



# Burma and Bangladesh – Regional Crisis Response

APRIL 4, 2023

## SITUATION AT A GLANCE

|                                                      |                                             |                           |                                            |                                                                          |
|------------------------------------------------------|---------------------------------------------|---------------------------|--------------------------------------------|--------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| <b>4.5</b><br>MILLION                                | <b>1.4</b><br>MILLION                       | <b>1.7</b><br>MILLION     | <b>950,972</b>                             | <b>1.5</b><br>MILLION                                                    |
| People Targeted for Humanitarian Assistance in Burma | IDPs in Burma Displaced Since February 2021 | People Displaced in Burma | Estimated Number of Refugees in Bangladesh | People Targeted by 2023 Rohingya Humanitarian Crisis Joint Response Plan |
| UN – January 2023                                    | UNHCR – March 2023                          | UNHCR – March 2023        | UNHCR – November 2022                      | UN – March 2023                                                          |

- Military authorities in Burma declare martial law in 47 townships across Burma, hindering the operations of relief actors and exacerbating protection risks faced by violence-affected populations.
- Fire in a Cox's Bazar District Rohingya refugee camp on March 5 displaces over 5,200 individuals and damages or destroys more than 2,800 refugee shelters, as well as nearly 160 camp facilities.
- The UN 2023 Rohingya Humanitarian Crisis JRP targets approximately 1.5 million people in Cox's Bazar and Bhasan Char to receive life-saving assistance.



## TOTAL U.S. GOVERNMENT HUMANITARIAN FUNDING For the Burma and Bangladesh Response in FY 2023

USAID/BHA<sup>1</sup> \$154,434,060

For complete funding breakdown with partners, see detailed chart on page 6

**Total \$154,434,060**

<sup>1</sup>USAID's Bureau for Humanitarian Assistance (USAID/BHA)

## KEY DEVELOPMENTS

### **Martial Law Constrains Access, Exacerbates Protection Risks in Burma**

Military authorities have declared martial law in 47 townships across parts of Chin, Kayah, Kayin, and Mon states, as well as areas in Bago, Magway, Sagaing, and Tanintharyi regions since February 2. Martial law—comprising bureaucratic impediments to the movement of vehicles and goods, curfews, and security checkpoints—has constrained humanitarian access, limiting relief actors’ ability to provide critical assistance to affected areas and reducing peoples’ ability to access basic services and livelihoods, according to the UN. The imposition of martial law has also exacerbated the protection risks faced by many civilians, including by increasing their risk of arbitrary arrest and unlawful detention. In addition, military authorities have issued directives for internally displaced persons (IDPs) to leave IDP camps and return to areas of origin, despite persisting insecurity in these areas, the UN reports. Compounding these vulnerabilities, populations residing in areas under martial law continue to experience recurring airstrikes and armed attacks—resulting in the displacement of thousands of individuals and the destruction of villages—the risk of recruitment or detention by armed actors, and the presence of landmines, according to the UN.

### **Hostilities Generate Further Displacement, Exacerbating Humanitarian Needs Across Burma**

Clashes between the ethnic armed organizations (EAOs), Myanmar Armed Forces (MAF), and People’s Defense Forces (PDFs) continued to generate significant displacement and civilian casualties in March, particularly in northwestern and southeastern Burma, with more than 1.4 million people displaced by insecurity nationwide between February 1, 2021 and March 27, the Office of the UN High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) reports. Across southeastern Burma—comprising Kayah, Kayin, and Mon; areas of southern Shan State; and Bago and Tanintharyi regions—more than 42,900 people remained displaced due to hostilities, as of March 27, according to UNHCR. Meanwhile in northwestern Burma, recurring airstrikes and military raids of villages continue to generate displacement and protection risks for civilians. Hostilities displaced 17,200 people in Sagaing and 11,400 people in Magway from mid- to late-March, bringing the total number of IDPs across northwest Burma to more than 940,000 people, as of March 27 according to UNHCR. Across violence-affected areas, recent hostilities—including airstrikes, heavy artillery fire, and village raids—have damaged or destroyed houses and public infrastructure, as well as displaced thousands of individuals to nearby areas where they remain in urgent need of emergency food, health, and shelter assistance. Since the February 2021 coup, MAF troops have burned more than 43,000 houses in Sagaing alone, representing an estimated 80 percent of all houses burned during armed attacks throughout the country since February 1, 2021, according to a humanitarian analysis organization.

