UNHCR
The UN Refugee Agency

IOM
UN MIGRATION

ROHINGYA BOAT ARRIVAL RESPONSE IN ACEH INDONESIA

EMERGENCY APPEAL

DECEMBER 2023 – JUNE 2024

Key figures

1,543 Rohingya refugees have disembarked from boats in Aceh, Indonesia since 14 November 2023. As of 12 December, the total Rohingya population in Aceh, including 179 who disembarked from boats earlier in the year, is approximately **1,722.**

Approximately 700 refugees currently remain stranded outside of designated accommodation. Over 1,000 have been relocated to over-crowded shelters in Aceh.

Due to the current situation within Myanmar, the protracted nature of Rohingya refugees' displacement in Bangladesh, and the arrival of the dry season with improved sea conditions, it is projected that more groups of Rohingya refugees will arrive in Aceh by the end of March 2024, all of whom will require immediate, sustained, life-saving assistance.

UNHCR, the UN Refugee Agency, and IOM are urgently appealing for USD 5.4 million to address the immediate, emergency needs of Rohingya refugees disembarked in Aceh Province, Indonesia.

Map of disembarkation locations and current temporary accommodations

*) To be confirmed if this is a separate or part of previous arrival

Background

Over a four-week period between mid-November and mid-December 2023, some 1,543 Rohingya refugees disembarked from nine boats in Aceh, Indonesia. These individuals join 179 Rohingya who remained in Aceh following boat disembarkations earlier this year. The number of disembarkations over these four weeks has far surpassed the total number of Rohingya who arrived in Aceh by boat between 2020 and 2022.

Over 76% of the refugees who have disembarked in Aceh since mid-November are women and children. For those who remain without designated accommodation, the lack of adequate shelter and sanitation is a serious health and protection risk.

It is believed that more boats may currently be at sea and more Rohingya refugees are awaiting departure from Bangladesh. Indonesia is likely the intended destination of these boats. It is projected that there may be as many as 2,000 Rohingya in Aceh by the end of 2023 and possibly 3,500 by the end of March 2024.

Rohingya refugees have reported that despite the considerable risks associated with this sea route, they undertake these dangerous boat journeys due to the challenges of living in protracted displacement, the limited prospects for solutions, and the current situation in Myanmar, the Rohingya's country of origin.

UNHCR's and IOM's emergency response

- **Supporting the disembarkation**: Teams have been on the ground during disembarkations to advocate with local communities to allow boats to land, passengers to disembark, and to provide immediate life-saving assistance. Teams will continue to work with authorities to enable the transfer of new arrivals from places of disembarkation to transit sites where they can receive protection and basic assistance. Teams assess the hosting locations from a protection and security perspective and implement safety measures, including by liaising with local, district, provincial, and national authorities.

- **Protection:** Protection teams are conducting registration for all new arrivals and refugee status determination for those claiming international protection needs who were not previously registered as refugees in Bangladesh. Best interest assessments are undertaken to identify the best care plan for the large number of unaccompanied children. Gender based violence (GBV) risk mitigation measures and GBV response, as well as case management for other vulnerable individuals, is prioritized. New arrivals and support staff are briefed on Protection from Sexual Exploitation and Abuse (PSEA) and other risks and reporting channels are established.

- **Shelter:** Approximately 700 new arrivals have not yet been allocated accommodation in Aceh and 1000 are hosted in temporary shelters that have significantly exceeded capacity. Minor shelter repairs and upgrades have taken place but more investment is urgently required to ensure adherence to minimum humanitarian standards at all sites. In addition, due to the overcrowding and anticipated new arrivals, additional sites are being considered by the local, provincial, and national authorities. Current and new sites require rehabilitation and expansion to host the refugee population and to ensure that protection concerns, particularly GBV risks, are mitigated.

- **WASH**: Water, sanitation, and hygiene remains a challenge to be urgently addressed to reduce risks to both the refugees and the host communities, particularly around disease spread. At the sites currently hosting refugees, there are insufficient WASH services, including limited safe access to water and sanitation, improper hygiene practices, and lack of effective waste management. While humanitarian partners are trying to improve the situation with temporary WASH facilities, urgent support is required to ensure that minimum WASH standards are met in all sites to respond to current needs and mitigate health concerns.

