European Civil Protection and Humanitarian Aid Operations

North Korea (DPRK)

Introduction

According to information released by the United Nations, more than 43 percent of the country's total population of 25 million are undernourished, have limited access to basic services, and are in need of humanitarian assistance. As humanitarian organisations have not been able to conduct assessments in the country over the past few years, the current situation remains unclear. The country is also prone to extreme weather conditions, particularly droughts, floods, and storms.

What are the needs?

Due to the international sanctions adopted against North Korea in early 2013, it is more difficult to make international bank transfers into the country, which affects the functioning of humanitarian agencies.

The food and nutrition situation remains fragile and subject to deterioration in case of shocks. According to the Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO), crop production in 2018 plunged below five million tonnes for the first time in more than a decade as the country continued to experience natural disasters, which threatened food security for a large part of the country's population. The overall chronic undernutrition and micronutrient deficiencies across the country remain worrying. Although child undernutrition has steadily declined over the past decade, additional efforts are required to improve children's conditions. According to the latest nutrition survey in 2017, stunting (low height compared to age) prevalence was reported at 19 percent, which is considered a "medium" public health concern by the World Health Organization (WHO).

Recurrent natural disasters, ranging from extended droughts and severe flooding to occasional typhoons, compound people's vulnerabilities and need for humanitarian assistance.
How are we helping?

In response to the large-scale flooding and landslides that hit the provinces of North and South Hwanghae in late August 2018, the European Union committed €100 000 for the International Federation of the Red Cross to provide essential assistance such as shelter, hygiene kits, water purification tablets, and kitchen sets to those most affected.

In 2016, the EU offered €300 000 for the provision of life-saving relief items to families affected by devastating flooding that swept across large parts of the northernmost province of North Hamgyong.

In early 2016, continuing its support to the most vulnerable communities, the EU provided €300 000 for an initiative led by the Finnish Red Cross (FRC), focusing on enhancing the capacity of people in rural areas to respond to future floods and droughts, at both local and national levels. The programme, which ran until November 2017, directly benefited over 7 000 people in targeted localities.

Earlier in 2015, when summer floods affected various villages on the outskirts of the cities of South Hwanghae and North and South Hamgyong provinces, the EU released €200 000 in humanitarian aid funding to ensure that emergency relief items reached the impacted families. Similar assistance was also provided in the wake of the floods in 2012 and 2013.

Between 2014 and 2015, a total of €72 000 was provided to North Korea as part of a multi-country initiative on disaster preparedness across Asia. This action, implemented by the United Nations’ Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO), aimed to increase capacities for disaster risk reduction (DRR) in agriculture, including the promotion of information sharing, the use of good farming practices and awareness-raising on core technical and institutional requirements.

The European Union has responded to humanitarian needs in North Korea since 1995, providing €135.7 million in humanitarian aid funding to support over 130 projects. The aid focuses on providing food assistance, the improvement of health services and access to clean water and sanitation to the most vulnerable populations.