



Mekong Region (Cambodia, Lao PDR, Vietnam)

ECHO FACTSHEET

Facts & Figures

EU humanitarian assistance

Cambodia:

€ 14.6 million to assist victims of natural disasters since 2009

Lao PDR:

€ 17 million in response to natural disasters since 1998

Vietnam:

€ 24.5 million in response to natural disasters since 1994

Disaster preparedness

€ 30.2 million for disaster preparedness in the three Mekong countries since 1998, including € 3.2 million under DIPECHO in 2014-2015



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Key messages

- Located in one of the world's most disaster-prone regions, the Mekong region - made up of Vietnam, Lao People's Democratic Republic (Lao PDR) and Cambodia - is frequently affected by natural disasters, especially by floods, droughts and typhoons.
- The European Commission's Humanitarian Aid and Civil Protection department (ECHO) has provided over € 56.1 million in humanitarian assistance to the three Mekong countries since 1994.
- A well-prepared community saves lives and reduces the impact of natural hazards. Integrating [disaster risk reduction](#)* (DRR) measures in humanitarian aid and strengthening local communities' resilience are key priorities for ECHO.
- ECHO has invested € 30.2 million under the Disaster Preparedness Programme (DIPECHO) in the region, to help communities better prepare for natural disasters and contribute to build up their resilience.
- For Vietnam, the government's own DRR capacity is now solid enough, and development partners are sufficiently present, to allow ECHO to exit from the DIPECHO programme at the end of 2015.

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* All the latest ECHO
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Humanitarian situation and needs

Background

Located in one of the most prone regions of the world, **Cambodia**, **Lao PDR** and **Vietnam** are all very vulnerable to natural hazards. The fact that they remain primarily agricultural further increases their vulnerability. In **Cambodia**, for example, 90% of the country's poor live in rural areas, where the seasonal monsoon rains and the resulting floods, can cause widespread destruction.

In neighbouring **Lao PDR**, vulnerability to natural hazards has been increasing as a result of illegal logging and deforestation. Disasters take place against the background of widespread poverty, especially in rural and inaccessible mountain areas, where ethnic minorities are concentrated.

With its long coastline, **Vietnam** is regularly affected by cyclones and tropical storms. While local capacity to withstand and respond to natural disasters has been substantially enhanced in the last decade, additional support is regularly needed when large-scale disasters strike.

Major challenges

With the resultant destruction of homes and livelihoods, storms, droughts and landslides often leave inhabitants in need of help. Outbreaks of tropical diseases such as dengue and malaria put an additional strain on local health services, and preventive action is required at community level. Access to the affected populations can sometimes represent an additional challenge in remote areas with inadequate and/or damaged infrastructure.

The European Union's humanitarian response

Funding

The European Commission regularly funds humanitarian assistance to address the needs arising from recurrent natural disasters in the Mekong Region. In the recent past, a total of € 4 million were provided following the devastation caused by cyclones Wutip and Nari in both Cambodia and Vietnam in late 2013. In Cambodia, € 2 million were allocated for emergency shelter, food aid, livelihoods, water, sanitation and hygiene, while another € 1 million was used for early recovery such as rehabilitation of small-scale infrastructure and medium-term food assistance. In Vietnam, a € 1 million envelope was released to meet the primary needs of the victims in terms of shelter, livelihood support, water, sanitation and hygiene.

Disaster Preparedness

In a context where the vast majority of the population relies mainly on agriculture, the accumulation of irregular seasonal patterns or frequent meteorological shocks such as floods and drought recurrently damage people's livelihoods. Deforestation, erosion of the riverbanks and improper land use are other human-made causes augmenting the impact of natural hazards.

Under its Disaster Preparedness Programme (DIPECHO), ECHO therefore seeks to reduce risks posed by natural hazards to the most vulnerable populations, as well as to improve local communities' resilience.

Since 1998, the European Commission has committed over € 30 million for DIPECHO projects focused on the most disaster-prone areas across the Mekong region: € 12.8 million in



Cambodia, € 4.2 million in **Lao PDR**, and € 13.2 million in **Vietnam**. The DIPECHO programme has strengthened disaster preparedness capacities through training of disaster management committees at the local level, integration of disaster risk reduction into local planning, implementation of small scale mitigation measures such as reinforcing of school buildings, latrines and wells against floods, raising walkways and small dykes, as well as setting up early warning systems. The programme also prioritises education, public awareness campaigns and epidemic surveillance in high risk areas.

For the current 2014-2015 project cycle, ECHO has committed € 2 million for a DIPECHO initiative in **Cambodia**, which is being implemented by a consortium of NGOs led by Action Aid. The project seeks to reduce risks posed by natural hazards to the most vulnerable populations as well as to develop joint advocacy strategies on DRR related issues and train journalists on disaster reporting.

