid response tools. The main factors constraining the sustainability of emergency response are: (i) short duration of ETB actions; (ii) lack of follow-up with other humanitarian or development actions; and (iii) lack of connectedness between DG ECHO and the EU institutions involved in development activities (DG INTPA, EU Delegation) and EU Member States.

EQ4, EQ7

## 7 RECOMMENDATIONS

This section presents five prospective/strategic recommendations related to DG ECHO's response to Sudden Onset Disasters, which emerged from the conclusions, in order of perceived strategic importance. As relevant, the strategic recommendations are broken down into further detailed, operational recommendations.

### **Recommendation 1: DG ECHO should improve awareness and understanding of its rapid response tools among partners and the wider humanitarian community**

DG ECHO's emergency response tools have different scope and timing, advantages and disadvantages and are therefore suitable in different situations, as described in detail in conclusions 1 and 4. The tools are not mutually exclusive, instead they are complementary, as proven for instance by the successful use of crisis modifiers embedded in E/RRMs.

The optimal and sufficient use of DG ECHO's tools in line with their unique characteristics, relies on a sufficient awareness and understanding of the opportunities they offer. These have so far been limited. Partners generally lacked awareness of the full range of DG ECHO's rapid response tools. This is reflected in the limited use of Crisis Modifiers and to a lesser extent of the Emergency Toolbox in certain countries. It is also reflected for instance in the lack of use of Crisis Modifiers for early action, with most partners not being aware of this opportunity.

DG ECHO should therefore improve awareness and understanding of the opportunities offered by its tools. This could be achieved by:

- Developing clearer guidelines on the use of different tools<sup>43</sup> and ensuring their sufficient dissemination.
- Encouraging the systematic use of crisis modifiers in volatile contexts including by organising workshops to strengthen partners understanding (on the basis of the already developed guidelines).

<sup>43</sup> Possibly on the basis of the ToC developed in the context of this evaluation.

### **Recommendation 2: DG ECHO should step-up its support for anticipatory action and pre-positioning of critical supplies**

There is overwhelming evidence on the benefits of investing in both anticipatory action and pre-positioning of stocks:

- Anticipatory action reduces humanitarian needs, protects development gains, and contributes to saving lives while strengthening the timeliness and efficiency of response.
- Pre-positioning of critical supplies reduces the time and cost of response. The evaluation demonstrated that insufficient pre-positioning of stocks was the biggest source of delays and cost-inefficiencies, beyond contextual factors.

Yet, there is currently very limited investment in anticipatory action through DG ECHO's rapid response tools, with DREF being the only tool used in this regard. Likewise, the Disaster Preparedness budget-line of DG ECHO is mainly focussed on local capacity building given the limited funding available rather than pre-positioning.

It is understood that DG ECHO B2 (Prevention and Disaster Risk Management) is currently working on a set of options for funding anticipatory action which inter alia includes the possibility of creating a specific tool for this purpose within the Emergency Toolbox. Moreover, the European Humanitarian Response Capacity (EHRC) will enable regional stockpiling in four countries worldwide, from the second half of 2022. These are both steps in the right direction.

This evaluation reinforces the importance of investing in anticipatory action and pre-positioning. Alongside the above actions, it is recommended that DG ECHO should:

- Encourage partners to use crisis modifiers for pre-positioning and anticipatory action.
- Continue to support IFRC's FbAF through DREF (see Part B of this evaluation).

### **Recommendation 3: DG ECHO should strengthen the feedback loops and linkages between its rapid response and HIP funding and DP/DRR programming**

During the evaluation period, there were several countries where the Emergency Toolbox was being used on a regular basis to respond to needs arising for recurrent disasters (e.g., the Philippines, Bangladesh). This raised the question of whether the humanitarian needs of these countries were adequately reflected in their HIPs as well as of the sufficiency of investments in DP/DRR, to reduce the scale of humanitarian needs in case of disaster.

To address these issues, DG ECHO should strengthen the feedback loops between its emergency response and regular programming via the HIPs (focussing on DP/DRR). For instance, DG ECHO, could systematically consider the ETB allocations in a country as one of the criteria for deciding the levels of HIP funding and Disaster Preparedness allocations. This would lead to a more joined-up approach within DG ECHO and ensure the optimal and appropriate use of its rapid response tools.

### **Recommendation 4: DG ECHO should improve Monitoring Evaluation and Learning (MEL) of its rapid response tools**

The evaluation has highlighted several weaknesses in the monitoring systems for rapid response tools e.g., lack of centralised data on the use of Crisis Modifiers and E/RRMs, sparing use of Key Result Indicators (KRIs) on timeliness etc. In absence of adequate monitoring systems, it is hard to objectively assess the timeliness, effectiveness and efficiency of the various tools. Moreover,

knowledge sharing on the use of these tools is currently limited (some lessons learned workshops have been organised on E/RRMs at country or regional level).

The evaluation makes the following recommendations to improve MEL:

- Introduce a flag to identify E/RRM projects and contracts with crisis modifiers on HOPE database.
- Regularly register the activation of crisis modifiers on HOPE.
- Agree on a common set of mandatory metrics (KRIs) to measure the timeliness of the various tools.<sup>44</sup>
- Monitor the length of decision-making and contracting processes for the ETB to ensure compliance with SOPs and foster lesson-learning.
- Undertake a detailed stock-taking and comparative study of DG ECHO funded E/RRMs with a view to capture good practices and lessons.

### Recommendation 5: DG ECHO should improve the speed and transparency of contracting for ALERT and SST

#### Speed

While streamlined processes, well-established SOPs and the use of Flanders algorithm for ALERT and SST have ensured quick decision making, there are considerable delays during the contracting phase (despite the SOPs establishing a timeframe of 14 days for ALERT). In order to provide a timely response, DG ECHO has to de facto, rely on pre-financing capacity of partners and their willingness to take financial risk. This situation is not optimal.

The following actions could be taken by DG ECHO to speed up contracting:

- Create a separate, shorter form for the Emergency toolbox.
- Establish clear response deadlines for partners for submitting proposals and for providing clarifications to any follow-up questions.

#### Transparency

DG ECHO often pre-selects partners for ALERT and SST funding on the basis of their local presence, capacity to deliver and track record rather than holding open calls. This is justified given the urgency and imperative to save lives, but transparency can and should be improved.

The following actions could be taken by DG ECHO to strengthen transparency while maintaining the speed of response and without reverting to open calls:

- Consult partners (for example by organizing a partner workshop) to discuss potential options for improving the transparency of ETB funding decisions, without compromising the speed of response.
- Consider putting in place a shortlist of key partners (selected through a transparent process) for the ETB actions who are capable of delivering quick and effective response in emergency prone areas by sectoral expertise.
- Clarify the contracting process for ALERT and SST within the Standard Operating Procedures to define the process of pre-selection and when this is justified.

<sup>44</sup> As explained in the timeliness case study, the use of timeliness KRIs is not mandatory and they are only very sparingly used. At the same time, due to their custom nature, even when filled in, these KRIs do not allow for systematic comparisons. Given the importance of speed for the response to Sudden Onset Disasters, it is therefore suggested to establish some mandatory KRIs on timeliness to be used across the different tools. E.g. “% targeted disaster affected beneficiaries receiving lifesaving response within the expected number of days from the displacement/disaster/alert/ trigger” or number of days between the delivery of life-saving support and the displacement/disaster/alert/ trigger”

**PART B: DG ECHO'S PARTNERSHIP WITH THE IFRC, 2016-2020**

**LIST OF ACRONYMS**

AAP	Accountability to Affected Persons
ADE	Aide à la Décision Economique
CERF	Central Emergency Response Fund
COHAFA	Council Working Party on Humanitarian aid and Food Aid
CREWS	Climate Risk and Early Warning Systems
CVA	Cash and Voucher Assistance
DAG	Donor Advisory Group
DG ECHO	Directorate-General for European Civil Protection and Humanitarian Aid Operations
DG INTPA	Directorate-General for International Partnerships
DG NEAR	Directorate General for European Neighbourhood Policy and Enlargement
DG NEAR	Directorate General for Neighbourhood and Enlargement Negotiations
DREF	Disaster Relief Emergency Fund
EAP	Early Action Protocol
EC	European Commission
EHF	European Humanitarian Forum
ERU	Emergency Response Unit
EQ	Evaluation Question
ESSN	Emergency Social Safety Net
EU	European Union
EU MS	European Union Member State
EU NS	European Union National Societies
EWS	Early Warning System
FACT	Field Assessment and Coordination Team
FAO	Food and Agriculture Organisation
FbAF	Forecast based Action Fund
FPA	Framework Partnership Agreement
FRIT	Facility for Refugees in Turkey
G7	Group of Seven

GDPR	General Data Protection Regulation
HAR	Humanitarian Aid Regulation
HH	Household
HIP	Humanitarian Implementation Plan (DG ECHO)
HNS	Host National Society
HOPE	Humanitarian Office Programme Environment (DG ECHO Database)
HQ	Headquarters
IASC	Inter-Agency Standing Committee
ICRC	International Committee of the Red Cross and Red Crescent
IFI	International Financial Institution
IFRC	International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies
INTPA	Directorate General for International Partnerships
ISC	Indirect Support Cost
JC	Judgment Criterion
KII	Key Informant Interview
LDC	Least Developed Countries
MoFLSS	Ministry of Family, Labour and Social Services
NGO	Non-governmental Organisation
PIROI	Indian Ocean Regional Intervention Platform
PPP	Pilot Programmatic Partnership
PRCS	Palestine Red Crescent Society
PRM	U.S.A. Bureau for Population Refugees and Migration
RCBL	Red Cross Bureau de Liaison in Brussels (also known as RCEU)
RCEU	Red Cross EU Office
RCCC	Red Cross Red Crescent Climate Centre
RDRT	Regional Disaster Response Team
REAP	Risk Informed Early Action Partnership
SFDRR	Sendai Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction
SIDS	Small Island Developing States
SSA	Sub-Saharan Africa



ToC	Theory of Change
ToR	Terms of Reference
TRC	Turkish Red Crescent
UN	United Nations
UNHCR	United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees
UNOCHA	United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs
WFP	World Food Programme
WHS	World Humanitarian Summit

## 1 INTRODUCTION

This is the Final Report for the Combined evaluation of the EU's humanitarian response to sudden-onset disasters from 2016 to 2020 (Part A) and of DG ECHO's partnership with the IFRC (Part B). The evaluation was launched by DG ECHO in August 2021. The work was undertaken by ADE with inputs from experts in the fields of humanitarian assistance and evaluation.

This section covers Part B of the combined evaluation: DG ECHO's partnership with the IFRC.

### 1.1 Purpose of the evaluation

The evaluation sought to assess how the relations between IFRC and DG ECHO have evolved and the extent to which these developments have laid the foundations for a strong and sustainable partnership going forward. More specifically, the following evaluation questions were examined:

**Table 19 : Evaluation questions for Part B**

EQ8	Alignment	How well aligned were DG ECHO and the IFRC in terms of: <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>strategies and objectives?</li> <li>prioritising crises and needs?</li> <li>advocacy priorities, communication campaigns and visibility efforts?</li> </ol>
EQ9	Dialogue	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>To what extent did a structured, strategic, timely and functional dialogue take place between the two partners? By what means?</li> <li>What has been the result of this dialogue on collaboration and funding trends between the two organisations?</li> </ol>
EQ10	Efficiency, effectiveness and Management costs	To what extent did the DG ECHO-IFRC partnership succeed in <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>maximising efficiencies and decreasing management and related costs, including administrative burden?</li> <li>improving effectiveness and cost effectiveness in their response?</li> </ol>
EQ11	Coordination & Nexus	To what extent did the DG ECHO-IFRC partnership contribute to: <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Strengthening coordination within the Red Cross Movement (IFRC, ICRC, EU National Societies and beyond), and with other humanitarian actors, notably UN?</li> <li>Strengthening a Nexus approach between the humanitarian response and development?</li> </ol>

## 1.2 Evaluation scope

### Thematic scope

The Evaluation covered the relationship between IFRC and DG ECHO focusing on the following aspects:

- **Strategic elements in the cooperation between the IFRC and DG ECHO**, most notably the role of the Partnership in (i) expanding the reach of DG ECHO's humanitarian response geographically (through IFRC NS membership); (ii) enriching the policy approaches of the two organisations (e.g., humanitarian principles, climate change, innovative approaches such as forecast based financing); (iii) supporting strategic initiatives of shared interest (iv) capacity building; and (v) addressing Grand Bargain commitments (e.g., multi-year funding, localisation).
- **Operational aspects of the partnerships**: the evaluation assessed the evolving relationships of DG ECHO with IFRC through their interactions on the DREF and ESSN, as constitutive elements of the operational side of the partnership being formalised in 2021 with the Programmatic Partnership (PP).

As the focus of the evaluation was on partnership working, **it did not assess the relevance, effectiveness, efficiency etc.** of DG ECHO funded actions implemented by IFRC, apart from those that fall under part A of the evaluation. However, whether the partnership contributes to relevant effective and efficient delivery, does fall within the scope of the present evaluation.

### Temporal Scope:

The Evaluation focused on the period 2016-2020 as per the ToR. However, in agreement with the Evaluation Managers, the ESSN case study covered the entire period of IFRC involvement in the ESSN, from 2019 to 2021. The IFRC implementation of the ESSN started from April 2020 onwards, with an inception phase between September 2019 and April 2020. Moreover, while the PP was only formalised in 2021 and was still in its roll out phase at the time of the evaluation, given its strategic importance, due consideration has been given to how the PP has supported the DG ECHO-IFRC partnership to develop. Thus, while not falling within the direct purview of this evaluation in terms of results achieved, the negotiation process and the implications of its launch were considered.

