

Queen of the Belgians meets Rohingya refugees in Bangladesh

PLACE

Cox's Bazar,
Bangladesh

DATE

08 February 2023



On her second day of visiting Bangladesh, Her Majesty the Queen of the Belgians traveled to the Rohingya refugee camps in Cox's Bazar, the largest refugee camp in the world. She met with Rohingya women, men, and youths to learn about their challenges, opportunities, anxieties, hopes and dreams. The visit to the Rohingya camps was organized on the occasion of the Queen's visit to Bangladesh in her capacity of the UN Secretary General's Advocate for the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs).

More than 940,000 Rohingya refugees are generously hosted by the Bangladesh Government and people in Cox's Bazar district, but living in congested camps in an area regularly hit by multiple natural disasters. "The Queen's visit comes as the crisis is well into its sixth year of displacement, and against the backdrop of a serious decline in available funding.; It will help keep the attention on the Rohingya situation, which continues to be one of the largest refugee crises in the world," said Johannes van der Klaauw, UNHCR – the UN Refugee Agency- Representative in Bangladesh. "The Queen's visit is a significant support to our ongoing efforts to mobilize sufficient funding for life-saving and life-sustaining assistance but also for key protection services, especially for women and children, such as preventing gender-based violence and addressing mental health problems"

During her visit to the camps, the Queen met children and their teachers in one of the learning centres in the camps, where she was briefed about the important steps being taken to introduce the Myanmar Curriculum and the challenges in identifying and training more Rohingya refugees as teachers and the need for additional space to accommodate more students. The Myanmar curriculum will lead the way towards a more formal education and nurture the hope that children will be able to continue their education once they can safely return home.

Young adolescent Rohingya climate activists also explained their role in taking care of the environment and raising awareness in their communities to prevent deforestation and protect the flora and fauna. UNHCR briefed on various activities to protect the environment and manage waste, enhance the resilience of refugees and host communities to respond to and prevent shocks as a result of climate change and natural hazards, while investing in infrastructure and greening efforts.

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The Queen met with, Rohingya women volunteers working to prevent and respond to gender-based violence and participated in a discussion with Rohingya refugee psychosocial counsellors to learn more about the mental health situation of their community. During the visit, the delegation was welcomed in various facilities managed by UNHCR and its partners, including national organizations, such as BRAC, CODEC, GK, IUCN, NGO Forum, as well as UNICEF and UN Women.

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