



Australian Government



BANGLADESH COVID-19 DEVELOPMENT RESPONSE PLAN

- Australia enjoys a strong development and trade relationship with Bangladesh and will continue to support Bangladesh through its response and recovery from COVID-19.
- COVID-19 has intensified pre-existing humanitarian and economic challenges, especially in Cox's Bazar, where the local community hosts large numbers of Rohingya refugees in camps.
- Australia will support Bangladesh's COVID-19 recovery with a focus on investments in long-term economic growth, underpinned by inclusive education, skills development and private sector engagement, and humanitarian assistance for Rohingya refugees and the host community.

Australia and Bangladesh have shared interests in a secure, prosperous and inclusive Indian Ocean region; we support independent, sovereign and resilient states. Our two-way trade exceeded \$2.5 billion in 2018-19 and, in the years to come, Bangladesh offers increased opportunities for Australia's private sector, including in agriculture, education and energy. We have strong sporting and people-to-people links, and Australia is a preferred education destination for Bangladeshi students. We work closely together to promote peace and security, including to prevent irregular migration and counter violent extremism.

Australia's development partnership with Bangladesh is mature and long-standing, as reflected in our continued investment in BRAC. Our development investments align with the Bangladesh Government's five-year plan and its COVID-19 Preparedness and Response Plan (2020), as well as the UN Joint Response Plans for the Rohingya Humanitarian Crisis and related COVID-19 appeals. Australia is supporting the response to the Rohingya crisis, providing over \$190 million in Bangladesh since September 2017.

COVID-19 SITUATION ANALYSIS

As one of the most densely populated countries in the world, with a population of 165 million people, Bangladesh is facing significant challenges in recovering from the pandemic. Bangladesh's health systems have been put under pressure and the economic impact is likely to be prolonged. Australia is committed to supporting Bangladesh's response to COVID-19 and working together to drive future prosperity.

The Bangladesh Government has implemented measures to protect the community from COVID-19 and support its economy, including public health directives, stimulus packages, and expanded social protection programs.

COVID-19 is having an impact in the Cox's Bazar District — where almost 1.3 million people, including 855,000 Rohingya refugees displaced from Myanmar and 444,000 local Bangladeshis — depend on humanitarian assistance. Humanitarian programming for Cox's Bazar was adjusted to prepare and respond to the pandemic, and to limit the spread of the virus in the Rohingya refugee camps. Widespread transmission across the camps could see higher-than-average mortality and morbidity rates. COVID-19 could further undermine social cohesion between the refugee and host communities. These conditions have the potential to place the Rohingya population in Cox's Bazar at greater risk from criminal people-smuggling networks and illegal migration, including the risk of exploitation and loss of life.

The economic impact of international and domestic measures to contain COVID-19 has been severe. After a decade of strong economic growth, the World Bank forecasts Bangladesh's GDP will fall to 1.6 per cent in 2020 from 8.2 per cent in 2019. Efforts to contain the spread of the virus have caused domestic economic activity to slow and a loss of earnings for the private sector, small businesses and low-income workers in both rural and urban areas. Bangladesh's ready-made garment (RMG) sector, which accounts for an estimated 84 per cent of total exports, is heavily affected by the slowdown of international markets. The World Bank estimates that remittances from Bangladeshi migrant workers, who sent home close to USD18 billion to Bangladesh in 2019, will fall by 22 per cent.

COVID-19 is posing significant risks to food and nutrition security through disruptions to food production, distribution and access. Before the pandemic, the World Food Programme (WFP) estimated that approximately 25 per cent of the population in Bangladesh was food-insecure and 36 per cent of children under five years of



age suffered from stunting, a common measure of chronic malnutrition. COVID-19 is expected to increase malnutrition rates for women and children.

Women are disproportionately affected by the loss of jobs in the informal sector and disruption to services. The risk of violence against women has increased due to COVID-19 pressures. People with disabilities, many of whom were already facing stigma, poverty and exclusion from essential services, may face increased vulnerability.

A prolonged economic downturn in Bangladesh could disrupt education and vocational training, particularly among the poorest communities across Bangladesh, and increase social tensions.

Bangladesh is highly vulnerable to the impact of climate change and natural disasters. The impact of extreme weather events and the annual monsoon season, including loss of housing, inundation of agricultural lands and exposure to contaminated water, will exacerbate the socio-economic and health pressure on communities already under strain due to COVID-19.

AUSTRALIA'S RESPONSE

This COVID-19 Development Response Plan will guide Australia's whole-of-government response to COVID-19 in Bangladesh over the next two years. Australia will prioritise support to enhance Bangladesh's health security, stability and economic recovery. We will place a strong emphasis on protecting the most vulnerable, especially women and girls and people with disabilities.

The nature of Bangladesh's challenges and the size of its population require targeted support and engagement that can be delivered at scale and in partnership with other donors and the government. We will maximise our impact by using all policy levers, including development, economic, diplomatic, trade and security capabilities, including in multilateral fora.

