European Civil Protection and Humanitarian Aid Operations

Mali

Introduction

Due to armed conflicts, inter-community clashes and food insecurity, Mali’s humanitarian situation continues to get worse. An estimated 3.2 million people (16 per cent of the population) are affected by these crises. Insecurity has gradually spread from the northern part of the country to the centre and to the areas bordering Niger and Burkina Faso, which makes access to those areas increasingly dangerous for humanitarians.

What are the needs?

Since 2018, Mali has seen a sharp increase in violence and insecurity, including serious violations of International Humanitarian Law. Insecurity has gradually spilled out of northern Mali, with the rapid spread of inter-ethnic clashes fuelled by armed groups in central Mali. The number of internally displaced people has more than doubled throughout 2018. Since the beginning of 2019, there have been 133 000 newly internally displaced people, with the total now reaching 279 850 people. It is presumed that many more remain unreached in conflict-affected areas. In addition, nearly 138 000 Malians are living as refugees in Niger, Burkina Faso and Mauritania and an estimated 26 700 refugees from Mauritania, Burkina Faso, and Niger are in Mali, a third of whom arrived in 2018.

Additionally, last year’s rainy season was irregular which affected livestock and crops yields. As a result, people struggled to have enough to eat and sustain their livelihoods. Access to education in Mali is increasingly under pressure as more than 950 schools are now closed down. An estimated 450 000 children are out of school because of the different crisis situations. With increasing violence against civilians and shrinking access for humanitarian workers to vulnerable people, the need for protection keeps rising; 3.2 million people in north and central Mali alone are in need of humanitarian aid, the majority of whom being children and women. Access to healthcare in most of the northern regions is dependent on humanitarian aid. In 2018, this situation has spread to the central regions, thus calling for increased humanitarian resources in that sector.

Insecurity in the country threatens humanitarian aid workers’ safety and hampers their access to the people in need. Security incidents affecting humanitarian non-governmental organisations have increased significantly over the past couple of years. In 2018, there were around 215 such incidents compared to 116 in 2016. So far in 2019, humanitarian organisations have faced 48 security incidents.
How are we helping?

The EU is a major contributor of relief assistance in Mali and has provided over €320 million in humanitarian aid in the country since the beginning of the crisis in 2012. In 2019, this aid amounts to €23.55 million and an additional €19.5 million is assisting Malian refugees living in the three neighbouring countries, meaning that, in total, €43 million is given as humanitarian assistance for the whole regional crisis.

Throughout 2018, the EU’s humanitarian response was reinforced several times to respond to the food and nutrition crises triggered by drought, high food prices, and disruptions caused by the conflict. In addition, forced displacement and the difficult period between harvests, called the lean season, created new humanitarian needs. Assistance was provided in terms of rapid response to displacements of population, shelter, basic needs items, food rations, water and sanitation, food assistance through cash transfers and vouchers, protection, health, nutrition, and education for children who were out of school because of the crises.

Most health and nutrition services in the north and part of central Mali are only running thanks to humanitarian organisations. In northern Mali, around half of the health facilities that deliver essential care and medicine are operated by EU-funded humanitarian partners.

Every year, the EU contributes significantly to the treatment of severe acute malnutrition throughout the country. Funding is given for the purchase and supply of therapeutic foods and essential medicines for children suffering from this most life-threatening form of undernourishment. The €76 million invested in nutrition between 2011 and 2018 provided the necessary treatment to over 600 000 severely malnourished children over that period.

The EU’s humanitarian air service, ECHO flights, have been used to carry humanitarian workers and deliveries of provisions to reach the most inaccessible areas in the northern part of Mali. In addition, the EU also gives financial support to the UN’s Humanitarian Air Service (UNHAS).

The EU has also maintained a strong humanitarian advocacy on Mali, as this regional crisis is a ‘forgotten’ one, receiving little international aid or attention, despite the growing needs. At the same time, efforts have been deployed to use different aid instruments that promote the link between short-term humanitarian aid, that can only address the consequences of a crisis, and medium-term development, that tackles the root causes of the crisis. As an example, in northern Mali, complementary actions are being implemented simultaneously by EU humanitarian operations, in the form of food assistance to the most vulnerable, and by the EU Trust Fund for Africa, which promotes longer-term food and nutrition resilience in the community.