European Civil Protection and Humanitarian Aid Operations

Vietnam, Cambodia, and Lao PDR

Introduction

The Mekong region - consisting of Vietnam, Lao People’s Democratic Republic (Laos), and Cambodia - is frequently affected by natural hazards such as floods, droughts and typhoons. With the vast majority of the population in the 3 countries largely relying on agriculture, people’s livelihoods are often damaged by recurrent hazards and irregular seasonal patterns. The European Union funds projects that focus on enhancing community resilience and disaster preparedness capacities. It also supports the delivery of emergency relief items such as housing repair kits, hygiene kits, and drinking water.

What are the needs?

In Cambodia, 90% of the country’s poor live in rural areas, where the seasonal monsoon rains and the resulting floods can cause widespread destruction. In neighbouring Laos, vulnerability to natural hazards has increased because of illegal logging and deforestation. Disasters take place against the background of widespread poverty, especially in rural and inaccessible mountain areas. Most recently, in September 2019, tropical storms Podul and tropical depression Kajiki triggered floods affecting an estimated 650,000 people, with 40,000 people displaced.

With its long coastline, cyclones and tropical storms are a regular occurrence in Vietnam. While the local capacity to withstand and respond to natural hazards has been substantially enhanced in the last decade, additional support is sometimes required when large-scale disasters strike.

Storms, droughts and landslides often destroy people’s homes and livelihoods, leaving communities in desperate need of assistance. Outbreaks of diseases such as dengue and malaria put an additional strain on local health services. Access to the affected populations can sometimes represent an additional challenge in remote areas with inadequate and damaged infrastructure.
How are we helping?

In 2020, the European Union committed €500,000 to support disaster preparedness programmes in several Southeast Asian countries, including Vietnam and Cambodia. The aim is to reduce risks posed by natural hazards to the most vulnerable populations and improve local communities’ resilience. The programmes explore new financing systems and approaches such as forecast-based financing, established from in-depth disaster predictions, or shock-responsive social protection initiatives. The emphasis is placed on decision-making protocols, which enable relevant organisations to set up protocols and organise financial options based on forecast information.

The European Union regularly funds humanitarian assistance to address the needs arising from recurrent natural hazards in the Mekong Region. In 2020, in response to the severe floods that swept across many areas of the 3 Mekong countries, the European Union allocated €1.9 million to address the pressing needs of the affected people. Priority is given to the provision of cash transfers to enable affected families to meet their basic needs. The aid ensures access to clean water, sanitation facilities and the promotion of good hygiene practices. Following a drought and saltwater intrusion that affected large parts of Vietnam’s Mekong Delta in 2020, the EU provided €60,000 to support the distribution of clean drinking water while also ensuring adequate hygiene practices among the affected communities. In 2019, the EU allocated €200,000 to address the most pressing needs of families affected by tropical storm Podul and tropical depression Kajiki that struck southern Lao PDR in September. In August 2019, when many parts of southern Vietnam were affected by floods, the EU committed €100,000 to provide crucial assistance to those most in need.

In response to the collapse of the Xepian-Xe Nam Noy hydropower dam in southern Lao PDR in mid-2018, the EU provided €200,000 to support the delivery of emergency relief items such as shelter, housing repair kits, drinking water and hygiene kits. In November 2017, when typhoon Damrey hit several parts of Vietnam’s central and south-central regions, the EU allocated €200,000 to respond to the urgent needs of the affected populations.

Since 2009, the EU's total humanitarian aid in the 3 Mekong countries exceeded €41 million, including some €16.5 million for disaster preparedness activities.