

# BANGLADESH

1 December 2017

Myanmar and Bangladesh signed a bilateral “arrangement for return”. UNHCR stands ready to support the **voluntary return of all Rohingya refugees in line with international standards**.

A **steady flow of new refugees** continues to cross to safety in Bangladesh from Myanmar’s Rakhine State, with a daily average of 750 new arrivals in November.

UNHCR is supporting the Government of Bangladesh to receive, **assist and protect newly arrived refugees** and address the needs of host communities.

## POPULATION FIGURES

**626,000\*** Estimated new arrivals in Bangladesh since 25 August 2017

**307,500** Estimated refugee population before the influx

**933,500** Estimated total refugee population now

## STAFFING & PARTNERS

**204** Staff now present in the operation compared to **49** prior to the crisis. 75 are national staff.

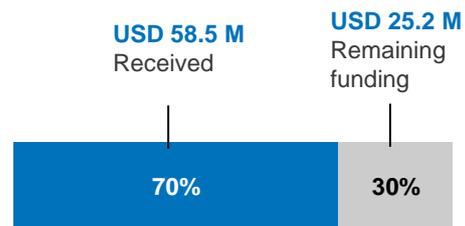
**21** partners compared to **7** prior to the crisis.

\* As reported by the Cox’s Bazar Inter Sector Coordination Group

## FUNDING (AS OF 5 DECEMBER 2017)

**USD 83.7 M**

Requested for UNHCR’s emergency response for 2017



Mokbul Ahmed, 75, and his granddaughter, Aysha, 8, return home to their shelter with firewood they collected on the edge of the jungle near Kutupalong refugee camp in Bangladesh. Mokbul and Aysha leave home every other morning at 7am to walk three kilometres into the forest.  
© UNHCR/Andrew McConnell

## Operational Context

Since 25 August 2017, **626,000 refugees have fled targeted violence and serious human rights violations** in northern Rakhine state in Myanmar and crossed into Bangladesh, bringing the total number of Rohingya refugees in Bangladesh to close to one million.

Newly arrived refugees are settling in the border areas in the South-east of Bangladesh, where an estimated 307,500 Rohingya refugees from Myanmar were already living. Weather conditions, the hilly terrain, and the lack of roads limit access to the refugees, especially those living in more remote areas of the spontaneous settlements.

The Governments of Myanmar and Bangladesh [signed](#) a bilateral “Arrangement for return” on 23 November. UNHCR [takes note](#) of reports that an agreement was reached, while it has not yet seen the details of it. Refugees have the right to return and a framework that enables them to exercise this right in line with international standards, will be welcome. First and foremost, this means that return must be voluntary, and take place in safe and dignified conditions that pave the way for lasting solutions.

At present, a steady flow of 20,000 new arrivals in November continues to cross into Bangladesh in search of safety, as conditions in Myanmar’s Rakhine State are not in place to enable safe and sustainable returns. In Bangladesh, UNHCR is working closely with the authorities and partners to provide protection and assistance to the refugees, and to support host populations affected by this new influx.



# Update on achievements



## PROTECTION

Since 5 November, UNHCR is **screening refugee families identified as having urgent vulnerabilities** during the Family Counting Exercise, to refer them to specialized services and to provide them with immediate assistance as needed. Using the GPS coordinates collected, UNHCR visit the families, confirm vulnerabilities, collect additional information and refer vulnerable individuals to appropriate services. Around 60% of the targeted 2,590 families in the northern part of Kutupalong refugee settlement have been visited to date. Some 400 refugees have been identified with multiple vulnerabilities, for instance single parents with a disability or a serious medical condition. Women represent the overwhelming majority of urgent vulnerable cases (73%).

