

# **Bangladesh**

## **Executive Committee Summary**

### **(a) Context and Beneficiary Population(s)**

A total population of 21,996 refugees from Northern Rakhine State (NRS) of Myanmar is registered in the two camps in Bangladesh as of 30 June 2002. These refugees, who have been in the camps for the last decade, are the residual population of over 250,000 refugees who fled from the NRS to Bangladesh in 1991 and 1992 for political, social and economic reasons. Repatriation movements were started in September 1992 based on a bilateral agreement between the two concerned governments. Following a signing of two separate Memoranda of Understanding with the Government of Bangladesh (May 1993) and with the Government of Myanmar (November 1993), UNHCR established an operational presence in Myanmar which enabled the start of the voluntary return of refugees in April 1994. To date, more than 94% of the total population has returned to Myanmar. Repatriation still continues, but at a very slow pace and the situation of the remaining population in the camps has become protracted. In order to bring this situation to an end, UNHCR intensified its efforts beginning in 2001 vis-à-vis the two governments to find durable solutions for the remaining population. Recently, the two governments agreed to end organised repatriation by June 2003.

Bangladesh is not a signatory to the 1951 Convention or the 1967 Protocol. Thus, there is no national protection framework for refugees in Bangladesh. The refugees from the NRS have been assisted based on the above-mentioned MOU signed between the Government of Bangladesh and UNHCR. The Office exercises its mandate in providing protection to all refugees, including approximately 100 urban refugees.

The primary task for UNHCR Bangladesh is to find durable solutions for the refugees in the camps through the implementation of voluntary repatriation. While encouraging bilateral dialogue between the two governments, UNHCR will also seek other durable solutions for those who do not wish to return to Myanmar.

Meanwhile, the provision of protection and assistance will continue in the camps. The well-being of vulnerable groups has been fully taken into account. All life sustaining activities and primary education in the camps will continue. Both at the capital and the field levels, UNHCR will co-ordinate the delivery of assistance through regular meetings with various Government ministries, NGOs and UN agencies in Bangladesh. Protection and material assistance to the urban refugees will be also provided pending their durable solutions.

Accession to international instruments will be vigorously pursued through the Eminent Persons Group (EPG) and other available channels. Promotional activities will be aimed at encouraging both the Government of Bangladesh and parliamentarians to initiate refugee legislation that would include provisions for a refugee status determination. To this end, UNHCR will further support the Bangladesh EPG.

In the event of completion of voluntary repatriation of the cleared and willing refugees planned for mid-2003, UNHCR Bangladesh would gradually reduce the level of care and maintenance operations in the camps and focus on the possibility of other durable solutions.

In line with revitalised efforts on voluntary repatriation, consultations and exchange of visits between the two UNHCR country offices at the capital level will continue. At the field level, two UNHCR offices in Maungdaw and Cox's Bazar will continue to have monthly co-ordination meetings while organising weekly repatriation movements. UNHCR Bangladesh has regular contact with offices in the sub-region to exchange up-to-date information on country of asylum/origin.

UNHCR works with implementing partners and independently funded agencies. Concern Bangladesh is UNHCR's main implementing NGO partner. It implements 37% of the total budget by running various activities in the two camps. MSF-Holland continues to fund its health and nutrition activities in Nayapara camp. The Bangladesh Red Crescent Society (BDCRS), co-funded by UNHCR and WFP, is in charge of food distribution. UNHCR meets regularly with WFP as well as other UN agencies, i.e. UNICEF, UNDP, UNESCO, UNFPA and FAO, for possible collaboration with multi-sectoral activities in the camps.

Dhaka Ahsania Mission (DAM), through its Refugee Counselling Services Unit (RCSU), implements a care and maintenance project for the urban caseload. With the effective management being gradually taken over by DAM, the RCSU will be further streamlined. Promotional activities are carried out through the Eminent Persons Group (EPG), Bangladesh Bar Council (BBC) and the Refugee Migratory Movement Research Unit (RMMRU) of the Dhaka University.

**(a) Selected Programme Goals and Objectives**

<b>Name of Beneficiary Population/Theme:</b> Refugees from Northern Rakhine State, Myanmar	
<b>Main Goal(s):</b> Durable solutions	
<b>Principal Objectives</b>	<b>Related Outputs</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Refugees willing to repatriate return to Myanmar.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Refugees willing to return assisted with repatriation.</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Other durable solutions sought for those who do not wish to repatriate.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Durable solutions negotiated for those who do not wish to repatriate.</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Refugees protected and provided with basic assistance.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Camp environment remains safe and refugees are not refoiled or pressured to return.</li> </ul>

UNHCR will continue to seek durable solutions for the refugees. In 2003, efforts will be geared to complete repatriation of refugees cleared and willing to return to Myanmar. Other durable solutions will be sought for those who do not wish to repatriate in order to bring the operation to an end.

<b>Name of Beneficiary Population/Theme:</b> Urban Refugees	
<b>Main Goal(s):</b> International protection and normative framework for refugee protection	
<b>Principal Objectives</b>	<b>Related Outputs</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Asylum seekers and refugees have access to international protection and are provided with assistance if determined necessary.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Refugee Status Determination for all asylum seekers conducted by UNHCR.</li> <li>Refugees recognised and provided with identification and assistance when necessary.</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Durable solutions are sought for refugees.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Refugees repatriated and resettled.</li> <li>Refugees become self-reliant.</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>GOB accedes to 1951 Convention.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Awareness raised amongst government officials on the need of accession to the Convention/National Legislation.</li> </ul>

The lack of legal framework for refugees remains the main protection concern. UNHCR will continue to encourage the Government of Bangladesh to accede to the 1951 Convention. Meanwhile, the Office will recognise urban refugees under its mandate, provide international protection and find durable solutions.