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General Guidelines on Operational Priorities for Humanitarian Aid in 2023

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The European Commission's Directorate-General for European Civil Protection and Humanitarian Aid Operations (DG ECHO) manages the EU's humanitarian assistance for the victims of conflicts or disasters, both natural and human-induced, in non-EU countries. DG ECHO's mandate is to save and preserve lives, reduce or prevent suffering, and safeguard the integrity and dignity of people affected by humanitarian crises by providing relief and protection. By taking early action and focusing on preparedness, DG ECHO seeks to preserve livelihoods and build up the resilience of affected populations. It also coordinates humanitarian assistance with, and among, EU Member States' humanitarian departments and agencies. The overall priority is to manage aid as effectively and efficiently as possible, so as to maximise the effect of EU-funded assistance, while observing EU Law, international law and the principles of impartiality, neutrality, humanity, non-discrimination and independence.

DG ECHO is also responsible for managing the Union Civil Protection Mechanism (UCPM)¹, which covers interventions in Member States and other countries², and helps implement Council Regulation (EU) 2016/369 on providing emergency support within the EU³. This Regulation lays down a framework for EU emergency support in the form of specific measures appropriate to the economic situation if there is an ongoing or potential natural hazard or human-induced disaster. This kind of emergency support can only be provided in exceptional circumstances where i) the exceptional scale and impact of the disaster is such that it leads to severe wide-ranging humanitarian consequences in one or more Member States, and ii) there is no other sufficient instrument available to Member States and the EU. Given that the COVID-19 pandemic has led to an unprecedented loss of life in the EU and has caused untold hardship, the Commission proposed⁴ that emergency support be activated in accordance with Article 2 of the Regulation and that some of its provisions be amended to address the special needs of the outbreak.

This document is drawn up under Article 16(1) of the Humanitarian Aid Regulation⁵ and covers humanitarian aid operations for the year ahead. It does not cover DG ECHO's activities in the field of civil protection, which are instead described in the annual work programme for civil protection actions to be adopted on the basis of Decision No 1313/2013/EU.

The Commission's Communication on *The EU's humanitarian action: new challenges, same principles*⁶ ('2021 Commission Communication on the EU's humanitarian action') from March 2021, and the subsequent Council Conclusions of 20 May 2021 set out key actions to strengthen the EU's global humanitarian impact, to meet the substantial rise in humanitarian needs triggered by COVID-19 and exacerbated by recent conflicts and disasters.

¹ https://ec.europa.eu/echo/what/civil-protection/mechanism_en.

² [Decision No 1313/2013/EU](#) of the European Parliament and of the Council of 17 December 2013 on a Union Civil Protection Mechanism (OJ L 347, 20.12.2013, p. 924), as amended by Decision [\(EU\) 2019/420](#) of the European Parliament and of the Council of 13 March 2019 (OJ L 77 I, 20.3.2019, p 1).

³ [OJ L 70, 16.3.2016](#), p. 1.

⁴ Proposal for a Council Regulation activating the emergency support under Council Regulation (EU) 2016/369 of 15 March 2016 and amending its provisions in respect of the COVID-19 outbreak ([COM\(2020\) 175 final](#)).

⁵ [Council Regulation \(EC\) No 1257/96 of 20 June 1996](#) concerning humanitarian aid (OJ L 163, 2.7.1996, p. 1).

⁶ [COM\(2021\) 110](#).

1. General context for 2023

Humanitarian crises have become steadily more complex and severe in recent decades, and the trend is expected to continue in 2023. Conflict remains the main driver of humanitarian needs. Driven by climate change, together with more frequent and broader epidemics, disasters triggered by natural hazards are also increasing in intensity and scope, while the resulting economic shocks take a toll on the most vulnerable. The **interaction between climate, economic, environmental and conflict risks** is aggravating existing vulnerabilities and inequalities, and affecting humanitarian needs, particularly for the most vulnerable populations, including children in conflict-affected areas.

Across the world, **over 300 million people are in need of humanitarian assistance**⁷ and protection, and more funding than ever before is required if we are to respond appropriately. Access to essential health services is still difficult for at least half of the world's population⁸, and 100 million people are still in extreme poverty because of health expenses. Against this global scenario, the health needs of the most vulnerable populations affected by humanitarian crises remain unmet.

Mid-October 2022, the UN humanitarian appeal for 2022 was USD 49.95 billion. Currently, the resources provided to meet this appeal stand at only USD 18.81 billion. This **funding gap** of USD 31.14 billion – the **highest ever** – is a serious concern, particularly in light of protracted conflicts, widespread consecutive drought, and the multiple and wide-ranging secondary impacts of the unprecedented crisis and ongoing armed conflict in Ukraine. The most underfunded emergencies to date (less than 25% funded) are those in Venezuela, El Salvador, Myanmar and Colombia.

Russian's war of aggression against Ukraine has further aggravated an already challenging humanitarian context, characterised by soaring humanitarian needs, a growing funding gap and violations of International Humanitarian Law (IHL).

According to the *2022 Global Report on Food Crises*⁹, in 2021, almost 193 million people across 53 countries were **acutely food insecure and in need of urgent assistance**. This **confirms a daunting spiral**, as the number of people in acute food insecurity has sharply and systematically increased since the first edition of the report in 2017. Considering protracted crises in the 39 countries and territories for which information is available in all six editions of the report, the number of people in crisis almost doubled between 2016 and 2021.

Hunger is also increasing in severity. In 2022, the number of people in Emergency (IPC/CH Phase 4) remains high, with 38.6 million people in this phase in 34 countries. This number does not include Ethiopia and Zimbabwe due to lack of disaggregated phase data. Over 481 000 people are forecast to be in IPC Phase 5 in 2022, of which the highest share (213 000) in Somalia, and the rest in Yemen (161 000), South Sudan (87 000) and Afghanistan (20 300)¹⁰.

Despite this trend, **the funding gap keeps increasing**. In 2020 (last data available), the humanitarian funds allocated to food sectors in 55 food crisis countries/territories was the lowest recorded in the five-year period since the first report, even though the number of acutely food-insecure people was the highest on record.

Furthermore, the latest Global Report does not yet factor in the spillover effects of Russia's war of aggression against Ukraine, which are currently unfolding. These are expected to be severe and make matters even worse, as both Russia and Ukraine are major food exporters and together provide one third of global cereal supply, 80% of global sunflower oil and 29% of wheat exports.

The low-income, food-importing countries, and countries highly dependent on food imports from Russia and Ukraine will be hit the hardest by this crisis. This includes many countries in the Middle East and North Africa

⁷ [Global Humanitarian Overview](#), June 2022 (UN OCHA)..new link: [Global Humanitarian Overview 2022, Mid-Year Update \(Snapshot as of 21 June 2022\) - World | ReliefWeb](#).

⁸ <https://www.who.int/news/item/13-12-2017-world-bank-and-who-half-the-world-lacks-access-to-essential-health-services-100-million-still-pushed-into-extreme-poverty-because-of-health-expenses>.

⁹ <https://www.wfp.org/publications/global-report-food-crises-2022>

¹⁰ In 2021, almost 40 million people were facing emergency or worse (IPC /CH Phase 4 or above) conditions, across 41 countries. Of even greater concern is that over half a million people (570 000) faced catastrophic conditions (IPC/CH Phase 5), implying starvation and death, in Ethiopia, South Sudan, southern Madagascar and Yemen.

(MENA) and Sub-Saharan Africa. Humanitarian organisations will also be put under additional pressure, as both humanitarian needs and operational costs are expected to increase.

Epidemics pose great risks to the health, lives and livelihoods of people in fragile and conflict-affected countries. The COVID-19 pandemic has further exacerbated the situation. This has led to a sharp increase in the number of people in need, with an unprecedented impact on children, their protection and their education. This has also led to a sharp deterioration in the ability to tackle pre-existing protection challenges, in particular gender-based violence. This has emphasised the important links between human, animal and environmental health (One Health¹¹), and required a ‘health system’ approach.

This is increasingly the case for mental health and psychosocial support (MHPSS) for the most vulnerable people living in humanitarian contexts, where the response is still insufficient.

Meanwhile, the **impact of climate change and environmental degradation** continues to be a key driver of humanitarian needs (extreme weather events and disasters related to natural hazards, the impact of climate change on food production and water, etc.) and conflict.

In situations of protracted conflict, insecurity often prevents aid from being delivered to areas where help is most needed. Activities to access and protect the most vulnerable people in conflict zones continue to be hampered by widespread and **increasing violations of IHL**. The percentage of civilian victims in conflicts has risen dramatically, attacks on medical facilities and personnel continue, students and educational staff are subject to attacks and military use of educational facilities, and the security of humanitarian personnel has remained a critical challenge. In 2020 and 2021, there were more than 5 000 reported attacks on educational facilities and incidents of military use of schools and universities, harming more than 9 000 students and educators in at least 85 countries. The year 2020 was among the most violent years on record for humanitarian workers, with 475 workers attacked, 108 killed, 242 wounded and 125 kidnapped¹². Children in armed conflict are particularly vulnerable. The July 2022 annual report of the UN Secretary-General on children and armed conflict, highlights almost 24 000 verified grave violations against children, an average of some 65 violations every day, over the year 2021¹³.

Protracted violence continues to force people to flee from their homes. The UN’s Refugee Agency reported a dramatic increase in the number of **forcibly displaced people** worldwide, notably because of Russia’s war of aggression against Ukraine. The global number of internally displaced persons (IDPs) reached an unprecedented high level with more than 59.1 million people displaced in their own country¹⁴. In 2021, over two thirds of the world’s refugees came from just five countries: Syria, Venezuela, Afghanistan, South Sudan, and Myanmar. Syria, Colombia, the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC), Yemen, Afghanistan, and now Ukraine, are the most affected countries as regards conflict-related internal displacements. Over 430 000 refugees returned to their country of origin, highlighting the difficulty of finding sustainable solutions.

The COVID-19 pandemic has created extraordinary and unprecedented challenges for the humanitarian response system. Humanitarian needs and vulnerabilities worldwide have increased, whereas travel and access restrictions remain a challenge to response capacity. The pandemic has also resulted in a global crisis for child education and learning, exacerbating existing inequalities and reversing gains in access to education: 1.6 billion children have had their education disrupted and 463 million have had no access to any form of remote learning¹⁵.

The most vulnerable people, including people with disabilities, older people, women and children, are the most affected by humanitarian crises. Almost two thirds of the world’s children live in a country affected by conflict, 1 in 6 live within 50 km of a conflict zone¹⁶. This not only threatens children’s physical and mental

¹¹ https://www.who.int/health-topics/one-health#tab=tab_1.

¹² <https://www.un.org/en/observances/humanitarian-day>.

¹³ <https://childrenandarmedconflict.un.org/wp-content/uploads/2022/07/Summary-of-the-Annual-Report-of-the-Secretary-General-on-Children-and-Armed-Conflict-2021-3.pdf>.

¹⁴ <https://www.internal-displacement.org/global-report/grid2022/>.

¹⁵ <https://www.unicef.org/press-releases/covid-19-least-third-worlds-schoolchildren-unable-access-remote-learning-during>.

¹⁶ [Children affected by armed conflict, 1990-2019, Peace Research Institute Oslo, Conflict trends, 2020.](#)

health, but it often deprives them of education and limits their future life opportunities. Over half of the refugees of school age are not in school¹⁷.

Girls living in conflict-affected countries are more likely to be out of school. Girls and women also face a much greater risk of sexual and gender-based violence (SGBV), including early marriage and unintended pregnancy, and are more affected by disasters. Preventing and responding to SGBV (which affects women, girls, men and boys) should get more priority from the earliest stages of emergencies. Humanitarian responders often lack appropriate mechanisms and adequate funding to address it comprehensively. Due to discrimination and environmental, physical, economic and social barriers, people with disabilities are more likely to be excluded from emergency responses and humanitarian services. They also face additional threats and vulnerabilities.

While global humanitarian needs are increasing dramatically, funding is not. It is therefore essential to anticipate, identify and focus on main priorities and observe the principles guiding the EU's humanitarian budgetary allocations. In 2023, EU humanitarian aid will remain focused on supporting those most in need following sudden-onset, protracted and forgotten crises¹⁸. Encouraging those in the humanitarian sector to achieve greater efficiency is also essential. Improving consistency between humanitarian, development and peace actions is also needed, along with closer cooperation to create sustainable responses for crisis-affected people.

The EU will continue to support the UN's central role in coordinating the international response to emergencies, in a spirit of effective multilateralism and finding collective solutions to global challenges.

¹⁷ [Stepping Up: Refugee Education in Crisis, UNHCR report \(2019\)](#).

¹⁸ The methodology used to that end is supported by the Index for Risk Management (INFORM).

2. Priorities

2.1. Horizontal thematic priorities: improving aid effectiveness, efficiency and quality of operations

The 2021 Commission Communication on the EU's humanitarian action provides an overarching framework for the thematic priorities in 2023. Given the growing challenges, the EU will give a renewed impetus to addressing growing humanitarian needs.

Aid effectiveness and result-oriented actions are still priorities for 2023. The '2022 Grand Bargain' annual meeting¹⁹ noted progress in the last year including on the issue of cash coordination as well as on remaining challenges related to the enabling priorities of quality (less earmarked and multiyear) funding and localisation. The increasing pace of humanitarian needs underlines the urgency to take the necessary decisions towards reform. The EU will remain in the Facilitation Group²⁰ until 2023, when progress made on the Grand Bargain, after 7 years, will be assessed, and if necessary, the process will be reviewed. The political focus of the 'caucus' approach has proved that the necessary drive for reforms can be provided. The EU has participated in all Grand Bargain caucuses so far and remains committed to ensuring the agreement on cash coordination is implemented and supporting quality funding and localisation, in addition to the priority of more accurately identifying and analysing the humanitarian needs.

In 2023, DG ECHO will further promote increased use of **multiyear funding**, taking into account the demand-driven context specific to humanitarian aid. It will also aim to increase flexible and less earmarked funding. DG ECHO will draw on the lessons from the four pilot **multiannual programmatic partnerships** with NGOs, which will end in 2023. It will also continue piloting similar programmatic partnerships with UN agencies and international organisations, which started in 2021 and 2022, respectively. These strategic partnerships and longer-term programmes, while seeking greater efficiency in aid delivery, also support quality funding, the use of cash, the localisation agenda and the promotion of the humanitarian-development-peace nexus ((HDP nexus) – see more on P.13). They promote innovative approaches in sectors such as Education in Emergencies (EiE), nutrition, forced displacement, disaster preparedness, prevention of IHL violation, and coordination. Overall, a programmatic partnership approach will be rolled out in 2023 in countries/regions where a partnership with a multiannual vision helps address the needs of vulnerable populations in an efficient and effective manner, while at the same time supporting strategic priorities of mutual interest.

DG ECHO's commitment to **localised funding models**, including the expansion of contributions to Country-Based Pooled Funds²¹, is a specific action in the Communication on the EU's humanitarian action. As of 2022, building on an evaluation of the first pilot contributions in 2020-2021, DG ECHO adopted a more strategic approach to contributions globally, in line with its priorities and interests, as well as to the Grand Bargain commitments, in order to support the localisation agenda. Developing and disseminating the guidance on how to promote equal partnerships with local responders will also help strengthen EU support to localisation.

Aid effectiveness and efficiency will also be pursued through disseminating, implementing and updating existing policies, as appropriate. In 2022, DG ECHO launched its **humanitarian logistics policy**²² recognising that logistics is cross-sectoral and, as such, the backbone of every humanitarian operation due to its key impact on core humanitarian aid elements such as access, funding or greening. The logistics policy promotes a paradigm shift in this area towards a more strategic approach given the significant opportunities for increased efficiency and effectiveness. DG ECHO will also make funding available to support this shift. Systematic monitoring and reviews by the Commission's humanitarian experts as well as using key results

¹⁹ <https://interagencystandingcommittee.org/grand-bargain-official-website/grand-bargain-annual-meeting-2022-outcome-document>.

²⁰ <https://interagencystandingcommittee.org/grand-bargain-official-website/grand-bargain-20-ep-and-facilitation-group-achievements-july-2022>

²¹ <https://www.unocha.org/our-work/humanitarian-financing/country-based-pooled-funds-cbpf>.

²² https://ec.europa.eu/echo/files/policies/sectoral/humanitarian_logistics_thematic_policy_document_en.pdf.

indicators will ensure that EU-funded operations are implemented in line with the relevant standards and will provide a more comprehensive picture of DG ECHO's results, performance and resource requirements.

DG ECHO will continue developing and deploying the **European Humanitarian Response Capacity** (EHRC), a set of operational tools designed to fill gaps in the humanitarian response to natural hazards and human-induced disasters. The EHRC helps facilitate the delivery of humanitarian assistance in places where the humanitarian community struggles to provide support. It will also help cover the immediate needs of the affected population.

DG ECHO will continue to support the **development of innovative solutions and approaches** in cooperation with a wide range of actors, including development finance institutions, the private sector and the scientific community. In this regard, supporting humanitarian partners to harness cost-effectiveness and efficiency gains offered by digital technology will be particularly important in coordinating assessments and response analyses and in delivering more effective assistance which is more accountable to people in need. Innovative financing methods based on blending will also be leveraged to try to improve the efficiency and effectiveness of our response and help harness new sources of capital, including from the private sector. The EU's research and innovation programmes²³ offer opportunities to harness technological innovation, technical skills and expertise, and foster their active involvement in humanitarian situations. DG ECHO will seek to build on the promising example of the Horizon 2020 Prize for Affordable High Tech for Humanitarian Aid to promote the sharing and scaling-up of innovative practices among donors and providers of humanitarian assistance.

