

# THE ROHINGYA CRISIS: TWO YEARS OUT











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AUGUST 2017-2019

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Note: The names of the beneficiaries have been changed in line with IOM's data protection principles

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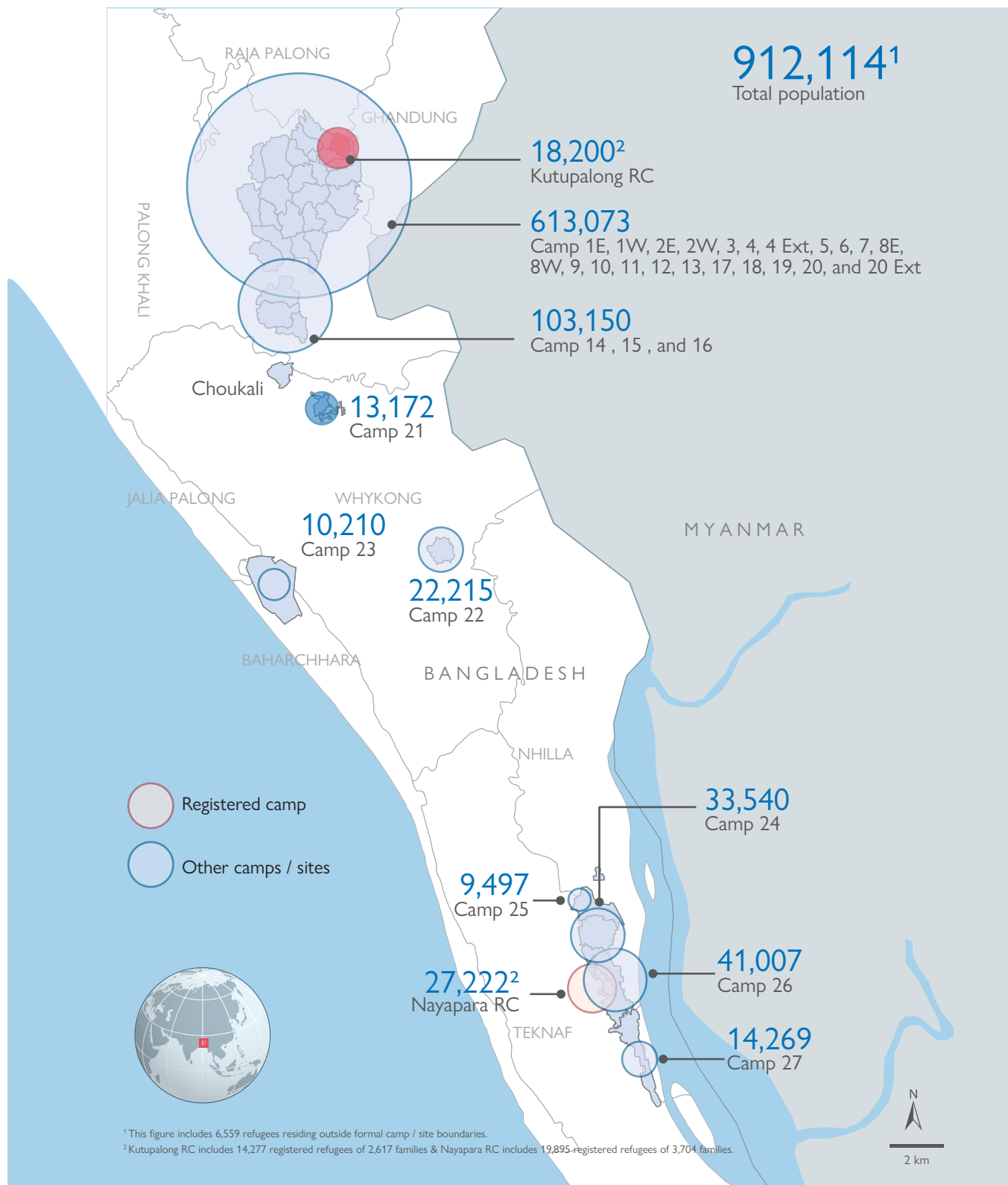


Canada



From  
the People of Japan





# THE BIGGEST REFUGEE CAMP IN THE WORLD

KUTUPALONG BALUKHALI MEGA CAMP



More people than ever are affected by emergencies caused by conflict and disaster. These crises have grave consequences, including displacement on a massive scale as an unprecedented number of men, women and children have been forced out of their homes across the globe.

The Rohingya, undoubtedly one of the most persecuted communities in the world, have suffered this same fate. In August of 2017, the international community bore witness to one of the worst humanitarian crises in recent times as 700,000 Rohingya streamed across the Myanmar border and settled into the area of Cox's Bazar, Bangladesh. The Government and people of Bangladesh generously responded to their need and have displayed immense hospitality in hosting them.

As we passed the two-year mark of this latest exodus, the majority of Rohingya living in the Cox's Bazar area still rely almost entirely on aid from the international community. IOM's area of interventions have manifested through emergency support in the realms of camp management, shelter, health, water, sanitation and hygiene, and protection services. Throughout these interventions and consistent across the globe, several overarching priorities underscore IOM's approach. Those include respecting and upholding beneficiary voices, protection needs, empowerment and improving service quality and access.

IOM also continues to support the most vulnerable host community members in the Cox's Bazar area, seeking to mitigate the impact of the Rohingya influx on local populations in order to protect Bangladeshi wellbeing and strengthen social cohesion. Furthermore, as the co-chair of the Strategic Executive Group and in close cooperation with the United Nations High Commission for Refugees (UNHCR) and the United Nations Resident Coordinator (UNRC), IOM provides policy advocacy and strategic guidance to ensure the fair and dignified treatment of Rohingya and local Bangladeshis alike.

IOM recognizes that even two years into this response, there is still much work left to be done. Priorities moving forward will include support to increased Government leadership, both within and outside of the camps, and ensuring stronger Rohingya community participation in decisions that affect their lives.

We remain indebted to all of our partners throughout this effort – this includes UNHCR other UN agencies, development partners and NGOs, as well as the Government of Bangladesh with special thanks to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, the Ministry of Disaster Management and Relief, the Refugee Relief and Repatriation Commissioner and the Deputy Commissioner for their leadership. Most importantly, we thank the people of Bangladesh for their kindness and continued support.

**Giorgi Gigauri**

Chief of Mission,  
IOM Bangladesh

In this book, we have endeavored to capture the scale of ongoing response operations in addition to the affected populations' plight. We hope that this pictorial representation will convey the historical context and scope of this emergency, how far we have come, and our views looking forward.



IOM has been working in Cox's Bazar since 2013. The UN Migration Agency has been unwavering in its commitment to serve the people in need in Bangladesh, more so soon after the Forcibly Displaced Myanmar National (FDMN) crisis broke at the latter part of 2017. In this last two years IOM has been instrumental in supporting the crisis by bringing in their expertise in Site Management & Site Development, WASH, Health, DRR, Livelihoods, Shelter and Alternative Fuel activities. The Government of Bangladesh is grateful to IOM for the collaboration in discussing and addressing the challenges throughout the crisis. IOM and the other humanitarian actors have contributed tremendously to achieving a stable condition at one of the world's largest crises.

IOM is not only working with the FDMN but also taking into account the needs of the affected Host Communities by supporting them in DRR, livelihoods, and capacity-building activities. Considering restoring the environmental degradation caused by the unplanned influx, IOM provided alternative fuel and reforestation activities to curb the negative effects. At the camps, under the leadership of the Refugee Relief & Repatriation Commissioner (RRRC), the smooth coordination among the CiCs and IOM have created the systematic exchange of information and effective implementation of plans. The organisation has also carried out great work in connection other Government agencies whenever support is needed.

I would like to congratulate IOM and its hardworking colleagues who have made a remarkable effort in providing humanitarian assistance. I am confident that IOM will carry on its great work and continue to improve the lives of people in crisis in Bangladesh.



*Md. Shah Kamal*

**Md. Shah Kamal**

Senior Secretary  
Ministry of Disaster Management & Relief  
Government of the People's Republic of Bangladesh



I am pleased to hear that IOM — the UN Migration Agency — is releasing a special book with pictures, descriptions, data and comments regarding the influx of Forcibly Displaced Myanmar Nationals (FDMN).

