Review of Australia Assists' Support to the Rohingya Crisis 2017-2020

RedR Australia's Delivery of the Australia Assists Program

redr australia

September, 2020

Young girl at a Women-Friendly Space in Cox's Bazar. These spaces provide a protected haven to play, learn and find support.
Photo credit: Carly Learson, RedR Australia.

Australia Assists

Australian Aid

Australia Assists is the Australian Government's humanitarian civilian deployment program. Managed by RedR Australia, technical specialists are deployed to help overseas partners prepare for, respond to and recover from natural disasters and conflict.

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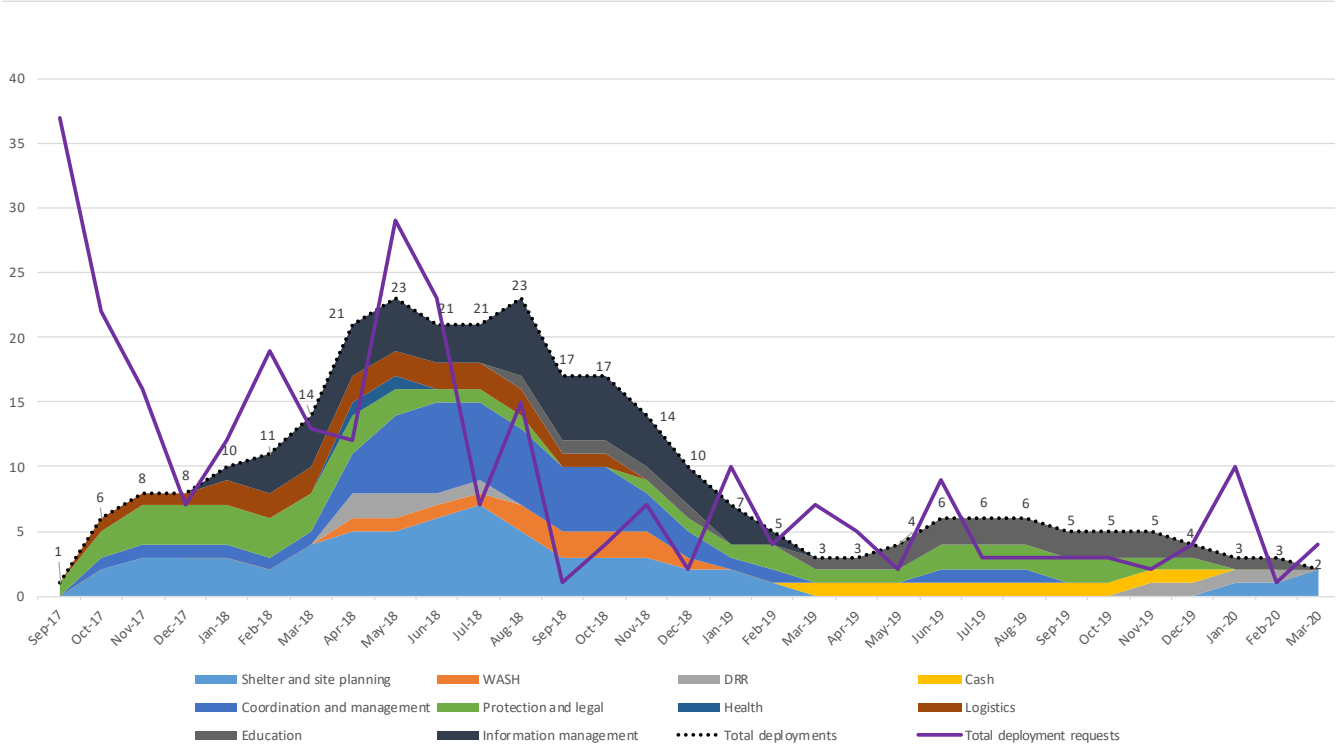
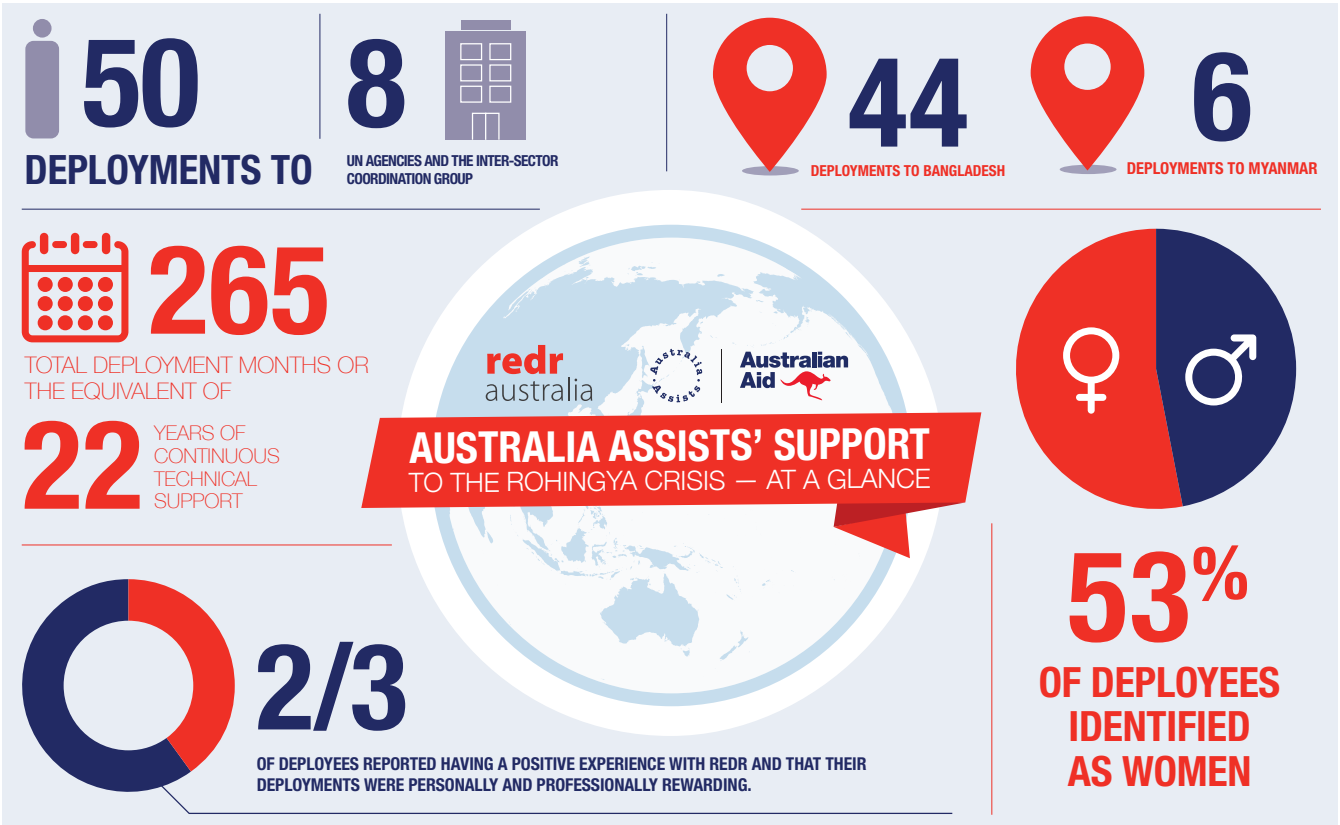
Acronym List

ASEAN	Association of Southeast Asian Nations
AUSMAT	Australian Medical Assistance Teams
DFAT	Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade
DRM	Disaster Risk Management
DRR	Disaster Risk Reduction
EiE	Education in Emergencies
FAO	Food and Agriculture Organization
GBV	Gender-based Violence
IOM	International Organization for Migration
ISCG	Inter-Sector Coordination Group
M&E	Monitoring & Evaluation
MEAL	Monitoring, Evaluation, Accountability and Learning
NGO	Non-Government Organisation
ODA	Official Development Assistance
RMCG	RM Consultancy Group
RRRC	Office of the Refugee Relief & Repatriation Commissioner
TOR	Terms of Reference
UNDP	United Nations Development Programme
UNFPA	United Nations Population Fund
UNHCR	United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees
WASH	Water, Sanitation and Hygiene
WFP	World Food Programme
WHO	World Health Organization

Program Snapshot

Australia Assists deployments by sector over time (against total deployment requests)





Findings and recommendations

The Australia Assists program is the Australian Government's humanitarian deployment capability, implemented by RedR Australia. Australia Assists' support to the Rohingya crisis has been critical. From the outset, it provided – and continues to provide – life-saving assistance, helped protect the most vulnerable, and meaningfully supported more sustainable and targeted responses. The findings of this review focus on understanding the nature of these impacts and what lessons can be taken to continue and improve this work. A summary of key outcomes is included in Table 1 and an overview of key findings and associated recommendations is included in Table 2.