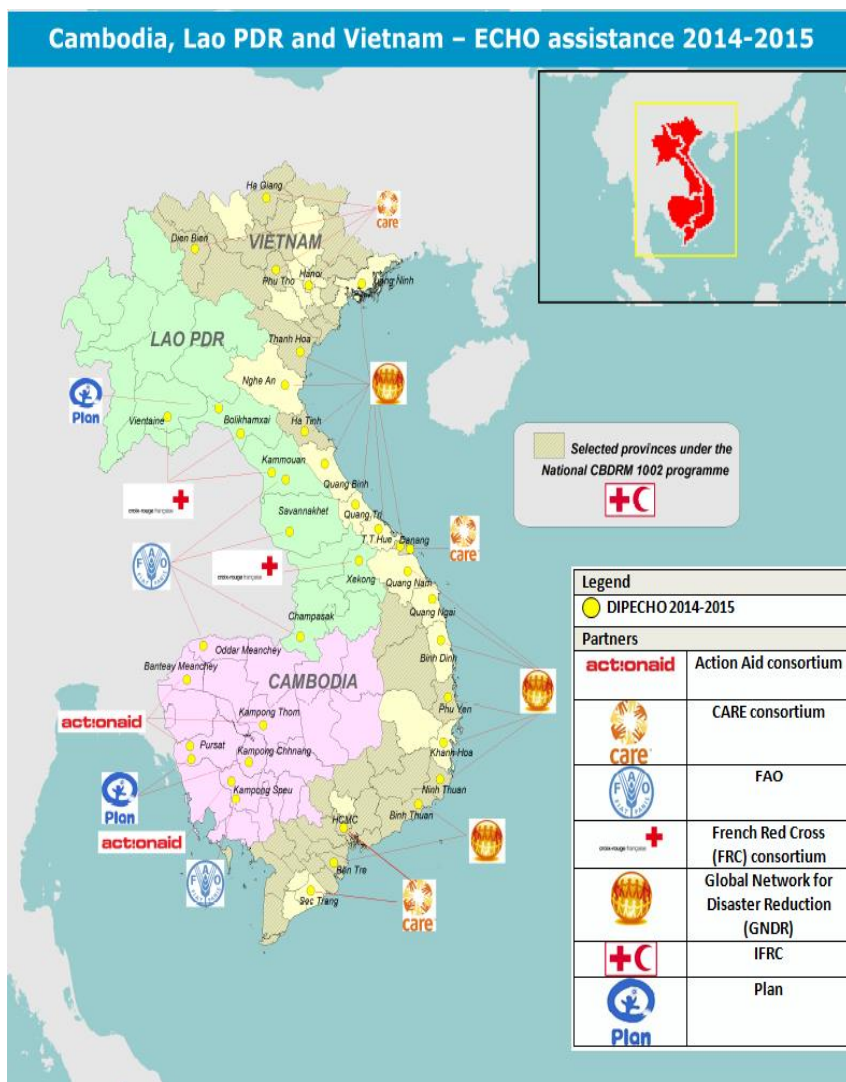
For the same purpose, € 2 million has been allocated in 2014-2015 to a consortium led by the French Red Cross in **Lao PDR**, with a focus on improving communities' resilience by scaling up Community-Based DRR capacities such as enhancing DRR and management capacity in schools, increasing emergency response capacity and developing a national DRR platform.

In **Vietnam**, the DRR capacity is now solid enough for ECHO to plan for an exit of the DIPECHO programme by the end of the year 2015. For the last funding cycle, € 1.2 million have been provided to three partners: CARE Germany, the International Federation of the Red Cross and GNDR/DWF (Global Network of Civil Society and Development Workshop France).

CARE focuses on providing technical support to the roll-out of the Ministry of Education's National Community Based Disaster Risk Management action plan, in ethnic minority areas. The project includes activities related to the Joint Advocacy Network Initiative, which supports the wider institutionalisation of community-based disaster risk reduction. This network is led by CARE but involves all DIPECHO partners, other disaster risk reduction agencies and the government.

The International Federation of the Red Cross will ensure that at least 700 DRR practitioners are trained on the Community Based Disaster Risk Management regulation, that vulnerability mapping tools are reviewed and that the capacity of provincial disaster response teams of the Vietnamese Red Cross is enhanced.

Finally, GNDR/DWF focuses on strengthening the Ministry of Construction's capacity to promote safe housing policies in coastal areas.



*All the latest ECHO Factsheets: bit.ly/echo-fs

EU-funded projects in the Mekong region



In late 2013, several parts of Cambodia were affected by flooding, including some areas which were still recovering from floods in 2011 and 2012. ECHO immediately deployed a humanitarian expert to liaise with NGOs and other humanitarian partners in order to plan assistance to the affected communities. The European Commission committed relief assistance worth € 3 million to help the communities, with a special focus on Banteay Menchaey and Battambang provinces, providing shelter, drinking water, sanitation and livelihood recovery support. © EU/ECHO

In the Saravan, Champasak, Sekong and Attapeu provinces of Lao PDR, a major outbreak of dengue was registered in 2013. ECHO joined the international efforts to save lives. Local clinics were stocked with the necessary items to diagnose and treat people affected by the disease. Communities have been mobilized for vector control activities in villages and temples. The project was implemented in nine provinces by Health Poverty Action with a grant of some € 250 000 from ECHO. © Health Poverty Action



Ensuring life-saving operations in the aftermath of natural disasters often involves many logistical challenges. In the Khammouane province, following the 2011 floods, the World Food Programme used EU funding to distribute food to villages cut off by rivers and where roads had been washed away. Boats were the only way to reach those communities. Fields were destroyed by the floods and livestock killed, forcing communities to rely on food assistance until the next harvest. © WFP

To further promote disaster preparedness, ECHO supports projects like the one currently being rolled-out in six southern provinces of Vietnam to train teachers in primary and secondary schools on how to involve their pupils in drafting child-friendly safe-school plans. The children themselves enthusiastically take part in designing such plans, as they often have first-hand experience from natural catastrophes. This initiative is being implemented by a consortium of NGOs, including CARE, Save the Children, and Plan International. © EU/ECHO

