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**Executive Board  
First Regular Session**

**Rome, 18–19 February 2013**

## **EVALUATION REPORTS**

*Agenda item 6*

*For consideration*

# **E**

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## **SUMMARY REPORT OF THE JOINT UNHCR/WFP IMPACT EVALUATION ON THE CONTRIBUTION OF FOOD ASSISTANCE TO DURABLE SOLUTIONS IN PROTRACTED REFUGEE SITUATIONS – BANGLADESH**

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## NOTE TO THE EXECUTIVE BOARD

**This document is submitted to the Executive Board for consideration.**

The Secretariat invites members of the Board who may have questions of a technical nature with regard to this document to contact the WFP staff focal points indicated below, preferably well in advance of the Board's meeting.

Director, EVA\*: Ms H. Wedgwood tel.: 066513-2030

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Should you have any questions regarding availability of documentation for the Executive Board, please contact Ms I. Carpitella, Senior Administrative Assistant, Conference Servicing Unit (tel.: 066513-2645).

\* Office of Evaluation

## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The evaluation covered the protracted refugee situation in southeast Bangladesh where Rohingya refugees from Myanmar have been assisted in two official camps for more than two decades. The goal was to assess the role of food assistance in, and its contribution to, self-reliance and durable solutions for the refugee and refugee-affected populations.

The primary evaluation question focused on the differential impacts of long-term food assistance on different refugee and unregistered Rohingya populations. Secondary questions focused on livelihoods and coping strategies, movements, protection and the protective environment, and food security and nutrition. This theory-based impact evaluation utilized a quasi-experimental design<sup>1</sup> and a mixed-method approach to analyse the causal linkages between food assistance and the differences among the selected groups.

The evaluation concludes that along with other forms of external assistance, food assistance was a contributing factor in households' choice of economic activity and adoption of specific coping strategies. Comparisons with unregistered Rohingya groups provided evidence that food assistance contributed to short-term outcomes, primarily through improved dietary diversity and reduced frequency of negative coping strategies for the refugees. However, these positive impacts were less apparent when the refugee groups were compared with unregistered Rohingya living in host communities. Nearly all registered refugee and unregistered Rohingya households were found to be engaged in some form of economic activity, despite the protection risks. External camp-based assistance, including food assistance, slightly mitigated the need for these activities among refugees. Unregistered Rohingya were found to be more mobile, as their search for income-generating opportunities led them to travel more frequently and further than refugees. There were indications that registered refugees had become dependent on camp assistance and that this safety net mitigated their search for economic opportunities elsewhere.

The evaluation found that food assistance was a secondary contributing factor to the perception of refugees' insecurity and vulnerability because it engenders a perception of favour among the unregistered and host populations. Protection was found to be a significant concern for all Rohingya groups; the legal protection provided by refugee status was muted by the prevalence of refugees' economic activities outside the camps, which were not legally permitted, resulting in refugees facing similar protection risks to those of unregistered Rohingya.

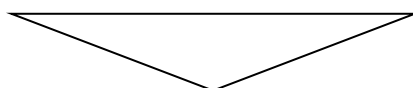
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<sup>1</sup> A quasi-experimental design is used to compare groups that are similar but not equivalent.

The evaluation found that external factors – primarily restrictions on Rohingya movements, and the widespread poverty and low levels of socio-economic development in Cox’s Bazar district – had very important effects on the potential for self-reliance of Rohingya households. The evaluation concludes that the logic of the current food assistance interventions, according to the model supporting the evaluation, will not lead to self-reliance for targeted households in Bangladesh in the absence of a supportive external environment and in the local context of widespread poverty.

The evaluation contributes empirical evidence on the role of economic activities and the protective environment in the livelihoods of all Rohingya groups in Cox’s Bazar district. To achieve self-reliance, alternative solutions that provide better protection to Rohingya and better services for all vulnerable groups, including local households, would be more appropriate. The evaluation makes four strategic recommendations in this regard.

## DRAFT DECISION\*



The Board takes note of “Summary Report of the Joint UNHCR/WFP Impact Evaluation on the Contribution of Food Assistance to Durable Solutions in Protracted Refugee Situations – Bangladesh” (WFP/EB.1/2013/6-B) and the management response in WFP/EB.1/2013/6-B/Add.1 and encourages further action on the recommendations, taking into account considerations raised by the Board during its discussion.

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\* This is a draft decision. For the final decision adopted by the Board, please refer to the Decisions and Recommendations document issued at the end of the session.

## INTRODUCTION

### Evaluation Features

1. This evaluation is part of a series of impact evaluations jointly commissioned by WFP and the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) in 2011 and 2012<sup>2</sup> to assess the role of food assistance in, and its contribution to, self-reliance and durable solutions for the refugee and the refugee-affected populations.
2. The evaluation covers the protracted refugee situation in southeast Bangladesh, where approximately 30,000 Rohingya refugees have been assisted in two official camps for more than two decades.<sup>3</sup> In addition to the registered refugees, approximately 45,000 unregistered Rohingya reside in makeshift sites and more than 150,000 reside in host communities in Cox's Bazar district.
3. The primary evaluation question was: What are the differential impacts of long-term food assistance on the different Rohingya refugee and refugee-affected populations in Bangladesh?
4. Four secondary questions were:
  - i) How does food assistance affect household livelihoods and coping strategies?
  - ii) What are the impacts on refugee movements?
  - iii) What are the impacts on protection and the protective environment?
  - iv) What are the impacts on food security and nutrition outcomes?
5. Based on a logic model developed by UNHCR and WFP that relates inputs, outputs, short- and long-term outcomes and impacts, and associated assumptions, the evaluation used a mixed-method approach combining quantitative survey data with qualitative data collection techniques. Quantitative data provided empirical evidence on the evaluation questions; qualitative data complemented and triangulated quantitative evidence for understanding the causal linkages between food assistance and the differences among different Rohingya populations.
6. To evaluate impact in the most methodologically rigorous manner for the context, a quasi-experimental design was used. Limitations<sup>4</sup> were mitigated through appropriate sampling to ensure statistically representative samples of registered and unregistered Rohingya populations, and cluster analysis as the basis for regression models and group comparisons.
7. The evaluation design focused primarily on three population groups: refugees living in two official refugee camps; unregistered Rohingya living in two unofficial sites, the official camps or host communities; and host communities.<sup>5</sup> The key quantitative comparison was between registered refugees who received food assistance and unregistered Rohingya who did not. The evaluation included a smaller sample of households from host communities to provide descriptive comparators; the sample was not

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<sup>2</sup> The other three evaluations covered protracted situations in Chad, Ethiopia and Rwanda.

