



Picture: WFP/Mojumder

Support To Livelihoods Of Host Communities And Resilience Opportunities For The Rohingya refugees¹

¹ This document was developed by the Livelihoods WG, based on the monthly 4Ws and JRP 2018 Plan, with the support of Protection WG, and Gender in Humanitarian Action (GiHA) WG;



BACKGROUND AND CONTEXT: The rapid and massive increase of the refugee population, concentrated in the south of Cox's Bazar district, has had an enormous impact on Bangladeshi host communities' food security, economic vulnerability, market access, labour opportunities and environment.

Currently, there are about 876,000² refugees in Cox's Bazar, of which an estimated 680,000 have arrived since August 25th 2017 following extreme violence and human rights violations in Rakhine State, Myanmar. The population is concentrated mainly in two sub-districts (upazillas): Ukhiya and Teknaf, and since September 2018 have been supported with immediate life-saving activities. However, along with these interventions there is an urgent need to support **resilience building activities** in the camps to minimize negative and irreversible coping mechanisms, create socio-economic empowerment³, enhance food security and nutrition **awareness** and promote life-skills to restore hope, **dignity**, and self-sufficiency.

The massive increase of refugees put an immense strain on infrastructure and services. The host populations – who have been the first responders to this crisis – were already suffering food insecurity (IPC 2015 ⁴) prior to the influx. As shown by the *Refugee Influx Emergency Vulnerability Assessment* (REVA)⁵, conducted in November 2017, **38 per cent of the local population** is vulnerable to food insecurity, of which 12.5 per cent are considered highly vulnerable. The refugee influx has exacerbated poverty, and the situation is likely to worsen in the near future due to a combination of factors that include **depletion of assets**, inflation for basic goods, **labour competition**, and **cyclone and monsoon** season impact. Food production in the district is scarce,⁶ leading to increased household expenditures on food and economic vulnerability overall.

The increasing **impact on host communities' livelihoods is contributing to social tensions and resentment** between the local population and refugees, particularly over natural resources such as land, water, fish and firewood. The local environment has suffered dramatic impacts, including deforestation, soil and water contamination, and reduction in water availability for both crops and household use. The need to support local communities' livelihoods under the guidance of Bangladesh authorities is paramount, and will have a key role in mitigating tensions.

2 Figures based on the Family counting (RRRC and UNHCR): <https://data.humdata.org/event/rohingya-displacement>

3 Joint Response Plan (JRP) for Rohingya – March 2018 (click)

4 IPC chronic analysis rolled out on 2015 reported the host communities being in a severe (7%) and moderate (20%) chronic food insecurity, and Cox's Bazar district being classified as level 3 (moderate) chronic food insecurity. Integrated Phase Classification: <http://www.ipcinfo.org/ipcinfo-detail-forms/ipcinfo-news-detail/en/c/415763/>

⁵ REVA – FSS/WFP – December 2017: http://vam.wfp.org/CountryPage_assessments.aspx?iso3=BGD

⁶ REVA – December 2017



COORDINATING LIVELIHOODS: The Food Security Sector (FSS)⁷, through its **Livelihoods Working Group**, promotes livelihoods for host communities and advocate for activities that enable refugees to move towards self-reliance and socio-economic empowerment. To achieve these goals the FSS gives strategic guidance, supports the **development of technical packages**, registers ongoing and planned assessments to harmonize initiatives and improve the overall response. The WG coordinates with GoB technical departments' counterparts under the leadership of the RRRC and DC to design packages to effectively support host communities and empower refugees. The Livelihoods Working Group promotes activities using the following **approaches**:

- **INCLUSION and RESILIENCE:** design livelihoods strategies that are **inclusive** and **reach the most vulnerable, ultra-poor families**, marginalized farmers⁸, landless and **women-headed** households who have been impacted by the recent influx; promote socio-economic empowerment and strengthen refugees' resilience.
- **SOCIAL COHESION:** promote activities that mitigate tensions within and among the communities (directly and indirectly) and prevent conflict. Livelihoods interventions should take into careful consideration also the **labour competition** amongst different groups.
- **MARKET-BASED**⁹: explore livelihoods options which strengthen the **entire food system, production, processing cycle**, and restore productive assets. Enhancing local production and marketing will increase markets' operational capacity and have a positive impact for both host communities and refugees.
- **EFFECTIVENESS:** utilize the most appropriate modality according to the context including **cash , vouchers, food for assets or in-kind transfers**.
- **ENVIRONMENT:** employ only green options and support the restoration of the **natural resource** base including critical habitats, **forest** and water resources in program design and implementation.
- **SAFETY NETS:** by further developing government capacity to maintain household-level **food and nutrition security**, protect against livelihoods risks, and develop capacity to respond to emergencies.

