



## BANGLADESH

### ECHO FACTSHEET

#### Facts & Figures

**Total EU humanitarian aid in 2013: € 11 million\***

**Number of beneficiaries in 2013: 1,150,496**

**Total EU Disaster Risk Reduction funding in 2013 & 2014: €3.65 million**

**Bangladesh has the highest population density in the world:**

**1 237.51 persons/km<sup>2</sup>**



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#### Key messages

- Bangladesh is one of the most disaster-prone countries in the world, exposed to a variety of natural disasters including cyclones, floods, earthquakes and landslides. Responding to the emergency and early recovery needs of people affected by recurrent natural disasters is an EU priority.
- The Rohingyas, an ethnic, religious and linguistic minority who are subjected to exclusion and discrimination in their home country of Myanmar, have sought refuge in neighbouring Bangladesh for over 30 years. EU funding provides basic life-saving support to an estimated 45,000 unregistered Rohingya refugees living in the Kutupalong makeshift camp and Leda site.
- The Chittagong Hill Tracts, a remote part of south-eastern Bangladesh are among the most food insecure regions of the country and the EU is providing livelihood and food assistance to local people in the region.
- An estimated 500 000 children suffer from severe acute malnutrition annually and addressing severe acute malnutrition in all humanitarian interventions is essential.

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## Humanitarian situation and needs

### Background and/or Situation in Country

Bangladesh is one of the most disaster-prone countries in the world, exposed to a variety of natural disasters including cyclones, floods and earthquakes. Bangladesh ranks as the 8<sup>th</sup> most populated country in the world, with the highest population density of the planet: 1 237.51 persons per square kilometre– growing at an estimated rate of 1.59% per year. This very high density exacerbates the impact of localized disasters. Continuing population growth and environmental degradation could further exacerbate the intensity of disasters in the future, contributing to a significant increase in humanitarian needs.

### Major needs and related problems

#### Natural disasters

Bangladesh ranks 1<sup>st</sup> in the world in terms of vulnerability and 6th globally in terms human exposure to floods and cyclone. Similarly, the country is highly exposed to the risk of tsunami (3rd out of 76 countries) and earthquakes (17th out of 153 countries), landslides (35th out of 162) and drought (63rd out of 162 countries)<sup>1</sup>. According to recent reports Bangladesh faces extreme risks from climate change and ranks 2nd on the Climate Change Vulnerability Index<sup>1</sup>. Being mostly low-lying and in the confluence of two large Asian rivers (the Ganges and the Brahmaputra) much of the country is prone to widespread seasonal flooding and very vulnerable to the effects of climate change. The frequency, unpredictability and severity of these disasters is likely to be adversely affected by global warming, population growth, environmental degradation, and ill-maintained infrastructure - all contributing to increase acute humanitarian needs. In May 2013, the impact of cyclone Mahasen affected the livelihood and habitat of more than a million people in three southern districts.

#### ROHINGYA REFUGEES

Bangladesh is host to one of the most intractable refugee crises in the world: the Rohingyas. This ethnic, religious and linguistic minority is subjected to exclusion and discrimination in their home country of Myanmar, and has sought to seek refuge in neighbouring Bangladesh (since 30 years ago). The vast majority are denied refugee status by the Bangladeshi authorities, who view them as economic migrants. Thus, without legal status they are unable to pursue education and formal employment opportunities, and remain vulnerable to exploitation and serious protection risks.

#### CHITTAGONG HILL TRACTS

The combination of a twenty-year long separatist conflict, demographic pressure, ethnic tensions, decreased productivity of traditional slash-and-burn agriculture, and an invasion of rodents a few years ago, has resulted in alarming levels of food insecurity in this remote part of southeastern Bangladesh. Recent reports suggest that the Chittagong Hill Tracts are among the most food insecure regions of the country: 77% of households identified as having poor or borderline food consumption practices, and in 35% of households, one or more family member skip meals.

#### NUTRITION

An estimated 500,000 children suffer from severe acute malnutrition annually. Among children under five years of age, 48% are stunted and 13.5% are acutely malnourished, with 3.4% of these suffering from severe acute malnutrition (source: National CMAM Guideline, GoB Sept 2011). The mental and physical damage caused by severe malnutrition in the early years of childhood is permanent. Moreover, recurrent floods and cyclones further compound malnutrition among affected people as they have little time to recover between disasters.



# The European Union's Humanitarian Response

## Funding

The European Commission's Humanitarian Aid and Civil Protection department (ECHO) has been working in Bangladesh since 2002, both in disaster preparedness and emergency response activities. It continues to fund emergency assistance programmes for people affected by floods and cyclones, and remains committed to providing basic life-saving support to an estimated 45,000 unregistered Rohingya refugees living in the Kutupalong makeshift camp and Leda site.

In 2014, ECHO is continuing its provision of humanitarian aid to Bangladesh. This includes support for the Rohingyas and local populations living close to the refugee settlements, who receive health care, nutrition support, water and sanitation facilities and protection services. In addition, food insecure people in the Chittagong Hills Tract benefit from food and livelihood assistance programmes.

ECHO had provided €11 million to Bangladesh to address the humanitarian needs in 2013. This amount included a €2 million contribution to respond to the impact of Cyclone Mahasen, with a particular emphasis on early recovery, livelihood assistance and support for shelter repairs, combined with some water, health and sanitation measures in remote areas. The rest of the funds provided flood-resilient shelters and livelihood and nutrition support to people affected by the 2012 floods as well as to those hit by water-logging in south-west Bangladesh. Funds also supported the basic humanitarian needs of unregistered Rohingya refugees, along with those of the local population of surrounding areas. In the neighbouring Chittagong Hills Tracts, locals benefited from livelihood and food assistance.

ECHO also continues to fund community-based disaster preparedness programmes, supporting initiatives such as the building of flood-resistant infrastructure and early warning systems, amongst others. The European Commission has allocated € 3.65 million for Disaster Risk Reduction projects in 2013 and 2014. It has contributed € 12.65 million since 2001 to this end.

## OUTREACH AND COORDINATION WITH HUMANITARIAN PARTNERS

In order to enhance the coordination and harmonization of humanitarian response, ECHO funds a UN Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA) staff member to support the UN Resident Coordinator in Bangladesh. ECHO is also an active member of the Humanitarian Country Task Team, and facilitates coordination between partner organizations and local, national and regional level stakeholders in humanitarian response. Since last year, the food security cluster led by the UN's World Food Programme and Food and Agriculture Organisation, as well as the Nutrition cluster lead by UNICEF, are also supported by ECHO.

## MAJOR CHALLENGES IN DELIVERING AID

- The reluctance of authorities to confer a disaster status to some life-threatening events can reduce the timeliness of humanitarian response.
- Delays from authorities in granting approval for partners to respond to emergencies, also hinders the effectiveness and timeliness of humanitarian response.
- The reluctance of authorities to authorise the provision of assistance beyond life-saving activities to the unregistered Rohingya refugees has hampered humanitarian response .

