COVID-19 Vaccination for Refugees

The second round of the COVID-19 vaccination campaign for the Rohingya refugees over 55 years old in Cox’s Bazar camps was completed on 23 September. Out of the government’s target of 43,093 a total of 36,943 refugees, representing 86% of the target age group received the second dose of the COVID-19 vaccine.

IOM administered the second dose of the vaccine to 6,693 refugees through the 10 health posts operated by IOM and its partners. 2,702 of those who received the second dose of the vaccine through IOM’s health posts are female, and 178 of them are persons with disabilities.

IOM supported this round of COVID-19 vaccination campaign, by distributing 12,838 relevant Information, Education and Communication (IEC) materials and reached out to 172,213 beneficiaries through risk communication and community engagement efforts.

Empowering Host Community Female Workers at IOM’s Bamboo Treatment Facility

IOM’s Bamboo Treatment Facility (BTF) is empowering vulnerable women from host communities in Cox’s Bazar through various work opportunities. Established in June 2019, the BTF is one of the largest bamboo treatment plants in the region. IOM’s BTF was designed to meet the treated bamboo needs for establishing safe and structurally sound shelters throughout the Rohingya refugee camps.

Female workers represent 20% of the total workforce at the facility. These workers are usually from vulnerable households who are usually overlooked in the regular day-labour market. The female workers are assigned different duties in the facility and have become valuable members of the team.

One Hnila-resident Monowara Begum has been the breadwinner in her family ever since her husband died 10 years ago. For a long time, she was a domestic worker in her village. She also worked locally as a domestic cleaner, but her wages, which are often irregular, rarely covered the expenses of her family. Her employment at the BTF affords her a regular source of income and enables her to better provide for the needs of her family.

Another female worker, Sumi Jaladash and her family used to live hand to mouth with no steady work. Her family regularly ran short of money to pay for their daily expenses following her husband’s disability. Through her work at the BTF, Sumi is now able to contribute to her family’s earnings and their economic situation has considerably improved. The women hope that in the future, there will be more work opportunities for women at the facility so more female community members can find the means to support their families.

The female workers at BTF see the facility as a safe place for women to be gainfully employed. They are proud to be able to provide for their families.

Watch in video.

Download the IOM Bangladesh 2021 Appeal here.
IOM continues to work closely with its implementing partners, the health sector and the Government of Bangladesh (GoB), in providing a wide range of essential health services to the vulnerable Rohingya refugees and the host communities by supporting the operation of over 40 health care facilities at the refugee camps and host communities in Cox’s Bazar.

**Essential Primary Health Services**

The IOM-supported health facilities provide outpatient and inpatient management of communicable and non-communicable diseases (NCD), services for child health and Sexual and Reproductive Health (SRH), 24-hour emergency referrals, Mental Health and Psychosocial Support (MHPSS), and Gender-based Violence (GBV). Along with regular medical consultation, a total of 248 medical referrals for acute life-threatening conditions for Rohingya refugees and host communities were addressed in September. IOM is also supporting the Ministry of Health and Family Welfare with routine vaccination in Rohingya refugee camps. In September, IOM vaccinated 807 children under five years old.

IOM observed a remarkable increase in the number of SRH services provided including 352 facility-based deliveries, 5,268 antenatal care, and 1,162 postnatal care. IOM conducted information campaign to improve the awareness of 4,605 women on modern family planning methods. Aside from supporting SRH cases, IOM also screened 3,981 patients for cardiovascular disease risk assessment and diagnosed 909 new patients with one of the major NCD such as diabetes mellitus, hypertension, asthma, and cancer. IOM also provided 2,063 patients with a major NCD with follow-up care, provided lifestyle counselling to 3,095 patients and referral support to 20 NCD patients.

