

COVID-19 AND MONSOON PREPAREDNESS AND RESPONSE IN ROHINGYA REFUGEE CAMPS AND HOST COMMUNITIES

WEEKLY UPDATE #28 | 11 to 17 September 2020

Cox's Bazar, Bangladesh

HIGHLIGHTS

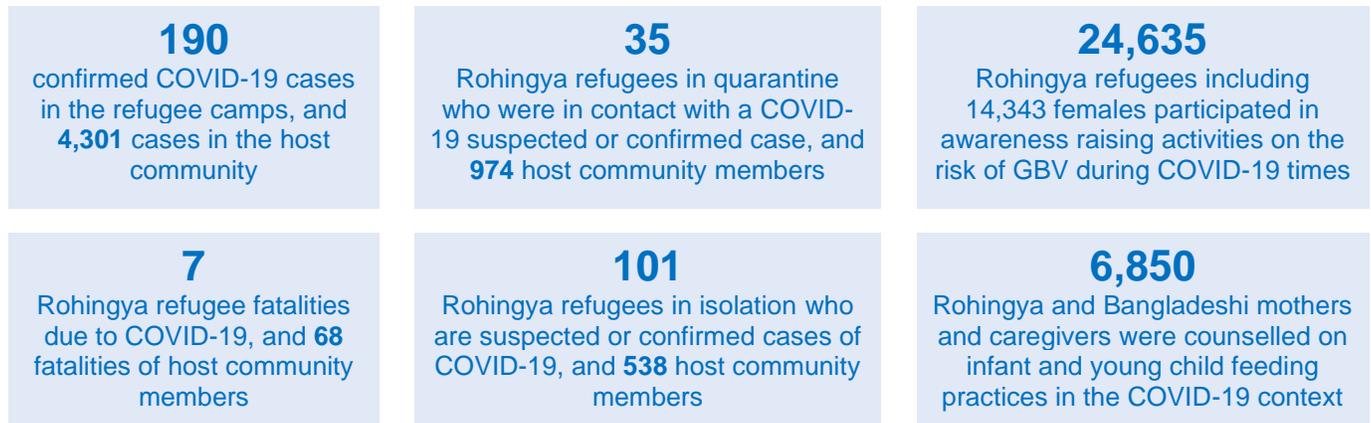
“I am feeling very happy to get an opportunity to engage myself in a livelihood activity. Through mask packaging my self-esteem increases and I have more confidence as previously I was neglected due to the inability to use my left hand. Now, I want to do more.”

– Isala Khatun, a 39-year-old Rohingya woman and mother of four children living in Kutupalong mega camp, the largest refugee settlement in the world. Isala’s left hand was burnt by a fire incident when she was 8 years old, and employers have refused to engage her in work due to her inability to use her hand, even though she wants to support her family’s daily needs. Last month, Isala was selected to participate in mask packaging by BRAC, a partner in the Cox’s Bazar Livelihoods Working Group’s mask-making initiative. Isala worked for 5 days and was able to purchase fish, vegetables and other items for her family. Her children were happy to see their mother engaged in a livelihood activity. Livelihoods Working Group partners are engaging many Rohingya persons with disabilities like Isala in mask packaging work, providing refugees with a new avenue to contribute to their community in the COVID-19 response.

