Protection Civile et Operations d’Aide Humanitaire Européennes

Sahel

Introduction

Humanitarian needs in the Sahel continue to be on the rise as a result of the combined effect of conflicts, sudden changes in weather patterns, food shortages, and disease outbreaks. On top of the socio-economic effects brought about by the coronavirus pandemic, it is also putting strains on weak health systems and already dire humanitarian needs. An estimated 28.3 million people across the region are in need of urgent humanitarian aid (HRP, 2020), including more than 17 million requiring emergency food assistance.

Quels sont les besoins ?

Conflict is disrupting the life of many fragile communities in the Sahel, with 4 armed conflicts and other violence spots affecting 7 of the 9 Sahel countries. People have to leave their homes behind, their fields and livestock, in search of safety. On top of this, violence makes it increasingly difficult for humanitarian workers to reach the people in need and impedes the delivery of emergency assistance.

Vulnerable people living in conflict-hit areas in the Sahel (especially in Mali, Burkina Faso, Niger, and the Lake Chad basin) are facing a food crisis for a fourth consecutive year in 2020, the result of the combined effect of the challenges the region is facing.

Up to 2.5 million children in the Sahel are at risk of severe acute malnutrition and need lifesaving treatment. Malnutrition rates are particularly worrying in Burkina Faso, Chad, Mali, Mauritania, and Niger. The situation could quickly deteriorate in conflict-affected areas already grappling with food shortages and an ever poorer access to malnutrition treatment facilities.

Against this backdrop, the coronavirus pandemic is posing additional challenges, both as concerns the pressure on already fragile health systems but also the effects of the containment measures on vulnerable people’s access to food and livelihoods.
En quoi consiste notre aide ?

The European Union is one of the largest donors of humanitarian aid to the Sahel. In 2020, its humanitarian assistance to the Sahel region stands at more than €142 million.

Aid is provided to both displaced people, as well as to the host communities. EU humanitarian aid supports emergency food and nutritional assistance to people facing hunger, including treatment for malnourished children, and assistance to people affected by conflicts and insecurity. In addition, EU funding ensures health centres have water and hygiene systems, training for staff, and screening facilities for children who are at risk of malnutrition.

Support is also given to disaster risk reduction initiatives to help countries better prepare for, and reduce the impact of, natural disasters related to climate, and their effects on food availability.

Given the new challenges posed by the coronavirus pandemic, EU-funded humanitarian projects in the Sahel are adopting measures and adapting existing ones within their projects to help beneficiaries and staff keep safe while continuing to provide life-saving assistance to vulnerable communities. Actions already focusing on the health sector will continue helping local health centres in providing access to health care and in epidemics control and prevention. Humanitarian funding is also supporting detection and response measures to the coronavirus pandemic, mainly through the World Health Organization (WHO). The EU also operated Humanitarian Aid Bridge flights to Burkina Faso and to the Central African Republic to help relief items and humanitarian workers reach the people in need, at a time where transport restrictions have held up commercial flights.

In order to help vulnerable communities that face recurrent and more frequent threats and challenges, humanitarian aid (which covers immediate, short-term needs) and development aid (which ensures longer-term resilience and addresses the root causes of the problems) work together in the Sahel to strengthen communities’ ability to cope with these challenges.

With this idea in mind, the Global Alliance for Resilience Initiative (AGIR) was launched, with the involvement of the EU and other partners, during the food crisis that hit the Sahel badly in 2012. This initiative aims at achieving ‘zero hunger’ in the Sahel region by 2032 by, for example, strengthening agricultural productivity through better farming methods, and improving the social protection system for vulnerable communities and households.