

COVID-19 Response 16-31 August 2020



The distribution of soap and masks in the camps is a priority activity that has been ongoing from the outset of the COVID-19 emergency. © UNHCR

Overview

As of 31 August, the World Health Organization (WHO) reported close to 4,000 cases of COVID-19 in Cox's Bazar in the host community, and some 100 refugees in the camps have also tested positive. Among the refugee population, 6 have died. To date, the health services put in place have had sufficient capacity to support all patients with COVID-19 and provide medical assistance. Over 280 people, including refugees and members of the host community, have so far received treatment in two UNHCR-supported Severe Acute Respiratory Infection Isolation and Treatment Centres (SARI ITCs) in Ukhiya and Kutupalong, as well as in an Intensive Care Unit that UNHCR was instrumental in establishing at Sadar Hospital, the District's principal healthcare facility.

There has been an easing of some lockdown measures in Cox's Bazar District. UNHCR and its partners continue to follow guidelines set by Bangladesh's Refugee Relief and Repatriation Commissioner (RRRC) on the critical activities that are permitted in the camps. The guidelines on critical activities allowed in the camps was last updated on 24 August, and includes limited registration activities and expanded monsoon response and repair work in addition to the most essential services related to health, water and sanitation and distribution of food, Liquefied Petroleum Gas (LPG) for cooking fuel and other items. UNHCR and its partners continue to exercise care in conducting activities in the camps with as low a footprint as possible, as the risk posed by the virus to the refugee community and humanitarian staff remains high.

Operational Update on Key Sectors



HEALTH

HIGHLIGHTS

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| 2 Severe Acute Respiratory Infection Isolation and Treatment Centres (SARI ITCs) in Ukhiya and Kutupalong | ■ Over 190 cases provided with care and assistance to date |
| Intensive Care Unit (ICU) ward in Sadar Hospital, Cox's Bazar | ■ 10 ICU / 8 high dependency beds continue to provide support (close to 90 admissions) |

Until now the treatment of COVID-19 cases in the camps has been managed on-site in health facilities that UNHCR and other humanitarian agencies have established in the District. UNHCR-supported Severe Acute Respiratory Infection Isolation and Treatment Centres (SARI ITCs) and an Intensive Care Unit in the Cox's Bazar District hospital have provided over 280 patients from the refugee settlements and the host community with support and care for COVID-19 to date. As of 31 August, over 200 patients have been successfully treated and discharged.

COVID-19 testing in the camps has increased in recent weeks. On average, during the reporting period, there have been close to 115 tests conducted daily in the camps. Increased testing is largely due to the work of refugee Community Health Volunteers (CHW) who are engaged in community-based surveillance and provide targeted counselling on testing to refugees identified with COVID-like symptoms. They support referrals, if required.

Mask production training for the community by the COMs continues with an enthusiastic response. Refugees are eager to learn new skills and find the mask production relevant and useful for their daily life. Since the initiative started at the end of May, over 4,300 training sessions were conducted reaching 9,500 refugees. This resulted in over 6,700 masks being made by community members. In addition to the masks the community is making, UNHCR has completed 22% of its planned distribution of masks across the camps it manages to approximately 91,000 households.

UNHCR's partners completed the production of 200,000 cloth face masks with refugee and host community women as part of a livelihoods project. These masks are also being fed into the ongoing distribution of masks in the camps.



COMMUNICATION WITH REFUGEES

HIGHLIGHTS

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| Community outreach ongoing | ■ Community-level outreach with 146,000 refugees reached with messages on COVID-19 |
| | ■ 9,115 support visits to older refugees |

UNHCR and community-based protection partners continue to work with the refugee community to conduct awareness-raising sessions on COVID-19 prevention and response in the refugee camps. Cumulatively since March, UNHCR-supported Community Outreach Members (COMs) have

reached some 146,000 refugees with key messages on COVID-19. A group of 248 COMs are dedicated to supporting older persons and to date have conducted 9,115 support visits. The restoration of internet services in the camps which took place on 28 August is expected to offer more opportunities to communicate with the refugee community through audio messages.



HOST COMMUNITY SUPPORT

HIGHLIGHTS

Livelihoods and host community support

- 5,200 host community households supported with cash payments as part of the COVID-19 response

UNHCR has completed a cash distribution for local Bangladeshi host community households through three partners. Some 5,200 local Bangladeshi households out of a target of 6,000 households have so far each received 4,500 Bangladesh Taka (approximately US\$ 53). In addition, 250 persons identified with specific needs under UNHCR's health programs have received one-off cash payments of the same amount. The cash is to assist families in the local community during the COVID-19 period due to the impact the situation has had on local livelihoods. These communities have generously supported the refugee response in Cox's Bazar over many years.

CONTACTS

Mai Hosoi, External Relations Officer, UNHCR Bangladesh (Dhaka) - hosoi@unhcr.org

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