## 2 STRUCTURE OF THE REPORT

The remainder of this document is organized as follows:

- Section 3 presents the methodology;
- Section 4 recaps the theory of change for DG ECHO's partnership with IFRC;
- Section 5 outlines the main findings per EQ;
- Section 6 elaborates conclusions;
- Section 7 details recommendations.

The main report is supported by the following annexes:

- Annex 1: Evaluation Matrix;
- Annex 2: List of consulted documents;
- Annex 3: List of interviews;
- Annex 4: Case studies;
- Annex 5: Methodology and Coverage: Survey on DG ECHO-IFRC Partnership;
- Annex 6: Results: Survey on DG ECHO-IFRC Partnership.

### 3 METHODOLOGICAL APPROACH

This section presents (i) the overall methodological approach; (ii) the evaluation tools; (iii) and challenges in terms of evaluability.

#### 3.1 Overall Approach

This evaluation of DG ECHO's partnership with the IFRC over the 2016-2020 period has a theory-based design. As such, the evaluation is underpinned by an explicit theory of change illustrating how the partnership is intended to work and the specific results and outcomes it is expected to deliver (see Section 4).

The evaluation explores specific aspects of the theory of the change, as reflected in the four evaluation questions. The choice of specific methods and tools was guided by a detailed evaluation matrix (presented in Annex 1) setting out the judgement criteria and indicators used for addressing each evaluation question.

#### 3.2 Methods and tools

##### 3.2.1 Interviews

Fifty-six key informant interviews (KIIs) were conducted remotely through various audio-visual tools as feasible, given the COVID-19 crisis. The list of informants can be found in Annex 3. This included key staff from IFRC, DG ECHO (both at HQ and field level), National Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies, and other relevant Commission services.

The interviews were conducted using semi-structured interview guidelines, which were based on the evaluation matrix (see Annex 1). These guidelines provided a structured and coherent approach to interviews conducted separately by different evaluation team members.

##### 3.2.2 Documentary review

A library of documents was developed during the inception phase of the evaluation. Further documentation was gathered through the key informant interviews. These were used as a complementary source of information. The library contained relevant documents from both DG ECHO and the IFRC on various aspects of the partnership.

A selection of 63 documents was reviewed in a structured manner against the judgement criteria in the Evaluation Matrix (see Annex 2 for the list of the documents reviewed). An excel sheet was used to extract and compile information by judgement criteria. This provided the basis for subsequent synthesis and analysis of documentary evidence.

##### 3.2.3 Online surveys

Two online surveys were administered during the desk phase of this evaluation. These are briefly described below:

- **DG ECHO staff:** The survey was disseminated to DG ECHO staff involved directly with the development of the partnership with IFRC or at policy level, and indirectly via the different activities implemented by the IFRC received the survey. This included staff at headquarters from the thematic, partnership and geographic units, as well as field staff at regional and country level;
- **IFRC staff:** The survey was disseminated to selected IFRC staff involved with DG ECHO either at a strategic level (notably involved in the development of the partnership with DG ECHO) or through the management and implementation of actions which benefited

from the support of DG ECHO. This included staff at Headquarter, regional and cluster or country offices.

To ensure that respondents had a sufficiently rich experience of the partnership, staff of selected regions and countries were targeted. The selection was based on the intensity of the collaboration and funding as well as a diversity of contexts both in terms of geography and humanitarian situation.

The questions included in the surveys were formulated to provide an overview of the perception of the key areas of the partnership. They enabled the identification of key issues that were then further explored in subsequent phases of the evaluation. More specifically, the areas covered included:

- Awareness on the different activities and components of the partnership;
- Intensity of collaboration in key areas;
- Intensity of coordination key areas.

The surveys succeeded in reaching a representative sample as indicated by a comparison of key population and sample variables:

- IFRC staff: The survey was sent by the IFRC to focal points in a set of regional/cluster/country offices with the request to disseminate the survey to knowledgeable staff. It is therefore not possible to precisely estimate a response rate for this survey. However, with 32 responses for a survey disseminated to around 10 focal points, the turnout appears satisfying. The large majority of IFRC respondents are based in field offices: around 50% in country offices and 35% in regional offices. The remaining 15% were based at the headquarters in Geneva. Around half of the respondent have management level positions (i.e., including Head of units/country offices). (See Annex 6 for more details);
- DG ECHO staff: Out of the 74 DG ECHO staff contacted, 19 responded to the survey which corresponds to a response rate of around 25%. DG ECHO respondents are equally shared between field staff and staff from HQ, half of whom are from the geographical desks. In terms of role in DG ECHO, around two thirds of the respondents are field, or desk officers and a quarter have management level positions.

**Details on the methodology and coverage of the surveys, as well as a presentation of the results are provided in Annexes 5 and 6 respectively.**

### 3.2.4 Theory of Change Workshop

A Theory of Change (ToC) was developed as part of the inception phase (See Section 4). This was presented at a workshop with participants from DG ECHO and the IFRC. The online workshop sought to discuss and refine the ToC to better reflect the inputs, outputs and results of the partnership between DG ECHO and the IFRC. The ToC was adjusted following the workshop and this finalised version constituted the conceptual basis for the evaluation.

### 3.2.5 Case Studies

To complement the above methods, two case studies were conducted as follows:

- **DG ECHO – IFRC partnership in the context of the ESSN<sup>45</sup>.** The ESSN was selected as a case study to inform the evaluation given its strategic significance for the DG ECHO-IFRC partnership. The contract for the implementation of the ESSN has been cited as a turning point in the relationship between DG ECHO and IFRC, primarily due to its size and strategic significance of the programme. The scale of this agreement dwarfed other previous cooperation agreements between the two organisations. The case study examined how the partnership worked in the context of ESSN implementation. It covered the entire period of ESSN implementation by the IFRC i.e., from 2019 to 2021. In addition, the findings were contextualised by comparison with the previous phase of ESSN implementation from 2016, prior to the handover of the management contract from WFP to IFRC.
- **DG ECHO’s contribution to Forecast-based Action (FbA) through the partnership with IFRC:** This second case study was more forward looking in its approach, exploring the role DG ECHO could play, going forward, in supporting the scale up of FbA via its partnership with IFRC. The case study was not designed to evaluate DG ECHO funded forecast based actions implemented by IFRC. It, however, draws upon the experience gained and lessons learned from the implementation of these actions, to determine what role DG ECHO could play moving forward.

The two case studies are presented in Annex 4.

### **3.3 Limitations and Challenges**

The COVID-19 pandemic limited the engagement of informants and restricted travel to the field. Despite the recent improvements regarding the COVID-19 pandemic, travelling to the field was still difficult in early 2022. Therefore, all the key informant interviews were conducted remotely.

In addition, several interviewees (DG ECHO, IFRC, TRC and external organisations) were not able to accommodate the requested interviews. However, answers to the evaluation questions were provided in written form by TRC staff and some DG ECHO staff who could not participate in interviews.

Finally, the nature of the subject under evaluation and the relatively nascent nature of the programmatic partnership meant that the document review provided little by way of evaluation evidence and there was therefore considerable reliance on interviews with key stakeholders.

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<sup>45</sup> The ESSN is an EU funded programme, with a total budget of nearly EUR 2.25 billion between 2016 and the beginning of 2021. It has provided monthly cash assistance via debit cards to the most vulnerable refugees in Turkey to help them meet their basic needs, in the context of the migration crisis. Starting from 2020, the project was implemented by IFRC (originally under the implementation responsibility of WFP)

## 4 THEORY OF CHANGE

Any form of public intervention is typically grounded in an underlying rationale and a theory - whether implicit or explicit - of how and why it will bring about the desired change(s). In evaluation terminology, this is referred to as a “theory of change” (ToC). It consists of the following building blocks:

- The underlying rationale for an intervention i.e., the problem and/ or opportunity being addressed;
- Inputs – the human, financial and institutional resources that go into an intervention;
- The outputs and expected effects (results, outcomes and impacts) of the intervention;
- The causal mechanisms through which an intervention is expected to bring about the desired change(s);
- External factors that influence the causal pathways as well as the direction and scale effects and which are fully or partially beyond DG ECHO’s control;
- The underlying assumptions about the causal links.

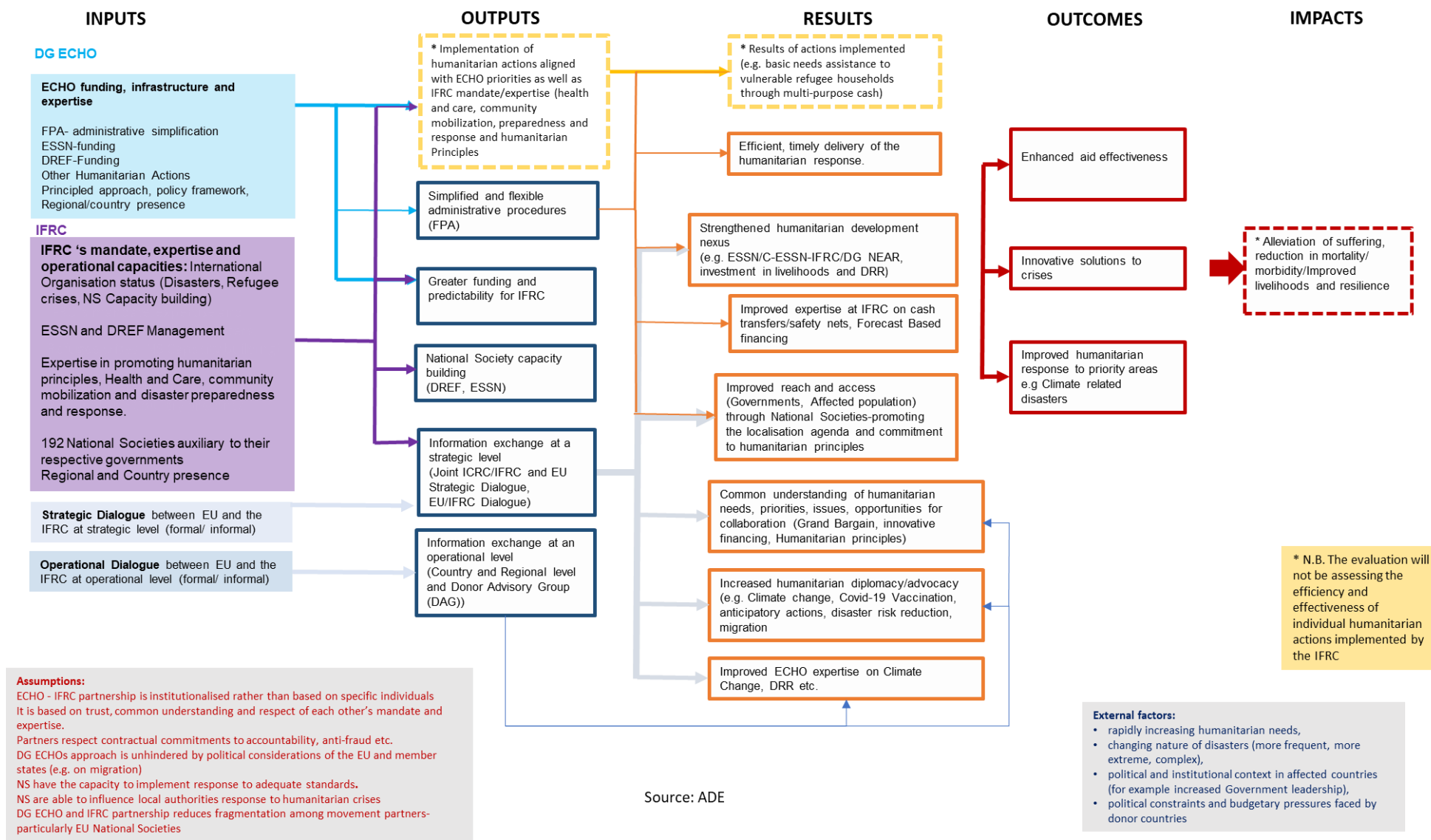
This section provides a high-level overview of the Theory of Change (ToC) for DG ECHO-IFRC partnership. It comprises two elements:

- A stylised diagrammatic representation of the ToC – see Section 4;
- A brief narrative description of the theory of change.

The ToC presented here provided a conceptual framework for the evaluation and set the scene for the findings contained in section 5 of the Report.



