

HUMANITARIAN IMPLEMENTATION PLAN (HIP) SOUTH, EAST, SOUTH-EAST ASIA AND THE PACIFIC

AMOUNT: EUR 71 300 000

The present Humanitarian Implementation Plan (HIP) was prepared on the basis of financing decision ECHO/WWD/BUD/2024/01000 (Worldwide Decision) and the related General Guidelines for Operational Priorities on Humanitarian Aid (Operational Priorities). The purpose of the HIP and its annexes¹ is to serve as a communication tool from DG ECHO² to its partners and assist them 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

First modification

The humanitarian situation in **Myanmar** continues to deteriorate, while a large funding gap reduces the capacity of humanitarian actors to respond. The most urgent funding needs are related to food security with at least a quarter of the total population in Myanmar faces food insecurity. Just in Rakhine, about half a million people are in critical need of food assistance, with deaths from starvation reported. Moreover, there has been a 50% increase in IDPs across the country in just six months, with more than 3 million people now internally displaced. In Rakhine State, roughly 225 500 people have become newly displaced since fighting resumed between the Myanmar military and Arakan Army in November 2023. In Rakhine, water scarcity is affecting some 84 000 displaced Rohingya people, as well as other IDPs and villagers. The Protection Incident Monitoring System Analysis covering January-March 2024 documented nearly 29 000 individuals who were victims of human rights violations across Myanmar, with half of those in Rakhine. The public healthcare system has collapsed and there is a lack of access to services, especially in conflict areas. In fighting hotspots central and northern Rakhine, some 1.6 million people no longer have access to hospital care. DG ECHO's First Line Emergency Response (FLER) mechanism, which has already delivered assistance to about a quarter of the new IDPs in Rakhine since November 2023, needs to be replenished.

The intensified fighting in Rakhine have led to movement of population towards the **Bangladesh border**. UNHCR has indicated that 4 000 residents of Rakhine (mostly Rohingya) may be heading towards the border to cross into Bangladesh. The worst-case scenario developed by the UN considers a **possible influx to Bangladesh of 200 000 people**. In addition, the security and protection situation are deteriorating in the Rohingyas camps, with forced recruitment by armed groups. In **Thailand**, approximately 1.3 million people have crossed the border in 2023. In just the first 4 months of 2024, 430 000 people crossed the border to Thailand. Refugees have been accommodated in the Temporary Shelter Areas (TSAs) controlled by the Thai Army. Existing systems in Thailand are struggling to manage the complexities of this influx. DG ECHO partners are active at the border, supporting on migration tracking, protection, and health both in and out TSAs, as well as IDPs camps on the border with Myanmar.

¹ Technical annex and thematic policies annex

² Directorate-General for European Civil Protection and Humanitarian Aid Operations (ECHO)

For these reasons, it is proposed to allocate **EUR 15 million** to cover the most critical needs of the affected population.

1. CONTEXT

This HIP covers the 35 countries of South and South-East Asia. East Asia and the Pacific, whilst targeting Myanmar, Bangladesh and the Philippines with humanitarian response programmes and with a Disaster Preparedness (DP) strategy which has a regional scope, with a focus on Bangladesh and Nepal. 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 large humanitarian needs of local populations, internally displaced persons (IDPs), refugees and other types of migrants. The response strategy in this HIP covers the multi-faceted crisis in Myanmar, including resulting forced displacement to neighbouring countries, mainly Bangladesh, as well as Thailand, India and the wider South-East Asia region. The HIP also includes a response to the complex and protracted crisis in the Mindanao region of the Philippines. 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 Papua New Guinea, DPRK and possibly others could require additional humanitarian intervention and a modification of this HIP.

1.1 Myanmar

The Myanmar crisis has remained marked by extreme violence and violations of International Humanitarian and Human Rights Law throughout 2023. Vulnerabilities, needs and population displacement have risen steadily since the Myanmar coup d'état, which occurred on 1st February 2021. According to the United Nations' (UN's) Humanitarian Needs Overview 2023 (HNO), 17.6 million are in need of humanitarian aid. An additional 500 000 people are estimated by the UN Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA) to have been affected by Cyclone Mocha in May 2023. As of August 2023, more than 1.9 million people are internally displaced. The crisis is becoming more protracted, with high intensity fighting taking place over much of the country. Fighting includes the use of prohibited means and methods of warfare, and the targeting of civilian settlements and infrastructure, in violation of International Humanitarian Law. The economy has further deteriorated due to the conflict and worldwide inflation. According to the UN's Development Programme (UNDP), 25 out of 56 million people now live under the poverty line. The UN's Food and Agriculture Association (FAO) and World Food Programme (WFP) pinpoint Myanmar as a global 'hunger hotspot', with more than 15 million people facing food insecurity. Lack of funds, access challenges and attempts to instrumentalise aid make it difficult to address the growing needs of the population. The UN's Humanitarian Response Plan (HRP) for Myanmar is consistently under-funded, which leads to needs becoming more severe with every year. The number of people in need, those displaced and those facing hunger are all set to increase in 2024. The expected implementation of a pilot return scheme for Rohingya refugees, as well as the continuation of the de facto authorities' so-called 'camp closure strategy', will pose renewed

challenges in terms of humanitarian principles, requiring a strong stance from the humanitarian community.

1.2 Bangladesh

Six years after the violent and large-scale operation of Myanmar security forces sparked the latest and largest Rohingya refugee influx from Myanmar into Bangladesh, conditions in the refugee camps in Cox Bazar remain extremely challenging with very high humanitarian needs and a situation of complete dependence on humanitarian aid (particularly in terms of food, Liquefied Petroleum Gas (LPG) and shelter). Access to land, resources, protection, and service provision remain limited. Recurring climatic events such as flooding, cyclones, and other disasters such as fire exacerbate needs. Bangladesh authorities increasingly express impatience with the lack of prospects for rapid repatriation. Insecurity and lack of rule of law in the camps, inter- and intra-communal tensions and conflict are growing, with Rohingya women and children at high risk of abuse and violations. Over the first half of 2023, 60 refugees were reportedly killed in increasingly common violent incidents, a sharp increase from 2022, which saw 40 violent deaths. The 30 000 refugees on the island of Bhasan Char face additional challenges due to isolation and logistical constraints. Protection concerns remain. International funding is decreasing due to the protracted nature of the crisis and the lack of option for voluntary, safe, dignified, and sustainable return soon, despite recent attempts from Myanmar and Bangladesh pressing for repatriation. Bangladesh is one of the most densely populated countries in the world, highly exposed to natural hazards and among the most vulnerable to the impacts of climate change.