### Achievements and Impact

- **Reported new arrivals to Bangladesh remain in line with previous trends**, with a daily average of 350 new arrivals in the last week, compared to around 430 during the previous week. UNHCR is closely monitoring potential impact of the recently signed “arrangement on return of displaced persons of Rakhine state” between Bangladesh and Myanmar.
- In coordination with local authorities, UNHCR is planning for the **upcoming relocation of an estimated 10,000 refugees from the border areas** in Bardaban district to the northwest of Kutupalong extension site. Access to the zone is a challenge due to its proximity with the border and absence of paved road. UNHCR conducted a pre-screening of refugees with specific needs who will need assistance to reach the buses. UNHCR informed refugees that the planned relocation was to safer areas in Kutupalong as some were concerned about being relocated to Thengar Char Island, an option put forward in the [press](#) by the Government of Bangladesh, or of being returned to Myanmar. Relocation to Kutupalong is expected to begin in early December.
- UNHCR and partner Technical Assistance Inc. (TAI) now have four **Information Points up and running**. Logbooks from the first two weeks indicate that almost 500 refugees visited three Information Points and enquired about access to non-food assistance (192), health (177) and food (160). UNHCR is training partners to operate Information Points, notably on services available and referral mechanisms. In partnership with BBC Media Action, Bangladesh beta radio & Radio Naf, UNHCR hosted some radio programmes on mental health and prevention of sexual and gender-based violence (SGBV).
- UNHCR facilitated an **information session on international refugee protection for 49 police officers in Cox’s Bazar** on 28-29 November. The Cox’s Bazar’s Police

Superintendent, together with UNHCR, opened the session, which focused on legal protection of refugees and covered topics such as SGBV and human trafficking. UNHCR's partner the Bangladeshi National Women's Lawyer Association (BNWLA) is also conducting awareness-raising sessions on human trafficking and legal aspects of SGBV, to which 135 refugees participated over the last week. The UNHCR Senior Emergency Coordinator met with the military Force Commander for Kutupalong to discuss prevention and reporting measures in regards to sexual exploitation and abuse. Training of security forces and refugee communities is essential to create an environment where all survivors of violence feel safe to seek assistance and justice.

- UNHCR is currently putting measures in place, such as adequate lighting and secure latrines and bathing facilities, in its Transit Centre to improve safety and security. Multifunctional teams of UNHCR staff conducted an assessment of the transit centre, looking at age, gender and diversity mainstreaming to **ensure facilities and services are adapted and accessible to all**. This multi-functional approach will progressively roll out to all operating areas, as appropriate. UNHCR is rehabilitating three temporary distribution points, so that men and women refugees can receive assistance in segregated lines and under shaded areas, as per their request.



*Mabiya Khatun (left), 35, and her husband, Abdu Rahman (centre), 45, sit with their family around a fire in what will be their new home in Kutupalong refugee camp, Bangladesh. The family have been in the camp for three days after an eight-day day trek to the border from their village in Myanmar. © UNHCR / Andrew McConnell*


**HEALTH**
**Achievements and Impact**

- UNHCR is supporting the Ministry of Health's **measles vaccination campaign** set to end on 3 December after vaccinating almost all children from 6 months to 15 year old. Médecins Sans Frontières (MSF) set up a vaccination team at UNHCR's transit centre to vaccinate all children upon arrival.


**WATER AND SANITATION**
**Achievements and Impact**

- In the new areas of Kutupalong being developed by UNHCR, notably in the northern zones called RR and QQ, partners are setting up latrines and boreholes in view of the upcoming relocation of some 10,000 refugees from the Bardaban district.


**SHELTER AND NFIS**
**Achievements and Impact**

- Over 12,000 families received a full emergency shelter kit, which comprises bamboo poles, ropes, tools and tarpaulins. UNHCR adopted a community-based approach, involving community leaders and distributing toolboxes to be shared between five families. UNHCR's partners, Save the Children, BRAC and ADRA, are providing technical training to refugees in order for them to build stronger structures, making the most of the material distributed. Provided with appropriate shelter material, Rohingya refugees build higher and safer shelters, which are also better ventilated. The most vulnerable families receive additional support to build their shelter.
- UNHCR is moving towards a **digitalized distribution system**, through the issuance of UNHCR standard ration cards which are linked to the family counting number. This system will be used for the upcoming distribution of eco-friendly cooking fuel and expanded to other types of assistance. Refugees often have multiple cards and tokens received from various agencies and are struggling to know where to go to get assistance. UNHCR is working with partners towards a better harmonized system.