On the basis of the 'do no harm' principle, DG ECHO will continue integrating **climate and environmental considerations** into humanitarian aid policies and interventions. As the climate and environmental crisis deepens, humanitarian actors are faced with a collective responsibility to ensure that their operations address the impact of climate change and do not further harm the environment in which people live, or people's health and well-being. Reducing the climate change and environmental impact of EU-funded humanitarian operations help achieve the objectives of the 2021 Communication on the EU's humanitarian action, which places a strong emphasis on addressing climate and environmental factors as part of humanitarian programming. It will also contribute to the European Green Deal²⁴https://ec-word-edit.officeapps.live.com/we/wordecorframe.aspx?ui=en-US&rs=en-IE&wopisrc=https://europea.eu.sharepoint.com/teams/GRP-WWD-GGOPHA2023/vti/bin/wopi.ashx/files/5549710194424ec0bb347a5ce1ac4f16&wdenableroaming=1&mssc=1&hid=5AC855A0-5043-4000-ABEE-BB9B74758D33&wdorigin=ItemsView&wdhostclicktime=1659104709578&jsapi=1&jsapiver=v1&newsession=1&corrid=c1181b1f-3ea8-4a94-86e9-69e04ee8e07d&usid=c1181b1f-3ea8-4a94-86e9-69e04ee8e07d&sftc=1&cac=1&mtf=1&sfp=1&instantedit=1&wopicomplete=1&wdredirectionreason=Unified_Single_Flush&rct=Medium&ctp=LeastProtected. From 2023 onwards, DG ECHO will require mitigation of the negative environmental impacts of actions it supports. This will be done primarily through applying the minimum environmental requirements, which come into force from 2023. To support this step-change, DG ECHO will continue to provide capacity-building support and rolling out the **Environmental Guidance for humanitarian projects**²⁵https://ec-word-edit.officeapps.live.com/we/wordecorframe.aspx?ui=en-US&rs=en-IE&wopisrc=https://europea.eu.sharepoint.com/teams/GRP-WWD-GGOPHA2023/vti/bin/wopi.ashx/files/5549710194424ec0bb347a5ce1ac4f16&wdenableroaming=1&mssc=1&hid=5AC855A0-5043-4000-ABEE-BB9B74758D33&wdorigin=ItemsView&wdhostclicktime=1659104709578&jsapi=1&jsapiver=v1&newsession=1&corrid=c1181b1f-3ea8-4a94-86e9-69e04ee8e07d&usid=c1181b1f-3ea8-4a94-86e9-69e04ee8e07d&sftc=1&cac=1&mtf=1&sfp=1&instantedit=1&wopicomplete=1&wdredirectionreason=Unified_Single_Flush&rct=Medium&ctp=LeastProtected.

²³ See European Innovation Council (EIC) Horizon 2020 prizes for [affordable high-tech for humanitarian aid](#), [early warning for epidemics](#) and [blockchains for social good](#).

²⁴ https://ec.europa.eu/info/strategy/priorities-2019-2024/european-green-deal_en.

²⁵ https://civil-protection-humanitarian-aid.ec.europa.eu/what/humanitarian-aid/climate-change-and-environment_en.

In line with the 2021 Communication on the EU's humanitarian action, DG ECHO and Sweden (as part of its upcoming Presidency of the Council of the EU) will co-organise the second edition of the **European Humanitarian Forum in March 2023**. This international event will host high-level discussions as well as workshops on humanitarian policies, strategies and operations. It will serve as an inclusive platform for strategic, open debates between the EU's political decision-makers and the wider international humanitarian community, including i) UN agencies, ii) signatories of the Humanitarian call for action²⁶, iii) international and national NGOs, iv) the International Committee of the Red Cross/Red Crescent Movement, v) international financial institutions, vi) academics, vii) think tanks, viii) local responders and ix) local representatives.

²⁶ <https://multilateralism.org/actionareas/humanitarian-call-for-action/>.

Thematic policies

Over the years, the Commission has developed **policies and guidance**²⁷ on areas such as protection, gender, health, food, nutrition, shelter, education, and disability inclusion. These documents outline its position on key international frameworks and standards, and provide its implementing partners with concrete recommendations on programming. The overall objective is to ensure the quality, coherence and accountability of EU-funded humanitarian operations.

As in previous years, the overarching priority of EU humanitarian aid operations in 2023 will be to ensure protection and to meet the life-saving needs of affected populations, focusing on the most vulnerable.

Cash

DG ECHO will continue to prioritise a '**basic needs approach**': an integrated multi-sectoral or cross-sectoral approach to programming that aims to meet/contribute effectively to the basic needs of affected populations. Addressing needs in a coordinated and demand-driven way puts people back at the centre of interventions, especially where they are empowered to make choices and tailor the assistance to meet their individual needs.

In this regard, and in line with the Grand Bargain commitments, DG ECHO will continue to encourage the use of **cash transfers**, which give affected populations the dignity of being able to have more choices, flexibility and more control over their own lives. In particular, DG ECHO will continue to encourage the use of **multipurpose cash transfers**, i.e. cash transfers used by beneficiaries to meet their basic needs.

To strengthen transparency and accountability, and to reflect improvements in light of field experience, DG ECHO has revised its guidance to partners on delivering large-scale cash transfers and the thematic policy on cash transfers²⁸.

Education

Following the outcomes of the UN Transforming Education Summit²⁹, DG ECHO will help make education more resilient, equitable, and efficient, by delivering **safe and quality learning opportunities** for children and young people affected by humanitarian crises and emergencies, with special attention given to girls and children with disabilities. DG ECHO will continue to provide strong support for **EiE** (in line with the Commission's staff working document on *Education in Emergencies in EU-funded Humanitarian Aid Operations*³⁰), promote effective and sustained investment in education – earmarking 10% of the EU's initial humanitarian budget to EiE – and help protect education from attack.

DG ECHO will continue its works towards four EiE objectives focusing on a) access, b) quality, c) protection and d) strengthened EiE response capacity, adopting a comprehensive approach to children's needs.

Food assistance and nutrition

DG ECHO's aid, in the form of **food assistance and nutrition**, will remain crucial to respond to the current global food crisis. The share of food assistance and nutrition in DG ECHO's overall portfolio will certainly be above the usual 25% share of the EU's annual humanitarian aid budget, making the EU one of the world's major donors in this sector. DG ECHO will continue to provide **food assistance**, adapted to the needs of specific groups and crisis situations, prioritising the use of cash transfers whenever appropriate and ensuring protection while fully observing the 'do no harm' principle. In line with the G7 famine prevention and humanitarian crises compact³¹, DG ECHO will aim to increase the efficiency of its aid and the coordination

²⁷ https://civil-protection-humanitarian-aid.ec.europa.eu/resources-campaigns/policy-guidelines_en.

²⁸ https://ec.europa.eu/echo/files/policies/sectoral/thematic_policy_document_no_3_cash_transfers_en.pdf

²⁹ <https://www.un.org/en/transforming-education-summit>.

³⁰ [SWD\(2019\) 150 final/2, 19.7.2019.](https://ec.europa.eu/echo/files/policies/sectoral/thematic_policy_document_no_3_cash_transfers_en.pdf)

³¹ <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/g7-foreign-and-development-ministers-meeting-may-2021-communicue/g7-famine-prevention-and-humanitarian-crises-compact>.

with other donors in the five commitment areas³², for example, through increased use of anticipatory action mechanisms.

DG ECHO will continue to support funding for **nutrition** in emergencies and the development and widespread use of tools and innovative approaches to ensure efficient and effective programming. As nutrition outcomes are multifaceted, DG ECHO promotes i) a multi-sectoral and integrated approach to address severe and moderate acute malnutrition and ii) closer coordination of humanitarian and development approaches. It closely follows recent developments and changes in the nutrition sector, so it can adapt the way nutrition services are provided, build resilient communities and reach as many malnourished people as possible. The EU humanitarian nutrition approach³³ contains guidance on how to provide nutrition services to the most vulnerable population groups.

Health

Health assistance will remain a core part of DG ECHO's humanitarian aid intervention. The overriding objective of DG ECHO's health assistance is to limit excess preventable mortality, mental health problems, permanent disability, and disease associated with humanitarian crises. DG ECHO is increasingly faced with the need to respond to complex health crises driven mainly by disasters and conflicts. The increased frequency and severity of disease outbreaks calls for improved epidemics preparedness and response. Ebola and the COVID-19 pandemic have stretched international capacities and demonstrated that health crises have an impact that goes far beyond immediate health needs, affecting livelihoods and compromising the survival of the most vulnerable. MHPSS has emerged as one of the needs to be addressed in humanitarian contexts through a multi-sector approach. DG ECHO will continue to fund needs-based, high-quality and context-specific health services to people affected by crises, in accordance with its *Health - general guidelines* and the technical annexes³⁴. By adopting an integrated response, DG ECHO endeavours to support people as they struggle to emerge from crises, through a 'health system' approach that looks at all the needs to be addressed.

Logistics

Further development is expected in the abovementioned humanitarian **logistics policy**. DG ECHO's implementation plan to fund projects under this policy will be rolled out in 2023 to help raise the profile of logistics in humanitarian operations, support partners in planning, make efficiency and effectiveness gains, and leverage the capacity of logistics to contribute to the greening of humanitarian aid.

Protection and focus on the most vulnerable

Over recent years, **serious violations of IHL** have been increasing. In some armed conflicts, IHL violations are widely reported as strategic, though illegal, methods of warfare. Such methods have long-term humanitarian consequences. The continued prevalence of breaches of IHL have resulted in protection being a key challenge in today's humanitarian contexts, in particular in armed conflicts involving non-state actors. The Commission will support actions that aim to prevent violations of IHL and improve compliance, e.g. through better monitoring of IHL violations, and advocacy actions.

Upholding rights and dignity of conflict-affected people as well as ensuring a **people-centred approach** remains our priority. In 2023, DG ECHO will continue to prioritise protection in its humanitarian assistance, in line with the provisions of the 2021 Communication on the EU's humanitarian action and the Commission's staff working document on *Humanitarian protection: improving protection outcomes to reduce risks for people in humanitarian crises*³⁵. DG ECHO will continue to mainstream protection in its humanitarian projects, as well as support specialised protection interventions and advocacy on protection.

³² Five commitment areas: i) address critical funding gaps; ii) promote humanitarian access, compliance with IHL and protection of civilians; iii) scale up anticipatory action; iv) partner with the World Bank Group to improve crisis preparedness and response; and v) strengthen our data and analysis to facilitate early action.

³³ https://ec.europa.eu/echo/files/policies/sectoral/nutrition_thematic_policy_document_en.pdf.

³⁴ https://ec.europa.eu/echo/files/policies/sectoral/health2014_general_health_guidelines_en.pdf.

³⁵ https://ec.europa.eu/echo/files/policies/sectoral/policy_guidelines_humanitarian_protection_en.pdf.

Humanitarian crises have different impacts on women, girls, boys and men. Their differing needs and specific vulnerabilities in crisis and post-crisis situations should be addressed accordingly. DG ECHO will continue to **mainstream gender and age** across all sectors, and help quickly apply the approach to SGBV in humanitarian crises that was outlined in the staff working document on *gender: Different Needs, Adapted Assistance*³⁶ and the DG ECHO Gender-Age Marker³⁷. This work is in line with, and helps implement, the EU's strategic approach and action plan on women, peace and security³⁸ and the EU gender action plan III³⁹. The EU will also remain an active member of the 'Call to Action on Protection from Gender Based Violence in Emergencies'⁴⁰ initiative, and continue to implement its commitments to the road map for 2021-2025⁴¹. DG ECHO will continue to help prevent and respond to SGBV through targeted actions and mainstreaming of gender and age needs.

Humanitarian crises expose children to unspeakable physical and psychological suffering. In line with the first-ever strategy on the **Rights of the Child** adopted in 2021 and covering 2021-2024⁴², the Commission will continue to place an emphasis on child protection, addressing all types of violence against children as well as providing MHPSS. Specifically, DG ECHO will continue to intensify work to prevent and end grave violations against children affected by armed conflict, including through advocacy activities promoting compliance with IHL as well as targeted quality funding.

People with disabilities are disproportionately affected by natural hazards and human-induced disasters. They also face multiple barriers in accessing humanitarian services (e.g. water, shelter and food) and may have specific protection needs. In 2023, DG ECHO will continue to ensure the 2019 *operational guidance on the inclusion of persons with disabilities in EU-funded humanitarian aid operations*⁴³ is implemented and that its work is in line with the UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities. It will also help implement the EU's 2021-2030 strategy for the Rights of Persons with Disabilities, including by supporting the capacity-building of humanitarian organisations to adequately respond to the needs of people with disabilities.

Risk-informed preparedness for response and early action

In 2023, DG ECHO will continue to promote disaster preparedness both through integrating preparedness activities into EU-funded humanitarian operations, and through implementing targeted interventions to strengthen preparedness capacities ahead of a crisis, under the disaster preparedness budget line.

In line with the *Disaster Preparedness Guidance Note*⁴⁴, DG ECHO will continue to consistently integrate a risk analysis into its needs-based approach to preparedness. Understanding and anticipating potential risks is critical to acting early and intervening before a crisis hits or a situation deteriorates, therefore reducing suffering and humanitarian needs. Concurrently, DG ECHO will continue to promote a people-focused approach to preparedness, prioritising assistance according to individual vulnerabilities and risk exposure, and leaving no one behind.

The core objective of DG ECHO-funded preparedness interventions is to strengthen the capacity of in-country preparedness and response systems (all first responders) to act as locally and early as possible. To this end, DG ECHO will continue to promote a system approach, focusing at the same time on strengthening communities and national and local governments' capacities, to ensure sustainability.

³⁶ https://ec.europa.eu/echo/files/policies/sectoral/gender_thematic_policy_document_en.pdf.

³⁷ https://ec.europa.eu/echo/files/policies/sectoral/gender_age_marker_toolkit.pdf.

³⁸ [EU comprehensive approach on UNSCR 1325 and 1820.](#)

³⁹ <https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/?uri=CELEX:52020SC0284>.

⁴⁰ <https://www.calltoactiongbv.com/>.

⁴¹ [CALL TO ACTION on Protection from Gender-Based Violence in Emergencies.](#)

⁴² https://ec.europa.eu/info/policies/justice-and-fundamental-rights/rights-child/eu-strategy-rights-child-and-european-child-guarantee_en#:~:text=The%20EU%20Strategy%20on%20the%20Rights%20of%20the,what%20the%20EU%20plans%20to%20do%20for%20them.

⁴³ https://ec.europa.eu/echo/files/policies/sectoral/doc_echo_og_inclusion_en.pdf.

⁴⁴ https://civil-protection-humanitarian-aid.ec.europa.eu/document/download/13015e8b-acaf-4d8a-b665-d2aab142c97b_en?filename=dg_echo_guidance_note_-_disaster_preparedness_en.pdf.

In 2023, DG ECHO will explore ways to scale up anticipatory action to further encourage the integration of climate and environmental concerns, as outlined in the Disaster Preparedness Guidance Note and in the revised *Resilience Marker*⁴⁵⁴⁶.

DG ECHO will continue to seek further synergies with the UCPM⁴⁷ to engage with, and support, local and national government bodies and response systems, including through using specific tools e.g. the civil protection prevention and preparedness missions.

Shelter

The EU approach to **shelter and settlement** (S&S) acknowledges the increased needs for humanitarian interventions in this area, and their importance for efficient and effective post-disaster responses and anticipatory action. Shelter is crucially important in providing protection, strengthening health and re-establishing livelihoods. DG ECHO interventions in this area will continue to be underpinned by i) promoting shelter solutions that are suitable for local areas and delivering S&S services in urban settings, ii) strengthening local capacity and ownership, and iii) recognising the environmental element of any S&S action. These activities are in line with the *Humanitarian shelter and settlements guidelines*⁴⁸.

Water, sanitation and hygiene

As one of the largest donors in the area, DG ECHO has significantly helped improve access to **water, sanitation and hygiene** (WASH) services for people affected by humanitarian crises. The rights of people to water and sanitation are at the core of DG ECHO's WASH mandate, along with its efforts to integrate environmental considerations into humanitarian WASH actions, helping to build the resilience of people in need and of affected communities. The primary objective of the WASH policy is to save lives and alleviate the suffering of populations facing severe environmental health risks and/or water insecurity in the context of humanitarian crises. Systematic quality control, compliance with the international quality standards, and systematic monitoring of performance are core aspects of DG ECHO's WASH policy⁴⁹.

Humanitarian-development-peace nexus and cross-cutting issues

The objective of the HDP nexus is to better link urgent relief and longer-term solutions, aiming at reducing needs and tackling the root causes of conflicts and crises. Without compromising humanitarian principles, DG ECHO seeks to contribute to longer-term strategies to build the capacity and resilience of the most vulnerable people and address the underlying reasons for their vulnerability. It will continue to shift to more systematic and upfront coordination and complementary programming between humanitarian, development and peace actors and relevant instruments at headquarters and on the ground. This will include coordination among EU institutions, EU Member States and other relevant organisations to find opportunities for synergies, and for them to jointly help strengthen resilience and build sustainable peace.

Over 100 million people are **forcibly displaced** worldwide due to persecution, conflict, generalised violence, human rights violations, disasters or the effects of climate change. The Commission Communication *Lives in Dignity: from Aid-dependence to Self-reliance*⁵⁰ outlines a development-led approach to addressing forced displacement. Its main objective is to strengthen the resilience and self-reliance of both the displaced and their host communities through a multi-actor approach from the onset of displacement crises. Both development and humanitarian actors will continue to implement this approach in a growing number of countries.

⁴⁵ See Section 4 of the electronic Single Form (eSF): www.dgecho-partners-helpdesk.eu/ngo/action-proposal/fill-in-the-single-form.

⁴⁶ Resilience Marker guidelines: https://ec.europa.eu/echo/files/policies/resilience/resilience_marker_guidance_en.pdf.

⁴⁷ https://ec.europa.eu/echo/what/civil-protection/mechanism_en.

⁴⁸ https://ec.europa.eu/echo/files/policies/sectoral/shelter_and_settlement_guidelines.pdf.

