

## **HUMANITARIAN IMPLEMENTATION PLAN (HIP)<sup>1</sup> SOUTH, EAST, SOUTH-EAST ASIA AND THE PACIFIC**

**The full implementation of this version of the HIP is conditional upon the payment  
of the Member State’s contribution.**

AMOUNT: EUR 78 281 019

The present Humanitarian Implementation Plan (HIP) was prepared on the basis of financing decision ECHO/WWD/BUD/2023/01000 (Worldwide Decision) and the related General Guidelines for Operational Priorities on Humanitarian Aid (Operational Priorities). The purpose of the HIP and its annexes<sup>2</sup> is to serve as a communication tool for DG ECHO<sup>3</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.

This HIP covers the 35 countries of South and South-East Asia, East Asia and the Pacific<sup>4</sup>, whilst targeting Myanmar, Bangladesh, Nepal and the Philippines with humanitarian response programmes and with a disaster preparedness (DP) strategy which has a regional scope.

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

#### **Sixth modification – 16/11/2023**

##### **Myanmar - External Assigned Revenues from Luxembourg**

An additional amount of **EUR 960 000** has been made available from a contribution in External Assigned Revenues from the Grand Duchy of Luxembourg, Ministry of Foreign and European Affairs, to co-finance the action named FLER2: Myanmar First Line Emergency Response Mechanism – 2<sup>nd</sup> Phase, ECHO/-XA/BUD/2022/91017.

This amount will be used in line with the overall objective agreed with the Luxembourg Ministry: to deliver an integrated response to the multifaceted crisis, covering the most urgent needs of IDPs and other conflict-affected population groups. The sectors targeted in priority are protection, health, food assistance, shelter and WASH.

#### **Fifth modification – 17/10/2023**

**Myanmar:** The escalating food security crisis in Myanmar requires an urgent reinforcement of the humanitarian response. The Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO) and the World Food Programme (WFP) identify Myanmar as a ‘hunger hotspot’

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<sup>1</sup> The HIP will be uploaded in APPEL for DG ECHO partners, in CIRCABC for Member States (humanitarian aid committee) and eventually be published on DG ECHO website.

<sup>2</sup> Technical annex and thematic policies annex

<sup>3</sup> Directorate-General for European Civil Protection and Humanitarian Aid Operations (ECHO)

<sup>4</sup> This HIP covers 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 People’s Republic of Korea, Mongolia, a total of 14 countries); the Pacific region (14 countries, not counting EU Member States overseas territories)

of very high concern in their June-November 2023 early warnings on food insecurity outlook. The mid-year Global Food Crisis report published on 15 September also pinpoints Myanmar as one of the worst food crises globally. Malnutrition is growing, with a September UNOCHA update showing that a projected pipeline break for therapeutic food and micronutrients could lead to 7 500 children dying from malnutrition in 2023. While the humanitarian situation in Myanmar continues to deteriorate, a large funding gap reduces the capacity of humanitarian actors to respond. To cover the most critical needs, **EUR 7 million** are added to the present HIP. The additional funding will support food assistance in priority. Due to the wide-ranging needs of the affected population, the funds will also help finance shelter and protection support, as well as WASH, health, and multisectoral emergency assistance.

**Bangladesh:** The humanitarian response to the Rohingya refugee crisis in Bangladesh and the Southeast Asian region is also facing a severe funding gap. One million Rohingya are entirely dependent on humanitarian aid to meet their basic needs, due to lack of access to income generating activities in refugee camps. The UN’s Joint Response Plan for 2023 is only 42.4% of funded. To address critical unmet needs in terms of food assistance, protection, health and WASH, **EUR 3.5 million** are added to this HIP.

### **Pilots for Anticipatory Action**

In its “*Communication on the EU’s humanitarian action: new challenges, same principles*”<sup>5</sup> the Commission committed to scale up its approach to Anticipatory Action (AA). AA involves actions that are implemented according to a pre-determined protocol, which describes the activities to be undertaken and pre-agreed triggers established based on historical and current forecast analysis<sup>6</sup>.

As part of this commitment, DG ECHO is seeking to pilot the use of Crisis Modifiers (CM) for AA, with a view to generate learning and additional evidence to step up its involvement in AA in the long term. As detailed in Annex 2 of the Disaster Preparedness Guidance Note<sup>7</sup>, a CM is a specific component of a project, with defined indicators, triggers, activities and an associated budget, which will only be activated if pre-identified and defined triggers and thresholds are reached. At present, CMs are primarily used for immediate response following a disaster or the aggravation of a crisis (ex post) rather than for AA (ex-ante).

To test this approach, DG ECHO has pre-selected the ongoing project in **Nepal:** “*Strengthening Ownership and Governance in Disaster Risk Management together with the Government of Nepal, humanitarian stakeholders and the civil society (STRONG in DRM together)*”, implemented by the Danish Red Cross, following the partner’s demonstrated experience in AA and the existence of an ongoing action with an AA protocol/framework ready to be activated. **EUR 200 000** will be added to the project as a Crisis Modifier that will summarise the protocol for AA that has already been developed.

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<sup>5</sup> COM (2021) 110 final.

<sup>6</sup> [dg\\_echo\\_guidance\\_note\\_-\\_disaster\\_preparedness\\_en.pdf \(europa.eu\)](#)

<sup>7</sup> [dg\\_echo\\_guidance\\_note\\_-\\_disaster\\_preparedness\\_en.pdf \(europa.eu\)](#)

In addition, DG ECHO has pre-selected the ongoing project in the **Philippines**: “*ACCESS: Assisting the Most Vulnerable Communities and Schools Affected by Complex Emergencies in Accessing Quality and Timely Humanitarian and Disaster Preparedness Services*” implemented by CARE-NL to test this approach, following the partner’s demonstrated experience in AA and the existence of an ongoing action with an AA protocol/framework ready to be activated. **EUR 200 000** will be added to the project as a Crisis Modifier that will summarise the protocol for AA that has already been developed.

#### **Fourth modification – 06/07/2023**

This modification is intended to transfer EUR 2 805 019 to be allocated to the IFRC pilot Programmatic Partnership action ‘Accelerating local action in humanitarian and health crises.

#### **Third modification - 23/06/2023**

##### **OR Bangladesh-Myanmar-Region**

**Bangladesh:** The Rohingya response in Bangladesh is experiencing a severe funding crisis, with only 25.6% of the UN’s Joint Response Plan for 2023 funded to date. The first important consequence of this massive funding gap has been a reduction in the food rations provided by the World Food Program (WFP) of over 30% (from USD 12 to USD 8 per person), and a full pipeline break is currently expected by October if no additional funding is pledged. Due to the almost complete dependence of refugees on humanitarian assistance, and the already precarious nutrition situation in the camps, the cuts are expected to have a devastating effect, also in terms of security and protection. For these reasons, it is proposed to allocate **EUR 7 million** to cover the most critical food assistance needs of the affected population.

**Myanmar:** The UN’s 2023 Humanitarian Response Plan (HRP) is funded at only 15 % to date. In addition, category 5 Cyclone Mocha, which hit Myanmar in May 2023, caused devastation and considerably increased the total amount needed to respond to people’s humanitarian needs. Before Cyclone Mocha, the World Food Programme (WFP) anticipated a pipeline break in August/September 2023 for cash and food relief for some 130 000 IDPs in Rakhine State. As WFP has used much of its in-kind stocks for the emergency response to the cyclone, an accelerated pipeline break is anticipated. Due to the collapse of the health system in Myanmar, health assistance is also key for the most vulnerable populations across the country, to be delivered via mobile health clinics. For these reasons, it is proposed to allocate **EUR 4.5 million** to cover the most critical food assistance and health needs of the affected population.

**Region:** The civil war in Myanmar has contributed to the regional instability including outward migration flows and forced displacements with different caseloads of refugees. In addition, Rohingya resort more and more to irregular and dangerous journey, rely on the services of exploitative smugglers and risk falling into the hands of human traffickers. For these reasons, it is proposed to allocate **EUR 1 million** to respond to the increasing protection needs of IDPs and refugees throughout the region, including in Malaysia, Indonesia, Thailand and India.

