

# ROHINGYA CRISIS RESPONSE: BOLSTERING LEARNING, LIVELIHOODS, AND COMMUNITY

December 2018



Rohingya girls embroidery workshop. Photo: UN Women/Juthika Dewry



Launch of Multi-Purpose Woman's Center (MPWC) #2. Photo: UN Women

## UN Women, Partners launch the 2nd Multi-Purpose Women's Centre for Rohingya Women and Girls

In October 2018, UN Women opened its second Multi-Purpose Women's Center (MPWC) in Camp 4. The new center is more than three times larger than the MPWC in Camp 18 and offers an assortment of new features and facilities for Rohingya women. These include a communal cooking and production space, additional meeting rooms and larger public spaces to accommodate simultaneous gatherings and trainings. MPWC 2 can also be used as a shelter in the event of a disaster.

Both MPWCs provide basic health consultations, and referrals for GBV and women's health support services.

Rohingya women view the MPWC's as a sanctuary from the chaos of camp life; a place where they can share experiences, build community, and feel safe. Hasina Khatun, a Rohingya woman shared her praise for the center: "I joined several UN Women trainings and I now feel I can better support my family. I think they respect me more. I encourage friends and family to come."

Since the opening of MPWC 1 in January 2018, there has been a steady stream of women and girls utilizing the center. With the addition of the 2nd MPWC in late October more women are taking classes, pop in for information on services or simply to socialize. The MPWC's have become a hub for women; a place they can cook meals together, discuss issues and connect. For many Rohingya women, being part of a community is something they had never experienced before.



Photo: UN Women/Allison Joyce

From January - November 2018, more than 17,226 women availed of services in MPWC 1 and MPWC 2, with a surge in users during the "16 Days of Activism," 25 November - 10 December. On average, MPWC 1 in Camp 18 welcomes 115-160 daily users and MPWC 2 in Camp 4 receives between 120-190 users daily. UN Women and partners expect these numbers to surge as more programmes and trainings roll out in 2019.

*Implementing partners ActionAid and YPSA manage daily programs/activities in both MPWCs with technical support provided by the Ministry of Women and Children Affairs of the Government of Bangladesh.*

## Rohingya women's self-discovery, empowerment and leadership development

In October and November 2018 UN Women developed the interactive training program "Women's Empowerment, Participation and Leadership," training more than 300 Rohingya women to date. Modules use role-play and games like "Ekka-dokka" (hoop jumping) and "Snakes and Ladder Ludu" that are familiar to Rohingya women from childhood. Given the relatively low literacy levels among Rohingya women, trainings do not require them to read or write; they are simply a relaxed way for women to interact and bond with other women. These group activities have been well-received and are becoming increasingly popular. After one training, a Rohingya woman remarked, "we went back to our childhood while playing". Another said, "before playing the jumping games we hesitated because body movement after puberty is not encouraged much."

Trainings also touch upon deeper topics like self-empowerment, confidence-building, reducing violence at home and treating girls and boys equally. The centers act as a hub for practical information on access to education and information, and family decision-making approaches. Many women have never been allowed to make decisions at home. Now they are taking classes on leadership, networking and mobilizing to solve local problems and build more resilient communities.

Women who took the course said that the classes inspired a sense of self, family and community. One participant highlighted "through this training, for the first time in our life we understand the importance of thinking about self and taking care of ourselves. If we can stand on our own feet, we would be able to help others".

UN Women field tested the training modules with 18 Rohingya women and then organized a Training of Trainers (ToT) for implementing partners, including 19 ActionAid and YPSA staff (14 female, 5 male). To date partners have trained over 300 women with plans to train another 4,000 in 2019.



Rohingya woman display handicrafts. Photo: UN Women/Flora Macula

## UN Women and World Food Programme (WFP) join hands for Rohingya women's livelihood development

In September 2018, UN Women and the World Food Program (WFP) signed a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) to partner on creating more sustainable livelihood opportunities for the most vulnerable women and adolescent girls. The joint UN effort capitalizes on the unique assets of WFP and UN Women. UN Women supports life-skills and leadership training and the formation of self-help groups. WFP provides basic literacy and numeracy training and trains women on a diverse set of practical livelihood skills like block printing. Training on income-generation opportunities has become popular with Rohingya women and many show interest in expanding beyond traditional sewing and embroidery classes. Women receive cash assistance once they complete a specific number of classes. A more diverse set of MPWC training opportunities is motivating women to return regularly, which has had a galvanizing effect. During the "16 Days of Activism" ActionAid organized an exhibit of Rohingya-made products to showcase women's new skills. The MPWCs serve as the hub for livelihood training and related activities.