- **Food and drinking water:** Food and supplemental nutrition for young children and pregnant women is ongoing, though with limited funds to sustain this response into 2024 or if there are additional arrivals.

- **Health:** Basic health assistance is currently provided in all hosting sites in partnership with local actors and health teams are deployed at disembarkation sites a part of the immediate response. Disembarked refugees require immediate medical check-ups and typically have a number of acute health concerns immediately following disembarkation, including dehydration and anemia. Other common issues requiring urgent access to health care in the hosting locations include skin conditions, care and support for pregnant women, and support to babies and young children. For more complex conditions and health needs, referral is supported to secondary and tertiary health centers. Basic mental health and psychosocial support services are also provided, including referrals for specialized care.

- **Non-food items:** A part of the refugees who landed have been supported with hygiene kits and dignity kits. The kit composition is based on international standard specifications and recent consultations with refugees. Sarongs and blankets have been provided in limited quantity.

- **Movement**: Humanitarian partners provide logistical support to local authorities to facilitate the transfer of refugees between the place of disembarkation and the shelters, or between shelters and sustained refugee care facilities in the country.

- **Host community support:** To ensure the continued support of local host communities, alleviate the burden of hosting refugee arrivals, and facilitate a peaceful and supportive environment for Rohingya refugees, activities to support and empower host communities are an imperative component of this response. The Rohingya response – including enabling disembarkation – rests largely on the continued hospitality and humanity of local Acehnese hosts. Communities along the shore, as well as those in locations to which Rohingya refugees are transferred after disembarkation, must be supported through quick impact projects, rehabilitation of community structures, engagement through individual contracts to support the response, and other activities based on the needs and priorities they identify.

- **Sustained care:** In line with refugee regulation in Indonesia, after receiving support in temporary shelters in Aceh province, refugees will be transferred to community-based accommodation facilities in refugee-hosting cities across Indonesia. Collaboration between authorities, communities and service providers in those locations allow refugees easier access to services and more independent living while durable solutions are identified. While hosted in sustained care facilities, refugees are supported with a small monthly cash allowance and health insurance to meet their basic needs without creating a burden on local service infrastructure.

- **Coordination:** As the movements are predominantly composed of refugees, who are also stateless, UNHCR supports Indonesian authorities by leading and coordinating the inter-agency response at the local and national level, in close coordination with IOM and humanitarian partners in Aceh and Jakarta.

Scaling up the response

With over 35 years' presence in Indonesia, UNHCR and IOM are working closely with national and international partners to ramp up the response as part of broader inter-agency efforts. UNHCR and IOM priorities include:

Protection

- **Advocacy to permit disembarkations.** Teams are present during disembarkation to engage local communities to permit boats to land, passengers to disembark, and to provide immediate life-saving assistance. Teams work with authorities to enable the transfer of new arrivals from places of disembarkation to transit sites where they can receive protection and basic assistance.
- **Registration, refugee status determination, documentation.** Teams are conducting registration for all new arrivals, refugee status determination for those claiming international protection needs and who were not previously registered as refugees in Bangladesh, and providing identification documents. This core protection activity – requiring prolonged support missions from Jakarta – will continue to be an essential part of the response.
- **Child protection.** Best interest assessments will be undertaken to identify the best care plan for the large number of unaccompanied and separated children, as well as case management for all children with heightened needs. In shelters, humanitarian partners will aim to create child-friendly spaces for children and mothers in line with cultural norms.
- **Gender-based violence** risk mitigation and response activities.
- **Safety and security.** While security remains the responsibility of the host government, the protection response requires that hosting locations are assessed from a protection and security perspective and safety measures are implemented, particularly by working closely with local, district, provincial, and national security agencies.
- **Risk Communication and Community Engagement** is carried out with refugees covering topics including GBV, PSEA, exploitation, human trafficking, risks related to onward movement, and reporting misconduct.
- **Family tracing/communication.** Family members of new arrivals often have lost contact with those journeying by boats. The dangers associated with boat travel are well understood and family members of those journeying are awaiting information on their wellbeing. Facilitating contact between new arrivals and family members elsewhere is crucial to ease concerns and support the mental health of both new arrivals and their relatives.
- **Legal support.** New arrivals who leave hosting facilities on their own in an effort to continue their journeys to other locations may be arrested and detained on immigration related charges. Legal support, advocacy, registration in detention, and engaging to facilitate release remain a part of the protection response.

