
Cox's Bazar, Bangladesh

18 June 2019

**UNHCR Representation
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UNHCR Goodwill Ambassador MIYAVI visited Rohingya refugee camps for the second time



Musician, actor and UNHCR Goodwill Ambassador MIYAVI visited Rohingya refugee children in Cox's Bazar, Bangladesh. This is his second visit to the refugee camps after a first one undertaken in February 2018.

Since 25 August 2017, when violence broke out in Rakhine State, Myanmar, more than 740,000 Rohingya sought refuge in Bangladesh. The vast majority of them are women and children, and more than 55 percent are under 18 years old. Together with Rohingya refugees who fled Myanmar in consecutive waves of displacement since the early 1990s, currently over 900,000 Rohingya refugees are living in Cox's Bazar.

MIYAVI expressed appreciation to Bangladesh's host communities in Cox's Bazar which generously supported refugees since their arrival in August 2017.

"The second visit enabled me to understand not only the progress in place but how it is advancing. These progresses include upgrade of shelters and reinforcement of community facilities as part of monsoon preparedness, and the UNHCR-Government of Bangladesh joint registration exercise that is essential for effective delivery of humanitarian aid. I also observed earth-moving work and development of infrastructure in the land additionally provided by the Government as well as volunteer activities by young refugees. Since my last visit, there have been many improvements in the camps.

UNHCR and other agencies are supporting not only the refugees but also the host communities who were the first responders to the refugee crisis. The host communities have been supporting refugees by sharing their lands and resources. Through such support given by the host communities, I believe refugee can regain their dignity and hopes for the future. "

In Cox's Bazar, MIYAVI met refugee children at a primary school in Kutupalong established in the 1990s, as well as children at a Learning Center established after 2017. Currently education provided at Learning Centers by aid agencies is not accredited and offers basic subjects like English, mathematics, life skills and Burmese.

The Goodwill Ambassador said, "After the immediate emergency phase had passed, refugees are now facing another challenge, how to rebuild their lives. Parents are concerned about education - what kind of education they can provide with their children. All the parents wish their children to have good education no matter where they live in the world. Learning values to share and social morals in good educational environment is important not only for refugee communities but also for all the world, and this is indeed

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an investment for our future. Myanmar also needs these children to be educated, for when they go back after they feel safe doing so.”

The Goodwill Ambassador planned his trip back to Bangladesh because he felt it was important to see what progress was made since the emergency. His first visit was in the middle of the emergency response when many services were basic or being established. “I’m happy to come back and see the Rohingya people here again. I see that the conditions in the refugee camps have improved a lot since my last visit in early 2018, just after the crisis. This time, what I felt more was an anxiety about the future. People are worried about what next. They want to go home. They can see Myanmar’s mountains in the near distance, but they do not yet feel safe to go back,” said MIYAVI.

The Goodwill Ambassador hoped that a future solution can be found quickly. “We all know what needs to happen. We hope that the leadership can be found to courageously go forward in a way that brings hope for the future. UNHCR, of course, I believe strongly encouraging and itself practicing the type of engagement that’s needed to foster solutions.”

The Goodwill Ambassador and refugee children sang together “Hands to Hold”- a song wishing for peace. He also attended a handover ceremony of football equipment donated by the people of Japan and played a football match with the children.

“All of us can have hopes when we have something to devote ourselves. As same as children living in Japan and other developed countries, refugee children play football with spark of joy. It could be music, sports, art or anything. Adults can give opportunities for children to find something they love.

I simply respect them and I am very inspired by the type of resilience I see in the Rohingya community. Most of what I saw in the camps, from bridges to shelters, roads, and replanting was done by the community itself. There’s a great volunteer spirit too. I saw one group of young men working under the hot morning sun to build a community shaded area for older people to sit in to meet and socialize.”

On 16 June, MIYAVI also visited the camps in the evening to see how the camps look as night falls. “The night scenery dazzled my eyes. I found the camps generally dark despite all the efforts to install solar lighting here. I can see how it must be difficult for refugees, particularly women and children, to go to bathrooms outside of their houses at night. It would be more dangerous during rain or a monsoon season. More lights are needed. I can see good efforts already but more can be done,” MIYAVI said.

It was the first night visit undertaken in Cox’s Bazar by a UNHCR Goodwill Ambassador. “I wanted to be here to see the reality refugees live in day and night. Many of the humanitarian staff return to Cox’s Bazar town in the evening with only emergency staff here to respond. I wanted to get a sense of what it’s like in the evening. I think it’s very important for me, as a Goodwill Ambassador, to see this, and to feel what people here must feel. I will continue deepening my knowledge on refugee causes, finding my way to contribute to the causes and spreading the world.”

UNHCR requires US\$307.6 million to respond to humanitarian needs in Cox’s Bazaar in 2019 in order to address the needs of children, women and men fleeing violence in Myanmar.

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