



Rapid Gender Analysis in Bhasan Char

July 2023



Acknowledgements

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Acronyms and Abbreviations

ARSA	Arakan Rohingya Salvation Army
Aoi	Areas of Inquiry
BDRCS	Bangladesh Red Crescent Society
CFRM	Community Feedback and Response Mechanism
CIC	Camp-in-Charge
FDMN	Forcibly Displaced Myanmar Nationals
FGD	Focus Group Discussion
GBV	Gender Based Violence
GBVIMS	Gender based violence Information Management System
GiHA	Gender in Humanitarian Action
GO	Government Organization
GOB	Government of Bangladesh
IAHE	International Agency Humanitarian Evaluation
IDI	In-depth Interview
INGO	International Non-Government Organization
IOM	International Organization for Migration
IPV	Intimate Partner Violence
ISCG	Inter-Sector Coordination Group
JRP	Joint Response Plan
KII	Key Informant Interview
LGBTQ	Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, and Queer
LPG	Liquified Petroleum Gas
MoDMR	Ministry of Disaster Management and Relief
MoPA	Ministry of Public Administration
MPWC	Multi-purpose Women Centre
NGO	Non-Government Organization

NSI	National Security Intelligence
PSS	Psychosocial Support
PWD	Persons with Disabilities
RGA	Rapid Gender Analysis
RRRC	Refugee Relief and Repatriation Commissioner
SEA	Sexual Exploitation and Abuse
UN	United Nations
UNFPA	United Nations Population Fund
UNHCR	United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees
UNICEF	United Nations Children's Fund
WFP	World Food Programme
WGSS	Women and Girls Safe Spaces
WGQ	Washington Group Questionnaire

Executive Summary

Background

This Rapid Gender Analysis (RGA) is based on a survey conducted by CARE from April to June 2023 among the Rohingya community in Bhasan Char, Bangladesh.

The Rohingya community's exodus to Bangladesh began in the 1970s. However, the most recent mass influx into Bangladesh occurred between 2017 and 2019 in response to the extreme violence inflicted upon them by Myanmar authorities. The actions of Myanmar Army were deemed by the United Nations as genocide, "scorched earth campaign", and "textbook example of ethnic cleansing."¹

Almost a million displaced Rohingya people were given shelter by the Government of Bangladesh (GoB) and reside in the camps in the Cox's Bazar district in Bangladesh. As an attempt to "decongest and de-risk the camps²", the government has provided habitations for the displaced Rohingya community on the island of Bhasan Char, off the coast of Bangladesh.

Purpose

There has been no analysis of the relocated Rohingya community living on Bhasan Char specifically focusing on their changing gender dynamics. This RGA highlights the urgent need to understand and address unique challenges faced by women, men, children, and gender diverse individuals within this displaced population. It is designed to assist humanitarian and development partners to develop strategies and project ideas that will serve the diverse needs of the relocated Rohingya women, men, boys, girls, and gender diverse people, taking into consideration of local gender dynamics, the promotion of gender equality and women's empowerment.

Specific objectives

The RGA aims to:

1. elaborate gender norms, roles, and relationships significantly affecting the wellbeing of relocated Rohingya people in all their diversity, in accordance with core Areas of Inquiry (AoI) developed by Care International
2. document observed changes in gender dynamics paying close attention to their lived experiences of relocation to Bhasan Char
3. provide analyses of the potential impact of ration cuts in Bhasan Char in terms of coping mechanisms that are likely to affect the livelihood in the island

¹ UN (11 Sep 2017). News/Press Release. "UN human rights chief points to 'textbook example of ethnic cleansing' in Myanmar" Extracted July 2023. Link - <https://news.un.org/en/story/2017/09/564622-un-human-rights-chief-points-textbook-example-ethnic-cleansing-myanmar> .

² Government of Bangladesh (30 Dec 2020), Press Release on Vashanchar, https://mofa.gov.bd/site/press_release/b4c48065-f1ba-466c-8d8f-f3dc9b324c5c

4. provide sector-wise recommendations, taking into account the differential needs, capacities and coping strategies of women, men, girls and boys in Bhasan Char.

Scope and area of focus

The RGA investigates three specific areas of focus: gender and governance, livelihood, and gender-based violence (GBV) and protection concerns, to better capture the newly forming Rohingya community in Bhasan Char and their gender dynamics. For each element, close attention was paid to how gender norms, roles, and relations inform and shape the Rohingya people's perceptions, behavior, and aspirations.

Methodology

The study design and framework include quantitative and qualitative methods based on survey questions, key information interviews, and focus group discussions. There were 335 survey respondents (59% female, 41% male, all adults), and 20 participants in the interviews.

Key findings

General Findings

- The relocated Rohingya community in Bhasan Char, which is still in the process of reforming, reflects the diversity of the Rohingya community in Cox's Bazar. The ways in which Rohingya individuals experience a protracted humanitarian crisis differ significantly, as they are influenced by various social factors including age, gender, economic status, health condition, and more.
- Many Rohingya people decided to relocate to Bhasan Char in search of better living conditions and security. A significant portion of the relocated Rohingya individuals express varying degrees of satisfaction.

Gender and Governance

- The Rohingya community in Bhasan Char is very much shaped by traditional gender roles and expectations. As a result, not only are women's voices unheard in the community governance system, but there are no female leaders representing Rohingya women in the island.
- CiC, *Majhis*, and *Imams* are regarded as community leaders among the Rohingya community in Bhasan Char. However, they are not democratically selected by the Rohingya community. The abuses of their leadership power have also surfaced in this survey.
- More than 70% of both Rohingya women and men consider Rohingya women are not suitable for leadership roles. This is a result of prevalent traditional gender roles and the extremely limited educational opportunities for women.

Livelihood Opportunities and Challenges

- More than 60% of the respondents are suffering from the lack of livelihood opportunities in Bhasan Char. Many of them find it difficult to find income generation opportunities whether it be NGO volunteer work or informal daily labour.
- An overwhelming majority of Rohingya women and men consider they can move around freely in their neighbourhood in Bhasan Char. This is a significant improvement compared with the time they lived

in Cox's Bazar. On the other hand, a small percentage of both Rohingya women and men find it difficult to leave their residence by themselves even after they relocated to Bhasan Char.

- Despite the optimistic views about their mobility in their neighbourhood, Rohingya women in reality face various challenges in traveling. Wearing a burka can provide a sense of protection to some women, but it does not get rid of all security concerns. Social norms, religious faith and family rules also shape women's mobility on the island.
- There are conflicting views about Rohingya women engaging with unconventional income generating work. While nearly 50% of Rohingya women consider Rohingya women should get a job to support their families, approximately 60% of Rohingya men do not agree to the idea. Given the fact that the majority of Rohingya women did not have experience in employment in Myanmar, women's attitude toward getting a job has changed significantly overtime.
- The RGA captures that Rohingya women and men engage with a wide range of coping mechanism facing livelihood challenges. This includes getting financial or in-kind support from neighbours or receiving remittances from outside of Bangladesh. Food-related coping mechanisms such as eating less quantity of food or borrowing food are not uncommon.

