

JOINT HUMANITARIAN RESPONSE TO FIRE INCIDENT IN ROHINGYA REFUGEE CAMPS

Cox's Bazar | 18 April 2021

ISCG | INTER SECTOR COORDINATION GROUP



Photo: A Rohingya woman uses a SCOPE card to access shelter and non-food items. © IOM

More than three weeks after a devastating fire broke out in three Rohingya refugee camps in Ukhiya, Cox's Bazar on 22 March 2021, aid agencies and the Government of Bangladesh continue to work together to meet the immediate needs of the 48,300 individuals who lost their homes and personal belongings.

Refugees have been provided with safe water, medical assistance, kitchen sets, Liquefied Petroleum Gas (LPG) for cooking, temporary shelter, and psychosocial support.

The Government and aid agencies continue to work together to ensure that the reconstruction of shelters and facilities takes place as soon as possible ahead of the monsoon rains and amid rising COVID-19 cases in Cox's Bazar District.

KEY FIGURES FROM THE FIRE INCIDENT



3

Camps affected



10,100

Households without shelter



48,300

Individuals directly affected

KEY OBJECTIVES OF AID RESPONSE

1 ASSIST

vulnerable people with immediate, lifesaving needs as a result of the fire.

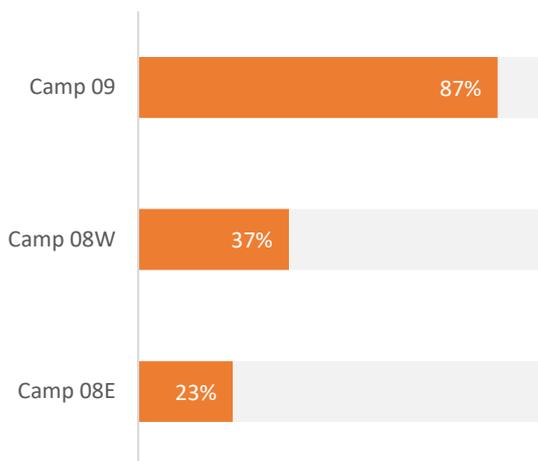
2 REBUILD

shelters and repair damaged facilities to restore essential basic services for vulnerable people in need.

3 PREPARE

and improve fire prevention mechanisms in the camps.

Estimated total affected households as a percentage of camp population (based on UNHCR February 2021 population figures)



KEY HIGHLIGHTS OF RESPONSE


Site Management Site Development Sector

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- Site management actors are coordinating with other agencies to link fire-affected families with humanitarian assistance, operate complaints and feedback mechanisms, and support Camps in Charge (CiCs) and their teams as needed.
- Fire-affected families continue to return to their camps of origin. As of 17 April, approximately 5,000 Rohingya refugees affected by the fire are residing outside their camps of origin.
- Site planners are coordinating with actors working on education and addressing protection issues to replan and rationalize facilities towards delivering integrated services.
- Site management actors continue to engage and coordinate all stakeholders to develop clear and actionable plans towards rationalizing facilities as part of a broader plan to rebuild the fire-affected camps.
- The Office of the Refugee Relief and Repatriation Commissioner (RRRC) has approved a plan to enhance fire breaks through road construction in camps 8W and 9 to be carried out by the Government of Bangladesh and aid agencies.


Health Sector

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- On 16 April, the Turkish Field Hospital, which was gutted by the fire, began providing 24-hour emergency services from the location of the original hospital. All other services previously offered at the Turkish Field Hospital are now being delivered at the Bangladesh Red Crescent Society Field Hospital.
- Agencies specializing in mental health and psychosocial support have arranged for psychologists to continue with face-to-face counselling services in English and Bangla and are operating the hotline for front line staff responding to the emergency who are in need of support.
- Since the fire, 163 community health workers have been working in and around camps 8E, 8W and 9 to strengthen the community health response and enhance community-based surveillance. These activities include:
 - 57,720 Rohingya refugee households (84,243 individuals) reached with fire safety messages;
 - 3,909 patients with acute or chronic health conditions identified and referred to mobile medical teams/health facilities; and
 - Persons with Acute Watery Diarrhea were identified, provided with oral rehydration solution and referred to mobile medical teams.
- Four mobile medical teams (MMTs) continued to support health facilities within the affected camps. A review of the deployment of MMTs is ongoing to draw lessons and better prepare for future deployments.


