



The Humble Requests of the Rohingya Women

Rohingya women left almost everything behind when they fled the burning and raping in Myanmar.

Now, there are over 670,000 new refugees crammed into camps on the hillsides near Cox's Bazaar, Bangladesh; they join the 200,000 refugees who have sheltered there since a wave of persecution in the 1990s. Since last November, World Renew has coordinated with the World Food Program to supplement their rice distribution in the camps with red lentils, cooking oil, and salt. Because the hills have been stripped of trees used for firewood, we hope to also support communal kitchens with bottled-gas cooking stoves.

Imagine eating rice and lentils for all your meals.

Now a well-fed visitor to your tent kitchen (me) asks you, "what are you grateful for?" The women answer: "We are grateful to God for refuge here, for visitors who ask us how we are doing, and for this place where we can cook our food."

Then the visitor asks: "What would you wish for?" and the eyes of these resilient women shine just a bit.

"Well," they say, "in our homes in Myanmar we always drank tea in the morning and tea in the evening. We really miss our tea! We are grateful to you for this communal kitchen with the stove, but we have only two cooking pots for all 25 of us. Could you please help us



get some more pots? And you know," they continue, "it is so hot here in these tents. We really wish we had some shampoo and soap to clean our hair and oil to put on our heads to keep our heads cool."

The dreaming continues...

"Could there be a little meat or fish? There is only one water well per 250 families. Our clothes are wearing out. When the heavy rains start in May, we fear that our tents and our kitchen on these sandy hills might wash away. There aren't enough bathrooms or bathing places for women and girls."

The humble simplicity and raw necessity of these requests from the hearts was emotionally overwhelming for me.

Such simple requests: a few more pots, some tea, some oil, a latrine that is safe to use at night.

Please.



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