



WFP Bangladesh Rohingya Refugee Response

Situation Report #35

Situation Update

- **Covid-19 in Bangladesh:** As of 26 March, Bangladesh has 39 confirmed cases (with five fatalities and five recoveries). This includes one confirmed case in Cox's Bazar who had traveled history from a Covid-19 affected country.
- The Government of Bangladesh has declared a nationwide lock down from 26 March to 4 April. The entire population is urged to stay indoors except for essential services/workers who will continue with their activities. The armed forces and the police have been deployed as of 24 March to enforce the conditions around the lock down. The United Nations diplomats and staff are still allowed to move but only for essential/critical life-saving activities. WFP has activated business continuity plans in Cox's Bazar, including protocols for work from home and movement of critical staff and has established a quarantine facility for staff in Dhaka, when/if required.
- **In Cox's Bazar:** Humanitarian organizations in Cox's Bazar are working closely with the Government of Bangladesh on the preparedness and response measures in Rohingya camps as well in Cox's Bazar host areas. As the lead for Logistics Sector, Emergency Telecommunication Sector and co-lead for the Food Security Sector WFP participated in developing the inter-sectoral plan which prioritizes critical life-saving activities for refugees and host communities, including food and nutrition assistance to the most vulnerable.
- As reported by the Inter-sector coordination group, planning is underway to expand the treatment facilities in Cox's Bazar district for both the Bangladeshis and Rohingya refugees. This includes expansion of capacity at Sadar Hospital (10 beds available initially) and support facilities in Ramu and Chakaria (100 beds available initially). Dedicated isolation facilities are being identified.

In Numbers | February 2020

855,000 refugees in the camps*

100 percent of the population provided with general food assistance

300,000 people received WFP assistance in the host community

Highlights

- **WFP programme interventions in response to Covid-19 in Cox's Bazar:** As advised by the Government of Bangladesh (Refugee Relief and Repatriation Commission in Cox's Bazar) WFP will continue its life-saving food assistance considered extremely critical for the refugee population. All other non-essential activities including livelihoods and disaster risk reduction activities in the camps and host community are temporarily suspended.
- **WFP has amended its feeding cycle:** In response to Covid-19, WFP has amended its feeding cycle to ensure beneficiaries receive the full entitlement both as part of general food distribution and the e-voucher modality at once every month. In regard to the anticipated market price fluctuations, WFP will provide an additional top-up of USD 2 to each beneficiary within the e-voucher modality.
- **WFP active preparedness measures to ensure safety and security of staff and the people we serve:** In response to Covid-19, WFP has taken preventative measures in the office space including distribution of hand sanitizers and thermal thermometers, construction of hand washing blocks and targeted awareness on hand washing and health and hygiene. In the WFP distribution outlets, beneficiaries are sensitized to maintain social distancing and are checked regularly for symptoms of Covid-19. WFP is engaged in regular sensitization of partners which includes retailers, cooperating partners and staff across all levels.
- **WFP has prepositioned food stocks to continue critical life-saving assistance for two months:** WFP has prepositioned food stocks in and around the camps for two months to continue critical food assistance if the situation demand.
- **Logistics Sector engaged in advanced preparedness for Covid-19:** WFP leads the global Logistics Cluster and is engaged in assessing the local demands of common services including storage capacity, transportation and supply of essential commodities. Already, Logistics Sector has procured 3,000 litres of hand sanitizers, which is in short supply locally, and stands ready to support humanitarian partners and the Government of Bangladesh with critical logistical support including necessary medical supplies when/if called upon.

Emergency Preparedness and Response

COVID -19 preparedness measures

- In early March, WFP organized an internal tabletop preparedness exercise focusing on two key features: business continuity and the safety of WFP staff and their dependents. The exercise aimed at determining the necessary preparedness and preventative measures for critical programme interventions. WFP also developed scenario-specific response plans to tailor its critical activities for the refugees and the host population in Cox's Bazar.

- **WFP Response:**

WFP has modified its feeding cycle i.e., beneficiaries are provided with food assistance once a month both within the general food distribution and e-voucher modality, this is intended to limit people-to-people contact and ensure adequate social distancing.