**Infection Prevention & Control and Emergency Preparedness and Response**

IOM operates and manages Severe Acute Respiratory Infections (SARI) Isolation and Treatment Centres (ITCs) in Camp 20 Extension and Camp 24 with a combined capacity of 199 functional beds for the COVID-19 response. IOM also operates a COVID-19 quarantine facility in Camp 20 Extension to quarantine contacts of reported cases to encourage early containment of the outbreak. To improve early detection, IOM’s 8 sentinel sites collected 2,115 COVID-19 samples that were sent to the central laboratory in Cox’s Bazar for testing.

IOM coordinates the dispatching of ambulance of the Dispatch and Referral Unit (DRU) for COVID-19 cases using a pool of 22 vehicles IOM conducted 321,970 door to door Referral Unit (DRU) for COVID-19 cases using a pool of 22 vehicles. IOM is also sending and coordinating a total of 248 medical referrals for 437 patients. A 24-hour emergency referrals are provided including 352 facility-based deliveries, 15,835 antenatal care, and 1,162 postnatal care. IOM conducted information campaign to improve the awareness of 4,605 women on modern family planning methods.

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As a part of preparedness and surveillance of diseases with outbreak potential, IOM conducted contact tracing for diphtheria and traced 49 contacts this month. IOM also conducted 222 Rapid Diagnostic Tests (RDT) for communicable diseases and is monitoring the trend of positive test by RDTs or bacteriological culture of Acute Watery Diarrhoea (AWD) cases in Cox’s Bazar and 1,377 AWD cases were treated in all IOM-supported and operated health facilities.

IOM is operating three Primary Health Care Centres with Oral Rehydration Points (ORP), a 20-bed in-patient isolation capacity and 33 other health facilities with Oral Rehydration Therapy (ORT) corners for rehydration therapy and monitoring of diarrheal case.

Playing a key role in Emergency Preparedness & Response, IOM leads and coordinates the Mobile Medical Team Working Group (MMTG WG) to ensure safe, rapid, and effective response during an emergency. A two-day training was conducted for 25 participants, from nine MMT partners, for improving clinical, coordination, and communication skills. The training was followed by a drill on mass casualty incidence management and command systems.

**Mental Health and Psychosocial Support (MHPSS)**

In September, MHPSS beneficiaries reported experiences of changes in appetite and sleep patterns, somatic complaints, concentration difficulties, social withdrawal, fear related to COVID-19 infection, and having suicidal thoughts. The most used coping mechanisms were religious activities, seeking medical support, family support, and socialization. A wide range of facility and community based MHPSS services such as individual counselling, tele-counselling, psychiatric consultations, awareness and psychoeducation sessions, community support sessions, case management were conducted this month.

During the reporting period, awareness sessions were mostly focused on COVID-19 vaccination hesitancy and suicide prevention. This is in recognition of the month of September as suicide prevention month with the theme, “Creating hope through actions”. The IOM MHPSS team organized several events in the camps and the host communities to encourage open discussions on suicide, raising awareness on the risks, and providing information on how everyone can contribute to its prevention.
IOM has been providing Shelter and Non-Food Items (Shelter/NFI) support for the Rohingya refugees and host communities since the humanitarian crisis started. Along with the provision of regular Shelter/NFI support, IOM has been playing a leading role in supporting beneficiaries during natural disasters such as monsoon, cyclones, floods, and landslides.

IOM completed the reconstruction of 645 shelters in Camp 9 as part of the response to the fire that happened in March 2021. Aside from this, IOM partners also constructed 31 shelters in Camp 8E. In total, IOM constructed 2,930 shelters while its partners constructed 452 shelters.

Aside from the fire response, IOM and its partners have been supporting Rohingya households with Transitional Shelter Assistance Phase-2 (TSA-2). IOM is using the voucher approach where beneficiaries can select the shelter materials according to their need. In September, a total of 2,748 refugee families in three camps received the TSA-2 materials from IOM while 1,063 households received the TSA-2 materials from IOM partner.

