European Civil Protection and Humanitarian Aid Operations

Pakistan

Introduction

For many years, military and insurgent operations in Pakistan have caused human suffering and large-scale internal displacements. This situation is compounded by the presence of an estimated 3 million Afghans, 1.4 million of whom are documented refugees. Furthermore, Pakistan experiences recurring natural disasters, and suffers from some of the worst food shortages and chronic malnutrition rates in the world.

What are the needs?

For the past 4 decades, Pakistan hosts Afghan refugees and is the second top refugee-hosting country worldwide, with a conservative estimate of 3 million Afghan nationals, out of which only 1.4 million are registered refugees. It remains key to provide protection and basic lifesaving services for most vulnerable Afghans, especially those undocumented, at most risk of deportation and with limited access to jobs and basic services, such as healthcare and education.

The northwest of Pakistan and the areas bordering Afghanistan have also been affected by large-scale internal displacements due to insurgency. A military campaign launched in 2014 prompted the displacement of millions of people, adding to those still displaced from previous years. While more than 1.5 million internally displaced people have returned to their places of origin following an acceleration of returns over the past few years, more than 117,000 people remained displaced as of May 2019. Conditions in areas of return are dire, due to limited services and job opportunities.

Pakistan is one of the world’s most disaster-prone countries and frequently experiences multiple disasters in a given year, such as floods, drought, heatwaves, and earthquake. The provinces of Sindh and Balochistan have been repeatedly affected by both floods and drought. High levels of malnutrition, coupled with limited access to water, sanitation and medical services, have compromised the healthcare capacities of the most vulnerable communities.
How are we helping?

In 2019, the European Union has allocated €9.7 million, in part to provide assistance to people affected by conflict, including Pakistani internally displaced and returnees as well as Afghan refugees. The funding also strengthens the resilience and the capacity of vulnerable communities to better respond to natural disasters such as earthquakes, recurrent floods, and drought. This amount brings the total EU humanitarian support to people in need in Pakistan to almost €565 million since 2009. The European Commission assists the most vulnerable displaced Pakistanis both in their areas of refuge and in the destroyed areas to which they have returned, notably with support for education in emergency, water and sanitation facilities. Although most Afghan refugees are integrated into Pakistani society, some live precariously in isolated communities where EU-funded projects assist them with healthcare services, education in emergencies, water and sanitation facilities, and legal protection services.

The EU humanitarian budget focuses also on both preparedness and emergency response to natural disasters. In 2019, the EU provided assistance to people affected by floods in March, the Mirpur earthquake in October, and drought. In response to drought in southern Pakistan, disaster preparedness assistance has focused on building the capacity of the local health structures, to anticipate and be better prepared to face surges in acute malnutrition. Although this summer monsoon rain has temporarily alleviated the immediate effects of protracted drought, the gravity of the food shortages and malnutrition crises in Sindh and Baluchistan (recently highlighted by the National Nutrition Survey and Integrated Phase Classification’s (IPC) analyses), will continue to require strengthened humanitarian as well as development and structural support.

The EU has operated in Pakistan since the 1990s, providing humanitarian assistance to people affected by conflict and major natural disasters, including the 2005 earthquake and the devastating floods between 2010 and 2015, which affected more than 30 million people. Relief items were channelled to flood victims through the EU Civil Protection Mechanism.