

Bangladesh

1 - 31 October 2020

On 22 October, the US, UK, EU and UNHCR co-hosted a virtual donor conference to promote support for Rohingya refugees and countries hosting them in the region including Bangladesh, highlighting a significant funding gap with contributions covering less than half of what is needed. The conference took the opportunity to reiterate the need for a sustainable solution.

Since the first **COVID-19** case was detected in May, the total number of confirmed cases in the Cox's Bazar refugee camps is 336, including 9 deaths. UNHCR continues to manage two COVID-19 treatment facilities and an ICU ward in the Sadar District Hospital which serve both the refugee and host communities.

Heavy rains affected Cox's Bazar during 22-25 October as a result of a depression in the Bay of Bengal. Humanitarian agencies working in the response closely monitored the situation and were able to respond quickly with assistance. October and November traditionally are periods when cyclones pose a risk to the region.

POPULATION DATA **862,277** refugees in Cox's Bazar district. ***826,758** refugees are registered under the Government of Bangladesh-UNHCR registration exercise. There are also **35,060** refugees from pre-2016 and who reside in the registered camps.

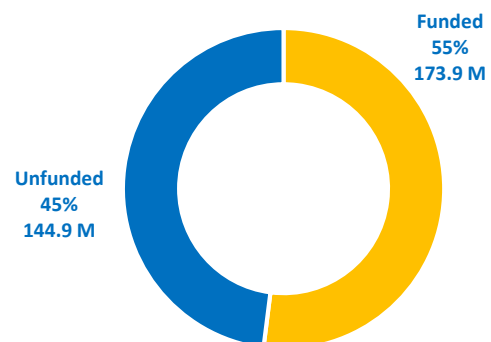
91,371

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 were also being supported with cooking kits and LPG.

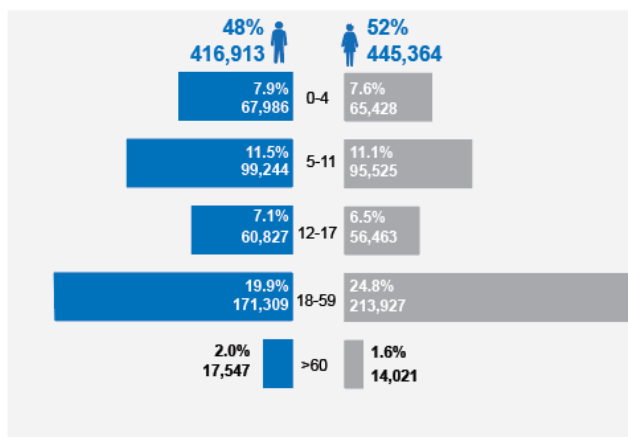
FUNDING (AS OF 3 NOVEMBER 2020)

