Introduction

Prolonged drought conditions in large swathes of Ethiopia have left 12.5 million people in need of emergency food aid, according to the UN. Faced with water shortages, livestock losses and conflict, Ethiopians in the Somali and Oromia regions are on the move. Ethiopia also relies on international aid to the many refugee camps inside its borders. In the space of a year, more than 100 000 refugees have arrived from South Sudan. EU humanitarian aid is used for the drought and refugee response.

What are the needs?

With 100 million inhabitants, Ethiopia is the second most populous country in Africa. Humanitarian assistance is needed for multiple reasons: droughts, cholera, internal conflict and a large refugee population.

An estimated 12.5 million people are in need of emergency food assistance, including 4 million chronically vulnerable people. Levels of severe acute malnutrition in the Somali region, worst hit by the drought, have skyrocketed. Meanwhile, eight out of Ethiopia's 11 regions are dealing with a major cholera outbreak. From January to October 2017, a total of 48 131 cases and 878 deaths have been reported.

The drought and renewed internal conflicts have triggered the displacement of more than 1.3 million people within the country. Makeshift camps are built around remaining water sources which foster the spread of communicable diseases such as cholera.

Ethiopia is the second largest refugee hosting country in Africa with over 883 000 registered refugees, most of whom are from South Sudan, Somalia, Eritrea and Sudan. The refugees are housed in 26 camps across eight different regions and in urban centres. The ongoing refugee influx, especially from South Sudan, has overstretched services. The refugee response is underfunded, resulting in food ration cuts and malnutrition.
How are we helping?

The European Union has allocated €91.5 million for the humanitarian response in Ethiopia in 2017. The focus is on addressing the most urgent needs resulting from the continuing drought and the influx of refugees, corresponding to respectively 60% and 40% of the humanitarian aid budget to Ethiopia.

The response to the drought concentrates on life-saving interventions such as the emergency supply of safe water through water trucking and wells rehabilitation; distribution of cash and food aid; detection and treatment of acutely malnourished children and pregnant or nursing women; prevention of cholera infection by dispensing water treatment chemicals; distribution of animal feed and health services to prevent livestock losses; and the distribution of essential items such as jerry cans, tarps and other household goods to the displaced populations.

The drought and ethnic conflict have caused massive displacement in the country, in particular in the Somali and Oromia regions. The EU funds the displacement tracking matrix, a system to track and monitor displacement and population mobility. The tool has made it easier to identify the needs of displaced people and assist them in a more timely and efficient manner.

Due to the mass influx of South Sudanese refugees – according to UNHCR more than 100,000 between September 2016 and October 2017 – most of the EU’s humanitarian assistance has focused on providing the refugees with shelter, water and sanitation facilities. Providing adequate protection to the most vulnerable refugees is also a priority. This is done by identifying those with special needs such as unaccompanied minors, distributing food assistance and providing vital support to acutely malnourished children and pregnant or nursing women.

Education in emergencies is provided in the refugee camps through early childhood development care and primary schooling. In parallel, there is ongoing support to the more established camps with refugees who have been in Ethiopia longer, to ensure that basic needs and services are covered, and to complement initiatives that promote more durable solutions for the refugees.