

25 JUNE 2018

SUPPORT TO BANGLADESH HOST COMMUNITIES AND INSTITUTIONS IN THE ROHINGYA REFUGEE RESPONSE JOINT RESPONSE PLAN

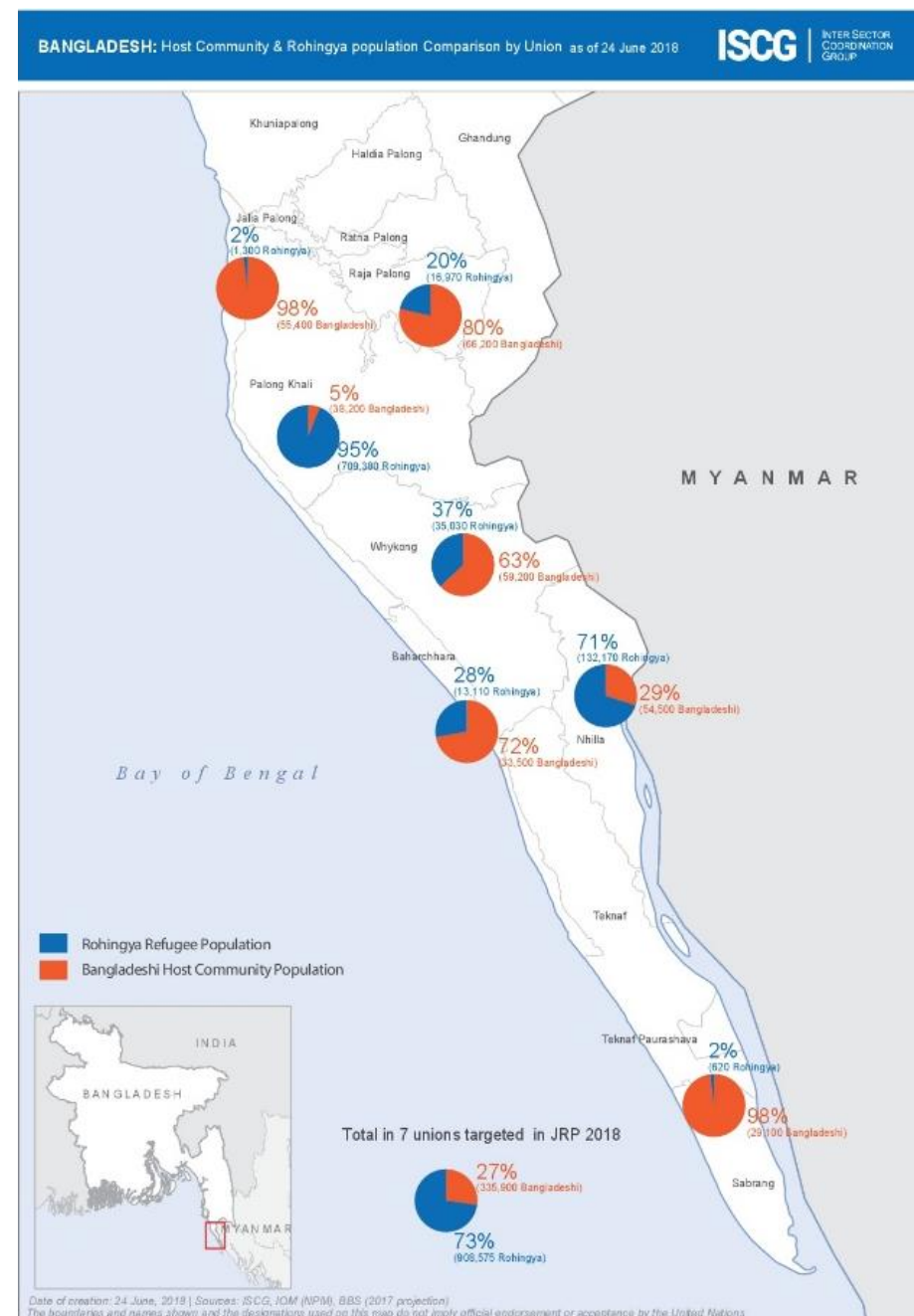
Under the 2018 Joint Response Plan (JRP), 25% of the humanitarian assistance provided is targeted to host communities affected by the refugee influx. In this context humanitarian support and programs aim to reach some 336,000 people in need.

The JRP has adopted an inclusive needs-based approach in its programs to support affected host communities. Critical interventions are extended to the most vulnerable families many of whom are facing similar challenges as those faced by newly arriving refugees (lack or limited income, access to job opportunities, food, nutrition services and general poverty).

The strategy fully recognizes that both refugee and host community populations are poor and in need of humanitarian assistance. In this context, projects aim to mitigate the impact of the refugee influx on the local economy; strengthen resilience of affected host populations and improve government service delivery to reduce tensions between host and refugee communities through social cohesion programs that promote peaceful-coexistence.

Support to government institutions and strengthening of systems

JRP programs are strengthening government institutions and systems in the areas of health and nutrition,



water and sanitation, education, agriculture, forestry and environment. Support is also provided to the Refugee Relief and Repatriation Commission (RRRC) and Camp-in Charge (CIC's), Deputy Commissioner's (DC) Office and local authorities (UNOs) in Ukhiya and Teknaf, on coordination and management of the humanitarian crisis.

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Examples of current host community programs

- **Livelihoods:** for 20,250 Bangladeshi families in Ukhia and Teknaf; Cash-for-work activities for 26,038 people. 144,022 students receive fortified biscuits daily; 2,150 households received agricultural inputs, 25,000 people targeted for micro-gardening/food safety kits.
- **Water and Sanitation:** Water Resource Assessment of Ukhia and Teknaf. Central Water Quality Testing Laboratory established for Cox's Bazar. 50 water points installed or repaired and a contingency water supply established in Teknaf. Multiple sludge treatment management units under construction for Ukhia and Teknaf.
- **Education:** All 137 primary schools in Teknaf and Ukhia are targeted for grants to improve infrastructure and supplies; 30,400 learners are benefiting from support.
- **Health and Nutrition:** 52 Outpatient therapeutic care centers strengthened to treat and prevent acute malnutrition; Cox's Bazar district hospital and Teknaf and Ukhia health complexes are being upgraded and strengthened for increased capacity; Laboratory and diagnostic services improved at Medical College.
- **Disaster Risk Reduction** infrastructure rehabilitated (including emergency repair of access roads, bridges, and drainage systems damaged by monsoon rains) and government structures capacitated including emergency control rooms in DC and UNO offices (Ukhia and Teknaf).

Upcoming projects: Cooking Fuel, Environmental Degradation and Food Security

Implementation of a Joint UN Project **SAFE PLUS**, is underway to address the urgent needs for cooking fuel. This project aims to prevent further environmental degradation and to promote food security for host communities affected by the refugee crisis. SAFE PLUS is anchored in four main pillars: (i) alternative cooking fuel (ii) livelihoods (iii) environmental restoration (iv) high demand, high-nutrient crop production.

Aligning humanitarian and development approaches

The needs in Cox's Bazar District are enormous and much more needs to be done. Development agency programs that complement and support the JRP can play a critical role in extending assistance coverage to the most affected areas of Ukhia and Teknaf.

Assessments are underway by the Office of Deputy Commissioner to determine district wide impact and identify plans for the medium term. The World Bank and the Asian Development Bank have put in place medium term strategies for Ukhia and Teknaf in coordination with the UN and other agencies to ensure a targeted approach to the humanitarian crisis with benefits to both host communities and refugees.

Impact of the influx to Host Communities

The dramatic increase in population has strained resources, infrastructure, public services and the local economy. The most affected areas have been the Unions in Ukhia and Teknaf Upazilas, but impacts are being felt throughout the district. Increased pressures include rising food, firewood and transport prices, pressure on water, basic services and the environment and competition for jobs. The education system has been impacted due to the hiring of both teachers and students to work on the refugee response. Increased traffic congestion on the roads has led to access and safety concerns.

Even before the influx, one in five households had poor food consumption patterns much higher than the national average. On average, 33% live below the poverty line and 17% below extreme poverty line. 38 per cent of the local population is vulnerable to food insecurity, of which 12.5 per cent are considered highly vulnerable. Food production in the district is scarce, leading to increased household expenditures on food and economic vulnerability overall.

Environmental impacts have been dramatic: More than two thousand hectares of forest and crop and have been depleted to establish the camps and every day more forest disappears due to firewood collection (about 700 tons per day). Agricultural land near camps are suffering from siltation and contamination from fecal matter. Irrigation wells for rice crop irrigation are also affected due to watershed destruction and diminished water table (particularly acute in Teknaf which was already water scarce).