<sup>3</sup> Only 24,000 of these refugees receive food assistance.

<sup>4</sup> The main limitations were the potential for selection bias, the difficulty in isolating the contribution of food assistance from other external assistance variables, and threats to internal validity from the non-equivalent groups.

<sup>5</sup> See Annex for a map of Cox's Bazar district.

statistically significant. Table 1 provides an overview of the household survey data collection and these population groups.

<b>TABLE 1: QUANTITATIVE DATA COLLECTION</b>		
<b>Location</b>	<b>Target population</b>	<b>Households in sampling frame</b>
<b>Nayapara refugee camp</b>	Registered refugees	2 681
	Unharmonized Rohingya <sup>6</sup>	371
	<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>3 052</b>
<b>Kutupalong refugee camp</b>	Registered refugees	1 700
	Unharmonized Rohingya	209
	<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>1 909</b>
<b>Kutupalong makeshift site</b>	Unregistered Rohingya	4 350
<b>Leda site</b>	Unregistered Rohingya	2 300
<b>Host communities</b>	Unregistered Rohingya	n/a
<b>Villages near Nayapara</b>	The poorest local households, identified through participatory rural appraisal	n/a

## Context

8. The Rohingya refugee situation in Bangladesh is one of the most protracted in the world, after more than 20 years of continuous camp settlement. Of the more than 200,000 Rohingya estimated to be present in Bangladesh, only approximately 24,000 are officially recognized as refugees by the Government of Bangladesh. These refugees live in two official camps, Kutupalong and Nayapara, while the remaining Rohingya population has settled in host communities in Cox's Bazar district and in two makeshift sites close to the official camps.
9. The Rohingya have a historical and cultural connection to the Chittagong area of southeast Bangladesh and Rakhine state of Myanmar. As well as sharing similar social, ethnic, linguistic and Islamic religious traditions, the two regions have historically interacted for centuries.
10. After the denial of Myanmar citizenship in 1974, approximately 200,000 Rohingya fled to Bangladesh in 1978. Bilateral government agreements forced many to return in 1979–1980. Following failed Myanmar elections in 1990, and a subsequent military crackdown especially in northern Rakhine state, approximately 250,000 Rohingya fled to Bangladesh in 1991–1992. In the following decade, most of these refugees were repatriated to northern Myanmar, but many Rohingya continue to come or return to Bangladesh. No Rohingya coming to Bangladesh after 1992 have been recognized as refugees by the Government of Bangladesh.

<sup>6</sup> UNHCR refers to unregistered Rohingya in official refugee camps as “unharmonized Rohingya”. This evaluation distinguishes between only registered refugees and unregistered Rohingya; despite living in camps, unharmonized Rohingya do not receive food assistance.

11. There are reports of marginalization and discrimination of Rohingya in Bangladesh and of sporadic conflict with host communities. The lack of refugee status leaves unregistered Rohingya with no legal recourse for protection. As a result they are often confronted with violence, abuse, arrest and detention; women and girls are particularly exposed. Some of the hostility towards Rohingya can be explained by the widespread poverty of Cox's Bazar, which reports some of the lowest social and economic indicators nationwide. Cox's Bazar district is also prone to landslides, floods and cyclones, and the population density puts extreme pressure on existing socio-economic systems and scarce natural resources.
12. This complex environment amplifies the challenges faced by humanitarian organizations in restoring refugees' livelihoods and satisfying the humanitarian and development needs of populations of Bangladesh in the region.

### **WFP and UNHCR Support to Refugees**

13. WFP and UNHCR have been assisting registered refugees in Bangladesh since 1992. WFP is responsible for food assistance for approximately 24,000 refugees, providing basic food commodities, school feeding with fortified biscuits, and supplementary foods for targeted groups. Food distribution is carried out by the Bangladesh Red Crescent Society. Planning and distribution of food assistance are undertaken jointly with government actors. UNHCR provides non-food items, shelter, health services, a potable water supply, sanitation, primary education, vocational training and other basic services.
14. Between 2002 and 2010, WFP reported expenditure of approximately US\$20 million on food assistance for registered Rohingya refugees in Bangladesh, through twice-monthly general food distribution; school feeding; supplementary feeding and mother-and-child health programmes; and food for work/training. These interventions supported other forms of assistance, such as health clinics, schools and vocational programmes.

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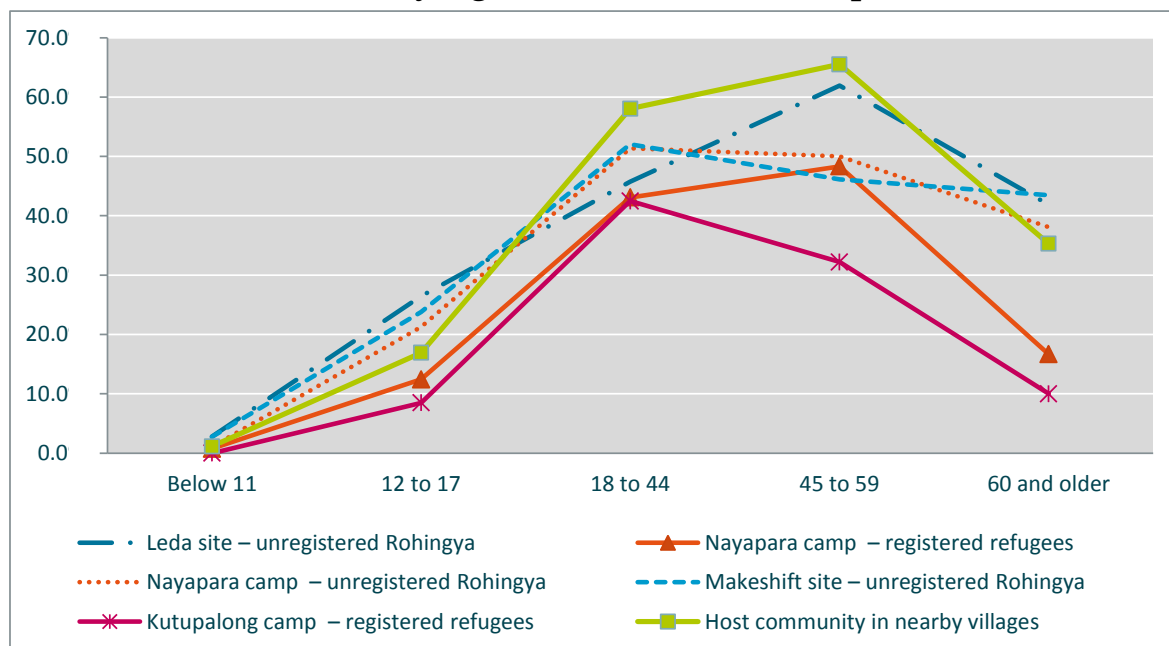
## **EVALUATION FINDINGS**

15. The evaluation findings are organized according to the four evaluation secondary questions: livelihoods and coping strategies; movements; protection and the protective environment; and food security and nutrition.

