

COVID-19: Preparedness and response for the Rohingya refugee camps and host communities in Cox's Bazar District

Weekly Update #12 | 31 May 2020

ISCG

INTER SECTOR
COORDINATION
GROUP

Highlights

"It is the 12th day after my son's birth and I am here to collect emergency support because we are passing through critical times due to COVID-19. I hope to buy fruits and vegetables for me and my family."

– **Ayesha Ahmed***, a **Bangladeshi mother living in Teknaf**. She is one of many vulnerable Bangladeshi families living in the host community in Teknaf and Ukhiya whose livelihoods have been impacted by the COVID-19 situation. Humanitarian and development actors are supporting the affected families with cash grants and hygiene kits, among other relief items.

Read more

**Not her real name*



Photo: UNDP

29

confirmed cases of COVID-19 in the Rohingya refugee camps, of a total 798 confirmed cases in the District – see [IEDCR](#)

6,514

older persons in the camps and host communities received COVID-19 awareness messages through community engagement activities

21,913

Bangladeshi households in Ukhiya and Teknaf received agricultural inputs (12,135 HH) and cash support (9,778 HH) to support livelihoods impacted by COVID-19

5,641

hand-washing stations installed in public places in the camps as well as at 80 entry points to the camps

20,000

Rohingya mothers trained on how to check the nutritional status of their children for referral to integrated nutrition facilities

33,091

Rohingya learners received COVID-19 education guidelines in their households from 376 Burmese Language Instructors

Sector Preparedness and Response

Health Sector

Health Sector partners **continued to support the Government in surveillance, testing, and case management for COVID-19 this week, isolating and treating cases of COVID-19** among refugees and the host community, and rapidly tracing and quarantining their contacts. As part of ongoing support to Infection, Prevention and Control (IPC) master trainers, WHO conducted a session at the new UNHCR Severe Acute Respiratory Infection Isolation and Treatment Centre (SARI ITC) operated by Relief International, in **preparation for admission of persons confirmed with COVID-19**. In order to **nearly double testing capacity at the IEDCR Field Laboratory at Cox's Bazar Medical College, serving the host community and Rohingya refugee camps**, WHO has undertaken a **recruitment drive for laboratory personnel** and supported the **refurbishment of the IEDCR laboratory to accommodate a new Polymerase chain reaction (PCR) machine for COVID-19 testing**. Health Sector has started discussions with partners and SMSD Sector on the **development of a quarantine pathway**, including movement and counselling of contacts and new arrivals.

Water, Sanitation and Hygiene (WASH) Sector

WASH Sector partners reached **107,364 individuals** with approved COVID-19 messages through a neighborhood-based approach, and **78,510 individuals** through mass media in Cox's Bazar District, including host and refugee communities. In the camps, WASH Sector partners provided **soap to 99 households** and **family hygiene kits to 161 households**; and installed **5,641**



Rohingya women collect water in a camp in Ukhiya while maintaining physical distancing. Photo: VERC NGO

hand-washing stations in public places, at household level and near toilets, as well as at 80 entry points to the camps. In the host community and camps, WASH Sector partners **disinfected 23,870 WASH facilities and 1,686 public buildings**; and **continued to provide 12 health centres and ITCs with full WASH packages**, including soap, a bucket, toothpaste, toothbrush and sanitary napkins.



Communication with Communities Working Group (CwC WG)

CwC WG partners organized **64 cascade training sessions** on COVID-19 with 332 staff and volunteers. CwC WG partners reached **149,794 people, including 6,514 older persons in the camps and host community with key COVID-19 messages** through community engagement activities, including 27,373 neighborhood-based sessions, 4,840 community consultations, 476 listening groups, 354 video/film viewings, and a further 1,580 sessions led by religious leaders. CwC WG partners organized **announcements on COVID-19 awareness** via loudspeakers and megaphones on CNG/Tomtom/auto-rickshaws in 16 camps. For community feedback and complaints, **20 information service centers were operational in the camps and 4 information service centers were active in the host community**. CwC WG published its [8th COVID-19 Risk Communication and Community Engagement Update](#), which includes the latest [9 audios on COVID-19](#) developed by partners. BBC Media Action published [What Matters, Edition 38](#), which focuses on the dynamics between the host community and Rohingya refugees during the COVID-19 pandemic.



A volunteer shares COVID-19 awareness messages with a refugee family through a neighbourhood-based session. Photo: CAID-DAM



Nutrition Sector

Nutrition Sector partners assigned **199 community nutrition volunteers to support the Health Sector's home-based care initiative**; and **referred 12 suspected COVID-19 cases from nutrition facilities to health centres in the camps**. Additionally, ACF supported the **transport of 59 samples for COVID-19 testing from the host community**. Nutrition Sector partners also **trained over 20,000 Rohingya mothers and 497 adolescent girls on how to measure Mid-Upper Arm Circumference (MUAC)** to check the nutritional status of their children and refer them to the nearest nutrition facility and **509 frontline staff and volunteers on mobile nutrition**, as part of the provision of emergency nutrition support in the host community and camps, and provided **COVID-19 awareness messages to 3,269 caregivers in community clinics** in the District.