Shelter

- **Emergency shelter** is required at the location of disembarkation while the refugees are transferred to temporary shelter facilities in Aceh. This is provided as communal shelter built with tarps or using tents provided by local partners.
- **Shelter site rehabilitation and expansion is** required to ensure that the current and future facilities assigned by the government to temporarily host refugees in Aceh can be used and expanded to maintain minimum humanitarian shelter standards and improve sites that operate significantly over capacity. Humanitarian partners will also conduct regular maintenance activities in cooperation with the refugees and the host community to ensure that living conditions remain above minimum humanitarian standard and that protection risks are mitigated, particularly GBV risks.

Water, Sanitation and Hygiene (WASH)

- **Emergency WASH** support is required at the location of disembarkation to ensure that refugees have safe access to water, sanitation and hygiene services to improve public health.
- **Waste management** at the site, including effective management of wastewater and grey water from WASH facilities to ensure proper drainage and reduce the risk of vector-borne diseases.
- **Expansion of sanitation facilities** at the temporary shelters in Aceh province is essential to host the refugees in line with SPHERE standards. While humanitarian partners are installing temporary WASH structure, the expectation is that refugees will stay in the shelters for several months and urgent investment is required in semi-permanent structures and permanent structures that can serve the refugee population for the length of their stay in the shelters. To ensure that the facilities will remain functional in that period, operation and maintenance guidance and arrangements will be established.
- **Water provision** is required in most sites where the local water source is insufficient to cater for the needs of the hundreds of refugees hosted there. Water trucking and expansion of water storage capacity will meet immediate needs while expanding local water source capacity with borehole or connection to nearby water sources.

Food and basic needs

- Most Rohingya arrive in Aceh with very few possessions and, as they are confined to hosting locations, they remain wholly dependent on humanitarian assistance to survive.
- **Food and drinking water** are an immediate need. The current conditions in most sites do not permit on-site cooking, so meals are prepared off site and delivered to the population.
- **Supplemental food** – including for very young children and pregnant mothers - is essential to ensure the health of the more vulnerable members of this population.
- **Non-food and core relief items**, including sarongs, underwear, hygiene kits, sleeping mats, blankets, mosquito nets and other basic items are needed by the new arrivals.

Health

- **Refugees are supported by strengthening emergency health services through continuous deployment of mobile health teams or local partners to carry out health check-ups** and to provide urgent treatment for dehydration, skin disease and other medical conditions identified upon disembarkation.
- **Primary healthcare** is provided by humanitarian partners with on-site clinics at the shelters hosting the refugees. This allows early identification and treatment of health issues, regular monitoring of refugees with medical conditions and referral to secondary and tertiary health facilities in the region.
- **Secondary and tertiary healthcare** is provided in partnership with public and private health facilities in the region. Humanitarian partners also support with logistics, interpretation and cultural mediation as necessary to ensure that the refugees can access required health care.
- **Pre-departure medical check** is conducted with all refugees in preparation for their transfer to accommodation facilities outside Aceh province. This reduces risks during travel and allows partners to take adequate measures to support the movement of medical cases.

Mental Health and Psycho-Social Support (MHPSS)

- **Group activities**, such as recreational, cultural, religious or sport activities, are extremely important to alleviate and address trauma and stress exacerbated by the journey and the difficult living conditions. Upon disembarkation, Psychological First Aid (PFA) is carried out by local partners within a few hours from the arrival of the refugees in the shelter. Children, youth-friendly activities are provided and different gender and age groups are addressed according to cultural norms and practices.
- **Life skills and informal education** activities are provided to engage the refugees and strengthen their resilience, self-reliance, and coping mechanisms. Language learning (Bahasa Indonesia and English) supports children to more easily access formal education opportunities.
- **Specialized referral** to mental health and psychosocial services is provided in collaboration with local partners.
- Response interventions will be focused on risk reduction and mitigation measures prioritized for safe programming and gender-specific needs addressed throughout all activities.

