

BANGLADESH REFUGEE EMERGENCY



Key protection concerns

This report presents the key findings and recommendations of a rapid assessment of protection needs of Rohingya refugees from Myanmar, conducted by UNHCR and its partners, CODEC, Save the Children and Technical Assistance Inc. (TAI) in October 2017.

Key findings

While most refugees managed to set up their own shelters and makeshift latrines, significant efforts are needed to address life-threatening gaps in accessing services and life-saving assistance.

Most refugees indicated that they felt relatively safe where they settled, with some citing the presence of the Bangladeshi Army as reassuring. Most refugees added that they were afraid to leave the settlement for fear of getting lost but also of getting robbed, kidnapped or harassed. The surrounding forest, an important source of wood, dry leaves and food, is also deemed unsafe because of wild animals and risks of trafficking and theft. Tensions within the refugee community was reported as linked to insufficient aid, with theft of food, for instance, but also increased quarrelling within families and in some cases, child abuses.

“We are scared of the hill site as there are elephants and snakes. But we need to go there to collect wood for cooking.”

Adolescent girls

09/10/2017

Women and girls are limiting their movement because of the fear of being

harassed, kidnapped or trafficked but also because of their lack appropriate clothing and sanitary napkins. The absence of light is another main obstacle to movement at night, including to go to the bathroom. Overall, women and girls do not feel safe in sanitation facilities, because toilets are not segregated, unclean and far away from their shelter. Some reported harassment when using latrines and bathing facilities.

Main obstacles to **access life-saving assistance** include limited information on where to get support, long distance to distribution points with unsteady bridges and muddy pathways, long queues without protection from the sun or rain. Refugees estimate that female-headed households with small children, pregnant women, the elderly and women without a man in the family had the most difficulties in getting assistance.

Most communities are in the process or have re-established their traditional leadership systems. These structures are traditionally dominated by men, with limited female participation, and often associated with corruption. Most refugees do not know how to resolve severe incidents, for which they would usually turn to the police.

Recommendations



Ensure access to life-saving assistance:

- Ensure access to food, shelter and clean water in all sites, including spontaneous sites;
- Increase the number of distribution points;
- Establish shaded areas and latrines at distribution points;
- Establish support mechanisms for delivering of assistance to persons with specific needs;
- Set up information campaign on assistance and services available, for instance through megaphones.



Improve safety and security:

- Provide support and information upon arrival at the border;
- Build bridges and improve pathways;
- Establish signposting within refugee settlements;
- Increase the number of segregated wash facilities with regular cleaning;
- Set up public (solar) lights, especially around WASH facilities;
- Offer an alternatives to firewood;
- Increase garbage collection.



Enhance community empowerment:

- Support the setting up of inclusive site management committees, with female representation;
- Facilitate the establishment of referral pathways for protection incidents and for assistance;
- Advocate for facilitated access to biometric enrolment by the authorities.



Methodology

This rapid assessment was conducted on 5-14 October 2017 in Cox's Bazar area by a team composed of six staff from three different agencies. They conducted 16 focus group discussions with 190 newly arrived refugees from Myanmar. A full report is available [online](#).

The assessment was designed to collect qualitative data. Findings therefore do not include information on the number of people affected by the issues raised. Findings cannot be extrapolated to sites not covered by the assessment. Due to the group discussion set up, certain people, particularly those with specific needs, may refrain from participating and from raising sensitive issues. Finally, findings are based on ten group discussions with adult and adolescent women and six with men. There may therefore be a bias towards issues of particular concern to women.

Acknowledgements

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CONTACT US

UNHCR Sub-Office in Cox's Bazar

New cottages, Motel Road
Cox's Bazar, Bangladesh

Tel.: +88 034163550
www.unhcr.org

COVER PHOTOGRAPH:

Fresh arrivals cross into Bangladesh through the Palongkhali border point in Ukhia, Cox's Bazar, on 9 Oct. Many said they came from Buthidaung in northern Rakhine state.(c) UNHCR/Roger Arnold