

BANGLADESH

21 February 2018 – 6 March 2018

UNHCR and the International Union for Conservation of Nature (IUCN) launched a project to prevent dangerous encounters with elephants, which have resulted in at least 10 deaths in Kutupalong settlement. The highly congested site lies on one of the migratory routes for Asian elephants.

Nobel Peace laureates Mairead Maguire of Northern Ireland, Tawakkol Karman of Yemen, and Iran's Shireen Ebadi visited refugee settlements in Bangladesh to raise awareness about the plight of Rohingya refugees. The laureates' visit took place as part of the Nobel Women's Initiative.

In the past two weeks, 623 families living in flood-prone areas of Kutupalong were relocated to safer parts of the settlement. UNHCR is working closely with the government and other partners to prepare for the upcoming monsoon season.

POPULATION FIGURES

671,000* Estimated new arrivals in Bangladesh since 25 August 2017

865,230 refugees, according to family counting exercise (figure pending verification)

STAFFING & PARTNERS

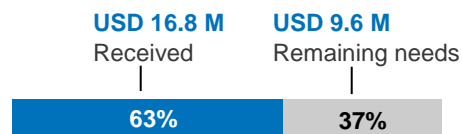
219 staff currently working on the emergency compared to **49** prior to the crisis. **147** are national staff.
23 partners compared to **7** prior to the crisis

* As reported by the Inter-Sector Coordination Group.

FUNDING

USD 83.7 million

Requested for UNHCR's initial emergency response from Sept '17 to Feb '18. Out of this amount, **USD 26.4 million** are the requirements for Jan-Feb 2018:



A Joint Response Plan, covering the period from March to December 2018, will be launched on 16 March 2018.



Young Rohingya refugee girls and boys get some schooling in displacement at a primary school supported by UNHCR and partners in Kutupalong. © UNHCR/Caroline Gluck

Arrival trends

Some 671,000¹ refugees have fled Myanmar to Bangladesh since 25 August 2017, with the overall counted refugee population in the area of Cox's Bazar reaching 865,230. Although the influx has slowed since the onset of the crisis, refugees continue to cross the border into Bangladesh, with a total of 3,236 new arrivals reportedly entering the country in February alone, bringing the number to over 5,000 newly arrived refugees so far in 2018.² On 24 February 2018, the population in the Transit Center reached approximately 2,300 individuals, exceeding its capacity of 1,600 individuals. However, with support from the Bangladesh Red Crescent Society (BRCS), all newly arrived refugees have received shelter.

During interviews with new arrivals, around 80% of those interviewed cited family safety and security as the main reasons for their flight, and 43% cited restrictions on livelihood as another major reason, in addition to frequent raids and lack of food.



Approximately 2,300 new arrivals took shelter at the UNHCR Transit Center near Kutupalong refugee settlement. The Transit Center was established on 18 October 2017 and has a capacity for 810 refugees or 162 families with a maximum emergency capacity of 1,620 persons. © UNHCR/Roger Arnold

Planning for voluntary return to Myanmar

The governments of Myanmar and Bangladesh bilaterally agreed to an 'arrangement' on the return of refugees to Myanmar on 23 November 2017 and a corresponding 'physical arrangement' on 16 January 2018. These agreements outline important commitments by both governments to ensure the voluntary, safe and dignified return of refugees to their place of origin in Myanmar, and to commencing a process to

¹ Approximately 671,000 new arrivals are reported as of 15 February 2018, according to IOM Needs and Population Monitoring (NPM) Round 8 site assessment. The decrease from the previously reported total of 688,000 is not a result of population return, but rather the use of a more detailed and accurate methodology to estimate total population figure.

² Information on arrivals at border points are reported through various sources which cannot always be verified or confirmed.

address root causes in line with the recommendations of the Advisory Commission on Rakhine State. While UNHCR was not involved in these arrangements, it is considered in both as playing a key role in assessing the voluntariness of potential returnees and assisting in any actual repatriation.

During his briefing on Myanmar to the Security Council on 13 February 2018, the UN High Commissioner for Refugees, Filippo Grandi, **reiterated** that conditions in Myanmar are not yet conducive to the voluntary repatriation of refugees. He stressed that the restoration of rights is key for their voluntary, safe, dignified and sustainable return. This week, UNHCR also renewed its call for unhindered humanitarian access in the northern part of Rakhine State and the implementation of the recommendations of the Advisory Commission on Rakhine State, stressing that UNHCR's offer to support to both governments in finding sustainable solutions for refugees remains open.

