

Bangladesh

1 - 30 September 2020

Between 5-8 September, a group of 40 refugees from Cox's Bazar took part in a **go-and-see visit to Bhasan Char** organized by the Government of Bangladesh. A UN protection assessment team remains prepared to visit the 306 refugees who have been on Bhasan Char since May. UNHCR is still awaiting decision from the Government of Bangladesh on the protection visit.

Since the first case was detected in May, the total number of confirmed **COVID-19 cases** in the Cox's Bazar refugee camps is currently close to 260, including 8 deaths. UNHCR continues to manage two COVID-19 treatment facilities and an ICU ward in the Sadar District Hospital which serve both the refugee and host community.

Monsoon conditions affecting the camps in recent months were less severe in August. There continued to be heavy rainfall resulting in damage to shelters and other infrastructure, but flooding was minimal. UNHCR is **preparing for an annual cyclone season** in the Bay of Bengal which can pose a risk generally in October/November.

POPULATION DATA **861,545** refugees in Cox's Bazar district. *826,485 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.

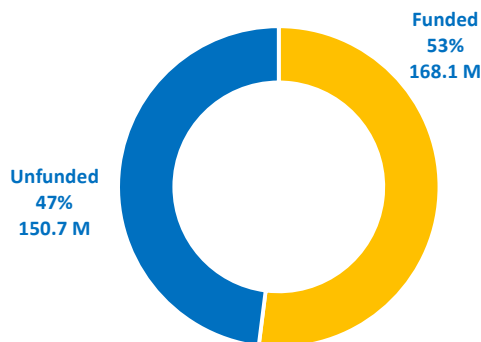
91,371

Number of refugee households who are being supported with cooking kits and Liquefied Petroleum Gas (LPG) cylinders in the camps; 10,716 families in host communities were also being supported with cooking kits and LPG.

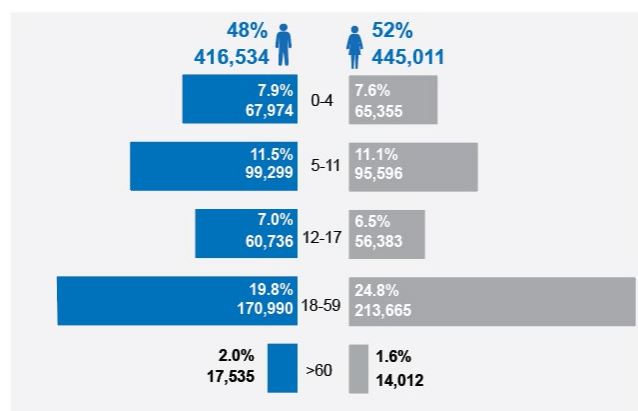
FUNDING (AS OF 22 SEPTEMBER 2020)

