



World Food Programme

SAVING LIVES  
CHANGING LIVES

# WFP Bangladesh Country Brief March 2021



## Operational Context

COVID-19 cases have increased dramatically in Bangladesh over the last two months. By March 31<sup>st</sup> there were 611,295 positive cases in the country, including 5,593 positive cases in host communities in Cox's Bazar and 406 positive cases among Rohingya refugees.

Bangladesh is among the five fastest growing economies in the world with an average growth rate of 6.5 percent. The COVID-19 pandemic is, however, expected to weaken this growth significantly. The latest South East Asia Economic Focus released by the World Bank estimated that regional growth will fall to a range between 1.8 and 2.8 percent in 2020.

The Government of Bangladesh has ended the national lockdown which was in place from 26 March to 30 June, resulting in the closure of businesses and markets and causing a loss of employment for many, especially those working in the informal sector. Wearing facemasks while outside remains compulsory to contain the spread of COVID-19. Schools, which have been closed since March 2020 are due to reopen on 31 March 2021.

WFP has been present in Bangladesh since 1974 and transitioned to a Country Strategic Plan (CSP) in April 2017. The CSP reinforces the commitment of WFP to strengthen the capacities of government counterparts, providing food assistance in emergencies and creating evidence on innovative approaches to resilience.

In response to the influx of over 745,000 Rohingya refugees in August 2017, the CSP was amended to facilitate WFP's tailored response to the crisis in Cox's Bazar. Since the start of the crisis, WFP has provided food assistance and nutrition services as well as life-skills training, disaster risk reduction (DRR) activities and common engineering services to the camp population every month. WFP also supports host community populations through longer-term interventions, including nutrition assistance, school feeding, livelihoods programmes and DRR activities.



Population: **167 million**

2019 Human Development Index: **135 out of 188**

Income Level: **Lower middle**

Chronic malnutrition: **31% of children between 6-59 months**

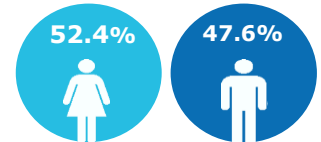
## In Numbers

**1,857 mt** of food assistance distributed

**US\$ 10.26 million** cash-based transfers made

**US\$ 69.87 million** six months (April - September 2021) net funding requirements, of which **US\$ 46.15 million** is for the Cox's Bazar L2 Emergency Response.

**1.04 million people assisted** in March 2021



## Situational Updates

On 22 March, a massive fire broke out in Kutupalong mega camp. The fire started in camp 8W and later spread through camps 8E and 9. According to findings from the Inter-Sector Coordination Group (ISCG) Rapid Joint Needs Assessment conducted immediately following the fire, 48,300 people were directly affected losing their shelters, belongings and food and 92,000 people were impacted. The fire damaged almost all infrastructures across the three camps. Essential facilities destroyed included six health facilities, two nutrition facilities, one food distribution point and 149 learning centers.

Bangladesh started its COVID-19 vaccination campaign in January for 130 million people. Health workers, law enforcement agencies, military forces, government officials, journalists and public representatives will be vaccinated first.

The Bangladesh Government relocated a fifth group of 4,000 Rohingya refugees to Bhasan Char island at the beginning of March and a sixth group of 4,750 people at the end of March/early April. This brings the total number of refugees on the island to approximately 18,750 people.

## Operational Updates

WFP responded immediately to the **needs of Rohingya refugees following the fire**. By 31 March, WFP reached up to 15,200 households with high energy biscuits, supported up to 63,000 people with over 933,450 cooked meals and distributed over 350,000 litres of water. WFP is also running seven kitchens to provide freshly cooked meals until LPG and kitchen sets can be distributed. See the latest [External Situation Report](#) for more details.

WFP provided **General Food Assistance (GFA)** to over 857,600 Rohingya refugees. Almost 99 percent (843,858 people) received e-vouchers at 21 outlets and the remaining (13,786 people) received in-kind assistance at one distribution point.

Through the **urban food security programme**, operational in two slums in Dhaka since August 2020, WFP provided 181,385 individuals with cash transfers and food. This includes the distribution of in-kind food to 149,885

**Contact info:** Sharika Tafannum ([sharika.tafannum@wfp.org](mailto:sharika.tafannum@wfp.org)), Fenella Henderson-Howat ([fenella.henderson@wfp.org](mailto:fenella.henderson@wfp.org)) and Andrew Miller ([andrew.miller@wfp.org](mailto:andrew.miller@wfp.org))

**Country Director:** Richard Ragan ([richard.ragan@wfp.org](mailto:richard.ragan@wfp.org))

Further information: [www.wfp.org/countries/bangladesh](http://www.wfp.org/countries/bangladesh)

## Country Strategic Plan (2017-2020)

Total Requirement (in USD)	Allocated Contributions (in USD)	Apr–Sep 2021 Six Month Net Funding Requirements (in USD)
<b>1,367.71 million</b>	<b>887.87 million*</b>	<b>69.87 million</b>

### Strategic Result 2: No one suffers from malnutrition

**Strategic Outcome 1:** Vulnerable groups in rural and urban settings are supported by enhanced national actions to improve their nutrition indicators in line with the national targets by 2020.