⁷ For all documents published by the FSS including Livelihoods WG - http://fscluster.org/rohingya_crisis

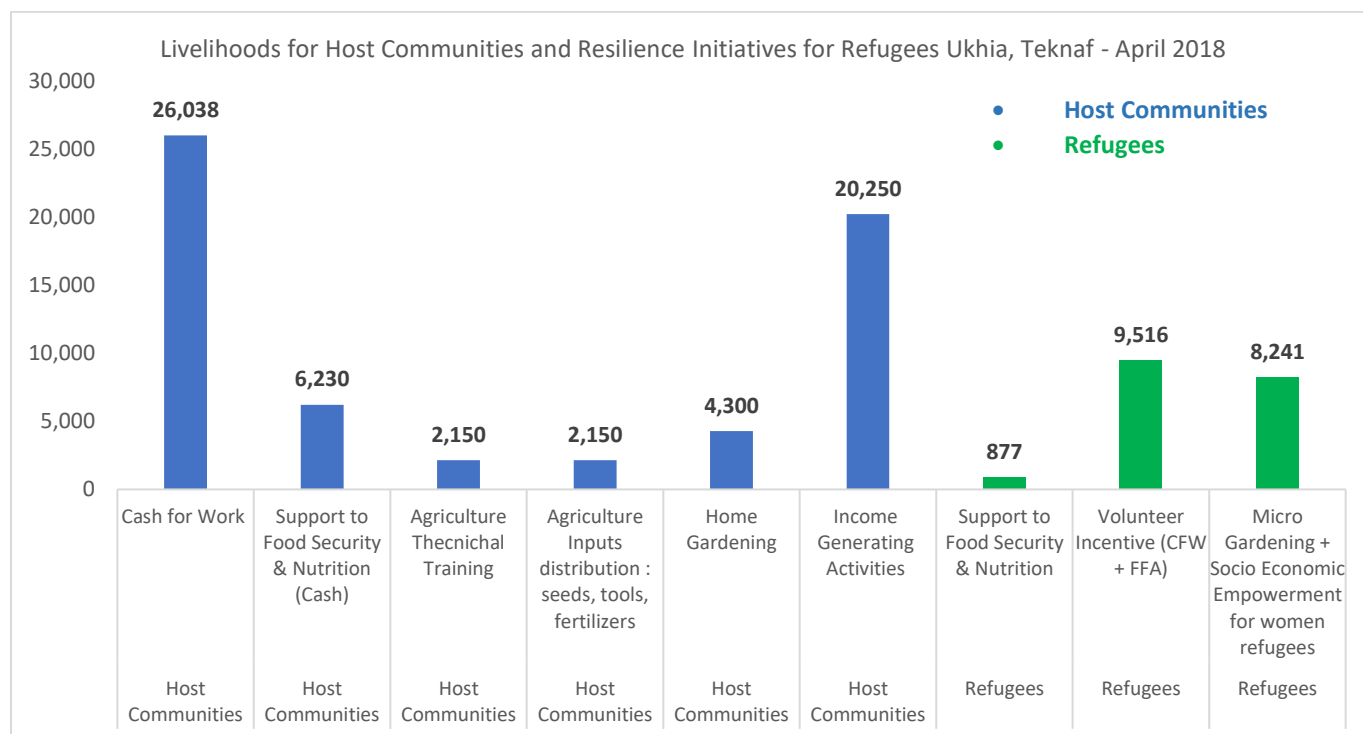
⁸ "The very poor do not own any land, often even including the land that their home is on. The poor typically own around ten decimals of homestead land, enough only for their home" – *Household Economy Analysis (HEA)* – WFP 2017

⁹ FSS members and WFP/VAM are monitoring prices in 15 markets near the camps, in Cox's Bazar and Chittagong for food and non-food items, including labour market: <https://public.tableau.com/profile/wfp.vam.cxb#!/vizhome/FSS-MPM-VAM-CXB/Story1>



Ongoing Livelihoods Activities

Currently **14 FSS members** are working with both host communities in Ukhiya and Teknaf, and refugees in camps for livelihoods or socio-economic empowerment¹⁰. That includes local, national and International NGOs as well as UN agencies. The following table shows the diversity of interventions and the number of people being reached within host communities and refugees in Ukhiya and Teknaf in April 2018.



