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"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

September 2019

The Women's Refugee Commission (WRC) improves the lives and protects the rights of women, children, and youth 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.

Acknowledgments

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Cover photo: Ummee Salma, 16, is a Rohingya refugee living in Cox's Bazar, Bangladesh, with her brother. Their parents are missing or dead. © Josh Estey/CARE
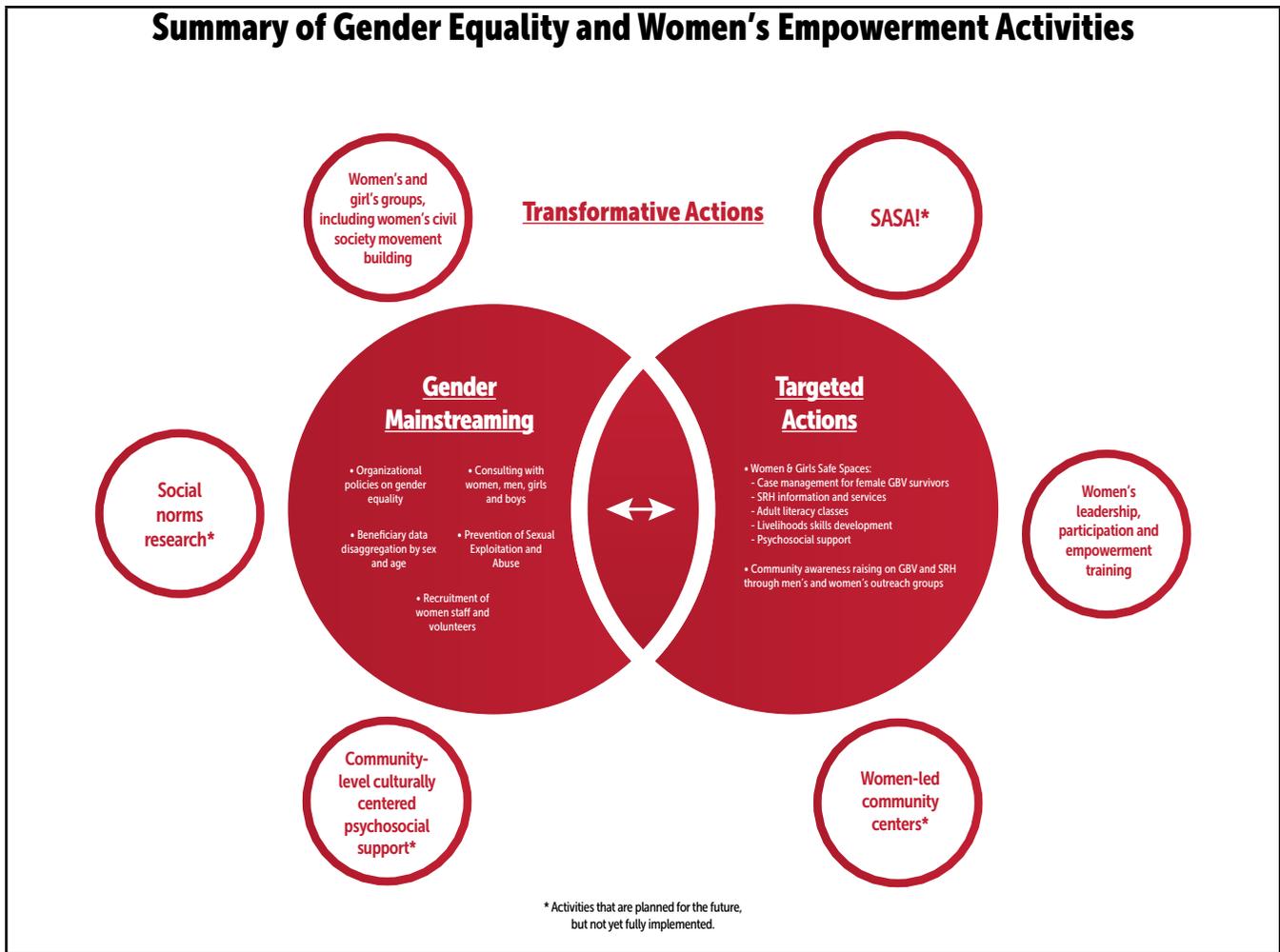
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Executive Summary

Gender equality and the empowerment of women and girls are considered central to an effective, inclusive, and rights-based response in crisis, conflict, and natural disasters. Understanding gender roles and power dynamics in an affected community, including intersections with other identity factors such as age, disability, sexual orientation, and socioeconomic class, is critical to ensure that humanitarian programs and activities meet the needs of women, men, girls, boys, and other groups in the affected community and "do no harm" by inadvertently reinforcing inequality, marginalization, and exclusion.

Gender equality programming in humanitarian responses has been demonstrated to increase access to services and assistance, including education and sexual and reproductive health (SRH) services, for women and girls; improve the participation, agency, and decision-making power of women and girls in their relationships, households, and communities; and decrease security risks, including the risk of verbal or emotional forms of gender-based violence (GBV) against women and girls. There is also evidence that gender equality strategies that engage men and boys—even in those activities that target women and girls—have a higher likelihood of successful outcomes for women and girls, reducing the risk of resentment and resistance from the wider community.[1]

With support from Global Affairs Canada, the Women's Refugee Commission (WRC) is working to advance gender equality in humanitarian programming globally. As part of this global project, WRC conducted a review of how gender and its intersection with other factors have been integrated by operational agencies and organizations into the Rohingya humanitarian response in Bangladesh, documenting positive practices, lessons learned, and recommendations for the humanitarian response in Cox's Bazar and globally.

WRC's gender operational review found commitment to gender equality and women's empowerment across the Rohingya humanitarian response. A range of strategies has been implemented early in the response targeting women and girls, with a particular focus on responding to and preventing GBV. While not consistently implemented, there is some evidence of positive outcomes from engaging men and boys in these activities, with this group demonstrating a willingness to learn about gender issues, and reducing the risk of backlash within the community. The change in social norms required to foster Rohingya women's leadership will require longer-term approaches, driven by the community itself. As such, fledgling women's groups in the camps and their work for the whole Rohingya community provide promising models for transformative change.

Summary of Gender Equality and Women's Empowerment Activities

Transformative Actions

Women's and girl's groups, including women's civil society movement building

SASA!*

Social norms research*

Gender Mainstreaming

- Organizational policies on gender equality
- Beneficiary data disaggregation by sex and age
- Recruitment of women staff and volunteers
- Consulting with women, men, girls and boys
- Prevention of Sexual Exploitation and Abuse

Targeted Actions

- Women & Girls Safe Spaces:
  - Case management for female GBV survivors
  - SRH information and services
  - Adult literacy classes
  - Livelihoods skills development
  - Psychosocial support
- Community awareness raising on GBV and SRH through men's and women's outreach groups

Women's leadership, participation and empowerment training

Community-level culturally centered psychosocial support*

Women-led community centers*

* Activities that are planned for the future, but not yet fully implemented.

(See page 11 for larger copy of this diagram.)

Recommendations:

The following recommendations are provided to build on and strengthen the positive efforts already undertaken within the Rohingya humanitarian response, and to catalyze longer-term support for transformative approaches.

- **Foster innovation and collective learning on emerging issues and approaches.** There are different understandings and interpretations of gender and empowerment among humanitarian actors. As the response moves into more transformative approaches, it is important to also foster collective learning and reflection on successful—and less successful—strategies. Learning events should explore emerging issues and approaches that require wider sectoral reflection, such as how to safely reach and support marginalized women and girls (e.g., older women and women and girls with disabilities) and people with diverse sexual orientation, gender identity and expression, or sex characteristics (SOGIESC). Fledgling civil society organizations within the Rohingya community should be involved and drawn upon for their advice on culturally sensitive gender equality programming.

- **Strengthen gender analysis and monitoring processes.** Establish a more structured approach to gender analysis, which maps the different groups in the community for consultation, including

marginalized groups of women and girls, and men and boys. Gender-transformative indicators, or indicators that measure change in women's and girls' agency, should be agreed upon and standardized across program and service monitoring. Ongoing and regular gender analysis can help to track the small, but important, incremental changes in gender equality and women's empowerment in the community, identify risks, and evaluate the effectiveness of mitigation strategies.

