

Impact of Cuts – Bangladesh CO

Outcome of 2023 pilot study: Impact of funding shortfalls on beneficiaries

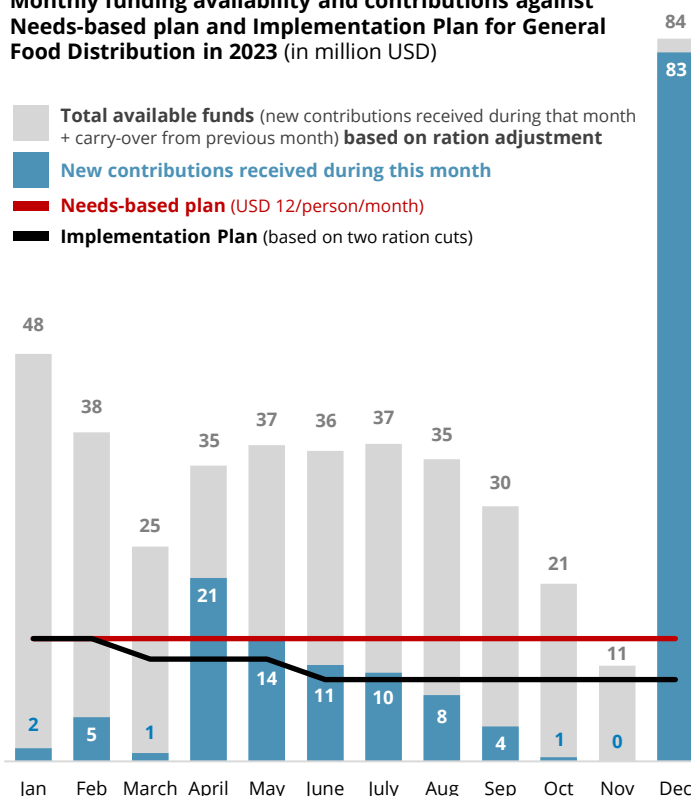
CONTEXT

WFP operations in Bangladesh faced very low levels of available funding during most of 2023. **This funding gap compelled the organization to make “hard calls” regarding reducing assistance.** Donations later in the year eased the situation somewhat, enabling [enhanced but still insufficient rations](#) to be distributed in early 2024.

WFP supports the Rohingya population currently living in Cox's Bazar, **the largest refugee camp in the world with more than 1 million refugees** that are dependent on humanitarian assistance. The surge in refugee arrivals in 2017 resulted in a more complex humanitarian emergency, which prompted the need for WFP to scale up its general food assistance. However, 2023 low resource contributions in multiple months forced the CO to prioritize by **reducing transfer values of GFA.**

WFP provides **additional nutritional Fresh Food Voucher (FFV) to 21 percent of most vulnerable Rohingya population in Cox's Bazar.** The criteria to receive FFV are households headed by children, women or elderly members or with disabled family members. Due to the low funding levels, Bangladesh CO had to reduced GFA transfer value while ensuring support to most vulnerable through FFV.

Monthly funding availability and contributions against Needs-based plan and Implementation Plan for General Food Distribution in 2023 (in million USD)



Prioritization Decisions

Beneficiaries	Entitlement	January 2023	March 2023	June 2023	Decrease in transfer value due to cuts ¹
General refugees	GFA	12 USD	10 USD	8 USD	33%
Most vulnerable	GFA + FFV	15 USD (12 USD + 3 USD)	13 USD (10 USD + 3 USD)	11 USD (8 USD + 3 USD)	27%

IMPACT OF CUTS | STUDY METHODOLOGY

A **mixed-method approach** was rolled-out to ensure the impact of funding cuts study captures the full beneficiary experience. The methodology was adapted to Bangladesh's operational context as per below:



Data over the same households (panel) from the Refugee Influx Emergency Vulnerability Assessment (REVA) since 2020 was used as baseline and compared to the REVA of 2023, collected after the cuts.



Since all beneficiaries are experiencing the reduction in GFA, the rich baseline from REVA is used to estimate projected outcomes (without cuts) and compared with the actual outcome (with cuts).



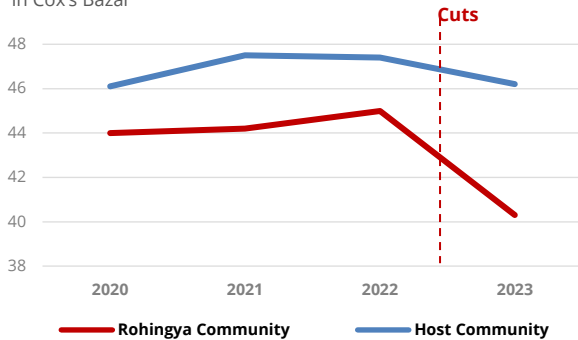
6 Focus Group Discussions (FGDs) and 18 In-Depth Interviews (IDIs) were conducted to support the findings with input on the broader societal effects of the assistance reduction.

