Bangladesh

At a Glance

Main Objectives and Activities

Facilitate voluntary repatriation to Myanmar of those refugees who are willing and cleared to return; promote and initiate activities fostering self-reliance for refugees unable or unwilling to return in the near future, pending a lasting solution; co-ordinate and ensure protection and basic services for the refugees, paying special attention to women and children.

Impact

- A total of 1,323 persons returned to Northern Rakhine State in Myanmar while 21,500 refugees still remained in refugee camps.
- An agreement was reached with the Government to introduce productive activities in the camps where such activities had previously not been allowed.
- UNHCR provided protection and assistance to urban refugees, pending durable solutions in the form of repatriation or third country resettlement.
- UNHCR raised awareness among lawyers, academics, government officials and civil society on the need for a legal framework for asylum, by means of legal training sessions focusing on international refugee law.

Persons of Concern				
Main Refugee Origin/Type of Population	Total in Country	Of whom UNHCR assisted	Per cent Female	Per cent under 18
Myanmar (Refugees)	21,600	21,500	51	60

Income and Expenditure (USD)				
Annual Programme Budget				
Revised Budget	Income from Contributions[1]	Other Funds Available[2]	Total Funds Available	Total Expenditure
2,609,215	3,102,534	1,115,333	4,217,867	2,483,340

[1] Includes income from contributions earmarked at the country level.
[2] Includes allocations by UNHCR from unearmarked or broadly earmarked contributions, opening balance and adjustments.
Figures do not include costs at Headquarters.

Working Environment

The Context

During 2000, 1,323 refugees from Northern Rakhine State repatriated to Myanmar, while 21,500 remained in two camps, Kutupalong and Nayapara. The refugees were the remainder of a population of some 250,000 refugees who had fled from Northern Rakhine State to Bangladesh in late 1991 and early 1992 for political, social and economic reasons. Following an agreement between the Governments of Myanmar and Bangladesh in 1992, some 230,000 persons returned voluntarily to Myanmar. In August 1997, the Myanmar authorities suspended repatriation, allowing it to resume in November 1998 following UNHCR's intervention, yet on a much reduced scale.

Of the remaining 21,500 persons, 16,000 were not considered eligible for return by the Myanmar authorities, as they were not cleared for return prior to August 1997. The remainder of the refugees had been cleared for return before August 1997, and were awaiting re-verification or authorisation by the Myanmar authorities to return.

Constraints

Although the restriction on the maximum number of returns per week was lifted by the Myanmar authorities, repatriation progressed slowly due to procedural difficulties in obtaining clearance. Of the remaining Myanmar refugees in Bangladesh, some 16,000 refugees continued to be considered ineligible for return by the Myanmar authorities. There were some 5,000 persons who were unwilling to repatriate due to protection concerns.

The Government of Bangladesh allowed the introduction of productive activities in the refugee camps, but it held to its view that repatriation was the most favoured durable solution. The camp facilities therefore continued to be maintained on the basis that they were a response to a temporary situation. The possibility of activities conducive to self-sufficiency outside the camps was excluded. UNHCR and the Bangladeshi authorities are continuing to discuss the matter.

Funding

Due to funding constraints experienced by UNHCR worldwide, some activities were cancelled, such as two refugee law training programmes organised with the Bangladesh Bar Council and two refugee law courses organised with the Refugee and Migratory Movements and Research Unit (RMMRU) of Dhaka University.

Achievements and Impact

Protection and Solutions

During the first quarter of the year, refugees alleged that the camp authorities had exerted pressure on them to repatriate. The allegations

included physical abuse, psychological pressure and the confiscation of refugee documents which confer eligibility for food rations and medical treatment. The situation was swiftly ameliorated following insistent interventions by UNHCR and an enquiry conducted jointly by the Ministry of Disaster Management and Relief and UNHCR. This served as an opportunity for the authorities to reaffirm their respect for the voluntary nature of return.

UNHCR monitored the situation of the Myanmar refugees in camps and intervened with the authorities on behalf of individuals facing protection problems, such as physical abuse, sexual harassment and disputes among refugees. Disciplinary action frequently followed: the refugees implicated would receive a serious warning and the victims would be removed to safer locations. When refugees were detained, UNHCR conducted prison visits; the detainees received counselling and material assistance. UNHCR also conducted periodic visits to monitor the border area between Bangladesh and Myanmar.

In addition to the Myanmar refugee population in two camps at the border area, there was a small group of urban refugees of different nationalities. Bangladesh is not a party to any refugee instrument and has no refugee legislation. UNHCR therefore conducted refugee status determination under its mandate and provided urban refugees with protection and assistance. UNHCR recognised 13 persons as mandate refugees. They were permitted by the Government to reside in Bangladesh and had access to education and other activities conducive to self-reliance. The Office facilitated the voluntary repatriation of three refugees to their country of origin as well as the resettlement of five refugees to a third country, making the total number of refugees 122 at the end of the year.

