August 2023

Study background and demographics

Briefs from Cox's Bazar Panel Survey[1] on Bhasan Char Baseline – 2022

Context

Nearly a million Rohingya refugees currently live in Bangladesh, most of whom live in the coastal district of Cox's Bazar. While the Rohingya refugee situation in Bangladesh is not new, the 2017 mass displacement across the Myanmar-Bangladesh border led to more than 700,000 Rohingya refugees moving into Bangladesh, making it one of the swiftest forced displacements in recent history.

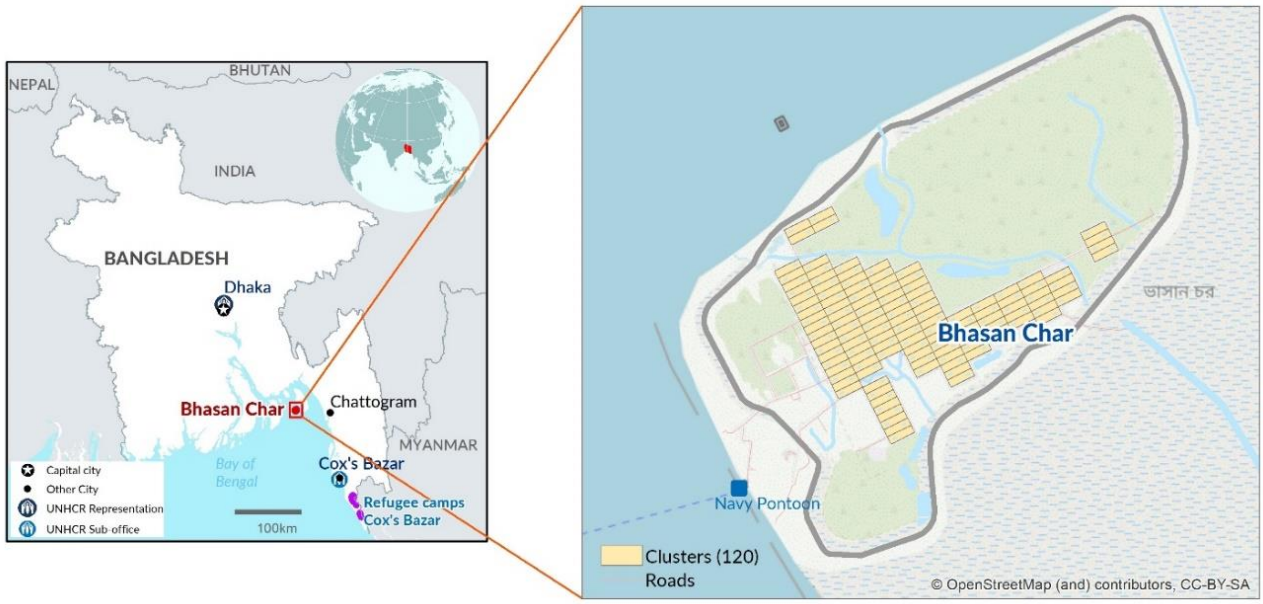

Figure 1: Map of Bhasan Char on the Bay of Bengal. Source: UNHCR.

Some 30,000 of these individuals now live on an island in the Bay of Bengal known as Bhasan Char – a new refugee site established by the Government of Bangladesh, about 52 kilometres away from Chattogram. At the time of data collection (November 2022), UNHCR registered/verified 28,760 Rohingyas living on the island, grouped in 7,323 families. They live across 59 out of 120 clusters on the island's Ashrayan – 3 project[2] area. 51% of the population is women, more than 56% of the population is below the age of 18 years, and about 2% aged 60 years of above. A working age population of 18 to 59 years make up some 42% of the island population of Rohingya refugees[3].

Recognizing the prevailing protection and humanitarian needs, the UN has entered into a memorandum of understanding with the Government of Bangladesh in October 2021 which guides the humanitarian response on Bhasan Char. The UN supports and complements the work of the Government of Bangladesh as well as NGOs operating on the island.

