



The onus of implementing largescale relief operations of the aid agencies and INGOs is on a small number of national and local NGOs which have become “overstretched”.

A section of the Kutupalong-Balukhali camp is visibly different from most other parts of the camps. The hill is dotted with shacks in close proximity as usual, but which have sturdy leakproof roofs and extra tarpaulin sheets covering the walls to protect from the monsoon rains.

At the foot of the hill hosting around 200 families is a community latrine with enclosed separate toilet facilities for men and women, unlike elsewhere in the camps where a sheet of plastic is all that shields the user. Inside the shacks however, is the same mud floor and scant belongings ubiquitous in the camps, with one major difference—residents of this camp have already received gas stoves to cook with.

The name of this idyllic (as much as is possible in a refugee camp) part of the camp is “Hope Village” and was created under a partnership between the Turkish and Bangladeshi governments. While the refugees housed there may not be much better off than others elsewhere in the camps, it may seem so to other refugees.

With a multitude of actors providing aid—often in the form of one-time donations—the lack of uniformity in what facilities and services each Rohingya refugee gets, is a given.

But this does not necessarily sit well with the receiving population. For example, Fatema Khatun who lives in Balukhali with her family of five expressed her dissatisfaction that they're not getting as much as the other refugees are. “Others are getting clothing and gas stoves. We don't get anything.” Fatema kept repeating the latter statement, joined sometimes by her elderly mother-in-law squatting on the floor.

Fatema cooks for her family on a mud stove but the



PHOTOS: ANISUR RAHMAN

refugees are no longer allowed to gather firewood in the nearby forest for cooking fuel. Largescale distribution of liquid petroleum gas (LPG) stoves and cylinders to Rohingya refugees and local villagers started in mid-August in order to combat widespread deforestation in Cox's Bazar.

The latest needs and population monitoring report (July 2018) by IOM notes that refugees commonly request cooking fuel above all, followed by lighting, a stove, and clothing. Some refugees have received solar light bulbs, others like Fatema's family have not.

Back in August 2017 before the latest and largest influx of Rohingya refugees from Myanmar, only five UN agencies and 10 national and international NGOs were operating in the refugee camps and makeshift settlements in Cox's Bazar. Fast forward a year and there are about 130 organisations in total working in the camps, including 13 local and 45 national NGOs. This is in addition to the 12 UN agencies and the Red Cross and Red Crescent Movement.

Overall responsibility of the humanitarian response

still lies with the government, mainly through the Refugee Relief and Repatriation Commission (RRRC) under the Ministry of Disaster Management and Relief. Around 22 government departments and ministries, and the army, are also involved.

There is a complex system of coordination in Cox's Bazar at the moment, with a large number of agencies and other organisations grouped sector-wise under the Inter-Sector Coordination Group (ISCG).

In addition to aid and humanitarian agencies, various private organisations and donors have turned up in Cox's Bazar in the months following the influx—from small, local religious organisations to foreign governments



While the abundance of aid givers—coordinated and uncoordinated—poses problems, it also allows the refugees to exercise economic choice.

PHOTOS: KAZI TAHSIN AGAZ APURBO

sponsoring entire camp neighbourhoods like the Turkish Hope Village mentioned above.

In such an extraordinary situation, how do these organisations coordinate the response so that some refugees do not receive more than others or are not left out of aid distributions how do they ensure access of all to basic services such as healthcare and education? Are resources being efficiently used? Do all the NGOs adhere to standards when providing services?

Coordinating the response

“NGOs coordinate their response through sectors (food security, water sanitation and hygiene, shelter, protection, site management, nutrition, etc.) working under ISCG. This is where operational and technical coordination happens,” says Dominika Arseniuk, who coordinates the Bangladesh Rohingya response NGO Platform.

There are ten sectors overall, as per the Joint Response Plan (JRP), a strategy document drawn up by government and non-government stakeholders in March 2018 for the rest of the year. Their total estimate of funding needed to last the year? A whopping USD 950.8 million.

The largest number of organisations is working in the health sector, followed closely by the sector working on shelter provision. There are 32 camps across Ukhaia and Teknaf in Cox's Bazar. The Kutupalong-Balukhali expansion site, known popularly as the megacamp, makes

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