#### **Second modification - 28/04/2023**

## **Adjustment of the Disaster Preparedness Budget Line**

This modification concerns the transfer of EUR 3 million from this HIP (DPBL) to the global line Programmatic Partnerships (DPBL). In parallel, EUR 3 million will be transferred from the global line Programmatic Partnerships (HABL) to this HIP (HABL).

This budget line will be used to fund the First Line Emergency Response (FLER) mechanism in Myanmar, whilst the EUR 3 million of the global line PP DPBL will be used to support DP activities in the 4 Asian countries (Cambodia, Bangladesh, Kyrgyzstan, and Kazakhstan) of the PP project with the IFRC.

### **First modification - 03/01/2023**

#### **External Assigned Revenue Luxembourg (Myanmar)**

An additional amount of **EUR 816 000** has been made available from a contribution in External Assigned Revenues from the Grand Duchy of Luxembourg, Ministry of Foreign and European Affairs, under the title of “Humanitarian Response to the Myanmar Complex Crisis”.

This amount will be used in line with the overall objective agreed with the Luxembourg Ministry: to deliver an integrated response to the multifaceted crisis, covering the most urgent needs of IDPs and other conflict-affected population groups. The sectors targeted in priority are protection, health, food assistance, shelter and WASH. The amount will be integrated and directly allocated to Allocation Round 2 – Myanmar, the details of which are available in the HIP Technical Annex.

#### **1. CONTEXT**

The South, East, South-East Asia and the Pacific region is one of the most exposed to the impact of climate change. The region is severely affected by accelerating environmental degradation and climate risks, which exacerbates the vulnerabilities of the poorest population groups in the region, in particular related to food insecurity and malnutrition. At the same time, the region is affected by human-induced disasters caused by armed conflicts, violence as well as political turmoil, resulting in huge humanitarian needs of both local populations, internally displaced persons (IDPs), refugees and other types of migrants. Over the past two years, the COVID-19 pandemic and associated restrictions have severely impacted socio-economic conditions and increased vulnerabilities in countries throughout the region. Russia’s war of aggression against Ukraine has furthermore led to an increase in commodity and energy prices and constrained supply, with direct consequences on cost of living.

The response strategy in this HIP covers the multi-faceted crisis in Myanmar, including resulting forced displacement to neighbouring countries, mainly Bangladesh, but also Thailand, India and the wider South-East Asia region. The HIP also includes a response to the complex and protracted crisis in the Philippines’s Mindanao region.

Support to national DP and Disaster Risk Management (DRM) systems and strategies remains critical. This HIP also plans for interventions in case of sudden onset emergencies in countries with humanitarian needs, due to limited capacity to cope, and/or where national or local capacity is overwhelmed. Throughout the region, new and

evolving crises in countries such as Sri Lanka, Papua New Guinea and possibly others could require additional humanitarian intervention and a modification of this HIP.

In **Myanmar**, rights abuses and International Humanitarian Law (IHL) violations have reached record levels since the 1 February 2021 coup d'état. Armed conflict and violence have propagated across the country and continue expanding. Armed Opposition Groups and Ethnic Armed Groups have increased their capacities and control more territories, thus fuelling conflicts and violence. An unprecedented level of forced displacements has been recorded, with 1 443 400 Internally Displaced Persons (IDPs) identified by the UNHCR as of 31 October 2022, of which 1 113 000 displaced post 1 February 2021. The political crisis, compounded by the COVID-19 pandemic has resulted in the collapse of the economic/banking system and key social services, which resulted in 14.4 million people in need of humanitarian assistance in 2022, including 5 million children. With no sign of national reconciliation or peace in the short or medium-term, humanitarian trends are expected to further aggravate in 2023. Long-lasting humanitarian access restrictions have further worsened in multiple new conflict areas across the country, due to the high intensity of armed clashes, recurrent denials of humanitarian access where most needed, and the use of prohibited means and methods of warfare. Humanitarian needs are expected to further increase in 2023.

In 2017, Myanmar security forces launched a violent, targeted and large-scale operation in Rakhine State, sparking the latest and largest Rohingya refugee influx from Myanmar into **Bangladesh**. The attack followed decades of institutional discrimination and violence against Rohingya people in Myanmar, who have been rendered stateless. Five years later, about 1 million Rohingya refugees live in the district of Cox's Bazar and on the island of Bhasan Char. The Rohingya crisis is a protracted crisis, with very limited prospect for sustainable solutions in the medium term. The increasing complexity of the crisis generates high protection concerns and adoption of dangerous coping strategies, aggravated by insecurity, inter- and intra-communal tensions, and violence. Rohingya women and children are particularly at risk of Sexual and Gender-Based Violence (SGBV).

Persisting restrictions on delivery of assistance keep refugees fully reliant on humanitarian aid for access to basic services including education, health and food assistance. Exposure to recurrent risks such as fire incidents and outbreaks of diseases with epidemic potential is extremely high. While the vast majority of Rohingya refugees remains in Cox's Bazar, approximately 30 000 refugees were relocated to the island of Bhasan Char since the end of 2020. Access to essential services remain limited. Bangladesh communities, including those hosting Rohingya refugees in Cox's Bazar, are continuously exposed to challenges that further increase existing vulnerabilities, including strained resources, low access to market, labour opportunities, and infrastructure. Without a comprehensive and more sustainable humanitarian-development approach, the risk of increasing needs and vulnerabilities for both refugees and local communities remains high in 2023.

In addition to Bangladesh, which hosts the bulk of the Rohingya refugees from Myanmar, other countries in the region are seeing an increase in migration flows, associated to the forced displacement stemming from Myanmar's multiple crises. Systematic human rights violations against the Rohingya and the renewed nation-wide crisis since the February 2021 *coup d'état* have forced people to flee the country and seek refuge in Malaysia, Indonesia, Thailand, Bangladesh, and India. Inconsistent and insufficient efforts to combat human smuggling, and trafficking across the region put

vulnerable people on the move at higher risks, especially of sex and labour trafficking. The COVID-19 pandemic has exacerbated multiple short- and long-term restrictions on human rights, manifestations of xenophobia and islamophobia, denial of access to national territories and safe disembarkations, indefinite detention, deportation, and breach of the fundamental principle of '*non-refoulement*' under international law, which forbids a country from returning asylum seekers to a country in which they would be in likely danger of persecution based on factors such as their race or religion. Most countries in the region are not party to the 1951 Refugee Convention, and the lack of access to refugee status determination further undermines access to services and protection for people in need.

The **Philippines** is highly prone to disasters, notably climate-related. In December 2021, Tropical Cyclone Rai devastated the country affecting 12 million people and damaging over 2 million houses. In addition, armed conflict remain a source of high humanitarian needs on the island of Mindanao, compounding exposure to high natural hazard risks and causing protracted displacement. The deteriorating nationwide socio-economic situation further worsens the vulnerability of people, reducing their capacity to cope with natural disasters. The poverty incidence worsened with over 26 million population below the poverty line. The most vulnerable persons are bearing the brunt of continuously increasing commodity prices due to fuel price hikes amidst the Russian's war of aggression against Ukraine.

**Regional Disaster Preparedness.** Humanitarian crises in South Asia and the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) have gradually become more protracted, unpredictable and complex. Crises are increasingly exacerbated by climate change, environmental degradation, rapid urbanisation and by the overlap between disasters, pandemic, conflict and fragile situations. Against this evolving risk landscape, the upward trend of climate-induced hazards further compounds vulnerabilities and leads to disastrous outcomes for affected communities, especially the most vulnerable and marginalised ones that often also are the least prepared for acting early.

Besides the countries which are affected both by natural disasters, as well as those that are human-induced (such as Myanmar, Philippines, and Bangladesh), the Disaster Preparedness programme of DG ECHO in 2023 will also cover Nepal, Laos, Vietnam, Cambodia and the ASEAN region.

