



**1,752**

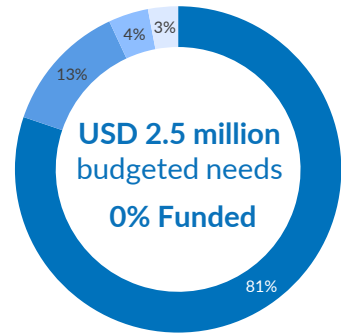
Individuals arrived in Indonesia on 11 boats since 14 November 2023



**243**

Estimated individuals who arrived from 14 Nov 2023 who have since spontaneously departed hosting sites

**UNHCR Funding Requirements**  
Aceh Emergency Appeal  
January-June 2024



■ Food & CRIs  
■ Protection  
■ Peaceful Co-Existence  
■ Shelter & WASH

## SITUATIONAL OVERVIEW

Rohingya refugees have undertaken perilous sea journeys from Myanmar and Bangladesh seeking protection, family reunification, and access to livelihoods and education for years. In the last weeks of 2023, however, the pace of boat arrivals and the number of individuals disembarking in Indonesia rapidly increased. From mid-November 2023 to date, 11 boats carrying 1,752 Rohingya refugees (74% of whom are women and children) have landed in Aceh and North Sumatra, Indonesia.

According to information provided to UNHCR by the new arrivals, the recent increase in the number of individuals undertaking the sea journey has been driven by a number of factors. These include the continued instability in Myanmar, lack of progress in addressing the root causes of Rohingya displacement and enabling conditions conducive for return, growing insecurity and declining humanitarian assistance in the camps in Bangladesh, more active smuggling networks, and a decrease in the cost of sea journeys.

These journeys, often undertaken on unseaworthy vessels, are extremely dangerous. Nearly 1,000 Rohingya refugees traveling by boat perished or went missing at sea in 2022 and 2023. This includes a boat bound for Indonesia carrying approximately 200 refugees that is believed to have sunk in November 2023. Recently disembarked refugees reported experiencing protection and security challenges at sea, including gender-based violence, physical abuse, malnutrition, exploitation, and extortion. Recent arrivals report that six individuals (including five children) died while at sea, presumably from sickness and malnutrition. Rohingya refugees confirm that they are aware of the risks but still board boats, highlighting the pervasive fear and sense of hopelessness that precipitate their decision to embark on these journeys.

In previous years, as per the 2016 Presidential Regulation 125 on the Handling of Refugees, Rohingya boats in distress were rescued and allowed to disembark in Indonesia by the navy, local authorities, and Acehese coastal communities. Following disembarkation, authorities designated host sites where UNHCR, IOM, and other partners provided protection and basic assistance.

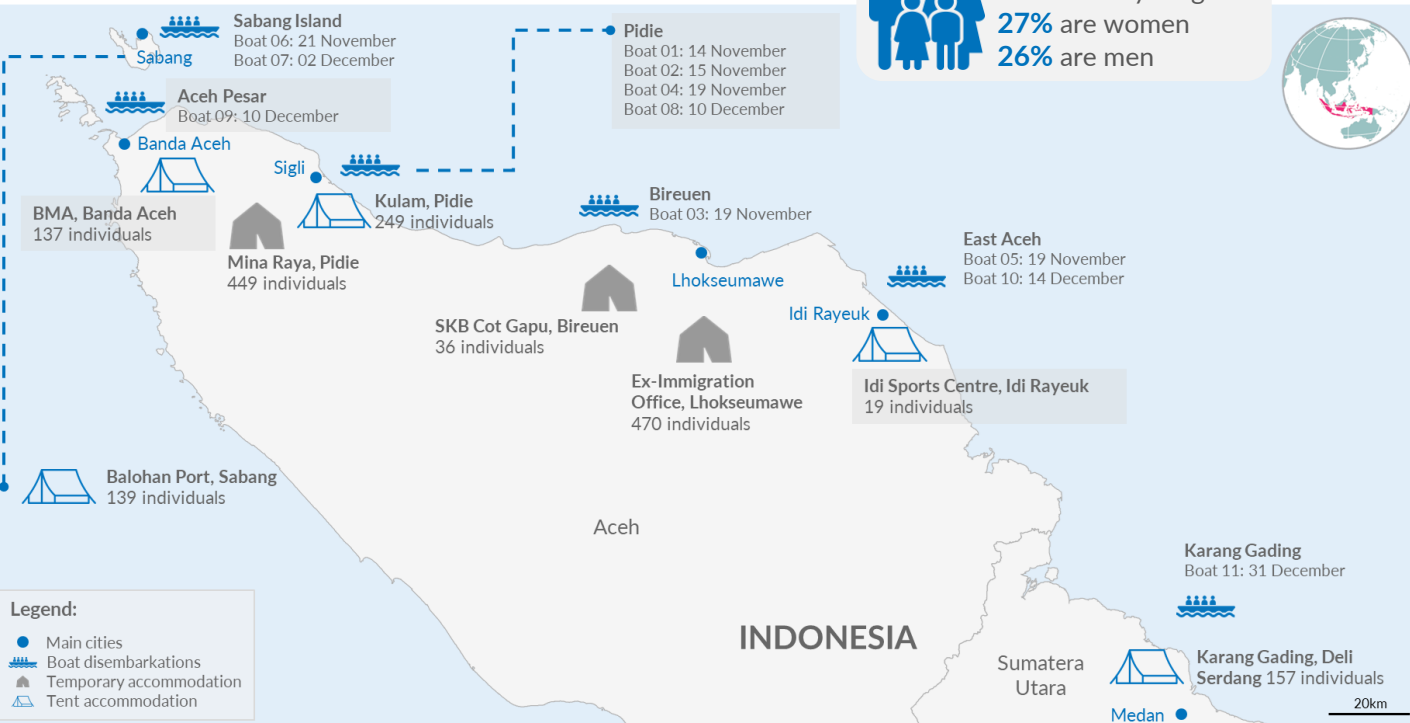
While many Indonesians remain supportive of and sympathetic to the challenges facing Rohingya refugees, the most recent boat arrivals met unprecedented resistance in Indonesia. Some Rohingya were prevented from disembarking, others disembarked only to be forced by local communities back on the boats and returned to sea, and many of those who disembarked have yet to be allocated adequate shelter by authorities. As a result, hundreds of refugees who have disembarked in recent weeks are currently living in extremely perilous, overcrowded, and sub-standard conditions in which the protection and assistance response is compromised.

Rohingya refugees have typically undertaken journeys from Bangladesh and Myanmar between November and March when sea conditions are most favorable. Support is needed to bolster the response in the likely event that more boats carrying Rohingya refugees arrive in Indonesia, particularly in the first quarter of 2024. In view of this, UNHCR and IOM launched an [emergency appeal](#) in December 2023 requesting USD 5.4M (USD 2.5M for UNHCR) to urgently respond to refugee boat arrivals in Indonesia through June 2024. However, no funding has been received by UNHCR to date and the Rohingya boat arrival response remains seriously underfunded.

## OVERVIEW: DISEMBARKATIONS AND HOSTING SITES

From 14 November 2023

**1,752** new arrivals  
47% are boys & girls  
27% are women  
26% are men



Population figures per hosting site include: individuals who arrived by boat prior to 14 November 2023, boat arrivals from 14 November, and babies born post-arrival.

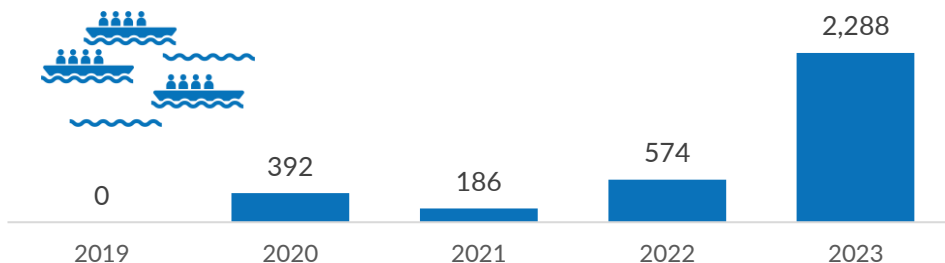
### TIMELINE OF KEY EVENTS

Prior to 14 November 2023  
178 Rohingya remained in Aceh from previous boat arrivals



