



Legal awareness session with a group of refugee women in Camp 4 Ext. @BRAC

## KEY ACTIVITIES

- UNHCR in cooperation with its partner organizations **BRAC** and **BLAST** provides free legal aid services to refugees across 33 camps and in Bhasan Char. Refugees in the camps can approach UNHCR's partner organizations in the camp for support and to receive comprehensive legal counseling. Legal services are delivered through **72 camp-based lawyers** supported by **72 refugee paralegal volunteers**, and include legal information and awareness raising sessions, legal counselling, legal representation, mediation support, as well as facilitation of prison visits to detained family members.
- Between January and March, **6,232** refugees benefited from **legal assistance** services in the camps (58% are women and girls). Among these, BRAC and BLAST assisted **59** refugees to file legal complaints in police stations and courts, after obtaining prior authorization from CiCs, and **241** refugees were supported in legal proceedings in courts. Legal assistance was provided mostly in cases where refugees were victims of arrest outside the camps (linked to freedom of movement restrictions), physical assault, sexual violence, abduction, etc.
- UNHCR through its partners continued to follow up and intervene in cases where refugees were detained for illegal entry or stay (in violation of Section 14 of the Bangladeshi Foreigners Act). Among these, 28 refugees were released following UNHCR's legal partners intervention. **41** refugees who were found outside the camps and detained were released upon advocacy efforts and legal interventions by UNHCR's partners.
- In addition to providing legal assistance, BRAC and BLAST also organize legal awareness sessions where lawyers inform refugees and respond to questions on legal issues, including protection mechanisms, legal procedures, right to legal aid and free legal services available in camps. In January-March, **7,601** refugees were reached through legal awareness raising sessions in 33 camps and in Bhasan Char.
- As refugees don't have access to the formal civil justice system (civil and family courts), legal partners also provide mediation support as an alternative dispute resolution mechanism in family, financial and civil related matters. In January- March, **1,971** cases were referred to legal partners for mediation, **795** of which were successfully resolved.
- As part of its engagement, **capacity building and advocacy** with the judiciary to facilitate access to justice for refugees, UNHCR provided support through a donation made to the District Legal Aid Office in Cox's Bazar to establish a mediation room in the District Judges Court. The mediation room is used to receive cases and provide free legal aid to vulnerable/destitute individuals, including for resolution of disputes. The new mediation room was inaugurated on 12 March 2023 by the District Judge and District Legal Aid Officer with the presence of UNHCR, judges and magistrates of the Cox's Bazar District Court.