The influx of the Rohingya was massive and sudden. About 1.1 million Myanmar nationals took shelter into two Upazillas of Cox's Bazar- Ukhia and Teknaf. The District Administration of Cox's Bazar along with all other government offices, the host community, and national and international organisations warmly received them. I can recall that IOM was one of the first responders among the international agencies in this crisis that worked from the initial stages of the influx. As time goes on host community people are being challenged by the crisis in terms of land, food, the environment, security, and the scope of education and access to road facilities. The District Administration is working on this part to address all grievances of the host community incorporating everyone. We have given support to the host community by distributing agricultural equipment, support to school and colleges; as well as food, shelter and jobs to unemployed youth. It is our target to ensure that 25% of affected communities are supported in the Joint Response Plan (JRP); a commitment as well of the NGO Affairs Bureau of the Prime Minister's office working with all NGO's to ensure 25% allocation for the same purpose. All national and international agencies are now taking the programme to consider those affected in the host community. Now are able to ensure a balanced position between these two communities. One of its outcomes is that Cox's Bazar District Administration has been given the "Public Administration Award-2019" as the best office in the country. Here, the role of IOM is praiseworthy contributing to government activities.

I hope that this photo book will represent all the work of IOM relating to Rohingya crisis management and activities to support the host community from 2017 to the present time. Cox's Bazar District Administration wishes success in all of IOM's work and strongly believes that this photo book will be a token of history.



**Md. Kamal Hossain**

Deputy Commissioner &  
District Magistrate, Cox's Bazar

I am delighted that the International Organization for Migration (IOM) is releasing a special book marking the two-year anniversary of the crisis of the Influx of Rohingya from Myanmar.

The influx has been an unprecedented crisis for the Government of Bangladesh, which has generously opened its borders to provide refuge to the Rohingya population and continues to lead the response in close collaboration with the humanitarian community. In support of Government efforts, IOM and the humanitarian community rapidly scaled up the response to provide life-saving protection and assistance. During 2019, the situation has stabilised and the conditions in the camps have improved, but much is still needed.

The international community remains committed to working with the Government of Bangladesh on voluntary, safe and dignified durable solutions; such as voluntary repatriation. The international community is working closely with governments on both sides of the border to work towards conditions in Myanmar conducive to returns. Under the leadership of the Government of Bangladesh, the humanitarian community has engaged in needs assessments, consultations and strategic planning, which has culminated in a prioritised Joint Response Plan for 2019. The response plan is implemented in full partnership with the Government of Bangladesh and all partners within the humanitarian community.

In the 24 months after the main influx began, IOM has been working in close collaboration with the Government of Bangladesh especially RRRC office and the humanitarian community to meet the needs of affected populations. IOM's key objective in the Rohingya crisis is to promote humane, orderly, regular and responsible humanitarian action for affected populations, and is constantly striving to scale-up operations to respond to the needs of the new arrivals, existing Rohingya persons, and impacted host communities. The tremendous support and cooperation we have received from IOM has been admirable.

I congratulate IOM for reaching this milestone and I extend my best wishes for the success of the book.



A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to be 'Abul Kalam'.

**Mr Mohammad Abul Kalam**

(Additional Secretary)  
Refugee Relief & Repatriation Commissioner  
Cox's Bazar, Bangladesh















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# HISTORY

## HISTORY





## History

### The first years

The story of IOM's operations in Bangladesh date back to 1998, following the signing of a cooperation agreement between IOM and the Government of Bangladesh. The agreement established a Regional Office for South Asia in Dhaka and supported a series of studies commissioned through IOM. Research focused on issues ranging from counter-trafficking to border migration, ultimately informing policy, strategy and operational planning in Bangladeshi migration management.

Bangladesh has a long history as an origin and destination country for migrants. This history is especially pertinent to the fate of the Rohingya facing persecution in Myanmar — a considerable number of whom entered Bangladesh in 1978 and again in 1992, settling in two ad hoc camps overseen by the government near the Myanmar-Bangladesh border. A repatriation process had facilitated the return of many of the Rohingya, but about 18,000 remained in border settlements with their numbers fluctuating according to conditions in Myanmar.

At the time, the fate of this population was largely ignored by the international community. In 2013, however, IOM's mandate extended from research and policy in Dhaka to include humanitarian assistance for this displaced community. IOM quickly became the only major organization providing relief, establishing a small office in the coastal city of Cox's Bazar to be able to work more closely with the Rohingya population. Situated on the north-eastern corner of the Bay of Bengal, the Cox's Bazar office was comprised of about five staff and operated under a limited mandate to provide Health and Water, Sanitation and Hygiene (WASH) services to the Rohingya. This included supporting seven healthcare facilities in Ukhiya and Teknaf and building infrastructure for safe water access and washing facilities in both the Rohingya's makeshift settlements and amongst host communities. IOM's initial points of contact on the Bangladeshi side were with the Deputy Commissioner, the police, and the Refugee Relief and Repatriation Commissioner's (RRRC) office. In its capacity, IOM was not only designated as the first major organization granted humanitarian access on the ground, but its presence opened the door for other UN agencies to operate in Cox's Bazar in the future.

After 2014, sporadic fighting in Myanmar caused renewed waves of Rohingya border crossings. To accommodate this slowly escalating humanitarian situation, IOM's presence in Cox's Bazar grew to about 40 staff by the year 2015. The conditions across the border quickly deteriorated in October 2016 following an attack in Rakhine State that led to the flight of 76,000 Rohingya women, men and children. Compounding upon this crisis was the unexpected arrival of Cyclone Mora, which hit Cox's Bazar in May 2017. IOM was on the ground providing aid to the new arrivals and to those compromised by the rains and 120km per hour winds. Despite these efforts, by the summer of 2017, violence was escalating in Myanmar as more refugees arrived in Cox's Bazar every day.

## The August Crisis

The situation in Rakhine state steadily worsened throughout the summer of 2017 amid heated ultra-nationalist rhetoric against the Rohingya and a growing military presence on the ground. The crisis did not reach its breaking point until August 25th, however, after a full-scale military operation was launched in Rakhine State targeting Rohingya families, villages and communities, ultimately provoking a massive refugee crisis as they fled for their lives.

For relief workers on the Bangladeshi side of the border, the effect of the Rakhine-state crackdown was immediate. On the morning of 26 August, refugees had already begun flooding into Bangladesh. It was the largest refugee migration the region had ever seen as an estimated 706,000 crossed into Bangladesh over land or through the shallow waters of the Naf River that separated the two countries. Witnesses in Bangladesh reported seeing plumes of smoke across the Myanmar border, as stories emerged of atrocities against the Rohingya population carried out by soldiers and local militias unleashing full-scale attacks. Many Rohingya reported leaving their homes with just moments notice and arriving with little more than the clothes on their backs. They settled on what land was available in an already heavily-populated country on the forested, hilly area just on the other side of the Bangladesh-Myanmar border. Spontaneous settlements were constructed, serving as the initial shelter for refugees in need of food, clean water, sanitation, and health support.

The small IOM team on the ground was overwhelmed by the sudden surge of arrivals whose humanitarian needs were extreme. IOM began largescale recruitments, and as early as 27 August, reinforcement started arriving. As fighting continued in Myanmar, the Bangladeshi government stated it would formally open its borders to the refugees on 12 September, contributing to the arrival of a further 160,000 Rohingya. With few facilities in place, refugees found refuge by the Naf River, lined roads, and settled their families in the dense forests that characterize the area. Compounding upon these difficult conditions, this exodus occurred during Bangladesh's rainy season. The region was hit by repeated monsoons throughout August and September, causing further suffering.

At the time, IOM had just 66,000 tarps on hand and few staff to help build structures. "It would have taken years for us to build houses if we had done it ourselves," recalls an IOM staff member in Cox's Bazar at the time. A decision was made to simply give the tarps out to the refugees to quicken up the response, which worked. The Rohingya distributed the resources and built shelters largely on their own with little intervention from the humanitarian community, giving strong testament to their resilience during the crisis.

The situation on the ground was dire, but immense international political and media attention on the Rohingya crisis drove momentum for the humanitarian effort. Aid organisations from around the world coalesced in Cox's Bazar, providing everything from medicine to clothing, infrastructure and food.











Perhaps most generous were the Bangladeshis themselves, many of whom opened up their homes to the new arrivals. A national effort was launched and everyone from workers to wealthy philanthropists poured donations to help the needy refugees. Universities held collection drives and factories in the country's massive garment industry sent surplus clothes. Every day, over 100 trucks arrived with assistance, said an IOM staff member. But the distribution was chaotic. Witnesses reported clothing, food and other essentials simply being thrown from trucks into mobs of desperate refugees. "At one point, some of the roads were literally lined with clothing that had fallen into the mud," recounts a local reporter who was in Cox's Bazar at the time. Women, children, persons with disabilities and those suffering from illnesses fared worse in these conditions while able-bodied men were best-positioned to jump the front of the line to receive aid.