⁴⁹ https://ec.europa.eu/echo/files/policies/sectoral/WaSH_policy_doc_en.pdf.

⁵⁰ <https://www.eesc.europa.eu/en/our-work/opinions-information-reports/opinions/lives-dignity-aid-dependence-self-reliance>

DG ECHO will further strengthen its efforts to raise awareness about the situation of vulnerable IDPs. This includes support to the UN Secretary-General's action agenda on internal displacement, launched in June 2022.

Displacement triggered by disasters, environmental degradation and the effects of climate change, is a growing challenge. DG ECHO will strengthen its operational and policy engagement in this area, along the lines of the staff working document addressing displacement and migration related to disasters, climate change and environmental degradation, published in July 2022⁵¹. This includes taking a leading role in the international policy dialogue, through the EU's chairing of the Platform on Disaster Displacement, which started on 1 July 2022 and will run for 18 months.

The **Global Compact on Refugees**⁵² is a multilateral framework aimed at developing a more sustainable and dignified response to refugees' needs, in line with the EU approach to forced displacement and development. In 2023, the EU will prepare for its involvement in the Global Refugee Forum scheduled for December 2023.

Scaling up **social protection systems** has been identified as one of the core means of strengthening the resilience of vulnerable populations. If implemented at scale, initiatives around social safety nets that form an integral part of the response to a crisis have huge potential to promote more inclusive and sustainable social protection coverage. While this has traditionally been within the remit of the development sector, the humanitarian community can play an important role in aligning with and complementing these efforts by supporting the creation of shock-responsive social protection systems and safety nets, e.g. cash transfers, for the most vulnerable. This requires coordination and dialogue to increase synergies between humanitarian and development action.

In 2018-2019, the Commission developed a guidance package on 'social protection across the humanitarian-development-peace nexus' (SPaN)⁵³. In line with the guidance, DG ECHO will continue to engage with development actors to support the development of shock-responsive social protection systems where feasible.

An increasing number of people in need of humanitarian assistance are seeking refuge in cities. At the same time, given the high population density, crises affecting cities tend to have a much more severe impact. In this context, in 2023, DG ECHO will continue to advocate for paying greater attention to humanitarian needs, preparedness and resilience in urban environments. It will further explore the potential of area-based approaches and other analysis tools to improve the assessment and response to urban crises.

⁵¹ https://ec.europa.eu/echo/files/policies/sectoral/swd_2022_displacement_and_migration_related_to_disasters_climate_change_and_environmental_degradation.pdf.

⁵² <https://refugeemigrants.un.org/refugees-compact#:~:text=The%20global%20compact%20on%20refugees%20is%20a%20unique,seeks%20to%20better%20define%20cooperation%20to%20share%20responsibilities>.

⁵³ <https://europa.eu/capacity4dev/sp-nexus>.

2.2. Operational priorities reflected in the budget allocation

2.2.1 General methodology

In line with Article 214 of the Treaty on the Functioning of the European Union⁵⁴, the Humanitarian Aid Regulation⁵⁵, and the European Consensus on Humanitarian Aid⁵⁶, and acting on the basis of the relevant financing decision⁵⁷, DG ECHO is committed to providing relief and protection for populations affected by natural hazards or human-induced disasters. The needs-based assessment leading to the allocation of funding is supported by its funding allocation methodologies, based on, among other things, INFORM Risk, INFORM Severity (see next section) and expert input. This assessment also pays special attention to forgotten crises.

The analytical preparatory work serves as a basis for DG ECHO's humanitarian implementation plans (HIPs), which provide detailed information on the operational priorities that it has identified.

DG ECHO constantly reappraises humanitarian crises as they evolve. If the need for humanitarian assistance diminishes (often when rehabilitation and development activities start), it winds down its humanitarian work. High priority is given to the close coordination of humanitarian aid and development activities as part of the HDP nexus approach. The exit strategy for all areas of humanitarian intervention is reviewed twice a year – first, when funds are initially allocated, and second, through a mid-term review. The latter is an opportunity to review priorities for remaining funds in light of evolving needs. To the extent possible, humanitarian exit strategies are discussed and coordinated with development and peace actors from the moment they are envisaged.

2.2.2 INFORM Risk and INFORM Severity

The **INFORM Risk** Index⁵⁸ is a global, open-source risk assessment for humanitarian crises and disasters, analysing three aspects of risk:

- hazard and exposure (the probability of physical exposure associated with specific hazards);
- vulnerability (economic, political and social characteristics of the community that can be destabilised if a hazard event occurs); and
- lack of coping capacity (a country's ability to cope with disasters).

INFORM Severity⁵⁹ is a composite indicator that summarises a wide range of quantitative information about crisis severity. It enables the severity of humanitarian crises and disasters to be measured and compared globally, based on three aspects of crisis severity:

- the impact of the crisis (the scope of its geographical and human effects);
- the conditions of those affected (information on the distribution of people affected by the crisis); and
- the complexity of the crisis (factors that affect its mitigation or resolution).

⁵⁴ Article 214 TFEU.

⁵⁵ Council Regulation (EC) No 1257/96 of 20 June 1996 concerning humanitarian aid ([OJ L 163, 2.7.1996, p. 1](#)).

⁵⁶ Joint Statement by the Council and the Representatives of the Governments of the Member States meeting within the Council, the European Parliament and the European Commission ([OJ C 25, 30.1.2008, p. 1](#)).

⁵⁷ Commission implementing decision financing humanitarian aid operational actions from the general budget of the European Union

⁵⁸ <https://drmkc.jrc.ec.europa.eu/inform-index/INFORM-Risk>.

⁵⁹ <https://drmkc.jrc.ec.europa.eu/inform-index/INFORM-Severity/About-INFORM-Severity-Index>.

2.2.3 Forgotten Crises Assessment

The Forgotten Crises Assessment seeks to highlight severe humanitarian crises where affected populations receive little or no international media attention and **insufficient or no international assistance due to the lack of humanitarian funding**. In principle, the EU as a global, principled donor allocates at least 15% of its initial annual humanitarian budget to forgotten crises. The following crises were identified in the 2022-2023 assessment. This assessment, based on evidence to the extent possible, relies principally on information from the INFORM indexes (explained above), the Europe Media Monitor Tool (EMM⁶⁰), OCHA⁶¹'s Financial Tracking Service (FTS)⁶², and input from field experts. The final list of forgotten crises is prepared in agreement with the EU Commissioner for Crisis Management.

Region	Conflict/country
Africa	Complex crisis in DRC Complex crisis in Cameroon Complex crisis in Burundi Complex crisis in South Sudan Violence West Darfur Complex crisis in Central African Republic (CAR) Refugee crisis in Sudan CAR refugees in Chad Northwest banditry in Nigeria Saharawi crisis in Algeria
Asia	Rohingya refugee crisis in Bangladesh Socio-economic crisis in Lebanon
Latin America and the Caribbean	Displacement of Venezuelans in Ecuador Displacement of Venezuelans in Peru Complex crisis in Colombia

2.2.4 Other considerations

DG ECHO aims to address as many crises as possible within its available budget, and ensure a swift, efficient, and comprehensive response. While funding allocations are based on needs assessments and coordination with other donors, certain factors outside of DG ECHO's control may reduce the volume of aid that can actually be delivered to the beneficiaries. These factors include in particular, i) the presence of implementing organisations on the ground and their capacity to respond in a given crisis zone (absorption capacity), and ii) the intertwined problem of access restrictions caused either by insecurity or administrative impediments.

DG ECHO aims to ensure that proper needs assessment and monitoring take place. It only operates in remote management mode where absolutely necessary and justified by humanitarian imperatives.

Restrictions faced by partners are most prevalent in areas of conflict, where the rule of law is markedly absent or where there are political and administrative impediments. Restrictions can also result from politically motivated obstruction from governments or *de facto* authorities.

⁶⁰ The Europe Media Monitor (EMM) explores and presents news reported by the world's online media. Monitoring thousands of news sources in over 70 languages, the system uses advanced techniques to extract information in order to automatically determine what is being reported in the news, where things are happening, who is involved and what they said.
<https://emm.newsbrief.eu/overview.html>

⁶¹ United Nations office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs.

⁶² <https://fts.unocha.org/>

2.2.5 Operational objectives and budget planning

The draft EU budget for 2023⁶³ earmarks EUR 1 710 952 967 for humanitarian aid and disaster preparedness (DP)⁶⁴. This is to be used for operations aimed essentially at:

- (a) providing humanitarian aid to vulnerable people affected by natural and human-induced crises or exceptional situations or circumstances comparable to those which have entailed or are likely to continue entailing major loss of life, physical and psychological or social suffering or material damage;
- (b) providing i) an initial response to cover the immediate needs of the most vulnerable in the days after a large-scale emergency or sudden-onset humanitarian crisis, and ii) humanitarian assistance for response and DP to populations affected by disasters where a small-scale response is adequate, and to populations affected by epidemic outbreaks;
- (c) supporting strategies and complementing existing strategies that enable local communities and institutions to prepare better for, mitigate and sufficiently respond to disasters by boosting their capacities to cope and respond, thereby increasing resilience and reducing vulnerability;
- (d) increasing awareness and understanding of, and support for, humanitarian issues through public awareness and information campaigns, especially in the EU and in other countries where the EU is funding major humanitarian operations;
- (e) improving the conditions for delivering humanitarian aid by supporting common logistical services, and pre-positioning of humanitarian supplies and by deploying experts, to ensure that aid is accessible to beneficiaries, including by means of the medical evacuation of humanitarian staff where unavailability of such transport services could adversely affect the timely and effective provision of assistance to beneficiaries;
- (f) improving the coherence, quality and effectiveness of humanitarian aid, e.g. by developing innovative approaches, methodologies, tools, support for capacity building, coordination and preparedness;
- (g) improving the quality of humanitarian aid by ensuring coordination with stakeholders, including EU Delegations, Member States and international organisations through the field network;
- (h) helping to step up the resilience of populations and communities in need; and
- (i) supporting targeted disaster-preparedness interventions in line with the four priorities defined in the guidance note.

DG ECHO will maintain its broadened **regional approach**, with regional responses in certain HIPs. A regional approach has the considerable advantage of providing added speed and flexibility to EU humanitarian assistance, and to simplification/streamlining among HIPs.

The following sections set out in more detail how DG ECHO will support humanitarian and food assistance for vulnerable people affected by disasters, and its DP operations (DIPECHO).

⁶³ 8 June 2022 – EU budget 2023: Empowering Europe to continue shaping a changing world: https://ec.europa.eu/commission/presscorner/detail/en/ip_22_3473.

⁶⁴ Draft budget for 2022, as proposed by the Commission, excluding allocation for technical assistance.

2.3. West and central Africa

The west and central Africa region⁶⁵ is characterised by three main conflict dynamics: the Central Sahel, Lake Chad, and the CAR regional crises, and the in-country crises in north-west Nigeria and in the Southwest and Northwest regions of Cameroon. So far in 2022, COVID-19 related measures and the effects of Russia's war of aggression against Ukraine have further exacerbated humanitarian needs, particularly in terms of food, nutrition and protection needs. In particular, the World Food Programme (WFP) estimated that Russia's invasion of Ukraine has put an additional 10 million people into a food crisis situation across west and central Africa. The extension of the conflict dynamics from Central Sahel to the countries of the Gulf of Guinea (Benin, Côte d'Ivoire, Ghana and Togo) is worrying and requires close monitoring in 2023. The same consideration applies to the food security situation of the three countries of the Mano River (Guinea, Liberia and Sierra Leone).

The total number of people in need of emergency humanitarian assistance stands at 37.1 million, while the number of those in need of emergency food assistance across all west and central African countries has rocketed up to 43 million (21.2 million in 2020). At least 2.4 million children under 5 years old require urgent life-saving treatment for malnutrition. The number of people forcibly displaced by conflicts and violence stands at 9.4 million. The region also remains prone to regular epidemic outbreaks and natural disasters.

2.3.1. Central Sahel (Burkina Faso, Mali, Niger)

In 2022, the humanitarian situation deteriorated in the north and centre of Mali and in border regions of Mali, Burkina Faso and Niger. This area is experiencing a proliferation of security incidents and community conflicts, triggering population movements and growing numbers of forcibly displaced people. In Mali and Burkina Faso, attacks by non-state armed groups on national armed forces and villages are increasingly frequent, as are counteractions by military forces and intercommunity violence. The political instability in Mali is further increasing humanitarian needs, posing challenges in terms of the response to those needs, particularly as regards protecting the civilian population. All parties to the armed conflicts tend to disregard IHL, which results in ever-greater civilian casualties, forced displacement, and increased protection needs. The expansion of armed conflicts has disrupted the local economy and livelihoods, and has limited the presence of the State, increasing the need for basic services, particularly water, sanitation, hygiene, healthcare and education. More than 6 000 schools and 500 health centres have been either closed or affected due to the prevailing insecurity.

Humanitarian needs across the three countries are massive and all indicators show the situation deteriorating. So far in 2022, the total number of people in need has reached 14.7 million, compared to 13.2 million in 2021 (+11%) and 9 million in 2020 (+63%). The number of IDPs and refugees has increased to 2.9 million, from 1.71 million in 2020 (+70%). Compared to the average over the lean seasons in 2015-2020, 2022 acute food insecurity figures have increased by 323% in Burkina Faso, 253% in Niger and 159% in Mali.

In Burkina Faso, due to violence spreading across the country's western, northern and eastern regions, there was a 21-fold increase in the number of IDPs, from 90 000 in January 2019 to 1 900 000 in July 2022, making this the fastest growing displacement crisis in Africa. Mali has 7.5 million people in need of humanitarian assistance and 477 000 forcibly displaced people. Mauritania hosts 86 800 refugees from Mali. In the western regions of Niger, the deteriorating security situation is due to increased activities of non-state armed groups at the border with Mali and Burkina Faso. Attacks target armed forces and civilians, reducing access to basic social needs and shrinking the 'humanitarian space'. The cumulative number of forcibly displaced people across Niger (refugees, returnees and IDPs) has reached 515 000 individuals.

⁶⁵ The region includes the following countries: Benin, Burkina Faso, Cabo Verde, Cameroon, the Central Africa Republic (CAR), Chad, Equatorial Guinea, Ivory Coast, Gabon, the Gambia, Ghana, Guinea, Guinea Bissau, Liberia, Mali, Mauritania, Niger, Nigeria, São Tomé e Príncipe, Senegal, Sierra Leone and Togo. Figures provided in the text refer primarily to the situation in the following countries: Burkina Faso, Cameroon, CAR, Chad, Mali, Mauritania, Niger, and Nigeria.

With the extremely fragile situation, the effects of the COVID-19 pandemic have only exacerbated needs in all sectors.

In 2023, DG ECHO will focus in particular on the humanitarian consequences of conflicts and violence, forced displacement and the food and nutritional crisis. It will provide emergency multi-sectoral assistance (notably food assistance, protection, healthcare and nutrition, and EiE) to the most vulnerable conflict-affected populations (refugees, IDPs and host/local communities) in Mali, Burkina Faso and Niger, e.g. through rapid response mechanisms (RRMs).

In addition, it will boost preparedness and response capacity in high-risk areas, including through anticipatory actions, and emergency response to epidemics and natural hazards and/or human-induced disasters, as appropriate.

2.3.2. Lake Chad basin crisis

The security situation has mostly deteriorated across the Lake Chad basin (affecting Cameroon and Chad, Niger and Nigeria), uprooting thousands of people and prolonging the displacement and adversity faced by over 6.8 million civilians across the region. In 2002, in the four countries affected by the Lake Chad crisis, almost 28 million people have faced food crisis conditions and more than 1.8 million children have suffered from severe acute malnutrition and required life-saving treatment. Recurrent attacks and insecurity, along with the associated security response, have restricted free movement. Farming, trade, transhumance⁶⁶ and other activities are affected, depriving millions of people of their means of survival and limiting access to basic services. The violence has also forced many schools to close. The global consequences of Russia's war of aggression against Ukraine have aggravated this emergency situation, adding to the consequences of erratic rain patterns on food security by disrupting trade flows and raising the price of agricultural inputs and staple foods.

In north-east Nigeria, the situation is particularly complex, with 8.4 million people in need, including more than 2 million forcibly displaced and considerable food security risks for people unable to access assistance (estimated at 1 million individuals). Access to those in need has become even more challenging throughout 2022, with the closure of IDP camps by the local authorities in the Maiduguri Metropolitan area, which might be extended further to other IDP camps in Borno State. In addition, in March/April 2022, there were returns from the Diffa region in Niger to areas in north-east Nigeria still considered unsafe, putting at risk the lives of people of need and limiting the scope for emergency assistance to them. Overall, in Nigeria, food insecurity (IPC 3+) increased by over 50% in 2022 compared to 2021, with 19.45 million people affected across the country.

In Niger, the regions neighbouring Nigeria remain unstable due to the consequences of non-state armed groups' activity and the inflow of refugees (see below).

In terms of forced displacements, Cameroon is the second-hardest hit country in the region after Nigeria, with 1.95 million forcibly displaced people and a total of 3.9 million people in need. The far north of Cameroon is home to 1.2 million people in need and 623 564 forcibly displaced people (135 243 Nigerian refugees, 357 631 IDPs and 130 690 returnees). In this area, 941 540 people were subject to severe food insecurity (IPC 3+) during the lean season (June to August) of 2022. This represents almost a 150% increase compared to last year. Also in the same area, the repeated outbreak of intercommunity violence over the use of natural resources (especially water) has made the situation even more complex, also leading to forced displacements in neighbouring Chad, with 42 564 Cameroonian refugees currently hosted in the capital N'djamena and in camps nearby. Chad itself is also being affected by transhumance-related and intercommunal tensions, on top of the spillovers from regional crises in the Lake Chad area, Sahel regions and near the borders with CAR, Libya and Sudan. In Chad, 6.1 million people are currently in need of assistance, of whom 2.1 million are subject to severe food insecurity, an increase of 139% compared to the 2015-2020 average. With 1 067 668 forcibly displaced people, Chad has one of the highest densities of displaced people in the world (6% of the population, and 71% of the total population of the country's Lake Province specifically). The situation

⁶⁶ a mobile livestock farming method related to seasonal migration of livestock and people who tend to them.

regarding protection in the Lake Chad region remains worrying, with 1 046 incidents reported in the first half of 2022 (which already constitutes 68% of the total number of incidents registered in 2021). As a result of conflicts and displacements, and of limited natural resources and minimal access to social services, Chad is ranked third from bottom in the World Bank's Human Development Index.

