

**For Immediate Release**

**PRESS STATEMENT**

## **Update #2 - MERCY MALAYSIA'S CONTINUAL RESPONSE TO THE ROHINGYA REFUGEE CRISIS IN COX BAZAR, BANGLADESH**

**Kuala Lumpur, 3 October 2017** – Amid a dramatic increase in the number of refugees fleeing violence in Myanmar's Northern Rakhine state, MERCY Malaysia continues to call for urgent action to provide relief for refugees in Cox Bazar, Bangladesh.

MERCY Malaysia is aiming to provide relief in the crisis-stricken area for a minimum of 6-months. It has been over a month since the influx of refugees into Bangladesh following the 25 August violent incident in Northern Rakhine. Currently, the refugees are in the process of settling down in 12 designated camps in the Ukhiya and Teknaf sub-districts of Cox's Bazar.

Relief agencies and partners are struggling to meet the needs of the refugees due to a lack of resources and challenges with aid coordination especially in the areas of food aid, Water, Sanitary and Hygiene (WASH), shelter, health and protection.

As we enter the second month of the crisis, the priority has shifted to Water, Sanitary and Hygiene (WASH) and health concerns, while maintaining efforts to provide for shelter and food items. This was a result of the earlier response in the first month which had not adhered to certain implementation standards due to the hectic situation. Improper planning of water points and latrines sites are feared to result in cross contamination, which the health sector group warns could impact health through water-borne diseases such as cholera and diarrhea. The government and its partners are looking into a mass vaccination campaign to vaccinate more than 500,000 refugees, and partners including MERCY Malaysia will be supporting the Bangladesh Ministry of Health through surveillance at our Primary Healthcare (PHC) clinics.

Over the next 2 – 6 months, MERCY Malaysia's Primary Health Clinic (PHC) services in Bhalukali and Tenkhali will play a key role in providing surveillance data to the Ministry of Health providing early warning system of any potential outbreaks. The two clinics are being managed continuously by local staff and supported by MERCY Malaysia's medical doctors and volunteers. MERCY Malaysia will be providing technical support to our local partners to ensure that the Primary Health Clinic (PHC) services and facilities are up to certain standard. There are plans to expand the services at two of the Primary Health Clinic (PHC) clinics to include ante-natal and post-natal care to women refugees, while one of the Primary Health Clinics (PHC) will potentially be turned into a maternity unit (for low risk deliveries) to reduce the burden of existing government health facilities.

MERCY Malaysia is also in the midst of conducting micro planning with the local government (department of public health engineering) and local partners to implement WASH programmes correctly, which includes the provision of clean water and latrines inside camps to ensure the refugees are not exposed to further health risks. Technical volunteers will be deployed for this initiative to support the local team in the planning and implementation of this project. Improved water and sanitation facilities are identified as an important element in providing better hygiene and health conditions, while reducing the risks of communicable diseases due to the cramped living conditions.

MERCY Malaysia will also be looking into mental health and psychological support services (MHPSS), whereby a team of MHPSS planners will be deployed within the coming weeks to conduct assessment,

attend cluster meetings and provide initial MHPSS training for front-line aid workers among local NGOs. Part of the MHPSS programming will be integrated into the existing Primary Health Care (PHC) services, with plans for a longer intervention period.

The crisis situation is expected to last for the next six months, which gives rise to the need for long term response planning. While we hope that the situation will improve in the next few months through better coordination among the government, military, UN agencies and civil society or NGOs, the reality on the ground is that refugees will continue living in deplorable conditions throughout their duration of stay in the camps. Therefore, we urge the public to keep contributing to MERCY Malaysia in ensuring we could sustain relief efforts for the refugees as long as necessary. We also call for better coordination among other NGOs through the existing aid mechanisms, to avoid duplication and uneven distribution of relief assistance.

MERCY Malaysia is continuously calling for the public to support its humanitarian efforts both in Cox Bazar, Bangladesh, that has become increasingly urgent due to the current situation requiring a total of MYR3 million for immediate relief on the ground, as well as the current situation of IDPs in Northern Rakhine. Donations can be made to MERCY Malaysia's Myanmar Relief Fund by logging on to [www.mercy.org.my](http://www.mercy.org.my).

**For more information, please contact:**

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**About MERCY Malaysia**

MERCY Malaysia is a non for profit organisation focusing on providing medical relief, sustainable health related development and risk reduction activities for vulnerable communities in both crisis and non-crisis situations, both locally and internationally. MERCY Malaysia recognises the value of working with partners and volunteers as well as providing opportunities for individuals to serve with professionalism. We uphold the Code of Conduct for the International Red Cross and Red Crescent Movement and NGOs in Disaster Relief and hold ourselves accountable to our donors and beneficiaries. For more information, please proceed to [www.mercy.org.my](http://www.mercy.org.my)

**How is MERCY Malaysia funded?**

To ensure independence and impartiality, MERCY Malaysia relies on donations from the general public for financial support. A portion of our income is obtained from institutional donors, individual government grants and other international organizations, which are given on project basis. MERCY Malaysia spends 80% if its income in carrying out its relief operations and support.

**Important Note to Media: Usage of Wordmark MERCY Malaysia**

In order to avoid confusion with other organisation(s) that uses "Mercy" as the organisation's name or part of the organisation's name, please take note that in addressing the name of our organisation, the wordmark for MERCY Malaysia is with capitalised "MERCY", followed by the word "Malaysia". When describing the organisation, the term "MERCY Malaysia" must always be used in full, and should not be partially referred to as "MERCY", or "Mercy". Thank you for your cooperation.