



Report in Brief

Why We Did This Audit

The Rohingya people—a Muslim minority in Burma who differ from the country’s dominant Buddhist population ethnically, linguistically, and religiously—have faced discrimination, targeted violence, and human rights violations for many years, forcing hundreds of thousands to flee their homes.

In 2017, a Burmese military operation against the Rohingya was described as “ethnic cleansing” by humanitarian organizations and forced more than 740,000 Rohingya to seek refuge in Bangladesh’s Cox’s Bazar, one of the largest refugee settlements in the world. The estimated 600,000 Rohingya who remain in Burma have been confined to camps and villages without freedom of movement and have had limited access to adequate food, healthcare, education, and livelihoods.

From August 2017 to September 2022, the U.S. government provided nearly \$1.9 billion in humanitarian assistance in Burma and Bangladesh for the crisis and has primarily used public international organizations and international nongovernmental organizations to carry out this assistance. With the growing recognition that local partners may enhance the impact of its efforts, USAID has focused over the past decade on strengthening local capacity and increasing the sustainability of outcomes.

OIG conducted this audit to determine the extent to which USAID (1) was positioned to transition from providing humanitarian assistance to development assistance in response to the protracted Rohingya crisis in Burma and Bangladesh, (2) has developed a strategy for managing the crisis, and (3) has used local implementers in response to the crisis.

What We Recommend

We made six recommendations to improve USAID’s humanitarian and development assistance efforts in response to the Rohingya crisis. USAID agreed with four recommendations and partially agreed with two recommendations.

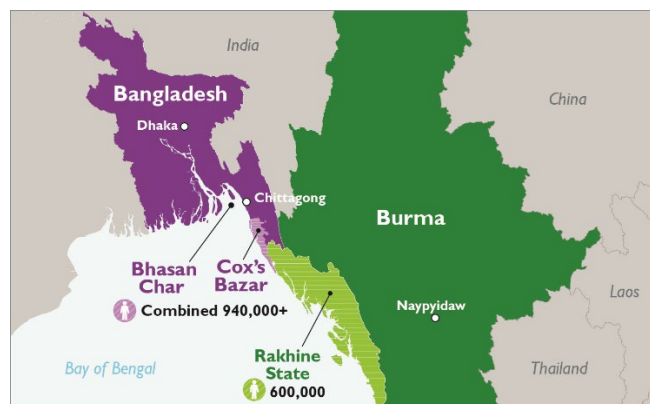
What We Found

Ongoing challenges have impeded USAID’s ability to transition from providing humanitarian assistance to development assistance for the Rohingya crisis. While USAID has targeted the most pressing short-term humanitarian needs, host country challenges and USAID’s limited role in this protracted crisis have severely restricted the Agency’s ability to provide long-term development assistance to the Rohingya in both Burma and Bangladesh.

USAID did not have an overall strategy for the Rohingya crisis primarily due to the volatile situation in Burma and instead used a variety of individual governing documents to guide the Agency’s efforts. These documents shaped each operating unit’s siloed response to the crisis but lacked specific terms, measurable outcomes, and clear roles and responsibilities.

USAID has utilized a small percentage of local organizations with direct funding due to local organizational capacity and USAID staffing issues. Specifically, USAID allocated only 1 percent of its total funding for the Rohingya crisis directly to local NGOs in Bangladesh and Burma.

Rohingya Population in Bangladesh and Burma’s Rakhine State, August 2022



Source: OIG map based on information from UNHCR.