In response to heightened humanitarian needs exacerbated by ongoing clashes across Burma, U.S. Government (USG) non-governmental organizations (NGOs) and UN agency partners continue to provide life-saving assistance to displaced and other violence-affected populations in Burma. Through local partners, alternative routes, and other means of overcoming ongoing access constraints, USAID/BHA partners reached nearly 800 violence-affected individuals in East Bago, Kayah, Kayin, and Tanintharyi with multipurpose cash assistance (MPCA) and approximately 630 IDPs in southeast Burma with non-food item (NFI) kits—containing blankets, clothing, and kitchen supplies—between February 27 and March 10. In Kayah State, USAID/BHA partner the UN World Food Program (WFP) reached more than 1,400 people with emergency food and nutrition assistance in March. During February, a USAID/BHA NGO partner provided MPCA to more than 10,000 households in Chin, Magway, and Sagaing.

### **March 5 Fire in Cox’s Bazar Secondarily Displaces 5,200 Rohingya Refugees**

A fire in a Cox's Bazar Rohingya refugee camp on March 5 quickly spread to camps nine, 10, and 12, displacing more than 5,200 Rohingya refugees and damaging or destroying more than 2,800 refugee shelters, as well as nearly 160 camp facilities—including health care centers, health posts, nutrition centers, and water, sanitation, and hygiene (WASH) infrastructure and learning centers—according to the Inter Sector Coordination Group. The Government of Bangladesh launched an investigation into the origin of the fire and assessments remained ongoing as of early April. Fire risks remain significant in the Rohingya refugee camps, as overcrowding and the construction of shelters with bamboo and tarpaulin, two highly flammable materials, remain pervasive and more than 200 fires were reported in the camps between January 2021 and December 2022, according to the Government of Bangladesh. Rohingya volunteer firefighting brigades—in coordination with local firefighters and government authorities—immediately responded to the incident and contained the fire within three hours, while the Government of Bangladesh and relief organizations deployed emergency medical teams to assist affected individuals. Between March 5 and 15, USAID/BHA partner WFP also distributed approximately 100,000 hot meals and more than 3,000 food kits to individuals affected by the fire. In addition, State/PRM partners BRAC, the International Organization for Migration (IOM), and the International Rescue Committee (IRC) responded immediately to provide essential health care services, more than 2,600 shelter kits—including blankets, mosquito nets, and solar lamps—and more than 8,000 gallons of safe drinking water to fire-affected households between March 5 and 15.

### **2023 JRP Targets 1.5 Million People for Humanitarian Assistance**

The UN 2023 Rohingya Humanitarian Crisis Joint Response Plan (JRP) requires approximately \$876 million to provide emergency food, health, livelihoods, nutrition, protection, shelter, and WASH assistance to approximately 1.5 million people in Cox's Bazar and Bhasan Char, a silt island in the Bay of Bengal, during the year. The 2023 JRP, which was released on March 7 aims to reach approximately 978,000 Rohingya refugees—of whom 95 percent remain entirely dependent on humanitarian assistance to meet their basic needs due to limited livelihood opportunities—and 495,000 host community members with multisector assistance during the year. The JRP indicates that priority needs among Rohingya refugees in Cox's Bazar and Bhasan Char include access to adequate and nutritious food, cooking fuel, education, shelter items as well as exposure to significant protection risks and a lack of livelihoods and skill-building opportunities. In addition, women and girls—comprising more than half of all refugees—continue to express concern regarding access to functional and safe latrines and reliable electricity in the Cox's Bazar camps and on Bhasan Char.

