



CHILDREN ON THE EDGE - ROHINGYA CRISIS RESPONSE

FIELD UPDATE - NOVEMBER 2017

BACKGROUND

The forced migration of thousands of Rohingya into Bangladesh is continuing, with mounting evidence of massacres which are increasingly classified as genocide. Over 700,000 Rohingya have crossed the border to Bangladesh, joining an estimated 400,000 that were already present in the country before August. The situation, on a human-rights level, is the most appalling we have ever encountered.

While the influx of Rohingya refugees showed some signs of abatement in the first week of November, the numbers have spiked sharply again in the following two weeks.

- Kutupalong is currently divided into approximately 26 blocks, over 3,500 acres, with a population of 325,000 at the last count. This will likely merge into Balukhali camp soon, making the population count over 400,000.
- The population density is 66,000 people per km sq. (roughly the same as Manila - the world's most densely populated city, without the space created by high rise buildings).
- The government are looking at other areas for Rohingya communities to move into. It is possible that the 'mega camp' will become 12-15 separate camps in the future. They are also negotiating repatriation, though no refugee we have spoken to in the last few weeks would consider a return to Rakhine after the horror they have been through at the hands of the military.

As is common in situations of crisis, the primary issue facing relief efforts in the camps is one of **coordination**. This, coupled with the understandable urgency to demonstrate expedient results to donors, has led to a wealth of rash decisions and poorly delivered services across multiple sectors. This update reflects how we are working to avoid these pitfalls in each area of provision.



FOOD DISTRIBUTION

THE SITUATION

Despite the continued tendency for numerous organisations to arrive with large trucks of food to give out on a haphazard basis, and an influx of ‘poverty tourists’ making their way into the camp for ‘selfies’ with refugees, by and large there is consistent food provision throughout each section of the camp.

The main gaps to address have been those refugees who have the least resources, or who have trouble signing up to a current programme. We met many new arrivals that had been kept in holding centres for days with very meagre provisions.

OUR RESPONSE

We initially budgeted to provide food for 4,000 families; however, through some resourceful procurement by our staff we were able to stretch those funds to provide supplies to 5,800 families.

Our distribution happens in partnership with the World Food Programme (WFP) who are responsible for co-ordination.

We prepared to steer away from the delivery of white rice, which is widely provided, but lacking in nutrition. Instead we aimed to focus on providing vitamin supplements, until the government determined that vitamins can only be distributed by doctors, via medical centres.

Consequently, each food parcels contains **4 kg of lentils, 4.5 litres of soybean oil, 0.5 kg of salt, 1kg of sugar and five oral rehydration sachets**. WFP also add in 25kg of rice.

Preference is given to the newest arrivals, identified in the areas with least resources. They are all families who are not yet signed up with the WFP or any other feeding programs.



SOLAR LIGHT PROVISION

THE SITUATION

Our initial relief budget included a significant allocation for cash transfers to heads of households, to procure household supplies. Numerous studies have verified that cash transfers are a uniquely effective way to alleviate suffering in critical response situations. In spite of that evidence, Bangladeshi government officials have banned cash transfers.

Solar lights are common in Myanmar as there is light infrastructure in place for Rohingya people. Some families have come across with their own lamps but many are without a source of light for the evening. This is problematic for cooking and other tasks, and makes travel around the camp dangerous at night.

OUR RESPONSE

To transition the budget line of the cash transfers to something useful we chose to provide portable solar lighting to approximately 5,333 families.

We have ordered strong, robust units which are expected to arrive in the first week of December. Project Staff will visit houses and select families with no suitable source of light. The seven day distribution will take place in a similar manner to food distribution, with 800 lights being distributed per day.

- Lamps provide 1,000 lumens of light, sufficient to light most shelters in the camp.
- They are heavy-duty and water-proof, with a five year battery life.
- They come with a hook allowing them to be hung from rooftops, but also have a hand strap, making them portable enough for camp residents to walk with at night time





WATER AND SANITATION

THE SITUATION

Currently, the camps are littered with hastily constructed latrines and tube wells, each proudly bearing the sticker of the donating agency. The problem emerging is that both latrines and wells are being dug at too shallow a level and are not being maintained.