- **Increase space for women to self-organize.** More flexible programming in women's and girls' safe spaces could create additional opportunities for women to self-organize and define their own goals and activities. Activities in these spaces could be further expanded to explore wider issues and concerns in the camp, explore their strengths and strategies, and analyze potential solutions. Concurrently, it will be important to establish a process for monitoring the inclusiveness of these activities—tracking which women are and are not participating in these activities.

- **Advocate for longer-term programming.** Transformative programming should foster social norms change and shared power and decision-making between groups in the community— and this take time. Promoting women's empowerment, participation, and leadership in a humanitarian context requires more sustained and longer-term programming, not only to demonstrate outcomes, but also to ensure the quality of activities implemented (through capacity development of staff and partners) and that we do no harm. Donors and funders must meet global commitments to gender equality with more meaningful and flexible financial investment and partnership with the Government of Bangladesh, which will give humanitarian partners the time and space to trial different methodologies and approaches.

- **Support fledgling women's civil society organizations.** The success and acceptance of fledgling organizations and groups of Rohingya that are forming the camp provide a critical opportunity for learning and innovation across the humanitarian response, particularly in addressing the patriarchal norms that reduce opportunities for women's leadership and participation in the community. These groups can act as advisors to humanitarian actors on culturally sensitive programming relating to women's leadership and participation, reducing risk of backlash in the community. They can also mentor other groups of women across the camps as they establish and expand their participation and influence in the camps.

1. Introduction

Gender equality and the empowerment of women and girls are considered central to an effective, inclusive, and rights-based response in situations of crisis, conflict, and natural disasters. Upholding humanitarian principles and standards requires that humanitarian actors understand and address the different needs of women, men, girls, boys, and other groups in the affected population, including supporting their participation in decisions that affect them, their households, and the community. Furthermore, understanding gender roles and power dynamics in an affected community, including intersections with other identity factors, such as age, disability, sexual orientation, and socioeconomic class, is critical in ensuring that humanitarian programs and activities "do no harm" by inadvertently reinforcing inequality, marginalization, and exclusion.

Gender equality also supports the achievement of wider development goals relating to poverty reduction,[2] economic growth,[3] and peacebuilding.[4] As such, the importance of advancing gender equality has been recognized by the international community through international frameworks such

as the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW),[5] the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action,[6] and the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development.[7]

Advancing gender equality is also a core component of global frameworks, guidelines, and standards relating to humanitarian action. Notably, empowering and protecting women is one of the seven strategic transformations required to ensure the Agenda for Humanity Core Responsibility of Leaving No One Behind.[8] The Call to Action on Protection from Gender-Based Violence in Emergencies[9] sets forth commitments that address the linkages between gender inequality and gender-based violence (GBV). Most recently, the G7 development ministers committed to promoting inclusive and innovative strategies, including increased investment for locally driven solutions, through the Whistler Declaration on Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women and Girls in Humanitarian Action.[10]

At an operational level, the Inter-Agency Standing Committee (IASC) *Policy on Gender Equality and Empowerment of Women and Girls in Humanitarian Action* (and the accompanying Accountability Framework)[11] sets gender equality and women's empowerment as a core principle for effective and transformative humanitarian preparedness and response, peace building, and development, while the IASC *Gender Handbook for Humanitarian Action*[12] provides detailed guidance for IASC members and partners to deliver on these commitments at the field level.

Gender equality programming in humanitarian responses has been demonstrated to increase access to services and assistance for women and girls; improve the participation, agency, and decision-making power of women and girls in their relationships, households, and communities; and decrease security risks, including the risk of verbal or emotional forms of GBV against women and girls. There is also evidence that gender equality strategies that engage men and boys—even in those activities that target women and girls—have a higher likelihood of successful outcomes for women and girls.[13]

Achieving meaningful and sustainable gender equality necessitates recognizing the diversity within and among genders and how intersectionality results in further marginalization. Gender and its intersections with other social markers (e.g., disability, age, race, ethnicity, socioeconomic class, gender identity, and sexual orientation) and how each of those intersections increases marginalization and impedes access to power, resources, participation, and decision-making are seldom addressed in humanitarian response.

With support from Global Affairs Canada, the Women's Refugee Commission (WRC) is working to advance gender equality in humanitarian programming globally by deepening the understanding of gender and intersectionality among humanitarian actors and supporting them to integrate that understanding into assessments, program design, implementation, and monitoring.

2. Background to the Rohingya Humanitarian Response

The Rohingya people, a stateless minority group in Myanmar, have suffered persecution, discrimination, and denial of basic rights for decades. In August 2017, Myanmar security forces launched widespread and systematic attacks on civilians in Kachin, Rakhine, and Shan States. The UN Human Rights Council's independent international fact-finding mission described these attacks as crimes against humanity, with reports of murder, torture, rape, and other forms of sexual violence, persecution, and enslavement with "elements of extermination and deportation," as well as "systematic oppression and discrimination."[14] These attacks resulted in the largest and fastest ever influx of Rohingya refugees into Bangladesh,[15] with an estimated 745,000 people arriving in 18 months.[16]

As of January 2019, there were more than 900,000 Rohingya refugees living in the Cox's Bazar area of Bangladesh, with the vast majority living in the Kutupalong Balukhali Expansion Site. Over half of the population are children, with girls disproportionately represented among separated or unaccompanied minors. Many women and girls were exposed to sexual violence in Myanmar, and following displacement, they continue to be at risk of domestic violence, forced/child marriage, and exploitation and trafficking.[17]

More than 50 partners (including eight UN agencies, 28 international NGOs and 14 national NGOs) are delivering services and assistance to the refugee and host population within the scope of the 2019 Joint Response Plan (JRP). The Strategic Executive Group (SEG), co-chaired by the Resident Coordinator, International Organization for Migration (IOM), and United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR), provides strategic guidance and government engagement at national levels of the response, with the Inter Sector Coordination Group (ISCG) representing the sectors and working groups at district level.[18] Several layers of leadership exist in the refugee camps, including the Camp in Charge (CIC) appointed by the Government of Bangladesh, religious leaders, civil society networks, the Bangladesh Army-appointed majhi system,[19] and more recently a pilot election of community representatives by refugees in one camp.[20]

Several assessments have identified gaps in meeting the needs of women and girls. Religious and cultural beliefs and perceptions of insecurity limit the mobility and participation of women and girls in the community and their access to services. Hence, protection and gender mainstreaming, including improved accountability to affected populations, is highlighted as a cross-cutting issue in the 2019 JRP.[21] The Protection Working Group, Gender in Humanitarian Action (GIHA) Working Group, GBV Sub-Sector, and Prevention of Sexual Exploitation and Abuse (PSEA) Network support sharing of information and coordination among partners. Additionally, a Gender Hub (led by UN Women) will be launched this year to bring together expertise and advice from the Protection Working Group, GBV Sub-Sector, GIHA Working Group, and the PSEA Network to support humanitarian actors with capacity development and knowledge management on gender and GBV issues.[22]

Almost two years into the Rohingya humanitarian response, it is time to reflect on experiences and lessons learned in advancing gender equality in programs and services, protection of women and girls, and addressing the humanitarian needs of the most marginalized within these groups.

3. Methodology

The wider goal of the operational review was to provide an overarching, comprehensive, and forward-looking analysis of the integration of gender equality and women's empowerment by agencies and organizations working in the humanitarian response in Cox's Bazar, with strategic advice and recommendations to make the response more equitable across sectors, coordination mechanisms, and programs and services.

3.1. Principles

The following principles guided the operational review methodology:

Focus on women and girls in all their diversity. Advancing gender equality requires specific attention to the needs, voices, and participation of women and girls, including those who may be further marginalized due to factors such as age, disability, and sexual orientation. As such, the operational review prioritized analysis and reflection of which women and girls are being engaged or reached, and which women and girls are still being missed, proposing recommendations to foster inclusive gender equality efforts moving forward.

Alignment with and supporting field priorities. The methodology was developed in consultation with operational partners engaged in the Rohingya humanitarian response. Intersections with field priorities were identified and capitalized on, ensuring that the findings and recommendations of the operational review benefit and support the ongoing humanitarian response.

Informing global learning. In addition to informing the humanitarian response in Cox's Bazar, the operational review sought to identify lessons learned for the wider humanitarian sector, developing high-level recommendations for the implementation of global commitments on gender equality set forth in the Whistler Declaration and the Call to Action on Protection from Gender-Based Violence.