**Figure 37 ToC for EU's partnership with IFRC**



## 4.1 Inputs

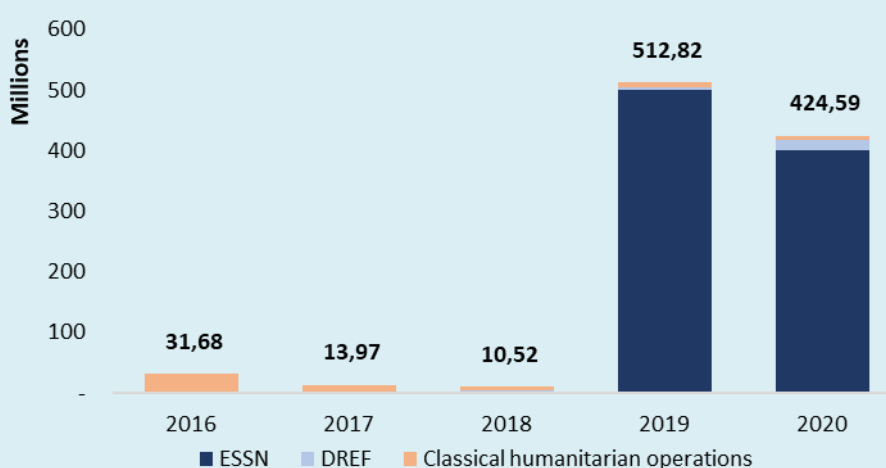
During 2016-2020, DG ECHO and IFRC channelled four types of inputs into the partnership. These were:

- **Funding**, including a stable and long-term partnership agreement. In 2014, DG ECHO and the IFRC signed an open-ended Framework Partnership Agreement (FPA)<sup>46</sup> which established the principles of the partnership. This agreement formed the basis for the specific funding of different actions during the evaluation period, including the DREF and its Forecast based Action Fund (FbAF). Box 1 provides an overview of DG ECHO funding to the IFRC during the evaluation period;
- **Technical and context level expertise**: in addition to funding, DG ECHO also provided thematic expertise, country and regional specific knowledge as well as operational expertise to all partners including the IFRC;
- **IFRC's mandate, expertise and operational capacities**: the IFRC's role in coordinating emergency international assistance to people affected by natural and man-made disasters, including the forcibly displaced, and in health crises as well as its ability to mobilise its network of 192 National Societies and therefore providing a global reach also constituted key inputs to the partnership;
- **Strategic and operational dialogue**: the IFRC and the Commission maintained a regular dialogue (formal and informal) during the evaluation period, at both strategic and operational levels on the forecasting and planning of EU-funded humanitarian actions and on other issues of mutual interest.

### Box 5: DG ECHO funding to the IFRC during 2016-2020

DG ECHO's funding to IFRC took three forms during the evaluation period: (i) funding to support the cash assistance programme in Turkey through the ESSN; (ii) annual contributions to DREF; (iii) funding for 'classical' humanitarian operations. While funding to "classical humanitarian operations" was the main form of DG ECHO funding to the IFRC during the first half of the evaluation period (2016-2018), the ESSN (by far) and to some extent the DREF took over in significance in 2019 and 2020 (Figure 2).

**Figure 38 Breakdown of DG ECHO's contribution to IFRC**

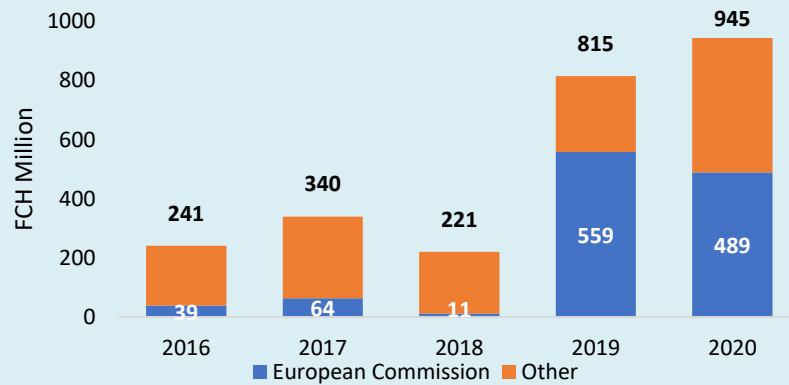


Source: ADE based on DG ECHO, Trends Regarding DG ECHO's funding to IFRC 2017-2020; HOPE database

<sup>46</sup> Framework Partnership Agreement with IFRC.

The IFRC currently holds the single largest agreement signed by DG ECHO, with a total of EUR 900 million (EUR 500 million in 2019 and EUR 400 million in 2020) for the implementation of the third and fourth phase respectively of the ESSN programme in Turkey. Since 2019, funding from the European Commission has accounted for more than 50% of the total voluntary contributions and donations received by the IFRC (Figure 3).

**Figure 39 Weight of European Commission contributions to IFRC budget, 2016-2020**



Source: ADE based on IFRC main donors 2016-2021

## 4.2 Outputs, Results and Outcomes

The ToC distinguishes between outputs, results and outcomes associated with the following inputs:

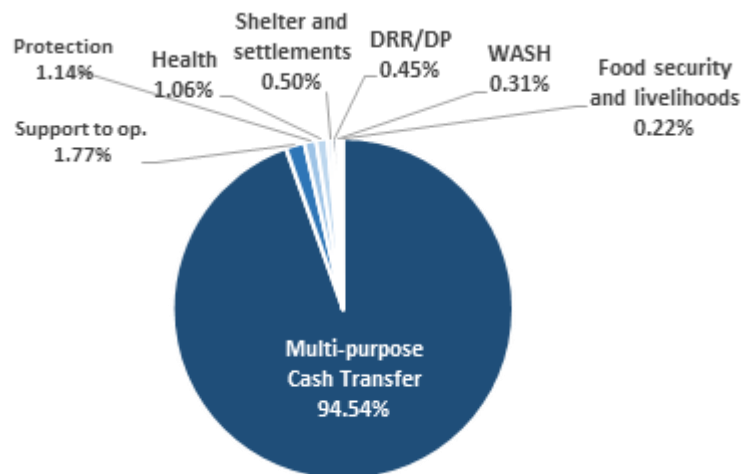
- DG ECHO funding - although DG ECHO funded operations implemented by IFRC were not the subject of the evaluation, these are briefly described here for completeness, as these form part of the overall partnership;
- Expertise and partnership structures;
- Strategic and operational dialogue.

## 4.3 DG ECHO funded humanitarian activities

Funding provided by DG ECHO enables IFRC to implement humanitarian actions that are in line with DG ECHO's HIPs and IFRC's strategic priorities set out in Strategy 2030 and associated plans and appeals. The design and implementation of these actions is framed and facilitated by each actor's expertise and institutional inputs (evidence and data, policy frameworks, logistical and operational capabilities etc.).

During the evaluation period (2016 to 2020), IFRC implemented 47 DG ECHO funded actions amounting to a total funding of EUR 994 million. Multi-purpose cash transfers make up the largest proportion of DG-ECHO funded actions (Figure 4). These are predominantly associated with the ESSN. Support to operations is the second largest funded action and represents DG ECHO investment in the DREF.

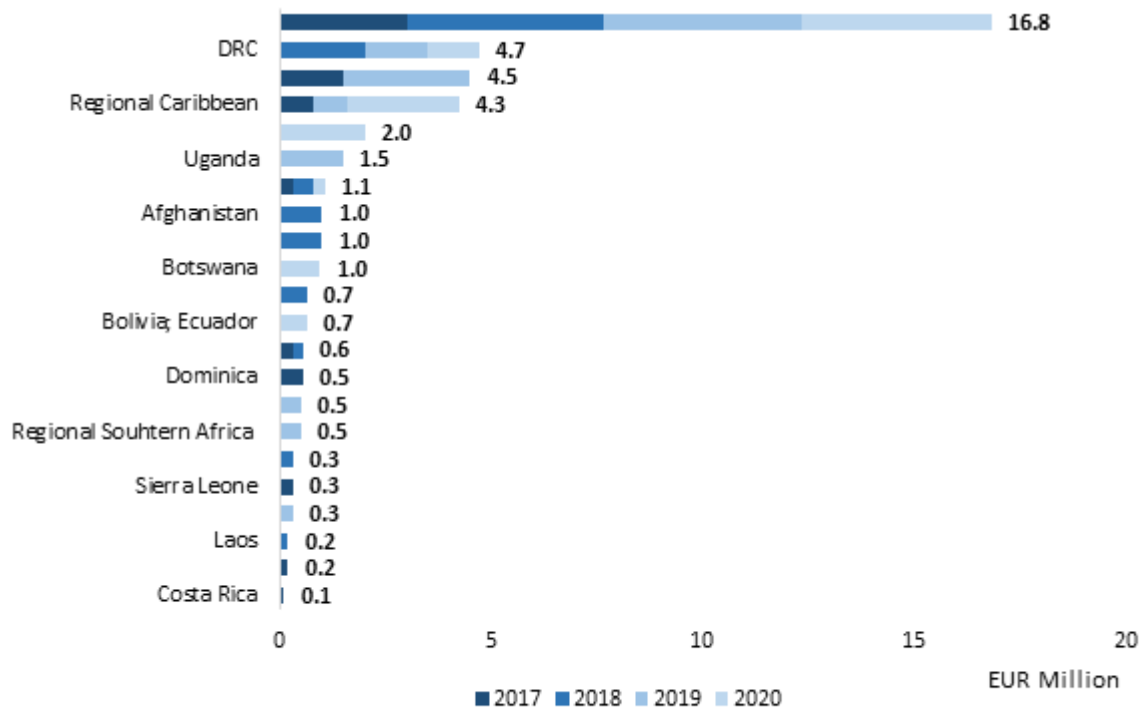
**Figure 40 Main Sectors of Intervention funded by DG ECHO (2017-2020)**



Source: ADE based on DGECHO 2021, Trends Regarding DG ECHO's funding to IFRC 2017-2020

Figure 5 below describes DG-ECHO country and regional allocations. When the ESSN is excluded, the major allocations were for regional projects in Latin America (EUR 4.95 million) and the Democratic Republic of Congo (EUR 4.7 million).

**Figure 41 DG ECHO Country and Regional Allocations, 2017-2020**



Source: ADE based on ADE based on ECHO 2021, Trends Regarding DGECHO's funding to IFRC

DG ECHO-funded actions implemented by IFRC result in:

- early action preventing the need for large scale humanitarian response and rapid response increasing efficiency;
- reducing risks associated with hazards protecting lives and livelihoods;
- addressing the nexus between humanitarian and development programming;

- greater access and coverage of people affected by disasters;
- access to food and essential household items by vulnerable populations;
- improved availability, accessibility and quality of health services;
- building resilience through improved and diversified livelihoods;
- access to basic services such as water, sanitation etc.;
- national/ local capacity building contributing to localisation;
- improved agency for the most vulnerable impacted by disasters.

The funded actions ultimately **contribute** to:

- alleviation of human suffering;
- protection of human dignity;
- saving lives and livelihoods and building resilience;
- advocacy on key global issue.

#### 4.3.1 Partnership structures and expertise

Aside from funding, DG ECHO's partnership structures (e.g., FPA, DREF, ESSN) and expertise is expected to provide the IFRC with:

- predictable and flexible (un-earmarked) financing which can deliver significant improvements in response times, avoids suffering and losses for the affected population, and reduces operational costs through planned and early procurement and pre-positioning of supplies;
- reduced administrative costs relating to proposals and reporting.

From DG ECHO's perspective, the partnership with IFRC is expected to contribute to enhancing its response, through greater localisation, use of cash, common humanitarian diplomacy as well as increase in coverage and reach via IFRC's network of National Societies.

Several partnership activities can also be expected to contribute to strengthened humanitarian development nexus e.g., the ESSN is expected to contribute to providing the most vulnerable refugees in Turkey (Syrians as well as refugees from other countries) with a life of dignity by helping them pay for the things they need most. Following the 2020 Mid-term Review of the ESSN, a small component focusing on providing referrals to livelihood opportunities inside the TRC network and elsewhere was introduced.

#### 4.3.2 Dialogue

The theory of change reflects the hypothesis that dialogue helps develop a common understanding of humanitarian needs, priorities, issues and partnership objectives; and leads to improved cooperation and coordination between DG ECHO and IFRC as well as other Movement members. A more joined-up approach contributes to improved efficiency and effectiveness of humanitarian action.

It is, however, worth noting that in some cases, dialogue has only started relatively recently (e.g., High level dialogue). This limits the extent to which recent activities can be evaluated.

- *DG ECHO/ IFRC High Level Dialogue*: These dialogues commenced in 2020 and identified a number of areas for follow-up including technical exchanges on innovative financing (drawing on IFRC and development experience); keeping DG ECHO informed about progress of revision of IFRC relations with UN agencies on increased support for National Society capacity building (with a view to possible discussions in the Donor Advisory Group<sup>6</sup>); mutual engagement on Grand Bargain commitments; and engagement on donor requirements for flexible funding in Donor Advisory.

- *DG ECHO/IFRC Strategic Dialogue:* These dialogues resumed in 2017 after a halt and included work to strengthen different aspects of the partnership (i.e. understanding, trust, institutional frameworks); possible partnership with the Red Cross Red Crescent Climate Centre and roll out of its training kit for DG ECHO staff; exchanges on anticipatory actions including the EU partnering with the Anticipation Hub and exploring the full potential of the DREF as a tool for both response and anticipatory actions ; exchanges on greening of humanitarian aid; and possibly explore migration as an area for closer cooperation with the EU.
- *IFRC/ICRC Joint Dialogue:* These meetings engaged the Senior management of all the organisations including the Director Generals of DG ECHO and ICRC and the Secretary General of the IFRC and started in late 2020. Initial discussions focussed on the issue of localisation, particularly the importance of local response and capacity building of National Societies. DG ECHO also recognised the need to engage other EU directorates such as Development Cooperation (DG DEVCO) and Neighbourhood and Enlargement Negotiations (DG NEAR) to broaden capacity building discussions. Discussions also took place on the COVID-19 pandemic response and the joint appeal by the IFRC and ICRC and the need for lesson learning.
- *DG ECHO/IFRC/IFRC Operational Dialogue:* At regional and country level, the network of complementary offices provides both organisations with a considerable global presence, while enabling engagement at country level on issues that pertain to specific crises. This can lead to improved situational understanding, improved coordination, advocacy, and ultimately improved response.