1.3 Regional Refugee Crisis

Mixed displacement and refugee flows remain a dominant feature in the region, particularly forced migration stemming from Myanmar, sometimes through other countries. In Myanmar, systematic human rights violations against the Rohingya people and the February 2021 *coup d'état* have forced people to flee the country due to conflict and persecution, and seek refuge in Malaysia, Indonesia, Thailand, India, and other countries in the region. Inconsistent and insufficient efforts to combat human smuggling and trafficking across the region put vulnerable people on the move at higher risk of sex and labour trafficking. This is compounded by multiple short- and long-term restrictions on human rights, and manifestations of xenophobia and islamophobia with denial of access to national territories, unsafe disembarkations, indefinite detention, deportation and breaching the fundamental principle of '*non-refoulement*' with total disregard for access to refugee status determination, and undermining access for services and protection for people in need. Those fleeing persecution and taking maritime, or land, crossings often find themselves in very poor physical and mental states following weeks or months on the move under very extreme conditions. Upon arrival in third countries, most individuals are commonly placed in detention centres, with limited aid to meet their basic needs. Most aid organisations are generally not granted access to assist those on the move. In the case of India, the humanitarian space and support for refugees is declining due to ethnic violence in Manipur since May 2023, as refugees from Myanmar have been hosted by the tribal communities which themselves are facing internal displacement and shortages of life saving supplies as well as safe shelter. The "one refugee" approach remains the key strategy of DG ECHO in the region, in providing humanitarian assistance to refugees in need regardless of their place of origin. Myanmar citizens from various backgrounds are fleeing persecution and violence from Myanmar to Thailand and India, with numbers increasing and decreasing depending on the scale and scope of the civil war in Myanmar. Access for humanitarian organisations and the response is constrained, but needs (shelter,

food, health care, protection) remain high along the border areas of Myanmar with Thailand and India.

1.4 The Philippines

The Philippines is one of the most disaster-prone countries in the world, with the INFORM Risk analysis finding that it is the 11th most exposed country to hazards, both climate-related and human-induced. Between 2022 and early 2023, the southern part of the country, Mindanao, experienced typhoons, flooding, earthquakes, and landslides, displacing thousands of families. Tropical Cyclone *Nalgae* alone affected 4 million people in Maguindanao. As such disasters predominantly occur in areas affected by internal armed conflict, the humanitarian situation has become increasingly fragile and complex, exacerbating the combined impact of human and natural hazards-induced disasters. The reoccurrence of such shocks drains the coping capacities and livelihoods of households and communities, especially those already living below the poverty line.

1.5 Nepal

Nepal remains a low-income country highly exposed to multiple natural hazards including earthquakes, landslides, floods, and fires affecting lives, livelihoods, and infrastructure. The intensity and frequency of these disasters are increasing due to climate change and compounded by unplanned settlements, population pressure, and poor economic development. 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 technical and 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.

1.6 Regional Disaster Preparedness

The region remains home to a complex mix of conflict, fragility, social and economic vulnerabilities, environmental and climate change challenges; its sub-regions rank amongst the most natural hazard-prone in the world. Despite rapidly transforming economies, the region is additionally marked by stark inequalities. Over the past two decades, humanitarian crises in the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) and Pacific nations have gradually become more protracted, unpredictable, and complex. Crises are increasingly exacerbated by factors such as climate change, environmental degradation, unplanned urbanisation, the overlap between disasters, the Russian War of Aggression against Ukraine, pockets of internal conflict, and other fragile situations. Against this fragile risk landscape, the upward trend of climate induced hazards, including the return of *El Niño* - a natural climate phenomenon characterized by the presence of warmer than normal sea surface temperatures (and higher sea levels) in the Pacific Ocean - further compound vulnerabilities and can lead to disastrous outcomes for affected communities. Those who are most vulnerable and marginalised are often the least prepared for early action, ahead of recurrent and protracted hazards' manifestation in the region. The 2023 Inform Risk Index shows that one country, Myanmar, is classified as very high-risk; three countries are high risk namely Bangladesh, India, and Philippines; while six others are medium risk: Nepal, DPRK, Cambodia, Indonesia, Lao PDR, and Thailand. The Pacific islands states, Vietnam, and Mongolia, albeit ranked at a low-risk class, also stand to be highly affected by climate change. For example, with the average air temperature having increased twice the global average in the last eight decades in Mongolia, 50% of its territory is desert and over three quarters is at risk of desertification.

	Myanmar	Bangladesh	DPRK	Philippines	Nepal	Cambodia	Fiji
INFORM Risk Index (0-10)	6.9/10	5.5/10	4.3/10	5.2/10	4.4/10	4.4/10	2.7/10
Vulnerability Index	5.5	6.3	3.9	4.4	4.4	4	3.4
Hazard and Exposure	9.2	5.5	3.1	7.8	3.6	3.5	2.2
Lack of Coping Capacity	6.1	4.9	6.4	4.1	5.5	5.9	2.7
Global Crisis Severity Index	4.4/5	3/5	4/5	2.1/5			
Projected conflict risk	9.6	2.8	0.4	9.2	0.7	0.4	0
Uprooted People Index	7.9	3.3	0	5.1	3.6	0	0
Humanitarian Conditions	10	2.6	0.3n/a	7	0.5	0.3	0
Natural Disaster Index	7.8	3.6	5.2n/a	8.4	5.8	5.8	3.9
HDI Ranking (Value)	149 (0.585)	129 (0.661)	-	116 (0.699)	143 (0.602)	146 (0.593)	99 (0.73)
Total Population	57 179 310	171 186 372	26 069 120	115 559 010	30 547 580	16 767 840	929 770

	India	Indonesia	Lao PDR	Mongolia	Samoa	Thailand	Vietnam
INFORM Risk Index ³	5.3/10	4.6/10	3.9/10	2.6/10	3.1	4/10	3.4/10
Vulnerability Index	4.8	3.3	3.5	2.3	3.4	3	2
Hazard and Exposure	7.4	6.7	2.9	1.6	2	5.6	4.7
Lack of Coping Capacity	4.2	4.4	5.9	4.6	4.2	3.9	4
Global Crisis Severity Index ⁴		2.5/5				2/5	
Projected conflict risk	10	7.6	0.4	0.1	0	7.2	0.3
Uprooted People Index	6.1	4.4	1.6	0	0	5.5	0
Humanitarian Conditions	7	5.3	0.3	0.1	0	5	0.2
Natural Disaster Index	7.7	7.7	4.9	2.9	3.6	6.1	7.4
HDI Ranking (Value) ⁵	132 (0.633)	114 (0.705)	140 (0.607)	96 (0.739)	111 (0.707)	66 (0.8)	115 (0.703)
Total Population ⁶	1 417 173 170	275 501 340	7 529 480	3 389 370	222 380	71 697 030	98 86 860

