European Civil Protection and Humanitarian Aid Operations

Ethiopia

Introduction

Ethiopia, the second most populous country in Africa, faces a massive internal displacement crisis due to inter-communal violence and conflicts. The displacement crisis started in autumn 2017 and has escalated and spread in the second half of 2018. Meanwhile, there is dramatic political change brought about by the arrival of a new prime minister in 2018, an ongoing refugee influx from South Sudan and Eritrea, and millions of Ethiopians who need emergency food assistance and support to rebuild their livelihoods.

What are the needs?

The number of people forced to leave their homes and move to another place in Ethiopia (internally displaced persons or IDPs) has risen to almost 3 million. About 1.4 million people were forced from their homes in the first half of 2018. This is more than in Syria, Yemen, or the Democratic Republic of Congo and represents the fastest growing displacement crisis in the world. Two-thirds of today’s displaced people have fled inter-communal violence. Ethnic tensions have boiled over into violence; the violence and displacement has spread even further with the sweeping reforms and profound transformation that are undergoing in the country.

Unknown numbers of people have been killed, many were injured and victims of gender-based violence. In some areas, the authorities are inviting the IDPs to return to their place of origin. However, many of the ‘returned’ instead take shelter in sites near their village of origin. All returns should be voluntary, safe, and dignified.

As Ethiopia slowly recovers from two successive droughts, millions of people – in particular farming and herding communities in the south and southeast of the country – need emergency food assistance and support to rebuild their livelihoods.

Ethiopia hosts nearly one million refugees mainly from South Sudan – who are fleeing ongoing war and food insecurity – and Eritrea following the re-opening of the Ethiopia-Eritrea border in 2018. Refugees rely on aid to meet their basic needs including education and protection from gender-based violence.
How are we helping?

In 2018, the European Union has allocated €63 million to help people in need in Ethiopia. The focus is on addressing the most urgent humanitarian needs resulting from conflict-related displacement, the influx of refugees from South Sudan and Eritrea and climate-driven emergencies such as drought and flooding.

The response to the internal displacement (driven by the drought, conflicts and violence) focuses on life-saving interventions. Such interventions ensure the emergency supply of safe water, improved sanitation and hygiene promotion, shelter, food assistance, cash transfers, healthcare including the detection and treatment of malnourished children, and the prevention of and response to disease outbreaks such as cholera.

EU partner humanitarian organisations provide thousands of displaced families with essential items such as plastic sheets as a protection against the elements, mats, blankets, jerry cans, and other household goods. However, they face considerable challenges in trying to access all locations where violence has occurred to conduct independent needs assessments.

EU humanitarian aid to South Sudanese refugees provides shelter and access to safe water and sanitation facilities. Creating a protective environment for the most vulnerable refugees, such as unaccompanied minors and people with disabilities, is a priority. The EU funds food assistance, including e-vouchers that refugees can exchange for fresh food at markets. EU funding also supports the detection and treatment of acutely malnourished children and mothers. Education in emergencies is another priority, providing primary education to refugee children.

In response to the recent influx of Eritreans, the EU has scaled up its support to humanitarian organisations providing shelter and basic assistance to new arrivals.

After heavy floods and landslides in May 2018, which affected more than 320,000 people in the country’s Somali region in the eastern part of the country, the European Union allocated €2 million to provide emergency shelter, clean drinking water, and essential items such as mosquito nets and blankets.