

COX'S BAZAR FOOD SECURITY SECTOR AND LIVELIHOOD WORKING GROUP PARTNER ACTIVITY HIGHLIGHT (SELF-RELIANCE)

Highlighting partners' activities to build the self-reliance of Rohingya refugees

AUGUST 2021

INTRODUCTION

Since the massive influx of Rohingya refugees in August 2017, Food Security Sector (FSS) partners and the humanitarian community in the Cox's Bazar District have responded to meet the basic needs of refugees and host communities most impacted in Ukhya and Teknaf. More than 800,000 Rohingya refugees are currently living in congested camps in Ukhya and Teknaf, with heavy social, economic and environmental impacts for the displaced as well as those hosting them.

While ensuring basic needs are met, food security and livelihoods partners have increasingly introduced interventions and projects to support refugees' self-reliance. As of July in 2021, 230,299 refugees have been engaged in a wide range of self-reliance activities, reported below by partners. The list is not exhaustive however, and the FSS invites more partners to share their inputs for the next update.

These activities have contributed to **increased food consumption, dietary diversity and resilience building** while also positively impacting **environmental and solid waste management** efforts in the camps.

PARTNER UPDATES

HOMESTEAD GARDENING ACTIVITIES

BRAC, CODEC, FAO, WFP, World Vision

With technical support from **FAO** and implementation support from **BRAC, CODEC** and **World Vision, WFP** plan to distribute gardening inputs to 40,000 households in 2021. This includes 30,000 across 25 camps and 10,000 affected by the March 2021 fire in camps 8E, 8W and 9. Distributions started at the beginning of August 2021. Homestead gardening increases household access to high quality nutritious food and improves dietary diversity. The proportion of households with acceptable food consumption decreased from 58 percent in 2019 to 50 percent in 2020, partly due to operational contractions on self-reliance activities in the camps following lock-down measures. Vulnerability in the camps increased in 2020 compared to 2019, driven by the protracted suspension of these activities. Expanding household gardening activities is an encouraging step towards strengthening resilience by increasing access to vegetables and providing skills development opportunities through agricultural training. Further, as agriculture is a common source of livelihoods in Arakan, this would be a valuable portable skillset for the Rohingya to engage in.

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Figure 1. Gardening input distributions in Camp 21 (Photo: World Vision)

FOOD AND NON-FOOD ITEM (NFI) PRODUCTION

Coast Trust, ICCO, IOM, MOAS, NGO Forum, Oxfam, Protyashi, TAI, UNFPA, UNHCR, UN WOMEN, WFP

Several partners are engaged in the production of food and NFIs, which are then distributed to a wider group of beneficiaries. Such items include: bags and baskets (jute, recycled materials, etc - some to be used to transport food and NFIs); solar lights (both for home use and for street lighting); stools; floor mats; hammocks; clothes and textiles; soap; menstrual items (pads and underwear); hand sanitizer; reusable cloth facemasks; water safety materials and upcycled sorting containers (made from wrappers and used during the fire response to divert organic waste to landfill).

Since January 2021, **UNHCR**, with implementation support from the **NGO Forum** has produced 669,075 jute bags and plans to produce a further 630,925 before the end of 2021. These bags are an environmentally friendly alternative to plastic and are used for NFI distributions.

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Figure 2. Jute bag production (Photo: NGO Forum)

Since October 2019, IOM has produced 6,092 sturdy handmade bamboo baskets with reinforced nylon strip handles. These baskets are used by IOM Shelter and NFI teams instead of plastic bags. This reduces the amount of waste introduced into the camps and provides households with a useful transportation and storage container. This initiative also served as a platform to transfer and enhance basket-weaving skills among female Rohingya refugees.

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Figure 3. Beneficiary making handmade bamboo basket
See more photos [here](#)

UNWOMEN set up a female-managed market in Camp 5, which has been operational since January 2021. This market has 24 shops, four floating shops, three well-appointed display corners, a tea corner, a beauty parlour, washrooms, a children's play corner and a breastfeeding corner. The market is intended to provide a safe shopping experience for women and all shops are run by women, from either the Rohingya (14 women) or host (10 women) community. The floating shops are open to women who want to display and/or sell their products on an occasional basis. All 24 female shopkeepers are given capacity development training on small business management, market linkages and customer service. Products sold include handicrafts, readymade garments, tailoring services, vegetables, and dried fish. The market is open for two hours in the morning (from 10-12am) to consider the role of women in the household. Nine organizations are currently supporting the market and the women (**Action Aid, BRAC, FAOBD, HELVETAS, Prantic Unnayan Society (PRANTIC), SBSKS, UNDP, United Purpose and WFP**).