USD 318.8 M

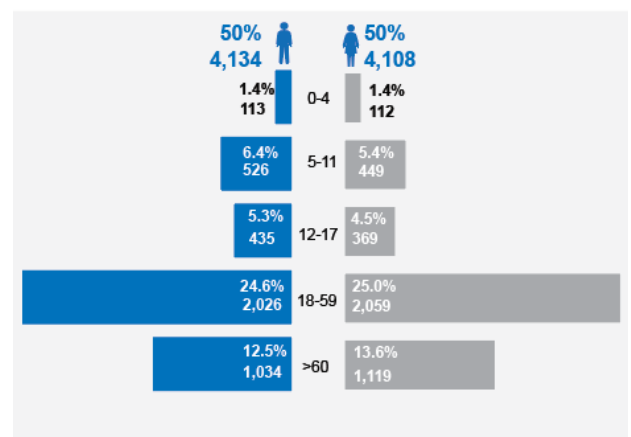
requested for Bangladesh



AGE BREAKDOWN OF REFUGEES IN COX'S BAZAR



DISABILITY BREAKDOWN BY AGE AND GENDER



Operational Context

- Since 14 May when the first COVID-19 positive case was detected in the camps, some **336 refugees have been confirmed with COVID-19, and 9 have sadly died**. To date, sufficient capacity has been available for responding to confirmed cases and offering treatment. UNHCR operates two Severe Acute Respiratory Infection Isolation and Treatment Centres (SARI ITCs) with 194 beds and supports an Intensive Care Unit (ICU) ward at the main local district hospital. These facilities offer treatment for refugees and the host community. So far, some 470 patients have received treatment at the facilities. Critical activities, including the delivery of food assistance and other support, continue to be undertaken in the camps.
- On 6-7 October, UNHCR and other agencies deployed emergency protection staff to respond to violence reported in limited areas of the camps in Cox's Bazar. The violence was reported to have been caused by clashes among two criminal gangs in the camps. Close to 1,600 families were displaced across the affected areas of the camps and temporarily stayed with relatives or in communal facilities such as learning centres before returning to their shelters. A number of the humanitarian agencies on the ground were required to temporarily suspend regular activities until order was reinstated by the Bangladeshi law enforcement and security forces. The situation has since stabilised.
- On 22 October, the US, UK, EU and UN Refugee Agency co-hosted a virtual donor conference to promote support for Rohingya refugees and host countries, highlighting funding gaps. The co-hosts called on the international community to provide much needed funding to assist Rohingya refugees, host communities, and internally displaced people in Myanmar. The conference also took the opportunity to reiterate that any sustainable solution to this situation must include the voluntary, safe, dignified and sustainable return of Rohingya refugees to Myanmar. The international community responded with the announcement of funding totaling some US \$600 million for the Bangladesh Joint Response Plan and the Myanmar Humanitarian Response Plan.
- On 6 October, UNHCR handed over 4,750 family tents to the Bangladesh Red Crescent Society to be distributed to the most vulnerable Bangladeshi families throughout the country who were displaced by torrential rain and flooding. Some 5.4 million people were affected, and 167 thousand families temporarily displaced, including in Sirajganj, Jamalpur and Rangpur Districts in particular. The tents, worth approximately USD 2.5 million, will support an estimated 24,000 flood affected Bangladeshis in 26 northern districts.



COVID-19 reports can be found [here](#) on UNHCR's Bangladesh portal.

Updates and achievements



MONSOON / CYCLONE SEASON

Heavy rains strike the camps in Cox's Bazar in late October with limited damage

- Between 22-25 October, the camps saw heavy and persistent rain for a few days as a result of a depression in the Bay of Bengal. The Bangladesh Meteorological Department raised the alert level at the start of the rains with a one-flag cyclone signal in the camps. UNHCR's Emergency Response Team was also deployed as a precaution. The flag was later lowered.
- Overall, the rains led to the total damage of 35 shelters, and close to 500 shelters were partially damaged in areas UNHCR supports. Up to 50 households needed to temporarily relocate. Site management partners referred families that required food assistance to WFP and shelter support was provided to repair or rebuild shelters that were damaged. Other damaged infrastructure, including latrines and bridges are being rebuilt.

**PROTECTION****Increased support for suicide prevention and mental health**

- Some reports have pointed to a rise in suicide attempts in the camps in Cox's Bazar since the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic, particularly among women. The data currently available on suicide is, however, difficult to read with certainty. UNHCR's protection staff as well as the inter-agency Mental Health and Psychosocial Support (MHPSS) Working Group have both highlighted the fact that reported suicides have been increasing. However, the data does not presently indicate if this is a continuation of a pre-existing trend, or if it is coming to light more as a result of a better understanding of the issue among medical and humanitarian service staff, as well as within the refugee community itself.
- UNHCR's MHPSS team is actively working with the inter-agency Health Sector and with refugee Community Health Volunteers to find ways to collect data and measure the scale of the situation in the camps. Under the MHPSS Working Group's umbrella, some Focus Group Discussions (FGDs) are already being conducted with refugees to find out the best way to understand and speak about suicide-related issues within the community. This is a necessary first step to ensure both the transparency of the initiative as well as community involvement and participation. These FGDs are being led by one agency of the Working Group's Suicide Prevention Sub-Group, with support from multiple organizations including UNHCR and its partners. UNHCR is also planning workshops for key partner staff to increase knowledge and understanding on suicide-related issues.
- UNHCR has integrated general mental health and psychosocial support into its work on protection, health and education. Together with partners, UNHCR stepped up mental health support for refugees in Cox's Bazar during the last few months as part of the COVID-19 pandemic response. Some mental health services were provided remotely over telephone or internet, while direct clinical care was also delivered. UNHCR also boosted training on MHPSS for frontline health and protection staff, refugee outreach volunteers, UNHCR's community-based protection networks, camp management personnel, and protection hotline staff. Some 212 refugee Community Psychosocial Volunteers (CPVs) were trained on mental health response modules focussing on the empowerment of children in staying safe and encouraging their role in protecting their families through COVID-19 preventative measures, as well as promoting their psychological wellbeing.

