Training of Trainers (TOT) on ‘Rohingya Refugee Women’s Empowerment, Participation and Leadership’ conducted for humanitarian actors

On 16-18, and 24-25 April, UN Women organized a Training of Trainers (TOT) on ‘Rohingya Refugee Women’s Empowerment, Participation and Leadership’ in Cox’s Bazar for humanitarian agencies engaged in the Rohingya refugee crisis response.

The TOT participants were provided with training modules and a set of tools developed by UN Women with inputs from Rohingya women to strengthen Rohingya women’s leadership and decision-making skills at the individual, household and community levels. The inputs were also derived from a training module which UN Women developed in 2018 on “Women and Leadership” which was tested in the field with Rohingya women, and potential leaders. Over 100 participants attended the TOT from over 25 different local CSOs, NGOs, INGOs, and UN agencies.

Bangladesh Police and key stakeholders sensitized on how to address Gender Based Violence (GBV) cases

UN Women, upon the request of Bangladesh Police, conducted a three-day training session on 22-25 April in Cox’s Bazar, to build the capacities of female and male police officers who work in the Rohingya refugee camps and host communities, as well as commanders, first responders and other key stakeholders from humanitarian agencies who work on addressing GBV cases.

Fatiha Yesmin, DC CMP, elaborated on policies and measures which protect GBV survivors. Photo: UN Women/ Julian D’Silva

Fatiha Yesmin, DC Chittagong Metropolitan Police, represented the Bangladesh Police Women Network (BPWN). She shared her experiences from the field, using real life case scenarios related to GBV and human trafficking, highlighting challenges and advising on best practice for effective case management, investigation, and adequately responding to the needs of survivors. ABM Masud Hossain, Superintendent of Bangladesh Police, Cox’s Bazar, participated on the last day. (continued on the next page)
The training was led by Jane Townsley, GBV and Policing Expert, and Executive Director of International Women Police Association, and builds on UN Women’s continuing efforts to facilitate gender responsive policing in Cox’s Bazar, in partnership with the Bangladesh Police. It utilized scenario-based exercises and other methods of learning, sensitized participants on handling GBV cases in a professional and effective manner.

Training participants from the police will be able to contribute to better integrate a gender perspective in their police activities based on gender-responsive risk assessments, as well as improving security environments and effective law enforcement through advanced gender-responsive and GBV survivor-centered policing techniques. All trainees demonstrated a willingness to participate, with both a commitment and desire for the Bangladesh Police to become more gender-responsive, thereby building trust and confidence in local communities, particularly amongst women and girls. Training session objectives and materials were developed based on training provided to female and male police officers as well as relevant stakeholders in December 2018, taking into consideration a training needs assessment and recommendations.

The 1-day workshop on 25 April aimed to build lines of communication between agencies and the police for handling GBV cases, sharing challenges and experiences and developing a partnership approach to solving problems. Photo: UN Women / Sultana Nasrin

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Stakeholders from the humanitarian sector, including NGOs, jointly participated with the Bangladesh Police in the training sessions. Photo: UN Women / Sultana Nasrin

Rohingya and Bangladeshi women celebrate Ramadan together in solidarity

The month of Ramadan is dedicated for reflection, charity and solidarity. To promote dialogue between women from Rohingya refugee and Bangladeshi host communities as well as women from local authorities, UN Women on 23 May, organized in partnership with its partners BRAC and Action Aid Bangladesh, a Ramadan Women Solidarity Event in the UN Women MPWC in Rohingya Camp 4 in Cox’s Bazar. The event gathered over 100 Rohingya Refugee and Bangladeshi host community women, 2 of the first women police officers deployed in the first UN Women supported Women and Children Police Help Desk in camp 4, and the first ever woman Camp-in-Charge (assistant) Shamima Akther Jahan to discuss together about common issues faced by women and their hopes for the future. At the end of the event all women participants received iftar food packages for themselves and their families. A video documentary captured messages of solidarity from the groups and can be viewed on the UN Women Asia and the Pacific YouTube channel.