2. HUMANITARIAN NEEDS

2.1 People in need of humanitarian assistance:

³ INFORM is a global, open-source risk assessment for humanitarian crises and disasters (mid-2022)

⁴ <http://www.inform-index.org/Global-Crisis-Severity-Index-beta>

⁵ Humanitarian Development Index (HDI) developed by UNDP

⁶ World Bank data, latest updated 2021

	Myanmar	Bangladesh	Regional refugees	Philippines	Other Crises
Total number of vulnerable people in need of humanitarian assistance	18 100 000	1 500 416			
Refugees, asylum seekers, stateless, people on the move ⁷	Stateless: 614 000	962 416	Malaysia: 192 855 Indonesia: 12 470 Thailand: 670 034 (91,337 refugees from Myanmar) ⁸ India: 290 048 (55 200 refugees from Myanmar)		Papua New Guinea: 11 800 ⁹
Internally Displaced Persons (IDPs)	1 882 100		India: Manipur 56 636 Mizoram 12 880	160 000 (Mindanao)	Indonesia: 72 000 ¹⁰ India: 631 000 ¹¹ Papua New Guinea: 91 000 ¹²
Host Communities	-	538 000			
Other crises-affected people					DPRK: 11 000 000 ¹³ India – Kashmir and Jammu: 12 500 000 ¹⁴

In **Myanmar**, according to UNHCR, in July 2023 there were a total of 1 882 100 IDPs, compared to 1 116 000 in July 2022 and an estimated 567 000 in July 2021. Access challenges to areas hosting the majority of the IDPs prevent the collection of precise data, meaning the numbers are likely much larger than reported. The protracted caseload of displaced people in Rakhine, Kachin and Shan states continue opportunities to lack access to basic services and livelihood opportunities. In Rakhine State, the Rohingya people continue to have no freedom of movement. Available data shows that displacement is becoming increasingly protracted, with conflict, human rights violations, mine contamination and land seizures being among the factors preventing IDPs from returning home.

According to the 2023 **Bangladesh** UN Joint Response Plan (JRP) for the Rohingya, a total of 1.52 million Rohingya refugees and vulnerable host community members are in need of humanitarian assistance. Among them, 962 416 refugees live in Cox’s Bazar and 30 456 refugees have been relocated to Bhasan Char. Amongst the refugee population, 48% are men and boys and 52% are women and girls; 52% are children, 4% are elderly and 4% have been identified with at least one specific need.

Thailand, Malaysia, Indonesia, and India: South-East Asia hosted 2.1 million forced migrants including 300 000 refugees and asylum seekers in 2021 and South Asia is home to approximately 2.5 million refugees. Between May-August 2022, there were a reported 501

⁷ UNHCR, <https://reporting.unhcr.org/operational/operations> The figures are UNHCR planning figures consisting of refugees, refugee-like situation, asylum seekers and stateless.

⁸ UNHCR, <https://reporting.unhcr.org/operational/operations/thailand> The stateless population in Thailand is 85% of vulnerable population (573,898)

⁹ UNHCR, <https://www.unhcr.org/countries/papua-new-guinea>

¹⁰ iDMC, <https://www.internal-displacement.org/database/displacement-data>. The figure is only conflict-related IDPs while NGOs estimated between 60 000 to 100 000 IDPs in Papua province <<https://www.ohchr.org/sites/default/files/2022-06/Solidarity%20for%20Indigenous%20Papuan2.pdf>

¹¹ iDMC, <https://www.internal-displacement.org/database/displacement-data> Due to ethnic violence in Manipur erupted in May 2023, there are more than 86 500 IDPs in Manipur, Mizoram and Assam States in India.

¹² iDMC, <https://www.internal-displacement.org/database/displacement-data>

¹³ UN Country Team, DPRK Response Plan 2022

¹⁴ <https://www.censusindia.co.in/states/jammu-kashmir>

790 registered refugees and asylum seekers in Thailand, Malaysia, Indonesia, and India. Of these, 277 394 are refugees from Myanmar including an estimated 145 528 Rohingya refugees. In addition, as of 1 May 2023, it was estimated that there were 88 300 refugee movements from Myanmar into neighbouring countries, including Thailand and India, since the February 2021 coup. Weak legal protection frameworks across the region, combined with these countries being non-signatories to International Refugee Law (IRL), place refugees, asylum seekers and migrants, in a highly precarious legal void. In Manipur, India around 70 000 people have become displaced as a result of ethnic violence in the state; 60 000 people have sought refuge in government relief camps, and the others have fled to bordering states. These IDPs struggle with a lack of food, water, hygiene products, and medicines and require assistance with their mental health. IDPs from the tribal (Kuki) community, many of whom were hosting refugees from Myanmar, are currently suffering from a severe lack of essential life-saving supplies. Meanwhile, Manipur and Mizoram continue to host refugees fleeing persecution in Myanmar.

Communities in Mindanao, the **Philippines**, continue to be negatively impacted by the combination of armed conflict and natural hazard induced disasters. Every month, approximately five to 10 incidents of displacement occur in Mindanao. In August 2023, there were around 160 000 IDPs in Mindanao due to the combined effects of armed conflict and disasters. Those who suffer most are families with almost no access to basic and emergency services: hard-to-reach areas especially indigenous peoples and ethnic minority communities; without functioning government due to the transition process from traditional to a new government after the peace agreement; those where the government deemed as ‘no-go’ areas due to presence of armed non-state armed groups, and communities whose mobility is curtailed, and those areas cordoned off by armed forces.

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. Severe International Human Rights Law (IHRL) and International Humanitarian Law (IHL) violations are reported in the conflicts in Myanmar and the Philippines, with sections of the population deliberately targeted or deprived of access to rights and services. In **Myanmar**, high levels of fighting, violence against civilians and violations of IHL and IHRL keep protection risks at unprecedented levels. Humanitarian mine action actors warn against a dramatic rise in contamination and incidents across the country. Cyclone Mocha has worsened the situation by displacing mines across Rakhine State. Adults as well as children are at high risk of arbitrary arrests, detention and killing. Forced recruitment, trafficking and Sexual and Gender Based Violence (SGBV) have significantly increased. In the **Philippines**, the most vulnerable IDPs, including indigenous peoples, often lack legal identification and documentation. Without these they cannot register for the government protection system nor access basic services including education. There are also unable to pursue legal procedures to respond to abuses against them, including arbitrary detention, rape, and trumped-up charges. In all three contexts children and adolescents, particularly those who drop out of school, continue to experience serious risks, –including recruitment by armed groups, kidnapping, trafficking, sexual exploitation, child labour and physical and emotional abuse. Child marriage often drives early pregnancies and continues to be prevalent.

