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Bangladeshi communities were the first to respond to the large influx of Rohingya refugees in 2017, providing lifesaving support together with the Government of Bangladesh. The rapid increase of population however has strained the local community's capacity, infrastructure, and public services, and was felt in the local economy, particularly in Ukhiya and Teknaf sub-districts which host the majority of the refugee settlements. The rising demands on food and transportation, pressure on water resources and basic services, along with environmental and infrastructure degradation (e.g. roads), among other factors, have contributed to a challenging situation for host communities and the refugees they are generously supporting.

UNHCR recognises that local communities assisting refugees also need support. In collaboration with local authorities and partner organisations, UNHCR initiated quick impact projects (QIPs) - small-scale community-based projects with short implementation periods that offer direct positive impacts for the targeted communities. 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 from the monsoon and cyclones. Additionally, schools and health facilities, as well as infrastructure like roads, were upgraded or provided added capacity. Repairing public buildings and infrastructure can strengthen a host community's capacity to serve local needs and allow the continuance of 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, and with the Bangladeshi authorities and communities, projects continue to be identified that can yield value. The following progress was made to date:

70 infrastructure/schools improved/renovated in Cox's Bazar
30,000 family kits distributed to assessed host community families affected by or prone to natural disasters
116,666 benefitting from quick impact projects in host community areas affected by the large refugee influx

UNHCR is working with host communities to support their needs through:

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

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

59 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

Challenges



A need for more in-depth evidence-based assessments to understand host community needs and aid planning; and need for more inputs and resources from relevant development agencies.



The monsoon and cyclone-prone seasons risk seriously affecting works in progress, or cause major damage to local services and infrastructure.



The strong interest in QIPs results in many requests for interventions, which increases time spent vetting potential projects.

Way forward

Livelihood support for 2,028 identified poor households started in partnership with BRAC in 2018 and will continue in 2019. UNHCR also started new livelihood and self-reliance projects in 2019 in partnership with BRAC, Mukti Cox's Bazar and CNRS for 4,500 poor and extremely poor households within the host community, and self-reliance support for 1,000 Rohingya households (basic skills development for women/youth, kitchen gardening to support household food and nutritional needs). The agency is also working closely with development actors to look at ways to use their expertise and resources to complement UNHCR's support. This collaboration can contribute to fostering better social cohesion and peaceful co-existence between host community and Rohingya. In partnership with the Government, UNHCR continues to explore ways to address host community needs, 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 27 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) | **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** | **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.

Donor country contributions to UNHCR Bangladesh (2018/2019)

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