European Civil Protection and Humanitarian Aid Operations

Central Asia

Introduction

Kyrgyzstan, Kazakhstan, Tajikistan, Turkmenistan, and Uzbekistan – the 5 republics of Central Asia – are particularly exposed to natural disasters such as landslides, avalanches, floods, earthquakes, droughts, and melting glaciers. These disasters cause considerable loss of life, destroy homes and livelihoods, and hinder long-term development.

What are the needs?

The impact of climate change coupled with the diverse geography of Central Asia - which ranges from mountains to steppes and from deserts to large river systems - make this region particularly vulnerable to natural disasters.

The region lies on numerous fault lines, which make it one of the most seismically active areas in the world; earthquakes are the leading threat. While the largest cities in Central Asia, growing at a fast pace, are especially at risk, earthquakes can also trigger secondary events such as landslides and mudflows, which threaten almost two-thirds of the entire population of the region. Even if some countries are better equipped than others to cope with natural hazards, disaster risk reduction has become a priority for the whole region. Significant progress has been made in the last years; however, a comprehensive disaster management capacity still needs to be achieved.
How are we helping?

The European Union began its humanitarian operations in the region in response to the civil war in Tajikistan in 1994. In the following years, EU humanitarian aid has supported victims of violence (such as the inter-ethnic clashes in Kyrgyzstan in 2010) and recurrent natural disasters (like the food security crisis that hit southern Tajikistan in 2012 as a result of a particularly harsh winter).

Recently, the EU has continued with small-scale support in response to natural disasters across the region. Following the latest flooding that wreaked havoc across large parts of Tajikistan in June, the EU has allocated €70,000 to assist those most in need. In May 2018, €60,000 was committed to support the families affected by floods in Tajikistan’s southern region.

Since 2003, the European Union has built up its support to disaster preparedness activities in the region under its flagship disaster preparedness programme, known as DIPECHO. In total, over 110 projects have been funded, with a total of approximately €47 million. Priority has been given to people who live in areas that are highly vulnerable to natural hazards, such as the communities along the Tien Shan and Pamir mountain chains of Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan. The EU has also assisted in the establishment and capacity building of a regional disaster risk reduction centre in Almaty, Kazakhstan, tasked with promoting cooperation amongst the 5 Central Asian countries and with other regions, including the European Union’s Emergency Response Coordination Centre in Brussels.

DIPECHO’s final action plan for Central Asia (2017-2018) encouraged partners to replicate previous successful community-based disaster risk reduction (DRR) models in order to consolidate the gains already made. The programme also promoted the integration of disaster risk reduction measures into local and national development plans and budgets, while encouraging development partners to adopt DRR as one of their priorities.

Since 1994, the European Union has allocated more than €228.7 million in humanitarian assistance to Central Asia.