

Bangladesh

1 - 30 November 2020

The Government of Bangladesh has continued its plans to relocate some refugees from the refugee settlements in Cox's Bazar to **Bhasan Char** island. The UN and UNHCR has limited information on the overall relocation exercise. The UN continues to emphasize the need to be able to undertake thorough protection and technical assessments of Bhasan Char, which would include onsite visits to the island.

Since the first **COVID-19** case was detected in May, the total number of confirmed cases in the Cox's Bazar refugee settlements has reached 356, including 10 deaths. UNHCR continues to manage two COVID-19 treatment facilities and is supporting the running of an ICU ward in the main District Hospital. These facilities serve both the refugee and host communities.

In November, there was **limited rains or wind** affecting the Cox's Bazar refugee settlements. Cyclone preparedness activities, however, continued to be undertaken. UNHCR and the inter-agency response teams in Cox's Bazar continued to be on stand-by to support in the case of any emerging cyclone threat. In Bangladesh, September through December is one of the danger periods for cyclones.

POPULATION DATA **864,281** 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.

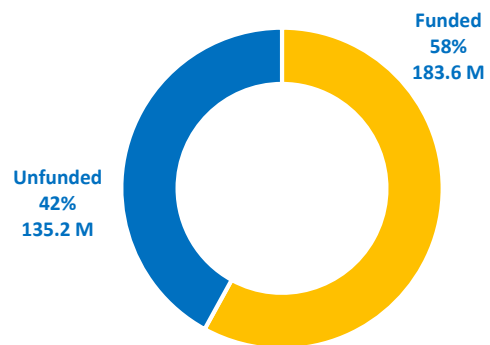
91,711

Number of refugee households who are being supported with cooking kits and Liquefied Petroleum Gas (LPG) cylinders in the camps; **17,148** families in host communities were also being supported with cooking kits and LPG.

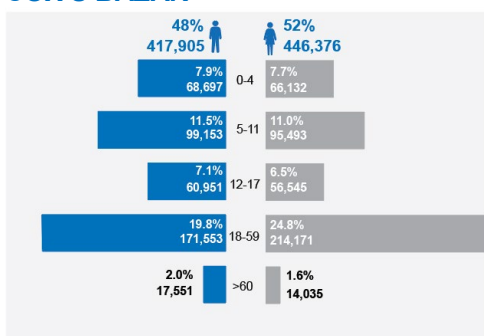
FUNDING (AS OF 3 DECEMBER 2020)

USD 318.8 M

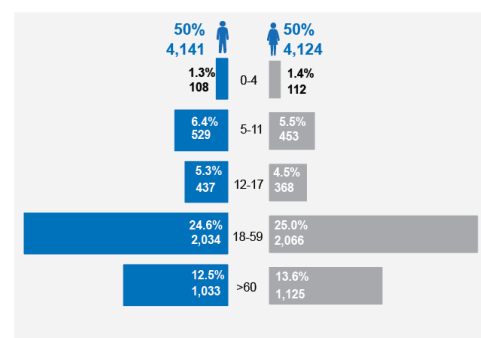
requested for Bangladesh



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 **356 refugees have been confirmed with COVID-19, and 10 have sadly died**. To date, sufficient medical capacity has been available for responding to confirmed cases and offering treatment. So far, some 470 patients have received treatment at the facilities supported by UNHCR.
- On 12 November, UNHCR participated in an inter-agency roundtable discussion to review contingency plans for cyclone preparedness and response. Cyclones can strike over two seasons in Bangladesh, from March through July, and September through December. The inter-agency response in Cox's Bazar remains alert for news of potential cyclone events at present.



