



KEY FIGURES

BENEFICIARIES

961,729

Total registered refugee population



52%
Female



52%
Children



48%
Male

as of 30 June 2023

PARTNERS

24

of partners implementing key UNHCR activities in 2023

NGO **13**

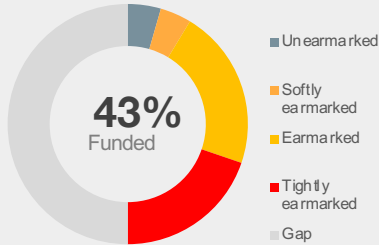
INGO **10**

Government **1**

FUNDING

275 M

Funding for 2023 operations



as of 27 June 2023

HISTORY

UNHCR has been a friend of Bangladesh since 1971, providing life-saving aid to some 10 million refugees forced to flee during the Liberation War.

Today, UNHCR and partners manage 16 camps in Cox's Bazar, including Nayapara and Kutupalong Registered Camps, plus the island of Bhasan Char, supporting the Government of Bangladesh to provide essential services and meet the protection needs of one million Rohingya refugees, including special services for women, children and persons with disabilities. Most arrived in 2017, fleeing persecution, large-scale violence and human rights violations.

Support is additionally extended to host communities while continuously working towards solutions to ensure that refugees can return in a safe, dignified, voluntary and sustainable way once conditions in Myanmar allow.

OPERATIONAL UPDATE

June 2023



Rohingya musicians perform on World Refugee Day in the Cox's Bazar camps. © UNHCR.

OVERVIEW

'Hope away from home' was this year's theme for World Refugee Day, observed annually on 20 June. UNHCR and partners marked the occasion with live art, music, storytelling, poetry, games and more, exploring art's power to ignite hope and imagine solutions. In Dhaka, UNHCR partnered with Bangladesh's Liberation War Museum for the second year to launch an exhibition featuring the work of 19 camp-based Rohingya photographers. Three photographers attended the opening, sharing stories and hopes with ambassadors, government officials, partners, and members of academia and civil society. In Cox's Bazar, a 'travelling cultural carnival' captured imaginations through a series of events showcasing the richness of Rohingya culture. The Artmobile, a colorfully designed mobile art studio created by Rohingya and local community artists, served as a mascot as it travelled with folk musicians through the various camps. Refugee voices led the day, celebrating the depth and diversity of Rohingya talent and reminding us of their creativity and resilience.

Earlier in June, UNHCR Deputy High Commissioner Kelly Clements made a four-day visit, meeting refugees, donors, and humanitarian and government partners. In the face of food cuts (a second ration cut took effect on 1 June, reducing the value of camp food vouchers by 33% since January) and shrinking funds, [Clements called](#) for more doors to be opened for Rohingya to support themselves: "If the Rohingya are given the opportunity to gain some income, they can purchase most of their food themselves. They want to make their own choices."

In camps, Clements visited projects exemplifying UNHCR's resilience agenda — such as the Balukhali shelter pilot where an improved shelter design seeks to better protect refugees from extreme weather or fire, and the skills development and production centre supported by Fast Retailing, where Rohingya women learn to sew pads and underwear for women and girls in camp while earning incentives. The facility is one of several promising projects developed by UNHCR and partners that help the community stand on their own feet through teaching them valuable skills and offering meaningful opportunities to better their lives. In talks with Bangladeshi leadership in Cox's Bazar and Dhaka, Clements spoke of ways to build upon this good work, including through partnerships with the private sector and key multi-lateral institutions such as the World Bank. She [urged](#) the international community to continue support.

June also saw the launch of activities supported by new private sector partner (PSP) [Mohammed bin Rashid Al Maktoum Global Initiatives](#), who join PSPs Fast Retailing, Qatar Charity and the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation in the Rohingya response. The Emirati foundation will support climate-smart agriculture and skills development activities for refugees and host communities in Cox's Bazar. The new partnership is a step in the direction of ensuring operational sustainability as it helps strengthen communities' capacity for self-reliance while tapping into growing private sector's interest in creating livelihood opportunities for refugees.