**ENVIRONMENT****A full agenda of work to improve the environment in the refugee camps in Cox's Bazar**

- UNHCR has commenced a series of studies on the environment in the refugee camps in Cox's Bazar. As part of the initiative, UNHCR will be gathering evidence-based data on soil, water, air and biodiversity, which will be used to help the agency to decide and plan how best it can contribute, with others, to ensure the recovery and future health of the environment in the locations where the refugee camps are currently located and surrounding areas. Significant environmental gains have already been made over the last two years through the introduction of LPG fuel for refugees and host communities, which reduced the cutting of trees in forest areas and improved air quality.
- Currently, soil sampling is ongoing with some 234 samples so far collected across 16 camps. This sampling will ensure any subsequent environmental rehabilitation work has a good soil quality baseline to comparatively measure progress. The study will further help UNHCR and its partners discuss with the authorities the selection of plant species to be used, as well as soil quality improvement ideas. UNHCR's partner, Center for Natural Resource Studies (CNRS) has already completed a separate soil study in Teknaf to identify deficiencies in the nutrient composition of the soil which can help in discussions on the cultivation of different agri-crops in both the host and refugee community areas.

- UNHCR and its partners recently started a more diverse planting programme in collaboration with the Forestry Department. Some 34 different plant species were used in one camp. This diversity in planting is important for ensuring the recovery of the ecosystem. A Natural Regeneration Assessment is also underway by The International Union for Conservation of Nature (IUCN) with the support of UNHCR to track the natural regeneration of native plant species in the area of the camps.
- Additionally, a wildlife survey to track trends related to the presence and return of indigenous species to the areas where the refugee camps are located has started. UNHCR and its partner CNRS have initiated the study in the large Kutupalong site where the majority of the refugees live.
- IUCN, with UNHCR's support, is also in the process of collaring one of the wild Asian elephants in the area to help track herd movements and behavioral changes due to alterations in the ecosystem since refugees arrived in 2017. The IUCN has already identified and documented each elephant living in the Teknaf game reserve forest. The study and data acquired from it will be valuable for wider conservation efforts being made for the elephants.
- Water testing is also part of the studies underway. It is part of a watershed management plan that UNHCR and its partner CNRS are implementing in the camps. A hydrological assessment was so far conducted for one of the big stream networks in the large Kutupalong camp to develop an ecological restoration plan for it. Other assessments are on the way for different watersheds that play an important role in the camp's environment as well as in the host community. Water testing has been carried out at 14 different sites to date, and UNHCR is tracking the impact of different watershed rehabilitation activities on improving water quality.
- All of the individual studies mentioned above, including air quality testing, will be ready by December. Going forward, UNHCR and its environmental partners see a need for more integrated monitoring of the environment. A monitoring framework is being developed with key environmental indicators. Both the studies and the integrated monitoring framework will help document the impact of current interventions on the soil, water, air and ecosystem in a holistic way to ensure there is a tangible record available on the progress being made in the environmental rehabilitation taking place in this important humanitarian setting.

Working in partnership

UNHCR is a co-chair of the Strategic Executive Group (SEG) in Bangladesh with the UN Resident Coordinator and IOM. The UN Refugee Agency also leads on the protection response, as head of the Protection Working Group in Cox's Bazar. UNHCR has valuable partnerships with a number of UN agencies and coordinates the delivery of its assistance with humanitarian partners through the sectors and working groups, as part of the Inter-Sector Coordination Group (ISCG). UNHCR's main government counterpart in Cox's Bazar is the Ministry of Disaster Management and Relief and its Cox's Bazar-based Refugee Relief and Repatriation Commissioner (RRRC), as well as the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Ministry of Home Affairs in Dhaka, among other government ministries and entities. UNHCR staff work closely with the RRRC's Camp-in-Charge officials in the 34 refugee settlements, as well as a range of international and national actors. UNHCR would also like to acknowledge the crucial role played by the refugees in the response, with over 7,000 volunteers from the refugee community who are often the first responders on the ground.

UNHCR's partners

MoDMR (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

Financial Information

Total recorded contributions for the operation amount to some **USD 173.9 million**. UNHCR is grateful for the critical support provided by donors that have contributed to this operation as well as those that contribute to UNHCR programmes with unearmarked and broadly earmarked funds. In 2019/2020, support continued to be generously received from the following: Austria, Australia, Bangladesh, Canada, China, Denmark, Estonia, the European Union, Finland, France, Germany, Ireland, Italy, Japan, the Republic of Korea, Lithuania, the Netherlands, New Zealand, Norway, Qatar, the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia, Singapore, Spain, Sweden, Switzerland, Turkey, the United Arab Emirates, the United Kingdom, and the United States of America. UNHCR is sincerely grateful for the additional support received from individuals, foundations, and companies worldwide, including: Athmar Holdings, Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation, CERF, Education Cannot Wait, Fondation EDF, Mabarrat Ghanaem Al Khair, Qatar Charity, Shih Wing Ching Foundation, and Thani Bin Abdullah Bin Thani Al Thani Humanitarian Fund.

CONTACTS & LINKS

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