

BANGLADESH

1 – 31 May 2019

IN THIS UPDATE:

- *Cyclone Fani tests preparedness in Cox's Bazar*
- *Pre-monsoon rains and strong winds affect Rohingya settlements*
- *Over 300,000 Rohingya now issued new identity documents*
- *Low rainfall resulting in water shortages in southern settlements*
- *Refugee youth volunteer groups making a difference in their communities*
- *UNHCR's Goodwill Ambassador from Korea visits camps*

Over 300,000 Rohingya have received identity cards and documents under the ongoing **joint Government of Bangladesh-UNHCR registration exercise**. Six registration sites are currently operating and register an average of **4,000 refugees per day**.

In early May, Cyclone Fani developed in the Bay of Bengal.

The Cyclone Preparedness Programme (CPP) under the Bangladesh authorities applied a "three flag warning system" and raised one flag in camps in Cox's Bazar as a signalling the lowest warning level.

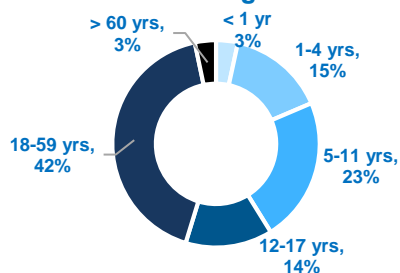
Population figures

(as of 31 May 2019)

910,908 Total number of refugees in Cox's Bazar

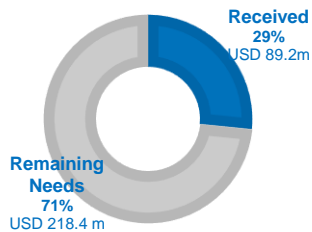
741,792 Estimated new arrivals since 25 August 2017

Age breakdown of refugees in Cox's Bazar



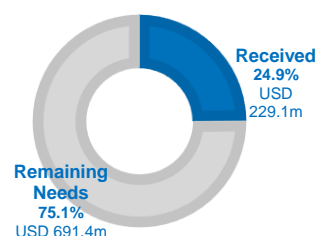
UNHCR FUNDING REQUIREMENTS 2019

307.6 m



JOINT RESPONSE PLAN FUNDING REQUIREMENTS 2019

920.5 m



UNHCR Goodwill Ambassador, Jung Woo Sung from Korea was briefed on UNHCR's efforts to use Liquid Petroleum Gas (LPG) as an alternative fuel in the refugee settlements in Cox's Bazar. The Goodwill Ambassador was on a three day mission, his second visit since 2017. LPG is more cost-effective as a fuel, more environmentally friendly, healthier for indoor cooking, and helps reduce risks for children who may otherwise have to go to forest areas to collect heavy loads of firewood. Photo: UNHCR/J. Matas

Cyclone Fani testing preparedness in Cox's Bazar

In the first week of May, UNHCR, alongside UN agencies, partners, and the Government of Bangladesh, conducted emergency preparations in response to the progression of Cyclone Fani in the Bay of Bengal. At its peak, Fani was designated a “high-end extremely severe cyclonic storm,” equivalent to a high-end Category 4 hurricane. In Cox's Bazar, a “one flag” warning—part of an established Government cyclone early warning system—was hoisted in the Rohingya refugee camps and the district overall to alert refugees and Bangladeshis of the cyclone's formation.

With Fani ultimately making landfall in Odisha (India) and affecting parts of northwest Bangladesh, the settlements in Cox's Bazar were spared the brunt of the Cyclone, with limited rain and winds affecting the area. Nevertheless, there were reported incidents of damaged shelters.

Prior to the storm's landfall, an inter-agency Humanitarian Coordination Cell was formed and met daily during the period of the cyclone threat to plan the response. UN agencies in Cox's Bazar jointly developed a 72 Hour+



UNHCR/S O'Brien

Extreme Weather Response Plan incorporating UN-wide strengths in addition to the strong presence of the IFRC/Bangladesh Red Crescent Society and identifying stocks, distribution points, and catchment areas for emergency deployment (based on estimated capacity of distribution points and surrounding population). Between the UN agencies, a minimum standard kit was agreed upon for emergency distributions, including an emergency shelter kit (ESK) (1 tarp, 1 bundle of 6mm rope, and 2 floor mats) and a WASH kit based on a 2 week supply per household (200 aquatabs (33mg), 5 bathing soaps (100g), and 2 jerry cans (10L)).

In addition to the joint response, UNHCR increased distribution of tie-down kits (TDK) (long iron pegs, rope, wire, and a solar light)— as part of UNHCR's already ongoing pre-monsoon preparations—which help anchor shelters against strong winds. Overall TDK distributions in May have now reached **58,977** households.

Immediately following the effects of the cyclone, UNHCR deployed its Emergency Response Teams (ERTs) as part of a simulation exercise to test decision-making, communications, and response cohesion, particularly with refugee community responders.

