UNHCR Bangladesh

The UN Refugee Agency

POPULATION

1,177,962 # of registered refugees

97% in 33 camps in Ukhiya & Teknaf
3% on the island of Bhasan Char

51.5% Female

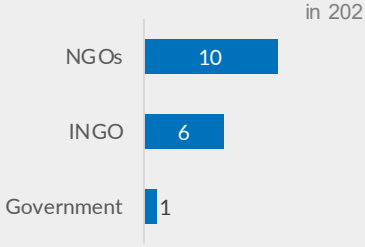
48.5% Male

52% Children

as of 31 December 2025

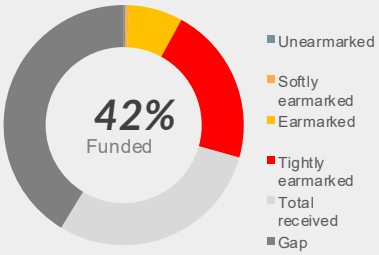
PARTNERS

19 # of partners implementing key UNHCR activities in 2025



FUNDING

255.5 M Funding for 2025 operations



as of 31 December 2025

HISTORY

UNHCR has been present in Bangladesh since 1992, but the relationship has deeper roots. In 1971, during Bangladesh's Liberation War, UNHCR coordinated a massive relief effort to support 10 million refugees forced to flee for protection, and helped facilitate their return to the newly independent nation in the following months.

Today, UNHCR and partners manage 16 camps in Cox's Bazar, including Nayapara and Kutupalong Registered Camps, plus the island of Bhasan Char, supporting the Government of Bangladesh to provide essential services and meet the protection needs of one million Rohingya refugees, including special services for women, children and persons with disabilities. Most arrived in 2017, fleeing persecution, large-scale violence and human rights violations.

Support is additionally extended to host communities while continuously working towards solutions to ensure that refugees can return in a safe, dignified, voluntary and sustainable way once conditions in Myanmar allow.

OPERATIONAL UPDATE

December 2025

Women's empowerment through sports and games during the 16 Days of Activism Campaign. © UNHCR/Shari Nijman

KEY UPDATES

- 2025 JOINT RESPONSE PLAN (JRP): As of 31 December, the 2025 Joint Response Plan (JRP) for the Rohingya Humanitarian Crisis was 54 per cent funded, according to the online financial tracker, with USD 491.7 million received against an appeal of $934.5 million. However, internal figures from the Inter-Sectoral Coordination Group (ISCG) indicate a higher funding level of 65 per cent. Funding for Priority 1 activities — including soap and menstrual hygiene items, stipends for teachers, cooking fuel, and emergency support for new arrivals — reached 93 per cent, leaving a gap of USD 32 million. However, declining funding combined with a growing population and increased needs meant that 2025 saw reduced service and assistance levels, contributing to deteriorating living conditions and heightened vulnerability in the camps. In 2026, UNHCR and partners will scale up efforts to re-calibrate the response to further reduce costs in 2026, including rolling out a leaner UNHCR-led coordination structure. In 2024, the JRP was 4 per cent funded, with USD 547 million received against an appeal of USD 852.4 million. *Read the reprioritized 2025 Joint Response Plan*.

- IDENTIFYING & ASSISTING NEW ARRIVALS: Rohingya and other residents of conflict-affected Myanmar's Rakhine State continued to flee for safety, although Bangladesh's closed-border policy hindered safe access to asylum. From 1 January to 31 December, 141,532 newly arrived individuals (37,244 families) have been identified through the joint biometric identification exercise (BIE) and issued family cards granting access to assistance, though not individual refugee identity documents. The BIE includes screening procedures to exclude ineligible individuals, and mechanisms are in place for Bangladeshi families mistakenly included in the refugee database to voluntarily return their assistance cards. Biometrically identified new arrivals now comprise 12 per cent of the current refugee population. UNHCR continues to advocate with the Government of Bangladesh for their full registration.

- 16 DAYS OF ACTIVISM: Friendly sports matches between refugees, UNHCR and partners, and government and police authorities were held during the 16 Days of Activism (25 November–10 December) to promote unity, protection and social cohesion. Men and women participated in football, volleyball, badminton, darts, musical chairs, skipping, folk games and chinlone (caneball), with designated days for men's and women's matches. For the first time, Rohingya refugee youth competed against UNHCR and humanitarian partners winning all matches. Women's participation and large community turnout in support of teams were particularly significant. Meanwhile, strong coordination between UNHCR, the Office of the Refugee Relief and Repatriation Commissioner (RRRC) and the Armed Police Battalion (APBn) ensured the festive events went smoothly and safely.

- TRANSIT CENTRE PHASE OUT: Community messaging on the planned closure of the Transit Centre (TC) began on 7 December following consultations with the RRRC and APBn. Service delivery within the TC, including provision of cooked meals, will be phased out by the end of 2025, lowering operating costs which the current funding crisis have made unsustainable. From January 2026, UNHCR's site management partner BRAC will take over management of the facility. Refugees at the TC will be relocated to other camps based on their protection needs and shelter availability, and will receive general good assistance and cooking fuel at their new locations.

STRATEGIC PRIORITIES

1. BASIC RIGHTS, PROTECTION & EDUCATION
Refugee rights are respected, and they have access to education and protection, including protection against gender-based violence.

2. ADEQUATE LIVING CONDITIONS IN A GREEN ENVIRONMENT
Essential and sustainable services (including safe shelters, health, nutrition, WASH, energy) are ensured, and the environment is protected.

3. SKILLS & CAPACITY BUILDING TO SUPPORT DURABLE SOLUTIONS
Work toward sustainable solutions, with voluntary repatriation at the centre, supported by skills development, livelihoods and capacity building for refugees.