Health Security

Australian development partners moved quickly to support Bangladesh's emergency health response to COVID-19. Australia, through BRAC, WFP and the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), supplied local health systems with equipment and training, and provided emergency food and income to vulnerable people across Bangladesh. Our partners have supported water and sanitation and hygiene (WASH) services and increased community awareness to control the spread of infection.

Our partners under the Australian Non-Government Organisation Cooperation Program (ANCP) quickly

adapted 14 existing projects across Bangladesh to respond to COVID-19. For example, CBM Australia through a local partner, the Centre for Disability Development, conducted a rapid situation and needs assessment for people with disabilities and supported cash transfers and hygiene kits.

Australia is responding to emergency health and humanitarian needs in Cox's Bazar District. Through DFAT's existing partnerships with UN agencies, Australian non-government organisations (NGOs) and BRAC, our support continues to meet basic needs in nutrition, education, protection and WASH services. Our COVID-19 health response includes the construction of isolation and treatment facilities with capacity for 1,900 beds. Our funding to UN Women is supporting Rohingya women leaders and volunteers to deliver targeted COVID-19 awareness sessions for women and girls and the production of face masks through their Multi-Purpose Women Centres. Through AusAssist we are providing technical experts to support the Rohingya crisis, including in specialist public health, disability inclusion, communications and logistical support.

Our partnerships with the United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA) and UN Women support women-only COVID-19 isolation and treatment facilities in Cox's Bazar and the continued delivery of essential sexual and reproductive health services disrupted by the pandemic.

Maintaining inclusive health services is a priority. This includes support through ANCP and sustainable WASH projects under Australia's regional Water for Women program. Australia has also stepped up global contributions to the World Health Organization (WHO), Gavi, the Vaccine Alliance, and the Global Fund to Fight AIDS, Tuberculosis and Malaria to help countries, including Bangladesh, respond to COVID-19 while continuing to manage other preventable diseases.

Stability

Australia will partner with Bangladesh to support greater social cohesion and ensure food security due to COVID-19. We will assist Bangladesh to reform the systems underpinning the National Social Security Strategy to enhance its systems, to ensure support reaches the most vulnerable.

We will extend our support through WFP for nutrition services for women and children. Through the Australian Centre for International Agricultural Research (ACIAR), CSIRO and Australian NGOs we will support nutrition-sensitive and climate-resilient agricultural research partnerships. Our engagement will be informed by ACIAR's analysis of food system vulnerabilities resulting



from COVID-19 and their impact on smallholder farmers in South Asia.

Australia will advocate for human rights and maintaining space for an active civil society in the region. We will work with local advocates and continue our own advocacy so the voices of women and girls are amplified.

We will continue the partnership between the Australian Federal Police and the Bangladesh National Police, and engagement on defence, centred on a shared interest in a stable and prosperous region. Our development investments and whole-of-government engagement will seek to address people smuggling and human trafficking and to counter violent extremism. We will seek opportunities to build women's leadership and promote their meaningful participation in security issues, in line with our shared commitment to the Women, Peace and Security agenda.

The Australia Awards program will continue to offer opportunities for study, research and professional development, including through new, innovative delivery methods where possible.

Australia will continue to prioritise inclusive access to education. With BRAC, the Underprivileged Children's Educational Programs (UCEP) and through our contributions to the Global Partnership for Education, we will prioritise programs to support the delivery of basic education to the extremely poor, and to poor students in rural and urban areas, with a particular focus on girls and children with disabilities. Our funding will include resources for remote learning and support to prevent the most vulnerable from dropping out of school.

In Cox's Bazar District, Australia's humanitarian assistance will support initiatives that build the resilience, social cohesion and self-reliance of both Rohingya and local communities. We will support efforts to combat gender-based violence, child and sexual abuse and trafficking of women, girls and boys. Our assistance will ensure communities can continue to build resilience to disasters, including training of volunteers in multi-hazard response. Our funding to education partners, such as the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) and Save the Children, will support the delivery of education to both Rohingya and local children, including learners with disabilities, and the safe, phased reopening of learning centres and schools. When conditions permit, we will support skills training and new livelihood opportunities. We will ensure the views of affected communities are taken into account and localised approaches adopted where appropriate.

Australia will continue to complement humanitarian assistance for the Rohingya crisis with broader efforts in pursuing accountability and working with Myanmar, Bangladesh and other regional and international partners to find a durable solution to the crisis.

Economic Recovery

Australia will support Bangladesh's longer-term economic recovery, including investing in human capital and job creation, with a focus on women, girls, youth, people with disabilities, and women-owned enterprises. This includes supporting technical and vocational training and apprenticeships, improving working conditions, and strengthening market value chains through our partnerships with BRAC, UCEP, non-government and multilateral organisations.

Australia will support Bangladesh's efforts to enhance the quality of transport and energy infrastructure, and revitalise and diversify trade and investment. This includes multilateral trade and infrastructure investments. We will help Bangladesh to plan and leverage private and multilateral development bank finance, and to access technical expertise, improve climate and disaster resilience, shift to low-carbon and inclusive development and improve regional connectivity.

