



Humanitarian Aid Decision

23 02 01

Title: Strengthening humanitarian information systems essential to the coordination of humanitarian assistance through thematic support to the United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA)

Location of operation: Global

Amount of decision: EUR 3,000,000

Decision reference number: ECHO/THM/BUD/2006/02000

Explanatory Memorandum

1. Rationale, needs and target population:

1.1. Rationale

In times of conflict or major disasters, the need for **accurate and timely information** is as crucial as is a rapid and coherent **coordination** among the international humanitarian community. Effective humanitarian information systems that provide timely access to comprehensive, relevant and reliable information are critical to humanitarian operations. As it has been demonstrated recently in the emergency responses in Darfur, the Indian Ocean Tsunami disaster or the South Asia Earthquake, access to information is crucial for a coherent strategic response. The faster the humanitarian community is able to collect, analyse, disseminate and act on key information, the more effective will be the response, the better needs will be met and the greater the benefit to affected populations.

In protracted, complex emergencies, a constant flow of updated and relevant information is essential to enable informed decisions to be made by those providing assistance and by the victims of these emergencies alike. The lack of access to independent information in conflict situations can easily fuel existing tensions. In a sudden-onset emergency the quick assessment of needs, the creation of emergency maps and the matching of needs with available resources improve the transparency, efficiency and cost-effectiveness of the response, thus avoiding under spending and overspending alike.

Mobilizing the support of the international humanitarian community is often dependent upon providing a complete overview of an emergency as it unfolds, including the provision of information on all of the activities of the humanitarian actors and agencies involved in the response. Comprehensive and reliable information and data, integrated and analysed, and packaged in usable formats, enables decision makers in the field to avoid duplication of effort

and to better coordinate response among operational agencies. Thus a repository of all relevant emergency documentation, including situation reports, geographic and thematic maps, Who is doing What Where (3W) activity tracking systems for each sector, assessment and funding information, updated on a continual basis, becomes a critical tool for agency and donor decision making during the response phase, both in and outside the country concerned.

Tracking of humanitarian finance is not merely used for retrospective analysis, but is a pivotal tool for ongoing humanitarian response. By identifying unmet needs and uneven allocations, it allows implementing agencies and donors to work together to determine the best use of humanitarian resources.

A regular flow of information and analyses of events in high-risk countries is a crucial component in **early warning**. Such timely early warning information enables proactive rather than reactive decision-making and policy development. By alerting the humanitarian community to an impending crisis, early warning analysis can facilitate timely preventive interventions and preparedness planning, which may minimize or avert a crisis.

The United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA) was established in 1991 with a specific mandate to work with operational relief agencies to ensure that there are no gaps in the response and that duplication of effort is avoided. OCHA serves as a catalyst in the multilateral system for principled humanitarian action from the moment a crisis is anticipated until rehabilitation and reconstruction are under way. OCHA's gathering of information management extends from the gathering and collection of information and data, to its integration, analysis, synthesis, and dissemination via the Internet and other means.

OCHA information systems are pivotal for the humanitarian community including for DG ECHO as a major humanitarian donor and its decision making procedure. DG ECHO is an important user of OCHA's information systems for its day to day management of humanitarian assistance. Furthermore, DG ECHO is strongly committed to the Principles and Good Practices of Humanitarian Donorship adopted at the 2003 Stockholm Conference. This funding decision is a concrete follow up to the commitment undertaken by Donors to enhance the coherence and effectiveness of its actions as well as accountability to beneficiaries.

Consequently and after the positive results achieved during these two years of thematic support to OCHA, DG ECHO envisages to continue to support, for the last year, measures designed to enhance the co-ordination of humanitarian assistance and the related information management systems. It will do so by funding OCHA, an experienced partner with a unique mandate and a global outreach in that domain. DG ECHO will maximize this investment by ensuring technical coordination, availability and interoperability with similar services developed for DG ECHO and other Commission Services by the Joint Research Centre.

Thematic funding has enabled OCHA to make significant progress in the important area of information management by the creation of Information Management Units in OCHA field offices and the deployment of Humanitarian Information Centers to emergencies like Darfur or in response to natural disasters like the Indian Ocean Tsunami last year or the recent South Asia Earthquake. After 3 years of thematic funding and the full implementation of these programmes, DG ECHO is planning to phase out its support by the end of this funding decision.