Epidemic outbreaks are frequent in the Lake Chad region, linked to poor healthcare coverage and lack of access to clean water and sanitation. The COVID-19 pandemic has aggravated the situation, straining an already fragile healthcare sector.

In 2023, humanitarian efforts will continue to prioritise multi-sectoral emergency assistance and protection for populations affected by conflict (IDPs, refugees, returnees, local people, and host communities) including those in hard-to-reach areas, as well as helping the RRM mechanism to continue responding to new forced displacements.

Food assistance will remain key, along with shelter, nutrition, healthcare, and WASH. Support will also be aimed at boosting preparedness and response capacities in high-risk areas, including through anticipatory actions. In addition, DG ECHO will advocate for a stronger strategy on humanitarian access and compliance with IHL.

2.3.3. CAR regional crisis

The crisis in CAR remains one of the world's most acute, despite the February 2019 peace agreement signed by the government and 14 armed groups. The agreement was a major step in resolving the conflict, but it is being implemented very slowly and is frequently being violated. Insecurity has worsened severely over the past 2 years, with an increase in violence, in particular attacks against civilians, the humanitarian community and MINUSCA⁶⁷, restricting the 'humanitarian space'. The country is still reeling from the increased violence and displacements that occurred during and after the presidential and parliamentary elections at the end of 2020. As a landlocked country, CAR is also being severely hit by the economic consequences of Russia's war of aggression against Ukraine, which has further aggravated an already challenging humanitarian context, characterised by significant humanitarian needs and recurrent violations of IHL.

Humanitarian needs remain very high with 3.1 million people (over half of the population) in need of humanitarian assistance. Some 44% of the population (2.2 million) are food insecure and more than one in four (1.38 million) have been forcibly displaced. Since last year, in stable areas, a large number (over 100 000) of IDPs have returned to their places of origin. However, the total number of IDPs remains significant (647 883 in July 2022), because the movement of return is being counterbalanced by new/fresh displacements in conflict zones. The crisis is continuing to spill over into neighbouring countries (some 347 575 refugees from CAR are still hosted in Cameroon, 206 967 in the DRC and 124 488 in Chad), and prospects for large-scale repatriation are limited in the short-term due in part to persisting instability in regions of return (areas of CAR bordering Cameroon and Chad). However, coordination on durable solutions for CAR refugees is gaining momentum at regional level, as was illustrated by the Regional Conference on solutions in the context of forced displacement related to the Central African Republic crisis related to the CAR crisis in April 2022.

CAR remains one of the most dangerous countries for humanitarian workers, particularly those on the front line. Humanitarian workers operate in a highly insecure environment and are regularly targeted by armed groups and criminals, mostly for predatory motives⁶⁸, which greatly affects humanitarian access. Access is also significantly constrained when the regular army and its allies run operations against armed groups. While

⁶⁷ United Nations Multidimensional Integrated Stabilization Mission in the Central African Republic.

⁶⁸ Motives seeking to exploit others

the number of incidents affecting humanitarian workers has decreased⁶⁹, the level of threat remains and could rise again due to the deteriorating socio-economic environment.

In 2023, DG ECHO will prioritise its assistance towards addressing emergency needs in unstable and hard-to-reach areas or areas affected by natural hazards. Taking action will ensure a swift and flexible response capacity in this volatile context. DG ECHO will continue to intervene in all sectors that cover the essential needs of the targeted populations, while ensuring a balance across sectors. Aid will include providing food assistance and short-term livelihood support, healthcare and nutrition services, WASH interventions, protection, EiE, shelter and non-food items for the conflict-affected population (including host populations) in CAR and, to some extent, in neighbouring countries. Due to the worsening of the food crisis caused by local as well as global factors (the armed conflict in Ukraine); food assistance will remain a priority. Assistance will include DP wherever possible and sustainable.

Within the humanitarian remit, it is intended that assistance provided to refugees in Cameroon, the DRC and Chad will foster sustainable solutions and strengthen self-reliance, due to weak return perspectives in the short to medium-term. At the same time, it will be important to adequately address the humanitarian needs of host communities.

Advocacy efforts will continue to help ensure that the CAR crisis, including its regional aspect, receives sufficient international response despite geopolitical factors affecting the relations between CAR and donors.

Activities will be closely coordinated with development cooperation instruments, particularly but not exclusively in the health sector, to promote the implementation of the HDP nexus.

2.3.4. In-country crises in north-west Nigeria and the Northwest and Southwest (NWSW) regions in Cameroon

There has been a serious deterioration of the security/humanitarian situation in north-west Nigeria, due to the combination of criminal gang activity and intercommunity violence. This area of Nigeria, which has the worst public health indicators in the country, also registered a spike in cases of severe and acute malnutrition, in the five states of Kebbi, Sokoto, Zamfara, Kano and Katsina in 2022. This happened in a context of limited humanitarian presence, due in particular to the challenging conditions of access and security. A total of 969 757 people are internally displaced because of the ongoing crisis, and 57 110 have sought refuge on the other side of the border, in Niger.

The crisis in the NWSW regions in Cameroon has led to some 597 909 people being forcibly displaced to date, within the two regions and the neighbouring West, Littoral and Centre regions. Some 79 681 other Cameroonians have fled to Nigeria. A certain amount of return movement to the NWSW regions was observed in 2021, resulting from, among other things, a lack of service and assistance in areas of displacement or fears over COVID-19 and its socio-economic impact in big cities. Thousands of people continue to suffer from human rights violations and abuses in the NWSW regions. Women, men, girls and boys are acutely affected by distinct risks to their protection. Food and drinking water are the top priority needs for displaced people in these two regions, followed by health and education. An estimated 700 000 students are affected by the closure of two out of three schools in the NWSW regions (over 3 200 schools are non-functional). The conditions for humanitarian partners to access those in need have deteriorated throughout 2022, due to a recent trend of criminalisation of emergency assistance.

In 2023, humanitarian assistance by DG ECHO will continue to address the needs in these crises, targeting in particular food assistance, nutrition, WASH, protection, and access to social services (health, education).

⁶⁹ In the first 7 months of 2022, the UN Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA) registered 96 incidents affecting humanitarian workers in CAR, compared with 212 recorded during the same period in 2021.

2.4. East and southern Africa

2.4.1. Upper Nile Basin

South Sudan

Almost 4 years after the Revitalised Agreement on the Resolution of Conflict in the Republic of South Sudan was signed, very little progress has been made in its implementation, particularly on graduation and unification of forces, the writing of a new constitution and the establishment of reliable voting lists. Therefore, on 4 August 2022, the President of South Sudan Salva Kiir and the First Vice President Riek Machar signed the agreement on the Road Map to extend the transitional period by 24 months, i.e. until 22 February 2025, with national elections due in December 2024. In the meantime, the country continues to be affected by high levels of insecurity due to violence between different clans and political instability.

Due to the combined effects of continued conflicts and the effects of climate change, notably 3 years of consecutive and unprecedented floods that triggered massive displacement and destruction of crops, South Sudan is facing its worst humanitarian crisis since independence. Over 8.9 million people (including 4.6 million children) are estimated to be in need of humanitarian assistance and protection. Currently, over 2 million people are internally displaced, while 2.3 million South Sudanese refugees live in neighbouring countries. South Sudanese people are faced with the highest level of food insecurity since the country became independent in 2011. Extreme levels of food insecurity and malnutrition, affecting two-thirds of the country's population, make the situation in South Sudan one of the worst food insecurity emergencies in the world. An estimated 75% of the population, or 8.4 million people, experienced severe food insecurity at the peak of the 2022 lean season (May–July).

South Sudan remains one of the most challenging countries for humanitarian aid workers, with frequent operational interference and bureaucratic impediments, in addition to an increase in reported attacks against humanitarian staff and assets. The cost of humanitarian operations keeps increasing, as air comprises a large part of the transportation due to the very challenging road conditions during the rainy season (June–October).

Under its 2023 strategy for South Sudan, DG ECHO will focus on life-saving interventions, notably in the case of new shocks, targeting the most vulnerable people in most severely affected areas. DG ECHO will also support the provision of humanitarian protection assistance to communities affected by violence in the country, focusing on critical SGBV cases and children affected by armed conflicts. Continued support will be provided for EiE that includes child protection, as well as for supporting the humanitarian community's activities in coordination, logistics, safety and security, context analysis, data collection, monitoring and conflict sensitivity. Furthermore, DG ECHO will support targeted multi-hazard DP actions aimed at strengthening early warning systems, developing local contingency and preparedness plans for effective response focused on natural hazard induced and human-induced disasters. Opportunities to connect humanitarian, development and peace actors will be pursued.

Sudan

The situation remains extremely complex in Sudan, with the suspension of the transition following the coup in October 2021, which puts the country's path of peace, democratic governance and economic recovery at risk. Since the military takeover, Sudan has been experiencing a very serious upsurge in violence and conflict in the periphery where the different groups compete for resources as well as political, economic, and social power. The end of the UN-African Union Hybrid Operation in Darfur (UNAMID), in December 2020, and the lack of progress in implementing the peace agreement are major obstacles to protecting civilians. The UN Integrated Transitional Mission in Sudan cannot address these obstacles due to limited resources and a lack of cooperation from the military authorities.

Sudan is facing its worst food crisis in a decade, driven by political, security and economic instability and a poor harvest. A record 11.7 million people, almost a quarter of the country's population, are currently facing acute hunger, over 2 million more than in 2021, according to the latest IPC analysis.

As conflicts intensified, mainly in Darfur and 'the Two Areas' – the states of South Kordofan and Blue Nile – the number of IDPs increased to 3.2 million in 2021, according to the 2022 Global Report on Internal Displacement (GRID)⁷⁰. Internal conflict displacements reported during 2021 multiplied by more than five compared to 2020, with about 442 000 newly displaced people, the highest figure since 2014. This trend has continued throughout 2022. Conflict and communal violence are responsible for 88% of displacements in the country and are the main reasons that returns are prevented, with 56% of Sudan's IDPs displaced for over 10 years.

Under its 2023 strategy for Sudan, DG ECHO will focus on addressing critical humanitarian needs by delivering emergency lifesaving basic services and protection assistance to populations displaced or otherwise affected by conflict, natural disasters or climate shocks, or epidemics outbreaks. DG ECHO will provide an appropriate response to health, nutrition and food security crises to prevent and/or reduce excess mortality and morbidity, while also reinforcing the humanitarian-development nexus. A continued response will be provided in EiE, focusing on providing children with safe access to quality formal and non-formal primary education and responding to their protection needs in schools. Support for coordination, logistics, safety and security, context analysis and conflict sensitivity will also be provided.

Uganda

Uganda is the largest refugee-hosting country in Africa and one of the top five largest refugees-hosting countries worldwide with more than 1.5 million people, mostly from South Sudan and the DRC. The number of refugees has been steadily increasing (+87 000 between January and August 2022). The Ugandan government's progressive and inclusive policy towards refugees is at risk. The scale of the refugee crisis continues to overwhelm national and local capacities, and is putting pressure on a humanitarian operation that is already largely underfunded. Uganda is also prone to disasters including natural hazards and epidemic outbreaks.

Uganda is a pilot country for the HDP nexus and the UN Comprehensive Refugee Response Framework (CRRF). The processes are linked, as the EU and its Member States have agreed to address problems with forced displacement in Uganda and help the country roll out of the CRRF. The overall objective is to help establish durable solutions for displaced and vulnerable people, targeting both refugee and host communities.

DG ECHO's strategy for 2023 will build on the previous year's strategy and focus on providing life-saving assistance to refugees and host communities, based on vulnerabilities, and on strengthening local first emergency responders' capacities at national, district and local levels. This is intended to address the plethora of crises including epidemics, new refugee influxes and natural hazards or human-induced disasters in a DP framework.

2.4.2. Horn of Africa⁷¹

With multiple natural hazard and human-induced disasters and epidemics continuing to affect the Horn of Africa throughout 2022, the humanitarian situation has deteriorated sharply. The Horn of Africa is facing multiple and overlapping humanitarian crises, both recent and protracted, with devastating human consequences. In particular, Ethiopia, Somalia, Djibouti and Kenya are facing the region's worst drought in at least 40 years. Combined with other human-induced and climate-induced disasters throughout the region, the drought is destroying lives and livelihoods, driving large parts of the population into temporary or

⁷⁰ <https://www.internal-displacement.org/global-report/grid2022/>.

⁷¹ Horn of Africa region includes the following countries: Djibouti, Ethiopia, Kenya, Somalia, and Eritrea.

protracted displacements, and is causing severe food insecurity across the Horn. The response remains largely underfunded, humanitarian access is often challenging, and the political and conflict dynamics in parts of the region further complicate the response.

The humanitarian outlook in **Ethiopia** remains bleak for 2023. In 2022, the humanitarian situation worsened with several other crises arising (drought, spillover of the northern conflict, worsening of localised conflicts, attacks against refugees, etc.). The northern Ethiopia conflict has created massive humanitarian needs in Afar, Amhara and Tigray. Furthermore, the country is now affected by an extreme drought, following four consecutive failed rainy seasons over the past 2 years. The country faces, overall, an extremely fragile political and security situation. The risk of international, internal, intercommunal and/or interethnic conflict remains very much present across the country.

Protecting civilians, advocating for compliance with IHL, improving humanitarian access and observing humanitarian principles will remain paramount and among DG ECHO's priorities. Considering DG ECHO's budget and mandate, and the added value it can bring to the humanitarian response in Ethiopia, its priority in 2023 will be to address the most urgent acute needs and ensure protection for people in areas mostly affected by conflicts or violence and natural shocks, i.e. displaced people, host communities and returned/integrated/relocated populations. DG ECHO's approach will remain flexible so it can adapt to a very fluid situation and it will focus on areas assessed as the most acute or that have been under-represented in the UN Humanitarian Response Plan (HRP), due to lack of data, partners and limited support capacity. Special attention will be paid to hard-to-reach areas.

At the end of 2021, **Kenya's government** adopted the Refugee Act, which represents a significant change in its policy approach towards refugees, shifting from encampment to settlements where refugees can integrate into the local economy and access services alongside the host communities. While the bill still needs to be regulated and the process has been lagging behind due to the general elections that took place in August 2022, it includes positive language on the prospects of more durable solutions for the half a million refugees currently in Kenya.

In the meantime, **Kenya** and **Somalia** are facing the worst drought in at least 40 years, following four consecutive below-average rainy seasons (end of 2020, spring and autumn 2021, March-May 2022). In Kenya, the food insecurity figures have reached levels higher than those recorded for both the 2010/2011 and the 2016/2017 droughts. Over 4.3 million people in the arid and semi-arid lands (ASALs) of Kenya will need food assistance beyond 2022, while the number of malnourished children is estimated at over 880 000. In Somalia, people's ability to cope with recurrent shocks has been decimated by the socio-economic impact of the COVID-19 pandemic, a declining economy, extreme drought and violent conflict, leading to multiple forced displacements. Over 7 million people are in need of emergency food assistance, of which over 200 000 face catastrophic hunger, and 1.5 million children under 5 years old suffer from acute malnutrition. Over 1 million people have been displaced by the ongoing drought, 750 000 of which were displaced in 2022 alone.

Conflicts in **Somalia** continue to cause massive (mostly internal) displacement, civilian casualties, and destruction to property and livelihoods. Escalating conflict and insecurity, and armed actors' disregard for IHL and international human rights law, give rise to widespread life-threatening issues, while also hindering principled humanitarian access. While the political crisis that has held the country hostage since 2020 appears to have abated with the conclusion of elections in June 2022, the new administration has yet to facilitate principled humanitarian access and the delivery of basic services to the population.

DG ECHO's support for **Kenya** in 2023 will focus on basic survival services (food, WASH, healthcare and nutrition, protection and EiE) for the most vulnerable people living in formal or informal camps, while continuing the efforts to link humanitarian interventions for refugees with durable solutions. The drought situation in the ASALs will be closely followed-up should more funding become available.

In **Somalia**, DG ECHO will prioritise emergency-focused life-saving assistance and protection for conflict-affected populations and those suffering from high levels of food insecurity or epidemic outbreaks, particularly in light of the historic drought. Early response capacity will be strengthened in areas with high levels of

displacement, an IPC 3+ classification and a high prevalence of acute malnutrition. EiE outreach to displaced out-of-school children and integrated actions, including protection, will also be supported.

Given the satisfactory results of the HDP nexus approach to the refugee situation in **Djibouti**, DG ECHO will continue to prioritise protection services and other types of assistance to vulnerable migrants, in coordination with the EU Delegation. It is estimated that the number of forcibly displaced people from neighbouring countries will increase, due in particular to ongoing conflicts in Ethiopia.

2.4.3. Southern Africa and Indian Ocean (SAIO)⁷²

The SAIO region is prone to both **climate-induced disasters, e.g. droughts and cyclones, and human-induced hazards** caused by armed conflict and violence. These hazards represent a major risk for exposed populations resulting in the loss of lives and internal displacement, destruction of livelihood assets and damage to major infrastructure hampering the delivery of assistance in some severely affected areas. The 2021/2022 cyclonic season wreaked havoc in Madagascar, Malawi, Mozambique and South Africa.