In non-conflict settings, the main concern is about protection of forcibly displaced persons, across international borders. In **Bangladesh** the protection situation in camps has significantly worsened, contributing to escalating insecurity, brutality, and fear, with growing concerns by

refugees of being targeted by criminal gangs and limited access to justice in case of rights violation and abuse. Reduction in provision of basic services and assistance due to insufficient funding further contributes to the overall deterioration of protection by forcing people to adopt negative coping mechanisms. Premature repatriation, without sufficient conditions for voluntary, safe, sustainable, and dignified returns could lead to additional protection risks. SGBV continues to be a threat both in the camps and host communities, particularly intimate partner violence. **Across the region** the lack of legal status heightens the risks faced by refugees and asylum seekers, including individuals detained as illegal immigrants in immigration detention centres. Access to documentation and protection services remains a key humanitarian need for this group, as documentation facilitates access to basic needs and services. Statelessness is at the root of many protection needs in the region and the Rohingya people are the largest stateless group in the world.

2.2.2 Health

Myanmar: Health needs have dramatically increased from 2022 to 2023, from 2.5 to 10 million people in need of assistance. Due to systematic under-funding of the HRP, however, the number of people targeted for health assistance has only increased from 1.4 to 2.3 million people during the same period. The dramatic expansion of conflict and violence, which includes regular and deliberate attacks against healthcare, together with the limited availability of health services, have all resulted in severe disruption of access to healthcare. Non-government-controlled areas are particularly badly affected.

Bangladesh: Health services in the camps remain under enormous pressure as they struggle to deal with the medical impacts of people's dire living conditions as result of poor sanitation, stagnant water, and overflowing latrines. Epidemic outbreaks, including of dengue fever and scabies, and the limited capacity to properly control them remain a concern. Scabies already affects 40% of the people living in the overcrowded camps.

Thailand, Malaysia, Indonesia, and India: Refugees, migrants, and people on the move in South-East Asia face serious problems with regards to access to healthcare. Following often extreme movement conditions for extended periods of time, these people typically arrive in very dire physical as well as mental conditions when arriving, where they are often subsequently arrested in a foreign country. Upon detention, national authorities in most countries in the region do not readily provide access to healthcare for these people, and national and international organizations are regularly not allowed to provide such services.

The **Philippines:** Each municipality has a health centre; however, health issues are still concerning due to low capacities of some of the local health services. Often left out of this service are the most vulnerable people who do not have financial resources to go to the clinics, do not feel safe to go out of their village due to armed conflict, and do not have information about proper health-seeking behaviour such as safe delivery at birthing facilities. In Bangsamoro Autonomous Region in Muslim Mindanao (BARMM), about 60% of children 12-23 months old have no vaccination and only 18% are fully vaccinated, the lowest rates in the country.

2.2.3 Nutrition

Myanmar: 2.2 million people have been identified as needing nutrition assistance in 2023, largely women and children. Due to limited funding and access difficulties, many displacement sites and conflict areas do not have access to nutrition treatment and prevention services for malnourished children and pregnant and lactating women.

Bangladesh: the overall nutrition situation remains a concern, particularly among the most marginalized and vulnerable groups, also considering the recent 2023 food ration cuts. According to the most recent available data (December 2022), more than one-third of all Rohingya children under five years were found to be stunted, half of the surveyed children (aged 6-59 months) were anaemic, and anaemia was also highly prevalent among women of reproductive age (40.5%) predisposing the at-risk groups to additional undernutrition and morbidity in the coming months.

The most concerning nutritional situation in the **Philippines** is in conflict affected BARMM. Already at emergency level, 10% of children under 5 years old are acutely malnourished. More than 39% of children of the same age are chronically malnourished.

2.2.4 Food Security and livelihoods

Food insecurity keeps rising in **Myanmar**, with 15.2 million people requiring food and nutrition support in 2023, up from 13.2 million in 2022. Prices of basic food items have escalated tremendously, first by 63 % in 2021, and then by 177 % in 2022. The trend is expected to continue over 2023, with a basic food basket costing almost 70 % more in June 2023 than in June 2022. Food production has diminished because of continued violence and insecurity, reduced land access due to travel restrictions, displacement, land seizures, mine and unexploded ordnances contamination, insufficient agricultural workforce, and high transportation costs. Cyclone Mocha has further exacerbated this situation in Rakhine State and other affected areas, with the destruction of seed stocks and agricultural assets. Continued discriminatory policies against the approximately 600 000 stateless Rohingya people who remain in Myanmar prevents them from earning a livelihood, making access to food particularly difficult.

Bangladesh: the 2023 food ration cuts in the camps will contribute to further deteriorate a situation which is already very alarming. While food remains the top-most priority for both Rohingya and Bangladeshi communities, 38% of Rohingya households cannot afford the minimum expenditure basket (MEB) and are frequently resorting to negative coping strategies to meet their food needs. Overall, vulnerability remained at similar levels in 2022 among Rohingya and Bangladeshi communities, albeit still higher than in pre-pandemic years. For Rohingya communities, 95 percent of households are moderately to highly vulnerable, thus confirming their overall underlying fragility.¹⁵

Around 12% of the population in the **Philippines** or about 3 million families experienced hunger by the end of 2022. The World Food Programme (WFP) assesses that one out of every 10 households are food insecure. In Mindanao, 12,7% of families said they experienced involuntary hunger, the highest rate in all regions in the Philippines. Armed conflict and nature-induced calamities have resulted in damaged or destroyed livelihoods in the most vulnerable communities. Only 11% of the affected population have acceptable Food Consumption Score (FCS), often gained through increased levels of negative coping strategies, such as resorting to harvesting wild food in forested areas where security risks are very high.

2.2.5 WASH, Shelter and Settlements

Myanmar: The dramatic increase in IDPs since the military coup (a more than 500 % increase between February 2021 and July 2023), has led to a bigger share of people in need lacking access WASH and shelter infrastructure. Cyclone Mocha, which affected 3.4 million people living in the highest impact zones, significantly worsened the already dire situation, especially

¹⁵ REVA, June 2023

in Rakhine State. The many new IDPs need emergency shelter and Non-Food Items (NFIs), but the majority of needs are not currently being covered.

Bangladesh: in Cox's Bazar, the humanitarian response benefited from substantial funding to address the investment required in terms of infrastructure and human resources but persisting gaps in operating and maintenance, equipment and/or services costs may become a major concern if not addressed. In early 2023 it was estimated that in Cox's Bazar over one million people were still in need of shelter and settlements and WASH assistance. The country is also exposed to cholera epidemic and natural hazards induced disasters such as the recent Mocha cyclone, which destroyed an estimated 2 000 houses in Chattogram Division.

