



© UNICEF Bangladesh/2021/Salman. 10-year-old Rezwan stands amid the ruins of the massive fire in the Rohingya refugee camps. The fire still burns behind him.

## Highlights

- A massive fire broke out in the Rohingya refugee camps around 3.30PM on 22 March 2021. The fire started in Camp 8W and then spread through Camps 9, 10 and 8E.
- According to the reports by the Inter-Sector Coordination Group (ISCG) mid-day on 23 March, over 45,000 people have been displaced and more than half of them are children under 18 years of age. However, these are still estimated figures and the official numbers are yet to be confirmed.
- A substantial number of UNICEF-supported facilities were damaged or totally burned down by the fire. They include one primary health centre in Camp 8W; two Integrated Nutrition Facilities (INF) in Camp 9 and Camp 8E; 141 learning centres (LCs); and two multi-purpose centres for Child Protection. WASH infrastructure and facilities were particularly badly affected with six water supply networks, 1,600 latrines and 630 bathing spaces destroyed in Camp 8W and Camp 8E. Eighty-seven children were reported as separated from their families.
- UNICEF implementing partners worked throughout the night on 22 and during the day on 23 March to provide care to the affected; fix water supplies; provide temporary latrines; provide shelter for displaced families in LCs; and reunite children separated from their families.

## Situation Overview and Humanitarian Needs

A massive fire broke out in the Rohingya refugee camps in Cox's Bazar District on 22 March around 3.30PM. The fire started in Camp 8W and spread to Camps 9, 10 and 8E, displacing an estimated over 45,000 people according to the reports by the Inter-Sector Coordination Group (ISCG) (figures not yet official). The exact origin of the fire is still unclear. Refugees displaced by the fire moved to other camps where they congregated in open spaces, moved to LCs and partner organizations' offices and sheltered with family or friends.

According to UNHCR and ISCG, among the essential facilities impacted by the fire in addition to those which are supported by UNICEF include the IOM and BRAC primary health centres, the MSF clinic and the Turkish Hospital. A number of distribution points, markets, police posts, LCs and other critical infrastructure were also destroyed.

## Summary Analysis of Programme Response

### Health

The UNICEF-supported primary health centre (PHC) in Camp 8W was damaged by the fire. Through collaborative efforts by a group of local volunteers, including the porters and community health workers from the centre, the fire in the facility was brought under control, allowing it to remain operational. Patients were evacuated while critical staff remained at the centre to provide care to those who were injured in the fire. Some refugees from the surrounding area also took shelter in the centre.

# Bangladesh


## Rohingya Camp Fire

### Situation Report No. 1


23 March 2021

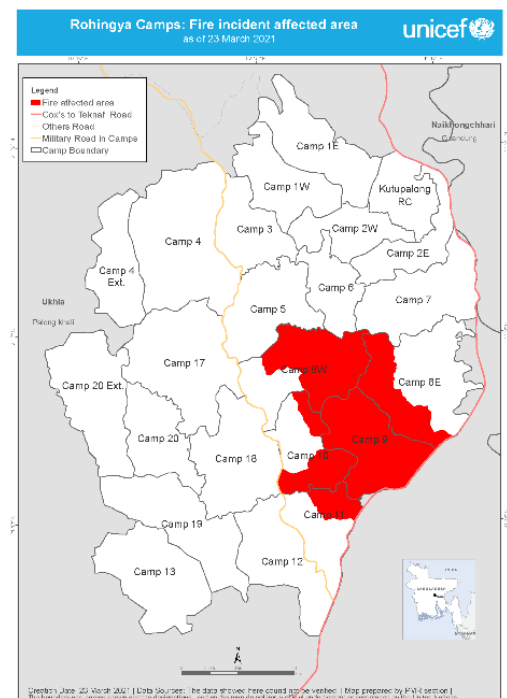


## Situation in Numbers

 **877,710**  
Rohingya refugees  
(UNHCR, 28 February 2021)

 **456,409**  
Rohingya refugee children

 **45,000**  
people displaced by the first  
24 hours of response  
(ISCG assessment 23 March  
2021)



A UNICEF implementing partner deployed a mobile medical team (MMT) and started delivering urgent medical services at the school building next to Balukhali sub-centre for affected refugees from 5:00PM until midnight. The MMT has so far treated a total of 95 patients including 10 with burns and 25 others with injuries related to the fire and displacement.

Despite the damage and the limited staff, the PHC at Camp 8W is open and providing services. The remaining 12 UNICEF health facilities in 9 different camps are safe and continue to provide services with MMTs ready to deploy when needed.

UNICEF is in close contact with partners and has readied the critical supplies to be delivered based on need. They include medicine, oral rehydration salts, basic medical equipment, tents and tarpaulin.