1.2. Identified needs:

Despite considerable innovations and accomplishments within the field of humanitarian information in the past years, the capacity to collect, analyze and disseminate information still varies considerably among partners in the humanitarian community, as well as within OCHA itself. The humanitarian information community still faces operational, institutional and strategic challenges that impede information management and exchange from becoming fully integrated into relief programmes.

To respond to information needs, OCHA has developed humanitarian information systems which include ReliefWeb, the Integrated Regional Information Networks (*IRIN*), Information Management Unit's (*IMUs*) and Humanitarian Information Centres (*HICs*). These services have established solid reputations in the provision of quality information and are recognized as essential in the coordination of emergency response among partners in the humanitarian community. Common in the success of these systems, or information services, is that the information provided is based upon a solid information exchange network among all partners in the humanitarian community. ReliefWeb consolidates final reports, documents and reports from humanitarian partners providing a global repository one-stop shop for emergency response information. IRIN gathers information from a range of humanitarian and other sources, providing context and reporting on emergencies and at risk countries. And IMUs and HICs collect, manage and disseminate operational data and information at the field level, providing geographic information products and a range of operations databases and related content to decision makers in the field as well as at headquarters.

Other OCHA humanitarian information systems that provide complementary information services to meet the full range of information needs as described above include the OCHA Online, the Financial Tracking System (FTS), and the Global Disaster Alert and Coordination System (GDACS).

Aware of the importance of reinforcing OCHA's information management systems, in 2003 DG ECHO started discussions with OCHA to develop a thematic strategy in this field. DG ECHO believed that OCHA's field offices had to be reinforced and standardized in terms of information management tools and other services to partner organization (e.g. the Who is doing What Where); HICs needed to become a relief tool to be deployed within days for ad hoc emergencies; that the FTS should not only cover CAP allocations but should become a Global instrument tracking all humanitarian aid flows. DG ECHO started discussion with the Joint Research Centre and OCHA to develop a global mechanism for early warning, damage assessment and strategic planning in natural disasters.

A) Field Information Systems

Operational experience has highlighted the difficulties involved in information collection and management, resulting from the lack of established standards and standardized information management tools. Such standards and tools are vital in order to enable partners to collect data, share assessment information, and facilitate information management and exchange.

These concerns also apply to the variety of information management tools used in OCHA field offices. In order to strengthen OCHA's field information capacity where HICs do not currently exist, there is a clear need to strengthen the capacity to utilize standardized information management tools including online information exchange platforms, databases,

datasets and geographic tools as well as to streamline both the methodology and the equipment used.

With the adoption by OCHA management in March 2004 of the **Information Management Strategy**, OCHA proposes to create and staff Information Management Units (IMUs) in field offices as integral components of the offices. Information management is essential for OCHA's coordination role and real value added to its field work. Good information systems in OCHA's field offices are essential for humanitarian partners. The creation of IMUs has substantially improved the information management capacity of the four field offices assisted with thematic funding in 2004 (Burundi, DRC, Uganda and Sudan).

It is now recognised that given the operational environment OCHA field offices work in, coupled with the high turnover of staff that characterises humanitarian emergencies, a robust information management system is required if knowledge is to be effectively retained, used and analysed within the OCHA office and by the wider humanitarian community. Moreover, a more rapid deploy mechanism for the HICs was identified. As a UN Humanitarian Common Service, HICs are inter-agency projects managed by OCHA to aid the relief efforts of the wider humanitarian community.

B) Financial Tracking System (FTS)

Tracking of humanitarian finance is essential for co-ordination purposes. Access to critical information on donor response to date and emerging gaps in relation to needs, allows implementers and donors to work together to determine best use of humanitarian resources.

Until recently, OCHA's **Financial Tracking System (FTS)** mostly collected reports of contributions to CAPs from donors and implementing agencies. Information on contributions outside CAPs was sporadic and seriously incomplete. However, there was the recognition of the need and potential of the FTS to become a more powerful and comprehensive resource covering contributions outside the CAP, humanitarian aid to non CAP countries and reports on forgotten crises.

