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Refugees who fled violence in Myanmar to Bangladesh since August 2017 continue to face major mental health and psychosocial concerns. These can seriously affect their long-term mental health and psychosocial well-being. In addition to their experiences in Myanmar and the impact of those events had, their living conditions in refugee settlements in Cox’s Bazar with limited access to services and livelihood opportunities and restrictions on movement are among a series of factors that contribute to high levels of daily stress for the refugees. Consequently, the mental well-being of the most vulnerable continues to be affected and requires support.

### Progress

UNHCR, in collaboration with various partner organisations, continues to improve the situation to support refugees’ mental health status. The following activities have been completed since May 2018:

2,569 refugees received individual psychosocial support services

542 clinical mental health consultations provided

1,572 refugees and local staff participated in capacity building activities organised by UNHCR

34,351 refugees participated in psychosocial group activities

**15-20%** refugees potentially with mild or moderate mental disorders

**3-4%** refugees potentially with severe mental disorders

**312,000** refugees reached through outreach activities to identify their needs and be referred to different MHPSS services

**UNHCR MHPSS strategic objectives are:**

- 1** Develop **community-based psychosocial awareness and support**
- 2** **Scale up psychological intervention**
- 3** Integrate **mental health interventions** into general healthcare system

### Challenges



Community-based psychosocial interventions are not yet at the scale needed to reach the number of refugees in need of these activities



Currently clinical mental health services are not widely integrated in general healthcare system



MHPSS data collection and reporting is only partially available across different sectors

### Way Forward

UNHCR is working to strengthen different levels of mental health and psychosocial support interventions, including recruiting and training Community Psychosocial Volunteers (CPVs) through health partners to promote community-based activities. Equally, UNHCR is training psychologists and counsellors for individual psychosocial support, and integrating mental health services into its primary healthcare system in five locations (with possibility to extend to more locations). In 2018, UNHCR published a study on [the culture, context and mental health of Rohingya refugees](#), which will also be used as guidance to inform the way forward.

### 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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