



World Food Programme

WFP Bangladesh Rohingya Refugee Response

Situation Report #36 March 2020



Photo: Beneficiaries observing physical distancing i.e., at least one meter apart from each other at the e-voucher outlets. © World Food Programme

Situation Update

- COVID-19 in Bangladesh: As of 24 April, Bangladesh has 4,689 confirmed cases (with 131 fatalities and 112 recoveries). This includes five confirmed cases in Cox's Bazar, with one recovered, and 92 people in institutional quarantine. A [lockdown](#) was imposed in March.
- As of 26 March, the Government announced a lockdown in all 34 Rohingya camps in Cox's Bazar, to stem the COVID-19 pandemic. However, critical life-saving operations are continuing uninterrupted, including WFP food and nutrition assistance.
- Humanitarian organizations are coordinating with the Government of Bangladesh on providing assistance in the isolation/treatment centres both for the Bangladeshi population and Rohingya refugees. This includes supporting the national Sadar, Ramu and Chakaria Hospitals.
- Almost 400 Rohingyas have [returned](#) to Cox's Bazar after failing to reach Malaysia by sea. The Bangladesh Coast Guard rescued the Rohingyas from the Jahazpur Ghat on 15 April, according to the Teknaf Station Coast Guard. National media claims that two more boats carrying Rohingyas are [still adrift](#) at sea. WFP provided rapid assistance for the new arrivals through its local cooperating partners.

In Numbers | | March 2020

859,808 refugees in the camps*

100 percent of the population provided with general food assistance

700,000 host community members targeted as part of the Covid-19 special support

Highlights

- **Life-saving WFP interventions continue in response to COVID-19 in Cox's Bazar camps.** The Government of Bangladesh through the Refugee Relief and Repatriation Commissioner (RRRC) suspended all other non-essential activities for refugees and host communities, including livelihoods training and school feeding activities until further notice.
- **WFP launched the "Special Support to the Host Community" programme** for the COVID-19 response. Through this programme, WFP plans to provide life-saving food assistance to 4,500 people in government quarantine and isolation facilities in Cox's Bazar, as well as provide immediate assistance to 140,000 vulnerable households from the local communities across all the sub-districts in Cox's Bazar.
- **WFP has prepositioned food stocks to continue critical life-saving assistance for two months in the camps.** To ensure availability of food, WFP has strategically placed buffer stocks of food commodities in and around the camps to continue uninterrupted general food distributions for two months.
- **The Logistics Sector facilitated camp access for humanitarian organizations during COVID-19.** With WFP support, the Logistics Sector launched the Humanitarian Access Project to support the Government authorities, including military and police, to facilitate access to the camps for the humanitarian community. It is a fully digitized system which minimizes delays and bottlenecks at the multiple vehicle checkpoints on the way to the camps.
- **WFP scaled up nutrition assistance in local community.** Following the 2020 Joint Response plan to extend assistance to the most vulnerable local communities, WFP opened three additional nutrition sites in Teknaf in March, bringing the total to 90 nutrition sites across Cox's Bazar. Due to the ongoing COVID-19 outbreak, no further expansion in terms of nutrition sites is envisaged in the coming months.

Emergency Preparedness and Response

COVID-19 Emergency Response

For the local community

- WFP has pre-positioned in-kind food commodities to support local government hospitals in Ramu and Chakaria. The assistance package will assist 1,500 in-patients in the isolation centre with 10 kgs of rice, 4.5 kgs of lentils and 1 litre of vegetable oil per person per month and provide hot meals (kichuri) to 3,000 beneficiaries in government quarantine facilities for six months, from mid-April.
- WFP has started distributing High Energy Biscuits (HEBs) to extremely vulnerable households in Cox's Bazar. Some 24,000 households from the livelihoods programme will receive one carton (7.5 or 5 kgs) of HEBs each (13,495 in Ukhiya and 10,768 in Teknaf). From May onwards, WFP plans to distribute cash and food assistance in Ukhiya and Teknaf, in addition to the HEBs. The programme will be scaled up in all the sub-districts of Cox's Bazar, as per the availability of required fund.
- WFP is engaging with partners to procure critical personal protective equipment (PPE) for staff, frontline health workers and humanitarians working in the emergency response.

For the refugees

- In response to COVID-19, WFP has modified its food delivery systems and introduced commodity vouchers. Only one beneficiary per household is allowed onsite to collect food. This is to limit person-to-person contact and ensure adequate physical distancing.
- Beneficiaries under the e-voucher modality receive their entire monthly food basket in one visit.
- Everyone entering WFP premises is required to sanitize their hands. Hand washing stations have been set up and temperature checks are in place for beneficiaries and staff.
- WFP has activated an internal Communications with Communities working group to support with sensitization messaging for cooperating partners, retail staff, volunteers, porters, and beneficiaries on critical health and hygiene related practices, as well as on changes to the operation.

Assessments

- The "Refugee Influx Emergency Vulnerability Assessment" (REVA III) is finalized and will be issued soon. This report will identify and assess multiple vulnerabilities and needs of the refugee and host community population.
- WFP published an internal flash market report which will assist price negotiations with retailers and partners. Key findings show a price increase of over 20 percent on rice and lentils, while vegetable oil remains the same. The increase in prices reflect increased demand, higher shipping and transactional costs, coupled with lower imports.

WFP Programme Updates

General Food Assistance

- WFP continues to assist 100 percent of the refugee population. In March, WFP assisted 225,716 beneficiaries through three food items (oil, rice and pulses), and 623,617 refugees through the e-voucher modality.
- In March, WFP transferred USD 5.7 million through the e-voucher outlets and Bangladeshi retailers engaged in the food assistance supply chain.
- WFP is planning to reach 100 percent of the refugee population via the e-voucher modality. Some delays are anticipated in the scale up due to COVID-19. Nonetheless WFP opened its 16th e-voucher outlet in April, adding 15,000 refugees to the modality.
- WFP is actively coordinating with the education sector to distribute essential materials through the e-voucher outlets.