Finally, the partnership has allowed DG ECHO and IFRC to undertake joint advocacy work and promote dialogue and discussion on key strategic areas such as climate change, forecast based financing, access, localisation and humanitarian principles. The theory of change hypothesises that by joining forces, DG ECHO and IFRC are able to increase their influence in pushing common agendas of interest to improve humanitarian response.

## 5 KEY FINDINGS PER EQ

This section summarises the key findings of the evaluation for each EQ. These findings were based on the triangulation of all the different sources of evidence described in the methodology section above.

### 5.1 EQ 8: How well aligned were DG ECHO and the IFRC in terms of (i) strategies and objectives? (ii) Prioritising crises and needs and (iii) advocacy priorities, communication campaigns and visibility efforts?

**There was good strategic alignment between DG ECHO and IFRC in terms of strategies and objectives at a global level.** The EU's Humanitarian Aid Regulation (HAR) describes the Community's humanitarian aid as comprising of "assistance, relief and protection operations on a non-discriminatory basis to help people in third countries, particularly the most vulnerable among them, and as a priority those in developing countries, victims of natural disasters, man-made crises, such as wars and outbreaks of fighting, or exceptional situations or circumstances comparable to natural or man-made disasters. It shall do so for the time needed to meet the humanitarian requirements resulting from these different situations." The HAR describes that such aid shall also comprise operations to prepare for risks or prevent disasters.<sup>47</sup>

The preservation of life, prevention and alleviation of suffering and helping to maintain human dignity in the face of natural and man-made disasters are the overriding objectives of humanitarian action, as enshrined in the EU Consensus on Humanitarian Aid.<sup>48</sup> The Consensus also pledges a commitment to the fundamental principles of humanitarian action, namely neutrality, humanity, impartiality and independence. Informants from DG ECHO and IFRC noted the "natural fit" between the two organisations based on a common principled approach, with the principles in the Consensus also enshrined in the Red Cross Movements Fundamental Principles.<sup>49</sup> Informants noted that such a principled approach was not always evident with other humanitarian actors.

Both the HAR and Consensus are well aligned with the strategic objectives of the IFRC as laid out in the Strategy 2020 Saving Lives Changing Minds.<sup>50</sup> The strategy includes strategic aims to i) save lives, protect livelihoods, and strengthen recovery from disasters and crises ii) enable healthy and safe living and iii) promote social inclusion and a culture of non-violence and peace. The strategy also includes enabling actions including building stronger National Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies, the pursuit of humanitarian diplomacy to prevent and reduce vulnerability in a globalized world and the effective function of the IFRC. Looking forward, the IFRC's Strategy 2030<sup>51</sup> maintains similar strategic directions as Strategy 2020 suggesting continued alignment between EU and IFRC strategic directions. The fact that both organisations have broad mandates and scale of operation means there is a natural fit. DG ECHO and IFRC both operate globally and under a multi-sectoral mandate.

**DG ECHO interest in the "red pillar" as a complementary alternative to the "blue pillar"**<sup>52</sup> **is also well served by a strong partnership with the IFRC.** Stakeholders referred to an explicit objective of DG ECHO in 2018 to develop alternatives to the UN system for delivering large scale response to humanitarian crises. In this respect, IFRC fitted into the intention of DG ECHO to mobilize the "red pillar" as a potential partner to respond at scale to large humanitarian crises. The ESSN provided a "proof of concept" that IFRC does indeed provide a credible alternative partner to the UN agencies for DG ECHO in responding to the largest humanitarian crises. In this regard, the ESSN

<sup>47</sup> <https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/?uri=celex%3A31996R1257>

<sup>48</sup> <https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/?uri=LEGISSUM:ah0009>

<sup>49</sup> ICRC & IFRC, 2015, Fundamental Principles of the Red Cross and Red Crescent Movement: Ethics and Tools for Humanitarian Action

<sup>50</sup> IFRC, 2010, Strategy 2020 Saving Lives, Changing minds

<sup>51</sup> IFRC, 2020, Strategy 2030

<sup>52</sup> The blue Pillar refers to UN Organisations and the Red Pillar to components of the Red Cross and Red Crescent Movement



partnership enabled the large-scale utilization of the cash programming approach through the “red pillar”.

**DG ECHO and the IFRC share common goals under the Grand Bargain commitments.** This is most explicit in terms of the use of multi-purpose cash transfers and the localisation agenda. Cash-based programming has been described to fulfil the greatest impact when delivered as a single multi-sector transfer and through common mechanisms.<sup>53</sup> The EU has committed to delivering 35% of humanitarian assistance in the forms of cash transfers under the Grand Bargain<sup>54</sup>. IFRC has also made commitments to delivering 50% of humanitarian assistance through cash by 2025<sup>55</sup>. Cash programming has been prioritized for further institutionalization within the Movement and embedded as an integral component of programming in IFRC’s humanitarian assistance responses to crises<sup>56</sup>. The partnership of IFRC with DG ECHO on ESSN enabled IFRC to engage into provision of cash-based assistance as part of the largest humanitarian programme ever implemented so far. This has contributed directly towards realising the IFRC’s strategic goal, as well as building the overall Red Cross Red Crescent capacity to use cash transfers at scale.<sup>57</sup>

**The Partnership with the IFRC supported DG ECHO’s commitments to localisation.** The partnership with IFRC supported the capacity strengthening and credibility of National Societies with respect to other humanitarian actors. For example, the ESSN demonstrated that National Societies with the support of the IFRC could deliver large scale programming effectively. At the same time the partnership addressed institutional constraints of DG ECHO to provide direct funding to third country entities. The IFRC with its network of 192 National Societies, with auxiliary roles to respective governments, provides a significant channel through which funding can be made available to national entities in third countries while mitigating associated risks. Similarly, but to a lesser extent DG ECHO could provide funding to third country National Societies through EUNS, however the scale of such funding would be limited when compared to funds available to IFRC under its International organisation status.

**Survey results suggest that the partnership contributed to strengthening coordination and alignment between DG ECHO and IFRC, although there was significant variation across the different areas of engagement and between the two organisations.** DG ECHO staff had a systematically lower perception of improved coordination. While almost all IFRC respondents stated that, overall, the coordination between DG ECHO and the IFRC had improved as a result of the partnership, only half of DG ECHO’s respondents did so, with 3 of the 14 DG ECHO staff suggesting that there was no improvement at all. Figure 6 suggests that needs assessment and capacity building coordination ranked high for both organisations.

**Informants described a number of areas for improvement.** They suggested that further work is needed to disseminate information about the partnership and that to some extent this survey finding reflects the complexity of both organisations. They reported a case where a DREF recipient National Society refused a monitoring visit by a DG ECHO TA as a result of a lack of understanding. In addition, in some countries EUNS have taken the lead in communications with DG ECHO.<sup>58</sup> This limited the direct contact between DG ECHO the IFRC delegation. The level of coordination between

<sup>53</sup> “The Grand Bargain – A Shared Commitment to Better Serve People in Need”, p.6. (Available from: [https://reliefweb.int/sites/reliefweb.int/files/resources/Grand\\_Bargain\\_final\\_22\\_May\\_FINAL-2.pdf](https://reliefweb.int/sites/reliefweb.int/files/resources/Grand_Bargain_final_22_May_FINAL-2.pdf))

<sup>54</sup> [https://ec.europa.eu/echo/what/humanitarian-aid/cash-transfers\\_en](https://ec.europa.eu/echo/what/humanitarian-aid/cash-transfers_en)

<sup>55</sup> <https://www.ifrc.org/cash-and-voucher-assistance>

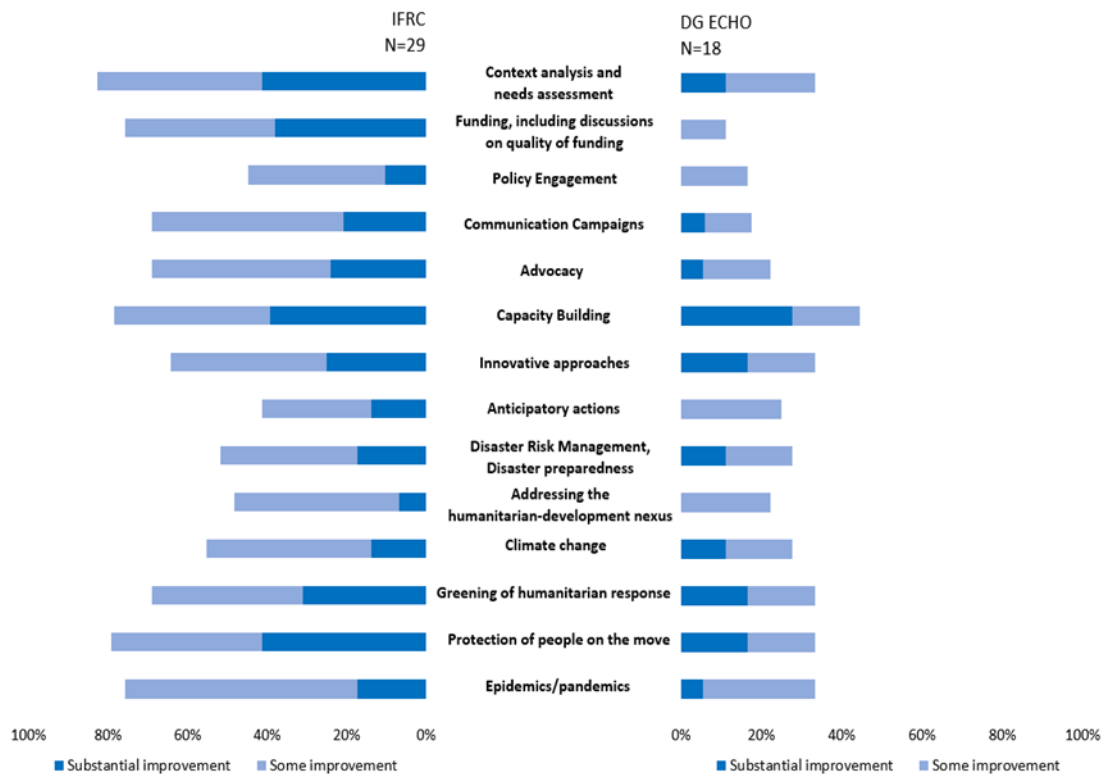
<sup>56</sup> International Red Cross and Red Crescent Movement (2018) “Cash Transfer Programming Strategic Framework 2020 – 2025”, p.3 (Available from: [https://cash-hub.org/wp-content/uploads/sites/3/2020/12/RCRCM-CTP-FrameworkEndorsed-CPWG-Gov-Board\\_June2018\\_v3\\_EDITED\\_V3-10.pdf](https://cash-hub.org/wp-content/uploads/sites/3/2020/12/RCRCM-CTP-FrameworkEndorsed-CPWG-Gov-Board_June2018_v3_EDITED_V3-10.pdf))

<sup>57</sup> ESSN Case Study

<sup>58</sup> IFRC and EUNSs have agreed about EUNSs leading the dialogue with ECHO’s TAs at the field level. EUNSs have carried out a mapping of world’s crisis and have pre-identified which one of them will be leading in technical discussions with ECHO in a given country/crisis. Based on this mapping, the leading EUNS will also have the priority to submit an application to DG ECHO; IFRC can only apply to ECHO if/when a EUNSs is not willing/able to apply and authorises IFRC to do so.

DG ECHO and IFRC at the country level thus relied on the level of coordination between EUNS/ IFRC, whereby challenges persisted.<sup>59</sup>

**Figure 42 DG ECHO and IFRC staff perception of improved coordination**



Source: ADE Survey of DG ECHO and IFRC Staff on the Partnership

**There is scope for furthering alignment between DG ECHO and the IFRC on two substantive areas, namely accountability to affected populations and the EU Civil Protection Mechanism<sup>60</sup>.**

The IFRC has invested considerable effort in the area of accountability to affected populations, however DG ECHO has not prioritised this during its discussions with the IFRC, despite its Grand Bargain commitments<sup>61</sup> to systematically address accountability and inclusion. An exception to this has been the ESSN which placed a significant emphasis on accountability to affected populations.

The EU Civil Protection Mechanism aims to strengthen cooperation between the EU countries on civil protection to improve prevention, preparedness, and response to disasters. When an emergency overwhelms the response capabilities of a country in Europe and beyond, it can request assistance through the Mechanism.<sup>62</sup> The European Commission played a key role in coordinating the disaster response worldwide and contributed to the transport and/or operational costs of deployments. Similarly, the IFRC maintains a standing capacity among EUNS (as well as other member National Societies) of equipment and human resources for deployment to crises in the form of Emergency Response Units (Logistics, Relief, Health, Hospitals, WASH units) and Field Assessment and Coordination Teams. While there would be value in close collaboration between DG ECHO and IFRC

<sup>59</sup> These challenges are elaborated further under EQ11.

<sup>60</sup> Note that the EU Civil Protection Mechanism is relevant for actions mainly taking place in EU countries.

