

Bangladesh

1 - 31 March 2020

In response to the **COVID-19 pandemic**, and in line with Government of Bangladesh efforts, UNHCR and other actors have reduced their activities to **essential only** in Cox's Bazar's refugee settlements.

The Joint Response Plan (JRP) for the Rohingya Response was launched, **appealing for USD 877 million** in 2020. Additional funding is sought for COVID-19 activities via **UNHCR's Global COVID-19 Emergency Response**.

Myanmar Curriculum Pilot (MCP) preparations are underway. UNICEF and UNHCR, as well as other partners, are aiming to reach 10,000 students by the end of 2020.

KEY INDICATORS

859,808 Rohingya refugees in Cox's Bazar

*824,748 Rohingya refugees are registered under the Government of Bangladesh-UNHCR registration exercise. There are also 35,060 Rohingya from pre-2016 and registered camps (as of 31 March 2020)

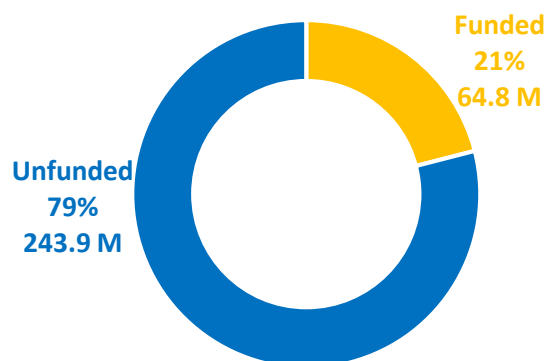
116,217

The number of refugee households who are being supported with cooking kits and Liquefied Petroleum Gas (LPG) cylinders in the camps; 10,716 families in host communities are also being supported with cooking kits and LPG, it is planned to reach 30,000 host community families.

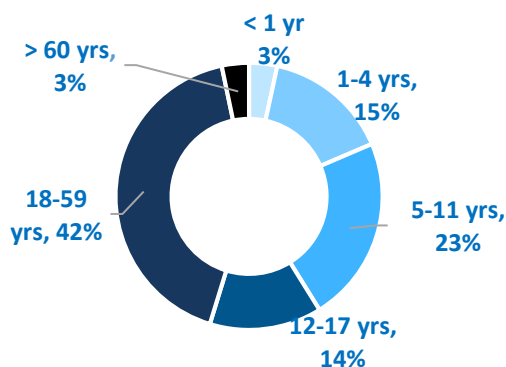
FUNDING (AS OF 6 APRIL 2020)

USD 308.7 M

requested for Bangladesh

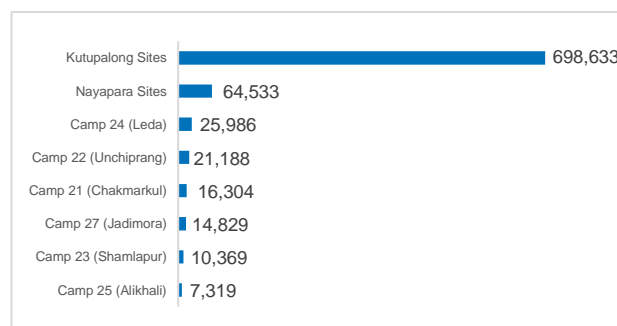


AGE BREAKDOWN OF REFUGEES IN COX'S BAZAR



POPULATION OF CONCERN

Key settlements



***Kutupalong Sites** includes Camp 10, Camp 11, Camp 12, Camp 13, Camp 14, Camp 15, Camp 16, Camp 17, Camp 18, Camp 19, Camp 1E, Camp 1W, Camp 20, Camp 20 Extension, Camp 2E, Camp 2W, Camp 3, Camp 4, Camp 4 Extension, Camp 5, Camp 6, Camp 7, Camp 8E, Camp 8W, Camp 9 Kutupalong RC and **Nayapara sites** includes Camp 26 and Nayapara RC

