

## Half a million Rohingya arrive in Bangladesh; UN agencies rush to provide shelter, clean water

29 September 2017 – The United Nations refugee agency announced today that it has started distributing plastic sheeting and essential relief items to Rohingyas arriving in from Myanmar into neighbouring Bangladesh, as part of a massive effort to cut the time refugees spend in the open.

“The latest estimate of the number of Rohingya who have arrived in Bangladesh since violence erupted in Myanmar has [crossed the half million mark](#), at 501,000 as of Thursday,” Andrej Mahecic, spokesperson for the Office of the UN High Commissioner for Refugees ([UNHCR](#)), told reporters at today’s regular press briefing in Geneva.

“Giving the newly arrived refugees the ability to construct their own shelter, begin cooking for themselves and taking care of their families is an important first step on the road to healing,” he added.

The 2,000-acre (809 hectare) extension site on the outskirts of Kutupalong Camp in southeast Bangladesh is becoming more organized, turning into a series of communities as UNHCR and its partners supporting the Bangladesh Government deliver more emergency relief items.

From its \$4.2 million budget, UNHCR is contributing \$2 million to support Bangladesh in constructing a road for easier aid delivery into Kutupalong extension site and shipping in 23 vehicles to assist aid efforts.

UNHCR nutrition experts estimate that approximately 18 per cent of new arrivals suffer from acute malnutrition.

“This is due to more than lack of food,” said Mr. Mahecic. “We witness dire need for psycho-social support and counselling among refugees,” he said adding that many breastfeeding mothers are “severely traumatised, sick and malnourished.”

UNHCR is working with its partner Action Against Hunger to provide warm meals as private donors conduct ad hoc food distributions, which is also becoming more structured.

“As Bangladesh shoulders the full extent of this refugee crisis, UNHCR calls on all countries in the region to show solidarity and do their part in keeping their borders open and protecting refugees who are fleeing discrimination, persecution and violence in Myanmar,” concluded Mr. Mahecic.

***UN Migration agency reports at least 23 dead in Bay of Bengal boat tragedy***

More tragic details have emerged about [yesterdays’ reports](#) that Rohingya refugees died when the boat they were using to reach safety in Bangladesh

capsized in the Bay of Bengal's rough seas. An International Organization for Migration (IOM) [local field team](#) travelled to the scene to assist survivors and assess any further response needed. Today, they report that, having checked with police and the owner of a grocery shop located close to where the incident occurred, the total confirmed dead is now 23.

#### ***Clean water and sanitation needed***

Meanwhile, IOM is partnering with UNHCR and other aid agencies to [provide clean water and sanitation](#) for an estimated half a million people who have fled to Cox's Bazar in Bangladesh.

As tens of thousands of new arrivals live with little or no shelter, food or access to healthcare, daily rain flooding campsites has left pools of water – numerous contaminated with faecal matter – as the only accessible water source, posing a lethal threat of waterborne diseases like cholera.

The Inter Sector Coordination Group, which, hosted by IOM, is managing the response, says that approximately 59 million litres of safe water are now needed every day to meet the basic needs of the new arrivals.

Since the influx began on 25 August, IOM has installed 1,532 emergency latrines in three sites to serve some 19,350 people and 17 mobile toilets to serve an estimated 850 people.

The IOM Water, Sanitation and Hygiene (WASH) team has also bored six deep tube wells, with installation completion due in two weeks to provide 3,000 people in the Kutupalong expansion site with clean water.

While agencies have been able to reach only 141,070 people in Cox's Bazar with WASH assistance, its engineers say some 18,000 emergency latrines are needed as basic emergency sanitation for all the new arrivals.