Food Security Sector

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- Following the distribution of kitchen sets and Liquid Petroleum Gas (LPG) which enables refugees to cook their own food, fire-affected households redeemed their monthly April e-voucher assistance and have been reintegrated into regular food assistance programming. As a result, the provision of hot meals was discontinued from 12 April.
- Food security agencies distributed 1,400,000 hot meals (lunches and dinners) to people affected by the fires since 22 March. Hot food kitchens have been set up in and around the camps to provide freshly cooked meals.
- Food security agencies have distributed more than 60,000 dry food snacks to complement the distribution of hot meals.
- Affected households in camps 9, 8E and 8W have now been provided with new SCOPE cards¹, together with kitchen kits, hygiene kits, face masks, and dignity kits.
- Agencies working on food security, WASH, and health have developed a draft joint guidance note for solid waste management in an emergency response setting, building on lessons learned from the fire response, to help strengthen the response to emergencies that may arise in the future.
- A joint environmental assessment of the fire-affected camps is currently ongoing. Involved agencies have gathered samples and data from the affected camps, including a catalogue of trees burnt by the fires.
- An advocacy note outlining the environment and disaster risk mitigation recommendations for the fire-affected camps has been developed.

¹ SCOPE is WFP's beneficiary information and transfer management platform.



Water, Sanitation & Hygiene (WASH) Sector

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- While discussions continue on the process for building back the affected camps, partners specializing in WASH continue to provide support to the locations where fire-affected refugees are currently being accommodated, maintaining temporary WASH facilities.
- In camp 9, the worst hit by the fire, up to 71 percent of latrines and 76 percent of bathing spaces are now functional.
- An assessment conducted by WASH partners in camp 9 shows that each fire-affected household has around 2.4 water containers. Agencies will provide each household with an additional 10 litre jerrycan and aluminium pitchers with a capacity of 15 litres.
- Following testing by IOM and partners in camp 9, it was found that 13 percent of deep tube-wells were contaminated, most likely during repairs. Shock chlorination (an overdose of chlorine into the contaminated tube-wells and then pumping of the water until clean) was completed by partners to remedy this issue.
- Organic waste from food distributions was taken to composting locations in other camps. WASH Sector partners are prioritizing finding solutions for disposing waste from drains.



Shelter and Non-Food Items (NFI) Sector

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- 14,743 kitchen sets, including four face masks each were distributed to fire-affected Rohingya refugee households (1,380 sets in camp 8E, 6,327 in camp 8W and 7,036 in camp 9).
- 14,743 SCOPE cards have been distributed to fire-affected Rohingya refugee households (1,380 in camp 8E, 6,327 in camp 8W and 7,036 in camp 9).
- The distribution of clothes and bedding for refugees who lost these items in the fire is ongoing. Since the fire, 200 households in camp 8W, 1,000 households in camp 8E and 2,625 households in camp 9 have been provided with clothes and bedding.
- The RRRRC Office has shared basic principles for shelter reconstruction and requested the Sector and IOM to provide designs and drawings, which have been developed and shared with the RRRRC and are pending approval.



Protection Sector

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- In the past week, up to five interagency Protection teams with 20 protection staff and nine volunteers have provided psychological first aid and/or psychosocial support to 3,219 refugees.
- In addition, Protection Focal Points and Protection Emergency Response Units in camps 1W, 2E, 6, 8W, 9, 11 and Kutupalong Registered Camp assisted 634 refugees with protection counselling (mainly on registration and legal issues), provided targeted services for persons with special needs and referred 433 refugees to service providers.
- Protection Focal Points and Protection Emergency Response Units also reached 2,920 individuals with general and protection information through standardized messages. Refugees have expressed increasing concern by the delays in the reconstruction of the shelters, especially due to the upcoming cyclone and monsoon seasons; emerging gender-related risks due to lack of proper clothing such as veils, which is limiting the mobility of women and girls; and the need for more temporary protection facilities that ensure easy and safe access for female refugees.
- Community-based protection remains at the centre of the fire response. In camp 9, protection partners have assigned 51 community outreach members (40 male and 11 female) to various protection-related tasks as part of the fire response, such as support to food distribution or LPG distribution; service mapping in the fire-affected blocks; supporting the site monitoring team to collect feedback from the affected people on services availability; and coordinating with protection actors in identifying, referring and, if needed, accompanying people with specific needs to services providers in the fire-affected blocks.
- Aid agencies who are part of the Age and Disability Working Group continued to screen and identify persons with disabilities and older persons in camps 8W and 9. Meanwhile, an assessment is underway in camp 8E to meet the urgent needs of rehabilitation and assistive devices for persons with disabilities. A total of 207 assistive devices were provided between 7-17 April, in addition to rehabilitation, psychosocial support and external referrals.
- Aid agencies are finalizing a Housing, Land and Property Response Plan and technical guidance on counselling and legal assistance to replace legal identity and land-related documents for Bangladeshi families who lost their documents in the fire. The assessment also shows an 8 percent increase in housing, land and property related disagreements and tensions.