Throughout the **South-East Asia** region newly arrived or rescued refugees and asylum seekers need basic non-food items as well as water and sanitation.

Philippines: In 2023, Mindanao has the country's lowest water and sanitation coverage, with 16% not having access to standard sanitary facilities and 13% to tested sources of drinking water. Various disasters affect the country such as the recent Mount Mayon eruption that affected 41 500 people, 20 100 of whom were displaced¹⁶ and in need of Shelter, NFI and WASH services, as well as Typhoon *Doksuri* which affected at its peak 5.3 million people and displaced over 55,000.

2.2.6 Education in Emergencies

Displaced and conflict-affected children in Myanmar and the Philippines, and refugee children in Bangladesh, Malaysia, Indonesia, India, and Thailand are particularly at risk of being deprived access to learning. In **Myanmar**, 3.7 million children are currently out of school (HNO 2023). Conflict and the COVID-19 pandemic have kept many children out of school for three years or more. The military frequently attacks schools and places of learning, which pushes parents to keep children at home. 2023 has seen a slight improvement in school attendance, especially in areas less affected by conflict and insecurity. In **Bangladesh**, refugee children and young people have experienced severe disruptions in education as well as high levels of vulnerability and psychosocial distress. Children and adolescents have missed significant amounts of schooling, and many older learners have dropped out of school, resulting in high protection risks such as early marriage and child labour. Despite the ongoing roll-out of the formal Myanmar Curriculum, in 2022 77 520 children aged 3-18 (20% of people in need) were still not enrolled. Improving access and retention, for out-of-school children and children with disabilities, addressing the key barriers faced by adolescent girls, especially in their transition to secondary education, and ultimately improving learning outcomes, remain major needs. Social-cultural and religious barriers and attitudes entrench gendered norms which impact adolescent girls and boys differently. In the **Philippines** in conflict-affected BARMM, only 36% of 12-to-15 years old children are enrolled in Junior High School while only 10% of 16-to-17-year-old children are enrolled in Senior High School. For every 100 children in BARMM, only 17 were able to graduate Grade 12 which is significantly lower than the national average of 57%. Main barriers include lack of qualified teachers, inadequate teaching materials, lack of learning sites, exposure to armed conflict, and financial means of the family.

2.2.7 Vulnerability to natural hazards induced disasters (Disaster Preparedness)

Although disaster risk management is a priority in regional and national strategies in ASEAN, Bangladesh, Nepal, Mongolia, and the Pacific, these are being advanced with differential pace across the region. Development gains are undermined by the frequency of disasters, crises, lack of comprehensive risk informed preparedness for and early action to reduce the impact

¹⁶ ECHO, Daily Flash, 27th of June 2023.

of future shocks and disasters. One of the main causes of human suffering in both South, East and South-East Asia and the Pacific is directly linked to the socio-economic vulnerability of sections of the people. Vulnerable people who lack training (and therefore capacities), as well as social and financial capital to deal with an event such as a cyclone, flood or drought are those who pay the most severe costs of disasters and climate change, often with their own lives. With climate-induced hazards increasing in intensity and frequency, shocks, crises, and disasters are resulting in higher human and economic costs. Despite their economic and technological dynamism, several countries within the broader region and subnational regions remain caught in protracted cycles of conflict and violence, which contribute to underdevelopment and fragility. Countries experiencing violent conflict and/or fragile governance are in addition those least likely to be able to prepare for and respond to disasters and adapt to climate change.

3 HUMANITARIAN RESPONSE AND COORDINATION

3.1 National / local response and involvement

3.1.1 Myanmar

The military authorities are rarely willing or able to respond to emergencies and if they do, it is limited to natural hazards, in areas under government control and with a clear political purpose, as demonstrated by the authorities' response to Cyclone Mocha. There is no willingness to deliver assistance in areas considered supportive to opposition forces. The Myanmar Red Cross society has significant capacities but faces access constraints like those faced by NGOs and cannot deliver assistance outside government-controlled areas unless authorisation is granted by de facto authorities. The bulk of local assistance continues to be delivered by local NGOs and civil society organisations, many of which are well-established, have significant capacity, and are the only ones who can access certain populations in need.

3.1.2 Bangladesh

Despite significant investments to support the implementation of risk-informed strategies and plans, the government capacity in terms of preparedness and response remains minimal within a system suffering from fragility, poor development, long-standing gaps, and issues which have been preventing the full operationalisation of the national Disaster Risk Management vision, legal basis and capacity. At local level, in the most disaster-prone rural areas of Bangladesh, disaster preparedness and response rely on the Disaster Management Committees (DMCs), and the Cyclone Preparedness Programme (CPP) which are supported by communities, volunteers, local CSOs and INGOs. These often lack the capacity to exercise their tasks properly and are thus highly dependent on the support of international donors to respond. In Cox's Bazar, while the government has established a steady governance structure at local and central level, the provision of humanitarian aid fully relies on national and international actors, whose capacity to deliver more durable and effective assistance is limited by the government's strict emphasis on the temporariness of the refugees' presence in the camps. Consequently, Bangladesh officially restricts self-reliance programming or use of cash in camps, regulates, and controls the employment of refugees as volunteers, and limits access to education, also enforcing a policy of physical separation between refugees and host communities. In terms of disaster preparedness in camps, concerns remain regarding the effective capacity to properly act in advance and respond in the event of emergencies and natural-induced hazards, also considering the extremely high level of congestion in the camps.

3.1.3 Regional Response to Refugee Crisis

Thailand, Malaysia, Indonesia, and India are not signatories to international refugee treaties and have insufficient and inadequate national protection frameworks. Refugees and asylum seekers without legal status and protection continue to face tightened restrictions, arbitrary and long periods of detention, and deportation. Humanitarian access is impeded across the region including to immigration detention centres. Most countries in the region do not provide adequate access to quality healthcare upon arrival and detention of refugees, migrants, and people on the move.

3.1.4 The Philippines

The national and local governments are primarily responsible for first response. Emergency and relief assistance during calamities rests on the three levels of Local Government Units (LGUs): Barangay, Municipal/City, and Provincial. The local government units have 5% of their budget assigned as calamity funds which they can mobilise when needed. Displacement due to natural-hazards-induced disasters are easier to respond to compared to displacement due to armed conflict. When local government units are overwhelmed with the needs, the national government through the Department of Social Welfare and Development (DSWD) augments support. The government response typically comes in the form of family food packs (for 2 to 3 days) and non-food items and hygiene kits. For displacement longer than 3 days, IDPs need aid that goes beyond this initial distribution. Other basic needs, such as mental health and psychosocial support, shelter, and education are normally not part of the emergency package. Impacts of disasters often overwhelm the capacities of families to cope and survive. Timeliness of emergency response is a significant factor to the deterioration or improvement of the vulnerability of the IDPs. Hence, LGUs see their need to improve their disaster preparedness systems and social protection programmes.

