

Press release: UK leads international support for Rohingya crisis at landmark conference

The UK has increased its own support for innocent families who have been forced to flee relentless violence in Burma and make the treacherous journey to Bangladesh to find refuge. This is an increase from £35 million to £47 million (US \$63 million) committed since the end of August, including £5 million to match the generous donations of the UK public to the Disaster Emergency Committee appeal.

Ahead of the landmark international pledging conference, which took place in Geneva today (Monday 23 October 2017), the UK had given more than a third of the overall money donated by the international community and the International Development Secretary Priti Patel called on other countries to follow the UK's lead and step up their support.

At the conference today countries including Sweden, Australia, Denmark and the UAE, have in total pledged over \$300 million. This reaches over half of the total funding required to meet urgent humanitarian needs as set out in the UN appeal. Countries are continuing to pledge.

International Development Secretary Priti Patel said:

The international community has followed the UK's lead and stepped up support which is absolutely vital to save the lives of victims of the world's fastest growing humanitarian crisis.

UK aid is helping hundreds of thousands of people who have lost everything and our further support announced today will relieve the suffering of thousands more.

Ethnic cleansing, sexual violence, starvation and the murder of children have no place in our world. Today's pledges are only just the start, and the world cannot afford to wait as innocent men, women and children continue to lose their lives.

Minister of State for the Foreign and Commonwealth Office Mark Field said:

During my recent visits to Burma and Bangladesh, I saw for myself some of the communities which have been so badly damaged by what is happening in Burma.

I am delighted to be in Geneva to announce the UK's latest contribution of £12 million to the Burma crisis response. Alongside the £30 million we provided to meet the urgent humanitarian need,

and the £5 million of public donations that the UK matched pound for pound for the Disasters Emergency Committee Appeal, the total contribution of the UK government is now £47 million.

I hope that the international community will continue to unite with the UK in its efforts, and help bring an end to this terrible humanitarian crisis.

Today's announcement of extra support builds on existing UK aid which is already helping to provide:

- Emergency food to 174,000 people;
- Lifesaving nutritional support to more than 60,000 children under-five and over 21,000 pregnant and breastfeeding women;
- Safe drinking water, emergency latrines and hygiene kits for more than 138,000 people;
- Essential items including soap, cooking utensils and water cans for over 131,000 people;
- Emergency shelter for over 130,000 people and support to make shelters more resilient to rain and heavy winds for 450,000 people as the cyclone season approaches;
- Access to female bathing cubicles and sanitary items for more than 35,000 girls and women;
- Counselling and psychological support for over 10,000 women suffering from the trauma of war and over 2,000 survivors of sexual violence;
- Medical help for over 50,000 pregnant women to give birth safely.

With UK aid support in Bangladesh, malnourished children on the brink of death are now able to eat, families who have been forced to live out in the open after their villages were burned are getting shelter and clean drinking water is helping stop the spread of disease.

Our existing work in the region meant that we were already in position to provide life-saving support when the crisis flared – without this, aid would have taken much longer to arrive.

The UK is also leading the charge to reform the humanitarian system, to ensure the international community responds efficiently and effectively to crises, pooling resources together rather than competing and working in isolation.

Notes to Editors:

1. Prior to the conference the UN appeal for the Rohingya crisis was just 24% funded, with over a third of the \$106 million pledged coming from the UK. A total of \$434 million is needed overall.
2. The UK is appalled by the inhumane violence that has taken place in Rakhine State, which has forced nearly 600,000 people to leave everything behind in Burma and make the perilous journey to Bangladesh.

3. The events in Rakhine look like ethnic cleansing. The Burmese authorities need to stop the violence and ensure immediate access into northern Rakhine so that UK aid can provide a lifeline to those still suffering in Rakhine State. Unacceptable intimidation and restrictions on the movement of humanitarian workers must be ended. Burma must work with international partners to put in place the conditions that will allow people to return to their homes safely, with dignity and hope for the future.
4. Recognising the unprecedented scale of the crisis in Bangladesh and Burma, the UK has been a leader in responding – in speed and size – providing an addition £47 million since August to help meet the urgent humanitarian needs of innocent men, women and children who have been forced to flee the relentless violence and atrocities in Burma, and make the treacherous journey to Bangladesh to seek refuge. We are working with international partners including UNICEF, IOM, UNHCR and World Food Programme to deliver this on the ground. The UK is also providing £1m to the Red Cross in Burma, the only organisation that currently has access to Northern Rakhine.
5. Alongside this, the UK Government is matching pound for pound £5 million raised by the Disasters Emergency Committee (DEC) Appeal for people fleeing the violence and destruction in Burma, doubling the impact of the public's own donations and ensuring that charities working on the ground can reach even more people in need.