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Significant emergency water and sanitation work has been undertaken for the Rohingya response to address life-saving needs of refugees who fled violence in Myanmar. The work of the Bangladesh authorities, UNHCR and its partners, and other international agencies helped avert a public health crisis. A large number of agencies are delivering services in the camps. Harmonized standards for WASH are in place. Major challenges are the lack of space to build facilities in particular for safe desluding and a recurrent water shortage in Teknaf during the dry season.

UNHCR is strengthening the response to better meet the needs of women, children, and persons with specific needs, including ensuring safe and well-lit and segregated facilities for use by all women and girls.

Progress

UNHCR and partners developed WASH facilities while dealing with a very challenging topography and the initial acute emergency needs. Improvements made over 2018 include upgraded latrines with larger volume pits to last longer; a large-capacity fecal waste treatment plant (in partnership with Oxfam) to serve a 150,000 people; and a move towards supplying safer water supply through a chlorinated water network to support both refugees and the host communities. 14 water networks are now completed with others under construction. UNHCR is continuing to closely monitor groundwater resources to ensure their sustainable use. Water purification tablets and containers for collection and storage of water were distributed to refugees.

UNHCR also promoted training for 677 WASH field teams, including partner organisations and refugee volunteers, and organised a rapid WASH assessment and repair works in 2018. Within the host community, UNHCR repaired drainage systems and built latrines for schools, as well as a waste water treatment plant for host community use as part of its Quick Impact Projects.

Hygiene promotion activities remain in critical need and are being boosted to avert public health incidents. Hygiene kits, including menstrual hygiene kits, continue to be distributed to girls and women.

370,582 refugees in 14 camps reached with UNHCR- supported WASH activities

>20 liters of water per person per day (not including camps in Teknaf)

>21 persons per latrine (minimum standard is 20)

UNHCR WASH objectives:

- 1 Adequate, acceptable, safe and dignified life-saving water supply and sanitation services
- 2 Refugees have the means and the access to information for promoting hygiene in their communities
- 3 WASH assistance is sustainable and cost-effective, incorporating environmental protection

6,875 latrines constructed, benefitting **>150,000 refugees**

679 tube wells installed serving over **169,750 refugees**

56,203 hygiene kits distributed

677 field staff and volunteers trained in WASH emergency response in 2018

Challenges

-  Need for long-term planning for WASH interventions, requiring commitments for multi-year funding, greater involvement of development actors, and agreement of authorities
-  Sanitation management challenges for Kutupalong settlement due to large population size, congestion, topography, and unavailability of land
-  Lack of easily reachable groundwater in Teknaf area and brackish quality of water in river requires alternative approaches, including introduction of catchment reservoirs

Way Forward

To address acute water needs in Nayapara, Teknaf, an upgrade of surface and groundwater resources serving both refugees and host communities is planned with the Refugee Relief and Repatriation Commissioner (RRRC) and the Department of Public Health and Engineering (DPHE). The lack of sanitation treatment and de-sludging capacity poses a significant public health risk. Initiative has been taken forming a committee from RRRC's office, UN agencies, DPHE and others for identification of appropriate land for faecal sludge management.

Working in partnership

UNHCR co-chairs the **Strategic Executive Group** together with the UN Resident Coordinator and IOM. The Refugee Agency leads on the protection response for all 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 assistance 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 the Camp-in- Charge officials in different refugee settlements, as well as with a range of international and national actors. It has a strong network of 28 partners, including:

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** (Gonosshasthaya 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)

UNHCR would also like to acknowledge the crucial role played by the 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)

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