**Nepal** remains a low-income country highly vulnerable to multiple hazards including earthquakes, landslides, floods, and fires compounded by unplanned settlements, population pressure, poor economic development, and low literacy rates. The country is also prone to outbreaks of emerging infectious diseases, many of which are zoonotic in nature and emerging regularly such as seasonal influenza and cholera. These diseases are further fuelled by the population density, close interface between humans and animals and climatic conditions, including rising temperatures. Despite the positive shift towards a federalised Disaster Management policy and the corresponding legislative framework, underlying challenges and critical gaps persist. The unclear division of roles and responsibilities between the federal, provincial, and local government levels, including concerning the financial capacity at local level, prevail. As a result, the impact of disasters disproportionately affects the most disadvantaged, vulnerable, and marginalised population groups. Enhancing disaster preparedness approaches in Nepal is therefore a priority under this HIP.

DG ECHO's needs assessment for 2023 identified very high humanitarian needs throughout the region, particularly in Myanmar, in parts of the Philippines and for

Rohingya refugees and host communities in Bangladesh and in other host countries. The vulnerability of the population affected by these various crises is assessed to be very high. The 2022 Inform Risk Index shows that five countries have a high risk of disaster and humanitarian crisis: Bangladesh, Democratic People’s Republic of Korea (DPRK) India, Myanmar and the Philippines, whilst seven others display a medium risk: Cambodia, Indonesia, Laos, Nepal, Sri Lanka, Thailand and Vietnam.

	Myanmar	Bangladesh	Regional Refugees <sup>8</sup>	Philippines	Nepal	Cambodia	Indonesia	Lao PDR	Thailand	Vietnam
<b>INFORM Risk Index<sup>8</sup></b>	<b>6.2/10</b>	<b>5.8/10</b>	<b>n/a</b>	<b>5.5/10</b>	<b>4.9/10</b>	<b>4.6/10</b>	<b>4.6/10</b>	<b>4.1/10</b>	<b>4.1/10</b>	<b>3.7/10</b>
Vulnerability Index	5.2/10	5.4/10	n/a	5.8/10	2.9/10	1.2/10	2.9/10	1.0/10	3.9/10	0.8/10
Hazard and Exposure	7.0/10	7.4/10	n/a	7.0/10	4.0/10	2.0/10	6.7/10	1.8/10	4.8/10	3.2/10
Lack of Coping Capacity	5.4/10	5.0/10	n/a	3.8/10	5.1/10	4.7/10	4.5/10	5.4/10	2.5/10	3.3/10
<b>Global Crisis Severity Index<sup>9</sup></b>	<b>4.4/5</b>	<b>3.4/5</b>	<b>3.8/5</b>	<b>3.2/5</b>	<b>n/a</b>	<b>n/a</b>	<b>2.6/5</b>	<b>n/a</b>	<b>1.85<sup>11</sup></b>	<b>n/a</b>
Projected conflict risk	9.6/10	9.1/10	n/a	9.3/10	5.7/10	2.8/10	9.5/10	2.5/10	6.8/10	4.5/10
Uprooted People Index	7.3/10	7.7/10	n/a	5.4/10	3.6/10	0.0/10	4.0/10	0.0010	5.5/10	0.0/10
Humanitarian Conditions	4.5/5	3.8/5	n/a	3.5/5	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	1.3/5	n/a
Natural Disaster Index	7.8/10	8.2/10	n/a	8.4/10	5.8/10	5.8/10	7.8/10	5.0/10	6.1/10	7.4/10
<b>HDI Ranking (Value)<sup>10</sup></b>	<b>148 (0.583)</b>	<b>134 (0.632)</b>	<b>n/a</b>	<b>111 (0.718)</b>	<b>143 (0.602)</b>	<b>144 (0.594)</b>	<b>110 (0.718)</b>	<b>137 (0.613)</b>	<b>80 (0.777)</b>	<b>118 (0.704)</b>
<b>Total Population<sup>11</sup></b>	<b>54 806 014</b>	<b>166 303 494</b>	<b>501 790</b>	<b>111 046 910</b>	<b>29 674 920</b>	<b>16 946 446</b>	<b>276 361 788</b>	<b>7 379 358</b>	<b>69 950 844</b>	<b>98 168 829</b>

## 2. HUMANITARIAN NEEDS

### 2.1 People in need of humanitarian assistance:

	Myanmar	Bangladesh	Regional refugees <sup>12</sup>	Philippines	Other Crises
<b>Total number of vulnerable people in need of humanitarian assistance<sup>13</sup></b>	<b>17 600 000</b>	<b>1 477 000</b>	<b>565 790<sup>14</sup></b>	<b>405 691</b>	<b>17 421 623</b>
Refugees, asylum seekers, stateless, people on the move	Stateless: 614 000	936 000 <sup>15</sup>	Malaysia: 184 080 Indonesia: 13 100 Thailand: 91 166 India: 213 444	131 629	Papua New Guinea: 14 000 <sup>16</sup>
IDPs	1 443 400			105 214	Indonesia: 100 000 <sup>17</sup>
Host Communities		541 000			
Other crisis-affected people			64 000		DPRK: 10 400 000 <sup>18</sup> India – Kashmir: 6 907 623 <sup>19</sup>

#### 2.1.1 IDPs and Refugees

<sup>8</sup> INFORM is a global, open-source risk assessment for humanitarian crises and disasters (mid-2022)

<sup>9</sup> <http://www.inform-index.org/Global-Crisis-Severity-Index-beta>

<sup>10</sup> Humanitarian Development Index (HDI) developed by UNDP

<sup>11</sup> World Bank data, latest updated 2021

<sup>12</sup> Above figures are UNHCR registered refugees with actual unregistered caseloads being far higher (e.g. Malaysia, 400 000 unregistered refugees, and Thailand 5 000 plus 480 000 stateless). All numbers are likely to continue to increase considering the situation in Myanmar.

<sup>13</sup> Sources: OCHA Humanitarian Snapshot (Myanmar); Joint Response Plan for Bangladesh; UNHCR Mindanao Displacement Dashboard for Philippines; UNHCR Persons of Concern data.

<sup>14</sup> An estimate of registered and unregistered/undocumented refugees in India, Indonesia, Malaysia and Thailand.

<sup>15</sup> Joint Government of Bangladesh - UNHCR Population Factsheet (31 July 2022)

<sup>16</sup> <https://www.unhcr.org/refugee-statistics/download/?url=746Bek>

<sup>17</sup> IDMC, Indonesia Displacement associated with Disasters as of 31 Dec 2020

<sup>18</sup> OCHA reliefweb, ACAPS Thematic Report: Democratic People’s Republic of Korea Humanitarian needs in the context of the COVID-19 pandemic (15 June 2022)

<sup>19</sup> [https://www.censusindia.gov.in/2011-prov-results/prov\\_data\\_products\\_J&K.html](https://www.censusindia.gov.in/2011-prov-results/prov_data_products_J&K.html)

In **Myanmar**, according to the UNHCR, in October 2022 there are 1 443 400 IDPs, compared to 330 400 IDPs prior to the coup, including approximately 144 000 stateless Rohingya IDPs. This is the result of post-coup upsurge in fighting and this figure is considered to be underestimated due to the lack of access in most active conflict areas. It is expected to significantly increase in 2023. In addition, about 470 000 Rohingya remain in confined villages in Rakhine state, facing continued movement restrictions drastically limiting access to livelihoods and essential services. Other IDPs in Rakhine, Kachin and Shan states remain in dire situations with very limited access to livelihoods and basic social services. Their situation is aggravated by renewed conflicts, insecurity and landmine contamination, as well as the lack of availability of services, which dramatically affect perspectives of voluntary, safe, dignified and sustainable return. Since the 1 February 2021 takeover, emergency multi-sectoral needs have also increased dramatically with limited coverage by humanitarian aid.