Rohingya embroidery display. Photo: ActionAid Bangladesh

## Gender in Humanitarian Action (GiHA) Training: Partnering in the Refugee Response

UN Women, UNHCR, and the Gender in Humanitarian Action (GiHA) Working Group held the "Gender in Humanitarian Action (GiHA) Training: Partnering in the Refugee Response" from 11-12 November to teach UN partners/sectors and NGO's working in the Rohingya refugee response on how to use gender needs assessments and gender analysis tools. Specific emphasis was reiterating the importance of mainstreaming gender into strategic planning processes, particularly using gender-responsive indicators and IASC Gender & Age Markers.

The group included an assortment of international and Bangladeshi organizations including the Center for Social Integrity, Oxfam, UNHCR, IOM, WFP, FH-MTI, MUKTI Cox's Bazar, Plan International, Coast Trust, HELP Cox's Bazar, CARE, Diakonia, GLOBAL ONE, ISDE-BD, ISOG, the Barefoot Counsellor Project, Save the Children, World Concern, Medair, Médecins du Monde, RISDA-Bangladesh, TWB, Mercy Corps and the DFID. This was GiHA's second training in 2018.

### Rohingya women say **#HearMeToo** - 16 Days of Activism to End Violence Against Women

Since the beginning of the Rohingya crisis, silence, stigma and shame continue to fuel Gender-Based Violence (GBV) in the refugee camps near Cox's Bazar. Deeply entrenched cultural and social norms discourage women from speaking up for themselves, making important household decisions or participating in community activities. Until recently, Rohingya women have been isolated.

The "**16 Days of Activism against Gender-Based Violence**" campaign brought women together under the theme **#HearMeToo**. Events commemorated as part of the global **UNiTE Campaign to End Violence Against Women**. The campaign gave Rohingya women and girls in Cox's Bazar the chance to speak out against the global pandemic of violence that affects their daily lives.



Rohingya women story telling. Photo: Oxfam



Women play team building games. Photo: Oxfam

---

**"As a woman I have the right to speak and write. My name and my ethnicity is Rohingya"**

---



Rohingya woman leader speaks on 9 December. Photo: UN Women/Juthika Dewry

In Cox's Bazar the campaign kicked off with a tree planting ceremony at the MPWC 2. Rohingya women and girls, alongside the RRRC planted the first few trees together. Later, women planted 100 trees across the camp to symbolise a peaceful future free from violence.

Later that day, Rohingya women met with Imams, Majid's (Rohingya community leaders) and Camp in Charge (CiCs) to discuss the issues that negatively impact their lives. Some of the most pressing issues included protection from generalized camp violence, domestic violence, child marriage, forced labor and existing dowry practices. Topics also included how men and boys can change existing narratives and actions to prevent or curtail violence against women.

Led by UN Women, the GiHA Working Group and the GBV sub-sector for Refugee Response, the 16 Days campaign was a truly collaborative, cross-sectoral effort with more than 20 national and international partners and 200 events and activities taking place across the camps.

The week also encouraged men and boys participation. Male camp residents and CiCs held a friendly football match to promote sport as a way to alleviate tensions that contribute to violence against women.

UN agencies and partner organizations distributed 3,500 orange [#HearMeToo](#) t-shirts and 500 scarves in Bangla, English and Burmese with the slogans "I Am a Child Not a Bride", "No Excuse for Violence and Abuse" and "Real Men do not Hit Women."



Rohingya girls at tree planting ceremony. Photo: UN Women/Juthika Dewry



Rohingya Women walk in solidarity to meet government officials. Photo: UN Women/Juthika Dewry



Rohingya girls gather for henna tattoo workshops Photo: UN Women/Juthika Dewry



Rohingya girls embroidery workshop. Photo: UN Women/Juthika Dewry



Police Capacity Training. Photo: UN Women/Juthika Dewry



Female police officer Photo: UN Women/Juthika Dewry

## Strengthening Police Capacity to address GBV

In partnership with the Bangladesh Police, UN Women organized the “Capacity Building of Stakeholders” workshop to teach 73 police officers, 50 of whom were female, and 10 NGO's and partners on how to manage GBV cases, collect and safeguard forensic evidence and work with victims and witnesses. The interactive training discussed law enforcement's role to address violent crimes against women and children and emphasized using victim-centered approaches with witnesses and victims to build trust. The NGO training on the final day provided tools and tactics to help organizations support police with victims and witnesses, preserve evidence and avoid crime scene contamination. A positive outcome of the training is the development of a joint Violence Against Women (VAW) Crime Prevention Plan between police, NGO's and partners with a report expected in early 2019.



The UN Women Rohingya Refugee Crisis Response is possible with support from the National Committees for UN Women in Australia, Japan, Iceland, Sweden and US and the Government of Sweden, the Government of Germany and the Tingari-Silverton Foundation.

UN Women Sub-Office  
Hotel Probal  
Cox's Bazar, BANGLADESH