- WFP has suspended daily, door-to-door beneficiary mobilization. Instead, beneficiaries will receive a permanent monthly distribution token, applicable for the entire month. This is critical in ensuring crowd control while undertaking blanket food distribution.
- WFP has conducted tailored sensitization sessions for cooperating partners, retail staff, volunteers and porters on critical health and hygiene related practices.
- Only one person per household will be allowed to enter WFP distribution points. This will help reduce the daily caseload, decongest sites and reduce crowding.
- Anyone entering WFP premises will be required to first sanitize their hands. Hand washing stations have been set up and beneficiaries are screened for their body temperature.
- WFP is reinforcing the need for social distancing at the waiting sheds, top-up points for the vouchers and help desks.

Monsoon and Cyclone Preparedness

- In preparation of the forthcoming cyclone and rainy season in Cox's Bazar, WFP has planned to undertake cyclone shelter rehabilitation which is temporarily suspended due to Covid-19. Through 2019, WFP rehabilitated 40 cyclone shelters in Teknaf and Ukhiya.

- WFP had originally targeted 31 additional shelters (16 in Ukhiya and 15 in Teknaf) for 2020. Rehabilitation work had started in 13 shelters in Ukhiya and 10 in Teknaf.

Assessments

- Technical review of the third edition of the "Refugee Influx Emergency Vulnerability Assessment" (REVA III) is ongoing. This report will identify and assess the vulnerabilities and needs of the refugee and host community population.

WFP Programme Updates

General Food Assistance

- In February, WFP opened a new e-voucher outlet in Madhurchara 2 which targeted 9,374 households, bringing the total WFP outlets to 15 in the camps which is managed by nine WFP contracted retailers from the local community.
- Currently, WFP is assisting 564,000 beneficiaries i.e., **70 percent** of the camp population through the e-voucher modality and the remaining 292,000 refugees i.e., **30 percent** through the in-kind food assistance modality. 100 percent refugee population are covered under WFP general food assistance.
- In February, WFP transacted USD 5.2 million through the e-voucher outlets which was directed inserted into the local economy through the Bangladeshi retailers engaged in the food assistance supply chain.
- Some delays are anticipated in the scale up of the e-voucher plan due to Covid-19. However, in April, WFP will open outlet its 16th which will bring close to 80 percent of the total population within the e-voucher modality.
- In February, WFP assisted 32,340 refugees through the Farmers' Market, transferring USD 84,940 to the small-holder farmers, retailers and traders. WFP farmers from the livelihoods programme who participated received a total transfer of USD 15,000 per month.
- **Nutrition Assistance: As a critical service for the most vulnerable population nutrition assistance will continue uninterrupted. However, beneficiaries will receive rations for two months at one time.** In the last month, WFP assisted over 200,000 pregnant and nursing women and children under five in the refugee camps and 6,300 participants in the host community.
- **SAFE Plus: The distribution of liquified petroleum gas as part of the SAFE plus consortium (between IOM, WFP and FAO) will continue uninterrupted.**
- **SCOPE:** WFP has waived fingerprint-based

identification as part of its response to Covid-19. Through the SCOPE and multi-wallet platform, WFP continues to support inter-agency coordination and collaboration:

- Recently, through the WFP SCOPE platform the Bangladesh Red Crescent Society distributed health kits in the camps as a preparedness measure for Covid-19.
- Further, International Organization for Migration (IOM) in collaboration with the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) distributed pressure cookers to 189 households.

Building Blocks

- **As a response to Covid-19, WFP has waived all biometric authentication on SCOPE and the building blocks initiative across all distribution points and e-voucher outlets.** Fingerprints won't be required to verify beneficiaries' identity and record distributions, and transactions will be recorded by tapping SCOPE cards to scan the QR codes.
- WFP successfully launched the building blocks initiative in camp D5, in alignment with UNHCR family registration data. The initiative was supported by the Emergency Telecommunications Sector connectivity. This ensures greater transparency and accountability in transferring and managing of the beneficiary entitlements and essential information/data.