<sup>61</sup> For more information on the Grand Bargain please refer to [https://interagencystandingcommittee.org/system/files/2022-01/GB2.0%20structure%20-%20Dec%202021\\_0.pdf](https://interagencystandingcommittee.org/system/files/2022-01/GB2.0%20structure%20-%20Dec%202021_0.pdf)

<sup>62</sup> For more information on the Mechanism refer to [https://ec.europa.eu/echo/what/civil-protection/eu-civil-protection-mechanism\\_en](https://ec.europa.eu/echo/what/civil-protection/eu-civil-protection-mechanism_en)

on civil protection, informants reported that it remains unclear how to collaborate with DG ECHO on the civil protection response mechanisms.

**Some differences in the prioritisation of crises and needs were observed between DG ECHO and IFRC, resulting in tensions. This was mostly reflective of the donor/ implementing partner relationship between the two organisations. IFRC as an operational organisation prioritizes its activities using a bottom-up approach to assessments.** It relies on National Society local assessments for prioritization and identification of affected population needs using the 48-hour (Initial assessment) and 7-day (Rapid assessment) formats.<sup>63</sup> In addition, prioritisation of responses takes into consideration the IFRC Emergency Response Framework which uses a crisis categorisation approach for decision on response mechanisms such as DREF, Emergency Appeal or Whole of IFRC engagement. Response options also take into account the capacity and resourcing of the National Society, as well as IFRC/Movement partners presence and engagement. **DG ECHO as a donor prioritises crises and needs at a global level, subject to its resource constraints. While it bases its funding allocation decisions to crises on needs assessments building on objective data and risk analysis<sup>64</sup> as well as inputs from operational teams at the country level, it also takes into account political considerations and budget constraints.**

Such differences were specifically observed for the ESSN, in the face of limited resources. DG ECHO and IFRC launched discussions on the adaptation of targeting for ESSN, in the context of the rising number of ESSN beneficiaries (also compounded by the impact of COVID-19) and more recently with the prospective transition of the ESSN from DG ECHO to DG NEAR. While DG ECHO advocated for improvements or innovations in targeting so that the programme targets only the most vulnerable and the ESSN caseload is reduced, IFRC emphasised the increasing needs on the ground. Given the current vulnerability of the refugees in Turkey, IFRC presented evidence for expanding the targeting criteria to minimise exclusion errors. At the technical level, DG ECHO agreed that needs were growing, and adjustments were made, including in the transfer value per beneficiary. However, ultimately there has been the requirement to operate within the framework of the December 2020 European Council Conclusions and to continue supporting refugees in Turkey based on existing levels of funding.<sup>65</sup>

In addition, a review of a selection of DREF replenishment applications to DG ECHO suggested that differences in prioritization between DG ECHO and the IFRC were also a result of DG ECHO's concerns relating to the quality of assessments, the clarity on targeting, National Society implementation capacity, efficiency and consideration of the response by other actors in IFRC's assessments.<sup>66</sup> Informants from the IFRC reported that efforts at improving needs assessment capacities are ongoing. It was also suggested that greater consideration should be given to the balance between needs assessment reporting and response on a "no regrets" basis. In other words, it is not always possible to undertake a detailed assessment in urgent situations where a rapid response is required.

**Both organisations are aligned on a risk-informed and needs-based approach (to anticipatory action)** DG ECHO's preparedness guidance note makes explicit the need for a risk-informed needs-based approach, thereby re-orienting the organisation from a purely life-saving humanitarian agenda to one that builds resilience as well as meeting grand bargain commitments on improved aid effectiveness and efficiency as well as addressing the Humanitarian Development nexus. **Although risk-based anticipatory action can save lives and money, it however, comes with uncertainty.** Tensions could arise between funding being used for life saving response

<sup>63</sup> <https://www.ifrc.org/emergency-needs-assessments>

<sup>64</sup> For prioritisation of crises and needs DG ECHO relies on data from the INFORM Index for Risk Management and the INFORM Severity Index For prioritization of crises and needs. In addition to these tools for making financing decisions the Forgotten Crisis Assessment tool is used for those crises that receive little if any media attention, or funding from other donors

<sup>65</sup> For more details refer to the ESSN Case Study

<sup>66</sup> Email Communication by DG ECHO to the Evaluation Team dated 20/10/21 containing positive and negative DREF replenishment requests.

and the activation of anticipatory action, since the latter is based on forecasts which may or may not have the predicted impact.<sup>67</sup>

**DG ECHO and the IFRC have engaged in advocacy, communication and visibility work, however there is potential to ensure better alignment as well as expand efforts.** Informants suggested that there has been minimal joint advocacy work over the evaluation period and that there is currently no structured approach to joint advocacy between the two organisations and efforts are often opportunistic.<sup>68</sup> However, informants noted that there are significant areas where the two organisations hold similar positions and could engage in a more strategic approach to communication and advocacy. These include areas such as climate change, the greening of humanitarian response, anticipatory action and multi-purpose cash transfer assistance.

Examples of joint communication and advocacy work undertaken during the evaluation period included the ESSN, anticipatory action, DREF as well as recent efforts on the COVID-19 response and vaccination. As part of the ESSN, DG ECHO has a joint communication campaign with IFRC which raised awareness and visibility of the ESSN in Europe and Turkey and in tandem sensitized host communities about the challenges faced by people fleeing conflict to shift perceptions about refugees. The communication campaign reached 20 million people.

A number of communication and advocacy initiatives were undertaken on anticipatory action. As part of the Anticipatory Action Task Force,<sup>69</sup> IFRC co-presented with FAO a policy brief on anticipatory action at the European Council Working Party on Humanitarian aid and Food Aid (COHAFA), a key EU policy forming body. The Working Party discusses the EU's humanitarian strategies and policies, as well as its response to humanitarian crises. The brief emphasised the need for learning, partnership as well as resources. DG ECHO with the support of the IFRC also promoted a "Team Europe"<sup>70</sup> approach in support of anticipatory action through the European Humanitarian Forum (EHF). Informants reported that such an approach would bring Member States together under a coordinated and coherent approach in support of anticipatory action, to expand early warning systems to address hazards and their impact, integration of anticipatory action into national disaster risk management and climate change adaptation frameworks as well as supporting research, exchange and coordination to address a wider scope of hazards through anticipatory action.

**DG ECHO has also contributed substantively to its role as co-chair of the Donor Advisory Group (DAG).** Through DG ECHO's co-chair role of the IFRC Donor Advisory Group (DAG) anticipatory action was promoted through a recent policy dialogue. The policy dialogue brought to the attention of donors the role that IFRC is playing in anticipatory action providing visibility to such efforts as well as challenges such as limited scale and volume of delivery and the lack of focus on more complex crises such as droughts and conflicts. Furthermore, DG ECHO played a key advocacy role by co-chairing the recent DREF pledging conference as part of the IFRC's strategic ambition to expand the DREF to enable CHF 100 million annually to be channelled to crises. Informants also noted recent joint advocacy efforts in relation to the COVID-19 response and vaccination.

Informants also noted that DG ECHO's endorsement of the IFRC and ICRC led Climate and Environment Charter for Humanitarian Organisations<sup>71</sup> helped promote it to a wider audience. Likewise, this has resulted in DG ECHO incorporating criteria for climate and environment concerns into the e-single form.

**The partnership has been mutually beneficial for DG ECHO and the IFRC.** The World Humanitarian Summit (WHS) in 2016 including the commitments to localisation, quality of response, the humanitarian development nexus and cash transfers under the Grand Bargain represented a

<sup>67</sup> For example, the FbAF may be activated for a cyclone which may not make landfall where initially predicted or may not make landfall at all or dissipate prior to making landfall, however funding would have already been expended on evacuation of people and assets.

<sup>68</sup> FbA Case Study

<sup>69</sup> partners include IFRC, START NETWORK, IFRC, WFP and German Red Cross.

<sup>70</sup> Team Europe approach refers to the EU and its member states.

<sup>71</sup> <https://www.climate-charter.org>

marked shift in donor interests including for DG ECHO. The IFRC with its 192 member National Societies therefore plays a key role for DG ECHO in meeting its commitment to localisation given the limitations on DG ECHO funding of non-EU entities. In addition, the IFRC has an intrinsic commitment to working with these National Societies over the longer term to support their development. This contrasts with the partnerships that UN agencies have – as alternative DG ECHO partners for project implementation – which is much more focused on the narrow objectives of immediate project objectives and implementation.<sup>72</sup>

DG ECHO also benefits from a more diverse set of potential implementing partners that can operate at scale and improve cost effectiveness. As noted above the partnership with the IFRC establishes a credible “red pillar” as a complement to the “blue pillar”. In addition, DG ECHO benefits from its support to the DREF. Through this fund, DG ECHO is able to address small and forgotten crises in a relatively efficient manner that it otherwise would not be able to, thereby extending its coverage. The IFRC’s dual mandate addressing humanitarian and development needs provides an additional positive alignment of interests to address the nexus.

On the other hand, the partnership on the ESSN and DREF has brought considerable benefits to the IFRC beyond the immediacy of secured funding. An increase in trust and credibility with DG ECHO has been fostered through the ESSN. The relationship has been deepened by IFRC’s success in delivering such a large-scale response and has also increased the profile and credibility of IFRC among the wider humanitarian community. Moreover, the partnership has been used to leverage support for expansion of DREF to meet the ambitious target of a turnover of 100 million CHF per annum.

**5.2 EQ9: To what extent did a structured, strategic, timely and functional dialogue take place between the two partners, by what means and what has been the result of this dialogue on collaboration and funding trends between the two organisations?**

**Regular strategic dialogue between DG ECHO and IFRC at headquarters level was useful, open and transparent but resource intensive.** There has been regular dialogue between DG ECHO and the IFRC throughout the evaluation period. This as noted above (Section 4.2.3) included DG ECHO/ IFRC High Level Dialogue, DG ECHO/IFRC Strategic Dialogue,<sup>73</sup> IFRC/ICRC Joint Dialogue, and DG ECHO/IFRC Operational Dialogue. The dialogues were very structured with opportunities for DG ECHO and other Directorate General (e.g., NEAR, INTPA) to contribute to the development of the agenda as well as IFRC and EUNS. The process of coordinating and managing the dialogue was described as heavy with protocols and resource intensive. More recently, the results of the dialogue are recorded in a monitoring table where actions points are regularly followed up.<sup>74</sup>

Dialogues have tended to cover a diverse range of topics such as National Society development, localisation, greening of humanitarian response, preparedness, nexus and more recently the COVID-19 response. Some informants indicated that a lack of focused dialogue due to a broad agenda made these less useful. The lack of focus was attributed in part to the dynamics between EUNS and the IFRC, with EUNS having different priorities for presentation and discussion at dialogues. Similarly, the widening of the participants to other EU Directorates General expands the potential topics for discussion. Conversely, some informants suggested a need for greater space to think outside of the normally very structured format of the dialogues. However, there remains a general consensus that the meetings are useful despite the considerable effort required to organize them due to protocol and coordination requirements.

**Informal, strategic, managerial and technical dialogues have been an important aspect of the DG ECHO-IFRC partnership.** At a strategic level, informants noted the engagement and relationship between the Director General and Secretary General of the respective organisations. The

<sup>72</sup> ESSN Case Study

<sup>73</sup> strategic dialogue led by DG ECHO and involving other services such as EEAS, DG INTPA, DG NEAR, etc.

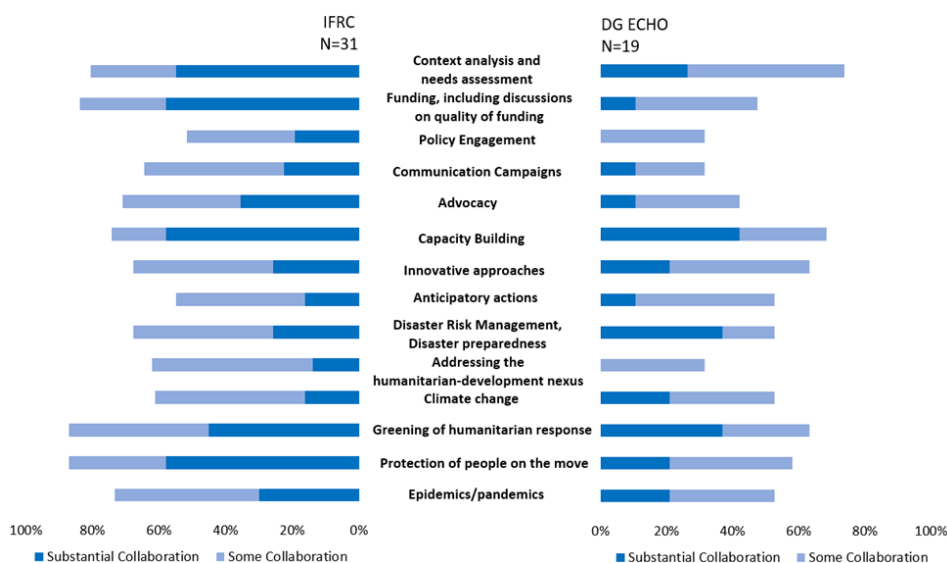
<sup>74</sup> DG ECHO –IFRC High-Level Bilateral Dialogue 9June2021Monitoring table of follow-up actions –updated 15/09/2021

relationship allows for informal conversations at meetings but also for the respective individuals “to pick up the phone to each other” should this be necessary. Similarly, the relationship between the Deputy DG of ECHO and the Under Secretary General for Global Relations, Diplomacy and Digitalization is such that regular informal discussion is possible.

