



Since 25 August 2017, more than 700 000 Rohingya refugees fled Myanmar to seek safety in Cox's Bazar, which increased the total number of refugees to 908 000. The rapid population increase placed a heavy strain on local natural resources, service provision and infrastructure. In particular, forest and water resources were severely depleted, and agricultural land has been lost to continuously spreading camps. Due to massive deforestation the population is exposed to an increased risk of landslides and flash floods, in an area which already experiences one of the world's highest rates of climate-related disasters.

In response, FAO is working with the Government of Bangladesh and humanitarian partners to support refugees and host communities in crop production, sustainable fisheries, alternative fuel provision and reforestation activities in Teknaf and Ukhiya Upazilas. FAO's early work included distributing Liquid Petroleum Gas (LPG), along with fire-safety awareness training, to camps and host communities to reduce firewood demand and curb deforestation. This also frees women and children from harvesting firewood, avoiding gender-based violence in faraway forests. This intervention supports FAO's longer-term reforestation and land stabilization efforts to prevent landslides and flash floods.

FAO was present conducting forestry assessments when the influx began. The resulting fast operational scale up, including being one of the first actors to support host communities as well as refugees. This was critical to mitigate growing tensions and support social cohesion between the communities.

To date, FAO has provided agricultural and food production support and food security assistance to more than 87 800 refugee and host community households (395 000 people).

Achievements to date

Livelihoods support includes providing power tillers, water pumps, threshers and sprayers to produce new varieties of crops, and micro-gardening kits to improve nutrition. Airtight food storage drums were provided to protect food from the elements, pests and mould. FAO distributed carp fingerlings and fish feed to provide alternative income sources in an increasing tight labour market. FAO's field schools training, planning and management aims to ensure high-value crop production, focusing on climate-smart agriculture and linking production to new markets.

In numbers



FAO requires
USD 12.7 million



to reach
350 000 people
in 2019



FAO is training host communities through farmer field schools to increase food production for sale to refugee markets, both boosting local income and improving refugees' nutrition.

In a situation where competition for scarce resources can cause resentment, FAO's work – supporting both refugees and host communities – builds social cohesion and sustains peace.

Priorities for 2019

Coordination in the response

- Linking emergency response actors with the Departments of Forestry, Agricultural Extension, Livestock and Fisheries, as well as the Office of the Refugee Relief and Repatriation Commission to ensure government priorities on environmental degradation and local farmer support are addressed.
- Providing technical support and leadership to the Food Security Sector, the Livelihoods Working Group and the Energy and Environment Technical Working Group.

Farm-to-market support to increase local food production and market development

- Providing fisheries and agricultural inputs and safe storage for food and tools.
- Introducing climate-smart and nutrition-sensitive technologies and building skills.
- Working with the World Food Programme (WFP) to link host community agricultural production with refugee markets, providing income.

Environmental restoration and disaster risk reduction

- Focusing on watershed management, water source protection and reforestation of denuded areas.
- Cash for work for environmental resilience building and disaster risk reduction.
- Investing in water use planning and conservation with communities and local and district governments.

Many of FAO's activities are implemented within the framework of the SAFE Plus (Safe Access to Fuel and Energy) project, in partnership with the International Organization for Migration, WFP and the United Nations Development Programme. This three-year multi-sectoral, multi-partner project addresses cooking fuel needs, environmental restoration and improves food security and livelihoods.

FAO is committed to continuing its immediate and longer-term support for refugees and host communities through a five-year Resilience Strategy, which is being designed with the Government to ensure local capacity and ownership to drive processes and ensure locally owned outcomes.



In an increasingly competitive labour market, FAO is training host communities in fish pond cultivation to provide an alternative source of income.



To ensure enough planting materials are available for reforestation to prevent landslides and flash floods, FAO is developing a network of plant nurseries in host communities.

Resource partners

Canada, the International Organization for Migration (with Japan and the United States of America funding), Ireland, the Netherlands, Norway and Sweden.

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