USD 318.8 M

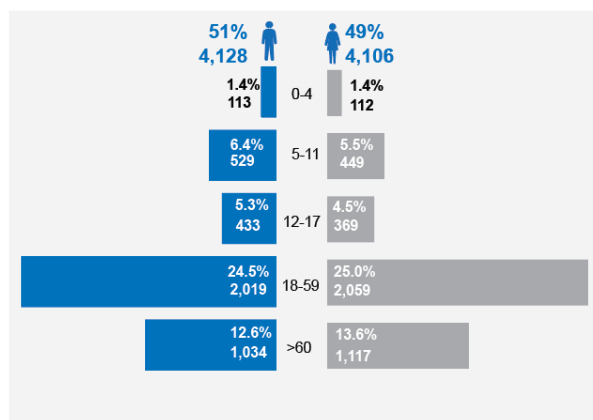
requested for Bangladesh



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 **260 refugees have been confirmed with COVID-19, and 8 have sadly died**. To date, sufficient capacity has been available for responding to confirmed cases and offering treatment. UNHCR operates two Severe Acute Respiratory Infection Isolation and Treatment Centres (SARI ITCs) with 194 beds and supports an Intensive Care Unit (ICU) ward at the main local district hospital. These facilities offer treatment for refugees and the host community. So far, some 400 patients have received treatment at the facilities. Critical activities, including the delivery of food assistance and other support, continue to be undertaken in the camps.
- The Bangladesh authorities have **resumed construction of fencing around the perimeter of the refugee camps in Cox's Bazar**. Concrete posts were largely in place around camps earlier in 2020. In September, the work has resumed with barbed wire being added between posts. The UN has emphasised that restrictions on freedom of movement should be proportionate and related to identified security concerns, and that measures imposed should be the least intrusive and allow refugees to continue to access services and other basic rights, whilst allowing for full humanitarian access. It is important that the authorities continue to communicate with refugees to explain the objectives of the fencing and how it will work, taking into consideration the psychological well-being of refugees and any concerns they may have. The UN has also encouraged and supported the authorities to focus on community-based engagement and preventative measures, as a first step towards achieving overall safety and security in the camps and neighbouring areas.
- Between 5-8 September, a group of 40 refugees selected directly by the Government of Bangladesh were invited to a **'go and see' visit to Bhasan Char**. The group had a chance to see the facilities in place and meet with the group of 306 refugees transferred to Bhasan Char in May this year. The UN was not part of the visit and it also continues to request access to the 306 refugees on the island in order to assess their immediate humanitarian needs. The UN also continues to emphasize the need for thorough protection and technical assessments to be undertaken by the UN before relocations take place to ensure it is a safe and sustainable place for refugees to live.
- UNHCR welcomed the life-saving **disembarkation of approximately 300 Rohingya refugees on the northern coast of Aceh**, Indonesia, on 7 September. Reportedly the refugees started the boat journey from Cox's Bazar and survived some seven months at sea in desperate conditions. Over 30 are estimated to have died en route.



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

Updates and achievements



PROTECTION

Improving road safety in the camps is one of the priorities in protecting children

- UNHCR is working alongside other actors in the refugee camps in Cox's Bazar to help improve road safety, especially for children. In 2020, so far, some 46 children were injured and 3 killed by vehicles using the camp roads. These are among the incidents reported to UNHCR, but others may go unreported.
- Roads now stretch throughout the various camps in Cox's Bazar. However, while these roads are vital to deliver services, there is a problem of often dangerous and unsupervised driving which is resulting in traffic incidents. The matter has been raised as a concern with the authorities and police.
- UNHCR is promoting measures to improve safety and has ensured that prompt medical support is provided for refugees involved in any incident, including transport to hospitals, in areas UNHCR is supporting. UNHCR's child protection staff also follows up on the condition and treatment of all children affected by incidents. UNHCR

covers medical costs if the child is referred out of the camps for additional treatment regardless of who is responsible for the incident. Psychosocial support is provided to the child and other children in the same family.



Children running along the main camp road that runs through Kutupalong refugee camp. Photo: ©UNHCR, Bangladesh

- Raising awareness on road safety is crucial. To that end, audio messages have been designed with BBC Media Action and are currently used in awareness sessions within the community. UNHCR's community-based protection teams and partners, including refugee Community Outreach Members (COMs), are targeting parents on the dangers posed by the roads to children. A video on road safety is also screened at UNHCR distribution points to raise awareness.
- However, the number of children visible on the busy camp roads continues to be high. Part of the challenge is the widespread use of children for work and other chores that requires them to walk on roads. Humanitarian agencies' have policies in place to prevent children collecting humanitarian assistance on behalf of households. This measure ensures that parents or other households cannot employ children to collect assistance. An added risk is the lack of educational opportunities due to COVID-19. All learning centres in the camps are temporarily closed as a public health measure and many are out of school. This has increased the number of children idle in the camps and playing on or near roads.
- The roads were initially designed to serve the emergency needs of the population living in the camps, and not equipped with footpaths. The humanitarian agencies had to install the roads quickly, but limited space was also an issue. As part of the planning to improve the camp, there is a need to develop additional footpaths. The matter has been flagged to development actors that are engaged in supporting both the camps and host communities. UNHCR is also currently developing a 'safe walk' project that will involve refugee volunteers taking on responsibilities to conduct on-the-ground monitoring of road safety and alerting children and pedestrians.
- UNHCR has already introduced defensive driving training for all partner agency drivers to increase their alertness and equip them to manage risks. All UNHCR drivers have completed this training. UNHCR limits its own vehicular movements inside the camps as much as feasible. Speed bumps have been installed in high risk locations and more are planned. In addition, in consultation with the camp authorities, UNHCR partners are assisting to install road signs so that drivers are alerted to the risks they pose, for example, when they are close to learning facilities or other facilities that are provided for children.

Myanmar Curriculum and ongoing preparations to scale up education for refugees in Cox's Bazar

- The UN is working to support the Myanmar Curriculum initiative for a pilot which was originally expected to be rolled out in April, but was delayed due to the COVID-19 pandemic and the temporary closure of learning centres in the camps as a public health measure.
- There has, however, been ongoing preparatory work taking place, including the printing of textbooks, the procurement of essential materials, as well as the identification of a pool of teachers and partner organizations that can support the pilot project when it starts.
- The Education Sector in Cox's Bazar – UNICEF, UNHCR, and a number of education partners continue to review and update the Plan of Action (PoA) for the Myanmar curriculum pilot based on developments. A 'safe

back to school' guideline is being drafted to be ready when the Government of Bangladesh allows the resumption of classes in the camps.

- The plan for the Myanmar Curriculum Pilot is to roll it out for Grades 1 to 10 over a period of three years for 10,000 students in a phased manner. The first year would only focus on Grades 6-9. An existing learning framework would continue to run in parallel, but phase-out as the new curriculum develops and expands during the three years.
- About 40% of children aged 3-24 years old and 89% of adolescents and youth aged 15-24 years old are not accessing any form of learning. This remains a great concern to refugee parents and UNHCR.
- In order to address the issue, there are a number of challenges. One of the key challenges is a need for more classrooms. An innovative solution has been put forward to Bangladesh to construct double-storey learning centres. This can create more room to teach in the camps which have limited space.
- It will be necessary for the transition to the new Myanmar curriculum to have extra space. The new curriculum will require education providers to switch to having students in two-shifts compared to the current system of three shifts. With less shifts, there will be a need to reduce the current number of children attending learning centres unless there is more classroom space.



Learning centres in the refugee camps are currently closed due to COVID-19. Photo: © UNHCR, Bangladesh



MONSOON/CYCLONE SEASONS

A plan to tackle shelters in the poorest condition before the next monsoon

- The monsoon continues to impact shelters in the camps in Cox's Bazar with over 2,000 affected by wind and rain in September. UNHCR is advocating for improved shelters with the authorities and is working in the meantime to ensure that refugees continue to have basic materials to adequately protect themselves. All fully or partially damaged shelters are repaired on average within a 48-hour period from the time of identification.
- UNHCR also undertook a blanket distribution of one plastic sheet for some 90,000 shelters in July and August. The blanket distribution was necessary because an assessment of individual shelter needs was not feasible due to COVID-19 risks and prevention measures that reduced the humanitarian footprint in the camps.
- Further preparation is now underway for the cyclone season that is just ahead and the next monsoon season that will follow in April/May 2021. With COVID-19 remaining a current threat, UNHCR and other shelter actors in Cox's Bazar have agreed on a common approach for assistance to be rolled out to target households living in shelters that are in the poorest condition. The same assistance approach will be taken across all 34 camps in the immediate months ahead. No individual assessment of shelters has been feasible for the time being. An assessment to identify precise needs would require a significant staff presence being deployed to inspect shelters. As such, and in order not to delay this vital work, a different methodology was required at this time. This was discussed among shelter actors and it was collectively agreed the best way to do this would be to target households that have remained the longest without any shelter assistance. This information is available from the records of items that were previously distributed. The approach is based on the expected correlation between the time when a household was last provided with assistance for their shelters and its present poor condition. UNHCR is aiming to reach some 30,000 households in the areas it manages before the end of the

year, with any remaining shelters targeted before the monsoon starts in 2021. Individual shelter repairs when necessary will also continue to be supported when reported. The package of assistance that will be offered to the 30,000 households will include mainly bamboo support, ropes, and wire.

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 crucial 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 168.1 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 continued to be generously received from the following: 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 sincerely 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

Mai Hosoi, External Relations Officer, Dhaka (Bangladesh), hosoi@unhcr.org

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