Nearly 30 million people in the region are experiencing high levels of acute food insecurity, including those in Angola, Eswatini, Lesotho, Madagascar, Malawi, Mozambique, Namibia, Zambia and Zimbabwe. The situation has been exacerbated by a challenging political and socio-economic environment, internal conflict and insecurity. Russia's war of aggression against Ukraine is putting additional pressure on an already fragile situation, as nearly 80% of the countries are highly dependent on imports from Russia and Ukraine.

The region hosts over 0.5 million refugees, asylum seekers and other people of concern, mainly from the DRC and Burundi. Across the region, over 1 million people are currently internally displaced.

Global warming, the scale and frequency of extreme weather events, and climate change scenarios have had severe effects on agricultural patterns, affecting harvests and the food security of nearly 309 million people in rural and urban areas in 2022 and undermining development gains in the region. Large parts of southern Angola, Eswatini, southern Madagascar and Zambia received their lowest seasonal rainfall in 40 years. It is estimated⁷³ that in the SAIO region, over 5.5 million children under 5 years old are facing global acute malnutrition. Around 16.5 million people across the region live with HIV.

In the Grand South region of Madagascar, over 1.68 million people face acute food insecurity and around 309 000 children are likely to suffer from acute malnutrition. The food security situation is compounded by worsening health, water and sanitation conditions across the country. In Zimbabwe, at least 4.67 million people (about 30% of households) are currently facing food insecurity and are in need of humanitarian assistance. Moreover, food insecurity is projected to further increase during the 2022/2023 lean season.

The escalation of the crisis in the province of Cabo Delgado (northern Mozambique) continued to be of concern during 2022. The province is suffering from violent activity with armed groups attacking villages and civilians, and clashing with security forces, causing deaths and forcing hundreds of thousands of people to flee within the province and to the neighbouring provinces of Niassa and Nampula. In early June, insurgent attacks were reported in the southern districts of Cabo Delgado – which previously had been considered safe and secure – triggering the displacement of nearly 100 000 additional people. Overall, the armed conflict has displaced over 946 000 people since the beginning of the crisis, while around 50% of the IDPs are children and over 1 million people face severe food insecurity. The conflict has disrupted the education of thousands of pupils.

⁷² The SAIO region includes the following countries: Lesotho, Madagascar, Malawi, Mozambique, Zimbabwe, Botswana, Comoros Islands, Eswatini, Lesotho, Madagascar, Malawi, Mauritius, Mozambique, Namibia, Seychelles, South Africa and Zimbabwe.

⁷³ : Southern Africa Humanitarian Snapshot (August 2021) | ReliefWeb

DG ECHO's strategy for 2023 in the region will be based on three pillars.

- The first involves providing needs-based, rapid and life-saving multi-sectoral humanitarian aid to populations affected by climate-induced and/or human-induced disasters, mainly in northern Mozambique and the Grand South and South-East regions of Madagascar.
- The second involves providing EiE services for displaced populations and their host communities in Cabo Delgado (Mozambique) and neighbouring provinces in northern Mozambique as well as in the South-East region of Madagascar. The focus is on ensuring safe learning spaces and providing education programmes for children in areas affected by violence and forced displacement.
- The third involves reinforcing past DP investments across the region in situations of recurrent and predictable crises, particularly for climate-related disasters and urban preparedness, and stepping up conflict preparedness. Focus will be on i) strengthening early warning systems and early/anticipatory action; ii) multipurpose cash preparedness and, if possible, linking it to shock responsive social protection systems; and iii) strengthening the overall preparedness and response capacity of local actors and organisations, including national disaster management authorities and first responders, specifically focusing on logistics and conflict preparedness.

DG ECHO will remain actively involved in expanding on the many opportunities to strengthen the HDP nexus approach in the region, in particular in relation to chronic food insecurity, resilience to drought, disaster risk reduction and early recovery of communities affected by natural disasters. It will also stay involved in the area of EiE, developing an integrated approach in northern Mozambique and building a comprehensive response capacity in the Grand South region of Madagascar. Advocating for 'humanitarian space' to be respected, and for humanitarian principles and IHL to be observed will remain critical.

2.4.4. Great Lakes region⁷⁴

The Great Lakes' region continues to be confronted with several complex crises, both protracted and acute, affecting millions of people. These crises include natural hazard and human-induced disasters, leading to high levels of insecurity, leading to recurrent forced displacement, food insecurity and under-nutrition, and protection issues relating to violence, coercion and deprivation. In 2022, the level and brutality of armed conflicts in the eastern parts of the DRC deteriorated further. In addition, the region faces recurrent outbreaks of diseases, including measles, malaria, cholera, yellow fever, monkey pox, Ebola and other viral haemorrhagic fevers, as well as (since 2020) COVID-19.

Many crisis-affected people lack opportunities to gain a livelihood and often live in extreme poverty. Food insecurity and under-nutrition remain among the most significant humanitarian problems, especially in the DRC, where over 27 million people faced food insecurity in 2022. In addition, around 900 000 children under 5 years old and over 400 000 pregnant or lactating women were acutely malnourished. The socio-economic impact of COVID-19 further worsened the plight of the most vulnerable people in the region. Access to basic social services and the rule of law are inadequate, especially in the DRC, the Republic of Congo and Burundi.

The protection of civilians in conflict-affected areas remains a major concern in the DRC. Ongoing conflict and high insecurity are also partly responsible for the dramatic increase in food insecurity, as they often prevent farmers from tilling their land and accessing local markets. There are almost six million IDPs in the DRC – the country with the largest number of IDPs in Africa.

The Great Lakes region hosts over a million refugees, mainly from Burundi, the DRC, Rwanda, CAR and South Sudan, with the DRC, Tanzania and Rwanda hosting the largest numbers. Tanzania continues to put pressure on Burundian refugees to repatriate.

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The Great Lakes region includes the following countries: Democratic Republic of Congo, Rwanda, Burundi, Tanzania, Angola, Republic of Congo and Zambia.

The increased return of refugees to Burundi (one side effect of the 2020 elections) is expected to continue in 2023. While the government invites refugees to repatriate, question marks remain over Burundi's absorption capacity, whether it will allow for the sustainable reintegration of large numbers of returnees. Burundi ranks 185 out of 189 countries in the UN Development Programme's latest Human Development Index (2020)⁷⁵. Food security is a structural problem and remains critical. Over 110 000 people were internally displaced in mid-2022 because of recurrent floods, landslides and other natural hazards. In addition, there are serious human rights and protection concerns. Working conditions for aid organisations remain difficult.

In the DRC, serious humanitarian needs exist throughout the country, but the situation remains particularly challenging in the eastern provinces of Ituri, North and South Kivu, and Tanganyika with ongoing complex emergencies and crises. In 2022, the DRC was considered the sixth most fragile country in the world (out of 179 countries). Significant protection concerns exist, including a high prevalence of SGBV.

In 2023, DG ECHO will address urgent humanitarian needs arising from epidemics and population displacements in conflict zones and life-threatening situations in non-conflict areas of the DRC. It will pay particular attention to protecting civilians affected by conflict. It will continue to support 'crisis modifiers', which allow ongoing aid projects to react swiftly to newly developing crises, and emergency response mechanisms to ensure swift response capacity in such volatile contexts. It will also address food insecurity and acute malnutrition in the region, taking into account emergency thresholds and local capacities, and overall funding availability.

As a priority, DG ECHO will provide immediate multi-sectoral assistance and protection to address the basic needs of refugees, while working with development actors on longer-term solutions for more protracted situations. It will continue to advocate for the voluntary character of refugee returns. In Burundi, it will focus mainly on protection activities, including for returning refugees.

All countries in the region are prone to natural hazard and human-induced disasters. DG ECHO already supports DP actions in Burundi, the Republic of Congo and the DRC. In addition, it will provide additional funds in Burundi and the Republic of Congo.

In line with the HDP nexus commitments, DG ECHO continues to be actively involved in searching for self-reliance solutions in forced displacement settings for IDPs and refugees in the region, and durable solutions for returning refugees to Burundi, in coordination with development partners. It will continue to advocate for 'humanitarian space' to be respected, and for humanitarian principles and IHL to be observed, along with support for humanitarian coordination and logistics where relevant, including vital EU humanitarian flight services to access remote areas in the DRC. While supporting emergency responses to epidemics, DG ECHO will continue with its aim to integrate preparation for and emergency responses to communicable disease outbreaks into its support for the health sector, and ensure coordination with ongoing development interventions in this sector where feasible.

2.5. Eastern Neighbourhood, Western Balkans, Caucasus and Turkey⁷⁶

2.5.1. Ukraine

Russia's war of aggression against Ukraine that started on 24 February 2022 is having a devastating impact on millions of Ukrainians, especially for the most vulnerable and those living in the proximity of the front lines and in Russian-occupied and illegally annexed territories of Ukraine. As of 2 September 2022, over 13.5 million people had been forced to leave their homes⁷⁷, over 7.6 million of whom were forced to leave the country⁷⁸. According to the revised UN Flash appeal⁷⁹, 17.7 million people in Ukraine need humanitarian assistance.

⁷⁵ <https://hdr.undp.org/data-center/documentation-and-downloads>.

⁷⁶ For this document Western Balkans and Caucasus includes Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Montenegro, Serbia, North Macedonia, and Moldova.

⁷⁷ <https://reports.unocha.org/en/country/ukraine/>.

⁷⁸ <https://data.unhcr.org/en/situations/ukraine>

⁷⁹ <https://reliefweb.int/report/ukraine/ukraine-flash-appeal-march-december-2022>

The military gains of the Ukrainian forces have revealed significant humanitarian needs in the areas earlier occupied by Russia. Due to severe damage to infrastructure, including water and electricity systems, and the predictions for a severe cold season, the needs in the corresponding sectors will be massive in the coming months. Considering the high likelihood of critical electricity and gas supply shortages due to heavy shelling, providing shelter solutions along with covering unmet basic needs, is a key priority. Access to health care continues to be severely impacted by security concerns, restricted mobility, broken supply chains and mass displacement; some 14.5 million people in Ukraine are estimated to need health assistance. Furthermore, the protection of civilians in conflict-affected areas remains a major concern; some 17.7 million people will need protection assistance as reported by the Protection Cluster⁸⁰. According to the UN, 5.7 million school-aged children have been affected since the start of the war; thousands of educational facilities have been damaged or destroyed by hostilities and need to be repaired.

Humanitarian access to former so-called non-government controlled areas⁸¹ as well as to other areas that fell under Russian military control is extremely challenging or impossible, while humanitarian needs are enormous and life-saving assistance to vulnerable people in those areas is vital.

In 2023, DG ECHO's intervention will continue to target conflict-affected people all over Ukraine, including whenever possible in the territories occupied by the Russian troops, if humanitarian access is granted. DG ECHO will address the humanitarian needs of the most vulnerable individuals, including children, pregnant women, older people and disabled people. DG ECHO will prioritise immediate multi-sector emergency assistance: food; cash/basic needs; WASH; shelter, including winterisation; healthcare (including Mental Health and Psychosocial Support, gender-based violence and sexual and reproductive health); protection; light and medium rehabilitation of schools and EiE, including child protection. DG ECHO will continue to advocate for the respect of IHL, humanitarian principles and humanitarian access.

DG ECHO will maintain a flexible approach to addressing rapidly evolving needs and adapting to the challenging operational context.

2.5.2. Turkey

Turkey is hosting the highest number of refugees in the world (around 4 million), including nearly 3.6 million Syrians under temporary protection, most of whom live in protracted displacement and who are in need of both humanitarian and development support. Despite increased employment opportunities and a higher level of income compared to pre-COVID 19 period, the already precarious socio-economic conditions experienced by refugees have further deteriorated due to continued depreciation of the local currency and high inflation.

Protection remains a critical need, as refugees continue to face difficulties accessing social services and exercising their rights, thus exposing them to increased risks. In 2023, the EU humanitarian support in Turkey will contribute to the full transition of selected programmes in health, protection, EiE and basic needs (Emergency Social Safety Net - ESSN). In line with the objectives of the transition, EU humanitarian funding will focus on filling gaps and supporting the most vulnerable groups in the abovementioned sectors, while encouraging a multi-sectoral approach in project implementation, as well as strengthening linkages between sectors.

2.5.3. Moldova

As of 3 October 2022, since the beginning of the Russia's military aggression in Ukraine, over 644 000 people fleeing the invasion have entered Moldova⁸², mostly women and children⁸³. Most refugees reside in either

⁸⁰ <https://reliefweb.int/report/ukraine/ukraine-flash-appeal-march-december-2022>

⁸¹ According to Ukrainian legislation, such areas had been defined as the temporarily occupied territories of Donetska and Luhanska oblasts before the Russian war of aggression started on 24 February 2022.

⁸² <https://data.unhcr.org/en/situations/ukraine/location/10784>

⁸³ Currently, there are more than 93 000 Ukrainians in Moldova of which 62.3% are women and 29.4% are children.

private rented accommodation (apartments and hotels) or with host families. If the situation does not further deteriorate in Ukraine, the protracted number of displaced people in Moldova is expected to remain below 80 000 over the course of 2023. However, further escalation of the conflict in Southern Ukraine and adverse impact of winter conditions may trigger a new influx of refugees into Moldova. The vast majority of displaced people from Ukraine are currently residing in Moldova without income, and are in need of basic needs assistance, protection, healthcare, education and shelter/winterisation. DG ECHO's priority is to respond to the emergency needs of the most vulnerable segments of the refugee population.

2.5.4. Western Balkans

Around 3 000 refugees, asylum seekers and migrants are stranded in Bosnia and Herzegovina, comprising a considerable number of vulnerable people, including families and unaccompanied or separated children and minors. On average, less than 2 000 people are accommodated in the four existing temporary reception centres (TRCs) in the Una-Sana and Sarajevo cantons, while a very small number are accommodated in government-run centres. More than 600 people are reportedly sleeping rough all over the country in various types of squats, mainly in the Una-Sana and Sarajevo cantons. In 2023, DG ECHO will continue its outreach assistance with a reduced amount of financial support to provide protection and MHPSS services inside the TRCs, with a view to ending its funding activities inside TRCs in 2024. DG ECHO will keep advocating for increased engagement with the authorities in order to develop a proper migration management plan including capacity building and a future handover.

2.5.5. Caucasus

The humanitarian consequences of the 44-day war in 2020 in the Southern Caucasus between Armenia and Azerbaijan, despite the fragile ceasefire signed in November 2020, may still require additional EU support in 2023 under the relevant HIP, primarily to address the remaining humanitarian needs of conflict-affected populations.

2.6. Middle East

2.6.1. Syria regional and Lebanon crises

Syria

The Syria conflict continues to cause a huge amount of displacement, casualties and suffering for the civilian population. Currently, 14.6 million people are in need of humanitarian assistance in Syria, almost half of whom are children. More than 12 million Syrians remain displaced, including 6.9 million inside the country. Throughout 2022, as part of its principled and needs-based humanitarian response throughout the country, DG ECHO has continued to provide life-saving assistance to meet acute humanitarian needs (particularly those of displaced people) and protracted needs compounded by drought and water shortages. The situation is particularly concerning in north-west Syria, where over 4.1 million civilians are in dire humanitarian need. In 2023, DG ECHO will continue to provide a swift response that is needs-based, multi-sectoral and life-saving. Its strategy will reflect how the humanitarian situation has deteriorated, which is characterised by a significant increase in basic needs, IHL and international human rights law violations, and protection challenges, along with a reduction in aid resources and government capacity due to the economic crisis. Flexibility will remain a central part of DG ECHO's response in light of the volatile security environment and uncertainty about continued cross-border access to north-west Syria. Sectors of assistance will include protection, healthcare, WASH, coordination, livelihood support, education, emergency preparedness and first-line response. Specific COVID-19-sensitive programming will continue. Humanitarian access and the protection of civilians, including humanitarian workers, will remain serious challenges.

DG ECHO will prioritise assistance to the most vulnerable people, regardless of their geographical location, using all available means and based on its partners' operational capacities. While conditions for return are still not met, it will continue to provide assistance based on needs rather than status. DG ECHO will also continue to keep risk management at the centre of its response strategy. It will continue its strong humanitarian advocacy to ensure compliance with IHL, improved access and protection for civilians. While it is premature to consider exit scenarios (due to the coexistence of protracted and acute humanitarian needs at scale), it will continue to seek to be consistent with and complement other EU financial instruments, encouraging partners to explore referrals and resilience opportunities within their programming.

Lebanon

Throughout 2022, the deep political, socio-economic and financial crisis faced by Lebanon has shown no sign of abating, with devastating effects on the population's vulnerability, including that of the large number of refugees. The absence of a functioning government, rampant inflation and unstable exchange rates are exacerbating shortages of fuel and other vital supplies. The removal of subsidies is causing hardship and putting essential products and health services beyond the reach of many Lebanese nationals and refugees. The COVID-19 pandemic has only exacerbated the situation and Lebanon's dependence on grain imports from Russia and Ukraine has left it vulnerable to the negative impact of shortages. Because of this, poverty has drastically increased over the past year. An estimated 35% of Lebanese households now live below the extreme poverty line.

Lebanon hosts the highest number of refugees *per capita* worldwide, with an estimated 1.5 million registered and non-registered Syrian refugees. The issue of Syrian refugees continues to figure prominently in political debates and rhetoric, and is exacerbated by the deteriorating crisis. Social tensions between refugees and host communities are rising. In 2023, DG ECHO will maintain its focus on providing life-saving assistance and protection to the most vulnerable, in order to address existing and emerging humanitarian needs. Protection and accountability remain key parts of its strategy. While DG ECHO will continue to focus on Syrian refugees, established humanitarian needs among other groups, including vulnerable Lebanese, will be included in an integrated response. Close coordination between different EU services and instruments will remain paramount to ensuring the operational continuity of actions and assistance, and to addressing the longer-term needs.