## **December 2017 – Present**

In the first months of the crisis, IOM's priority was to help coordinate the response and bring order to the chaotic situation on the ground. The Site Development team began by building roads and paths to the displacement sites to ensure humanitarian access while Site Management staff managed coordination with key partners and the Bangladeshi government to ensure this access could be granted and maintained. Once basic access was achieved, upgraded shelter materials were brought in to replace the rudimentary structures set up by the Rohingya in the first days of the crisis. IOM also started relocating refugees from flood- and landslide-prone areas to mitigate the impacts of the monsoon and cyclone season, in addition to training refugees in safety measures.

It was not enough to address only shelter and access needs, however. Many of the new arrivals were traumatised by the violence they experienced back home and during their journeys, pointing to significant gaps in Protection assistance. IOM's Protection team responded, building fully-equipped Safe Spaces in Balukhali, Leda, Kutupalong and Shamlapur to provide counselling and other support. Protection measures were also critical in addressing the safety needs of the most vulnerable populations such as women, children, older persons and persons with disabilities. This effort was aided by the work of IOM's Needs and Population Monitoring unit who helped monitor, record and analyze the demographics of the influx, in turn informing the humanitarian response. To achieve this goal, NPM was responsible for conducting regular site assessments in order to gather figures on the new arrivals.

Aggravating already extreme humanitarian need, a diphtheria outbreak hit the camps in the first months of the response. The waterborne illness spread rapidly through stagnant pools of rainwater common throughout the camps. IOM Health was hard at work to address this issue, opening isolation and treatment centres, launching sanitation and preventative programmes and procuring medications. As one of the earliest responders on the ground, the Health unit's pre-influx presence was being transformed to meet the evolving needs of the response. What were initially 'mobile clinics' — doctors moving on foot from patient to patient — were being converted into longer-term facilities to diagnose and treat patients.









IOM and its partners oversaw gradual improvements in the camp conditions and by February 2018, the situation had been largely stabilised. But with this ‘new normal’ came new challenges. While the refugees were receiving food disbursements, they lacked fuel to cook their meals and many resorted to scavenging for firewood in the camps to meet their needs. When this resource was depleted — many of the Rohingya ventured out into surrounding areas and cut down forests. Much of the natural habitat was destroyed as elephant migratory routes were interrupted, contributing to a concurrent rise in animal attacks on the villages. These defoliated slopes were also much more vulnerable to landslides – a fact that became all the more evident as the monsoon season approached. Refugees additionally complained of security risks associated with gathering wood, and the task of collecting fuel often fell on the shoulders of women.

To address this problem, IOM launched the Safe Access to Fuel and Energy (SAFE+) project in August 2018 to distribute LPG to the refugees and the host community. The cooking gas canisters helped to reduce deforestation, cutting smoke pollution in houses and the camps on a whole and boosting security. As another dimension of SAFE+, IOM initiated a slope stabilisation programme and by the end of the first year, a total of 280,000 metres of high-risk slopes had been stabilized in time for the monsoon season. During this time IOM also recognized the need to support the local population in capacity-building and awareness-raising in Disaster Risk Reduction in turn supporting host communities and ensuring social cohesion between Rohingya and Bangladeshis.

Approaching the two-year mark of this crisis, the Rohingya are benefitting from a response that is better coordinated and conditions on the ground that are far superior to those in the first days of the emergency. However, as the international community redirects its attention to other pressing needs and events around the world, the challenge now is to prevent this crisis from losing its global significance and support. And most importantly, perhaps, international momentum and pressure must remain so that long-term solutions can be achieved. While IOM continues to improve its service delivery to the Rohingya and host communities, there is only a solution to this crisis: one that results in their safe, voluntary and dignified return to their homeland.



# SITE MANAGEMENT

## Key Coordination through Site Management

The IOM Site Management team and its partners have worked closely with the Government of Bangladesh and other stakeholders to coordinate the humanitarian action throughout the Rohingya response. This includes management of 14 camps in the Kutupalong-Balukhali Expansion Site and four camps in Teknaf. Responsibilities range from monitoring service provision and allocating humanitarian facilities, to coordinating sectors on the ground and providing a direct link to the communities that receive assistance.

IOM Site Management facilitates a range of camp operations such as demarcations and relocations, as well as community engagement designed to increase beneficiary and humanitarian capacity. The camps are prone to landslides and flooding, so Disaster Risk Reduction and emergency response plans are integrated into Site Management field operations where IOM staff work closely with affected populations to prepare for disasters and safety incidents. This includes the mobilisation of 1,800 Disaster Management Volunteers trained by both the Fire Service and Civil Defence and Cyclone Preparedness Programme.







“

As I addressed the problem on (my community's) behalf and IOM listened to their request, they started trusting me. My community believes in me now. Since then, they started coming to me with many problems that I share with IOM in the monthly meeting

”

*Rohingya community engagement participant*



**24,438**

INDIVIDUALS RELOCATED FROM RISK-PRONE AREAS

---



**283**

TRAINING SESSIONS ON SITE MANAGEMENT

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**1,800**

DISASTER MANAGEMENT VOLUNTEER MOBILISED

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These sessions are complimented by IOM's Health and Protection training to enable beneficiaries to develop comprehensive emergency-response skills. IOM Site Management also operates at the field level with Communication with Communities and Protection staff to ensure a balanced approach to community engagement, focusing on messaging and strengthening links between communities and service providers. In camps where Rohingya live side-by-side with host communities, IOM Site Management engages both Rohingya and Bangladeshis in identifying their needs and gaps. This approach is taken in order to develop and carry out activities that will be effective in improving overall beneficiary living conditions, and promoting peaceful co-existence between host and refugee communities.











# SITE DEVELOPMENT

## **Building and maintaining infrastructure**

The IOM Site Development team works to improve the physical environment in the camps, both to support living conditions and reduce risks faced by the population. This includes everything from creating new roads, pathways and drainage networks, to stabilising slopes, replanting lost forests, building community facilities and installing streetlights. IOM's approach to the issue of access addresses the need to ensure open and safe pathways for persons moving throughout the camps. Installing and managing roads, flat pathways and staircases to ensure that beneficiaries, including those most vulnerable, are able to navigate the site falls under this effort. Access is also critical for humanitarian personnel, emergency responders and health services needing to reach all areas of the camps and beneficiaries in need. All Site Development works are closely coordinated with the Site Management team to maximise community decision making, target works at the most vulnerable, and ensure coordination with other sectors and the Government. In addition to direct implementation, the IOM Site Development team in each camp is responsible for carrying out camp-level risk assessments and coordinating the works of Site Development and Improvement.







“

Stairs help us a lot, especially for the elderly and for young kids to move down site. Also, the environment of the camp is so good; lots of tree planting happening in the camp. It is now more green than before.

”

*a 52 year-old Rohingya man*



**5,689**  
METERS OF BRIDGES  
CONSTRUCTED



**61,912**  
METERS OF PEDESTRIAN PATHWAYS  
CONSTRUCTED/REINFORCED



**36,000**  
SQUARE METERS OF SLOPES  
STABILISED



**81,000**  
METERS OF DRAINAGE  
INSTALLED

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Not only does IOM's Site Development team manage general site infrastructure, it is also responsible for camp expansion. Under the Site Maintenance and Engineering Project (SMEP), in 2018, IOM developed new land to expand the physical space available for Rohingya settlement. In cooperation with IOM's Shelter unit, this project included construction of additional beneficiary homes, enabling the relocation of those living in at-risk areas. IOM's Site Planning team, integrated into Site Development, ensures that planning standards and minimum services are incorporated in the development of new areas, including community and recreational spaces. The execution of these massive undertakings is largely thanks to the hard work of men and women employed under IOM's Cash-for-Work programme. IOM Cash-for-Work provides opportunities to affected communities to engage in income-generating activities while contributing to the development and management of the camps and surrounding areas. The Cash-for-Work programme operates according to a two-week rotation period, ensuring prioritisation of extremely vulnerable households and individuals.



Camp 20 Extension 2018



Camp 20 Extension 2019











# COMMUNICATION WITH COMMUNITIES

## **Communication with communities (CwC) places beneficiaries at the centre**

The IOM CwC team works under the Site Management unit to ensure accountability, open communication and trust with affected populations across the camps and host communities under IOM's area of responsibility in Cox's Bazar. As part of this work, IOM operates over 20 Feedback and Information Centres where Rohingya camp residents can ask questions, provide comments on services and request assistance. IOM's Community Engagement teams also hold routine meetings with youth groups, women, persons with disabilities and Imams in each camp to share information and discuss problems within the broader community. IOM utilises these sessions to plan and implement other engagement activities, such as community and site improvement projects. Additionally, IOM regularly hosts radio listening groups that play audio programmes in Rohingya, broadcasting about health-, safety-, and aid-related issues to increase beneficiary capacity to access the support and information they need in the camps. CwC staff also disseminate emergency radio messaging and warnings prior to extreme weather events to ensure communities are prepared and ready to respond if disaster strikes.