### **Livelihoods and Coping Strategies**

16. In assessing the impact of food assistance on livelihoods and coping strategies the evaluation found that all Rohingya, regardless of refugee status, were economically active to some extent. Food assistance and other external interventions did not reduce the need for registered refugees to seek supplementary income, while unregistered Rohingya without assistance had to work to meet their basic needs, despite the legal restrictions, and their implications, for both groups.
17. Comparisons among different groups of Rohingya revealed significant differences in economic activities. Figure 1 presents the percentages of individuals, disaggregated by age and household group, engaged in economic activities. The evaluation found that unregistered Rohingya began working earlier than registered refugees; more than 20 percent of unregistered Rohingya under 17 years of age worked, compared with 10 percent of registered refugees. Unregistered Rohingya were also more economically active for longer periods. Child labour and youth employment were therefore significantly more frequent among unregistered Rohingya than registered refugees. Host communities followed a similar trend to that of the unregistered Rohingya.

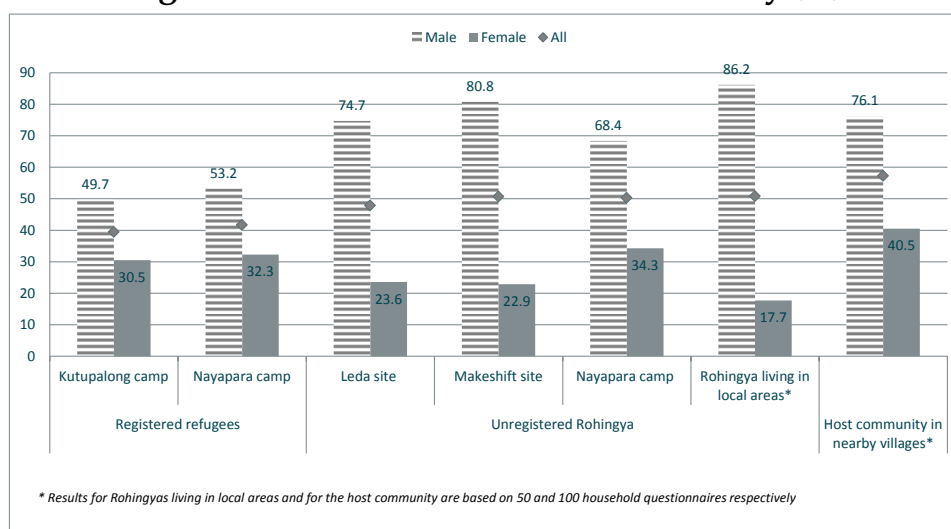
**Figure 1: Percentages of Respondents with Economic Activity, by Age and Household Group**



Source: DARA quantitative household survey May–June 2012.

18. The evaluation found that refugees were significantly less economically active and overall earned less income than unregistered Rohingya, who were found to play a significant role in the region’s labour market. Among men and boys, unregistered Rohingya living in the makeshift site were more economically active than registered refugees in the official camps. This trend was reversed for women and girls (see Figure 2).

**Figure 2: Prevalence of Economic Activity (%)**



Source: DARA quantitative household survey, May–June 2012.

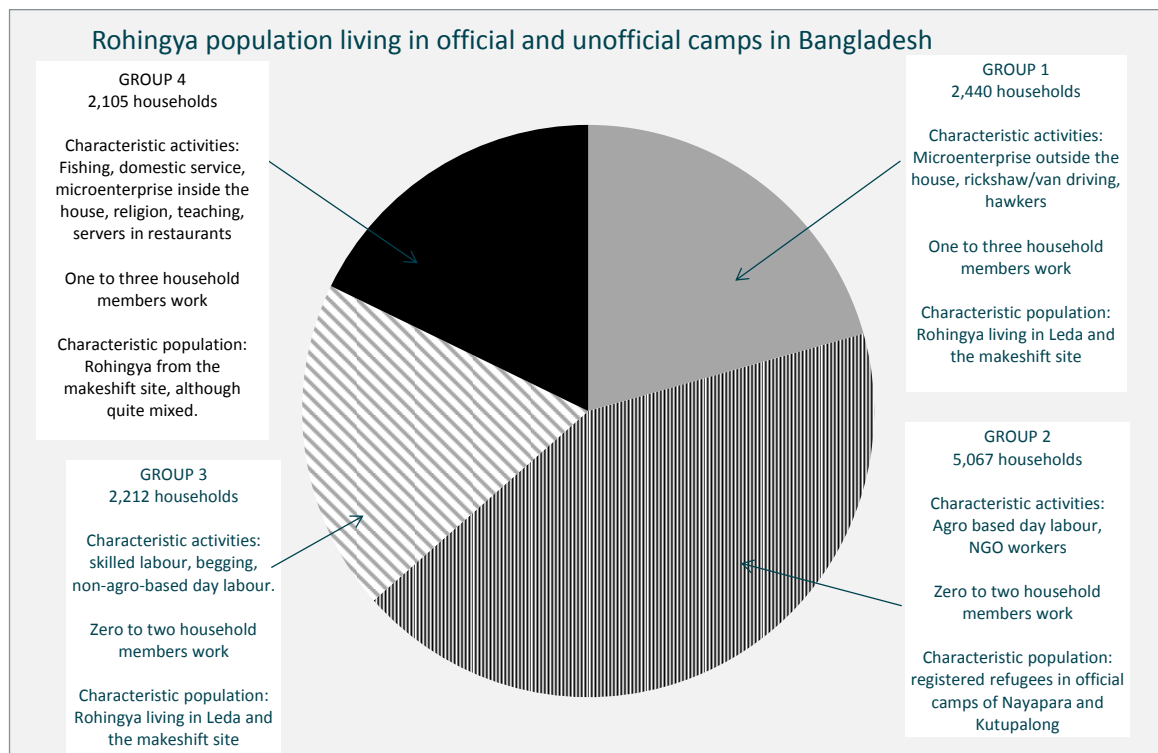
19. The evaluation found that registered refugees engaged in better and more skilled jobs than unregistered Rohingya, who were considered less skilled and generally found jobs considered to be of far higher risk, such as high-sea fishing and unloading of ships. These jobs were also found to be the least favoured by host communities and registered refugees. Other economic activities were labour-intensive, such as work in salt production, agriculture, or construction in urban areas such as Cox’s Bazaar. The evaluation found



clear evidence that unregistered Rohingya played an important role in the local labour market, often supplanting labour from the local population of Bangladesh, because they worked for lower wages in riskier employment without recourse to legal protection. However, this role was not quantified in the evaluation.