3.1.5 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.

3.1.6 Other countries in the region

National and/or regional key instruments steering Governments to take collective action towards disaster preparedness, risk reduction and resilience building are in place. Notably these are: the ASEAN Agreement on Disaster Management and Emergency Response Work Programme 2021-2025 and the Framework for Resilient Development in the Pacific “An Integrated Approach to Address Climate Change and Disaster Risk Management (FRDP) 2017 – 2030”. Considering the evolving risk and vulnerability profiles of the region, support to disaster preparedness and disaster risk management systems and strategies is essential.

3.2 International Humanitarian Response

3.2.1 Myanmar

Chronic under-funding of the international response leaves the majority of humanitarian needs unmet. As of September 2023, the HRP for Myanmar was 27% funded, leaving a USD 647 million gap. While the humanitarian architecture has significantly improved with substantial

measures taken to adjust to the new post-coup reality, under-funding also affects the coordination structure at national and subnational levels, with most coordination positions not fully funded. Coordination remains weak in new conflict areas due to access challenges and the remote management modalities that have to be used *in lieu* of in-person management.

3.2.2 Bangladesh

At the national level, the refugee humanitarian response is led by the Strategic Executive Group (SEG) co-chaired by the UN RC, UNHCR and IOM. 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. The 2023 JRP for the Rohingya crisis in Bangladesh (March 2023) has a financial requirement of USD 876 million. As of September 2023, the JRP is 40% funded, leaving a 524 USD million gap. At country level, the Humanitarian Coordination Task Team, co-chaired by Bangladesh's 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.

3.2.3 Regional level

In the absence of humanitarian response plans, assistance for refugees and asylum seekers remain underfunded in **Thailand, Malaysia, Indonesia, and India**. As of August 2023, UNHCR's funding requirement for South-East Asia (SEA) is 46% funded from the total USD 407 million (EUR 370 million) required for 2023, leaving a funding gap of 54% to date. In India, the total funding requirement is USD 21.7 million (EUR 19.7 million) for 2023, which is only 22% funded as of August 2023, amounting to USD 16.9 million of the total funds required. In **other countries of the region**, in the absence of global humanitarian response plans, there are ad hoc appeals assistance from different organizations. In Thailand, the UN and NGOs have developed a joint refugee preparedness and response plan. The plan for 2023 and 2024 is being updated. In several countries in South-East Asia, international organisations manage to secure access to very basic healthcare services, yet typically only following tedious negotiations with the national authorities.

3.2.4 The Philippines

The country has received USD 23.3 million in humanitarian funding in 2023 (as of August 2023) with major donors including the United States, Japan, and the European Commission through DG ECHO. The latest country appeal, Super Typhoon Rai (Odette) Humanitarian Needs and Priorities 2022 that requires USD 168.9 million (EUR 156.6 million) has received 55.3% of the required funding. The Philippines is one of the four countries/contexts included in the UN Emergency Response Coordinator (ERC) Flagship Initiative that aims to develop and test innovative, lean and context-specific approaches for collective coordination and response that put people and their priorities, needs, rights, and capabilities at the centre.

3.2.5 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.

3.3 Operational constraints in terms of:

3.3.1 Access/Humanitarian space

Authorities in **Myanmar** have a long history of restricting humanitarian access, including during the period of semi-democracy under the previous government. However, since the military takeover in 2021, access impediments have become particularly severe, with armed conflict affecting much of the country and the military authorities regularly blocking access to areas not under their control. There subsequently remains an imbalance between the assistance delivered in government-controlled and non-government-controlled areas. International organisations also face difficulties in securing registrations, Memorandums of Understanding (MoUs) and visas. The new Organisation Registration Law has added further bureaucratic constraints, subjecting international and local NGOs to a cumbersome and unclear process that ultimately criminalises much aid activity.

In **Bangladesh**, while the situation has slightly improved compared to previous years in terms of bureaucratic processes related to the implementation of projects and activities in refugee camps, operating modalities remain sometimes challenging. The overall deteriorating security situation in camps may also have an impact on the capacity of implementing partners to smoothly implement their interventions in 2024.

Humanitarian access to **regional refugees and asylum-seekers** is severely impeded, **across the region**, including in immigration detention centres. In Malaysia, Rohingya refugees that disembarked and/or were detained during the 2020 crackdowns remain in detention centres with no humanitarian access.

In the **Philippines**, humanitarian organisations face security and safety risks, especially in Mindanao. The communities in need of humanitarian assistance are in remote, hard-to-reach areas, where armed conflict persists, and security risks are high. Known as ‘red tagging’, in Mindanao agencies, and organizations with projects in communities are often accused of being supporters of non-state armed groups, shrinking the humanitarian space. Other barriers to humanitarian access include rugged terrain with limited road network, small islands, and coastal areas not being accessible during the monsoon. In line with the DG ECHO country priority for the Philippines, partners are expected to be operational on the ground with sufficient security management capacity.

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

Despite the difficult operating environment, partners are managing to maintain significant presence and capacity in **Myanmar**. Many UN agencies maintain access on the ground, while most INGOs mainly work through implementing partners, with a focus on ensuring the delivery of quality aid respecting humanitarian principles. International aid organisations are also playing a central role in localisation efforts to ensure fairness and sustainability, and to avoid transfer of risks in the dangerous operating context. Partners’ constant adaptation to the fluid context has kept absorption capacities excellent.

In Cox’s Bazar, **Bangladesh** the implementation and absorption capacity of implementing actors remains good, although restricted by policy environment and the various challenges faced. 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. With the funding reduction experienced since 2022, important efforts in terms of rationalization are ongoing with the aim to improve the overall cost-efficiency and ensure a better use of the limited available resources. The humanitarian response on Bhasan Char is implemented exclusively by national NGOs, with varying capacity.

Regional Refugee Crisis: Several vibrant civil society organisations and networks do exist in Thailand, Indonesia, Malaysia, and India but their work is in some cases severely restricted by the authorities. Capacities vary, but working with international organisations, capacities to respond and scale up operations are present. With increasing bureaucratic impediments being imposed by Governments within the region, this is in some instances leading to NGOs being forced to leave or operate remotely.

Humanitarian agencies and partners have adequate presence and capacity in the **Philippines**. Sudden onset disasters are readily responded to by partners that have long-term presence in the country, demonstrated through the emergency response to Super Typhoon Rai with EUR 21.7 million of funding from DG ECHO was accomplished in six months. In Mindanao, where protracted armed conflict exists despite the peace agreement, some of the humanitarian agencies and organisations are also conducting peace and development projects, especially in collaboration with the Bangsamoro Autonomous Region in Muslim Mindanao. In growing partnerships with L/NGOs and civil society organisations have increasingly shared the work of bringing timely relief assistance to most vulnerable communities.

