IMPROVING FIRE PREPAREDNESS ACROSS THE ROHINGYA REFUGEE CAMPS

The world’s largest refugee camps, the Rohingya refugee camps in Cox’s Bazar, Bangladesh, are vulnerable to fire outbreaks in the dry season (from November/December to March/April). Since 2018, over 1,200 fire incidents have occurred in the camps. Following the biggest ever fire incident in the camps in 2021, it was evident that robust fire preparedness measures were critically needed.

Through comprehensive mock fire drills conducted with refugee volunteers from the Disaster Management Unit (DMU), IOM aims to reduce the risk of fire hazards for refugee populations across the camps under its Area of Responsibility (AoR).

Since the inception of these drills, IOM’s camp management teams have organized over 90 simulations with 19 simulations conducted in January 2024 alone -- the simulations will continue until March 2024. Across the camps in IOM’s AoR, these drills have engaged more than 1,600 dedicated DMU volunteers and over 220 Site Management and Site Development (SMSD) volunteers; to increase the number of first respondents, SMSD has also extended the drills to include other sector volunteers such as Protection and Shelter volunteers. The commitment and participation of these individuals underscore the collective determination to fortify their emergency response capabilities.

The overarching purpose of these drills is to ensure that community volunteers consisting of DMUs, other sector volunteers and SMSD teams, are well-prepared and adept at swiftly and efficiently responding to fire incidents. Through rigorous practice, volunteers are honing their skills in utilizing essential firefighting equipment, such as mobile fire-fighting units and water tanks, to contain and extinguish fires effectively.

The drills also serve as an excellent opportunity to assess and refine communication protocols among DMU volunteers and IOM teams. Clear and efficient communication is vital during emergency situations, and these exercises enable teams to streamline their coordination efforts and ensure a seamless information flow.

Lastly, the drills facilitate the assessment of accessibility to critical firefighting equipment, including Mobile Fire-Fighting Units (MFFUs) and TukTuks (three-wheeler vehicles carrying fire extinguishing equipment), ensuring that these resources are readily available and easily retrievable by DMU volunteers in emergency. IOM remains committed to safeguarding the well-being of refugees and building their resilience in the face of potential crises.

A delegation from Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office, visited the Rohingya refugee camps and explored the IOM’s humanitarian interventions in the camps.

A Parliamentary delegation from the United Kingdom visited the Rohingya Cultural Memory Centre and experienced the richness of Rohingya cultural heritage.
Programme Update

Site Management and Site Development, and Communication with Communities

- 10,551 complaints/feedback received; 5,787 referred; 2,657 considered resolved
- 1,694 different community engagement and participation activities conducted
- 1,998 women representatives attended 186 awareness sessions
- 2,183 m of access ways constructed/repairs/upgraded
- 7,665 m² of slope stabilized

Shelter and Non-Food Items

- 3,446 families received Shelter Upgrade and Maintenance assistance
- 90,155 liquefied petroleum gas (LPG) refills provided
- 523 cooking stoves repaired
- 2,639 extremely vulnerable individuals (EVI) received porter support during the LPG distribution
- 2,183 m of access ways constructed/repairs/upgraded
- 7,665 m² of slope stabilized

Health

- 116,470 primary medical consultations in IOM-supported facilities
- 18,327 consultations on sexual and reproductive health services
- 144,167 door-to-door visits conducted
- 1,782 individuals received mental health and psychosocial support (MHPSS) focused services
- 9,179 persons benefited from MHPSS community-based activities

Water, Sanitation and Hygiene

- 259,504 people are receiving continued life-saving WASH support
- 6,886 kgs of compost produced from the Solid Waste generated in different camps
- 404,834 soaps distributed to the beneficiaries
- 40,565 dental kits distributed
- 300 WASH facilities rebuilt/upgraded

Protection

- 7,133 beneficiaries reached with protection, child protection and gender-based violence (GBV) awareness messaging
- 14,021 individuals received GBV support services including age-appropriate psychosocial support
- 15,522 persons sensitized to counter-trafficking
- 278 EVI and non-EVs referred for further specialized services
- 81 victims of trafficking identified and directly assisted

Social Cohesion

- 623 beneficiaries received vocational skills training
- 165 Rohingya beneficiaries received technical skills training
- 100 Rohingya refugees received business development skills training
- 606 host community beneficiaries received conditional cash support for income generation
- 89 host and 75 Rohingya community beneficiaries received in-kind support

Needs and Population Monitoring

- In coordination with the Emergency Preparedness and Response Working Group and humanitarian sectors in Cox's Bazar, a camp-level training on the “Joint Needs Assessment process for the camp focal points and sectors' representatives in 17 IOM AoR camps” was conducted
- UAV mapping of fire-affected Camp 5 conducted and imagery, shapefile and damage maps prepared
- 15 different thematic maps, e.g. 2023 incident maps, AoR map, health facilities map etc., prepared

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