GBV and Protection Concerns

- Nearly 60% of Rohingya men do not think security concerns have increased after they arrived in Bhasan Char. Conversely, more than 60% of Rohingya women express an opposite view. Rohingya women continue facing the fear of physical violence in a new environment.
- Facing severe livelihood challenges, harmful practices including child labour, polygamy, and child marriages are expected to increase in Bhasan Char. Rohingya people in Bhasan Char do not have many options but to engage with harmful behaviours like these.
- When Rohingya people face protection risks, they want to rely on community leaders such as *majhi* and *imam*. They also count on the services provided by NGOs in Bhasan Char. The absence of female leaders can hinder Rohingya women and girls from seeking out for support.

Recommendations:

Protection

- The RGA has made it clear that the Rohingya community on Bhasan Char is composed of various individuals and households that have different cultural backgrounds, capabilities, and susceptibility to vulnerability. The Protection Sector should continue mainstreaming protection concerns with other sectors, so a comprehensive approach is strengthened across the community to address varied protection risks that have different impacts on different groups in the diverse Rohingya community.
- Protection Sector has already identified the gaps in GBV-related services. Humanitarian partners should consider providing additional support to this sector so all Rohingya people in Bhasan Char from diverse backgrounds will have just access to necessary support when they face GBV-related challenges. This includes ensuring access to justice for GBV survivors. Men and boys also need to engage with GBV-related activities for various purposes.
- The Rohingya community in Bhasan Char already has supporting mechanisms even though their history in the island is quite new. It is essential to leverage existing or burgeoning support networks to enhance the resilience of the Rohingya community at large, paying particular attention to vulnerable groups who tend to be excluded from mainstream support mechanisms.

- Community governance structures and participatory mechanisms should ensure that women, girls, men, boys, and gender diverse individuals of all ages and diverse backgrounds contribute to their own protection. This can include the formation of representative committees to enable Rohingya communities to exercise their right to participate and influence the design and delivery of humanitarian programmes.
- In facing serious livelihood challenges, an increasing number of people are expected to engage with harmful practices as negative coping mechanism. Risk mitigation programs need to be implemented in cooperating with the Protection sector. Community leaders as well as law enforcement agencies need to be trained on addressing harmful practices in a more inclusive and effective way.

Education

- There is a pressing need of education support for Rohingya girls and women in Bhasan Char in consideration of the fact that the majority of them have never received education before arriving in Bangladesh. Not only does education help girls and women reduce protection risks such as child marriage, human trafficking, or child labour, it also paves the way for women to take up leadership roles.
- Rohingya girls continue facing mobility challenges in Bhasan Char. To increase girls' attendance to educational services, creating an enabling environment is essential, by engaging with the entire community including men and boys as well as securing caregivers' full buy-in.
- Education plays an important role in bringing about social transformation. Investing in female education enables girls to participate in the community governance more effectively, where currently girls and women voices are not fully reflected. Education can also provide both women and men with an opportunity to openly discuss how they want to transform their society in a way that is suitable to the diverse needs of Rohingya individuals.

Health and Nutrition

- The Rohingya community in Bhasan Char has been grappling with food insecurity since the day they arrived in the island. A strong health monitoring system needs to be strengthened to keep track of adverse impacts of food insufficiency, incorporating intersectional perspectives. Equitable access to quality health services must be ensured to all Rohingya residents from different backgrounds.
- In view of declining humanitarian assistance and existing livelihood challenges, those who engage with harmful martial practices are expected to rise. It is important to strengthen a health system so it addresses the unique needs of Rohingya girls and women from all backgrounds and diversities, including mental health support. Raising awareness on Sexual and Reproductive Health Rights is critical as well.
- Health outreach programs need to be enhanced for the groups that face challenges in accessing health services. These groups include persons with disabilities and gender diverse people. The written guidelines can be developed for these groups in collaboration with Health sector in Cox's Bazar.

Food Security

- Humanitarian partners, in partnership with the Government of Bangladesh, need to demonstrate collective strength to keep providing the sufficient level of food assistance to the relocated Rohingya people. The unique impacts of food insecurities on girls, women, and other vulnerable groups within the Rohingya community need to be sensitized at multiple levels.
- The RGA shows that Rohingya women and girls have not attained an equal social position with Rohingya men and boys. Because of such structural inequality, Rohingya women and girls have more risks of having less access to food than their male counterparts. Similarly, the food insecurity could lead to the increased tension and conflict within households. Detailed studies need to be conducted to better understand how the food security deteriorates gender equality in the Rohingya context.
- More than 20% of the Rohingya people consider they do not receive enough information about humanitarian assistance in Bhasan Char and more women than men report that they are not consulted enough for humanitarian assistance they are entitled to. In case food assistance is reduced in Bhasan Char following the same path of Cox's Bazar in future, the careful consultation with Rohingya people, particularly girls and women, is necessary to ensure everyone understands potential consequences of the reduction of food assistance.

Site Management Support, Shelter and Non-food Items

- Even though the expectations for community leaders such as CiC and *Majhi* are very high within the Rohingya community, the current community governance system does not effectively capture diverse voices and perspectives of the Rohingya community. One way to tackle this problem is to increase the number of women in leadership positions, but it requires long-term empowerment of women and girls through education and economic opportunities. In the meantime, the current *Majhi* system needs to be adjusted so it enhances the transparency of the *majhi* selection system and the decision-making mechanism. The operational guidelines and a code of conducts should be developed and put in place.
- The current infrastructure arrangements in Bhasan Char, especially low occupancy rate of the residential buildings, enhance security risks for the Rohingya community. A better community governance system needs to be introduced so the community can take lead of the control of security risks. A participatory security risk mapping exercise should be conducted by Rohingya residents from various backgrounds of different age.

Livelihoods and Skill Development Sector

- Lack of literacy skills among the Rohingya community poses a challenge in improving their livelihoods in Bhasan Char. In collaborating with the Education sector, a more robust literacy education program needs to be rolled out for all those who are willing to develop basic literacy skills. To encourage women to participate in such program, getting buy-ins from community leaders and caregivers are essential. The security situation in Bhasan Char is more suitable for women to participate in such programs than in Cox's Bazar, if adequate cares are provided.
- Giving women access to more livelihood opportunities will lead to the empowerment of Rohingya women. However, the sudden structural change in the Rohingya community can induce a backlash from individuals who do not appreciate such change. The entire community needs to be sensitized about the importance of women engaging with livelihood activities for the future of the Rohingya community. Diverse voices of women of different backgrounds also need to be made visible within the community.

