



Save the Children



EMBARGOED UNTIL GMT+1 00:01, 15 FEBRUARY 2019

**Joint Statement from Oxfam, Save the Children and World Vision on the
2019 Joint Response Plan for the Rohingya Humanitarian Crisis
15 February 2019**

Eighteen months ago, more than 700,000 people fled violence, persecution and mass human rights violations in Myanmar. The speed and the volume of the influx created an unprecedented protection crisis. Today, almost 1 million Rohingya still languish in the world's largest refugee camp in Cox's Bazar, Bangladesh. More than half of them are women and children.

Today, these families are pinning their hopes on the renewed Joint Response Plan (JRP) for the Rohingya Humanitarian Crisis launched today in Geneva. Every day, families in the camps tell us how they long to return to their homes in Myanmar. But they also say they don't want to go back until their rights are recognized and until their safety can be assured. So in the meantime, they are counting on this ambitious new funding plan to prioritize education for their children and youth. In the meantime, people also need income-generating opportunities that will help them regain some sense of normality, feed their families better and be less reliant on humanitarian aid.

The Bangladeshi communities living alongside the Rohingya refugees also anticipate the new JRP. In August 2017, the Government of Bangladesh displayed exceptional hospitality in opening its border, as well as the people of Bangladesh who welcomed the Rohingya into their homes. Eighteen months later, their commitment to host almost 1 million refugees continues to place immense pressure on the capacity of host governments and neighbouring families. The unprecedented number of newcomers has affected social, economic and environmental systems in Cox's Bazar—already one of Bangladesh's poorest districts—pushing some families further into poverty. The host community's on-going generosity is particularly laudable as many countries are building barriers to prevent refugees from receiving the assistance they need and the protection guaranteed under international law.

Today, Oxfam, Save the Children and World Vision also applaud the compassion of donor governments who have funded the Rohingya humanitarian response to date. We urge you to respond generously to this appeal for US\$920.5 million to assist 1.25 million people, including 909,000 Rohingya refugees and 336,000 host community members.

We also call on donors and the Government of Bangladesh to ensure that humanitarian action in Bangladesh supports communities to live in greater safety and dignity, while continuing to meet refugees' basic needs for food, clean water and shelter. This means investing in education to equip children and youth with the skills they will need to create a more prosperous future in Myanmar when

they can safely return there. It also means enabling refugees to become self-reliant today so they can provide for their families in dignity.

Refugee children and adults tell us that education is a top priority for them. However, 18 months on there is an overwhelming gap in access for children and adolescents. An estimated 700,000 children and youth age 3 to 24, including 200,000 from the host community, lack access to educational services. The situation for refugee adolescents and youth is particularly dire: only four in 100 have access to any form of education or life-skills and vocational training.

Thirteen-year-old refugee, Sirjil, worries that he'll never go back to school. He says, *"I was in fifth grade in Myanmar, but here I have nothing to do. Sometimes I go to the forest to collect firewood. Sometimes I go to the river. There is no opportunity for education. Tutors cost 300 taka a month (about \$3.50). How can you pay that if you have no money?"*

Without the safety that schooling provides, at least 100,000 Rohingya refugee children in Cox's Bazar face greater child protection risks, including psychosocial distress, neglect, abuse, separation from caregivers, child marriage, child labour and trafficking. Education also provides a sense of routine and normalcy. We know that the longer children are out of school, the less likely it is that they will be able to return to learning.

Education is not a luxury. It's a human right. We can't fail Rohingya children like Sirjil who have already survived so much. More investment in education and protection for children and youth is desperately needed if we are to prevent a lost generation. Without such education, these children will lack the skills they need to cope with their current situation. They will also lack the skills necessary to contribute to their society when they return to Myanmar.

In addition to insufficient access to education, refugees also lack income-generating opportunities in the camps, which puts them at further risk. This is a significant obstacle to their recovery and to the realization of their rights. It renders the Rohingya fully dependent on aid and highly vulnerable to exploitation, especially women and children.

Left with limited safe options, they are at risk of child and forced labour, early marriage, trafficking and prostitution. Young girls sold into forced labour were the largest group of trafficking victims identified by the International Organization for Migration in Bangladesh's Rohingya refugee camps in 2018.¹ Providing women and girls opportunities to earn an income through formal recognition of activities such as care work could help them to protect themselves from abuse and exploitation now and in the future.

The release of the 2019 Joint Response Plan today marks the mid-point in the second year of this unprecedented, prolonged crisis. Oxfam, Save the Children and World Vision thank the Government of Bangladesh for its continued efforts to protect the Rohingya. We call on the international community to support Bangladesh in making education for children and youth a central priority, and to encourage initiatives that promote self-reliance and recovery for their parents.

¹ <https://www.iom.int/news/girls-sold-forced-labour-largest-group-trafficking-victims-identified-iom-bangladesh-refugee>