Child Protection Sub-Sector (CPSS)

- Child Protection actors are offering both mobile and static child friendly spaces and multi-purpose child and adolescent centres to provide children with a sense of normalcy, basic psychosocial support, and recreation and safe play activities. There are currently nine temporary child friendly spaces providing this support.
- Structured and basic psychosocial support is being provided by child protection partners through small group and home-based community psychosocial support in both the host communities affected by the fire as well as in the camps. From 7-17 April, 3,161 children (1,504 girls and 1,657 boys) received psychosocial support through these mechanisms.
- Psychosocial support is also being provided to caregivers who were severely impacted by the fire.
- Agencies specializing in child protection participated in interagency mobile protection teams, together with protection agencies to identify and address child protection concerns and identify the most vulnerable children to ensure that they receive adequate services.
- Unaccompanied and separated children continue to be registered and reunified in line with safe verification and screening processes. From 7-17 April, 93 children (53 girls and 40 boys) were reunified with their caregivers.
- Many separated children choose to continue to stay with extended family and community members both in the fire-affected and other camps until reconstruction is complete, but they are in regular contact with caregivers. As of 17 April, 246 children (129 girls and 117 boys) are accommodated by extended families or community families. 23 children (12 girls and 11 boys) are staying in nine emergency shelters that are in contact with the respective caregivers.
- Five help desks remain operational for children and caregivers to register family members who are still unaccounted for. The help desks are linked to family tracing and reunification efforts for the very few remaining children yet to have contact with caregivers.
- Community-based child protection committees have been mobilized to prevent further child protection risks and support the response to child protection concerns, as well as mobilisation of adolescents to provide psychosocial support and community messaging.
- Case management remains a priority. 76 new child protection cases (43 girls and 33 boys) have been opened as a result of the fire.

Gender-Based Violence Sub-Sector (GBVSS)

- Agencies specializing in the prevention and response to gender-based violence have so far distributed 14,537 dignity/menstrual hygiene management kits since the fire to affected Rohingya women and girls.
- Aid agencies continued to provide door-to-door and facility-based psychosocial support and psychological first aid services and referrals for fire-affected individuals.
- Messages on menstrual hygiene management, child marriage, COVID-19 awareness and help line numbers have been shared with fire-affected people in camp 9.



Education Sector

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- Specific details of the 207 Learning Facilities damaged and destroyed in the fire are now available following sector assessments:
 - 167 Learning Centres were destroyed in camps 8E, 8W, 9 and 10;
 - 12 Learning Centres under construction in camp 9 were destroyed;
 - 28 Community-Based Learning Facilities in camps 8E and 9 were destroyed;
 - Two Cross-Sectoral Shared Learning Facilities in camp 9 were destroyed;
 - One Learning Centre each in camps 8W, 9 and 10 are partially damaged;
- Among the total of 14,602 children affected by the fire:
 - 13,462 children previously attended the destroyed Learning Centres;
 - 564 children previously attended the destroyed Community-Based Learning Facilities; and
 - 40 children previously attended the destroyed Cross Sectoral Shared Learning Facilities.
- Aid agencies have distributed 44,093 sets of books to children (21,606 girls and 22,487 boys).
- A total 22,249 learners and adolescents (11,374 girls and 10,875 boys) have received psychosocial support.
- Education actors have reached 514 households with psychological first aid, reaching 186 parents of learners (111 females and 75 males).



