



Working on human-centered design to enable community led settlement planning © UNHCR / Iva Vavic

PROTECTION CONTEXT:

Since August 2017, an estimated **703,725** Rohingya refugees have fled from Myanmar into Cox's Bazar, Bangladesh, increasing the total number of refugees to around **854,704**. The majority are reliant on humanitarian assistance, services, and resources including shelter, food, clean water, and sanitation. As the situation enters its third year, UNHCR and its protection partners have put in place a system to ensure a strengthened understanding of the protection landscape for Rohingya refugees, including the following key areas of concern across sectors, each of which requires regular monitoring.

PROGRESS

Advocacy and Refugee Rights

• **Registration and Civil Documentation:** As of 31 Dec 2019, **819,787** individuals making up **179,589** households registered through the Government of Bangladesh-UNHCR registration exercise. Phase III of the exercise has commenced as of 15 January 2020, with the focus now shifting to continuous registration procedures. Additionally, standardized marriage and divorce registration procedures have been put in place in all camps from October 2019, though birth registration (including for the host community) remains suspended despite ongoing advocacy.

• **Freedom of movement:** Due to recent changes in the political and security environment, security forces have begun adding more restrictions on the movement of refugees within the district. UNHCR has raised its concerns with government counterparts and the situation has improved to some extent, but continued advocacy on the issue is required including as part of capacity building initiatives with government counterparts.

• **Access to Justice:** To complement a range of activities conducted over the course of 2019, in December UNHCR organized a workshop with Camp-in-Charge (CiC) officials from all 34 camps to discuss a range of protection issues, including measures to ensure access to justice and civil documentation. Linked to this, UNHCR organized a training for legal assistance partners on community-based mediation, which is being expanded to provide meaningful resolution to interpersonal disputes of a non-criminal nature.

• **Education:** Some **66,809** learners were provided access to education services through UNHCR supported programs in 2019, including **58,720** children between the ages of 3 and 14 benefitting from education interventions and **8,089** adolescents and youth aged 15-24 engaged in foundational literacy and numeracy programs. A total of **71** classrooms were constructed in 2019, bringing to **452** the total number built since 2017. During the year **1,384** volunteer teachers were recruited, trained and deployed to support the teaching and learning processes. Although the Government of Bangladesh continued to prohibit formal education programs for refugees, progress was made toward the introduction of the Myanmar curriculum, which will hopefully be piloted in 2020.

• **Status recognition and non-refoulement:** Since January 2019, a total of **3,293** refugees in **934** households entered Bangladesh to seek international protection, including **3,021** persons from Myanmar and **272** from India and other countries.

• **Durable Solutions:** Following a request from the Government of Bangladesh, UNHCR conducted interviews with **338** households who had been cleared for return by the Government of Myanmar to ascertain their willingness to repatriate. Of the families interviewed, none indicated that they would like to return to Myanmar.

Key Protection Thematic Area:

Advocacy and Refugee Rights

- Registration and civil documentation
- Freedom of movement
- Access to justice
- Education and vocational training
- Status recognition and non-refoulement
- Durable solutions

Protection Mainstreaming

- Emergency preparedness and response
- Safety and security
- Site planning, energy and environment

Reduced Aid Dependency

- Access to basic services
- Income generating opportunities

Community Engagement

- Outreach and sensitisation
- Feedback and Referrals System
- Community engagement and empowerment
- Community representation
- Peaceful coexistence with host communities

Specialized Services

- Persons with specific needs, physical and mental health and psychosocial support
- SGBV and gender mainstreaming
- Legal assistance
- Child protection
- Prevention, Response and Reintegration of trafficking victims

Protection Mainstreaming

- **Emergency preparedness and response:** Since May 2019 some **14,194** awareness sessions on emergency preparedness have been conducted by refugee Community Outreach Members (COMs), reaching a total of **177,877** individuals, while **880** service projects relating to emergency preparedness were completed by community groups. Refugee multi-functional teams were operational in 2019 to support their communities in preparing and responding to cyclone warnings, heavy rains and floods.
- **Safety and security:** UNHCR and its partners, BRAC, TAI, BLAST, and BNWLA, continued to carry out protection monitoring and supported refugees through legal assistance programs in 2019. The security situation remained of concern throughout the year, particularly in the camps in Teknaf where criminal gang activity and lawlessness continued unabated, and where ongoing military and law enforcement activities were undertaken often without regard to the rights of alleged perpetrators. UNHCR and its legal assistance partners, together with the law enforcement agencies, successfully rescued **19** victims of trafficking and missing individuals as of Dec 2019.
- **Site planning:** UNHCR's site planning team continued work on a human-centered design tool to aid in mapping community needs and desires and enable community-led settlement planning. As part of this initiative, several cross-camp workshops and co-creation sessions were held with girls, boys, women and men. The refugees, alongside UNHCR site planners, jointly re-planned their existing self-settled areas by using a drone base map and creating a desired living environment in the form of a paper 3D model. Through this process UNHCR managed not only to hear community voices but empower them to join the design team. The site planning team has also been extensively engaged in supporting the Local Government Engineering Department (LGED) with spatial allocation of infrastructure development projects funded by the Asian Development Bank and the World Bank, and in developing community messaging and facilitating a protection sensitive relocation process for communities affected by the projects.
- **Energy and environment:** UNHCR continued its LPG distribution program which mitigated a range of environmental risks and social instability between refugees and host communities. The Center for Natural Resource Studies (CNRS) have extended watershed management and water treatment projects now that planting activities are transitioning to a period of monitoring and evaluation, whereby less planting is now required. Energy programs are now focusing on fuel efficient intervention pilots with IOM and the scaling up of solar interventions across the health, education and protection sectors. Humanitarian conservation interventions continue with elephant-human contact and rescue and release projects proving very successful in preventing human and wildlife fatalities.

Reduced Aid Dependency

- **Access to basic services:** While UNHCR and other humanitarian actors continued to work in a coordinated manner to provide access to basic services to the more than **900,000** refugees in the camps along with vulnerable members of the communities hosting them, some refugees continued to face challenges in accessing food as they were unable to complete biometric registration due to technical issues. UNHCR and its partners are following up to resolve these problems.
- **Income generating opportunities:** Economic transfers or public works cater to both the host and refugee communities, and this has ensured social cohesion in a refugee-host community setting. A total of **412,347** individuals from both the host and refugee communities were engaged in cash for work in 2019.

Community Engagement

- **Outreach and sensitization:** Through diversified channels of communication, COMs conducted **49,994** outreach sessions reaching **584,430** refugees covering health, emergency preparedness and protection topics. Radio Listening and Audio Watching Groups have become increasingly popular as men, women, boys and girls participate in discussions of diverse topics around their protection and wellbeing.
- **Feedback and Referrals System:** Some **3,542** calls were made to UNHCR's Protection hotline over the course of 2019, while **581** letters were received in UNHCR's feedback boxes, with the main issues reported relating to registration, legal assistance, durable solutions and repatriation, shelter, and access to basic services including cooking fuel. At the same time, **52,291** visitors approached the UNHCR Information Service Centers to provide feedback and request assistance, predominantly in relation to core relief items and shelter.
- **Community engagement and empowerment:** UNHCR supported **1,879** community led initiatives by **78** men, women and youth groups and embarked on conducting a mapping of religious leaders and structures with the aim of promoting community-based solutions to community-identified needs. Pilot training opportunities with the Protection Unit as well as BBC Media Action were offered to Imams in order to strengthen outreach coverage on key issues around health, emergency preparedness and protection.
- **Community representation:** In 2019, elections were conducted in the Nayapara and Kutupalong Registered Camps, as well as in Camp 4 Extension. Camp Committees are now functional in four locations, including the two registered camps, Camp 4 Extension and Camp 26. Gender parity and community support to women's participation in leadership roles was observed during elections. Community representation is an important step in promoting inclusive and accountable community self-management.
- **Peaceful coexistence with host communities:** Alongside development actors, drivers of tension between host and refugee communities will be addressed through effective and targeted support to host communities; in particular in the areas of livelihoods, education, assistance for certain basic needs to vulnerable host community members and through enhancing community engagement between the two communities. In some camps, fencing is now being erected between the host community and the refugee population, which is causing considerable anxiety. UNHCR continues to monitor these developments and their impact on refugees' freedom of movement and access to basic services.

Specialized Services

- **Persons with specific needs, physical and mental health and psychosocial support:** Some **5,000** refugees benefitted from programs to provide support to their specific needs, particularly persons with serious medical conditions, persons living with disabilities, elderly refugees, and others. This included referrals to specialized services and mental health and psychosocial support, and provision of assistive devices.
- **SGBV and gender mainstreaming:** Three joint audits conducted by UNHCR and partners revealed that the lack of proper visual communication and signage at facilities hindered women's access to services, while the lack of lighting prevented women's movement at night, especially to use WASH facilities. Relevant units are following up on these issues.