20. Regarding economic activities and coping strategies, clear differences emerged between what appeared to be very similar household groups, which fell into four distinct clusters (see groups 1 to 4 in Figure 3).

**Figure 3: Household Clusters, by Economic Activity**

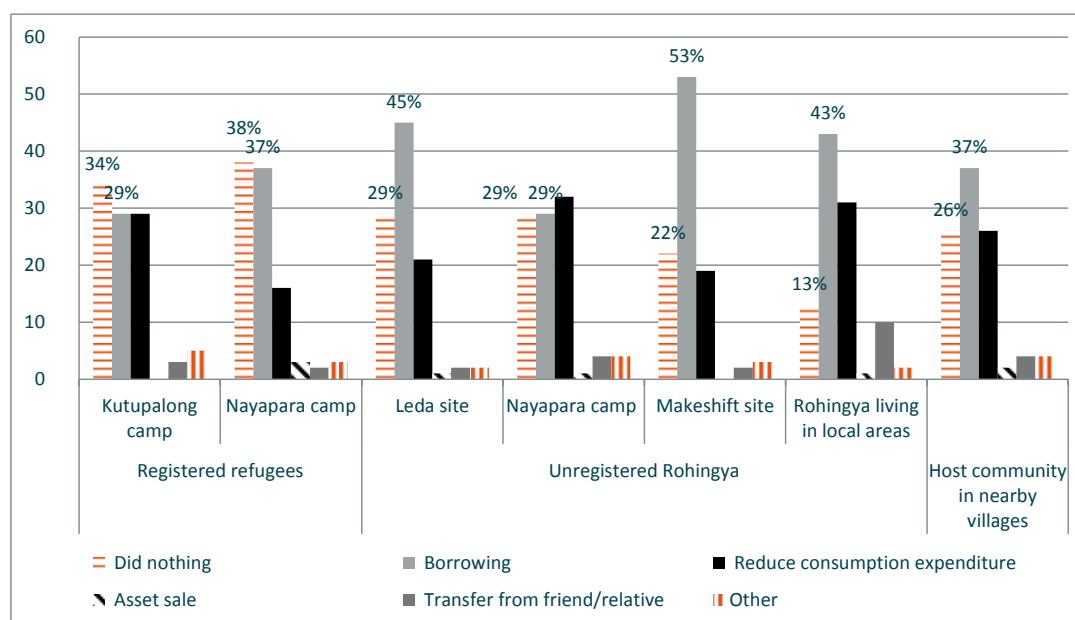


Source: DARA quantitative household survey, May–June 2012.

21. The following are the main findings on economic activities across the four groups:
- Groups 1 and 4 had higher earnings per household member because they worked longer hours than groups 2 and 3 and were more likely to have a member under 14 years of age working – 59 and 57 percent of households in groups 1 and 4, compared with 25 percent in groups 2 and 3.
  - Groups 2 and 3 were less economically active, but based on types of economic activity group 3 was slightly more vulnerable than group 2. Households in group 3 were characteristically engaged in farming, non-agriculture-based day labour, begging and some skilled labour; group 2 households were characteristically engaged in farming, agriculture-based day labour and work with non-governmental organizations (NGOs).
  - Group 2 represented an important part of the overall Rohingya population (42.9 percent), composed of households that were less economically active and, based on the activities they undertook, slightly less vulnerable. Most registered refugees – 60.6 percent – were in this group.
  - Across all groups, registered refugees were wealthier than their unregistered counterparts. The evaluation determined that this was primarily because of the difference in accumulated assets.

22. The coping strategy index was applied to develop an empirical understanding of what households do in case of idiosyncratic or co-variant shocks. The evaluation found significant evidence that registered refugee households employed coping strategies in different ways (see Figure 4) from unregistered Rohingya, and overall resorted less to negative coping strategies (see Figure 5).

**Figure 4: Frequency of Adoption of Coping Strategies (%)**



Source: DARA quantitative household survey, May–June 2012.

23. The option of “doing nothing” was found significantly more frequently among registered refugees, and evaluation evidence indicated that reliance on external assistance – housing, food, health care, etc. – in the event of shocks was an important coping mechanism for this group. Unregistered Rohingya reported this coping strategy far less frequently.
24. Reliance on loans was generally more prevalent among unregistered Rohingya, and reduced consumption was found across all groups. Among unregistered Rohingya, the evaluation found qualitative evidence of persistent reliance on negative coping strategies such as transactional sex and begging, especially among women, either as heads of household or when their husbands had migrated for work.
25. Food exchange and sale (see Table 2) and mortgaging of refugee documents – family books<sup>7</sup> – were other very common coping strategies for registered refugees. The evaluation found that approximately 50 percent of these households shared, exchanged or sold food rations, mainly to diversify diets, finance non-food items and repay loans.