Table 1: Summary of key outcomes

Sector	Outcomes of significance
Shelter and site planning	• Supporting the design, planning, construction or renovation of a broad range of significant infrastructure projects that aided the scale-up of support to beneficiaries including storage facilities, roads, sewerage systems, bridges, shelters and health facilities • Improving the quality and safety of shelter works by improving the quality of bamboo being used to construct shelters and the training of excavators, engineers, and information and communication technology (ICT) staff • Supporting scale-up via securing and negotiating access to safe land for future humanitarian assistance • Improving camp management strategies and establishing team structures across three sites that increased basic camp management services to the community
Water, Sanitation and Hygiene (WASH)	• Developing and designing of reservoirs, sewer networks, treatment centres and decommissioning unsafe WASH facilities within camps • Supporting harmonisation of systems to improve effectiveness (applying lessons to inform best practice) and ease of repairs
Disaster Risk Reduction (DRR)	• Preventing monsoon and landslide related deaths and injury via prepositioning stores, implementing an early warning system for landslides and identifying key environmental issues to address as the response continues
Cash	• Supporting the operational scale-up of the e-voucher programme and transition from in-kind modality of food assistance to e-voucher modality for 155,000 individuals

Sector	Outcomes of significance
Coordination and management	• Improving the relationship between the humanitarian actors and the Government of Bangladesh, in particular the Office of the Refugee Relief & Repatriation Commissioner (RRRC) • Strengthening interagency/sub-sector and cluster co-ordination across sectors • Supporting the coordination of the education sector at crucial times in the response - enhancing the quality of reporting and coordination between actors and government working on education in the response
Protection and legal	• Raising the voices of refugee women, and their particular experiences, to donors, government and other stakeholders through communications work throughout the response, leading to increased funding for Gender Based Violence (GBV) prevention and women's empowerment programmes • Improving co-ordination of the GBV sub-sector in Rakhine State, leading to enhanced GBV mainstreaming in Myanmar • Raising awareness of disability inclusion and training 200 WFP staff on disability inclusion
Health	• Supporting the scaling up of diphtheria treatment, prevention and testing facilitates working across agencies/sectors • Contributing to the provision of safe and well-resourced health clinics through shelter, planning, and supply chain support • Enhancing the co-ordination of health-related activities with health partners and national authorities in the field
Logistics	• Assisting in the preparation and delivery of core relief items distributed to 160,000 families • Improving the health logistics supply chain and storage facilities

Table 2: Summary of review questions, findings and recommendations

Key questions	Finding	Recommendation
Performance and sustainability		
• To what extent have Australia Assists deployments to the Rohingya crisis generated significant outcomes, what have these outcomes been, and in what sectoral or thematic areas?	**1.** The collective impact of RedR's 50 deployments to date through Australia Assists in Bangladesh and Myanmar was significant – with the investment yielding both critical impact and value for money.	No Recommendation.
• What evidence is there of tangible and sustainable change as a result of these deployments?	**2.** The sustainability of outcomes was somewhat variable; reflecting the challenging operating environment, the multiple roles deployees were required to play; their varied understanding of capacity building and sustainability; and lack of policies, procedures or staff planning in host organisations.	**2a.** Assess the feasibility of capacity building or sustainability efforts as outlined in deployment TORs and where necessary; negotiate changes to TORs with host organisations to reflect the Australian Government and RedR's sustainability priorities.
		2b. Communicate RedR's position on localisation and capacity building to deployees and host organisations.
Aid policy harmonisation		
• What mechanisms will help to facilitate better integration of the Australia Assists program within Australia's humanitarian response packages for the Rohingya and other crisis affected communities in Bangladesh and Myanmar?	**3.** While RedR has been responsive to the Standby Partners in making decisions around deployments, they have been increasingly harmonised with Australian Government priorities.	**3a.** The Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade (DFAT) should review how Australia Assists' outcomes are disseminated internally and used to inform future planning.
		3b. RedR should continue to prioritise relationships with DFAT Posts in Dhaka and Yangon alongside its partnerships in Canberra.

Key questions	Finding	Recommendation
	4. The challenge for RedR - as it continues to align with Australian Government priorities - is to address cross-cutting issues such as localisation, gender, disability, protection, DRR while still meeting the host organisations' traditional requests (such as shelter, food, site planning, WASH and engineering support) that meet critical needs of affected populations.	**4a.** RedR and DFAT should consider how Australia Assists' contribution can be more clearly articulated within Australia's humanitarian response packages for the Rohingya and other crisis affected communities in Bangladesh and Myanmar.
		4b. Continue to look for innovative ways to embed cross-cutting humanitarian action (eg. gender equality, social inclusion) within host organisations - either through attracting specialised personnel on the roster or deploying several personnel at a time to host organisations to enhance impact.
Partnerships		
• To what extent have RedR Australia's strategic partnerships facilitated humanitarian outcomes and innovation in the Rohingya crisis via Australia Assists?	**5.** The Australia Assists' partnership between RedR and DFAT is functioning effectively. Early misunderstandings – particularly a shortfall in RedR's budget in FY2018/19 for deployments to Bangladesh and Myanmar – have necessitated operational growth that now benefits the relationship.	**5a.** Continue to integrate budget management lessons across the partnership; DFAT must ensure multi-year planning and funding flexibility is maintained to enable RedR to adaptively respond to emerging needs.
	6. RedR Australia's role in the UN Standby Partnership was a critical enabler of the Australia Assists' response.	No Recommendation.
	7. The lack of new strategic partnerships for the program in Bangladesh and Myanmar is an ongoing challenge – particularly to localise the response as a protracted crisis.	**7a.** Opportunities for strategic partnerships between local and/or national NGOs should be re-assessed to identify local immediate and longer term technical needs. There is opportunity for this to be done in ways that align with regional DRR and humanitarian priorities.

Key questions	Finding	Recommendation
Localisation		
• What evidence is there that deployees both understood the localisation agenda and took an active localisation approach in the course of their work?	**8.** Most deployees demonstrated an appropriate understanding of the localisation agenda and several deployees played an impactful role in progressing it - working either with host governments, NGOs, or both.	**8a.** RedR, in partnership with DFAT, should consider building skills and sharing knowledge of its personnel to support localisation, similar to efforts being progressed in the Pacific.
	9. Localisation was not, however, an explicit focus in the majority of deployments - due, in large part, to the lack of focus by host organisations or a specific localisation focus outlined in the TORs of the deployees.	**9a.** RedR should ensure close alignment between Australia Assists' response to the Rohingya crisis and its organisation-wide Localisation Strategy and Action Plan.
		9b. Continue to explore deployment opportunities that support system reform in partnership with host Governments, delivering DRR and disability inclusion impact in particular.
Coordination		
• To what extent is there evidence of Australia Assists deployees having worked in a more collaborative way to strengthen coordination across agencies and/or sectors?	**10.** Australia Assists deployees played important roles in improving coordination within and between agencies. This was particularly significant in gender, food, site planning, education and health.	**10a.** Continue to prioritise coordination and accountability roles and outcomes to strengthen the effectiveness and sustainability of the crisis response, noting that longer deployments should be favoured as they deliver the best coordination results.
	11. There was some evidence that the informal network of Australia Assists' deployees directly enhanced cross-agency coordination and outcomes for affected populations. The in-country retreat and shared start dates were enablers for these relationships.	No Recommendation.

Key questions	Finding	Recommendation
Learning		
• What have been the enabling factors, and what opportunities for learning do these provide?	**12.** The quality of the RedR Australia roster, the interpersonal skills of deployees, specificity of TORs and RedR's increasingly effective relationship with DFAT were important enablers of deployment outcomes.	**12a.** RedR should continue to ensure the quality of its roster and that it remains fit for purpose, and responsive to emerging humanitarian priorities.
• What have been the inhibiting factors, and what opportunities for learning do these provide?	**13.** Workplace challenges occurred on a continuum, ranging from poor organisational culture and interpersonal dynamics that impacted deployee wellbeing and stress levels. This affected around 10 per cent of deployments, disproportionately impacting women. On the other end, at least four deployees experienced toxic workplaces where bullying, harassment, sexism and misogyny were commonplace in their host organisation.	**13a.** RedR should raise these issues at the SBP Duty of Care Working Group. DFAT should continue to support RedR's SBP strategic support to advance gender equality, inclusion and UN governance to ensure duty of care and workplace wellbeing.
		13b. Consider embedding bystander training or key messages from similar training as part of pre-deployment requirements - highlighting that gender issues and power-over dynamics can occur both in the workplace and among communities and equipping deployees to safely and promptly report or address them.
		13c. RedR should continue to advocate reform where it is determined incidents are not isolated but rather systemic to the workplace culture and discontinue deployments to responsible host organisations while issues remain unresolved.
		13d. RedR to consider undertaking a review to examine the experiences of Australian deployees in UN agencies through the lens of Australia's commitment to gender equity. These findings should be used to actively promote and drive reform among host organisations and the SBP network on issues and practices related to discrimination, bullying, harassment, sexism, racism, able-ism and exclusion.

Key questions	Finding	Recommendation
	14. During 2017 and early 2018, RedR's operational support to deployees was, on occasion, inadequate. However RedR's restructure of its operational support in 2019 has meant support is now more systematic, timely and emotionally intelligent; demonstrating good practice across its functions.	No Recommendation.
	15. Decision-making for deployments was agile and responsive to host organisations. However given the scale and urgency of the need, deployments in the first 12 months could have been more strategic and adept at integrating observations from deployees on the ground.	**15a.** Review approach to reviewing and assessing feedback from returning deployees - especially when considering future deployments.
		15b. Continue to explore opportunities for more flexible deployment approaches – including rapid recruitment or partnerships to meet emerging needs and assessment missions to set up long-term deployments for short-supply sectors such as disability inclusion or disaster risk reduction.
		15c. Deployment opportunities must be carefully designed together with host agencies holistically, not in isolation, to maximise limited resources and respond to identified needs on the ground. A commitment to disability inclusion from both host agency headquarters and leadership at field level are crucial for success (see case study 6 on page 36).