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[1] *The Cox's Bazar Panel Survey (CBPS) is a partnership between the Yale Research Initiative on Innovation and Scale (Y-RISE), the Gender & Adolescence: Global Evidence (GAGE) program, and the Poverty and Equity Global Practice (GPVDR) of the World Bank. The UN Refugee Agency (UNHCR) funded and implemented the Bhasan Char stratum of the CBPS which is an extension to the original design. UNHCR gratefully acknowledges the support from the CBPS research partners for access to their survey instruments, technical support, and valued partnership.*

[2] *Ashrayan project is Government of Bangladesh development project under the Prime Minister's Office building homes for homeless and displaced people.*

[3] *UNHCR, 2022. Population Factsheet as of November 2022.*

Table 1: Age Breakdown of Rohingya living on Bhasan Char by Sex. Source: UNHCR, December 2022.

Age, in years	Female	Male
<1 year	2%	2%
1 to 4	9%	9%
5 to 11	11%	12%
12 to 17	6%	6%
18 to 59	23%	19%
60 and above	1%	1%

Study background

Cox's Bazar Panel Survey (CBPS) is a longitudinal panel survey tracking wellbeing of Rohingya refugees in Cox's Bazar since 2019[4]. The panel survey provides comparable socioeconomic data on several thematic areas, including household characteristics, housing/ shelter, education, consumption, income, health and mental health, and assets. The baseline survey was conducted in 2019 with interviews from over 2,500 refugee and 2,500 host community households in Ukhiya and Teknaf sub-districts.

As the number of refugees living on the island continued to increase, UNHCR collaborated with CBPS research partners to extend the survey to the island of Bhasan Char using a contextualized questionnaire to account for the local differences between Bhasan Char and Cox's Bazar. Unlike the Cox's Bazar panel survey, Bhasan Char does not include the host communities. The exercise produced the first set of comparable statistics for refugees living on Bhasan Char, with an intent to:

- Act as a baseline for monitoring refugee wellbeing on the island,
- Support potential policy and programming interventions and provide evidence to guide policymakers, humanitarian, and development partners, and
- Provide comparative analysis of refugees living on Bhasan Char and in Cox's Bazar.

Sample size

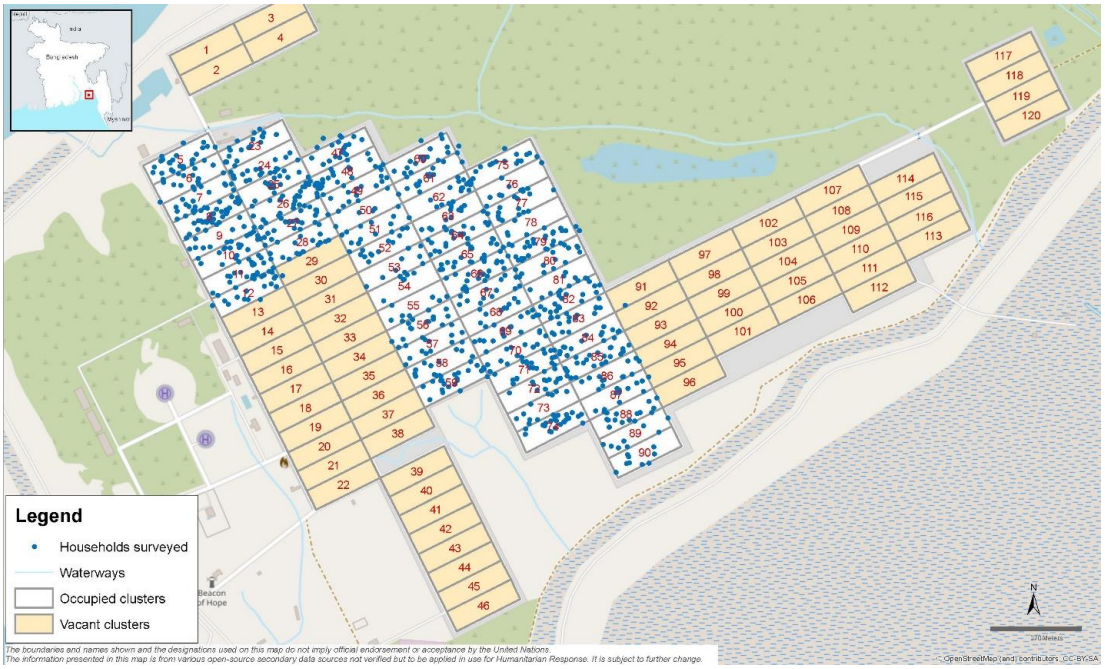

Figure 2: Geographic distribution of successful surveys completed on Bhasan Char. Source: CBPS.