Of the TSA-2 beneficiaries, 218 Extremely Vulnerable Individuals (EVI) families in three camps received shelter construction and porter support through IOM and Partners in the reporting month. In addition, a total of 2,820 beneficiaries -- 1,813 males and 1,007 females -- received the Shelter Maintenance and Improvement training.

During the reporting period, IOM supported 31 households from Camp 20 Ext. with Tie-Down kits (TDK) for monsoon preparedness. In all, IOM supported 68,487 households with TDK for the monsoon and cyclone season. Aside from these, 135 households received emergency shelter packages in response to monsoon emergencies from IOM and its partners.

IOM introduced the Cash for Work (CFW) intervention programme as a part of the Cash-Based Intervention (CBI) in IOM managed camps and host community sites, as part of its emergency response operations. CFW assistance for vulnerable families ensures that, families have access to resources for meeting their basic needs. During the reporting month, a total of 44,247 man-days were paid through Shelter CFW activities while a total of 2,598 man-days were paid through Liquified Petroleum Gas (LPG) CFW activities.

In September, IOM treated a total of 23,500 Borak bamboo poles at its Bamboo Treatment Facility to improve the durability of the bamboo being used in IOM’s Shelter Programme. IOM also distributed a total of 169 LPG kits (including cylinder, stove, regulator, and hose) in 11 camps. IOM also distributed 86,599 cylinders refilled with LPG in 16 camps under IOM’s AoR. Among the beneficiaries of the LPG distribution are 2,784 extremely vulnerable individuals (EVI’s) and COVID-19 suspected beneficiaries who were also afforded with porter support. 1,643 of the EVI’s who received porter support are female beneficiaries.
IOM and its partners work closely with the GoB through the Office of the Refugee Relief and Repatriation Commissioner (RRRC) and affiliated stakeholders to coordinate humanitarian response in 18 camps in Ukhia and Teknaf Upazilas. IOM focuses on improving living conditions, mitigating environmental and ease of access within the Rohingya Camps.

IOM is conducting consultation meetings with community people to identify the gap related to monsoon such as WASH, shelter, and Site Development (SD). In September, a total of 95 coordination meetings were held while 18 community projects were implemented. Besides, 26 trainings were arranged on Site Management (SM), Protection, Women Participation Project, Disaster Management Unit (DMU) training.

IOM is part of the Rapid Investigation and Response Teams (RIRTs) set up by the Health Sector in each camp to follow up on identified COVID-19 patients and to conduct contact tracing, as necessary. DMU volunteers and SM volunteers supported the RIRTs in the contact tracing, provided information for completing the testing, and are linked to services and assistance. IOM disseminated COVID-19 key messages like the importance of wearing masks, maintaining physical distancing, symptoms of COVID-19, examples of symptomatic cases, the proper way of handwashing.

As part of the Emergency Preparedness and Response programme for DMU volunteers and field staff, IOM organized Fire Safety trainings for 18 camps. In partnership with Fire Service Civil Defence Bangladesh, 25 SMEP staff, 450 DMU volunteers and 54 SM camp volunteers completed the training in the reporting month.

Women’s Participation Project (WPP)

Women Committee consultation meetings were conducted in nine camps with 552 members on their engagement in site management, finalizing women led projects, trainings, and other activities in the camps. A total of 2,986 beneficiaries were reached through door-to-door visits to disseminate different key messages on COVID-19 vaccination, monsoon, landslide, and fire safety.

A total of 538 women committee members identified and implemented 13 projects in 10 camps. These community projects include hygiene pad-making, cap weaving, handkerchief making, cloth decoration, handicraft, gar-dening (vegetable/fruit tree), poultry. All WPP focal from 10 camps gathered as part of the monthly meeting to provide a platform for experience-sharing of good practices as well as challenges, discuss and plan on priorities moving forward.
In September, the authorities lifted several COVID-19 related restrictions that were established in 2020 and 2021, which hindered the access of Rohingya refugees’ access to protection activities and the presence of various protection actors. The easing of the measures enabled IOM to deploy 65 protection staff and 70 volunteers to conduct case management services and raise awareness at the community level.

