European Civil Protection and Humanitarian Aid Operations

Sahel

Introduction

The resurgence and spillover of conflicts in the second half of 2018, combined with the long-lasting effects of past erratic rains and high food prices in some areas, continue to put the lives of millions of people in the Sahel at risk. Recent nutrition surveys show a deterioration of the situation in all Sahel countries, with severe malnutrition exceeding emergency thresholds registered in several regions of Mauritania, Niger, and Chad.

What are the needs?

The combined effects of extreme weather, armed conflicts, high insecurity and volatile prices increasingly contribute to severe food insecurity and malnutrition in many areas of the Sahel.

The spillover of the armed conflicts in Mali and the Lake Chad basin renders the provision of basic services to the population even more difficult. Protection needs are on the rise, with gender-based violence and child protection among the issues. Livelihoods and trade remain severely disrupted by the impact of insecurity. In addition to the humanitarian consequences on the local population, insecurity exacerbates humanitarian access and impedes the delivery of emergency assistance to people in need.

The areas afflicted by armed conflicts (in Mali, Burkina Faso, Niger, and the Lake Chad basin) will remain in a food crisis for a third consecutive year in 2019. At the end of 2018, an estimated 4.2 million people in eight countries needed immediate food assistance to save them from facing acute hunger; women and children were the worst-affected. This number could double in the coming months if no assistance is provided.

Up to 2.8 million children are at risk of severe acute malnutrition and will need lifesaving treatment in 2019. The global acute malnutrition rate exceeds 10 percent in all Sahel countries and is above the international emergency threshold (15 percent) in several parts of Mauritania, Niger, and Chad.
How are we helping?

The European Union is one of the largest contributors of humanitarian aid to the Sahel. It provides emergency nutritional and food aid assistance to people facing hunger (including treatment for malnourished children) and assistance to people affected by conflicts and insecurity.

In 2018, the European Union provided €273 million in humanitarian assistance to the region. This amount included €101 million in food assistance and €62 million in nutritional aid. Furthermore, support was given to disaster risk reduction initiatives to help countries better prepare for, and reduce the impact of, natural disasters related to the climate and their effects on food security.

The EU currently funds food assistance in the form of cash transfers, vouchers and food rations for families, ready-to-use therapeutic food, and essential medicines to treat severely undernourished children. The EU’s humanitarian funding helps to equip healthcare centres with water and hygiene systems, providing training for staff, and ensuring screening for children who are at risk of malnutrition.

While there are huge humanitarian needs in the region this year, joint efforts with development partners are required to help build long-term resilience. The Global Alliance for Resilience Initiative (AGiR) was launched during the Sahel food and nutrition crisis in 2012 with the aim of achieving ‘zero hunger’ in the Sahel region by 2032.

The EU was closely involved in the setting up of AGiR and continues to support it. The momentum created by AGiR has prompted ten countries in the region to adopt national resilience priorities. These countries seek comprehensive support from the international aid community to translate these priorities into effective action. The EU is also working actively on the implementation of the humanitarian-development nexus to address the needs of vulnerable people through a more sustainable and long-term approach.