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de Alimentos

**Executive Board  
Third Regular Session**

**Rome, 19 - 22 October 1999**

# REPORTS OF THE EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR ON OPERATIONAL MATTERS

**Agenda item 8**

***For information***



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## PROTRACTED RELIEF AND RECOVERY OPERATION APPROVED BY THE EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR (1 JANUARY–30 JUNE 1999)— BANGLADESH 6155.00

### Assistance to Refugees from Myanmar

Number of beneficiaries	21,000
Duration of project	Six months (July–December 1999)

Cost (United States dollars)	
Total cost to WFP	928,553
Total food cost	620,810
Total cost to UNHCR	2,316,036

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## NOTE TO THE EXECUTIVE BOARD

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

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.

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Should you have any questions regarding matters of dispatch of documentation for the Executive Board, please contact the Documentation and Meetings Clerk (tel.: 066513-2641).



1. Between November 1991 and April 1992, approximately 250,000 Muslim residents from the Rakhine State of Myanmar sought refuge in southern Bangladesh. The refugees belonged to the poorest section of the population in Rakhine State. The initial average daily influx of around 1,200 refugees rapidly rose to 5,000 by April 1992, with a total of 250,877 refugees entering Bangladesh, according to a UNHCR/WFP census undertaken in September 1992.
2. Since then, a total of 229,766 refugees have been repatriated, with movements interrupted for 16 months from July 1997 to October 1998. The Bangladesh and Myanmar authorities currently allow one weekly repatriation movement of no more than 50 persons. This has left a remaining 21,000 refugees in two camps, including 7,000 already cleared by the Government of Myanmar. Most refugees are unwilling to repatriate. In view of this situation, the Government of Bangladesh and UNHCR have requested WFP to continue to provide food to the remaining refugees. A visit by the Myanmar Foreign Minister in mid-July 1999 confirmed the resolve of the two Governments to strengthen their cooperation for bringing the repatriation of the remaining refugees to a close within the next 12 months.
3. The past influx of refugees has contributed to the deterioration of the diverse ecological conditions of the Teknaf peninsula. This environmental impact could be partially allayed through a food-for-work (payment in wheat) tree-planting operation near the camps, involving refugee volunteers and the local population. In addition, the prolonged stay of refugee families in the camps has led to interest in providing a basic voluntary service system involving wheat rations. Although any volunteer services would need to be approved by the Bangladesh authorities, provisions have been made in the PRRO for ration supplements in support of volunteer services.
4. Because of government restrictions on outside employment and income generation, WFP food assistance is the primary means of meeting the basic nutritional needs of the refugee population. Up to 30 June 1999, WFP provided 184,000 tons of food commodities, amounting to US\$55 million, with assistance from Australia, Canada, the European Union, Finland, France, Germany, Japan, the Netherlands, Norway, Saudi Arabia, Sweden, Switzerland, and the United Kingdom.
5. WFP's commitment is to ensure "direct distribution of food commodities to senior female members in the refugee households". A joint action plan by WFP, UNHCR and NGOs was established with the objective to motivate refugee women to be present during the weekly distributions. A separate line for women refugees has been created, and preference is given to the women to be at the "front of the line" for distributions in the remaining camp. These steps have had a positive effect on the participation of women at the distribution site. Currently 94 percent of the total women heads of households (representing 39 percent of the total households) go to the distribution site to collect food for their families.
6. WFP works closely with the Ministry of Disaster Management and Relief and the Bangladesh Red Crescent Society, who are responsible for transporting food commodities from the extended delivery points and distributing food commodities among the refugees at the camp level, as well as reporting on such activities. Under the overall coordination of the Ministry of Health, the Directorate of Health Services and other relevant government departments, two NGOs, CONCERN and Médecins sans frontières (MSF)-Holland, provide assistance in the health, nutrition and sanitation sectors.

