

SAVING
LIVES
CHANGING
LIVES



A year into the Rohingya Refugee Emergency Response

Rabia is grateful to the local people of Bangladesh

Rabia and her husband have three children – two daughters and a son. Rabia fled Myanmar for the sake of her young children. She hopes every day that soon there will be justice and she can return home with her family. She hopes her daughters will get married in Myanmar.

They ran to Bangladesh for fear of their lives, to survive. Rabia said they had no expectations when they arrived but then they received food, water, shelter, support from local people. This was beyond her expectations! And for that they will always be grateful.

When Rabia and her family were moved to the camp, they started receiving humanitarian assistance. She hopes this support - food, shelter - does not stop until they can safely return home...

Over four decades, Rohingya refugees have been fleeing to Bangladesh from Rakhine State, Myanmar, where they have suffered discrimination and targeted violence. The largest and fastest Rohingya refugee influx into Bangladesh began on 25 August 2017.

Since August, over 702,000 refugees have fled to Bangladesh, bringing the total number of Rohingya refugees in Cox's Bazar to nearly 920,000. Over 80 percent of the Rohingya refugees in Bangladesh are women and children.

Cox's Bazar is one of the poorest and most vulnerable districts in Bangladesh, with poverty levels higher than the national average. The recent refugee situation adds further pressure to the already scarce resources in Cox's Bazar, overwhelming the limited basic services and increasing the need for safety nets for the local population.

There is a high dependency of the refugee population on humanitarian assistance. WFP's Refugee Influx Emergency Vulnerability Assessment (REVA) from December 2017 estimated that over 80 percent of the overall refugee population are dependent on humanitarian assistance to meet their basic food needs. The REVA also estimated that over 38 percent of the local host community are vulnerable to food insecurity, with households that are headed by women being even more vulnerable.





WFP FOOD ASSISTANCE FOR REFUGEES.

WFP provides life-saving assistance to refugees through **in-kind food distributions** of rice, pulses and fortified oil. Entitlement size is adjusted as per family size. Nearly 650,000 refugees are benefitting from monthly food distributions.

Since 2014, WFP has been assisting Rohingya refugees through **e-vouchers**. This programme has been significantly scaled up to include the newly arriving Rohingya families. The refugees receive approximately USD 9 (BDT 760-800) per person per month to purchase from a selection of 18 food items from a network of WFP-contracted outlets operated by local retailers. The e-vouchers are issued in the name of a senior woman of the family with one alternate who she nominates.

PREVENTION AND TREATMENT OF MALNUTRITION.

Nutrition programmes are implemented in refugee camps and host communities. A nutritious supplementary food (fortified wheat soya blend) is distributed to pregnant and breastfeeding women and children under the age of five years. The programme also provides nutrition assessments, growth monitoring counselling, behaviour change communication sessions on nutrition, health and hygiene and the preparation and conservation of the monthly ration of supplementary food.

DISASTER RISK REDUCTION (FOOD ASSISTANCE FOR ASSETS).

WFP implements disaster risk reduction activities, where vulnerable refugees and host community members are engaged in community-based infrastructure rehabilitation and risk mitigation. Key activities include improving access by maintaining roads and pathways, improving drainage channels, stabilising slopes in high risk areas, constructing toilets and bridges and maintaining WFP food assistance sites. The participants benefit from up to 16 days of work in exchange for a cash remuneration.

ENHANCING FOOD SECURITY AND NUTRITION.

This livelihoods intervention supports vulnerable families from the host community and empowers women from these families with trainings including functional literacy, business skills, along with a cash grant of BDT 15,000 (USD 180) and a monthly subsistence allowance of BDT 1,050 (USD 12), enabling them to set-up an income generating activity. Organized into self-help groups, the women also undergo behaviour change communication sessions on nutrition and life skills.

SCHOOL FEEDING.

WFP distributes micronutrient fortified biscuits to all primary school children from the local host community and in learning centres for refugee children. Over 258,000 children benefit from this daily snack, which helps allay hunger and supports them to learn better. The biscuits are locally produced in Bangladesh.

SELF-RELIANCE.

WFP with partners is planning a self-reliance pilot project for refugee women and adolescent girls. The project aims to strengthen their skills and knowledge, providing life-skills training, including functional and financial literacy and vocational skills. The project started in July with 2100 participants from the Kutupalong-Balukhali camp and will gradually be scaled up.

SUPPORTING THE HUMANITARIAN COMMUNITY.

WFP continues to lead the Logistics Sector and the Emergency Telecommunication Sector and co-lead the Food Security Sector to optimise partners' preparedness capacity and emergency response coordination.

To mitigate impacts from the monsoon and cyclone season and maintain access to the camps, WFP is working with IOM and UNHCR on a **Site Maintenance and Engineering Project (SMEP)**. This inter-agency initiative has prepared safe land to extend the camps, where families from the most at-risk areas are being relocated. They are carrying

Photo: WFP e-voucher outlet.

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out construction and rehabilitation of infrastructure such as roads, culverts and bridges, and ensuring continued access throughout the camps.

FOOD ASSISTANCE PLAYS A CRUCIAL ROLE TO ENSURE ACCEPTABLE DIET AMONG REFUGEES.

Since the recent arrival of the refugees, WFP has substantially scaled up its assistance to the refugees while continuing ongoing support to the host community. Food security monitoring during the first half of the year confirms the positive effects of assistance on refugee families. Food assistance has helped families significantly reduce the need to adopt negative coping strategies, such as relying on less preferred food items or reducing portion sizes or numbers of meals consumed.