Jordan

At present, Jordan is hosting over 760 000 refugees, the second highest number of refugees *per capita* in the world, including some 676 000 Syrians, out of which over 80% reside outside camps, in communities⁸⁴. An estimated 30 000 refugees and some 7 000 non-Syrian asylum seekers remain undocumented, having only limited access to basic services and facing protection risks.

The Syrian crisis has brought to the fore some of the underlying challenges that Jordan faces in areas such as employment, the business environment, climate change and management of natural resources. The socio-economic situation of refugees has further deteriorated due to the COVID-19 crisis and the consequences of Russia's war of aggression against Ukraine, leading to a rise in unemployment and the cost of living. 85% of Syrian refugee households experience food insecurity. In addition, the education sector has been heavily affected by the crisis with child labour, early marriage and gender-based violence on the rise. An increasing number of refugees are moving to camps as a last resort so they can cope.

Some 5 years after the closure of the north-eastern border with Syria, around 7 500 people are still stranded at the 'berm' on the Syrian side of the border (Rukban) and this number is not expected to fall significantly. In addition, the COVID-19 crisis has led to the closure of the only UN health clinic located on the Jordanian side of the border, forcing those with emergency medical conditions to visit health facilities in areas held by the Syrian Government, with no means of return, and therefore high protection risks.

In 2023, DG ECHO will continue to assist refugees in host communities and in refugee camps, focusing mostly on access to protection, healthcare and education services. In addition, it will keep providing WASH

⁸⁴ UNHCR, July 2022.

services to the population stranded at the ‘berm’. In parallel, it will continue its coordination efforts with other EU instruments to ensure a smooth transition to longer-term solutions for refugees and host communities.

2.6.2. Palestine⁸⁵

The civilian population in Palestine continues to suffer from the consequences of the ongoing Israeli occupation and recurrent IHL violations. In Gaza, the already precarious humanitarian situation has deteriorated significantly following the escalation of hostilities in May 2021 and again in August 2022. Israeli restrictions on the entry of goods and people, compounded by multiple waves of COVID-19 on a largely unvaccinated population have contributed to increased vulnerabilities and a sharp drop in socio-economic indicators. Moreover, the impact of Russia’s war of aggression against Ukraine on food prices and imports risks pushing entire segments of the population into poverty and destitution. Living conditions are deteriorating at an alarming rate and record-high levels of unemployment have reduced people’s purchasing power and their access to food.

In 2023, DG ECHO will continue to assist and protect the most vulnerable people in Gaza, who are affected by recurrent shocks and conflicts, and economic hardship. In the West Bank, particularly in light of Israel’s continuing policy on settlements, evictions, demolitions and confiscations, DG ECHO will continue to support vulnerable communities who are at risk of displacement and who lack access to basic services. EU humanitarian assistance in Palestine will maintain its focus on protection, including advocacy against recurrent IHL violations, and improved preparedness for health emergencies. Close coordination with other Commission DGs and services and the EEAS in the areas of health, WASH and social protection will continue to ensure that programmes involve aspects of both immediate relief and resilience building.

2.7. North Africa, Iraq and Arabian Peninsula

2.7.1. Yemen

Yemen has entered its eighth year of conflict between the internationally recognised government of Yemen (IRG), supported by the Saudi-led Coalition, and the Houthi group (Ansar Allah). After the conflict intensified during 2021, the UN brokered a truce in April 2022, which has offered the longest period of respite to civilians in Yemen since the war started in March 2015. However, the implementation of the truce agreement is fragile and the long-term evolution of the crisis remains unclear with no meaningful political negotiations yet on track, despite the efforts of the UN Special Envoy for Yemen and the broader support of the international community.

While the truce has decreased the impact of the conflict on civilians, the conflict in Yemen remains one of the world’s largest humanitarian crises, which continues to worsen. In 2022, the Yemen Humanitarian Response Plan identified 23.4 million people in need of humanitarian assistance and protection, of which 12.9 million are in acute need. Out of a total population of 32 million, this represents a staggering volume and highlights the severity of people’s needs in the country. The impact of this protracted conflict on civilians, the collapsing economy and eroded institutional fabric, access restrictions and increasing impact of natural disasters and climate change are further compounded by the global rise of food and energy prices aggravated by Russia’s war of aggression against Ukraine.

Projections for 2022, using data collected before the war in Ukraine, show that up to 161 000 people had been expected to face famine-like conditions during the second half of 2022, with an overall increase of 18% of people facing acute food insecurity, reaching 19 million. As a country relying on staple food imports, Yemen is particularly vulnerable to the current volatility in the global markets and further deterioration is expected at

⁸⁵ This designation shall not be construed as recognition of a State of Palestine and is without prejudice to the individual positions of the Member States on this issue.

the end of 2022 and during 2023. Malnutrition levels are among the highest in the world, with about 8.1 million in need of nutrition assistance. This includes 2.2 million children (of whom an estimated 538 000 are severely acutely malnourished) and 1.3 million pregnant and lactating women. Approximately 4.3 million people have been displaced, with over 1 million living in informal sites. Almost 22 million people are in need of healthcare, while the already dilapidated healthcare system is struggling to address needs related to epidemics and the direct effects of the conflict on top of addressing regular healthcare issues. The situation is exacerbated by limited access to safe water and sanitation for over half of the population (17.8 million). Of an estimated 8.5 million school-aged children, at least 2.4 million are out of school and 5.4 million children need help to ensure they continue with their education.

In 2023, DG ECHO will focus on multi-sector and integrated interventions that address the needs of vulnerable people:

- directly exposed to conflict and displacement (either triggered by the war or natural disasters) and;
- affected by the health, nutrition and food security crises.

DG ECHO will prioritise WASH activities aimed at preventing malnutrition and the spread of epidemics, including by mainstreaming the response to COVID-19. Humanitarian protection will remain a key aspect of its response in Yemen. DG ECHO will support efforts to gather evidence and analysis of the intentions of the displaced population to enable a contextualised strategy on providing durable solutions that ensures principled return (i.e. voluntary, safe, and dignified). It will also focus on locations with the highest concentration of life-saving needs. In addition, it will help boost coordination and critical logistical capacities and the development of interoperable systems enabling better integration of emergency and recovery assistance, therefore supporting the HDP nexus approach.

2.7.2. Iraq

In a highly unstable context, Iraq's recovery process continues to face political, security and socio-economic challenges. Some 5 years after the military operations against the Islamic State concluded, the humanitarian situation in Iraq has improved. According to the 2022 Humanitarian Needs Overview⁸⁶, the number of Iraqis requiring humanitarian assistance has declined from a high of 11 million people in 2017 to 2.5 million in 2022, out of which 1.2 million Iraqis continue to remain internally displaced, facing challenges requiring adapted durable solutions. Latest IOM DTM⁸⁷ data show that 179 000 of these displaced Iraqis live in the 26 remaining IDP camps while 4.9 million have returned or resettled. However, 961 000 highly vulnerable Iraqis still have a range of protracted acute needs and significant challenges in meeting their basic needs due to barriers to return, limited recovery, reintegration, and reconciliation activities. Poor and insecure living conditions increase their protection risks, particularly the lack of critical civil documentation, which is key to their access to essential public services. The lack of civil documentation remains a major obstacle to rolling out durable solutions for IDPs and returnee populations. In 2022, the international community initiated a transition process out of the humanitarian/emergency phase towards a longer-term agenda on durable solutions, where national authorities will have a leading role. The scaling down of the international humanitarian response is ongoing, and by the end of 2022, the humanitarian coordination structures and clusters should be deactivated.

In 2023, DG ECHO will contribute to improving the unsafe environment for the most vulnerable displaced people living in camps and informal settlements by providing specialised protection services to the people most at risks, including those who lack key civil documentation and support their reintegration into the national social protection system.

2.7.3. Algeria - Sahrawi crisis

The Sahrawi refugees hosted in five camps in south-west Algeria (near Tindouf) are almost entirely dependent on humanitarian assistance, with little prospect for return, integration or resettlement. The humanitarian

⁸⁶ <https://www.ochaopt.org/content/humanitarian-needs-overview-2022>.

⁸⁷ International Organization for Migration Displacement Tracking Matrix: <https://iraqdtm.iom.int/>.

funding for this forgotten crisis significantly decreased in 2022. Until June 2022, all declared funding from international donors amounted to USD 22 million. In 2021, the overall funding amounted to USD 35.6 million, which was above the average for the last 5 years. The EU has provided more than 40% of the total funding. The global inflation makes the funding situation particularly difficult and there is a risk that the food assistance pipeline may be discontinued.

In 2023, DG ECHO will continue to focus on the refugees' basic needs, such as food assistance, water and sanitation, essential medicines, and EiE. It will keep a close eye on the evolution of the delivery methods for food assistance as well as promote a more evidence-based and strategic approach to nutrition. It will pay further attention to the environmental impact of the projects it funds. In parallel, it will continue advocating for greater burden sharing among all donors and other EU instruments to support livelihood and self-reliance initiatives. Employment opportunities are particularly important for young people, who feel increasingly frustrated by their dependency on aid and their bleak future prospects.

2.7.4. Egypt

Egypt hosts an estimated population of over 289 000⁸⁸ refugees and asylum seekers, who are living in some of the most overcrowded and poorest neighbourhoods of the country's largest cities, where the host communities suffer from similar levels of vulnerability. Roughly, half of the refugees are Syrian, with others mainly from the Horn of Africa, Sudan, and South Sudan. More than half are women, 87 000 are children, including 4 176 unaccompanied and separated children⁸⁹. They face many significant barriers in accessing basic services, while also suffering from high levels of discrimination and stigmatisation. 70%⁹⁰ of refugee and asylum seeker households report not being able to meet their basic needs, with many resorting to negative coping strategies.

In 2023, DG ECHO will continue to support refugees and asylum seekers by assisting the most vulnerable through an effective 'one refugee' approach, focusing on access to quality education. It will also address their basic needs and mainstream protection throughout its activities. The approach will also strengthen the HDP nexus framework, including coordination and advocacy initiatives.

2.8. Asia

2.8.1. South-west Asia and the central Asia region

Afghanistan

Afghanistan is one of the largest and most complex humanitarian emergencies worldwide. The humanitarian situation has significantly worsened over the past year since the Taliban takeover. Although new internal displacement fell in 2022 compared to previous years (7 420 people fled their homes between January and June 2022 due to fighting/insecurity, compared to 660 000 who fled over the same period in 2021). Of the 5.9 million people that fled the conflict, the majority remains in need of assistance and protection. The alarming food security situation persists, despite a massive increase in food assistance in 2021 and 2022. Some 19.7 million people (47% of the population) faced acute food insecurity over the 2022 lean season (March-May), including 6.6 million people (16% of the population) at emergency levels (IPC 4) and an estimated 20 300 people are expected to be exposed to famine-like conditions over the winter in 2022 (IPC 5). It is estimated that almost 19 million people will continue to face emergency levels of food insecurity (IPC 3 and above) due to a deepening socio-economic crisis, disrupted markets and increasing food markets. The WFP

⁸⁸ UNHCR Egypt Monthly Statistical Report, 30 June 2022

⁸⁹ Source: UNHCR, June 2022. Unpublished data

⁹⁰ Source: UNHCR, June 2022. Unpublished data

and the UN's Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO) have included Afghanistan in the list of 'hunger hotspots'. The current socio-economic context increases the likelihood of households' reverting to extremely critical and irreversible coping strategies, further increasing the vulnerability of most at-risk population, including children and people living with disabilities. Of particular concern is the increased challenge of freedom of movement for women and girls due to new restrictions and increased cultural barriers, which severely limit their ability to participate in the country's economic life and to access basic services, including education above grade 6.

The 2022 HRP identified 24.4 million people in need of humanitarian assistance, with food being the main priority followed by health and livelihoods. In 2022, therefore, there will be a continued need to support life-saving and life-sustaining multi-sector interventions to assist conflict-affected populations, and to ensure in particular that food, health and nutrition care are provided. DG ECHO will support coordination, safety and security measures and air services, as a pre-requisite for more effective aid delivery. Afghanistan is regularly affected by natural hazards (predominantly floods and drought) and it will be important to maintain the multi-sector support capacity for saving and sustaining the lives of affected populations. DG ECHO closely collaborates with DG INTPA in developing the humanitarian-development nexus by coordinating effectively on the roll out of the basic human needs approach while preserving the 'humanitarian space'. DG ECHO participates in the EU-Taliban dialogue and strongly advocates and clarifies the key principles of humanitarian engagement:

- independence of humanitarian assessments and operations;
- presence of female humanitarian staff, as a pre-requisite so as to have access to women and girls; and
- safety and security for humanitarian staff and infrastructure, and respect of the civilian nature of humanitarian infrastructure (healthcare and education).

Pakistan

Pakistan continues to face multiple crises, namely the following.

- The 40-year old Afghan refugee crisis: Pakistan still hosts some 3 million Afghans (including 1.4 million registered refugees), many still in need of humanitarian assistance; including new arrivals since the takeover of Afghanistan by the Taliban in August 2021.
- A severe malnutrition emergency and food insecurity: This was triggered by multiannual drought, compounded by the consequences of the pandemic and a locust plague, and the impact of past and ongoing insurgency/counter-insurgency operations, including related internal displacement and returns.
- One of the world's highest degrees of proneness to disaster, e.g. floods, glacial lake outburst floods (GLOFs), earthquakes, and heat waves: This is highlighted by the **current humanitarian crisis, which arose due to flooding**. Throughout 2022, more than 33 million people in Pakistan have been affected by the flooding, brought on by record monsoon rains amplified by climate change. Hundreds of thousands of homes are still under water in Sindh province. The floods have caused over 1 300 deaths and washed away homes, businesses, roads and bridges. The UN's World Health Organization said that more than 1 460 health centres have been damaged by the floods. This accounts for roughly 10% of the country's healthcare institutions, of which 432 were completely wrecked, the majority of them in Sindh. Over 4 500 medical camps have been set up by the WHO and its partners, while over 230 000 rapid test-kits for acute watery diarrhoea, malaria, dengue, hepatitis and chikungunya have been distributed. Damage from the devastating floods is set to hit USD 10 billion, according to the Pakistani government.

Therefore, in 2023, DG ECHO's response will focus on:

- the most acute humanitarian needs of Afghan refugees, including new arrivals;
- people affected by drought/food security issues and malnutrition;
- Pakistanis affected by internal conflict, i.e. IDPs and returnees, for instance to tribal districts (former Federally Administered Tribal Areas (FATAs));
- people affected by other natural hazards (e.g. flooding, GLOFs, earthquakes);

- continued EiE support for children most in need; and
- DP strategy fostering the institutionalisation of multi-hazard approaches through strengthening the governance and ownership of disaster risk management for risk-based preparedness.

Iran

Iran is facing a deteriorating humanitarian situation and will continue to be severely hit by several crises, such as:

- the 40-year Afghan refugee crisis, with up to 3.5 million Afghans hosted in Iran, many of them very vulnerable and dependent on humanitarian aid (especially those who are undocumented), including new arrivals since the Taliban took over Afghanistan in August 2021;
- a health system severely impacted by COVID-19 as well as the country's challenges in importing medical goods and its limited capacity to provide life-saving healthcare;
- a socio-economic crisis exacerbated by the USA's stated policy of maximum pressure, implemented primarily through sanctions, and the socio-economic impact of COVID-19, with serious consequences for people's livelihoods; and
- the impact of climate change and natural hazards, due to floods, earthquakes and locust infestation, with possible negative food/nutrition impacts.

In 2023, DG ECHO will continue to focus on the humanitarian needs of the most vulnerable Iranians and Afghan refugees. In particular, attention will be given to newly arrived Afghans hosted in temporary settlements, and people affected by natural hazards. In addition, it will continue with the DP strategy to strengthen DP policies and systems and boost logistics-response capacity as well as capability of humanitarian partners and stakeholders.

Central Asia

Central Asian countries are prone to natural hazards and are often hit by floods, flash floods, droughts and earthquakes. In recent years, DG ECHO responded to several emergencies through the International Federation of the Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies (IFRC) Disaster Relief Emergency Fund (DREF). DG ECHO's DIPECHO plan in Central Asia ended in 2018. Development programmes should now ensure follow-up support.

In 2023, DG ECHO will continue to closely follow the situation in the region, in particular the spillover effect from the Afghan crisis, as well as continue responding to small-scale natural hazard and human-induced disasters.

2.8.2. South and south-east Asia

Bangladesh

Following widespread military crackdowns in Myanmar's Rakhine state in August 2017, the massive influx of Rohingya refugees has worsened the humanitarian situation in the city of Cox's Bazar, which is now home of 910 000 Rohingya refugees. In addition, around 30 000 have been relocated to the Island of Bhashan Char. Rohingya refugees are unable to pursue education or formal employment, remain vulnerable to exploitation and serious protection risks, live in congested camps and are entirely dependent on humanitarian aid. The February 2021 military coup in Myanmar has further reduced the prospects of a voluntary, safe, dignified and sustainable return of refugees to the country. The 2022 Joint Response Plan (JRP) for the Rohingya Humanitarian Crisis in Bangladesh calls for funding of USD 881 million to assist 1.46 million people, both Rohingya refugees and host communities. As of August 2022, only 25% of the JRP has been funded.

In 2023, DG ECHO will continue to deliver basic life-saving humanitarian aid to the Rohingya refugees and the host communities in Cox's Bazar and Bhashan Char, including food assistance, nutrition, WASH services, healthcare and education, and increased protection for the most vulnerable groups.

Bangladesh is also one of the world's most disaster-prone countries, exposed to a variety of natural hazards, including cyclones, floods and earthquakes. DG ECHO will continue to help address the emergency needs generated by major disasters that overwhelm national response capacities. In parallel, it will also help scale up measures to improve preparedness for natural hazards. DG ECHO will build upon opportunities to further improve the anticipatory action framework and approach in the country, aiming to strengthen shock responsive components of social protection and safety net mechanisms to address the needs of those who are most vulnerable to specific risks.

