

**HUMANITARIAN IMPLEMENTATION PLAN (HIP)**  
**SOUTH, EAST, SOUTH-EAST ASIA AND THE PACIFIC**  
**AMOUNT: EUR 79 000 000**

The present Humanitarian Implementation Plan (HIP) was prepared on the basis of financing decision ECHO/WWD/BUD/2021/01000 (Worldwide Decision) and the related General Guidelines for Operational Priorities on Humanitarian Aid (Operational Priorities). The purpose of the HIP and its annexes<sup>1</sup> is to serve as a communication tool for DG ECHO<sup>2</sup>'s partners and to assist in the preparation of their proposals. The provisions of the Worldwide Decision and the General Conditions of the Agreement with the European Commission shall take precedence over the provisions in this document.

**0. MAJOR CHANGES SINCE PREVIOUS VERSION OF THE HIP**

**Third Modification – 04/11/2021 – Rohingya Refugee crisis**

The humanitarian needs of Rohingya people forcibly displaced in Bangladesh and Myanmar have significantly grown over the course of 2021, and the EU is stepping up its humanitarian support for lifesaving activities. The humanitarian situation in the Rohingya refugee camps in Bangladesh has been heavily impacted by extensive lockdowns, population movements, securitisation, and deterioration of humanitarian indicators due to containment measures. In Myanmar, Rohingya populations have seen their access to basic services degrade, and both countries are experiencing severely underfunded humanitarian crises.

**Bangladesh.** Rohingya refugees in Bangladesh have been fully reliant on humanitarian assistance for the past four years. With the COVID-19 pandemic, since 2020 the situation has deeply degenerated. A year and a half of restrictions on humanitarian aid has resulted in dramatic consequences at multiple levels. Lockdowns and closures of schools have widened education inequalities and exacerbated pre-existing challenges, particularly for female students. Essential services, such as school feeding programs, sexual reproductive health awareness and services, protection and child protection services as well as disaster preparedness rehabilitation and maintenance activities have been heavily curtailed since 2020. It is proposed to allocate **EUR 10 million** to critical activities that have been either suspended or reduced or whose suspension has created new needs or secondary negative effects. Funding will address gaps in disaster preparedness and critical healthcare services, as well as maintaining nutrition activities in critical areas, based on environmental, context and protection degradation.

**Myanmar.** In Rakhine State, approximately 600,000 Rohingya individuals are living as stateless people, subject to violations of their fundamental rights. 144,000 Rohingya are living in IDP camps, with extremely restricted movement and regular rights violations; they are reliant on humanitarian assistance to cover most of their basic needs. COVID-19 restrictions have sharply reduced access to basic services and livelihood opportunities, while humanitarian access and assistance were severely constrained. In parallel, the multifaceted impact of the political crisis has dramatically deepened the vulnerability of

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<sup>1</sup> Technical annex and thematic policies annex

<sup>2</sup> Directorate-General for European Civil Protection and Humanitarian Aid Operations (ECHO)

the Rohingya and other conflict affected populations in Rakhine and Chin States. It is thus proposed to allocate **EUR 2 million** to scale-up humanitarian activities in the sectors of nutrition, protection, camp management and shelter in Rakhine and Chin States.

### **Second Modification - 01/07/2021 - OR COVID-19 Asia**

Numbers of COVID-19 cases and deaths have been increasing in many Asian countries. Vaccinations continue to be very slow in most countries due to supply problems. This additional request for COVID-19 response focuses on Asian countries where the local health structures are more under pressure and DG ECHO support can have a greater impact, and/or with large displaced populations. Countries identified are Bangladesh, Nepal and Sri Lanka.

**Bangladesh.** With a weekly increase of 48% of number of new cases and 45% of deaths, as of June 27 Bangladesh has reached 888 406 cumulative cases and 14 172 deaths since the start of the pandemic. The vaccination rate is progressing at a slow pace with 10.1 million doses of vaccine been administered so far, corresponding to 2.6% of population with complete vaccination. To address the fast rate of transmission, starting from 1 July the country has entered into a more rigid nation-wide lockdown. The situation in the district of Cox's Bazar, host to approximately 900 000 Rohingya refugees, is of particular concern as it follows the up surging national trends. The vaccination campaign in the refugee camps is yet to commence, due to the scarcity of vaccines in country. In light of the fast evolving sanitary situation, it is proposed to allocate **EUR 3 million** to support the surveillance, detection, management and prevention of COVID-19 cases, as well as strengthening the overall health response capacity in the Rohingya refugee camps and host communities in Cox's Bazar. Operational costs of the vaccination campaign can be considered in the event of a confirmed vaccines supply.

**Nepal.** Since May, Nepal has been battling with a second wave of the pandemic, leading to the health system being severely overwhelmed by the surge of positive cases, averaging daily over 5 000. As of 30 June, cumulative cases stood at 638 805 and 9 112 deaths and the inoculation roll-out is progressing slowly with around 8% of the population being covered so far. At the same time, prolonged periods of lockdown have exacerbated socio-economic vulnerabilities and use of negative coping strategies such as child labour, early marriages and other types of dangerous survival strategies are emerging. Notwithstanding the mobilisation of the international community - including the EU - COVID-19 needs in Nepal remain significant amid limited local capacities. It is proposed to allocate **EUR 3 million** to support the management of COVID-19 cases in health facilities, support for isolation management including health system preparedness for future COVID-19 surges. Protection concerns stemming from the measures to counter the pandemic - lockdown and/or home isolation - will likewise be considered. Operational costs of the vaccination campaign can be considered in the event of a confirmed vaccines supply. DG ECHO already provided COVID-19 support to Nepal through the epidemics decision for an amount of EUR 2 million. Nepal also received in-kind assistance by Participating States through the activation of the UCPM.

**Sri Lanka.** Sri Lanka's health system has come under severe strain faced with the third wave of COVID-19 since mid-April, whereby over 2 500 new cases are identified daily and cumulative positive cases of 257 225, including fatalities crossing the mark of 3 000 as of 30 June. Lack of hospital space, ill equipped health facilities in rural areas,

shortages on key COVID-19 treatment equipment and supplies, lack of health personnel, coupled with the slow inoculation roll-out across the country are critical challenges the country is grappling with. As of 24 June, only 3.4 million vaccines have been administered (population of 21.8 million), leaving a large segment of the population vulnerable. The north and eastern regions remain critically underserved in terms of treatment facilities and inoculation. Nation-wide strict mobility measures have likewise exacerbated vulnerabilities. It is proposed to allocate **EUR 2 million** for supporting the management of COVID-19 cases in health facilities including health system preparedness in case of future surges. Protection concerns stemming from the measures to counter the pandemic will likewise be considered. Attention will be given to underserved regions. Operational costs of the vaccination campaign can be considered in the event of a confirmed vaccines supply.

