

## A Field Brief on Women’s Empowerment

This Field Brief has been developed to provide key messages on women’s empowerment for field staff working in the Rohingya humanitarian response. The key messages can also be used by field staff when communicating with women and girls on issues relating to participation and leadership. These messages were developed based on the findings of an assessment conducted by the Women’s Refugee Commission.<sup>1</sup>

### Key Message 1: Rohingya women know the way the forward

Empowerment will look different for every individual and community. Rohingya women and girls are the experts on the way forward. They know best the steps that need to be taken over time to expand their choices and opportunities. Sometimes women and girls will take steps on their own. Other times they will work together. There are women’s groups in the camp, such as Shanti Mohila, which can give advice on programs and activities.

“We have a message to the women in the world. Support us to strengthen our Shanti Mohila group, so that we can extend our activities and empower our women.”

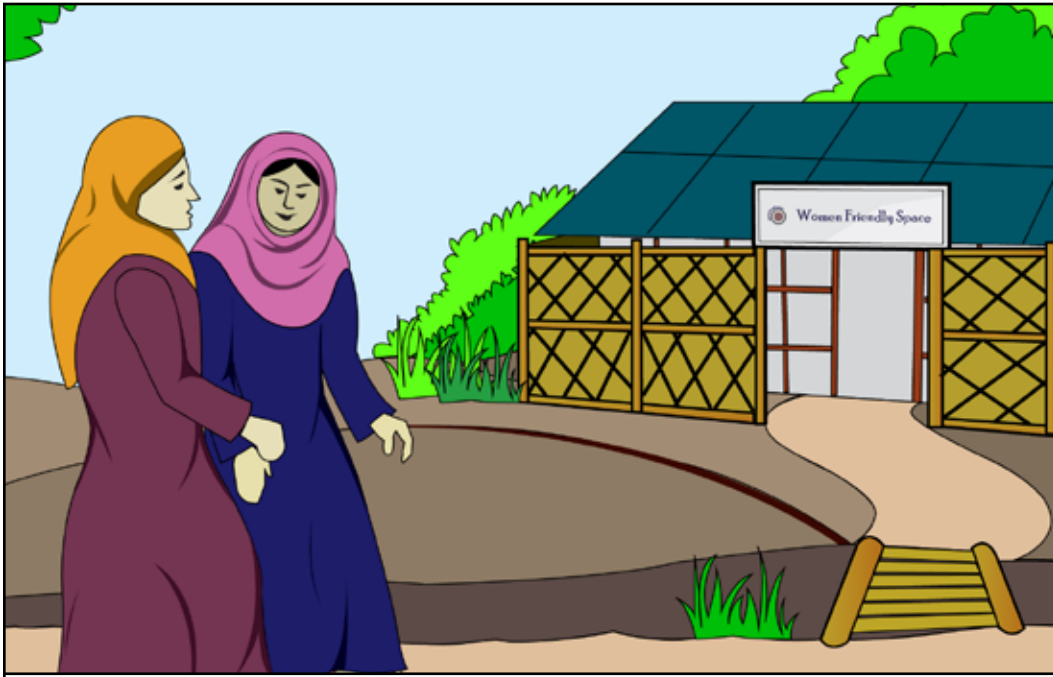
- Rohingya woman & Shanti Mohila representative

### Key Message 2: Learn how Rohingya women and girls influence others

Rohingya women and girls have different types of power in their relationships, households, and communities. They already have a range of strategies that they use every day to influence others, and to take action on things that are important to them. Ask Rohingya women and girls to share examples of how they have made changes in their lives or in the lives of their family and community. What were some of the challenges they faced? What strategies worked well? Here are some examples...



“We want a teacher for tailoring in the safe spaces for women and girls. My wife wants to learn more. Our wives told us this is what they want, and we should tell you.”



“When I came to the SSWG and learned new things, I went home and told my neighbors, and then we decided to come together and learn more.”



“When we go on our own nothing happens. But if we go as a group, then we can make some change. For example, there was a problem with the gas supply—some people were getting it, and some were not getting it. So, we talked to the majhi and filled out an application, and then we got the cylinder for this house (that had been missed).”

## Key Message 3: Create space for women and girls to have their own ideas and activities

Provide space for women and girls to discuss with each other about wider issues and concerns in the camp. Ask them to explore their strengths and strategies. Let them identify common goals. They may start out with activities just for each other—like learning to read and write. Over time, they may want to make changes in the wider community—like changes based safety mappings or strengthening education. It is up to them to decide.



## Key Message 4: Monitor inclusion and diversity

Women are all different. Some are younger with new ideas. Some are older, with lots of life experience. Other women may be considered “different” and be excluded by the community. Support women and girls to identify and reach out to other women in their circle. Ask them to think about who might be left out, and establish strategies to reach out to these groups. Think about women and girls who may have difficulty moving or communicating, or women who are divorced or unmarried.

## Key Message 5: Engaging men and boys

It is important to engage with men and boys, even when conducting activities that target women and girls. This will prevent misunderstanding about the activities, and ensure wider support from the community. Ask women and girls who you are working with about who else they want to involve in activities and how you can support them. Some examples of how men and boys have been engaged:

- Raising awareness about women’s activities in their community.
- Courtyard discussions on gender-based violence and sexual and reproductive health.
- Improving access to safe spaces for women and girls by repairing paths.

## Closing Message: Empowerment is a process, not a project outcome

Empowerment is a process where women and girls gain power and choices in their lives. They will have successes and challenges. Acknowledge all the decisions and steps women and girls make along the way—big and small. They are all important!



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### Women's Refugee Commission

The Women's Refugee Commission improves the lives and protects the rights of women, children, and youth who have been displaced by conflict and crisis. We research their needs, identify solutions, and advocate for programs and policies to strengthen their resilience and drive change in humanitarian practice.

#### Note

1. "We Need to Write Our Own Names": Gender Equality and Women's Empowerment in the Rohingya Humanitarian Response in Cox's Bazar Gender Operational Review Report (July 2019). Available at <https://wrc.ms/gen-eq-rohingya-report>.

Illustrations by Sohana Naznin Anu.