



Photo: UN Women/ Marie Sophie Pettersson

IN BRIEF



COX'S BAZAR UPDATE

JULY – SEPTEMBER 2020

Diverse Women as First Responders

Three Year Mark of Rohingya Influx and World Humanitarian Day

25 August 2020 marked three years since the armed conflict escalated in Rakhine state, Myanmar, targeting the Rohingya, and violence unleashed upon them forced to flee across the border to Bangladesh. On 19 August, the World Humanitarian Day, to honour the strength and resilience especially of Rohingya refugee and host community women across diversities, a diverse group of women front line-humanitarian workers and leaders from Rohingya and host communities spoke at an online forum on *Feminism: Diverse Women as First Responders*. The forum was hosted by the ISCG Gender Hub, managed by UN Women.

The forum featured stories of resilient women responding to a wide range of crises -- including displacement and the coronavirus pandemic – by providing a range of critical life-saving services, social support and channels for building peace and bettering lives in their communities.

Anika Rahman, Associate Director of the Center for Disability in Development, told the forum that even though people with disabilities experience great hardships, they never shy away from opportunities to help out during crises by volunteering, advocating and joining youth campaigns.



Photo: CDD/Anika Rahman

Anika Rahman, Associate Director of the Center for Disability in Development

She urged people to “engage organizations of persons with disabilities not just to collect their feedback, but to play an active role in all the phases of humanitarian actions”.

Chekufa Ra, a Rohingya refugee, activist and community leader, spoke of her pride in her work, but also of the need for financial support. “Our women’s network has the knowledge and skills to manage activities within the community ... We can proudly say that we have the community's support. We ask humanitarian agencies to engage women’s networks to be a part of the humanitarian coordination mechanisms.”

“Since childhood I grew up watching my mother and other women could never speak up in front of men in the family. There was no opportunity for women to study and go outside the home. When I came to Bangladesh, I realized that as a woman, I also have the right to live a dignified life.”

Minara is a 15-year-old Rohingya girl living in refugee camp 18 in Cox's Bazar. She took part in Nakshi-kantha sewing training in the Multi-purpose women centre (MPWC) of UN Women and ActionAid. Now every month she earns a good income for her work.



Photo: ActionAid

Aleya Akter Lily, the General Secretary of the Sex Workers Network, talked about the stigma and challenges that Sex Workers organization face.

She called for revising the rules and policies “so that the sex workers’ organizations can be recognized as diverse women’s activist organizations, not as beneficiaries”.

“Humanitarian actors should priorities working with diverse women’s organizations and groups. Provide us real opportunities, not just promising words,” said Neelima Akter Chowdhury, Cox’s Bazar resident who founded the non-governmental organization AGRAJATTRA in 1998. About Ninety representatives of civil society groups, United Nations agencies, and humanitarian and development groups attended the forum.

Learning Circle on Diversity and Expression of Racism

Organized by: ISCG Gender Hub

This quarter, the Gender Hub held a learning circle on the topic of Diversity and the Expression of Racism in humanitarian sector. The learning circle was held with members of the feminist collective and the GiHA Working Group to share and learn from diverse perspectives on the intersectionality of racism and sexism, as well as to identify immediate measures that can be taken to promote inclusion, gender equality and respect, starting from individual practice (in both personal and professional settings), as well as policy and practice in humanitarian, host and refugee communities to initiate the change.



Photo: Gender Hub

During the discussions, it was highlighted that people need to question their own biases and be better informed to help shape our knowledge, the process of deconstruction and unlearning of white supremacist power structures.

Gender Mainstreaming Training for the Education Sector and Gender Induction Trainings New Frontline and Programme Management Workers Across Rohingya Refugee Response

Organized by: ISCG Gender Hub

The Gender Hub conducted Gender Induction trainings in Bengali to ensure gender equality and inclusion in activities in all aspects of the Rohingya Refugee response. A total of 82 staff (48 women and 34 men) participated from the Ministry of Women’s Affairs, local and international NGOs, and the UN agencies. In addition to the induction training sessions, ISCG Gender Hub completed an additional three-day Gender Mainstreaming Training for the Education Sector in Ukhiya.



Photo: Gender Hub

15 Education programme staff (6 women and 9 men) were trained in the pilot testing session on the Gender Mainstreaming in Education Training Manual and Gender tip sheet.

This was the first in a series of sector focused gender capacity development trainings that will be held during the final quarter of the year.