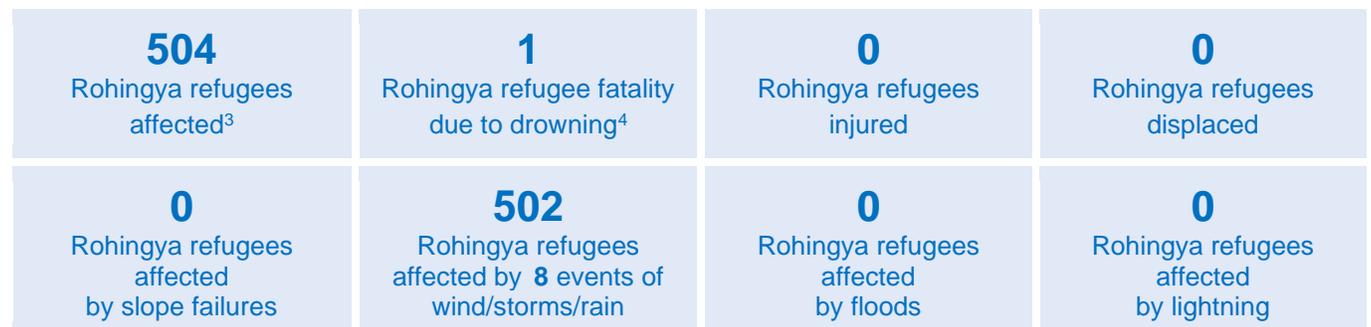


Photo: WFP/Md. Khairul Islam

Key COVID-19 figures¹



Monsoon-related Incidents² reported this week



¹ COVID-19 data on Cox’s Bazar District is sourced from WHO daily update. Please note that confirmed COVID-19 cases and number of fatalities are cumulative.

² All numbers are indicative only, as reported to SMSD Sector following rapid assessments carried out on the day of the incident. The numbers are not verified.

³ Households and/or individuals directly affected by a specific incident, including people injured, relocated, displaced and with damaged shelters. These estimates do not include people who are indirectly affected ex. by not being able to access affected facilities.

⁴ SMSD Sector cannot confirm that drownings resulted from the monsoon, however, the data captures all incidents (windstorm, slope failure, lightning, flood and drowning) reported in the camps during the monsoon season.

COVID-19

HEALTH

The number of confirmed COVID-19 cases continued to increase in the camps. Last week, 32 confirmed cases were reported among the refugee population, compared to 50 cases last week – which was the highest number per week recorded since testing started. All cases were investigated by a field surveillance network of camp health disease surveillance officers (CHDSO). Testing in the camps also increased this week to 1,803 tests per million population, compared with 1,485 tests in the previous week. Similarly, an increase in testing per million continued to be observed among the host communities with 684 tests, compared with 658 last week. Health Sector partners conducted routine immunization sessions with the support of WHO guidance on the operation and sustenance of immunization programs in the context of the pandemic. Despite data showing an increasing trend, immunization coverage still remains low among the refugee population due to COVID-19 mitigation measures.

WATER, SANITATION and HYGIENE (WASH)

WASH Sector partners reached 278,154 individuals through a neighbourhood-based approach and 142,007 individuals through mass media with COVID-19 awareness messages in host and Rohingya communities. In the camps, WASH Sector partners provided soap to 31,312 households and family hygiene kits to 197 households, and installed a total of 2,727 hand-washing stations (HWS), including 588 HWS with stools and buckets at household-level, 500 HWS in public spaces, and 1,639 “tippy taps” in public places and near toilet facilities. As part of COVID-19 risk prevention measures and infection prevention and control (IPC) compliance in the host communities and camps, WASH Sector partners disinfected 71,060 WASH facilities and 5,968 public buildings.



WHO Country Representative washing hands at camp entry point. Photo: Khokhon Khan

COMMUNICATION with COMMUNITIES (CwC WG)

CwC WG partners organized 20 cascade training sessions on COVID-19 with 152 staff and volunteers. CwC WG partners reached 274,179 people in the camps and host communities with key COVID-19 messages through community engagement activities, including 55,473 neighbourhood-based sessions; 18,280 community consultation meetings; 873 listening group sessions; 538 video/film viewings; and 9,805 sessions led by religious leaders. CwC WG partners organised COVID-19 awareness announcements via loudspeakers/megaphones in 20 camps. For receiving community feedback and complaints, 91 information service centres in the camps and 4 information service centres in the host communities were operational. [3 new audio messages on COVID-19](#) were developed by CwC WG partners.



Bangladeshi women from a nearby host community attend a neighbourhood-based awareness session on COVID-19 prevention and response. Photo: Caritas

FOOD SECURITY (FSS)

[Protection Mainstreaming Focal Points](#) supported FSS this week to strengthen partners' approach to age, gender and diversity, and further integrate protection principles into the delivery of critical assistance and services during the pandemic. FSS partners continued providing food assistance to all refugee households with support from alternate collectors, mahjis, or volunteer porters for beneficiaries who are unable to access facilities. A total of 906 CwC volunteers were mobilized in every camp block to disseminate key COVID-19 messages at the household-level and to ensure community consultation. As a key measure for preventing the transmission of COVID-19, partners reached 731,400 Rohingya refugees and 492,500 vulnerable Bangladeshi individuals with at least 2 reusable masks each as of 20 September.