- Particular groups within the Rohingya community such as persons with disabilities, elderly people, gender-diverse people, and young women tend to be left behind from participating in livelihood activities because of their accessibility barriers. A clear guideline needs to be developed for the selection of program participants in a way that takes into consideration of access barriers of different groups in the community. The livelihood sector should pay particular attention so particular groups in the community do not dominate the control of community assets.

Common Services and Logistics

- The logistics sector traditionally lacks gender equality in its staff composition. The unique, isolated setting of Bhasan Char could be strengthening this tendency. Gender equality should be sensitized among humanitarian and government partners and the Rohingya community so more women or gender diverse people will have an interest to join the sector activities.

1. Introduction and Background

Bangladesh is hosting approximately one million Rohingya people³ in Ukhiya and Teknaf *upazilas*⁴ of Cox's Bazar district, and Bashan Char Island of Noakhali district. Among the total number of the Rohingya community residing in Bangladesh, 52% are female and 48% are male, comprising 52% children, 44% adults and 4% older people. In terms of place of origin, 68% of them come from Maungdaw township followed by Bauthidaung (26%) and Rathedaung (5%) township,⁵ all in Myanmar.

Citing issues of overcrowding, congestion, and security in Cox's Bazar, since October 2017 the Government of Bangladesh (GoB) has been developing a relocation site for the displaced Rohingya community.⁶ The site is called Bashan Char, situated on an island in the Bay of Bengal under Noakhali District. The island was formed by Himalayan silt in 2006.⁷ It spans 40 square kilometers (15 sq mi; 4000 ha). The GoB first suggested resettling displaced Rohingya people on the island in June 2015, a proposal characterized by the United Nations Refugee Agency as "logistically challenging".⁸ Nevertheless, on January 26, 2017, the Bangladeshi government ordered the resettlement to begin.⁹ In August 2019 the government announced an expansion of the Ashrayan Project (Ashrayan-3) to build 100,000 homes on the island.¹⁰ The project includes 1,140 concrete housing structures built 1.3 m above the ground in order to protect the residents from high tidal waves,¹¹ flood defense embankments from 2.7 m to 5.8 m, 120 cyclone shelters, cluster villages, mosques, hospitals, water channeling infrastructure, roads, infrastructure for farming, and

³ The Government of Bangladesh refers to the Rohingya community in Bangladesh as "Forcibly Displaced Myanmar Nationals (FDMN)", deciding to do so since September 2017. The United Nations (UN) system refers to this population as Rohingya refugee

s, in line with the applicable international framework.

⁴ An *upazila* (or sub-district) is an administrative area of Bangladesh.

⁵ Government of Bangladesh and UNHCR. Rohingya Refugee Response/Bangladesh: Joint Government of Bangladesh - UNHCR Population factsheet (as of 31 May 2023). ReliefWeb. Retrieved on July 2023. Link: <https://reliefweb.int/report/bangladesh/rohingya-refugee-responsebangladesh-joint-government-bangladesh-unhcr-population-factsheet-31-may-2023>

⁶ Cowper-Smith, Yuriko (17 June 2020). "The Bhasan Char Relocation Project – Implications for Rohingya Refugees in Bangladesh". ReliefWeb. Retrieved on July 2023. Link: <https://reliefweb.int/report/bangladesh/bhasan-char-relocation-project-implications-rohingya-refugees-bangladesh>

⁷ Kullab, Samya (February 23, 2017). "The Trouble With Thengar Char". Foreign Affairs. Retrieved on July 2023. Link: <https://www.foreignaffairs.com/articles/bangladesh/2017-02-23/trouble-thengar-char#:~:text=During%20the%20June%E2%80%93September%20monsoon,populating%20Thengar%20Char%20died%20off>.

⁸ "UN concern at Bangladesh plan to move thousands of Rohingya to flooded island". The Guardian. June 14, 2015. Retrieved July 2023, Link: <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2015/jun/14/un-concern-at-bangladesh-plan-to-move-thousands-of-rohingya-to-flooded-island>

⁹ Rahman, Shaikh Azizur (February 2, 2017). "Plan to move Rohingya to remote island prompts fears of human catastrophe". The Guardian. Retrieved July 2023. Link: <https://www.theguardian.com/global-development/2017/feb/02/bangladesh-government-plan-move-rohingya-remote-island-human-catastrophe>

¹⁰ Khokon, Sahidul Hasan (29 Nov 2017). "Bangladesh: Govt takes up Ashrayan-3 project to shelter Rohingya refugees". India Today. Retrieved July 2023. Link: <https://www.indiatoday.in/world/story/rohingya-bangladesh-myanmar-sheikh-hasina-ashrayan-3-1096442-2017-11-29>

¹¹ Anik, Syed Samiul (29 Jan 2019). "Inside the Bhashan Char plan for Rohingyas". Dhaka Tribune. Retrieved July 2023. Link: <https://archive.dhakatribune.com/bangladesh/rohingya-crisis/2019/01/29/inside-the-bhashan-char-plan-for-rohingyas>

numerous other land development works.¹² The Bangladesh navy built much of the infrastructure on Bhasan Char.¹³ Despite these efforts, concerns have been raised by humanitarian observers regarding the impact of the relocation on the Rohingya's safety, freedom of movement, legal rights and livelihood opportunities.¹⁴ In addition to government agencies, by December 2020, 22 NGOs were actively providing support to the relocated Rohingya.¹⁵

There is no national legislation in Bangladesh specifically governing the administration of refugee and asylum affairs: the government manages the Rohingya crisis through directives, letters and administrative instruments.¹⁶ However, the GoB and the Office of the Refugee Relief and Repatriation Commissioner (RRRC) have committed to providing ongoing support for forcibly displaced Rohingyas seeking shelter in Bangladesh through its Camp in Charge (CiC) coordination structure. There are 33 CiC offices in Cox's Bazar Rohingya camps and one CiC office in Bhasan Char. Under these 34 CiC offices, as of June 2023, some 39 officers of the Ministry of Disaster Management and Relief (MoDMR) and Refugee Relief Repatriation Commission are working in the roles of one Secretary, one Additional Secretary and two Deputy Secretary at Dhaka level and one RRRC, three Additional RRRCs, Fourteen other officials under RRRCs, 19 CiCs and Additional CiCs at Cox's Bazar level with around 440 project staff, all funded by UNHCR. For 2024, UNHCR has discussed and the MoDMR agreed to further downsize the budget and reduce the number of support staff.