[4] *World Bank, 2019. Study Overview.*

UNHCR and Government of Bangladesh's joint registration exercise records a list of all refugees who relocated to the island. Using this data as the population universe, a one-stage random sampling was conducted to generate the sample. Data was collected in person from 962 households during November – December 2022 using this sample. The sample covers approximately 13% of the entire island households at the time of data collection and is representative of the island's refugee population.

Early insights from the survey

Table 2: Household Demographic Summary Statistics. Source: CBPS.

Household/ Head of Household Characteristics	Bhasan Char (2022)	Cox's Bazar (2019)
Household size	4.7	5
Dependency ratio	5.7	2.5
Female headed household	32%	27%
Head of Household is married	84%	78%
Head of Household born in Myanmar	93%	98%
Head of Household can read a letter	16%	24%
Head of Household can write a letter	15%	22%
Total households surveyed	**962**	**2,615**

The average household size in the Bhasan Char sample is about 4.7 individuals, with a very high dependency ratio[5] of 5.7 dependents per employed working age adult. The population group is overwhelmingly young, with more than half of the population below 18 years of age.

32% of the households are female headed, which is 5 percentage points more than CBPS baseline data from Cox's Bazar (2019)[6]. 98% of the household heads surveyed in Cox's Bazar in 2019 were born in Myanmar, whereas 93% of the household on Bhasan Char are headed by individuals born in Myanmar. Only 16% of the heads of households on Bhasan Char can read a letter and only 15% of them can write a letter, compared to 24% and 22% in Cox's Bazar.

Survey modules

CBPS on Bhasan Char looks at multiple thematic areas to provide a comprehensive understanding of refugee wellbeing on the island. It presents a representative set of statistics across several socioeconomic indicators as listed below.

Household questionnaire

The following seven modules were part of a household level questionnaire collecting information described below:

- **Household Roster:** Household composition and basic information (relation to household head, age, marital status, religion, ethnicity), educational information (literacy, level of education, type of schooling, reasons for no schooling) and working status.
- **Housing Characteristics:** Housing and amenities including dwelling characteristics, access to latrines and type of latrines, access to drinking water, cooking fuel, lighting fuel, electricity, and rental status.

[5] *Dependency ratio is defined as the number of individuals below 18 years and above 60 years per employed working age adult between the ages of 18 and 60.*
[6] *Baird et al., 2019. Cox's Bazar Panel Survey.*

Food Consumption Score: Aggregated household-level data on the diversity and frequency of food groups consumed over the previous seven days using WFP's Food Consumption Score index module.

Consumption: Household non-food consumption in the last thirty days (sources of items, expenses incurred if items were purchased) and access to markets (location of frequented market, time of commute of market, mode of commute, difficulties accessing markets).

Household Income: Sources of income of all household members, amount earned from each source, total income earned in a year.

Assistance: Types of assistance or aid received by the household, when they received them, and from whom did they receive the assistance. This also includes a section on relocation grant assistance provided by the Government to households during relocation to the island, and how they used the grant.

Assets: Current household assets and household assets owned before 2017, perceived current resale value.

Adult questionnaire

The following modules were part of an adult individual questionnaire that was administered to a randomly selected adult in each of the households who completed the household questionnaire, and is above the age of 15 years:

Labor Market: Current employment information of selected adults (employment status, primary and non-primary work descriptions, type of work, hours worked, wages/profits, reasons for unemployment, job-seeking networks) including a question to identify if any of the jobs fall under cash for work or refugee volunteer activities.

Migration History: Location of birth, residence at the age of 12, details for each migration wave, specifically. Short-term migration: all migrations in the last 12 months of at least 2 weeks and up to 1 month for the purpose of work (destination, date of migration, duration, reason, type of residence, type of work).

Use of Health Services: Health status, illnesses and/or injuries suffered from in the last 12 months, expenses on medication, visits to the hospital or health care center, details of visit, duration and mode of commute, cost of visit, satisfaction with health care services, COVID-19 prevalence, vaccination rate.

Crime and Conflict: Types of crimes experienced and/or observed in neighborhood and reporting or conflict resolution practices.

Trauma and Mental Health: Symptoms of depression (Patient Health Questionnaire, 8 items). ■

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Recommended citation: UNHCR, August 2023. Briefs From Cox's Bazar Panel Survey on Bhasan Char Baseline – 2022, *Study Background and Demographics*.