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## IOM Fortifies Cyclone Preparedness in Bangladesh

Households in Bangladesh's Cox's Bazar District are at risk of experiencing severe cyclones that develop in the Bay of Bengal. With support from USAID's Office of U.S. Foreign Disaster Assistance (USAID/OFDA), the International Organization for Migration (IOM) is rehabilitating cyclone shelters and helping communities strengthen disaster preparedness plans in Cox's Bazar's Ramu, Teknaf, and Ukhiya sub-districts.

With USAID/OFDA funding, IOM engineers have directed repairs on 20 community cyclone shelters to date, strengthening their structural integrity, rewiring electricity, installing solar panels and protective metal siding, and extending water systems, in addition to rehabilitating pathways to improve access to the shelters. Once refurbished, the cyclone shelters serve dual purposes as schools or municipal buildings on most days. When a cyclone is projected to make landfall in Cox's Bazar, however, approximately 1,000 community members can evacuate to each upgraded, elevated shelter for protection from flooding, landslides, rain, and wind.

IOM is also bolstering preparedness capabilities among community volunteers and union disaster management committees (UDMCs) in the three sub-districts. In Jalia Palong, one of Ukhiya's five unions, for example, IOM recently trained more than

40 local volunteers to provide early warning messaging and evacuation assistance in their communities prior to a cyclone's landfall. Jalia Palong's UDMC leader is also the local school's assistant manager, committed to incorporating school-level disaster preparedness programming into the curriculum and sharing shelter maps with students, who can in turn provide the information to their families.

In one of Ramu's 11 unions, IOM helps community leaders schedule and organize UDMC meetings for nearly 40 members, including teachers and school managers. Since reactivating meetings 18 months ago, the UDMC has engaged 135 community volunteers with protocols and equipment to respond and evacuate community members to shelters before a cyclone makes landfall.

By encouraging enhanced coordination and commitments from participants and volunteers, in addition to improving cyclone shelters serving 20,000 people, IOM is working to ensure that communities are better protected when disasters strike.