- **Legal assistance:** Over the course of 2019 a total of **13,512** refugees received legal assistance by UNHCR and its partners BRAC, BLAST, TAI, and BNWLA, including legal counselling, legal representation and mediation. Some **30** cases were filed at police stations and **13** cases were filed with the Court by **43** refugees with the support of UNHCR and its partners. These services helped ensure protection-focused legal interventions while reducing refugees' dependence on ad-hoc dispute resolution mechanisms by majhis and other actors who may not be appropriately trained or sufficiently impartial. As part of UNHCR's comprehensive capacity building program, **27,345** refugees and **5,784** community leaders benefited from awareness raising sessions on legal protection. Meanwhile, UNHCR and its partners facilitated **2,193** visits for **611** refugees to meet their family members imprisoned in Cox's Bazar.
- **Child protection:** UNHCR's child protection program is implemented using the socio-ecological approach to strengthen systems for the prevention and response to children at risk. Activities are implemented through three key output areas, including community-based child protection, specialized services for children at risk, and adolescent programming. Through these activities, over **26,760** children have received services from UNHCR and its partners in 2019.
- **Prevention, Response and Reintegration of trafficking victims:** As part of prevention activities, UNHCR through its partners conducts awareness raising sessions on anti-trafficking; targeting parents, adolescent boys and girls and community leaders. Awareness campaigns through posters, billboards and radio shows have reached **1,943** refugees in 2019. UNHCR also receives complaints and trafficking incidents through the UNHCR protection hotline and assists law enforcement agencies in search and rescue Operations as appropriate. In 2019, **758** victims of human smuggling and trafficking were rescued by law enforcement agencies. A project implemented through UNHCR's partner TAI seeks to reintegrate victims of trafficking. In addition, UNHCR collects and analyzes information on trafficking incidents with a view to understanding emerging trends and put in place appropriate protection services.

KEY CHALLENGES

- Substantial gains have been made in empowering communities to address their own protection needs through community self-management. However, developments that have negatively impacted upon the protection environment; including the increasingly negative discourse on refugees since August 2019, have resulted in increased scrutiny of community groups and volunteers. As such a tailored and considered approach is required to ensure safety and security of refugees, whilst maintaining the momentum and achievements in community engagement.
- WASH remained one of the main concerns for the refugee community throughout 2019, with recurring malfunction of facilities (broken tube wells and toilets) as well as insufficient local drainage systems. Access to facilities was difficult in the monsoon season, and medical treatment for persons with chronic or serious illnesses remained largely insufficient.
- Over time, LPG distribution has mitigated risks during firewood collection, although diversification of food remains a key ask amongst refugees.
- Child trafficking continues to be a major concern in a number of camps, with UNHCR and its legal assistance partners receiving one or more cases each week, mostly involving girls and often relating to child marriage, with the promise of economic stability through marriage being used to lure victims into trafficking schemes.
- Due to calmer sea conditions in the Bay of Bengal between December and February, refugees are more likely to be engaged in human smuggling by boat to other countries – and are therefore at elevated risk of becoming victims of trafficking. Awareness raising sessions by UNHCR and its legal partners are important as a measure to prevent this and other risks.
- An increasing number of drug users, including females, were reported in the camps in 2019.
- Alleged corruption on the part of majhis remained a challenge across the camps, with reports of majhis abusing their power, preventing refugees from accessing legal assistance mechanisms, physically assaulting refugees, taking money to resolve disputes, and advocating for inappropriate resolutions in cases of intimate partner violence.
- The Government has implemented a ban on the use of Bangladeshi sim cards by refugees and limited the coverage of mobile phone networks in the camps. This has had an adverse impact on the work of humanitarian actors and has limited refugees' access to effective referral services, including emergency response, as well as their ability to communicate within the camps and with their families in Myanmar and other countries.