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Figure 4. Items produced in the upcycling centre

With support from **WFP** and technical partner **GARBAGEMAN, ICCO Cooperation** is running an upcycling centre in Camp 15. Since January 2021, the centre has produced around 300 different items every month (bags, baskets, dustbins, etc.) made from upcycled emergency food assistance packages. The project started in 2020 with the renovation of a centre in Camp 15 to ensure access to people with disabilities, while implementing a Human-Centred Design (HCD) approach for more inclusive programme interventions. The project is providing portable skills to beneficiaries while increasing community awareness on waste management and reducing the impact on the environment. These products are now being sold in Cox's Bazar town

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Oxfam has been producing Menstrual Hygiene Management (MHM) - reusable sanitary pads - in host communities and Personal Protective Equipment (PPE) - cloth masks - in both host and Rohingya communities since September 2020. There are 26 women's groups (20 women in each) in the camps involved in producing cloth masks, which has improved their sewing/tailoring skills and thereby contributed to their self-reliance. The women have produced 163,435 cloth masks to date (August 2021) and Oxfam has distributed 132,588 of these masks. Under the self-reliance activities Oxfam is also working to provide sanitary pad production trainings to female group members, having received official permission from the respective national authorities at the Rohingya camps.

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Figure 5. Women's groups working to make masks in Camp 22

SKILLS DEVELOPMENT

BRAC, HelpAge, Helvetas, IOM, MOAS, UNHCR, WFP

A number of partners are conducting interventions to develop skills needed in the camps, such as repairing solar and lamps, Gas burners, mobile phones, sewing machines, navigation devices and umbrellas. These trainings have also been organized for skills such as barbering, cobbling, bamboo carpentry, tailoring and mechanics.

Since March 2021, **Help Age International** has been implementing self-reliance activities for people over the age of 50 and people with disabilities, in collaboration with **WFP** in camps 11, 12, 13, 15 and 18. These interventions include capacity strengthening on life skills and different trades for bamboo cane products, as well as production of prayer caps, pickles and fishing nets. Five hundred people have been targeted so far, with 70 percent of participants women.

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MOAS, funded by **UNHCR, IOM, and WFP** with implementation by **Helvetas**, has been engaged in fire safety activities since January 2021 and water safety activities since March 2018. Water safety includes local production of throw-bags and bottle-ring rescue equipment and training over 3,500 Rohingya volunteers. Fire safety training is yet to start, but during the pilot phase a range of mobile firefighting units were produced for testing in the camps prior to large-scale production. The goal is to provide sustainable livelihoods opportunities for technically skilled host community members by producing safety equipment, and to build Rohingya volunteers' capacities in safely performing water rescues and fighting fires. MOAS has reported several lives saved from drowning as a direct result of the training provided, and plan to train 1,600 volunteers on water safety and 3,500 volunteers in basic firefighting.

Photos: Water Training Photos [Link](#); Mobile Fire ighting Unit Photos [Link](#); Flooding Rescues Photos [Link](#)

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Since 2018, **BRAC** has been implementing trainings for Rohingya refugees in collaboration with **WFP**. These include the trade of mobile phone servicing, solar panel installation and maintenance, tailoring and dress making, and handicrafts. Between 2018 and 2019 BRAC provided skills training to 3,626 refugees. In 2020, 110 graduates of the BRAC programme manufactured 400,129 reusable cloth masks and 1,000 re-usable sanitary pads. BRAC involved 10 people with disabilities in mask packaging, who were paid daily wages; BRAC strives to ensure that older people and those with disabilities are targeted through these training sessions. During 2021, BRAC targeted 1,000 Rohingya refugees for skills development in solar panel installation, cooking, and gas burner and sewing machine repairing. Ten percent of the 1,000 trained were people with disabilities.

HELPFUL RESOURCES

- [FSS Cox's Bazar Website](#)
- Similar to the the operational coordination section of this [example](#);
 - [IOM](#)

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