

# Bangladesh

1 - 29 February 2020

**Small numbers of refugees are attempting to leave Bangladesh** by boat to destinations in the region. One boat sank near St. Martin's Island in February resulting in the loss of life of 15 refugees, many more remain missing.

**Fencing** of Kutupalong refugee settlement's perimeter by the Bangladesh Army continues to expand, with barbed wire expected to be installed between fencing posts soon.

UNHCR is extending **legal services** to all refugee settlements in Cox's Bazar. In 2019, 13,500 refugees benefitted from legal counselling and representation, as well as other legal aid in UNHCR managed camps.

## KEY INDICATORS

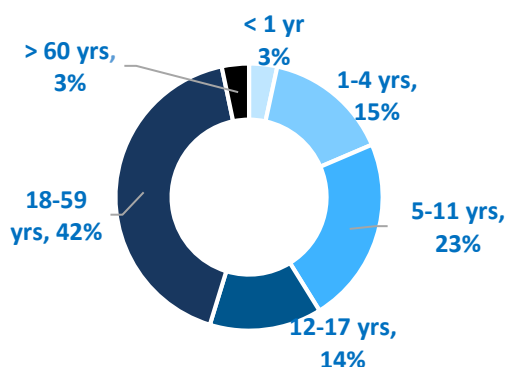
**854,704\*** Rohingya refugees in Cox's Bazar district

\* 819,787 Rohingya refugees were registered under the Government of Bangladesh-UNHCR registration exercise as of end December 2019. There are also 34,917 registered refugees from the pre-existing and registered camps.

**190,000**

The number of refugee households who are being supported with cooking kits and Liquefied Petroleum Gas (LPG) cylinders in the camps; 20,000 families in host communities are also being supported with cooking kits and LPG.

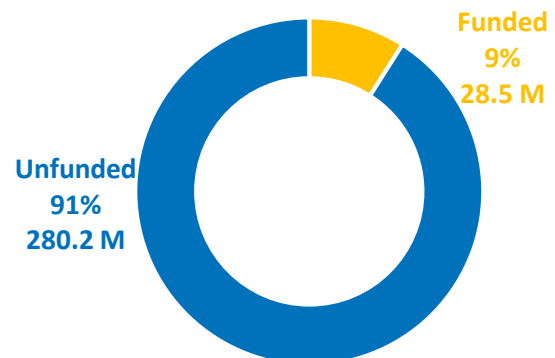
## AGE BREAKDOWN OF REFUGEES IN COX'S BAZAR



## UNHCR FUNDING (AS OF 27 FEBRUARY 2020)

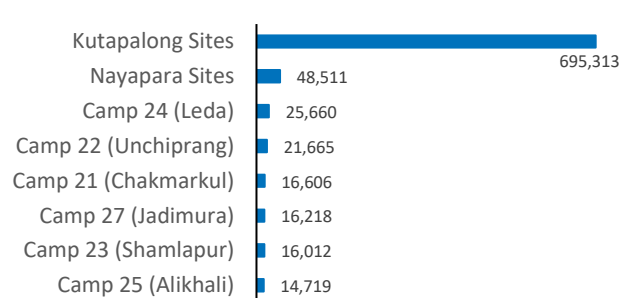
**USD 308.7 M**

requested for Bangladesh



## POPULATION OF CONCERN

### Key settlements



\***Kutupalong Sites** includes Camp 10, Camp 11, Camp 12, Camp 13, Camp 14, Camp 15, Camp 16, Camp 17, Camp 18, Camp 19, Camp 1E, Camp 1W, Camp 20, Camp 20 Extension, Camp 2E, Camp 2W, Camp 3, Camp 4, Camp 4 Extension, Camp 5, Camp 6, Camp 7, Camp 8E, Camp 8W, Camp 9 Kutupalong RC and **Nayapara sites** includes Camp 26 and Nayapara RC