To achieve that, under the previous thematic funding decision, the FTS has been upgraded to provide more timely and accurate information on the status of funding within and outside of appeals, and expanding the system to non CAP countries. FTS has developed a new server and users can now access funding information for any of the 100 countries now reported to be receiving humanitarian aid. In 2004 FTS recorded some 5500 specific contributions to more than 100 recipient countries, from about 500 donor governments and organizations <http://ocha.unog.ch/fts/index.aspx> .

The FTS team in Geneva is working closely with DG ECHO to ensure the compatibility and electronic transmission of data from the 14 point system into the FTS.

C) Global Disaster Alert and Coordination System (GDACS)

Many organizations, responding to natural and man-made disasters, have identified the need for a comprehensive "Global Disaster Alert and Coordination System" (GDACS) to provide a global mechanism for Early Warning/Alert, Damage Assessment, Strategic planning and international response coordination. OCHA has already developed a system that is primarily used for natural disasters, the Virtual OSOCC (On-Site Operations Coordination Centre), encompassing several of these functions and which is successfully utilized by international organizations in response to disasters.

In 2004 the Joint Research Centre (JRC), in collaboration with DG ECHO and OCHA, developed a prototype for GDACS, built on existing tools that have proven to be successful in the past and which are already widely accepted by stakeholders in international disaster response, updating information in a timely and accurate way.

Ensuring the functioning of such a GDACS requires not only web-based information management tools, but also elements such as dedicated stakeholders, a widely accepted and standardized methodology and procedures for advocacy and training.

D) Information portal on Humanitarian Emergencies (ReliefWeb)

ReliefWeb (www.reliefweb.int) is the world's leading online gateway to information on humanitarian emergencies and disasters. Through ReliefWeb, OCHA provides practitioners with information on both complex emergencies and natural disasters worldwide from over 1,000 sources, including UN, Governments, NGOs, the academic community and the media. On average, ReliefWeb receives up to 3 million hits per day, representing an increase of 20 percent in the past year. Some 150 new documents and maps are posted daily from over 2,000 sources. Through this well-developed information network, awareness is raised of the core humanitarian principles of impartiality, neutrality and humanity. During the Pakistan earthquake ReliefWeb started posting information within 2 hours and within 48 hours had posted over 200 documents from 77 sources.

A redesigned version of the site in 2004 contains new views of content by region and sector, modernized search and navigation and increased reporting on forgotten crises and countries of concern.

E) Integrated Regional Information Networks (IRIN)

The **Integrated Regional Information Networks** (IRIN) (www.irinnews.org) were established by OCHA to improve the gathering and flow of timely and accurate information, thereby enhancing the capacity of the humanitarian community to understand, prepare for, respond to and avert emergencies. IRIN is an independent non-commercial humanitarian news service covering 47 countries in sub-Saharan Africa, Afghanistan, eight countries in Central Asia and the Middle East.

1.3. Target population and regions concerned:

Funding under this decision will benefit the wider humanitarian community and beneficiaries and other persons of concern to OCHA.

The target groups and stakeholders identified are the UN agencies and other International Organizations, NGOs, Donors, Governments, Academia, Specialists and the Media. In addition to the above, local governments, parties to conflict, civil society groups, local media and regional organizations are also target groups.

1.4. Risk assessment and possible constraints:

Most of the areas included in the field of information management systems, involve issues related to access, security of humanitarian workers, constraints on information exchange among stakeholders, and possible sensitivity of information to member states and other political groups which must be taken into consideration and given due weight.

Ensuring a well-functioning information exchange among stakeholders is a process that requires reciprocity. In order to overcome the reluctance of sharing information that is often encountered, OCHA must give equal weight to the dissemination as to the collection of information in order to ensure optimal availability of information.

OCHA's ability to perform these functions depends on having skilled and experienced staff. Funding from other donors to support the overall OCHA programme will remain a vital component.

Funding under this decision will not overlap, but reinforce, operations where DG ECHO is already directly supporting OCHA. Geographical funding will continue to support OCHA coordination activities in the field, including the information management units in those OCHA offices that have created them. The outputs of the present funding decision will be important prerequisites for standardised geographically specific operations.

2 - Objectives and components of the humanitarian intervention proposed: ¹

2.1. – Objectives:

The principal objective of this decision is that co-ordination of humanitarian assistance is strengthened amongst the international community in view of better meeting the needs of victims of humanitarian crises.

