

OVERVIEW

As part of its shelter strategy, UNHCR supports refugee families build safer homes before the start of the monsoon season in Bangladesh.

Since 25 August 2017, over **713,000** refugees have fled Myanmar and settled in hilly terrains in the southernmost part of Bangladesh. UNHCR is working with the Government of Bangladesh (GoB) and partners to ensure that they receive the protection and assistance which they need.

Bangladesh is amongst the top five countries globally prone to natural disasters¹. In the past 28 years, it has been impacted by **219** natural disasters². The south-eastern part of the country receives more rain in two months than London does in a whole year³.

When refugee families first arrived, they built shelters where they could find available land, using limited materials they could find, such as small bamboo sticks or donated items. The structures provided almost no protection from the elements. They were not waterproof and often dark, poorly ventilated and of low height, not allowing people to stand up inside.

In its effort to improve refugees' living conditions, UNHCR developed a shelter strategy, which aims to ensure that

refugees have homes that meet international standards, resist the winds and are waterproof. The new shelters are also designed to provide height, ventilation, light and security (UNHCR is piloting the use of padlocks).

Between November 2017 and 06 May 2018, UNHCR has distributed upgraded shelter kits, composed of bamboo poles, ropes, tools, and tarpaulins, to **78,133** out of **80,000** families. Prior to the arrival of the cyclone season, UNHCR is also delivering, through its partners, Tie Down Kits to offer greater protection to the light weight structures in windy conditions. Distributions of kits are being accelerated ahead of the rainy season, to reach more families.

After receiving upgraded shelter kits, refugees carry out the construction work themselves and make individual decisions about the design of the shelters – e.g. where doors should be relocated, internal partitioning, how the roof space and outside areas can be used etc. Some vulnerable families, for instance female-headed households with small children, receive help from UNHCR's partners to carry and build their shelters. Partners are also on-hand to assist with advice and guidance, in case of need.



Shelter found amongst most families in Kutupalong makeshift settlement. © UNHCR/Caroline Gluck

¹UNU-EHS, [World Risk report 2017](#)

²UNDRP, Bangladesh: [Disaster Risk Reduction as Development](#).

³Weather online, [Chittagong weather averages](#).



Shelter found amongst almost all refugees staying in Nayapara's makeshift settlement. ©UNHCR/ Richard Evans



Young men use UNHCR shelter kits to try to build stronger shelters. ©UNHCR/ Matthew Saltmarsh

In some cases, the new bamboo structures are built over an older existing shelter. After the roof of the shelter is fitted, the older shelter is dismantled and the materials are recycled and used to construct the walls of the new home.

For newly-arrived refugees, the shelters are built from scratch by themselves. The tarpaulin provided to families is the standard UNHCR tarpaulin which is designed to withstand harshest conditions, made high quality material and is resistant to UV rays.

Some refugees have been creative in tailoring the buildings to their needs, such as creating sliding doors and shelving to provide extra protection from the sun or rain.

However, despite the improved shelters, extreme and unpredictable weather conditions during the upcoming monsoon season could still put many refugees at risk, especially if cyclones occur. UNHCR continues to work with the Government of Bangladesh and it's partners to bolster the preparedness and response efforts.



Refugees play an active role in designing their shelter. Here a family decided to build a veranda. ©UNHCR/ Richard Evans

Working in partnership

In Bangladesh, UNHCR works in close collaboration with the government and humanitarian actors to coordinate the response. The Ministry of Disaster Management and Relief (MoDMR) and the Refugee Relief and Repatriation Commissioner (RRRC) are UNHCR's main government counterparts, in addition to Camp-in-Charge officials (CiCs) overseeing refugee settlements in the Cox's Bazar District.

UNHCR coordinates its interventions with humanitarian actors under the Inter-Sector Coordination Group (ISCG), of which UNHCR co-chairs the Strategic Executive Group (SEG) with the UN Resident Coordinator and IOM. UNHCR leads on the protection response for all refugees, and heads the Protection Working Group of the ISCG, together with the RRRRC.

To implement its response, UNHCR works closely with a 26 partners, both international and national actors:

ACF (Action Contre la Faim) | **ACTED** (Agency for Technical Cooperation and Development) | **ADRA** (Adventist Development and Relief Agency) | **BDRCS** (Bangladesh Red Crescent Society) | **BNWLA** (Bangladesh National Women Lawyers Association) | **BRAC** (Bangladesh Rehabilitation Assistance Committee) | **CARITAS BANGLADESH** | **CODEC** (Community Development Centre) | **DRC** (Danish Refugee Council) | **FH** (Food For the Hungry) | **GK** (Gonoshasthaya Kendra) | **HELVETAS Swiss Intercooperation** | **HI** (Handicap International) | **IUCN** (International Union for Conservation of Nature and Natural Resources) | **MDMR** (Ministry of Disaster Management) | **NGOF** (Ngo Forum) | **OXFAM** | **PUI** (Première Urgence Internationale) | **REACH** | **RI** (Relief International) | **RTMI** (Research Training and Management International) | **SCI** (Save the Children) | **SI** (Solidarités International) | **TAI** (Technical Assistance Incorporated) | **TDH** (Terre Des Hommes Foundation) | **WFP** (World Food Programme)

Local sourcing of goods and services is a priority for UNHCR.

Supporting the response

The response of the Government and people of Bangladesh is extraordinarily generous, and continuous support from the international community is critical to assist Bangladesh in the humanitarian response to the refugee situation. UNHCR has called for support for refugees and host communities, as well as sustained political efforts to work towards a solution for the situation. A Joint Response Plan (JRP) for the Rohingya Humanitarian Crisis was launched in March 2018 calling for USD 951 million for humanitarian actors to continue delivering lifesaving assistance until the end of the year. UNHCR is appealing for USD 238.8 million as part of its Supplementary Appeal for 2018 to enable the organization to respond to the needs of hundreds of thousands of refugees as they prepare to face a harsh monsoon and cyclone season.

Acknowledgement

UNHCR's humanitarian response in Bangladesh is made possible with the generous support of major donors who have contributed unrestricted funding to UNHCR's global operations, and donors who have generously contributed directly to UNHCR's operations in Bangladesh. UNHCR would like to acknowledge support received in 2017 and 2018 from the people and governments of:



UNHCR is grateful for the additional support received from many individuals, foundations, and companies worldwide, including Calouste Gulbenkian IKEA Foundation, Kuwait Finance House, Latter-Day Saints Charities, OPEC Fund for International Development, Prosolidar Foundation, Qatar Charity, Rahmatan Lil Alamin Foundation, The Big Heart Foundation, and UPS Corporate.

CONTACTS

Mai Hosoi, External Relations Officer, UNHCR Bangladesh, hosoi@unhcr.org

Dalal Al Sharhan, Reporting Officer, UNHCR Bangladesh, sharhand@unhcr.org

Showvik Das Tamal, Assistant External Relations Officer, tamal@unhcr.org