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Bangladeshi communities were the first to respond to the large influx of Rohingya refugees in 2017 and provided lifesaving support together with the Government of Bangladesh. The rapid increase of population however has strained the local community capacity, infrastructure, and public services, which affected local economy, particularly in Ukhiya and Teknaf sub-districts which host the majority of refugees. The rising demands on food and transportation, pressure on water resources and basic services, environmental and infrastructure degradation (e.g. roads), and others have contributed to a challenging situation for both host communities and for refugees.

Recognising the generosity of local communities which continue to assist refugees and their needs for additional support, UNHCR initiated quick impact projects (QIPs) for host communities in collaboration with local authorities and partner organisations. These small-scale community-based projects with short implementation periods offer direct positive impacts for the targeted community. UNHCR has provided livelihood support for the poorest, distributed family kits (tarpaulin, wire, rope, bucket and sleeping mats) to local families affected by and at risk of monsoon. Additionally, schools and health facilities, as well as infrastructure like roads, have been renovated or constructed. These efforts will help strengthen host community's capacity to serve local needs and enable them to continue providing critical support for refugees through their established services. It remains a strong part of UNHCR's planning to enhance and develop the capacity of host communities in meaningful ways.

Progress

UNHCR works with partners BRAC, Gonoshasthaya Kendra (GK), NGO Forum for Public Health, Technical Assistance Inc. (TAI), Artolution, CODEC, and the Adventist Development and Relief Agency (ADRA). Together with the Bangladeshi authorities and communities, projects that could yield value were identified. The following progress has been implemented to date:

35 out of 40 QIPs of education, water and sanitation, health, shelter and energy **completed**

55 schools renovated with additional classrooms, computer labs and latrines

30,000 family kits delivered to local communities, including **4,300** to the poorest

2,028 women received livelihoods support and trained towards graduation from extreme poverty

70 infrastructure and schools improved and renovated in Cox's Bazar Sadar, Ukhiya and Teknaf sub-districts throughout 2018

30,000 family kits distributed to host community families affected by or prone to natural disasters

170,000 people in host community areas affected by the large refugee influx benefitting from quick impact projects

UNHCR is promoting peaceful coexistence and enhancing social cohesion through:

- 1 Ongoing consultations** with local communities affected by the refugee influx to identify needs and support
- 2 Livelihood support** to affected communities particularly the poorest, including women
- 3 Income-generating activities** with direct impact to local economy and the communities

Challenges



A need for more in-depth, evidence-based assessments to understand the needs of host community and assist in planning, as well as more development inputs and resources from relevant development agencies.

Way forward

UNHCR is working closer with development actors to look at ways to complement each other's support to the Bangladeshi community. This collaboration needs to be meaningful, help strengthen the resilience of refugees and local communities through shared resources and encourage greater social cohesion and harmony. UNHCR will also continue to explore for innovative ways to support the poorest members of Cox's Bazar community in partnership with the Government and the international community, while delivering on its responsibility to support and protect refugees.

Working in Partnership

UNHCR co-chairs the **Strategic Executive Group** together 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 a number of 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 with a range of international and national actors. It has a strong network of 28 partners, including:

Action Aid Bangladesh | **ACF** (Action Contre la Faim) | **ADRA** (Adventist Development and Relief Agency) | **BNWLA** (Bangladesh National Woman Lawyer's Association) | **Bangladesh Red Crescent Society** | **BRAC** (Bangladesh Rehabilitation Assistance Committee) | **Caritas Bangladesh** | **Center for Natural Resource Studies** | **CODEC** (Community Development Centre) | **COAST** (Coastal Association for Social Transformation Trust) | **Danish Refugee Council** | **FH Association** (Food for the Hungry) | **GK** (Gonoshasthaya Kendra) | **IRC** (International Rescue Committee) | **IUCN** (International Union for Conservation of Nature and Natural Resources) | **Handicap International** | **Helvetas Swiss Intercooperation** | **Light House** | **Oxfam GB** | **Relief International** | **Mukti Cox's Bazar** | **NGO Forum for Public Health** | **RTMI** (Research, Training and Management International) | **Save the Children International** | **Sesame Workshop** | **Solidarites International** | **Terre des hommes** Foundation | **TAI** (Technical Assistance Incorporated)

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. 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.

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