More detailed analysis shows that while all types of food assistance lead to a significant improvement in a family's food security, families assisted with e-vouchers have better food consumption levels than those receiving in-kind assistance. This is probably due to the fact that e-vouchers allow entitlements to be adjusted to the exact number of people in a family. E-vouchers also allow families to adjust the amounts of individual food items to their specific needs, helping improve their intake.

However, improving dietary diversity continues to be a challenge with only slight improvements being noted over the last year. WFP is looking at ways to adjust its programme design, strengthen communication with communities to accelerate gains in dietary diversity.

SUCCESS STORIES

SCALING UP ASSISTANCE THROUGH E-VOUCHERS.

WFP scaled up its e-voucher programme from assisting 34,000 registered refugees to 214,000 refugees over this year. The expansion of the e-voucher programme is planned to gradually include the entire refugee population.

E-vouchers allow refugees choice and dignity in accessing their assistance. Diversified and nutritious food items are made available at the retail outlets, many of which are procured locally. The e-voucher programme stimulates local economy by growing opportunities for local traders. The retail outlets provide employment opportunities to host community as well as to the refugees.

For the e-voucher scale up, WFP collected refugees' information and biometrics for enrolment on SCOPE, WFP's beneficiary management platform. The data helps WFP tailor assistance for instance entitlements are adjusted as per the number of members in a family and biometric verification ensures the entitlements are accessed by those for whom it was intended.

Through retail sector engagement, WFP regularly monitors market prices for the select commodities. Negotiations are held with the retailers to ensure prices of the commodities at the e-voucher outlets are just lower than market price.

WFP is setting up its system so that it can be expanded to a multi-wallet platform, accommodating other agencies'

transfer needs. WFP is establishing partnerships with humanitarian organizations to launch initiatives enabling affected populations to meet not only their food needs but also other basic needs. WFP and UNICEF have signed an agreement to include hygiene items through the e-voucher outlets.

IMPROVING NUTRITION.

WFP has had nutrition programmes in Cox's Bazar for over two decades. Since August 2017, most of the refugees crossing the border were women and children. WFP was especially concerned about their health as they arrived hungry and malnourished. Malnutrition prevention and treatment programmes were introduced and scaled up to tackle the worrying levels of undernutrition. WFP previously had five nutrition assistance sites in the camps, after the recent arrival of the refugees, assistance has been scaled up to 27 sites while maintaining nutrition support to the host community. Over 164,000 women and children from the refugee and host community are receiving a monthly ration of nutritious supplementary food.

A recent emergency nutrition assessment highlights significant improvements in the nutrition status of women and children. Prevalence of moderate acute malnutrition (low weight-for-height) for children has reduced. Chronic malnutrition (stunting – too short for their age) among children has also declined but remains near WHO critical threshold. While the prevalence of anaemia in young children is still a concern, its overall prevalence has decreased. The health and nutrition emergency among the Rohingya refugees is far from over but this assessment indicates great strides in the right direction.



VOICES FROM THE CAMPS.

Sahara is glad they get eggs through WFP's e-vouchers, especially through Ramadan

Sahara Khatun is 35 years old and the head of her family. She is the carer for her physically disabled husband, five children and her four siblings. She feels safe in Bangladesh and is grateful to the local people here who gave her family a place to stay, where she can sleep peacefully.

She uses the WFP Assistance Card (e-voucher) to get food for her family. Her older children go to learning centres in the camp, where they also receive fortified biscuits. With her younger children she visits WFP's nutrition centre and she is happy to observe the healthy change in her babies.

For Sahara and her family this was their first Ramadan away from home. Throughout Ramadan, they missed being able to eat meat or fish and the traditional meals they would prepare at home. Most of their Sehri meals (meal before the fast starts) were mainly eggs that they got from WFP's e-voucher outlets.

Her family has no income source. She hopes for work opportunities in which her disabled husband can participate. And she hopes they go back to Myanmar as citizens one day.

Special nutritious food for Amina's babies lessens her worries

Amina fled violence in Myanmar with her young children. She was separated from her husband as they tried to escape from their village. She recounts how all she and her four children ate during their three-day long journey was biscuits and some rice.

Amina now lives in a simple shelter in the Kutupalong

'mega camp', which is on a slope and floods whenever it rains. She worries that her shelter could break at any time. Amidst all the struggles she is facing, she is not worried about food for her family. She is happy not only for the rice, oil and lentils she is receiving from WFP but also that her younger children get additional nutritious food with which they make porridge. Supercereal, or 'pushti suji' as she knows it, is giving her babies essential nutrients to stay healthy.

S Khatun gave birth to her daughter in her shelter in the 'mega-camp' amidst the monsoon storms.

Life in Myanmar she reminisces was difficult long before the recent violence started. Rohingya children had no access to formal education or jobs. However, Khatun and her family managed fine. They had a home with electricity, with trees around. They did farming and kept some poultry. The tipping point for Khatun's family came with the outbreak of the violence. They first fled and hid in the jungle but when the violence did not stop they decided to leave for Bangladesh to save their lives.

Life in the camps is difficult. Their basic shelter does not protect them from the heavy rains. Since she had her new baby, she is even more worried as the damage to her shelter from the rains results in her baby often getting drenched and then getting sick. Her one-and-a-half-month old daughter has been sick often with fever, cold and other diseases. Looking to the future, all she hopes for is a way to keep her children healthy. She hopes for special food for her children, access to a school and books. Her greatest desire is for her children to get an education. She wants to be able to buy her children vegetables, meat and fish. And only if they would be accepted as Rohingya and allowed a life of dignity, she hopes for them to go back to Myanmar.



Photos: WFP/Saikat Mojumder

For more information visit <http://www1.wfp.org/emergencies/bangladesh-myanmar-emergency>

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