European Civil Protection and Humanitarian Aid Operations

Ethiopia

Introduction

Ethiopia faces widespread humanitarian needs due to a multitude and, at times, an overlap of crises, mostly the result of inter-communal and ethnic conflicts, and climate shocks. The coronavirus pandemic risks exacerbating vulnerabilities in the country. Ethiopia also hosts the second largest refugee population in Africa, with a majority of refugees dependent on humanitarian aid. The EU continues its longstanding humanitarian assistance to refugees and displaced communities in Ethiopia.

What are the needs?

Outbreaks of violence and ethnic tensions continue to push people to flee their homes; others have to escape because of extreme weather. Humanitarian access in several areas remains a challenge.

In May 2019, the authorities undertook a massive return operation for internally displaced people – at times forced and premature and to areas where security, reconciliation and rule of law were not yet in place. The EU continues to advocate that all returns should be voluntary, safe, informed, and dignified, in line with international principles and standards.

Ethiopia suffers from food shortages due to the effects of drought. Increasingly frequent and severe droughts do not allow people to recover, while natural hazards, such as flash floods and landslides, take away lives and livelihoods. Ethiopia is also one of the countries in eastern Africa grappling with swarms of desert locusts that are destroying crops and pastures.

Ethiopia reported the first cases of coronavirus in March 2020. The pandemic adds a significant pressure on a fragile health system that already has limited capacity to deal with shocks. In addition, cholera and other epidemic outbreaks remain a major public health threat, mainly due to poor living conditions, inadequate water and sanitation facilities, and poor health and hygiene practices.

There are more than 740,000 refugees in Ethiopia, mostly from South Sudan, Somalia, Eritrea, and Sudan most of whom rely on humanitarian aid to meet their basic needs.

Since 2017, more than 400,000 Ethiopian migrants have been deported from the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia and other countries. The EU is calling for a moratorium on all deportations during the coronavirus pandemic.
How are we helping?

EU-funded humanitarian action in Ethiopia focuses on addressing the most urgent humanitarian needs. In 2020, the EU is providing €42.85 million to humanitarian projects in Ethiopia. The EU supports the provision of live-saving assistance to internally displaced people uprooted by violence or natural disasters. The EU provides protection, food aid, safe water, shelter, basic essential items, nutritional assistance and healthcare, disease prevention, and education.

EU humanitarian aid also contributes to helping refugees in Ethiopia. One of the priority actions is the creation of a protective environment for the most vulnerable refugees, such as unaccompanied minors. In addition, the EU funds food assistance, including the use of e-vouchers that refugees can exchange for fresh food at markets. EU humanitarian support also provides shelter, access to safe water and sanitation, the detection and treatment of malnourished children and mothers, and primary education for refugee children.

The EU also provides emergency assistance and dignified shelter to the most vulnerable Ethiopians deported from the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia, with a focus on unaccompanied children.

Given the new challenges posed by the coronavirus pandemic, EU-funded humanitarian projects in Ethiopia are adopting measures and adapting exiting ones within their projects to help beneficiaries and staff keep safe, while continuing to provide life-saving assistance to support 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.

These actions are complementing ongoing efforts by the Ministry of Health of Ethiopia. In addition, the EU is supporting the World Health Organization (WHO) in Ethiopia in early detection and response measures to the coronavirus pandemic.

In response to the current desert locust swarms infesting countries in the region, including Ethiopia, the EU mobilised €11 million in humanitarian and development funding to support the international effort in eastern Africa to tackle the pest outbreak. Additional €9 million from the humanitarian funds allocated in 2020 in Ethiopia are being used to address food shortages and provide livelihood support to pastoralists and farmers affected by the desert locust outbreak.

Following the recent torrential rains that caused devastating floods and landslides across the region, the EU mobilised €850,000 in emergency assistance to respond to immediate needs in Ethiopia.