In October 2021, the GoB and UNHCR on behalf of United Nations (UN) agencies signed a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) establishing a common protection and policy framework for the Rohingya humanitarian response relating to Bhasan Char.¹⁷ In Bhasan Char, coordination structures have been established in line with the Refugee Coordination Model, supporting the Government's lead role in the response. UNHCR support the response in coordinating humanitarian actors through the Inter-Agency Coordination Forum and sectors involving multiple partners. The coordination structure comprises eight sectors: (1) Protection, lead agency UNHCR, (2) Education, lead agency United Nations Children's Emergency Fund (UNICEF) (3) Health and Nutrition, lead agency UNHCR, (4) Water and Sanitation, lead agency UNICEF, (5) Livelihoods and Skills Development, lead agency UNHCR and co-lead by WFP and BRAC, (6) Site Management, Support, Shelter and Non-food Items, lead agency UNHCR, (7) Food Security, lead agency World Food Programme (WFP), and (8) Common Services and Logistics, lead agency WFP. UNHCR leads the overall coordination on behalf of the humanitarian community.

¹² Islam, Jahidul (17 Dec 2019). "Bhasan Char project cost to rise 34%". The Business Standard. Retrieved July 2023. Link: <https://www.tbsnews.net/rohingya-crisis/bhasan-char-project-cost-rise-34>.

¹³ "Bangladesh sends third group of Rohingya refugees to island". Al Jazeera English. 29 January 2021. Retrieved July 2023. Link: <https://www.aljazeera.com/news/2021/1/29/bangladesh-sends-third-group-of-rohingya-refugees-to-island#:~:text=Nearly%201%2C800%20refugees%20sent%20to,groups%20to%20halt%20the%20process.&text=Authorities%20in%20Bangladesh%20have%20sent,a%20halt%20to%20the%20process>.

¹⁴ Ibid.

¹⁵ UN Bangladesh (4 Dec 2020). Press Release. "Rohingya relocation to Bhashan Char". Retrieved July 2023. Link: <https://bdun.org/2020/12/04/rohingya-relocation-to-bhashan-char/>

¹⁶ UNHCR Micro Data Library, Operational Data Portal, Retrieved on July 2023. Link: <https://data.unhcr.org/en/country/bgd#:~:text=Rohingya%20refugees%20are%20hosted%20in,Bangladesh%20to%20decongest%20the%20camps>

¹⁷ UN Bangladesh (9 Oct 2021). Press Release. "UN and Government of Bangladesh sign Memorandum of Understanding for Rohingya humanitarian response on Bhasan Char". Retrieved on July 2023. Link: <https://bangladesh.un.org/en/150722-un-and-government-bangladesh-sign-memorandum-understanding-rohingya-humanitarian-response>

The Rohingya community has been continuously facing the challenges of fragmentation and restructuring because of their experiences of repetitive displacements, the COVID–19 pandemic, and state violence in Myanmar. The relocation to Bhasan Char forces the displaced Rohingya community to reconstruct their community in a new island setting, presumably requesting community members again to negotiate, compromise or reinforce gender dynamics, for which each individual may have different understanding and expectations. Displacement and relocation also can disrupt gender roles and dynamics within families and communities, leading to changes in power relations and decision-making. However, no formal study has yet been conducted to unfold the changing gender dynamics of the Rohingya population in Bhasan Char. Critical knowledge gaps therefore exist, posing a challenge to policy and planning and implementation among the humanitarian actors.

Noting this fact, Japan International Corporation Agency (JICA) and CARE partnered to conduct the first-ever Rapid Gender Analysis (RGA) on Bhasan Char. In general, an RGA provides a source of information during a crisis about the different needs, capacities and coping strategies of women, men, boys, girls and gender diverse people and helps to understand gender roles and relations and changing patterns of role division. It provides practical programming and operational recommendations to meet different needs of women, men, boys and girls, and to ensure the principle of ‘do no harm’ is adhered to. RGA tools are adapted to each specific context to ensure they are culturally sensitive and used to gather information from women, men, boys and girls about the impact of a crisis. This current RGA seeks to bridge the gap in knowledge and ensure that local gender dynamics are properly understood and integrated in programming for effective aid delivery to the Rohingya community in Bhasan Char.

2. Purpose, Objectives, and Scope

2.1 Overall purpose

This RGA is designed to assist humanitarian and development partners to develop strategies and project ideas that will serve the needs of Rohingya women, men, boys, girls, and gender diverse people who have been relocated to Bhasan Char, in a manner that takes into consideration of local gender dynamics, the promotion of gender equality, and women’s empowerment.

2.2 Specific objectives

The RGA aims to:

1. elaborate gender norms, roles and relationships significantly affecting the wellbeing of relocated Forcibly Displaced Myanmar Nationals (FDMNs)/Rohingya refugees in all their diversity, in accordance with core Areas of Inquiry developed by Care International
2. document observed changes in gender dynamics paying close attention to their experiences of relocation to Bhasan Char
3. provide analysis of the potential impact of ration cuts in Bhasan Char in terms of coping mechanisms that are likely to affect the livelihood in Bhasan Char
4. provide sector-wise recommendations, taking account of differential needs, capacities and coping strategies of women, men, girls and boys in Bhasan Char.

2.3 Scope and area of focus

The RGA investigates the following specific elements: governance, livelihoods, and GBV and protection concerns, to better capture the newly forming Rohingya community in Bhasan Char and their gender dynamics. For each element, close attention is paid to how gender norms, gender roles, and gender relations inform and shape the Rohingya people's perceptions, behavior, and aspirations.

Gender and Governance (formal/informal decision-making mechanism, community dispute resolution, social justice)

- How is a new Rohingya community being forged in Bhasan Char and how are gender norms reflected within it?
- Who has influencing power in the community?
- What decision-making mechanism is in place both formally and informally?
- How are social/gender justice issues including dowry, child marriage, and polygamy policed?
- How are community governance and religion intertwined and what are the implications in terms of local gender dynamics?
- How are marginalized groups included in community decision-making?

Livelihoods (remittances, dowry, NGO jobs and other livelihood activities)

- What livelihood opportunities exist in Bhasan Char and how do they affect gender dynamics?
- How is dowry perceived and practiced in Bhasan Char in light of the fact that the Rohingya have different livelihood opportunities there?
- What negative coping mechanisms are foreseeable in light of potential food ration cuts?
- Who is more vulnerable or marginalized in the context of Bhasan Char?

GBV and Protection Concerns (available social services, access to aid information, child marriage)

- What services are available on the island and who has access to such information?
- What security concerns do women and girls have in Bhasan Char?
- What makes the Rohingya community maintain or discontinue the practice of child marriage and smuggling of brides in Bhasan Char, where freedom of movement is much more restricted?