“I am grateful to feel empowered as I have learnt about my rights as a woman, and I now feel I can share what I’ve learned with other women and help them also feel more confident” - Hamida, Rohingya Woman Leader

“No matter which country we are from, we women are all sisters, and must all stand up for each other in solidarity, and help each other out if anyone of us face any issues.”

-Shamima Akther Jahan, Assistant Camp-in-Charge

“I would like to tell Bangladeshi host community women that the Rohingyas have come to our country as our guests, and so for them to behave well accordingly as you do with guests and create a beautiful environment.

-Morzina Akter, Female Police Woman

UN Women receives broad support from the Governments of Canada, Germany, Japan, Sweden, the United Kingdom, the National Committees for UN Women in Australia, Japan, Iceland, Singapore, Sweden and USA, as well as the Tingari Silverton Foundation and Central Emergency Response Fund (CERF), towards delivering a humanitarian response in Cox’s Bazar, Bangladesh for Rohingya refugee and host community women and girls.
Rohingya lawyer, educator, human rights activist, and founder of the Rohingya Women Welfare Society (RWWS), Razia Sultana has made speaking up for the most vulnerable Rohingya women and girls her life’s mission.

Born in Myanmar sixth of eight sisters in a working-class family in Rakhine State, Myanmar. Razia’s father left then-Burma in the late 1960’s to grow his business in Bangladesh. Razia and her siblings spent their formative years in Bangladesh, but always considered Myanmar their true home. Razia’s father’s unwavering support, allowed her to follow her dream of practicing law, which was rather unprecedented for the time.

In 2012, Razia began using her legal expertise to fiercely advocate for Rohingya women on the world stage. Like most conflicts, women and girls were the first to suffer from organized, systematic and violent attacks by armed actors and security forces. While the largest, most violent attacks in Rakhine State, Myanmar escalated in August 2017, discrimination and violence against the Rohingya people have been a constant throughout Razia’s life.

The August 2017 escalations of violence in Rakhine State, Myanmar, led to more than 720,000 Rohingya people fleeing to seek refuge in Cox’s Bazar, Bangladesh. More than half of the refugees are women and girls, who arrived deeply traumatized from the violence, assault and rape that they themselves survived, witnesses and risked their lives to escape. Razia shared about the myriad of challenges that continues to plague Rohingya women in the camps today. They have restricted freedom of movement due to being a woman and a refugee which exposes them to different forms of GBV and harassment and limits their access to health care among other life-saving services. For many women, liaising with security forces or being examined by a male doctor re-introduces women’s trauma.

“We do not live a normal life. The camps in Cox’s Bazar are crowded and we cannot freely leave. We are stateless persons. We are not even Bangladeshis. We have no address – this life is not for anyone” Razia says.

To ease the trauma faced by countless Rohingya women, Razia has mobilized 60 women to conduct home visits such visits are informal drop-ins to visit with or counsel other women. Razia hopes that women who undergo counselling will in turn, mentor other trauma survivors. This model, Razia hopes, will help Rohingya women connect, share their stories, normalize their trauma and evolve into a new cadre of empowered women leaders. Working with host communities, Razia also combats negative stereotypes about the Rohingya in Cox’s Bazar.

“We need to focus on peace. If problems arise, where will the Rohingya go?”

UN Women is working to support the efforts of Razia Sultan, RWWS and other Rohingya Women Leaders’ Networks including through linking them to our Multi-Purpose Women’s Centers in the camps as well as our gender advocacy efforts under the humanitarian coordination system to ensure that Rohingya women’s voices and demands are shaping the current response efforts as well as the plans and prospects for their future.