Meanwhile, at the end of June, refugees celebrated the festival of Eid-ul-Adha for the sixth year away from home. Despite enduring hardship and many hard days of rain, they marked the day with characteristic generosity as the community ensured that the poorest and most vulnerable Rohingya had means to enjoy festival traditions.

STRATEGIC PRIORITIES

1. BASIC RIGHTS, PROTECTION & EDUCATION

Refugee rights are respected, and they have access to education and protection, including protection against gender-based violence.

2. ADEQUATE LIVING CONDITIONS IN A GREEN ENVIRONMENT

Essential and sustainable services (including safe shelters, health, nutrition, WASH, energy) are ensured, and the environment is protected.

3. SKILLS & CAPACITY BUILDING TO SUPPORT DURABLE SOLUTIONS

Work toward sustainable solutions, with voluntary repatriation at the centre, supported by skills development, livelihoods and capacity building for refugees.

4. DIVERSIFIED FUNDING & PARTNERSHIPS

Partnerships with development and private sector actors to innovate, support and localize operations.

5. CREATING A POSITIVE NARRATIVE

Lead the narrative on the Rohingya refugee response and improve public attitudes toward the Rohingya.

DONORS

UNHCR in Bangladesh is grateful for the support of Australia, Belgium, Canada, Denmark, France, European Union, Germany, Ireland, Italy, Japan, Jersey, the Republic of Korea, Luxembourg, the Netherlands, New Zealand, Norway, Philippines, Sweden, Switzerland, the United Kingdom, the United States of America.

With additional support received from UN funds including Education Cannot Wait (ECW) and the Central Emergency Response Fund (CERF) and private donors, foundations, corporates, and companies worldwide including Fast Retailing Co. Ltd., Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation, Qatar Charity, and the Mohammed bin Rashid Al Maktoum Global Initiatives.

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KEY UPDATES

- 2023 JOINT RESPONSE PLAN:** As of 30 June, the 2023 Joint Response Plan (JRP) is 25% funded with USD 226 million received against the overall appeal of USD 876 million, including USD 67 million for Bhasan Char. The 2023 Plan provides protection services and essential assistance to nearly one million vulnerable Rohingya refugees and a half million Bangladeshis in host communities. [Read more.](#)
- CYCLONE MOCHA APPEAL:** On 16 May, a joint funding appeal of USD 42.1M was launched to support rebuilding and response efforts after the devastating storm, which exhausted bamboo stocks, contingency funds and other resources. In June, UNHCR received contributions of USD 7.8M against its appeal of 8.8M, which included USD 5M to build sturdier shelters and ensure better site planning. [Read the appeal.](#)
- FOOD ASSISTANCE REDUCTION:** From 1 June, due to acute funding cuts, refugees in Cox's Bazar now receive monthly food vouchers worth USD 8 per person, or 27 cents per day. This is just 67% of full assistance, or only 83% of energy requirements per SPHERE standards — far short of the recognized daily global humanitarian standard of 2,100 kcal. The second ration cut comes on the heels of the March reduction of USD 12 to USD 10 per person monthly. While the most vulnerable Rohingya families continue to receive USD 3 top-ups to purchase fresh food items, and young children and pregnant/breastfeeding women get critical extra calories and nutrients through specialized feeding programmes, humanitarian partners are on high alert for signs of negative impacts and coping mechanisms. Deteriorating community health, nutrition and food security have been forecast, as well as increases in negative coping mechanisms such as child labour, early marriage and human trafficking unless funds can be secured to restore full food assistance. On Bhasan Char, refugees continue to receive USD 15 per person per month.
- PILOT REPATRIATION INITIATIVE:** The repatriation pilot exercise — a bilateral agreement between Myanmar and Bangladesh aiming to return 1,100 Rohingya refugees to Rakhine state — was the focus of the 5 June [meeting](#) between UNHCR Deputy High Commissioner Kelly Clements and Bangladesh Foreign Secretary Masud Bin Momen in Dhaka. Clements emphasized that returns should be voluntary, sustainable, in safety and with dignity — and received strong assurances from the senior government official that this would be the case. Though UNHCR has not been involved in the bilateral agreement, it is committed to ensuring that, if and when Rohingya refugees choose to realize their right to return, their decision will be fully informed and wholly voluntary. [Read UNHCR's statement.](#)
- DENGUE FEVER:** While cases of the fever continue to rise in the Cox's Bazar camps, they are at half of last year's levels: 1,600 confirmed cases as of 30 June vs 3,224 cases reported in the same period last year. Smart prevention efforts by the WASH and Health Sectors have raised community awareness, improved disease surveillance and rehabilitated areas of stagnant water where mosquitos breed — but the overcrowded camps and this year's early heavy rainfall create ideal conditions for the spread of the disease. UNHCR leads the Community Health Working Group which, through partners, continues to work on comprehensive prevention measures.