3.2. Research Questions

The operational review sought to answer the following research questions:

1. **Gender analysis:** How are humanitarian actors recognizing, integrating, and responding to gender and intersectionality (i.e., the intersection of gender with other factors, such as disability, age, gender identity, and sexual orientation) in the response? What strategies for gender analysis are humanitarian actors employing, how are these informing the response, and what is the outcome for women and girls in all their diversity?

2. **Participation and leadership of women and girls:** How have the voice, participation, and opportunity for women and girls been strengthened and expanded through the response? What good practices and innovative programs and models are being used to address their rights, promote participation in decision-making, and facilitate access to and control over resources?

3. **International standards and principles:** How are international standards relating to gender equality, including organizational policies and strategies to ensure gender parity among staff, being operationalized? How do accountability mechanisms address gender issues, in particular the needs of women and girls in all their diversity?

4. **Lessons learned and recommendations:** What are the gaps and opportunities to strengthen gender equality and intersectionality across the Rohingya humanitarian response? What are the gaps and opportunities to strengthen gender equality and intersectionality across the global humanitarian sector? What are the roles of different stakeholders at national and global levels in the implementation of recommendations?

3.3. Data Collection and Analysis

Data collection and analysis activities were implemented through desk-based research and a three-week field visit to Bangladesh.

1. **Literature Review**

Policies and strategies, operational research reports, humanitarian needs assessments, sector response plans and monitoring reports, working group meeting notes, and specific program or project proposals, reports, and evaluations were reviewed to identify and summarize existing information and data on gender equality and women's empowerment.

2. **Key Informant Interviews (KIIs)**

A total of 49 people participated in semi-structured interviews, including donors (6 people), UN actors (10 people), and NGO staff (16 international NGOs; 17 national organizations). Key informants were people with firsthand knowledge of the Rohingya humanitarian response, including knowledge of processes and systems for gender analysis and mainstreaming, actual programming on gender equality and women's empowerment, and/or needs and capacities of marginalized groups of women and girls.

3. **Focus Group Discussions (FGDs) and Meetings with Community Members**

Focus group discussions and meetings were conducted with Rohingya community members engaged in a range of group activities in camps 4, 8, and 14, including community committees, women's safe spaces, and GBV prevention activities (e.g., community awareness raising, engaging men and boys' initiatives). Approximately 40 women and girls and 20 men and boys, including community volunteers, imams, and majhis, were consulted through these activities.

All participants were briefed on the project and purpose of FGDs and KIIs, including how the information would be used and shared with others. Names were not collected to ensure confidentiality and foster open exchanges of information and ideas. KIIs with humanitarian actors were conducted in English, and those with community members in a combination of Rohingya and Chittagonian languages, with translation into English (see 3.5. Limitations). FGD and KII notes were coded and thematically analyzed using NVivo12 software.

4. **Stakeholder Meeting**

Finally, a stakeholder meeting was conducted in Cox's Bazar bringing together focal points from a range of sectors to: 1) share and validate initial findings of the gender operational review; 2) explore implications for the current Rohingya humanitarian response; and 3) inform global recommendations for the humanitarian sector.

3.4. Reporting and Documentation

Gender operational review findings and recommendations were documented in a draft report, which was circulated among the key stakeholders in Cox's Bazar for further feedback prior to publication. A brief or summary will be developed for communication with field actors and the refugee community. This brief describes how the gender equality is currently being implemented in the Rohingya humanitarian response and profiles strategies to strengthen women's empowerment processes in the camp.

3.5. Limitations

The findings and recommendations from this operational review should be considered keeping the following limitations in mind. First, the community members consulted were largely self-selected—they were individuals already attending and/or engaged in gender equality efforts, and as such may represent a positive bias in attitudes compared to the wider population. Second, many marginalized groups in the community, such as women and girls with disabilities and those from diverse SOGIESC communities, were under-represented in consultation processes. However, information was gathered about these groups through the literature review and KIIs with humanitarian partners working directly with these groups. Third, lack of time and appropriate sensitization made it difficult to safely explore more sensitive issues relating to men and boys, such as violence, abuse, and exploitation. Finally, there may be errors in interpretation, as some activities required multiple interpreters for Rohingya into Chittagonian, and then into English. There is also still a significant gap in understanding gender-related terminology in the Rohingya language, making some concepts difficult to express and/or explore in detail.[23]

4. Findings

Gender mainstreaming and empowerment of women and girls have become a central component of the Rohingya humanitarian response. In 2018, the SEG launched four key actions to ensure gender equality and empowerment of women and girls in the Rohingya humanitarian response in line with the IASC Policy and Accountability Framework. These actions are:

- collecting, analyzing, and using disaggregating data on gender, age, and diversity;
- supporting women's economic empowerment through livelihoods and skills development;
- ensuring leadership and meaningful equal representation of women and marginalized groups; and
- preventing, mitigating, and responding to GBV and sexual exploitation and abuse.[24]

4.1. Coordination and Monitoring of Gender Equality

To date, the Protection Working Group, GIHA Working Group, GBV Sub-Sector, and PSEA Network have all played a part in the coordination of gender equality and women's empowerment across the Rohingya humanitarian response. Recognizing gaps in capacity to provide technical advice and support to humanitarian partners on gender equality and women's empowerment, there are plans to establish a Gender Hub, which will draw together the technical guidance and data from the different

coordination bodies, support partners to translate policies into actions, develop standardized training, and facilitate knowledge management and exchange.[25]

Gender equality and women's empowerment are being monitored through the 2019 JRP, which has gender-related indicators under all three strategic objectives (and all sectors). There is also a specific outcome dedicated to gender and protection mainstreaming under Strategic Objective 1, which seeks to collectively deliver protection to refugee women, men, girls, and boys: "Refugee and host community women, men, girls, and boys benefit from direct protection services, and from services that mainstream protection and gender considerations." Gender-related indicators to measure this outcome include:

- number of sectors that approved projects meeting the protection and gender guidelines; and
- number of service providers trained on protection principles and gender mainstreaming.[26]

Other 2019 JRP indicators require some form of sex- and age-disaggregated data collected by humanitarian partners through the "4W Tool,"[27] reported on a monthly basis to the Information Management Unit of ISCG, and for gender to be integrated into sector-specific needs assessments and multi-sector needs assessments.

Combined, these sources generate a substantial volume of data for which there is currently no structured process for analysis. It is anticipated that the forthcoming Gender Hub will play a role in the analysis of the aggregated data to monitor progress against each indicator and identify gaps for future attention in response planning. Field monitoring missions will also be undertaken to look into the qualitative aspects of indicators that stand out as low, high, or remain unchanged in comparison to baselines.[28]

The Assessment Capacities Project (ACAPS) is now supporting analysis of secondary data and is developing an analytical framework that will inform and support the multi-sectoral needs analysis. The objective of this is to interpret and draw recommendations from the data and information already available.[29] The project also hopes to strengthen gender analysis during needs assessments, as well as in the monitoring phase of the humanitarian project cycle, through the adaptation of global tools and resources.

4.2. Overview of Gender Equality and Women's Empowerment Programming

The IASC *Gender Handbook for Humanitarian Action* describes two main strategies to gender equality programming: 1) Gender mainstreaming to ensure that the needs and vulnerabilities of all people affected by a crisis are taken into account; and that women and men benefit equally, and that inequality is not further perpetuated through humanitarian action; and 2) Targeted actions to address the specific needs identified in gender analysis and assessments.[30,31]

The range of gender equality programming currently being implemented in the Rohingya humanitarian response includes both gender mainstreaming and targeted strategies. Early assessments in the crisis highlighted the high levels of GBV experienced by Rohingya women and girls before and during the crisis.[32,33] As such, the vast majority of targeted actions focus on women and girls, with systems being set up to ensure quality support for GBV survivors in alignment with international standards, largely through safe spaces for women and girls (SSWG) that also provide service delivery, skills development, and psychosocial support.

