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Significant investments in emergency water and sanitation were made in 2017/18 to address the immediate needs of over 725,000 refugees who fled violence in Myanmar in August 2017, as well as to prevent environmental and public health crises occurring in settlements.

There was limited space for new WASH facilities, and introducing harmonised standards remains a challenge due to a number of actors initiated latrine and other WASH responses immediately. A rapid needs assessment shortly after the influx observed open defecation as a common practice. UNHCR and its partners continue providing support and seek sustainable solutions for both refugees and host communities.

Progress

UNHCR and partners have developed standards suitable for the topography and the emergency nature of the response, including latrines with larger volume pits. WASH facilities currently cover all refugees within emergency standards. In addition to water purification tablets, water containers for collection and storage were distributed as part of hygiene kits. Menstrual hygiene kits were also distributed to girls and women, and hygiene promotion activities undertaken. Small and medium-sized fecal sludge units have been constructed, while a large-scale unit is being developed. UNHCR also helps repair drainage systems and latrines in schools as part of the Quick Impact Projects to support Bangladeshi communities affected by the influx.

In order to provide sustainable water supply, a chlorinated water network plan has been designed for 735,000 people in both Teknaf and Ukhiya sub-districts. About 15 per cent of these networks are under construction, and concerned WASH sector members are coordinating closely to ensure timely and appropriate implementation of this plan. UNHCR trained WASH field teams, comprising WASH experts from partner organisations and refugee volunteers, to conduct rapid assessments and to quickly repair damaged facilities during the monsoon season. Refugee volunteers were also trained in emergency WASH response and preparedness. Furthermore UNHCR conducted hydrogeological surveys in Teknaf and Ukhiya to identify suitable locations to drill for safe and adequate amount of water.

6,243 latrines constructed, benefitting >125,000 refugees

625 tube wells installed serving over 156,000 refugees

60,203 hygiene kits distributed in UNHCR's target areas in 2018

677 WASH field staff and volunteers trained in emergency response

UNHCR has supported **361,851** refugees in 14 settlements as WASH focal agency;
Achieve the minimum standards of **20 liters** of water/person/day;
Achieve minimum SPHERE standards of **>30** persons/latrine.

UNHCR WASH objectives:

- 1 Ensure **effective, sufficient and continuous provision of life-saving water and sanitation services**,
- 2 Ensure refugees have the means and are encouraged to adopt **health-seeking behaviors**, and
- 3 Ensure WASH assistance **promotes protection, safety and dignity of beneficiaries**

Challenges going forward



Policy framework needed to plan for long-term WASH interventions



Technical sanitation management challenges for Kutupalong settlement



Poor water quality requires the set up of chlorinated water supply through water networks

Way Forward

To address acute water needs in Nayapara, an upgrade of a water surface reservoir serving both refugees and host communities is being surveyed along with the project to install a productive borehole. Sewage systems to carry and treat waste are being designed to pilot in Kutupalong, as the current manual de-sludging process, combined with limited treatment capacity, will pose a continued public health risk.

Working in Partnership

UNHCR co-chairs the **Strategic Executive Group** together with the UN Resident Coordinator and IOM. The Refugee Agency leads the protection response for all refugees, and heads a **Protection Working Group** in Cox's Bazar. UNHCR welcomes its valuable partnerships with a number of UN agencies and coordinates the delivery of its assistance with humanitarian partners through various 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 works closely with the Camp-in-Charge officials in different refugee settlements as well as with a range of international and national actors. It has a strong network of 28 partners, including:

ACF (Action Contre la Faim) | **ACTED** (Agency for Technical Cooperation and Development) | **ADRA** (Adventist Development and Relief Agency) | **BDRCS** (Bangladesh Red Crescent Society) | **BNWLA** (Bangladesh National Women Lawyers Association) | **BRAC** (Bangladesh Rehabilitation Assistance Committee) | **CARITAS BANGLADESH** | **CODEC** (Community Development Centre) | **CSI** (Center for Social Integrity) | **DRC** (Danish Refugee Council) | **FH** (Food For the Hungry) | **GK** (Gonoshasthaya Kendra) | **HELVETAS** Swiss Intercooperation | **HI** (Handicap International) | **IUCN** (International Union for Conservation of Nature and Natural Resources) | **IRC** (International Rescue Committee) | **MTI** (Medical Teams International) | **NGOF** (NGO Forum) | **OXFAM** | **PIN** (People in Need) | **PUI** (Première Urgence Internationale) | **REACH** | **RI** (Relief International) | **RTMI** (Research Training and Management International) | **SCI** (Save the Children) | **SI** (Solidarités International) | **TAI** (Technical Assistance Incorporated) | **TDH** (Terre Des Hommes Foundation)

UNHCR would also like to acknowledge the crucial role played by the refugees in the response; with over 1,000 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 emergency response.

Donor country contributions to UNHCR Bangladesh (2017/2018)



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