WFP Bangladesh
Country Brief
October 2018

Operational Context

Bangladesh is poised to transition into a middle-income country by 2020 and is making significant advances in the nutrition and food security front.

Facing critical levels of poverty and undernutrition, exacerbated by high population density, Bangladesh strives to continue with consistent socio-economic growth in the future. Prevalence of child marriage, adolescent pregnancies and undernutrition in mothers and adolescent girls are considerable impediments to these goals. This is compounded by high rates of stunting in children under the age of 5 that is a perceptible hindrance to achieving the Sustainable Development Goals in Bangladesh. WFP, present in Bangladesh since 1974, transitioned to the Country Strategic Plan in April 2017. The CSP reinforces WFP’s commitment to capacity strengthening of the government counterparts, facilitating direct provision of food assistance in emergencies and activities aimed at evidence creation.

Furthermore, in response to the unprecedented influx of the Rohingya population in August 2017, the CSP was amended to facilitate WFP’s tailored response to the refugee crisis in Cox’s Bazar. Presently, WFP is providing food and nutrition assistance to over 870,000 refugees besides implementing a range of livelihood programmes for both the host and refugee communities.

In Numbers

- **12,648 mt** of food assistance distributed
- **US$ 3.2 m** cash-based transfers made
- **US$ 193 m** total confirmed contribution for Cox’s Bazar L3 Emergency Response
- **US$ 36.9 m** six months (Nov 2018 - April 2019) net funding requirements for CSP of which **US$ 33.1 m** is for Cox’s Bazar L3 Emergency Response
- **1.27 m people assisted** in October 2018

Operational Updates

- **WFP Executive Director visits Rohingya refugee camps**: WFP’s Executive Director, David Beasley, and the Danish Minister for Development Cooperation, Ms Ulla Tornaes, visited Cox’s Bazar Rohingya refugee camps to understand WFP’s Emergency operation and related Danish Government and NGO activities. As of November 2018, the total population of Rohingya refugees in Cox’s Bazar stands at 923,000 (ISCG reports).

- **Life-saving Food Assistance**: The 25th round of General Food Assistance (GFA) was completed, reaching 146,500 households with in-kind food; e-voucher assistance reached 45,800 households (211,700 individuals).

- **Malnutrition Prevention and Treatment Programmes**: 182,000 children under five years of age (CU5) and 35,000 pregnant and breastfeeding women from both the refugee camps and host communities received nutrition assistance.

Country Level Programmes

- **Rice Fortification**: Fortified rice distribution has been incorporated in the Food Friendly Programme (FFP), one of the largest Government social safety net initiatives, targeting over 600,000 beneficiaries across ten sub-districts. It is planned to be scaled up to 15 sub-districts by 2019.

- **First time cash distribution through Forecast Based Financing (FBF)**: WFP made a first-of-its-kind mobile cash transfer to around 3,400 extremely poor and disaster-prone households. This was part of a simulation exercise on the FBF Flood Early Action protocol to test resiliency of the model. It was organized simultaneously in WFP Country Office, Rangpur Sub Office and the Financial Service Provider’s Office.

- **Nutrition Workshop inaugurated by the Minister of Health and Family Welfare**: The workshop on the National Plan of Action was organized in Sirajganj involving relevant Government departments and NGOs.
**Stories from the field**

**“Nobojatra assistance has helped shape my identity”, retorts Shahanara**

In April 2018, Shahanara was enrolled into the Nobojatra project during her trimester. She receives BDT 2,200 (US$ 26) every month alongside participating in a focused training in Social and Behaviour Change Communication (SBCC). She concedes, “I feel more free and confident now, I can decide for myself and my family”. The cash assistance has no just helped her elevate living-standards of her family but has also raised her status in front of her husband. ‘Previously, my days were spent just cooking – it was tiresome. Now surprisingly, my husband cooks for me, I couldn't be happier’, Shahanara retorts. During pregnancy the likes of Shahanara are much relieved by such assistance and can concentrate solely on their health.

**Challenges**

- **Forthcoming general elections**: Bangladesh goes for general elections end of this year. As previously recorded, this is a time of elevated security mishaps due to organized political strikes by competing groups that could have significant impact on WFP operations across the country.

- **Ongoing cyclone season**: Cox’s Bazar was on high alert, for Cyclone Titli. Persisting rainfall in this season is a veritable hindrance to swift implementation of programmes on the ground.

**Major Donors**

Australia, Austria, Bangladesh, Canada, Denmark, DFID-UK, European Commission, France, Germany, Italy, Japan, Korea, Kuwait, Luxembourg, UN Common Funds and Agencies, UN CERF, USA, WPD Share the Meal, and Multilateral and Private Donors.