The most updated UNHCR population figures and the 2022 **Bangladesh** UN Joint Response Plan (JRP) for the Rohingya Humanitarian Crisis reflect over 1.47 million Rohingya refugees and vulnerable host community members in need of humanitarian assistance, including around 30 000 refugees relocated to Bhasan Char since December 2020. This number is expected to increase in the coming months.

In 2021, **Southeast Asia** hosted 2.1 million migrants and forcibly displaced people, including 300 000 refugees and asylum seekers. As of August 2022, there were 501 790 registered refugees and asylum seekers in **Thailand, Malaysia, Indonesia, and India**. Of these refugees, 277 394 are from Myanmar, including an estimated 145 528 Rohingya. In addition, since the February 2021 coup, an estimated 90 000 refugees from Myanmar crossed into neighbouring countries, especially Thailand and India. Weak legal protection frameworks across the region, combined with these countries being non-signatories to UN Convention relating to the status of refugees, place refugees, asylum seekers and migrants in a highly precarious legal void.

Internal displacement caused both by armed conflict between non-state actors and governmental actors, and from hazard-induced disasters (often on a temporary basis) continues to affect many vulnerable families in the Mindanao Island (**Philippines**). As of July 2022, more than 100 000 people are displaced and in need of humanitarian assistance. Whilst displacement has affected 73 Municipalities in Mindanao, most vulnerable IDPs are in BARMM<sup>20</sup> villages and in ancestral lands of the Lumad indigenous peoples in Caraga Region. Displacement varies from short-term to protracted displacement; needs are therefore complex and specific to the situation of each community. Several other factors additionally deteriorate the situation of the IDPs, such as the COVID-19 pandemic, offensive military operations in the Lumad indigenous areas, localised conflicts fuelled by political issues, and the compounding impact of natural hazards and changing natural environment.

### *2.1.2 General population*

The exposure of populations living in disaster prone areas of South and South-East Asia is on the increase. In 2020, the number of disasters in the ASEAN region was double the yearly average<sup>21</sup>, almost solely attributable to hydro-meteorological and climatological events. Over 24 million people were affected, with 3.37 million displaced and over 1.44

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<sup>20</sup> Bangsamoro Autonomous Region in Muslim Mindanao

<sup>21</sup> 5 years average. Annual Report 2020, the ASEAN Coordinating Centre for Humanitarian Assistance on disaster management (AHA Centre)



million homes damaged. Over half of the ASEAN population already lives in urban areas, and by 2025, a further 70 million people in this region are expected to become city dwellers<sup>22</sup>. Income inequality in ASEAN cities, already higher than in rural areas before COVID-19, has been heightened by the impact of the pandemic, thus reducing the capacity of people to adapt to climate change and be more resilient when facing disasters. Needs for **Disaster Preparedness (DP)** in South and South-East Asia therefore remain high as vulnerability profiles continue to evolve, with increased urban migration, erosion of traditional coping mechanisms, erratic meteorological patterns, and higher disaster impact from hydro-meteorological events

## 2.2 Description of the most acute humanitarian needs

### 2.2.1 Protection

Protection is a key need in conflict and displacement-affected countries of the region. Serious violations of Human Rights (HR) and International Humanitarian Law (IHL) characterise the conflicts in **Myanmar** and the **Philippines, and other countries**, with parts of the population specifically targeted or deprived of access to rights and services. In **Myanmar**, protection risks dramatically increased with the expansion of the violence and armed conflicts following the coup, as well as repeated HR and IHL violations including prohibited means and methods of warfare against civilian populations and infrastructures, and devastating harm caused by landmines and other explosive weapons. Children and adults alike risk arbitrary arrests, detention and death sentences. In **Mindanao (Philippines)**, IDPs are often confronted with a lack of legal identification and documentation, lack of access to land rights, and discrimination. Throughout the region, children suffer from various protection risks such as forced marriage, child abuse, exploitation, trafficking, and in Myanmar and Mindanao also forced recruitment by armed groups. SGBV is highly prevalent, often exacerbated by traditional gender roles, as well as by conflicts. There are strong indications that the pandemic has further increased the prevalence of domestic violence.

Across the region, the lack of legal status heightens the risks faced by the **refugees and asylum seekers**, including individuals detained as illegal immigrants. The access to documentation and protection services remain a key humanitarian need for this group, as facilitators of access to basic needs and services. Statelessness is at the root of many protection needs in the region and the Rohingya is the largest stateless group in the world. For the Rohingya refugees in **Bangladesh**, the trauma caused by fleeing from the persecutions in Myanmar is exacerbated by the protracted displacement, the deteriorating security situation in Cox's Bazar camps and the concerning protection risks to which they are increasingly exposed, compounded by the uncertainty about their future. The lack of legal status and legal documentation, heightened securitisation of the camps, constrictive policies and reduced asylum space further erode the dignity dimension of their stay.

### 2.2.2 Health

**Myanmar:** While access to healthcare was already scarce before the coup and further reduced by both the COVID-19 pandemic and the impact of the CDM, the 2022 Humanitarian Needs Overview (HNO) identified 2.5 million people in need of urgent health services, with only 1.4 million targeted under the HRP. The dramatic expansion of conflicts and violence, including attacks against healthcare, together with the limited

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<sup>22</sup> ASEAN, 2018

availability of health services, are all resulting in further disruption of access to healthcare. **Bangladesh:** The availability and utilisation of primary health services is overall satisfactory in the refugee camps, due to the provision of free and reliable health services, while on Bhasan Char, availability of services is still insufficient. However, because of the full dependency on humanitarian assistance, a drastic reduction of humanitarian funding would have a devastating effect on the overall health situation in camps. **Philippines:** Mindanao Island has low public healthcare capacities, including very poor mental health and psychosocial support services. The lack of medical personnel is a huge challenge for Local Government Units (LGUs), which are unable to serve their far-flung conflict-affected communities. **Refugees in Thailand, Malaysia, Indonesia and India** often have no, or limited, access to health care due to their lack of legal status.

### 2.2.3 Nutrition

**Myanmar:** In addition to the health crisis across the country, many displacement sites or conflict areas do not have access to nutrition treatment and prevention services for malnourished children and pregnant and lactating women, due to the lack of access and limited funding. **Bangladesh:** In the camps in Cox's Bazar and on Bhasan Char, the overall nutrition situation remains of concern, particularly among the most marginalised and vulnerable groups. The global acute malnutrition rate in the Cox's Bazar camps is 13.7%<sup>23</sup>, chronic malnutrition (stunting) is above the critical rate of 30%, and the prevalence of anaemia is increasing (50.5 % among children 6-59 months and 40.3 % among non-pregnant of 15-49 years).

### 2.2.4 Food Security and livelihoods

Populations affected by conflict, natural hazard-induced disasters, and displacement most frequently suffer deeply constrained access to food and other basic commodities. The situation is further aggravated by the global prices and supply crisis of food and basic commodities. In **Myanmar**, the combination of disruption of livelihoods and markets by conflicts, reduced agriculture production, economic setback and cash crisis have contributed to an over 13-fold increase in food insecure people over 2021-22. People in need of food assistance (13.2m) and targeted by HRP 2022 (4.1m) is due to increase in 2023. The absence of return perspectives for protracted IDPs and the lack of access to livelihoods have led to dependency on humanitarian aid and reliance on negative coping mechanisms. Discriminatory policies have increased the vulnerability of stateless Rohingya. In new conflict-affected areas, Myanmar Armed Forces restrict essential supplies, services and humanitarian aid. The number of new conflict-induced IDPs in hard-to-reach locations is rapidly increasing requiring a geographic expansion of humanitarian operations. In **Cox's Bazar**, despite current level of assistance, food security of refugees has continued to deteriorate since 2017 and remained stagnant in 2021. In 2021 households with acceptable Food Consumption Score (FCS) only marginally improved from 45% to 50%, lower than pre-COVID-19 (58%).<sup>22</sup> Refugees in Cox's Bazar and Bhasan Char continue to fully depend on international humanitarian assistance and tight restrictions persist on unconditional cash assistance and livelihood activities. In the Philippines, **Mindanao Island** has the highest poverty incidences. BARMM is the poorest region with lowest human development. COVID-19, conflicts, floods and strong typhoons have further regressed the food security of the most

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<sup>23</sup> 2021 Standardized Expanded Nutrition Survey (SENS)

vulnerable population. DG ECHO partners show that 100% of the survey respondents in Lumad indigenous areas and 70% in Moro areas have Poor-to-Borderline FCS. Households have minimal coping capacity and, in case of additional shocks, need emergency humanitarian assistance. Across **the South-East Asia region**, refugees and asylum seekers suffer different levels of food insecurity and lack of access to basic services due to their general vulnerability, exposure to risk of deportation/trafficking, lack of access to work legally, lack of documentation and ethnic/religious discrimination. Newly arrived people need urgent food assistance and/or subsistence means.

