

# Bangladesh

December 2020

Over 5,600 COVID-19 cases were confirmed in the Cox's Bazar district by mid-December, **including over 360 Rohingya refugees** living in the camps. 10 refugees have died to date. Nearly 17,000 refugees have been tested for COVID-19.

Over **550 people** from both refugee and host communities have so far **received treatment** for COVID-19 in UNHCR Severe Acute Respiratory Infection Isolation and Treatment Centres and Intensive Care Units.

In line with global trends, the pandemic in Bangladesh is negatively affecting the **overall protection environment for refugees**. Ensuring the protection of refugees remains a key priority.

## POPULATION OF CONCERN

### Host Countries

Bangladesh

**864,281**

This figure includes the 829,221 Rohingya refugees registered in the joint Government-UNHCR registration and 35,060 refugees living in two Registered Camps that pre-date the 2017 influx.

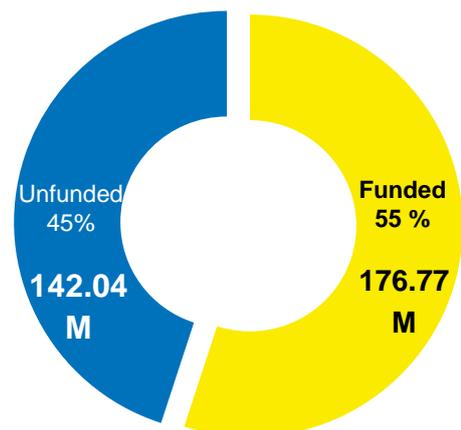
Of the total refugee population:

- Children (0-17 years old): **446,971 (52 percent)**
- Women and girls: **446,376 (52 percent)**
- Persons with special needs: **4.3 percent**
- Average household size: **4.6**

## FUNDING (AS OF 15 DECEMBER 2020)

**USD 318.8 M**

requested for the Bangladesh refugee situation.



## UNHCR PRESENCE

### Personnel

**309** National

**108** International

### Offices

Representation Office in Dhaka

Sub Office in Cox's Bazar



Health staff at UNHCR supported COVID-19 treatment centre send off the first patient to recover and be discharged. Photo: Relief International.

## Working with Partners

UNHCR is a co-chair of the Strategic Executive Group (SEG) in Bangladesh with the UN Resident Coordinator and IOM. UNHCR leads on the protection response through the Protection Working Group in Cox's Bazar. UNHCR coordinates the delivery of its assistance with humanitarian partners, including nine UN agencies and more than 135 national and international NGOs through sectors and working groups as part of an Inter-Sector Coordination Group (ISCG). UNHCR's main government counterparts are the Ministry of Disaster Management and Relief and the Office of the Refugee Relief and Repatriation Commissioner (RRRC) in Cox's Bazar, as well as the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Ministry of Home Affairs in Dhaka, among others. UNHCR works closely with the RRRC and Camp-in-Charge officials across 34 camps. Over 7,000 refugee volunteers also play a crucial role in the response with helping to support the running of the camps.

**UNHCR's partners:** MoDMR (Ministry of Disaster Management and Relief) | Action Aid Bangladesh | ACF (Action Contre la Faim) | Bangladesh Red Crescent Society (BDRCS) | BRAC (Bangladesh Rehabilitation Assistance Committee) | Caritas Bangladesh | Center for Natural Resource Studies (CNRS) | CODEC (Community Development Centre) | COAST (Coastal Association for Social Transformation Trust) | Danish Refugee Council | FH Association (Food for the Hungry) | GK (Gonoshasthaya Kendra) | Helvetas Swiss Intercooperation | Handicap International | IUCN (International Union for Conservation of Nature and Natural Resources) | Light House | Mukti Cox's Bazar | NGO Forum for Public Health | Oxfam GB | Relief International | RTMI (Research, Training and Management International) | Save the Children International | World Vision | Terre des Hommes | TAI (Technical Assistance Incorporated) | BLAST (Bangladesh Legal Aid and Services Trust) | Rights Jessore

## Main Activities

### Protection

- UNHCR's protection interventions focus on access to territory, registration and documentation, access to assistance, community participation, prevention and response to gender-based violence, protection from sexual exploitation and abuse, child protection, education, and access to justice. UNHCR actively engages other actors in its protection activities, including government agencies, UN partners, NGOs, civil society organisations, and donors.
- Mitigating the social protection consequences of the COVID-19 pandemic and ensuring ways to safeguard the resilience and psychosocial well-being of refugees is a key priority for the operation.

