

INGO 2021 Joint Response Plan Statement
May 18, 2021

The Rohingya refugee crisis has become protracted as we approach the fourth anniversary of the Myanmar military's violent campaign against the Rohingya in August of 2017. More than 800,000 Rohingya people were forced to flee Myanmar and cross the border into Bangladesh in search of safety and shelter, where they were welcomed by the Government of Bangladesh and host communities in Cox's Bazar. In Myanmar, Rohingya have long suffered persecution. Since the Myanmar military seized power on February 1st, the future and safety of Rohingya in Myanmar and the repatriation of Rohingya from Bangladesh has never been more uncertain. Refugees tell us that they long for home, but they need promises. They want to hear that their rights will be respected, their citizenship restored, that they can move freely, and use their own name. They are still waiting for Myanmar to take these steps. There is an urgent need for the international community to provide longer term support to refugees, host communities and to the Government of Bangladesh.

For four years, refugees have been surviving off of food aid, basic healthcare, water and sanitation, and protection services, and living in temporary shelters made of flimsy and highly flammable tarpaulin and bamboo. These 884,041 women, men, girls and boys deserve more. The more than 440,000 Rohingya children are quickly becoming 'a lost generation.' Girls and boys are without access to formal and accredited education and their parents do not have access to livelihood opportunities, both of which would allow them a semblance of dignity and the ability to integrate more easily into society when the conditions are safe to return. INGOs increasingly take a complementary role in delivering this sectoral work through our strong partnerships with Bangladeshi NGOs and the Government of Bangladesh, working to strengthen capacity around technical standards, as well as ensuring continued advocacy for the rights of a highly vulnerable refugee population.

We note with regret the absence of refugees in today's discussion panel. Living in this context where Rohingya rely on the generosity of the Government of Bangladesh and upon foreign aid, refugees tell us that they feel they have little control over their own lives and have been disenfranchised from making decisions that affect their daily lives in the present and for the future. As INGOs, we commit to do more to ensure the systematic inclusion of refugees, and in particular women and youth, in discussions that affect their lives. Despite these challenges, in 2020 and 2021 we saw refugees take on massive responsibilities for the running of the camp during the Covid-19 lockdowns, stepping up to ensure critical services such as shelter repairs, mediation, legal support reached their communities when our staff could not.

Recently, the safety and protection risks refugees are exposed to inside the camps have reached a critical point. Refugees report a sense of fear and insecurity, due to the recent fires, the upcoming monsoons, and limited presence of humanitarian actors in the camps due to the Covid-19 pandemic. The principle of "protection by presence" has been challenged during Covid by the limitation on humanitarian and in particular protection activities. As a result, abuses and acts of violence, particularly GBV and kidnappings, have increased. Refugees in turn have been left with limited support when they are confronted with threats, abuse, and violence. Their personal safety and mental wellbeing have suffered.

We must work together as a global community to support Rohingya refugees to live a safe and dignified life in the refugee camps in Bangladesh until durable solutions to the Rohingya crisis can

be realised. The international community can support these efforts through their financial commitments, which support Rohingya women, men, girls and boys to exercise their rights, participate in decision-making, access humanitarian services and access opportunities for livelihoods, cash for work and formal and accredited education. Host communities who so generously welcomed the Rohingya four years ago also need continued support. The financial contributions and actions taken now can support Rohingya refugees to live a dignified life in the refugee camps and support their skills and resilience when they have a chance to return home.

Signed,

ACTED

ActionAid

Action Contre la Faim

CARE

Christian Aid

Concern Worldwide

Danish Refugee Council

EDUCO

Handicap International- Humanity and Inclusion

HEKS/EPER – Swiss Church Aid

HELVETAS Swiss Intercooperation

International Rescue Committee

Islamic Relief

Médecins du Monde France

Médecins du Monde Japan

Médecins du Monde Suisse

Norwegian Refugee Council

Oxfam

Plan International

Save the Children

Solidarités International

Voluntary Service Overseas

World Vision International