UNHCR continued to work closely with the RMMRU and the Bangladesh Bar Council to raise awareness of refugee law. Various training activities and seminars were jointly organised for government officials, academics and other concerned members of the public. These activities were greatly appreciated and the demand for courses increased among the military, border security personnel and the NGO community. The model national refugee law drawn up by the Regional Consultation on Refugees and Migratory Movements in South Asia was translated into Bengali.

Activities and Assistance

Community Services: At the women's centres in the camps, 240 refugee women received skills training such as sewing, embroidery, crochet, knitting and weaving of fishing nets. Four community service assistants conducted their work from the women's centres. Awareness-raising sessions were held with the participation of 1,217 refugees (624 women and 583 men) on topics such as sexual and gender-based violence, trafficking of women and children, reproductive health and the importance of education. Recreational equipment such as balls, skipping ropes and board games were made available to refugee children through refugee schools. An average of 25 urban refugees per month received counselling on voluntary repatriation, resettlement, protection, self-reliance, education, financial problems and health issues. Social counsellors conducted visits to urban refugees' homes, as well as visits to new self-reliance projects.

Domestic Needs/Household Support: Household items were distributed to the refugees in the two camps. These included compressed rice husk for cooking fuel, kerosene, soap, clothing, blankets, sleeping mats and jerry cans. Clothing and soap were distributed to refugees detained in jails. UNHCR provided monthly cash allowances for an average of 49 urban refugees who were identified as vulnerable.

Education: Training in basic teaching and management skills was given to 62 refugee teachers at the camps. Fourteen refugee schools received school supplies. A total of 3,196 refugee children were enrolled in refugee schools (40 per cent of them girls, which was an improvement on 1999); 63 refugee women and adolescents were enrolled in literacy and numeracy classes. UNHCR funded the construction and extension of eight local schools in Ukhiya and Teknaf areas as part of the assistance to refugee-affected areas. All urban refugee children were enrolled in English-medium private schools as there was no scope for local integration and English would be useful upon repatriation or resettlement. Tuition fees, books, uniforms, examination fees and school supplies were funded for the urban refugee students.

Food: WFP provided basic food rations composed of rice, pulses, vegetable oil, salt, sugar and blended food for camp refugees, with UNHCR providing condiments. Following a vulnerability survey carried out by WFP in 1999, the daily ration was increased from 2,007 to 2,112 kcal per person. A monthly average of 464 malnourished refugee children and 607 expectant and nursing mothers benefited from the therapeutic and supplementary feeding programmes. During voluntary repatriation, all refugees received fresh food at the transit centre followed by high protein biscuits prior to departure.

Forestry: A total of 4,700 trees, fencing material and fertiliser were distributed to refugees, to provide shade, and to improve the environment within the camps. Refugee volunteers also received incentives to look after the trees which they planted.

Health/Nutrition: The overall health situation in the camp was stable and there were no outbreaks of disease. A total of 1,227 Myanmar refugees received medical treatment. Sanitary items were distributed to refugee girls and women between the ages of 12 and 45. Polio vaccine and vitamin A were given to all refugee children under the age of five. Workshops on HIV/AIDS and malaria were conducted by the authorities and attended by UNHCR and its partners. Eight urban refugees received assistance for medical treatment at local hospitals.

Income Generation: A total of 2,000 vulnerable refugee families received vegetable seeds for kitchen gardens and 646 families received five chicks each in order to start poultry farming. The beneficiaries were female-headed households, families with many children and families with children in the supplementary feeding programmes. Both activities played a major role in improving the diet of these vulnerable refugee families. Four urban refugees received self-reliance grants and two others received business loans.

Legal Assistance: UNHCR provided legal support for 167 detainees. Laminated identity cards were issued to all urban refugees. Interpretation costs were also covered for asylum-seekers' interviews. Both the Bangladesh Bar Council and RMMRU organised refugee law courses for a total of 120 participants composed of lawyers, military officers, NGO workers, students and journalists. The Bar Council also organised a seminar for over 400 lawyers on accession to the 1951 Convention. As part of awareness-raising and promotion, UNHCR organised a visit for journalists to the refugee camps.

Operational Support (to Agencies): Monthly inter-agency meetings with implementing partners were held and workshops were organised on cyclone preparedness, food distribution and UNHCR's new management concepts. Two workshops on protection issues were organised for refugees, government officials, and implementing partner staff. UNHCR covered the administrative costs incurred by implementing partners.

Sanitation: In Kutupalong camp, 200 latrines and 73 garbage pits were constructed, and 171 latrines, 103 bathing cubicles and 234 garbage pits were repaired. Community health workers disseminated information on hygiene and other health-related issues. The two refugee camps and the transit centre were sprayed against malarial insects.

