

P R E S S E M I T T E I L U N G

Second fire of 2022 leaves 750 children homeless in Rohingya refugee camp, says Save the Children

Cox's Bazar, Bangladesh, 10 January, 2022 – About 750 children have been left homeless in what is already this year's second fire to tear through Rohingya refugee camps in Cox's Bazar, Bangladesh, Save the Children said today.

The fire tore through the world's largest refugee settlement in Cox's Bazar – home to more than 1 million people – on Sunday evening, destroying 300 shelters, which for more than four years have been the closest thing to home for Rohingya families fleeing Myanmar.

About 1,500 people have been left without shelter, including 750 children, and four temporary learning centres were burned to ashes, according to Save the Children.

Some families are staying with relatives in the affected camp while others have been displaced to nearby camps. No casualties have been reported, although two people are reported to have been injured.

Jainab, 25, who is eight months pregnant, said: 'When the hue of smoke and crying started, we came out of our house immediately. We could not see anything for the smoke. I ran with my child to a safer place and watched my house burn to ashes. I couldn't even take any of my valuables out of the flames. I have lost everything.'*

Shamsuddin, 70, said: "During the fire, I was asleep. Suddenly my wife pulled me out of my room and rushed far from the burning shelters. We had less than a minute to respond, so we couldn't save any of our goods. Since last night sitting here in the cold, we have had no food, except a cup of hot water provided by some aid agencies. We need shelter and food right now."*

Save the Children's acting Country Director in Bangladesh, Dr Shamim Jahan, said: "Just 10 days into 2022, and this is already the second fire of the year. Yet again, thousands of Rohingya refugees have watched what little they had left reduced to wreckage. These camps were supposed to be safe for refugees who fled their homes in Myanmar over four years ago.

"Fire-resistant materials should be permitted and used when constructing shelters. The risk of fires in these extremely densely populated and confined areas is enormous, and disasters like this can be especially frightening for children. Ultimately, this incident shows yet again that children do not belong in refugee camps."

In March last year, a huge fire swept through the refugee camps, killing at least 15 people and destroying more than 10,000 shelters. There were at least 100 fires in the camps in the first seven months of 2021 alone.

Save the Children is concerned that the fire could trigger past traumas for children, many of whom saw their homes set alight in Myanmar. In a survey conducted by Save the Children in August last year, about 73% of Save the Children staff said children they worked with referred to traumatic experiences in Myanmar when talking about more recent events in the camps, including fires.

Save the Children is providing first aid and psychological support to distressed children.

The aid agency is distributing blankets and mosquito nets to families who have been left homeless by the fire, and is working to identify lost children and reunite them with their families.

The organisation is also calling on the international community to find a long-term solution to the Rohingya crisis that addresses its root causes and allows for safe, dignified, and voluntary returns of Rohingya refugees to Myanmar when it is safe to do so.

**names have been changed*

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Über Save the Children

Im Nachkriegsjahr 1919 gründete die britische Sozialreformerin und Kinderrechtlerin Eglantyne Jebb Save the Children, um Kinder in Deutschland und Österreich vor dem Hungertod zu retten. Heute ist die inzwischen größte unabhängige Kinderrechtsorganisation der Welt in rund 120 Ländern tätig. Save the Children setzt sich ein für Kinder in Kriegen, Konflikten und Katastrophen. Für eine Welt, die die Rechte der Kinder achtet. Eine Welt, in der alle Kinder gesund und sicher leben und frei und selbstbestimmt aufwachsen und lernen können – seit über 100 Jahren.