Myanmar

Following the February 2021 *coup d'état*, more than 14 million people in Myanmar are in need of humanitarian assistance and protection services, according to the 2022 UN Humanitarian Needs Overview. The UNHCR estimates that there are currently over 1.2 million persons of concern in Myanmar. This figure includes 810 000 IDPs and 600 000 stateless Rohingya, of which 148 000 remain displaced. The 2022 UN Humanitarian Response Plan includes targets to reach over 6 million vulnerable people, requiring USD 825 million. As of August 2022, only 17% has been funded. In 2023, DG ECHO will continue to provide life-saving assistance to address the needs of the most vulnerable people affected by violence and conflicts in Myanmar. As well as the traditional areas of Rakhine, Kachin and Shan, DG ECHO will focus on new areas affected by conflict in the north-west and south-east of the country. Most of the sectors targeted in 2022 (e.g. protection, healthcare, EiE, food assistance) and the operational arrangements will remain relevant. Due to the nature of the crises in Myanmar, protection will remain in any case the entry point and the primary sector of intervention. The Myanmar HDP nexus strategy is being implemented through the Nexus Response Mechanism, co-funded by DG INPTA and DG ECHO. Humanitarian access – at all levels – is an increasing challenge throughout the country.

On the preparedness side, DG ECHO will provide emergency cash transfers, with a focus on strengthening and building up the capacity of local networks, along with timely, flexible, coordinated and harmonised assistance to IDPs and others affected by conflict or nature-induced disasters. This will be done primarily through the first line emergency response programme.

Regional refugee crisis

Countries in south-east Asia are experiencing two regional crises with their root causes in Myanmar: these concern Rohingya refugees (Thailand, Indonesia, Malaysia and India) and refugees from Myanmar following the conflicts generated by the coup (Thailand and India). More than half a million people are estimated to be in need of protection and assistance, most of them are women and children.

In 2023, DG ECHO will continue to pursue a non-discriminatory 'one refugee' approach aimed at supporting humanitarian interventions for the most severely affected populations in need of protection and assistance, regardless of their country of origin. The strategy will aim at providing a protection-centred response along the axes of risk analysis; preparedness for first basic needs response, protection programming, coordination, access to essential service provision including healthcare, and joint advocacy.

Philippines

The Philippines are prone to significant humanitarian crises prompted by both natural hazards and conflicts, particularly in Mindanao where there has been a long-standing internal conflict between government armed

forces and various non-state armed groups. According to UNHCR, over 100 000 people were still displaced in July 2022, but this number will continue to change due to local conflicts.

In 2023, DG ECHO's humanitarian assistance in Mindanao will aim to reach the most vulnerable conflict-affected populations, and those who suffer from social and cultural discrimination and/or receive little or no assistance. The most acute humanitarian needs continue to include food security, protection, early recovery, WASH, healthcare, and education.

In view of this complex, fragile setting and high vulnerability to multiple hazards, the 2023 DP strategy for the Philippines will seek to strengthen local preparedness capacities in conflict-affected areas in Mindanao. The targeted interventions will continue to bolster preparedness for local rapid-response capacity, especially where local resources are depleted and no front-line assistance is in place. The strategy will aim to support local authorities' ability to mainstream, replicate and independently finance risk-based anticipatory actions in their disasters preparedness plans.

Nepal

Nepal is a low-income country highly vulnerable to multiple hazards such as earthquakes, landslides, floods and fires compounded by unplanned settlements, population pressure, poor economic development and low literacy rates.

In 2023, DG ECHO DP investments will promote the uptake of common, multi-hazard approaches through strengthening local governance ownership for risk-based preparedness. The focus will be in earthquake risk regions of Nepal, including urban DP and health-emergency preparedness.

Disaster preparedness in south and south-east Asia

In 2023, DG ECHO will focus its regional DP strategy for south and south-east Asia on early action, by continuing the Pilot Programmatic Partnership with the FAO. This partnership implements anticipatory actions and involves related capacity building, notably to ensure the link to social protection systems. The countries targeted by the Programmatic Partnership are Bangladesh, Philippines, Laos, Vietnam and Pakistan, which are all characterised by extreme weather events, acute food insecurity, economic and political instability.

2.9. Latin America and the Caribbean

2.9.1. Central America

The Central American countries and Mexico are subject to both significant exposure to natural hazards and high levels of inequality and poverty. Of the countries in the region, Mexico, Guatemala and Honduras rank highest in the 2021 INFORM index, confirming that they are substantially more exposed to natural hazards and most vulnerable groups with a limited crisis response and risk-reduction capacity. The region is also witnessing epidemic levels of organised violence, with major humanitarian impacts on individuals and communities (similar to those caused by conflicts). The total number of people in need of humanitarian assistance has reached 8.3 million in Guatemala, Honduras and El Salvador (comprising almost 25% of the total combined population of all three countries). This 60% increase from early 2020 is due partly to the impacts of hurricanes Eta and Iota, and the COVID-19 pandemic. Successive climate shocks in recent years, exacerbated by *El Niño*-related droughts, a decrease in purchasing power and the interruption of school food

programmes during the pandemic have seriously affected food security in the region. In 2022, over 8.4 million people suffered from food insecurity (IPC 3 or above), mainly in the ‘Dry Corridor’ of Central America (Guatemala, Honduras, El Salvador, and Nicaragua). The situation is expected to worsen given the impacts of Russia’s invasion of Ukraine.

In 2023, DG ECHO will continue to support protection and relief assistance for populations suffering from the effects of multiple crises, including the most vulnerable victims of organised violence, forced displacements as well as those requiring food assistance and short-to-medium-term livelihood support. DG ECHO will also support DP and resilience-building activities, in full coordination with longer-term development actions. It will also continue to monitor and respond to epidemics. DG ECHO will monitor the population movements – especially from Honduras, Guatemala, El Salvador and Nicaragua as well as from outside the sub-region – that are triggered by violence, poverty, food insecurity and social unrest, including mass mixed migration flows to Mexico and Panama. It will address the related humanitarian consequences based on assessed needs.

2.9.2. South America

Countries such as Colombia, Brazil, Peru, Ecuador, Bolivia and Chile continue to experience an unprecedented influx of over 5 million migrants/refugees from Venezuela. Most migrants live in an irregularised situation, are exposed to threats to their protection, lack access to basic services (healthcare, food, water, education), and still experience the socio-economic effects of the COVID-19 pandemic. Response capacities in the host countries are overwhelmed, triggering appeals for international support. South America is also prone to various hazards (including floods, earthquakes and forest fires) and large indigenous communities are particularly vulnerable to the above multidimensional threats, which are further aggravated by the impact of climate change. In addition, the COVID-19 pandemic (the region has been the most affected worldwide) and more recently the inflation caused by the invasion of Ukraine, are creating new risks including increased population movements, social unrest, and unprecedented levels of food insecurity.

In 2023, DG ECHO will consolidate and extend the current response to human mobility, with a particular focus on protection and life-saving operations for the most vulnerable groups in areas of transit and agglomeration. DG ECHO will also put particular emphasis on the needs of indigenous populations across the continent, which have been traditionally marginalised.

In parallel, DG ECHO will continue to support disaster-preparedness activities and activities that reduce the risks posed by disasters to strengthen local, national and regional response and coordination capacities to better tackle the multiple humanitarian challenges. To this end, it will continue to closely coordinate with local, national and regional institutions, and pursue synergies with the UCPM.

Colombia

Some 6 years after the signing of the peace agreement between the Government and the Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia, the country continues to face multiple challenges. Throughout 2022, at least 7.7 million people have been in need of humanitarian assistance. Wider territorial control by armed groups (particularly in rural areas) has escalated the conflict and added to the existing needs, leading to increased displacement, attacks in urban areas, reduced humanitarian access and a spike in the number of lockdowns. The complexity of the situation is heightened by the spillover from the Venezuelan crisis⁹¹, Colombia’s exposure to natural hazards and the socio-economic consequences of COVID-19. As a result, the main humanitarian needs are in the areas of food security (7.6 million people in need), health (6 million), protection (4.6 million), WASH (4.6 million), and shelter and non-food items (3.8 million).

⁹¹ 2.4 million Venezuelan migrants and refugees in Colombia as of August 2022.

In 2023, DG ECHO's strategy is to focus on responding to the overlapping humanitarian consequences of i) the conflict, ii) the mixed migrations flows and iii) natural disasters. Support will be provided to the most affected and vulnerable populations (such as Afro-Colombians), especially recently displaced people, rural communities affected by the armed conflict and people subject to food emergencies. The priorities are in the areas of protection (case management), health (mainly comprehensive primary healthcare, sexual and reproductive health, mental health & psychosocial support, and mother and child health), EiE, disaster preparedness and food security (evidence generation). The assistance provided includes some cross-cutting aspects, such as the mainstreaming of protection, IHL and efforts to increase access to advocacy, the nexus approach as well as localisation and ethnic sensitivity.

Venezuela

The complex crisis in Venezuela continues to unfold, with severe consequences for people's living conditions, particularly in terms of access to food, healthcare and education. Malnutrition rates have exceeded the emergency threshold, and national health services have almost collapsed, with only emergency services available (largely thanks to international support). The COVID-19 pandemic has aggravated every aspect of the humanitarian emergency. Food security levels have deteriorated and are expected to rise significantly with the consequences of Russia's war of aggression against Ukraine. In 2019, the WFP assessed that around 9.3 million Venezuelans were food insecure⁹². However, according to HumVenezuela, a Venezuelan civil society organisations platform, the estimated number of people with food insecurity within the country and who have exhausted their means of livelihood or do not have enough to eat, ranges between 14.4 and 18.5 million⁹³.

Up to 70% of school-aged children are not attending school regularly. Some 6 million refugees and migrants have fled Venezuela and around 84% are hosted in other Latin American countries and the Caribbean. By June 2022, there were over 199 000 Venezuelans recognised as refugees worldwide and over 971 000 pending asylum claims⁹⁴. At least 8.4 million people are in need of humanitarian assistance due to the migration crisis (RMPR 2022⁹⁵).

In 2023, DG ECHO will continue to provide humanitarian assistance to Venezuela according to identified needs inside the country and the wider region. Multi-sectoral actions will focus on providing basic health services, protection, access to food and nutrition services, WASH and shelter support for people on the move, as well as on mainstreaming disaster preparedness. EiE will be supported, with a set of integrated activities aimed at making schools a protective environment. Based on an all-risk analysis, actions will target in particular i) children under 5 and young people, ii) pregnant and lactating women, iii) older people, iv) indigenous communities in remote areas, v) populations in transit (*caminantes*), vi) new arrivals and/or daily migrants (*pendulares*), and vii) vulnerable groups. In parallel, DG ECHO will continue to support the humanitarian coordination, inclusion and strengthening of local organisations, the enlarging of the 'humanitarian space', and the coordination of leading donors at country level, with a renewed effort in the framework of the Humanitarian Aid Working Group of the International Contact Group⁹⁶.

⁹² <https://www.wfp.org/publications/consolidated-approach-reporting-indicators-food-security-cari-guidelines#:~:text=The%20Consolidated%20Approach%20to%20Reporting%20Indicators%20of%20Food,classified%20into%20one%20of%20four%20food%20security%20categories.>

⁹³ <https://www.abnnoticias.net/reporte-de-humvenezuela-revela-el-impacto-profundo-de-la-emergencia-humanitaria-en-venezuela/>.

⁹⁴ [UNHCR Venezuela Situation Fact Sheet June 2022 - Venezuela \(Bolivarian Republic of\) | ReliefWeb.](#)

⁹⁵ <https://rmp.r4v.info/#:~:text=The%20nine%20sectors%20of%20the%20RMPR%202022%20response,and%20Human%20Trafficking%20and%20Smuggling%29%2C%20Shelter%20and%20WASH.>

⁹⁶ https://www.eeas.europa.eu/eeas/international-contact-group-venezuela-ministerial-declaration-1_en.

2.9.3. Caribbean

The Caribbean is highly vulnerable to natural hazards, notably hurricanes, storms, flooding and drought (the latter intensified by the *El Niño* phenomenon since 2015, with particularly worrying situations in Cuba and the Dominican Republic). The region has also been severely affected by the COVID-19 crisis and Russia's war of aggression against Ukraine, which are having a heavy impact on national economies.

DG ECHO will maintain its support for disaster preparedness, disaster risk reduction and the strengthening of resilience, building on the lessons learned and achievements of previous interventions, within a wider EU HDP nexus strategy linking relief to rehabilitation and development. It will continue to cooperate with disaster-management institutions at local, national and regional levels to promote the integration in their policy and legislative framework and the sharing of best practices. It will also stand ready to provide rapid humanitarian assistance in response to new sudden-onset disasters in the region. It will seek continued synergies with UCPM interventions. It will also support needs-based food security and protection activities to help displaced populations, in particular refugees from Venezuela and Haiti, and other groups of people forcibly displaced due to disasters.

Haiti

In 2022, 4.9 million Haitians (40% of the population) were in need of humanitarian assistance. The situation has been aggravated by the dramatic increase of gang-related violence in the metropolitan areas, which have forced thousands of families to move within and outside the country. The violence has affected access to public services such as health or drinking water for more than 1.5 million people, exposing them to dramatic protection risks. Gangs also block the main roads leading from the capital Port-au-Prince, making the delivery of humanitarian aid to other departments of the country extremely difficult. The coping capacities of the vulnerable population have further deteriorated due to: i) political upheavals (e.g. the inability of the current government to call for free and transparent elections), ii) social tensions related to the fuel shortage and the high inflation (27% according to August 2022 data), iii) prevailing food insecurity and iv) other factors, e.g. climatic hazards.

The last updated IPC analysis confirms a worsening food security situation with 4.5 million people (over 40% of the total population) being acutely food insecure (IPC phases 3 and 4), with 1.3 million people being in an emergency situation (IPC phase 4). The food and nutritional status of vulnerable Haitians is expected to deteriorate further in the coming months, in the wake of Russia's war of aggression against Ukraine. The nutritional situation among children under 5 years old is worsening. According to latest available data from UNICEF, approximately 20% of children under 5 in Cité Soleil are suffering from severe or moderate acute malnutrition, 5 percentage points above the emergency threshold set by the WHO.

In 2023, DG ECHO will continue to support the provision of food assistance to vulnerable populations facing a food emergency, and nutritional inputs for children under 5 and children with severe acute malnutrition. It will also continue to address the protection needs of victims of the gang-related violence, as well as those for forced returnees/deportees. Efforts to support disaster preparedness and build local rapid-response capacities will also be maintained. All interventions will be designed to complement EU longer-term development actions, following the establishment of a joint humanitarian-development intervention framework in Haiti. In parallel, DG ECHO will step up its humanitarian monitoring and advocacy efforts, in the light of the worrying deteriorating socio-economic and security situation in the country.

2.10. Response to sudden-onset emergencies

The EU response will continue to address humanitarian needs in the context of sudden-onset emergencies (e.g. epidemic outbreaks, cyclones, floods, earthquakes, landslides). Its interventions in this context fall under the Emergency Toolbox HIP⁹⁷ and they are designed to ensure rapid funding in response to a broad range of fast-onset and first-response needs.

Epidemics

Epidemics pose great risks to the health, lives and livelihoods of vulnerable people in developing countries. Communicable diseases that have appeared or reappeared in recent years have demonstrated their epidemic potential and their capacity to significantly overwhelm national resources and quickly spread across borders, causing regional or (e.g. the COVID-19 pandemic) global emergencies. The burden of endemic and epidemic-prone diseases tends to increase exponentially in more complex emergency situations involving disasters, climate change and conflict. Such crises result in increased vulnerability to infectious diseases alongside reduced national capacities to respond to public health risks, especially if health systems are already poorly resourced. Vaccination coverage in developing countries is generally low, so the risk of spreading infection increases. As health workers are particularly at risk of infection, a proper response relies on the availability of medical evacuation options. To reduce morbidity and mortality in disease outbreaks, early and effective action is required. Response capacity is a key factor for an effective response, but is only possible with an appropriate degree of preparedness.

*Small-scale tool*⁹⁸

While affecting relatively limited numbers of people, small-scale disasters still have a seriously negative impact on lives and livelihoods. They can occur in remote or isolated areas without regular support or assistance. The objective of the ‘Small-scale tool’ is to provide victims of natural or human-induced disasters with rapid relief assistance where a small-scale response is sufficient to cover unmet needs and improve preparedness.

Acute Large Emergency Response Tool (ALERT)

Large-scale sudden-onset disasters can hugely affect the lives and livelihoods of vulnerable populations. In many countries, the effects of a disaster when combined with high levels of vulnerability and insufficient local capacities may be devastating and require urgent life-saving assistance. It is usually critical that needs are addressed rapidly within the first days. The purpose of the ALERT is to provide an initial response to cover the immediate needs of the most vulnerable in the immediate aftermath of a large-scale natural or technological disaster or a new humanitarian crisis.

Support to the International Federation of the Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies DREF and the DREF Forecast-based Action

In most small-scale emergencies, emergency assistance is generally provided at local or national level. The National Red Cross and Red Crescent societies, supported by the International Federation of the Red Cross (IFRC), are often best placed to immediately respond, as they are rooted in the local community and can mobilise local people as volunteers. The contribution to the DREF contributes to DG ECHO’s localisation

⁹⁷ https://civil-protection-humanitarian-aid.ec.europa.eu/funding-evaluations/funding-humanitarian-aid/financing-decisions-hips_en#ecl-inpage-944.

⁹⁸ The small-scale tool allows DG ECHO to provide a rapid response to disasters where a limited response is appropriate. Small-scale disasters affect a relatively limited number of people but can have a serious negative impact on the lives and livelihoods of these populations.

commitments and is based on the need to ensure a quick-reaction capacity with minimal administrative burden for those concerned. It may go towards the Forecast-based Action (FbA), a new mechanism under the DREF. The FbA is taken when a disaster is imminent (or if it is a slow-onset disaster, about to come to a head) and follows a pre-determined protocol setting out the action to be taken and pre-agreed triggers established on the basis of historical and current forecast analysis.