PROTECTION, including Child Protection (CPSS) and Gender-Based Violence (GBVSS)

Protection Sector partners worked closely with existing community-based structures in the camps to raise awareness on COVID-19. This week, Rohingya imams and female preachers conducted 1,984 awareness sessions for 30,291 individuals. On 15 September, Protection Mainstreaming Focal Points held a training in English and Bangla for 64 participants in the Health Sector on mainstreaming protection principles in the implementation and planning phases of health interventions in the camps. GBVSS and CPSS strengthened coordination in the camps on case management

for child and adolescent survivors of sexual violence through GBV/CP workshops and a joint meeting between 36 GBV and CP case managers. GBV SS partners resumed Start, Awareness, Support, and Action (SASA) activities, which had been suspended earlier this year due to the pandemic. SASA is a social engagement methodology across GBV programming, which engages men and boys as activists. GBVSS partners continued the awareness-campaign on the risks of GBV during the COVID-19 pandemic through household visits and other activities, reaching 24,635 refugees including 14,343 females.

SITE MANAGEMENT and SITE DEVELOPMENT (SMSD)

SMSD Sector partners supported temperature screening and hand washing at camp entry points, and screened 6,617 individuals in Teknaf during the week. SMSD teams also supported contact tracing volunteers in identifying and communicating with refugee families on how to maintain IPC measures. SMSD Sector partners supported 7 families (26 individuals) from different camps temporarily residing in a quarantine facility in Camp 20 Extension. Furthermore, partners conducted awareness-raising sessions via household-level visits, radio listening groups, and video showings with Rohingya women, men, adolescent boys and girls, and imams.

NUTRITION

Nutrition Sector partners trained around 2,300 Rohingya mothers and 118 Rohingya adolescent girls on measuring Mid Upper Arm Circumference (MUAC) and referring children to the nearest integrated nutrition facilities. Partners also counselled nearly 1,200 Rohingya and 5,650 Bangladeshi mothers and caregivers on infant and young child feeding practices in emergencies, particularly in the COVID-19 context. Nutrition Sector identified 78 suspected COVID-19 cases at nutrition facilities in the camps and referred them to health facilities.

EDUCATION

During the week, 1,841 Burmese Language Instructors (BLIs) disseminated COVID-19 awareness messaging to 83,144 parents, community members and caregivers through audio clips and loud-speakers in the camps. BLIs provided at-home educational support, explaining learning materials and activities to 2,782 learners. 1,219 BLIs and education facilitators provided remote guidance on COVID-19 prevention, wellbeing and self-care to 56,736 children, youth and adolescents. 79,207 learners, parents, and caregivers were oriented on handwashing, physical distancing, and use of masks and hand sanitizer. In the host communities, volunteers and educational facilitators distributed 851 COVID-19 awareness leaflets and shared COVID-19 awareness messages with 1,127 parents, community members and caregivers.

LOGISTICS

Logistics Sector presented to partners the results of its 2020 warehouse capacity assessment. The assessment revealed that there is a higher utilisation of smaller storages by partners in the Rohingya humanitarian response, which means that those storages have little flexibility in case of higher demand. Warehouse capacity ranged from 25 m² to 6,683 m². Moreover, total storage space capacity has increased by approximately 12% since 2019 and 98% since 2018; and temperature-controlled storage has increased since the beginning of the COVID-19 response, accounting for 4% of the total reported storage spaces.