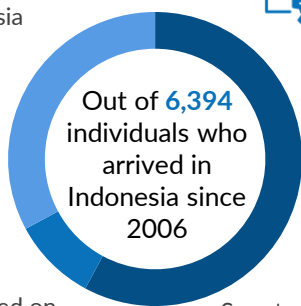
### TRENDS: ROHINGYA BOAT ARRIVALS IN INDONESIA

Pre-registration figures



### SOLUTIONS

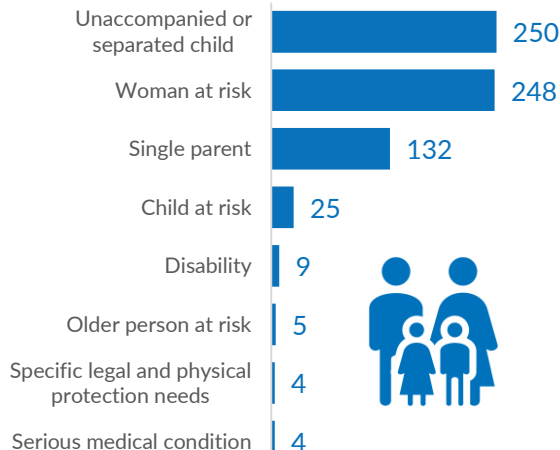
Remain in Indonesia  
**2,092**



Departed on resettlement/complementary pathways **589**

Spontaneous departures from Indonesia **3,683**

### VULNERABILITIES: RECENT ARRIVALS



## UNHCR RESPONSE



### COORDINATION

UNHCR supports Indonesian authorities by leading and coordinating inter-agency preparedness and response at the local, provincial, and national levels, in close cooperation with IOM and other humanitarian partners in Aceh, North Sumatra, and Jakarta. UNHCR's coordination role includes **regular** advocacy with the government, security agencies, and local communities on issues related to Rohingya refugees, international protection principles, and the humanitarian response. UNHCR also chairs the **weekly** inter-agency coordination meetings at the local level and **monthly** meetings at the national level. In addition, UNHCR maintains a 4W (Who is Where, When, doing What) matrix to identify assistance gaps and ensure protection issues and basic needs are covered in the **eight** sites Rohingya refugees are currently accommodated in Aceh and North Sumatra. UNHCR is also engaging with over **50** media outlets, civil society groups, universities, social media platforms/companies, religious leaders, Islamic philanthropies, community-based organizations (CBOs), and influencers at the national and local level to address disinformation, misinformation, and hate speech and contribute to a supportive and informed civil society in Aceh, North Sumatra, and throughout Indonesia.



### PROTECTION

UNHCR leads the protection response for Rohingya refugees in Aceh and North Sumatra. Protection activities to date include advocacy with local authorities and communities to permit the disembarkation of **all boats** in distress at sea and ensuring UNHCR presence at the beach and points of disembarkation to advocate on behalf of individuals landing on the **11** boats. **1,367** new arrivals have been registered, with biometrics captures for **1,207** individuals. **1,127** new arrivals have received UNHCR documentation. **400** individuals requiring refugee status determination or verification to determine international protection needs have been identified, with status determination/verification carried out for **15** individuals. UNHCR has also undertaken **96** best interest procedures (of **140** children identified in need) as well as other child protection work for the large number of child spouses, unaccompanied children, and otherwise at-risk children. UNHCR has conducted gender-based violence prevention and response activities and established protection reporting and referral systems in **five** sites. UNHCR is working with local authorities and security agencies to maintain the safety and security of **all** refugee hosting sites. Prevention and response activities on fraud, sexual exploitation and abuse, and other forms of mistreatment have been implemented in **five** hosting sites. UNHCR has also engaged host communities in the response by hiring **40** local volunteers to work in the sites in an effort to build and maintain social cohesion and peaceful coexistence between refugees and host communities.