Who Holds the Microphone

Shanti Khana Women, Bangladesh

Rohingya women from the Peace Centre (Shanti Khana) learned to make their own video with the support of UN Women. This gave them a new means and platform to tell their story to the world. In this video, they spoke of the respect they enjoy within the community, despite the persistence of restrictive gender roles for women, and how they aspire to educate themselves so they can educate more women.

“Who Holds the Microphone” is a series of UN Women produced participatory videos that allow crisis-affected women to speak about the initiatives they self-developed and implement in order to create transformative change for themselves, their dependents and their communities. This project was funded by the US Government.



The first journalist dialogue on gender responsive journalism in Cox's bazar

Organized by UN Women

To strengthen engagement with local media to promote gender equality and empowerment of women and girls, on 29 September 2020, UN Women organized the first “Journalist dialogue on Gender-responsive Journalism in Cox's Bazar”.

Social tensions are growing between the Rohingya and host community with the prolonged humanitarian crisis and impact of the refugee influx in the district. Mis-information, hate speech, and negative rhetoric about the Rohingya, and the negative portrayal of Bangladeshi women humanitarian staff and female Rohingya volunteers working for the refugee response in the media is adding to the overall hostility of the host community towards Rohingya and stigmatization, harassment and security threats against women. This is more broadly leading to an increase in sexual and gender-based violence and leading to further barriers to women's socio-economic empowerment.

This created the need for UN Women to increase its engagement with local media and journalists on gender-responsive journalism to promote more accurate, appropriate and empowering reporting on the situation and roles of women and girls in Cox's Bazar.



Photo: UN Women/ Marie Sophie Pettersson

During the dialogue, UN Women shared findings from a recent survey conducted among journalists of Cox's Bazar. The local journalists also shared their perspectives of the gender barriers women journalists face in the media industry. The group of local journalists in attendance discussed next steps to strengthen gender-responsive journalism practices, and the partnership between UN Women and local media in Cox's Bazar. Recommended next steps included organizing regular dialogues and training workshops on different gender topics for the journalists.

Two online newspaper printed, and one online television channel broadcasted the news of the dialogue in the local media of Cox's Bazar.

Grant in-kind Distribution

Honorable Camp-in-Charge Mr. Md. Mahfuzar Rahman, Camp-4 & 4 Extension visited the Multi-purpose Women Centre -3 of UN Women and ActionAid on 9 September 2020. He attended an in-kind grant distribution for Rohingya women and adolescent girls who have received skill training in the centres for their empowerment and economic resilience building. In his remarks, he emphasized the importance for Rohingya women to develop their skills as these will be useful for them when they will return to Myanmar.



Photo: ActionAid

Case Study: Bangladesh

Funding for gender equality and the empowerment of women and girls in humanitarian



UN Women and UNFPA conducted a research study on “Funding for gender equality and the empowerment of women and girls [GEEWG] in humanitarian programming”.

This case study reviews the current context for funding for Gender Equality and Empowerment of Women and Girls (GEEWG) in Cox's Bazar, Bangladesh, including the levels of funding requested, funding received and the consequences of the funding gap. The study specifically focuses on funding for women and girls, though the findings are very applicable for GEEWG at large, as the research found little programming that explicitly targeted gender equality more broadly. Overall the report highlighted that while the amount of funding requested for women and girls has increased, it still falls short of the overall response. A comparison of the amount of funding received indicates that coverage for programmes focused on women and girls is disproportionately underfunded compared to the overall response; coverage is lowest for targeted programmes. As recommendations, the report highlights the need to: increase investment to close the funding gap on programming for women and girls; expand the types of programming for women and girls that fit under a humanitarian mandate; strengthen the use of the Gender with Age Marker and use audited data for programming, advocacy and transparency; and track gender funding alongside impact.



Photo: UN Women/Mahmudul Karim

I have been working for underprivileged women and girls from the beginning of my career. I want to work for women throughout my life



AFSANA JASMIN POPY
Female Vice Chairperson,
Ramu Upazilla Parishad, Cox's Bazar

UN Women in Cox's Bazar is consulting with Women Development Forum (WDF) members and other Women Groups in all 8 Upazila. As part of this initiative, a meeting with the WDF were held in Ramu on 10 Sep 2020 at Ramu Upazila Parishad.

Meet the Mask Makers

An UN Women Initiative in Rohingya Camps

UN Women with the support of implementing partners ActionAid and BRAC, trained more than 200 Rohingya artisans on mask production. These women have produced a total of 123,874 reusable cloth masks at the UN Women Multi-Purpose Women Centers till September 2020 and continuing. This initiative mostly involved female-headed households of the Rohingya community so that they can support their families. These masks were sold to organizations, including UNDP, UNHCR, World Vision and UN Women, which enabled women artisans to generate income of BDT 15 per mask. These masks were distributed among Rohingya community, host community, law enforcement agencies, CiCs and site management support. We were the first to start mask making by Rohingya women and girls in Rohingya Camps and several organizations have visited our MPWC to study the production of masks.



