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PLACE: Cox's Bazar

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## **The Greening of Cox's Bazar - The Positive Impact of Liquefied Petroleum Gas (LPG) distribution among the Refugee and Host communities**

Due to joint efforts by UNHCR, IUCN, the Government of Bangladesh and partners, the re-greening of the refugee hosting areas of Cox's Bazar is becoming a reality.

A widely reported environmental concern, which was exacerbated due to the Rohingya influx in Cox's Bazar, was the extensive firewood collection from the local forest for cooking fuel. To counter this practice, alternative fuel in the form of liquefied petroleum gas (LPG) and improved cooking stoves were distributed from August 2018 onwards to both Rohingya refugees and host communities in order to reduce the need for firewood from the nearby forest.

To better understand the impact on people's lives and the environment, UNHCR and IUCN partnered with the members of the inter-agency Energy and Environment Technical Working Group (EETWG) to carry out an assessment. The study collected information from approximately 1,400 households including over 1,200 Rohingya households, and almost 200 host community households close to the camps. Data was also collected from 10 markets surrounding the camps in Ukhiya and Teknaf sub-districts.

All Rohingya refugee households are now benefitting from LPG distributions. The study found that LPG distribution has resulted in a significant reduction of demand for firewood in the Rohingya camps. On average, amongst Rohingya families, the demand for firewood has dropped a massive 80% per household.

In line with the objective of the [Global Refugee Compact](#) to ease pressure on host communities, UNHCR and IOM also began providing LPG to local families near the camps. The combined target is to reach 55,000 host community households. So far, this has increased the use of LPG from approximately 7% to over 20% amongst the local community, which in turn has resulted in a 53% reduction in the demand for firewood among the host community households using LPG.

"The supply of LPG has also entirely changed the dynamics of the firewood market. The study suggests that due to the availability of LPG dealers/shops nearby, more and more of the local community also started using LPG for cooking at homes and restaurants", said Raquibul Amin, IUCN Country Representative. This will bring long term benefits to the local community and the environment, as alternative energy sources become more accessible and affordable.

Prior to the influx, nearly 95,000 tons of firewood were being supplied through the market and/or collected from local sources. This increased significantly following the influx, while the price of firewood also began to increase. However, following the launch of the LPG distribution programme, demand for firewood has dropped to just 37,000 tons, while the average price per kg of firewood has also dropped.

LPG has also had an impact on food habits and nutrition due to ease of cooking as well as a pollution free environment in the kitchen. The number of food items consumed by the household and food diversity has increased for all households using LPG. In terms of nutritional balance, LPG users are found to be consuming more vitamins, as their intake of vegetables has increased.

Furthermore, the reduced need to travel long distances to collect firewood has an important impact in terms of reducing risks of sexual and gender-based violence, while it can be assumed that children who used to spend hours collecting firewood now have more time to attend temporary learning centres.



## PRESS RELEASE

It must also be noted that joint efforts by members of the Energy and Environment Technical Working Group (EETWG) have seen more than 300 hectares of land reforested in 2019 alone, in collaboration with the Bangladesh Forest Department. This also contributes to Disaster Risk Reduction, through the stabilization of soil and reduction of landslides. These interventions are implemented hand in hand with innovative environmental conservation and rehabilitation efforts.

“With the significant reduction in demand and the price of firewood in the locality due to the availability of LPG, combined with joint reforestation and conservation efforts, the pressure on the environment has reduced to a large extent. The innovative joint energy and environment interventions in Cox’s Bazar have shown remarkable results for both the refugee and the host communities” said Steven Corliss, UNHCR Representative in Bangladesh.

Furthermore, global benefits from carbon saving are estimated to be \$69 million USD, when the social costs of carbon emissions are counted, while Bangladesh is an active participant in the UN-REDD programme on Reducing Emissions from Deforestation and Degradation, since 2010.

UNHCR, IUCN and the EETWG, with the support of partners and the World LPG Association (WLPGA), intend to upscale and expand both LPG distributions amongst the host community as well as joint reforestation efforts in 2020. The final assessment report will be publicly available in the first half of 2020.

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