### **Nutrition**

Two INFs in Camp 9 and Camp 8E were destroyed in the fire. These two centres were supporting 164 children with severe acute malnutrition (SAM), 1,223 children with moderate acute malnutrition (MAM), 112 pregnant women and 139 lactating mothers. Nutrition services to the concerned children and women will continue to be provided at INFs in the other camps. Part of the buffer stock of ready-to-use therapeutic food is being released to meet the needs of these children along with stock from the INFs located in areas where the displaced refugee children are sheltering.

The functional INFs in the neighbouring areas will be provided with extra supplies and extra manpower to manage additional caseload of malnourished children and pregnant and lactating mothers coming from the affected camps.

UNICEF is coordinating with WFP and implementing partners to provide support both in the camps affected by the fire and where those who were displaced are temporarily relocated. This includes:

- identification/establishment of breastfeeding corners in child protection- and health-related facilities to support breastfeeding mothers, especially those with injuries;
- provision of complementary food to children aged 6 to 23 months in coordination with WFP and other nutrition partners; and
- provision of play materials to the multi-purpose centres to help the affected children recover from the trauma.

### **Child Protection**

Two multi-purpose centers in Camps 8E and 9 were destroyed by the fire. Initially, 87 children were registered as separated from their families by UNICEF's partners. Of them, 36 have been successfully reunified with their families as of mid-day 23 March. UNICEF-supported partners sheltered overnight 73 children who had been separated from their families in various locations of Camps 16 and 8E. Partners provided water and cooked meals.

UNICEF partners have also initiated the provision of psychological first aid and psychosocial support to the affected children, caregivers and families. 180 tarpaulins are being dispatched to partners to be set up in various locations and will be used as temporary spaces to provide psychosocial support and other required services. Meanwhile, UNICEF partners are distributing dignity kits to women and girls including the basic menstrual hygiene management items.

### **Education**

A total of 141 UNICEF supported LCs and 8 other facilities including multi-purpose centres, resource centres and project offices were damaged in Camps 8E, 8W, 9 and 10. UNICEF-supported LCs and multi-purpose centres in areas not affected by fire hosted those displaced are being used as temporary shelters until further directives are given by the government's camp management authorities. UNICEF worked closely with the partners and secured assets from LCs and multi-purpose centers that can be reused and placed them in the safe custody of the Burmese Language Instructors, Learning Centre Management Committee members and night guards. Assets that are in the facilities currently used as shelters were moved out to safe custody as well.

Following the directive for the nation-wide reopening of schools on 30 March after a year of shutdown due to the COVID-19, UNICEF has prepositioned learning materials for school reopening and will replenish items that were lost by the fire. UNICEF will also provide tents for temporary learning places for all the sites where LCs were burnt. Plans are discussed with the concerned partners and the camp authorities to rebuild or repair affected LCs.

## WASH

UNICEF has been coordinating the fire emergency response with the WASH Sector, the concerned government authorities and WASH area focal agencies (UNHCR and IOM besides UNICEF). Government water trucks are being mobilized to provide water to the displaced populations while the water infrastructure is rebuilt.

Displaced refugees are accessing water from operational water networks in unaffected areas of the camps. UNICEF is distributing jerrycans and soap to the displaced refugees in affected areas of Camps 8E and 8W as well as to those who have arrived in other camps. A UNICEF WASH Team is conducting a rapid assessment in the fire-affected camp areas to determine the level of damages to WASH infrastructure and the water, sanitation and hygiene needs of those people displaced together with partners.



**Repaired tap stand © Ferdous Alam**

UNICEF partners are actively repairing damaged hand pumps in the fire-affected areas. Pre-positioned emergency supplies are also being distributed. Initial estimates of the damages include the following.

- Six water supply networks were damaged out of the 12 water supply networks in Camps 8E and 8W.
- Approximately 1,600 latrines and 630 bathing spaces were destroyed in Camps 8E and 8W
- Approximately 850 handpumps are in the affected camp areas and are currently being assessed for damage and functionality.

## Communications for Development (C4D)

One Information and Feedback Centre (IFC), which provides critical information to people seeking services in the camps, was destroyed in Camp 9. Community volunteers including 50 religious leaders are supporting families in relocation including efforts to search for and reunite missing children. Loudspeaker announcements are being used to coordinate the response and direct families to the temporary locations. Thirty youth volunteers are supporting the community in searching for missing children and elders in relocating. Community radio is working on ground to develop public service announcements to support family reunification and other critical services.

## The next Situation Report will be issued on 25 March 2021.

For general information regarding the actions being pursued by UNICEF and other humanitarian community actors for Rohingya Refugee Emergency and resource requirements, please see the following documents.

- UNICEF Bangladesh Humanitarian Action for Children (HAC) (<https://www.unicef.org/appeals/bangladesh.html>)  
UNICEF Bangladesh Facebook: <https://www.facebook.com/unicef.bd/>)
- Bangladesh Rohingya Refugee Joint Response Plan 2020 (<https://www.humanitarianresponse.info/en/operations/bangladesh>)
- UNICEF Response to the COVID-19 Pandemic in Bangladesh (<https://dashboard.unicefbangladesh.org>)

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