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

Updates and achievements



CYCLONE SEASON

Refresher training on cyclone preparedness and response in Cox's Bazar

- UNHCR organized a refresher training for its emergency response team in Cox's Bazar on 23/24 November. Twenty-three UNHCR staff together with representatives from the Bangladesh Army, the District Commissioner's Office, the Refugee Relief and Repatriation Commissioner (RRRC), the Bangladesh Red Crescent Society (BDRCS) and Migrant Offshore Aid Station (MOAS), participated in the emergency preparedness and response refresher workshop. The event offered an opportunity for participants to share information on existing plans for any extreme weather or cyclone events affecting refugees in Ukhiya and Teknaf, as well as surrounding host community areas.
- UNHCR shared information on its current preparedness measures, relief item stocks and emergency staffing. UNHCR was also able to hear the perspective of the authorities and how they would manage access to refugee settlements and host communities in the event of a major incident, as well as modalities for the distribution of emergency relief items for refugees and the host community. The workshop also discussed the importance of communication lines to engage refugees in the preparedness and response, and roles of refugee volunteers and partners before, during, and after any extreme weather event or cyclone.



PROTECTION

UNHCR and UNICEF are working together to promote minimum standards for child protection

- The Minimum Standards for Child Protection in Humanitarian Action (CPMS) were jointly launched on 19 November by Bangladesh's Ministry of Women's and Children's Affairs and the Refugee Relief and Repatriation Commissioner (RRRC), with the support of UNHCR and UNICEF. The CPMS, initially developed by The Alliance for Child Protection in Humanitarian Action in 2012, was revised a year ago,

with the inputs of more than 85 organizations, thought the launch of the standards was delayed due to the COVID-19 pandemic. The new version is more inclusive and relevant for displacement refugee contexts.

- The promotion of the guidelines in Cox's Bazar comes after a year of heightened concerns for children in the refugee settlements. The COVID-19 pandemic has significantly reduced the footprint of service providers in the refugee settlements and halted the implementation of important protection support mechanisms, such as learning centres and child friendly spaces. Consequently, the number of cases related to child marriage, child labor, violence, exploitation, and psychological distress have all increased in 2020. Adolescents particularly males were often engaged in negative coping mechanisms in the absence of learning, skills or other opportunities.
- The CPMS is meant to help governments and humanitarian actors to better assess child protection needs and develop effective responses regardless of their age, gender, abilities and disabilities. The standards are built around common principles that focus on improving the quality of programming; strengthening coordination between child protection actors and others; and facilitating advocacy and communication efforts on child protection among stakeholders.
- Six areas of the CPMS are considered as a priority by UNICEF and UNHCR, including case management to ensure more focus on the best interests of children being met; gender-based violence, the need to address an increase of child marriage; and capacity building in the refugee community to contribute to child protection. Refugee community volunteers have made significant contributions towards child protection throughout the COVID-19 response phase so far. Other areas include the need for more focus on the cross-cutting areas of health and child protection, as well as mental health and psychosocial support due to increased psychosocial distress exacerbated by the pandemic, which has particularly affected children. There is also a need to better frame and integrate protection work with children, families, communities and the larger societal efforts on this from (which falls under CPMS' socio-ecological approaches).

Pilot stores offering an alternative to blanket distributions in the refugee camps in Cox's Bazar

- UNHCR has started a pilot to look at how it can better meet different refugee households' needs by changing its approach to the delivery of standard relief kits and items. To date, UNHCR has largely provided standard core relief items to refugees through blanket distributions.
- The new system, which has just been piloted, offers refugees a choice from a range of available relief items through 'pop-up stores.' The idea originates from several rounds of consultations with refugees in which UNHCR asked them about their household needs.
- The pilot works on the idea of providing households with an allowance that is based on the family's size. The initial allowance for a family is based on the cost of a standard core relief item kit needed for daily activities. The allowance would incrementally increase for larger households. The allowance could be used in a pop-up store to pick items that they need, in lieu of receiving a standard kit. The benefits may be able to improve the usefulness of items provided and allow for more choice for refugees.
- While the initial pilot is small, refugees positively responded to the new initiative. The pilot is being conducted in Camp 4 Extension from 27 October to 10 December and targeting 667 households with a family size of five or more. So far, refugees have preferred to have a choice and understood the concept well.



- It is anticipated that in any shift to a pop-up store model that some items would remain part of a fixed distribution, such as plastic sheeting for shelters.
- The pilot is to be reviewed, and UNHCR would be seeking to expand the pop-up store option for refugees, as an alternative to full blanket distributions in 2021.

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 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 183.6 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 was generously received from: *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 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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