

# BANGLADESH

22 March – 04 April 2018

The UN Human Rights Council adopted a [resolution](#) on 23 March 2018 on the human rights situation in Myanmar. The resolution was adopted by a vote of 32 in favor, five against and 10 abstentions. The Permanent Representative of Myanmar [rejected](#) the resolution.

As of 2 April 2018, **1,947 families** have been relocated to three sites by UNHCR and IOM, with the assistance of partners, for various reasons, including construction works, landslide and/or flood vulnerability, and new arrivals. Out of those, 962 were relocated due to being at high risk of flooding and/or landslides.

As of 28 March 2018, **60,982 families** received upgraded shelter kits, including bamboo poles, rope, shelter-grade tarpaulin and tools. UNHCR and partners are accelerating shelter distributions ahead of the rainy season to reach tens of thousands more families, and also providing biodegradable sandbags to help to anchor structures.

## POPULATION FIGURES

**869,994** Total number of refugees in Bangladesh (figure pending verification)

**671,300\*** Estimated new arrivals in Bangladesh since 25 August 2017

## STAFFING & PARTNERS

**224** staff currently working on the emergency compared to **49** prior to the crisis. **150** are national staff. **23** partners compared to **7** prior to the crisis.

\* As reported by the Inter-Sector Coordination Group.

## FUNDING

**USD 238.8 million**

Requested for UNHCR's emergency response in 2018.

**USD 28 M** Received      **USD 210.8 M** Remaining needs

12...      88%



Families waiting in line to receive assistance in Kutupalong settlement. UNHCR and partners continue to undertake monsoon preparations, in addition to ongoing distribution of shelter materials and core relief items, and other assistance. © UNHCR/Hector Perez

## Arrival trends

Since January 2018, over 7,400 refugees arrived in Bangladesh, with some 910 arriving during the last two weeks alone (18-31 March 2018)<sup>1</sup>. Although the influx has slowed since the onset of the crisis, refugees continue to cross the border into Bangladesh. Some 671,300<sup>2</sup> refugees have fled Myanmar to Bangladesh since 25 August 2017, with the overall refugee population in the area of Cox's Bazar reaching 869,994 in March 2018. During interviews with new arrivals, over 30% said that the death or loss of a family member was the main reason for their flight. Around 23% said they had left relatives behind in Myanmar who plan on coming to Bangladesh.



Children at the Transit Center in Kutupalong, where newly arrived refugee families are received, and provided with the immediate assistance they need. © UNHCR/Dalal Alsharhan

## Planning for voluntary return to Myanmar

The Governments of Myanmar and Bangladesh bilaterally agreed to an 'arrangement' for the voluntary return of Rohingya refugees to Myanmar on 23 November 2017, and a corresponding 'physical arrangement' that will guide the implementation on their prior agreement on returns on 16 January 2018. These agreements set forth commitments by both governments to ensure the refugees' right to voluntary, safe and dignified return to their places of origin in Myanmar, and to start a process to address the root causes in Myanmar in line with the recommendations of the Advisory Commission on Rakhine State. While UNHCR is not a party to these bilateral agreements it is referred to therein as having a key role in assessing the voluntariness of potential returns and assisting in any actual repatriation.

<sup>1</sup> Information on arrivals at border points are reported through various sources which cannot always be verified or confirmed.

<sup>2</sup> Approximately 671,300 new arrivals are reported as of 25 February 2018, according to the ISCG.

The UN High Commissioner for Refugees, Filippo Grandi has said that the solutions to the crisis lie in Myanmar. He stressed that refugees have the right to voluntarily return home, but that conditions in Myanmar are not currently conducive to refugees' safe and dignified return. He said that the odds are growing against an early solution, but that this was not a reason to give up. The High Commissioner's comments came at the launch of the Joint Response Plan (JRP) for the Rohingya Humanitarian Crisis, on 16 March, which calls for USD 951 million to enable UN agencies and NGO partners to continue delivering lifesaving assistance during the period March-December 2018. UNHCR is appealing for USD 238.8 million as part of its [Supplementary Appeal](#) for 2018 in order to continue to respond to the needs of hundreds of thousands of refugees, who are now preparing to face a harsh monsoon season.

With discussions on returns regularly being reported in the media, refugee communities remain anxious about their future. Over the past months, refugees have frequently said to UNHCR that they will not consider going back to Myanmar unless questions of citizenship, legal rights, access to services, justice, and restitution are addressed.



© UNHCR/Hector Perez

*In the UNHCR-supported livelihoods center for Rohingya refugees managed by implementing partner TAI, women receive vocational training, learning how to sew and earn an incentive salary making sanitary wear (pants and washable napkins), produce soap and tooth powder. These items are included in hygiene kits distributed to refugees twice a year. © UNHCR/Hector Perez*

## UNHCR's response

### *Protection activities*

As part of its community outreach program, launched in December 2017, UNHCR and protection partners continue to train community outreach members (COMs) from diverse groups within the refugee community. Over the past two weeks, COMs reported refugees' concerns about shortage of potable water, in addition to various protection concerns. Shelter, health, and food concerns were also among the top issues reported by refugees. Based on data collected from various partners, health and protection

referrals rank the highest among other types of referrals. Out of those being referred, women of 18 to 50 years old are the main group seeking such assistance.