### *2.2.5 WASH, Shelter and Settlements*

**Myanmar:** WASH infrastructures and services in protracted displacement settings are insufficient, under-standard and under-maintained, with significant gaps in needs coverage due to lack of funding and/or access. For new IDP caseloads, often in fluid displacement patterns, the drastically limited access and complex operational modalities strongly limit the coverage of needs. The shelter situation has worsened with many near-collapse shelter units in protracted displacement settings and hard to meet, rising, new needs. NFIs have been a key focus of emergency assistance to new IDPs, yet a large part of needs has remained uncovered. With no positive outlook on the conflicts' resolution, it is expected that needs will be greater than ever in 2023. **Bangladesh:** The precariousness of the shelters, their vulnerability to recurrent disasters, and continued restrictions imposed by authorities on the use of durable solutions and materials result in a constant need for maintenance and repair. Similarly, for Site Management and Site Development persisting restrictions on large investments prevent long-lasting interventions which would ensure better access to services and mitigation of risks from natural hazards and safety issues. More than half of the households have unmet WASH needs related to accessing water sanitation and bathing facilities.<sup>24</sup> Solid waste management also remains a critical concern. **Philippines:** BARMM has the country's lowest water and sanitation coverage with 16% still practicing open defecation, 36% having unimproved and 13% limited sanitation facilities. More than 14% of BARMM population have no access to handwashing facilities and 26% have limited, unprotected sources of drinking water. Lack of safe shelter remains a vulnerability as evidenced by the more than 2 million damaged shelters due to Typhoon (TC) Rai in December 2021. So far, the local government's recovery effort for shelter solutions remains insufficient. Issues related to land rights and no-build zones, building back better, access to sanitation and water supply and other basic services persist. Throughout the South-East Asia region, newly arrived/rescued **refugees and asylum seekers** need basic non-food items as well as water and sanitation.

### *2.2.6 Education in Emergencies*

Refugee children throughout the region are particularly at risk of being deprived of access to learning. In **Myanmar**, several factors have led a great part of school age children to miss, in part or fully, two to three years of education. These factors include the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic, an upsurge in conflict and violence since 2021, ongoing teacher strikes linked to the civil disobedience movement against de facto authorities, as well as regular attacks against or occupations of schools. Currently an estimated 7.8 million children are out of school. In **Bangladesh**, almost 2 years of national schools' closure, including in refugee camps has caused a serious learning gap

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<sup>24</sup> JMSNA 2021

and drop-outs, which is more pronounced for girls. In the Rohingya refugee camps, education remains a priority as children are increasingly exposed to risks such as trafficking, child labour and early and forced marriages. The education gap for adolescents is alarming due to extremely low enrolment for both genders. The Myanmar Curriculum scale-up remains insufficient to ensure effective learning outcomes, retention, and ensuring sufficient space to accommodate all students and qualified teachers. In **Mindanao**, families struggle to keep their children in school due to the lack of safe, inclusive learning facilities, recurring displacement and the need for children to work to support their families' livelihoods. BARMM has the lowest enrolment rate in the country at 57% and the highest proportion of out-of-school children, 14% for boys, 11% for girls; enrolment declined by 30% for the school year 2020-2021. Schools are damaged by natural hazard-induced disasters, and capacity to provide Education in Emergencies (EiE) in sudden onset crisis is very low.

### *2.2.7 Vulnerability to natural hazard-induced disasters (Disaster Preparedness)*

Although DRM is a priority in regional and national strategies in ASEAN, Bangladesh and Nepal, its advancement varies across the region. Development gains are undermined by the frequency of disasters, crises, lack of comprehensive risk-informed preparedness and early action to reduce the impact of future disasters. One of the main causes of human suffering in both South and South-East Asia is directly linked to the socio-economic vulnerability of sections of its people. With climate-induced hazards increasing in intensity and frequency, shocks, crises, and disasters result in high human and economic cost<sup>25</sup>.

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

### **1. National / local response and involvement**

In Southeast Asia, ASEAN adopted several key instruments steering its Member States to take collective action towards disaster preparedness, risk reduction and resilience-building under the ASEAN Agreement on Disaster Management and Emergency Response Work Programme 2021-2025. Considering the evolving vulnerability profiles of the region, support to national disaster preparedness and disaster risk management systems and strategies is essential. The COVID-19 pandemic created unprecedented political space in ASEAN Member States to support the expansion of Social Protection. This rapid scale up of shock responsive social protection schemes capitalised on the adoption of the Disaster Responsive Shock Preparedness Guidelines by ASEAN in November 2020 and on the ASEAN Framework on Anticipatory Action in Disaster Management in May 2022.

In **Myanmar**, given limited government capacity and willingness to aid conflict-affected people, a major part of local response is delivered by local NGOs and networks, and the Myanmar Red Cross Society. As conflicts have drastically hampered humanitarian access, particularly for international humanitarian actors, the role of local organisations and networks has vastly increased, as it is often the only way to deliver humanitarian aid. Many local organisations in new conflict-affected areas that did not have a humanitarian mandate had to refocus their resources and capacities toward emergency assistance, thus increasing the reach of local networks and channelling international, as well as local aid.

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<sup>25</sup> Asia-Pacific Riskscape @ 1.5°C: Subregional Pathways for Adaptation and Resilience, Asia-Pacific Disaster Report 2022 for ESCAP Subregions

However, this comes with significant limitations and great needs in capacity strengthening.

In the regional response to refugee crisis, **Thailand, Malaysia, Indonesia and India** are not signatories to international refugee treaties and have ineffective national protection frameworks. The severe restrictions and derogations of human rights imposed by States to curb the COVID-19 pandemic has further marginalised refugees and asylum seekers, who without legal status and protection continue to face tightened restrictions, arbitrary and long periods of detention, and deportation. Thailand and India are witnessing a consistent erosion of civil society spaces with national policies targeting national/local NGOs working on refugees and asylum seekers or advocating rights-based approaches to deal with such issues.

Although **Bangladesh** is not a signatory to international refugee treaties, it continues to host almost 1 million Rohingya refugees, the 2022 JRP continue to be built on the roles and efforts of both national and international capacities. The government has steadily increased its oversight over the refugee response through various structures at local and central level. Still, the multiplicity of coordination mechanisms has further complicated the governance linearity, resulting in increased administrative hurdles that hinder the response capacity.

The government of Bangladesh responds to recurrent disasters in various parts of the country, but capacity is stretched, particularly in regions already severely affected by floods and cyclones. Due to the magnitude of needs and the heightened risks in highly congested urban areas, local and international efforts often come together in support of the national capacity. While national NGOs have extensively proven their capacity to respond to the most common disasters, the combination of pre-existing vulnerabilities and risks significantly diminish the capacity of local communities to cope with any additional crisis and shock.

In the Mindanao region of the **Philippines** the transitioning government in BARMM, is the primary agency providing social services to the Bangsamoro conflict-affected communities. The Ministry of Social Services and Development has started relief operations; but this is not sufficient to address the needs. In other conflict-affected provinces, especially Lumad indigenous areas, Local Government Units (LGU) still struggle to adequately respond to conflict-induced displacement. Recovery programmes for protracted displacements are mostly stalled: the Marawi Comprehensive Rehabilitation and Recovery Program is still ongoing after five years of displacement. At national level, some new policies are relevant. LGUs received additional budget that can be available for relief operations. A bill on IDP Rights is being proposed aiming to promote and protect the rights of IDPs and improve emergency response.