### **First modification - 07/04/2021 - OR Myanmar**

Since the military coup d'état on 1 February 2021, the situation in Myanmar has witnessed a rapid deterioration due to multiple factors, with increased humanitarian needs in previously targeted areas as well as new needs emerging in new areas, including urban and peri-urban locations. These factors include:

- Increased civil unrest and violence by the security forces against civilian protestors in Myanmar's towns and cities, using increasingly lethal tactics and weapons of war;
- Other grave violations including large-scale arbitrary arrest and detention of protestors, including children, and occupation of schools and medical facilities by security forces;
- The impacts of the Civil Disobedience Movement (CDM) on the social services (including the healthcare sector), banking system and economy (disrupted supplies, increase in prices and shortages of essential commodities, availability of cash and resources impacting especially food security and the delivery of humanitarian aid).
- The escalating conflict between the Myanmar Armed Forces (MAF) and Ethnic Armed Groups (EAGs), which is also expected to have ripple effects in the region, including with possible further refugee movement into Thailand - where several thousand people already crossed the border - and other countries.

It is therefore proposed to allocate **EUR 9 million** to three priority sectors: health, protection, food security, as well as multisector emergency assistance. Within these priority sectors, in Myanmar there is a need for health-related emergency response capacities for first aid, evacuation, and referral of wounded in urban protest zones, as well as additional health capacities in rural settings, including mobile health clinics, to respond to the impact of the CDM on the functionality of health centres. On protection, a broad approach is required, including protection monitoring, appropriate information provision on rights and access to services and support to access civil documentation, case management and referral, emergency assistance, mine action, mental health and psychosocial services, specific child protection to limit killings, detention and recruitment risks, as well as Education in Emergencies, including safe and accessible learning environments. Finally, there is a need for scaled up assistance capacities in food security, especially in hard to reach and non-government-controlled areas.

An indicative amount of EUR 1.5 million will be to address potential regional implications of the Myanmar crisis, with a protection focused multi-sectoral emergency response.

## 1. CONTEXT

This HIP covers response to man-made disasters, natural hazards and epidemics, as well as disaster preparedness (DP) in South, East, South-East Asia and the Pacific<sup>3</sup>. In terms of man-made crisis, this HIP focuses on the humanitarian consequences of the three main crises of the region: Rohingya forced displacement crisis affecting Myanmar, Bangladesh and other countries in South-East Asia<sup>4</sup>, other internal conflicts in Myanmar and Mindanao armed conflict in the Philippines<sup>5</sup>.

The region is highly vulnerable to various hazards ranging from floods, cyclones, droughts and epidemics resulting in loss of lives and livelihood assets. In areas affected by conflicts, the combination with natural disasters could have a catastrophic humanitarian impact. DG ECHO stands ready to intervene in case of sudden onset disasters in countries with limited capacity to cope, and/or where national or local capacity are overwhelmed. In addition, DG ECHO is supporting the most affected and vulnerable countries in developing Disaster Preparedness strategies.

The COVID-19 pandemic further aggravates the humanitarian context across the region. Persons of concern are facing barriers in accessing services, while humanitarian actors encounter obstacles in delivering assistance. India remains the main hotspot in Asia. Malaysia and Myanmar have become new hotspots in Southeast Asia for the coronavirus transmission. The Philippines and Indonesia continue to struggle to combat the disease.

DG ECHO's Integrated Analysis Framework for 2020 identified very high humanitarian needs in Bangladesh and high humanitarian needs in Myanmar and the Philippines. The vulnerability of the populations affected by the crises is assessed as high to very high. The following crises have been assessed as “forgotten”: the Rohingya Regional crisis, Myanmar (conflict and displacement in Kachin and Northern Shan States) and the Philippines (armed conflict in Mindanao).

### 1.1 Rohingya crisis

The Rohingya crisis is a human rights crisis with serious humanitarian consequences for conflict-affected communities in **Myanmar** and forcibly displaced Rohingya in the region. After the mass forced displacement of 720 000 Rohingya from Rakhine State to Bangladesh in 2017, approximately 600 000 Rohingya remain in Myanmar in very insecure conditions. They have very limited access to basic services and employment and are denied citizenship rights. This makes the Rohingya one of the largest stateless

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<sup>3</sup> A total of 35 countries: South Asia (6 countries - Bangladesh, Bhutan, India, Maldives, Nepal and Sri Lanka); East and South-East Asia (10 Member States of the Association of South-East Asian Nations - ASEAN - plus Timor Leste, China, Democratic Republic of Korea, Mongolia, a total of 14 countries); the Pacific region (14 countries not counting EU Member States overseas territories).

<sup>4</sup> Mainly Malaysia, Indonesia and Thailand.

<sup>5</sup> Other countries in the region have an Inform Crisis Index 2020 equal to 3 (India, Sri Lanka, Thailand, Cambodia, DPRK, Indonesia and Laos). These countries are also affected by man-made disasters (ex. India with the conflict in Kashmir) or natural disasters (ex. Indonesia) that could develop in humanitarian crisis potentially addressed through this HIP.

populations in the world. The crisis has a wider regional dimension, as record numbers of Rohingya have fled to neighbouring countries, in particular Bangladesh. Prospects for a rapid resolution to the crisis are not positive. According to the Independent International Fact Finding Mission in Myanmar the threat of genocide continues Rohingya remaining in Myanmar. In an historical ruling, the International Criminal Court of Justice held that Myanmar must take steps to prevent further genocidal acts by its own forces or by groups or forces acting within its territory. Progress on the establishment of conducive conditions for voluntary, safe, dignified and sustainable returns of displaced Rohingya remains elusive.

In **Bangladesh**, despite considerable steps towards poverty alleviation, many challenges remain. 24.3% of the population live in poverty (less than USD 1.9 per day), under constant threat of shocks. Climate events, the impact of globalisation and uncontrolled rural exodus have led to congestion in urban areas. The COVID-19 pandemic has crippled the post-lockdown economy and thrown millions into further poverty and damaging coping strategies, gravely affecting those depending on the informal sector. Bangladesh hosts almost one million Rohingya refugees from Myanmar in the district of Cox's Bazar, one of the country's poorest and most vulnerable districts<sup>6</sup>. The rapid and massive increase in the refugee population has had an enormous impact on the host communities in this area and has put considerable pressure on the environment. Due to the COVID-19 pandemic, the district is at extreme risk given the highly congested living situation in the refugee camps, and the high level of vulnerability among refugees and destitute local communities hit hard by the current economic impact of the crisis.

With conflict intensification in Rakhine State (Myanmar) and increasing restrictions in the refugee camps of Cox's Bazar, the Rohingya crisis generates acute humanitarian and protection needs in **other South-Asian countries**. Destitute Rohingya undertake perilous journeys via sea and land-routes in hope of a better future. While exact figures are difficult to establish due to the irregular nature of movement, maritime movements alone were three times higher in 2020 than over the same period in 2019<sup>7</sup>. The global pandemic, consequent policies and systematic barriers developed by the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) littoral States have widespread humanitarian ramifications including a broad range of human rights concerns affecting the stateless Rohingya.

## 1.2 Myanmar

The Myanmar conflict is characterised by widespread violations, systemic violence, and institutionalised discrimination against Rohingya and other ethnic minorities in the country. The root causes of the conflict have not yet been addressed, humanitarian needs of conflict-affected and stateless communities are high, and have been exacerbated by constrained humanitarian access, escalation of the hostilities, and the COVID-19 pandemic. A sharp resurgence of active ethnic conflicts (affecting in particular Rakhine and Chin states, as well as Shan and South east) resulted in new waves of Internally Displaced Persons (IDPs), adding to a protracted displacements across the country. High

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<sup>6</sup> Cox's Bazar is one of 20 districts in Bangladesh considered to be 'lagging behind' the national average for development indicators, with approximately 33% of the population living below the poverty line compared to the national average of 31.5%. HDI is 0.538 compared to national 0.614.

