

UN migration chief urges more support for Rohingyas fleeing Myanmar or 'thousands will suffer'

19 October 2017 – The United Nations migration agency and its partners are supporting Bangladesh in coordinating assistance for the influx of hundreds of thousands of Rohingya refugees, including with clean water and sanitation, shelter, food and psychosocial care for the most vulnerable.

The world has rarely witnessed [a refugee crisis of such speed](#), with more than half a million crossing into Bangladesh in just over a month, said William Lacy Swing, Director General of the International Organization for Migration (IOM), on Wednesday, as he completed a three-day visit to Bangladesh.

The arc of misery that exists between Northern Rakhine state and Cox's Bazar is deeply upsetting – too many people suffering desperately with too little support, he said, adding that just two days ago, some 1,500 more Rohingya refugees waded through a river as monsoon rains drenched the country.

The Bangladesh Government has confirmed that it will move an estimated 15,000 people currently stranded in a so-called 'no man's land' near the Anjuman Para border crossing point in Cox's Bazar's Ukhia District, into more appropriate settlement areas.

Director General Swing began his visit with a day-long tour of the makeshift settlements in Ukhia and Teknaf sub-districts, where an estimated 800,000 refugees are now living, to observe the scale of the crisis and the sheer enormity of needs.



William Lacy Swing, the Director General of the International Organization for Migration (IOM), visits Rohingya refugees at makeshift settlements in Bangladesh's Cox's Bazar. Photo: IOM

I saw women carrying small babies, only a few days old, sometimes born while their young mothers were fleeing deadly violence in torrential rains. I saw young children, who had lost not just their parents, but any remnants of hope, Mr. Swing stated.

He called for global commitment to these women and children, who are among the most vulnerable in the world, to do everything possible to ensure that their suffering stops here. If adequate resources are not mobilized by the international community, we cannot make that commitment. Thousands will suffer without food, shelter, health care and protection, he emphasized.

We must make a commitment to these women and children, who are among the most vulnerable in the world, that we will do everything in our ability to ensure that their suffering stops here.

Based on the recommendations of the Advisory Commission on Rakhine State established by Myanmar's Office of the State Counsellor and the Kofi Annan Foundation, the Director General highlighted the critical importance of a peaceful resolution to the crisis.

“Humanitarian aid alone is not a solution. The root causes of this crisis are in Myanmar and there can be no lasting peace in Rakhine without inclusive development,” he said, pointing to the recommendations as a roadmap to peaceful co-existence and welcoming the Myanmar Government's commitment to implementing the Commission's findings.

“The first step in that implementation process will be to urgently allow UN agencies to resume their work in Rakhine state,” Mr. Swing said.

Since late August, IOM has scaled up quickly, providing: shelter to 379,000 people; health consultations to 47,000 individuals; over 11,000 dignity kits; 678,000 litres of water; and 200 staff to assist the Health Ministry in vaccinating 679,000 people against cholera. IOM staffing has also been boosted with 443 staff and in-country volunteers.