In **Nepal**, the Disaster Risk Reduction and Management (DRRM) Act sets out formal structures, roles, and responsibilities at federal, provincial, district, and local levels. Nepal also has a National DRRM Policy (2018) and a Disaster Risk Reduction National Strategic Action Plan 2018-2030. The new Constitution empowers municipalities to plan and execute service delivery for disaster risk reduction, management and climate change. The new law and policies are guided by a holistic approach emphasising preparedness; however, challenges remain to shift from a response-oriented culture to a disaster-preparedness one.

## 2. International Humanitarian Response

In **Myanmar**, the humanitarian architecture has significantly evolved to better meet humanitarian needs over a greatly expanded geography, while all relevant clusters have been activated. The HNO and HRP have reflected well the evolution in needs as compared to 2021, yet the level of funding remains dramatically low. While humanitarian needs are expected to further increase in 2023, based on current conflict dynamics, the outlook is not positive and calls for greater prioritisation, cost-effectiveness and stronger synergies through localised approaches. Capacity building of local actors should be envisaged alongside a fair share in support costs to allow sustainable management and the scale-up of the response. Furthermore, partnerships with local actors should focus on ensuring full adherence to applicable sector standards and adequate risk management must be a priority, also in line with audit trail requirements.

In **Bangladesh**, at national level, the refugee humanitarian response is led by the Strategic Executive Group (SEG) co-chaired by the UNRC, UNHCR and IOM. At country level, the Humanitarian Coordination Task Team, co-chaired by the Ministry of Disaster Management and Relief and the UN, 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 disasters in Bangladesh. In Cox’s Bazar, the response is coordinated by the Inter-Sector Coordination Group (ISCG), composed of lead humanitarian agencies and key sectors. Both structures provide a platform for collaboration on common objectives and strategies.

In the **Philippines**, coordination between the Government of the Philippines and the international humanitarian community has improved as shown in the TC Rai response. The government-led coordination takes place at national and cluster/department levels. The Humanitarian Country Team (HCT) and the Mindanao Humanitarian Team with participation from NGOs, local CSOs, private sector, IFRC, and donors are the centres of humanitarian coordination.

In **Nepal**, the HCT is activated during a disaster and works alongside the government authorities. There are two contingency plans at present developed by the HCT - Monsoon Preparedness and Response Plan and Earthquake Preparedness and Response Plan.

In **other countries in the region**, in the absence of global humanitarian response plans, there are ad hoc appeals assistance from different organisations. Appeals for refugees and asylum seekers in Thailand, Malaysia, Indonesia and India remain heavily underfunded.

#### International Humanitarian Appeals in Asia

<i>Appeal</i>	<i>Amount</i>	<i>% funded (October 2022)</i>	<i>Target</i>
Myanmar Humanitarian Response Plan 2022	USD 826 million	26%	6.2 million people (IDPs and host communities)
Bangladesh Joint Response Plan 2022	USD 881 million	38%	1.46 million people (Rohingya refugee and host community)
Thailand UNHCR refugee Response Plan (6 months)	USD 14.4 million	40%	24,000 Myanmar refugee
India UNHCR refugee 2022	USD 17.2 million	61%	Myanmar refugee
Philippines UN appeal 2022	USD 169 million	36%	Typhon RAI/Odette

### 3. Operational constraints

#### 3.3.1 Access/humanitarian space

In Myanmar, humanitarian access, already constrained before 2021, has further shrunk in the aftermath of the coup, particularly in new conflict-affected areas. Additional legal constraints in relation to international humanitarian actors' registration and MoUs have further impeded their access and capacities. Alternative access strategies have been supported over 2021-2022 and should remain a major focus for DG ECHO, alongside active and coordinated local, regional and global advocacy efforts.

Over the years, **Bangladesh** authorities have introduced new and more restrictive operating modalities, specifically in the refugee response. National and international agencies are subject to thorough scrutiny that may hinder the delivery of timely and predictable assistance to affected populations. In addition, heightened security measures, such as fencing, are posing daily challenges to the delivery of aid.

Humanitarian access to **regional refugees and asylum-seekers** is severely impeded **across the region**, including in immigration detention centres. In Malaysia, Rohingya refugees who disembarked and/or were detained during the 2020 crackdowns remain in detention centres with no humanitarian access. In Thailand, Myanmar refugees are held temporarily in so-called "safety zones" under the authority of the Royal Thai Army with no humanitarian access granted, subsequently being pushed back to Myanmar and no screening process allowed to determine whether they need international protection. India's national policies, too, foresee sending Myanmar nationals and Rohingya refugees back to Myanmar, and humanitarian access and operations have been severely challenged, including through the Foreign Currency Regulation Act (FCRA) imposed on NGOs. With the exception of Bangladesh, Indonesia is currently the only country where humanitarian organisations have the operational space to assist refugees.

In the **Philippines**, DG ECHO prioritises reaching communities that are specifically disadvantaged due to the presence of both physical and socio-economic challenges. The risks are particularly high with frequent incidents resulting from the armed conflict in project areas and difficult terrain. The access to people in need is further challenged by red tagging of humanitarian actors, as being on one side of the conflict. As all projects must ensure last-mile distributions, partners are expected to demonstrate efficient security and physical risks management.

Due to the difficult terrain in **Nepal**, the access to the most vulnerable communities remains a challenge.

#### 3.3.2 Partners (presence, capacity), including absorption capacity on the ground

Many international organisations are present in the field in **Myanmar** with significant capacities built over years, but often limiting to pre-coup traditional humanitarian geographic focus. Scaling-up or initiating capacities in new conflict-affected areas, with all above-mentioned access challenges, has proven difficult and slow, if ever possible, in some particularly affected conflict zones. Partnerships with local networks and capacity-building are key to maintain actual operational capacities where access is most challenged.

In the refugee response in **Bangladesh**, the implementation and absorption capacity of implementing actors remains globally good, despite the difficult policy environment and the various challenges described above. Partners have proven experience and capacity to ensure adequate assistance through a well-established presence of experienced and

skilled staff, able to cover the most urgent humanitarian needs in different sectors of intervention. More efforts are still needed to ensure a more effective coordination with the aim to improve the overall cost-efficiency and ensure a better use of the limited available resources.

A large number of civil society organisations and networks are engaged in **Thailand, Indonesia, Malaysia and India**. Together with the handful of international organisations and joint efforts, capacities to respond to the regional refugee crisis and scale up operations are present.

There is sufficient number and outreach of humanitarian partners in the **Philippines**, some of them can rapidly react to acute emergencies. Most of the clusters are active and functioning during disasters. The presence of local organisations is important and complements international agencies in rapidly deploying relief operations especially in small islands and interior provinces.

In **Nepal** the outreach of the humanitarian partners is throughout the country. They have proven capacity for disaster response as well as preparedness.

### *3.3.3 Other*

The complex operational context in **Myanmar** has forced humanitarian actors to develop alternative intervention modalities. Operational constraints as well as “do no harm” considerations imply greater agility in switching between cash-based to in-kind modalities. The disruption of the banking system obliged humanitarian partners to use alternative cash agents with associated higher costs. The localisation focus comes with significant needs and challenges regarding capacity building, supervision, and monitoring, reinforced due diligence and control mechanisms to avoid aid instrumentalisation or diversion, and ensure accountability to beneficiaries and donors.

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

DG ECHO will continue to seek humanitarian-development-peace (HDP) 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 development 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 EU multi-annual financial framework 2021-2027 and in accordance with EU priorities.

