

Key Messages

Impact: A funding shortfall has forced WFP to reduce its general food assistance for 920,000 refugees in Cox's Bazar by 17% as of 1 March. This will go below the minimum Kcal consumption level in an emergency situation. The consequences will be far reaching and include:

- *Malnutrition and Health:* We are at risk of reaching emergency Global Acute Malnutrition (GAM) levels in 3 – 6 months. This will severely impact children under five, as well as pregnant and lactating women. Vulnerable groups with underlying medical conditions that require an increased nutritional demand are also placed at immediate risk. Further, mental health will deteriorate for a community that has been persecuted for decades.
- *Protection Risks:* Negative coping mechanisms such as child marriage, child labour and polygamous marriages will likely increase. Women and children in particular will be more at risk of trafficking and other forms of exploitation and abuse. Domestic violence could rise to alarming levels, a trend that was noticeable during the COVID-19 pandemic where essential services were reduced, leading to re-victimization for women who have already endured severe sexual abuse and trauma when they arrived in the camps. We could also see an increase in other negative coping mechanisms with an impact on security in the camps, as well as onward movement outside the camps to other countries, and under perilous conditions.
- *Education:* When access to education for all children remains critical, a higher school drop-out rate for girls and boys is expected as well as rise in child labour and early child marriage among teens.
- *Environment and Energy:* The sale of LPG canisters and the cutting of trees is likely to increase as refugees seek other means to augment their income/food. Refugees may also turn to distress sale of non-food items to purchase food.

Actions needed: Greater efforts must be made by all stakeholders to ensure that funding cuts do not have a sudden and severe impact on the refugees:

- Immediate funding of WFP's general food assistance programme is urgently needed. WFP requires USD 172 million annually for this programme. WFP requires USD 125 million to revert to 100% of the general food assistance programme for the rest of this year. It will require USD 100 million to limit the ration cuts to 17% (to stay at \$10 per person until year-end and not cut further).
- Predictable multi-year unearmarked funding, as well as firewalling critical assistance such as food, LPG, nutrition, protection is crucial.
- Refugee self-reliance through livelihood projects and income-generating activities need to be scaled up.
- Technology such as BKash (a digital wallet) will allow refugees freedom to purchase the items they want locally rather than depend on in-kind support.
- Coordination with Sectors to understand priority gaps and ensure that they are funded is also critical. The Principles of Rationalization call on donors to coordinate first with Sectors before arriving at funding decisions.

- Long-term strategies as well as multi-year funding opportunities, including through the engagement of development partners, will be key in investing in this protracted crisis.

Background

General

- Through WFP's general food assistance programme, all Rohingya receive monthly food assistance via e-vouchers, redeemable for dry and fresh foods at WFP outlets throughout the camps. Today, 950,000 refugees in Cox's Bazar and in Bhasan Char receive 2,100 Kcal per day on average.
- While this will not affect the approximately 30,000 refugees on Bhasan Char or the WFP school feeding programme for the moment, it will have a significant impact on the refugee community confined to refugee camps, wholly dependent on external aid, and have no immediate prospects for voluntary repatriation.
- 2,100 Kcal per person per day is considered the minimum in an emergency situation. The 17% cut will reduce the daily Kcal consumption from 2,100 Kcal to potentially lower than 1,920 Kcal per person.

Impact on the refugee community

- Global Acute Malnutrition (GAM) currently stands at 12.4%, a rate relatively unchanged over the past years. A GAM rate of 15% or higher is considered to be emergency levels; the national GAM rate is 9.8% while stunting is at 28% (MICS 2019). The prevalence of wasting and stunting among refugee children under five has been reported to be high/very high (up to 30% and above) over the past four years. To mitigate emergency levels of wasting and stunting, in-kind blanket supplementary feeding programmes for children under five, as well as pregnant and lactating women (around 30% of the community) will be necessary, where treatment is more expensive than prevention.
- Child marriage for girls was reported at approximately 12.5% in 2022.
- 38% of GBV incidents are committed by refugees who are not gainfully employed, and in 18-20% of cases, husbands have denied their spouses proper access to food and other resources. The repercussions will be even more pronounced among those with specific needs, including the elderly and persons with disabilities.
- Currently the average education attendance rate is 81% (early childhood development at 91%). The attendance rate for 11–18-year-old girls is 70%. Considerable efforts are being made to ensure that all adolescent girls go to school. 99% of learners ages 3 to 18 received school feeding support in 2022, with a positive impact on the attendance rate.
- Over the past four years, 3,100 hectares have been reforested in the refugee and host communities. This has only been made possible due to concerted efforts by the international community and the government. The use of LPG for cooking has also prevented the felling of trees in and around the camps.
- The sale of soap, menstrual pads and other non-food items will also likely rise, leading to a decrease in hygiene and increase in health issues. Vandalism and selling various items in the camps, from solar lights to water facilities, may also see a rise.

Rationalization and streamlining

- The donor community, NGOs, and the UN finalized the Principles of Rationalization in 2022, a critical step to ensure that refugees receive equitable services. Sector-wide rationalization and streamlining has been under way since 2022, with the aim of reducing staffing and overlaps, and strengthening coordination and cost effectiveness. In 2022, this helped save close to USD 70 million.
- Last year considerable efforts were made to streamline the coordination system of the response, responding to new challenges, and ensuring it remains fit-for-purpose. Modifications resulted in

reconfiguration of sectors, reduction of the number of working groups, and strengthening the cross-cutting issues in the inter-sector coordination. The exercise also clarifies coordination and leadership roles and reinforces the framework for accountability and responsibilities.