Acknowledgement of Country

This report was prepared on Dja Dja Wurrung Country of the Jaara People. We acknowledge the Traditional Owners of the Country that we work on throughout Australia and recognise their continuing connection to land, waters and culture. We pay our respects to their Elders past, present and emerging and the Elders of other Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities. Moreover, we express gratitude for the knowledge and insight that Traditional Owners and other Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people contribute to our shared work.

1. Introduction

1.1 The Crisis

In late August 2017, the Rohingya communities of Northern Myanmar were subjected to systemic genocide; rape, torture, destruction of property and mass murder. What followed was one of the largest mass migrations since Rwandans in Tanzania and (then) Zaire in 1994 and the Kosovars in Albania and Macedonia in 1999. In September 2017, an average of 20,000 refugees per day fled to one small stretch of land. By October 2017, the 700,000 Rohingya had formed the world's largest and most densely populated refugee camp near Cox's Bazar in Bangladesh.

The scale and speed of the refugee influx was overwhelming, eventually totalling approximately 850,000 people placing additional burden on over 400,000 members of the already vulnerable local Bangladeshi community.

1.2 The Response

The Australian Government has provided over $330 million in Official Development Assistance (ODA) since the crisis emerged in 2017 (as of March 2021). Implemented by RedR Australia, Australia Assists has been central to this response.

The Australia Assists program is the Australian Government's humanitarian deployment capability. It deploys technical specialists to global partners, including host governments, United Nations (UN) organisations, multilateral organisations and non-government organisations (NGOs), to help them prepare for, respond to and recover from natural disasters and conflicts.

In supporting the Rohingya crisis, RedR has facilitated 50 deployments of technical specialists to eight UN agencies and the Inter-Sector Coordination Group (ISCG) since 2017. This represents RedR's largest single response to a humanitarian emergency in almost thirty years of operation.

1.3 Our Report

This review provides a detailed analysis of the collective impact of Australia Assists deployments to the Rohingya crisis to date. This work was proactively commissioned by RedR Australia and undertaken by Meg Berryman and David Hale for RM Consulting Group (RMCG).

This independent review promotes accountability and offers recommendations on how the program can be strengthened and/or adapted to improve humanitarian outcomes over the next two years. It explores the effect of these deployments for affected communities and what factors enabled deployees to deliver these outcomes. From this, it identifies what could be done differently to support the protracted crisis in the years ahead and what lessons can be applied for future emerging humanitarian emergencies.

1.4 Our Approach

This review was developed in partnership with RedR Australia. Due to travel restrictions resulting from the outbreak of Covid-19, the review was limited to a desktop analysis of deployment reports and 21 remote semi-structured interviews with 25 key stakeholders and deployees. A full list of interviewees is included at Appendix 1.

From this work, outcomes were 'harvested' and deployees' experiences were collated to identify evidence of collective impact. These were analysed to understand how change was realised on the ground.

Within this, the review considered six key evaluation domains, summarised in Table 2.

2.1 Performance and sustainability

To what extent have Australia Assists deployments generated significant outcomes to the Rohingya crisis response, what have these outcomes been, and in what sectoral or thematic areas? What evidence is there of tangible and sustainable change as a result of these deployments? (PERFORMANCE; SUSTAINABILITY)

Key finding 1: The collective impact of RedR's 50 deployments to date through Australia Assists in Bangladesh and Myanmar was significant – with the investment yielding both critical impact and value for money.

The work of deployees increased and enhanced support to the most vulnerable refugees in Cox's Bazar, increased accountability of agencies to beneficiaries and improved coordination within and between agencies. The net effect of this work meant significantly more people were provided with better shelter, cleaner water and sanitation, safer living conditions, had access to more and healthier food options, lived with greater safety and were supported to access education.

Different stakeholders had differing assessments of the significance of deployment outcomes, reflecting the spectrum of priorities represented across DFAT, RedR, UN agencies and deployees themselves. As the response unfolded during Australia Assists' formative stages, there was also a lack of agreed strategic priorities in the crisis and early recovery stages; meaning views of deployments were more subjective.

DFAT interviewees valued deployments that met technical gaps in priority areas of the humanitarian strategy, while also advancing strategic interests; access, reputation and reform. Deployments such as disability inclusion in WFP, education coordination in Rakhine State through UNICEF and high-visibility engineering, shelter and site planning work were all highly regarded by DFAT. DFAT valued deployments initiated by Posts; they felt this increased the likelihood that work bridged the dual needs of being a strategic priority for Australia while also meeting genuine humanitarian need. 'Successful' deployments by extension, increased DFAT's legitimacy, leverage and capital to advocate for broader outcomes.

Given the nature of the Standby Partnership, UN agencies placed highest value on meeting the largest technical gaps. The outcomes of engineering, site management and coordination deployments were all particularly well regarded.[1] Host organisations spoke to the technical capacity of RedR deployees, but more distinctly, their capacity to build strong relationships within teams, organisations and sectors.

Australia Assists' deployees provided critical life-saving engineering solutions as the Rohingya camps became the fourth largest city in Bangladesh in little more than a month. They supported the design, planning, construction or renovation of a broad range of significant infrastructure projects that aided the scale up of support to affected communities including storage facilities, roads, sewerage systems, bridges, shelters and health facilities. However, much of the work – particularly in shelter – occurred in isolation from deployment to deployment. Additional deployments in coordination and management would have benefited overall outcomes in this sector.

Deployment of protection specialists had varied impact – largely dependent on the level of support provided by host organisations. However, embedding protection in the work of WFP in the early response phase achieved particularly significant outcomes that have been sustained across the duration of the response (see case study 6).

> "Australia's reputation in Cox's Bazar is outstanding. I rarely go to a meeting without Australia Assists being mentioned and partners asking me for more deployments... It allows us to push policy objectives such as gender and disability."
>
> *DFAT, Dhaka*

1. 28 deployees were rated very good/exceptional by their host organisations in Post Deployment Reports

Deployees raised the voices of refugee women, and their particular experiences, to donors, government and other stakeholders through communications support, leading to increased funding for life-saving maternal and child health programmes and interventions. Other deployees improved the coordination of the GBV-prevention sector in Cox's Bazar and Rakhine State, creating enhanced protection for women and girls (who make up 52 per cent of the refugee population).

Deployments in disaster risk reduction and monitoring and evaluation over-performed for the numbers deployed. DRR deployments strengthened the capacity of stakeholders - including Government of Bangladesh and UNDP to promote protection of Rohingya refugees during disasters. While Monitoring, Evaluation, Accountability and Learning (MEAL) deployments – particularly where they backed onto one another – significantly improved the accountability of humanitarian support to refugee and host communities.

RedR's strategic deployments significantly aided agencies and the Government of Bangladesh to coordinate and harmonise their responses. These deployees – positioned in key coordination roles – streamlined assistance, strengthened relationships and gave voice to marginalised people through the interagency/sub-sector and technical clusters. Australia Assists' deployees were valued for their capacity to build relationships within and between agencies and their willingness to solve problems, find solutions, and create innovation within their roles.

Australia Assists' deployments catalysed some important institutional change in agencies on the ground. Protection was mainstreamed in food distribution to ensure access for the most vulnerable, while disability inclusion action plans were embedded across WFP at a time when people with a disability were largely invisible to implementing agencies.

Key finding 2: The sustainability of outcomes was variable; reflecting the challenging operating environment, the multiple roles deployees were required to play; their varied understanding of capacity building and sustainability; and lack of policies, procedures or staff planning in host organisations.

Deployments that achieved the most sustainable outcomes were those that embodied principles of localisation. Deployees who had a sustained and focused effort on supporting national and host organisation staff to increase their capacity across the sectors of protection, Monitoring & Evaluation, gender and disability were particularly effective in sustaining outcomes.

Acute humanitarian environments are not conducive for sustainable outcomes, and this was reflected in the experience of Australia Assists' deployees. Many early deployees indicated that they didn't have capacity to mentor others within their role. A focus on rapidly meeting critical immediate needs, staff turnover and overlapping or competing UN mandates all undermined the capacity of most deployees to achieve sustainable outcomes over the first 12 months of RedR deployments. Exceptions to this were apparent, enabled through a combination of strategic mandates and individual deployee experience across humanitarian crises. This aided deployees to more effectively embed outcomes institutionally – be it through foundational research (site planning in UNHCR), transformative approaches (protection in WFP) or systems development (monitoring and evaluation in UNICEF).

Deployees increasingly achieved more sustainable outcomes through the early recovery and protracted phases. One deployee in UNHCR transformed shelter construction by demonstrating the benefits of treating bamboo before use. While another helped embed disability inclusion by identifying and training work-area champions to monitor and implement work following her departure from WFP.

RedR was effective at capturing lessons from deployments and building expertise in good practice approaches to inform Australia Assists' programming. While RedR did connect future deployees with relevant returned deployees, more work could be applied to ensure that returning deployees' feedback is taken into account for future deployments.

Recommendation 2(a): Assess the feasibility of capacity building or sustainability efforts as outlined in deployment TORs and where necessary; negotiate changes to TORs with host organisations to reflect the Australian Government and RedR's sustainability priorities.

Recommendation 2(b): Communicate RedR's position on localisation and capacity building to deployees and host organisations.

Australia Assists Site Engineer, Tristan, shows RedR Australia Director of International Response, Heidi, the construction site of a bridge he supervised. The 28 metre low-water bridge over the Bakkhali River in Cox's Bazar enables WFP to open new food distribution points, and provide better access to a new settlement on the other side of the river. **Photo credit: Max Greenstein, RedR Australia.**

2.2 Aid policy harmonisation

What mechanisms will help to facilitate better integration of the Australia Assists program within Australia's humanitarian response packages for the Rohingya and other crisis affected communities in Bangladesh and Myanmar?