**Myanmar** is an EU nexus pilot country. The strategic areas of the 2018 EU and Member States’ Nexus Plan of Action are forced displacement, food assistance, and Disaster Preparedness. While the priorities set remain relevant, the drastic change in context since the military coup and the subsequent massive shifts in development programming focus and modalities have altered the scope for HDP nexus in some domains. This requires the redefinition of priorities across a much larger part of the country than prior to the coup. A significant reduction in development programmes and the reduced availability of basic social services have increased the need for humanitarian aid. Despite this, nexus should remain a priority for partners whenever opportunities are identified and should be reflected in strategies and proposals. In this spirit, in 2020 DG ECHO participated in the development of the operational framework for the newly established "Humanitarian-Development-Peace Nexus Response Mechanism" (NRM), established by DG INTPA. The mechanism addresses long-term peace and national reconciliation, security, stability



and sustainable development by reducing vulnerability, building resilience, and protecting the rights of conflict- and disaster-affected communities across Myanmar. Since January 2022, DG ECHO has been financially contributing to the NRM.

In **Bangladesh**, a dedicated policy framework supported by the government would be key to promoting synergies between humanitarian and development instruments in the refugee response. So far, the government's opposition to any form of longer-term support has been an obstacle to the formulation of any meaningful progress in this regard, despite numerous attempts from donors and partners. Joint advocacy and coordination of messages, particularly on the Rohingya crisis, is a key nexus element in Bangladesh. Nevertheless, further synergies will be established on education, protection, nutrition and possibly self-reliance and skills development interventions, by looking at how to best engage resources to invest on advocacy for policy change in key areas. On the national Disaster Preparedness response, key nexus opportunities have been identified on how to advance sustainable planning, disaster-risk informed development programmes and synergies between anticipatory actions and existing social protection systems, with the aim of developing an evidence-based dialogue on shock-responsive safety nets. Joint participation in conflict analysis screening and programming efforts further consolidate a common EU approach in the country.

In the **Philippines**, humanitarian-development nexus hinges on the presence of DG ECHO and DG INTPA operations in the BARMM areas. The convergence on local institutional actors and target beneficiaries is a good foundation. The BARMM (transitory) government acts on emergency rapid response and pilots innovative DP strategies with support from humanitarian partners. At national level, the EU is also supporting the Copernicus programme to strengthen the country resilience to natural disasters and climate change. Development partners work on the overall institutional capacity-building in establishing all branches of the BARMM government as well as on building community resilience, including through the development of Agri-cooperative livelihoods of the most vulnerable communities affected by armed conflict. In the context of the COVID-19 pandemic, the nexus translated into development and humanitarian assistance running in parallel, with INTPA supporting an integrated livelihood intervention and enhanced social cohesion and resilience in BARMM, while ECHO focused on ensuring access to basic food assistance, improved WASH, and vaccines elsewhere in the country. The joint exercise on conflict analysis assessment further improves synergies in the effort of mitigating the risks of violent conflict while promoting sustainable and durable peace with a do-no-harm, humanitarian-inclusive approach.

**Disaster Preparedness:** Developing comprehensive partnerships beyond traditional communities of practice is key to achieving progress in tackling complex, multi-layered hazards and risks. As such, the establishment of partnerships, notably with regional fora and/or networks that facilitate the exchange of information and learning across public and private stakeholders is encouraged. Likewise, opportunities for engagement in national and regional advocacy initiatives will continue to be researched.

Though the main focus remains on regional and national multi-hazard preparedness for response and early action, synergies with European Union Civil Protection (EUCPM) and nexus opportunities with development and Team Europe's Initiatives will be explored. The overall aim of Disaster Preparedness actions in the region is to create better-prepared and more resilient communities and institutions to face natural and man-made hazards.

In **Nepal**, the presence of strong development partners such as DG INTPA, UN agencies, multilateral organisations, international NGOs and Red Cross provides an opportunity to build synergies between the ongoing DP and development activities, namely in the education sector and implementation of federalism reform. The anticipatory action and shock responsive social protection platforms have created a conducive environment for the humanitarian and development actors to work together to address the issues and concerns of the most vulnerable communities. Strengthened nexus can build on best practices from the past, such as the humanitarian aid, post-disaster reconstruction, and capacity building that were provided in 2015, when the country was hit by a 7.8-magnitude earthquake.

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

### General conditions for all interventions

The humanitarian response shall be compliant with EU thematic policies and guidelines that are described in the HIP policy annex. Mainstreaming of protection, gender (including mitigation of risks of SGBV), age, disability and diversity inclusion, as well as of disaster preparedness and mitigating environmental impact in line with the minimum environmental requirements, should be duly reflected in all proposals.

Despite an annual budget, DG ECHO continues to support multi-year projects (initial funding allocation for 24 months) in case the partner organisation demonstrates the efficiency gains and the operational logic of a longer-lasting project, as it is for example already the case with Education in Emergencies and disaster preparedness projects that usually run for at least two years. Other sectors could be relevant for a multi-year project if well-justified by a partner organisation.

In the logic of multi-annual strategic humanitarian projects, DG ECHO also supports (pilot) programmatic partnerships and would consider such an approach within this HIP, if partner organisations - NGOs with a DG ECHO programmatic partnership certificate, UN agencies and the Red Cross/Crescent family - demonstrate the strategic and/or innovative character of the action and the gains which would be achieved through such a longer-term partnership. A programmatic partnership can be implemented through multi-year funding (initial funding allocation for 24 months or more) or through a staged approach where funding is allocated annually.

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

The 2023 strategy for the region builds on past experiences and reinforces the 2022 HIP response.

The strategy is composed of three mutually reinforcing pillars:

**Pillar 1, Humanitarian response to complex emergencies** will cover the complex emergency in Myanmar, as well as the protracted crisis in the Philippines' Mindanao.

**Pillar 2, Humanitarian response to refugee crises and mixed migration** will cover the Rohingya refugee crisis in Bangladesh, as well as the refugee and mixed migration regional crisis in other countries of the region, particularly Thailand, Malaysia, Indonesia and India.

**Pillar 3, Disaster preparedness** will address high vulnerability to multiple hazards and climate fragility throughout the region, with particular attention to Nepal, the Philippines and Bangladesh.

Pillars	Countries covered
Pillar 1: Complex Emergencies	Myanmar, the Philippines
Pillar 2: Refugee crises	Bangladesh, India, Thailand, Indonesia, Malaysia, other host countries
Pillar 3: Disaster Preparedness	Nepal, Bangladesh, the Philippines, other countries of the region.
<b><i>Pillar 1: Humanitarian response to complex emergencies</i></b>	

This pillar will provide needs-based, and lifesaving multi-sectoral humanitarian aid to populations affected by conflict, forced internal displacement and natural hazards, with a focus on Myanmar and on Mindanao in the Philippines. This pillar may also reinforce the response capacities in country.

The response will be multi-sectoral and address the basic needs and gaps identified. It will address gender, age and disability vulnerabilities.

***Priority 1: Myanmar – multi-sector humanitarian assistance***

DG ECHO’s strategy in Myanmar is to address the acute humanitarian needs of conflict-affected people across the country, while maintaining essential assistance to protracted IDPs. Given the magnitude of needs and the operational constraints - in terms of access and operational conditions - the priority of DG ECHO will be to provide emergency and life-saving assistance, while adopting nexus as a crosscutting priority in order to address basic needs of the general population through adequate operational synergies with other programmes. Opportunities of operationalised nexus could be sought by all partners and possibly in all the sectors listed hereafter. DG ECHO has made significant investments in capacity building of local networks through international partners, particularly through the FLER, to allow for timely and quality preparedness for multisector response. This will remain a DG ECHO priority in 2023, while synergies with other programmes and networks should be further supported with a Nexus lens.

Due to the dynamic nature of the crisis, multiple geographical areas are affected and humanitarian assistance must take into account evolving needs. Under this pillar, conflict-affected areas will be particularly targeted, provided that capacities and access are demonstrated.