3. Methodology

The study design and framework were established in accordance with the agreed Terms of Reference (ToR) of this study. The study methodology was established to consist of seven stages: (1) conceptualization, (2) secondary research, (3) development of data collection tools (4) data collection, (5) data analysis and compilation of findings, (6) consultation and validation with JICA, and (7) report finalization and presentation. The analysis and sense-making process followed the way, so it meets the objectives of the study. Throughout the study process, the CARE Bangladesh team worked closely with GoB authorities and NGO/INGOs working in Bhasan Char.

4. Data Collection

Data collection schedule, April 8–13, 2023 and May 20–25, 2023

Date	Place	Work
1 st trip to Bhasan Char		

Date	Place	Work
8 th April	Cox's Bazar to Chattogram Boat Club	Arrival at Bhasan Char by navy ship
9 th April	Household survey, FGD and IDI	Coordination with BC in-charge, meeting with BDRCS Site Management FGD with Adolescent Boys and Girls for story collection
10 th April	Bhasan Char	Household survey
11 th April	Bhasan Char	Household survey, FGD
12 th April	Bhasan Char	Household survey, KII with CiC, Majhi
13 th April	Bhasan Char	Household survey (Morning) Return to Chattogram by Navy ship
2nd Trip to Bhasan Char		
20 th May	Cox's Bazar to Chattogram	Arrival at Chattogram
21 st May	Off to Bhasan Char	Arrival at Bhasan Char by Navi ship Meet with BDRCS – SM volunteers
22 nd May	Bhasan Char	Coordination Meeting with UNHCR Household survey, FGD, KII, IDI for story collection
23 rd May	Bhasan Char	Household survey, FGD, KII, In-depth Interview for story collection, Persons with Disabilities, INGO, UN
24 th May	Bhasan Char to Chattogram	Household survey, FGD, KII, In-depth Interview for story collection Attend Protection Coordination Meeting and Return

The study followed a mixed methods approach, with both qualitative and quantitative data collected as evidence of the findings by following the RGA criteria. The CARE team ascribed the utmost importance to collection and management of data, ensuring validity, integrity, precision, and reliability. Alongside collecting data from primary sources, strong focus was given to collecting data from various secondary sources as well. The data collection tools were adopted and customized in a joint and consultative manner with the study team and JICA. The agreed tool was also field tested to finalize those. The data collection team was thoroughly oriented to the tools before they were deployed for the data collection.

While data from household survey helped in generating a data-centric analysis of trends and practice, the qualitative data helped the study team to unfold deep-rooted reasons, socio-economic conditions, and perceptions behind issues such as gender-based violence, gender inequality, child marriage, dynamics of gender roles and gender disparity. Triangulation of data from multiple sources has been prioritized by the study team.

4.1 Quantitative methods

Part of this study method was an individual survey at the household level to collect quantitative data. Although we initially considered targeting a sample size of 384 individuals, eventually survey was conducted among a total of 335 women and men in Bhasan Char. This was due to the team having to close data collection earlier than planned because of interruption by Cyclone Mocha. The survey collected primary data to accumulate evidence to inform the study's key objectives and research questions. Based

on the review of available secondary documents, and focusing on CARE's RGA guideline, a semi-structured questionnaire was developed for this household survey. The quantitative data was collected and archived using the KoBo toolbox.

4.2 Qualitative methods

The qualitative data was collected through observations from cluster visits to Bhasan Char, conversations with representation of the Camp-in-Charge (CiC) and NGOs/INGOs working on Bhasan Char, and focus group discussions (FGDs) with Rohingya community members comprising men, women, boys, girls and gender diverse people. The study team conducted 9 FGDs, 8 Key Informant Interviews (KIIs) and 3 in-depth interviews. KIIs were conducted with (1) relevant government agencies/civil servant responsible for camp management and administration, (2) UN agencies, (3) national and international NGOs, and (4) cluster focal/*majhi* in Bhasan Char. FGDs were conducted with 3 women's groups, 2 male groups, 1 religious leaders' group, 1 adolescent girls' group, 1 adolescent boys' group and 1 gender diverse people's group; 3 in-depth interviews were conducted to collect case stories of adult women and men, and adolescent girl. All these qualitative data collections were guided by appropriate checklists.

The qualitative information was triangulated with reports, articles, meeting minutes and the available literature review, with data collected from the KIIs and FGDs, and applied grounded theory, to identify the key themes and priorities that emerged. A standard analytical framework for a RGA encompasses the following domains:

1. attitudes and beliefs
2. gender role and division of labour
3. power and decision making; and
4. access and control over resources
5. livelihood opportunities
6. gender-based violence

These domains are interwoven into the key RGA findings section that discusses how these underlying power dynamics contribute to the most salient barriers of displaced Rohingya men, women, girls, boys and gender diverse people in Bhasan Char.

4.3 Desk review

In the initial stages, the team examined the objectives and conceptualized the overall RGA and its framework. This session guided the next stages of the analysis through capitalization of existing knowledge and leveraging existing literature from different sources. The team conducted a desk review of 30 key documents and previous RGA analysis reports, relevant research articles, journals, and published reports of development agencies/partners, and the media to understand the overall socio-cultural and socio-political context of gender equality, equity, gender norms and gender-based violence, and women empowerment in humanitarian contexts. This literature review was conducted manually and informed of the design of a semi-structured guide for the FGDs and KIIs (see Annex 2) that was adapted to the unique profiles of individual stakeholders.

4.4 Analysis and sense-making

Data analysis involved the systematic organization, comparison and synthesis of information and data collected using all the methods, and generated an evidence-based report to provide recommendations

on the key areas of enquiry: gender and governance, livelihoods, and gender-based violence. The report focused and elaborated on the findings of the analysis and the generated recommendations are summarized and appended to this report.

4.5 Sampling framework

A systematic and single stage simple random sampling method was adopted to identify sampled individuals, both women and men, for the household survey. The study aimed for a sample size of 384, with a 95% confidence level and a 5% margin of error. However, due to various limitations a total sample size of 335 was surveyed. The study covered the complete target area proposed by the project, taking into consideration the unique nature of each community/group/cluster and the homogeneity and heterogeneity of the respondents.

The equation used to calculate the sample size is:

$$S = (Z^2 * p * (1-p)) / e^2$$

where:

- Z = 1.96 (the value at 95% level of confidence)
- e = 0.055 (type I error level/5.5% margin of error)
- p = 0.5 (approximate proportion which is 50% to be conservative as we have no idea what the prevalence is)

Following the formula, we get:

$$S = ((1.96)^2 (0.5) (1 - 0.5)) / (0.05)^2 = 384.16 = 317.48$$

as the estimated sample size for the household level quantitative survey. The enumerators followed a systematic process to identify the sample households for the interview.