Operational Context

- The general situation of refugees in Cox's Bazar has been overshadowed by COVID-19 concerns. In line with global efforts to stem the spread of COVID-19, UNHCR ramped up prevention and preparation activities in the camps and host communities. This includes raising awareness and information sharing about the virus through multiple languages and channels, including radio spots, videos, podcasts, posters and more. Furthermore, UNHCR is conducting hygiene promotion, including soap and hygiene item distribution and establishing handwashing facilities throughout the camps, at distribution points, health facilities and nutrition centres. UNHCR also provides support to existing health centres in the camps and local communities with additional resources such as Personal Protective Equipment (PPE).
- UNHCR and partners are identifying sites to establish Severe Acute Respiratory Infection Isolation and Treatment Centres (SARI ITCs) for refugees and host communities. Bangladesh has a number of confirmed cases including only one case of a Bangladeshi national returning from abroad to Cox's Bazar district. No cases were detected in refugee camps as of April 1.
- In collaboration with other humanitarian agencies in Cox's Bazar, and in line with the wider efforts of the Government of Bangladesh under its *National Preparedness and Response Plan*, intensive efforts are ongoing to ensure the camps are prepared to prevent and respond to any outbreak of the virus.
- Through the Inter-Sector Coordination Group (ISCG), the humanitarian community is working closely with the Government of Bangladesh, including the Civil Surgeon, Deputy Commissioner (DC), Refugee Relief and Repatriation Commissioner (RRRC), and Camp-in-Charges (CiCs). UNHCR has been advocating for refugees to be fully factored into national- and Cox's Bazar-level response planning. The need to maintain critical humanitarian access has also been raised with authorities. At the same time, efforts are being made to reduce the staff footprint and risk of exposing refugees to the virus, with only critical staff now entering the camps.
- As a precaution to reduce the possibility of the virus transmitting to the camps, the Government has halted all but critical services in Rohingya settlements. The authorized services and activities are mainly in the areas of health, nutrition, food and fuel distribution, hygiene promotion, hygiene kit distribution, water and sanitation activities, construction of health facilities and additional WASH infrastructure, site management support, logistics, and the identification of new arrivals/quarantine, and family tracing. Facilities and activities that are temporarily closed include educational facilities, women and child friendly spaces, training facilities, site development works, registration activities, and markets, although WFP e-voucher shops are still operational.
- Since 15 March, the Government introduced several travel restrictions to Bangladesh, including a two-week self-quarantine for foreign nationals and Bangladeshis entering the country from other affected countries.
- A Global Humanitarian Response Plan for COVID-19 has been issued by OCHA, requesting USD 2.01 billion. In Bangladesh, the humanitarian community – through the ISCG - is examining additional needs for the refugee and host community response in Cox's Bazar, outside of the JRP. Globally, UNHCR has urgently sought USD 255 million of additional funding to support prevention and response efforts for COVID-19 in refugee sites and host countries. Bangladesh is one of the priority countries targeted in the appeal for support.
- A ban on the use of SIM cards and internet connectivity remains in place, impacting refugees' ability to contact family members and access reliable information. It also has created challenges for field level coordination of



UNHCR's Dr. Taimur handing over Personal Protective Equipment (PPE) to Cox's Bazar district hospital to help prepare for COVID-19. Photo: © UNHCR

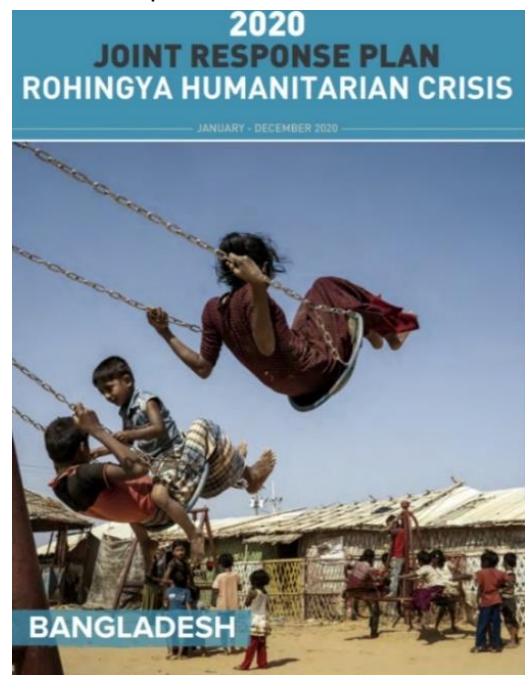
humanitarian operations. Advocacy is ongoing with authorities considering COVID-19 and the need to ensure coordination of activities on the ground, particularly with agencies now limiting their staff footprint.