Sector priorities encompass: i) protection: including mine action and psychological support, IHL dissemination; ii) food security and basic needs through emergency assistance in protracted settings; iii) health: provision of emergency fixed or mobile health services, primarily for conflict-affected and hard-to-reach populations; iv) shelter/NFIs through emergency assistance in protracted settings; v) WASH: with particular focus on protracted settings in addition to basic assistance in emergencies; vi) preparedness for, and provision of, emergency multi-sector assistance, with a focus on capacity building and strengthening of local Civil Society Organisations (CSO) networks and assisting populations affected by conflict or natural hazard- and multi-hazard-induced disasters (primarily through the FLER programme); vii) education in emergencies (EiE), with a primary focus on return to learning through temporary learning opportunities.

*Priority 2: Mindanao, Philippines – multi-sector humanitarian assistance*

In the Philippines, ECHO will provide humanitarian assistance to the most vulnerable populations affected by the internal conflict in Mindanao, with a priority on the newly displaced.

The actions in the conflict-affected areas will implement targeted solutions to protection risks; assist damaged or dysfunctional health facilities in ensuring primary health care; provide sufficient food assistance and protect livelihoods from further degradation during and after displacement; ensure efficient value-adding WASH interventions for IDP families and for host communities when necessary; provide appropriate shelter and settlement solutions that are purposive and comprehensive to particular displacement situation of IDPs. Education in Emergencies will focus on return to, and enrolment in, learning and provision of temporary solutions in new emergencies. The actions will be integrated, holistic and inclusive of the needs of both IDPs and host families.

<p><b><i>Pillar 2: Humanitarian response to refugee crises and mixed migration</i></b></p>
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The Rohingya refugee crisis, which originated in Myanmar, is one of the most important instances of mass forced displacement in the region. Bangladesh hosts by far the largest number of Rohingya refugees from Myanmar. However, the situation in Myanmar fuels forced displacement throughout the region, with Rohingya and other people from Myanmar seeking refuge in countries such as India, Indonesia, Malaysia and Thailand. This forced displacement compounds increasing mixed migration flows throughout the region.

*Priority 1: Rohingya refugee crisis in Bangladesh – multi-sector humanitarian assistance*

In Bangladesh, DG ECHO will continue to assist the Rohingya population and most vulnerable host communities, through interventions that address risks and mitigate vulnerabilities. Though the majority of unmet needs remain in Cox’s Bazar’s refugee camps, humanitarian needs have also emerged on the island of Bhasan Char, where almost 30 000 Rohingya refugees have been relocated. DG ECHO will respond to the Rohingya refugee crisis through humanitarian multi-sector assistance primarily focused on underserved geographical areas, including the Teknaf Upazilla and parts of Ukhia where fewer actors operate. A specific focus will be on target groups particularly affected in terms of access to essential services and exposure to high protection risks, including children and adolescents at risk.

DG ECHO’s response addresses primarily key humanitarian needs in terms of protection, health, nutrition, food security and education, although intervention in other sectors will also be supported as part of a multi-sector approach. DG ECHO will also seek opportunities to contribute to the self-reliance of refugees and to limit their total dependence on external aid by identifying more sustainable solutions and pursuing opportunities for nexus policy engagement. Enhanced coordination at regional level and with humanitarian actors in Myanmar will help keep the focus on solutions to the crisis, as the origin and the solution to the refugee crisis rest in Myanmar.

*Priority 2: Regional refugee crisis and mixed migration – protection, advocacy and emergency response*

The envisaged response encompasses a non-discriminatory “one-refugee” approach aiming to support humanitarian interventions targeting the most severely affected populations in need of protection and assistance, irrespective of their country of origin.

The strategy will aim to support a protection-centred response along the axes of risk analysis, preparedness for first basic needs response, protection programming, coordination, access to essential service provision including healthcare and joint advocacy. Countries targeted by the response will primarily be India, Thailand, Indonesia and Malaysia.

### ***Pillar 3: Disaster Preparedness***

Throughout the region, the main aim of DG ECHO's preparedness strategy is to put people at the very core of regional and state Disaster Risk Management (DRM) design in ASEAN. This will be pursued through leveraging previous DG ECHO targeted Disaster Preparedness investments to reinforce local preparedness and response capacity, whenever possible working at system level.

The systematic inclusion of those who are most vulnerable in relevant DRM plans at all levels, advocating for inclusive policies that comprehensively protect vulnerable and at-risk populations so that they are better prepared to withstand shocks and crises wherever they reside, will continue to remain at the centre of DG ECHO action. DG ECHO will also continue to seek improvements in the localised preparedness systems in conflict-affected and fragile settings in ASEAN, whenever possible acting in anticipation of shocks and crises.

In every preparedness investment, inclusion of climate and environmentally sensitive programming will be systematically promoted through a multi-hazard and multi-sector approach whereby risks are identified by those who are most vulnerable, marginalised and in need. In Southeast Asia, focus will be put on supporting anticipatory action and shock-responsive social protection systems through the Pilot Programmatic Partnership with the FAO.

#### ***Priority 1: Disaster Preparedness in Bangladesh***

In Bangladesh, building on available lessons learnt, DG ECHO will seize opportunities to further improve the multi-hazard anticipatory action framework and approach in country, also aiming to reinforce shock responsive components of social protection and safety net mechanisms, to address the needs of those who are most vulnerable to specific risks.

In 2023, DG ECHO will also continue to invest in better preparedness and response in urban settings, particularly through private sector engagement. Disaster Preparedness actions will also complement the humanitarian response in Cox's Bazar, where the main objective will remain a more coherent and coordinated Disaster Risk Management architecture for the district, including the refugee camps.

#### ***Priority 2: Disaster Preparedness in Nepal***

DG ECHO DP investments will foster the uptake of harmonised, as much as possible common, multi-hazard approaches through strengthening local DRM governance ownership for risk-based preparedness in earthquake risk regions of Nepal. This will include urban DP and health emergency preparedness, building on available learning and legacy of the previous targeted DG ECHO DP investments, the 2015 earthquake response operation, as well as the COVID-19 response.

Consolidation of the transition from centralised governance to a federal system such as the one envisaged by the new Constitution, through focusing on tackling local DRM

governance gaps and bottlenecks will be supported. DG ECHO in Nepal will aim to support local governments in a whole- of society risk-informed approach to natural hazards. Any proposal must aim to ensure the inclusion of marginalised population groups through risk-informed approaches and protocols of local governments for earthquake preparedness, specifically related to urban disaster management and emergency health preparedness, focusing on mass casualty management and epidemic outbreaks.

### Priority 3: Disaster Preparedness in the Philippines

In the Philippines, ECHO pursues a dual strategy, which is to provide humanitarian assistance to the most vulnerable populations affected by the internal conflict in Mindanao, with a priority on the newly displaced, as well as support disaster preparedness in the country.

The Disaster Preparedness strategy will build on previous targeted interventions supporting an increased uptake at Local Government Unit level of anticipatory actions in their Disaster Risk Reduction and Management plans, with gradual increase of dedicated resources from own fiscal allocations. Support will continue to be provided to BARMM's DP policy and multi-stakeholder platforms and partnerships to analyse, prepare for, address environment and climate issues at river basin scale that multiply disaster risks. In conflict-affected areas, the targeted interventions should continue to bolster preparedness for local rapid response capacity, especially where local resources are depleted and where no front-line assistance is in place. All activities must be inclusive, environmentally sensitive, and compliant with a no-regrets policy.

### **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.

In view of the importance of logistics for humanitarian operations, DG ECHO remains also committed to contribute to logistics operations, via funding or any other tool, such as the European Humanitarian Response Capacity (EHRC), at its disposal.

The European Humanitarian Response Capacity (EHRC) is a global initiative, aiming at supporting the delivery of humanitarian assistance with a gap-filling approach. Under the EHRC the Commission has at its disposal several tools that can be activated in case of sudden onset disasters, e.g., a series of Common Logistics Services (including air operations, warehousing services, last-mile ground transportation, etc.), and a stockpile of emergency WASH and shelter items to be pre-positioned in regional warehouses worldwide.