Over the past week, COMs have been mobilized together with UNHCR partner, ACTED, to sensitize the community on road construction, relocation modalities, assistance, as well as the identification of vulnerable refugees. UNHCR together with partners also participated in community outreach plans to inform refugees of monsoon and cyclone risks relevant to the location of their shelters and to engage in preparedness activities.



*UNHCR, partners, and COMs team leaders brainstorming and discussing roles and responsibilities for emergency preparedness and response.*  
©UNHCR/Vipawan Pongtrangoon

UNHCR and partners regularly coordinate to ensure that the issues identified by COMs are addressed and that refugees are engaged and informed about the progress of activities to improve their living conditions. COMs also refer refugees to UNHCR's partners Technical Assistance Inc. (TAI) and Bangladesh Rural Advancement Committee (BRAC) for support and assistance.

On 22 March 2018, UNHCR facilitated a session on "Protection for first responders" during a training of trainers (ToT) for UNHCR and IOM protection staff. The trained participants will provide training to the community-based "Disaster Risk Reduction and Response Safety Units" which are composed of 50 refugee volunteers per site. These units are being established to conduct specific preparedness activities and act as the first responders on fire and other emergencies (landslides, cyclones and other weather events).



*Children play in Chakmarkul refugee settlement in Whykong, Cox's Bazar, which houses close to 12,000 refugees who fled their homes in Myanmar.*  
©UNHCR/Caroline Gluck

UNHCR and partners TAI and Relief International (RI) continue to respond to reported cases of sexual and gender-based violence (SGBV) in Kutupalong and Nayapara settlements. Survivors are provided with counselling and, based on their needs, some receive psychosocial support, legal assistance, medical treatment, and emergency medical care. In addition, UNHCR and partners engage with the refugee community to provide information on SGBV services to women, girls, and boys through outreach and awareness raising activities. Other initiatives are also planned to strengthen the

engagement of men and boys in SGBV programs.

On 21-22 March 2018, UNHCR conducted a session on “SGBV Risk Mitigation” to enhance the capacity of WASH (water, sanitation, and hygiene) and shelter staff in dealing with and mitigating SGBV incidents.

The Gender in Humanitarian Action (GiHA) Working Group, which is co-chaired by UN Women and UNHCR, released on 1 April 2018 a gender equality [checklist](#) for the monsoon and cyclone season, highlighting the importance of integrating gender equality in disaster preparedness activities and plans.

Since January 2018, over 400 unaccompanied and more than 1,300 separated children were identified and assisted by UNHCR and its partners. As of 1 April 2018, close to 7,000 children benefitted from psychosocial support through structured play and other activities at Child Friendly Spaces (CFS), which are established throughout the settlements.

As of 29 March 2018, 25 temporary learning centers have been upgraded to semi-permanent classrooms and 23,111 children are enrolled in primary and secondary education activities supported by UNHCR.



UNHCR funded Temporary Learning Centre for Rohingya refugees run by UNHCR's implementing partner CODEC in Kutupalong refugee settlement. © UNHCR/Hector Perez

### *Provision of services and assistance*

As of 28 March 2018, 60,982 families received upgraded shelter kits, including bamboo poles, rope, shelter-grade tarpaulin and tools. UNHCR and partners are accelerating shelter distributions ahead of the rainy season to reach tens of thousands more families, and also providing biodegradable sandbags to support the anchoring of structures. Between 16 and 29 March, 8,243 households received compressed rice husks (CRHs) in Kutupalong and Nayapara. This alternative fuel is helping to mitigate the

environmental impact resulting from the collection of firewood by refugees. Some 13,443 households received core relief items (CRIs), 4,503 households were provided with hygiene kits, while 485 refugees received shawls.

UNHCR continues to work with the Government of Bangladesh and partners on the priority relocation of refugee families currently living in areas that are vulnerable to flooding and/or landslides to safer parts of the settlements. As of 2 April 2018, 1,947 households have been relocated to three sites by UNHCR and IOM, with the assistance of partner organizations, for various reasons, including construction works, landslide and/or flood vulnerability, and new arrivals. Out of those households, 962 were relocated from areas that are at high risk of flooding and/or landslides.



*Work is well underway to pave the main arterial road cutting through Kutupalong-Balukhali, the largest Rohingya refugee settlement in Cox's Bazar district, Bangladesh which houses more than 570,000 refugees. ©UNHCR/ Caroline Gluck*

Currently, upwards of 150,000 refugees are estimated to be living in areas that are at high risk of floods and/or landslides. UNHCR, WFP and IOM continue to undertake emergency preparedness work through the Site Management Engineering Project (SMEP), which is a joint initiative to enhance monsoon preparedness and response. SMEP activities currently include earthworks and other engineering projects to ensure conditions for the safe relocation of refugees whose shelters are at risk of flooding, landslides, or both.