Key finding 3: While RedR has been responsive to the Standby Partners in making decisions around deployments, they have been increasingly harmonised with Australian Government priorities.

The Australian Government's response to the Rohingya Crisis has increasingly integrated the Australia Assists program as a valuable tool of the aid program. DFAT's country desk officers are increasingly committed to collaborating with RedR as part of annual planning rounds. As a result, deployment opportunities are increasingly harmonised with priorities identified by DFAT.

DFAT interviewees highlighted RedR's effectiveness in engaging a humanitarian disability and inclusion specialist who went on to achieve meaningful institutional impact in WFP. More broadly, DFAT interviewees appreciated RedR's willingness to respond to Australian Aid priorities and needs identified by Posts and their ability to test opportunities to ensure TORs were relevant and hosted in the right agency. This was particularly aided by RedR's internal restructure, which streamlined contact with DFAT through one clear point of contact. Annual planning for country desks now involves RedR, further strengthening opportunities to work strategically to maximise impact, while RedR's willingness to connect in-country and understand priorities was important.

DFAT does however acknowledge it needs to do more to further harmonise expectations of Australia Assists' role in Bangladesh and Myanmar internally. Part of this work is within DFAT itself, and part is ensuring officers are engaging RedR more effectively; "we need to get RedR more across what we're trying to do"[2].

Recommendation 3(a): DFAT should review how Australia Assists' outcomes are disseminated internally and used to inform future planning.

Recommendation 3(b): RedR should continue to prioritise relationships with DFAT Posts in Dhaka and Yangon alongside its partnerships in Canberra.

> **"I find RedR very responsive. Post has been really clear with Canberra and RedR that the positions need to align with Post's humanitarian program – and that's been reflected in the deployments."**
>
> *DFAT, Yangon*

2. Interview, DFAT Canberra, 9 July

Key finding 4: The challenge for RedR - as it continues to align with Australian Government priorities - is to address cross-cutting issues such as localisation, gender, disability, protection, DRR while still meeting the host organisations' traditional requests (such as shelter, food, site planning, WASH and engineering support) that meet critical needs of affected populations.

To effectively harmonise Australia Assists' deployments with emerging response priorities, RedR will need to bridge demands as a standby partner with priorities identified within Australia's humanitarian response packages for the Rohingya and other crisis affected communities in Bangladesh and Myanmar. This means RedR must be proactive in planning for, and shaping deployments that can meet complementary objectives; particularly in the sectors of health (in response to Covid-19), disability inclusion, gender, protection, governance and localisation. WASH, shelter and food experts can, and should, operate with an inclusion and protection lens. Small teams may also be deployed to ensure priority objectives are mainstreamed in technical requirements identified by agencies.

More planning is required to identify niche opportunities that meaningfully contribute to humanitarian outcomes, support localisation and contribute to long-term transformation. Opportunities identified by interviewees include:

- A deployment to Nay Pyi Taw to shape DRR[3]
- A deployment to the RRRC to support better governance.[4]
- A deployment to establish a cluster or working group dedicated to accountability for affected populations[5]
- A localisation advocate in the ISCG[6]
- The recruitment and deployment of national specialists – to build sustainability and challenge entrenched notions in the UN of who constitutes an 'expert'[7].

Recommendation 4(a): RedR and DFAT should consider how Australia Assists' contribution can be more clearly articulated within Australia's humanitarian response packages for the Rohingya and other crisis affected communities in Bangladesh and Myanmar.

Recommendation 4(b) Continue to look for innovative ways to embed cross-cutting issues within deployments - either through attracting specialised personnel on the roster or deploying several personnel at a time to host organisations to enhance impact.

3. Interview, DFAT, 22 June 2020
4. Interview, UNHCR, 8 July 2020
5. Interview, Australia Assists deployee, 22 July 2020
6. Interview, DFAT, 9 July 2020
7. Interview, DFAT, 9 July 2020.

2.3 Partnerships

To what extent have RedR Australia's strategic partnerships facilitated humanitarian outcomes and innovation in the Rohingya crisis via Australia Assists? (PARTNERSHIPS)

Key finding 5: The Australia Assists' partnership between RedR and DFAT is functioning effectively. Early misunderstandings – particularly a shortfall in RedR's budget in FY2018/19 for deployments to Bangladesh and Myanmar – have necessitated operational growth that now benefits the relationship.

RedR was unable to sustain its level of deployments from FY2017/18 to FY 2018/19, straining the partnership from both sides. This issue resulted from a budget shortfall where announced funding from DFAT was not administered until late in the financial year and was unable to roll-over across financial years. This meant at least three deployments were cut short, while other identified deployments were either delayed or not progressed. The unplanned reduction in deployments affected the continuity of work on the ground and meant the potential impact of the program was not fully realised in that year.

Coordination in the early years of the response was also hampered by conflicting opinions as to the nature and purpose of the Australia Assists' Program within DFAT. These opinions varied from Yangon to Dhaka to different desks in Canberra. Some were expecting the program to be an extension of the Australian Civilian Corps – with DFAT planning a central role in driving deployment opportunities – while others expected RedR to strictly maintain its role as a humanitarian Standby Partner, rapidly filling technical gaps as they emerged.

An overhaul of the multi-year funding mechanism and RedR's operational restructure has built confidence across the partnership. Coordinating points are clearer, mechanisms for reviewing deployment opportunities have been streamlined and trust has developed through time invested in relationships. This foundation has also helped illuminate expectations and capabilities from both sides of the partnership.

Recommendation 5(a): Continue to integrate budget management lessons across the partnership; DFAT must ensure multi-year planning and funding flexibility is maintained to enable RedR to adaptively respond to emerging needs.

Key finding 6: RedR Australia's role in the UN Standby Partnership was a critical enabler of the Australia Assists response.

RedR is regarded as a reliable and effective Standby Partner for UN agencies. This meant agencies looked to the RedR roster for support and were receptive to RedR/DFAT-led deployment initiatives (such as education coordination with UNICEF in Rakhine State). RedR has developed these relationships over its 25 years of operations, and remains an internationally-recognised brand in humanitarian support.

> "There is a much better understanding of RedR as a Standby Partner. DFAT understands that sometimes RedR have to deploy in certain circumstances because of their commitment."
>
> *DFAT, Canberra*

Key finding 7: The lack of new strategic partnerships for the program in Bangladesh and Myanmar is an ongoing challenge – particularly to localise the response as a protracted crisis.

New strategic partnerships were explored to broaden the scope of Australia Assists deployments, but none have yet been formalised. RedR identified a range of opportunities with NGOs that have either been postponed due to Covid-19 (BRAC in Bangladesh) or failed to eventuate due to budget issues in 2018/19 (including DRC and Save the Children in Myanmar). Efforts to formalise partnerships with Governments in host countries has yielded limited success. RedR has been responsive to requests for assistance arising from Covid-19 and is currently finalising a strategic partnership with AUSMAT.

Recommendation 7(a): Opportunities for strategic partnerships between local and/or national NGOs should be re-assessed to identify local immediate and longer term technical needs. There is opportunity for this to be done in ways that align with regional DRR and humanitarian priorities.

> **"RedR is in the top three for technical expertise as a Standby Partner. It's an incredibly consistent partner - which we rely on massively."**
>
> *UNHCR Shelter Coordinator, Bangladesh*

Hydraulic Engineer, Neil, celebrating the delivery and storage of oxygen, which marks the completion of a Covid-19 Isolation and Treatment Centre in Cox's Bazar. **Photo supplied.**

2.4 Localisation

What evidence is there that deployees both understood the localisation agenda and took an active localisation approach in the course of their work? (LOCALISATION OF HUMANITARIAN ACTION)

Key finding 8: Most deployees demonstrated an appropriate understanding of the localisation agenda and several deployees played an impactful role in progressing it - working either with host governments, NGOs, or both.

Australia Assists deployees worked to localise their contributions wherever possible. Deployees worked as mentors, partners and capacity building specialists. But importantly, most relationships were two-way. Many Australia Assists deployees demonstrated an eagerness to be guided by local knowledge and experience; ensuring their activities were relevant, sustainable and empowering.

Deployees were particularly effective where TORs directly embedded localisation in deployees' mandate. These roles included support for the Government of Bangladesh through the RRRC (via UNHCR) and DRM and DRR training for government and NGO staff (UNHRC) and landslide risk communications. Several deployees also applied an active localisation approach without direction from host agencies. RedR's GBV prevention specialist in UNFPA (Myanmar) established a national-staff coordination meeting to guide discussions and decisions of the international staff-dominated cluster meeting. A shelter officer with UNHCR also took the initiative to train national staff in using drones to map camps and inform site-planning decisions across the response.

Recommendation 8(a): RedR, in partnership with DFAT, should consider building skills and sharing knowledge of its personnel to support localisation, similar to efforts being progressed in the Pacific.

Key finding 9: Localisation was not however an explicit focus in the majority of deployments - due, in large part, to the lack of focus by host organisations or a specific localisation focus outlined in the TORs of the deployees.

RedR did not have a cohesive approach to localisation in this context, though the organisation has now, in 2020, developed a Localisation Strategy. RedR will need to ensure Australia Assists' response to the crisis is well aligned with this strategy going forward.

Recommendation 9(a): RedR should ensure close alignment between Australia Assists' response to the Rohingya crisis and its organisation-wide Localisation Strategy and Action Plan.

> "RedR are very good at including the national staff in their work. Probably more so than other deployees. I get the impression that RedR has a particular focus on this. They bring them into their work and transfer their knowledge to national staff. It's something we can learn from. It should be the goal for all deployees."
>
> *UNHCR, Bangladesh*

The Governments of Bangladesh and Myanmar have, at times, been resistant to hosting deployments - constraining RedR's capacity to work in partnership. Between 2017 and 2020, only two deployments have been made to the Government of Bangladesh, while no deployments have been embedded in the Government of Myanmar. Deployees interviewed reported that the Government of Bangladesh at times actively impeded initiatives to host deployees in government departments. Some deployees also indicated challenges emerged navigating profit-seeking projects; including resisting certain construction projects that were seen to financially benefit Bangladesh Army personnel.

Recommendation 9(b): Continue to explore deployment opportunities with host Governments, possibly including DRR and disability inclusion.

The scale of critical needs meant deployees often struggled to prioritise localisation. Many deployees indicated they wished to do more capacity building work but were constrained by the pressures of immediate tasks at hand. High turnover of international staff in UN agencies and, at times, deeply hierarchical cultures often meant many supervisors were focused on short-term outputs at the expense of long-term partnerships.

> "What happens with most agencies – they pick one or two implementing partners (although their capacity is limited). So they build capacity with their partner and it's not available to others."
>
> *RedR, former Country Manager*

Education, Information Management and Communications Officer, Axelle, supported field monitoring of Education in Emergency programs in Sittwe, Myanmar. **Photo credit: RedR Australia.**

2.5 Coordination

To what extent is there evidence of Australia Assists deployees having worked in a more collaborative way to strengthen coordination across agencies and/or sectors? (COORDINATION)

Key finding 10: Australia Assists deployees played important roles in improving coordination within and between agencies. This was particularly significant in gender, food, site planning, education, disability inclusion and health.

Collaboration was strengthened by deployees with an explicit mandate in coordination and, at times, as an outcome of other deployees' work undertaken during the response. A site planning specialist with IOM for example was able to formalise coordination mechanisms across agencies in the establishment of camp management processes. While an Australia Assists' technical cash specialist in WFP for example had to liaise with nine different work areas in the agency to establish a unique e-voucher program for refugees. This meant bringing together WFP's engineers, ICT specialists, administration, DRR officers (among others) to coordinate the constructions and operations of e-voucher shop-fronts.

Several dedicated coordination specialists were particularly effective. Australia Assists' deployees to education in emergencies (EiE) with UNICEF were able to sensitively liaise with communities, across agencies and with government to service planning and program delivery. While deployees to the RRRC (see case study 7) and UNFPA in Rakhine State (see localisation section) were adept at improving cross-agency coordination through localised and sustainable approaches.

Recommendation 10(a): Continue to prioritise coordination and accountability roles and outcomes to strengthen the effectiveness and sustainability of the crisis response, noting that longer deployments should be favoured particularly in coordination roles.

Key finding 11: There was some evidence that the informal network of Australia Assists' deployees directly enhanced cross-agency coordination and outcomes for affected populations. The in-country retreat and shared start dates were enablers for these relationships.

At its peak, Australia Assists had 22 individuals deployed in Bangladesh; establishing a series of advantageous linkages within and between agencies. Australia Assists deployees in the RRRC and WFP for example arrived in-country on the same flight and formed an unlikely cross-agency connection. Through the partnership, the WFP deployee was connected to the RRRC and ISCG to strategically map disability inclusion opportunities across the response. Incidental connections, such as this, or those made more formally through the RedR deployee retreat in 2018, meant Australia Assists cemented unique ties that would otherwise not have existed.

> **"We know we need to activate local resources. But we couldn't even hire locals on the ground. We still did, but it was obscured."**
>
> *RedR deployee, UNHCR*

2.6 Learning

What have been the enabling factors, and what opportunities for learning do these provide? (LEARNING)

Key finding 12: The quality of the RedR Australia roster, the interpersonal skills of deployees, specificity of TORs and RedR's increasingly effective relationship with DFAT were important enablers of deployment outcomes.

The quality of RedR Australia's roster undoubtedly underpinned the outcomes achieved by Australia Assists deployees to Bangladesh and Myanmar. Deployees were sufficiently experienced in humanitarian emergencies to understand agency roles and responsibilities, they were trained effectively to operate under pressure and brought a range of critical technical skills that both filled gaps and regularly delivered outcomes above and beyond expectations.

Many deployees demonstrated particular deftness at relationship-building; which supported improved coordination and localisation of activities and outcomes. Deployees worked effectively in sensitive coordination roles, such as the RRRC and EiE in Rakhine State; while others navigated institutional or operational challenges through relationship building – including disability support in WFP.

Recommendation 12(a): RedR should continue to ensure the quality of its roster and that it remains fit for purpose, responsive to emerging humanitarian priorities

The agility of RedR deployees to rapidly respond to changing needs and meet emerging opportunities was identified as a clear enabler of success. Deployees demonstrated an ability to adjust to changing or unclear TORs (including cash transfers in WFP and Covid-19 shelter response in UNHCR) or respond to needs they identified through relationships and partnerships with national expertise.

> "The training that RedR provides is the best in the world. What they do, they do very well."
>
> *RedR deployee, UNFPA*

> "Building relationships with the Government [of Myanmar] is not easy. She built trust with officials because she could interact with partners easily."
>
> *UNICEF, Myanmar*

The quality of TORs and support from supervisors had a clear correlation with outcomes. Deployees who had clear expectations and a healthy relationship with their supervisor unsurprisingly had a vastly more impactful and enjoyable deployment. Agency buy-in and supervisor engagement were clear enablers in outcomes achieved in information management and WASH (UNHCR) and GBV prevention (UNFPA, Rakhine State). Host agencies have acknowledged generic TORs often fail to identify the right deployees to meet actual needs. RedR has also worked more effectively to cross-check TORs with partners and DFAT. With the onset of the protracted crisis response, it has been particularly important to ensure RedR is filling niche roles that are beyond the host agency's expected capacity on the ground or not detrimental to localisation initiatives.

Two thirds of deployees reported having a positive experience with RedR both in the pre-deployment phase and in-country. RedR's support in-country served as an important protective factor for deployees to effectively complete their work. RedR's regional manager, country manager and program advisor worked to support deployees, problem-solve administrative issues and connect the cohort to promote healthy peer-support networks while they were on deployment.

Mainstreaming protection during the acute phase of the crisis helped mitigate entrenched protection risks. The deployment of a protection specialist to inform food distribution in WFP in late 2017 serves as a model for protection-led planning during crisis response and early recovery (see case study 3).

RedR's increasingly effective relationship with DFAT has helped identify strategic opportunities, foster strategic partnerships and improve coverage of the RedR Australia roster. See Section 2.6 Harmonisation for more findings on this partnership as an enabler of outcomes.

What have been the inhibiting factors, and what opportunities for learning do these provide? (LEARNING)

Key finding 13: Workplace challenges occurred on a continuum, ranging from poor organisational culture and interpersonal dynamics that impacted deployee wellbeing and stress levels. This affected around 10 per cent of deployments, disproportionately impacting women. On the other end, at least four deployees experienced toxic workplaces where bullying, harassment, sexism and misogyny were commonplace in their host organisation.

Relationships lay at the heart of many challenges for a significant number of deployees. This included; conflicting ideas over roles and responsibilities, misinterpretation of TORs, perceived undervaluing of skills and lack of clear leadership or vision. These issues were not isolated or concentrated in one agency or another. Low-level harassment and misogyny were often viewed within agencies as normalised behaviours, and issues to work-around rather than problems to be addressed.

Workload management stemming from ineffective leadership was another impediment for several deployees, particularly during early deployment. Around 20 per cent of deployees reported that their main challenge lay in workloads and managing competing pressures – including being responsive to donors, DFAT and RedR.

UN agencies at times struggle to uphold the values internally they are working to protect and promote. This can be a systemic issue and was evident at times in agencies that hosted Australia Assists' deployees. Over the past four years, UN agencies have taken active steps to improve behaviour change with reviews and corresponding policy updates. The intent to improve workplace conditions is important but at the sector level it appears more can be done to advance progress.

Regardless, toxic workplaces remain a risk for future deployments. Incidents of bullying, harassment or inappropriate behaviour were witnessed, while incidents of systemic sexism and misogyny were experienced first-hand by some deployees. In response, RedR bilaterally raised issues identified by deployees with their host organisation and has suspended deployments to that duty station until changes are made.[8]

> "I didn't want to be seen as the trouble-maker because I had so much to do."
>
> *RedR deployee*

8. RedR Australia fully complies with the DFAT Sexual Exploitation and Abuse or Harassment (SEAH) reporting mechanism (via the Child Protection Compliance Section), detailed in the Preventing SEAH DFAT Policy. In addition, Stopline, a confidential reporting mechanism, is disseminated to deployees during their mandatory briefing, and 24/7 psychosocial support from Mandala is accessible to all RedR personnel.

Recommendation 13(a): RedR should raise these issues at the SBP Duty of Care Working Group. DFAT should continue to support RedR's SBP strategic support to advance gender equality, inclusion and UN governance to ensure duty of care and workplace wellbeing.

Recommendation 13(b): Consider embedding bystander training or key messages from similar training as part of pre-deployment requirements - highlighting that gender issues and power-over dynamics can occur both in the workplace and among communities and equipping deployees to safely and promptly report or address them.

Recommendation 13(c): RedR should continue to advocate reform where it is determined incidents are not isolated but rather systemic to the workplace culture and discontinue deployments to responsible host organisations while issues remain unresolved.

Recommendation 13(d): RedR to consider undertaking a review to examine the experiences of Australian deployees in UN agencies through the lens of Australia's commitment to gender equity. These findings should be used to actively promote and drive reform among host organisations and the SBP network on issues and practices related to discrimination, bullying, harassment, sexism, racism, able-ism and exclusion.

Key finding 14: During 2017 and early 2018, RedR's operational support to deployees was, on occasion, inadequate. However RedR's restructure of its operational support in 2019 has meant support is now more systematic, timely and emotionally intelligent; demonstrating good practice across its functions.

During the early stages of the response, some deployees were not paid on time, issues with contracts were reported, and requests were at times left unanswered. In response to these issues, RedR underwent a significant restructure of its operations team which has proven highly effective. This has seen more suitably qualified individuals providing human resource support, a longer continuum of care and more personalised and responsive engagement.

Key finding 15: Decision-making for deployments was agile and responsive to host organisations. However given the scale and urgency of the need, deployments in the first 12 months could have been more strategic and adept at integrating observations from deployees on the ground.

Although RedR was well regarded as an essential Standby Partner – effectively filling technical gaps as they emerged – its response was largely dictated by agencies. These agencies preferred international specialists from known partners – limiting the localisation of the response. It would be too speculative to assess whether the same resources could have achieved more substantive outcomes in different roles. However, Australia Assists' probably would have benefited from a more strategic response framework based on the feedback of initial deployees (had resources allowed).

As a protracted crisis, a greater mix of short and medium term deployments would have increased the scale and sustainability of outcomes. RedR was receptive to requests to extend deployments (usually beyond three months), but more strategic planning is required to proactively identify optimum deployment length per position to help shape expectations of both agencies and deployees from the outset.

Opportunities for more tailored deployments – maximising the unique specialisations on the roster, or responding dynamically to emerging needs - were not always prioritised. Many returning deployees possessed detailed knowledge of gaps, challenges and teams/ organisations that were not conducive for future deployments. It was unclear to what extent this feedback dictated future deployments to the Rohingya crisis within either RedR or DFAT.

> "RedR is very proactive with their engagement now. They follow-up with issues. They're incredibly supportive. They were actively engaged the whole time. I felt like I was valued and was contributing."
>
> *RedR deployee, UNFPA*

Among agencies, RedR is often synonymous with particular specialisations – including food, shelter, site planning and WASH - meaning requests were often directed at known capabilities rather than testing unknown skills. People asked for what they know RedR has. RedR was however unable to meet an urgent need identified by its deployed Country Manager for Maternal and Child Health nurses as the roster lacked such specialists – having reportedly not identified such a sectoral demand previously.

Similarly, the deployment of a disability inclusion advisor to WFP could have benefited from a more tailored approach to address the short-supply of specialists on the roster and imprecise Terms of Reference (TOR) provided (see case study 6).

Recommendation 15(a): Review approach to reviewing and assessing feedback from returning deployees - especially when considering future deployments.

Recommendation 15(b): Continue to explore opportunities for more flexible deployment approaches – including rapid recruitment or partnerships to meet emerging needs and assessment missions to set up long-term deployments for short-supply sectors such as disability inclusion or disaster risk reduction.

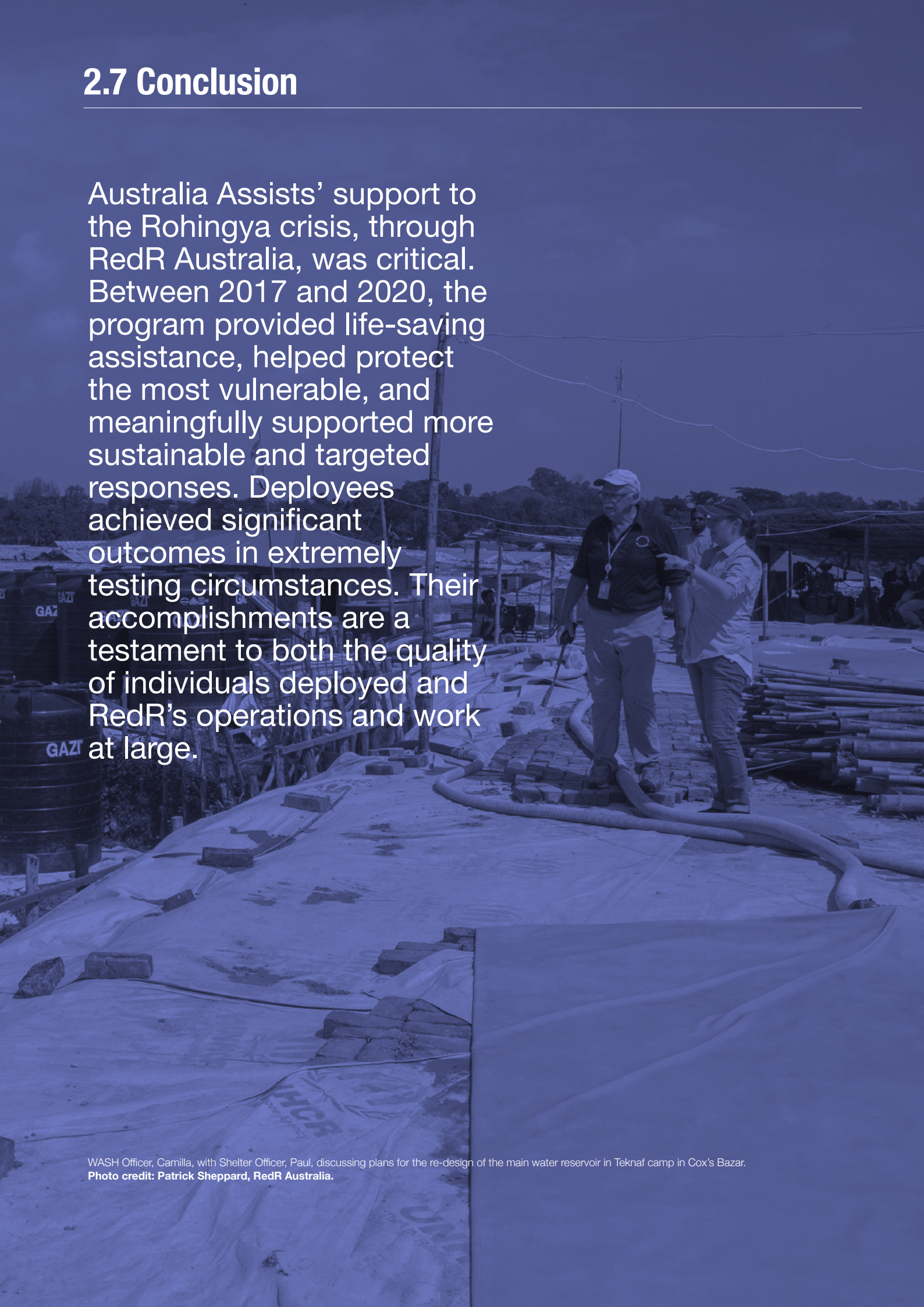
Recommendation 15(c): Deployment opportunities must be carefully designed together with host agencies holistically, not in isolation, to maximise limited resources and respond to identified needs on the ground. A commitment to disability inclusion from both host agency headquarters and leadership at field level are crucial for success (see case study 6 on page 36).

> **"We got a lot of feedback from a lot of agencies that deployments needed to be longer. In that kind of crisis, you can't achieve much in three months – particularly in the protection space."**
>
> *DFAT, Yangon*

Humanitarian Performance Monitoring Officer, Jean-Noel, and Registration Team Leader, Min, conducted a joint assessment mission to the information hubs in Cox's Bazar. The hubs are supported by solar power and audio visual equipment from the Emergency Telecommunications Sector, to provide community feedback and information to refugees in the settlement. During their visit, Min and Jean-Noel assisted local staff to set up the solar panels and demonstrated the use of the equipment. **Photo credit: RedR Australia.**

2.7 Conclusion

Australia Assists' support to the Rohingya crisis, through RedR Australia, was critical. Between 2017 and 2020, the program provided life-saving assistance, helped protect the most vulnerable, and meaningfully supported more sustainable and targeted responses. Deployees achieved significant outcomes in extremely testing circumstances. Their accomplishments are a testament to both the quality of individuals deployed and RedR's operations and work at large.



WASH Officer, Camilla, with Shelter Officer, Paul, discussing plans for the re-design of the main water reservoir in Teknaf camp in Cox's Bazar.
Photo credit: Patrick Sheppard, RedR Australia.

Appendix 1: Interview list

Organisation Type	Gender Disaggregation	Number of Interviewees
DFAT	Female: 7 Male: 2	**9**
RedR Australia	Female: 1 Male: 2	**3**
UN Agencies	Female: 2 Male: 3	**5**
Australia Assists Deployees	Female: 7 Male: 1	**8**
Total	Female: 17 Male: 8	**25**

Appendix 2: Case studies

Case study 1: Raising the voices of refugee women in the response

Australia Assists' deployments to UNFPA throughout the response supported the voices of refugee women to be heard both within the humanitarian response system, and more widely by governments and donors. The deployments - totalling 18 months - saw four technical specialists in sexual and gender-based violence and communications deployed to Cox's Bazar, Dhaka and Sittwe from March 2018 to May 2019. This work included:

- Securing vital resources for UNFPA's health and gender interventions through information sharing
- Gathering human interest stories and building awareness around the needs of Rohingya women in Bangladesh and Myanmar to local and international audiences
- Building the capacity of local implementing partners working on the frontline in sexual and reproductive health and violence prevention, as well as national UNFPA staff in-country
- Raising awareness of and improving the mainstreaming of sexual and reproductive health and gender based violence prevention within the humanitarian system - ensuring that the concerns and needs of women were taken into account in shelter, protection, food security and other programming
- Sustaining appropriate advocacy and outreach to governments with the government officials at various levels on the particular challenges facing women in the response
- Improving the coordination of the gender based violence sub-sector in Rakhine State, Myanmar
- Enhancing the capacity of UNFPA management and the overall effectiveness of the office in Sittwe.

Australia Assists' deployments to UNFPA - including two deployments to the same position back to back (Communications Officer in Cox's Bazar in 2018), and two deployees working on gender based violence on either side of the border (one in Sittwe and one in Dhaka in 2019) ensured that support was sustained, integrated and complementary. The specialists were all rated good/very good by the host organisations - the timing of their deployment coinciding with points in the response where coordination was needed and the scale-up meant there was a risk that the voices of the largest proportion of refugees (52 per cent being women) would not be represented in the overall response.

As a result of the deployments, Australia's commitment to centre gender equality and the empowerment of women and girls in their response to the crisis was upheld. More women and girls received coordinated access to life-saving support including supplementary food vouchers for pregnant women, maternal and child health referrals and services, women friendly spaces, dignity kits and vital training, psychosocial support and education.

Case study 2: Improving accountability to affected communities and host organisations

Australia Assists' deployees - across the response - played a substantive role in improving the accountability of humanitarian support to refugee and host communities.

In early 2018, RedR deployed a Humanitarian Performance Monitoring Officer to UNICEF in Cox's Bazar for six months. Two months after the completion of that assignment, a second deployee landed in-country to continue the work of improving the performance of UNICEF in supplying vital assistance to beneficiaries.

Totalling 12 months at a time when the response was rapidly scaling up and transitioning from the acute phase, the deployments significantly enhanced UNICEF's field monitoring capacity - ensuring that assistance was timely, appropriate and evaluated from camp level upwards.
The deployees:

- Led the digitisation of field monitoring for UNICEF's response in CXB - ensuring the rapid feedback of field level data to local, country and regional level decision making bodies
- Conducted data collection, analysis and software training for over 100 personnel for UNICEF and BRAC
- Improved accountability to the affected population through the inclusion of focus groups and key informant interviews to present potential ways to improve programming
- Developing feedback loops to ensure field level data was being used to inform programming decisions
- Closely mentored local staff to build monitoring, learning and accountability capacity on the ground.

UNICEF stated that the deployees' support filled a critical gap at a time when UNICEF was transitioning from providing medium to long term assistance for 1 million refugees. Without standby partners like RedR continuing to fill critical gaps in monitoring, learning and accountability, the effectiveness, relevance, sustainability and efficiency of support being provided by the broader humanitarian system would likely have been significantly diminished.

These type of strategic deployments are not always centred during the early recovery phase. RedR's partnership with UNICEF ensured UNICEF's work was timely, efficient and genuine good practice.

Case study 3: Protection-led reponse

Michelle Sanson was RedR's first deployee through Australia Assists to Cox's Bazar. As a protection specialist, she advised WFP on how to ensure the safety and dignity of the most vulnerable refugees in accessing the essentials of everyday life. During her time with WFP, distribution points grew over five-fold; from 4 to 22 to meet rapidly growing needs.

In a megacamp, new distribution points bring new complications for safety; ensuring refugees – particularly women and girls – are protected from violence and kidnapping while walking to collect essential supplies. Insufficient spacing of toilet blocks can mean women and children are at increased risk of being harassed and assaulted. Fear of getting lost is real in a maze of indistinguishable shelters – particularly for children. These issues are compounded for people with mobility issues; with many older people at risk of missing out on aid because they are unable to reach distribution points.

In the rush to place essential services in camps, protection can be an afterthought. Deploying protection advisors after distribution points are identified or toilet blocks or water stations are constructed often means problems are identified too late. Michelle remembered an emergency coordinator saying "I never would have thought protection was a profile you needed at the beginning, but now I always will".

RedR's capacity to rapidly deploy protection specialists to inform response planning, influence site planning and embed protection in food distribution undoubtedly improved the safety of the most vulnerable Rohingya refugees. Advocating for protection-led planning during crisis response and early recovery will be an important focus for RedR and the Australia Assists program for future humanitarian crises.

Gender, protection and inclusion are key priority areas of the Australia Assists program. **Photo credit: Carly Learson, RedR Australia.**

Case study 4: Supporting localisation through disaster risk reduction

In mid 2018, RedR deployed Chris Piper, a Bangla speaking Early Warning Dissemination and Training Specialist, to UNDP to strengthen the capacity of stakeholders - including the Government of Bangladesh and UNDP to enhance the safety of Rohingya refugees during disasters.

In three short months, Chris:

- Established rain gauges in Cox's Bazar designed to warn humanitarian actors and officials when rainfall may trigger landslides, flooding or other events that threaten refugee and host populations
- Conducted training for 40 BRAC staff on disaster risk management training, translating into improved community-based disaster risk management at camp level
- Supported the communication with communities working group to disseminate information about extreme weather events and disaster risk reduction measures
- Supported UNDP to widen its reach as the humanitarian system's DRR adviser.

The specificity of the role combined with Chris' technical and professional skills created a rich environment for impact, efficiency and sustainability within the deployment - leading to enhanced capacity of UNDP, NGO staff and Government officials to lead early warning efforts ahead of the monsoon season.

Australia Assists deployee, Chris, delivering early warning dissemination training for UNDP. **Photo supplied.**

Case study 5: Improving the effectiveness of RedR deployments through enhanced support in-country

RedR Australia deployed three staff members to Bangladesh as part of the response - to support deployees, create program opportunities and leverage strategic regional partnerships. These deployments - totalling 16 months - saw the RedR Regional Coordinator South Asia deployed to Dhaka for three months, the RedR Bangladesh Country Manager deployed to Cox's Bazar for eight months and the RedR Bangladesh Program Advisor deployed to Cox's Bazar for five months.

RedR's presence in-country enabled adaptation in the program as the response evolved, as well as effective and efficient rectification of issues arising within individual deployments. They were also able to facilitate a retreat for RedR deployees in the middle of 2018 - enabling deployees to debrief, share information, coordinate and build their capacity to operate effectively in-country.

Without their presence and capacity to solve problems, support deployees, receive and collate strategic feedback and create and deepen relationships, the effectiveness of the overall response effort - as well as many deployments - would have been negatively affected.

Some of the feedback from the deployees about RedR's presence in-country included:

For a response of this size, the deployment of skilled RedR personnel in-country has proved supportive and is a worthwhile consideration for future responses to ensure Australia Assist's deployments are aligned with DFAT and RedR priorities; that deployees are being placed in positions where they can achieve maximum impact and that deployments take into account the evolving situation on the ground.

> "The arrival of the RedR Program Advisor made getting information and assistance very easy and accessible."

> "There were positive changes when RedR's Regional Country Manager Melinda was deployed to Cox's Bazar - we were able to speed up admin processes and ease bureaucracy."

> "Anna and Melinda were good when I had problems with my manager."

Case study 6: A different approach to disability inclusion

Tarryn Brown was deployed to the UN's World Food Programme (WFP) for four months in 2019 and, at the time, was the only disability inclusion specialist working in any UN agency in Cox's Bazar.

Tarryn's work has justifiably been heralded as transformative for some of the most under-served and vulnerable people living in the world's largest refugee camp. At the time of Tarryn's deployment, up to 135,000 people are likely to have been living with some type of disability – many of these not immediately apparent.

Tarryn supported each of the 18 work areas in WFP's Cox's Bazar Office to develop disability inclusion plans for ensuring the meaningful participation of persons with disability in program design and implementation. She led training for over two-thirds of WFP's technical staff – totalling over 200 people – to embed these plans institutionally and supported disability inclusion champions from each team to sustain these efforts long-term.

"Things definitely changed. I had people with disabilities come in (two or three times) and talk about their experience. The difference was really clear. Colleagues started to say they were noticing people with disabilities in camps for the first time. They were changing how they were seeing the world and how they were working".

But Tarryn's impact could have been much greater.

As a sector, disability inclusion is severely under-resourced and poorly understood. As a technical specialisation, disability inclusion is under-represented on the RedR Australia roster – as it is across most humanitarian actors. Resources are at such a premium that deployment opportunities must be carefully designed to maximise potential. As Tarryn observed, "there is a massive supply and demand issue with disability inclusion".

For Tarryn, working solely within WFP limited her capacity to create systemic change in disability inclusion across and within different agencies in Cox's Bazar. A strategic deployment – not reacting to one agency or another – but through identified needs on the ground would have likely meant Tarryn worked in a role that cut across a number of agencies including WFP, IOM, UNHCR and the ISCG.

Tarryn's experience highlights an opportunity to approach disability inclusion differently. The program has learnt that in the future, it will be essential for Australia Assists to work together with the host agency to strategically develop disability inclusion role ToRs. In addition, a commitment to disability inclusion from host agency headquarters, along with engagement by host agency leadership at field level are crucial for success.

Furthermore, in the future, the deployments could be a limited assessment initially – two weeks to review needs and identify action plans – with subsequent missions to build relationships, capacity and embed approaches. And inclusion actions could have been scaled, sustained and localised through support to local partners.