UNHCR is closely following the situation of a group of vulnerable people who have been living near the Tombru canal, in a so-called "no man's land", on the Myanmar side of the border between Myanmar and Bangladesh since the end of August 2017. This week, UNHCR **expressed** concern about their safety, after they were reportedly ordered to leave the area by Myanmar authorities. UNHCR reiterated that everyone has the right to seek asylum, just as they also have the right to return home when they deem the time and circumstances right, and that people who have fled violence must be granted safety and protection. Any decision to return must be voluntary and based on free and informed choice.

With discussions on returns regularly being reported in the media, refugee communities remain anxious about their future. Over the past months, refugees have frequently **said** that they will not consider going back to Myanmar unless questions of citizenship, legal rights, access to services, justice, and restitution are addressed.

UNHCR's response

Protection activities

The family counting exercise, which was initiated jointly by UNHCR and the Government of Bangladesh in October 2017, continues to highlight protection needs at the household level. The exercise, which includes gender and age disaggregated data and protection needs for the entire population, also ensures that refugees not issued with Family Counting Cards (FCN), such as new arrivals or those who have relocated, are also included in assistance delivery.



A young boy enjoys activities at one of the Early Childhood Development centers in Kutupalong settlement. © UNHCR/Caroline Gluck

This exercise also provides information on the location of people and population density within the different settlements, which has been analyzed with data on areas likely to be affected by the upcoming monsoon season, thus allowing for better

preparedness measures to be undertaken, including informing communities about the risks and empowering volunteers through evacuation and first aid training.

RAIS, UNHCR's online platform for distribution and monitoring of assistance, is now available with comprehensive information on the refugee population on individuals grouped into families. UNHCR partners will be assisting with the updating of specific protection needs in RAIS during follow-up of individual cases and protection monitoring. Additionally, RAIS is being used as a verification tool at distribution sites. UNHCR continues to provide support to other partners by resolving issues relating to FCN cards, including lost cards, and by supporting the identification and referral of persons with specific protection needs.



Kutupalong hosts almost 600,000 refugees, making it the world's largest refugee settlement. It is equivalent to the size of the city of Glasgow (UK) but with 13.2 times the population density. © UNHCR/Dalal Alsharhan

In collaboration with Protection partners, UNHCR trained community outreach members (COMs), from diverse groups within the refugee community, as part of a community outreach program launched in December 2017. This is part of UNHCR's community-based approach to protection and to empower refugees as first responders to support their peers. Since the launch of the program, the number of COMs has grown from 30 individuals in Kutupalong to 279 trained members, who were trained on Code of Conduct, their roles and responsibilities and other topics related to their activities.

Since January 2018, COMs and Community Outreach Workers, which include members of the host community, conducted some 2,220 home visits to identify cases in need of support, provide direct assistance and support, and refer refugees to UNHCR's partners Technical Assistance Inc. (TAI) and Bangladesh Rural Advancement Committee (BRAC) for additional support.

In close cooperation with partners TAI and BRAC, UNHCR also provides male and female COMs with training on sexual and gender-based violence (SGBV), which focuses on the identification of SGBV cases as well as referral methods. Survivors of SGBV reported to UNHCR and partners are assisted with counselling, and depending on their case, they may be provided with legal support and medical treatment.

UNHCR established a strong referral link with its partner the Bangladesh National Women Lawyers' Association (BNWLA) for the delivery of legal counselling services to refugees, which includes door-to-door counselling on various issues such as maintenance, domestic violence, and physical and mental abuse. In addition to feedback boxes, a protection hotline is also available and the number is posted in

information centers and other important locations around the camps and settlements to ensure adequate outreach and awareness. A referral pathway was established to ensure immediate assistance to refugees by UNHCR and partners. Since January 2018, a total of 561 calls were received, referred, and addressed.

In the past two weeks, over 50 unaccompanied and 300 separated children were assisted by UNHCR and its partners.

Currently, more than 6,500 children were able to benefit from psychosocial support through structured play and other activities at Child Friendly Spaces (CFSs), which are established throughout the settlements. UNHCR and partners also engage with the refugee community to discuss various issues affecting children, including child marriage and its impact on the community, as well as improving the identification and referral of child protection cases by the community. Children clubs were also engaged to discuss issues affecting children in the community and to provide them with peer support.

Access to education remains a top priority for UNHCR and partners. As of 24 February, 14,543 children are enrolled in primary education through 23 schools across Kutupalong and Nayapara settlements and 59 temporary learning centers in the settlements' extensions, while 586 children are enrolled in junior secondary education in the settlement.



