

Fire in Camp 21 - Assessment

25 April 2023



Overview

In the evening of 24 April 2023, a fire broke out in a Rohingya refugee camp in Cox's Bazar, Bangladesh. The fire was specifically located in Camp 21, a UNHCR-managed refugee camp in Teknaf.

As of 25 April, UNHCR estimates 239 individuals have been affected by the fire, 76 per cent of whom are women and children. No fatalities were reported. Refugees affected by the fire sought shelter either with relatives or at the community centre. Multiple shelters and facilities were damaged or destroyed as a result of the incident, including personal belongings, LPG cylinders and cooking stoves, as well as food items.

Trained refugee volunteers were among the first responders. Rohingya safety unit and site management volunteers, together with other refugee community members, doused the fire with water and fire extinguishers. Government emergency services and armed forces also played an integral role in putting out the fire.

Impact & Response

Under the lead of the Office of the Refugee Relief and Repatriation Commissioner (RRRC), humanitarian partners have been onsite from soon after the onset of the fire to establish a coordinated response. A coordination meeting was held on 25 April, led by the Camp-in-Charge (CiC) of Camp 21 with multi-sector participation from humanitarian partners.

UNHCR is working closely with the government, the Inter-sector Coordination Group (ISCG), NGO partners and other UN agencies¹, to assess the damage and respond to urgent needs on the ground². Refugee volunteers continue to be mobilized to support the affected families and direct them to available services.



Site Management, Shelter and Non-Food Items (NFI)

Impact:

- 56 shelter units have been damaged or destroyed by the fire.
- 41 families require a replacement LPG cylinder.
- 37 families need a replacement cooking stove.
- Two learning centres and one storage space were damaged.
- 6 solar streetlights were burnt.

¹ Organisations include Action Aid Bangladesh, BDCRS, BRAC, Concern Worldwide, Save the Children (International), SHED, and WFP.

² The information mentioned in this assessment reflects the impact and response to the fire incident as of 25 April 2023.

Response:

- Site management and safety unit refugee volunteers and community members, together with government emergency services and armed forces, successfully put out the fire using water pumps and fire extinguishers. More than 70 volunteers were mobilized to support as needed.
- UNHCR and partners on the ground carried out a rapid damage verification to assess the damage caused and began technical assessments for shelter reconstruction.
- Replacement shelters will be reconstructed and where possible, site planning strengthened.
- Core relief items (CRIs) are positioned and ready for distribution as required. These include tarpaulins, blankets, sleeping mats, solar lamps, kitchen sets, mosquito nets, and buckets.
- Replacement LPGs will take place once families return to their shelters.
- The damaged solar streetlights will be replaced.

Water, Sanitation and Hygiene

Impact:

- Nine latrines and four bathing cubicles were damaged.
- Six tube-wells were damaged.

Response:

- Four tube-wells have been restored and cleaned and are now functional.
- Currently an estimated 50 per cent of the burnt ash and debris has been cleared.
- The affected latrines and bathing cubicles will be repaired.

Health and Nutrition

Impact:

- One young child was referred to a primary health care centre, and a few minor injuries were also treated.
- Nutrition supplies that would cover 40 beneficiaries were lost in the fire.

Response:

- Ten Community Health Workers were mobilized to provide first aid, disseminate key safety messages, make referrals and support evacuation efforts.
- Mobile Medical Teams were on the ground to respond to any emergencies, provide first aid and make further assessments.
- 31 individuals received psychological first aid.
- Community Nutrition Volunteers and partners have been identifying and supporting children and pregnant/lactating women in need of special support and have replenished the supplies at the centre.
- High energy biscuits and hot meals have been provided by WFP to fire-affected families. However, solutions are being explored to address a potential gap in food provision.

Protection

Impact:

- 20 families stayed in the community centre, and 32 families were hosted by relatives in the camp.
- Vulnerabilities are exacerbated as a result of the sudden fire, with refugees losing their shelters and belongings.
- Specifically, women and children often face multiple difficulties in the aftermath of such incidents. UNHCR estimates 76 per cent of those affected by the fire are women and children.
- 16 families have lost their identification documents.

Response:

- Child protection partners and volunteers reunited three separated children with their caregivers on the same day of the incident.
- Nine gender-based violence volunteers were engaged to provide psychological first aid and make referrals to services.
- Dignity kits are available and in-stock.
- Legal protection partners and volunteers proactively shared information about referral services with affected refugees, and also verified misinformation.
- Community Outreach and Community Group assisted affected families to move to safe areas, disseminate key messages and minimize a potentially chaotic environment.
- UNHCR and partners are working together with the camp authorities to re-issue registration documents.



Shelters destroyed by the fire. © UNHCR/ Amos Halder

