



UNHCR
The UN Refugee Agency

Dhaka, Wednesday, 21 May, 2008

UNHCR welcomes Australian donation – will provide new homes for 10,000 refugees

The UN refugee agency today thanked the Australian government for two donations totaling more than \$1.4 million U.S. dollars that will be used to build new homes for Rohingya refugees in a Bangladeshi refugee camp.

“This is the first time Australia has contributed to UNHCR’s program in Bangladesh, and its contribution is going to make a huge and very welcome improvement in many refugees’ lives,” said Pia Prytz Phiri, UNHCR Representative in Bangladesh.

The contribution came at different times in two parts from the Australian International Refugee Fund (\$563,000 Australian dollars, or \$517,000 U.S. dollars) and from the Australia Minister of Immigration (\$950,000 Australian dollars, equal to \$883,000 U.S. dollars).

All the money is to be used to build some 280 new six-unit bungalows in Kutupalong Camp (near Cox’s Bazar) which can each house six families in more spacious shelters than the decrepit huts they had been living in.

“This is a major achievement,” said Ms. Phiri. “Shelter is of course at the very center of refugees’ lives. Improved shelter means a better quality of life, better protection and better health. It’s really hard to overstate how important this improvement will be for the 10,000 refugees who will benefit. I visit the camps often, and how excited the refugees are to get new homes after too many years in the old hovels.”

Kutupalong Camp is home to almost 10,800 Rohingya refugees; a second camp near Cox’s Bazar, Nayapara Camp, houses nearly 17,000 refugees. The Rohingya refugees have been in Bangladesh since fleeing Myanmar’s northern Rakhine state in the early 1990s.

Over the last two years, the Bangladeshi government has allowed UNHCR, other UN agencies and non-governmental organizations to make substantial improvements – such as new housing, improved medical care and greater vocational training -- in the two camps, which are funded by UNHCR but administered by the government.

Media Relations
& Public Information
Service

HQPI00
P.O. Box 2500
Geneva

Tel (41 22) 739 85 02
Fax (41 22) 739 79 15
www.unhcr.org



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For more information, please contact:

Ms. Pia Prytz Phiri, UNHCR Representative in Bangladesh
Tel. +88 02 882 6802

Or
Kitty McKinsey,
Senior Regional Public Information Officer (Bangkok)
+668 1827 0280