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

3.3.3 Other

Several excellent localisation initiatives exist within the region, but in some operating contexts, Government policies or various operating impediments are resulting in ‘forced’ localisation that can be detrimental to aid effectiveness, and contrary to the vision of the DG ECHO localisation agenda.

4 HUMANITARIAN – DEVELOPMENT – PEACE NEXUS

4.1 Myanmar

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 these priorities remain relevant, the military coup has brought a dramatic change in context. Development assistance has been reduced and shifted focus, while the space for peace-related activities has radically changed. Despite the unfavourable evolution of the context, nexus remains an EU priority and continues in Myanmar, with numerous activities funded via the Nexus Response Mechanism (NRM). Partners should strive to identify opportunities for nexus implementation in their strategies and proposals and focus on ways to reduce dependency on humanitarian aid and increase aid efficiency through synergies and partnerships.

4.2 Bangladesh

Now in its sixth year, the humanitarian situation in Cox Bazar has clearly shifted from an emergency to a protracted crisis with no clear prospects for resolution. The total dependency of the refugee population on international assistance is striking despite the persevering efforts to engage in initial steps towards self-reliance. The involvement of development actors in the response and the definition of a dedicated policy framework supported by the government could help ensure more sustainability to the response. Additional efforts in terms of efficiencies, using current policy openings to enhance self-reliance and move away from blanket assistance in all sectors, as well as increasing the capacity to attract development

funding with a longer-term perspective, will remain essential. In terms of national Disaster Preparedness, 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 schemes with the aim of developing an evidence-based dialogue on shock-responsive safety nets and ensure the effective replicability and institutionalisation of the approaches tested so far.

4.3 *Regional Refugee Crisis*

Concerted efforts are needed to address the major drivers of forced displacement by preventing new conflicts, resolving existing ones and addressing human rights abuses¹⁷. Central to this will be the need to ensure that durable solutions and accountability measures related to refugee situations remain high on the agenda EU Services, Members states and within relevant forums, including ASEAN. In Thailand, for instance, the EU is assisting with different and complementary instruments both a protracted group of refugees from Myanmar living in 9 camps since mid-1980s and a new caseload generated by the military takeover in February 2021.

4.4 *The Philippines*

DG ECHO partners demonstrate the triple nexus approach in Mindanao wherein humanitarian actions complement the peacebuilding and development elements funded by the EU. Whilst spearheading the ECHO-funded humanitarian action (HA), Disaster Preparedness (DP) and Education in Emergencies (EiE), CARE, Save the Children and local NGOs simultaneously implement the Peace and Culture projects through the European Commission's Service for Foreign Policy Instruments (FPI) programmes in Mindanao. DCI/NDICI funded projects on peace-building and local value chains / livelihoods are also closely coordinated with ECHO funding.

The EU NDC Facility through the EU Delegation supports the launching of the Enhancing Resilient Communities (ERC) Flagship Initiative implemented in the Philippines by RC/HC through UN-OCHA and the Humanitarian Country Team.

4.5 *Nepal*

The presence of strong development partners such as DG INTPA, World Bank, 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 urban disaster preparedness 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 during COVID-19 pandemic as well as 2015 earthquake.

4.6 *Disaster Preparedness*

Developing comprehensive partnerships beyond traditional communities of practice is key to achieving progress in tackling complex, multi-layered hazards and risks. 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,

¹⁷ Lives in Dignity: from Aid-dependence to self-reliance- Forced Displacement and Development European Commission Brussels, 26.4.2016 COM(2016) 234.

opportunities for engagement in national and regional advocacy initiatives will continue to be researched.

Though the focus remains on regional and national multi-hazard preparedness for response and early action, synergies with the European Union Civil Protection (EUCPM) and nexus opportunities with development and Team Europe's Initiatives will be explored. Further nexus opportunities are expected to arise during the development of regional INTPA programmes addressing the effects of climate change. The overall aim of Disaster Preparedness actions in the region is to create better-prepared and more resilient individuals, people, communities, and institutions to withstand both natural hazards and human-induced crises.

5. ENVISAGED DG ECHO RESPONSE STRATEGY AND EXPECTED RESULTS OF HUMANITARIAN AID 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 mitigation of environmental impact in line with the minimum environmental requirements, should be duly reflected in all proposals.

5.1 Envisaged DG ECHO response

The 2024 strategy for the region builds on past experiences and reinforces the 2023 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 Mindanao region of the Philippines.

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 the ASEAN region, Bangladesh, Nepal, and the Philippines.

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	ASEAN region, Nepal, Bangladesh, and the Philippines, other countries of the region

Pillar 1: Humanitarian response to complex emergencies

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 IDPs and other conflict-affected people across the country, while maintaining essential assistance to protracted IDPs. Given the magnitude of needs and the operational constraints, the priority of DG ECHO will be to provide emergency and life-saving assistance, while supporting the nexus through operational synergies with other programmes. DG ECHO and its partners have provided significant support to the capacity strengthening of local networks, particularly through the First Line Emergency Response (FLER) mechanism, to build preparedness for a multisector response. This will remain a priority in 2024, and DG ECHO encourages proposals that include capacity strengthening and capacity sharing methodologies and initiatives. DG ECHO will support partners in providing local organisations with resources, in line with DG ECHO policies and to minimise risk in the Myanmar context, including training, where such costs are shown to contribute to achieving the objectives of the action. Due to the expansion of conflicts across Myanmar, with multiple geographical areas affected, increased assistance delivery in conflict-affected areas will be prioritised and partners will need to demonstrate capacity via equitable partnerships with local organisations and networks.

HIP sector priorities for Myanmar are: i) protection: including mine action and psycho-social support (PSS), basic protection packages in emergency response, IHL dissemination; ii) food security and basic needs through emergency assistance; iii) health and nutrition: provision of emergency - fixed or mobile - health and nutrition services, primarily for conflict-affected and hard-to-reach populations; feasibility of the new WHO-endorsed simplified Community-Based Management of Acute Malnutrition (CMAM) approaches will be explored; iv) shelter/NFIs through emergency assistance and in protracted displacement settings; v) WASH, with a 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 on assisting populations affected by conflict or natural hazard- and multi-hazard-induced disasters (through the FLER approach); vii) education in emergencies (EiE), with a primary focus on return to learning through temporary learning opportunities. All humanitarian assistance should be risk-informed, gender, disability, and age inclusive, comply the environmental standards, and contributing to the humanitarian-peace-development nexus.

