



Photo: Rohingya photographer Zia Naing for NRC

As severe flooding devastates Cox's Bazar, 32 humanitarian agencies call for urgent funding in Bangladesh

July 29 2021

Conditions in the Rohingya refugee camps and the surrounding areas in Cox's Bazar District are deteriorating as a result of several days of heavy monsoon rainfall across southern Bangladesh, which is expected to continue for the next 48 hours. In the Rohingya refugee camps, thousands of shelters have been damaged and flooded, low-lying areas have also been flooded, and landslides have been reported. In the last 24 hours, humanitarian partners have received reports of approximately 13,000 people affected—including 17 people who have tragically lost their lives, in both the refugee and the host communities. Due to lack of mobility, Women, children, older people and persons with disabilities face the greatest risk of being injured or killed and have the most difficulty accessing aid and safety.

"I am so afraid a landslide will happen at night and my sons will not know what to do or be able to escape. Our floor is damaged by rain, and I can't leave my two sons with disabilities at home to get material to

repair the floor—so now water keeps coming into our shelter. I can't cook or eat because there is too much water. I am worried our shelter will collapse.” – A Rohingya mother in the camps

As the rain continues, the risk of unsanitary conditions and the spread of water-borne diseases increases, which could be disastrous considering hundreds of cases of Acute Watery Diarrhea have already been identified in the camps. Due to Government-enforced COVID-19 prevention and control measures, humanitarian access has been restricted which has made it difficult for humanitarian agencies to respond to the existing needs of refugees and host communities, let alone take preventive action to mitigate the impacts of disasters like this before they occur.

The humanitarian community appreciates the Government of Bangladesh's quick action to lift access restrictions in order to prevent further loss of life from water-borne illness and slope failures. Together, we are working tirelessly to respond to the dire humanitarian needs of refugees and the host community. However, each day hundreds more are in critical need of assistance. As 32 humanitarian agencies, **we call for the following to address the emerging needs and prevent a future catastrophe:**

- Full access is needed urgently for first responders to provide food, clean water and sanitation, safe shelter, healthcare and protection services, including psychosocial supports and cash assistance to affected communities in both the Rohingya and host community. In particular, access is needed to assess and respond to the protection and humanitarian needs of vulnerable groups including women, girls, boys, older people, and persons with disabilities.
- Continued access after the water recedes for humanitarian services, particularly emergency preparedness and response, site management and site development, protection and case management services. These activities should be considered life-saving critical services at all times and be listed in government directives.
- A comprehensive and inclusive evacuation plan to be developed jointly by the Government of Bangladesh, UN Agencies, national and international response agencies, refugees and host communities. The plans should ensure access to emergency shelters, ensure that families are not separated and the needs of children, women, older persons, and persons with disabilities are systematically included.
- Use of more durable construction materials must be permitted to better withstand the impact of both cyclone and monsoon weather conditions. Further, existing community facilities such as child friendly spaces or mosques should be strengthened, as there are often perceived as safe points by the communities and vulnerable groups such as unaccompanied minors.
- Administrative barriers should be removed and approvals for FD7s and FD6 project permits should be expedited to enable a smooth and timely response by humanitarian responders.
- Substantial and sustained funding for the 2021 Joint Response Plan and the Rohingya crisis must be an international priority. The protracted nature of the crisis, compounded with the impacts of climate change and COVID-19 have made the needs of refugees in Cox's Bazar more urgent than ever before.

Signed:

Save the Children, International Rescue Committee, Norwegian Refugee Council, Concern World Wide, Muslim AidUK, Malteser International, Norwegian Church Aid, Danish Refugee Council, Solidarités, Food for the Hungry, Christian Blind Mission, Handicap International, Relief International, Oxfam, Action Aid Bangladesh, United in Purpose, , World Vision International, , Action Against Hunger, educo, Christian Aid, Plan International, , ADRA, CARE, Terre Des Homes (TdH), Médecins du Monde Japan, Asian Dignity Initiative (ADI), MedAir, United Purpose, World Concern, HELVETAS, DanChurch Aid (DCA)