At a managerial level and technical level there is regular engagement between focal points to clarify issues, ask questions and resolve ongoing issues related to proposals, contracts, and DREF applications for replenishment. At a technical level this has included inputs by the IFRC on DG ECHO’s Guidance Note on Preparedness as well as DG ECHO’s Thematic Policy Document no.3 on Cash Transfers.

**Informants suggested that the partnership would benefit from a greater emphasis on common policy and advocacy interests.** Figure 7 details the areas of collaboration between DG ECHO and IFRC. Discrepancies exist between DG ECHO staff perspectives and IFRC staff perspectives with regards to the degree of collaboration on policy, communication advocacy and the humanitarian development nexus with DG ECHO staff reporting less collaboration in these areas when compared to IFRC staff survey responses. This reflects DG ECHO informants’ views that the partnership would benefit from a greater focus on policy issues and advocacy. However, the current tendency for IFRC is to remain focussed on funding aspects of the partnership. Where joint advocacy and policy engagement has taken place, it remains opportunistic rather than planned. An exception to this has been observed in the context of the ESSN.

**Figure 43 Areas of Collaboration between DG ECHO and IFRC**



Source: ADE Survey of DG ECHO and IFRC Staff on the Partnership

**Currently, any issues that arise are dealt with between interlocutors of the organizations at different levels.** This can be through email or verbal communication. When required, issues can be escalated through formal communication between the senior managers of the organisation including the Director general of DG ECHO and the Secretary General of the IFRC. Informants from the IFRC noted that this was positive as it was not always possible at Secretariat level to be aware of issues across all 192 National Societies and that a collaborative approach in this regard is welcomed and contributes to the quality of IFRC’s actions.

**Informants also suggested that there was limited engagement at regional and country level between DG ECHO and IFRC.** This is changing to a degree with IFRC’s role in Shelter cluster coordination and participation in Inter Agency Standing Committee (IASC) but is not yet consistently reflected in engaging at Regional and Country level with DG ECHO. Informants also noted that despite regular briefings of DG ECHO staff at Country and Regional offices on the strategic partnership,



dissemination takes time and can be impacted by staff movements. Additional limitations noted by informants for engaging with DG ECHO included capacity constraints and a lack of overlap of strategic priorities in country. An added complexity is that at country level it may be that an EUNS is leading the engagement with DG ECHO which may reduce direct contact between DG ECHO and the IFRC. Most recently for example informants noted that EUNS will be leading in 22 of the 25 countries selected under the Programmatic Partnership, with the responsibility to engage with DG ECHO.

In Asia Pacific, informants reported regular dialogue but that it tended to be event driven, for example when HIPs are released, or more recently on the Programmatic Partnership. While there was an open relationship, improved communication is necessary to increase understanding between the two organisations. For example, IFRC reported that in some instances where proposals were not funded it was not always clear what the reasons for rejection were and in some cases the reason for refusal was not communicated. It also sometimes appeared that allocation of funding was not transparent as funding was allocated to the same partners. DG ECHO noted that this can appear to be the case in some instances as they tend to fund partners based on their local presence, capacity and past track record in order to provide quick and effective response, rather than taking on new partners with whom they have not worked with before.

In the case of the ESSN, dialogue took place at multiple levels and was frequent and open. Both DG ECHO and IFRC reported frequent engagement to support the design and implementation of the ESSN. Complementary dialogues were reported at the strategic, managerial, and technical levels. Dialogue occurred at multiple levels, including between the respective officers in Ankara as well as with the headquarters in Geneva and Brussels. In later stages it also involved conversations with the regional offices of both DG ECHO and IFRC. At Ankara level, the dialogue was particularly strong and reported to have taken place on a near daily basis. Dialogue with Brussels was less frequent and occurred primarily around key points such as monitoring missions.

**During the evaluation period, there was an imbalance between the funding relationship and more strategic aspects of the partnership.** This translated in an imbalance over decision-making given DG ECHO's role as a donor. In the case of the ESSN, this imbalance was reflected in DG ECHO's ability to have the final say during negotiations as well as in the fact that reportedly IFRC prioritised the funding relationship over bringing challenging issues to the attention of DG ECHO. In the case of the Programmatic Partnership, the imbalance was reflected in the country choices. The two organisations were not completely aligned in terms of the approach to selection of countries to be included in the partnership, and this created some tension. For example, in one instance, IFRC's Regional office invested time and effort in conducting a selection process to identify appropriate countries to engage in the Programmatic Partnership, only to be provided with a list of pre-selected countries by DG ECHO. Informants also reported that engagements tended to be more intense around funding opportunities, with missed opportunities for collaboration and cooperation on humanitarian issues of mutual interest, including for instance specific advocacy opportunities.

DG ECHO funding levels to IFRC have significantly increased over the evaluation period. DG ECHO increased funding to IFRC was mainly related to the ESSN and to a much lesser extent to increased investment in the DREF. The dialogue between DG ECHO and IFRC has intensified as a result of the ESSN funded action in Turkey which resulted in the IFRC receiving the highest amount of EU funding among all partners. This has placed the IFRC at a strategically elevated level than when funding was at a much smaller scale (Figure 7 above). IFRC's success in implementing the ESSN to date is seen as a key step in securing funding for the Programmatic Partnership with DG ECHO.

DG ECHO's increased investment in DREF was strategically important due to the fact that this is the main tool within the Emergency Toolbox for DG ECHO to address small scale or forgotten disasters and is the only such fund that DG ECHO supports.<sup>75</sup> One key informant noted that DREF was an important tool in making DG ECHO a "global donor" as it enables the EU to support crises it would

<sup>75</sup> For example, DG ECHO does not support the UN CERF.



not otherwise be able to, thereby increasing its coverage. DREF is also the means by which DG ECHO funds Forecast based Action, a new area of DG ECHO partnership with the IFRC since 2021. DG ECHO contribution to FbA is explored further through a case study (Annex 4).

**DG ECHO commitment to the partnership extended to co-chairing the IFRC Donor Advisory Group (DAG).** The DAG was established in 2012 by the IFRC and is made up of representatives from donor governments, member National Societies of those same countries, and the European Union. The DAG purpose is to provide a forum for high-level strategic and policy discussion on global issues—including humanitarian and development assistance and donor trends; support the IFRC to strengthen partnerships for the benefit of all members of the Donor Advisory Group and National Societies; provide high-level strategic inputs to the IFRC as to how it can strengthen partnership opportunities. DG ECHO co-chaired the DAG in 2021 with the IFRC.<sup>76</sup>

DG ECHO through its co-chair role continued promoting important aspects of IFRC’s work including building resilience of local actors, anticipatory action, disaster preparedness, and focusing on climate and greening. DG ECHO was also open to discussing commitments under the Grand Bargain, in particular localisation, flexible financing, and needs assessment. For example, through DG ECHO’s co-chair role of the IFRC Donor Advisory Group (DAG) anticipatory action was promoted through a recent policy dialogue. The policy dialogue took place in June 2021 and brought to the attention of donors the role that IFRC is playing in anticipatory action as well as the challenges faced in anticipatory action including the limited scope and volume of delivery, the continued focus on more visible events such as tropical storms and cyclones rather than on more complex crises such as droughts and the limited anticipatory action in fragile, and conflict settings.<sup>77</sup>

**The DG ECHO-IFRC partnership until recently had no agreed documented strategic objectives.** Throughout the evaluation period (2016-2020), the DG ECHO-IFRC partnership was premised on a Framework Programme Agreement signed in 2014 and based on Pillar assessments or compliance assessments which the European Commission requires partner organisations to pass before using indirect management cooperation. The Framework Partnership laid the basis (principles and administration) for actions to be individually funded by DG ECHO.<sup>78</sup> However, until the recent advent of the Programmatic Partnership there had been no mutually agreed and documented strategic objectives for the partnership, with some informants finding the need redundant. The Programmatic Partnership is changing this with agreed geographical coverage of 25 countries and 5 thematic areas of work covering Disaster Risk Management, Assistance and Protection to People on the Move, Epidemic and Pandemic Preparedness and Response, Cash and Voucher Assistance and Risk Communication and Community Engagement and Accountability.<sup>79</sup> These objectives provide a clear blue-print by which to measure the effectiveness and efficiency of the partnership as well as providing clarity to staff of both organisations and members on the aim of the partnership.

**There are limited examples of learning exercises or reviews on the partnership between DG ECHO and the IFRC during the evaluation period.** The last such evaluation took place in 2004 and found that “The Strategic Partnership meetings between ECHO, the EUNSS, the RCBL and the Secretariat are an excellent stage to discuss major policy, strategic and operational issues.”<sup>80</sup> Informants suggested that the lack of learning exercises was because, for the majority of the period covered by the evaluation, the scale of funding and engagement has been minimal and did not warrant investment in such an exercise. One example of learning was identified that relates to an unsuccessful HIP application by the IFRC for Pakistan in 2021.<sup>81</sup> Through this learning a number of

<sup>76</sup> DG ECHO continues to Co-chair the DAG in 2022

<sup>77</sup> IFRC, 2021, IFRC DAG Policy Dialogue.

<sup>78</sup> This includes EUROPEAN UNION INDIRECT MANAGEMENT DELEGATION AGREEMENT why capital letters here? NO ECHO/DRF/BUD/2021/91002

<sup>79</sup> IFRC Single Form, 2021, Accelerating local action in humanitarian and health crises

<sup>80</sup> SHER, 2004, EVALUATION OF ECHO’S CO-OPERATION WITH THE INTERNATIONAL FEDERATION OF RED CROSS AND RED CRESCENT SOCIETIES (IFRC) AND IFRC ACTIVITIES FUNDED BY ECHO, INCLUDING THE PARTNERSHIP AND ACTIVITIES WITH CERTAIN EU RED CROSS NATIONAL SOCIETIES. why capital letters here?

<sup>81</sup> Undated, IFRC, Report on Lesson learnt workshop in response to ECHO HIP 2021 application refusal to RCRC proposal, Pakistan

areas of weakness in the application process were identified, including poor quality of assessment, lack of technical capacity and a lack of focal point for contact with DG ECHO amongst others. More recently, the Red Cross Brussels office undertook an evaluation of RCEU ECHO Coordination Process. This is discussed further below (Section 5.4). The evaluation highlighted that target levels of funding had not been achieved.

Conversely the ESSN demonstrated some good practice in learning and knowledge management relating to actions funded by DG ECHO and implemented by IFRC. The learning from ESSN has been publicly available on the “Cash in Turkey” webpage<sup>82</sup> under the Resources section of the Cash Hub<sup>83</sup> that has been established as an online platform aiming at knowledge sharing and information exchange for the cash practitioners in the Movement. As part of learning and sharing of best practices in ESSN, a *rotational delegate scheme* has been launched for cash experts and senior officers from National Societies of the countries aiming at large-scale cash programming. The scheme has been structured as a two-way exchange of resources and learning for 2-3 months where delegates not only learn from ESSN so that they bring the knowledge back and implement in their own National Societies but also contribute and help enhance ESSN process.<sup>84</sup>

### **5.3 EQ10: To what extent did the DG ECHO-IFRC partnership succeed in: a. Maximizing efficiencies and decreasing management and related costs, including administrative burden? b. improving effectiveness and cost effectiveness in their response?**

**Over the evaluation period, funding was neither flexible nor predictable. However, the Pilot Programmatic Partnership which started in October 2021 (and thus outside the scope of the evaluation) with the inception phase provides for flexible and predictable funding<sup>85</sup> within an agreed programming framework.** From 2016 to 2018 DG ECHO funding to the IFRC under the Framework Partnership Agreement decreased from just over 30 million to approximately 10 million and could not be said to be predictable or flexible. This funding relied on submission of proposals by IFRC on an ad-hoc basis for response as well as annual contributions for replenishment of DREF operations. In 2019 the funding provided by DG ECHO to IFRC saw a substantial rise predominantly as a result of the ESSN making the IFRC the largest recipient of EU funding. The ESSN offered flexibility and predictability, albeit for a very specific purpose and a limited timeframe (i.e. it having been pre-established, and the time limited nature of the ESSN engagement with foreseen handover).

DREF funding, the second largest portion of DG ECHO funding to the IFRC over the evaluation period (see figure 1), was neither flexible nor predictable as it was based on annual contributions and was earmarked based on DG ECHO decisions on replenishment of the fund. While DG ECHO provided annual funding along with PRM, other donors provided multi-year commitments to the DREF. Conversely, the recent development of a Programmatic Partnership with DG ECHO is on track to be flexible, in the sense that the objectives are jointly agreed between the partners and predictable since funding will be provided over a three-year period based on annual funding<sup>86</sup> supported by a letter of intent by DG ECHO for a further two years funding. Given DG ECHO’s long standing support to DREF and IFRC’s ambition to grow the fund, a similar approach to the Programmatic Partnership of annual funding coupled with a letter of intent for multi-year support could be considered. This could support IFRC in leveraging funding from other sources given DG ECHO’s standing among the donor community.

The Commission continued to work towards greater cost-efficiency, in line with Grand Bargain commitments between donors and operational agencies at the World Humanitarian Summit. In this

<sup>82</sup> <https://cash-hub.org/resources/cash-in-turkey/>

<sup>83</sup> <https://cash-hub.org/>

<sup>84</sup> ESSN Case Study

<sup>85</sup> A letter of intent for funding over a three-year period was signed for the PP, however due to DG ECHO regulations prohibiting multi-year funding annual funding will be provided.