<sup>7</sup> UNCHR, Flash Update, Maritime movements of Rohingya Refugees in South-East Asia, January- May 2020

susceptibility to natural hazards coupled with low national capacities add another layer of vulnerability. Finally, the social and economic impact of COVID-19 on a population largely living off farming and/or daily wages could be devastating, especially in conflict-affected areas. Economic growth is expected to decline and will push low income (88% residing in rural areas) households into poverty. Ongoing restrictions combined with increased use of negative coping mechanisms are likely to exacerbate the fragility of an already vulnerable population.

### **1.3 The Philippines**

The armed conflict in Mindanao is considered as one the most important forgotten crises with a maximum Forgotten Crisis index of 10/10 in 2020. Mindanao is the poorest, most vulnerable region in the country. The Philippines are prone to natural disasters with millions affected in the past year due to a multitude of hazards. The exponential COVID-19 pandemic is exacerbating vulnerabilities especially among displaced communities and reveals very low resilience and insufficient local capacities to cope with shock. Against this backdrop, the secondary consequences of the pandemic are likely to impact also millions of marginal urban dwellers depending on the informal sector and/or remittances.

### **1.4 Disaster Preparedness (DP)**

The region covered by this HIP ranks among the most natural hazard-prone in the world, exposed to volcanoes, earthquakes, droughts, floods, landslides and cyclones. The 2020 Inform Risk index update shows that ten countries have a very high risk of disaster and humanitarian crisis: Bangladesh, Myanmar, Philippines, India, Sri Lanka, Thailand, Cambodia, DPRK, Indonesia and Laos. Recurrent natural hazards have a high human and economic cost, affecting highly urbanised societies marked by very large inequalities. The increase in volume, severity and complexity of meteorological events is likely to affect more populations with significant socio-economic costs. Considering the vulnerability of the region in terms of natural disaster, support to national Disaster Preparedness strategies is essential. DG ECHO will focus on countries where humanitarian action is at scale given the magnitude of risks, underlying vulnerabilities and already existing needs (Bangladesh, Myanmar and the Philippines). In addition, DP action will prioritise Nepal and most affected ASEAN countries<sup>8</sup> in line with DP strategies of this regional organisation.

**Nepal** is characterised by rapid urbanisation, chronic underdevelopment, high unemployment, widespread poverty, and food insecurity. The COVID-19 pandemic further compounds the existing vulnerabilities of many Nepalese, particularly those depending on remittances and the informal sector. The drop in income and disruption of the food chain are likely to increase already chronic food insecurity.

In South East Asia, over the past years, the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) has adopted a number of key instruments which steer ASEAN Member States to take collective action towards resilience-building. The most notable, being the ASEAN Agreement on Disaster Management and Emergency Response (AADMER) and

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<sup>8</sup> Myanmar, Cambodia, Indonesia, Laos, Malaysia, the Philippines, Thailand and Vietnam. Brunei and Singapore are also part of ASEAN but will not be prioritised.

the ASEAN Vision 2025 on Disaster Management. The objective of AADMER is to provide effective mechanisms to achieve substantial reduction of disaster losses in lives and in the social, economic and environmental assets of the parties, and to jointly respond to disaster emergencies through concerted national efforts and intensified regional and international co-operation. Under the leadership of the ASEAN Committee on Disaster Management (ACDM) the AADMER Work Programme 2021-2025 is being updated and provides opportunities to further strengthen the operationalisation of resilience based on anticipatory early action and shock responsive work plans.

	Bangladesh	Myanmar	Philippines	Nepal	Thailand	LAO	Vietnam	Sri Lanka	India	Cambodia	DPRK
<b>INFORM Risk Index<sup>9</sup></b>	6.0/10	6.3/10	5.5/10	5.4/10	4.0/10	4.0/10	3.7/10	3.8/10	5.4/10	4.7/10	5.4/10
Vulnerability Index	5.8/10	5.3/10	5.2/10	4.7/10	3.0/10	3.6/10	2.2/10	3.1/10	4.9/10	4.0/10	5.7/10
Hazard and Exposure	7.4/10	7.4/10	7.8/10	5.7/10	5.5/10	3.0/10	5.4/10	4.4/10	7.4/10	4.2/10	4.5/10
Lack of Coping Capacity	5.0/10	6.3/10	4.1/10	5.8/10	4.0/10	6.0/10	4.2/10	4.0/10	4.3/10	6.1/10	6.3/10
<b>Global Crisis Severity Index<sup>10</sup></b>	3.3/5	4/5	3/5	N/A	N/A	NA	N/A	NA	N/A	N/A	
Projected conflict risk	9.8/10	9.3/10	8.8/10	8.0/10	6.6/10	0.9/10	3.2/10	4.9/10	9.7/10	3.2/10	5.4/10
Uprooted People Index	7.7/10	7.0/10	6.2/10	3.7/10	5.5/10	0.0/10	0.0/10	4.2/10	6.1/10	0.0/10	0.0/10
Humanitarian Conditions	3.5/5	3/5	N/A	N/A							
Natural Disaster Index	8.2/10	7.1/10	8.4/10	5.7/10	6.2/10	4.9/10	7.4/10	5.2/10	7.8/10	5.8/10	5.2/10
<b>HDI Ranking<sup>11</sup> (Value)</b>	136 (0.614/1)	145 (0.584/1)	106 (0.712/1)	147 (0.579)							
<b>Total Population<sup>12</sup></b>	163 046 161	54 045 420	108 116 615	28 608 710	69 300 000	4 574 848	97 338 582	21 413 250	1,380,0 04,385	16,718,965	25,778,8 16

## 2. HUMANITARIAN NEEDS

### 2.1 People in need of humanitarian assistance

Population in Need	Bangladesh	Myanmar	Regional Rohingya	Philippines
Total number of vulnerable people in need of humanitarian assistance <sup>13</sup>	1 800 000	990 000	119 920	300 000
IDPs		264 600		

<sup>9</sup> INFORM is a global, open-source risk assessment for humanitarian crises and disasters

<sup>10</sup> <http://www.inform-index.org/Global-Crisis-Severity-Index-beta>

<sup>11</sup> Humanitarian Development Index (HDI) developed by UNDP

<sup>12</sup> World Bank data, year 2019

<sup>13</sup> Sources: Joint Response Plans for Bangladesh; Humanitarian Response Plans for Myanmar and UNHCR Mindanao Displacement Dashboard for Philippines.

Host communities	949 000	104 636		
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### 2.1.1 IDPs, Host communities, Refugees & Stateless Persons

In June 2020, an addendum to the **Bangladesh** UN Joint Response Plan for the Rohingya Humanitarian Crisis was published, reflecting a drastic increase in the number of people in need among host communities due to COVID-19. There are 949 000 vulnerable people from the host community in Cox’s Bazar district affected by the pandemic. Amongst the 860 000 Rohingya refugees, 48.3% are men and boys and 51.7% are women and girls; 52% of the refugee population are children. According to UNHCR, 119 920 Rohingya are registered as refugees across **India, Indonesia, Thailand and Malaysia**. Malaysia, the preferred destination for Rohingya asylum seekers, hosts the second highest Rohingya caseload after Bangladesh, with Thailand and Indonesia often being transit countries, and a smaller Rohingya caseload found in India.

According to the revised UN Humanitarian Response Plan (HRP) for **Myanmar** published in July 2020, the revised number of people in need includes 990 000 people affected by conflict or disasters. Of 600 000 Rohingya in Myanmar, around 126 000 are internally displaced and effectively confined to camps established in the central part of the State following sectarian violence in 2012. The other 474 000 non-displaced Rohingya also face discrimination and restrictions on freedom of movement, which similarly limit their access to livelihoods and services. An upsurge in fighting between the Myanmar Armed Forces and the Arakan Army has caused more civilian casualties and the displacement of tens of thousands of people. According to government figures more than 32 000 people remained displaced in 112 sites due to this conflict. In Kachin State more than 97 000 IDPs remain in camps established in 2011. In northern Shan State, numerous outbreaks of violence have occurred in 2018 and 2019, involving fighting between the Myanmar Armed Forces and Ethnic Armed Organisations. While most of the displacement during this period was for relatively short periods, around 9 600 people in northern Shan State experience long-term displacement.

In conflict-stricken Mindanao in the **Philippines**, 63% of the region’s population are extremely poor<sup>14</sup>. While all segments of the population are affected by conflict, about 300 000 IDPs (49.5% female and 50.5% male) are disproportionately affected due to repeated forced displacement and have limited access to essential social services and to protection. There is a significant increase in the number of people in need among IDPs and communities due to the consequences of COVID-19. The most discriminated and least assisted amongst this vulnerable population includes indigenous peoples, remote Moro communities and those in the islands, who are often victims of International Humanitarian Law (IHL) and human rights violations. Violence and gender-based violence have also increased.

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<sup>14</sup> PSA 2020, Official Poverty Statistics, Philippine Statistics Authority, <https://psa.gov.ph/tags/official-poverty-statistics>

### 2.1.2 *Protection, health, food and nutrition*

Three years into the mass displacement of Rohingya to **Bangladesh**, protection issues remain at the core of this crisis. 860 000 Rohingya refugees are in need of protection, as well as over 200 000 Bangladeshi from the host communities. Psychological distress as a result of traumatic events experienced before and during forced displacement from Myanmar have been exacerbated by the harsh living conditions and additional protection risks to which Rohingya refugees are exposed while displaced in Bangladesh, as well as ongoing uncertainty about their future. In Bangladesh, ensuring adherence to quality and the respectful implementation of the minimum standards for services in health facilities is a continuous challenge, in part due to large caseload covered by health facilities (860 000 refugees) and high staff turnover. Risks for communicable disease persist due to living conditions in the camps. The Rohingya refugee population of 860 000 people remains 100 percent reliant on food assistance to sustain the minimum daily required kilocalories per individual, and for dietary diversification. The reasons for this dependence include the lack of opportunities to produce food, limited financial and physical access to food, movement restrictions, protection issues and low income. Many of the same needs are present in the host community (949 000). In Bangladesh, over 15 million individuals are considered to be in moderate or severe chronic food insecurity (IPC 3 and 4)<sup>15</sup>. Food security among the poorest people living in the host community (949 000 people) is also a growing concern.

In **Myanmar**, 922 000 people are in need of protection. In particular, in Kachin and northern Shan, armed conflict, displacement, landmine contamination and non-respect of international humanitarian law cause serious protection concerns. In Rakhine, prolonged displacement, discriminatory policies and practices, restrictions on freedom of movement that impedes access to livelihoods and basic services result in rights violations compounded by high levels of psychological distress and negative coping mechanisms. Over 523 000 people in Myanmar are in need of life-saving health assistance. Without primary health care, children will be at risk of contracting vaccine preventable diseases. Over 900 000 people in Kachin, Shan, Rakhine and Chin states need emergency food assistance and livelihood support. Reduced access to safe and nutritious food may result in increased malnutrition, intensified use of negative coping strategies and overall deterioration of food security.

In the **Philippines** (Mindanao), more than 300 000 individuals are in need of protection assistance including on Child Protection and protection against Gender Based Violence. About 100 000 individuals are in need of health assistance, including people in need of mental health as well as sexual and reproductive health assistance. More than 100 000 people are food insecure and in need of assistance.

### 2.1.3 *Education in Emergencies*

In **Bangladesh**, despite significant progress during the last two years in providing safe and systematic access to learning opportunities, more than 30 percent of Rohingya children and youth aged 3-24 years old still require access to education (375 924 children). 69% of Rohingya refugee households reported at least one child aged between

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<sup>15</sup> <http://www.ipcinfo.org/ipc-country-analysis/en/>

5 and 17 years old without any learning opportunities. Furthermore, an alarming 83 % of adolescents and youth aged between 15 and 24 years have no access to any educational or skill development activities, including those whose limited education was interrupted by displacement from Myanmar.

Education remains a priority component of the humanitarian response plan in **Myanmar**. Without funding allocated to education, over 200,000 children and adolescents will be at greater risk of being exposed to trafficking, risky migration or exploitation.

In the **Philippines** (Mindanao) 125 000 children are in need of education emergency assistance.

## **2.2 Description of the most acute humanitarian needs**

### *2.2.1 Protection*

Protection is a key need in conflict-affected countries of the region. Severe human rights and humanitarian law violations characterise the conflicts in Myanmar and the Philippines, but also in India, South Thailand, and other countries, with sections of the population specifically targeted or deprived of access to rights and services. Protection is also a dominant need in non-conflict affected countries that have not ratified the 1951 refugee convention, and have not established legal frameworks for asylum seekers and refugees. The lack of legal status further heightens the vulnerability of individuals detained as illegal immigrants or engaged in the informal economy, restricting access to basic services and justice. Statelessness is at the root of many protection needs in the region. The Rohingya are the largest stateless group in the world. Child marriage, child abuse and exploitation are highly prevalent in the region, exposing vulnerable children to increased protection risks, for instance in the sprawling Rohingya refugee camps in Bangladesh. Sexual and gender-based violence is highly prevalent throughout the region, often exacerbated by traditional gender roles in some parts of the region, as well as by conflict. There are strong indications that the recent pandemic has further increased the prevalence of domestic violence. Due to the armed conflict in 2017 (Siege of Marawi), IDPs in Marawi (Mindanao) do not have birth certificates or identification documents and therefore do not receive assistance and information on their possible return. Children in Mindanao suffer from protection risk as force marriage, child abuse, exploitation, force recruitment by radical armed groups and disruption of education.

### *2.2.2 Food security and nutrition*

Food security and nutrition are acute humanitarian needs throughout South and South-East Asia. In 2020, the situation was exacerbated by the global pandemic and associated containment measures and loss of productive income and remittance. In Mindanao, the armed conflict has resulted in 69% food gap impacting IDPs. In conflict-affected areas of Myanmar and the Philippines, recurrent short-term displacement, as well as stringent restrictions on freedom of movement hinder predictable access to fields and markets, further affecting food security. In highly disaster-prone areas of South Asia, catastrophic floods and cyclones, frequently destroy the livelihoods of millions of individuals, causing significant loss of crops as well as arable land.

### 2.2.3 *Health and WASH*

The burden of infectious diseases is high in many countries across the region. Epidemics, in particular malaria, dengue, acute watery diarrhoea, and other communicable diseases, occur frequently with an extended geographical scope. Access to quality health is limited in many countries of the region, particularly in isolated areas. The COVID-19 pandemic is still developing throughout the region, with significant direct and indirect impact. The number of cases is still rising in Bangladesh's Cox's Bazar district, home to the world's largest refugee settlement, as well as in Myanmar's conflict-affected Rakhine State. Throughout the region, mental health is an unmet need for many refugees and IDPs having fled or suffered violence in conflict areas. Protracted displacement, closed future perspectives and additional restrictions in the context of the global pandemic, have led many to adopt damaging coping strategies, increasing exposure to risks. WASH infrastructure in most refugee and IDP camps remain fragile, and heavily dependent on continued humanitarian intervention.

### 2.2.4 *Shelter and NFI*

The provision of shelters and NFIs is essential for displaced populations in the region, whether displaced by conflict or natural events. In refugee and IDP contexts such as Bangladesh and Myanmar, where permanent construction is prohibited, shelter upgrade and repairs is a recurrent need.

### 2.2.5 *Education in Emergencies*

Displaced children in Bangladesh, Myanmar and the Philippines are particularly subject to serious education gaps. In Bangladesh, Rohingya children have no access to formal education in the camps or host communities. A pilot introduction of the Myanmar curriculum in the Cox's Bazar refugee camps was postponed due to the closure of all educational facilities in relations with measures to combat COVID-19 in the country. Informal education following an ad-hoc Learning Framework was likewise interrupted. In Myanmar and the Philippines, schooling is disrupted by frequent short-term displacement, and safe access to school is not guaranteed. Both in conflict areas and in areas of displacement, education is closely intertwined with child protection, providing safe spaces and allowing the identification of children at risk. Disruption of education is thus likely to further increase child protection needs.

### 2.2.6 *Vulnerability to natural disasters (Disaster Preparedness)*

Asia and the Pacific are highly prone to natural disasters, including extreme climate events, earthquakes, volcanic eruptions and tsunamis. Densely populated urban cities in Asia are at high risk of natural disasters and large-scale health related emergencies, thus highlighting the need for a holistic environmental public health strategy approach to overcome these extreme vulnerabilities. In Bangladesh, in spite of a strong culture of preparing for and responding to emergencies, humanitarian needs from floods continues to outweigh response capacity. High congestion in urban areas, rapid urbanization and gaps in preparedness increases the potential for catastrophic consequences following earthquakes and other natural disasters. Bangladesh is a high-risk country with regard to COVID-19 and its impact. Disaster preparedness programming is paramount to reduce

loss and mitigate vulnerability. Myanmar ranks 2nd in the index of countries most affected by extreme weather events (from 1999 to 2018). Considering the vulnerability of Myanmar to natural disasters, combined with ongoing violence, emergency preparedness with expansion of shock-responsive social protection mechanisms and forecast-based early action, remains critical. In the Philippines, the multitude of natural hazards combined with continued and intense conflict, disaster preparedness remains pivotal, to mitigate risks and vulnerabilities of both conflict and natural disaster affected populations in Mindanao. The COVID-19 situation has further depleted the local DRR capacity. Nepal is exposed to a multitude of climate related disasters, combined with dense population settings, unplanned building structures and limited local services and investment. Residences are systematically exposed to multiple hazards such as fire, earthquakes and flooding. Despite Government efforts in disaster management policy and the new legislative framework, the results obtained at the Local Government level in reducing the impact of disasters are still far from satisfactory. Development gains are undermined by frequent disasters and weak risk informed projects. In Southeast Asian countries, the population is exposed to a multitude of weather-related disasters. Floods and landslides devastate the region each year, causing hundreds of deaths and huge losses in terms of livelihoods for the most vulnerable population.

### **3. HUMANITARIAN RESPONSE AND COORDINATION**

#### **3.1 National / local response and involvement**

##### *3.1.1 Bangladesh*

The Government is responding to the COVID-19 situation while addressing the immediate needs of populations affected by natural hazards in various regions of the country. The capacity is stretched. Local and international efforts are coming in support due to the magnitude and complexity of needs. Local NGOs have proven capacity in disaster preparedness for the most common disasters (floods, cyclones), but need to adapt to address the secondary impact of the current pandemic in the most congested urban areas. In the refugee response, the 2020 Joint Response Plan (JRP) builds on significant achievements made possible through the efforts of the Government and humanitarian partners. In the past years, the Government has increased its oversight over refugee camps and settlements. The Ministry of Disaster Management and Relief, represented by the Refugee Relief and Repatriation Commissioner, is in charge of operational coordination of the response, through the deployment of Camp in Charge officials. The Deputy Commissioner's Office and the Bangladesh Army play key roles in the response, on coordination, relief distribution, logistics and construction. However, administrative hurdles and gaps in governance, capacity and coordination remain.

##### *3.1.2 Myanmar*

The Government's capacity and willingness to respond to conflict induced humanitarian crises remains extremely low. As a result of the constrained humanitarian access, Civil Society Organisations (CSOs) and local NGOs ensure most of the frontline assistance to all people in need, particularly in non-government-controlled areas. The Myanmar Red Cross and CSOs ensure an essential complement to the limited government capacities to respond to the frequent natural hazards. At the end of 2019, the Ministry of Social

Welfare, Relief and Resettlement endorsed a national-level strategy for camp closure. However, the ongoing “closure” of specific camps does not meet expected international standards. In Rakhine state, no progress has been made in regard to the situation in camps or confined villages for Rohingya communities. The modalities of return/resettlement for internally displaced people remains inadequate to ensure a safe, sustainable and voluntary process, as a result of both a discriminatory local body of laws and a lack of harmonisation of related aid strategies. In parallel, gross human rights violations by all parties to the conflict remain unaccounted across conflict-affected areas. The deterioration of the overall access situation in parallel to COVID-19 restrictions, highlighted the primary role of existing local organizations and community solidarity networks in the humanitarian response. The localized dimension of the humanitarian interventions should be acknowledged and factored in the overall strategy of response in Myanmar, in order to sustain access to funding while reinforcing capacities to deliver assistance up to standards, in a principled manner.

### *3.1.3 ASEAN Countries*

A vibrant number of civil society organisations and networks are engaged in the Rohingya cause. Coordination and concerted advocacy capitalizing on existing frameworks needs to be increased. These frameworks include ASEAN Convention against Trafficking in Persons, especially Women and Children (ACTIP) in line with its complementary ASEAN Plan of Action against Trafficking in Persons, Especially Women and Children (APA) and mechanisms such as the Bali Process. International laws such as the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea (UNCLOS), International Convention for the Safety of Life at Sea (SOLAS); and the International Convention on Maritime Search and Rescue (SAR Convention), as well as the duty to render assistance to persons in distress at sea and the principle of non-refoulement – both embedded in customary law, likewise need to be advocated for.

### *3.1.4 The Philippines*

The focus of the country in terms of Disaster Risk Reduction and disaster response is generally on natural disasters. The National Disaster Risk Reduction and Management Council is responsible at national level for ensuring the protection and welfare of people during disasters or emergencies. Conflict-induced displacement is usually not recognized as a disaster or crisis that warrants a response from the administration. So the government has provided assistance to very few of the frequent conflict-induced displacements. In conflict-affected areas, lack of financial resources has affected the capacity of authorities to respond even to natural calamities. In Bangsamoro Autonomous Region in Muslim Mindanao, the creation of a department for emergency response opens an opportunity for response-based services with the caveat that it also faces challenges in resourcing its annual plan. The COVID-19 crisis has also affected the response capacity at the national level.

## **3.2 International Humanitarian Response**

### *3.2.1 Bangladesh*

*Refugee response:* The Inter-Sector Coordination Group (ISCG), composed of lead agencies for all humanitarian sectors at Cox’s Bazar level, leads the humanitarian

response in Cox's Bazar. At national level, the refugee humanitarian response is led by the Strategic Executive Group (SEG) co-chaired by UNRC, UNHCR and IOM. Donors coordinate through informal meetings at Dhaka and at Capitals level. The 2020 Joint Response Plan for Rohingya crisis in Bangladesh (JRP) initially sought USD 877 million for 117 partners, 61 of which are Bangladeshi organisations. Following the COVID-19 crisis, an addendum published in June 2020 increased the number of people in need to 1.8 million people and added USD 181 million as new COVID-19 funding requirement. In October 2020, the JRP was only 48% funded. The SEG and ISCG coordination structures provide a platform for all actors engaged in the response to collaborate on common humanitarian objectives and strategies.

*Country-wide (disaster response):* The Humanitarian Coordination Task Team (HCTT) works as a coordination platform to strengthen the collective capacity of government, national and international actors to ensure effective humanitarian preparedness for, response to, and recovery from the impacts of disaster in Bangladesh. The HCTT is co-chaired by one official representing the Ministry of Disaster Management and Relief and one official of the United Nations (UN) nominated by the UN Resident Coordinator. In the past months the HCTT published two appeals following the two major disasters occurred in the period May-August 2020: the 2020 Monsoon Floods Humanitarian Response and Recovery Plan (HPRP) amounting to USD 40 million for the period July 2020- March 2021; and the response plan in response to cyclone Amphan with a total of USD 25 million, funded at 26% as of July 2020.

### 3.2.2 Myanmar

At national level, the overall response is led by the Humanitarian Country Team and coordinated by a range of clusters and working groups, with sub-national coordination forums. The Myanmar HCT, which is convened under the leadership of the Humanitarian Coordinator (RC/HC), is a key coordination structure that is composed of organisations that undertake humanitarian action in Myanmar and that commit to participate in coordination arrangements. The operational coordination in Rakhine State remains shared on a geographical basis between OCHA and UNHCR. The Myanmar Humanitarian Response Plan (HRP) for 2020 amounts to USD 275.3 million, including USD 58.8 million for COVID-19 response through two addendums, to cover the humanitarian needs of 915 000 people (including 60 000 returning migrants). As of August 2020, the HRP was 42.7 % funded<sup>16</sup>. The trend is showing a decline in funding compared to last year, whereby HRP was funded 55% in July 2019. COVID-19 response plan related to the HRP (44.8%) received a higher percentage than the general humanitarian proposed interventions (39.2%)<sup>17</sup>. The HRP focuses on humanitarian needs in Rakhine, Kachin and Shan, Kayin and Chin States. The Rohingya crisis represents a large part of the protracted humanitarian needs and funding but other conflicts, including in Rakhine State, tend to increase in scale and acuteness.

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<sup>16</sup> <https://fts.unocha.org/appeals/934/summary>

<sup>17</sup> COVID-19 Global Humanitarian Response Plan is funded 44.8% (USD 26.3 million funded (EUR 22.4 million) out of 58.8 million (EUR 50 million)). Non-COVID-19 Global Humanitarian Response Plan is funded 39.2% (USD 84.9 million (EUR 72.3 million) funded out of USD 216.5 million (EUR 184 million)).

### 3.2.3 *The Philippines*

In the Philippines, the coordination and communication of international humanitarian actions are carried out by the Humanitarian Country Team (HCT) led by the UN Humanitarian Coordinator/Resident Coordinator. Aside from all UN agencies performing humanitarian services, HCT has active participation from international organizations (IFRC and ICRC) and representatives of the private sector. Humanitarian donors are observers. The HCT holds regular monthly meetings and ad-hoc meetings during emergencies. The current Philippines COVID-19 Humanitarian Response Plan of EUR 121.8 million was 23% funded as of August 2020.<sup>18</sup> Three donors, USA, ECHO and Sweden covered about 66% of the 2019 humanitarian funding assistance for the Philippines.<sup>19</sup> There is no Humanitarian Response Plan for Mindanao and the international funding for Mindanao has been decreasing over time.

## 3.3 Operational constraints

### 3.3.1 *Access/humanitarian space:*

Over the past year, **Bangladesh** authorities have introduced increasingly restrictive measures. National and international organisations face operational and administrative constraints that can hinder the delivery of timely and predictable assistance to affected populations. Access to visas for international staff and lengthy bureaucratic procedures for authorisations to operate, continue to affect efficiency. In addition, the Government ban on internet services in the refugee areas since September 2019 has a severe impact on the capacity to run and maintain the large aid operations at scale and quality, but also to ensure emergency response and coordination among involved actors in case of a disaster.

**Myanmar** figures among the “very high access constrained” countries in the world. Humanitarian access has deteriorated due to bureaucratic procedures and security related constraints mainly in areas currently or formerly affected by conflict. Since January 2019, in the wake of the conflict between the Arakan Army and Myanmar forces, further restrictions were imposed on townships in central and Northern Rakhine (later extended to Chin) for humanitarian organizations. Internet shutdown by the Ministry of telecommunication for more than a year has also severely impacted the rights to basic services for over a million people in Rakhine and Chin States. In Kachin and Northern Shan States, no travel authorization applications to Non-Government Control Areas (NGCA) have been approved since June 2016. Humanitarian assistance in NGCA has been mainly delivered by local organizations, while international humanitarian actors face continuous movement restrictions in government-controlled area. The internal and international restrictions associated to COVID-19 have further affected the capacity of humanitarian response in-country.

In the **Philippines**, humanitarian access to conflict-affected areas has considerably narrowed in 2019-2020 with more stringent transport and distribution restrictions from uniformed government personnel. The heightened security alert in Mindanao has imposed controlled movement to and from conflict-affected communities especially those in isolated areas. The increased frequency of armed conflict and more intense

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<sup>18</sup> OCHA 2020, Philippines COVID-19 Humanitarian Response Plan (August 2020 Revision), <https://reliefweb.int/report/philippines/philippines-covid-19-humanitarian-response-plan-august-2020-revision>

<sup>19</sup> OCHA 2020, Funding by donor Philippine Country Snapshot for 2019, Funding By Donor, Financial Tracking Service (FTS), 20 July 2020, <https://fts.unocha.org/countries/176/summary/2019>

military operations (more aerial attacks) also delays distributions. The recently passed Anti-Terrorist Law may cause more access restrictions as it employs stricter regulations, such as permits, on social activities including distributions and community trainings. The COVID-19 quarantine imposes border restrictions between different provinces that prevent, if not delay, the movement of people and humanitarian workers and activities across borders. Movement restrictions due to COVID-19 have brought the livelihoods of the most vulnerable to a quasi-standstill.

### 3.3.2 *Partners (presence, capacity)*

#### **Bangladesh**

The current COVID-19 crisis is further limiting the capacity of agencies to deliver beyond “critical” activities. These restrictions aim to reduce the spread of the virus but access to affected population and delivery of specific services has also been reduced. Despite these challenges, the absorption capacity of partners remains good, with UN agencies, International, National and Local NGOs, ICRC and national Red Cross societies present with adequate experience and capacity. Most INGOs collaborate with local NGOs to increase effectiveness and access to affected population. At national level, partners have been restricted by the lockdown measures imposed by the Government. However, a strong network of volunteers and local partners has helped reaching out to those most exposed to the COVID-19 impacts in the urban areas of Dhaka or in the remote rural areas. The aftermath of Cyclone Amphan and the current floods, present further accessibility challenges due to extended damages to connecting infrastructures.

#### **Myanmar**

Despite the mentioned constraints, there are a large variety of humanitarian/development actors on the ground with a wide geographical coverage. In 2019, 34 International Non-Government Organizations (NGOs) and 9 United Nations Organizations reported humanitarian activities. In terms of national/local response, there were 46 national organizations in 2019 and the role of national organizations, local civil society and the national Red Cross Society remains critical in the provision of humanitarian assistances as first responders. However, access is severely impacting the capacity of both international and national partners on the ground, just as national legal framework exposed local organizations to potential risks of arrests and/or additional restrictions.

#### **The Philippines**

Considering the worsening security situation, delivery of humanitarian assistance to people in most need greatly relies on the humanitarian agencies’ ability to stay and operate in the high-risk areas. DG ECHO partners have long-time presence and operation in conflict-affected areas. They co-operate with local implementing partners such as national and local NGOs, trusted by the communities and with well established presence on the ground. This enables DG ECHO partners to maintain presence and provide assistance to conflict affected population.

### 3.3.3 *Other*

#### **Bangladesh**

Despite advocacy and use of vouchers for humanitarian food assistance, the Government reluctance to accept the provision of cash transfers to cover the basic needs of refugees

represents a major challenge for the economic integration of the refugee and host communities.

### **Myanmar**

The overall deterioration of the access and humanitarian situation, with no sign of medium term fundamental political solution to the conflict imposes a strategic shift in operational approaches in Myanmar. Limited access to beneficiaries by international humanitarian actors in the field and growing restrictions should be balanced by the development of alternative operational modalities, supporting and empowering the local actors to extend humanitarian aid to a larger number of beneficiaries, including those so far not reached by international assistance. This should be accompanied by a solid monitoring and accountability framework to avoid any instrumentalisation of aid and ensure fair access to all populations in need in Myanmar.

### **The Philippines**

Violence and armed conflict continues in the Bangsamoro areas while people have been expecting better security and improved livelihood after the peace agreement and the adoption of the Bangsamoro Organic Law. This is fuelling dissatisfaction within the population and contributes to violence and extremism with a subsequent destabilising effect on the region and potentially on humanitarian space.

## **4. HUMANITARIAN –DEVELOPMENT – PEACE NEXUS**

DG ECHO will seek humanitarian-development nexus opportunities with different EU funding instruments, and encourage partners to also consider this aspect. DG ECHO has involved its counterparts in the other EU services in the elaboration of this HIP, its priorities and the identification of nexus opportunities. Likewise, EU Delegations in the region included DG ECHO in their identification of priorities under the upcoming EU multi-annual financial framework 2021-2027 and in accordance with EU priorities.

In **Bangladesh**, medium to longer term planning is at the core of the development of the District Development Plan, a process led by the UN and the World Bank to address structural poverty and development gaps of Cox's Bazar district. However, a critical piece of the plan would be policy dialogue with the Government to ensure that medium to long term interventions can also benefit the refugee community through appropriate amendment to the current restrictive policies. DG ECHO works with development actors to highlight the specific needs and vulnerabilities of refugees and host communities. Key nexus opportunities for 2021 have been identified for strengthening synergies and complementarity between DG ECHO and other EU instruments in both strategic priorities of DG ECHO: disaster preparedness and refugee response. On the refugee response, further synergies will be established on protection, nutrition, education sectors, by looking at how to best invest in more sustainable actions for both refugees and host communities and together support advocacy for policy change in key areas. Concerning disaster preparedness, potential collaboration could be established on linking support to existing and developing social protection/safety nets with forecast-based actions and disaster preparedness programmes, with the aim of developing an evidence-based policy dialogue on shock-responsive safety nets and social protection schemes responding to the needs of the most vulnerable.

**Myanmar** is a nexus pilot country. An EU Nexus Plan of Action was established in 2018 identifying strategic areas - forced displacement, food/nutrition and disaster preparedness

- for a more complementary engagement from the EU and its Member States. The Plan of Action includes the first framework of a joint analysis. The priorities identified in the plan remain relevant and its implementation is well advanced. Particular emphasis is placed on Forced Displacement in Rakhine and Kachin States. The method and approach to cooperation and coordination between DG ECHO Office the EU Delegation has been formalised in “The Nexus Standard Operating Procedures (SOPs), EU Delegation Myanmar (2019)”. A major achievement in 2020 is the establishment and roll out of the EU Humanitarian-Development-Peace Nexus Response Mechanism (NRM). This mechanism offers an important opportunity for nexus implementation in Myanmar. DG ECHO has contributed to the design of the mechanism and it is exploring potential contribution to it. The NRM is a flexible implementation mechanism, which allows for a quick response to an emerging crisis or a changing environment. It also allows for piloting short-term funding through implementing partners to test the feasibility of complex interventions in uncertain/volatile contexts. If successful, these interventions can be scaled up; if they fail (due to a restriction of access, a new Government policy or military activities or others) funding can be redeployed for other purposes. A key nexus opportunity for 2021 will be DG ECHO contribution to the NRM, which will allow greater synergies and alignment in a given geographical area (emergency response with mid and longer-term interventions). It is also expected to offer greater opportunities of exit strategy from protracted assistance, allowing DG ECHO to refocus on emergencies and new or underserved areas of intervention.

### **The Philippines**

The EU and the Government of the Philippines resumed talks in mid-2020 and, as a result, the EU development programmes for the Bangsamoro Autonomous Region in Muslim Mindanao (BARMM) were launched. DG ECHO and other EU services have then identified nexus opportunities for conflict-affected communities in Mindanao. COVID-19 response is a common agenda, with DG ECHO immediately responding with relief aid at the start of the pandemic and DEVCO contributing to the improvement of the structural response capacity. The shared objective of the nexus in Mindanao is to ensure that development actors include the most vulnerable populations in their development programmes, allowing these communities to improve their level of resilience and disaster-risk reduction to future shocks. Key Nexus opportunities for 2021 have been pre-identified in the sectors of food security, livelihood, DRR and education. The DEVCO Peace and Development programme is expecting to contribute to improve resilience and living conditions of vulnerable communities in Mindanao and will be implemented by NGOs and UN agencies. This programme is the most assimilated to the DG ECHO interventions and will constitute therefore the best work space in which the nexus between DG ECHO and DG DEVCO could be further developed.

### **Disaster Preparedness**

Disaster preparedness in humanitarian action is per se a nexus strategy with development work on disaster preparedness. In the countries of this region, Disaster Risk Reduction programs help to improve the resilience of the most vulnerable in large cities in the event of a disaster; to increase the capacity of local and national authorities to face disasters and to allow structural improvements that persist in the long term. This contributes to sustainable development. The early forecast-based financing actions developed

throughout the region contain a strong nexus component as they contribute to building a "shock response social protection" system in beneficiary countries.