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

In the Philippines, DG ECHO will focus on the unmet, forgotten humanitarian needs of the most vulnerable families affected by internal conflict in Mindanao. Priority will be given to conflict-affected communities that have no access to immediate relief assistance and where current operations of the government lack regularity of social and relief assistance to the people. Direct protection assistance will be provided to those who are deprived of access to services and abused during armed conflict. Humanitarian food assistance will be aimed at preventing hunger and deteriorating coping strategies in the first few days of displacement and other consequences of armed conflict. Accessible health and nutrition assistance will be ensured to vulnerable, at-risk individuals whose low health-seeking behaviour is aggravated by fear and impacts of conflict. Similarly, these vulnerable populations are provided with

inclusive access to safe, adequate, water, sanitation, and hygiene (WASH) assistance. Shelter assistance, which is adaptive to the duration and location of displacement will be provided and complemented with essential household items. Education in Emergencies actions will enable children who have been out or are at risk of dropping out of school to return to and remain in school to ensure continued education during or after emergencies. Humanitarian needs and deterioration of rights due to repeated, cyclical displacement in complex, fragile settings often need longer, more comprehensive, continuing interventions. All humanitarian assistance should be risk-informed, gender, disability, and age inclusive, comply the environmental standards, and contributing to the humanitarian-peace-development nexus in Mindanao.

Pillar 2: Humanitarian response to refugee crises and mixed migration

The Rohingya refugee crisis, which originated in Myanmar, is the most severe case 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

DG ECHO's strategy for Bangladesh in 2024 will focus on the response to the refugee crisis, to continue ensuring comprehensive humanitarian multi-sector assistance, including protection in all its aspects, food assistance, health, nutrition, WASH, Shelter and Camp Coordination and Camp Management, Education in Emergencies, and response to suddenly arising needs. However, priority will be given to the provision of critical services in the above-mentioned sectors of intervention for the most affected groups, and people exposed to increasingly high protection risks and additional vulnerabilities. To limit the total dependence on external aid, and considering further expected funding reduction, initiatives and interventions aiming at contributing to the self-reliance of refugees are also recommended. All humanitarian assistance should be risk-informed, gender, disability, and age inclusive, comply the environmental standards, and contributing to the humanitarian-peace-development nexus.

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

The envisaged response will encompass 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 for a protection centred response ensuring access to essential needs and services - food, healthcare, WASH, nutrition, shelter, education, as well as basic and specialised protection services. Advocacy to ensure access and response is vital but the primary focus will be on ensuring the response. 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 disaster preparedness strategy is to put people at the very core of regional and state Disaster Risk Management design. This will be pursued through leveraging previous DG ECHO targeted Disaster Preparedness (DP) investments so 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 whenever 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, 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. Thematic focus will continue to be put on supporting anticipatory action and shock responsive social protection systems.

Priority 1: Disaster Preparedness in Bangladesh

In Bangladesh, DG ECHO will continue building on ongoing DP initiatives by maintaining focus on its policy engagement with the objective to provide further evidence of the relevance of multi-hazard standardised, replicable and scalable anticipatory action models, which should then be institutionalised within the national disaster management system. These need to be designed with a systems approach and clearly defined entry and exit strategies based on prioritized gaps and bottlenecks analysis. Further contributing to the replication of an Anticipatory Action framework and approach in country by the State, including the integration of shock responsiveness in selected safety net programs for future scale-up, remains central.

DG ECHO may continue to invest in better preparedness and response in urban settings, particularly through private sector if clearly proposed as complementary to own initiated and financed initiatives. In refugee camps, DG ECHO will consolidate and protect investments and gains in disaster preparedness, including multi-hazard safety and initiatives to promote a more coherent and coordinated preparedness for and response approach. Disaster preparedness/contingency plans should integrate context-specific environmental degradation aspects, especially the ones that directly aggravate disaster risk aspects (deforestation, waste accumulation). This is both to reduce risks and prepare for a more environmentally sustainable response.

Priority 2: Disaster Preparedness in Nepal

DG ECHO will continue to foster the uptake and institutionalization of harmonised, common (as much as possible), multi-hazard approaches through strengthening local Disaster Risk Management (DRM) governance and ownership. With primary focus to be placed in earthquake and landslides risk regions of Nepal, this may include urban DP and landslide management, building on available learning, evidence, and legacy of the previous targeted DG ECHO DP investments. Disaster preparedness/contingency plans should integrate context-specific environmental degradation aspects, especially the ones that directly aggravate disaster risk aspects (deforestation, waste accumulation). This is both to reduce risks and prepare for a more environmentally sustainable response. All humanitarian assistance should be risk-informed, gender, disability, and age inclusive, comply the environmental standards, and contributing to the humanitarian-peace-development nexus.

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 risk governance gaps and bottlenecks, will be supported. DG ECHO in Nepal will aim to support local governments, primarily targeting the municipal and provincial government to enhance their capacity and capabilities in a whole-of-society risk-informed approach to natural-hazards induced disasters, so that these investments can be embedded in own systems and in future

paid by locally prioritised financial resources. Any proposal must aim to ensure the inclusion of marginalised population groups through risk-informed and shock responsive social protection approaches. Local government preparedness for and acting early capacity can be strengthened by including shared anticipatory action frameworks if fully owned by the State.

Priority 3: Disaster Preparedness in the Philippines

To complement humanitarian actions in the Philippines, disaster preparedness capabilities of local government should be improved to include strategies that specifically aim at reducing the vulnerability of conflict-affected families. In recent years, DG ECHO partners have piloted and embedded people-centred, risk-informed DP strategies into local systems. For example, rapid response mechanisms, anticipatory actions, resilience livelihood, and alternative transitional shelters, have enabled local government units and BARMM to assist communities affected by multiple hazards and armed conflict.

5.1.2 Programmatic Partnerships

Under the HIP 2024, Programmatic Partnerships could be considered in the Philippines (multi-sector response in Mindanao), Myanmar (emergency response mechanism) and Bangladesh (DP). In addition, on-going Pilot Programmatic Partnerships will continue with FAO (Bangladesh, Laos, Vietnam, and the Philippines), IFRC (Bangladesh) and OCHA (Myanmar).

5.1.3 Multi-Year Funding

Interventions in the sectors of Education in Emergencies or Disaster Preparedness, as well as other relevant sectors, including for humanitarian action that aims at environmental sustainability in an innovative and more strategic (mainstreaming) way, may benefit from multi-year funding. Please refer to HIPTA sections 3.g and 4.d for technical and administrative details.

5.0 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.

Activities under this HIP might be complemented by the activation of the European Humanitarian Response Capacity (EHRC). The EHRC is a DG ECHO-led global initiative, aiming at supporting humanitarian partners for 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.), a stockpile of emergency items, and deployment of humanitarian expertise.