<sup>86</sup> DG ECHO started contributing to DREF in 2008.

respect, the Commission issued a Guidance Note on the Delivery of Large- Scale Cash Transfers, which aims at ensuring that more funding reaches beneficiaries and that less is spent on administrative costs. In this context, the EU continued the roll-out its largest cash programme – the Emergency Social Safety Net (ESSN) for refugees in Turkey.<sup>87</sup>

The partnership with IFRC on the ESSN was heavily driven by DG ECHO's desire to improve the overall cost efficiency of the programme. There was evidence from a wide range of stakeholder interviews that the primary motivating factor in the new partnership with IFRC to manage the ESSN was a response to the findings of the European Court of Auditors report in 2018<sup>88</sup>

**The cost efficiency of the ESSN has improved over time and with the transfer of responsibility to the IFRC.** There is strong evidence that the overhead costs of the ESSN have declined strongly overtime. The overall cost efficiency of the programme is understood to have improved from 80:20 at the start of the programme (i.e., 80% of the total programme costs were transferred to beneficiaries in the form of cash) to a contractually mandated 90:10 ratio in the current IFRC managed phase. However, some care needs to be taken in interpretation of this improvement. Clearly there are significant setup costs at the start of the programme that mean that the cost efficiency would improve overtime in any case.

A note for the file<sup>89</sup> detailed the efforts made by DG ECHO to negotiate lower Indirect Support Costs (ISC) for the ESSN, as part of recommendations from the European Court of Auditors in their report on the Facility for Refugees in Turkey. This description complements the content of note Ares (2019) 6849308 about the EU-UN Workshop on overheads flexibility held on 17 September 2019. In the framework of the HIP 2019 for Turkey, three partners submitted proposals for the third programme cycle of the Emergency Support Safety Net (ESSN 3). Proposals were received from WFP, IFRC and World Bank on 11 January 2019. IFRC proposed a good efficiency rate of 90-10 (for every Euro spent, 90 cents go to the pockets of beneficiaries), with very low Indirect Support Costs.<sup>90</sup> This followed the European Court of Auditors recommendation that DG ECHO pursue a reduction in the Indirect Support Costs paid for the ESSN.

Direct support costs fell substantially during the IFRC phase.<sup>91</sup> This partly reflected the capacity building work that had been achieved during the previous implementation phases. To some extent, it also reflected the increased trust that IFRC had on TRC as its national partner which translated in a simplification of the accountability structures.<sup>92</sup> The increased use of national staff by IFRC also contributed to reducing the total direct support costs.

**There was limited evidence that there has been a wider impact on reducing overhead costs amongst other humanitarian actors.** There was limited evidence that the decision of IFRC to charge a lower Indirect Support Cost rate for the ESSN had a wider influence in the humanitarian sector in reducing these costs. While it was reported that some UN agencies were now accepting lower rates in exceptional circumstances – for example projects implemented directly on behalf of recipient governments – in general, UN agencies have maintained their established rates.<sup>93</sup>

The funding of DREF by DG ECHO is unique<sup>94</sup> and addresses its strategic intent to respond to forgotten and small-scale crises it would not otherwise cover. However, efficiency gains particularly in reducing the lag time between requests for funding and a National Society receiving the funding are needed.

<sup>87</sup> DG ECHO 2019, REPORT FROM THE COMMISSION TO THE EUROPEAN PARLIAMENT AND THE COUNCIL Annual report on the European Union's humanitarian aid operations financed in 2018

<sup>88</sup> European Court of Auditors (2018) "Special Report No 27/2018: Facility for Refugees in Turkey: helpful support, but improvements needed to deliver more value for money" (Available from: [https://www.eca.europa.eu/Lists/ECADocuments/SR18\\_27/SR\\_TRF\\_EN.pdf](https://www.eca.europa.eu/Lists/ECADocuments/SR18_27/SR_TRF_EN.pdf))

<sup>89</sup> DG ECHO, 2020, Note for the File ESSN 2 and 3, 13/3/2020

<sup>90</sup> The contractually agreed ISC cost was reduced from 6.5% to 3.85%.

<sup>91</sup> Interviewed IFRC staff reported that the number of staff employed by IFRC was less than half relative to the previous implementation phase.

<sup>92</sup> For instance, unlike in the previous implementation phases, IFRC did not employ field monitors to mirror the TRC field staffing arrangements

<sup>93</sup> ESSN Case Study.

<sup>94</sup> DREF is the only external fund that DG ECHO contributes to. For example, DG ECHO does not fund the UN CERF.

As the purpose of the fund is to provide timely lifesaving assistance to the most vulnerable affected by disasters and crises, timeliness of requests is crucial in approving an allocation. On average, DREF allocation has been approved within eight days from the request from the National Society (including slow onset disasters), for sudden onset disasters this has been reduced to six days. The average number of days from the date of disaster until approval is eleven days. Similar lag times were reported for release of funding from the FbAF.<sup>95</sup> Informants suggested that the average approval time did not constrain response times because National Societies, in most cases, would start their domestic response and then utilize the DREF to replenish the used resources, once the DREF is approved. The new procedures and guidelines coupled with the NS capacity strengthening initiative for 2019, to support NSs to more efficiently access DREF were designed to facilitate the speeding up of this process<sup>96</sup>

DG ECHO expanded its support to anticipatory action in 2019 by supporting the Forecast Based Action Fund (FbAF) of IFRC through an indirect management funding agreement.<sup>97</sup> This allowed the IFRC, upon agreement with DG ECHO, to use up to 20 percent of DREF for Forecast based Actions as laid out in the new procedures for the Forecast Based Action Fund<sup>98</sup>. Accessing rapid pre-approved funding prior to a shock and based on pre-agreed triggers is a key step in ensuring that forecast based action is effective.

Funding through the FbAF is contingent on scientifically defined triggers and thresholds detailed in EAP, which when reached automatically generate an allocation from the FbAF which is then replenished by DG ECHO. DG ECHO's contributions are guided by an indirect management agreement.<sup>99</sup> The agreement stipulates specific EU funding eligibility criteria including:

- Allocations from the EU funding to the FbAF can be used to replenish the allocations made to individual trigger based early action in full or in part with a maximum amount of EUR 200 000 per activity and a minimum of 50% of the allocation made by the FbAF, unless otherwise explicitly agreed upon by DG ECHO.
- Trigger based early actions covered by this funding can have a maximum implementing period of three months.<sup>100</sup>

Anticipatory action has garnered widespread interest within the humanitarian and development sectors as a result of its potential to address resilience objectives (as it straddles the humanitarian-development nexus). This is in addition to potential efficiency and effectiveness gains from taking actions prior to an emergency, potentially speeding up the response and reducing its cost. Potential also exists for DG ECHO to gain further insight through engagement on climate change and the greening of humanitarian response given the IFRC's experience and technical capability as well as through the Red Cross and Red Crescent Climate Centre.<sup>101</sup>

DG ECHO promoted National Society Development during its Co-Chair of the DAG in 2021. Consultations were held with donor representatives during the DAG on the National Society Development Strategy, noting also the importance such support to National Societies plays in meeting the localisation agenda.<sup>102</sup> Informants reported that DG ECHO funding cannot be used to support core National Society Development directly, but its funding channelled through the IFRC can be used to support capacity enhancement that relates to actions undertaken by the National Society in response to a crisis.

<sup>95</sup> FbA Case Study

<sup>96</sup> IFRC, 2019, DREF Annual Report 2018

<sup>97</sup> ECHO/DRF/BUD/2019/91004 Signed Agreement registered under file n° 2019/00582/RQ/01/01.

<sup>98</sup> DG ECHO, 2021 Procedures for the Mobilisation and Allocation of the European Union Contribution to the DREF and the FBAF

<sup>99</sup> ECHO/DRF/BUD/2019/91004 Signed Agreement registered under file n° 2019/00582/RQ/01/01.

<sup>100</sup> This criterion excludes slow onset events for which it might take more than 3 months to implement early action.

<sup>101</sup> <https://www.climatecentre.org>

<sup>102</sup> IFRC, 2021, FINAL Background Paper Technical meeting with the Donor Advisory Group on National Society Development strategy 10092021

**The Programmatic Partnership is seen as a “game changer” by the IFRC because** it allows for strengthening of National Society capacity in support of actions that address humanitarian response. The main objective of the action is still humanitarian response – but building National Society capacities as an enabler of the response is permitted. Having said this administratively the programmatic partnership has required both the IFRC and DG ECHO to adapt tools and approaches. For example, DG ECHO regional desks have contributed part of their budgets to the Programmatic Partnership and IFRC has had to create new tools and working modalities in support of the partnership. This has required additional administrative efforts on the part of both organisations. Some informants also noted that the Single Form is not suited to the intent of the Programmatic Partnership.

The more recent strategic approach by DG ECHO to its partnership with IFRC remains at an early stage in terms of its development. It is therefore too early to determine what influence the partnership has had on the enhancement of the technical capacity of both organisations. Informants have noted that while the IFRC did undertake cash transfers prior to the ESSN the sheer scale of the programme provided the IFRC a different status and weight at cash transfer for a including a wider credibility and status.

**5.4 EQ11: To what extent did the DG ECHO-IFRC partnership contribute to a. strengthening coordination within the Red Cross Movement (IFRC, ICRC, EU National Societies and beyond), and with other humanitarian actors, notably UN? b. strengthening a Nexus approach between the humanitarian response and development?**

**The DG ECHO-IFRC partnership has contributed to the strengthening of Red Cross Movement coordination but there remain opportunities for improvement.** Key to the strengthened coordination has been having EUNS representation during dialogues, mutual engagement but also the reported directive by the Secretary General of the IFRC in 2018 that EUNS will have priority over the IFRC for funding whenever possible. The Programmatic Partnership has also led to the development of new ways of working between EUNS and the IFRC which demonstrates a willingness to engage. The ESSN has been praised for providing the basis for increased coordination within the Programmatic Partnership due to the reputation and credibility it provided IFRC to manage large sums of money and work in support of National Society implementation.

The ESSN partnership also enabled IFRC to strengthen the internal coordination within the movement through capacity building interventions as well as dissemination of knowledge and know-how within the learning framework mainly focused on internal learning rather than the entire humanitarian community.

A 2021 evaluation by the RCEU<sup>103</sup> office highlighted that the funding levels secured by EUNS and the IFRC were below the targeted level. A number of factors were identified as contributing to this. These included the need to identify realistic targets, improve alignment between Host National Society (HNS) priorities and those of the EU, and gaps in geographical coverage where DG ECHO has considerable funding envelopes available. In addition, capacity in areas such as cash transfers and protection as well as improved capacity of delegates to engage with the mechanism were areas identified for improvement. The results of the evaluation suggest that there is further potential to strengthen the partnership.

It remains unclear whether the partnership between DG ECHO and IFRC has improved coordination between ICRC and the IFRC. However, the advent of recent joint appeals, e.g., for COVID-19 response suggests the Movement is considering new forms of joint engagement.<sup>104</sup> The influence of the DG ECHO-IFRC partnership on this is unproved.

<sup>103</sup> IFRC, 2021, Evaluation of RCEU ECHO Coordination Process-Presentation to DG ECHO

<sup>104</sup> <https://www.icrc.org/en/document/covid-19-movement-appeal>

**Despite reported improvements in coordination and reduced competition between EUNS and the IFRC there remain inefficiencies in the coordination mechanism.** Informants reported less competition between the EUNS and the IFRC for DG ECHO funding. However, there remain tensions in this regard with EUNS viewing the EU as “their donor” despite the IFRC’s International Organisation status giving it access to funding streams not available to EUNS. Thus, internal coordination between the IFRC and its members can reportedly be lengthy, time consuming and in some instances overly arduous. More recently, negotiations over the Programmatic Partnership have yielded positive results and improved coordination among EUNS and the IFRC and DG ECHO. Informants suggested that negotiations have led to the development of agreed upon logical frameworks among member EUNS and the IFRC which detail the joint programming. This is reportedly the first time that such joint programme planning has been done. This coupled with agreed roles and responsibilities with lead EUNS in each of the 25 countries<sup>105</sup> selected is deemed as progress. This positive process has been attributed to the success achieved by IFRC in managing the DG ECHO funding for the ESSN and the credibility it has gained through management of large-scale funding and coordinating its implementation by a member National Society.

**There was, to date, little evidence that the partnership contributed to strengthening the nexus approach between humanitarian and development partners.** For instance, Figure 40 shows that DG ECHO funding to IFRC for DRR/DP and food security/livelihoods, sectors more associated with the nexus, were less than 1% of DG ECHO funding to the IFRC between 2016-2020..

**On the other hand, positive developments have been noted at a strategic level, such as more joined up approaches** with the presence of DG NEAR, DG INTPA and DG SANTE at various strategic dialogues with the IFRC, raising the potential for greater emphasis on the humanitarian development nexus given the dual mandate held by the IFRC. One such area that shows potential for strengthening of the nexus is through increased engagement with the IFRC on Forecast based actions.

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<sup>105</sup> It was reported that IFRC would lead in only 3 of the 25 countries selected under the Programmatic Partnership.



## 6 CONCLUSIONS

### Alignment

DG ECHO has had a long-standing partnership with the IFRC which dates back to DG ECHO's inception. The fundamentals of the partnership remain the same with both organisations committed to a principled approach to humanitarian response as enshrined in DG ECHO's Consensus and the IFRC's Fundamental Principles. Also, in common, was the two organisations' multi-sectoral approach to address the needs arising from natural or man-made disasters. Over the years the partnership has experienced peaks and troughs in strategic engagement and funding. Over the evaluation period, the partnership has reached new levels in financial terms and in terms of strategic engagement and intent between the two organisations, driven primarily by the role of IFRC in implementation of ESSN.