IOM reopened its nine Women and Girls Safe Spaces (WGSS) – some of those have child-friendly corners inside the spaces – where Psychosocial Support (PSS), life-saving information sharing, and skills development activities are conducted in small groups.

General Protection (GP)

IOM resumed activities that had been pending for several months, including training for Community Protection Committee members in Camp 19. In September, IOM continued to support families and individuals affected by the monsoon season, responding to various protection concerns expressed by the refugee community.

As a continuous effort in mitigating threats to COVID-19 pandemic, 20,708 Rohingya refugees benefitted from IOM awareness sessions about COVID-19 preventive measures and protection risks.

Child Protection (CP)

In September, two Child-Friendly Spaces (CFS), operated by IOM partner Terre des Hommes (TDH), reopened after the restrictions for small group PSS activities was lifted. A total of 929 persons received PSS during the reporting period. A total of 48 children received case management services as all child protection caseworkers were allowed to be in the camps.

In the host communities, 29 dignity kits were distributed to families caring for children with disabilities, and sessions were facilitated on positive parenting techniques for the caregivers. Monthly meeting activities were conducted with Community-based Child Protection Committees and Adolescents Groups.

After 18 months public schools and educational institutions reopened in September. In Ratnapalong union under Ukhiya Upazila, IOM teams visited four primary schools and discussed child protection and hygiene issues on COVID-19 with the teachers. Also, one-on-one awareness sessions about child protection issues were provided to 930 persons.

Gender Based Violence

Rohingya women and girls attended sessions about self-care and coping skills in stressful situations, equal gender roles, menstrual hygiene, human trafficking, and other PSS topics using customized booklets and training modules at the reopened WGSS. A total of 901 women and girls benefited from IOM’s small group-based PSS activities that were held in the WGSS.

A total of 11,441 refugees were sensitized to GBV prevention in the camp and host community areas. The group-based and door-to-door sessions also covered COVID-19 awareness including vaccination and monsoon-related topics. IOM’s partner PULSE Bangladesh also carried out group-based awareness sessions and phone call sessions for 5,132 refugees on COVID-19 preventive measures, offered PSS, and discussed protection-related issues. IOM distributed 246 dignity kits; 331 thami sets (traditional Rohingya women’s clothing); and 45 sharees (South Asian traditional garment) to the most vulnerable women and girls.

Counter-Trafficking (CT)

IOM and partners continued to raise awareness on human trafficking, COVID-19 vaccination, and prevention of COVID-19 for Rohingya refugees and host community members on an individual basis or in small group sessions. In September, 4,727 comic pocketbooks, leaflets, posters, and masks that featured the Counter-Trafficking hotline were distributed to the participants.

A total of 50 victims of trafficking were identified and assisted with case management services in the host community and camps. Two trainings were conducted for 25 members of the Community Protection Committee (CPC) in Camp 19. A total of 96 counter-trafficking committees (CTC) members attended three meetings, representing local government and support organizations. A total of 11 orientation sessions on counter-trafficking basic concepts and COVID-19 were organized in four camps and three unions of host communities.
IOM oversees the operation, maintenance, and repair of all WASH facilities in 13 camps and two host-community villages. IOM provides safe water for drinking and domestic purposes, safe sanitation facilities, improved solid waste management, and hygiene promotion activities. IOM engages six implementing partners (IP) to provide comprehensive WASH services.

From January to September, IOM distributed 246,409 soap kits in the refugee camps through partner NGOs. Each soap kit containing eight bars of bathing soap and seven bars of laundry soap is meant to address the soap needs of an average-sized family for a month. In addition, IOM provided 450 WASH kits to the relocated families from this January to September. Each relocation WASH kit contains eight bars of bathing soap, seven bars of laundry soap, two pairs each of child and adult size flip-flops, four toothbrushes, and a tube of toothpaste. IOM also distributed 68,819 Menstrual Hygiene Management kits in 2021.