4.6 Confidentiality and ethical code of conduct

The study team took every necessary measure to ensure a safe and respectful environment for all respondents by:

1. ensuring gender-sensitive communication
2. respecting the confidentiality of the respondents
3. requesting verbal informed consent from respondents in FGD/KII
4. ensuring non-discrimination and full respect for all respondents in the process.

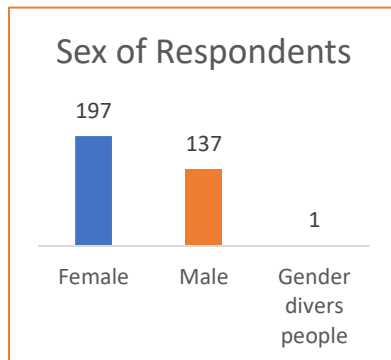
It also adhered to the terms and conditions as set out by CARE–JICA and adopted ethical measures, and made it clear to all participating stakeholders that they were under no obligation to participate in the study. Participants were assured that there would be no negative consequences if they chose not to participate. The team obtained informed consent from the participants and obtained prior permission to take and use visual images for specific purposes. The study ensured participant anonymity and confidentiality; it will ensure that all documented data is protected and used for the agreed purpose only and ensure copyright laws are complied with. Further, the team followed all ethical considerations and ensured respect for all human, child, and disability rights. It also adhered to the Child and Youth Safeguarding policies of CARE and JICA. All documents, papers and data produced during the assignment will be treated confidentially and will not be used publicly.

4.7 Challenges and limitations

- The RGA team encountered some challenges in terms of time management of the whole study process. The approval process from RRRC for the assessment and the study team's visit to Bashan Char was time-consuming. Planning for this had to keep in mind the schedule of the navy vessel that the team needed to use to access Bhasan Char; consequently, they were unable to manage all the data collection in one single visit. During the first-round visit to the island, the team had to take into consideration shortened working hours during the month of Ramadan and the Eid holidays. Similarly, the second visit had to be postponed because of Cyclone Mocha, and its duration had to be cut short due to the sudden change of the navy's schedule due to the bad weather forecast. All these resulted in some delays and not being able to conduct all the planned data collection, and the household survey sample size reduced to 335.
- Boys and girls under 18 years of age were not covered by the household survey, which, considering the nature of the questions, was conducted with adult groups. However, adolescent boys and girls were engaged through FGDs/in-depth interviews.
- The proportion of women and men respondents are not the same. Consequently, the study cannot simply compare the values.
- The RGA included persons with disabilities and gender diverse populations in its consultations; however, more dedicated and focused consultations are required to adequately reflect their gender dynamics, challenges and needs. The volume of data gathered makes generalization impossible.
- It took more time than anticipated to coordinate with stakeholders working in Bhasan Char, to explain the objective of RGA and get support to communicate with respondents for survey and qualitative information collection. Some stakeholders also had to get permission to support our RGA work from their senior management.

5. Basic Data about the Relocated Rohingya People

5.1 Demographic Data

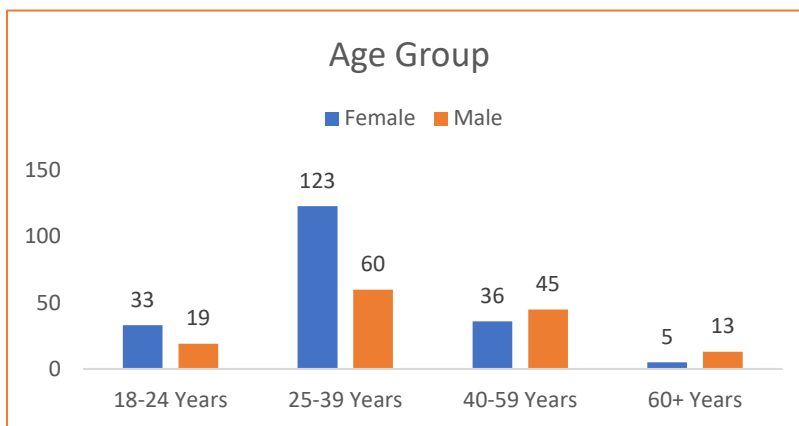


Sex, Age, and Basic Facts

The survey data captured an essence of diversity among total survey populations in Bhasan Char. Out of 335 survey respondents, 59% were women and 41% were men; one respondent identified as gender diverse. Our data also finds that among the survey population, 228 households have no pregnant/lactating woman, 106 households have one pregnant/lactating woman, and the remaining one household has two pregnant/lactating women. There are 286 households with no

people with disabilities, 47 households with one person with disabilities, and two households have multiple persons with disabilities.

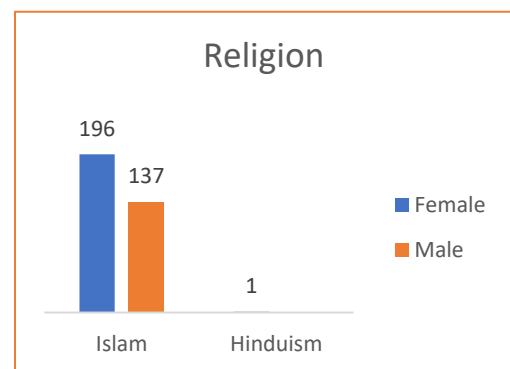
The largest cohort of respondents were the age group between 25 to 39 (183 in total), followed by 40 to 59 (81 in total), 18 to 24 (52 in total) and 60+ (18 in total). Our survey does not include child respondents. However, UNHCR



demographic data of the Rohingya population show that the percentage of children (56%) is greater than that of adults (42%) and older person (2%) in Bhasan Char.¹⁸

Religion

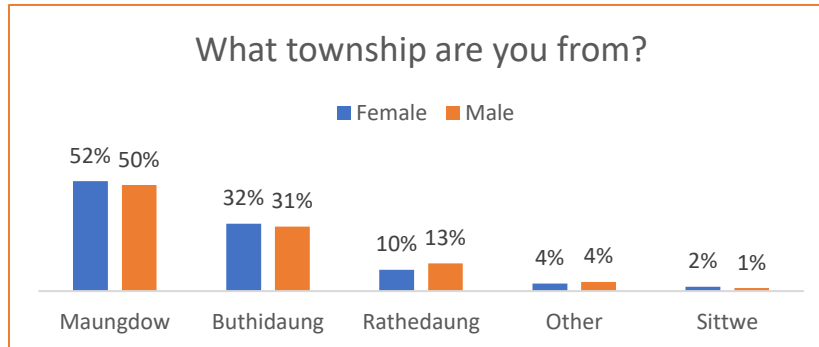
All the respondents identified themselves as Muslim, apart from one woman who identified as Hindu. There is a misconception that Rohingya population includes only Muslims; however, it is important to understand the spectrum of religious faiths among the displaced population in Cox's Bazar and Bhasan Char. It was also reported in the news that almost 500 Hindu Rohingyas came to Bangladesh¹⁹ along with a small number of Christian Rohingya who fled during the persecution in Myanmar after August 2017.