In late 2019, fencing around the boundaries of some of the camps was initiated. This has created a great deal of concern on the part of affected refugee communities.
- Threats posed by criminal elements and heightened security operations by police, particularly in the Teknaf camps, has exacerbated fear among the refugee population. Elected members of the Refugee Committee in Nayapara Registered Camp are extremely concerned about heightened security measures and are increasingly fearful for their own safety and that of their community.
- Unprotected water reservoirs, ponds and bridges in several camps continue to pose serious risks such as drowning, particularly for children.
- Policy limitations on the provision of quality, accredited education to refugee children and youth is a concern. While overall coverage has expanded in 2019, the absence of meaningful education and vocational training programs and the lack of certified education creates space for idleness and increases risks of exploitation, child marriage, and other harmful coping mechanisms, particularly for adolescents.
- The proposed relocation of refugees to Bashan Char remains pending, and the UN Country Team continues to constructively engage with the government on carrying out assessments on the safety, sustainability of relocating refugees to the island and discuss the protection framework under which such relocation could potentially take place.
- Humanitarian actors are facing challenges due to shrinking humanitarian and protection space as a result of the inconsistent application of measures such as limitations on the use of telecommunications and the possible discontinuation of refugee volunteers as well as issues related to access. Ongoing advocacy efforts by UNHCR and other humanitarian actors are on-going in order to mitigate protection consequences of such measures and continue to place communities at the center of the response.

WAY FORWARD

- In line with its mandate responsibilities, UNHCR will continue to advocate with the Government of Bangladesh for continued access to territory for Rohingya refugees fleeing persecution in Myanmar and will support the Government and the people of Bangladesh to ensure they continue to offer international protection to those in need, until such time as conditions become conducive to voluntary repatriation to Myanmar in safety and dignity.
- UNHCR will support efforts at the national and regional level to address the root causes of displacement thereby setting the stage for conducive conditions for voluntary repatriation in safety and dignity. Complementary pathways for solutions will also be explored with relevant actors in the spirit of the Global Compact on Refugees.
- UNHCR will continue to enhance coordination with humanitarian partners to ensure effective protection programming across all 34 camps.
- Promoting peaceful coexistence between refugees and host communities will remain a major objective of the operation through programs that support vulnerable Bangladeshis with access to basic services and livelihoods opportunities, and that provide a forum for engaging members of the host community to address their concerns.
- UNHCR will continue to strengthen community-based protection mechanisms through an Age Gender and Diversity Approach and ensuring accountability to affected populations across the camp; including by promoting elected refugee representation bodies and supporting the expanded formation of community-led initiatives through self-organized community groups.
- UNHCR will continue to undertake regular protection monitoring in the camps and at the border – directly and through partners – to identify protection risks and inform response, while strengthening individual case management and referral pathways and expanding outreach with refugee communities to identify and address their concerns.
- UNHCR will lead the process of ensuring protection mainstreaming across all sectors through the establishment of multi-functional teams, internally within UNHCR and with partners including the refugee community.
- UNHCR will expand efforts to strengthen access to formal and informal justice mechanisms through capacity building with partners, CiCs, and law enforcement authorities, and through awareness raising within the

refugee and host communities. The expanded use of community-based mediation schemes to resolve interpersonal and family conflicts will be a key component of the program, including training of partners and awareness raising with the community. A pilot community policing program will also be put in place together with UNDP and IOM.

- UNHCR will advocate for more structured engagement with authorities and other stakeholders in Cox's Bazar and Dhaka to more effectively address safety and security concerns within the camps, including through systematic notification of arrest of refugees and access to legal representation, designation of focal points within law enforcement agencies, and strengthened monitoring of detention facilities.
- UNHCR will continue to co-chair the Anti-Trafficking Working Group as a forum for information sharing and joint programming and advocacy with authorities and refugee and host communities and will strengthen awareness raising on anti-trafficking and anti-smuggling within the camps.
- UNHCR will continue to work with the Government to register refugees and provide individual documentation, whilst advocating for access to more effective civil registration procedures, particularly for the issuance of birth certificates.
- Access to quality education will remain a key priority, and UNHCR will continue to implement its activities under the Learning Competency Framework (LCF) and Guidelines for Informal Education Programmes (GIEP) as an interim solution while advocating for sustainable, meaningful, and equitable education for refugees and host communities. Advocacy efforts will focus on the introduction of the Myanmar curriculum in camp schools; improved quality of teaching and increased teaching-related professional development; better measurement of learning outcomes; and increased refugee and host community engagement in education programming. UNHCR will continue to support coordination efforts aimed at overall strategic enhancement of interventions within the Education Sector as chair of the Strategic Advisory Group (SAG).
- The UN Country Team continues to constructively engage with the government on carrying out assessments on the safety, sustainability of relocating refugees to the island and discuss the protection framework under which such relocation could potentially take place.
- Catalyzing development actors in order to enhance the overall protection environment in Cox's Bazar is also a key priority of the Operation.