### ASSISTANCE AND SERVICES

UNHCR, IOM, and partners are working together to deliver lifesaving assistance following initial disembarkation and establish service delivery to ensure basic needs are met. Assistance sectors are led by IOM (shelter, health, and water, sanitation, and hygiene (WASH)) and UNHCR (food and core relief items (CRIs)). Assistance and basic services - the provision of food and CRIs, shelter repairs and rehabilitation, access to WASH, health care, and mental health/psycho-social support - have been established for **all** Rohingya refugees in the **eight** hosting sites, although the extent and scope of assistance and services is dependent on the level of access humanitarian partners have to the sites, site locations, the security situation surrounding the sites, the engagement and position of host communities, whether a site has been officially designated by authorities, budget limitations, etc. UNHCR's contributions to assistance and services include the provision of three meals/day and CRIs and hygiene kits - including diapers for children, mosquito nets, mattresses, sarongs, blankets, and undergarments - for **1,527** refugees.

## KEY DEVELOPMENTS AND CHALLENGES

### Identification and designation of new sites

- Of the eight locations where refugees are currently hosted, only two have been officially designated as refugee hosting sites by Indonesian authorities. The other six sites remain extremely transitory and untenable – a coconut field, a parking garage, a port area, etc.
- The reluctance to formally designate shelters and the resulting continued use of these informal sites has a number of negative consequences for the refugee population, host communities, and humanitarian staff. Uncertainty around the informal sites creates security concerns and tension as local communities express frustration with hosting new arrivals in conditions that have not been formalized. In some instances, refugees have been relocated by force as they face rejection by local villagers and authorities in informal hosting sites. Moreover, the absence of designated sites to which disembarked refugees can be transferred leads to confusion and threats of pushback at points of disembarkation along the coast. In addition, UNHCR and humanitarian partners are unable to invest robust resources to scale up community support and carry out improvements as adequate facilities can not be established in the informal sites, creating security, health, and protection concerns in these locations.
- UNHCR, IOM, and other partners are exploring potential sites where refugees can be hosted, assessing the feasibility of these locations from a security, protection, host community relations, and SPHERE perspective, and engaging authorities and relevant actors in an effort to secure suitable sites.
- It is imperative that, as per the Presidential Regulation, local authorities – in consultation with provincial and national authorities – designate and secure shelters that can accommodate those currently in the informal sites as well as future Rohingya boat arrivals.

### Addressing misinformation, disinformation, and hate speech

- An online campaign of misinformation, disinformation, and hate speech directed at Rohingya refugees and UNHCR, in particular, has been prevalent in Indonesian media and social media since late November. This has [negatively impacted](#) refugees and humanitarian actors on the ground in Aceh, including pushbacks, protests, a mob attack, forced relocation, personal threats to staff members, etc.
- Efforts to understand the reasons behind the campaign, remove online hate speech, and correct misinformation and disinformation are ongoing. These include engaging with social media platforms to address issues of concern, sharing facts on UNHCR and Rohingya refugees online and in traditional media, working with security agencies and relevant government ministries, engaging prominent and influential Acehnese, as well as holding discussions with universities, civil society, CBOs and other groups to promote mutual understanding.

### Ensuring rescue and disembarkation of boats in distress

- The heightened insecurity and tension around Rohingya refugees and boat arrivals in Indonesia has raised concerns regarding the willingness of Acehnese communities and Indonesian authorities to continue to rescue and disembark.
- UNHCR will continue to work closely with Indonesian authorities and local communities to ensure boats in distress at sea are rescued and permitted to disembark in Indonesia, as per the Presidential Regulation.

### Funding gap

- UNHCR and IOM launched an [emergency appeal](#) in December 2023 requesting USD 5.4M (USD 2.5M for UNHCR) to respond to refugee boat arrivals in Indonesia through June 2024. To date, no funding has been received by UNHCR. The response remains critically underfunded, and more support is needed to urgently scale up assistance to Rohingya boat arrivals.

UNHCR is grateful to the following donors who are funding the Indonesia operation with earmarked, softly earmarked funding as well as those supporting UNHCR operations globally with unearmarked funding.

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Rohingya women and children at a temporary shelter in Aceh. © UNHCR/A. Jufrian