We will continue to help workers, employers and government partners in the RMG sector during the COVID-19 pandemic through virtual advisory services, seminars and training to reduce COVID-19 risks, and partnering with the International Labour Organization. Australia's support to the Global Trade Professionals Alliance will continue to build the capacity of industry bodies in Bangladesh to provide strengthened support services for small businesses, in particular women entrepreneurs.

Australia and Bangladesh intend to pursue new opportunities to promote trade and investment so that our companies can support a shared economic recovery from COVID-19, including potentially through expanding e-commerce. We will support private sector opportunities in growth industries, such as information technology, through Australia's new Emerging Markets Impact Investment Fund and the Business Partnerships Platform. CSIRO and RMIT University are working closely with the Bangladesh Council of Scientific and Industrial Research (BCSIR) on a number of opportunities to develop new industries in Bangladesh, including mineral sands, e-waste recycling and solar energy.



HOW WE WILL WORK

Australia will work in partnership with the Bangladesh Government to ensure our COVID-19 programs remain closely aligned with key government initiatives, and focused on Bangladesh's longer-term development priorities.

We will work with UN agencies (including the World Health Organization), large donors (including the United Kingdom, United States and European Union) and multilateral financial institutions, which will all play a vital role in the long-term COVID-19 response and recovery in Bangladesh. We will engage with our partners on crisis and conflict risk assessments and use our influence with multilateral organisations to enhance coherence and effectiveness. Large established donors and multilateral development banks are taking broad, fast action to help Bangladesh address the immediate health, social and economic risks of COVID-19 and support government reforms.

Australia will continue to work in a targeted and flexible way, through a range of Official Development Assistance (ODA) and non-ODA investments in Bangladesh. We will leverage our strong relationships and proven results with our partners, in areas where we can make a difference. We will work alongside civil society in Bangladesh and draw on our people-to-people links.

Australia will work with Bangladesh in the Indian Ocean Rim Association (IORA) further to connect and grow the regional economy. We will strengthen our cooperation with Bangladesh on ocean carbon ecosystems such as mangroves, tidal marshes and seagrasses, including through the CSIRO-IORA Blue Carbon Hub.

We will maintain our strong commitment to effective monitoring, research, evaluation, learning and adaptation – to promote accountability and inform our investments and engagement in supporting Bangladesh's COVID-19 recovery and long-term development

TABLE 1: COVID-19 RESPONSE PLAN PERFORMANCE FRAMEWORK

Response Plan	Health Security	Stability	Economic Recovery
Expected Outcomes	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Emergency health assistance supports vulnerable people (SDG1,2,3) - Improved water, sanitation and hygiene for women and people with disabilities (SDG 6) - Rohingya and host communities are provided with critical health services and humanitarian assistance to meet basic needs (SDG 1,2,3,5,6) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Reforms under the National Social Security System progressed for a more inclusive system (SDG1,16) - Bangladesh's food security is strengthened (SDG 2) - Poor children, particularly girls, benefit from education (SDG 4) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - People, with a focus on vulnerable women, girls, youth and people with disabilities, gain skills and job placements (SDG 5, 8) - Private sector, including female entrepreneurs, are able to benefit from Bangladesh's economic recovery (SDG 5, 8) - Enhanced economic engagement between Australia and Bangladesh
Key Results	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - 327,500 women, men, girls and boys provided with emergency assistance (excluding Cox's Bazar District) - 660,600 vulnerable Rohingya and host community women, men, girls and boys provided with life-saving assistance in crisis situations - 136,000 Rohingya and local Bangladeshis in Cox's Bazar benefiting from improved water and hygiene activities 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Strengthened governance systems for social protection (including examples of assistance provided and significant policy change achieved) - Bangladesh is supported with technical advice on building capacity for food security (including examples of assistance provided and results achieved) - 340, 000 additional girls and boys enrolled in school - Examples of young women empowered to influence policies, regulations and norms which obstruct the rights and potential of all women. - 45,000 Rohingya and host community children reached with basic education services (primary school or emergency basic learning) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - 18,500 young women and men supported through skills training and experience - Examples of private sector, including female entrepreneurs, provided with financial and/or business development services - Specific activities for the promotion of trade and investment opportunities between Australia and Bangladesh
Supporting Bilateral Investments	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Pivoting of bilateral partnerships, as needed (UNDP, BRAC and WFP) - Rohingya and Host Communities Humanitarian Package Partners are UNHCR, UNFPA, IOM, UN Women, BRAC, WFP, UNICEF and the Australian Humanitarian Partners (Save the Children, World Vision, Plan, CARE, Oxfam and CANDO) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Social Protection Policy Support Program (UNDP) - World Food Programme Rise Up! Mobilising Young Women's Leadership and Advocacy – Phase IV (World YWCA) - BRAC Strategic Partnership (BRAC,UK) - Skills for Economic Growth and Prosperity (UCEP) - Australia Awards Rohingya and Host Communities Humanitarian Package. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - BRAC Strategic Partnership (BRAC,UK) - Skills for Economic Growth and Prosperity (UCEP) - Better Work Programme (International Labour Organization)