Original Township in Myanmar

¹⁸ UNHCR. Bhasan Char Population Factsheet (as of 30 June 2023).

¹⁹ Radio Free Asia (25 Jan 2021). "Bangladesh: Repatriating Small Number of Hindu Rohingya to Myanmar 'Not Our Priority'". Retrieved on July 2023. Link: <https://www.rfa.org/english/news/myanmar/hindu-01252021173313.html>



Rakhine State has five districts (Maungdaw, Sittwe, Thandwe, Mrauk-U, Kyaukpyu) and 17 townships. Sittwe is the state capital.²⁰ According to our survey data, respondents were from three townships in the northern state (Maungdaw, Buthidaung and Rathedaung). Over half of respondents (51%) were from

Maungdaw township and 31% from Buthidaung (both part of Maungdaw District) and 11% from Rathedaung township. Only 2% of respondents were from Sittwe township; the remaining 4% were from other Myanmar cities.²¹ These percentages of place of origin of the Rohingya community on Bhasan Char differ slightly compared to the Rohingya community in Cox's Bazar. To be clear, a 2022 study of Rohingya families living in the Cox's Bazar camps found that 62% of respondents were from Maungdaw and 38% from other towns in Rakhine state. However, according to our survey, 51% of respondents were from Maungdaw and 49% were from other towns, indicating that the percentage of respondents who came from locations other than Maungdaw is 11% higher than the percentage given in the 2020 study.²²

Camp of Origin in Cox's Bazar

In Cox's Bazar District, almost a million Rohingya people are hosted in 33 highly congested camps.²³ Among the total survey respondents on Bhasan Char, 318 had been relocated from camp number 1–23 of Cox's Bazar and two were relocated from Kutupalong and Nayapara registered camps. Due to a data error, the original camp number of 15 respondents could not be retrieved.

Language

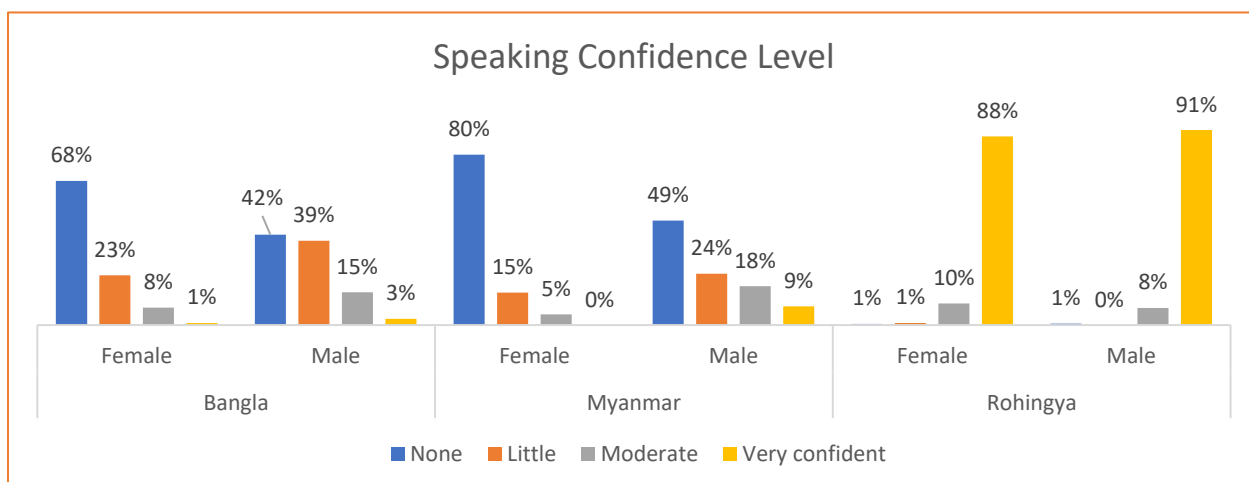
The respondents mainly speak in their mother language 'Rohingya', which is very close to the Chittagonian dialect spoken by local Bangladeshis throughout the Chittagong division but different from standard Bangla. Apart from the Rohingya language, our survey captured the reported level of self-confidence by respondents to speak/communicate in two other languages: Myanmar (Burmese) and Bangla. Little confidence with the 'Myanmar' language was reported in the survey, with only 5% of women and 9% of men stating they were very confident in speaking Myanmar. On the other hand, possibly due to six years of displacement, a higher percentage of Rohingya reported being more confident in speaking Bangla than the Myanmar language. However, a large percentage of Rohingya (68% women, 42% men) still reported

²⁰ Online Burma/Myanmar Library (31 Dec 2017). "Myanmar: States/Divisions & Townships Overview Map". Retrieved July 2023. Link: https://www.burmalibrary.org/docs6/MIMU001_A3_SD%20&%20Township%20Overview.pdf

²¹ Other cities mentioned by the respondents were Aikkangh, Boli Bazar, Chingri Para, Kamonchi, pokira bazar, Komir kahli, Pui Mali, Shitaporikka, Shirdar Para, Tardewa, Tomboroo, Walidaung.

²² The Asia Foundation and Centre for Peace and Justice, Brac University. (August 2020). "Navigating at the margins: Family, mobility and livelihoods amongst Rohingya refugees in Bangladesh. San Francisco: The Asia Foundation and Dhaka: Centre for Peace and Justice". Retrieved July 2023. Link: <https://asiafoundation.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/09/Navigating-the-Margins-Family-Mobility-and-Livelihoods-Amongst-Rohingya-in-Bangladesh.pdf>

