



EMERGENCY RESPONSE TO THE FIRE IN KUTUPALONG BALUKHALI REFUGEE CAMPS ON 22 MARCH 2021

UNHCR's partner OXFAM provides clean water for families affected by the fire. © UNHCR/2021

Previous reports can be accessed [here](#).

FLASH REPORT: In the early hours of 2 April, a fire broke out in Kutupalong market adjacent to the Kutupalong refugee camps. Initial reports suggest the tragic deaths of three individuals in the fire, and severe fire damage to some 15 shops in the market area. Authorities are investigating the incident.

Overview

Following the devastating fire that broke out in Kutupalong Balukhali refugee camps on 22 March, UNHCR has been responding to the immediate needs of the affected population under the leadership of the Government of Bangladesh and the Inter-Sector Coordination Group (ISCG), working closely with IOM and other partner UN agencies, and NGOs. According to findings from the ISCG Rapid Joint Needs Assessment, 48,300 individuals lost their shelters when the fire spread through Camp 8W, 8E, and 9. The fire impacted 92,000* individuals, and destroyed over 1,600 facilities including hospitals, distribution points, learning centres, and a UNHCR registration centre.

UNHCR has identified immediate needs amounting to US\$5.9 million to address the immediate aftermath of fire. To date, UNHCR is only 20 per cent funded, of the USD\$294.5 million it is seeking for the overall Rohingya refugee response in Bangladesh in 2021. Additional support is urgently needed. For more details, [click here](#).

*Population residing around the fire affected area within a 100m buffer zone whose shelters were destroyed to create fire breaks and/or were accessing services and facilities in camps 8E, 8W and 9.

Response

Protection

- From 31 March, UNHCR deployed its registration teams to key WFP distribution points in fire affected camps to re-issue refugee identity documentation that was destroyed in the fire. UNHCR and WFP are working together closely, utilizing community outreach mechanisms, to ensure refugees in affected camps as well as those who are sheltering in neighbouring camps are referred for new documentation. As of 1 April, 442 households have received family attestation documentation, which includes some 2,000 refugees.
- Over 300 UNHCR-supported refugee volunteers continue to actively support refugees in the fire affected camps as well as in other camps where refugees are taking shelter. For example, by taking older refugees, children and pregnant women to safe places, accompanying affected refugees to health care facilities, assisting in building temporary shelters, and clearing debris, and identifying and referring refugees with specific needs to relevant service providers. They are also conducting awareness raising sessions on child protection risks such as child-trafficking and gender-based violence (GBV), fire safety and general assistance.
- UNHCR's partners CODEC, Relief International, Save the Children International and Terre des Hommes identified more than 600 separated children. All have now been reunited with their families. Two child protection helplines and 4 re-unification help desks were established by UNHCR's partner Relief International.
- Coordinated messages on services and support available are being shared through partners, refugee volunteers and refugee leaders covering health, child protection, GBV, and registration. UNHCR's Interactive Voice Response (IVR) has started broadcasting calls with recorded messages. More than 5,000 refugees have been contacted so far, while efforts continue to reach out to more affected refugees.

Site Management, Shelter and Non-Food Items (NFI)

- As of 1 April, 1,705 families totaling 8,190 individuals from the affected camps temporarily moved to and remain sheltered in UNHCR-managed camps. The remaining estimated 40,000 displaced refugees are in IOM-managed camps in temporary shelter.
- While considering that families are eager to rebuild their shelters, and the monsoon season is approaching, in coordination with IOM and the ISCG, UNHCR is supporting initiatives to rebuild the destroyed shelters in a safer way. This includes advocating with the authorities for rebuilding to include site improvements such as fire breaks to reduce the risk of fires spreading.
- So far, UNHCR handed over 3,000 blankets, 20,000 solar lamps, 7,000 kitchen sets, 7,000 stoves and 7,000 mosquito nets to IOM for distribution. UNHCR has so far provided 3,200 female hygiene kits through various partners.
- UNHCR has over 12,000 pieces of clothing for affected families ready for distribution.

Public Health

- UNHCR handed over three hospital tents to IOM to support the immediate medical care services in the affected camps.
- UNHCR has been supporting other agencies including IOM with the provision of medicines and supplies for their health partners in the affected camps.
- UNHCR partners Relief International, Food for the Hungry and Medical Teams International have been deploying mobile medical teams equipped with supplies normally pre-positioned at facilities within the camps, to provide emergency first aid.

- Approximately 200 partner volunteer community health workers have reached over 30,700 refugees so far with key awareness messages, including fire safety, first aid and response.
- Over 330 mental health and psychosocial support staff from UNHCR partners are actively involved in continuing to provide psychosocial first aid to affected families as well as frontline workers. In coordination with IOM and our partners, over 9,700 refugees have received psychosocial support.

Water, Sanitation and Hygiene

- Together with partners OXFAM, NGO Forum and BRAC, more than 130,000L of water and 10,000 jerry cans were distributed to refugee families so far.
- UNHCR continues to support the activities of the WASH sector including through four water tankers that are delivering safe water, and the removal of faecal sludge.
- The construction of 26 emergency latrines and emergency tap stands has been completed.

Security

- The Government of Bangladesh's law enforcement and security forces, Armed Police Battalion (APBn) and Army, have increased their presence in the affected camp area since the fire and remain on site.
- Since the 22 March fire, over 60 smaller fires have been reported in other camps in Kutupalong and Nayapara. Refugees have managed to put out the fires quickly with only a limited number of families affected. Investigations by the Bangladesh authorities are underway.

UNHCR remains on standby to provide additional support to IOM and other humanitarian partners in the ongoing emergency response.

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