Young children drawing at one of the temporary learning centers in Rohingya refugee settlements. © UNHCR/Caroline Gluck

Provision of services and assistance

At the start of the crisis, UNHCR urgently started provision and distribution of core relief items (CRIs) and other assistance to refugees. In less than three months (between 15 September and 12 December 2017), 17 airlifts to Bangladesh were conducted to deliver assistance to refugees. Upon their arrival, refugee families were provided with CRIs, such as sleeping mats, mosquito nets, tarpaulins, and solar lamps, and a shelter kit to build their houses.

Now UNHCR is scaling up efforts to support refugee families to build safer homes before the start of the monsoon season in Bangladesh. As part of its preparedness efforts, between November 2017 and 1 March 2018 UNHCR has distributed upgraded shelter kits, composed of bamboo poles, ropes, tools, and tarpaulins, to more than 35,564 families. Distributions of kits are being accelerated ahead of the rainy season to reach tens of thousands more families. After receiving upgraded shelter kits, refugees carry out the construction work themselves and make individual decisions about the design of the shelters – e.g. where doors should be relocated, internal partitioning, etc. Some vulnerable families, including female-headed households with small children, receive help from UNHCR's partners to carry and build their shelters. As part of its assistance program, UNHCR is planning to launch a pilot cash distribution program in Kutupalong this month.



Chakmarkul settlement houses around 13,400 Rohingya refugees who fled their homes in Myanmar. © UNHCR/Caroline Gluck

On 20 February 2018, UNHCR and partners began relocating the first groups of families living in flood-prone areas to new and safer part of the sites. So far, over 620 families living in areas vulnerable to flooding in Kutupalong were relocated to safer parts of the settlement. While families most at risk of floods and landslides are encouraged to relocate to other areas, given the limited land available in the

settlements, strict prioritization on UNHCR-assisted relocations is being undertaken. Given the limited land available in the settlements, UNHCR and partners are working closely with the government to identify safer and additional areas to relocate more families at risk of landslides and flooding. In addition, UNHCR protection teams are facilitating community engagement in preparedness efforts, including appropriate messaging to communities likely to be affected by landslides, floods or cyclones, and analyzing community coping mechanisms and preparedness plans.

Water, Sanitation and Hygiene (WASH) issues have been some of the top concerns for the refugee population and aid agencies in the past six months. UNHCR and partners continue to respond to the urgent needs and to strengthen preparation efforts ahead of the rainy season.

UNHCR's new latrine designs, which were recently approved by the Government of Bangladesh, provide an improved standardized model that allows UNHCR and partners to construct a sanitation infrastructure that will reduce desludging needs and improve sanitary conditions. In parallel, UNHCR's partner Oxfam has installed a water treatment and distribution system in Shalbon in the Nayapara Expansion to combat the water shortage crisis, while UNHCR is making preparations for emergency water trucking.



Rohingya refugees in Kutupalong receive bamboo as part of their shelter kits, allowing them to build sturdier homes. © UNHCR /Caroline Gluck

Moreover, UNHCR is coordinating with the authorities to improve the sites, shelter, and services in Kutupalong and Nayapara settlements, and to continue working on new site areas. Works are ongoing to expedite preparations and mitigate the risk of future “emergencies within an emergency” as the monsoon season is approaching. UNHCR and partners continue to work on small-scale engineering projects, including the construction of bamboo-reinforced footpaths, bridges, retaining walls for soil stabilization, and drainage works. UNHCR started pre-positioning containers with post-cyclone relief items at distribution points across Kutupalong and Nayapara, including the Transit Center.

Regarding access to health services, UNHCR and partners have scaled up their response and continue to strengthen support to medical facilities in refugee-hosting areas with logistics, equipment, and other immediate needs such as ambulances, hospital tents, medicines, medical supplies, and training. Currently, UNHCR supports 16 health facilities, through which approximately 250,000 individuals have access to primary healthcare.

UNHCR and partners have already conducted mass immunization campaigns for refugees and host communities in Ukhia and Teknaf Upazilas in the Cox's Bazar district, which included vaccinations against Measles, Rubella, Cholera, and Polio. After two rounds of Diphtheria mass immunization campaigns conducted in December 2017, a third round is scheduled before the end of March 2018.

In preparation for the monsoon and cyclone season, UNHCR and partners are also prepositioning medical supplies in strategic locations in the north and south of Kutupalong and Nayapara settlements. In addition, plans are underway for the formation and training of mobile medical teams to respond to the medical needs in the event that health facilities in some areas become inaccessible due to damage from flooding, landslides, or cyclones.

