



COMMUNITY COOKING AND LEARNING CENTRES

BANGLADESH REFUGEE CRISIS RESPONSE

INTERVENTIONS

Every day, more than 1,000 Rohingya mothers prepare hot meals on the efficient gas stoves in World Vision's community cooking and learning centres. They no longer have to buy expensive firewood or send their children to fetch it. Most importantly, the centres provide a safe space for the vulnerable—pregnant women, young mothers and widows—to call their own.

Women's mobility in the camps is limited according to cultural restrictions and safety concerns. Yet they can freely leave their homes to go and cook. While at the centres, mothers enjoy classes on nutrition, food hygiene, child protection and gender-based violence prevention. They also gain new income-generating skills, such as market gardening, while building close friendships with their neighbours.

DONORS



LOCATIONS

CAMPS 8E, 13, 15, 19, 20, 24



42

community cooking and learning centres operate across six camps.



1,050

women cook hot meals for their families in the centres daily.



5,250

estimated number of family members who enjoy meals prepared in the centres daily.



2,625

kilograms of rice cooked per day on average in the 42 centres (2.5 kg per family).



630

gas cylinders (12 kg each) used monthly in the 42 centres.



378

Rohingya women volunteers manage the community centres.

IMPACT

Children are freed from collecting firewood; women can cook healthy meals for their families while learning about nutrition and market gardening; social support networks are built.

SUPPORT COUNTRIES





COMMUNITY KITCHENS ARE BECOMING THE “HEART OF THE HOME” FOR REFUGEE MOTHERS

“Please have one, take a taste,” says Setara, proudly holding out a platter of warm, freshly made crepes. “I learned how to make these here just this week.”

Laughter and chatter fills the humid morning air as Setara and a dozen neighbours cook together at the World Vision community kitchen in Camp 19. Stirring vats of fragrant rice and woks of simmering sauce, they discuss family matters and the latest news.

Before the kitchens opened, these women cooked over open fires in their small plastic tarp-and-bamboo shelters. They burned anything they could find—wood, old clothes, plastic bottles and street garbage. This not only poses a deadly fire hazard in the overcrowded camps, but is a severe health risk to children and adults who inhale the toxic fumes inside their cramped homes. Many children complained of eye infections and coughs.

Today, World Vision’s community kitchens provide a safe, convenient place to cook. They are becoming the “heart of the home” for the 1,050 refugee mothers who prepare meals for their families here each day on the kitchens’ two-burner stoves.

“This kitchen is very helpful,” says Setara. “It saves us money because we don’t have to buy firewood. I have

more money to buy food and other necessary things for my children.”

Setara is expanding her recipe repertoire. “We learned how to make pastries like patisapta, a cake made with flour and sweet rice pudding,” says Setara. “If we can learn how to make a few more things, we can sell them. Those pastries will bring in money.”

Setara and her neighbours are eager to earn an income. Legally, refugees are not allowed to work in the camps, but they need cash to buy daily necessities. Of the 232,000 families living here, more than 32,000 are headed by women—most of whom are widows. Never having worked outside their homes in Myanmar, they are trying to find ways to cope as the family breadwinners.

“At the kitchen, we discuss how we can improve our situation and have a better life,” says Setara. The centres provide camaraderie and comfort in a safe, celebrated space that the women can call their own.

“After cooking together in the kitchen, we talk together about our problems,” confides Setara. “If we have worries, we share them with each other. If anything bad happens to us, this kitchen is a place where we can talk about it freely. We try to share each other’s burdens.”