

Briefing Note – 18 January 2017

Bangladesh

Refugee Influx



	Not required	Low	Moderate	Significant	Major
Need for international assistance			X		
Expected impact	Very low	Low	Moderate	Significant	Major
			X		

Crisis overview

Three border posts along the Myanmar–Bangladesh border were attacked on 9 October by Harakah al-Yaqin, a resurgent group in Rakhine state which has supposed links to the Rohingya. In response, the Myanmar Army has deployed more troops into the northern Rakhine area, mainly in Maungdaw, and has conducted a security operation. At least 130 people have since been killed in raids and skirmishes. A state of emergency has been declared.

66,000 Rohingya have fled to Cox's Bazar district in neighbouring Bangladesh, across the Naaf river, despite many being pushed back by Bangladesh Border Guards. Many have little possessions and have high humanitarian needs. The host population and existing refugee camps have limited capacity to provide for the new refugees due to existing poverty and government policy towards Rohingya refugees.

Key findings

Anticipated scope and scale 66,000 have been displaced as of 17 January. It is expected that this figure will increase, but not dramatically. Refugees are located mainly in Cox's Bazar and are slowly registering themselves to receive humanitarian assistance.

Priorities for humanitarian intervention

- **Protection:** lack of legal status increases vulnerability.
- **WASH** overcrowded camps have poor pre-existing WASH facilities. New makeshift camps do not have WASH facilities. Need for safe drinking water.
- **Food** is a priority for new refugees.
- **Shelter/NFIs:** registered camps are overcrowded, as are makeshift camps. Winter increases necessity of shelter and NFIs

Humanitarian constraints The policy of the Government of Bangladesh towards the Rohingya refugee population creates a complex system for humanitarian assistance.

The refugee population may be wary of detention and deportation so avoid public services and camps. Some are hiding in forests and small villages.

Limitations

It is unclear exactly how many are displaced despite official numbers.

It is not clear how funding has been divided between agencies.

There is ambiguity around access to new refugees. Reports indicate that many are dispersed in the forest and in little villages.

Crisis impact

As of 17 January, 66,000 refugees have crossed the Naaf river into Bangladesh to flee violence in Rakhine state, Myanmar which started on 9 October 2016 and continues today (Myanmar Times 10/10/2016). These refugees arrive in Cox's Bazar, Chittagong District where there is already a significant Rohingya refugee population. 32,700 are in two official refugee camps while an estimated 200,000 to 300,000 are unregistered in unofficial camps or living among the Bangladeshi population in Cox's Bazar (The Diplomat 14/10/2016; Kaladan Press Network 22/06/2016).

This influx has further strained resources for this marginalised refugee population. The expansion of existing settlements, the creation of new settlements, and integration into host communities creates pressure on host communities and service provision (IFRC 17/01/2017). Furthermore, for fear of detainment and deportation, many new refugees initially avoid accessing assistance provided, hiding in forests and little villages in and around Cox's Bazar (Democratic Voice of Burma 14/01/2016).

There was a reported increase of 22,000 refugees between 3-9 January, but this number represents a jump in refugee registration after more trust was built between humanitarian assistance organisations and new arrivals rather than a spike in new refugees. New refugee numbers are predicted to continue, but at a slower and consistent rate. (OCHA 09/01/2017; Democratic Voice of Burma 14/01/2016)

The Government of Bangladesh has repeatedly turned back boats carrying Rohingya (Kaladan press network 27/12/2016). Furthermore, it has historically refused to legally register Rohingya refugees and has created living conditions which limit incentives for new refugees to settle in Bangladesh and incites existing refugees to leave. However, it has provided limited humanitarian relief coordination and assistance to this newly displaced population and has coordinated with humanitarian agencies for this purpose. Talks between the Council of the Foreign Ministers of the Organisation of Islamic Cooperation, as well as between Myanmar and Bangladesh government officials have been held to address the problem and find a solution (Prothom Alo 14/01/2017).

While many Rohingya remain in Cox's Bazar district, some are reportedly moving to slums such as in Bandarban and Chittagong districts (Jakarta Post 27/11/2017). However, the biggest portion of refugees remain in Cox's Bazar.

Food

Food security is a priority in Cox's Bazar. Assessments conducted in December 2016 and January 2017 show that the refugee population has limited or no access to food (IFRC

17/01/2017; OCHA 03/01/2017). Most have left all livelihood assets in Myanmar and therefore face financial constraints to access markets, which remain functional. (IFRC 17/01/2017).

About 300 workers involved in handling goods at Teknaf land port on the Naaf river have lost their jobs due to the fall in business arising from increased border control. Other small business owners in the region have been affected by trade disruption (New Age Bangladesh 11/12/2016).

Nutrition

Many children arriving in Bangladesh have shown signs of malnutrition (ECHO 28/12/2016).

These children are arriving at camps and host communities where two out of three children show signs of stunting and one out of three from 6-23 months shows signs of wasting (WFP/UNHCR 2010).

Health

In Ukhia Upazila, Cox's Bazar district, two deaths and 390 cases of injury have been reported. Assessments show that new refugees have limited or no access to health services (IFRC 17/01/2017; Al Jazeera 17/01/2017). This problem is compounded as the refugee population seeks to avoid authorities and assistance for fear of detention and deportation (Kaladan press network 27/12/2016). Provision of medical services therefore remains a priority for this population (OCHA 03/01/2017).

There is overcrowding in camps and host communities in Teknaf and Ukhia Upazila. Major health concerns for the newly arrived population includes: injury, infectious diseases, trauma and psychological disorders, and maternal care. Psychological care is of particular concern, due to their current precarious position, previous trauma, and cases of gender based violence (IFRC 17/01/2017). Unconfirmed cases of measles has been reported and although immunisation coverage among the registered refugee population is high, makeshift camps are at risk (WFP UNHCR 2012).

WASH

New refugees have little access to WASH facilities. While the number of people crossing the border is reportedly decreasing, movement towards makeshift camps, adjacent areas, and city areas has increased. Overcrowding in makeshift camps, registered camps, and host communities compounds these WASH concerns. Lack of safe drinking water was of concern for registered camps prior to the current influx of refugees, and the situation has further deteriorated since then. Inadequate supply and significant leakage in Nayapara camp is especially of concern. In makeshift camps there is no access to safe drinking water and sanitation (WFP UNHCR 2012; IFRC 17/01/2017; Al Jazeera 17/01/2017). Latrines in registered camps are limited, and waste management is poor, especially in Nayapara (WFP UNHCR 2012).

A few humanitarian agencies are providing basic sanitation support but they cannot support all the new arrivals. Sanitation issues have become a threat and may massive spread of diseases (IFRC 17/01/2017).

Shelter and NFIs

There are urgent needs for shelter and NFI assistance due to the sudden increase in the number of refugees (ECHO 28/12/2016). Movement towards makeshift camps, registered camps, and city areas have increased. As a result, registered camps have been expanded and more than a dozen makeshift camps have been created by refugees. Although markets are selling tarpaulin, bamboo, and rope, many families cannot afford all necessary items (OCHA 16/01/2017; Al Jazeera 17/01/2017). Some camps are being set up in illegal areas and risk being taken down (Daily Star 10/01/2017).

The refugee population requires shelter and NFIs such as clothes, bedding, and mosquito nets to protect them during this winter season, which continues until February (IFRC 17/01/2017; OCHA 03/01/2017)

Protection

Rohingya in Bangladesh face discrimination and marginalisation, as well as sporadic conflict with host communities (HCTT Joint Needs Assessment 20/07/2016). Sexual and Gender Based Violence (SGBV) is identified as an issue requiring attention. Many households are female headed, which increases exposure to exploitation and gender based violence (IFRC 17/01/2017).

Vulnerable groups affected.

Most of the 66,000 refugees arriving are females and children, with the average number of children per family between 3 and 5 (IFRC 17/01/2017; ECHO 28/12/2016). Many of these households are female headed, which increases exposure to exploitation and gender based violence (IFRC 17/01/2017).

The marginalisation and discrimination of the Rohingya population in Bangladesh means the whole group is vulnerable to conflict with host communities and authorities. Rohingya are often confronted with violence, abuse, arrest and detention; women and girls are particularly exposed (HCTT Joint Needs Assessment 20/07/2016).

Humanitarian constraints

Bangladesh is yet to sign the 1951 Convention on the Status of Refugees or its 1967 Protocol, which defines who is a refugee. It has not recognised Rohingya refugees and has not tried to integrate them into Bangladeshi society (HRW 2000). This means that international organisations do not have official authorization to access this population, as they are officially illegals in Bangladesh. Only unofficial agreement with local authorities has allowed humanitarian access, and often with strict conditions (HRW 2000).

Access in the southeast of Bangladesh is challenging, with only 9.5% of roads paved. (HCTT Joint Needs Assessment 20/07/2016). The refugee population is wary of authorities due to fear of detention and deportation and therefore can be difficult to access (Kaladan press network 27/12/2016).

Aggravating factors

Seasonal information

Winter is typically mild in tropical Bangladesh. However, severe cold waves have been experienced over the last six years, and a cold wave is predicted until February 2017, with temperatures dropping to around 10 degrees celsius (NIRAPAD 12/12/2016).

Other factors of vulnerability

Drug-based violence is prevalent in the border areas of Cox's Bazar region, and Rohingya have been blamed, with their movement and access to basic services further restricted in 2012 as a result (The Diplomat 14/10/2016). This, combined with the presence of non-state actors including the Arakan Army of Myanmar and Rohingya insurgents in the region, increasing suspicion from local security forces and authorities and further weakens the perception of Rohingya. (The Diplomat 14/10/2016).

Position of Rohingya in Bangladesh Society

The Government of Bangladesh begrudgingly accepts the Rohingya refugee population yet constantly tries to have them returned to Myanmar. Therefore, unlike most refugee populations, the Rohingya are denied freedom of movement, employment, and education beyond the primary level. (Refugee Studies Centre, 06/2001). Durable solutions and development are not pursued for this population, as the government of Bangladesh seeks to limit the influx of refugees (WFP UNHCR 2012).

As a result, humanitarian conditions for the refugees in Cox's Bazar were poor prior to the current influx (WFP 30/11/2016). Food is only distributed to registered camp-based refugees, creating a risk of conflict and fraud as unregistered new refugees set up camp on the outskirts of registered camps without any boundaries. (WFP UNHCR 2012; IFRC 17/01/2017). Anaemia rates in children under five years old are over 50%. Health services available are curative, with very limited preventive focus (WFP/UNHCR 2010).

Poverty of Bangladesh

Socio-economic indicators across Bangladesh are poor, especially in Chittagong division. Registered refugees benefit to a limited degree from services they receive in camps. However, for the host community and those living outside registered camps, widespread poverty affects access to humanitarian necessities (WFP UNHCR 2012). Existing

poverty also means little attention is given to the needs of Rohingya (Refugee Studies Centre, 06/2001).

Contextual information

Drivers of the current conflict

On 9 October, three posts on the Myanmar–Bangladesh border were attacked. Although it was initially unclear who was behind the attack, local authorities and government officials pointed to the Rohingya as the perpetrators of the attack (Myanmar Times 10/10/2016). Several weeks later, Harakah al-Yaqin were identified as the perpetrators of the attack.

The Myanmar Army conducted 'security operations' in Maungdaw township, northern Rakhine, as a consequence of the attack. Since then, access into northern Rakhine has been restricted, and a state of emergency is in effect. In the security operations, at least 130 people have been killed, including security personnel (Radio Free Asia 16/11/2016). The Myanmar Army claims that all Rohingya killed in the security operations were among the attacks, yet many activists claim that many were civilians.

The Myanmar Army has been accused of conducting many human rights violations against the Rohingya. These violations include murder, torture, rape and other sexual violence, burning of villages, looting, and arbitrary detention. Activists say that acts carried out against Rohingya may amount to genocide (Amnesty International 19/12/2016; Human Rights Watch 28/10/2016; The Diplomat 18/01/2017).

Due to the grave violence against Rohingya, at least 30,000 people have been internally displaced (ECHO 17/11/2016). Around 66,000 Rohingya have fled to Bangladesh. The Myanmar Army shoots at fleeing Rohingya, sinking their boats on the Naf river which serves as the border crossing to Bangladesh. Bangladeshi border authorities have also turned away Rohingya at the border, leaving them stuck on their boats. The number of Rohingya stuck at the border crossing is unknown, but is likely to be high (Kaladan Press Network 10/12/2016).

Status of Rohingya minority in Myanmar

The Rohingya are a Muslim minority of around 1.1 million people, who are widely discriminated against by the predominantly Buddhist society. The 1982 Citizenship Law, which excluded Rohingya from the list of national races, and stripped them of their citizenship, exacerbated discrimination. The Myanmar government refers to Rohingya as 'Bengali', indicating that they are illegal immigrants (OCHA 30/11/2015). Rohingya are allowed to have a maximum of two children, but birth certificates are not issued to

Rohingya children (HRW 01/16). Rohingya are restricted in their movement, with limited ability to leave their townships or IDP sites (ECHO 29/05/2016).

Intercommunal violence in 2012

Intercommunal violence between Buddhists and Rohingya surged in 2012, after a Buddhist woman was found raped and murdered (CfE-DMHA 2014). At least 100 people, mostly Rohingya, died in attacks by both sides. Over 140,000 Rohingya were displaced to camps in Rakhine state (UNHCR, MIMU, Shelter Cluster & CCCM Cluster 01/09/2016). Since then, Rohingya have largely been restricted from leaving their townships, and many checkpoints ensure Rohingya cannot move around freely (HRW 01/16). The restrictions on movement severely hamper the Rohingya's access to humanitarian aid, basic services, and livelihood opportunities (ECHO 29/05/2016; IRIN 11/10/2016).

An estimated 94,000 Rohingya fled to other countries via the Bay of Bengal in 2015 (OCHA 30/11/2015).

Past displacement

Continued displacement for centuries has led to a significant Rohingya population in Bangladesh and in Cox's Bazar. As of May 2016, there were 32,713 registered Rohingya refugees in Cox's Bazar living in two official camps: Nayapara in Teknaf sub-district, and Kutupalong in Ukhia sub-district. Another estimated 200,000 to 300,000 are unregistered in unofficial camps or among the Bangladeshi population in Cox's Bazar (The Diplomat 14/10/2016; Kaladan Press Network 22/06/2016).

History of conflict and relevant stakeholders

The Myanmar government: The National League for Democracy (NLD) headed by Aung San Suu Kyi, is the current governing party. When the NLD won elections in late 2015, the international community was optimistic that the situation of the Rohingya would improve. However, since the start of security operations on 9 October, the government has not condemned any acts by the Myanmar Army, and has consistently denied any allegations of human rights abuse. A government delegation investigating human rights abuse in northern Rakhine concluded on 4 January that no violations were committed (Al Jazeera 04/01/2017; Human Rights Watch 01/01/2016)

The Myanmar Army: The Myanmar Army operates largely independently. They hold 25% of seats in parliament, meeting the requirements for a veto. The Myanmar Army has control over the ministries of internal affairs, border and security affairs, and defence. Since 9 October, they have carried out 'security operations' in northern Rakhine, but deny any allegations of human rights abuses (Irrawaddy 16/12/2016; Human Rights Watch 01/01/2016).

Harakah al-Yaqin: Arabic for 'faith movement', the HaY is an insurgent group in Rakhine state, that carried out attacks on three border posts on 9 October, which spurred the

crackdown of the Myanmar Army on the Rohingya. HaY is reportedly run by Rohingya located in Saudi Arabia, and is backed by Rohingya in Rakhine. Although founded on Islamic foundations, HaY does not appear to have a jihadist or terrorist agenda. Rather, the foundations of the group are likely strengthened by the marginalization and discrimination of the Rohingya in Rakhine state (International Crisis Group 15/12/2016).

International and neighbouring countries' relationship to the conflict

Myanmar and Bangladesh have been at a stalemate regarding Rohingya refugees in Bangladesh for decades. Bangladesh wants Myanmar to take back recent refugees, and Myanmar agreed on 12 January, if they can be proven to be Myanmar nationals. However, Rohingya refugees are not citizens of Myanmar, so any agreement is still to be had (Government of Bangladesh 31/12/2016; Reuters 12/01/2016).

The government of Malaysia has been critical of the treatment of the Rohingya, and has called for a stop to what it calls a policy of genocide. It has sponsored a meeting of the Organisation of Islamic Cooperation to address the crisis (AP 18/01/2017).

Key characteristics of Cox's Bazar

Demographic profile: 2,899,900 people were in Cox's Bazar as of the 2011 National Census with a sex ratio of 53.8 males to 46.2 females. 78.2% live in rural areas.

Food: 20% of the population is in IPC Phase 3 (Crisis), while 7% is in IPC Phase 4 (Emergency) food security levels.

Nutrition: 47% of children under 5 show signs of stunting.

Health: The maternal mortality rate is 114 per 100,000 live births, the Under 5 mortality rate is between 41 and 50 for 1,000 live births.

WASH: 99.8% use improved drinking water sources while 51.1% have access to improved sanitation.

Lighting and cooking 40% have access to electricity while 97.1% use solid fuel for cooking.

Literacy Rate: The literacy rate is at 43.15%

Sources: Bangladesh Chittagong profile ACAPS 25/07/2016

Response capacity

Local and national response capacity

The Government of Bangladesh recognised the needs of the Rohingya refugee population and launched a National Strategy in 2014, although this has had a limited effect on the conditions of existing refugees. While continuing to push back boats of Rohingya, it has provided assistance to this population once in Cox's Bazar. The Ministry of Disaster Management have been overseeing food, medical treatment and accommodation of refugees with various local and foreign agencies prior to the current influx, and have distributed food among new refugees since October. (Mizzima 18/10/2016; Ministry of Disaster Management 2016; Dhaka Tribune 05/01/2016). The Ministry of Disaster Management and the Ministry of Foreign Affairs requested support from BDRCS on 29 December after talks on the current crisis. The BDRCS has mobilized 40 volunteers and staff (IFRC 17/01/2017).

Teams of high profile visitors have visited official camps and makeshift settlements, including the Bangladesh Foreign Minister, State Minister and Foreign Secretary (IFRC 17/01/2017).

International response capacity

The EU has allocated EUR 300,000, while the United Nations Central Emergency Response Fund has allocated USD 3 million to support life-saving protection, food, nutrition, WASH, health and shelter activities (OCHA 03/01/2017; ECHO 28/12/2016). Other countries have further contributed to agencies working in Bangladesh, such as the WFP (Bangladesh News 17/01/2017).

The BIFRC, ICRC, UNHCR, WFP, IOM, UNFPA, UNICEF, ACF, SI, MSF, HI, NGOF, Save the Children are involved along with local NGOs such as MUKTI, BGS, SHED, RTMI, TAI, VERC (Cox's Bazar Coordination 2017; Ministry of Disaster Management 2016). A website for humanitarian coordination in Cox's Bazar exists and was used for coordination in previous events such as cyclone Komen in 2015 (Cox's Bazar Coordination 2017). Organisations such as BDRCS, WFP, and UNHCR have been involved in assistance for the Rohingya refugee in Cox's Bazar since 1978 (IFRC 17/01/2017).

Agencies have provided blankets, supported health centres, created family links services, coordinated needs assessments, food distribution, dignity kits, winter clothes, emergency latrines, and midwives (IFRC 17/01/2017).

The ambassadors of Sweden, Denmark, and Norway visited Cox's Bazar on 15-17 January (Bangladesh News 17/01/2017).

An extraordinary meeting of the Council of the Foreign Ministers of the Organisation of Islamic Cooperation will convene in Kuala Lumpur on 18 January at the request of the Malaysian government to discuss the current Rohingya crisis (The National 17/01/2017).

Information gaps and needs

It is unclear how many are displaced. Figures such as the 66,000 reported are a result of an agreement between different actors rather than a precise number.

It is not clear how many Rohingya are entering Bangladesh daily, nor the movements of this population.

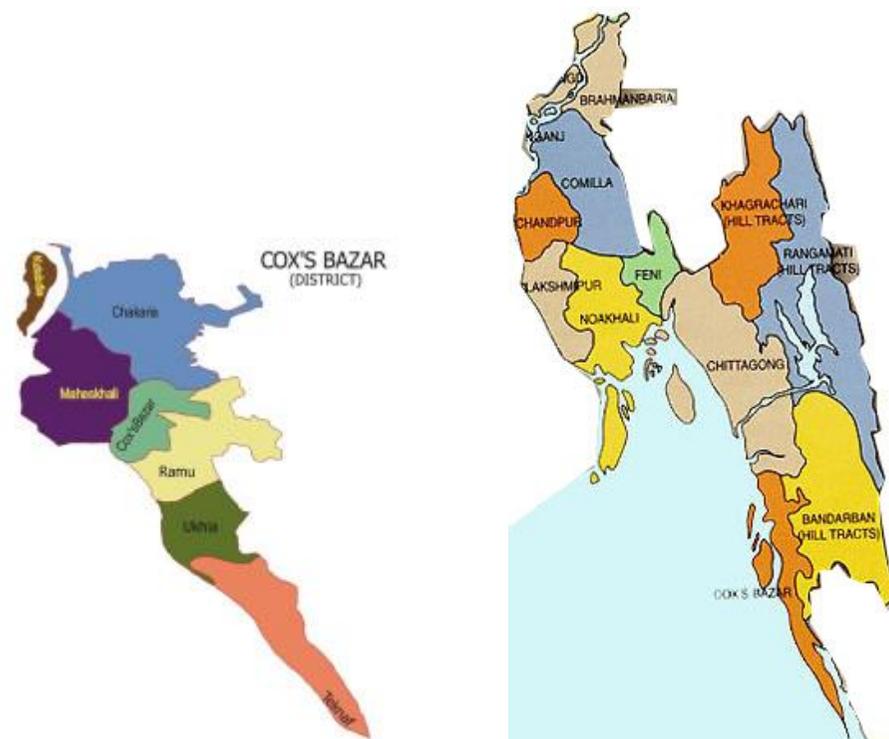
It is not clear how funding has been divided between agencies.

There is ambiguity around access to new refugees. Reports indicate that many are dispersed in the forest and in little villages

Lessons learned

Response is limited by the complexities surrounding the legal recognition of Rohingya in Bangladesh. Distribution of NFIs and food prior to the influx has been limited to officially registered camps (IFRC 17/01/2017; WFP 2017). The Government of Bangladesh has recognised the needs of the Rohingya refugee population and launched a National Strategy in 2014. This resulted in slightly improved services to undocumented populations but has yet to provide them with any kind of legal status (IFRC 17/01/2017).

Maps



Source: Bangladesh Probashi 2015