

Rohingya humanitarian response marks World Environment Day

Cox's Bazar, 5 June 2020

This year, Inter Sector Coordination Group (ISCG) partners – UN agencies and NGOs, together with the Government of Bangladesh, mark World Environment Day and its 2020 theme of biodiversity amidst a COVID-19 pandemic in the Rohingya refugee camps and host communities. Humanitarian partners renew their commitment to safeguard the environment and biodiversity in Cox's Bazar District, which hosts the world's largest refugee settlements and is particularly vulnerable to climate change impacts.

Since the Rohingya influx in August 2017 and under the leadership of the Government, UN agencies and NGOs have made collective strides in restoring the unique forest reserves and conserving endangered species including elephants, in Ukhiya and Teknaf, and the wider district. Humanitarian actors have reforested over 1,000 hectares in the camps and surrounding host communities, including through the planting of indigenous species to stabilize land against erosion, which helps to protect Rohingya and Bangladeshi families from the dangers of slope failures and flooding.

The humanitarian community has also implemented watershed management strategies that are safeguarding streams, canals, banks, reservoirs, and ponds, and simultaneously reducing landslide vulnerability to protect the lives and property of Bangladeshi and Rohingya people living Cox's Bazar District. Furthermore, UN agencies and NGOs have provided livelihoods support in sustainable climate-smart agriculture. Furthermore, efforts have been made to install solar powered lighting within the camps including in public areas and at the household level.

A Liquefied Petroleum Gas (LPG) distribution project was launched in 2018 and expanded beyond the refugee population to include the host community. Currently, 100% of the refugee population is receiving LPG distributions, as well as more than 35,000 host community households. This has significantly reduced the need to collect firewood by 80% amongst the refugee population, while simultaneously reducing the overall demand for firewood in the areas surrounding the camps to a third of the pre-influx levels, protecting natural resources and biodiversity.

On World Environment Day, ISCG partners call for action and solidarity from the international community to support the scale up of collective actions to restore the environment and protect biodiversity in Cox's Bazar District.

END

Media contact:

Francesca Fontanini, ext.rel@iscgcxb.org