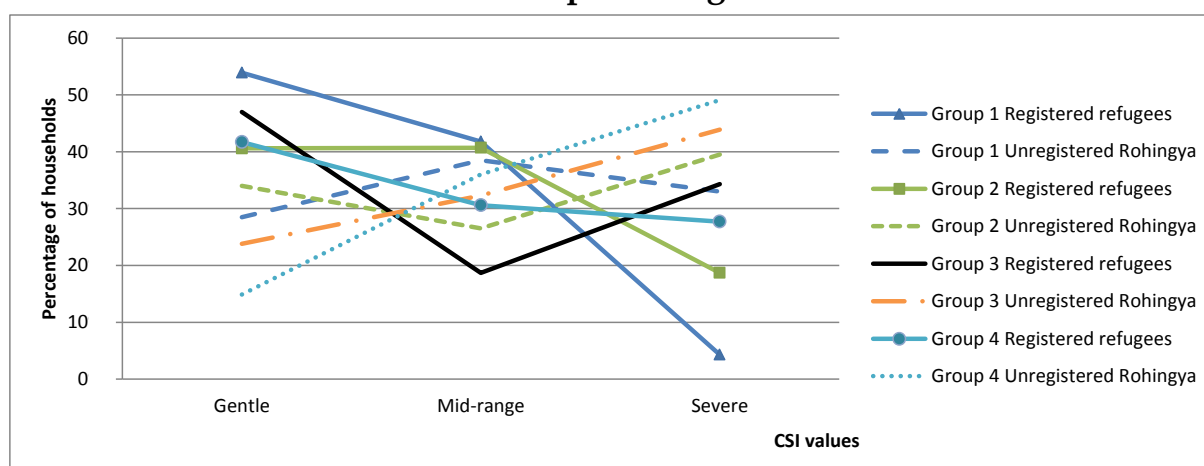
<sup>7</sup> ‘Family books’ are refugee identification documents used by the Government of Bangladesh and United Nations partners for determination of food ration entitlement.

Camp	Households sharing part of their rations	Households selling part of their rations	Households exchanging part of their rations	Households consuming all their food assistance
Nayapara	1.7	37.1	15.4	44.0
Kutupalong	13.8	18.4	19.5	51.1

Source: DARA quantitative household survey, May–June 2012.

26. Regression models revealed that across the four groups, the unregistered Rohingya adopted more severe coping strategies (see Figure 5). The adoption of negative coping strategies was found to depend on several factors, including the household's registration status, wealth score, size, earnings and economic activity, and the marital status and education level of the household head. It was also correlated with external assistance to registered refugees; the reduced reliance on severe coping strategies among registered refugees was positively correlated to the provision of external assistance, including food rations.

**Figure 5: Coping Strategy Index, by Household Group and Registration Status**



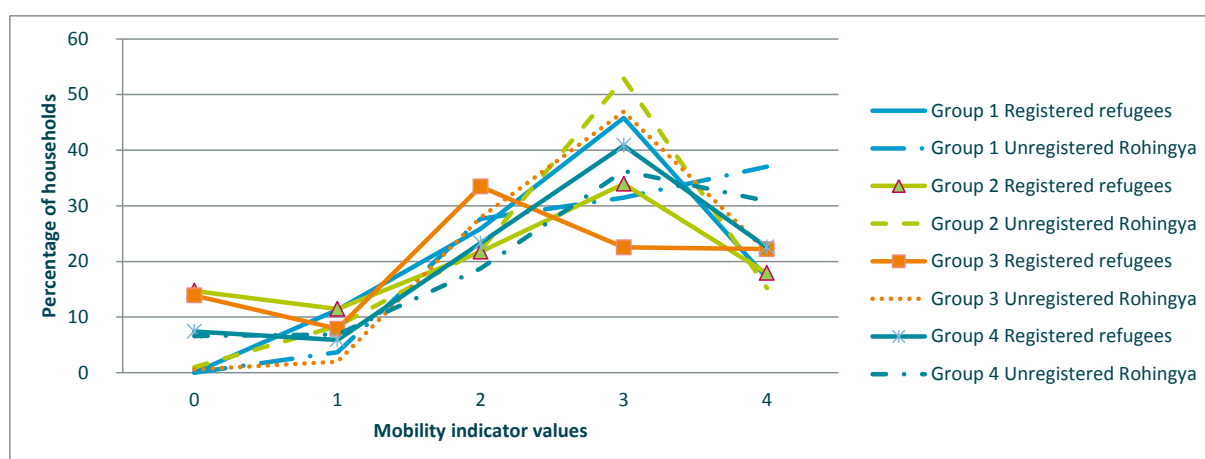
Source: DARA quantitative household survey, May–June 2012.

27. The evaluation concludes that along with other forms of external assistance, food assistance was a contributing factor in households' choice of economic activity and adoption of specific coping strategies. Compared with their unregistered Rohingya counterparts, registered refugees engaged in significantly different economic activities, including higher-skilled and less risky employment for overall higher wage rates. They also had significantly better wealth status based on asset accumulation. Food assistance was an integral component of their livelihoods, used mainly for consumption and as collateral and a value transfer for loans and mortgages. The value transfer of all external assistance in the camps enabled refugees to work less and to rely on this external assistance in times of crisis.
28. Despite these differences, all refugee and unregistered Rohingya groups relied on economic activity to support their livelihoods. Unregistered Rohingya employed a wider range of coping mechanisms, both positive and negative, and were a significant part of the region's labour market.

## Movements

29. Despite restrictions on movements, all refugees and unregistered Rohingya were found to be highly mobile, not only locally and close to the camps, but also within Cox's Bazar district and other areas of Bangladesh. These movements were closely linked to the search for income opportunities. However, the evaluation found important differences in movements between unregistered Rohingya and registered refugees.
30. Figure 6 summarizes findings from the mobility indicator.<sup>8</sup> There was evidence that 40 to 50 percent of registered refugees in groups 1 and 4 moved as far as Cox's Bazar town. Unregistered Rohingya in the same groups travelled further, with more than 30 percent – and nearly 40 percent in group 1 – travelling to other parts of Bangladesh. Registered refugees in groups 2 and 3 concentrated their movements between Teknaf and Cox's Bazar, largely depending on the placement of their camp.

**Figure 6: Mobility, by Household Group and Registration Status**



Source: DARA quantitative household survey, May–June 2012.

31. Regression analysis found that household mobility could be explained by the household's registration status, wealth score and earnings; the sex, marital status and education level of the household head; and certain economic activities. In all groups there was a tendency for unregistered Rohingya to travel further than registered refugees. Evaluation evidence indicated that the search for economic employment was the main driving factor and that external assistance, including food assistance, mitigated registered refugees' need for this employment, reducing their movements away from the camps. The evaluation also found that unregistered Rohingya felt safer, and reportedly could earn more, if they moved further away from the camps and makeshift sites; there was thus a pull factor away from the insecurity of local areas to places where employment opportunities were better.
32. The evaluation found significant differences in survey respondents' period of residency in Bangladesh. As summarized in Table 3, most registered refugees were either born in the camps or had lived there for more than 20 years. Unregistered Rohingya had spent less time in Bangladesh. Through additional data collection, the evaluation determined that period of residency reflected the general pattern of mobility and the search for

<sup>8</sup> The mobility indicator is a simple proxy for movement. The higher the indicator the more frequent and the further the movements: households scored 0 if no members left the camp/site, 1 if at least one member visited nearby areas, 2 if at least one member visited Teknaf, 3 if at least one member visited Cox's Bazar, and 4 if at least one member visited other parts of Bangladesh.

income-generating opportunities; unregistered Rohingya spent less time in the vicinity of Cox's Bazar district as they moved into other parts of Bangladesh.

