



Humanitarian Aid Bangladesh

Strategy, Activities and Perspectives in the Rohingya Response

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Rohingya refugee crisis in Bangladesh

Rohingya influx

The Rohingya refugee crisis has resulted in a large influx of refugees to Cox's Bazar district in Bangladesh. Since the onset of the crisis in August 2017, more than 745,000 Rohingya refugees have crossed the border from Myanmar, increasing the area's refugee population to about one million people. Most of the Rohingya refugees settled in Ukhiya and Teknaf upazilas of Cox's Bazar, a district bordering with Myanmar. 91% of the refugees live in highly congested makeshift settlements and camps. The humanitarian community has launched a large-scale response to provide urgent basic needs such as emergency food, health, and shelter to the refugees.

Return to Myanmar?

Despite the interest to repatriate Rohingya to Myanmar and agreements between the two countries, Rohingya are unwilling to return without guarantees that their security and rights will be protected, accountability ensured, and compensation provided for the destruction of their villages, homes, and property. The international community is insisting that a return can only take place on a voluntary basis. With this constellation, it is very likely that the big majority of Rohingya will continue staying in the camps for several years, despite the efforts of the Bangladesh Government to negotiate a return of the Rohingya as soon as possible. The Bangladesh government communicates very clearly that they will not integrate the Rohingya into the Bangladesh society.

Life in the Camps

The Rohingya live in shelters from bamboo and tarpaulins on tiny plots leading to an exceptional population density in an environment that used to be one of the sparsely populated parts of the countries. The presence of Rohingya completely transformed the landscape. Forests on hills were cleared and terraces were cut into the slopes allowing construction of shelters. In the absence of sustainable livelihoods and the right to move and work in Bangladesh, the Rohingya are dependent on support by the international community in the camps. With acknowledging that the Rohingya presence is not a short-term phenomenon, the early emergency installations for WASH, camp infrastructure, and shelters are being improved by humanitarian actors to ensure acceptable living conditions within the framework of Government restrictions on construction designs and materials.

Host-Community

The rapid arrival of Rohingya refugees has been a significant shock to the host community which already experienced underemployment, under-investment and poor access to services. Already prior to the 2017 influx, Ukhiya, where Rohingya outnumber the local Bangladeshi population by a factor of 10, belonged to the 10% most socially deprived upazilas of Bangladesh. While some host community households can benefit from increased income opportunities like jobs with NGOs or trade, the big group of households living from agricultural day labour can hardly compete with Rohingya for jobs. Coupled with increased food costs, the host community's situation has become difficult, and tensions between the two communities are increasing.





HEKS/EPER in Bangladesh and Humanitarian Strategy

HEKS/EPER implements projects in Bangladesh since 1971 and is registered by the NGO Affairs Bureau. Its development cooperation department mostly focusses on projects for ethnic minorities. Humanitarian Aid interventions for the Rohingya response are managed directly by the Humanitarian Aid Department from an own office in Cox's Bazar and a field office in Ukhiya.

A dedicated HEKS/EPER team manages about 3 Million USD annual budget, mostly in construction-related sectors Shelter, WASH, and Site Improvement as well as on Environment and Livelihoods. HEKS/EPER's central logistic warehouse, office, and training facility is in camp 15, from where also neighboring camps can be supported. The HEKS/EPER implementation approach in the Rohingya Response gives strong emphasis on the following elements:

Needs-based assistance

HEKS/EPER closely analyses the situation in cooperation with the beneficiaries in the camps and the host community to develop tailor-made interventions. Projects are closely monitored by a dedicated team and beneficiary feedback is used to optimize implementation approaches.

Quality

HEKS/EPER ensures project implementation on very high quality, which is achieved by (1) strategic planning prior to the start of a project. Standardized procedures allow minimizing implementation delays. (2) Systematic monitoring is implemented by the management team with regular verification visits and comprehensive real-time online tools. (3) Support is provided to Beneficiaries beyond the delivery of material but also by intensive training and technical support during construction in the shelter sector. (4) A dedicated engineering team develops customized designs for drains and stairways and other infrastructure, based on the specific location, rather than replicating the same design everywhere.

Coordination

HEKS/EPER actively participates in various clusters and with respective government departments to ensure alignment of projects with coordinated implementation decisions. During coordination with stakeholders, HEKS/EPER always puts the benefit of beneficiaries before the interests of the organization.

Innovation

With creativity the team designs and pilots new project approaches, which includes a project to plant fruit trees and portable vegetable gardens in the camps and a capacity-building project for WASH in Health facilities in the camps.

Future strategy

HEKS/EPER supports beneficiary, throughout an emergency, and envisages to continue supporting the Rohingya until an international solution is found which provides the Rohingya life in safety and dignity with enough economic opportunities and ensured rights.





TRANSITIONAL SHELTER ASSISTANCE





HEKS/EPER' s contribution to Shelter and NFI

Needs of the refugees

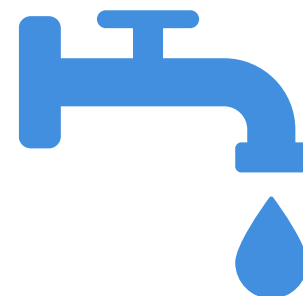
There are very clear restrictions by the Bangladesh Government for shelter construction in the camps, which need to be understood also in the light of Bangladesh's political agenda of repatriation of Rohingya to Myanmar and their interest in maintaining the temporary character of the camps. The approved design is shelters made from tarpaulin-covered bamboo frames, while longer-lasting materials like Brick Masonry and CGI are not allowed. These shelters need to be repaired regularly as the sun deteriorates the tarpaulins over time, and the bamboo structures are damaged by moisture and insects. Therefore, the coordinated shelter strategy foresees to rehabilitate all shelters, including improvements such as treated bamboo and steel or RCC foundations which substantially extend the lifetime of the Shelters under the label Transitional Shelter Assistance (TSA). However, funding commitments are lacking behind. The strategy was declared in July 2018, but one and half years later in January 2020 only 35% of the shelters have been rehabilitated and 24% shelters have been committed. Consequently, still 40% of shelters are currently without commitment for rehabilitation.

HEKS/EPER's response

As partner of IOM, HEKS/EPER focusses its shelter interventions on camp 15, where HEKS/EPER has the lead in the shelter sector. Already in the rainy season 2019 all families in camp-15 (Jamtoli) received new tarpaulins, allowing them to replace damaged tarpaulins and keeping their shelters dry. In 2019, 5,000 households received also the TSA support and the remaining 6'500 households will be supported in the first half of 2020, which will finally ensure 100% coverage of people in the camp.



Improving the Environment in the local community
ਪੰਜਾਬੀ ਯੁਵਕਾਂ ਦੇ ਵਾਤਾਵਰਣ ਨੂੰ ਸੁਧਾਰਨਾ
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HEKS/EPER's contribution to WASH

Needs of the Refugees and host communities

The humanitarian actors constructed mostly shallow tubewells in the initial phase of the response, which allowed them to quickly provide access to water. However, the extreme population density coupled with open defecation and emergency latrines without proper treatment of faecal matters led to contamination of the accessed aquifers. Throughout the Rohingya intervention, the installations had to be improved. New latrines and faecal sludge management plants replaced the emergency latrines, and shallow tubewells were replaced by deep tubewells and partially also by chlorinated network water supply. However, in the WASH sector many challenges remain including 52% of handpumps show signs of contamination with e-coli, solid waste management is not yet efficient, open defecation is still practiced, and faecal sludge management is not covering all latrines.

HEKS/EPER also assessed the host community where the wash situation revealed to be problematic, too. People were partially consuming untreated surface water, open defecation was widely practiced, and the infrastructure existing was often of low quality and not systematically managed by the local community,

HEKS/EPER's response

In 2018, HEKS/EPER constructed latrines and bathing cubicles for the Rohingya camps and acknowledged later in 2018 that a major challenge in the camp was that constantly new latrines were constructed, but the old dysfunctional and completely filled emergency latrines posed a serious health hazard in the camp. Rather than further constructing new latrines, HEKS/EPER took the responsibility to dismantle the damaged latrines and to disinfect the soil. Additionally, investments were made in faecal sludge management. Hygiene promotion was implemented throughout the response.