Shelter/Other Infrastructure: One women's centre was completed in Nayapara camp bringing the total number of UNHCR-supported women's centres to three. The construction of 14 camp schools was completed to replace old schools. Various infrastructures in the camps, Teknaf transit centre, and the jetty were repaired. The access road to Kutupalong camp was improved. Refugees were provided with materials for minor repairs to their sheds.

Transport/Logistics: Two trucks and two boats were used for repatriation, and a warehouse was rented for the storage of repatriation kits and domestic supplies. Two double cabin pick-up trucks were procured for the Government to replace old vehicles. During the dry season, water was carried by trucks to the Nayapara camp on a daily basis. Seven urban refugees and two asylum-seekers received transportation assistance for various reasons such as medical referral.

Water: Refugees in Nayapara and Kutupalong camp received an average of 23.5 and 19.2 litres of potable water per person per day, respectively. Water pumps and distribution lines were maintained in Nayapara camp, and 41 tube wells were maintained in Kutupalong camp.

Organisation and Implementation

Management

UNHCR in Bangladesh operated from Dhaka and Cox's Bazar, with a total of 30 staff consisting of six international, one JPO, and 23 national staff. The office in Dhaka was responsible for liaison with government authorities, the donor community, UN agencies and NGO partners. Assistance and protection activities were co-ordinated by the office in Cox's Bazar, which maintained daily contacts with the refugees, camp authorities and NGO implementing partners.

Working with Others

UNHCR actively co-operated with the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and the Ministry of Disaster Management and Relief. There were three NGOs working in two refugee camps, including one self-funded NGO. UNHCR is linked with other NGOs through PARinAC, which met quarterly. UNHCR encouraged other UN agencies, particularly WFP, UNDP, UNICEF, UNESCO and UNFPA, to initiate programmes in Teknaf and Cox's Bazar.

Overall Assessment

Although only limited progress was made on the voluntary repatriation of refugees to Myanmar, UNHCR succeeded in obtaining the consent of the authorities for productive activities in the camps, which led to an enhanced diet for refugees and an improved camp envi-

ronment. Improvements were also made in the delivery of basic community services for women and children, leading to an improvement in refugees' quality of life. UNHCR continued to engage in dialogue with the authorities for further opportunities for self-help activities for those refugees in camps who are unable or unwilling to return to Myanmar in the near future.

UNHCR continued to hand over activities to NGOs to phase out direct involvement in the provision of assistance to refugees, and targeted its activities to address the specific needs of the vulnerable populations.

UNHCR ensured asylum-seekers had access to refugee status determination procedures and effectively provided protection to recognised refugees under its mandate. At the same time, it continued to promote the need for a framework of refugee law in Bangladesh. UNHCR's promotional activities played a significant role in sensitising Bangladeshi society to the existence and function of international refugee law.

Offices

Dhaka

Cox's Bazar

Partners

Government Agencies

Ministry of Disaster Management and Relief

NGOs

CONCERN Bangladesh

Dhaka Ahsania Mission

Financial Report (USD)				
	Current Year's Projects		Prior Years' Projects	
Expenditure Breakdown		notes		notes
Protection, Monitoring and Co-ordination	522,767		0	
Community Services	24,816		6,938	
Domestic Needs / Household Support	136,809		69,748	
Education	8,589		1,499	
Food	65,932		34,320	
Forestry	1,549		0	
Health / Nutrition	179,301		58,300	
Income Generation	5,121		10,180	
Legal Assistance	5,473		560	
Operational Support (to Agencies)	161,096		71,043	
Sanitation	11,859		4,203	
Shelter / Other Infrastructure	24,159		56,334	
Transport / Logistics	58,691		7,238	
Water	49,674		16,874	
Instalments with Implementing Partners	405,657		(261,857)	
Sub-total Operational	**1,661,493**		**75,380**	
Programme Support	723,446		16,240	
Sub-total Disbursements / Deliveries	**2,384,939**	(3)	**91,620**	(6)
Unliquidated Obligations	98,401	(3)	0	
TOTAL	**2,483,340**	(1) (3)	**91,620**	
Instalments with Implementing Partners				
Payments Made	1,031,479		85,775	
Reporting Received	625,822		347,632	
Balance	**405,657**		**(261,857)**	
Outstanding 1 January	0		406,550	
Refunded to UNHCR	0		141,993	
Currency Adjustment	2		(2,700)	
Outstanding 31 December	**405,655**		**0**	
Unliquidated Obligations				
Outstanding 1 January	0		138,304	(6)
New Obligations	2,483,340	(1)	0	
Disbursements	2,384,939	(3)	91,620	(6)
Cancellations	0		46,684	(6)
Outstanding 31 December	**98,401**	(3)	**0**	(6)

Figures which cross reference to Accounts: (1) Annex to Statement 1 – (3) Schedule 3 – (6) Schedule 6