WORKING IN PARTNERSHIP

UNHCR co-chairs the **Strategic Executive Group** together with the UN Resident Coordinator and IOM. UNHCR leads on the protection response for 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 protection and assistance programs 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 Camp-in-Charge officials in different refugee settlements, as well as with a range of international and national actors. UNHCR has a strong network of 32 partners, including:

MDMR (Ministry of Disaster Management and Relief) | **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** | **World Vision** | **Solidarites International** | **Terre des Hommes** | **TAI** (Technical Assistance Incorporated) | **NRC** (Norwegian Refugee Council) | **WFP** (World Food Programme) | **UNDP** (United Nations Development Programme) | **IOM** (International Organization for Migration)

UNHCR would like to acknowledge the crucial role played by refugees in the response. **Over 3,000 volunteers from the refugee community** are working side by side with humanitarian agencies.

Donor Country Contributions to UNHCR Bangladesh (2018/2019)

UNHCR's humanitarian response in Bangladesh is made possible thanks to the generous support of major donors who have contributed unrestricted funding to UNHCR's global operations, and to donors who have generously contributed directly to UNHCR Bangladesh operations. In 2018 and 2019, support has been received from the people and governments of: **Australia, Bangladesh, Canada, Denmark, Estonia, the European Union, France, Germany, Ireland, Italy, Japan, the Republic of Korea, the Netherlands, New Zealand, Norway, Qatar, the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia, Spain, Sweden, Switzerland, Thailand, the United Arab Emirates, the United Kingdom, and the United States of America.**

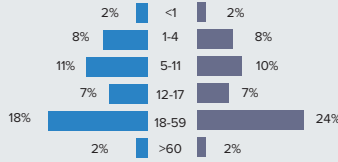
UNHCR is sincerely grateful for the additional support received from many individuals, foundations, and companies worldwide including the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation, the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-Day Saints, Education Cannot Wait, Kuwait Finance House, Qatar Charity, and Thani Bin Abdullah Humanitarian Fund.