The specific objective is that OCHA's information management systems and services, mainly Field Information Systems, the Financial Tracking System, the Global Disaster Alert and Coordination System, ReliefWeb and IRIN are strengthened in view of improving the co-ordination of humanitarian assistance.

2.2. - Components:

A) Field Information Systems

The Field Information Systems department in OCHA will finalise and train staff on the standardized information management tools including, online information exchange platforms, databases, contact directory, datasets and geographic tools, developed under the thematic funding.

1. Grants for the implementation of humanitarian aid within the meaning of Council Regulation (EC) No.1257/96 of 20 June 1996 concerning humanitarian aid are awarded in accordance with the Financial Regulation, in particular Article 110 thereof, and its Implementing Rules in particular Article 168 thereof (Council Regulation (EC, Euratom) No 1605/2002 of 25 June 2002, OJ L248 of 16 September 2002 and No 2342/2002 of 23 December 2002, OJ L 357 of 31 December 2002).Rate of financing: In accordance with Article 169 of the Financial Regulation, grants for the implementation of this Decision may finance 100% of the costs of an action. Humanitarian aid operations funded by the Commission are implemented by NGOs and the Red Cross organisations on the basis of Framework Partnership Agreements (FPA) (in conformity with Article 163 of the Implementing Rules of the Financial Regulation) and by United Nations agencies based on the Financial and Administrative Framework Agreement (FAFA). The standards and criteria established in Echo's standard Framework Partnership Agreement to which NGO's and International organisations have to adhere and the procedures and criteria needed to become a partner may be found athttp://europa.eu.int/comm/echo/partners/index_en.htm

By the end of this funding decision, all OCHA field offices should have the minimum standard of information management capacity and an Information Management Unit created. Field Information Systems (FIS) should support offices with staff training, procurement of equipment and related information management tools and data, connectivity and communications. Once the field office has received the support from the FIS department, running costs of Information Management Units should be integrated in the OCHA Country Appeal.

Regarding Humanitarian Information Centres (HICs), OCHA will continue its efforts to improve their timely deployment and management which should be deployable, within seven days of activation, with trained personnel, equipment and related information management tools and data.

B) Financial Tracking System (FTS)

OCHA will continue to improve the FTS to make it a global instrument on humanitarian aid flows, containing a continually expanding scope of data and becoming a fully interactive platform linking to other OCHA information systems like ReliefWeb, HICs or OCHA field offices. The main challenge for the FTS is to be able to adapt the tracking of humanitarian assistance to the field realities. For this, the FTS has to develop contacts with OCHA field offices to ensure that the data collected reflects the response at field level. FTS has taken important steps to transforming itself from a CAP-centered system to a global information pool on humanitarian funding and requirements. Needs assessments in 2005 showed that the important next steps include stronger horizontal links with other OCHA information platforms (e.g. HICs) in both on-line presentation and methods for data collection; broader participation of and information provision by NGOs; continued usability and functionality improvements for the website; and support for better reporting (more complete, timely, and automated) by donors.

C) Global Disaster Alert and Coordination System (GDACS)

By the end of 2005, GDACS expects to have a functional on-line disaster management system established, which comprises an automatic alert component, a real-time disaster information exchange component (Virtual OSOCC) as well as direct access to reports (ReliefWeb) and satellite images (UN Satellite Imagery) in any significant disaster.

In the last year, OCHA has developed a system of regional and/or national focal points for GDACS. Based on the model of the INSARAG Regional Antenna office in Tunisia, GDACS Antenna Offices will be established within disaster response organizations of interested disaster-prone countries. The GDACS Antenna Office would be responsible for assisting in development of the methodology (i.e. participation in workshops and simulation exercises), to raise awareness of the tool in their own country/region and to act as an interface with the international community in case of disasters in their own country.

In 2006 OCHA will continue to promote the participation of disaster-prone countries in GDACS and organize an annual GDACS meeting with key stakeholders to discuss lessons learned and corrective measures following evaluation of the use of GDACS in disaster response as well as defining requirements and support for the further development.