## Operational Context

- There are continued limits on the freedom of movement of refugees in Cox's Bazaar. The Bangladesh Army has started fencing refugee settlements, beginning their work in the northernmost settlement in Kutupalong, Ukhiya.
- A ban on the use of SIM cards remains in place, which has affected refugees' ability to contact family members abroad and has created challenges for coordination at field level for officials and agencies working in the humanitarian operation.
- A small number of refugees have been reported trying to leave Bangladesh through sea movements since the sea conditions eased following the monsoon/cyclone season. On 11 February, a boat carrying an estimated 138 Rohingya refugees and Bangladeshi nationals from Cox's Bazar sank off the coast of Bangladesh, 15 persons were confirmed drowned and 50 remain missing. It is believed that the boat was on its way to Malaysia. UNHCR and IOM closely liaised with the Government of Bangladesh's first responders and offered assistance in responding to the needs of the survivors, including food, shelter and medical aid. Irregular boat movements are not new to the region, as refugees often risk unsafe journeys to travel abroad. Recognizing the dangers they face at sea, the UN has been working with Government authorities in Bangladesh to raise awareness among refugees and local people on the risks of these journeys. The UN is also supporting law enforcement, where possible, to address smuggling and trafficking to protect those most at risk.
- Preparations for the monsoon/cyclone seasons are underway. UNHCR selected 62 of its staff to be on standby for the remainder of the year as part of a multifunctional Emergency Preparedness and Response Team (EPRT).



Fencing posts can be seen around the camp areas in Kutupalong, erected by Bangladesh Army.  
Photo: UNHCR

## Achievements

### PROTECTION

#### Legal aid, supported by UNHCR, extended to all refugee settlements in Cox's Bazar

- During February, UNHCR agreed with other actors that it would start expanding its legal aid work to all refugee settlements in Cox's Bazar. This is the first time that UNHCR will be present and performing this vital protection activity in all settlements since the start of the refugee influx in 2017.
- In 2019, more than 13,500 refugees benefitted from legal counselling, legal representation before courts, assistance in filing complaints at police stations, mediation and logistical support to access formal justice mechanisms. Ensuring access to effective justice remains a challenge for refugees. Some of the issues are general in nature, however, and affect locals also, such as processing delays and other issues.
- Considering the challenges refugees may face in seeking legal remedies from the national courts, efforts were made in 2019 to enhance alternative dispute resolution through community-based mediation for minor disputes. UNHCR introduced comprehensive guidelines and procedures on mediation and provided training for legal partners. Law enforcement officials were also introduced to the activities undertaken by UNHCR and its partners to ensure an understanding of the nature and extent of the activities, as well as how this can support the work of law enforcement and judicial actors.

- At the same time, UNHCR and its partners organized awareness raising sessions for refugees on access to justice including on support in minor disputes or other legal processes, and more than 28,500 refugees participated in the sessions.

## MONSOON/CYCLONE PREPAREDNESS & RESPONSE

### Emergency preparedness for monsoon/cyclone seasons, and fire incidents

- UNHCR, in collaboration with its partner Bangladesh Red Crescent Society (BDRCS) – as part of the Cyclone Preparedness Programme (CPP) - intensified its focus and training on fire and monsoon safety throughout February. Six training sessions, including drills, were organized on emergency response in the case of fire, and flooding. Refugee volunteers who are actively supporting emergency preparedness and response activities in the settlements in Cox’s Bazar participated in the fire safety management training and simulation exercises. Emergency training of refugee volunteers enhances the knowledge, skills, and capacity within the settlements. This helps ensure that refugees are at the center of the response, saving lives as the first responders.