Pre-monsoon rains and strong winds affect Rohingya settlements

Pre-monsoon storms known as *Kalbaishaki*—or *Nor'westers*—hit Cox's Bazar in May, affecting refugee settlements in the district. Hundreds of shelters suffered different levels of damage, mostly to roofs by winds and minor flooding due to blocked drainage.

The heaviest of the storms hit Cox's Bazar on 25 May, causing significant damage resulting from gusty winds, particularly to shelters constructed with materials distributed earlier in the emergency that may now be worn down by the elements.

UNHCR has completed nearly 40% of an ongoing pre-monsoon shelter assessment which aims to provide targeted shelter assistance to refugee households, including upgrading materials like bamboo or plastic sheeting for roofs. Of shelters assessed to date, over 40% are estimated to be in need of some replacement items for fortification, with distribution of items to identified shelters provided simultaneously.

One of the lessons learned from the storms in May is a need for greater focus on incident reporting, particularly on ways to make inter-agency consolidated reports more rapidly available.

Over 300,000 Rohingya now issued with new identity documents

Over 300,000 Rohingya refugees from Myanmar have been registered and provided with new identity cards by the Bangladesh authorities and UNHCR.

As of end of May, the Government and UNHCR have registered 301,437 refugees (66,410 families) in the settlements in Cox's Bazar district.

Each day, over 4,000 refugees are registered at six different locations, where more than 450 staff are aiming to complete the process by late 2019.

Comprehensive registration is important for improving the accuracy of data on the Rohingya population in Bangladesh, providing the national authorities and humanitarian organizations with a better understanding of needs, and can also safeguard the right of Rohingya refugees to be able to return voluntarily to Myanmar in future.

UNHCR uses a Biometric Identity Management System (BIMS) that captures unique data, including fingerprints and iris scans. At the end of the process, refugees receive an ID card that includes a photo and key information, such as name, date of birth, and place of birth. The card also indicates Myanmar as the country of origin.

All refugees over the age of 12 receive the card, and families also receive an attestation showing the details of all family members, including younger children.

Low rainfall resulting in water shortages in southern settlements

Refugee settlements in southern parts of the Teknaf peninsula where over 140,000 Rohingya refugees are living are currently affected by water shortages due to low rainfall this year.

With only sporadic rainfall since November 2018, the water table has dropped to critical levels. At refugee settlements in southern Teknaf, groundwater is not available through most of the boreholes. Water is largely collected by capturing rain water in small reservoirs. Water shortages are a seasonal challenge generally in this part of Bangladesh during the summer period and affect both refugees and the local population.

The daily ration of water for refugees has been reduced from the normal minimum standard of 20 litres a day per person to 15 litres a day. As a result, UNHCR is expanding efforts to build better facilities to capture and preserve rain water during the monsoon season which is expected to start in June. Hundreds of refugees are currently involved in a project by the World Food Programme (WFP) and ADRA with support of UNHCR to build a new reservoir to capture rain in Teknaf.

UNHCR is exploring how to improve facilities to capture and keep rain more effectively. This work could also be an asset for host communities in the area and help resolve some of the chronic water shortages that have normally affected the area.

Refugee youth volunteer groups making a difference in their communities



A young Rohingya refugee from Myanmar has her iris scanned as a part of a registration exercise at Kutupalong refugee settlement, Bangladesh. © UNHCR/Will Swanson

Across the 34 Rohingya refugee settlements in Cox's Bazar district, young men and women, ranging from 15 to 25 years old, are forming groups to improve the daily life of their community. They all work together to lead and implement identified community services projects, with a focus on assisting persons with specific needs.

UNHCR is working with these groups and offers support with materials for projects that refugees identify and implement, which range from shelter repairs for older refugees to rebuilding paths, fixing damaged tube wells and latrines, making vegetable gardens to improve nutrition, and planting trees to provide shade and stabilise the soil.

The groups promote the need for all community members to play a role in the future of the community. The groups are open to all refugees and hold meetings in public spaces to demonstrate the impact of their unpaid voluntary activities in their communities.

Refugee women and girls are also signing up to women's and youth groups across the settlements in Ukhiya and Teknaf sub-districts.



A service project directed at latrine repair in Kutupalong by a men's volunteer group on 20 May 2019 Photo: UNHCR/Nord.

In collaboration with local partners TAI and BRAC, UNHCR has provided training and guidance to the community groups on topics of personal and family hygiene, emergency preparedness, and mental health self-care.

All the active volunteer groups are helping further identify, understand, and prioritise challenges within their community for discussion or action. It is an important mechanism for UNHCR and other partners to understand self-identified community needs.

The community groups also continue to grow as they inspire other refugees to join their efforts. In the first five months of 2019, the men, women, and youth groups collectively completed more than 500 service projects. Community groups are set to play an important role in supporting refugees as the monsoon approaches, given their ability to quickly mobilise their communities to respond and assist those in need of urgent help.