### **WFP Reduces Food Rations in Cox's Bazar Amid Funding Shortages**

On March 1, USAID/BHA partner WFP reduced the value of its monthly food vouchers for Rohingya refugees in Cox's Bazar camps from \$12 to \$10 per person due to insufficient funding, the UN agency reports. This decrease is expected to exacerbate food security concerns among the nearly one million Rohingya refugees living in Cox's Bazar. The ration cut allows WFP to continue providing food assistance to Rohingya refugees, though at a level insufficient to address current needs. An estimated 45 percent of refugee households in Cox's Bazar consume an insufficient diet, while 40 percent of children experience stunting, defined as low height-for-age resulting from chronic undernutrition, as of March 2, according to the UN. Relief actors have also expressed concern that the recent ration reductions could heighten insecurity in the Rohingya refugee camps and prompt affected households to adopt negative coping mechanisms, such as reducing the quality of nutritious food consumed by refugees, child labor and narcotics trafficking, as well as departing the Cox's Bazar refugee camps for third-countries via dangerous sea and land routes in search of improved livelihood opportunities. The USG continues to advocate for increased international donor funding to address the food assistance needs of Rohingya refugees in Bangladesh. Since 2017, USAID/BHA has provided nearly \$674 million to WFP for emergency food and complementary assistance to Rohingya refugees in Bangladesh, including nearly \$99 million in FY 2023.

## Rohingya Repatriation Program Aims to Return More Than 1,000 Refugees to Burma

Following negotiations between the Government of Bangladesh, the Government of the People's Republic of China, and military authorities from Burma in mid-March, relevant authorities agreed to a repatriation program which aims to return more than 1,000 Rohingya refugees from Bangladesh to Burma during the coming months, according to international media. The program would bring eligible refugees—individuals with proof of previous residence in Burma and a statement verifying their voluntary return—into western Rakhine State via two reentry centers in Rakhine's Maungdaw township, relief actors report. However, as of March 30 military authorities in Burma had not provided any details regarding Rohingya returnees length of stay in reentry centers upon arrival, the kind of assistance provided at these sites, and where Rohingya returnees would be relocated to once they leave the centers. UNHCR has also raised concerns that conditions in Rakhine are not currently conducive to the sustained return of Rohingya refugees, due to persistent humanitarian access restrictions that limit relief actors' ability to provide humanitarian assistance, as well as the ongoing conflict and widespread presence of explosive remnants of war and landmine contamination, which threaten the safety of civilians and humanitarian staff in the area. This repatriation program represents the fourth effort since 2018 to repatriate Rohingya refugees from Bangladesh to Burma, with past attempts in 2018, 2019, and 2021 unsuccessful.

### KEY FIGURES



**\$136.3  
Million**

In dedicated USAID/BHA  
FY 2023 support for  
food security activities



**6**

USG partners  
implementing stand-  
alone protection  
interventions in FY 2023

## U.S. GOVERNMENT RESPONSE

### FOOD SECURITY

USAID/BHA provides funding to WFP to deliver emergency food assistance—including cash transfers for food; food vouchers; and in-kind food assistance through local, regional, and international procurement (LRIP)—to populations in Burma and Bangladesh. USAID/BHA also supports complementary nutrition services, as well as coordination and capacity-building activities among other food security actors in the two countries to strengthen response efforts. In addition, State/PRM supports IOM, the UN Children's Fund (UNICEF), UNHCR, and NGO partners to deliver complementary livelihood and nutrition services to refugees and other vulnerable individuals in Bangladesh.

### PROTECTION

USAID/BHA and State/PRM support six humanitarian partners to address protection concerns among displaced and violence-affected populations throughout Burma; host communities and Rohingya refugees in Cox's Bazar; and Rohingya refugees residing across Southeast Asia. USG-supported protection activities in Burma and Bangladesh focus on increasing access to protection services such as gender-based violence prevention and response, child-friendly spaces, community-based mental health and psychosocial support, and legal assistance. USG partners also work with the broader humanitarian community in Burma to advocate for access to life-saving humanitarian assistance and promote the delivery of protection services in areas with significant humanitarian access constraints.



