European Civil Protection and Humanitarian Aid Operations

Niger

Introduction

Niger has significant humanitarian needs due to food shortages, undernutrition in children, and an increase in the number of uprooted people, either as refugees or from Niger itself, who are hit by the crises in Burkina Faso, Mali, the Lake Chad region and northwest Nigeria. Violence spills over from neighbouring countries into cross-border regions in Niger. Getting humanitarian aid to vulnerable people remains a serious challenge.

What are the needs?

More than 2.3 million people in Niger are in need of humanitarian assistance, the last-ranking country in the Human Development Index. Many in Niger suffer from food shortages. Food availability becomes even scarcer in-between harvests. Niger has an emergency level of severe acute malnutrition in children under the age of 5 across the country.

Consequences of armed group violence in neighbouring Burkina Faso, Mali, and Nigeria worsen the humanitarian situation in Niger. The Diffa region in Niger, that borders Nigeria, hosts more than 119,540 refugees (UNHCR). In Diffa there are more than 109,400 Nigeriens who left their homes due to violence or because of the impact of natural hazards, such as floods. These uprooted people depend on humanitarian assistance for their survival.

In May 2019, just under 42,000 Nigerian refugees have sought refuge in Niger’s Maradi region following a flare-up of violence in northwest Nigeria (UNHCR). The sudden influx of refugees has put additional pressure on host communities’ drinking water resources and food supplies. Having a common border with Burkina Faso and Mali, Niger’s Tillabéri and Tahoua regions are also affected by the consequences of conflict in the neighbourhood. An extended state of emergency has been declared in these regions resulting in increased military operations. Consequently, people’s livelihoods and their access to basic social services have been disrupted.

Access to people in need has been negatively affected by measures imposed by the Nigerien authorities requiring the use of armed escorts in May and October 2019. Humanitarian organisations unanimously refused in respect of the humanitarian principles that guide aid. As a result, the delivery of assistance was suspended for a few weeks in 2019, affecting numerous humanitarian operations.
How are we helping?

The European Union is one of the leading humanitarian donors in Niger, providing life-saving and emergency aid to people in need. In 2019, the European Union has provided €32.45 million in emergency assistance in conflict-affected areas and regions with widespread food shortages and high undernourishment rates among children.

EU funding in Niger focuses primarily on covering basic needs, including food, shelter, healthcare, water, protection of vulnerable people hit by conflict (such as victims of gender-based violence, unaccompanied children and disabled people), and education. Given that conflict-driven humanitarian crises escalate rapidly, the EU also supports organisations to react quickly to the needs of vulnerable people.

One of the major areas of action by EU-funded projects in Niger is the prevention and treatment of severe acute malnutrition. In 2018, funding from the EU contributed to the treatment of more than 246,000 children under the age of 5 suffering from severe malnutrition, including children from refugee groups. This figure represented about 65% of the total number of children receiving nutrition treatment in the country.

In 2019, the EU is also funding NGOs providing medical care in fragile areas and supported activities to raise awareness, through radio and social activism, within the affected communities. The EU also funds actions to provide schooling to children in humanitarian crises (Education in Emergencies) and protection interventions to mitigate the impact of the armed conflict and its consequences on the most vulnerable people.

In addition, the EU provides support to strengthen the preparedness of communities and authorities in responding to recurrent emergencies, particularly food and nutritional crises, natural hazards and population displacement.

In light of the volatile security situation in Niger, the EU continues to advocate for a safe working environment for humanitarian workers, where the respect of humanitarian principles and international humanitarian law guide the humanitarian agenda and response.

---

European Civil Protection and Humanitarian Aid Operations - B-1049 Brussels, Belgium - E-mail: echo-info@ec.europa.eu
Website: http://ec.europa.eu/echo - Facebook: @echumanitarian.aid - Twitter: @eu_echo - Instagram: @eu_echo