Fire safety drill with refugee volunteers, UNHCR, BDRCS and CPP in action. Photo: UNHCR/A. Nord

- Safety Unit Volunteers (SUVs), site management volunteers, and Community Outreach Members (COMs) have undergone continued fire preparedness training since 2018, which is particularly relevant because during the dry season fires, if started, can pose a greater risk in the densely populated camps. In February 2020, 625 refugee volunteers in Cox’s Bazar received fire safety management training and fire drills, conducted jointly by UNHCR and BDRCS.
- Four hundred refugee volunteers from four settlements in Ukhiya sub-district received flood and water safety training conducted jointly by UNHCR, Migrant Offshore Aid Station (MOAS) and BDRCS, in February. Similar training was provided to 500 refugees in Teknaf sub-district in 2019. The training focused on awareness of risks associated with flood environments, so that volunteers can identify areas of higher risk within their communities and provide guidance, including assistance with emergency relocation to safe places during harsh weather situations.
- 620 “Throw Bags” – emergency flotation devices – were distributed amongst both host community and refugee volunteers in 2019. These are effective tools used as a rescue aids, allowing a rescuer to pull a conscious person from the water. All floatation devices provided to the volunteers have been locally manufactured from recycled plastic bottles.



Bangladeshi CPP volunteers in action on a Shamlapur river to drill on water life-saving techniques. Photo: UNHCR/A. Therik



- On 16 February UNHCR donated three inflatable rafts to CPP in Cox's Bazar. A drill with local CPP volunteers with the rafts was organised in Monkhal river, close to Shamlapur in Teknaf sub-district of Cox's Bazar. The drill was an opportunity to test the inflatable rafts for use in rescue operations at times of flooding in local communities or inside refugee settlements.
- The monsoon period from May to October sometimes sees tidal surges inundating low-lying coastal and riverbank areas, as well as flooding from heavy rains. UNHCR has supported similar initiatives to support community resilience and has offered practical assistance to complement the safety and preparedness work of local agencies and programmes.



Handover of water rafts to CPP by UNHCR. Photo: UNHCR/A. Threik

### Emergency Preparedness and Response Team (EPRT) induction for 2020

- On 24 February, UNHCR's Emergency Preparedness and Response Team (EPRT) kick-started its preparations for 2020 in Cox's Bazar. An induction training session was held for 62 staff recruited to be part of the emergency response team, committing to be on call for any urgent emergency during the year.
- The EPRT will receive a dedicated training for potential emergency incidents during the monsoon/cyclone period in Cox's Bazar, as well as participate in training on coordination with other actors, emergency first aid, telecommunications, and joint needs assessment.

## ENERGY / ENVIRONMENT - SUPPORT OF REFUGEES AND HOST COMMUNITIES

### Pressure cooker pilot launched in host community and refugee settlements

- UNHCR and other agencies distributed cooking kits and Liquefied Petroleum Gas (LPG) cylinders to over 190,000 refugee households and 20,000 families in the host communities. This initiative successfully reduced environmental impacts on hosting refugees. To further save energy consumption, in February UNHCR started to provide training for 30 members of the host community on the use of pressure

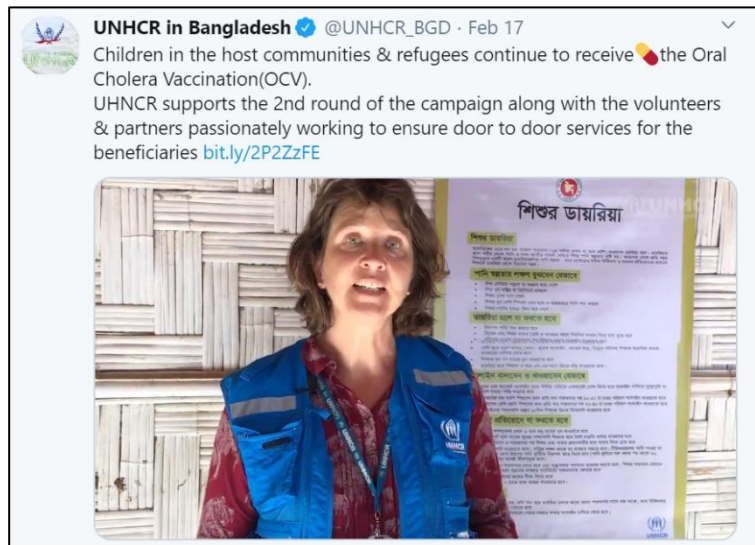


Cooking demonstration by UNHCR Energy & Environment staff, on use of pressure cooker as well as cost-saving and time-saving benefits. Photo: UNHCR/P. McCallion

cookers, including cooking techniques, suitable foods that can be used, and information on cost and time saving that the cookers offer to bring to households. The trainees will share their experience as part of a distribution of pressure cooker sets to refugee and host community households. In March, some 400 refugee households will receive the pressure cooker, with an expansion of the pilot going forward.