- In parallel with COVID-19 preparations, UNHCR and partners continue to prepare for the monsoon season ahead and key activities to mitigate risks associated with potential cyclones in the coming months.

Achievements

LAUNCH OF Joint Response Plan for Rohingya humanitarian response in Bangladesh

- On 3 March, United Nations agencies and NGO partners launched the **2020 Joint Response Plan (JRP)** for the Rohingya refugee response in Bangladesh. Through the JRP, the humanitarian community in Bangladesh outlines its requirements of USD 877 million to respond to the needs of 855,000 refugees and 444,000 Bangladeshis in the host community. The JRP does not include the additional needs identified for preparedness and response for COVID-19 in Cox's Bazar, mentioned above. The 2019 JRP was funded at just over 70 per cent, or USD 650 million received against USD 921 million requested.
- Vital services and assistance including food, shelter, clean water and sanitation make up 55 per cent of the overall JRP in 2020. Food needs alone account for almost 29 per cent. Health, protection, education, site management, energy and environment needs are all identified as critical.
- **The 2020 JRP places a stronger emphasis on areas where host communities have been most impacted**, including public service infrastructure and delivery, access to sustainable livelihoods, environmental rehabilitation and energy initiatives.
- The JRP outlines important achievements in 2019, including the biometric registration of all Rohingya refugees living in the camps, which secures identities, enhances protection, and lays the foundations for more targeted, effective and efficient delivery of the humanitarian response.
- Further, environmental rehabilitation combined with providing alternative energy sources have brought real improvements to life in the settlements. All refugee households now use Liquefied Petroleum Gas (LPG) for cooking, which has reduced the demand for firewood by 80 per cent. It is also planned to reach some 30,000 local Bangladeshi families in the initiative. The introduction of LPG, with reforestation and conservation efforts, have resulted in a remarkable "re-greening" of the areas where refugees are living.
- Funding for the 2020 JRP will support a pilot for the introduction of the Myanmar school curriculum for refugee children. This will be a significant step forward, and is a priority that refugees identified. It will also help prepare for and respond to the monsoon and potential cyclone. Work in this respect in previous years has resulted in a marked decline in families impacted by rain, wind and flooding during the monsoon and cyclone season.



HEALTH / COVID-19 RESPONSE

Humanitarian planning in Cox's Bazar in response to global COVID-19 situation

- UNHCR and other UN agencies, as well as national and international NGOs are working with the Government of Bangladesh and refugee communities to limit and mitigate the spread of COVID-19 in Cox's Bazar District.
- Currently, there is a report of one confirmed case of a Bangladeshi national in the local community in Cox's Bazar. Although there were no cases detected in the refugee camps (as of end-March), as a precaution, the RRRC has directed that only critical services should be undertaken in the settlements. UNHCR activities were scaled down activities in late March in line with the directives of the authorities in Cox's Bazar., Support for

agreed activities continues in the areas of health, nutrition, water, sanitation, hygiene, information and awareness raising on the virus, cooking fuel and some protection services. Movements of humanitarian workers to the camps have been limited to decrease the risk of infection amongst the refugee population, while maintaining essential humanitarian services and assistance.