¹As of January 2023, WFP considered 12.5 USD as the transfer requirement to fulfill caloric needs (2100Kcal per person per month) in Cox's Bazar

IMPACT OF CUTS | RESULTS

Scarcity of livelihoods prospect leave Rohingya refugees almost entirely **reliant on WFP assistance** to meet food needs. Refugees receiving only two-thirds of GFA assistance was reported as **inadequate to cover minimum food needs**. Cuts thus resulted in a significant impact on beneficiaries' food consumption and their wellbeing: up to 5 points reduction in Food Consumption Score (FCS) **after WFP's cuts**. 10 percent of households reported **poor levels of food consumption**, compared to 3 percent before the cuts.

Figure 2: Evolution of Food Consumption Score (FCS) in Cox's Bazar

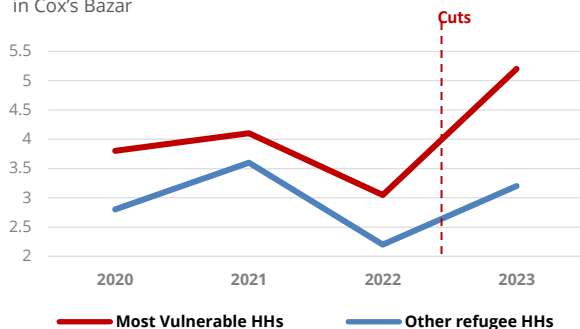


A great concern arises since households were up to **70 percent more likely to resort to food-based coping strategies that compromise** their food intake. This includes buying **less preferred food** or **reducing the number of meals per day**. Families are buying the cheapest food options, sacrificing quality over quantity, reducing protein consumption, and resulting in **a less diverse diet that compromises their nutrition**.

*"The food we take now is just to survive. It does not meet our appetite."
- Disabled female head of household during FGD*

Hard prioritizing decisions had left FFV top-ups untouched. However, the reduced coping strategies index (rCSI) – an indicator looking at the hardship faced due to food shortages – sadly indicated that **highly vulnerable households** had to resort to significantly **more harmful coping strategies** to maintain an already low level of food consumption. This is a natural consequence, as these households report difficulties in engaging in the very scarce income generating activities to compensate for ration cuts.

Figure 3: Evolution of households' rCSI in Cox's Bazar



The Rohingyas have **limited means of living beside aid**. While the full-rations ensured that 99 percent of beneficiaries could meet food needs in 2022, after WFP's reduction in assistance in 2023 only 79 percent were able to do so. The dire consequences of funding shortfalls have left families with even lower **financial means**. Beneficiaries stressed increases in selling of assets, needs for additional loans, and how the most vulnerable beneficiaries also **resort to begging**.

After the cuts in 2023, some beneficiaries feel more exposed to **risks to abductions, theft and violence**. As resources become scarce, more conflicts related to debt and repayment are noticed. Results also show a **worsening of the relationship with the host community**. Within the household, beneficiaries reported quarrels between family members as they face tension and insecurity from cuts. Beneficiaries also reported a general feeling of **unsafety** within the camps.

The grave repercussions of funding shortages are particularly **affecting vulnerable community members**. A nutrition assessment from November 2023 using anthropometric showed GAM rate of 15.1 percent among children under five, emergency levels. Beneficiaries also mention how children's physical health decline due to the poor diversity of food consumed. Experiencing financial difficulties induced by the cuts, households report **decreasing spendings on education**, with some children now engaging in income generating activities. Additionally, children and women are also reported to be more **susceptible to abductions**, as well as other safety issues.

The impact seen from WFP's 2023 GFA cuts in Cox's Bazar is devastating. When faced with assistance reduction, Rohingya beneficiaries' food consumption immediately drops, and due to limited livelihood opportunities, they rapidly resort to a large range of **coping strategies to survive**. Just a few months after the cuts, some beneficiaries **considered migrating abroad** for better work opportunities and more security for their families. Considering the **cascading effect on beneficiaries' lives** with vast long-term consequences in already complex refugee crises, **WFP's lifesaving assistance should be sustained with full rations**.

For the global outcome of the four pilots conducted, please refer to: <https://docs.wfp.org/api/documents/WFP-0000158934/download/>

WFP Bangladesh Country Office & WFP Analysis, Planning and Performance

World Food Programme

Via Cesare Giulio Viola 68/70

00148 Rome, Italy - T +39 06 65131

wfp.org