Shorter deployments are likely to be more appealing to in-demand disability inclusion specialists. These could also aid in the design of longer-term TORs to ensure the right work is being done in the right places.

Tarryn's achievements in Bangladesh should not be discounted. But they should be seen as a sign of what is possible with more flexibility and more host agency ownership of deployments in disability inclusion.

Case study 7: Localising coordination

Several Australia Assists' deployees played important coordination roles; often bridging inter-sector or interagency divides to improve the efficiency and effectiveness of service delivery. The deployment of a coordinator to the Office of the Refugee Relief and Repatriation Commissioner – the Government of Bangladesh's primary agency overseeing the crisis response – was particularly significant. Jacqui Reeves worked in the RRRC for six months, supporting the agency to work effectively with the UN and ensure activities on the ground were effective and accountable.

The deployment prioritised the localisation agenda. Placement of the role acknowledged the centrality of the host government with ultimate duty of care for the refugee population. Jacqui approached her role with humility; she acknowledged her role as an outsider and sought to build trust and capacity through meaningful relationships and practical, sustainable action; "I tried to work with the systems they already had but just improve them". Through her work, Jacqui substantively improved the confidence and capacity of local officials to hold UN agencies accountable for proposed and ongoing work. "They were able to start solving problems for themselves. It smoothed the way for the future. I know so many people in that office are more comfortable working with the UN now".

Jacqui's experience highlights the potential of the Australia Assists' growing number of development and coordination specialists. The right specialist in the right position can magnify impacts across a response. Effective coordination underpins effective responses in complex emergencies. And where this work recognises and enhances the legitimacy of host government as duty bearers in crises – where appropriate – the more sustainable all action will be.

Local workers load a truck with food aid from WFP for distribution to Rohingya refugees. **Photo credit: Max Greenstein, RedR Australia.**

Appendix 3: Rohingya Crisis Deployments

Position	Host Agency	Start Date	End Date	No. of Months	Country	Duty Station	TOR Skills Area	Gender
Protection Advisor	WFP	29/9/17	25/5/18	6	Bangladesh	Cox's Bazar	Protection and Legal	Female
Site Engineer	WFP	4/10/17	21/4/18	6	Bangladesh	Cox's Bazar	Shelter/Engineering	Male
Supply Officer	UNHCR	10/10/17	9/1/18	3	Bangladesh	Cox's Bazar	Logistics	Female
RedR Regional Coordinator South Asia	RedR	16/10/17	15/1/18	3	Bangladesh	Dhaka	Response Coordination and Management	Male
Site Manager	IOM	22/10/17	21/1/18	3	Bangladesh	Cox's Bazaar	Shelter/Engineering	Female
CPIE National Sub Cluster Coordinator	UNICEF	30/10/17	30/4/18	6	Bangladesh	Dhaka	Protection and Legal	Female
CPIE Specialist	UNICEF	13/11/17	4/9/18	9	Bangladesh	Cox's Bazar	Protection and Legal	Female
Physical Site Planner	UNHCR	18/11/17	17/2/18	3	Bangladesh	Cox's Bazar	Shelter/Engineering	Male
Humanitarian Performance Monitoring Officer	UNICEF	25/12/17	25/6/18	6	Bangladesh	Cox's Bazar	Response Coordination and Management	Female
Registration Team Leader	WFP	22/1/18	24/4/18	3	Bangladesh	Chittagong	Shelter/Engineering	Male
Information Management Officer for the Food Security Cluster	WFP	8/2/18	8/7/18	5	Bangladesh	Cox's Bazar	Response Coordination and Management	Male
Capacity Building Officer	IOM	9/2/18	29/5/18	4	Bangladesh	Cox's Bazar	Response Coordination and Management	Female
Early Recovery Information Management Officer	UNDP	11/2/18	9/12/18	9	Bangladesh	Cox's Bazar	Information Management	Male
Health Logistics Officer	WHO	27/2/18	27/10/18	8	Bangladesh	Cox's Bazar	Logistics	Female
Humanitarian Communications Officer	UNFPA	13/3/18	12/9/18	6	Bangladesh	Cox's Bazar	Response Coordination and Management	Female
Shelter Officer	UNHCR	19/3/18	10/11/18	7	Bangladesh	Cox's Bazar	Shelter/Engineering	Male
Shelter Officer	UNHCR	25/3/18	19/9/18	6	Bangladesh	Cox's Bazar	Shelter/Engineering	Female
Shelter Officer	UNHCR	28/3/18	6/10/18	6	Bangladesh	Cox's Bazar	Shelter/Engineering	Male
Field Manager / Coordinator	WHO	3/4/18	4/7/18	3	Bangladesh	Cox's Bazar	Response Coordination and Management	Female
Health Sector / Cluster Coordinator	WHO	4/4/18	11/5/18	1	Bangladesh	Cox's Bazar	Health / Nutrition	Male
Early Warning Dissemination and Training Specialist	UNDP	6/4/18	7/7/18	3	Bangladesh	Cox's Bazar	Response Coordination and Management	Male
Shelter Officer (Engineer)	UNHCR	6/4/18	7/7/18	3	Bangladesh	Cox's Bazar	Shelter/Engineering	Male
WASH Officer	UNHCR	10/4/18	31/12/18	9	Bangladesh	Cox's Bazar	WASH	Male
Project Manager/ Engineer	WFP	17/4/18	17/10/18	6	Myanmar	Sittwe	Shelter/Engineering	Male
RedR Bangladesh Country Manager	RedR	26/4/18	12/12/18	8	Bangladesh	Cox's Bazar	Response Coordination and Management	Female
Shelter and Supply Management Officer	IOM	10/5/18	13/2/19	9	Bangladesh	Cox's Bazar	Shelter/Engineering	Male

Position	Host Agency	Start Date	End Date	No. of Months	Country	Duty Station	TOR Skills Area	Gender
Excavator Operator and Trainer	WFP	10/5/18	10/8/18	3	Bangladesh	Cox's Bazar	Shelter/Engineering	Male
RedR Bangladesh Program Advisor	RedR	14/5/18	3/10/18	5	Bangladesh	Cox's Bazar	Response Coordination and Management	Female
Humanitarian Affairs Officer	UNHCR	22/5/18	22/8/18	3	Bangladesh	Cox's Bazar	Response Coordination and Management	Male
Executive Assistant	UNHCR	24/5/18	23/11/18	6	Bangladesh	Cox's Bazar	Response Coordination and Management	Female
Reporting Officer	UNHCR	25/5/18	28/2/19	9	Bangladesh	Cox's Bazar	Response Coordination and Management	Female
Health Logistics Officer	WHO	25/6/18	25/9/18	3	Bangladesh	Cox's Bazar	Logistics	Male
Civil Engineer	UNDP	30/7/18	29/1/19	6	Myanmar	Sittwe	Shelter/Engineering	Male
WASH Officer	UNHCR	1/8/18	1/11/18	3	Bangladesh	Cox's Bazar	WASH	Female
Monitoring and Evaluation Officer	FAO	1/8/18	31/1/19	6	Myanmar	Yangon and Sittwe	MEAL and Reporting	Male
Humanitarian Communications Officer	UNFPA	3/8/18	4/1/19	5	Bangladesh	Cox's Bazar	Communications	Female
Communications Officer	WHO	6/8/18	6/11/18	3	Bangladesh	Cox's Bazar	Communications	Female
Humanitarian Performance Monitoring Officer	UNICEF	15/8/18	14/2/19	6	Bangladesh	Cox's Bazar	MEAL and Reporting	Male
Education Cluster Coordinator	UNICEF	17/9/18	18/12/18	3	Bangladesh	Cox's Bazar	Education	Female
Gender-Based Violence Interagency Coordinator	UNFPA	27/11/18	27/2/19	3	Myanmar	Sittwe	Protection and Legal	Female
Gender Based Violence Coordinator	UNFPA	16/2/19	19/5/19	3	Bangladesh	Dhaka	Protection and Legal	Female
Cash Based Transfer Officer	WFP	22/3/19	20/12/19	9	Bangladesh	Cox's Bazar	Food Security	Female
Education Information Management and Communication Officer	UNICEF	31/3/19	30/3/20	12	Myanmar	Sittwe	Information Management	Female
Information Management Specialist (Education)	UNICEF	11/5/19	10/11/19	6	Bangladesh	Cox's Bazar	Information Management	Male
Disability Advisor	WFP	11/6/19	23/10/19	4	Bangladesh	Cox's Bazar	Protection and Legal	Female
Coordination Officer	UNHCR	12/6/19	11/12/19	6	Bangladesh	Cox's Bazar	Response Coordination and Management	Female
Protection Officer	UNHCR	30/6/19	20/8/19	2	Bangladesh	Cox's Bazar	Protection and Legal	Female
Environmental Assessment and Planning Specialist	UNDP	26/11/19	30/6/20	7	Bangladesh	WFH (Cox's Bazar)	Preparedness, Risk Reduction and Resilience	Male
Shelter Officer	UNHCR	4/1/20	20/3/20	3	Bangladesh	Cox's Bazar	Shelter/Engineering	Male
Hydraulic Engineer	UNHCR	9/3/20	8/6/20	3	Bangladesh	Cox's Bazar	Shelter/Engineering	Male
Protection and AAP Advisor	WFP	21/4/20	21/7/20	3	Myanmar	WFH (Yangon)	Protection and Legal	Female

Fellow Australia Assists deployees, Camilla and Paul, using drone technology to survey Cox's Bazar. **Photo credit: Patrick Sheppard, RedR Australia.**

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