**The IFRC Strategy 2020 Saving Lives Changing Minds, which covered the majority of the period under evaluation, was well aligned with DG ECHO's two key strategic documents** that guide its approach to humanitarian response, namely the HAR and Consensus. IFRC's new Strategy 2030 continues to align with DG ECHO's strategic priorities suggesting that there remains a strong underlying basis for the partnership. This has been consolidated through the Programmatic Partnership.

**DG ECHO interest in a complementary alternative to the "blue pillar" in terms of humanitarian response was well served through a partnership with the IFRC as a component of the "red pillar".** The partnership can lead to more efficient response as demonstrated through the ESSN programme. The partnership has also enabled DG ECHO to act as a global humanitarian donor through support to the DREF (which has allowed it to support humanitarian response to under-the-radar or forgotten crises). One DG ECHO informant noted that without its support to DREF "we would not be able to claim that DG ECHO is a global donor". DREF support has enabled DG ECHO to fund responses to crises it would not otherwise be able to respond to. The partnership has also enabled DG ECHO to expand support to new and innovative approaches such as anticipatory action with one of the key organisations leading the development of the approach.

**DG ECHO and the IFRC share common goals under the Grand Bargain commitments.** This has been most explicit in terms of both organisations' interest in cash transfers and localisation. Both organisations have made ambitious commitments in delivering humanitarian assistance through cash transfers. Recent engagement in the ESSN has both demonstrated and strengthened the IFRC capacity for cash transfers, thus providing DG ECHO with a reliable complementary alternative to the "blue pillar" for large scale multi-sector cash transfer programmes including support to shock responsive social protection mechanisms. On the other hand, localisation commitments have posed a challenge to DG ECHO due to its inability to directly fund organisations emanating from third countries. The IFRC with its International Organisation status and indigenous 192 National Societies has provided a channel through which DG ECHO commitments to localisation can be realised without the associated financial risk.

**Concerns by DG ECHO about the quality of IFRC assessments undertaken as part of DREF applications have revealed a need for better understanding of needs assessment approaches** including the contextual limitations faced by humanitarian actors in emergency situations.

**DG ECHO's recent commitment in the Guidance note on Preparedness to a risk informed needs-based approach creates greater linkages and opportunities for working across different Directorate Generals of the Commission (INTPA, NEAR etc.)** to address resilience and humanitarian, development and peace nexus. This aligns well with IFRC and its dual mandate in humanitarian response and development.

**There has been a lack of a strategic approach to advocacy, communication and visibility resulting in minimal joint advocacy and communication with efforts described as**



**opportunistic in nature.** This was despite common areas of interest including climate change and greening of humanitarian response, cash transfers and anticipatory action among others. The ESSN provided a good practice example of joint advocacy, communication and visibility as have efforts in relation to anticipatory action. The Programmatic Partnership may provide opportunities to build on this good practice but is likely to require concerted planning at a strategic level. Two other areas where alignment could be improved are on Accountability to Affected Populations (AAP) and the EU Civil Protection Mechanism. Accountability to affected populations has not been prioritised by DG ECHO in discussions with the IFRC despite the latter's recent increased investment in AAP and Grand Bargain commitments that DG ECHO has signed up to. The lack of alignment between the EU's Civil Protection Mechanism and the IFRC's international deployment capacity (FACT, ERUs and RDRT) poses a risk of duplication and inefficiency given the similarity of the approaches and resources available and warrants further exploration between DG ECHO and the IFRC and EUNS that hold the standby capacity.

### Dialogue

The World Humanitarian Summit (WHS) in 2016 including the commitments to localisation, quality of response, the humanitarian development nexus and cash transfers represented a marked shift in donor interests including for DG ECHO. Regular dialogue between DG ECHO and IFRC at headquarters level has encompassed these topics as well as areas of common interest such as climate change. These dialogues have been useful, open and transparent but resource intensive. Greater flexibility to enable thinking and innovation outside the very structured agenda is of interest to some of the stakeholders.

In addition to these strategic dialogues informal strategic managerial and technical dialogues have been a key component of the partnership between DG ECHO and IFRC. They helped resolve differences, raise issues of concern as well as highlight common areas of interest and seek technical guidance in areas such as preparedness, anticipatory action, the ESSN and proposals for actions. This dialogue is perhaps strongest between respective headquarters. This highlights the need for regular dissemination to respective regional and country offices of the opportunities the partnership can present. One such opportunity is the need for greater emphasis on common policy and advocacy interests.

**During the evaluation period, the funding relationship dominated over the more strategic aspects of the partnership.** This translated in an imbalance in power over decision-making given DG ECHO's role as a donor. The negotiations concerning the ESSN as well as those relating to country choices for the Programmatic Partnership both reflected this imbalance.. Opportunities for deepening the strategic relationship through greater technical, policy and advocacy engagement existed.

Having said this, the ESSN programme and IFRC's ability to deliver on the programme along with the TRC has driven the relationship to new levels of engagement both strategically and financially. The ESSN has consolidated the importance and effectiveness of the "red pillar" as a complementary alternate to the "blue pillar". To a lesser degree DG ECHO's increased investment in DREF and its flexibility in supporting anticipatory action continues to signify the strategic importance that the fund holds to DG ECHO's response as well as commitment to smaller scale and forgotten crises. The result of these positive engagements was deemed a major factor in the IFRC securing the Programmatic Partnership, a flexible multi-year funding commitment.

The Programmatic Partnership has also been an opportunity to consolidate the partnership around agreed upon strategic objectives spanning programming across 25 countries with measurable indicators for success, something the previous partnership arrangement did not have. The Programmatic Partnership has also provided an opportunity for increased systematic learning which has not been a feature of the previous partnership period. The Programmatic Partnership also has the potential to lend itself to greater scrutiny of the effectiveness and efficiency of the partnership around the chosen thematic areas.

## Efficiency, effectiveness and Management costs

Over the evaluation period funding was neither flexible nor predictable. However, the recent Pilot Programmatic Partnership which started in October 2021 with the inception phase provides for flexible and predictable funding<sup>106</sup> within an agreed programming framework.

The Commission has continued to work towards greater cost-efficiency, in line with Grand Bargain commitments between donors and operational agencies at the World Humanitarian Summit. This was demonstrated by awarding the ESSN contract to the IFRC. The cost efficiency of the ESSN has improved over time and with the transfer of responsibility to the IFRC. The model of reduced overhead costs agreed with IFRC may have the potential to not only reduce the costs of IFRC projects but serve as a negotiating point with other actors – reducing costs across the sector. However, interviews suggested that this has not been realised.

The funding of DREF by DG ECHO is unique<sup>107</sup> and addresses its strategic intent to respond to forgotten and small-scale crises it would not otherwise cover. Recent expansion in strategic intent to cover anticipatory action has strengthened the potential to address the nexus. However, efficiency gains particularly in reducing the lag time between requests for funding and a National Society receiving the funding are needed. This is partially related to the need for improved assessment quality by National Societies (as noted previously) as well as the specific replenishment process in place for DG ECHO funds.

## Strengthened Coordination internal and external and nexus

Broadly, informants from both organisations have recognised the complexity of the triangular relationship between EUNS, the IFRC and DG ECHO. The IFRC Secretary General's directive that EUNS assume priority for EU funding has to some extent reduced competition over the funding relationship, but this still reportedly underlies existing tensions, despite the fact that EUNS do not have the same access as the IFRC to some funding streams. The Programmatic Partnership has to an extent necessitated better alignment and coordination between the EUNS and the IFRC, but this has come at a cost in terms of developing new ways of working and tools as well as lengthy meetings with expansive participation. The result however may be worth this initial cost as some stakeholders see these new ways of working being built on in the future. It will therefore be important to document these new ways of working and ensure that lessons learned are captured in a systematic way. There was little evidence to suggest that DG ECHO had any influence on the coordination between IFRC and ICRC.

**Despite the nexus gaining in importance for both organisations, the partnership has only to a limited extent served to make progress in this area.** Going forward, the expansion of FbA by the IFRC opens new avenues for DG ECHO to support resilience and specifically livelihoods interventions with the potential to protect development gains. This coupled with DG ECHO's role in facilitating engagement between IFRC and DG NEAR and INTPA has the potential to yield results in future but remains nascent at this stage.

Overall, the potential for growth in this newly invigorated partnership serves both DG ECHO and IFRC well. With both organisations mutually reinforcing each other's strategic objectives positively while also catering for the needs of key stakeholder member EUNS.

<sup>106</sup> A letter of intent for funding over a three-year period was signed for the PP, however due to DG ECHO regulations prohibiting multi-year funding annual funding will be provided.

<sup>107</sup> DREF is the only external fund that DG ECHO contributes to. For example, DG ECHO does not fund the UN CERF.

## 7 RECOMMENDATIONS

**The evaluation demonstrates the strategic added value of the partnership for DG ECHO in:**

- **Promoting the localisation agenda:** Through the network of 192 National Societies the IFRC has considerable reach and the potential to increase the coverage of DG ECHO crisis response.
- **Delivering large scale response:** By systematically considering the IFRC as a reliable complementary alternative to the “blue pillar” for large scale programme implementation.
- **Improving the efficiency of its response:** The partnership with IFRC may in some circumstances result in efficiency gains, particularly if it retains a willingness to negotiate indirect costs on large scale programmes, however this should not be at the expense of quality programming.
- **Expanding the use of multi-purpose cash transfer programming:** There is strong alignment between the intent of DG ECHO and IFRC on expanding the use of cash assistance. Contrary to the sector-based approach of the UN to cash assistance, the IFRC is better aligned with DG ECHO’s multi-purpose cash assistance agenda.

There is, however, scope for strengthening the partnership between the two organisations. The evaluation makes the following recommendations in this regard:

### Strategic Recommendations

**Recommendation 1: Continue to deepen and expand the dialogue with IFRC in strategic areas of interest including facilitating engagement with other Directorate Generals of the Commission.**

- **Consider whether the frequency of Strategic Dialogues at HQ level is sufficient.**
- **Strengthen strategic dialogue between the two organisation at the country level.** During the evaluation period, dialogue at the country level was mostly focused on funding/contractual opportunities rather than broader humanitarian issues of mutual interest. Dialogue in the context of the ESSN has been an exception in this regard.
- **Create opportunities for mutual learning and information sharing (including dedicated thematic meetings)** on topics such as greening of humanitarian response, cash transfer programming and climate change among others would provide opportunities for increased technical expertise and exchange.
- **Ensure organisation wide dissemination of dialogue results** to promote increased Regional and country level engagement.

**Recommendation 2: Develop in collaboration with the IFRC a joint organisation wide strategic advocacy plan based on aligned interests. The advocacy plan should:**

- **Consider using as its basis the thematic areas of the Programmatic Partnership as well as the country experiences for advocacy and communication and visibility.**
- **Set specific target audiences at national, regional and international levels for advocacy and communication and visibility activities.**
- **Engage headquarters, regional and country office staff in the planning and advocacy initiatives in order to promote wider engagement of staff across both organisations and members.**
- **Set specific target indicators in the plan and monitor progress against the plan.**

**Recommendation 3: Capture learning and manage knowledge about the partnership in a more systematic manner and disseminate this throughout the organisation. The IFRC should consider a similar approach.**

- **Develop a structured approach** to capture learning and manage the knowledge about how the partnership has worked.
- **Critically document the processes and tools developed** as part of the design of the Programmatic Partnership to capture the new way of working.
- **Dissemination:** Consider as part of this approach the need for regular learning events and knowledge management and dissemination strategies.

**Operational Recommendations**

**Recommendation 4: Manage the mismatch of expectations in some operational areas by gaining a better understanding of what the partnership can offer in relationship to:**

- **Needs Assessment:** Work to understand the strengths and weaknesses of IFRC's needs assessment approach, recognising that contextual issues can constrain or limit effectiveness of existing needs assessment approaches.
- **Protection and AAP:** Both Protection and AAP are elements of a people-centred approach promoted under the Grand Bargain commitments. Clarifying the role the IFRC can play in this regard - based on an assessment of its strengths and weaknesses – would support DG ECHO's Grand Bargain commitments.
- **The Humanitarian Development and Peace nexus:** Continue to explore how to engage on the HDP nexus, facilitating a better understanding among other Directorate Generals of the role that IFRC could play as well as how existing tools such as FbA can promote a nexus approach.
- **The EU Civil Protection Mechanism:** the need for improved coordination between the EU system and IFRC's emergency response mechanisms, FACT, ERU etc.
- **FbA:** Specifically explore what DG ECHO can offer with regards to support to readiness associated with early action, including training and pre-positioning of supplies. DG ECHO will also need to adopt a position vis a vis IFRC's intended use of less vigorous triggers for release of funds for early action.

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## The European Civil Protection and Humanitarian Aid Operations - ECHO

### ECHO Mission


The primary role of the Directorate-General for Civil Protection and Humanitarian Aid Operations (DG ECHO) of the European Commission is to manage and coordinate the European Union's emergency response to conflicts, natural and human-induced disasters. It does so both through the delivery of humanitarian aid and through the coordination and facilitation of in-kind assistance, specialist capacities, expertise and intervention teams using the Union Civil Protection Mechanism (UCPM)

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