European Civil Protection and Humanitarian Aid Operations

North Korea (DPRK)

Introduction

According to United Nations agencies, more than 43% of the North Korea’s population of 25 million are undernourished, have limited access to basic services and are in need of humanitarian assistance. The country is also prone to extreme weather conditions, particularly droughts, floods, and storms. At the same time, access to North Korea for humanitarian organisations remains constrained.

What are the needs?

International sanctions adopted against North Korea in early 2013, have made it increasingly 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 natural disasters and other shocks. According to the Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO), crop production in 2018 plunged below 5 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 rates (low height compared to age) was reported at 19%, 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?

Most recently, following the early seasonal drought that hit the country in early 2019, the European Union allocated €55,000 to support the International Federation of the Red Cross in providing essential assistance to the most vulnerable families in the worst-hit eastern province of South Hamgyong. Earlier in August 2018, when the province of North and South Hwanghae were struck by large-scale flooding and landslides, the EU allocated €100,000 to assist those most affected by the disaster. 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 more than 7,000 people in targeted areas.

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 provided €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 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 more than €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.