Demographic profile

854,704 Total Refugee Population

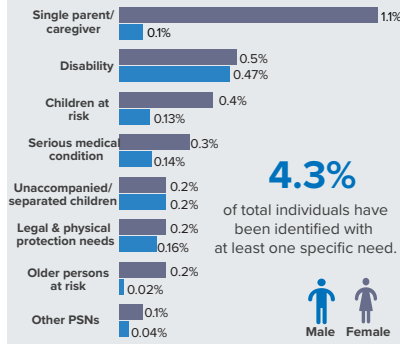
185,903 Total Families

48% Male **52% Female**



54% children **42%** adults **4%** older persons **1%** persons with disability

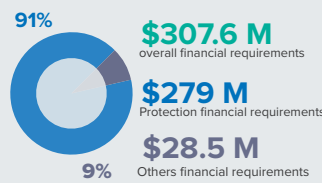
Specific Needs



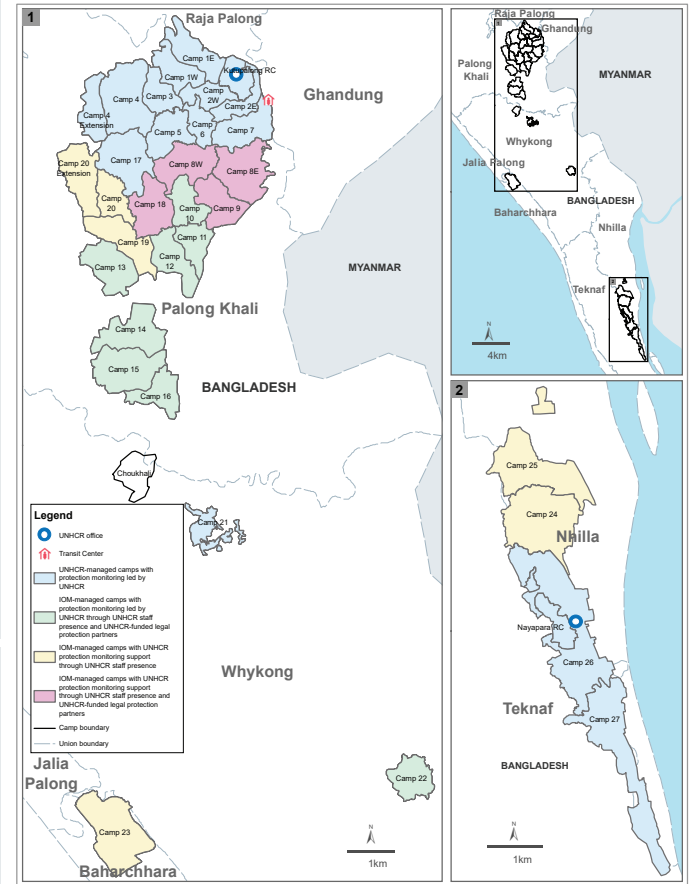
Key figures

- 53124** Reached via Info Service Centers
- 3297** New Arrivals as of Month of December
- 3350** Calls Received on Protection Hotline
- 644** PoC Trained on GBV Prevention & Response
- 1230** Community-based Early Childhood Development Centers established
- 51** UNHCR-funded Child Friendly Spaces
- 15** Information service centers in operation

Financial Requirements

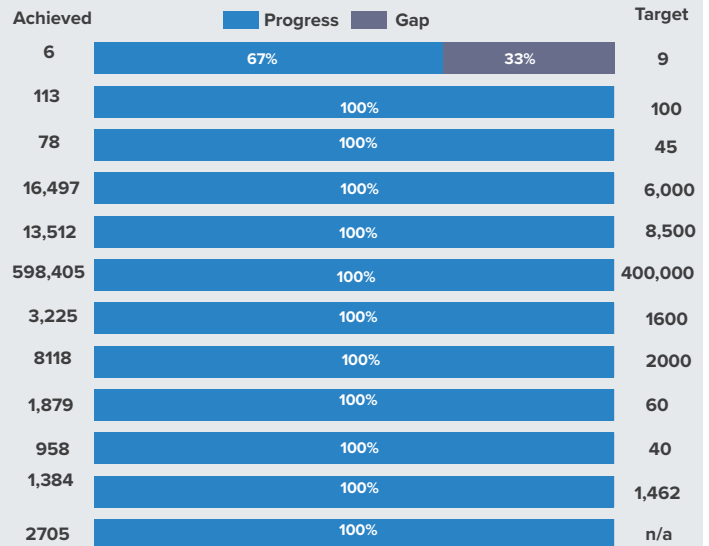


UNHCR Protection Presence

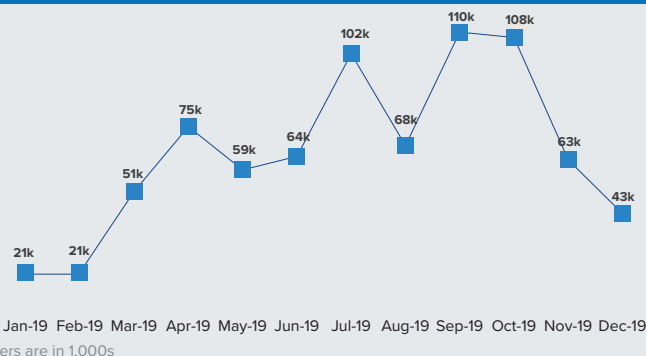


Progress Against 2019 Targets

- # of community-based committees/ groups working on SGBV prevention and response
- # of children's committees, groups & other structures that are operational & facilitate children's participation
- # of community groups supported
- # of adolescents and youth receiving services, including life skills, hands on skills and reliance activities
- # of PoC receiving legal assistance
- # of people reached by community-led messaging on key protection risks
- # of partner, government and UNHCR staff trained on SGBV prevention and response
- # of people at heightened risks identified and supported through Protection case management mechanism
- # of community-led initiatives supported by humanitarian actors
- # of advocacy interventions for the promotion of and respect for refugees' rights
- # of teachers recruited, trained and deployed
- # of service providers trained on protection principles and Code of Conduct

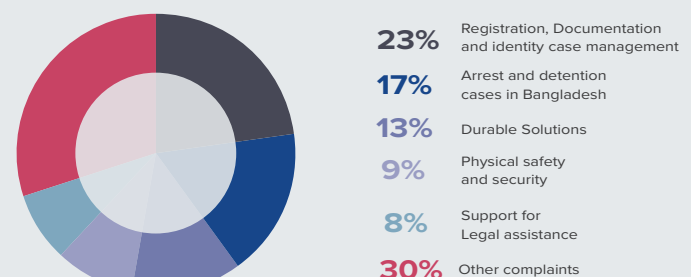


Newly Registered Population by Month



Hotline Analysis

Top 5 protection related issues*



*As reported by the Protection Hotline in the month of December