



Humanitarian Response for Rohingya Refugees in Cox's Bazar

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| Implementing partner: | Multi-and Bilateral Partners / SDC self-implementation |
| Phase Budget / SDC contribution: | CHF 50 million (2017 – present, including IC projects) |
| Modality: | Financial contributions / Expertise / Direct Implementation |

General description:

Following the outbreak of violence in 2017 in Myanmar's Rakhine State, more than 700,000 people have fled to and sought refuge in Bangladesh. At present, 902,798 Rohingya refugees live in 33 overcrowded camps in Ukhiya and Teknaf Upazilas of Cox's Bazar District and 30,000 in Bhasan Char.¹ Besides, approximately 495,431 people that are residing in the surrounding host communities have been the most affected by the presence of the Rohingya refugees and are also in need of humanitarian support. In an effort to contribute to the alleviation of suffering, Switzerland has re-activated its humanitarian commitment in Bangladesh and contributed a total of CHF 50 million from September 2017 to August 2023 .

The humanitarian portfolio comprises of multi-and bilateral partnerships as well as one direct action. Furthermore, Switzerland has seconded technical experts to international organisations to strengthen the humanitarian response. It links humanitarian and development approaches (nexus) through a joint analysis of the rapidly-changing situation on the ground, joint funding of medium-term activities, seeking for complementarities of the instruments through addressing the needs of both refugee and host population. Jointly financed projects in the past have addressed the needs of refugee and host communities in Water, Sanitation and Hygiene (WASH), as well as in health.

Switzerland's humanitarian response aims at saving lives and alleviating suffering of the host and refugee communities in Cox's Bazar district. Its engagement aligns with the Joint Response Plans (JRP). The JRP 2023, which appealed for a budget of USD 876 million², set out a comprehensive programme shaped around three strategic objectives: enhance protection, provide life-saving assistance and foster social cohesion among Rohingya and host communities. According to a recently signed MoU between the UN and GoB, the JRP 2023 will cover Cox's Bazar and Bhasan Char.

Lines of Action / Components:

- Switzerland contributes to UN and partner organisations, where majority of the contributions support UN organisations (WFP, IOM, UNHCR, UNWomen and UNICEF). Furthermore, Switzerland has supported International/Swiss NGOs (such as Action Contre la Faim, HEKS, Helvetas, Solidarités International, Médecins du Monde, Norwegian Refugee Council, Legal Action Worldwide and Swiss Red Cross). These organisations work in the fields of food security and nutrition, safe drinking water, shelter, sanitation and hygiene, as well health, environment and protection.
- Switzerland has also provided in-kind contributions such as tents, tarpaulins, health equipment and WASH material to the UN and NGO partners. Through its direct action in the health sector, Switzerland was able to improve the standard of and the access to health services in the Cox's Bazar area through supplying medical equipment and enhancing a blood-donation system and infrastructure. In collaboration with the Department of Public Health Engineering (DPHE), a contribution to the improvement of health conditions of vulnerable host communities and Rohingya refugees is made by empowering DPHE in its role to lead the WASH sector and manage the provision of drinking water supply, as well as waste water and solid waste management services. More specifically Switzerland has helped DPHE set-up a faecal sludge laboratory (equipment, training, etc.) to analyse effluent waters of faecal sludge treatment plants

¹ Joint Response Plan 2023, https://reliefweb.int/attachments/f421e91f-6a0e-4bf6-8514-d8ad24e28c96/bangladesh_2023_jrp_rhc_appeal_en.pdf

² Joint Response Plan 2023 is only 24 percent funded, <https://www.unhcr.org/news/press-releases/bangladesh-unhcr-deputy-high-commissioner-calls-urgent-support-rohingya>



Embassy of Switzerland in Bangladesh

which is operational since January 2022.

- A total of 25 experts from Swiss Humanitarian Aid (SHA) have been engaged in this crisis to-date, including in site-planning of camps, improvement of the water and sanitation installations, and cash-based-transfer interventions.

Reflection of HA portfolio and vision:

- Switzerland understands protection through a broader context encompassing the lack of future opportunities, education, livelihoods and consistent hopelessness about the future for the Rohingya refugees. The protection portfolio of Switzerland addresses many of the prevailing challenges. GBV and gender are central aspects of the protection portfolio connecting different projects together and thus putting Swiss international priorities on gender equality and GBV protection in practice. Where possible, self-reliance, enhanced participation and inclusions are supported through initiatives that strengthen a rights-based approach to programming and access to justice for the survivors of GBV.
- Through the engagement in the WASH sector, Switzerland will contribute in strengthening elements that can protect the environment from further degrading, and contribute to climate change mitigation. Furthermore, the WASH activities are also seen as part of protection in terms of improved environmental, communal and individual well-being and, thus supporting the longer-term development goals and social coexistence amongst the refugee and host communities.
- Overall, the Swiss (protection) portfolio contributes to empowerment, access to rights, dialogue between communities and a strengthened community-based approach which in the long-term are needed assets for the Rohingya communities, regardless of the durable solutions that are eventually found.
- Additionally, the portfolio comprises the elements of nexus (peace-development-humanitarian) in order to pave the way for strengthened regional collaboration in the future in terms of enhanced Rohingya voices and participation that support durable solutions, access to rights and broader community coexistence.
- In 2023 and looking ahead toward 2024, Switzerland will continue to focus its intervention on the nexus in Bangladesh. As the Rohingya response has been categorised as a protracted crisis, this provides the space for Switzerland to shift its strategy from short-term humanitarian interventions to longer term development minded programming which seek to support the capacity and well-being of the Rohingya during their stay in Bangladesh and hopefully for their eventual voluntary, safe, and sustainable return to Myanmar. Within Switzerland's response the thematic areas of protection and WASH/Solid Waste management will remain central to Switzerland's work.
- Within the larger humanitarian context, Switzerland is also seeking to enhance its work on Climate Change and Environment as part of the 30% target. As part of the Rohingya crisis response, Switzerland is looking for innovative and nature-based solutions which can help address the impact nearly 1 million refugee camp has had on what was previously a natural forest reserve. Programming will build on Bangladesh's climate change commitment and Switzerland humanitarian and development expertise for fostering a CCE strategy that prioritises climate change adaptation for both the Rohingyas and host communities.