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Over 730,000 refugees fled Myanmar since August 2017 and are hosted in Bangladesh. 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

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 NGO, UN partners, and the Government to strengthen SGBV prevention and response mechanisms through rights-based community approach. Below are some of the activities implemented in the area of SGBV:

Medical: Health facilities provide Post-Exposure Prophylaxis (PEP) 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 met with the community to find ways to address SGBV risks as well as confront stigma, and create within communities support for survivors to increase their protection. Some **340 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 **1,449** awareness sessions have been conducted with men and boys, including religious leaders, to mitigate SGBV risks, promote gender equality, and enlist their support to fight SGBV.

MHPSS: 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.

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 households are single female-headed households

UNHCR is working to address SGBV:

- 1** **Scaling up** immediate health, psychosocial, and legal support
- 2** **Increasing access** to specialized 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 the community, and integrating SGBV considerations into all activities.
- 4** **Engaging men, boys, and traditional leaders on SGBV issues**

6 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: **73,842** of chain and locks have been distributed to increase the safety of refugees, particularly women and children, and their belongings.

Fuel: LPG has reached **20,000** households; helping to 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 leaderships structures hamper the promotion of conditions to prevent and address SGBV

Partners:
BNWLA, BRAC,
RTMI/IRC, Relief
International and TAI

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:

ACF (Action Contre la Faim) | **ACTED** (Agency for Technical Cooperation and Development) | **ADRA** (Adventist Development and Relief Agency) | **BDRCS** (Bangladesh Red Crescent Society) | **BNWLA** (Bangladesh National Women Lawyers Association) | **BRAC** (Bangladesh Rehabilitation Assistance Committee) | **CARITAS BANGLADESH** | **CODEC** (Community Development Centre) | **CSI** (Center for Social Integrity) | **DRC** (Danish Refugee Council) | **FH** (Food For the Hungry) | **GK** (Gonoshasthaya Kendra) | **HELVETAS** Swiss Intercooperation | **HI** (Handicap International) | **IUCN** (International Union for Conservation of Nature and Natural Resources) | **IRC** (International Rescue Committee) | **MTI** (Medical Teams International) | **NGOF** (NGO Forum) | **OXFAM** | **PIN** (People in Need) | **PUI** (Première Urgence Internationale) | **REACH** | **RI** (Relief International) | **RTMI** (Research Training and Management International) | **SCI** (Save the Children) | **SI** (Solidarités International) | **TAI** (Technical Assistance Incorporated) | **TDH** (Terre Des Hommes Foundation)

UNHCR would also like to acknowledge the crucial role played by the refugees in the response; with over 1,000 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.

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