IOM UN MIGRATION



তথ্য ও প্রতিক্রিয়া কেন্দ্র  
Information & Feedback Centre  
သတင်းဌာန



“Through radio-listening sessions, I have learned a lot of life saving information like care for pregnant women and new-born babies, preparation for storms and cyclones, hygiene and hand washing, trafficking risks and identifying different types of diseases

”

*a Rohingya beneficiary*



**75,000**  
RADIOS  
DISTRIBUTED



**29**  
FEEDBACK & INFORMATION  
HUBS CONSTRUCTED



**46,461**  
COMPLAINTS REFERRED VIA  
FEEDBACK & INFORMATION  
HUBS

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# SITE MAINTENANCE AND ENGINEERING PROJECT

## Three partners work hand-in-hand under SMEP

In February of 2018, three agencies the International Organization for Migration, the United Nations High Commission for Refugees (UNHCR) and the World Food Programme (WFP) unified behind the Secretary General's vision of a One-UN system. The joined forces around a shared goal of creating infrastructure with equitable access for the 1.2 million Rohingya and Bangladeshi host community individuals residing in and around the Cox's Bazar refugee camps. The initiative became known as the Site Maintenance and Engineering Project (SMEP).

SMEP's first major project began in February of 2018 when teams dredged 20km of drainage channels in Kutupalong-Balukhali Expansion site, engaging about 500 Rohingya volunteers. The scalability of the project was soon put to the test when the initiative expanded by three months to develop an additional 800 acres of land. Rising to the challenge, the three agencies engaged more than 5,000 volunteers and 100 machines to develop stable land free from threats of flooding and landslides.

In June 2018, 10 new bases were set up across the camps to install 12 acres of new road, 19 acres of slope stabilisation, and three acres of drainage. Operations also included repairs, in which 19 acres of pre-existing road and 33 acres of drainage were addressed. The successes led to the expansion of the SMEP response from ten bases to 17 in 2019 to ensure greater coverage. Teams of about 30 workers equipped with tools, machines and prepositioned materials undertake daily inspections, address damage and respond to the public. Also serving as a rapid-response group, during the first six months of 2019, SMEP addressed more than 800 incidents reported to its call centre.





“ The handcart makes our job easier. Now we can carry materials from and to our work place ”

*a Rohingya volunteer*



**20,879**  
SQUARE METERS  
OF DRAINAGE CONSTRUCTED



**161,534**  
SQUARE METERS OF  
ROADS REPAIRED



**354,441**  
SQUARE METERS  
DRAINAGE REPAIRED  
AND CLEARED



**26%**  
FEMALE  
WORKING FORCE

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In addition to building infrastructure, SMEP prioritises training locals and fabricating materials. In 2018, SMEP teams responded to requests to expand its casting yard. Expansions included three new facilities where materials are produced that include prefabricated, reinforced concrete speed bumps, guard houses, retaining walls, and drainage slabs at output of over 600 per day. One facility provides space to train over 40 host community entrepreneurs in construction and infrastructure maintenance. SMEP teams were given classes that followed a 75-hour syllabus and concluded with the presentation of group business plans on behalf of participants, after which graduates were referred to livelihood partners for mentoring and support.

Highlights from the past two years of SMEP's accomplishments include rapid setup of field-information management, providing real-time resource management and activity monitoring, localised work forces, weekly training of supervisors in first aid, health and safety, environmental awareness raising and engineering best practices.











# SHELTER AND NON-FOOD ITEMS

## **Roofs over heads and tools in hands through Shelter and Non-Food Items interventions**

The 2017 crisis created a historic humanitarian need for housing as nearly one million refugees fled over the Bangladesh border. In the space of just a few months — an entire city appeared where there had been little more than bush and hills. IOM's Shelter team faced the daunting task of procuring massive quantities of life-saving shelter and non-food item materials, managing the Shelter Sector Common Pipeline to support partner agencies, and assembling technical staff to design and conduct training and other technical support.

During the initial stages of the influx, the refugees built rudimentary shelters with materials supplied through an emergency distribution of one tarpaulin, one bundle of rope, a limited amount of bamboo and basic NFIs, supplemented with whatever else they could find. To upgrade the 100,000-odd structures in the IOM area of responsibility, in 2018 IOM, in conjunction with the Shelter Sector, provided a package of materials along with 'Shelter and Disaster Risk Reduction' training to ensure all households learned how to safely and effectively improve their shelters. Efforts have included relocations and piloting of new, Mid-Term Shelter designs to increase durability and comfort.

The Shelter team is also at the forefront of storm preparedness. Both the Rohingya and Bangladeshi residents of Cox's Bazar live under a consistent threat of cyclones and harsh monsoon rains and wind. The Shelter team has over 100 trained staff ready to respond to emergencies within hours, and has been upgrading community structures to serve as temporary places of refuge for displaced families. Disaster preparedness has also included distribution of over 100,000 tie-down kits in 2018 alone, which help to ensure shelter roofs are anchored to the ground. In 2019, 100,000 such kits were distributed in the days leading up to the 2019 Cyclone Fani, including additional materials and messaging on effective tie-down and drainage practices.







In mid-March 2018, after witnessing seven horrible months, I gave birth to a baby boy. No one can ever feel the joy of a mother who is finally able to provide a safe roof over her child's head. Without IOM's support, it would be tough to ensure a safe shelter for our child



*a Rohingya refugee*



**490,600**

INDIVIDUALS SUPPORTED  
WITH SHELTER ASSISTANCE



**147,101**

CASH-FOR-WORK DAYS  
(INCLUDING FEMALE WORK FORCE)



**147**

COMMUNITY STRUCTURES  
REINFORCED FOR USE  
AS TEMPORARY REFUGEE SITES



**60,620**

POLES TREATED AT IOM'S BAMBOO  
TREATMENT FACILITY



## Shelter and Non-Food Items distribution meet needs

Providing refugees with the necessities to make their homes safe and liveable is the responsibility of the Shelter and Non-Food Items (NFI) team. After the refugees were provided with housing and food assistance, the Shelter and NFI team assembled packages of necessities to distribute throughout the camps. These included 43,398 blankets, 33,740 floor mats, 43,374 portable solar lights and 53,255 kitchen sets. These crucial items provide the refugees with the necessities to cook, sleep and move around safely.

In 2017, IOM distributed 120,000 non-food item kits to new arrivals in the months following the influx of August 2017. We also provided 100,000 tie-down kits, which included supplies to secure a structure from heavy wind and rain.





## Mid-Term Shelters offer longer-term solutions

When new land becomes available, IOM's Shelter team constructs Mid-Term Shelters to replace Transitional Shelters. These are sturdier and made from precast, reinforced cement footings, treated bamboo and metal rod connections. They come in a standard size for families of up to five and have a mezzanine design for families of six or more, featuring a second floor capable of serving as a bedroom. Both include a partition to offer privacy and a cement plaster wall in the cooking area for safety. The first beneficiaries selected to move into Mid-Term Shelters are families living in at-risk areas due to threat of floods or landslides. So far, IOM has obtained approval for 539 Mid-Term Shelters to be built in the pre-planned Camp 20 Extension site, with more expected in the coming months.



## Bamboo treatment forms the backbone of safer, longer-lasting structures

Following the refugee influx, there was an immediate need for shelter and a widely-available, cost-efficient housing material that could withstand wind and rain. The most viable resource on hand was bamboo, which grows in abundance across Bangladesh.

In the months that followed, 22 million poles of bamboo were distributed to build structures in what became the world's largest refugee camp. As the crisis continued however, untreated bamboo in contact with the wet soil began to rot and experience pest attacks. By 2018 many of the poles needed to be replaced. IOM contacted international experts who pointed out a treatment process using borax – an environmentally friendly insecticide and fungicide. Responding to this opportunity, IOM constructed what is now the world's largest humanitarian bamboo treatment facility, with capacity to process 48,000 pieces of bamboo per month.

The bamboo-treatment process follows three steps: bamboo poles are procured from all over Bangladesh and labourers clean them of branches and debris. The poles are given a seven-day bath in a borax solution to infuse into the bamboo. The treated poles are then removed from the solution and allowed to dry before being sent off to IOM's distribution centres in the camps or for use by partners.