**HEALTH**
**Successful mass cholera vaccination campaign completed, with refugees playing central role**

- UNHCR, as the Community Health Working Group chair, supported WHO in the implementation of a mass vaccination campaign for cholera. The target age group of the campaign was 1-5 years of age, and all refugees age >1 year who arrived in the camps after 1 June 2018 (the last mass vaccination campaign was in May 2018). The target was more than 162,000 refugees, but in total some 179,891 children were vaccinated. The 110% coverage can be explained due to fact that parents see the benefit in vaccination and often try to include older children in the vaccination.
- The campaign utilised 1,440 volunteers, including UNHCR-organised Community Health Workers (CHWs) from the refugee community, as well as site management, UNICEF and BDRCS volunteers, to conduct door-to-door information sessions.
- It was the second time that a campaign was implemented door-to-door in Cox's Bazar's refugee settlements. The first time this modality was used was for the oral cholera vaccine campaign during December 2019, where CHWs engaged actively in door-to-door vaccination. This approach helped increase the overall success and coverage of the campaign, as the CHWs and other refugee volunteers know their assigned areas well and it was easier for many to access the benefits of the vaccination programme in this way. For example, mothers could remain at home instead of travelling to vaccination points and waiting for long periods there.
- The ability to implement the campaign in this manner is a recognition of the commitment and ability of CHWs in the community. UNHCR is very encouraged by the efficient, well-trained and well-coordinated community outreach workforce.



To see what it looked like on the ground, check out a small video on the campaign put together with our health officer, Sandra Harlass on UNHCR Bangladesh's Twitter account: [https://twitter.com/UNHCR\\_BGD/status/1229282226602377216](https://twitter.com/UNHCR_BGD/status/1229282226602377216)

## Working in partnership

UNHCR co-chairs a Strategic Executive Group (SEG) in Bangladesh 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 a range of international and national actors. It has a strong network of 27 partners:

MDMR (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.

UNHCR would also like to acknowledge the crucial role played by the refugees in the response; with over 3,000 volunteers from the refugee community who are often the first responders on the ground.

## Financial Information

Total recorded contributions for the operation for 2020 amount to some **US\$ 28.5 million**. 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.

UNHCR's humanitarian response in Bangladesh is made possible thanks to the generous support of major donors who have contributed unrestricted funding to UNHCR's global operations, and to donors who have generously contributed directly to UNHCR Bangladesh operations.

**In 2019 and 2020, support has been received from the people and governments of:**

Austria, Australia, Bangladesh, Canada, Denmark, Estonia, the European Union, Finland, France, Germany, Ireland, Italy, Japan, the Republic of Korea, the Netherlands, New Zealand, Norway, Qatar, the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia, Spain, Sweden, Switzerland, Thailand, the United Arab Emirates, the United Kingdom, the United States of America, and CERF.

UNHCR is sincerely grateful for the additional support received from many individuals, foundations, and companies worldwide including Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation, the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, Education Cannot Wait, Fondation EDF, Kuwait Finance House, Qatar Charity, Shih Wing Ching Foundation, and Thani Bin Abdullah Bin Thani Al Thani Humanitarian Fund.

### CONTACTS

**Mai Hosoi**, External Relations Officer, Dhaka (Bangladesh), [hosoi@unhcr.org](mailto:hosoi@unhcr.org)

**Steven O'Brien**, External Relations Officer, Cox's Bazar (Bangladesh), [obrien@unhcr.org](mailto:obrien@unhcr.org)

### LINKS

[Situation portal](#) - [Twitter](#) - [Facebook](#)