Period in Bangladesh	Registered refugees		Unregistered Rohingya		
	Kutupalong camp	Nayapara camp	Leda site	Kutupalong makeshift site	Nayapara camp
Born in Bangladesh	62.6	62.5	49.8	36.7	56.5
< 5 years	0.1	0.0	0.2	10.1	0.3
5–9 years	0.0	0.7	9.5	33.7	3.2
10–14 years	0.2	0.9	17.5	9.8	8.4
15–19 years	1.5	2.2	14.8	6.0	15.3
≥ 20 years	35.6	33.8	8.2	3.6	16.3
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>100.0</b>	<b>100.0</b>	<b>100.0</b>	<b>100.0</b>	<b>100.0</b>

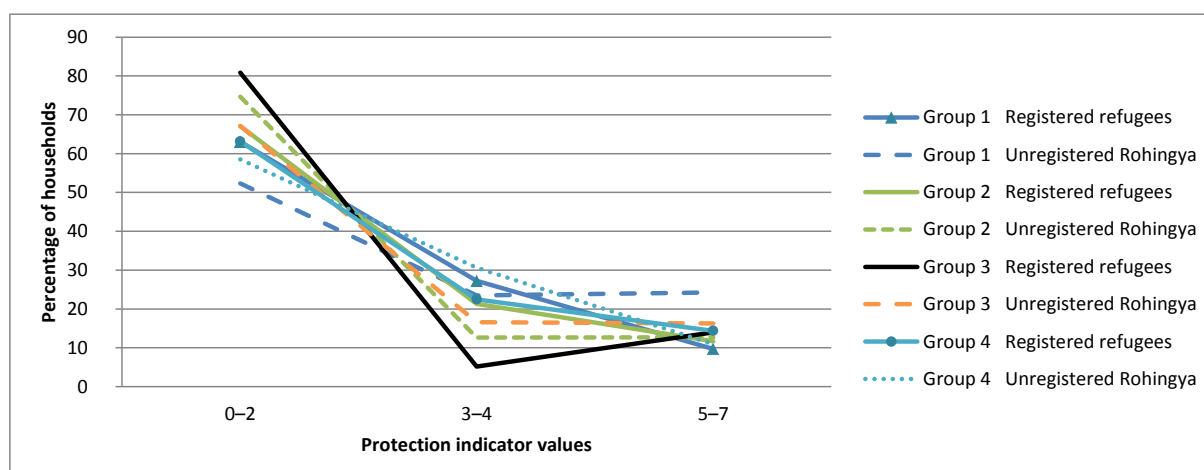
Source: DARA quantitative household survey, May–June 2012.

### Protection and the Protective Environment

33. The evaluation found that all Rohingya, regardless of refugee status, had significant protection concerns. Figure 7 summarizes the evidence from the composite indicator for protection.<sup>9</sup> Registered refugees had the same perceptions of protection and the protective environment as unregistered Rohingya, despite living in very different conditions and circumstances.
34. However, specific protection issues differed substantially. While unregistered Rohingya were found to be particularly exposed to physical protection issues, registered refugees experienced protection issues related to food distribution and camp management, including lack of complaint mechanisms and perceived discrimination by service providers. Unregistered Rohingya, especially those in makeshift sites, were far more vulnerable than registered refugees because sites are unprotected. Movement to and from these sites often exposed unregistered Rohingya to violence, harassment, abuse or arrest.

<sup>9</sup> The composite indicator is based on questions about safety, interaction with local authorities and communities, ability to meet basic needs, and perceptions of refugees. The indicator ranges from 0 to 7, with 0 being negative and 7 positive on all aspects. See the Statistical Annex of the full evaluation report for more detail.

**Figure 7: Protection Indicator, by Household Group and Registration Status**



Source: DARA quantitative household survey, May–June 2012.

35. The evaluation found evidence of a widespread informal system of protection, with various networks – including some based on patronage – operating throughout Cox’s Bazar district forming the core protective environment for most refugees when outside the camps and for unregistered Rohingya. These networks comprised local elite groups, community leaders, imams and local authorities. The evaluation found repeated instances of payment for access to transportation, jobs, natural resources, etc. for refugees and unregistered Rohingya. Not all of these arrangements were perceived to be negative or exploitive; the evaluation found evidence that unregistered Rohingya living in local villages were often warned by local leaders and imams when authorities were near.
36. The evaluation concludes that protection concerns were a major problem for all Rohingya groups and had effects on refugees’ movements, livelihoods and coping strategies. However, there was evidence that unregistered Rohingya were more vulnerable than refugees because they lacked legal status and relevant documentation. Although this distinction was significant, it was muted by the prevalence of refugees’ economic activities and movement outside the camps, neither of which is legally permitted.
37. The evaluation found that food assistance was a secondary contributing factor to perceptions of refugees’ insecurity and vulnerability. Food and other external assistance contributed to the higher wealth status of refugees and therefore to widespread resentment from those not receiving assistance – unregistered Rohingya and local households throughout the region.
38. Within the camps, the evaluation heard direct testimony of inappropriate or illicit practices during food distribution, and respondents felt there were few effective complaint mechanisms. It was commonly found that refugees feared retaliation from official and unofficial authorities for making complaints, and cases of violence and imprisonment were reported. Refugees within the camps felt that oversight by UNHCR and WFP was not adequate to address these issues.

