Cox's Bazar, Bangladesh, 6 October 2017: The World Health Organization is seeking USD 10.2 million to protect, promote and secure the health of more than half a million people who have moved to southern Bangladesh from across the border since August this year.

"The health needs of this immensely vulnerable population are massive, and growing. Though WHO has provided critical support to health services delivery – including by supporting mobile medical teams and mobilizing life-saving medicines – the need to scale-up operations is clear. WHO's response has been immediate, but it must also be ongoing, for which we need consistent and actionable resources," said Dr Roderico Ofrin, Regional Emergency Director for WHO South-East Asia.

To make that happen, WHO is appealing for USD $10.2 million.

WHO is currently working with the Ministry of Health and Family Welfare and partner agencies to plan and implement an oral cholera vaccination (OCV) campaign that will provide life-saving protection against the disease to 900 000 people.

WHO's response has already had life-saving impact. Since the first signs of the rapid influx emerged, WHO has established joint coordination of the health sector to best utilize WHO's technical and operational capacity, and helped vaccinate 135 000 children against measles and rubella and 72 000 against polio. WHO also supported the provision of Vitamin A to 72 000 children.

To detect and respond to the outbreak of epidemic-prone diseases, WHO has raised an Early Warning, Alert and Response System (EWARS) that is calibrated to the specific epidemiological profile of both Cox's Bazar and Rakhine state. WHO has also provided vital support to the functioning of 20 mobile medical teams for a period of two months to ensure basic health care services are available and effective.

To increase access to safe water, sanitation and hygiene (WASH), WHO has deployed an environmental health team to Cox's Bazar to assess and monitor drinking water and initiate cholera prevention measures. As part of this, WHO has provided supplies to treat 20 000 cases of diarrheal disease.

As per the Response Plan, WHO will scale-up its activities and:

- Strengthen communicable disease prevention, detection and control to prevent mortality and morbidity from communicable disease outbreaks. That includes by fortifying surveillance and supporting local health services and emergency and routine immunization, as well as enhancing water, sanitation and hygiene, especially in health facilities.

- Advance leadership and coordination to achieve an effective health response, including by leading or supporting the mobilization of resources, coordinating mobile medical teams, assessing and analyzing health information, and mapping health services availability to identify and fill gaps.
- Support ongoing access to essential health services to reduce mortality and morbidity. That includes by providing emergency health kits, reagents and supplies to equip health facilities and mobile clinics, establishing supply chain and cold chain mechanisms as and where needed, identifying and strengthening referral mechanisms, and training health workers to be able to detect and provide basic targeted treatment of noncommunicable diseases

http://www.searo.who.int/mediacentre/releases/2017/1667/en/