IN CASE YOU MISSED IT...

- In June, [new funding contributions](#) for UNHCR Bangladesh were received from Central Emergencies Response Fund (CERF), Japan, New Zealand, Norway, Switzerland and the United States of America. As of 27 June, 43% of overall funding needs have been received.
- On World Environment Day (5 June), UNHCR voiced commitment to and celebrated progress towards climate action goals in Cox's Bazar. Working with partners, refugees and the Government of Bangladesh, UNHCR has helped replant 3,100 hectares of trees while transitioning 100% of refugee households to cooking with LPG gas instead of firewood, restoring forests and saving them from destruction. [Watch video.](#)



UNHCR Deputy High Commissioner Kelly Clements sports an eco-friendly jute sunhat produced by refugee women at the jute skills development and production centre. © UNHCR.

UPDATE ON ACHIEVEMENTS

STRATEGIC PRIORITY #1: BASIC RIGHTS, PROTECTION & EDUCATION

- **Registration update exercise:** The exercise to verify and update the registration data, including family composition, of refugees in the two registered camps continued in June. Uptake was strong in the first two weeks, then declined mainly due to Eid-ul-Adha celebrations. By 27 June, 5,804 registered refugees (1,330 households) in Kutupalong Registered Camp (KRC) were verified out of 18,063 refugees (3,372 households) who are registered in KRC.
- **Girl Shine programme:** On Bhasan Char, the island's first cycle of Girl Shine wrapped with 23 girls completing the 'life skills curriculum', equipped with knowledge and skills to realize their dignity, health and well-being. Five women completed the 'caregivers' curriculum' which is designed to sensitize them to the needs of their girls. A second cycle will begin in July. Meanwhile, in Cox's Bazar, the UNHCR gender-based violence team completed the first round of Girl Shine monitoring, observing 16 sessions conducted by three partners and evaluating the effectiveness of the delivery of different modules. The 'trust module' rated the highest at 44%, while 'health and hygiene' and 'safety modules' were found to be 25% effective. A dashboard has been created to support ongoing monitoring.
- **World Day Against Child Labour:** On 12 June, UNHCR and child protection partner CODEC organized activities to discuss root causes and harmful impacts of child labour with 200 refugee and host community members participating including parents, adolescents and children. As they recognized child labour as a cascading effect of household poverty and lack of livelihood opportunities, both Rohingya and Bangladeshi participants requested they be provided more chances to earn livelihoods as well as vocational training and non-formal education for their children.
- **Numeracy and literacy training:** BRAC Institute for Educational Development, a UNHCR education partner, launched a two-week training for facilitators of basic numeracy and literacy sessions for adolescent and child protection clubs, as well as Girl Shine facilitators. While 292 facilitators initially joined the training, 41 Bengali-speaking participants from the host community later withdrew as the training was offered only in Burmese. Organizers are developing an alternative plan to reach the Bengali-speakers.