In 2019, HEKS/EPER expanded WASH implementation to the host community, where HEKS/EPER implemented a comprehensive WASH program which included owner-driven construction of improved latrines, provision of deep tubewells, hygiene promotion and community mobilization for management of WASH infrastructure and moving towards an open defecation free neighborhood.





HEKS/EPER' s contribution to Site Development

Needs of the Refugees and host communities

The Rohingya influx had a massive impact on the environment. Forests on hills were cleared and terraces were cut into the slopes allowing construction of shelters. During the first two years, planned and spontaneous paths were stabilized mostly by sandbags which prevent paths to turn into mud after rains. Stairways were constructed either with sandbags or with bamboo. These solutions are short-term and quickly break due abrasion through mere utilization, erosion during rain, moisture, and infestation by insects. Many paths and stairways, which were built for the 2018 monsoon, turned back into muddy slopes and paths during the 2019 monsoon, which limits the movement of Rohingya and is a serious hazard.

Living on the slopes of the hills is especially problematic during the monsoon season, as the water needs to drain from the hills. Without vegetation cover and completely changed water regimes related to the transformation of the landscape, the slopes are subject to landslides and erosion. Proper drainage infrastructure is required to prevent impacts on shelters and infrastructure as well as to prevent water-borne diseases resulting from stagnant water.

In the host community, the situation is equally problematic. Camp surrounding host communities are impacted by rapid environmental degradation and the loss of forest resources that is caused by the influx. Overconsumption of natural resources in the camps, adjacent host communities are becoming susceptible to natural disasters, especially flooding from cyclones and monsoon rainfall. To prevent any further degrade Bangladesh government emphasized to initiate mitigation measures such as slope stabilization, and reforestation.

HEKS/EPER's response

HEKS/EPER implements large scale programmes to improve the settlement infrastructure in the camp. Pathways and stairways are constructed mostly from brick and concrete. This infrastructure is sustainable and will remain functional for several years and with minimal maintenance will sustain the heavy use and forces during the monsoon season.

HEKS/EPER has strongly specialized on the construction of drainage infrastructure and implements various designs after a clear assessment of the situation. Between the shelters, drains are constructed mostly with bricks with a concrete plastering. Where required the drains are covered and are used as footpaths. Larger drains collect the water and are constructed partially with RCC elements. To ensure that water is safely leaving the camps, the canals around the camp are re-excavated and stabilized with sandbags. To protect slopes, HEKS/EPER uses bamboo structures and Geo-bags.

The host community benefits from the interventions, as HEKS ensures the proper discharge of the water from the camps through large rehabilitated canals, which protects the fields of the Bangladeshi farmers from contamination. Additionally, pathways and stairways are also constructed in the host community.

All infrastructure projects are implemented with a cash-for-work component that economically benefits Rohingya and the host community.





HEKS/EPER' s contribution to Food Security and Livelihoods

Needs of the Refugees and host communities

Even though many Rohingya are seeking working opportunities in the areas around the camps despite that they are officially not allowed, their income is by far not enough to cover their basic needs. For the major part of their nutrition, they remain dependant on the food aid provided under the lead of WFP. Following the food security cluster, the majority of Rohingya faces a problem to access diversified nutrition with 78% of households consuming only 3 food groups or less. 99% of households report spending money for additional food. The sale of assistance items to purchase complementary food items remains widespread.

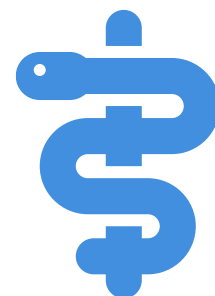
The presence of the Rohingya significantly also impacts the livelihoods of the host community, especially of the day labourers, as they have to compete with the massive Rohingya workforce, which is willing to work for very low rates. The Bangladeshi labourers, will find less employment and if they do, they are paid less than they were used to

HEKS/EPER's response

Despite that land is scarce in the camps HEKS/EPER has promoted the cultivation of vegetables in the camp since early 2018. Households were supported to cultivate mainly climbing vegetables like pumpkin, from small gardens in front of their shelters. In an innovative project in 2019 further developed this approach by introducing bag gardens, which allows households now also in very densely populated areas to plant vegetables.

Tree cultivation has been practiced by different agencies for land stabilization. However, tree varieties selected do not produce fruits for human consumption. HEKS/EPER has closely assessed the possibilities of introducing fruit trees and finally supported households to plant in total 25,168 Papaya, Lemon and Moringa trees. These trees improve the environment on the camps, provide shade to people and allow diversifying nutrition. HEKS/EPER implemented a livelihood project in the host community and supported 150 households living from day labour to plant vegetables for the markets, which since the arrival of the Rohingya allowed them to achieve high rates.





HEKS/EPER' s contribution to WASH in the Health Sector

WASH needs of Health Facilities

The 1 Million Rohingya that has mostly entered Bangladesh during a few months in 2017 put massive pressure on health services, while the cramped living conditions represent a significant public health risk. The Rohingya are completely dependent on the support of the Bangladesh government and the relief agencies for health services. Currently, the Health Sector has registered around 250 health care facilities in different Rohingya camps, mostly run by various NGOs. A baseline assessment of 140 health care facilities by WHO identified gaps in WASH and health care waste management. Many facilities do not fully comply with WHO standards.

HEKS/EPER's response

With the support of WHO, HEKS/EPER implements the WASH FIT approach developed by UNICEF and WHO. This is a comprehensive process to optimize water supply, toilets, sewage, and waste disposal, including medical waste. The project focuses on improving infrastructure management and hygiene practices.

To this end, the following activities are carried out:

1. Capacity Building:
 - Training of facility managers doctors, and nurses that are working in health facilities in the Rohingya camps on WASH, infection prevention and control as well as health care waste management.
 - Training of Health and Wash Coordinators of INGOs and GOs on the WASH Fit Methodology.
2. Supporting Facilities:
 - Rapid facility improvement assessments in each health facility to extract the key achievements, challenges and identifying the bottlenecks. Routine supervision, on the job coaching and mentoring, to improve day-to-day management directly in the health facilities.
 - A technical advisory group counsels health facility on context-specific engineering and managerial solutions for waste and medical waste management, latrines, water supply, as well as on water and greywater treatment.

With the big success of this programme in 2019, HEKS will expand interventions in 2020 also to the host community in Cox's Bazar and will facilitate the dialogue at national level, adapt these programmes to other districts.

Achievement in Bangladesh till December 2019

Sector	Refugee camp	Host community
SHELTER/NFI	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 5,550 Tie-down-kits distributed • 11,279 Tarpaulins distributed • 21,020 Blankets distributed • 5,000 Transitional shelter assistance • 2,225 NFI kits distributed • 52 community kitchens constructed 	
WASH	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 4,225 Hygiene kits distributed • 25 Toilets constructed • 20 Bathing cubicles constructed • 1 Faecal sludge management plant constructed • 1 Solid waste management plant constructed • 2,500 Waste bins placed at household level • 250 Waste bins placed at community level • 450 Latrines decommissioned • 12 Cleaning campaigns • 12,000 people received hygiene awareness messages 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 2,000 people received hygiene awareness messages • 211 Tubewells water quality tested • 21 Deep tubewells installed • 21 Women bathing corner constructed • 221 Twin offset pit latrines constructed • 186 Latrines upgraded • 441 handwashing stations installed • 1 village declared as open defecation free
SITE DEVELOPMENT	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 7,657 Meters RCC drain constructed • 3,065 Meters canal re-excavated • 30 Bamboo bridge constructed • 24,145 Person days generated through cash for work 	
FSL	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 3,000 Portable vegetable gardens installed • 2,600 Micro gardens installed • 25'168 Fruit trees planted • 20,000 People received gardening training 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 150 households supported to produce vegetable for the market.
WASH FIT	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 01 action research and publication for policy advocacy • 89 facilities in FDMN received technical counselling • 272 medical staffs trained 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 07 Government health facilities received advocacy support • 38 people trained

Partnerships

HEKS/EPER implements projects in Bangladesh both through local partner organizations as well as by direct implementation. Local partners are supported in capacity building. HEKS/EPER projects are funded by the Swiss public as well as institutional donors.

Partners:



In coordination with:



HEKS/EPER is a member of:





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