European Civil Protection and Humanitarian Aid Operations

Burkina Faso

Introduction

The humanitarian situation is deteriorating quickly and severely in Burkina Faso, a fragile country among the 10 poorest in the world. The internal conflict has intensified, spreading across northern, western, eastern, and into southern regions of the country. The armed violence has caused massive population displacements, while civilians are increasingly targeted. A state of emergency remains in 14 out of the 45 provinces in the country.

What are the needs?

Since mid-2018, there has been an escalation of conflict between non-state armed groups and state forces, and a rise in inter-communal attacks. Between February 2019 and February 2020, more than 664,000 people were forced to flee their homes, representing a 6-fold increase in one year. Another 16,000 Burkinabe have sought safety in neighbouring countries. In 2019, violent attacks claimed almost 2,190 lives, 60% of whom were civilians.

The widespread violence affects people's livelihoods. Access to fields and markets is becoming even more challenging, meaning families cannot always meet their food needs. Both refugees and internally displaced people heavily depend on humanitarian aid as they have lost their means of subsistence.

Education has been hit hard as well: more than 2,360 schools remain closed, leaving 325,400 children without access to education. Health facilities are under threat, with more than 230 local health centres either closed or operating at a minimum service, restricting access to healthcare to 1.3 million individuals.

The volatile security situation makes it increasingly difficult for humanitarian workers to access the people most in need, only making needs more acute in these hard-to-reach communities. As humanitarian access becomes more challenging, adherence to the humanitarian principles of humanity, impartiality, neutrality and independence remains paramount.
How are we helping?

Since 2014, the European Union has allocated more than €120 million in humanitarian aid for people in need in Burkina Faso, including €11.45 million mobilised in 2020.

The EU’s humanitarian action in the country focuses on 3 priorities: providing humanitarian aid to internally displaced people and host populations affected by the ongoing armed conflict; addressing the food and nutritional crisis; and building the capacity of local organisations to prepare for and respond to emergencies.

Burkinabe people uprooted within their country and host communities in areas most affected by the conflict are provided with food assistance, shelter and basic essential items. Improving access to healthcare and providing mental health support to help people overcome the traumatic experience of conflict is also a priority. EU support also provides education in an environment where schools have closed and teachers and students face threats from armed groups.

EU humanitarian aid funds the delivery of emergency food assistance during the lean season – the crucial period of the year between harvests, normally running from June to September, when food reserves are depleted. At the same time, assistance provides free-of-charge nutritional care for malnourished children under 5 years of age. EU funds help provide therapeutic food and other essential medicines needed to treat severely malnourished children.

The third pillar of EU aid in Burkina Faso is disaster risk reduction. Ongoing programmes include increasing communities’ preparedness to face health risks, setting up efficient alert and rapid response mechanisms in the north, and strengthening the national response system to prevent and manage food and nutrition crises.

To reinforce people’s ability to cope with crises, the EU links its humanitarian emergency assistance with its longer-term development cooperation. For instance, EU development assistance in Burkina Faso financially supports a national programme enabling access to free healthcare for children under 5 years of age. This ensures that life-saving interventions addressing malnutrition are maintained beyond the immediate, short-term emergency measures funded by humanitarian aid.