European Civil Protection and Humanitarian Aid Operations

Nepal

Introduction

Due to its location and variable climatic conditions, Nepal is one of the most disaster-prone countries in the world. Climate change and an increasing population further exacerbate the impacts of natural hazards, which each year cause heavy loss of life and damage to property. The European Union continuously supports initiatives that reduce the risks of natural hazards and improve the disaster preparedness capacities of vulnerable populations. In addition, the EU finances the provision of urgent services such as emergency shelter, healthcare, and water and sanitation.

What are the needs?

Every year, during the monsoon season, landslides and floods kill more than 500 people in Nepal. The potential threat of earthquakes, glacial lake outbursts, avalanches, and cold and heat waves always looms large. According to the United Nations, Nepal is the 11th most vulnerable country to earthquakes in the world, and Kathmandu is the most at-risk city. In mid-August 2017, large parts of Nepal were hit by its worst flooding in 15 years, killing over 140 people and affecting more than 1.7 million. In April 2015, central Nepal was struck by the most devastating earthquake in decades, which claimed close to 9,000 lives and destroyed more than half a million homes.

In the early 1990s, more than 108,000 refugees from Bhutan – approximately 20% of Bhutan’s population – arrived in Nepal and settled in camps run by the United Nations’ refugee agency (UNHCR). Thanks to a third-country resettlement process, most of the refugees now live in other countries. However, following the conclusion of the programme at the beginning of 2018, a remaining 6,600 refugees have stayed on in Nepal, where they are not allowed to work and are almost entirely dependent on international humanitarian assistance.
How are we helping?

The European Union is committed to continuing its support for those in need across Nepal. In 2019, the EU allocated €2 million in humanitarian assistance to the country, bringing the total humanitarian funding to €105 million since 2001. The funding provides support to initiatives focusing on mitigating the risks of natural hazards and enhancing the disaster preparedness capacities of vulnerable populations. Key priorities include strengthening the emergency response capacity of the medical community and networks to cope with mass casualty events and serious outbreak of disease; promoting disaster preparedness activities and action plans in the education sector; and increasing preparedness and response capacities of communities in rural and urban areas. In addition, the funds also improve the preparedness and response capacities of the government of Nepal towards a timely, effective and targeted response in the aftermath of emergencies.

Following the 2015 earthquake, the EU provided €14 million in emergency aid to ensure emergency shelter, emergency healthcare, water and sanitation, livelihood support, and logistics. This included €2 million specifically directed towards preparing for the winter, including blankets, winter clothes and insulation materials.

To ensure the continued delivery of essential humanitarian assistance to the earthquake victims, the EU provided a total of €2.4 million to support relief operations in 2016 and 2017. This funding focused on a “Build Back Better” approach to shelter reconstruction through the building of “model houses” that are more resilient to earthquakes. Overall, the EU contributed close to €150 million in humanitarian aid to the earthquake victims, including funds for early recovery and rehabilitation.

During Nepal’s internal conflict, and up until 2011, EU humanitarian actions totalling €35 million supported thousands of conflict-affected people, especially in rural areas, by providing healthcare in addition to water and sanitation facilities. The EU also assisted refugees from Bhutan for more than 10 years until 2015. Since 2001, the total aid funding to Nepal exceeds €104 million, including more than €27 million allocated to disaster preparedness and risk reduction activities.