

Rohingya Crisis in Bangladesh: Our Nonstop Aid to Refugee Children and Families Continuing As Monsoon Downpours Begin Flooding Camps

June 2018

“The monsoon is a big concern for me. I’m an adult so I know that I can walk away from danger, but my son is just a small child, so he can’t run away. I am so worried about him.”

--Father in a camp in Cox’s Bazar District

The Emergency

The fears of aid agencies like Save the Children and others providing lifesaving relief to Rohingya refugees in Bangladesh are coming true. Drenching monsoon rains have started in the Cox’s Bazar District, turning camps where some 915,000 refugee children and adults from Myanmar are living into sodden acres of ankle-deep mud and lakes of contaminated water.

Already, over 2,000 families have had their flimsy shelters of bamboo and plastic damaged by torrential rain, high winds and landslides. On June 13, the Inter Sector Coordinating Group also reported damage to latrines, which will increase the risks of water-borne diseases in camps, and limited road access, making aid deliveries of food and essential supplies even more difficult.

Our staff in Cox’s Bazar tell of families who have lost their shelters seeking refuge from the rains at our temporary learning centers and child-friendly spaces in camps. Our main concern is that across the three main camps, 185,000 refugees are living in areas that are in danger of flooding and mudslides.

The United Nations is predicting that up to one-third of the Kutapalong Camp, which is home to 623,000 refugees, could be under water this monsoon season. What was already a children’s emergency is now



A family crosses a bamboo footbridge over a ditch of water in a camp in Cox’s Bazar. *Save the Children Photo*

growing worse, as children’s survival is a day-to-day proposition.

The monsoon is expected to dump up to 9 feet of water on Cox’s Bazar. There is also a one-in-four chance of a strong cyclone striking the district. The odds of a tropical storm, which would also wreak havoc, are greater than one in three.

Save the Children has been preparing for the chaos of the monsoon season even as we continue working nonstop to help meet Rohingya children and families’ urgent needs.

Your flexible funding will help us address urgent needs across the camps now and as conditions deteriorate, which will lead to even greater suffering and risks to children. Our teams are

closely monitoring conditions in camps in Cox's Bazar and are prepared to react immediately using your support.

Our Humanitarian Mission

We are working around the clock in Cox's Bazar to alleviate urgent needs. Since our expanded relief mission began in late August 2017, we have reached over 611,000 children and adults.

Monsoon Preparations

We recognized the dangers that the monsoon poses to refugees months ago, and have worked alongside the Government of Bangladesh and our partners to ramp up emergency preparedness.

We pre-positioned shelter and hygiene kits, medical supplies, food and materials for our child protection and education work. We upgraded and strengthened our health posts and child friendly spaces. We improved critical infrastructure like drains and bridges, reinforced landslide-prone hillsides with sandbags and helped communities develop cyclone preparedness plans to make sure people can react effectively once a cyclone warning is given.

Our Bangladesh staff are now working to ensure that our health posts remain open and accessible. We also distributed over 300 more emergency shelter kits to very vulnerable families.

Our top priorities are to save lives, protect families' shelters and vital infrastructure and ensure that all our services can continue in structures that are safe for children.

Ongoing Relief for Children

Emergency Health

Many refugees are in poor health. Crowded conditions in camps and poor water and sanitation create ideal conditions for disease outbreaks.

Our 9 health posts provide critical primary health care services. The posts together see around 1,000 people daily. Each has highly trained staff including a



Mohammed holds his son, Sadeque*, 2. They live near a Save the Children health post in their camp and one of our distribution points, where they received a hygiene kit. "This is the first time I have received a hygiene kit ... I am very happy we are getting this for free because we have no money here, so we can't buy these things ourselves. The hygiene kit has soap, washing detergent, and lots of things to clean with. We are very thankful to Save the Children," he told our staff. We have also provided the family with material for shelter and cooking.

Save the Children Photo

**names changed to protect privacy*

doctor, paramedics and a midwife. We also have a 20-bed primary care center to provide 24/7 in-patient care.

Food Aid

Virtually all Rohingya in camps depend on food aid. We are a lead partner of the World Food Program and work around the clock to distribute food to almost two-thirds of the entire Rohingya refugee population.

Nutrition

Malnutrition levels remain extremely worrying, especially for young children. Assessments continue to show that nearly one in six children under age 5 suffers from acute malnutrition.

We have outpatient nutrition services integrated into our health clinics to screen and treat malnourished children and pregnant and lactating women. Our

nutrition team also runs “mother-baby” areas to educate mothers on safe and appropriate feeding practices for their youngest children. We also provide nutritious food to the most vulnerable children and mothers.

Shelter and other Non-food Aid

Most Rohingya families live under plastic sheets and bamboo poles.

Over 33,000 families have received our shelter kits. To help families during the monsoon, we distributed some 4,000 shelter upgrade kits to help make shelters more durable.

Water and Sanitation

Water and sanitary services cannot keep up with demand. A recent World Health Organization survey found that that over 75 percent of water sources and household containers tested positive for E.coli bacteria. We’ve provided over 41,000 hygiene kits to families to help them maintain good hygiene practices. We have constructed over 800 latrines and over 60 wells and organized and trained water and sanitary committees.

Protecting Children from Harm

Many children are traumatized and have seen things that no child should ever witness. Parents have told us their children are afraid that they will be attacked again. Unaccompanied children are at grave risk of exploitation. Our trained team identifies children who are alone, supports family tracing and reunification and arranges for foster care for unaccompanied children. We have safe spaces where unaccompanied children can receive 24-hour protection while attempts are made to find family members. We run 82 child-friendly spaces and 10 “girl-friendly” spaces, where children can play, receive emotional support and feel a sense of normalcy.

Emergency Education

While the Bangladesh government does not support formal education for Rohingya children, it does allow nonformal learning activities.

Over 11,500 children attend activities at our 115 temporary learning centers. As of mid-June, all were open and safely functioning despite the monsoon.

Why Save the Children?

Save the Children has worked in Bangladesh since 1970. We are a leading humanitarian organization for children there, with expertly trained staff and proven programs to respond to emergencies. We now have over 1,600 staff and volunteers supporting our programs in child protection, access to education, health and nutrition, water and sanitation services, as well as distributions of shelter and food items.

Here are some of the other ways that differentiate us from others responding to this crisis:

- We integrate activities across programs to maximize results. For example, our response to a recent diphtheria outbreak included activities built into our health, nutrition, education and child protection programs.
- Save the Children and UNICEF co-lead the education “cluster” of responding agencies, which ensures that all agencies are providing the same level of services to children and there is no duplication of work.
- We are viewed by others as a leader in addressing malnutrition among very young children. This included launching our first-ever pilot project in an emergency to address malnutrition among infants.
- We have community mobilizers – 80 percent of whom are Rohingya – who help us by informing refugee families about our services, following up on children treated for malnutrition and spreading information in camps about preparing for floods and cyclones.

Ten percent of your generous gift goes to helping our emergency teams prepare for and provide critical assistance when and where children need us the most.