STRATEGIC PRIORITY #2: ADEQUATE LIVING CONDITIONS IN A GREEN ENVIRONMENT

- **Strengthening camp infrastructure:** In June, site development activities in UNHCR-managed camps included slope protection, drain repair and construction, and building of footpaths and bamboo bridges. Some 3,000 meters of retaining walls, 3,100 m of drains, and 2,400 m of pathways were constructed. 4,300 households received regular shelter assistance.
- **Update on shelter stocks:** Heavy rainfall and strong winds damaged individual shelters and camp infrastructure, and 1,709 monsoon-affected households received shelter assistance across 16 UNHCR-managed camps in June. The impact of monsoon rains is expected to intensify in July, increasing risk of shelter damage and thus need for robust stocks of shelter materials. Through concerns remain that suppliers' delivery of bamboo continue to fall short in quality and quantity, the rate of deliveries improved over the month: 497,000 pieces of *mulji* bamboo* and 16,865 pieces of *borak* bamboo* were received. In July, 262,700 pieces are scheduled to be delivered to sustain response capacity.
- **Alternative shelter designs:** Construction is underway for eight shelters in Camp 26, piloting an alternative design that, while still portable, is less fragile to weather and fire. The Camp 26 shelters are being built at the request of the Camp-in-Charge, with approval from the Office of the RRRRC, to house extremely vulnerable households in dignity and safety. As the improved shelters will require less maintenance and repair, they will be more cost-effective.
- **Fencing ponds for child safety:** The risk of children drowning while playing in ponds and waterlogged areas remains during the monsoon season. Community volunteers have been mobilized to raise awareness, and community members and child protection partners requested that site management build fences around seven ponds.
- **Planting season:** UNHCR and partners are planting ten hectares of mixed vegetation including grasses, shrubs and trees, adding to 3,100 hectares already planted in Cox's Bazar. In addition to greening the camps, the mixed vegetation will help stabilize and bind soils, filter contaminated particles from water networks, lock away carbon and prevent soil erosion.
- **Integrated drain cleaning and solid waste management:** Safeguarding public health and the environment through an integrated approach to drain cleaning and solid waste management is a key WASH priority. Household waste collection began in six blocks in May and will gradually expand across camps in Ukhiya and Teknaf. Meanwhile, from March to June, 48 kilometers of drains (28% of camp-wide needs) were cleaned, and 504 non-designated waste dumping areas were identified, of which 73% have been cleaned/rehabilitated into green spaces supporting livelihood activities such as gardening and vegetable production. In Bhasan Char, recommendations from a comprehensive study on solid waste management were presented to WASH Sector partners and officials in charge.

*Two bamboo species used for housebuilding. *Borak* is a giant species, often used for load-bearing support. *Mulji*, which is thinner, is also used for weaving crafts and as a source of paper pulp.

UPDATE ON ACHIEVEMENTS

ADEQUATE LIVING CONDITIONS IN A GREEN ENVIRONMENT cont'd

- **Dengue fever:** While cases of the mosquito-borne fever continued to rise in the camps, the current rate is 50% of 2022 levels. As of 30 June, 1,600 confirmed cases and three verified deaths have been reported in 2023, compared to 3,224 cases in the same period last year — reflecting the success of joint WASH and Health Sector efforts to stamp out mosquito breeding grounds, increase surveillance and raise community awareness on prevention. Prevention efforts are ongoing, with Community Health Working Group partners collaborating with Sectors on surveillance, community awareness, hygiene promotion and other key measures.
- **Vitamin A supplement and malnutrition screening campaign:** From 18-26 June, partners conducted the first campaign round, reaching 94% of households in Ukhiya and Teknaf camps. Community health and nutrition volunteers made door-to-door visits, screening children aged 6–59 months for acute malnutrition and providing Vitamin A supplements.