The treatment process has significantly increased shelter lifespan and has improved the bamboo's ability to better-withstand storms. In the hope that these methods will last far beyond the humanitarian response, over 500 staff have been trained at the treatment facility.







## Emergency response support and community shelter upgrades to weather the storm

Between May and September of each year, severe rain and winds blow in off the Bay of Bengal, causing extensive flooding and damage to homes and infrastructure in the Cox's Bazar area. To support families whose shelters have suffered storm damage, IOM maintains a team of over 100 trained staff ready to conduct rapid damage verification and material distribution within 48 hours of a severe weather event. IOM transports materials and repairs households identified as extremely vulnerable. To provide safety and dignity to families displaced during severe weather, IOM reinforces community buildings to allow them to function as emergency community shelters. Large, common structures such as mosques, madrasas and women- and child-friendly spaces are selected to maximise the number of beneficiaries. IOM also supplies each facility with basic, non-food items including blankets, floor mats and solar lights for use during emergencies. Since 2018, IOM has upgraded a total of 174 such shelters to ensure that they are storm ready, though the programme does not guarantee that the buildings will be 'cyclone-proof' as it is unlikely that any bamboo structure can fully resist a cyclonic wind. Nonetheless, this effort involves anchoring columns in concrete, tying down roofs, securing pegs to the ground, installing bamboo braces, treating bamboo with fungicides, upgrading ventilation and pouring concrete floors to fortify buildings. In addition to the package of non-food items provided to all households, IOM distributes to each upgraded facility blankets, floor mats and solar lights to increase the comfort for those forced to take refuge.







### **Transitional Shelter Assistance increases durability; empowers households**

The refugee crisis unfolded rapidly and many new Rohingya arrivals scrambled to build rudimentary shelters that fell far below international standards. These shelters were made with the few materials available and built on land that was highly congested, sometimes unstable, and at risk of flooding or landslides. The overall durability of these shelters was questionable as families lived in homes that were not designed to withstand the climate nor the terrain of the area.

While the Site Management team has relocated large numbers of households to safer and less-congested areas, the vast majority of the camp has no choice but to remain on their existing plots until more land becomes available.



IOM's Shelter team unrolled a four-step approach to increase the safety and durability of beneficiary housing: distribute durable shelter materials, train beneficiaries in shelter maintenance, ensure the provision of technical assistance, and disburse vouchers for shelter and non-food items. Through this support, beneficiaries are provided the tools and training necessary to reinforce their shelters and transition housing to mid-term solutions.

The upgraded shelters are a step up from their predecessors because they are more durable, stronger and more habitable. IOM's trainings include content on installing outdoor cooking spaces for health reasons and a partition to allow for privacy. In their design and implementation, beneficiaries are also directly engaged, increasing Rohingya sense of ownership over their own homes. This programming has been tailored to a wide range of beneficiary needs, including those of vulnerable families who have been prioritised and supported with upgrade assistance.



# HEALTH

## The long journey from on-foot doctors

IOM's Health response has come a long way since 2017. Back then, what is now the Kutupalong camps had no clinics or care facilities to support the hundreds of thousands of newly-arrived refugees who were in need of medical assistance. Many were afflicted by Acute Watery Diarrhoea and Respiratory Tract Infections as well as traumatic injuries incurred from the conflict such as burns and bullet wounds. One of IOM's early health responders describes the situation: "Health service were provided largely by mobile teams, many on foot. Heavy equipment and medicines often had to be hand-carried on muddy trails in conditions made worse by monsoon weather."

Beginning in 2016, nearly a year and a half prior to the influx, IOM's Health programme was small and focused on providing healthcare in registered camps in Kutupalong and Leda. The scale and capacity of these operations proved inadequate to meet the needs of the new-arrivals following the influx.

An IOM midwife details conditions during this time, recalling that pregnant women and patients requiring emergency healthcare had to be carried to the nearest health point on improvised stretchers. Some women gave birth in makeshift settlements, which was dangerous for both mother and child. Lack of vaccinations and overcrowding lead to outbreaks of preventable illnesses such as diphtheria, chickenpox and water-borne diseases.



IOM  
OIM

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“

I am so relieved to see a new facility within reach. I used to walk so far or have to pay five taka to get transport. This facility means I don't have to do that because it is nearby and provides good medicine

”

*a 25 year-old Rohingya beneficiary*



**1,184,941**  
OUTPATIENT  
CONSULTATIONS



**3,680**  
DELIVERIES CONDUCTED  
IN IOM HEALTH FACILITIES



**69,060**  
ANTENATAL  
CARE SESSIONS



**12,435**  
REFERRALS TO SECONDARY  
AND TERTIARY FACILITIES

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Two years later, the situation on the ground has improved dramatically. Many of the bamboo makeshift clinics have been upgraded to pre-fabricated facilities, of which five operate 24-hours. Over 350 healthcare staff were brought on board, including 45 doctors, 40 midwives, 30 nurses and other ancillary staff. Thanks to the work of these dedicated professionals, patients have benefitted from over 1,200,000 consultations at 23 IOM or IOM-supported health centres since August 2017. Additionally, over 66,400 pregnant women have received antenatal care and over 3,900 babies have been safely delivered. A fleet of 12 ambulances and referral teams also operate at the camp-, district- and divisional-levels, providing emergency, secondary and tertiary healthcare to some 11,000 patients.







IOM is also committed to disease prevention and outbreak control. To this end, IOM deploys 350 health workers throughout the camps to teach about sanitation and disease prevention and spread messages regarding potential outbreaks. Especially during monsoon season, during which mosquito-borne illnesses pose greater threats, IOM engages awareness raising sessions about the prevention of dengue fever and other illnesses common to the rainy months.











# MENTAL HEALTH & PSYCHOSOCIAL SUPPORT

## Healing Ceremonies promote psychosocial wellbeing and sense of community

Providing mental health and psychosocial support (MHPSS) to a population fleeing war and conflict is a difficult task. Newly-arrived refugees from Rakhine State were grappling with not only the violence and trauma they endured, but also the uncertainty over their wellbeing and future. Faced with these challenges, IOM's mental health and psychosocial responders in the first days of the crisis developed a community-based approach to properly address community needs.

In addition to the provision of emotional and psychological support, support groups were established to engage the community in promoting wellbeing and preventing mental health problems. As part of this approach, a structured group activity called Healing Ceremonies was created. "The groups are starting to reflect on the question: Who are we? What are the stories behind the Rohingya's memories as an ethnic group?" muses an MHPSS project officer. Fortunately, within Rohingya customs and culture, the MHPSS team found a promising avenue through which to design and implement services. "One of the main factors that help the Rohingya face adversity has been their strong sense of unity and religious life", the MHPSS project officer reflects, "they have told me, 'when we feel bad or sad, we pray together and we sing together'".







“ I feel that I can now help my community to create a sense of belonging and self-esteem. ”

*a 25 year-old Rohingya beneficiary*



**28,256**

WOMEN AND GIRLS RECEIVED PSYCHOSOCIAL SUPPORT



**80**

HEALING CEREMONIES ORGANISED IN COX'S BAZAR FOR ROHINGYA AND HOST COMMUNITY

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The use of art and music plays an important role in the Rohingya identity and resilience against the discrimination they faced in their country of origin and exile. Through traditional songs called *Taranas*, the Rohingya express emotions often related to despair, melancholy and fear. *Taranas* are typically sung but can be accompanied by musical instruments such as the *tobla*, small drums, or *juri* — traditional guitar-like instruments. This music represents a medium to keep history alive and preserve collective identity.

The Healing Ceremonies have become a ‘safe space’ where beneficiaries can connect over memories of their homeland and their sense of identity as an ethnic group and community. “Resilient stories have emerged that share a different angle of the Rohingya experience as compared to the typical, negative narratives commonly associated with refugees: stories about teachers, musicians, poets, artist, leaders; all of them are connected to strong values of solidarity, generosity, creativity and strength” the Mental Health officer shares. Mental health problems are often rooted in social isolation and deterioration of community networks; the goal is that these ceremonies will help promote positive relationships and connection amongst the Rohingya.





The first Healing Ceremony took place during Ramadan in 2018. What began as an IOM programme involving small groups in select camps has grown and is now being driven by the refugees themselves. “The way that the community was engaged and the way that this activity is addressing community needs has been key to promoting ownership and empowerment,” said a Mental Health officer.

Other initiatives are being coupled with the Healing Ceremonies, including a programme called “Collective Kitchens” where families gather to prepare food from back home as a way to promote solidarity and supportive spaces to address their needs. The Mental Health officer added, “We are facilitating spaces where families can restore their capacity to contribute to the wellbeing of the community, and by doing so, they are promoting good mental health.”





