



Office of the Refugee Relief
and Repatriation Commissioner

PRESS RELEASE

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Amidst a humanitarian tragedy, the people of Bangladesh responded. One year on, the collective commitment of the international community to support Rohingya in Cox's Bazar remains crucial.

Cox's Bazar, Bangladesh, 26 August 2018 - A year ago, the world witnessed one of the largest cross-border forced displacements of recent times. Within the space of a single month, close to half a million Rohingya men, women and children fled their homes in Northern Rakhine State to seek safety in Cox's Bazar, Bangladesh. The number of new arrivals has now risen to over 720,000 persons. Many of the new arrivals report having undergone severe and horrific traumas in addition to having endured generations of statelessness, eroding their access to the inalienable right that much of the world takes for granted.

The response of the Government and the people of Bangladesh remains a crucial example to all - of the principles of a shared humanity and collective solidarity. The year that has passed provides a moment to reflect upon a collective response that has done much to meet many of the basic needs of an extremely vulnerable population. Considering that those seeking asylum and protection arrived into an undeveloped area with its own constraints of population density, and a harsh terrain prone to natural disasters, the speed with which an entire plastic and bamboo city has been created from nothing, is already a miracle.

The joint response illustrates the power of the combined efforts of both the local community and administration supported by significant international support. Local Bangladeshis were the first responders, sharing their homes and modest resources. As the rate of arrivals swelled, the Government allocated 6,000 acres of land to host the Rohingya. Through the past year all responders rallied in supporting the establishment of camps, building essential infrastructure - bamboo bridges and roads, culverts and ditches directly contributing to saving lives during the monsoon season.

We have witnessed the inspiring commitment demonstrated by government-assigned camp officials, military, United Nations staff, national and international NGO workers who have worked tirelessly to provide a protective space for the hapless community. Almost the entire displaced population have been provided with reinforced shelter kits, while deep water wells, drainage and latrines have been constructed, and hundreds of thousands of hygiene kits and water purification tablets have been distributed to help improve access to clean water. Some 866,000 Rohingya; including families who sought safety in Bangladesh during earlier displacements receive life-saving food every month.

Health services have included vital vaccination, to respond to a community that arrived with physical injuries, low immunization coverage, malnourished children, in need of psycho-social support, reproductive health care, and at risk of disease. Commendable efforts have been made to successfully avert major disease outbreaks of cholera and diphtheria. Protection interventions have sought to address the immense psychosocial needs of women, men, boys and girls in the camps, raise awareness on protection risks, including early marriages, exploitation, trafficking and child labour, and to combat gender-based violence. Safe spaces for women and girls, together with child friendly spaces have also been established amidst the limited area in the camps. Education for the Rohingya and the host community remains a priority. Thousands of children in the camps up to the age of 14 are now attending temporary learning centres, where basic literacy, numeracy and lifesaving messages in English and Burmese are provided.

The Joint Response Plan (JRP), for the Rohingya Humanitarian Crisis, remains only 34 percent funded, with some USD 632 million still required to meet the urgent and priority needs of the Rohingya and affected host communities up to the end of the year. The camps remain severely congested and under-served given the resources available and the sheer number of people compelled to flee their homes in search of protection.

Pending, a long-term and voluntary solution to their displacement, the world must renew its financial commitments to the Rohingya humanitarian response. Commitments made today, up to the end of this year and beyond, will shape the futures of the Rohingya and the host community as well as that of the wider region. Simultaneously a strong international attention is required to address the root causes of the crisis and find solutions for all.

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