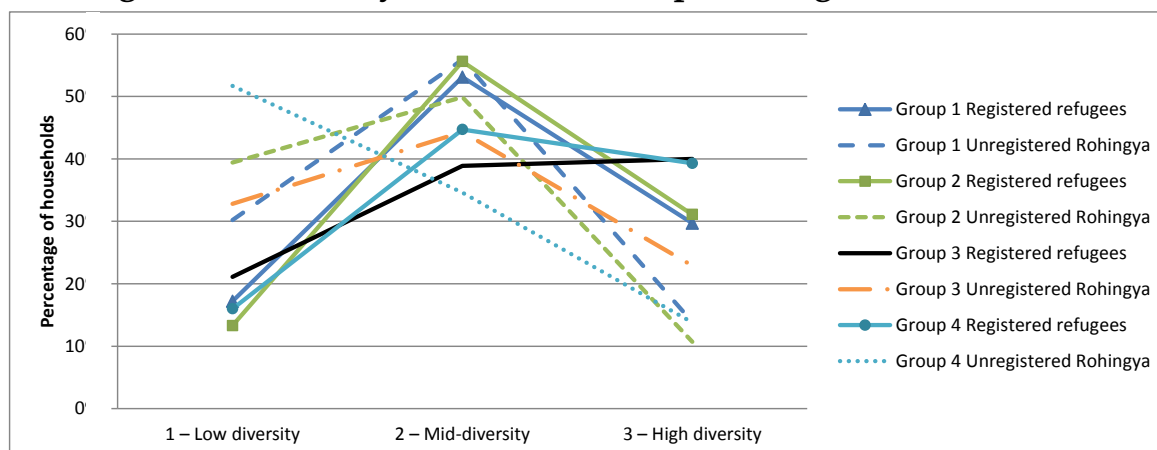
## Food Security and Nutrition

39. Food assistance has been provided regularly to registered refugees since they arrived and were registered in the early 1990s. The food basket met minimal international standards, with 2,100 kcal per adult per day, but was incomplete in terms of proteins and micronutrients. The household dietary diversity score (HDDS) was found to be poor for all

sampled groups: the local host population, unregistered Rohingya, and refugees receiving food assistance.

40. As shown in Figure 8, across all groups the HDDS was lower for unregistered Rohingya. Regression models indicated that for registered refugees the lack of economic activity in a household did not correlate to a decrease in the HDDS, while it did for unregistered Rohingya.

**Figure 8: HDDS, by Household Group and Registration Status<sup>10</sup>**



Source: DARA quantitative household survey, May–June 2012.

41. Table 4 summarizes the HDDS results and shows that although registered refugees had, as expected, higher HDDS than unregistered Rohingya, their scores were still lower than those of the poorest local households, including the Rohingya living in local communities. While findings from these latter two groups are only indicative – because of limited sample size – the result revealed that Rohingya who had assimilated with local populations managed to diversify their diets more than registered refugees benefiting from food rations. Almost twice as many Rohingya living in local communities had four or more food groups in their diets than did unregistered Rohingya in makeshift sites.

TABLE 4: HDDS SURVEY RESULTS				
Survey results May 2012	No.	Mean HDDS	% households with at least 4 food groups in day prior to survey	Weekly food expenditure /person
Rohingya in local communities	50	5.58	96.0	296
Host community	100	5.24	93.0	260
Kutupalong camp, registered refugees	174	5.00	91.4	114
Nayapara camp, registered refugees	175	4.91	80.0	93
Leda site, unregistered Rohingya	262	4.43	67.5	196
Nayapara camp, unregistered Rohingya	132	4.01	65.5	143
Kutupalong makeshift site, unregistered Rohingya	150	3.90	58.1	189
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>1 069</b>	<b>n/a</b>	<b>n/a</b>	<b>n/a</b>

<sup>10</sup> Low, mid- and high diversity are only comparative within the range of HDDS found by the survey (see Table 4). They do not indicate low, mid- or high dietary diversity overall.

Source: DARA quantitative household survey, May–June 2012.

42. The HDDS findings complemented available secondary nutrition data. Since the early 1990s, the prevalence of global acute malnutrition (GAM) in the camps has stabilized at about 15 percent, the World Health Organization (WHO) threshold for a critical situation. Recent surveys<sup>11</sup> found that unregistered Rohingya at the Kutupalong makeshift site had the highest malnutrition rates. The evaluation did not collect data on nutrition status, but stakeholders in Bangladesh noted the persistent and critical GAM rates.
43. Evaluation findings on food security revealed that registered refugees could diversify their diets significantly more than unregistered Rohingya living at the unofficial sites. Food assistance contributed directly to this dietary diversity, because rations could be sold, shared or exchanged. The value transfer of the ration was also found to be important in obtaining loans. Analysis revealed that the HDDS of registered refugees did not depend on having an income stream – so refugees were able to absorb shocks, changes in the labour market, etc. – whereas that of unregistered Rohingya was directly dependent on their economic activity. It must be noted that across all groups covered by the evaluation, including the local populations of Cox’s Bazar district, HDDS were within a narrow range, reflecting the generally high levels of poverty and food insecurity across the district.

## EXPLANATORY FACTORS OF IMPACT

### External Factors

44. The Rohingya are not legally authorized to engage in economic activities in Bangladesh, and refugees can send their children to school until only grade 4. They are also not allowed to leave refugee camps without authorization. These restrictions, imposed on registered refugees and Rohingya in general, leave them with fewer opportunities – and only “illegal” options – for pursuing more secure and long-term livelihood opportunities. Although restrictions have not prevented Rohingya households from engaging in local economic activities, they constitute serious protection risks if authorities decide to react.
45. Kinship, community support and patronage are important external factors that enable unregistered Rohingya to cope. The evaluation found that unregistered Rohingya benefited from support in the form of food and shelter provided by Bangladeshi relatives through marriage or by community members, who also provided employment opportunities and physical protection. Established Rohingya – refugees or unregistered Rohingya who had been in Bangladesh for a long time – provided support to new migrants. Patronage relationships were also found to be common, with local elite groups, community leaders and authorities providing tacit approval for various Rohingya livelihood activities. In the Cox’s Bazar area Rohingya are integral to the labour market.
46. Cox’s Bazar is among the poorest areas of Bangladesh and this local context limits the Rohingya population’s opportunities for developing self-reliance. Local poverty and limited resources mean that the Rohingya are competing with the poorest quintiles of the local population for jobs. This creates friction with communities, especially as it was found that Rohingya would accept jobs at lower wage rates. The scarce resources in the area also meant that both refugees and unregistered Rohingya competed with the local population for access to farmland, fishing areas and fuelwood.

<sup>11</sup> *Action contre la faim* (ACF), 2011.



## Implementing Factors

47. This evaluation did not examine operational factors of UNHCR or WFP food assistance interventions; in the evaluation design, food assistance as it had been implemented was considered as the intervention variable.
48. However, the evaluation noted that WFP food assistance operations were relatively well funded for at least the last decade, the target population was relatively stable, and no significant pipeline breaks were noted by stakeholders.