Razia Sultana was the first Rohingya to address the UN Security Council in April 2018 and represent civil society at the UN Security Council Open Debate on Sexual Violence in Conflict. Photo: UN Women / Susan Megy

Razia Sultana is a founder of Rohingya Women Welfare Society. In April 2018, Razia spoke before UN Security Council’s Open Debate on Sexual Violence in Conflict. In 2019, she was a recipient of the U.S. Secretary of State’s International Women of Courage Award.
Further updates from UN Women Cox’s Bazar

➢ In addition to UN Women’s existing two Multi-Purpose Women Centres (MPWCs) in camps 4 and 18, three new UN Women MPWCs are now also up and running in camp 3 and 5 in partnership with BRAC and in camp 4 extension in partnership with Action Aid Bangladesh. The new centres will further strengthen UN Women’s efforts to provide safe spaces for Rohingya women and adolescent girls as well as ensure their access to life-saving services (first aid for GBV, counselling, and paramedic care), information (including on nutrition, personal hygiene, disaster preparedness, trafficking, health, sanitation, family planning), learning/literacy and livelihoods skills training (mobile repair, handicraft, tailoring, reusable sanitary pad production, etc) and referral services. They also support instigating positive interactions among women from both Rohingya and host communities through joint awareness and learning sessions.

➢ Under the Gender in Humanitarian Action (GiHA) WG, co-chaired by UN Women and UNHCR, a women’s leadership taskforce (WLT), has been established, responsible for strengthening joint efforts to promote women’s participation, leadership and empowerment as central to the Rohingya crisis response. Its immediate priority action areas include ensuring women’s participation in ongoing camp elections (as voters and candidates), protection and supporting women’s right to self-organize, and advocacy efforts of local women’s networks, promoting women and adolescent girls’ education and economic empowerment. The composition of the task force members insofar is: UN Women, UNFPA, WFP, UNHCR, Oxfam, Action Aid, BRAC, Plan International, CARE, IOM, Mukti, Relief International, CODEC, Jago Nari Unnayon Songsta and Legal Action Worldwide. The WLT is chaired by UN Women.

➢ On 25 April 2019, UN Women organized a solidarity event for female frontline workers, involved in Rohingya Refugees Response at Cox’s Bazar, to take time out from their daily duties and unwind. It provided an opportunity for women humanitarian responders to network, share ideas, collaborate, and vitally – enhance ways to work together. 246 women of different nationalities from 52 organizations participated at the event.
World Refugee Day 2019 marked through Rohingya women and girls’ art and handicrafts exhibition and fair, themed #StepWithRefugees

There are 25.4 million refugees around the world today, and nearly half are women and girls. The Gender in Humanitarian Action Working Group (GiHA WG), commemorated World Refugee day on 20 June 2019, and organized an event: ‘Rohingya Women’s Art Exhibition and Handicrafts Fair’ in Dhaka, showcasing Rohingya refugee women and girls’ talents in art and the production of handicrafts.

Shah Kamal, Senior Secretary, Ministry of Disaster Management and Relief (MoDMR) attended the event as chief guest. Among special guests were Rezwan Hayat, Joint secretary and Head of Refugee Cell, MoDMR, renowned female artist Joya Shaheen Hoq, Shoko Ishikawa, Country Representative UN Women, Papa Kysma, Deputy Country Representative, UNHCR, Flora Macula, Head of Sub Office, UN Women and Co-Chair of the GiHA WG, and Country Director of Relief International, Nazrul Islam.

The GiHA WG for the Rohingya Refugee crisis response in Cox’s Bazar provides cross-sectoral support to ensure the integration of gender aspects in humanitarian action and is co-chaired by UN Women and UNHCR. The exhibition and fair were jointly supported by the following: UN Women, UNHCR, IOM, WFP, OXFAM, Relief International, BRAC, ActionAid, CARE, HELP Cox’s bazar, UNFPA, Action Against Hunger, MUKTI Cox’s Bazar, Save the children, Terre des hommes, CODEC and Pulse Bangladesh.

Photographs capturing the activities of several UN agencies and NGOs present on the field for the Rohingya crisis response were exhibited, in addition to handicraft production skills of Rohingya women, which are developed when they participate in various livelihood training courses in Ukhiya and Teknaf. Photo: UN Women / Sultana Nasrin