



Media release

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61 NGOs warn of worsening crisis in Myanmar, call for refugees' engagement on safe, voluntary returns

Cox's Bazar, Bangladesh (21 August 2019)— Nearly 1 million Rohingya are still waiting for justice and a say about their future, two years after being forced from their homes by mass atrocities in Myanmar, and are struggling for safety and dignity in Bangladesh as refugees. In a joint statement released today, 61 local, national and international NGOs working in the two countries called for human rights for all to be recognized in Rakhine State and for Rohingya refugees to have a role in decision-making about their own lives, including conditions for their return to Myanmar.

The NGOs voiced strong concerns about the safety of affected families in Rakhine State, including Rohingya, as the conflict escalates and humanitarian access remains limited. They urged the Governments of Bangladesh and Myanmar to ensure that any return process be safe, voluntary and dignified, as news of the possible expedited repatriation of 3,450 Rohingya refugees circulated this week.

For the past two years, NGOs have assisted the Government of Bangladesh and UN agencies to effectively provide life-sustaining support to people living in the world's largest refugee camp. Their collective efforts have stabilized camp conditions, strengthened monsoon preparedness and helped prevent disease outbreaks. But more needs to be done. The agencies called on the international community to increase funding for the humanitarian response in Bangladesh and Myanmar to improve the lives of refugees and host communities, as well as internally displaced persons.

David Skinner, Head of Save the Children's Rohingya Response in Cox's Bazar:

“For two years, Rohingya children and their families have been living in the camps with little hope of a bright future. After suffering some of the worst human rights abuses of the 21st century, they now live in temporary shelters made of bamboo and plastic and can't get a proper education. One in ten children is still malnourished and fears of trafficking, drugs and crime in the camps make children feel unsafe.

“It is time for the world to create conditions to support the Rohingya's safe and voluntary return to Myanmar, where the government must fulfil one of the most basic responsibilities of any government – to guarantee the same level of safety and humanity for all. The Rohingya deserve justice for what they have suffered - perpetrators of human rights violations and crimes against humanity must be held to account so Rohingya children are protected from these atrocities ever happening again. It would give them the future they want.”

ENDS

FAST FACTS

- In Myanmar, some 128,000 displaced Rohingya, and other Muslim communities, have been confined to camps in Rakhine State since 2012, unable to return home.
- In Bangladesh, refugee children need access to more robust educational services. More than 25,000 children are out of school. Further, 97 per cent of adolescents aged 15 to 18 years do not attend any type of educational facility.
- In Bangladesh, the percentage of host community households living on less than USD60 a month spiked from 10 to 22 percent after the influx in August 2017.

Note to editors: We have people available for interview, please contact: Ally Clelland, Communications Specialist, Save the Children NZ, phone 022 531 9514 or email ally.clelland@scnz.org.nz

About Save the Children NZ

Save the Children works in more than 120 countries across the world. The organisation responds to emergencies and works with children and their communities to ensure they survive, learn and are protected.

Save the Children NZ currently supports international programmes in Fiji, Cambodia, Bangladesh, Laos, Nepal, and Thailand. Areas of work include education and literacy, disaster risk reduction, and alleviating child poverty.