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## CONCLUSIONS

49. The evaluation found several significant differences between registered refugee households, which received food assistance, and unregistered Rohingya households, which did not. A cluster analysis demonstrated that household economic activity was the key determinant variable in households' livelihoods, coping strategies, mobility, protection and food security. Food assistance contributed to these factors through its impact on the economic activity of recipient households.
50. The logic model of the evaluation postulated that food assistance would provide short-, medium- and long-term outcomes leading to self-reliance. Comparisons with unregistered Rohingya groups at the Kutupalong makeshift and Leda sites provided evidence that food assistance contributed to short-term outcomes, primarily through improved dietary diversity and reduced frequency of negative coping strategies for refugees in the official Nayapara and Kutupalong camps. However, these positive impacts were less apparent when the refugee groups were compared with unregistered Rohingya living in host communities.
51. Empirical evidence from the evaluation indicated that the search for income opportunities was the main driving factor behind differences among Rohingya groups and that external assistance, including food assistance, slightly mitigated registered refugees' need for this income, thereby reducing their movement away from the camps. Unregistered Rohingya were found to be more mobile, as their search for income-generating opportunities led them to spend less time in or near Cox's Bazar district and to move more frequently into other parts of Bangladesh. There were indications that registered refugees had become dependent on camp assistance and that this safety net mitigated their search for livelihood opportunities elsewhere.
52. The evaluation found that food assistance was a secondary contributing factor to the perception of refugees' insecurity and vulnerability. Food and other external assistance contributed to the greater wealth status of refugees, leading to widespread resentment from those not receiving assistance. However, protection was a significant concern for all Rohingya groups, and the protection provided by refugee status was muted by the prevalence of refugees' economic activities and movements outside the camps, neither of which was legally permitted.
53. A significant evaluation finding was that unregistered Rohingya living outside the makeshift sites – who constitute the majority of Rohingya in Cox's Bazar district – appeared to have better food security and access to informal protection systems. They also utilized a greater range of coping strategies and had higher mobility scores. They were the group that came closest to the goal of self-reliance, although they have no legal status in the country. In contrast, the approximately 45,000 unregistered Rohingya residing in makeshift sites were found to be the most food-insecure and the most vulnerable in terms of protection. A consistent evaluation finding was that this exposure was linked to the

highly concentrated numbers of unregistered Rohingya in a small area, where they outnumbered local populations. Deterioration of the nearby natural environment – through deforestation, fishing and the pollution of water sources, for example – was also noted as a source of conflict.

54. The Leda and Kutupalong sites were found to constitute a safety net, especially for women and children, by providing protection and some services; unregistered Rohingya remain at these sites in the hope of becoming eligible for legal refugee status and associated external assistance. Further analysis is needed to determine whether or not large-scale food assistance was a pull factor, but there were indications that its provision within the official camps may have contributed to maintaining the makeshift sites in an area where concentrated populations were more food-insecure and vulnerable than unregistered Rohingya who were assimilated/integrated into local communities.
55. The evaluation found that external factors – primarily restrictions on unregistered Rohingya resulting from their lack of legal status, and the widespread poverty and low levels of socio-economic development in Cox’s Bazar District – had very important effects on the potential for self-reliance of Rohingya households. Food assistance was found to contribute to short-term outcomes for recipient households, but its provision within a package of external assistance over a long period and to a select group of households created dependency for these households.
56. The evaluation concludes that the logic of the current food assistance interventions, based on the model supporting the evaluation, will not lead to self-reliance for targeted households in Bangladesh in the absence of a supportive external environment and in the local context of widespread poverty. The evaluation found empirical evidence on the role of economic activities and the protective environment in the livelihoods of all Rohingya in Cox’s Bazar district.
57. To achieve self-reliance, alternative solutions that provide better protection to Rohingya and better services for all vulnerable groups – thereby reducing the need to resort to negative coping strategies – would be more appropriate. Temporary status and recognition would improve the protective environment, enable all Rohingya to engage in the local labour market with fewer entry barriers, and mitigate adoption of many of the more severe negative coping strategies.
58. Food assistance provides specific short-term food security outcomes, but needs to adapt to the protracted context, within an overall transition strategy, and to move beyond the current emergency modality that has persisted for more than two decades. Recovery and livelihood interventions using a range of food assistance modalities should address not only vulnerable refugees, but also local vulnerable groups, to avoid disfavoursing those in greatest need among the host population. These options will need further study.
59. The historical, cultural and religious kinship ties between Rohingya and communities of Bangladesh are an untapped opportunity for reaching more acceptable solutions. However, the evaluation concludes that this opportunity will not be realized without political support from the Government of Bangladesh and the international community. The evaluation also calls on the international community to maintain pressure on Myanmar to improve the conditions and legal recognition of the Rohingya in Myanmar.

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## RECOMMENDATIONS

60. Based on the evaluation findings and conclusions, four recommendations are directed to key stakeholders. These recommendations are strategic and intended to address the complex linkages among food security, economic activities and the protective environment in the livelihoods of all Rohingya in Cox's Bazar district. They should be operationalized in cooperation with the Government of Bangladesh:
61. **Recommendation 1:** Develop a transition strategy for providing unregistered Rohingya in Cox's Bazar with temporary status and recognition, pending durable solutions in Myanmar, to ensure that they have protection, opportunities to contribute to the economy, and access to basic services.
62. **Recommendation 2:** Jointly develop an alternative strategy for current food assistance and introduce options that continue to target: a) registered refugees; and b) increasingly, the most food-insecure, unregistered Rohingya and local population groups in Cox's Bazar.
63. **Recommendation 3:** Identify strategies for ensuring that all vulnerable Rohingya and local populations in Cox's Bazar are targeted for support interventions including health, education and services for preventing malnutrition.
64. **Recommendation 4:** Within the framework of a transition strategy and alternative food assistance options, develop strategies for gradually reducing the large concentrations of refugees in camps and of unregistered refugees at unofficial sites to mitigate conflict over natural resources and the significant protection problems at these locations.

**ANNEX**

**Map of Cox's Bazar District**



The designations employed and the presentation of material in this publication do not imply the expression of any opinion whatsoever on the part of the World Food Programme (WFP) concerning the legal status of any country, territory, city or area or of its frontiers or boundaries.

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## ACRONYMS USED IN THE DOCUMENT

GAM global acute malnutrition

HDDS household dietary diversity score

NGO non-governmental organization

UNHCR Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees