



European
Commission



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European Civil Protection and Humanitarian Aid Operations

Health

What is it?

Health is a core sector of humanitarian assistance, but also a reliable measurement of its impact. The European Commission aims to provide high-quality humanitarian health assistance in fragile contexts, such as emergency medical assistance, outbreak preparedness and response, vaccination, hygiene promotion, and screening for malnutrition.

Health is interconnected with other humanitarian sectors, such as water and sanitation, nutrition, and food.

Why is this important?

According to the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD), before COVID-19, more than 76% of the world's poorest were estimated to be living in fragile contexts. Violence, conflict and disasters restrict people's access to primary health care. Climate change, population growth, mass migration and microorganisms resistant to treatments are hampering the Universal Health Coverage.

Despite the progress achieved, half of the world's population does not have access to a package of essential health services. As the world battles the coronavirus pandemic, some countries are also concurrently facing other disease outbreaks.

The most frequent medical needs arise from acute respiratory diseases, diarrhoea, complications during pregnancy and delivery, injuries (including from sexual and gender-based violence), under-nutrition, malaria, and other communicable diseases. Mental health and psychosocial support services help the people affected by crises to cope with high distress and trauma.

Weakened or disrupted health systems that are unable to provide prevention and treatment for non-communicable diseases and basic health services aggravate the problem. Prolonged conflicts have a devastating impact on healthcare provision, especially when health facilities and health workers come under attack.

How are we helping?

The European Commission provides around €200 million every year to support humanitarian health programmes. The EU's humanitarian health funding is governed by its Consolidated Humanitarian Health Guidelines, which help ensure coherence between the departments of the European Commission, EU Member States and other donors providing health assistance.

Recent examples funded by the European Commission's humanitarian aid department includes:

- improving access to primary healthcare: during the COVID-19 pandemic, it is even more important to ensure continued lifesaving services and comprehensive response to the outbreak, like in Sudan and in Bangladesh
- addressing specific health needs of women and girls (sexual and reproductive health services) in Iraq and Syria
- preventing and responding to disease outbreaks (such as cholera, measles, and Ebola outbreaks) in Yemen and the Democratic Republic of Congo
- providing mental health and psychosocial support in Afghanistan, Libya, and Syria
- supporting adapted and culturally sensitive healthcare services to refugees and migrants in Türkiye

In addition, EU humanitarian aid also ensures the treatment of severe and moderate malnutrition, and access to safe water. To mobilise medical and public health teams and equipment for rapid response to emergencies, the European Commission and countries joining the EU Civil Protection Mechanism have launched the European Medical Corps. Countries can offer their specialised health units in support of populations hit by disasters inside and outside the EU.

Under the EU Civil Protection Mechanism, medical capacities are being developed as part of rescEU. This is a new European reserve of capacities aimed to protect citizens from disasters and manage emerging risks, such as medical emergencies and chemical, biological, radiological and nuclear incidents. Currently, rescEU provides for medical areal evacuation for highly infectious disease patients and disaster victims, Emergency Medical Teams and a stockpiling reserve of medical equipment and therapeutics.

The European Commission is also actively involved in the Global Health Cluster, which is the main international forum for coordinating humanitarian health assistance led by the World Health Organization (WHO). The European Commission is strengthening the collaboration with the European Centre for Disease Control (ECDC) to inform policy direction and strategy to tackle health emergencies effectively.

Facts & figures

EU Half of the world's population does not receive the health services it needs

More than **80%** of epidemics occur in conflict-affected countries

Malaria kills over **400,000** people every year

Largest EU-funded humanitarian health interventions in 2020:

- Syria
- Democratic Republic of the Congo
- Afghanistan
- Yemen
- Iraq

EU humanitarian health funding:
nearly **€200 million** a year