Budget

OUTCOME AREAS	Targeted Population	Total Budget (USD)	UNHCR (USD)	IOM (USD)
PROTECTION				
Registration and Documentation, Legal Assistance, Child Protection, GBV Risk Mitigation and Response, Protection monitoring, Case management, Risk communication and Community Engagement.	3,500 individuals	295,000	278,300	16,700
Advocacy and coordination with national and local authorities	3,500 individuals	91,000	44,500	46,500
Sub-total		**386,000**	**322,800**	**63,200**
SHELTER AND WASH				
Shelters renovation and improvement	3,500 individuals	388,300	-	388,300
Water, Sanitation, and Hygiene (WASH)	3,500 individuals	332,900	-	332,900
Shelter safety and security	3,500 individuals	72,800	72,800	-
Sub-total		**794,000**	**72,800**	**721,200**
FOOD AND BASIC NEEDS				
Food, drinking water, and supplementary nutrition for pregnant mothers and children under 5	3,500 individuals	2,020,800	2,020,800	-
Non-Food Items (NFIs)	3,500 individuals	734,000	2,400	731,600
Sub-total		**2,754,800**	**2,023,200**	**731,600**
HEALTH AND MENTAL HEALTH SUPPORT				
Primary healthcare, secondary and tertiary referrals	3,500 individuals	248,100	-	248,100
Mental Health and Psychosocial Support (MHPSS)	3,500 individuals	229,100	-	229,100
Sub-total		**477,200**	**-**	**477,200**
PEACEFUL CO-EXISTENCE WITH HOST COMMUNITIES				
Host community engagement for social cohesion, addressing needs in host communities	3,500 individuals	244,100	89,000	155,100
Sub-total		**244,100**	**89,000**	**155,100**
POST-EMERGENCY / SUSTAINED CARE				
Accommodation, Cash-based Intervention (CBI), and health insurance	3,500 individuals	741,000	-	741,000
Sub-total		**741,000**	**-**	**741,000**
TOTAL		**5,397,100**	**2,507,800**	**2,889,300**

Partnerships

UNHCR and IOM are supporting local, provincial, and national authorities as part of the inter-agency response. In line with the UN's partnership principles, UNHCR and IOM are working with local organizations in Aceh including: Yayasan Kemanusiaan Madani Indonesia (YKMI), Jesuit Refugee Service (JRS), Yayasan Balee Seribu Bintang (YBSB), Palang Merah Indonesia (PMI), KontraS Aceh, Yayasan Geutanyoe (YG), LazisMU, Dompet Dhuafa (DD), Waqeefa, Yayasan Saluran Indonesia (YSI), Muhammadiyah Disaster Management Center (MDMC) and others.

Women and children's refugees in the temporary shelter in Bluka Tebay
©UNHCR/A. Jufrian

Refugees taking seats in the bus for relocation to a new temporary place (ex-immigration office building) in Lhokseumawe.
©UNHCR/A. Jufrian

ROHINGYA BOAT ARRIVAL RESPONSE IN ACEH, INDONESIA

EMERGENCY APPEAL

DECEMBER 2023 – JUNE 2024

COVER PHOTO: Rohingya refugees just arrived in Bluka Tebay, disembarked on their own at Bluka Tubai Beach, Dewantara Sub District. There are 61 adult male, 36 adult female, 12 male child, 10 female child. Temporary shelter was accommodated at Fishermen Hall nearby.
©UNHCR/A. Jufrian

For more information

LINKS: Global Focus: Indonesia
Twitter: UNHCRIndo

CONTACTS: UNHCR: Emily Bojovic, Senior Protection Officer: bojovic@unhcr.org
IOM: Stefano Bresaola, Programme Coordinator, sbresaola@iom.int

DONOR ACKNOWLEDGEMENT: UNHCR and IOM are grateful for the critical support provided by donors who have contributed to our response in Indonesia as well as those who have contributed to UNHCR and IOM programmes with broadly earmarked and unearmarked funds which allow us to respond in an agile manner.
Australia | Belgium | Canada | Denmark | European Union | France | Germany | Ireland | Japan | Netherlands | Norway | Spain | Sweden | Switzerland | United Kingdom | United States of America | Private donors

UNHCR The UN Refugee Agency

IOM UN MIGRATION