

Humanitarian Aid in the European Union

The European Union (EU) is the largest donor of humanitarian aid in the world.

The European Commission in Brussels together with the 27 EU Member States fund more than half of the world's humanitarian aid work.

The European Commission Humanitarian Aid department (ECHO) is responsible for funding humanitarian work throughout the world. In 2008, it provided over €936 million (US\$1.235 billion) for humanitarian aid programmes in over 70 countries. In 2009, its budget has been set at €777 million (more than US\$1 billion). This does not include the aid given separately by EU Member States.

Funds are spent on goods and services such as food, clothing, shelter, medical provisions, water supplies, sanitation, emergency repairs and mine-clearing. The Commission, through ECHO, also funds disaster preparedness and mitigation projects in regions prone to natural disaster.

To boost its presence in the field, ECHO has established regional offices in six capitals around the world: Dakar (Senegal), Nairobi (Kenya), Amman (Jordan), New Delhi (India), Bangkok (Thailand) and Managua (Nicaragua). It also has around 30 field offices in crisis zones.

There are around 170 European-based non-governmental organisations (NGOs) as well as United Nations humanitarian agencies and the organisations of the Red Cross family which receive ECHO funding. These partners run projects which help the victims of conflicts and natural disasters.

This humanitarian aid is provided to victims of crises on a needs basis, regardless of their race, religion or political affiliations. The European Commission's humanitarian support helps around 20 million people each year.

For more information about what ECHO does, visit our website at:
http://ec.europa.eu/echo/index_en.htm

Zimbabwe – ECHO Funding in 2008, €25 million

Zimbabwe's profound crisis, which worsened during 2008, had many aspects: poor governance, an economy in freefall, an HIV/AIDS pandemic, food insecurity and erratic weather conditions. In August 2008 a disastrous cholera outbreak offered further tragic evidence of the state of a country in which basic services such as public health, water supply and sewage systems had all collapsed. By the end of the year, the disease had spread to all provinces with nearly 33,000 reported cases and 1,622 deaths. The European Commission was already funding humanitarian activities to prevent and mitigate the possible occurrence of water-borne diseases before the outbreak occurred. This involved activities such as the rehabilitation of boreholes and water points, the provision of vital medicines and medical supplies, the supply of hygiene and sanitation items and the establishment of cholera treatment centres. When the epidemic began in early August, the European Commission moved quickly with further support for partner agencies to manage health treatment and water/sanitation

activities.

The Commission's global humanitarian aid plan for Zimbabwe was aimed at mitigating as far as possible the impact of the socio-economic breakdown by boosting the access of vulnerable populations to basic social services.

Food assistance worth €15 million was provided, as the economic collapse had greatly reduced the amount of food being produced locally and hyperinflation left imported food beyond the reach of most Zimbabweans.