Disaster Risk Reduction:

- **As a response to Covid-19, disaster risk reduction activities will prioritize only the most critical repairs and infrastructures needs.**
- **In the camps:** In February, WFP engaged 5,195 workers, including 52 disabled and 424 females, through different structural interventions in the camps. These include 2,762 meters of road and pathways, 1.8 km of drainage construction and clearance and 1 km of slope stabilization.
- **In the host community:** WFP will continue maintenance and care activities of 730 ha of forest land and earth filling and planting 410 of 500 planned Garjan trees. However, precautionary measures have been taken to ensure social distancing between the participants and integrating essential hygiene practices which is deemed critical as a preventive measure.
- In February, WFP engaged a total of 784 workers from the host community for cyclone shelter rehabilitation and reforestation work, with a total of

BDT 3,160,856 (USD 37,200) transferred to them.

Self-Reliance for Refugees

- **Due to Covid-19, all Self Reliance activities in the camps are now suspended.**
- In February, WFP, in partnership with Action Aid Bangladesh, conducted regular skills trainings to 2,100 refugees in ten trainings centres across the camps. The participants are receiving trainings in tailoring, embroidery block printing, repair and maintenance on sewing machine, gas burner and solar panel, snacks making and makeover training (beauty parlor).
- WFP also engaged 450 refugees on homestead gardening in four camps.

School Feeding Programme:

- **As per the directive by the Government, all the learning centres in the camps and government schools in the host community are closed temporarily.**
- **In the camps:** In February, WFP assisted 270,796 refugee children (126,896 girls and 134,640 boys) with micronutrient fortified biscuits in 4,108 learning centres in the camps.
- **In the host community:** In February, WFP provided micronutrient fortified biscuits to 133,496 children (70,198 girls and 63,298 boys) in 469 schools in five sub-districts (Ukhiya, Teknaf, Kutubdia and Moheshkhali) of Cox's Bazar.
- Additionally, Room to Read Bangladesh facilitated the training of 1,656 Book Captains in 142 schools in Ukhiya and Kutubdia, on storytelling.

Common Services

Food Security Sector (FSS)

- **As part of the Covid-19 prevention and advanced preparedness measures, the Food Security Sector participated in drafting the inter-sectorial preparedness plan and has prioritized essential and critical activities.** Considering more than 80 percent of the refugee population are dependent on external aid, WFP food assistance is deemed critical across different scenarios.

Logistics Sector:

- **In a prompt response to the overstretched capacity of the local market/supplier to provide disinfectant and hand sanitizers, the Logistics Sector has procured 3,000 litres of hand sanitizers to be used by WFP and the humanitarian partners.** This is critical to ensure office hygiene and secure staff and beneficiaries'

safety and health care.

- Logistics Sector is engaged in mapping partners' personal protective equipment stocks need for which is very high considering the evolving global health crisis.
- Since activation of the Logistics Sector in October 2017, it has handled a total of 40,183 m³ (12,793 mt) of relief items for 35 organizations.
- As part of the monsoon and cyclone preparedness, Logistics Sector is doing a road assessment exercise. Until end of February, 340 km out of the planned total of 600 km of roads inside the camps, including their elevation, width and overall road conditions was mapped.

Emergency Telecommunications Sector:

- **The Emergency Telecommunications Sector is engaged in providing critical internet connectivity across the camp sites as/if needed for the service delivery of food assistance.**

Funding Outlook

- **Six months funding shortfall (March 2020 – August 2020):** USD 96 million.
 - WFP is thankful for the generous contributions in 2019 and 2020 from: USAID, UK, Australia, Germany, ECHO, Japan, Canada, Denmark, Netherlands, Norway, Switzerland, Sweden, Saudi Arabia, France, Kuwait, Russian Federation, Italy, Luxembourg, United Arab Emirates, Republic of Korea, New Zealand, Thailand, Qatar, Ireland, Estonia, World Bank, UN CERF, Private Donors.
-

WFP Representative and Country Director:

Richard Ragan

WFP Emergency Coordinator:

Peter Guest

WFP Reports and Information Management Officer:

Baisali Mohanty (baisali.mohanty@wfp.org)

Nour Salama (nour.salama@wfp.org)

For more information on:

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