Food Security Sector (FSS)

WFP prepared [key messages on new temporary food assistance measures](#) that will be implemented from 1 June in the camps to reduce COVID-19 exposure risk and provide extra nutrition, which will mean an increase in the quantity of food items in the [e-voucher food basket](#) and joint distribution with a nutrition programme, alongside food distribution of supercereal as a blanket supplementary feeding programme to all Rohingya refugees. WFP **provided high energy biscuits as a rapid response to 26 Rohingya households who had been displaced due to Cyclone Amphan**. UNHCR, World Vision and United Purpose **distributed agricultural inputs to 12,135 host community households in Ukhiya and Teknaf**. UNDP, IOM, and IRC **provided cash support to 9,778 host community households in Ukhiya and Teknaf**.



Protection Sector, including Child Protection and Gender-Based Violence (GBV) Sub-Sectors (SS)

Community Outreach Members reached 10,248 refugees with COVID-19 awareness messages through 2,425 household visits and 91 protection monitoring visits; and **conducted 3,023 awareness sessions on protection and COVID-19, reaching 14,119 refugees, including 2,716 older persons and 250 persons with disabilities**. In 7 camps, **Imams conducted 396 COVID-19 prevention and awareness sessions, reaching 6,820 individuals**. As Anti-Trafficking Working Group co-chair, UNHCR developed a **communication leaflet to inform Rohingya and host communities on the dangers of undertaking dangerous journeys including during the COVID-19 pandemic**. Protection Sector, including Child Protection and GBV SS, revised its **cyclone preparedness and response plan**, taking into consideration the current COVID-19 situation and lessons learned from Cyclone Amphan. Child Protection SS supported the Rohingya and host communities to **develop community-based plans for alternative care in the event of temporary separation**; and worked closely with the Health Sector to **develop plans to address scenarios where children are separated from primary caregivers in quarantine centers and ITCs**.

GBV SS organized **5 virtual training sessions on Coping with Stress caused by COVID-19** with the participation of 38 case workers; a **training session on Gender Equitable Roles during COVID-19** attended by 81 GBV staff; and a **training session facilitated by community mobilizers on Equal Gender Roles**, which focused on shared responsibilities between men and women during the COVID-19 situation in the Rohingya community, and was attended by 36 Imams and 12 Majhis from 6 camps.

Education Sector

In the camps, **2,292 Learning Center Management Committee Members disseminated COVID-19 awareness-raising information in the community** through 50 banners and 3,325 posters, and sent out key messages through **291 loudspeakers at mosques and 13 hand microphones** in the community. **376 Burmese Language Instructors shared COVID-19 education guidelines with 33,091 learners** at the household level.

Site Management Site Development (SMSD) Sector

SMSD teams, Disaster Management Unit volunteers, women's committees, and community leaders **reached 33,444 individuals in 17 camps with COVID-19 awareness and prevention sessions**. An SMSD Sector partner **installed 26 hand washing devices in one camp in Ukhiya** as part of COVID-19 prevention. An SMSD team **constructed tertiary drainage for an MSF ITC in Unchiprang camp**, as well as a stairway, bamboo railing, and a retaining wall to prevent landslides; and finalized construction of a bamboo bridge to ensure access to the facility. At the request of the Rohingya community and with RRRC approval, SMSD Sector partners **completed a graveyard construction project** in a camp in Ukhiya including drainage, slope stabilization, and fencing work. SMSD teams held Disaster Management Committee meetings with CiCs and the essential Sector Focal Points to discuss **lessons learned from Cyclone Amphan preparedness and response in the COVID-19 context**.



SMSD team member distributes cloth masks to an elderly Rohingya woman in a camp in Teknaf. Photo: IOM

Logistics Sector

Following an interagency procurement between WFP and IOM, Logistics Sector coordinated the arrival on 30 May in Bangladesh of the **second phase of sea shipment of cargo for the humanitarian COVID-19 response** from the United Nations Humanitarian Response Depot in Kuala Lumpur. Receiving the items in Cox's Bazar may take time due to customs clearance and congestion in the port.

Gender in Humanitarian Action Working Group (GiHA WG) and Gender Hub

GiHA WG and Gender Hub published the Bangla version of the [behavioural protocol for staff working in isolation and treatment facilities](#), and of the [Advocacy Brief Rohingya Women Speak Up on COVID-19 in Cox's Bazar](#). On 28 May, Gender Hub and WASH Sector co-facilitated an **online Menstrual Hygiene Day Workshop** with 82 participants to raise awareness on menstrual hygiene during pandemics. Participants committed to better inclusion of menstrual hygiene in the WASH agenda. Across 20 camps and in the host community in Ukhiya and Teknaf, **6 CiC Gender Officers, 40 volunteers, and 42 women leaders including transgender networks and civil society organisations** continued to conduct COVID-19 awareness sessions, and engage in community consultations to identify community-based solutions to gender issues related to COVID-19 and cyclone preparedness, primarily targeting women and girls. GiHA WG and Gender Hub continued providing **technical inputs, gender training, orientation and awareness sessions to sectors in their COVID-19 response**, including care for older persons.

*The humanitarian community and Government of Bangladesh are working closely in COVID-19 preparedness and response in 34 camps and for vulnerable Bangladeshis across the District delivering **critical assistance and services** supported by **over 2,000 Rohingya and Bangladeshi volunteers**, and **establishing and supporting SARI ITCs** in District facilities. **Key challenges** continue to be **limited testing, intensive care capacity, skilled medical staff, and supply of Personal Protective Equipment, restricted telecommunications in and around the camps, and physical distancing in the densely populated camps**.*

