UNHCR Bangladesh

The UN Refugee Agency

POPULATION

976,507 # of registered refugees

96.5% in 33 camps in Ukhiya & Teknaf
3.5% on the island of Bhasan Char

51% Female

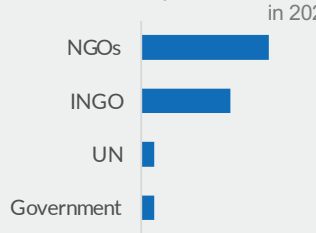
49% Male

52% Children

as of 29 February 2024

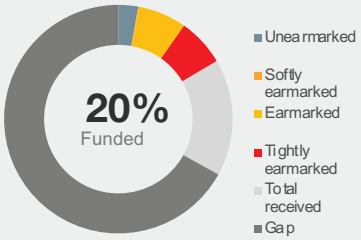
PARTNERS

19 # of partners implementing key UNHCR activities in 2024



FUNDING

275 M Funding for 2024 operations



as of 29 February 2024

HISTORY

UNHCR has been a friend of Bangladesh since 1971, providing life-saving aid to some 10 million refugees forced to flee during the Liberation War.

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

February 2024

Spacing shelters to include adequate fire breaks will help prevent future conflagrations, like January's devastating fire in Camp 5. @ Fahima Tajrin/UNHCR

KEY UPDATES

- 2024 JOINT RESPONSE PLAN (JRP): The 2024 JRP appeal, to be launched on 13 March in Geneva, requests continuing support for 1.35 million vulnerable Rohingya people and host communities. Underfunding in previous years has had severe consequences for the Rohingya, with ripple effects including an increase in dangerous boat journeys. The 2023 JRP was 65.5% funded with USD 538.7 million received against an overall appeal of USD 876 million. In 2022, 69% funding was received against an appeal of 881 million.

- FATAL FIRE INCIDENT ON BHASAN CHAR: On 24 February, ten refugees, seven of them children, sustained severe burns from a serious fire incident caused when liquefied petroleum gas (LPG), released from a cylinder in one room, ignited in another room where a family was cooking. After receiving first aid at island's 20-bed hospital, nine people were transported to the mainland via speed boat for emergency care. As the registration and certification of Bhasan Char's sea ambulance still remains pending, it is not operational. Five children later died from their injuries at Chittagong Medical College and Hospital's burn unit. A committee has been formed to investigate the incident and develop recommendations, while actors have intensified community engagement efforts to educate the refugees on safe use of LPG. Meanwhile, the surviving refugees have been discharged and are receiving necessary support.

- LIFE SKILLS SESSIONS FOR ADOLESCENTS: 660 teen boys and girls belonging to 11 adolescent clubs (each club has 60 members, 50% female) began life skills sessions in February. The sessions, operated by child protection partner CODEC, will enhance teens' capacity to communicate, express themselves, and protect themselves from all forms of abuse. The sessions will run through September.

- GENDER-BASED VIOLENCE (GBV) PREVENTION PROGRAMMES: UNHCR conducted capacity-building for partner staff on the innovative male role models (MRM) approach, reaching 26 partner staff with an orientation on non-violent communication, positive male behaviour, anger management, and the sexual and reproductive health (SRH) needs of men and boys. The annual Girl Shine workshop was also held in February, reaching 58 partner staff with refreshed information on the Girl Shine curriculum and an orientation on SRH.

- DISABILITY INCLUSION: To strengthen disability inclusion in community activities and case management services, UNHCR provided training on disability inclusion to 90 religious leaders (30 women) on Bhasan Char and 64 GBV caseworkers in Cox's Bazar. Meanwhile, the successful integration of a standardized question set designed to identify people with disabilities (PwD) in UNHCR's vulnerability assessment tools is expected to enable more accurate data collection. Previously, PWDs were identified mainly by visual cues.

- COMMUNITY DIALOGUES: To better understand the challenges faced by refugees in daily camp life, UNHCR held dialogues with 86 participants from six camps in February. Safety and security concerns remained high, and frustrations were voiced regarding limitations on higher education, freedom of movement and livelihoods opportunities. However, the increase in food rations per person from USD 8 to US 10, effective from January, was appreciated.

