

## PRESS RELEASE

### Norway to support environment and clean energy activities for Rohingya refugees with USD 6.5 million



**Dhaka, 10 May 2023:** Ragnhild Sjoner Syrstad, State Secretary to the Norwegian Minister of Climate and Environment, announced today her country's contribution of NOK 70 million, equivalent to USD 6.5 million, for the energy and environment programme of the Rohingya response in Bangladesh. The contribution will support the provision of cleaner cooking energy to Rohingya refugees, the continued rehabilitation of biodiversity and ecosystems and the facilitation of enhanced skills development for refugees and Bangladeshi host communities. These activities are part of the Safe Access to Fuel and Energy Plus, phase 2 programme (SAFE+2), a joint UN initiative which brings together the Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO), the International Organization for Migration (IOM), the UN Refugee Agency (UNHCR), and the World Food Programme (WFP).

"Norway has been a donor to the SAFE Plus programme since its launch in 2019. The positive impact it has had on the refugees' living conditions as well as the environment is impressive", said Ragnhild Sjoner Syrstad. "To see how much of the forest has returned mainly because of the programme's replanting and reforestation efforts, is a huge inspiration. I am happy that our contribution will support the provision of cleaner cooking energy and continued rehabilitation of ecosystems for refugees and host communities. Without access to safe cooking fuels the forest will be lost again, and the dangers related to collecting firewood will return. It is important that we prevent this from happening", she added.

"The contribution from the Government and the people of Norway comes at a critical time and will allow us to continue providing some 190,000 refugee households with Liquefied Petroleum Gas (LPG). This cleaner cooking fuel improves refugees' health and living conditions, while also helping prevent gender-based violence and other protection risks related to the collection of firewood from forests," said Johannes van der Klaauw, UNHCR Representative, speaking on behalf of the UN agencies. "It will also support the Bangladeshi host communities, who are on the frontlines of the climate crisis, through successful rehabilitation of the environment and ecosystems of Cox's Bazar, and by substantially reducing CO2 emissions," he added.

The distribution of LPG and fuel-efficient cooking equipment enables an energy transition away from firewood and associated deforestation. So far, it has prevented annual emissions of over 400,000 tons of carbon dioxide. Through skills development projects related to environmental rehabilitation and agriculture, such as replanting, reforestation, slope stabilization, and the improvement of watersheds, the

joint programme also supports the resilience of vulnerable refugees and host communities, and their protection from natural hazards.

SAFE+2, which was launched as a joint UN programme in July 2022, is supported by the Governments of Canada, Sweden and now Norway. It builds on the successes and learnings from a SAFE+ first phase programme initiated in 2019 and then led by IOM.

As the Rohingya humanitarian crisis is well into its sixth year, after more than 700,000 Rohingya refugees were forced to flee violence and persecution in Myanmar, it now is officially considered a protracted refugee situation and faces dire funding prospects. The nearly one million Rohingya refugees in Bangladesh (930,000 hosted in densely populated camps in the Cox's Bazar area, with an additional 30,000 refugees living on Bhasan Char) remain dependent on international assistance.

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