Water, Sanitation and Hygiene (WASH) issues continue to be among the top concerns for the refugee population. UNHCR and partners continue to respond to urgent needs and to strengthen preparation efforts ahead of the rainy season. Since 25 August 2017, UNHCR's partner NGOs constructed 3,600

latrines, 899 tube wells, and 1,614 bathing cubicles. In order to reduce risks of contamination of water sources during the monsoon when flooding will affect the refugee settlements, UNHCR decommissioned 62 and dislodged 315 latrines between 23 and 29 March as part of its WASH preparations.

As part of the response to the water shortage crisis affecting the refugee and host populations in Nayapara in Teknaf sub-district of Cox's Bazar, UNHCR and its partners are preparing for possible water trucking operations in the coming weeks. Meanwhile, the cash-for-work program to increase the main water reservoir of Shalban is ongoing, with 1,921m<sup>3</sup> already excavated.

### *Peaceful co-existence between host and refugee communities*

UNHCR is installing 270 solar street lights in public areas within and on the outskirts of refugee settlements, and in host communities. They are being installed in public places, including near schools and mosques, to benefit the local community.



*Young girls pictured at one of the UNHCR supported learning facilities. © UNHCR/ Hector Perez*

## Working in partnership

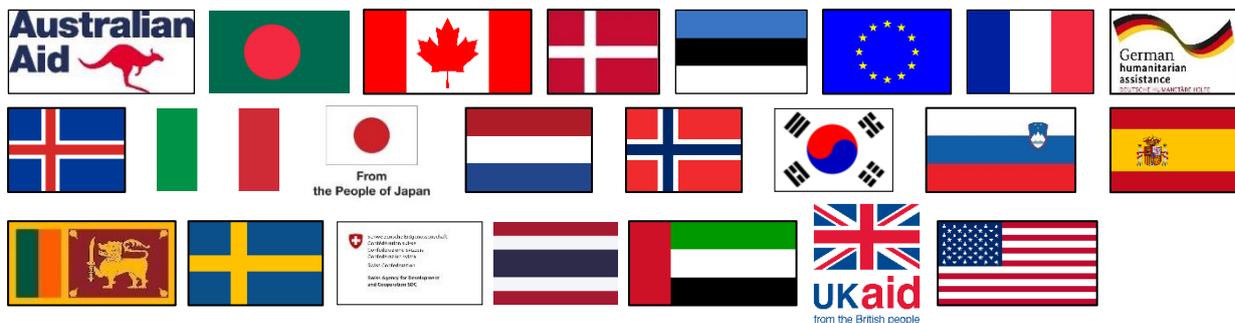
At Dhaka level, UNHCR co-chairs the Strategic Executive Group with IOM and the UN Resident Coordinator. UNHCR exercises a lead role in the protection response for all refugees, including heading the Protection Working Group, and coordinates closely on the delivery of assistance with UN agencies and other partners through the various sectors and working groups under the Inter-Sector Coordination Group (ISCG). UNHCR's main government counterpart is the Ministry of Disaster Management and Relief (MoDMR). In Cox's Bazar, UNHCR works closely with the RRRC, the local representative of the MoDMR, and appointed Camps-in-Charge in different settlements.

UNHCR is working in close collaboration with a range of international and national actors in Bangladesh, and it has scaled up its partnership network to 23 partners, including nine national NGOs. In 2018, UNHCR also plans to increase national and local sourcing of goods and services. So far, UNHCR has already signed 35 local framework agreements worth over USD 20 million, 10 of which are for construction alone, while others are for the procurement of CRIs, shelter material, and services for persons of concern.

## Donor Support

The response of the Government and people of Bangladesh has been extraordinarily generous. More support is required from the international community to assist Bangladesh in its humanitarian response to the refugee situation. UNHCR has called for the commitment of international donors to support the immediate needs of refugees and host communities in Bangladesh, and to work for a solution to the situation.

### Donor country contributions to the UNHCR Bangladesh operation in 2017 and 2018, and donor unrestricted funding to UNHCR's global operations



With thanks also to the many private donations from individuals, foundations, companies including Calouste Gulbenkian Foundation, IKEA Foundation, Kuwait Finance House, OPEC Fund for International Development, Prosolidar-Onlus Foundation, Qatar Charity, Rahmatan Lil Alamin Foundation, The Big Heart Foundation, The Church of Latter-Day Saints, and UPS Corporate. Special thanks also to UNOPS and CERF.

### CONTACTS

**Showvik Das Tamal**, Assistant External Relations Officer, UNHCR Bangladesh, [tamal@unhcr.org](mailto:tamal@unhcr.org), Tel: +880 17 7874 4379

**Mai Hosoi**, External Relations Officer, UNHCR Bangladesh, [hosoi@unhcr.org](mailto:hosoi@unhcr.org).

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