### Health

- UNHCR works with the Ministry of Health and Family Welfare, the Office of the Refugee Relief and Repatriation Commissioner (RRRC), and other partners to strengthen health services for refugees and host communities. Services are provided through 35 health facilities supported by UNHCR. Mental health and psychosocial support are integrated across UNHCR's programme. The treatment and prevention of moderate and severe acute malnutrition is implemented through 21 nutrition facilities. More than 1,300 community volunteers support the health and nutrition programme to raise awareness and refer refugees in need of care and support.
- In response to COVID-19, UNHCR established four quarantine facilities and two Severe Acute Respiratory Infection Isolation and Treatment Centres (SARI ITCs) with 194 beds, as part of an inter-agency effort. To date, over 400 refugees and host community members have received care. UNHCR is also supporting an 18 bed Intensive Care Unit in Cox's Bazar's main district hospital and 20 bed ward for severe COVID-19 patients.

### Water and Sanitation

- Improvements in water, sanitation and hygiene over the past two years have included upgraded latrines with larger volume pits; a faecal waste treatment plant (with Oxfam) to serve 150,000 individuals; and an increased number of chlorinated water networks, with 55 now complete and others under construction.
- In water scarce areas in Teknaf Upazila of Cox's Bazar district, shortages impact on both refugees and host community members. Surface water is the best option for meeting these needs. Temporary dams and reservoirs secure water supplies for the dry season and upgrades are planned to address these critical needs.
- Hygiene promotion activities have been prioritized in 2020 in response to COVID-19. Nearly 2,000 handwashing points were installed at distribution centres and other centres and locations. COVID-19 messaging has continued throughout the year, so that refugees and host community members know how to protect themselves and what to do should they experience symptoms.

### Shelter and Site Management

- Site development activities such as drainage, constructing and maintaining footpaths, stairs, bridges, and slope stabilization works continue to be a priority for the annual monsoon period. As of July 2020, 28 kilometres of roads and pathways, 79 kilometres of drainage, 63 kilometres of retaining structures, 33 kilometres of steps and 4.8 kilometres of bridges had been constructed by UNHCR.
- Some 176,156 shelter-tie-down kits have been distributed to refugee households. In 2020, nearly 25,000 shelters were repaired or replaced. In 2021, UNHCR will introduce innovative two-storey steel frame shelter designs to help decongest some parts of the camps and improve living conditions.

### Energy and Environment

- UNHCR has supported 103,476 refugee and Bangladeshi households with liquified petroleum gas for cooking. A pressure cooker pilot project is underway, which may offer the promise of improving fuel efficiency by an estimated 30 percent.
- Solar powered mini grids are being piloted in selected areas of the camps to increase access to lighting and renewable energy.

### Host Community Engagement

- In 2020, some 5,550 host community households received livelihood support from UNHCR and its partners. 19 Host Community Solidarity Projects focused on the repair or construction of road networks, drainage systems, and buildings, responding to some impacts and additional needs created by hosting refugees.

### Working Toward Durable Solutions

- UNHCR prioritises work toward durable solutions for refugees in Bangladesh, including through their safe, dignified and voluntary repatriation to Myanmar. UNHCR supports refugees to build the capacities that would help with their sustainable return and reintegration, including by improving their access to education and skills development activities.

## Financial Information

In 2020, UNHCR is appealing for USD 318.8 million to respond to the needs of refugees. The recorded contributions for the operation amount to **US\$ 176,776,222**. UNHCR is grateful for the critical support provided by donors who have contributed unearmarked funds, as well as those directly earmarking to the operation.

**In 2019 and 2020, UNHCR has received support the people and governments of:**

Austria, Australia, Bangladesh, Canada, China, Denmark, Estonia, the European Union, Finland, France, Germany, Ireland, Italy, Japan, the Republic of Korea, Lithuania, the Netherlands, New Zealand, Norway, Qatar, the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia, Singapore, Spain, Sweden, Switzerland, Turkey, the United Arab Emirates, the United Kingdom, and the United States of America.

UNHCR is sincerely grateful for the additional support received from individuals, foundations, and companies worldwide, including: Athmar Holdings, Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation, CERF, Education Cannot Wait, Fondation EDF, Mabarrat Ghanaem Al Khair, Qatar Charity, Shih Wing Ching Foundation, and Thani Bin Abdullah Bin Thani Al Thani Humanitarian Fund.

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