# NEEDS AND POPULATION MONITORING

## **Informing the humanitarian response**

Information is one of the most critical elements in developing, implementing and ensuring a humanitarian response. Proper and up-to-date field data allows actors on the ground to identify beneficiary needs ranging from access to resources to basic housing and safety.

In the early days of the crisis, IOM's Needs and Population Monitoring (NPM) unit trained and dispatched enumerators to assess border crossings and refugee arrival points throughout the southern Cox's Bazar district. Their task was simple: to count. As tens of thousands of refugees entered into Bangladesh, NPM was at the frontline providing daily updates on arrivals and population movements.

The NPM team's contributions comprise part of IOM's global Displacement Tracking Matrix (DTM), an information-management system that captures, processes, and disseminates information concerning the movements and evolving needs of displaced populations. Having been rolled out in over 40 complex emergencies, DTM offers both the experience and tools to quickly establish a functioning management system for regular provision of information.







“ Many of our enumerators now have a decent grasp of the Rohingya language, which I think helps us to mix with them, to know their feelings, demands, and expectations. This plays a key role in collecting solid data and assessing their condition ”

*an NPM Team Leader*



**2,040**

REFUGEE SITES VISITED ON A REGULAR BASIS



**25.4**

SQUARE KILOMETRES OF CAMP IMAGERY



**721**

MAPS PRODUCED



**32**

REPORTS PUBLISHED

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As the refugee influx slowed, NPM's focus shifted to providing information on the population breakdown, location, and multi-sector needs and vulnerabilities of Rohingya beneficiaries in both camps and host communities. To date, NPM has trained over 150 enumerators and completed 15 Site Assessment rounds, each time interviewing over 2,000 key informants, offering a snapshot of the situation for host and refugee communities across the response.

As camps grew, so did the need for precise and detailed imagery and maps to support everything from site development and boundary divisions to service access and emergency-response preparedness. NPM not only sourced crucial information from the ground, but also captured data from above in the sky. This includes over 25 square kilometres of precise aerial imagery and maps, available in both print and online, enabling real-time use in the field.

To ensure the usability of NPM data and products, regular training and support is provided to IOM units, humanitarian partners, and government officials. NPM consistently utilises this training, encourages feedback, and implements lessons learnt to ensure its products are targeted and equipped to support informed and effective humanitarian decision making.











# WATER, SANITATION AND HYGIENE

## Water for all

Despite high wet-season rainfalls and a plethora of pump stations, accessing clean water in the camps of Cox's Bazar is a challenge for many Rohingya refugees. While in theory, well water is abundant near the surface, human contaminants have made it undrinkable. To address this challenge, the Water, Sanitation and Hygiene (WASH) team has been working hard to provide safe, potable water through deep tube wells and water treatment systems. In 2018 alone, IOM built 450 deep tube wells serving about 107,500 beneficiaries in both refugee camps and host communities. To keep contaminants out of the water supply, IOM also built 420 emergency latrines, 662 twin pit latrines, 45 latrines with septic tanks and 1,184 household latrines. IOM also distributed WASH hygiene kits containing soap, toothbrushes, hygienic cloths, water containers, menstrual products, undergarments, antiseptic and other personal items.

Another challenge WASH faced was dealing with the large volumes of wastewater generated by the beneficiary populations. Responding to this need, an environmentally-friendly method known as a Decentralised Wastewater Treatment System (DEWATS) was designed and implemented by IOM. The method employs septic tanks, biological filtration and infiltration trenches that work to remove contaminants in the water. The results have been impressive and the technology has been widely recognised for its efficacy.





“ The community never had the means or knowledge of hygiene practices before coming here, now through our work we are changing that ”

*a Rohingya hygiene promotion volunteer*



**225,542**

INDIVIDUALS BENEFITING FROM SAFE WATER AND SANITATION SERVICES



**554**

DEEP TUBE WELLS CONSTRUCTED



**2,400**

DURABLE LATRINES CONSTRUCTED



**1,116**

BATHING CUBICLES SERVING APPROXIMATELY 22,320 WOMEN AND GIRLS



**360,000**

HYGIENE KITS PROVISIONED FOR CORE PIPELINE SUPPLY



## Good hygiene a top priority

Comprising a population of nearly one million people, the Cox's Bazar refugee camps are some of the world's most densely populated settlements. Compounding this is the weather, Cox's Bazar has a humid, tropical climate where harsh rainstorms can be followed by long, hot dry spells. From a hygiene perspective, this means that water collects in stagnant pools throughout the camps, with the potential of transmitting disease. A lack of toilet facilities in the early days of the crisis also contributed to faecal matter contamination around camp water bodies, acting as a further health threat. The result in the first months of the crisis was a rapid spread of illnesses such as diphtheria and dysentery, posing health challenges for the response.

Faced with these challenges, the WASH Hygiene team initiated a multi-pronged campaign in the camps and host communities. IOM held public sessions to distribute kits to households and educate refugees in hygiene and sanitation. Simple messages were spread, including through posters urging people to wash their hands and use soap. IOM also initiated a project to build both communal and household latrines in both Rohingya and host community sites.













Marking one of the largest projects accomplished under the WASH unit, in July 2019, IOM and partner Japan International Cooperation Agency (JICA) built one of the humanitarian world's biggest solar-powered water supply networks. At over 400 metres in depth, a well was dug in the Kutuplaong-Balukhali expansion camp that has the capacity to generate 61kW in green energy. This energy fuels a powerful pump that brings clean water from deep below the earth to the surface where it can be accessed by 30,000 beneficiaries living in and around the camps.







# SAFE ACCESS TO FUEL AND ENERGY

## LPG offers energy atop reforestation drive

After the the refugee influx, Rohingya families had no fuel to cook the food they received from aid agencies. They resorted to cutting firewood in the surrounding forests, resulting in deforestation of some 7,000 hectares of land.

A treeless landscape in and around the camps can be dangerous in an area prone to cyclones and extreme monsoons. Soil erosion is a growing problem and there is an ever-present risk of landslides triggered by heavy rains. In 2018, the humanitarian community in Cox's Bazar stepped in to address this problem, launching programmes to reduce the need for firewood and replant trees inside and near the refugee camps.

IOM, in collaboration with the Food and Agricultural Organisation (FAO) and the World Food Programme (WFP), launched the Safe Access to Fuel and Energy (SAFE Plus) initiative to respond to these needs. The project provides refugees and local communities with Liquefied Petroleum Gas (LPG) stoves and fuel while rehabilitating deforested areas. Under the initiative, refugees and local villagers are given LPG stoves, fuel tanks and access to re-fills. Some 78,206 LPG stoves have already been distributed, with a target of 90,000 by August 2019.







“ Our LPG distribution facilities have become very popular in the camps, and our hour-long training session makes beneficiaries aware of the environmental implications of SAFE+ ”

*a SAFE+ Community Mobiliser*



**78,206**  
HOUSEHOLDS RECEIVED LIQUIFIED PETROLEUM GAS (LPG) CYLINDER AND REFILLS



**200**  
HECTARES OF LAND HAVE BEEN REPLANTED WITH TREES

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Despite the project's successes, its three-year workplan is still under-funded. Staff also highlight the importance of parallel efforts in IOM's partnership with FAO to replant trees in and around the camp. "The initiative works because it addresses both the demand for firewood and the rehabilitation of the area's forests," a Transition and Recovery Division (TRD) colleague explains.

Replanting is essential to combat dangerous soil erosion triggered by the heavy monsoon rains; indigenous trees and local plants such as Vetiver and Broom grass, meanwhile, protect slopes by holding soil intact. Other plants and trees can also be used for medicines. "The project has worked with local authorities to determine the best plants and trees for the area. One is the Neem tree, which gives the famous scented oil used in South Asian medicine. We also plan to plant teak. Bangladesh has some of the world's highest quality teak wood," shared the TRD staff.









The SAFE Plus programme has been welcomed by both refugees and local communities, who say it reduces their spending on firewood and results in cleaner air not only in their homes but also in the camps due to a reduction in smoke from burning firewood. This initiative also lessens the risk of violence against women and children who must often walk long distances from their homes to collect increasingly scarce firewood.



# DISASTER RISK REDUCTION

## Reducing risk in a disaster-prone area

Bangladesh is one of the world's most disaster-prone countries and Cox's Bazar, where the Rohingya refugee camps are located, is especially vulnerable to monsoons and cyclones. Perched on the north-east coast of the Bay of Bengal, Bangladesh falls directly in the line of storm systems that form near Sri Lanka. They move through the bay and often make landfall near the Bangladesh-Myanmar border where the camps are situated. Less predictable is the risk of earthquakes; Cox's Bazar is near the Sagaing Fault line that splits the land and informs the boundary between Bangladesh and Myanmar.