> "In the early influx, the priority for all actors was to reach out to women and girls who had undergone sexual violence—how do we reach out to them—the scale was really too huge to start and it took us time to scale up, to recognize capacities, work on systems." - Donor representative
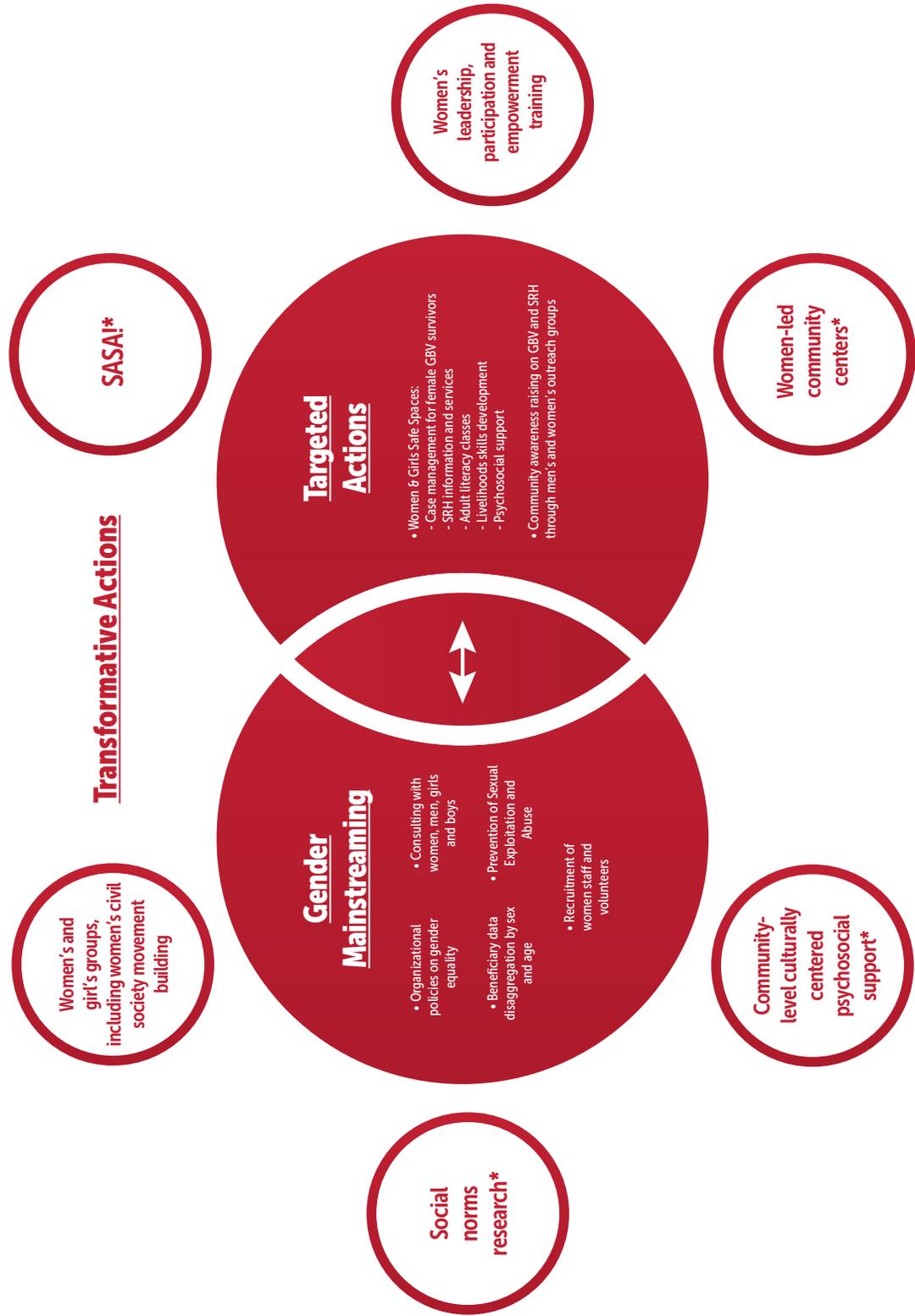
Concurrently, international standards on gender mainstreaming were adopted across the response, with humanitarian actors consulting with different groups in the community—to date, this includes women, men, girls, and boys—and the collection of sex- and age-disaggregated data for reporting purposes. However, some humanitarian actors raised concerns that this process is a "tick the box" exercise with limited opportunity for the community to meaningfully influence programming.

> "They will go to the women's and men's groups—they go to these groups—this is systematic—but they are using them just for [their] own agenda. We already know what we want to do. This is why I am critical of gender mainstreaming." - NGO staff member

On the margins of these activities, a growing number of gender-transformative actions are being implemented or planned—that is, actions that seek to promote shared power and decision-making between men and women in the community. For example, UN Women has recently launched a comprehensive training-of-trainers (TOT) package on Women's Leadership, Participation, and Empowerment for field staff of various agencies and organizations that actively work as part of the Rohingya refugee crisis response. TOT participants are provided with training modules and a set of tools, developed by UN Women with inputs from Rohingya women and field tested, to strengthen Rohingya women's leadership and decision-making skills at the individual, household, and community levels. The United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA) has recently launched several women-led community centers, where women have been supported to establish their own self-help groups and are now receiving capacity development and training. Finally, initiatives that are planned for future, such as SASA![34] and social norms research, have the potential to better understand the power dynamics in the community, cultural and contextual drivers of these power imbalances, and develop culturally sensitive strategies to transform attitudes in the community.

The illustration on page 11 "Summary of Gender Equality and Women's Empowerment Activities" lists these different activities and strategies, with several being described in more detail in later sections of this report.

Summary of Gender Equality and Women's Empowerment Activities

Women's leadership, participation and empowerment training

SASA!*

Women-led community centers*

Transformative Actions

Targeted Actions

- Women & Girls Safe Spaces:
  - Case management for female GBV survivors
  - SRH information and services
  - Adult literacy classes
  - Livelihoods skills development
  - Psychosocial support
- Community awareness raising on GBV and SRH through men's and women's outreach groups

Gender Mainstreaming

- Organizational policies on gender equality
- Consulting with women, men, girls and boys
- Beneficiary data disaggregation by sex and age
- Prevention of Sexual Exploitation and Abuse
- Recruitment of women staff and volunteers

Women's and girl's groups, including women's civil society movement building

Community-level culturally centered psychosocial support*

Social norms research*

* Activities that are planned for the future, but not yet fully implemented.

4.3. Gender Policies and Accountability—Shifting to Implementation

All humanitarian actors consulted in this operational review reported having an organizational commitment to gender equality, with policies in place to promote gender parity across the organization and PSEA.

All national organizations consulted in this operational review had large numbers of women working for them, often a majority of women. However, they were mostly filling field-level positions, as opposed to leadership roles in the organization. Having larger numbers of women working at field levels is necessary to facilitate access to and communication with Rohingya women, who, due to cultural and religious constraints, have limited contact with men outside their families. Many humanitarian agencies and organizations have also set quotas for gender parity among Rohingya volunteers, which has posed some challenges in implementation due to the aforementioned restrictions, culminating in threats of violence against women volunteers and their families. Strategies to address these issues have included awareness raising with family members, ensuring women volunteers report only to women supervisors, and providing opportunities for women volunteers to work with women and girls closer to their homes.

Despite large numbers of women working for operational partners, all the directors and senior managers from national organizations consulted in this operational review were men. In contrast, the vast majority of people consulted from international NGOs and UN agencies were women, highlighting that perhaps men remain largely underrepresented in gender equality programming at global levels.

Humanitarian actors and field staff consulted in this operational review demonstrated a good understanding of PSEA. They understand the consequences of sexual exploitation and abuse (SEA) for refugees and on affected communities, the seriousness of the problem, and acknowledge that actions should be taken to prevent and respond to incidents. However, key informants report that individual staffs' awareness of how to incorporate PSEA into their daily work is fragmented, with trainings differing between organizations and agencies. PSEA induction is delivered on an impromptu basis, by selected protection staff from within organizations, and sometimes only in English language. As such, the PSEA Network is working on finalizing a unified training on PSEA. The training will explain what SEA is, provide concrete examples, inform staff of their duties to both beneficiaries and the organization, as well as explain the reporting mechanisms available. Importantly, these training materials will be in both English and Bangla. The PSEA Network is also working on the creation of a pool of trainers to systematically offer refresher trainings to all staff.

Key informants report that among the wider Rohingya community, there is limited understanding of who constitutes a humanitarian worker, what a code of conduct is and expected behaviors, or how to report a case of SEA. To this end, the PSEA Network is currently facilitating production of SEA messages for distribution through community-led workshops. These messages will be generated by the community for the community through a participatory approach. This communication strategy will also be shaped by the community and tailored according to their opinion and preferences and will lay the groundwork for the establishment of a Community-Based Complaints Mechanism.