Nutrition Assistance

- As a critical service for the most vulnerable population, WFP nutrition assistance continues uninterrupted. Beneficiaries are receiving a two-month ration to reduce the number of visits to the nutrition centres.
- In March, WFP assisted 200,000 pregnant and nursing women and children under five in the refugee camps and 6,200 participants in the host community.
- At all WFP nutrition sites in the camps, hand washing stations, soap, alcohol-based hand rubs and sodium hypochlorite have been set up.
- WFP is conducting awareness sessions on COVID-19 prevention measures in all nutrition sites. WFP is also displaying posters and messaging in all integrated nutrition sites.

SCOPE

- As a response to COVID-19, WFP has waived all biometric authentication on SCOPE across all distribution points and e-voucher outlets. Fingerprints are no longer a mandatory verification for beneficiary identification, and transactions are being recorded by tapping the SCOPE cards to scan the QR codes.
- WFP has suspended all beneficiary registration and re-alignment activities with UNHCR data. To date 120,000 households' (approximately 540,000 people) data have been aligned.

Multi-Wallet

- In March, WFP provided multi wallet support to the International Organization for Migration (IOM) across 17 camps for the distribution of Liquefied Petroleum Gas (LPG) to 71,552 refugee households. WFP also supported UNICEF in two camps for the distribution of hygiene kits to 16,057 households.

Disaster Risk Reduction

Refugee camps

- In March, WFP engaged 1,011 refugees through food assistance-for-assets activities in the camps (72 women and 939 men, including 8 people with disabilities). WFP transferred USD 64,400 of entitlements to refugees for structural interventions and reforestation activities.
- The reforestation project in the refugee camp is ongoing with limited refugee workers doing maintenance work across 67 Hectares in 17 camps. WFP is ensuring social distancing among the participants during cash distribution.

Host community

- In March, a total of 1,521 host community members participated in the reforestation project and cyclone shelter rehabilitation works (74 women and 1,444 men, including 3 people with disabilities) with USD 116,786 transferred. Cyclone shelter rehabilitation is suspended until further notice.
- Participants completed reforestation care and maintenance work for 730 Hectares of forest land. They also planted 410 out of 500 Garjan trees in five subdistricts of Cox's Bazar.

Livelihoods

- The Livelihoods programme in the host community is engaged in conducting remote awareness sessions on COVID-19. So far WFP has reached 4,246 beneficiaries from 204 groups awareness sessions, and 15,000 through pre-recorded audios and

translations of awareness materials.

- In March, WFP provided 669 beneficiaries with financial management training. Currently, all the trainings have been suspended due to the COVID-19 situation.

Site Maintenance Engineering Project (SMEP)

- In response to the COVID-19 emergency, SMEP has activated its emergency roster team of staff members, stationed at the Logistics Hub next to the camps, to ensure continuation of emergency activities at the sites when/if required.
- SMEP is continuing critical engineering works in the camps. This includes drainage clearance in camp 12 and 17, a riverbank project in Camp 5 and dam site construction in Camp 20 extension.
- As a response to COVID-19, SMEP has prioritized projects that improve vehicle access to key sites in the camps and essential infrastructure such as the pipe culvert construction in Camp 5.

Cross-Cutting themes

- WFP M&E unit is planning a quick assessment to assess the gender, protection and social cohesion aspects in the refugee and host communities. This is to support an inclusive and bottom-up modality of programming.
- WFP's protection unit is actively collaborating with field operations to ensure quick redressal of complaints related to protection issues.

Common Services

Food Security Sector

- The Food Security Sector continues to coordinate 43 partners for a harmonized COVID-19 response strategy. An [online response tracker](#) was developed and shared to track partners' activities
- The Food Security Sector circulated a survey with partners to assess their needs and operational challenges, to best respond to the COVID-19 crisis.
- WHO has identified needs of possible tailoring support for items such as pillowcases, bed sheets, patient gowns, and cloth masks for patients and family members to use during recovery from COVID-19. In response, the FSS is coordinating the production of cloth masks in the host communities and UN Women is set to start mask production in the camps.

The Logistics Sector

- In March, 612 m³ of relief items were received into common storage on behalf of seven organizations, bringing the current total to 3,780 m³ of relief items

stored on behalf of 17 organizations in Madhu Chara, Balukhali, and Teknaf logistics hubs in Cox's Bazar district.

- As local suppliers were unable to meet demand for disinfectant and hand sanitizers, the Logistics Sector has procured 3,000 litres of hand sanitizer to be used by WFP and humanitarian partners. This is critical to ensure office hygiene and secure staff and beneficiaries' safety and health care.

Emergency Telecommunications Sector

- The Emergency Telecommunications Sector remains engaged in providing critical internet connectivity across the camp sites as needed.
- To date, the team has set up connectivity services at 24 sites, including in 16 e-voucher shops, three hubs, four re-alignment sites and one relay site to support digital assistance efforts.
- There are currently 994 users with 436 active users accessing ETS connectivity including humanitarians working in the e-voucher shops where digital assistance is being provided.

Funding Outlook

- **Six months funding shortfall (March 2020 - August 2020):** USD 96 million.

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Additional Resources:

- [For all previous WFP Rohingya Refugee Response reports on ReliefWeb](#)
- [For all previous Inter-sector Coordination Group Reports](#) on ReliefWeb

WFP Representative and Country Director: