

MYANMAR/BANGLADESH REPATRIATION AND REINTEGRATION OPERATION

AT A GLANCE



Main Objectives and Activities

Bangladesh

Protect and assist 22,000 refugees remaining in the camps; facilitate their repatriation to Myanmar while ensuring the voluntary nature of returns; and promote interim solutions for those remaining refugees unable or unwilling to return by encouraging self-sufficiency activities.

Myanmar

Continue to work with the Government on the successful reintegration of returnees; promote the stabilisation of the population of Northern Rakhine State through multi-sectoral assistance and monitoring in areas hosting returnees. The establishment of a UN Integrated Development Plan in Northern Rakhine State continued to be a key factor in UNHCR's strategy to phase down its assistance activities throughout 2000.

Impact

- In Bangladesh, only 1,130 refugees were repatriated during 1999 because of procedural difficulties in obtaining clearance for those scheduled to return to Myanmar. Some 22,000 refugees remained in the camps, dependent on external assistance.
- No major population movement to Bangladesh has been reported since mid-1997. This can be attributed to UNHCR's continued monitoring and protection activities, combined with an extensive assistance programme which contributed to the stability of the population in Northern Rakhine State.
- The situation of women and children in the refugee camps was improved by integrating protection and assistance concerns through increased participation in camp life and decision making, and ensuring equal access to basic services.
- In Myanmar, UNHCR made limited progress in accelerating repatriation by working with the Government to ease restrictions on the number of people allowed to return from Bangladesh.
- The ongoing dialogue with the authorities on policy affecting the Muslim population resulted in a notable reduction in demands for unpaid labour and compulsory contributions in some areas.

Persons of Concern

HOST COUNTRY/ TYPE OF POPULATION	TOTAL IN COUNTRY	OF WHICH: UNHCR-ASSISTED	PER CENT FEMALE	PER CENT < 18
Bangladesh (Refugees)	22,000	22,000	51	60
Myanmar (Returned in 1999)*	1,130	1,130	50	-

* During 1998, 100 Myanmar refugees returned. A total of 230,596 refugees returned from Bangladesh between 1992 and 1999. About ten per cent of returnee families remain in a vulnerable situation.

Income and Expenditure (USD)

WORKING BUDGET*	INCOME FROM CONTRIBUTIONS	OTHER FUNDS AVAILABLE**	TOTAL FUNDS AVAILABLE	TOTAL EXPENDITURE*
13,091,199	12,253,482	3,337,744	15,591,226	12,025,207

* Includes costs at Headquarters.

** Includes opening balance and adjustments.

WORKING ENVIRONMENT

The Context

Some 250,000 Muslim refugees from Myanmar fled to Bangladesh in late 1991 and early 1992 for political, social, and economic reasons. They were accommodated in camps run by the Government of Bangladesh with assistance from UNHCR. Following a 1992 agreement between the two Governments, some 230,000 refugees repatriated to Myanmar with the assistance of UNHCR. Repatriation was suspended after the imposition of an August 1997 deadline by the Myanmar authorities, but resumed in November 1998 following UNHCR interventions. Procedural difficulties in obtaining clearance for those scheduled to repatriate to Myanmar worked to limit the number of refugees able to return in 1999.

Constraints

Although the overall security situation in the refugee camps had improved by the end of 1998, repeated strikes and demonstrations throughout the country adversely affected UNHCR's activities during the year. Water and food deliveries to the camps were delayed, and monitoring activities were hampered. In Myanmar, the imposition of stricter visa and import regulations obstructed the implementation of projects by UNHCR and its implementing partners.

Funding

UNHCR's operational capacity in Bangladesh and Myanmar was severely affected by late funding. By August 1999, only 40 per cent of the operational budgets had been covered, forcing UNHCR to reduce the budgets by more than USD 2.5 million. Significant reductions were made on quick impact projects in a variety of sectors.

ACHIEVEMENTS AND IMPACT

Protection and Solutions

In Bangladesh, UNHCR continued to ensure the voluntary character of repatriation and the well-being of vulnerable groups in the camps by maintaining dialogue with the authorities and the refugees themselves, and by intervening when necessary. UNHCR continued to sensitise the Bangladesh authorities on protection issues while emphasising the voluntary nature of return. Some progress was seen with respect to solutions for refugees unwilling or unable to return to Myanmar in the near future. The Government of Bangladesh agreed to the introduction of self-help activities such as tree

planting and vegetable gardening for these people. In Myanmar, UNHCR continued to work closely with the authorities on issues affecting the Muslim population, including the lack of citizenship, restriction of freedom of movement, compulsory labour practices, compulsory contributions, the rice purchasing scheme, and land reallocation. In May, the Ministry of Home Affairs relaxed the enforcement of certain provisions of the Towns Act and the Village Act of 1907 under which compulsory labour is enforced. This resulted in a reduction in instances of compulsory labour and contributions during the year.

Activities and Assistance

Community Services: In Bangladesh, community centres for women were constructed in the camps, and group sessions were organised to reduce the level of violence against women and children and to promote family planning. Skills training was conducted for women and literacy classes were organised. In Myanmar, UNHCR continued its efforts to increase community participation in assistance activities. A survey of extremely vulnerable individuals revealed a reduction in their numbers from 22,424 persons to 7,749; the survey provided a basis for a reorientation of activities to meet the needs of the extremely vulnerable, particularly single women and female-headed households.

Crop Production: In Myanmar, some 5,800 farmers were assisted through a Village Agricultural Input Bank, a Regional Agricultural Development Fund, and extension services with the objective of improving food security by increasing the area under cultivation and expanding food production. Forty-two irrigated sites were developed, and FAO conducted training on seed multiplication skills and distributed 52 metric tons of seeds. Agricultural tools, seeds, and fertilisers were distributed to 500 extremely vulnerable families.

Domestic Needs/Household Support: In Bangladesh, various household items including cooking fuel were provided to the refugees in the camps. A total of 3,070 metric tons of compressed rice husk, 45,318 litres of kerosene, 170,000 pieces of soap, 46,120 items of clothing, 4,200 blankets, 1,000 mosquito nets, and 400 rolls of plastic sheeting were distributed. In Myanmar, a settling-in grant (Kyats 10,000 or USD 30) was given to each returnee.

Education: In Bangladesh, community-based, informal education activities continued in both camps; UNHCR

continued to focus on increasing the enrolment of girls. In December 1999, more than 3,000 students were participating, roughly one third of them girls. In Myanmar, 10 school buildings and four Women's Learning Shelters were constructed. A literacy programme benefited 1,969 children, 1,228 women, and 987 adolescent men. Under the UNHCR-Magsaysay Centre for Women Project, approximately 2,400 women aged 15 to 50 years participated in vocational training activities, and 623 persons benefited from the Magsaysay small business assistance scheme.

Fisheries: In Myanmar, FAO promoted the fisheries sector by conducting a training course on aquaculture and shrimp farming, and procured essential equipment.

Food: In Bangladesh, WFP provided basic food rations (rice, oil, sugar, salt) to the 22,000 Muslim refugees. UNHCR gave the repatriates fresh food during their stay at the transit centre prior to their repatriation. In Myanmar, WFP distributed about 3,000 metric tons of rice to 36,200 members of both the local and returnee populations. Rice rations were also provided as an incentive for the education of girls and skills training.

Health/Nutrition: In Bangladesh, the overall health situation in the refugee camps was stable throughout the year. Medical clinics were maintained in the camps and, when necessary, refugees were referred to local hospitals for treatment. A nutritional survey of children aged under five revealed a slight increase in malnutrition. Because of this, the wet feeding programme was abolished in May 1999 and replaced with a high-energy milk supplementary feeding programme for moderately malnourished children, and pregnant and nursing mothers. In Myanmar, the United Nations Office for Project Services (UNOPS) provided equipment and drugs, health education programmes and training for village health volunteers in Northern Rakhine State. UNICEF expanded its immunisation activities through funds from UNHCR. A health team supported by UNHCR conducted training courses on tuberculosis control, primary health care, and maternal health care.

Income Generation: In Myanmar, UNOPS provided 2,980 families with grants through a Rotating Savings and Credit Scheme. The beneficiary groups used the funds to establish or expand small-scale businesses such as trishaw services, small boat operations, and trading. Training in small-business skills was given to 200

individuals, and hand-driven husking mills were provided for 125 female-headed households.

Legal Assistance: In Bangladesh, a voluntary repatriation assistant was recruited to facilitate co-ordination with the local authorities. In Myanmar, UNHCR's *Handbook on Procedures and Criteria for Determining Refugee Status* was translated into the local language for distribution.

Livestock: In Myanmar, to help farmers better manage the health of their animals, FAO conducted a training course on poultry and livestock disease control.

Operational Support (to Agencies): In Bangladesh and Myanmar, UNHCR funded the administrative costs of its implementing partners. In Bangladesh, two workshops were conducted for implementing partners on financial management, monitoring, and reporting requirements.

Sanitation: Some 116 latrines and 116 garbage pits were constructed or repaired, and community health workers disseminated information on hygiene and other health-related issues.

Shelter/Other Infrastructure: In Bangladesh, 411 sheds were constructed in Nayapara refugee camp, and 250 in Kutupalong refugee camp. In the latter, four schools were also constructed, and the jetty at the Teknaf departure point was repaired. In Myanmar, 176 returnee families received a house construction grant (Kyats 10,000 or USD 30 per family).

Transport/Logistics: In Myanmar, the Immigration and National Registration Department (IND) gave transportation grants of Kyats 200 or just over half of one US dollar per person to 1,130 returnees who returned in 1999. WFP, through its food-for-work scheme, constructed 15 kilometres of village access roads, 124 bridges, and 151 culverts. This infrastructure provided access to services and markets for the population, helping to create new economic opportunities.

Water: In Bangladesh, the residents of the refugee camps received an average of 22 litres of potable water per person per day. Water distribution lines and pumps were maintained and wells were renovated. In Myanmar, six tube-wells were dug benefiting 1,850 persons.

ORGANISATION AND IMPLEMENTATION

Management

In Bangladesh, UNHCR maintained offices in Dhaka and in Cox's Bazaar, with six international and 25 national staff. Six posts in Cox's Bazaar (two international and four national staff posts) were discontinued in 1999, while one JPO post was created. In Myanmar, UNHCR maintained offices in Yangon and in Maungdaw, with 13 international staff (including two JPOs) and 46 national staff. Three posts in Maungdaw (two international and one JPO post) were discontinued in 1999. UNHCR offices in Cox's Bazaar and Maungdaw held monthly co-ordination meetings to exchange information on repatriation movements.

Working with Others

In Bangladesh, the Ministry of Disaster Management and Relief was UNHCR's main government counterpart, and two international NGOs implemented activities in the sectors of health/nutrition and sanitation. However, due to funding constraints mid-year, one NGO partner assumed its own financial support, but continued to implement the programme under a co-operative agreement with UNHCR. The Bangladesh Red Crescent Society (BDRCS) was responsible for the distribution of food and non-food items in the camps, and WFP provided basic food rations to the refugees, both working in close co-ordination with UNHCR.

In Myanmar, UNHCR's government counterpart was the Department of Immigration and National Registration at the Ministry of Immigration and Population. As a prelude to launching the UN Integrated Development Plan for Northern Rakhine State, four UN agencies implemented aspects of UNHCR's programme in 1999, particularly in the sectors of health, income generation, and agriculture. Three international and two national NGOs were UNHCR partners, with capacity-building for the latter a key objective in order to ensure continued services as UNHCR winds down its assistance. Regular inter-agency co-ordination meetings were held in Yangon and Maungdaw.

OVERALL ASSESSMENT

In Bangladesh, discussions were held with the authorities on the introduction of self-help activities for refugees in the camps unwilling or unable to return to Myanmar in the near future. These yielded some results. The activities will limit the sense of dependency

developing among the refugees and enable them to pursue a productive life pending a solution to their individual situation. UNHCR's attempts to streamline assistance to refugees in Bangladesh and reduce costs have underscored the importance of a close dialogue with implementing partners.

In Myanmar, the five-year UN Integrated Development Plan, scheduled to commence in 2001, will provide for a greater role for developmental agencies in Northern Rakhine State. UNHCR's work on infrastructure has created a climate of dependency on external assistance. Therefore to build a sense of ownership and responsibility within the local community, community participation was increased in the implementation of construction projects. The UN Integrated Development Plan in Northern Rakhine State is a key factor in UNHCR's strategy to wind down its assistance activities in 2000.

Offices

MYANMAR

Yangon
Maungdaw

BANGLADESH

Dhaka
Cox's Bazaar

Partners

MYANMAR

Government Agencies

Department of Immigration and National Registration
Ministry of Immigration and Population

NGOs

Bridge Asia Japan
Community and Family Support International
Groupe de Recherche et d'Echange Technologique
Myanmar Maternal Child Welfare Association
Myanmar Red Cross Society

Other

Food and Agriculture Organisation
United Nations Children's Fund
United Nations Office for Project Services
World Food Programme

BANGLADESH

Government Agencies

Ministry of Disaster Management and Relief

NGOs

CONCERN Bangladesh
Médecins Sans Frontières (The Netherlands)

Voluntary Contributions (USD)

Donor	Income	Contribution
Australia	195,312	195,312
Denmark	1,217,862	1,217,862
France	163,222	163,222
Germany	300,000	300,000
Japan	4,580,000	4,050,000
Sweden	710,220	710,220
United States of America	1,500,000	1,500,000
European Commission	3,585,685	3,617,198
Private Donors Japan	280	280
Private Donors Switzerland	901	901
TOTAL	12,253,482	11,754,995

Financial Report (USD)

Programme Overview	Current Year's Projects		Prior Years' Projects	
		notes		notes
Opening Balance	2,663,200	(1)		
Income from Contributions	12,253,482	(1)		
Other Funds Available	674,544			
Total Funds Available	15,591,226	(5)		
Expenditure	12,025,207	(1) (5)		
Closing Balance	3,566,019	(1) (5)		
Expenditure Breakdown				
Protection, Monitoring and Coordination*	3,119,450		159,011	
Community Services	182,378		28,028	
Crop Production	319,952		236,367	
Domestic Needs / Household Support	199,045		33,158	
Education	313,627		133,874	
Fisheries	3,518		1,500	
Food	110,497		12,434	
Health / Nutrition	418,942		199,411	
Income Generation	149,767		112,729	
Legal Assistance	5,474		3,901	
Livestock	12,201		28,420	
Operational Support (to Agencies)	430,969		632,523	
Sanitation	45,360		23,329	
Shelter / Other Infrastructure	97,173		12,461	
Transport / Logistics	541,985		359,048	
Water	61,452		27,739	
Instalments with Implementing Partners	4,290,661		(1,729,546)	
Sub - total Operational	10,302,451		274,387	
Administrative Support*	1,134,007		7,372	
Sub - total Disbursements/Deliveries	11,436,458	(5)	281,759	
Unliquidated Obligations	588,749	(5)	0	
TOTAL	12,025,207	(1) (5)	281,759	
Instalments with Implementing Partners				
Payments Made	6,749,743		93,203	
Reporting Received	2,459,082		1,822,749	
Balance	4,290,661		(1,729,546)	
Outstanding 1 January	0		2,020,077	
Refunded to UNHCR	0		287,234	
Currency Adjustment	0		(3,297)	
Outstanding 31 December	4,290,661		0	
Unliquidated Obligations				
Outstanding 1 January	0		642,954	(6)
New Obligations	12,025,207	(1) (5)	0	
Disbursements	11,436,458	(5)	281,759	(6)
Cancellations	0		361,195	(6)
Outstanding 31 December	588,749	(5)	0	(6)

* Includes costs at Headquarters.

Figures which cross reference to accounts

(1) Annex 1 to Statement 1

(5) Schedule 5

(6) Schedule 6