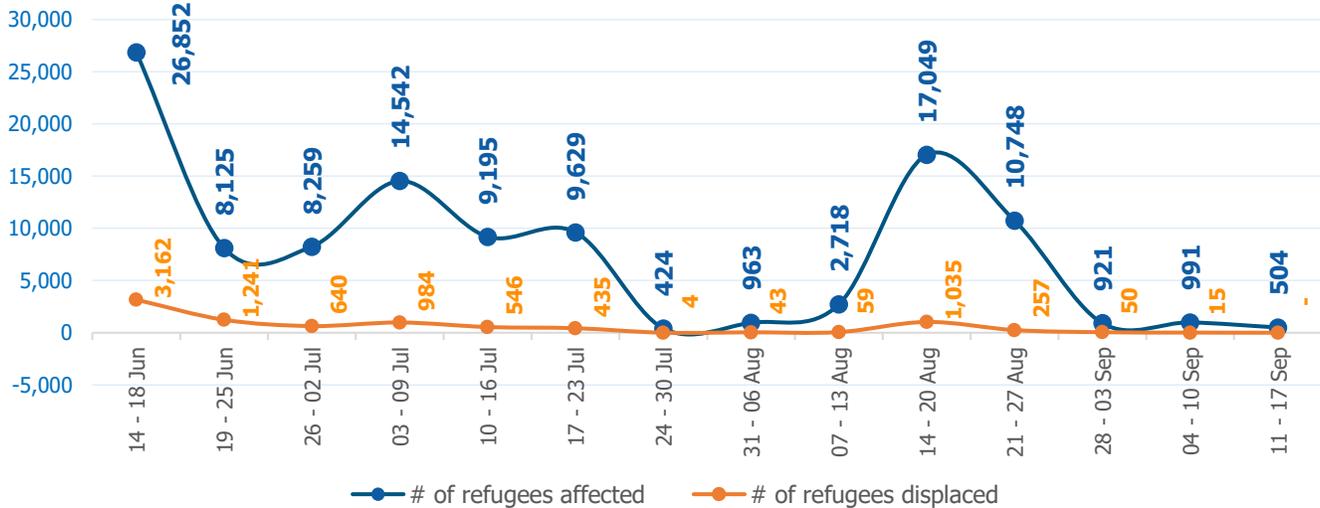
GENDER IN HUMANITARIAN ACTION (GiHA WG) and GENDER HUB

GiHA WG members conducted awareness-raising and outreach consultations on the gendered impacts of COVID-19, targeting Rohingya women and girls, including older persons and persons with disabilities. GiHA WG partners met with [the Rohingya women leaders and volunteers network](#) on 17 September to highlight and discuss gender risks and barriers due to COVID-19 and worsened security risks for women in the camps. The Gender Hub conducted a second round of induction training in Bengali on Gender in Humanitarian Action for 20 new frontline and programme management workers in the COVID-19 response from the Ministry of Women Affairs, local and international NGOs, and UN agencies.

MONSOON

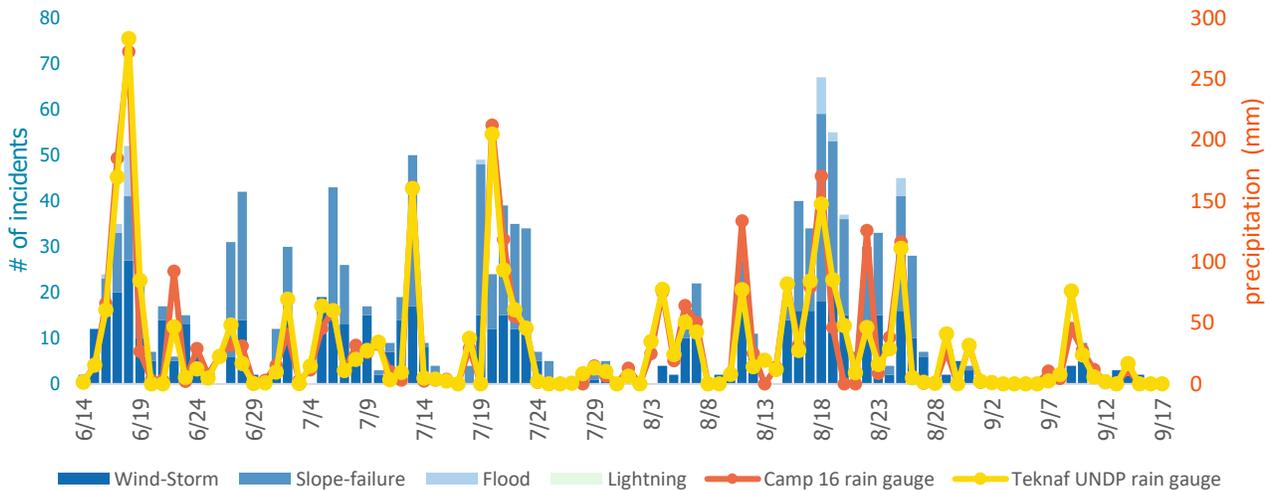
Monsoon-related incidents reported in Camps since 14 June 2020 (SMSD Sector)

CUMULATIVE CASUALTIES: Since 14 June, 5 fatalities have been reported in the camps as a result of monsoon-related events. Some 17 refugees have been injured. The peak was recorded on 18 June, when over 13,900 refugees were affected by wind and slope-failure on one day.



Precipitation compared to number and type of incidents reported by rain gauge since 14 June (Geological Survey of Bangladesh/UNDP)

Please note the pre-determined risk thresholds are - 3 hours: 75 mm; 24 hours: 200 mm; 72 hours: 350 mm. The slope failure risk is significant when those thresholds are reached with the given time period. Peak rainfall of 282.95 mm was recorded on 18 June.



HEALTH

This week, the Health Sector completed updating its cyclone contingency plans for 29 camps.

WATER, SANITATION and HYGIENE (WASH)

Monsoon rains affected 68 toilets, 14 bathing cubicles, and 5 tube wells in different camps in Ukhiya, and impacted 5 toilets, 3 bathing cubicles, 3 tap-stands, and 2 solid waste management pits in camps in Teknaf. WASH Sector partners started repairing the damaged toilets and bathing cubicles in Ukhiya and Teknaf.

COMMUNICATION with COMMUNITIES (CwC WG)

CwC WG partners engaged with Rohingya and host communities to raise awareness on the risks of heavy monsoon rains and reached 12,012 individuals through different community engagement activities, including 73 community awareness sessions, 2,135 neighbourhood-based sessions, 28 radio listeners' group sessions, and 87 video/film shows. Additionally, 95 information service centres were operational, with staff disseminating monsoon-related information and receiving feedback and complaints from both communities.

SHELTER/NON-FOOD ITEMS (NFI)

14 Rohingya refugee households were partially moderately damaged	55 Rohingya refugee households were partially severely damaged	46 Rohingya refugee households were fully damaged	6 Rohingya refugee households were completely destroyed
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Shelter/NFI Sector partners continued providing emergency support to vulnerable Rohingya refugee households affected by monsoon rains. Shelter/NFI Sector partners verified shelter damage for 121 households and provided them with emergency shelter assistance, and 6 households with older persons without caretakers were provided with home deliveries of emergency shelter materials and received support to repair their shelters.

PROTECTION, including Child Protection (CPSS) and Gender-Based Violence (GBVSS)

Rohingya Community Outreach Members (COMs) conducted 878 home visits and 371 monitoring assessments, reaching 4,163 refugees with messages on protection during the monsoon season. COMs monitored the situation of persons with specific needs facing mobility difficulties due to the heavy rains. Protection actors identified and referred 314 protection cases in the camps to service providers for urgent interventions. CP actors disseminated messages in the camps on risks faced by children during the monsoon period, and together with SMSD actors, conducted awareness-raising sessions on drowning prevention. Emergency Child and Caregiver Information Points were operational across camps, providing support in case of incidents/family separation. GBVSS partners conducted awareness-raising sessions in the camps on the risk of GBV during monsoons. Some women and girls facilities were difficult to access in the camps and host communities due to the monsoon rains and road damage.

SITE MANAGEMENT and SITE DEVELOPMENT (SMSD)

SMSD teams continued repairing damages from monsoon rains and winds in the camps and implemented mitigation measures, including pathway access improvement, slope stabilization, and bridge repairs. SMSD Sector partners also supported shelter teams with monsoon damage assessments, reporting and emergency assistance. SMSD teams started installing lightning arrestors in Camp 8E with the aim of installing a total of 19 lightning arrestors.



Rohingya women volunteers repair a bamboo bridge in Camp 19. Photo: Action Aid Bangladesh

EDUCATION

This week, Education Sector partners continued repairs on 142 learning centres affected by the monsoon rain.

GENDER IN HUMANITARIAN ACTION (GiHA WG) and GENDER HUB

The Gender Hub trained 30 participants from key Sectors, the Office of the Refugee Relief and Repatriation Commissioner (RRRC), and agencies working in Disaster Risk Reduction (DRR) in the camps on Gender Inclusive Disaster Preparedness as a part of the BDRCS, IFRC, and Cyclone Preparedness Programme's Inclusive DRR and Multi-hazard Preparedness trainings. GiHA WG members engaged Rohingya and Bangladeshi women and women leaders in awareness-raising activities on monsoons and cyclones, with a focus on gender and GBV issues and the COVID-19 context.