IOM installed six deep tube wells from January to September and constructed 524 latrine cubicles. IOM also retrofitted 461 latrine cubicles to improve access for disabled and constructed 193 bathing cubicles in 2021. In this period, four DEWATS were constructed.

In September, IOM rebuilt 93 communal latrines, and 59 bathing cubicles. IOM also constructed 2 WASH blocks in the fire-affected Camp 9. Each WASH block contains two cubicles of the latrine and one cubicle of bathing. Handwashing devices and laundry drying racks are installed nearby the latrine blocks. IOM consulted with the user groups to determine the community preferences for gender-specific use of the latrine and put the gender marks accordingly. A privacy fence is included in the WASH block design to ensure privacy and safety of the beneficiaries.

IOM partners conducted 138,818 hygiene promotion sessions in September. More than 279,140 individuals received WASH support through the operation and maintenance of WASH facilities, and awareness and materials for promoting hygienic practices through IOM partners. IOM partners have been working to develop a system to focus on meaningful hygiene promotion through regular follow-up visits at household and communal WASH facilities, and active engagement of community groups with the service providers.

Around 3,214 kg of organic fertilizer (compost) is produced from the Solid Waste Management Units in different camps while 2,536 kg of organic fertilizer will be provided to host community farmers through IOM’s Social Cohesion unit. This inter-unit support will continue depending on the compost production from the WASH unit and the demand in the host community supported by the Social Cohesion Unit. IOM is facilitating daily disinfection of WASH facilities and key communal locations in camps with 0.5% chlorine solution through the partners.

IOM has rolled out the first round of monthly hygiene-related practice monitoring tools for the baseline data collection on 29 September. Besides, IOM is settling the Knowledge, Attitude, and Practice (KAP) survey tool to collect baseline data on hygiene awareness and practices throughout the camps.

IOM continued supporting the relocated families to mega camps from other areas with the WASH relocation kit. In the reporting period, 19 WASH relocation kits have been provided to the relocated families in Camp 20 Extension.

In September, IOM facilitated a high-level delegation visit from the Swiss Agency for Development and Cooperation (SDC) to the Decentralized Wastewater Treatment System (DEWATS) and WASH block in Camp 9.
In parallel with supporting refugees in Cox’s Bazar, the host communities have also been supported since the humanitarian crisis started. IOM acknowledges that the socio-economic and security impact on both Rohingya refugee and host communities is multidimensional. To address this, the focus needs to be on sustaining peace between the two communities, reducing disparities, inequalities, and social exclusion, as well as strengthening safety and security, social relations, and socio-economic interactions and ties.

IOM focuses on enhancing social cohesion and community stabilization through the use of a human security approach both in camps and host communities. IOM believes that if basic services, livelihoods, protection, and safety measures are in place at the community level, and if the sources of insecurity are correctly identified and managed, then people’s perception of community stabilization will improve.

**Livelihoods**

As a part of support to dry fish producers, IOM provided 45kg of fresh fish to one of the 16 non-chemical dry fish production beneficiary groups in September. The remaining 15 beneficiary groups will be provided 675kg fresh fish by this November. IOM initially formed the groups, with providing a fish drier, equipment, and initial supplies of fishes to produce non-chemical dry fish for sale in local markets. IOM provided the supplemental fresh fish support to enhance revenue generation and economic activities.

IOM host community beneficiaries rely heavily on agriculture for livelihood and food security, but limited income prevents or limits investment in appropriate fertilizer. IOM facilitates distribution of composted vegetable waste from refugee camps to host community beneficiaries for enhancing soil to increase overall crop yields and disaster resiliency. IOM distributed 5,404kg compost fertilizer to a total of 1,351 host community beneficiaries.