Nutrition Sector

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- Three temporary integrated nutrition facility sites remained operational in camp 9 and 8E and provided emergency nutrition services to affected persons. By 17 April, 13,658 children under five and pregnant and lactating women had been reached by frontline nutrition service providers and screened for malnutrition in the affected communities. Of those screened since 22 March, 231 severely acutely malnourished children, 958 moderately acutely malnourished children and 22 moderately acutely malnourished pregnant and lactating women were identified and admitted to nutrition support programmes.

- Since the fire, other essential support was provided by partners specializing in nutrition that include the following:
 - Children from 6-23 months old and pregnant and breastfeeding mothers received hot porridge with additional nutrients each day;
 - Children under five and pregnant and lactating women received supplementary food;
 - Over 1,975 breastfeeding mothers used women-friendly spaces to nurse their children, helping to ensure that they receive continuous important nutrition in their early years;
 - 5,739 children under the age of five who visited the integrated nutrition facilities used the early childhood care and development zone, which provides children the opportunity to interact with each other and play games while receiving nutritional support; and
 - Access to clean and safe drinking water continued to be provided for children under five as an emergency measure to help prevent malnutrition and water-borne diseases. More than 3,500 bottles of drinking water have been distributed.



Communication with Communities Working Group

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- Between 7–17 April, 18,130 people were reached through 2,874 neighbourhood-based interpersonal communication sessions. 2,981 people were reached through 391 awareness-raising sessions.
- 1,422 people participated in 152 group listening sessions on various topics including fire safety, hot meal distribution and health care services. 50 people were reached through seven video screening sessions.
- 80 religious leaders were mobilized for community engagement through interpersonal communication sessions and informal dialogues on fire incidents.
- Loudspeaker messaging continued in fire-affected camps and adjacent areas, through which over 40,000 people were reached between 7-17 April.
- 698 females (349 girls) were reached during the same period through 103 information-sharing discussions led by religious leader volunteers.
- Bangladesh Betar and Radio Naf broadcasted 90 public service radio announcements on fire precaution and COVID-19 awareness between 7-17 April.
- Five emergency information and feedback service centres (InfoHubs) continued to operate in camps 9, 8E, and 8W.



Logistics Sector

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- During the reporting period, logistics partners have supported the humanitarian community to transport 9.34 metric tonnes of relief items using seven trucks for the fire response.
- In total, 171 metric tonnes of relief items have been transported on behalf of the humanitarian community's fire response efforts.



Emergency Telecommunications Sector (ETS)

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- ETS remains on standby to respond to requests from aid agencies for support related to telecommunications as needed. No such requests related to the fire response were received during the reporting period.

Gender in Humanitarian Action Working Group (GiHA)

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- Between 7-17 April, supplementary dignity kits were distributed to 1,039 Rohingya refugee households in camp 9. Aid workers, including Gender Field Officers and 20 community outreach Rohingya volunteers, were engaged in the overall distribution process.
- The supplementary dignity kits included an abaya with a niqab, underwear, reusable sanitary napkins, toothbrushes, a tube of toothpaste, two pairs of sandals, a comb and a mosquito net.
- Gender Field Officers and 36 outreach volunteers (20 female, 10 male) worked on continuous assessments via door-to-door visits in camp 9 to monitor the evolving needs of women and girls and maintain coordination with the CiC's office to facilitate access to services for the affected families.

CHALLENGES

- The humanitarian response in Cox's Bazar, including activities specific to the fire response, continues to be impacted by the climbing rate of COVID-19 cases in Bangladesh and the extension of the lockdown imposed by the Government of Bangladesh. The aid community continues to limit movements to the camps to life-saving activities only.
- Tensions and unrest in the fire-affected camps have impacted refugees, especially children. Aid agencies have also reported some incidents of looting in child protection facilities.

- Families reported increased fear for personal security due to damaged shelters and inadequate lighting at damaged WASH facilities at night.
- While distribution of clothing is underway, gaps in the provision of clothing and other items for adult women, adolescent girls and children have been identified. Improving the availability of sex disaggregated data among affected individuals would strengthen partners' ability to distribute more targeted support; aid agencies are working together to address these needs.
- Poor mobile network coverage in the camps continues to impact the fire response and coordination, especially in the current context of restricted movements due to ongoing COVID-19 prevention measures.

For more information: Inter Sector Coordination Group (ISCG)

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