- In line with the Government's decision to temporarily close schools nationwide, the RRRC directed that educational facilities in camps be likewise closed from 17 March until further notice.
- Health actors are working to increase isolation and treatment capacities in Cox's Bazar district. UNHCR is supporting the district hospital in Cox's Bazar to establish an intensive care unit for refugees and the host community. Two Severe Acute Respiratory Infection Isolation and Treatment Centres (SARI ITCs), one with 150-beds and one with 50-beds, are being established near the refugee settlement in Ukhiya. A quarantine site has been agreed with the local authorities and will be supported by UNHCR. UNHCR and its partners are distributing soap and installing additional hand washing facilities while at all UNHCR distribution facilities, social distancing has been introduced and monitored.
- Refugees in Cox's Bazar live in congested conditions, and challenging hygiene conditions prevail. The most common health issues facing refugees previously are acute respiratory illness, diarrhoea and skin infections. The prevalence of respiratory illnesses in particular, combined with underlying factors such as malnutrition and other undiagnosed diseases, could increase the impact of any outbreak on the refugees living in the camps.

Getting messages on COVID-19 out to the community at large

- Awareness raising and sharing of reliable and accurate information has been scaled up as a priority. The Communication with Communities (CwC) Working Group, with UNHCR's support, produced key messages on COVID-19 in Rohingya, Bengali and Burmese languages, as well as materials and communication tools, including information targeting people with disabilities. Refugee settlements are being targeted through public service announcements, radio spots, videos, posters, leaflets and messages about how the virus spreads, how people can protect themselves, symptoms and care-seeking.



Left: Social distancing being practiced during water collection from water taps in the refugee settlements in Cox's Bazar. Right: Circles on the ground of distributions points are helping to make social distancing easier to understand and manage. Photo: ©UNHCR/Ciobanu, I.

- The Community Health Working Group, led by UNHCR, has organised the training of 127 Community Health Volunteer supervisors on COVID-19. These supervisors then trained over 1,500 Community Health Workers (CHW) and more than 560 other volunteers working in the refugee settlements. The training aimed to disseminate common messages and build capacity on the ground to respond to refugee concerns. CHWs will engage in mass communication and door-to-door messaging. Other volunteers will be able to respond to refugee questions in line with approved messages and also know how to handle situations if they are approached by persons with symptoms. In these cases, all volunteers will be requested to refer the person to the nearest health facility.

- UNHCR and other agencies have worked with BBC Media Action and Shongjog (a multi-stakeholder platform on Communication with Communities) on radio spots, video and other messages that community volunteers and leaders are using to explain how the virus spreads, symptoms, how people can protect themselves, and care-seeking. These materials are available on the [Shongjog website \(see this hyperlink\)](#) in the Rohingya language (for refugees), Chittagonian (for local host communities), and Bangla (for wider use in Bangladesh).

**PROTECTION****Community resource mapping helping UNHCR to better engage with refugee communities**

- In March, UNHCR completed a full mapping of 41 community structures that it and its partners established and supported over the past two years, including groups, networks, committees, volunteer associations, social clubs, and other initiatives. In total, 22,109 refugees are estimated to be actively involved in the structures and are working with UNHCR and partners, including volunteers with and without incentives in all sectors. The mapping did not include self-run initiatives which are also widespread in the camps.
- UNHCR has invested in these community structures as an important element of its effort to build a means of communication with refugees on protection, and as channels of feedback and accountability. Strong engagement with the structures and their members has enabled UNHCR to better plan its support for the community and improve access to information, particularly when there is an increased need for quality information, such as on voluntary return. The structures have allowed UNHCR to also work with refugees as active members of their communities, strengthening the idea of **'refugees-at the-centre of the response'**, which has been a success in terms of community engagement in response to the risks posed by the annual monsoon, and the day-to-day challenging conditions in the camp, including their work to help improve protection and service delivery for their communities.