**Disaster Risk Reduction**

In September, the renovation work of 22 cyclone shelters in Ukhiya and Teknaf Upazila, with capacity of up to 30,000 individuals, is 90% completed. The remaining two shelters in Saint Martin Island will be completed by this October. These improved shelters are integrated within primary schools, thus, during non-emergency times the improvements offer additional year-round benefits by providing improved education environment for students, teachers, and faculty.

IOM also completed cleaning 30 multipurpose cyclone shelters located in Teknaf. These cleaning activities have created wage earning opportunities in the local communities through cash for work and provided an improved physical working and learning environment, benefiting the health of students, teachers, and faculty.

During the reporting month, 37% structural disaster mitigation activities out of 35 have been completed in Teknaf and Ukhiya. These include construction of raised and brick paved footpaths, and the installation of new and reinforced rain and flood water drainage systems such as canals, guide walls and culverts. These interventions provide greater physical protection from hydrometeorological hazards and improved access to clean water, schools, markets, disaster shelters, health services, and transportation and, ultimately, increase disaster resiliency and improved community access in both disaster and non-disaster times.

**Returning Migrants**

Aiming to strengthen economic resilience of returning migrants and vulnerable women in Cox’s Bazar through skills development, IOM identify four areas of skills interventions and will design the trainings to build capacity of the selected beneficiaries.

Till September, a total of 1,474, returning migrants’ data have been collected while four upazilas have been selected for the project implementation. Shortlisting of the beneficiaries is continuing while the local administrations expressed their interest in supporting the outcome of the project. To shortlist the beneficiaries, enumerators training is planned for this mid-October.

**Community Safety Initiative**

IOM, in collaboration with UNDP and UNHCR, is working on increasing the practical knowledge for the police working in Rohingya camps in community safety, conflict resolution, crime prevention and communication with refugees. In the reporting month, a total of 252 members of Armed Police Battalion (APBn) received training that will help them to understand the context of Rohingya emergency, the dynamics, and challenges to work in the camps and host communities.
As a part of the Ministry of Disaster Management and Relief (MoDMR) project on assessing the capacity of the MoDMR to capture information of natural disaster induced displacement, the data collection workshop was held in Cox’s Bazar on 5 September. NPM facilitated and provided technical assistance to the MoDMR workshop.

In September, Shelter Standard Assessment was published, which is done by NPM and the Shelter sector. NPM and CWC jointly produced Trends Survey Report (Rohingya Hobor) which was published in the reporting period. Along with World Food Programme, NPM drafted a joint report on the rapid flood impact assessment which was conducted in both the host community and the camps. The report will be published this October.

The facilities monitoring dashboard was launched, where an interactive overview of facilities in the Rohingya refugee camps was provided. Facilities data was collected from this February to April for 17 camps and verified by Site Management teams. Data collection for the remaining 17 camps is still ongoing. The flood incidents maps are produced with the data from NPM Daily Incident Reporting Mechanism and shared with relevant partners. NPM also produced maps for the health sector.

In the reporting period, NPM completed the data collection for the Common Feedback Platform (CFP) Monitoring exercise while the ‘Daily Incident Reporting Mechanism is ongoing with the sector. NPM teams in collaboration with SMSD are continuing Solar Street Light (SSL) tagging and geolocation collection as well as Facility Mapping Exercise. Teams have already completed six and 10 camps respectively and are going to cover all 18 IOM-managed camps.

The data collection for “Cash for Work Post Distribution Monitoring Round 5” was completed. As a part of the Multi-Sector Needs Assessment (MSNA) qualitative component, NPM and ACAPS conducted 40 focus group discussions across the camps and host communities. Training for the “Skills Development Needs Assessment” which will be conducted in coordination with Social Cohesion Unit take place on 3 October.

NPM is planning to conduct an assessment for Comprehensive Gender Analysis with Gender Equality in Humanitarian Action (GHA) and joint assessments with Perception Survey Round 6 and Disability Inclusion Assessment.