UNHCR The UN Refugee Agency | Bangladesh

OPERATIONAL UPDATE
March 2024

Celebrating International Women's Day with the Refugee Repatriation & Relief Commissioner and partners in Cox's Bazar. @UNHCR/Sumayet Naiyer Oshmita

POPULATION

978,003 # of registered refugees

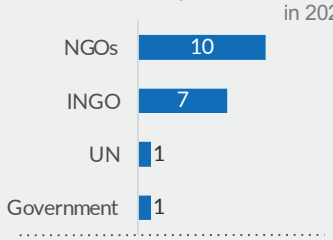
96.4% in 33 camps in Ukhiya & Teknaf
3.6% on the island of Bhasan Char

51% Female
49% Male
52% Children

as of 31 March 2024

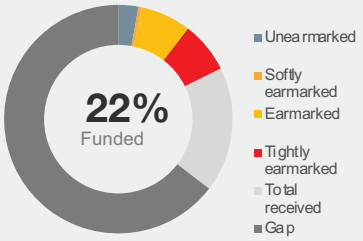
PARTNERS

19 # of partners implementing key UNHCR activities in 2024



FUNDING

275 M Funding for 2024 operations



as of 31 March 2024

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.

KEY UPDATES

- **2024 JOINT RESPONSE PLAN (JRP):** The 2024 JRP appeal was launched on 13 March in Geneva, requesting USD 852.4 million in continued support for 1.35 million vulnerable Rohingya refugees and host communities. In 2023, the Plan was 61.5% funded with USD 538.7 million received against an overall appeal of USD 876 million. Now, more than ever, international solidarity with Bangladesh and refugee protection is needed as the conflict in Myanmar escalates, and 95% of Rohingya households in Bangladesh remain dependent on humanitarian assistance. Read more.

- **25TH RELOCATION TO BHASAN CHAR:** On 1 March, 1,137 refugees (326 households) were relocated by the Government of Bangladesh to Bhasan Char, where UNHCR and partners provided essential assistance and protection services. This relocation — the 25th since 2020 — brings the island's current population to 35,059 Rohingya. The 2024 JRP also includes an appeal of USD 68.4 million to meet the needs of up to 75,000 refugees, should voluntary relocations ramp up in 2024.

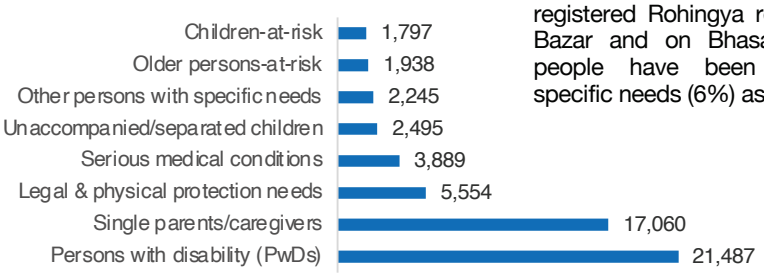
- **CAMP SECURITY:** Advocacy continued with key authorities, including Armed Police Battalion and Camp-in-Charges, to improve the security situation in the camps and address areas of concern. Meanwhile, Protection Sector partners finalized an Action Plan designed to improve camp safety through a five-prong approach. Concerns about safety and security remain high among refugees in the Cox's Bazar camps. 48% of arrivals in the 1 March relocation to Bhasan Char reported a desire for better security as their primary consideration for relocation.

- **INTERNATIONAL WOMEN'S DAY (IWD):** On 8 March, UNHCR joined partners, local authorities and refugees to celebrate IWD 2024 in Cox's Bazar and on Bhasan Char. Through roundtable discussions, art competitions, games and more, participants honoured women and girl's contributions and reflected on the need to continue investing in progress towards gender equality and empowerment in the Rohingya community.

- **MENTORING ROHINGYA GIRLS:** UNHCR and partners are developing a new strategy to empower graduates of the Girl Shine curriculum to become peer mentors in their own communities. In March, 225 graduates were selected to be the camps' first Girl Shine Stars, and are receiving training on how to best support their fellow teen girls.

- **PEOPLE WITH SPECIFIC NEEDS:**

Of the current population of 978,003 registered Rohingya refugees in Cox's Bazar and on Bhasan Char, 56,465 people have been identified with specific needs (6%) as of 31 March.



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, the People's Republic of China, Denmark, Finland, the European Union, Ireland, Luxembourg, the Netherlands, Norway, Republic of Korea, Sweden, Switzerland, the United Kingdom, and the USA.