**EDUCATION****Myanmar Curriculum Pilot (MCP) moving forward, initially targeting 10,000 students**

- Education actors in Cox Bazar, including UNHCR, are preparing for the launch of a Myanmar Curriculum Pilot (MCP) following a decision by the Bangladesh Government in January 2020 to allow the curriculum to be piloted in Cox's Bazar. The program will initially target 10,000 students in middle school (grades 6-9). By end-of-year, barring significant delays due to COVID-19, the pilot was planned to be fully operational.
- Among the activities undertaken in March to get the pilot up and running were a stakeholder consultation (including local authorities, and all partners willing to support the pilot), as well as engagement with refugee community-led education networks to identify means of supporting children enrolled in these initiatives.
- A task team, including UNICEF and UNHCR, has also developed tools to guide the identification and placement of potential students in appropriate grades. The team is further examining the number of teachers required and available for the pilot. It also developed guiding documents for quality assurance of the pilot, including how learning outcomes will be measured both during and at the end of the pilot.
- During the pilot phase, UNICEF will acquire the curricula materials from Myanmar and work with a selected group of partners in ten camps repurposing some of the existing learning centres to enrol at least one thousand students. Additional students will be enrolled in a phased manner as more facilities are repurposed by UNHCR. UNHCR will also, along with other actors including UNICEF, support the pilot by providing funding for teachers.
- An immediate challenge the task team faces is the need to identify, train, deploy and remunerate enough teachers within the existing volunteer teacher incentive scheme. There is also a need to adopt a pragmatic approach towards the language of instruction through which learning will be provided, particularly as there are limitations in using Burmese or English exclusively in the classroom.

Working in partnership

UNHCR co-chairs a Strategic Executive Group (SEG) in Bangladesh with the UN Resident Coordinator and IOM. The Refugee Agency leads on the protection response for all refugees, and heads a Protection Working Group in Cox's Bazar. UNHCR welcomes its valuable partnership with a number of UN agencies and coordinates the delivery of its assistance with humanitarian partners through several 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 staff work closely with the Camp-in-Charge officials in different refugee settlements, as well as a range of international and national actors. It has a strong network of 27 partners:

MDMR (Ministry of Disaster Management and Relief) | Action Aid Bangladesh | ACF (Action Contre la Faim) | Bangladesh Red Crescent Society (BDRCS) | BRAC (Bangladesh Rehabilitation Assistance Committee) | Caritas Bangladesh | Center for Natural Resource Studies (CNRS) | CODEC (Community Development Centre) | COAST (Coastal Association for Social Transformation Trust) | Danish Refugee Council | FH Association (Food for the Hungry) | GK (Gonoshasthaya Kendra) | Helvetas Swiss Intercooperation | Handicap International | IUCN (International Union for Conservation of Nature and Natural Resources) | Light House | Mukti Cox's Bazar | NGO Forum for Public Health | Oxfam GB | Relief International | RTMI (Research, Training and Management International) | Save the Children International | World Vision | Terre des Hommes | TAI (Technical Assistance Incorporated) | BLAST (Bangladesh Legal Aid and Services Trust) | Rights Jessore.

UNHCR would also like to acknowledge the crucial role played by the refugees in the response; with over 3,000 volunteers from the refugee community who are often the first responders on the ground.

Financial Information

Total recorded contributions for the operation amount to some **USD 64.8 million**. UNHCR is grateful for the critical support provided by donors who have contributed to this operation as well as those who have contributed to UNHCR programmes with unearmarked and broadly earmarked funds. UNHCR's humanitarian response in Bangladesh is made possible thanks to the generous support of major donors who have contributed unrestricted funding to UNHCR's global operations, and to donors who have generously contributed directly to UNHCR Bangladesh operations.

In 2019/2020, support continued to be generously received from the following:

Austria, Australia, Bangladesh, Canada, Denmark, Estonia, the European Union, Finland, France, Germany, Ireland, Italy, Japan, the Republic of Korea, the Netherlands, New Zealand, Norway, Qatar, the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia, Spain, Sweden, Switzerland, Thailand, the United Arab Emirates, the United Kingdom, the United States of America, and CERF.

UNHCR is sincerely grateful for the additional support received from many individuals, foundations, and companies worldwide including Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation, the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, Education Cannot Wait, Kuwait Finance House, Qatar Charity, Shih Wing Ching Foundation, and Thani Bin Abdullah Bin Thani Al Thani Humanitarian Fund.

CONTACTS & LINKS

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

Steven O'Brien, External Relations Officer, Cox's Bazar (Bangladesh), obrien@unhcr.org

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