Government surveys have shown that many **tube wells** have already dried up and more are expected to become inactive due to high use and the affects of dry season. Many are not certified as clean. Commonly, manure is used as a lubricant for the digging process, and many have not had the 'shock chlorination' treatment required.

Latrines pose the most immediate risk. According to ACF (Action Contre La Faim), who coordinate the WASH committee for the camps, approximately 70% of the newly dug latrines were dug at a far too shallow level. By their estimates, around 1 in 3 latrines in the camp are already at, or near capacity and there is no indication of follow-on maintenance.

In terms of the disposal of waste, without the creation of secondary health risks, issues are not being addressed by either the donors (who are pressuring agencies to construct facilities rapidly) or the agencies (who tend to build large numbers of latrines and walk away). We saw countless numbers of latrines built at elevation with visible seepage below them, or constructed near both running and stagnant water.



concrete sleeves for latrines



latrine by water source



latrines with biogas facility

OUR RESPONSE

We are working with ACF who are co-ordinating the WASH (Water Sanitation and Hygiene) cluster in the camps and have extensive experience in building high quality wells and latrines. To avoid the pitfalls mentioned we are training local staff to install:

- **20 high quality tube wells** with a depth of 600ft or greater, and two concrete chambers: one for washing clothes and dishes and one for pure water for cooking and drinking. The chambers are separate, so the two don't mix and contaminate, and each well is shock chlorinated.

A wall will be built around them where people can hang their clothes (instead of hanging them on the handles, which are prone to rust) and each water point will be regularly checked.

- **Latrines** will be located in areas that are not at risk of water contamination. They will take the form of either:
 - *12 biogas latrine facilities*, which are usually blocks of about 18 toilets that utilise waste to provide sufficient clean fuel to allow 20 families to cook three meals a day. These take up a significant amount of space and may be difficult to build in the camp, so an alternative is;
 - *60 biofil latrines*, which utilise bacteria, worms, and other organic matter to help reduce the volume of human waste. If neither of these are possible we will provide;
 - *100 permanent latrines*, with a minimum standard of 10 concrete rings depth. These latrines will also be carefully maintained to ensure that they pose no health risk to communities.

The construction of these WASH facilities will be completed by the end of January 2018. We will also ensure going forward that they are durable enough for rainy season. This is one advantage of having a historical perspective working here in the camps throughout many Bangladeshi monsoons.





EDUCATION

THE SITUATION

Children on the Edge is in the process of identifying areas with the greatest concentration of newly arrived children, without access to schooling. The sheer number of children in the camps means that even with a number of large agencies involved, there is almost certain to be thousands of children not enrolled in schools in 2018. In blocks of the camp that we have already surveyed, there is approximately 31,000 school-aged children who have had no contact with a Child Friendly Space or a non-religious school.

While, there are scores of prominently-signed 'Child Friendly Spaces' (CFS) throughout the camp, the actual activities in each venue varied greatly. During a five-day period, we checked 22 spaces. Only nine had an adult presence there. A further six at least had some play materials and supplies, with the remaining seven appearing to be labeled but empty and unused.

OUR RESPONSE

Children on the Edge remain committed to making education the fulcrum of our efforts in the long-term. We have been continuing to run our 45 schools within the makeshift Kutupalong camp and using these to 'double up' as safe spaces, between classroom shifts, for newly arrived Rohingya children.

We have already gained agreement to build up to 100 new semi-permanent learning centres, with the aim of beginning to provide education for 10,000 children by February 2017 in a two shift system.

These new centres will draw on our experience, providing colourful and innovative schools which stand out for their excellence. We will deliver two classes per day and each school will benefit from our seven years providing schools in both mixed-population, slum communities and fully-Rohingya, migrant communities in Bangladesh.

Thank you for supporting our Rohingya Crisis Appeal. You are helping to protect the lives of thousands of Rohingya families.