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MEDIA RELEASE: Devastating flooding in Cox's Bazar leaves thousands homeless

30 July 2021

Days of heavy rainfall have led to the tragic deaths of at least six people, including two children, and left thousands of Rohingya refugees homeless after extensive flooding in the world's largest refugee camp, Cox's Bazar.

In the 24 hours to Wednesday, more than 30 centimetres of rain fell on the camp, inundating shelters where nearly one million Rohingya people live in cramped conditions after fleeing conflict in Rakhine state.

Over 2,700 households were affected by the monsoon rains, from flooding, landslides and windstorms, which wreaked destructions across the camp. At least 1,400 shelters were impacted, along with food distribution sites, latrines, water points, a health facility and a water treatment plant.

"This news is heartbreaking, especially when our partners have been working so hard to provide adequate shelter for the community," said Anshu Adhikari, Caritas Australia's Program Coordinator for Myanmar and Bangladesh.

"We know that people are seriously overcrowded, and that the structures they live in are just not up to scratch for the heavy rainfall. Earlier this year we saw a tragic loss of life from the fires that swept through the camp, and we've been working with our partners on the ground and other organisations to rebuild, but these floods show just how challenging this context is for people to live in year in, year out."

"Especially now that Bangladesh is in a strict lockdown over the Delta variant of COVID-19, only emergency services are permissible, which makes humanitarian response even more challenging to these kinds of disasters. Roads are still flooded right now, so it's really hard for volunteers and staff to respond easily, and we're hoping that the warehouses where vital supplies are stored aren't too damaged."

"I'm really concerned about the long-term impacts of this lockdown for the already vulnerable Rohingya community in the camps, who are already lacking regular access to basic services including healthcare, clean water and sanitation, education and protection from sexual and gender-based violence."

"Thankfully, the government has consulted with humanitarian organisations so that we're able to better coordinate for essential services like water, sanitation and hygiene during the lockdown, but it's heartbreaking to know that people in the camps are now even more isolated from crucial help and support at the exact moment when they need it the most."

The Catholic agency for international aid and development

Address: 24-32 O'Riordan St, Alexandria NSW 2015

Phone: 1800 024 413 **Fax:** +61 2 8306 3401

Email: questions@caritas.org.au **ABN:** 90 970 605 069

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Caritas Australia is supporting church and NGO partners on the ground. Visit caritas.org.au or call 1800 024 413 toll free to provide much needed support to vulnerable communities in Asia by donating to our Asia Regional Appeal.

Media contact: Jessica Stone 0490 684 867

jessica.stone@caritas.org.au or caritasmedia@caritas.org.au.

Note:

Anshu Adhikari, Caritas Australia's Program Coordinator for Myanmar and Bangladesh is available for interview.

James Gomes, Programs Director at Caritas Bangladesh is available for interview from Bangladesh.

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