## **5. ENVISAGED DG ECHO RESPONSE AND EXPECTED RESULTS OF HUMANITARIAN AID INTERVENTIONS**

### **5.1 Envisaged DG ECHO response**

#### **General considerations for all interventions**

The humanitarian response shall be compliant with EU thematic policies and guidelines that are described in detail in the HIP Policy Annex. For instance, mainstreaming of protection, gender (including mitigation of risks of SGBV), age, and disability inclusion should be duly reflected in all proposals.

Furthermore, the increasingly negative consequences of environmental degradation and climate-related challenges and the COVID-19 pandemic will continue to impact humanitarian crises and the provision of humanitarian assistance for the foreseeable future. For these reasons, in their proposals partners are requested to follow an all-risks assessment approach, to contemplate measures to reduce the environmental footprint of operations and to factor in as appropriate the COVID-19 dimension.

DG ECHO will release an operational guidance on its renewed approach to preparedness in January 2021, for the consideration of its partners as well. This document will be the result of an extensive consultation with partners on the key policy elements and operational modalities of the approach.

#### *5.1.1 Bangladesh*

In 2021, DG ECHO's response to the Rohingya crisis in Bangladesh will focus on i) continuing to respond to existing high humanitarian needs, including in food assistance, health, nutrition, WASH, shelter, education in emergencies, communication with communities, and response to suddenly arising needs; ii) addressing the increased protection concerns and the heightened vulnerability of refugees; iii) addressing the anticipated needs resulting from the secondary impact of COVID-19 pandemic in both refugee and vulnerable local communities; iv) supporting critical coordination and advocacy functions; iv) investing on synergy and complementarity of approaches with other EU instruments and v) continuing advocacy with other donors and humanitarian actors for the use of cash as preferred modality to respond to basic needs. Accountability to affected populations remains relevant, as is support to key coordination and advocacy functions where DG ECHO provides added value. For partners with cross border and regional capacity, DG ECHO encourages inclusion of broader analysis of the crisis, in line with DG ECHO's ongoing practice.

*Disaster Preparedness:* In 2021, DG ECHO's disaster preparedness strategy will build on opportunities and lessons learnt from the current fragile context. Based on the seasonal recurrence of disastrous climate events, scaling up the capacity of forecast based early action in various regions is critical. DG ECHO will engage in the reflection and contribution to the debate on shock-responsive social protection schemes, which are contextually highly relevant in Bangladesh.

### 5.1.2 Myanmar

ECHO strategy in Myanmar will aim to address the acute humanitarian needs and improve the resilience of conflict-affected people. Recognizing the fundamental human rights dimension of the humanitarian crisis across conflict affected areas in Myanmar<sup>20</sup>, protection will remain a central component and an entry point for DG ECHO's response. The "accountability deficit" on widespread abuses and violations of IHL and IHRL remains a key challenge in Myanmar. This requires donors, UN and INGO/NNGO partners to ensure that a coherent programming shift, in line with the Human Rights Up Front initiative, is more firmly embedded in all programmes. Envisaged response will encompass: i) protection through strengthened monitoring, support to direct services, or mainstreaming, along with IHL dissemination; ii) health with focus on access to primary and secondary health care for the most vulnerable and hard to reach population; iii) emergency preparedness and multi-sectorial response to provide flexible, comprehensive emergency response to immediate, short-term displacements or conflict-induced humanitarian needs. The emergency response approach will support and reinforce localized systems/mechanisms of response (and existing local solidarity networks) with the development of local partnerships, especially in hard to reach areas, and will envisage the use of technology and digitalization; iv) education sector will include support to education in non-government controlled and remote areas, development of pathways and mine risk education.

*Disaster Preparedness:* DG ECHO will consider bolstering localized preparedness systems to ensure adequate assistance to conflict and/or natural hazard affected populations; support to forecast based early action and shock responsive safety net programs in conflict affected/disaster prone areas, while consolidating and expanding the urban component with a focus on multi-hazard preparedness initiatives.

### 5.1.3 Rohingya Regional Crisis

The increasing number of Rohingya displaced in the region, in particular in Malaysia, Indonesia and Thailand, generates acute humanitarian and protection needs and requires a reinforced protection-based humanitarian response throughout the South-East Asia region. DG ECHO's regional strategy will focus on the most vulnerable persons of concern forcibly displaced throughout the region (e.g. documentation, refugee status determination including expedited renewals hereof, restoring family links, assistance in detention centres, etc.). Whenever possible, alternative strategies, such as labour options, inclusion in national strategies, effective livelihood opportunities, etc. will be supported. The regional approach will build on cross border coordination, advocacy, and monitoring efforts that already inform ECHO response to the crisis.

### 5.1.4 The Philippines

DG ECHO's 2021 response strategy is composed of: 1) humanitarian assistance for victims of armed-conflict induced crisis in Mindanao; and 2) disaster preparedness capacity improvement. ECHO will provide a multi-sectoral response in favour of the most disadvantaged and discriminated IDPs and other conflict-affected people in Mindanao. As vulnerable communities in Mindanao are now not only affected by natural

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<sup>20</sup> In line with the council conclusions on promotion of IHL: Council Conclusions on "Humanitarian Assistance and International Humanitarian Law" – Nov. 2019.

disasters and conflicts but also by COVID-19 and the worsening of IHL violations and social discrimination, protection will be integrated into all actions. Wherever feasible and relevant, multipurpose cash will be promoted through innovative, flexible, fast-track, and harmonized delivery mechanisms. Policy advocacy with the government and civil-military dialogue will be continued to promote and explain a response based on humanitarian principles.

*Disaster Preparedness:* The two DP priorities for 2021 are: 1) expanding the scope of forecast-based funding strategies that were piloted in the previous year; and 2) expand the urban readiness model (Move Up) in key urban areas in Mindanao that are centres of displacement of the surrounding areas affected by armed conflict and natural disasters with the establishment of emergency response mechanism (ERM).

#### *5.1.5 Nepal*

The disaster preparedness strategy for Nepal will focus on two priorities i) urban preparedness; ii) earthquake preparedness; with the objective of strengthening the disaster preparedness of local institutions and embedding risk informed approaches within Disaster Risk Management (DRM) planning along a nexus logic. Lessons learnt and good practices from the 2015 earthquake response will be transferred in the region. In both priorities, climate and environmental resilience will be mainstreamed.

#### *5.1.6 South East Asia (SEA)*

DG ECHO's regional Disaster Preparedness Strategy is articulated along three operational priorities, with climate/environmental sensitive programming being a leading principle of all 3 priority pillars: i) scaling up forecast-based and cash-based early action, within shock responsive social protection in ASEAN; ii) preparedness in conflict/fragile settings iii) consolidation of urban approaches to health system preparedness for earthquake and emerging infectious diseases in ASEAN.

## **5.2 Other DG ECHO interventions**

The Emergency Toolbox HIP may be drawn upon for the prevention of, and response to, outbreaks of Epidemics. Under the Emergency Toolbox HIP, the Small-Scale Response, Acute Large Emergency Response Tool (ALERT) and Disaster Relief Emergency Fund (DREF) instruments may also provide funding options.