123,874

Reusable cloth masks has been produced by UN Women with the support of partners ActionAid and BRAC till September 2020.

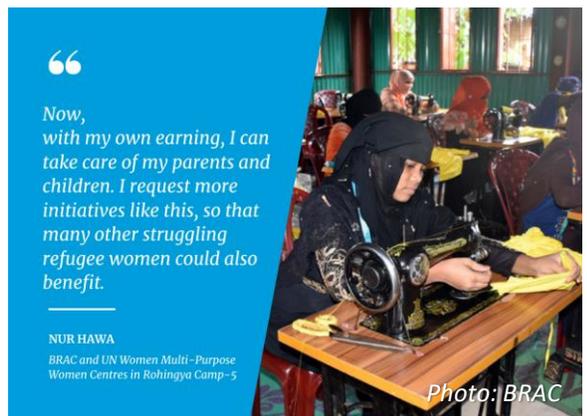


Photo: BRAC



Now, with my own earning, I can take care of my parents and children. I request more initiatives like this, so that many other struggling refugee women could also benefit.

NUR HAWA
BRAC and UN Women Multi-Purpose Women Centres in Rohingya Camp-5

Nur hawa is one of the 128 women and adolescent girls mask makers of BRAC and UN Women Multi-Purpose Women Centres (MPWCs) in Rohingya camps. This initiative involved female-headed households of the Rohingya community so that they can support their families.

Every Day is Women's Day

Rohingya Women Speak Up

Three years since the massive Rohingya influx began in August 2017, today there are over 860,000 Rohingyas in need of humanitarian assistance in Cox's Bazar, and over half of them are women and girls.

Recently UN Women launched a video on YouTube amplifying the voices and demands of Rohingya women and girls who came together on International Women's Day on 8 March 2020, in dialogue sessions together with Camps-in-Charge (CiC) and humanitarian workers. Yes, after this day, the whole world and Cox's Bazar turned its focus towards combatting the COVID-19 pandemic, and despite its severe gender impacts, the focus on women's rights became sidelined. Since the outbreak of COVID-19, reports have shown increases in all types of violence

against women and girls. This is the Shadow Pandemic growing amidst the COVID-19 crisis and we need a collective effort to stop the violence.



One day a year, on 8th March, is not enough to end the larger shadow pandemic of gender inequality. Let's make everyday Women's day! - whether we are dealing with a disease outbreak, armed conflict, refugee crisis, monsoon, or disasters. Any emergency response needs to be shaped by women's voices and leadership as front liners and decision-makers.

Monsoon Flood in Camps

UN Women temporarily sheltered Rohingya family in Multi-purpose women centres

Due to heavy rainfall on 18 and 19 August 2020 dozens of landslides caused severe shelter damage and extensive flooding in Rohingya refugee camps of Cox's Bazar. UN Women and ActionAid temporarily sheltered 28 families of 126 women, children, adolescent and men for two days in its Multi-purpose Women Centre (MWPC). We also coordinated with the site management support for their provision of food and non-food item relief, as well as relocation and shelter repairs. Separate spaces were arranged for men and boys to ensure wellbeing of women and girls. Two volunteers provided continuous support in coordination of UN Women's Gender Field officers.

The hosting of flood affected families caused trouble ensuring COVID-19 prevention measures, as well as safe access to regular services and activities for women and girls in the centres. Despite this, UN Women and partners continued to provide critical services (paramedic, midwifery, psychosocial support, GBV case management, WASH and COVID-19 related information and awareness-raising) to Rohingya women and girls.



Photo: ActionAid

"This place ensures separate rooms for men and women which feels more secured than the other places which could not provide."

Dola begum a Rohingya women sheltered in UN Women - ActionAid Multi-purpose Women Centre

Flood affected families sheltering in the space received easy access to drinking water, food distributions, toilets, and bathing facilities during their stay at the MPWCs. They safely returned to their houses after water washed away.

UN Women has received invaluable support from the Governments of Canada, Germany, Japan, Sweden, Australia, the National Committees for UN Women in Australia, Japan, Iceland, Singapore, Sweden, USA, as well as the Tingari Silverton Foundation towards delivering a humanitarian response in Cox's Bazar, Bangladesh for Rohingya refugee and host community women and girls.