European Civil Protection and Humanitarian Aid Operations

Sahel

Introduction

Humanitarian needs in the Sahel continue to be on the rise due to the combined effect of increasingly violent conflicts, deep poverty, climate change, and unprecedented food insecurity and malnutrition. In addition to the socio-economic impacts of COVID-19, weak health systems are increasingly strained, and humanitarian needs are growing. In 2021, 32.4 million people in Burkina Faso, Cameroon, Chad, Mali, Mauritania, Niger, and Nigeria will need assistance and protection, almost 6 million more than one year ago.

What are the needs?

Due to ongoing conflicts, more than 7.2 million people have fled their homes searching for safety and have now limited access to basic services. Protection needs are increasing, with child protection and gender-based violence among the main concerns. Hosting communities are overwhelmed by the influx of forcibly displaced people, which fuels inter-community tensions. Besides, violence and insecurity make it increasingly difficult for humanitarian workers to reach the people in need.

Basic services such as education are disrupted by the ongoing violence. More than 4,800 schools remain closed in affected areas in Burkina Faso, the Far North of Cameroon, Chad’s Lac Province, Nigeria’s northeastern regions, Niger, and Mali. Without education, millions of children are at risk of exploitation and abuse. Healthcare is equally affected, with 173 health remaining closed due to insecurity just in the Central Sahel.

For the fourth consecutive year, vulnerable people living in conflict-hit areas are facing a food crisis due to Sahel’s ongoing challenges. Some 23.4 million people are facing severe food insecurity for the 2021 lean season (when food reserves run low). Up to 2.5 million children are at risk of severe acute malnutrition. The situation could quickly worsen in conflict-affected areas already grappling with food shortages and
access to nutrition facilities.

Against this backdrop, COVID-19 is posing additional challenges. The pandemic puts pressure on already fragile health systems, while containment measures complicate vulnerable people’s access to food and livelihoods.
**How are we helping?**

The European Union is one of the largest donors of humanitarian aid to the Sahel. In 2021, its humanitarian assistance to the Sahel region stands at €188.6 million.

The EU provides aid to both displaced people and host communities. EU humanitarian assistance supports people affected by conflict and insecurity, providing them with shelter, emergency food and nutritional aid, access to health care and clean water, to treatment for malnourished children, and protection for the vulnerable. In addition, EU funding ensures safe access to education for the children affected by armed conflicts.

We also fund disaster risk reduction initiatives to help countries better prepare for, and reduce the impact of, natural hazards 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 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 centers in providing access to healthcare and epidemics control and prevention.

In addition, the European Commission is providing **€100 million in humanitarian assistance** to support the rollout of vaccination campaigns in countries in Africa with critical humanitarian needs and fragile health systems. €10 million out of this funding will be supporting vaccination campaigns for the most vulnerable in West and Central Africa.