High population density and a lack of widespread development also increase Bangladesh's disaster risks. As a developing country of 160 million people, Bangladesh is one of the highest-ranking states on the global disaster risk index.

Faced with these challenges, in March 2018, IOM developed specialised Disaster Risk Reduction (DRR) programming, adapting a holistic approach to strengthen the humanitarian response by building disaster shelters, engaging in community education and outreach and working with partners to increase overall capacity, efficiency and efficacy. To this end, IOM has organised Disaster Management Committees in two localities that have fanned out across local communities to neighbours and friends, increasing disaster safety capacity. IOM DRR programmes have also renovated 20 cyclone shelters capable of housing 30,000 people in case of evacuations. A total of 30 cyclone shelters, equipped with emergency tools and resources, have been established to house 45,000 people in case of mass evacuations. Committees on cyclone shelter management received training in life-saving skills for emergency responses. Moreover, 15,203 individuals including Cyclone Preparedness Volunteers, Fire Service Civil Defence officials and volunteers and Disaster Management Committee members have been trained in lifesaving skills, risk assessments, risk reduction measures and disaster response planning.





“ IOM is raising disaster awareness, providing capacity-building, renovating cyclone shelters and providing emergency equipment support. IOM has a vital role in supporting the people of the community ”

*Mr. Nur Hossen BA  
Chairman and UDMC president,  
Sabrabg, Teknaf*



**20**  
CYCLONE SHELTERS  
REHABILITATED



**50**  
CYCLONE SHELTERS RECEIVED  
EQUIPMENT



**5,000**  
SQUARE METER AREA COVERED BY  
GEOTEXTILE AND VETIVER GRASS TO  
PROTECT THE SLOPES FROM EROSION  
AND LANDSLIDE



**15,203**  
BENEFICIARIES SUPPORTED  
THROUGH CAPACITY BUILDING

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Education plays an important part in IOM's efforts to reduce disaster risk in an area prone to cyclones. Locals both in and outside the camps have been invited to DRR sessions where they are able to learn about the various 'flags' and 'signals' used to denote a potential disaster. Attendees also learn about the risks of drinking contaminated water and how to re-enforce their shelters. Disaster drills have been held featuring scenarios ranging from freeing a child trapped under debris to offering first aid on the scene. DRR programmes like these have contributed to a steady reduction in the number of fatalities caused by disasters over the years. By improving IOM's programmes and services, DRR aims to reduce not just the immediate impact of disasters, but the humanitarian fallout that results from damaged and destroyed shelters and infrastructure.







# LIVELIHOODS AND SOCIAL COHESION

## **Capacity building strengthens bonds and broadens livelihoods**

Bangladesh is one of the world's most densely populated countries and despite immense demands to provide for its own population and manage a rapidly-expanding economy, the country generously opened its arms during the 2017 Rohingya influx. Since then, IOM has worked alongside Bangladeshi stakeholders and the government to provide support and services for not only Rohingya beneficiaries, but also to members of the local host community. This is a vital initiative that addresses the impact of this sudden population influx on the host community. Recognising this need, IOM developed and implemented a Livelihoods and Social Cohesion programme aimed at fostering dialogue and cooperation between the host and Rohingya communities. IOM carries out this effort through a wide array of programmes, including regular community meetings to encourage collaboration and address areas of mutual concern. Attendees, both men and women, discuss matters ranging from immediate issues of resource needs to longer-term deforestation and energy use. Livelihoods and Social Cohesion volunteers and local staff also organise events around issues that concern both communities, such as monsoon and cyclone preparedness.







**My cow and goats given to me by IOM have given me a better life; I feel proud to own an asset that generates income to feed my family and keep my two children in school.**



*a livelihood beneficiary*



**420**

HOUSEHOLDS BENEFITTED FROM ASSETS TRANSFER & MONITORING



**1,500**

VOCATIONAL SKILLS /SELF-RELIANCE FOR ROHINGYA WOMEN



**2,500**

SKILLS TRAINING FOR YOUTH REFUGEES



**50**

YOUTH BUSINESS PLATFORMS SUPPORTED



To mitigate the economic impact of the influx, programming is designed to increase livelihood skills and opportunities for both communities. Specifically, IOM supports employment skills-building of the host community, with programmes that range from sewing and cooking to basic IT and computer use. Specialised capacity building is also offered for female beneficiaries, with the aim of increasing Rohingya and host community women's empowerment, economic independence, and social engagement. The aim is to equip beneficiaries, Rohingya and Bangladeshis alike with skills that will outlive the refugee crisis. Over 9,700 individuals have directly benefited since the programmes were initiated in 2018 through vocational and technical skills, small grants for income-generating activities, and asset transfers for poor household to begin building capital. Similarly, 12,300 Rohingya beneficiaries (including women, adolescent boys and girls and persons with disabilities) have benefited from self-reliance support through skills development initiatives. In addition to addressing these practical matters, the Livelihoods and Social Cohesion programme also fosters friendships between Rohingya and local Bangladeshis. Market linkages, for example, have been supported by IOM between host and Rohingya communities, not only generating income opportunities, but also strengthening peaceful coexistence. Communal works have also been implemented through Cash-for-Work so that beneficiaries can together restore shared infrastructure. Shared cultural events and sports activities have been coordinated, all working towards supporting closer bonds between the two communities.











# PROTECTION

## **Protection by Presence: General Protection teams maintain outreach to promote dignity**

General Protection (GP) encompasses all cases that don't fall under Gender-Based Violence, Counter Trafficking and Child Protection. And in a refugee camp with nearly one million people, that can mean anything from breaking up a fight to helping locals being targeted by criminal networks. General Protection focuses on vulnerable individuals and families, identifying and supporting people with specific needs.

IOM applies the concept of "Protection by Presence" to its daily work. Instead of managing centres where beneficiaries come with their concerns, IOM Protection actors walk around the camps, making themselves available to anyone that needs their assistance. This approach strengthens beneficiary and Protection staff relationships and builds confidence for community members to proactively come forward with concerns or issues.

Developing these resources has not been without its difficulties. "When you are helping a victim of violence, or of crime for example, there is also a perpetrator and that perpetrator isn't necessarily happy if someone intervenes on the side of the victim," said an IOM Protection teammate. Mitigating those risks can be tricky, but it begins with having credibility with the community. That comes with formal activities like focus group discussions, and simply by maintaining good relations and a presence in the camps.

General Protection teams currently cover Camps 9, 10, 18, 19, 20, and 20ext in the Ukhiya sub-district, as well as Camps 23 (Shamlapur), 24 (Leda) and 25 (Alikhali) in the Teknaf sub-district. These teams provide a variety of services, ranging from provision of case management support to identification and referral of vulnerable individuals in need of assistance. Activities also include conducting Protection monitoring activities at the individual-, household- and community-level, and working with groups to encourage self-reliance and capacity to identify Protection risks.

International Day of Persons with Disabilities-2018







After a long day a smile comes to our faces. We have seen in this camp IOM is different, we feel peace and comfort talking to you



*a Rohingya beneficiary*



**731**

PERSONS WITH DISABILITIES RECEIVED HOME-BASE REHABILITATION SERVICES PROVIDED BY MOBILE TEAMS.



**74,000**

WOMEN AND GIRLS PARTICIPATED IN GROUP PSYCHOSOCIAL SUPPORT ACTIVITIES



**900**

GBV CASES RECEIVED CASE MANAGEMENT SUPPORT



**62,000**

ROHINGYA AND HOST COMMUNITY MEMBERS PARTICIPATED IN SESSIONS TO RAISE AWARENESS ON HUMAN TRAFFICKING







**One child who is getting support from us has lost his parents in Myanmar and now lives with some neighbors from his village. After a home visit he told me how happy he is to see me because I am the only one who cares about him and keep an eye on him. Such a small sentence can give me so much motivation after a hard day in the field, as we witness many difficulties of children and families**



*a Child Protection  
case worker*

## **Child Protection reaches the most vulnerable**

Perhaps one of the most distressing dimensions of the Rohingya refugee crisis was the large numbers of unaccompanied children crossing the border from Myanmar. The haste and chaos of the crisis meant that many young people had been separated from their families due to violence and persecution or were orphaned by the conflict. Arriving in a strange land, these children were among the most vulnerable in the Rohingya crisis.