4. DIVERSIFIED FUNDING & PARTNERSHIPS
Partnerships with development and private sector actors to innovate, support and localize operations.

5. CREATING A POSITIVE NARRATIVE
Lead the narrative on the Rohingya refugee response and improve public attitudes toward the Rohingya.

DONORS

UNHCR in Bangladesh is grateful for the support of Australia, Belgium, Canada, the People's Republic of China, Denmark, the European Union, Finland, France, Germany, Ireland, Italy, Japan, Jersey, Luxembourg, the Republic of Korea, Kuwait, the Netherlands, New Zealand, Norway, Spain, Sweden, Switzerland, the UK, and the USA.

With additional support from UN funds including Education Cannot Wait (ECW), UN AIDS and the Central Emergency Response Fund (CERF), and private donors, including Fast Retailing (UNIQLO), Adidas Foundation, Adyen, Join Together Society (JTS), Mohammed bin Rashid Al Maktoum Global Initiatives (MBRGI), Muslim World League, Ousri Family Foundation, SONY, Tanmeia Foundation

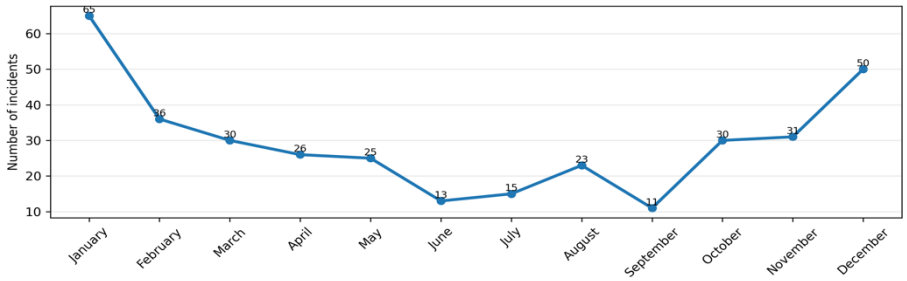
Contacts:
Romain Desclous, desclous@unhcr.org,
Senior External Relations Officer, Dhaka.

- PARTNER SELECTION: UNHCR completed partnership transitions for 2026-2029, reducing the number of NGO partners from 16 to 12 as part of rationalization and integration efforts. Selection criteria prioritized national NGOs with demonstrated project management capacity and sectoral expertise over international NGOs. Health and nutrition partners were streamlined as UNHCR decreases its operational footprint in that Sector. Protection partners were also streamlined, reflecting integration of protection services.

- ENGLISH LANGUAGE TRAINING: 113 participants, including one woman, of a six-month UNHCR-supported English language and basic ICT training programme sat the International English Language Testing System (IELTS) exam administered by the British Council in December. The programme aims to strengthen English-language proficiency to support future higher-education and complementary pathways for Rohingya refugees.

- LPG DISRUPTION ON BHASAN CHAR: A shortfall in liquid petroleum gas (LPG) supplies for cooking led to the exclusion of some 2,200 of 5,700 households from LPG distribution based on vulnerability criteria recommended by the ARRRC, including: 383 households with access to biogas supplies, 140 shop-owning households, and 1,693 volunteer households were temporarily dropped from the list. Affected families were observed reverting to firewood collection for cooking fuel, impacting the environment. Without fresh funding to ensure LPG coverage of all families on the island, serious health, environmental, and protection consequences are risked— including rationing fuel use, undercooking food, or seeking unsafe alternatives such as burning biomass and other improvised materials. UNHCR urgently appeals for immediate funding to resume LPG access for all refugee households on Bhasan Char.

- FIRE PREPAREDNESS & RESPONSE: 231 fire incidents were recorded in UNHCR-managed camps in 2025 (including 50 incidents in December); 452 further incidents were reported in IOM-managed camps, for a total of 683 fire incidents affecting 733 households across 33 camps in 2025, compared to 640 incidents affecting 3,368 incidents in 2024. Fire season coincides with Bangladesh's dry season (December to March), with incidents typically rising in December and spiking in January. Most fires are quickly extinguished with minimal damage by site management volunteers trained as firefighters, with support from the community. However, conditions such as high shelter density without fire breaks, narrow access roads, water scarcity and strong winds can delay response and increase impact (as seen in the Camp 5 fire on 7 January 2024, which affected approximately 900 households). Multi-sectoral efforts to reduce fire risks are ongoing in collaboration with government authorities, humanitarian partners, and refugee communities, including the installation of 89 10,000-litre water tanks and the rehabilitation of 32 mobile firefighting stations.



- MISSION REPORT: UNHCR welcomed seven visits from donors/partners in December, for a total of 119 missions in 2025. Visitors included the Ambassadors of Sweden and France, a senior delegation from the British Council and a delegation of magistrates and judiciary officials receiving training from UNHCR on Rohingya-related issues.

- FUNDING UPDATE: As of 31 December, the UNHCR Bangladesh operation was 42 per cen USD 106.2 million received against an operating plan of USD 255.5 million. Contributions were received from the US and Italy.

"IN CASE YOU MISSED IT…"

- ***Election of the new High Commissioner for Refugees:*** *Current High Commissioner Filippo Grandi welcomed the election by the General Assembly in New York of former President of Iraq Barham Salih as his successor to lead UNHCR. Read the press release.*

- *UNHCR Bangladesh published 26 Facebook posts, 27 tweets and 24 Instagram posts in December, including posts on the 16 Days of Activism campaign, fires in the camps, and the election of the new High Commissioner.*

"Solidarity saves lives." Listen to the powerful words of High Commissioner Filippo Grandi at the opening of the Global Refugee Forum Progress Review.

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