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, Finland, the European Union, Ireland, the Netherlands, Norway, Sweden, Switzerland, and the United Kingdom.

With additional support received from UN funds including Education Cannot Wait (ECW), UN AIDS and the Central Emergency Response Fund (CERF) and private donors, foundations, corporates, and companies worldwide including Adidas, Fast Retailing Co. Ltd., Qatar Charity, and the Mohammed bin Rashid Al Maktoum Global Initiatives.

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- VOCATIONAL SKILLS DEVELOPMENT & PRODUCTION: In February, 1,947 refugees (1,117 women) were enrolled in vocational skills training, including 190 youth on Bhasan Char. 163 refugee women were engaged in jute bag production and 129 women in handicraft production on the island. Meanwhile, 420 refugee women were engaged in underwear and sanitary napkin production in Cox's Bazar, and a fifth production centre was established.

- SPECIALIZED SHORT-TERM TRAINING: Targeting graduates of vocational training courses, UNHCR is expanding skills development through additional short-term trainings with private sector partners. In February, 17 refugee youth were trained by partner RFL on stove repair and will join stove repair stations as volunteers in April. Additional training on solar repair targeting 240 refugee youth is planned for March.

- WATER RATIONING IN TEKNAF: With the seasonal water shortage in the Teknaf area squeezing available water supplies, a temporary reduction of water from 20 litres to 15 litres per person per day was implemented on 12 February. At the community's request, however, water supply will be restored to the full 20 litres during Ramadan, the Islamic holy month, beginning 12 March. The situation will be reviewed next month, considering the availability of water in different dams, while longer-term solutions in collaboration with WASH sector partners, relevant government authorities and development actors continue to be explored.

- SAFE USAGE OF PRESSURE COOKERS: A door-to-door campaign on the safe use of pressure cookers began in February, targeting all households in the 16 UNHCR-managed camps. 54,894 households have so far been reached (59% coverage).

- IMPROVING SEXUAL AND REPRODUCTIVE HEALTH (SRH): To improve SRH service quality and reduce high rates of maternal mortality (231 deaths per 100,000 live births) and perinatal mortality (304 deaths since surveillance began in August 2023) in the camps, UNHCR helped the SRH Working Group develop a comprehensive monitoring tool.

- REBUILDING CAMP 5 AFTER THE FIRE: As of 29 February, 766 shelters destroyed in the 7 January fire had been rebuilt (94% coverage), and 551 shelters handed over to 525 families, prioritizing family reunification, access and support for female-headed families. The use of treated bamboo and precast footing will extend the longevity of the new shelters and enhance user comfort. However, difficult site conditions and opposition to the smaller dimensions of the new standardized shelters prevented reconstruction of 26 shelters. Meanwhile, 334 fire-affected families received new pressure cookers, and 55% of 208 planned WASH blocks (which integrate a bathing cubicle, latrine and handwashing facilities per every four shelters) had been fully constructed by month-end.

- MISSION REPORT: In February, UNHCR hosted or assisted 11 visits from donors and partners to Cox's Bazar camps and Bhasan Char, including Global Affairs Canada, Schneider Electric, and the Director of UNHCR's Regional Bureau for the Asia-Pacific.

- FUNDING UPDATE: As of 29 February, the UNHCR Bangladesh operation was 20% funded against an operating plan of USD 275 million. Contributions were received from the UK, Finland, Education Cannot Wait and UN AIDS.

IN "CASE YOU MISSED IT…

- ***"Your participation in the Forum & the support promised are a true recognition that, when we work together, we are impactful."*** Sumbul Rizvi, UNHCR Representative in Bangladesh, reflects on a successful 2023 Global Refugee Forum which helps pave the way for future support and solutions for Rohingya refugees. Watch the video.

- UNHCR Bangladesh social media accounts published 20 Facebook posts, 29 tweets and 16 Instagram posts in February, including messages on International Mother Language Day (21 February), updates on the fatal fire on Bhasan Char, and a closer look at what UNHCR is doing to embrace clean energy.

The climate crisis threatens everyone — but those in the most vulnerable situations bear the greatest brunt. Rohingya youth climate activist Mohammed Anower calls us to action Watch video.

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