To date, there is no standardized response-wide system for reporting and follow-up of SEA. Most organizations require beneficiaries to contact a PSEA focal point or hotline within the organization to report incidents. Proposed reporting mechanisms will be based on community input to ensure maximum accessibility, acceptability and confidentiality when a report is made; mechanisms could take the form of a hotline, complaints or suggestion boxes, emails, face-to-face information points,

or reception by trained frontline workers. The expansion of community-level volunteers has added another layer of complexity to PSEA efforts, with confusion between SEA and GBV cases within the community. In general, policies for SEA risks related to the use of volunteers vary from agency to agency. For example, victims who suffer SEA by a volunteer do not at present receive the cost of necessary legal action from the agencies concerned. Discussions within the PSEA Network also acknowledge a serious gap in the response related to access to justice, both for GBV and SEA survivors. The PSEA Network and GBV Sub-Sector have leveraged existing GBV referral pathways to link survivors to appropriate sources of direct assistance and services. The PSEA Network is also working to standardize training and provide more guidance to PSEA focal points as they navigate and roll out PSEA strategies across their organizations.

4.4. Gender Analysis—An Ongoing Process

Gender analysis examines the relationships between women, girls, men, and boys and others in the community, including gender roles and the constraints that may affect access to and control over resources and opportunities. A gender analysis is usually conducted in the humanitarian needs assessment, but should also be integrated into sector assessments, as well as monitoring and evaluation processes throughout the humanitarian program cycle.[35]

In Cox's Bazar, humanitarian actors have relied on two types of gender analysis to inform programming at response and sectoral levels:

1. Organizations with established skills and expertise on gender analysis conducting multi-sectoral needs assessments, and developing recommendations for different sectors to implement.

2. Integration of gender across sectoral needs assessments and subsequent JRP planning processes.

Cross-Sectoral Gender Analyses

Two such assessments have been conducted over the course of the response: 1) a rapid gender analysis conducted by CARE Bangladesh in 2017[36] and 2) a joint gender analysis conducted by Action contre la Faim, Save the Children, and Oxfam (with contributions from CARE, UNHCR, ISCG, and UN Women) in 2018.[37] These two assessments used a combination of FGDs, KIIs, and analysis of secondary data and documents to explore the roles of women and men in the community; how power dynamics have changed with the crisis affecting access to opportunities and resources; and the risks and needs faced by women, girls, and boys in the communities, as well as their capacities.

Both assessments highlighted the high rates of GBV and reduced mobility faced by Rohingya women and girls in Bangladesh, providing a sound rationale for the proliferation of SSWG, which now act as hubs to access information and services relating to GBV and SRH, as well as for livelihoods and skill development opportunities (see 4.4. Women-Friendly Spaces—A Hub for Gender Equality Programming). The CARE Bangladesh analysis documented that Rohingya women rarely have contact with males who are not family members,[38] providing a rationale for recruitment of female staff among organizations at field levels. Both assessments focus more on the cultural and religious drivers of restricted mobility, with less analysis of contextual factors that have led to increased restrictions of movement.

> "I think when many different people are brought together, and when they have lost so much, the cultural traditions become more prominent, because they are trying to hold onto that identity." - UN agency staff member

The assessment by Action contre la Faim, Save the Children, and Oxfam provides a more detailed

analysis of power dynamics in the community and how this affects women, men, girls, and boys in their relationships, households, and community. Most notably, this analysis articulated how men are the power holders for decision-making at household levels and how religious beliefs, in combination with protection concerns, reduce the mobility of women in the community, including their engagement in community leadership roles. Furthermore, it highlighted the disproportionate and increasing power held by majhis since displacement, with reports of abuse and exploitation. The engagement of children and young people in the gender analysis highlighted that abuse of power extends to Rohingya volunteers who may beat and exploit children, and brought forth notable differences between girls and boys, with boys more likely to experience this abuse, whereas girls were more likely to report fear of the police (the majority of whom were male at the time of this analysis).[39]

Demonstrating a more nuanced understanding of gender, Action contre la Faim, Save the Children, and Oxfam also explored the situation of transgender people by asking questions about this group in the survey, FGDs, and KIIs - 7 percent of questionnaire respondents reported knowing a transgender person in their community, toward whom most people said they would usually react with "jokes," suggesting that this group is largely discriminated against by the wider community.[40]

Concurrently, there has been a range of other cross-sectoral studies in the Rohingya community that have added texture to gender-related concepts and issues. For example, Translators Without Borders has made a significant contribution by unpacking the nuances of Rohingya language relating to gender issues, including how the community understands and talks about SOGIESC individuals.[41] Oxfam International also conducted a rapid analysis that focused solely on the division of care work responsibilities between men and women in both the host and Rohingya communities. In 2017, Oxfam's Rapid Protection, Food Security, and Market Assessment (built largely around their programming at the time) provided valuable information about the different vulnerabilities faced by women and girls, and is one of the few documents that also mentions the potential risks faced by men, boys, older people, and persons with disabilities in the community.[42] Oxfam later drew on the findings of the joint gender analysis and these other studies to produce recommendations for the humanitarian response at its one-year mark, highlighting the need to design, fund, and implement activities that are more sensitive to existing gender norms and social practices within the Rohingya community.[43]

Gender Analysis in Sectoral Needs Assessments

Sectoral gender analysis is promoted through the JRP process with all partner proposals being assessed against the gender marker.[44] However, there appears to be no standardized approach to the way information is collected or systematic process for aggregation and analysis. (Sub)sector coordinators reported conducting "roundtables" where partners would bring information from the field about the different needs of women, men, girls, and boys to planning discussions.

> "It may not be a formal finding that we write in a report. … Partners use lots of different methodologies—like focus group discussions with different groups, gender- and age-sensitive sessions at centers—it is not formal, but everyday consulting with these groups." - UN agency staff member

All sectoral and agency strategy documents and guidance notes require the collection and use of sex- and age-disaggregated data, and there are examples from the GBV, nutrition, and water, sanitation, and hygiene (WASH) (sub)sectors of consultations with women, men, boys, and girls that, in turn, led to changes in programming.

Gender Analysis Informs WASH Programming

CARE Bangladesh consulted with women and girls attending SSWG to identify their respective needs, concerns, and recommendations relating to WASH programming in the camp. Findings highlighted a wide range of factors that influence the appropriateness and use of sex-disaggregated toilet and bathing facilities for women and girls:

- Women and girls prefer to wash menstrual pads and clean their bodies in bathing facilities, not toilets, which are seen as dirty—toilets and bathing facilities should not be close together.
- Privacy and the religious practice of purdah affect the location of sites for toilets and bathing facilities, which should not have doors facing a pathway where women may be observed entering the facility.
- Women have to hide menstrual cloths, even from male family members in their own homes, so they are not drying them properly.
- Grey water from washing menstrual cloths should also not be seen. Pipe drains should be attached and the drain from the floor inside the bathing facility should not be visible to the public.[45]

As a result, CARE Bangladesh has adapted WASH facilities and guidance for WASH staff. They also piloted a new laundry facility that provides private and fast drying for menstrual cloth, with adequate ventilation and a screen to ensure the materials are not seen by others.

CARE Bangladesh has piloted a new laundry facility that provides private and fast drying for menstrual cloth. © CARE Bangladesh

Gaps in Gender Analysis

Although GIHA and Protection Working Groups have provided guidance for mainstreaming gender and protection in sector needs assessments, there is no structured way in which humanitarian actors are undertaking gender analysis, with all organizations using their own tools and methodologies to collect information from communities. Turnover of staff and confusion with other approaches, such as GBV mainstreaming, have presented challenges in institutionalizing and coordinating gender analysis across the response.

> "Everyone has their own way of doing this … very few people understand how to do a gender analysis and why it is important, and the focal persons keep changing. There is also conflation between gender and GBV mainstreaming." - UN agency staff member

Very few of the organizations consulted in this operational review were able to provide tangible examples of how they have analyzed sex- and age-disaggregated quantitative data to make changes to their programs. However, many organizations are collecting qualitative data about their programs and activities, albeit in an unstructured way, which could be valuable for wider response planning. Some respondents suggested that there is a reluctance to share information about negative outcomes or unsuccessful strategies.

> "People are collecting data and consulting with the community, and they get feedback on what is and isn't working, but they don't want to share their data with others because it perhaps reflects negative perspectives." - NGO staff member

Analysis of how gender intersects with other factors is largely confined to age (with a focus on children and adolescents) and marriage (with a focus on child marriage and widows). While the needs of the elderly and persons with disabilities are referenced throughout, there is little analysis of how gender influences the needs and roles of these two very heterogeneous groups over their life course. Child marriage and polygamy are highlighted throughout these assessments, and the decision-making power of widows is also referenced. However, there seems to be little analysis of intra-gender power dynamics within polygamous marriages, which no doubt have linkages with age, and of other forms of marital status that would tell us more about the lives of women who are unmarried or those who are divorced. The specific needs of men and boys and people from the SOGIESC community are largely overlooked in such analyses.