UNHCR's Goodwill Ambassador from Korea visits refugee settlements

UNHCR's Goodwill Ambassador from Korea, Jung Woo Sung, visited the Rohingya refugee settlement in Kutupalong in Cox's Bazar from 19-21 May 2019. This was his second visit to Cox's Bazar. He had previously visited in December 2017 during a period when the majority of refugees had just fled violence in Myanmar's Rakhine State.

The focus of the Goodwill Ambassador's visit was to see progress made within the camps after a year and a half of effort by the Government of Bangladesh and the international community to stabilize the emergency, including the work and activities undertaken by UNHCR.

He was also able to meet with Rohingya refugee families whom he had previously met in 2017 and heard about their life in Bangladesh since their arrival, as well as their hopes for the future.

The Goodwill Ambassador visited a joint Government of Bangladesh-UNHCR registration site and a children's learning centre. He was encouraged to see progress in living conditions of refugees and the need for solutions. He also expressed his commitment to increase visibility of the situation in Korea, including financial needs to support the ongoing work of UNHCR in Cox's Bazar.



UNHCR Goodwill Ambassador Jung WooSung visiting a learning centre to hear from children and parents. © UNHCR/J. Matas

Working in partnership

UNHCR co-chairs a Strategic Executive Group (SEG) in Bangladesh with the UN Resident Coordinator and IOM. The Refugee Agency leads on the protection response for all refugees, and heads a Protection Working Group in Cox's Bazar.

UNHCR welcomes its valuable partnership with a number of UN agencies and coordinates the delivery of its assistance with humanitarian partners through a number of working groups under the Inter-Sector Coordination Group (ISCG). UNHCR's main government counterpart is the Ministry of Disaster Management and Relief and its Cox's Bazar-based Refugee Relief and Repatriation Commissioner (RRRC). UNHCR staff work closely with the Camp-in-Charge officials in different refugee settlements, as well as a range of international and national actors. It has a strong network of **28 partners**:

Action Aid Bangladesh | **ACF** (Action Contre la Faim) | **ADRA** (Adventist Development and Relief Agency) | **BNWLA** (Bangladesh National Woman Lawyer's Association) | **Bangladesh Red Crescent Society** | **BRAC** (Bangladesh Rehabilitation Assistance Committee) | **Caritas Bangladesh** | **Center for Natural Resource Studies** | **CODEC** (Community Development Centre) | **COAST** (Coastal Association for Social Transformation Trust) | **Danish Refugee Council** | **FH Association** (Food for the Hungry) | **GK** (Gonoshasthaya Kendra) | **IUCN** (International Union for Conservation of Nature and Natural Resources) | **Handicap International** | **Helvetas Swiss Intercooperation** | **Light House** | **Norwegian Refugee Council (NRC)** | **Oxfam GB** | **Relief International** | **Mukti Cox's Bazar** | **NGO Forum for Public Health** | **RTMI** (Research, Training and Management International) | **Save the Children International** | **Sesame Workshop** | **Solidarites International** | **Terre des Hommes** | **TAI** (Technical Assistance Incorporated) | **World Vision**

UNHCR would also like to acknowledge the crucial role played by the refugees in the response; with **over 3,000 volunteers from the refugee community** who are often **the first responders on the ground**. UNHCR and partners have trained and work with **safety unit volunteers (SUVs)** who support the emergency response, **community outreach members** who support raising awareness on important issues and in addressing protection risks, **community health workers** who assist with outreach for health and nutrition, and others who provide further critical support to the refugee response.

Donor Support

The Government and the people of Bangladesh have shown extraordinary generosity in responding to the crisis. While support has been generous, more support and solidarity is required from the international community to assist the ongoing humanitarian response. Continued political efforts to work towards a solution to the situation remains vital. UNHCR is appealing for USD 307.6 million in order to respond to the needs of hundreds of thousands of refugees, as well as affected host communities.

UNHCR Bangladesh is grateful for the generous contributions of donors who have provided unrestricted and broadly earmarked funds, as well as to donors who have contributed directly to the Operation in 2018 and 2019:



With thanks to the many private donations from individuals, foundations, and companies such as the Arab Gulf Fund, Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation, Education Cannot Wait, International Islamic Relief Organization, Kuwait Finance House, Qatar Charity, Rahmatan Lil Alamin Foundation, The Big Heart Foundation, The Church of Latter-Day Saints, and UPS Corporate. Special thanks also to CERF.

CONTACTS: **Steven O'Brien**, External Relations Officer, UNHCR Cox's Bazar, obrien@unhcr.org
Mai Hosoi, External Relations Officer, UNHCR Dhaka, hosoi@unhcr.org

[LINKS: UNHCR data portal](#) - [UNHCR operation page](#) – [Facebook](#) – [Twitter](#) – [Latest stories](#) – [Instagram](#)