D) Information portal on Humanitarian Emergencies (ReliefWeb)

In 2006 DG ECHO will continue to support ReliefWeb's efforts to improve the timeliness and efficiency of its site, the quality of its products, the capacity to produce maps and its

coverage of “forgotten emergencies”. ReliefWeb will improve its site through the development of an enterprise level server infrastructure and a new search engine to ensure rapid and efficient access to critical information 24 hours a day, 365 days a year.

E) Integrated Regional Information Networks (IRIN)

In 2006, IRIN will maintain and strengthen its coverage of forgotten, under-reported and ad hoc crisis situations in sub-Saharan Africa and Central Asia and consolidate its coverage of Nepal.

Furthermore, IRIN will further consolidate its surge capacity, a rapidly deployable and flexible emergency information response capacity to augment reporting response capacity within its current geographic sphere and elsewhere.

F) Visibility

In 2006, OCHA will implement a comprehensive visibility and communication strategy to ensure that appropriate measures are undertaken to highlight the EC’s support for humanitarian coordination. The EC logo will continue to be posted on the HIC, FTS, ReliefWeb, IRIN and GDACS web site front pages with a logo hyperlinked to DG ECHO web site. ReliefWeb will continue to publish EC humanitarian reports and publications as defined within the selection criteria. IRIN publications and film productions will continue to clearly indicate the EC support. HICs and assisted OCHA field offices will display EC visibility and communication materials as appropriate.

3 - Duration foreseen for actions within the framework of the proposed decision:

The duration for the implementation of this decision will be 15 months. The programmes that DG ECHO is funding under the present decision, in principle, require a medium-term perspective that DG ECHO cannot formally commit to given the annual basis of DG ECHO programming and budget and the short-term nature of DG ECHO’s mandate. However, DG ECHO believes that this support is needed as a necessary investment over a limited period of time, to ensure the effectiveness and feasibility of its short-term action in a medium to long-term perspective.

Humanitarian operations funded by this decision must be implemented within this period. Expenditure under this Decision shall be eligible from 1 February 2006.

The start date is: 1 February 2006.

If the implementation of the actions envisaged in this decision is suspended due to *force majeure* or any comparable circumstance, the period of suspension will not be taken into account for the calculation of the duration of the decision.

Depending on the evolution of the situation in the field, the Commission reserves the right to terminate the agreements signed with the implementing humanitarian organisations, where the suspension of activities is for a period of more than one third of the total planned duration of the action. In this respect, the procedure established in the general conditions of the specific agreement will be applied.

4 – Previous interventions/decisions of the Commission within the context of the crisis concerned herewith

In 2004 the EC adopted its first thematic funding decision to OCHA and the contribution agreement ECHO/THM/BUD/2004/01001 was concluded. This decision was followed by a second decision in 2005 with a contribution agreement (ECHO/THM/BUD/2005/01002) for the same amount (EUR 4 M).

The initial results of the two years of thematic funding are positive, mainly because of OCHA's management commitment to make this programme a success and due to the close involvement of DG ECHO in the monitoring. DG ECHO has actively participated in the development of the new FTS and GDACS. FIS has partially achieved its stated objectives under the 2005 funding. In each of the OCHA assisted offices information management expertise has either been deployed or is expected to deploy before the end of the grant agreement. Standardised tools in support of humanitarian coordination have been made available; although integration of these tools into the work flow and decision making processes has not yet been fully realised. A list of trained personnel prepared for deployment was maintained and utilized for successive HIC deployments in 2005.

DG ECHO's support for the improvement and standardisation of HIC's at thematic level has proved to have a positive impact in the field. Thematic funding has also covered the deployment costs of the HICs in Darfur, Sumatra, Sri Lanka, Niger and now Pakistan, allowing OCHA to react fast (<http://www.humanitarianinfo.org>). These 5 crises have proved to be the perfect case for the deployment of a HIC, due to the rapidly changing humanitarian operational environment, the large number of new humanitarian actors entering the operational area and the lack of existing data in this region. HICs have proved to be essential for the coordination of the humanitarian assistance. DG ECHO continued to support the HICs in Darfur, Sumatra and Sri Lanka with geographical funding.