4.5. Women-Friendly Spaces—The Center of Gender Equality Programming

Providing "safe spaces" where women and girls can go to receive information, services, and support on a range of issues, including SRH and GBV, is one of the key actions to promote minimum standards for prevention and response to GBV in emergencies.[46] These spaces not only provide an entry point for lifesaving services and information, but also an opportunity for women and girls to meet and support each other, expanding their protective peer networks and social assets.[47]

There are now at least 56 SSWG across the Rohingya camps that provide a range of services and activities,[48] including access to information on SRH and GBV, peer support activities, safe and confidential case management for GBV survivors, and wider SRH services (such as family planning) that women may feel uncomfortable accessing in the more "public" health clinic setting. Some SSWG provide separate and tailored activities for adolescent girls, as well as skills development, such as literacy, tailoring, and handicrafts.

Women and girls consulted in the operational review reported learning about these spaces through a community volunteer who visited their homes. Women report traveling by foot to the SSWG, sometimes in groups that they organize themselves or with facilitation from the volunteer, which makes them feel "safer." Some women report sharing information and in turn engaging other women to attend the SSWG.

While women value the education and skills development provided in the SSWG, most of their discussion centered around the psychosocial benefits of attending these spaces, including "feeling peace" and "sharing with each other," with some women reporting that they lacked these opportunities in Myanmar. Women consulted in this operational review also highlighted that meeting each other and acquiring basic literacy skills are critical to strengthening their voice in decisions that affect them in the camp.

> "We need to write our own name – we need to be able to sign for things." – Rohingya woman

Some SSWG have concurrent activities to mobilize women into groups and committees for the purposes of greater participation in decision-making in the community. These groups may share information and support survivors to access services; some groups, for example, work together to approach the majhi about issues in the camp. The networks built in the SSWG have in some cases led to the formation of more organized civil society groups, which set their own goals and activities (see 4.6. Women's Leadership, Participation, and Empowerment).

> "In Myanmar, we could not come together to talk because our houses were far from each other. But now we can come together to share experiences. … We came from one country to another, and we are learning about this culture." - Rohingya woman

Women and girls consulted in the operational review reported that some women have difficulty accessing SSWG, most commonly women with disabilities who face environmental barriers to reach the location. They also suggested that some "uneducated" women may not understand the importance of these spaces and the information provided, and as such decline to attend. Some women may not attend because they do not have a burka and umbrella, which is important to maintain the religious practice of purdah and linked to perceptions of dignity among Rohingya women.[49]

> "In my family, we have five women, but only one burka and umbrella. So, when I take this, what about the others? How will they come?" - Rohingya woman

Finally, women and girls report that having the support of their husbands and families is important when deciding whether to attend the SSWG. They called for more counseling and awareness raising with these groups so that "they will understand what happens here, and it will make our lives easier." Some women also described how support from husbands and family can provide opportunities for them to make their own decisions, and a sense of autonomy relating to this.

> "We get support from our family, husbands … and ourselves—we decide that we want to come." - Rohingya woman

4.6. Engagement of Men and Boys—Supporting Targeted Actions for Women and Girls

There is evidence that engaging men and boys in activities that target women and girls increases the acceptance of these activities and in turn increases access for women and girls.[50] Humanitarian

actors consulted in this operational review reported that engaging men and boys has only started recently and in response to initial backlash to activities targeting women and girls.

> "We set up girl-friendly platforms and spaces. Later, particularly because of politics and gender norms, the community felt that men and boys were being neglected, and this has created conflict—the men became more arrogant and they began doing harassment." - UN agency staff member

While SSWG remain for women and girls only, satellite activities have been developed in the communities to raise awareness about these spaces, address any misconceptions, and gain support from wider family members for women and girls to attend these spaces. Humanitarian actors report that acceptance from husbands and male family members is more likely when they know that there are no men are allowed to enter the space—and making explicit that this includes male staff. The women and girls attending these spaces report that this family support opens opportunities for them to decide whether they wish to participate in activities, with statements reflecting personal development in decision-making (see 4.6. Women's Leadership, Participation, and Empowerment).

> "Now we have the male outreach workers doing engagement of men. We have explained the space and that there [are] no men. The CIC [Camp in Charge] also came and tried to motivate the community. We have no challenges after educating the men." - SSWG staff member

Activities with men and boys mostly relate to GBV prevention, including awareness raising on topics such as domestic violence, child marriage, and community safety, as well as SRH, with a focus on antenatal care and family planning. Community committees and other groups of men (often including majhis and imams) have been formed to receive this information and share it with other men and boys in the community. This happens largely through existing spaces and forums where men already meet, such as mosques and madrassas. However, there are also examples of organizations running activities with men and boys through "courtyard discussions," where they meet in a space or home in their blocks.

Consultations suggest that these activities have influenced the attitudes, and even behaviors, of men and boys. A paramedic at a health clinic reported that there has been an increase in the uptake of long-acting contraceptives, which they credit to engaging men more in SRH awareness raising. Furthermore, male community outreach groups, supported by CARE Bangladesh, demonstrated knowledge and awareness of SRH- and GBV-related issues, and commitment to improving services and assistance for women and girls in their community. For example, this group constructed a pathway to the SSWG following complaints that women and girls found it difficult to navigate the rough terrain to the space.

While these groups may not represent the attitudes of the wider Rohingya male population, these findings do challenge us to think in a more nuanced way about how their attitudes are shaped by religion and culture, versus education and exposure to new ideas, which men have also been lacking throughout their life in Myanmar.

> "We have meetings with the staff to get information about child marriage. Then we do an awareness session with the community. We talk together about this topic in the mosque and the school. It is a good talk, because we have never had this kind of information [in the past]. There was no group before, and no one to help us to understand."- Rohingya man

4.7. Women's Empowerment, Participation, and Leadership—Models and Approaches

Women's empowerment is "a process of personal and social change through which they gain power, meaningful choices, and control over their lives."[51] Humanitarian actors cannot "empower women"— women and girls are the agents of their own empowerment. However, we can facilitate this process by creating space and opportunity for women to reflect, meet, and take action. Empowerment strategies should foster a range of types of power, such as "power from within," which is built around an individual's awareness and self-confidence, as well as "power to" and "power with," which focus on individual and collective strengths to make change. Empowerment strategies must avoid replicating or reinforcing negative forms of power, such as those that focus on having "power over" others.[52]

Understanding and Recognizing Empowerment, Participation, and Leadership

There is a generalization in the literature and among humanitarian actors that Rohingya women and girls have little say in decisions at interpersonal, household, and community levels. While men may dominate leadership structures in the community, this operational review consulted with many women who described examples of power and agency in their personal lives, as well as capacity to influence others—husbands, neighbors, and even majhis—on issues that matter to them. Many humanitarian actors consulted also view women's leadership through the lens of formal roles in the community (e.g., committees, volunteers, majhis) or consultation processes (e.g., community meetings). Participation and leadership can take many forms. The descriptions from women and girls about how they have influenced others demonstrate different forms of leadership, but also collective action and solidarity.

Table 1: Examples of Women Influencing Others		
Husbands	Neighbors	Community Leaders
"We want a teacher for tailoring in the SSWG—my wife wants to learn more." [Facilitator: " How did you come up with this idea?"] "Our wives told us that this is what they want, and we should tell you. [Laughing]" - Rohingya man	"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." - Rohingya woman	"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)." - Rohingya woman

A learning needs assessment and subsequent training package[53] developed by UN Women on women's empowerment, participation, and leadership highlights how perceptions will be different for women and men in the Rohingya community. Women reported that access to information, a violence-free family life, and reading, writing, and listening to others, as signs of women's empowerment, and that leaders should be friendly, able to communicate with lots of different types of people, including UN, NGOs, and other community members, and "stand by people." Men, on the other hand, described their own empowerment as having the ability to generate income, having an education, and having "followers." Based on this analysis, UN Women has developed the training modules and a set of tools to strengthen Rohingya women's leadership and decision-

making skills at the individual, household, and community levels and established Empowerment and Leadership Indicators for Rohingya Women that provide a holistic outline of the sign-posts in the empowerment process for women and girls (see Table 2: Empowerment and Leadership Indicators).

Table 2: Empowerment and Leadership Indicators for Rohingya Women		
(Extracted from: UN Women Bangladesh Office, Women's Empowerment, Participation, and Leadership Training for Rohingya Women, 2019)		
Personal Life	Family Life	Community Life
Loud Voice	Children listen to her	Create opinion against child marriage
Ability to [make] eye contact	Husband listens to her	Create opinion against dowry
Ability to take care of self	Husband has trust on the woman	Create opinion against drugs
Trust in self	Children have trust in the woman	Create opinion against sexual abuse/stalking
Think about self	Relatives have trust in the woman	Women engage in creating community trust in women's leadership
Listen to self	Do not tolerate insult by husband	Women inform community people on multiple services of the camp
Consider that thinking about self is not a crime	Do not tolerate abuse by children/relatives	Women motivate Rohingya women on importance of small family
Perceive that control over own body is important	Do not tolerate abuse by relatives	Support pregnant women for medical check-up
Think before doing an activity planning	Do not discriminate against girl child	Existence of women's group
Ability to stand straight/with dignity	Do not allow anybody in the family to discriminate against girl child	Have ability to make plan for the betterment of the community
Ability to control emotion while talking (do not laugh)	Can motivate others against child marriage	Follow plan
Active listener	Can motivate others against dowry	
Ability to make a systematic conversation	Can motivate others against drugs	
Mobility outside the house	Can motivate others against sexual abuse	
Learn tailoring	Send daughters to school	
Learn embroidery	Motivate husband to do household work	
Can describe importance of small family	Discuss with husband about child spacing, planning of undertaking children	
Access to information	Encourage husband to use contraceptives	
Access to income work		
Men's participation in household activities		
Use of contraceptives		
Having friends outside the family		
Ability to take decisions for self		
Talk about women's rights		

Civil Society Movement

A growing number of civil society groups are emerging within the Rohingya refugee population. A recent mapping of these groups described them as falling into two categories: 1) groups that seek political goals and are focused on building their constituency of supporters; and 2) grass-roots social movements for peace and human rights that focus on the provision of social services, particularly education, in the camps.[54]

Despite the patriarchal norms and beliefs that pervade the community, there are examples of women and girls self-organizing in the camps, with at least two women's civil society groups established (see box).

Examples of Rohingya Women's Civil Society Groups

Rohingya Women Advocacy and Empowerment Network (RWEAN) is a grassroots women's network that aspires to provide "basic world literacy" to the women in the camp. The 20 women on the organization's central committee have reached out to another 20 women in each of their blocks, expanding reach and mobilizing more women through awareness raising on topics such as trafficking, sexual violence, women's rights, and civic engagement.[55]

Shanti Mohila (which means "Peace Women" in Bangla) was established in 2017, with support from Legal Action Worldwide, to advocate on the repatriation conditions under discussion and to seek justice for the women in their group and their community through the International Criminal Court (ICC). The women first met in a SSWG, where they decided to form their own group. The group currently consists of 30 women, but they report being connected to more than 400 women in the camp. Their work on access to justice, not only for women and girls but also for the wider community, is valued by men in the camp and fellow community leaders.

Shanti Mohila is now focused on literacy training for women and girls, setting up an office, and expanding to other camps.

> "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

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The empowerment journey of these women and their organizations, which could support the development of other groups in the camp, is marked by:

- opportunities to meet each other;
- education on rights and basic literacy skills;
- space to make meaningful decisions and implement their own activities (with humanitarian actors facilitating—not leading them); and,
- making contributions to the wider community, which in turn has the potential to change attitudes, particularly among men in the community.

4.8. Diversity and Inclusion—Strategies to Reach Groups Being Left Behind

As mentioned above, gender analyses across the humanitarian response are largely confined to exploring intersections of gender, age, and marital status on the needs, risks, and priorities of women and adolescent girls in the Rohingya community. A more detailed analysis of gender and

intersectionality is needed to ensure that the humanitarian response meets the different needs of this diverse population. In particular, very little is known about how the crisis is affecting more marginalized groups in the Rohingya community, such as members of the SOGIESC community, women, girls, men, and boys with different types of disabilities, and how the intersection between gender and older age affects the opportunities and access to resources for older women.

Attitudes and Awareness on Inclusion

Given the restrictions on movement in the camps, it is not surprising that there is a lack of insight among women and girls into the different groups that may or may not be able to access the SSWG. When directly asked about certain groups, such as women with disabilities, the women reported there were no such people in their block. The UN Women Learning Needs Assessment reported that women perceive being "married once" (i.e., not having multiple relationships and marriages) as an important quality in a leader.[56] As such, it is critical to also better understand intra-gender dynamics, among other factors, that may result in discrimination between women and reduce the inclusiveness of gender equality and women's empowerment efforts.

Women and Girls with Disabilities

Very few women and girls with disabilities are attending the SSWG. This is understandable given the hilly terrain upon which the vast majority of camps are built, and which makes the site planning for roads and transport exceptionally challenging. Organizations are addressing this gap through outreach activities that provide information to women and girls with disabilities and their caregivers in their shelters. However, GBV actors report that there are many barriers to safely identifying and supporting GBV survivors who are unable to attend the SSWG for such services. There are plans to further develop the standard operating procedures to better reflect the needs of these groups.

Some donors are now requiring disability-disaggregated data collection using the Washington Group Short Set of Questions on Disability.[57] However, asking such detailed questions is not in keeping with the principles of the SSWG and many individuals who attend these spaces prefer not to give personal details. Disability-disaggregated data collection is not operationalized across the response and given the significant gaps in capacity to collate, analyze, and use such data, would be unlikely to make substantial changes to the accessibility and inclusiveness of programming.

Older Women

Although quantitative data was not collected in the scope of this operational review, the age ranges of women attending SSWG and engaged in women's civil society groups suggest that older women are well represented in these activities. However, they appear to be less vocal in FGDs, deferring to other women for leadership in such settings.

A recent study by Amnesty International documents that older women and men have experienced sexual violence committed by security forces in Myanmar, and as refugees in Bangladesh, older women face particular challenges in reaching private bathing and latrine facilities.[58] HelpAge International has established Age-Friendly Spaces that act as an integrated space for both older men and women and persons with disabilities to access health, protection, and WASH services. The HelpAge International needs assessment highlights difficulties with continence, mobility, hearing, and seeing within this population, and reveals that these needs are the same for men and women. This surprising finding warrants further exploration, as the specific health needs of post-menopausal women are most likely under-recognized.

Sahara Khatun (60), a Rohingya refugee, with her granddaughter Rafiqa (12) in Cox's Bazar.
© Philipp Hedemann/CARE

While the situation of married girls is commonly explored in needs assessments and studies, there is very little evidence and information on the situation of married older women, particularly those in polygamous marriages. There are anecdotal reports that when men marry younger women (and girls), the older wife may face added risks of physical abuse, including control of her food and money, especially if she objects to the marriage.

Widowed or Divorced Women

Humanitarian actors reported that there are women in the Rohingya community who are widowed or divorced. They may be responsible for caring for children on their own, and as such may not have the time or capacity to fetch their own water and food distributions, and other tasks. These issues are largely covered by approaches to reach and support female-headed households. What is not fully understood and addressed is community attitudes relating to these women, particularly where a woman may have been accused of extra-marital relationships and other acts considered "sinful" within the Rohingya community in order for the husband to be granted a divorce. These women are most likely excluded by other women from social networks and opportunities, and as such face extreme marginalization in their community.

People of Diverse Sexual Orientation, Gender Identity and Expression or Sex Characteristics

Concepts of gender equality across the humanitarian sector, in Bangladesh and globally, are largely built around a binary understanding of gender—that is, men and women. However, gender norms and discrimination also affect individuals perceived as defying these norms due to their sexual orientation or diverse gender identity. In the Rohingya community, there are "hijra" individuals ("hizara" in Rohingya), often called the "third gender," who represent people of diverse gender identities and expressions, including transgender and intersex individuals.

Bandhu Social Welfare Society is a national organization with a long history of advocating for the

rights of the hijra community in Bangladesh. They report that refugee trans women and men who have sex with men are increasingly approaching their staff in the Cox's Bazar region. Due to this, they will be launching a new project in the coming months to learn more about this group in the Rohingya community and provide mental health and psychosocial support.

Male Survivors of Violence

To date, engagement of men and boys in gender equality programming has largely focused on improving access for women and girls to targeted activities. Gender analyses have not yet brought forth the specific needs of Rohingya men, many of whom are also survivors of violence. A study by the Women's Refugee Commission in 2018 found:

- In FGDs with 89 Rohingya men and adolescent boys, one-third of participants personally knew a Rohingya man or boy who had directly experienced conflict-related sexual violence in Myanmar.
- All focus groups reported that the Myanmar Army had forced men and boys to watch sexual violence against female family and community members.
- Some Rohingya men and boys are subjected to sexual abuse and exploitation in Bangladesh, with the most vulnerable groups being adolescent boys and young men; boys with disabilities (especially intellectual disabilities); persons from the SOGIESC community; and men and boys engaged in informal work and child labor.[59]

The small number of men and boys consulted in this operational review consistently profiled the needs of women and girls and were reluctant to share how their needs were different (see 3.5. Limitations). However, they did suggest that they have sensitive issues, which warrant further time and space to explore in a way that does no further harm.

> "Men have some issues that they are too shy to talk about. … Not having any money and wanting to work hard again [are important to us]."– Rohingya man

Sex Work

Key informants report that while sex work is hidden in the Rohingya community, majhis and "madams" (who are usually older women) are working together to organize and control the sex work trade around the camps, including navigating the permissions and processes required for women and girls to leave the camp. There are reports that these women and girls are often young (e.g., 15-22 years old) and have little control over the money that they earn. Furthermore, there are reports of women and girls being sent away for periods of time under "contracts" that are organized by pimps with hotels.

Drop-in centers provide a supportive environment and vital health and protection information and services for women and girls from both the refugee and host community who may be at risk of HIV and other sexually transmitted infections. Consulting with these groups of women and girls, preferably through these trusted health services, would assist in identifying any intersections between sex work and trafficking, as well as wider strategies that may safely support these women and girls within a rights-based approach.

5. Recommendations to Strengthen Gender Equality and Women's Empowerment

The following recommendations are provided to build on and strengthen the positive efforts already undertaken within the Rohingya humanitarian response, and to catalyze longer-term support for transformative approaches.

5.1. Foster Collective Learning on Emerging Issues and Innovative Approaches

There are many assessments relating to gender equality and women's empowerment across the different sectors in Cox's Bazar, and some humanitarian actors expressed concern about being able to keep track of the learning in the field. There are also different understandings and interpretations of gender and empowerment among actors. As the response moves into more transformative approaches, it is important to foster collective learning and reflection on successful, and less successful, strategies.

The Gender Hub is proposed to act as a knowledge management hub for assessments and research, synthesizing findings and positive practices, and strengthening the evidence base for innovative programming. Learning events should explore emerging issues and approaches that require wider sectoral reflection and could also involve refugee women from appropriate civil society organizations. For example, CARE Bangladesh is planning a learning pilot that will reflect on the collective experience of UN agencies and NGOs working with survivors of GBV through SSWG to identify good practices. There is still a significant gap in knowledge and awareness about gender-transformative approaches across the wider sector, which should explore intersectional approaches. Many organizations engaged in the operational review expressed interest in learning more about SOGIESC refugees as Bandhu Social Welfare Society starts to implement its new project.

5.2. Strengthen Gender Analysis and Monitoring Processes

Gender analysis should be seen as a central component to monitoring gender equality and women's empowerment programming. It is critical to establish a more structured approach to gender analysis, which maps the different groups in the community for consultation, including marginalized groups of women and girls, and men and boys. This needs to be ongoing and regular in order to identify and address misunderstandings about the purpose of activities targeting women and girls, and then to evaluate the effectiveness of risk mitigation efforts.

> "As humanitarian workers, we really need to understand the gender norms in the community, or we put the community at risk. We started talking about gender and the community became unhappy—I think we should have done it differently. We took very quick approaches, and this did not work well." – UN agency staff member

Additionally, gender analysis and monitoring are critical for identifying the small but important incremental changes in space and agency for women and girls, as well as changes in the attitudes of the wider community, fostering more effective and transformative programming. As such, it is recommended that gender-transformative indicators, or indicators that measure change in women's and girls' agency, be agreed and standardized across program and service monitoring.

The forthcoming Gender Hub can play a central role in addressing the knowledge gap on gender

analysis among humanitarian actors with training and capacity development, aggregation on data to track progress against gender-related indicators in the JRP, and sharing of gender analysis findings across the response. ACAPS is also planning to strengthen gender analysis through analysis of secondary sources, identification of key knowledge and capacity gaps in relation to gender analysis, and the adaptation of global tools and resources. Both these initiatives present opportunities for implementation of this recommendation at field levels.

5.3. Increase Space for Women to Self-Organize

SSWG provide valuable spaces for accessing information and skills development, as well as safety and security. More flexible programming could create additional space and opportunity for women to self-organize and define their own goals and activities. Activities in these spaces could be expanded to explore wider issues and concerns in the camp. Coming together and doing exercises to identify problems, explore their strengths and strategies, and analyze potential solutions will support women to identify common goals and over time foster confidence to engage in wider change processes. Participatory exercises, such as community safety mapping, can also be linked to autonomy beyond access to services (e.g., autonomy to visit relatives and friends).

Concurrently, it will be important to establish a process for monitoring the inclusiveness of these activities—tracking which women are and are not participating (see 5.2. Strengthen Gender Analysis and Monitoring Processes). Common mobilization strategies used in the development sector, such as supporting women to map and reach out to other women in their circle,[60] combined with participatory activities that foster reflection on women who may be excluded from these networks, could be trialed in the Rohingya community.

5.4. Advocate for Longer-Term Programming

Most humanitarian partners are still working on six-month approvals from the Bangladesh Refugee Relief and Repatriation Commissioner. There are also reports of donors funding very short projects on gender equality, with some organizations ceasing activities due to lack of funding, undermining trust with community members.

Promoting women's empowerment, participation, and leadership requires more sustained and longer-term programming, not only to demonstrate outcomes, but also to ensure the quality of activities implemented through capacity development of staff and partners, and to identify and mitigate potential risks—essentially to ensure that we do no harm. Donors and funders must meet global commitments to gender equality with more meaningful and flexible financial investment, which gives humanitarian partners the space to trial different methodologies and approaches.

> "Short-term projects kill us—we have no time to build partnerships and get money out there and make change in the community." - UN agency staff member

5.5. Support Fledgling Women's Civil Society Organizations

The success and acceptance of fledgling organizations of women provide a critical opportunity for learning and innovation across the humanitarian response, particularly in addressing the patriarchal norms that reduce opportunities for women's leadership and participation in the community. They can act as advisors to humanitarian actors on culturally sensitive programming relating to women's leadership and participation, reducing the risk of backlash in the community, and mentor other groups of women across the camps.
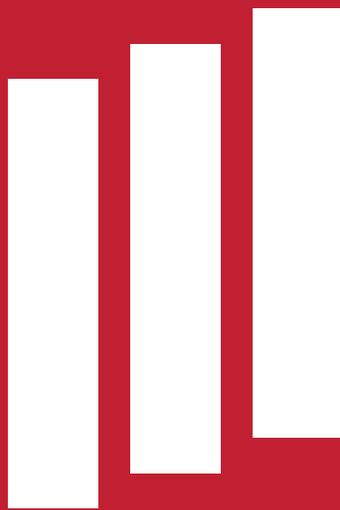
Abbreviations and Acronyms

ACAPS	Assessment Capacity Project
CEDAW	Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women
CIC	Camp in Charge
FGD	Focus group discussion
GBV	Gender-based violence
GIHA	Gender in Humanitarian Action
IASC	Inter-Agency Standing Committee
ICC	International Criminal Court
IOM	International Organization for Migration
ISCG	Inter Sector Coordination Group
JRP	Joint response plan
KII	Key informant interview
NGO	Nongovernmental organization
PSEA	Prevention of sexual exploitation and abuse
RWEAN	Rohingya Women Advocacy and Empowerment Network
SEA	Sexual exploitation and abuse
SEG	Strategic Executive Group
SOGIESC	Sexual orientation, gender identity and expression, or sex characteristics
SRH	Sexual and reproductive health
SSWG	Safe Spaces for Women and Girls
TOT	Training of trainers
UN	United Nations
UNHCR	United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees
UNFPA	United Nations Population Fund
WASH	Water, sanitation, and hygiene
WRC	Women's Refugee Commission

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WOMEN'S REFUGEE COMMISSION

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