IOM's Child Protection response originated with just two staff, slowly working to establish a team on the ground to provide support through the camp's first foster-care system. While offering shelter, support and supervision, the system has proven one of the best options in creating family-like placements and involving the broader community to encourage child wellbeing. Foster care-givers are found based on an assessment that is complimented by community input. Vulnerable children are identified through a combination of site referrals and interventions from partner organisations and members of the community. IOM ensures foster care-givers additional support through counselling, provision of non-food items, and follow-up.

As IOM speaks with more community members, Child Protection experts have realised that the traumas suffered by many children require a more comprehensive approach. IOM has expanded its activities to offer greater support, case management, and psychosocial assistance to children in need. IOM also formed Child Support Groups through Community-Based Child Protection initiatives to allow the broader community to play a role in raising and supporting their children.

Following an assessment, Child Protection also addresses the threat of human trafficking, exploitation and child abuse through prevention and advocacy. IOM opened its first Child Friendly Spaces to allow young people to play and learn practical information about hygiene and safety in the camps. Similarly, adolescent boys' and girls' clubs offer life skills and vocational training. Positive parenting sessions are held to improve child-care skills. Parents and caregivers participate with their children in Disaster Risk Reduction preparedness trainings to improve safety measures for natural disasters.



## Persons with Disabilities

IOM found immense gaps in identifying and providing support to persons with disabilities, leading to the development of a disability inclusion programme very soon following the influx. Children with disabilities received rehabilitation services while their parents and caregivers were given assistance with their physical and emotional needs.

Service provision extended beyond parents and adult caregivers to other community members with disabilities, as many Rohingya arrived with long-term physical impairments caused by gunshots, shrapnel, fire and landmines.

IOM has worked on raising awareness in the community about disability issues and vulnerabilities, engaging conversations on the ways in which disability might increase children and adult vulnerability to exploitation, abuse, and harassment during emergencies, and how the community can mitigate these risks.



## Countering human trafficking in a high-risk area

As stateless persons with limited economic opportunities, the Rohingya are highly vulnerable to exploitation by traffickers. As a result, during the influx in late summer of 2017, a window opened for traffickers and black-market dealers to target areas in and around the camps in search of victims.

IOM dispatched a Counter-Trafficking (CT) assessment team in the first few weeks of the crisis. The team identified at least 24 Victims of Trafficking (VoTs) who were offered false promises of free trips abroad and guaranteed income. Some VoTs tell IOM that they were recruited by strangers, while others were recruited by someone they knew such as a family member or neighbour.

Bangladesh has long been a source, transit, and destination country for trafficking. The Rohingya crisis created additional risks, spurring IOM's CT team to engage and strengthen legal and social support systems to combat this harmful, multi-billion-dollar industry. On the legislative side, IOM supported the Bangladeshi government's passage and implementation of the Anti-Human Trafficking Act in 2012. On the social support side, IOM works directly with VoTs and has assisted over 473 survivors of forced labour and sexual exploitation. Survivors benefit from IOM counselling, psychological assistance, health support, return assistance, livelihoods self-reliance and legal support.

Awareness-raising is also critical to IOM's efforts, in both the refugee camps and the host communities. IOM has held over 3,500 awareness-raising sessions educating beneficiaries about risk mitigation. The CT team has produced written booklets, and a comic strip and pocketbook to create community awareness on human trafficking modus operandi. IOM also manages a hotline number for beneficiaries to call if in need of support. Complementing these Protection and prevention efforts, IOM and the Bangladeshi government are building the capacity of local authorities, including law enforcement, to identify and safely-refer victims of trafficking. On the Government side, IOM supports the district's Counter Trafficking Committee (CTC) which regularly meets at the district- and local-levels.

“  
**My husband left me and married another woman. It was very difficult to maintain and support my children. With limited option in the camps, I went outside with someone who offered me a job but I ended up working restlessly without any payment.**”

*a Rohingya beneficiary*





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TARE WT. 2,210 LBS  
PAYLOAD 23,290 LBS



“ I am telling you the whole story because you're listening to me. No one ever listened and understood like you before ”

*a female beneficiary*

## Gender Based Violence teams responds beyond immediate needs

When hundreds of thousands of Rohingya began fleeing to Bangladesh in 2017, the immediate priority was to meet their most basic housing, health and nutritional needs. IOM's Protection team detected other important dimensions of beneficiary wellbeing, quickly adapting the response to provide services for female victims of gender-based violence perpetrated in both Myanmar and the refugee camps.

The Protection field team was very small during the early stages of the response. Nonetheless, there was an urgent necessity for a specialized Gender Based Violence (GBV) team to assess the newly-arrived refugees' needs. The team's goal was simple — to create female-only spaces to serve as non-stigmatising access points for at-risk women and girls as well as survivors of gender based violence. As the programme grew, these spaces began providing counselling, case management and mental health and psychosocial support.

Since these initial efforts, IOM's GBV unit has increased the size and numbers of these spaces. Women and Girls Safe Spaces have evolved through “generations” in their design, from basic bamboo shelters with dirt floors to mid-term structures with cement foundations built for longer term use. Now in their third generation, the Safe Spaces are becoming an integral part of community life for many women. They offer privacy, information access and the opportunity for women and girls to develop support networks in their community.

Safe spaces offer a wide range of activities that help female beneficiaries build resilience, independence, and empowerment. Classes in handicrafts, sewing and financial literacy are provided, in addition to awareness-raising activities focused on protection issues such as early marriage, trafficking in persons, positive parenting, and health. Women also benefit from day-to-day discussions on community safety and practical issues such as installing lighting to make streets safer.

Encouragingly, this positive impact is noted as women are using Safe Spaces as a platform for participation in their communities. Women's Groups and Committees are already flourishing in the camps thanks to this resource.





## IMPLEMENTING PARTNERS

ACF | ACTION AID | ADRA | AMERICAN REDCROSS |  
ARTOLUTION | BA | BANGLADESH RED CRESCENT | BASTOB |  
BBC MA | BFRI | BGS | BNWLA | BRAC | BSF | CARE | CARITAS |  
CBM | CHRISTIAN AID | CONCERN WORLDWIDE | DISTRICT  
COMMISSIONER OFFICE | DRC | DSK | DEPARTMENT OF  
CLINICAL PSYCHOLOGY | DEPARTMENT OF GEOLOGY | DPHE |  
DWW | FAO | GERMAN REDCROSS | HANDICAP INTERNATIONAL  
| ICCO COOPERATION | IFRC & RCS | IRC | ISCG | JAAGO  
FOUNDATION | LGED | MEDAIR | MSF | MUKTI | NRC | OXFAM |  
POLICE DEPARTMENT | PRACTICAL ACTION | PULSE | PUI | RI |  
RRRC | RTMI | SHED | SHULSHILAN | SOLIDARITES  
INTERNATIONAL | TDH | UNDP | UNICEF | UNFPA | UNHCR |  
UNWOMEN | UNITED PURPOSE | WORLD CONCERN | YPSA | CRS  
| WFP | WORLD FISH | WORLD VISION | IMPACT | REDR |  
ICCCAD | FRIENDSHIP | RISDA

Dear friends and colleagues

Over the last two years we have achieved significant progress on the management of this crisis. It was a colossal emergency operation, but we have saved lives, improved the refugees' quality of living conditions and strengthened our cooperation at all levels. The overview of this path, though not always easy, is presented for posterity on the previous pages of this publication. But such overview wouldn't be complete or true to the achievements it highlights without the recognition that IOM was not alone in this effort.

All that was achieved between August 2017 and August 2019 was based on cooperation, joint support, partnerships and joint implementation. No organisation can claim sole authorship of the achievements of this operation, but we should all be very proud of having been part of this team: those who are still here and those whom have moved onwards since.

IOM would like to thank all the partners and friends that have been with us during these challenging 24 months. Without your support, without similar or differing views, we would have been unable to prevent deaths, epidemics or to provide basic dignity to the Rohingya community. We apologise if we have missed any partner on the former page and we recognise that certainly many more could have been mentioned. To all of those, we offer our assurance of consideration to their efforts and contributions.

Last but not least, I would like to thank the Government of Bangladesh and the Bangladeshi communities of the district of Cox's Bazar. We know the pressures and strains this crisis has caused to the local communities and we are committed to support the mitigation of the same. We have no words to convey the generosity and humanity of the Government for opening its borders and extending the resources that have been provided to its management of land, people, services and coordination. We still have a long path ahead of us and difficult decisions and discussions, but we are confident that as a team we will be able to overcome our differences and ensure the dignity, quality of life and protection of the Rohingya while in Bangladesh.

My deep thanks to all whom have been with us in this journey.



**Manuel Marques Pereira**

Deputy Chief of Mission  
IOM Cox's Bazar

THANK YOU