Emergency response reserve

As a complement to ALERT, the emergency response reserve aims to provide adequate resources if a sudden natural or human-induced crisis occurs on a large scale and if there is a serious deterioration in any ongoing crises.

2.11. Complementary and thematic activities

European Humanitarian Response Capacity (EHRC)

The EHRC was launched in March 2022. Its purpose is to fill operational gaps in the humanitarian response to natural hazards and human-induced disasters. The EHRC helps deliver humanitarian assistance in cases where the humanitarian community struggles to provide support. It will also help to cover the immediate needs of the affected population. The added value of the EHRC is its support to humanitarian partners and emergency responders, enabling them to carry out more effective and efficient humanitarian action. In this sense, the EHRC is a ‘business-to-business’ service, where the direct beneficiaries are humanitarian actors and emergency responders rather than affected populations. Being anchored in humanitarian principles, the EHRC is integrated into DG ECHO’s existing response mechanisms and the wider strategic framework on logistics, and strengthens the synergies between the humanitarian aid instruments (Emergency Toolbox, HIPs provisions) and the various components of the UCPM (resceEU, European Civil Protection Pool).

Although new strands to fill operational gaps continue to be identified, the current EHRC is based on three pillars.

- **Common logistics services provided to the humanitarian community:** these are a set of services ranging from the EU Humanitarian Air Bridge (EU HAB) and the EU Humanitarian Aid Flight (EU HAF), to a variety of transport options including international and in-country (last-mile) solutions, warehousing services, and other logistics options. These logistics services aim to fill critical gaps in the delivery of humanitarian aid thereby strengthening humanitarian or emergency responses. The United Nations Humanitarian Air Service (WFP UNHAS) implements the EU HAF projects in operations in Africa. DG ECHO also has a framework contract with a private logistics transport company (DAMCO Denmark) to provide transport and logistics services worldwide, which are used to run the EU HAB activities.
- **Regional emergency stockpiles:** to support partners with pre-positioning of stocks to reduce logistical challenges in the aftermath of a crisis. The stock will be put at the disposal, free of charge, of humanitarian partners and emergency responders, who will be tasked with the actual distribution to final beneficiaries.
- **Deployment of expertise:** in particular, this concerns the provisioning expertise to the health and logistical sector. This pillar, still being developed, could boost the Commission’s capacity to support partners in deploying specialised experts, e.g. public health experts in case of outbreaks, or specialised and pre-identified emergency medical teams.

These services can be applied in specific protracted humanitarian contexts, and also in specific emergency response situations, such as pandemics, floods, earthquakes and tsunamis. The EU HAF (ex-ECHO Flight) project provides air transport options for humanitarian partner organisations working in challenging conditions.

The EU HAF currently supports around 200 projects in the DRC, Kenya and Mali. For the most part, each month it transports over 1 100 passengers and 20 tonnes of cargo.

Currently, the fleet consists of three dedicated aircrafts and closer links have been established with WFP UNHAS (particularly in Kenya, where a plane is shared).

Supporting a paradigm shift in humanitarian logistics

In 2022, DG ECHO launched its humanitarian logistics policy, which recognises that logistics is cross-sectoral and is the backbone of humanitarian action.

Given the significant opportunities for efficiency and effectiveness gains, this policy calls for a paradigm shift in this area towards a more strategic approach. In 2023, DG ECHO will provide specific financial support for initiatives that contribute to this. It will roll out an ambitious implementation plan, funding in particular projects which enable greater use of common services, shared services, and joint procurement, on a regional or global level, ranging from support to operations to, e.g. research or structural support to organisations.

Policy support toolbox

Access to the right mix of policy support tools and making the best use of them are essential to creating and maintaining a systemic, long-lasting impact on the humanitarian system in priority areas that are important for DG ECHO and for the humanitarian system as a whole.

In a context of increasingly complex humanitarian challenges and scarce resources, the capacity of humanitarian actors to respond to ever-growing needs is often stretched to the limit. Addressing this issue is not only a question of increasing financial resources, but also of improving tools, knowledge, coordination and preparedness, as stated in the European Consensus on Humanitarian Aid⁹⁹.

The development and roll out of innovative and well-informed policies also ensures that DG ECHO's operational activities meet the highest international standards in terms of quality and timeliness.

Through the policy support toolbox, composed of the 'Enhanced response capacity and Policy Support Framework contract', DG ECHO has championed numerous policy initiatives, helped develop and build capacity and strengthened its partners' ability to deliver. It will continue to adapt the toolbox for maximum effectiveness.

Visibility, information and communication

In 2023, DG ECHO aims to increase awareness, understanding of and support for humanitarian issues, especially in the EU and in non-EU countries where the EU is funding major humanitarian operations, by organising high-impact public awareness, information and communication actions. Providing transparent, accountable information on the impact of EU humanitarian aid and disaster response, and its underlying values, is crucial to underpinning and mobilising continued support and relief assistance. Effective communication will also highlight the EU's cooperation with international, national and local partner organisations in delivering relief assistance to people affected by humanitarian crises.

DG ECHO's communication approach reflects the special characteristic of humanitarian aid, with a view to preserving a distinct identity for principled, needs-based humanitarian action, in line with the European Consensus on Humanitarian Aid and the Communication on the EU's humanitarian action.

Communicating the EU's response to sudden-onset, ongoing and protracted crises remains at the core of communication planning, together with awareness-raising on more strategic themes, including IHL, the humanitarian principles, prevention of and preparedness for climate-related disasters and 'forgotten crises'. Communication channels will include traditional print media, digital and social media products, visits by

⁹⁹ [http://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/?qid=1431445468547&uri=CELEX:42008X0130\(01\).page.7](http://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/?qid=1431445468547&uri=CELEX:42008X0130(01).page.7).

journalists, audio-visual programmes and media partnerships, online and offline content promotion, and strategic actions with humanitarian partners on key campaigning issues. The various communication initiatives will also be complemented by the stakeholder and outreach activities around the annual European Humanitarian Forum.

Joint communication actions with the European Commission's humanitarian partners are integral to this approach. Operational activities funded by DG ECHO will therefore fully integrate this imperative in its overall approach, aligned with the visibility requirements of the Commission's corporate model grant agreement, and its subsequent guidance to DG ECHO's funded partners.

Where appropriate, DG ECHO's communication actions will contribute to the Commission's corporate communication, in particular on the implementation of #NextGenEU¹⁰⁰, the themes of the European Green Deal, and the EU in the world¹⁰¹ (the latter in collaboration with the other external policy DGs in the Commission and the EEAS).

3. Delivery, coordination and control of humanitarian aid

3.1 Ways and means of delivering aid

Field network

The field network of 50 field offices in 42 countries is considered one of DG ECHO's key strengths and a distinctive feature of the Commission's humanitarian aid policy. Composed of both international and local experts, it contributes decisively to the EU's status as a 'reference donor', whose strong position in international forums is based on first-hand operational knowledge. The field network makes it possible to improve the quality of humanitarian aid by ensuring coordination with stakeholders, including EU Delegations, Member States and international organisations. The field network is flexible, responsive, and adjusted to the need for humanitarian interventions. It enables the strengthening of the EU reaction capacity in situations where a sudden crisis arises, increasingly building on the synergies with civil protection.

Its basic role is to step up the effectiveness and suitability of the EU's humanitarian action by:

- helping identify and evaluate humanitarian needs in the field, and their possible evolution;
- monitoring EU-funded humanitarian aid projects, providing technical advice on needs assessment, analysing proposals and lessons learned;
- contributing to the coherent roll-out of policy guidelines guaranteeing a consistent level of quality for EU-funded humanitarian aid projects; and
- representing the Commission in relevant humanitarian aid clusters/forums, advocating with relevant stakeholders at local/regional/global level, within the framework established by headquarters, and ensuring appropriate communication and visibility actions, while keeping office structures flexible, agile, adapted to needs and based on appropriate resource, logistics and security management arrangements separate from the EU Delegations.

Therefore, the field network is crucially important in helping to increase the impact of humanitarian aid and improve DG ECHO's ability, on behalf of the Commission, to determine priorities.

Relations with (international) partners

¹⁰⁰ https://europa.eu/next-generation-eu/index_en.

¹⁰¹ <https://futureu.europa.eu/processes/EUInTheWorld?locale=en>.

DG ECHO carries out its humanitarian aid mandate by funding projects proposed by partner organisations (currently around 200). The partner organisations are European humanitarian NGOs, international organisations (including UN agencies), and specialised agencies in the Member States¹⁰². With some of these organisations (strategic partners, who jointly account for more than half of the annual humanitarian budget, and programmatic partners), DG ECHO organises annual strategic/high-level dialogues to discuss major issues of shared interest. It will continue to coordinate the EU's preparation for meetings of the governing bodies of those strategic UN partners for which it has the lead, which includes liaising with EU Member States.

Having a diverse range of partners is important, as it allows comprehensive coverage of an ever-growing list of needs in complex situations across the world. Grants and contributions are decided on the basis of the best proposals covering the needs of those most vulnerable. Partner organisations make a commitment to highlight the origin of EU aid.

Programmatic partnerships

Quality funding is at the heart of the Grand Bargain 2.0¹⁰³, leading to i) a *quid pro quo* approach, ii) humanitarian actions being increasingly efficient and effective, iii) accountability to beneficiaries, iv) support to local actors, v) greater predictability of funding, vi) flexibility, vii) simplified reporting, and viii) donor visibility to deliver a maximum of aid to vulnerable populations. DG ECHO is committed to continue supporting this process.

Programmatic partnerships are one way to implement these shared commitments. They support multiannual strategic and geographic priorities of shared interest between DG ECHO and its partners, and they promote innovative policy approaches.

The programmatic partnerships allow activities that require a longer timeframe to be put in place, such as capacity-building actions for local partners or a nexus programme. The expected benefits are:

- more and/or better outcomes at the end of the programme than if the partner had embarked on successive but distinct annual projects;
- efficiency gains and economies of scale, increasing the number of direct beneficiaries.

Since 2020, DG ECHO has launched pilot programmatic partnerships with four NGO partners¹⁰⁴: UNICEF, the FAO, the IFRC, and with the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC).

The programmatic partnership model will be rolled out in 2023. It will be used as part of the humanitarian response in specific crises/regions where the underlying multiannual approach addresses the needs of vulnerable populations in an efficient and effective manner, while at the same time supporting strategic priorities of mutual interest.

3.2 Coordination and information exchange

Various mechanisms are in place to ensure coordination and the exchange of information on crisis response and humanitarian aid activities in general, including:

- exchange of information on overall operational strategies and on responses to specific crisis situations, which is a regular feature on the agenda of the Council Working Group on Humanitarian Aid and Food Aid attended by Member States;
- crisis reports, which are shared with Member States and contribute to shared assessments and understanding of the situation on the ground, therefore helping with the overall coordination of the EU's and Member States' humanitarian response;

¹⁰² https://ec.europa.eu/echo/partnerships/humanitarian-partners_en.

¹⁰³ <https://interagencystandingcommittee.org/grand-bargain-official-website/grand-bargain-20-structure>.

¹⁰⁴ Acted, Concern Worldwide, IRC-DE and STC-DK.

- regular exchanges with partners at headquarters and in the field;
- the European Disaster Response Information System, which collects data on DG ECHO's and Member States' humanitarian aid activities;
- the Common Emergency Communication and Information System, which enables information exchange, situational awareness and coordination during emergencies with the UCPM member and participating states;
- the Emergency Response Coordination Centre (ERCC), which is a 24/7 coordination hub enabling coordinated and swift responses to disasters by supporting humanitarian aid and civil protection activities by means of:
 - facilitating a coherent EU response during emergencies, and supporting other EU services and the Member States in crisis situations;
 - supporting the institutional crisis management process as well as other DGs (on 1 February 2020, it took over the Commission's duty system under phase 1 of the general rapid alert system (**ARGUS**) from the Secretariat-General, so all incoming communications concerning an ongoing or potential crisis are directed to the ERCC);
 - acting as the 24/7 operational focal point in the context of the Integrated Political Crisis Response arrangements and in a coherent information flow for the production and dissemination of the integrated situational awareness and analysis reports;
- international forums and donor groups, in which DG ECHO continues to participate, e.g. the Good Humanitarian Donorship initiative, the ICRC Donor Support Group, the IFRC Donor Advisory Group and the OCHA Donor Support Group;
- regular exchanges of views in the European Parliament on the EU's response to crises (in particular in the Development Committee, but also increasingly in the Foreign Affairs Committee);
- *ad hoc* crisis coordination meetings of the Commission DGs and services and where appropriate the EEAS, which are aimed at exchanging information (e.g. ARGUS meetings, EEAS Crisis Platform);
- regular information exchange and upstream coordination with the relevant Commission's services (DG INTPA, DG NEAR and FPI) in relation to crisis response interventions under the 'NDICI - Global Europe' Regulation¹⁰⁵ and in relation to the humanitarian-peace-development nexus to ensure optimal deployment of DG ECHO resources and coherence of interventions across EU funding instruments;
- regular information provided to Member States focal points about activating the EHRC tool in emergency situations;
- regular geographical evaluations each with a suitable thematic/sectoral focus, to cover all regions in which DG ECHO operates and cover all humanitarian themes and sectors every 5 years, with the results being posted on DG ECHO's website¹⁰⁶; and
- thematic platforms, such as the Global Network against Food Crises.

3.3 Monitoring the use of funds

Correct implementation of EU-funded operations is ensured by the Commission by several layers of checks and monitoring at internal level and by external actors. This includes appropriate rules and procedures for providing financing to third parties, including review procedures, where appropriate, as well as rules and procedures to ensure compliance with EU restrictive measures¹⁰⁷, account being taken of the relevant principles of IHL.

¹⁰⁵ Regulation (EU) 2021/947 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 9 June 2021 establishing the Neighbourhood, Development and International Cooperation Instrument Global Europe, amending and repealing Decision No 466/2014/EU and repealing Regulation (EU) 2017/1601 and Council Regulation (EC, Euratom) No 480/2009 (OJ L 209, 14.6.2021, p. 1).

¹⁰⁶ <https://ec.europa.eu/echo>.

¹⁰⁷ www.sanctionsmap.eu Please note that the sanctions map is an IT tool for identifying the sanctions regimes. The source of the sanctions stems from legal acts published in the Official Journal (OJ). In case of discrepancy between the published legal acts and the updates on the website, it is the OJ version that prevails.

Evaluation

Evaluation is a key tool for increasing the effectiveness and efficiency of EU initiatives. DG ECHO's 5-year evaluation programme provides comprehensive evaluation coverage of its humanitarian aid and civil protection activities over the relevant period.

In 2022, the following evaluations will be completed and the reports will be made available on DG ECHO's evaluation webpage¹⁰⁸:

- evaluation of the second phase of the ESSN-2, January 2018-March 2020;
- evaluation of the EU's humanitarian interventions in the Horn of Africa, 2016-2020, and DG ECHO's partnership with the ICRC;
- the EU's humanitarian interventions in disaster preparedness, 2015-2020;
- the EU's humanitarian response to sudden-onset disasters, 2016-2020, and DG ECHO's partnership with the IFRC;
- the EU's humanitarian interventions in the Sahel and in the food assistance and nutrition sectors, 2016-2020 (combined evaluation);
- DG ECHO's humanitarian response to epidemics, and its partnership with the WHO, 2017-2021 (combined evaluation).

The following evaluations are currently ongoing and will be completed in 2023:

- evaluation of humanitarian logistics in the European Commission's civil protection and humanitarian aid operations, 2018-2022, and of the Mobility Package within the Emergency Support Instrument re-activation, 2020-2022;
- evaluation of regional crisis in Venezuela, and the partnership with the UNHCR (2017-2021);
- Interim evaluation of the UCPM (2017-2022).

Controls carried out by DG ECHO

The main aspects of DG ECHO's environment as regards checks include the following supervision and monitoring procedures and prior and subsequent checks:

- strict mechanisms for the selection and quality control of NGOs and international organisations as DG ECHO partners, with explicit requirements for their financial credentials;
- assessment of needs of people affected by crises through a worldwide network of DG ECHO field experts;
- appraisal of project proposals and on-the-spot project monitoring through a worldwide network of DG ECHO field experts;
- regular field visits to project sites by geographical desk officers, technical experts, external auditors, and DG ECHO managers;
- obligation for partners to produce reports after each operation finishes to justify their expenses. DG ECHO's operational and financial desk officers carry out a thorough analysis of the reports, with checks on eligible expenditure; and
- external auditors contracted by DG ECHO audit the legality and regularity of expenses claimed; sound financial management and control systems, and compliance with the requirements set out in the certificate¹⁰⁹.

The above monitoring mechanisms should not be seen in isolation. Each one helps provide assurance on the legality and regularity of transactions and their compliance with relevant rules and obligations. In the Commission, checks are also carried out by the Internal Audit Service, whose mission is to issue

¹⁰⁸ http://ec.europa.eu/echo/funding-evaluations/evaluations_en..

¹⁰⁹ <https://www.dgecho-partners-helpdesk.eu/ngo/humanitarian-partnership-2021-2027/eu-humanitarian-partnership-certificate-2021-2027>.

recommendations, opinions and advice on Commission's departments' and EU agencies' internal control system.

Additional controls

DG ECHO's operations and financial management are also subject to external audits. The European Court of Auditors audits the EU's finances and, increasingly, the performance of its activities. Observations and recommendations are published in the Court's annual and special reports, which are forwarded to the European Parliament and the Council.

Specialised committees of the European Parliament and Council exercise control over the financial management of Commission DGs and services. In this context, the European Parliament's Budgetary Control Committee organises annual hearings with a number of Commissioners as part of the procedure for discharging the European Commission's annual accounts.