Last week, UNHCR and the International Union for Conservation of Nature (IUCN) in Bangladesh launched a project to prevent dangerous encounters between refugees and elephants in Kutupalong refugee settlement, which lies along the migratory routes of wild Asian elephants. The plan is executed in consultation with the Bangladesh Forest Department and the Refugee Relief and Repatriation Commissioner's Office (RRRC), and includes the installation of watch towers in addition to Elephant Response Teams (ERTs) made up of trained refugee volunteers. This is done in response to several incidents involving elephants wandering into the camps, leading to the deaths of at least 10 people, including young children.



Elephant crossing sign along the roadside of the UNHCR Transit Center in Kutupalong. © UNHCR/Roger Arnold

Peaceful co-existence between host and refugee communities

Around 20 solar street lights are being installed by UNHCR in Foliapara village, which has a population of 10,600 people and is located on the outskirts of Kutupalong refugee settlement. They are being installed in public places, including near schools and mosques, to benefit the local community. This forms part of a total of 270 solar street lights provided by UNHCR that are being installed in areas of Kutupalong, Nayapara host community and extension site, and the Transit Center.

In order to enhance support to the national systems and services, in addition to establishing and supporting health facilities in the refugee settlements, UNHCR and partners have expanded their response to host communities through supporting government hospitals and clinics. Based on the needs identified by its Government partners, UNHCR supports health facilities with logistical support and provides equipment and medicines as well as training and resources to the government-run hospitals and clinics in areas hosting refugees.



From left to right: Before and after photos showing a solar street light being installed in Foliapara village, located on the fringes of the giant Kutupalong Rohingya refugee settlement. © UNHCR/Caroline Gluck

As a result of the influx and in order to minimize the impact of the humanitarian response on the environment, UNHCR and partners continue to distribute compressed rice husks (CRHs), a cooking fuel alternative that is friendlier for the environment. This initiative also supports host communities as CRHs are procured from local suppliers. UNHCR and partners the Food and Agricultural Organization (FAO), IOM, and the World Food Program (WFP) also continue working on the pilot liquid petroleum gas (LPG) initiative to provide a safer alternative for fuel to refugees and host communities.



Khaleda Begum (red scarf) at her home surrounded by refugee families now living on her farm where she cut down numerous trees to accommodate their shelters, a child friendly space and a clinic. © UNHCR/Roger Arnold

Working in partnership

UNHCR is working in close collaboration with a range of international and national actors in Bangladesh, and it has scaled up its implementing partnership network to 23 partners, including nine national NGOs. In 2018, UNHCR also plans to increase national and local sourcing of goods and services. So far, UNHCR has already signed 35 local framework agreements worth over USD 20 million, 10 of which are for construction alone, while others are for the procurement of CRIs, shelter material, and services for persons of concern. UNHCR exercises a lead role in the protection response for all refugees, coordinating closely on the delivery of assistance with UN agencies and other partners through the various working groups under the Inter-Sector Coordination Group (ISCG). UNHCR's main government counterpart is the Ministry of Disaster Management and Relief (MoDMR). In Cox's Bazar, UNHCR cooperates with the RRRC, the local representative of the MoDMR, and appointed Camp-in-Charges in different settlements.

Donor Support

The significant demands of the humanitarian response for Bangladesh need to be recognized. The response of the Government and people of Bangladesh has been extraordinarily generous. However, additional support is needed. UNHCR has called for the commitment of international donors to meet immediate needs in Bangladesh, and finding solutions continues to be a priority. An inter-agency Joint Response Plan (JRP) covering the period from March to December 2018 is presently being finalized.

Donor country contributions to the UNHCR Bangladesh operation in 2017 and 2018, and donor unrestricted funding to UNHCR's global operations



With thanks also to the many private donations from individuals, foundations, companies in Australia, Canada, China, Egypt, France, Ghana, India, Ireland, Italy, Japan, Korea, Netherlands, Oman, Philippines, Portugal, Spain, Senegal, Singapore, Switzerland, Thailand, United Kingdom, UAE, and USA including Calouste Gulbenkian Foundation, IKEA Foundation, Kuwait Finance House, OPEC Fund for International Development, Prosolidar-Onlus Foundation, Qatar Charity, Rahmatan Lil Alamin Foundation, The Big Heart Foundation, The Church of Latter-Day Saints, and UPS Corporate. Special thanks also to UNOPS and CERF.

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