In addition, three organizations reported ongoing support to host communities also in the upazillas of Ramu, Cox's Bazar Sadar and Pekua in crop production, fish processing and income generating activities.

A complementary action, the **School Feeding** Programme, is ongoing as a safety net¹¹ measure with the main objectives of increasing school attendance, meeting nutritional deficiencies and increasing public nutrition awareness: **144,022 children** in host communities (557 schools) and more than 77,000 Rohingya children living in camps are enrolled in the programme as of April 2018.

¹⁰ "Socio-economic empowerment" refers to a range of activities targeting refugees such as: skills enhancement opportunities (tailoring, handicrafts, etc.), nutrition and food security learning initiatives, multipurpose training centres for marginalized groups.

¹¹ In collaboration with the Ministry of Primary and Mass Education.



Livelihoods and Protection¹²

Livelihoods enhancement is key to achieving protection. In addition to building resilience, avoiding aid-dependency, preventing the development of potentially harmful coping mechanisms and improving social capital, it enables refugees to contribute to local economies, as well as to their future (re)integration within their former country of residence or in any other country.

Restrictions on freedom of movement, lack of education and formal employment in Bangladesh not only limit refugees' current resilience opportunities, but also their prospects to access livelihoods in the future in their home country, Myanmar, or/and in any other country. Adolescents in particular are asking for education and employment opportunities so that when they return they will be able to compete in the job market and build their future. Without access to livelihood and resilience opportunities, protections risks faced by both host communities and refugees are multiplied. These risks include exploitation and trafficking, a variety of forms of sexual and gender-based violence, increased domestic violence, the worst forms of child labour and child abuse including early marriages, as well as increased health complications.

In terms of protection, efforts to increase livelihoods and resilience opportunities for host communities and refugees should ensure that the fundamental rights to decent work and education, including through participation in vocational trainings, are guaranteed. Exploring partnerships with the private sector may also allow refugees and local communities to share economic progress and reduce protection risks arising from tensions between the host and refugee communities.¹³ In addition, activities to increase host community and refugee livelihoods and resilience opportunities should be developed in consultation with refugees and host community boys, girls, men and women to ensure that their voices are heard and views duly taken into account.

LIVELIHOODS AND NUTRITION: It is paramount to promote innovative practices which reduce food and nutrition insecurity through diversified livelihoods approaches (home-gardening, improved seed and agricultural technology provision, small livestock inputs, cash and in-kind transfers, etc.). Promotion of hygiene and food security and good nutrition practices and food utilization should be considered in all trainings (storage, processing, where appropriate). Public awareness should be raised through education outreach about reducing risks to food insecurity, and malnutrition via effective community mobilization in coordination with local authorities¹⁴.

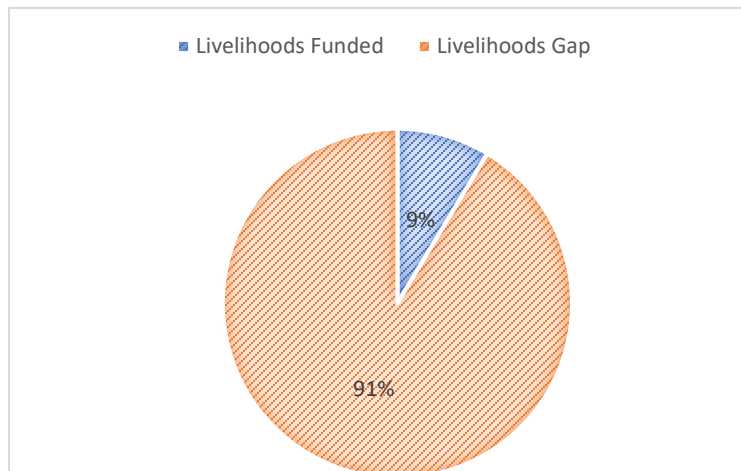
¹² This section was developed with the support of Protection WG.

¹³ UNHCR Global Strategy for Livelihoods 2014-2018

¹⁴ Education often plays a critical role on the food security and nutrition status of the households (REVA 2017).



