



Over 730,000 refugees fled Myanmar since August 2017 and many refugee women and girls, as well as men and boys, have reported sexual violence in Myanmar. In Bangladesh, the challenging living conditions exposed them to other sexual and gender-based violence (SGBV) risks, including scarce livelihood opportunities, violence by intimate partners, sexual exploitation, trafficking, and child/forced marriages.

### Progress

In Cox's Bazar, UNHCR is an active member of the GBV Sub-sector under the Protection Sector and has a dedicated SGBV unit composed of 8 specialised staff who work with BNLWA, BRAC, RTMI/IRC, Relief International and TAI; UN partners, and the Government to strengthen SGBV prevention and response mechanisms through a rights-based community approach. Below are some of the activities implemented in the area of SGBV:

**92%** of SGBV survivors are women and girls; 8% are men and boys

**5** UNHCR partners are working to prevent and respond to SGBV

**31%** of households identified with at least one protection vulnerability, while 16% of them are single female-headed households

### UNHCR is working to address SGBV by:

- 1** **Scaling up** immediate health, psychosocial, and legal support
- 2** **Increasing access** to specialised survivor-centred services, including comprehensive women's health centres
- 3** **Working to prevent and mitigate risks** through building community-based protection response mechanisms, encouraging girls and women to participate in decision-making and leadership roles, raising awareness in community, and integrating SGBV considerations into all activities
- 4** **Engaging men, boys, and traditional leaders on SGBV issues**

**Medical:** Health facilities provide Post-Exposure Prophylaxis to prevent HIV, treat Sexually-Transmitted Infections (STIs), and offer emergency contraception for rape survivors. Health staff trained on Clinical Management of Rape. **76%** of survivors received medical treatment in 2018.

**Community sensitisation/outreach:** **143 community-based groups** were set up and had discussions to find ways to address SGBV risks, confront stigma, and provide support for survivors. Some **380 community outreach volunteers** were trained on SGBV to support identification and referral, and sensitise community and individuals on available support, confidentiality, and access.

**Men & boys:** **105** male role models have been selected and **1,862** awareness sessions have been conducted with men and boys including religious leaders, in order to mitigate SGBV risks, promote gender equality, and enlist their support to fight SGBV.

**MHPSS (Mental Health & Psychosocial Support):** UNHCR has a team of four psychologists working with partners to provide psychological first aid, mental health and psycho-social support to refugees, including SGBV survivors.

**7 counselling centres** and **9 community centres** were established to support case management, psychosocial services, and referrals.

**Safe spaces:** **Fourteen** safe spaces for women and girls were established, including 3 spaces equipped with healthcare services. These are places where SGBV survivors or women and girls at risk of violence can seek temporary shelter until a solution is found for their situation.

**Lights:** UNHCR has placed solar lights in refugee settlements and host communities to increase security for refugees. Lights make it harder for would-be perpetrators of violence to get away, as well as support the communities to protect themselves.

**Locks:** **85,000** of chain and locks for shelter have been distributed to increase the safety of refugees, particularly women and children, and their belongings.

**Fuel:** **37,583** households received LPG (Liquefied Petroleum Gas) as cooking fuel which help reduce exposure to potential SGBV risks by decreasing firewood collection in isolated forest areas.

### Challenges

- limited access to livelihoods and education result in disempowerment/social challenges
- traditional gender norms marginalise women and girls in the community, increasing vulnerability
- limited fully representative leadership structures among the refugees hamper the promotion of conditions to prevent and address SGBV

### Working in Partnership

UNHCR co-chairs the **Strategic Executive Group** together with the UN Resident Coordinator and IOM. The Refugee Agency leads on the protection response for all refugees, and heads a **Protection Working Group** in Cox's Bazar. UNHCR welcomes its valuable partnerships with a number of UN agencies and coordinates the delivery of its assistance with humanitarian partners through a number of working groups under the Inter-Sector Coordination Group (ISCG). UNHCR's main government counterpart is the Ministry of Disaster Management and Relief and its Cox's Bazar-based Refugee Relief and Repatriation Commissioner (RRRC). UNHCR staff work closely with the Camp-in-Charge officials in different refugee settlements, as well as with a range of international and national actors. It has a strong network of 28 partners, including:

**Action Aid Bangladesh | ACF** (Action Contre la Faim) | **ADRA** (Adventist Development and Relief Agency) | **BNWLA** (Bangladesh National Woman Lawyer's Association) | **Bangladesh Red Crescent Society** | **BRAC** (Bangladesh Rehabilitation Assistance Committee) | **Caritas Bangladesh** | **Center for Natural Resource Studies** | **CODEC** (Community Development Centre) | **COAST** (Coastal Association for Social Transformation Trust) | **Danish Refugee Council** | **FH Association** (Food for the Hungry) | **GK** (Gonoshasthaya Kendra) | **IRC** (International Rescue Committee) | **IUCN** (International Union for Conservation of Nature and Natural Resources) | **Handicap International** | **Helvetas Swiss Intercooperation** | **Light House** | **Oxfam GB** | **Relief International** | **Mukti Cox's Bazar** | **NGO Forum for Public Health** | **RTMI** (Research, Training and Management International) | **Save the Children International** | **Sesame Workshop** | **Solidarites International** | **Terre des hommes** Foundation | **TAI** (Technical Assistance Incorporated)

UNHCR would also like to acknowledge the crucial role played by the refugees in the response; with over 3,000 volunteers from the refugee community who are often the first responders on the ground. UNHCR and partners have trained and work with safety unit volunteers (SUVs) who support the emergency response, community outreach members who support raising awareness on important issues and in addressing protection risks, community health workers who assist with outreach for health and nutrition, and others who provide further critical support to the emergency response.

### Donor country contributions to UNHCR Bangladesh (2018/2019)



*With thanks to the many private donations from individuals, foundations, companies including the Arab Gulf Fund, Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation, Education Cannot Wait, International Islamic Relief Organization, Kuwait Finance House, Qatar Charity, Rahmatan Lil Alamin Foundation, The Big Heart Foundation, The Church of Latter-Day Saints, and UPS Corporate. Special thanks also to CERF.*