**70,000**

Households received tie-down kits from USG partners for cyclone and monsoon prevention

## SHELTER AND SETTLEMENTS

USAID/BHA works with partners in Bangladesh to enhance community resilience to cyclones and other natural disasters by conducting disaster risk reduction activities, as well as infrastructure rehabilitation in host communities in Bangladesh's Bandarban and Cox's Bazar districts. State/PRM-supported shelter assistance in Bangladesh includes emergency shelter repairs and distribution of shelter materials, such as plastic sheeting to prevent roof leaks, complemented by site coordination capacity-building activities. USG partners also provide cash assistance for host community members and refugees to purchase local shelter materials to improve the resilience of their living spaces to natural disasters. In Burma, UNHCR implements protection-sensitive shelter reconstruction in Rakhine by considering IDPs' specific needs in coordination with local actors.



**6**

USG partners implementing critical WASH programming in FY 2023

## WASH

The USG supports WASH programming in Cox's Bazar and Bhasan Char and in violence-affected areas of Burma to ensure access to safe drinking water and sanitation facilities, prevent communicable disease outbreaks, and mitigate the risk of wasting—the deadliest form of malnutrition—in children ages five years and younger and pregnant and lactating women. With State/PRM funding, BRAC, the International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies, IOM, Terre des Hommes Foundation, UNHCR, and UNICEF address critical WASH needs in Cox's Bazar by improving drainage and waste removal systems, installing handwashing stations and latrines, providing hygiene supplies and safe drinking water, and strengthening community awareness of proper WASH practices to reduce the spread of disease.

## CONTEXT IN BRIEF

- On February 1, 2021, Burma's military staged a coup d'état against the civilian government during which soldiers detained senior civilian government officials, including State Counselor Aung San Suu Kyi and President Win Myint, and announced a one-year state of emergency. In August 2021, military authorities extended the initial one-year state of emergency to August 2023. Since February 2021, clashes between the MAF, EAOs, and other local non-state armed groups across Burma have persisted, resulting in continuous displacement and humanitarian needs, particularly in southeastern and northwestern Burma, as well as in Kachin and Shan. Coup-related instability has also resulted in access challenges, restricted banking operations, and limited cash availability, challenging the provision of assistance by relief actors at a time of significant humanitarian need.
- Burma's military forces launched large-scale and indiscriminate military operations—which the USG has since characterized as genocide—in Rakhine's Buthidaung, Maungdaw, and Rathedaung townships following Arakan Rohingya Salvation Army attacks on northern Rakhine checkpoints and police posts in October 2016 and August 2017. More than 799,000 refugees—the majority of whom rely on

humanitarian assistance to meet their basic needs—had fled Burma since August 2017 into neighboring Bangladesh and taken shelter in Cox’s Bazar’s 34 refugee camps as of November 2022, UNHCR reports. Meanwhile Government of Bangladesh policies limit refugees’ access to basic education services, capacity to engage in income-earning activities, and freedom of movement. Refugees and host communities in Cox’s Bazar are also vulnerable to natural hazards, such as cyclones and flooding. Additionally, the Government of Bangladesh had relocated nearly 29,340 refugees from Cox’s Bazar to Bhasan Char between November 2020 and January 2023.

- As of January 2021, an estimated 600,000 ethnic Rohingya—a minority group not recognized by Burma’s military forces and denied rights to citizenship, freedom of movement, and public services—remained in Rakhine. Many IDPs in Rakhine are Rohingya, including approximately 144,000 people affected by the 2012 clashes who remained displaced as of May 2022. In addition, approximately 78,000 civilians, mostly ethnic Rakhine, remained displaced in Rakhine and Chin states as of mid-March 2022 due to clashes between the Arakan Army and the MAF that erupted in 2018. Displaced populations, as well as other vulnerable individuals, continue to lack access to basic services and livelihood opportunities due to persistent violence and associated movement restrictions.
- On December 28, 2021, U.S. Ambassador Thomas L. Vajda re-issued a DHN/disaster declaration for Burma due to the ongoing complex emergency. Additionally, on November 3, 2022, U.S. Ambassador Peter D. Haas issued a declaration of humanitarian need (DHN) for Bangladesh in response to ongoing humanitarian needs among Rohingya refugees host communities.