STRATEGIC PRIORITY #3: SKILLS & CAPACITY BUILDING TO SUPPORT DURABLE SOLUTIONS

- **Global Affairs Canada skills development project:** As of June, 1,535 refugees, including 878 women, are engaged in a second batch of vocational skills training in five trades: solar system installation and maintenance, concreter, health worker, sewing and tailoring, and agriculture. After completing 360 training hours, the project graduates are offered placement in incentive-based livelihood activities, community work and various activities in the camps
- **Fast Retailing skills development and production project:** In the project's second phase, 150 Rohingya women will learn to make sanitary napkins and female underwear while receiving volunteer incentives, joining 250 women trained in phase one. As of 30 June, the production centre has handed over 111,604 female hygiene kits (each consisting of 12 sanitary pads and 3 female underwear) for distribution to women and girls in camp. By year-end, production output will reach 1.3 million sanitary napkins and 700,000 pieces of underwear, all made in-house by the 400 trainees.
- **Mohammad Bin Rashid Al Maktoum Global Initiatives (MBRMGI) skills and livelihoods project:** From June, new funding from MBRMGI supports climate-smart agriculture and skills development activities in the camps and host community. 4,847 refugee households will learn to apply climate-smart methods to grow nutritious food for their families, while 2,500 Bangladeshi households will learn to operate small-scale on-farm businesses, including how to link markets.
- **Livelihoods on Bhasan Char:** Enrolment in vocational skills projects targeting Rohingya men and women aged 18-24 on the island has fallen short of targets, due in part to low literacy levels. A June adjustment to livelihoods activities implemented by partner BRAC will allow some savings to be reallocated to UNESCO for the development of an accelerated and blended adult learning programme. Meanwhile, NGO Forum continued skills training of 50 refugee women, who will begin production of several jute and cloth items in July, and Sector co-leads UNHCR, WFP and BRAC agreed on a new strategic framework aimed at advancing a diversified package of livelihoods activities for the largest possible number of refugees on the island.

STRATEGIC PRIORITY #4: DIVERSIFIED FUNDING & PARTNERSHIPS

- **Missions:** In June, UNHCR hosted or assisted in eight visits to Cox's Bazar camps and Bhasan Char from donors and partners. Visitors included UNHCR Deputy High Commissioner Kelly Clements, ambassadors of Saudi Arabia and Norway, and Director General of European Civil Protection & Humanitarian Aid Operations (ECHO) Maciej Popowski.
- **Private sector partnerships:** In June, projects supported by private sector partners included skills and livelihood initiatives under Fast Retailing Co. Ltd. (UNIQLO) and Mohammed bin Rashid Al Maktoum Global Initiatives (MBRGI), WASH projects under the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation, and energy and shelter support from Qatar Charity.

STRATEGIC PRIORITY #5: CREATING A POSITIVE NARRATIVE

- **Social media:** In May, UNHCR Bangladesh accounts published 35 Facebook posts, 41 tweets, and 16 Instagram posts on topics including World Refugee Day and World Environment Day. Follow [@unhcr_bgd](#) for more.
- **"Life Through Rohingya Eyes" photo exhibit:** On World Refugee Day, UNHCR and the Liberation War Museum (LWM) of Bangladesh inaugurated a four-week exhibition of photographs offering an intimate look at life in the world's largest refugee camp through the lens of nineteen Rohingya refugee photographers. [Read more.](#)
- **World Refugee Day media coverage:** Also on World Refugee Day: an op-ed by UNHCR Representative Johannes van der Klaauw appeared in The Daily Star (English) and Prothom Alo (Bangla). Meanwhile, the Dhaka Tribune published a special feature showcasing photos from Rohingya photographers, including several from the LWM exhibition, accompanied by an essay on the power of art to ignite hope by Rohingya photographer and poet Shahida Win.

WORLD REFUGEE DAY



The Artmobile, a mobile art studio designed by Bangladeshi and Rohingya artists. © Abdullah, Rohingya photographer



Rohingya musicians perform for World Refugee Day. © UNHCR

WORLD REFUGEE DAY



World Refugee Day exhibition at the Liberation War Museum in Dhaka. © LWM



World Refugee Day exhibition at the Liberation War Museum in Dhaka. © LWM

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