With additional support received from UN funds including Education Cannot Wait (ECW), UN AIDS and the Central Emergency Response Fund (CERF), and private donors, foundations, corporates, and companies worldwide including adidas AG, Fast Retailing Co. Ltd., and Tanmeia Foundation.

Contacts:
Amy Jo Davies, daviesa@unhcr.org, External Relations Officer, Cox's Bazar;
Romain Desclous, desclous@unhcr.org, Senior External Relations Officer, Dhaka.

- PRODUCTION CENTRES: As of 31 March, 494 refugee women were working in five underwear and sanitary napkin production centres, an 18% increase from February. By December 2024, the centres will have 600 fully-trained female volunteers. Meanwhile, nine newly-trained women joined the jute production centre, taking the total to 172 volunteers.

- VOCATIONAL & PRE-VOCATIONAL TRAINING: 4,500 refugees (50% women) were engaged in pre-vocational learning, acquiring the foundational literacy and numeracy skills necessary to advance to curriculum-based training. At the same time, 3,324 refugees (56% women) were engaged in vocational skills training. In Cox's Bazar, 1,043 participants were assessed for competency, with a 90% pass rate. To date, 779 graduates (60% female) have been successfully referred and placed as volunteers.

- WASTEWATER MANAGEMENT: Wastewater runoff from the camps in Teknaf poses health and environment risks to both refugee and host communities, and disrupts livelihoods. In March, UNHCR organized interim measures such as waste collection and drain cleaning campaigns to urgently address pollution to host community salt farms, while partnering with BRAC to explore optimization of the existing water treatment plant. Advocacy is ongoing for long-term solutions through development donors and government WASH agencies.

- HEALTH & NUTRITION RATIONALIZATION: In an effort to further rationalize service delivery in the camps, UNHCR closed the standalone nutrition stabilization centre and moved services to the Friendship-run primary healthcare centre in Camp 26. Friendship, which operates as a UNHCR health and nutrition partner in 2024, also took over mental health and psychosocial support services in Camps 26 and 27 from BRAC. Meanwhile, UNICEF confirmed the takeover over eight integration nutrition facilities from 1 July, allowing UNHCR to better allocate resources to core activities.

- REBUILDING CAMP 5: 218 shelters were handed over to 184 families in March, taking the total number of families rehoused to 709 families in 769 new shelters (out of a target out 791 shelters). Some families received double shelters due to large household sizes. 12 families whose shelters were located on landslide-prone areas have rejected the new shelters on safer sites offered by UNHCR as they prefer not to move. Community engagement is ongoing to encourage these families to relocate. Out of 197 planned WASH blocks (which integrate a bathing cubicle, latrine and handwashing facilities per every four shelters), 181 latrines and 194 bathing cubicles were fully constructed by month-end.

- FIRE PREPAREDNESS & RESPONSE: To improve fire response in hard-to-access areas of the camps, UNHCR assessed and identified placement locations for 10,000 litre water tanks in all 16 UNHCR-operated camps. Installation will be completed by June 2024.

- MISSION REPORT: In March, UNHCR hosted or assisted 12 visits from donors and partners to Cox's Bazar camps and Bhasan Char, notably the ambassadors of Japan and the UK, and a Swedish delegation including the Crown Princess, the Minister for International Development Cooperation and Foreign Trade, and the UNDP Assistant Secretary-General.

- FUNDING UPDATE: As of 31 March, the UNHCR Bangladesh operation was 22% funded against an operating plan of USD 275 million. New contributions were received from Tanmeia Foundation and the European Union. UNHCR also acknowledges an earlier contribution from adidas AG.

IN "CASE YOU MISSED IT…

- ***"Most people think that refugees are intentionally living in another country for their own benefits. I learned that not correct. They are forced to be here."*** Young filmmaker Nowrin Islam Rio took home the top prize in the 'Forced to Flee' category in the 2024 Dhaka International Mobile Film Festival (DIMFF), supported by UNHCR. Learn more.

- UNHCR Bangladesh social media accounts published 25 Facebook posts, 39 tweets and 19 Instagram posts in March, including an IWD 2024 spotlight on women firefighters, a glimpse at Ramadan in the camps, a broadcast of the 2024 JRP launch, and a look at the films created through UNHCR's mobile filmmaking collaboration with university students.

On International Women's Day (8 March), UNHCR celebrated the contributions of all staff — from drivers to health officers to communication team members— working for the protection and wellbeing of women and girls. Watch video.

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