#### USAID/BHA HUMANITARIAN FUNDING FOR THE BURMA-BANGLADESH RESPONSE IN FY 2023<sup>1,2</sup>

| IMPLEMENTING PARTNER                                                                                      | ACTIVITY                                                                                                                                | LOCATION                                                   | AMOUNT               |
|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|------------------------------------------------------------|----------------------|
| <b>FUNDING IN BURMA FOR THE REGIONAL CRISIS RESPONSE</b>                                                  |                                                                                                                                         |                                                            |                      |
| USAID/BHA                                                                                                 |                                                                                                                                         |                                                            |                      |
| Implementing Partners                                                                                     | MPCA, Nutrition, Protection, WASH                                                                                                       | Kayah, Magway, Rakhine, Sagaing, Shan                      | \$4,100,000          |
| UN Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA)                                             | Humanitarian Coordination, Information Management, and Assessments (HCIMA)                                                              | Countrywide                                                | \$1,500,000          |
| WFP                                                                                                       | Food Assistance—LRIP; Nutrition                                                                                                         | Chin, Kachin, Kayah, Kayin, Magway, Rakhine, Shan, Sagaing | \$50,000,000         |
|                                                                                                           | Program Support                                                                                                                         |                                                            | \$3,100              |
| <b>TOTAL USAID/BHA FUNDING IN BURMA</b>                                                                   |                                                                                                                                         |                                                            | <b>\$55,603,100</b>  |
| <b>FUNDING IN BANGLADESH FOR THE REGIONAL CRISIS RESPONSE</b>                                             |                                                                                                                                         |                                                            |                      |
| USAID/BHA                                                                                                 |                                                                                                                                         |                                                            |                      |
| WFP                                                                                                       | Disaster Risk Reduction Policy and Practice (DRRPP); Food Assistance—Food Vouchers; Logistics Support and Relief Commodities; Nutrition | Cox's Bazar                                                | \$98,800,000         |
|                                                                                                           | Program Support                                                                                                                         |                                                            | \$30,960             |
| <b>TOTAL USAID/BHA FUNDING IN BANGLADESH</b>                                                              |                                                                                                                                         |                                                            | <b>\$98,830,960</b>  |
| <b>TOTAL USG HUMANITARIAN FUNDING FOR THE BURMA AND BANGLADESH REGIONAL CRISIS IN FY 2023<sup>3</sup></b> |                                                                                                                                         |                                                            | <b>\$154,434,060</b> |

<sup>1</sup> Year of funding indicates the date of commitment or obligation, not appropriation, of funds. USAID/BHA and State/PRM funding includes funding for both refugees from Burma and asylum-seekers in the region, as well as IDPs inside Burma. Funding does not include USAID/BHA support for activities in Bangladesh that are not related to the Rohingya refugee response.

<sup>2</sup> Estimated value of food assistance and transportation costs at time of procurement; subject to change.

<sup>3</sup> USG funding for populations in Burma and Bangladesh affected by the violence in Rakhine totals nearly \$2.1 billion—including more than \$1.6 billion in Bangladesh and nearly \$409 million in Burma—since the outbreak of violence in August 2017. This includes more than \$1 billion in State/PRM funding and more than \$1 billion in USAID/BHA funding for populations affected by the violence in Rakhine and other vulnerable populations. USG funding represents publicly announced funding as of April 4, 2023.

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## PUBLIC DONATION INFORMATION

- The most effective way people can assist relief efforts is by making cash contributions to humanitarian organizations that are conducting relief operations. A list of humanitarian organizations that are accepting cash donations for disaster responses around the world can be found at [interaction.org](https://interaction.org).
- USAID encourages cash donations because they allow aid professionals to procure the exact items needed, often in the affected region; reduce the burden on scarce resources, such as transportation routes, staff time, and warehouse space; can be transferred very quickly and without transportation costs; support the economy of the disaster-stricken region; and ensure culturally, dietarily, and environmentally appropriate assistance.
- More information can be found at:
  - USAID Center for International Disaster Information: [cidi.org](https://cidi.org)
  - Information on relief activities of the humanitarian community can be found at [reliefweb.int](https://reliefweb.int).

USAID/BHA bulletins appear on the USAID website at [usaid.gov/humanitarian-assistance/where-we-work](https://www.usaid.gov/humanitarian-assistance/where-we-work)