**Refugees with access to water**

**42,5%**  
Beneficiaries covered

**57,5%**  
Remaining target


**Refugees with access to latrines**

**42,5%**  
Beneficiaries covered

**58,5%**  
Remaining target


**Refugees who received core relief items**

**60%**  
Beneficiaries covered

**40%**  
Remaining target



**SITE COORDINATION AND SITE MANAGEMENT****Achievements and Impact**

- In Nayapara camp, an estimated 2,000 refugees living in various settlements around the camp spontaneously moved and settled in an empty forestry land. This created **tensions with local communities** who had planted saplings in the area. Water and sanitation actors were not yet able to build latrines and water reservoir. UNHCR is working with local authorities to resolve the situation, so that basic infrastructures can be set up as soon as possible.
- UNHCR is partnering with the Asian Disaster Preparedness Centre (ADPC) to start a **rapid assessment of landslides and flooding risk areas in Kutupalong**, create a heat mapping of the most vulnerable zones and inform relocation to safer areas. Together with the Camp in Charge, the Bangladeshi officials in charge of management refugee settlement, UNHCR and the ADPC will train refugee community leaders on landslides risks, preparedness and disaster risks measures.

**ACCESS TO ENERGY****Achievements and Impact**

- UNHCR and its partner the Bangladeshi Red Crescent Society are starting to distribute **eco-friendly cooking fuel** on 4 December, to minimize deforestation around refugee settlements and protect the environment. Between three to five football fields are cleared every day to cover refugee needs for firewood. In total, this distribution will reach some 78,000 families in the northern part of Kutupalong refugee settlement and Nayapara, which are under UNHCR's area of responsibility. UNHCR is advocating towards with authorities and development actors in favour of longer-term initiatives to preserve the environment.

**LOGISTICS****Achievements and Impact**

- UNHCR received its 16<sup>th</sup> airlift, carrying 13,061 kitchen sets that will be distributed to refugees in UNHCR's family kits and three prefabricated warehouses to stock assistance.

## Working in partnership

- **UNHCR continues to support the Government of Bangladesh's efforts in providing protection and assistance to all refugees.** UNHCR's main government counterpart is the Ministry of Disaster Management and Relief (MoDMR), in charge of leading the emergency refugee response in coordination with the district authorities. In Cox's Bazar, UNHCR cooperates with the office of the Refugee Relief and Repatriation Commissioner (RRRC), the local representative of the MoDMR.
- **UNHCR is working with international and national NGOs in Bangladesh and scaled up its partnership network to 21 partners, including nine national NGOs.** UNHCR is assuming its lead role in the protection response for all refugees, coordinating closely on the delivery of assistance with UN agencies and other partners through the various sector working groups of the inter-sector coordination Group.



*Rohingya children sit beneath a solar lantern, part of the UNHCR Non-Food Items emergency relief pack given to new arrivals at Kutupalong refugee camp in Bangladesh. (c) UNHCR / Andrew McConnell*

## External / Donors Relations

UNHCR is grateful for the critical support provided by donors who have contributed to this operation as well as those who have contributed to UNHCR programmes with unearmarked and broadly earmarked funds.

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## CONTACTS

**Showvik Das Tamal**, Associate External Relations Officer, UNHCR Bangladesh,  
[TAMAL@unhcr.org](mailto:TAMAL@unhcr.org), Tel: +880 17 7874 5379

**Vivian Tan**, Senior Regional Public Information Officer, UNHCR Bangkok (Regional Office), [TANV@unhcr.org](mailto:TANV@unhcr.org), Tel: +66 2 342 3503

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