**Focus area:** Root causes

**Activities:**

- Act. 1 Technical assistance and advocacy to enhance the food security and nutrition impact of selected safety nets.
- Act. 2 Technical assistance and advocacy for improved nutrition.
- Act. 3 Technical assistance and advocacy for scaling up post-harvest rice fortification.
- Act. 4 Policy advice and technical assistance to scale-up school feeding.

### Strategic Result 1: Access to Food

**Strategic Outcome 2:** The most vulnerable population of Cox's Bazar, the Chittagong Hill Tracts and disaster-stricken areas have enhanced food security and nutrition.

**Focus area:** Crisis response

**Activities:**

- Act. 5 Deliver an integrated assistance package in Cox's Bazar.
- Act. 6 Deliver an integrated assistance package in Chittagong Hill Tracts.
- Act. 7 Deliver food assistance in emergencies.

### Strategic Result 4: Food systems are sustainable

**Strategic Outcome 3:** Innovative approaches to enhance the resilience of food insecure households exposed to climate-related shocks and stresses are validated by 2020.

**Focus area:** Resilience building

**Activities:**

- Act. 8 Evidence creation on innovative approaches to enhance resilience.
- Act. 9 Implement the Nobo Jatra programme.

### Strategic Result 5: Countries have strengthened capacity to implement the SDG

**Strategic Outcome 4:** The humanitarian response system for large-scale natural disasters in Bangladesh can respond with reduced cost and lead time.

**Focus area:** Resilience

**Activities:**

- Act. 10 Capacity strengthening for emergency response.
- Act. 11 Lead the logistics cluster and co-lead the food-security cluster.

### Strategic Result 8: Sharing of knowledge, expertise, technology, strengthen global partnership to support country efforts to achieve the SDG

**Strategic Outcome 5:** Humanitarian and development partners in Bangladesh have access to reliable services in the areas of supply chain, emergency telecommunication, site maintenance and engineering project crises.

**Focus area:** Crisis response

**Activities:**

- Act. 12 Coordinate the LS/C and provide efficient common logistics services to support the humanitarian community's response.
- Act. 13 Coordinate the ETS/C and provide efficient common services to support the humanitarian community response.
- Act. 14 Site Maintenance and Engineering Project (SMEP).

individuals in quarantine and isolation. The programme also has a cash-back element to incentivise nutrition and dietary diversity among beneficiaries.

**Mother and Child Benefit Programme:** WFP facilitated self-registration for 31,814 new beneficiaries in March, and the transfer of a monthly allowance of USD 9.44 to 130,717 beneficiaries.

**Rice Fortification:** WFP continues to advocate for and provide technical assistance to the Government to scale up distribution of fortified rice through its social safety net programmes. WFP is supporting the Government of Bangladesh in scaling up rice fortification in Food Friendly Programme (FFP) and Vulnerable Group Development (VGD) programme in 120 new upazilas in 2021 to reduce the impact of COVID-19.

**Social Safety Nets:** Through the cash-back urban support programme, WFP provided support to a total of 27,527 individuals (6,554 households) with cash transfers in March, with a total amounting USD 52,179. Each family received up to USD 8.83 based on their purchase of healthy foods. More than 97 percent of the total expenditure by beneficiaries was on healthy food.

### Investment-Component Vulnerable Group

**Development (ICVGD):** 100,000 vulnerable women have been selected online through household verification under the ICVGD programme with technical assistance of WFP.

**School feeding:** In March, WFP supported the distribution of nutritious snacks for **over 3 million pre-primary and primary school children**. Of this number, 92,170 students were reached in Cox's Bazar host community with 170 mt of high energy biscuits and 182,250 households were reached in refugee camps with 230 mt of high energy biscuits. A total of 37 mt of high-energy biscuits was distributed as take-home rations to 10,204 children of government primary and NGO schools in Bandarban district.

**Nutrition:** WFP continues to implement the **targeted supplementary feeding programme** across 45 integrated nutrition sites in the refugee camps and 123 host community clinics. In March, WFP provided malnutrition prevention and treatment services to 45,800 pregnant and nursing mothers and almost 171,300 children under 5 in the camps and host communities. WFP also provided emergency nutrition services to 200 women and 2,000 children in fire-affected camps since 24 March.

**Livelihoods in host communities of Cox's Bazar:** WFP continued to support 28,700 host community women through the Enhancing Food Security and Nutrition (EFSN) programme. WFP also supported 126 fire-affected host community households with in-kind food on 26 March.

## Donors

Australia, Bangladesh, Canada, Denmark, European Commission, France, Germany, Japan, Luxembourg, Netherlands, Norway, Qatar, Republic of Korea, Saudi Arabia, Sweden, Switzerland, Thailand, United Arab Emirates, United Kingdom, United States of America, Vietnam.

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