Two Joint Review Missions between DG ECHO and OCHA have taken place in Sudan (Darfur) and Sri Lanka and Indonesia (Banda Aceh). The Joint Review Missions have been a very positive feature of this thematic funding programme for the technical support component they brought with them. The joint OCHA and DG ECHO Monitoring Mission to the HIC Sri Lanka and HIC Sumatra in April 2005, identified over 26 recommendations and issues that needed to be addressed to improve the effectiveness of the HIC concept. The mission confirmed that although both HICs were having a positive impact on the humanitarian response, the concept itself required further clarification, particularly their relationship with the OCHA Office and the Humanitarian Coordinator. Furthermore, DG ECHO requested OCHA to reinforce its human resources capacity for information management given that FIS staff is often called to respond to emergencies like has been the case for the Asian Tsunami or the South Asia Earthquake.

In 2006, a Joint Monitoring Mission to Pakistan with OCHA, the US Office for Foreign Disaster Assistance/United States Agency for international Development (OFDA) and the UK Department for International Development (DFID) is planned. This mission should examine the HIC deployment as a coordination mechanism in response to the South Asia Earthquake <http://www.un.org.pk/earthquake05/undac.htm>.

5 - Other donors and donor co-ordination mechanisms

Like the European Commission, various EU Member States, as well as the US, Japan and Canada have provided continued strong support to OCHA operations, notably in Africa. All recognize that strong support is needed in this particularly vulnerable and volatile area.

Financial support provided by the US Office for Foreign Disaster Assistance/United States Agency for international Development (OFDA) and the UK Department for International Development (DFID) complements the DG ECHO thematic funding.

OFDA provides a pool of funding which can be activated to support the start up of a Humanitarian Information Centre. Similarly, DFID stores and maintains the equipment (heavy module) required for the deployment of a full HIC in the United Kingdom and covers deployment costs. This service is key to ensuring that obligations to have HICs operational within 7 days of a sudden-onset disaster are viable. Both OFDA and DFID have, during the course of 2005, provided staff on secondment to HICs.

Duplication and overlap are avoided by close and ongoing contacts between DG ECHO, OFDA/USAID and DFID, who coordinate their support to FIS/FIM and work together on evaluating how financial assistance may best be used to support the common strategic objectives related to OCHA's information management strategy.

OCHA ensures that there is no overlap in funding of activities by different donors and notably between DG ECHO funding at country and thematic level.

6 – Amount of decision and distribution by specific objectives:

6.1. - Total amount of the decision: EUR 3,000,000

6.2 - Budget breakdown by specific objective

Principal objective: <i>Co-ordination of humanitarian assistance is strengthened amongst the international community in view of better meeting the needs of victims of humanitarian crises</i>				
Specific objectives	Allocated amount by specific objective (EUR)	Possible geographical area of operation	Activities	Potential partners²
Specific objective: OCHA's information management systems and services, mainly Field Information Systems, the Financial Tracking System, the Global Disaster Alert and Coordination System, ReliefWeb and IRIN are strengthened in view of improving the co-ordination of humanitarian assistance.	3,000,000	Global	<u>FIM</u> : Regional workshops on information management and a global Field Information Management training course; Training of staff on IM, equipment procured and installed in OCHA field offices; Standardized IM tools available; When required, HIC is deployed within 7 days for ad hoc emergencies; Evaluation of the information management response to the South Asia Earthquake; <u>FTS</u> increases tracking of humanitarian aid outside CAP by 90%; FTS and 14 point system are consistent by 95%; 20% increase in the number of info sources for forgotten crises; Advance search for FTS; full use of electronic 14 point system; Independent study undertaken and indicates increase of quality of <u>ReliefWeb's</u> reports; new search engine operational; <u>IRIN</u> will strengthen and maintain its coverage of forgotten, under-reported and ad hoc crisis situations in sub-Saharan Africa and Central Asia while consolidating its coverage of Nepal; Strengthening IRIN's Surge Capacity; Annual <u>GDACS</u> stakeholders meeting and technical workshops to test GDACS methodology. GDACS functions on-line and comprises an automatic alert component (ASGARD), a real-time disaster information exchange component (Virtual OSOCC) as well as direct access to reports (Reliefweb) and satellite images (UNOSAT) in any significant disaster.	UN - UNOCHA
TOTAL	3,000,000			

² UNITED NATIONS, OFFICE FOR THE COORDINATION OF HUMANITARIAN AFFAIRS

7 – Evaluation

Under article 18 of Council Regulation (EC) No.1257/96 of 20 June 1996 concerning humanitarian aid the Commission is required to "regularly assess humanitarian aid operations financed by the Community in order to establish whether they have achieved their objectives and to produce guidelines for improving the effectiveness of subsequent operations." These evaluations are structured and organised in overarching and cross cutting issues forming part of ECHO's Annual Strategy such as child-related issues, the security of relief workers, respect for human rights, gender. Each year, an indicative Evaluation Programme is established after a consultative process. This programme is flexible and can be adapted to include evaluations not foreseen in the initial programme, in response to particular events or changing circumstances. More information can be obtained at:

http://europa.eu.int/comm/echo/evaluation/index_en.htm.

8 – Budget article 23 02 01

	CE (in EUR)
Budget Appropriations for 2006	470,429,000
Supplementary budgets	-
Transfers	-
Budget Appropriations for 2006	470,429,000
Total amount of the Decision	3,000,000

COMMISSION DECISION

of

on the financing of humanitarian operations from the general budget of the European Union to strengthen humanitarian information systems essential to the coordination of humanitarian assistance through thematic support to the United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA)

THE COMMISSION OF THE EUROPEAN COMMUNITIES,

Having regard to the Treaty establishing the European Community,

Having regard to Council Regulation (EC) No.1257/96 of 20 June 1996 concerning humanitarian aid¹, and in particular Article 15(2) thereof,

Whereas:

- (1) In times of conflict or major disasters, the need for accurate and timely information is crucial. The faster the humanitarian community is able to collect, analyze, disseminate and act on key information, the more effective will be the response, the better needs will be met and the greater the benefit to affected populations.
- (2) The United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA) was established with a specific mandate to work with operational relief agencies to ensure that there are no gaps in the response and that duplication of effort is avoided. To respond to information needs, OCHA has developed several humanitarian information systems.
- (3) DG ECHO is an important user of OCHA's information systems for its day to day management of humanitarian assistance.
- (4) An assessment of the humanitarian situation leads to the conclusion that the Community should finance humanitarian aid operations for a period of 15 months.
- (5) It is estimated that an amount of EUR 3,000,000 from budget line 23 02 01 of the general budget of the European Union is necessary to support and enhance humanitarian information systems essential to the coordination of humanitarian assistance, taking into account the budget available, other donor's intervention and other factors.
- (6) The present decision constitutes a financing decision in the sense of Article 75 of the Financial Regulation², Article 90 of the detailed rules for implementation of the Financial Regulation³, and Article 15 of the 2004 Internal Rules on the implementation of the general budget of the EC⁴. This is under the condition that the preliminary draft budget for 2006 is adopted by the budgetary authority.
- (7) In accordance with Article 17 (3) of Regulation (EC) No 1257/96 the Humanitarian Aid Committee gave a favourable opinion on 26 January 2006.

¹ OJ L 163, 2.7.1996, p. 1-6

² OJ L 248, 16.9.2002,p.1

³ OJ L 357,31.12.2002,p.1

⁴ Commission Decision of 15.3.2005, SEC (2005)310

HAS ADOPTED THIS DECISION:

Article 1

1. In accordance with the objectives and general principles of humanitarian aid, the Commission hereby approves a total amount of EUR 3,000,000 to strengthen humanitarian information systems essential to the coordination of humanitarian assistance by using line 23 02 01 of the 2006 general budget of the European Union.
2. In accordance with Article 4 of Regulation (EC) No.1257/96, the humanitarian operations shall be implemented in the pursuance of the following specific objective:
 - OCHA's information management systems and services, mainly Field Information Systems, the Financial Tracking System, the Global Disaster Alert and Coordination System, ReliefWeb and IRIN are strengthened in view of improving the co-ordination of humanitarian assistance.

The total amount of this decision is allocated to this objective.

Article 2

1. The duration for the implementation of this decision shall be for a maximum period of 15 months, starting on 1 February 2006.
2. Expenditure under this Decision shall be eligible from 1 February 2006.
3. If the operations envisaged in this Decision are suspended owing to *force majeure* or comparable circumstances, the period of suspension shall not be taken into account for the calculation of the duration of the implementation of this Decision.

Article 3

This Decision shall take effect on the date of its adoption.

Done at Brussels,

For the Commission

Member of the Commission