The Livelihoods dimension in the Joint Response Plan 2018



The Joint Response Plan (JRP) was launched on March 2018 by the Inter-Sector Coordination Group (ISCG)¹⁵. **Eighteen partners** under the Food Security Sector have requested resources for livelihoods activities in host communities, and socio-economic empowerment activities with the refugee population. The total amount requested is estimated at **USD 35 million**, with **only 9 per cent** currently funded (as of April

2018), as reported by the FSS partners. The **main livelihoods activities** of the FSS - JRP:

- Strengthen household food production, nutrition and income generation for landless and small-scale landholders.
- Support local communities by creating new and sustainable job opportunities and market linkages.
- Support local farmers with high-value crop production, small livestock rearing and animal health, and post-harvest food processing.
- Promote sustainable fishing technologies and off-season income generation activities for fishing communities, processing and marketing of dry fish.
- Provide vocational skills training in tailoring, handicrafts, mechanics, carpentry, electrical, catering, etc.
- Provide refugee-specific support packages aimed at social empowerment, literacy, numeracy, 'portable' life skills, food security and nutrition enhancement practices.
- Undertake seasonal employment programmes for land stabilization, forest rehabilitation and community forest management.

MONSOON IMPACT ON LIVELIHOODS AND PRODUCTIVE ASSETS¹⁶: Flash floods, landslides, cyclones, and the monsoon season will have a major impact on the host communities' livelihoods¹⁷ and productive assets. Each year disasters result in loss of livelihoods, land loss and degradation, flood damage, and other impacts on livelihood. Rough seas limit fishing opportunities. Compounded health hazards, increased malnutrition,

¹⁵ Rohingya Joint Response Plan (JRP) - March 2018

¹⁶ "Flood losses reduce the assets of households, communities and societies through the destruction of standing crops, dwellings, infrastructure, machinery and buildings" – *Impacts of flood on the lives and livelihoods of people in Bangladesh: a case study of a village in Manikganj District* <http://dspace.bracu.ac.bd/bitstream/handle/10361/3802/13168004.pdf?sequence=1> - BRAC University

¹⁷ Flash flood in Cox's Bazar, Bandarban, Chittagong – 2015 HCTT JNA 2015 and ACAPS



and reduced access to services after disasters reduce working days and opportunities”¹⁸. These potential impacts need to be considered when planning livelihoods activities in the coming months. Cash interventions can be used as support to the families that have lost their assets and to help prevent negative coping strategies. A negative impact from increased food prices should be expected as well.

Investing in women’s economic empowerment¹⁹

The Rohingya refugee crisis has a particularly **gendered nature** with many women and girls experiencing greater risks and burdens. The refugee population includes more than 70% women and children, and 16% of the households are headed by women. Gendered isolation and restricted mobility of Rohingya women and girls limit their access to information, services, community engagement, decision-making and livelihood opportunities. These limitations **impact nutrition and health**, particularly of women headed households. Women and girls in host communities are also disproportionately affected as basic services available prior to the influx are now severely strained, prices of essential commodities have risen, and wages for daily labour are down further exacerbating their pre-existing vulnerable condition²⁰. **Households headed by women** within host communities are more vulnerable to food insecurity (45 percent are vulnerable or highly vulnerable) than those headed by men (35 percent)²¹. To prevent adoption of negative coping strategies among refugee and host community women, it is imperative to invest in women’s adaptability by identifying and supporting livelihoods that are **resilient to disasters** and climate change, sustainable and empowering. Partners must ensure that livelihood initiatives are accompanied by measures to reduce women’s unpaid care work (e.g. ensure child-care in proximity), advance women’s agency, transform gender discriminatory norms/practices, lead to higher incomes, **promote better access** to and control over resources.

MORE RESOURCES for restoring the livelihoods of host communities and strengthening the resilience of Rohingya refugees are urgently needed. These critical interventions will not only strengthen the local economy, empower the most in need, reach the most marginalized groups, but will also contribute to mitigate social tensions, ensure environmental recovery, and pave the way for sustainable longer-term solutions²².

18 Views on Bangladesh: https://sustainabledevelopment.un.org/content/dsd/resources/res_pdfs/ga-64/cc-inputs/Bangladesh_CCIS.pdf

¹⁹ This section was developed with the support of GiHA WG.

²⁰ UN Women Note on the Empowerment of Rohingya Refugee Women and Girls in Cox’s Bazar, Bangladesh

²¹ REVA FSS-WFP 2017

²² In line with the UN 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development:

<https://sustainabledevelopment.un.org/post2015/transformingourworld>