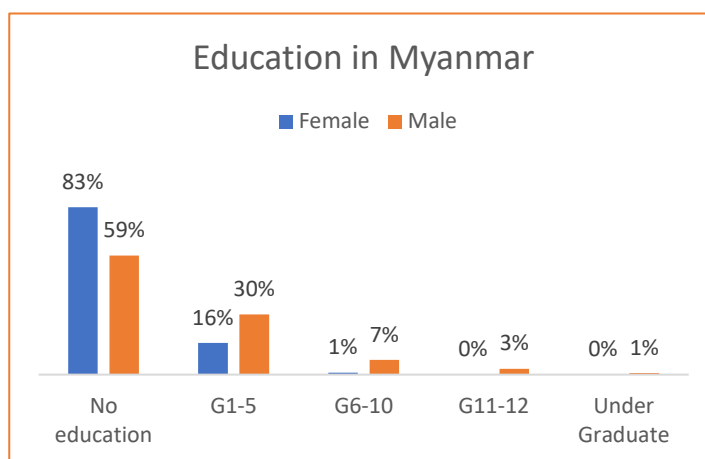
²³ UNHCR Operational Data (31 May 2023). Retrieved July 2023. Link: <https://data.unhcr.org/en/country/bgd#:~:text=Rohingya%20refugees%20are%20hosted%20in,Bangladesh%20to%20decongest%20the%20camps>



being unable to speak Bangla. 23% of women and 39% males identified having a basic ability to speak Bangla. The findings of this study suggest that government and development partners should consider evaluating Rohingya children's existing level of proficiency in speaking and understanding the Myanmar language in rolling out national Myanmar curriculum for all school-aged children.²⁴

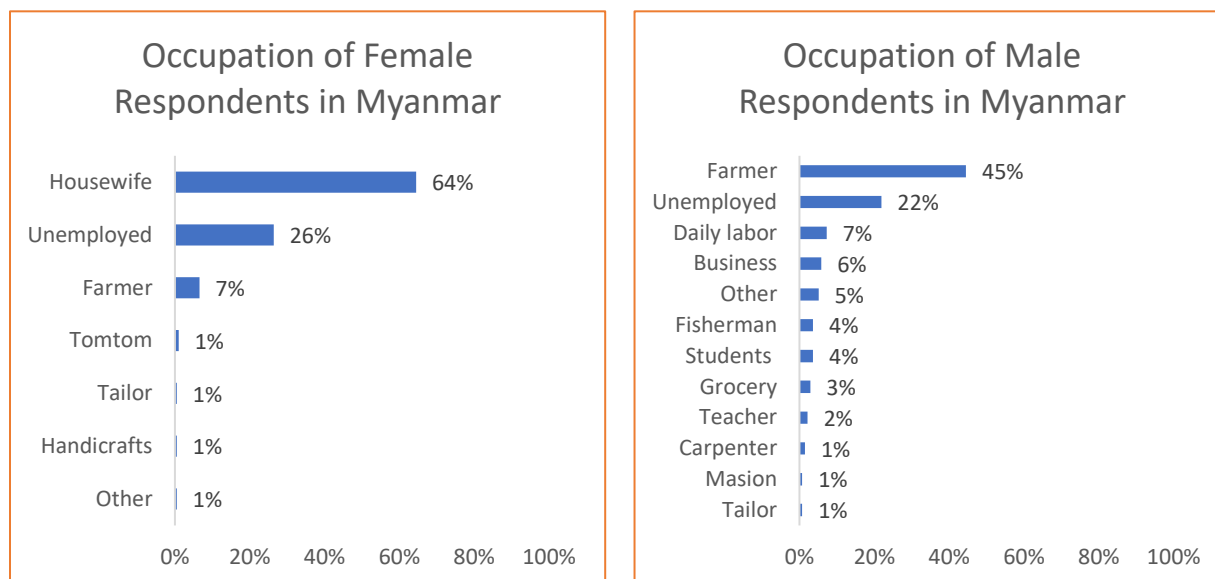
Education Background

Levels of education among the Rohingya community are notably low, substantially so among women. 73% of respondents (83% women, 59% men) reported never having been to school or receiving any formal education; only 22% (16% women, 30% men) completed grades 1–5. Seven % of men and one % of women completed grades 6–10, 3% of men and zero % of women completed grades 11–12. The collected education background data show the importance of providing education to Rohingya adults, especially women.



Occupations in Myanmar

²⁴ UNICEF (1 May 2022). Press Release. "Education milestone for Rohingya refugee children as Myanmar curriculum pilot reaches first 10,000 children". Retrieved July 2023. Link: <https://www.unicef.org/bangladesh/en/press-releases/unicef-education-milestone-rohingya-refugee-children-myanmar-curriculum-pilot#:~:text=reached%20this%20month,-,The%20Myanmar%20Curriculum%20Pilot%2C%20launched%20by%20UNICEF%20and%20partners%20in,for%20their%20return%20to%20Myanmar.>

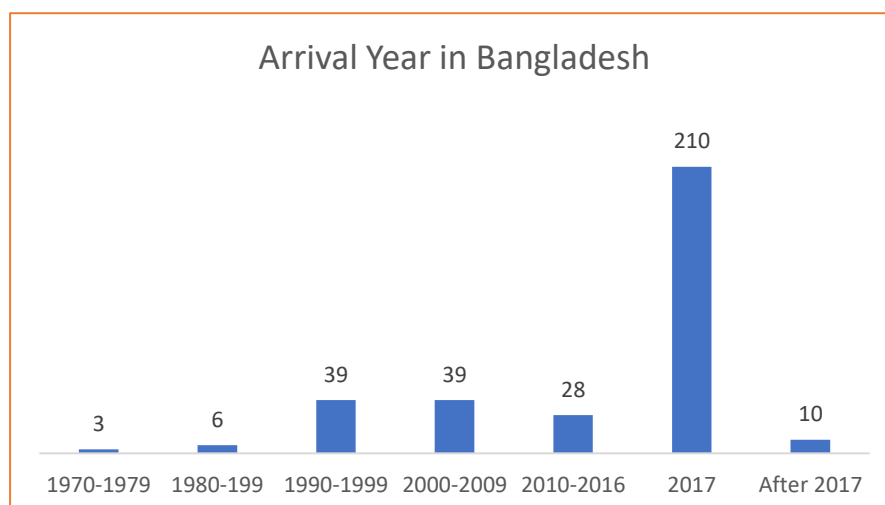


The survey data shows that pre-displacement labor force participation rates were significantly higher among Rohingya men than women. In Myanmar, Rohingya men had mostly been farmers and involved with the agricultural sector; other male occupations included casual work or day labor (7%), business (6%), fishing (4%), managing a grocery (3%), teaching (2%), carpentry (1%), stone masonry (1%) and tailoring (1%). In contrast, 64% of women in our survey were housewives and 26% reported that they had no jobs in Myanmar. Of those women who had been involved in paid work in Myanmar, 7% were engaged in farming and the remaining were engaged with Tomtom driving²⁵, handicrafts, tailoring or others.

5.2 Relocation to Bhasan Char

Arrival in Bangladesh

Rohingya people have been living in Bangladesh since the 1970s. Our survey data says only three respondents came to Bangladesh in the 1970s, six in the 1980s, 39 in the 1990s, 39 in 2000, and 28 in the 2010–16 period. The majority 210 (63%) of respondents arrived in 2017 after experiencing intense persecution,



²⁵ A three-wheeler vehicle providing a taxi service.

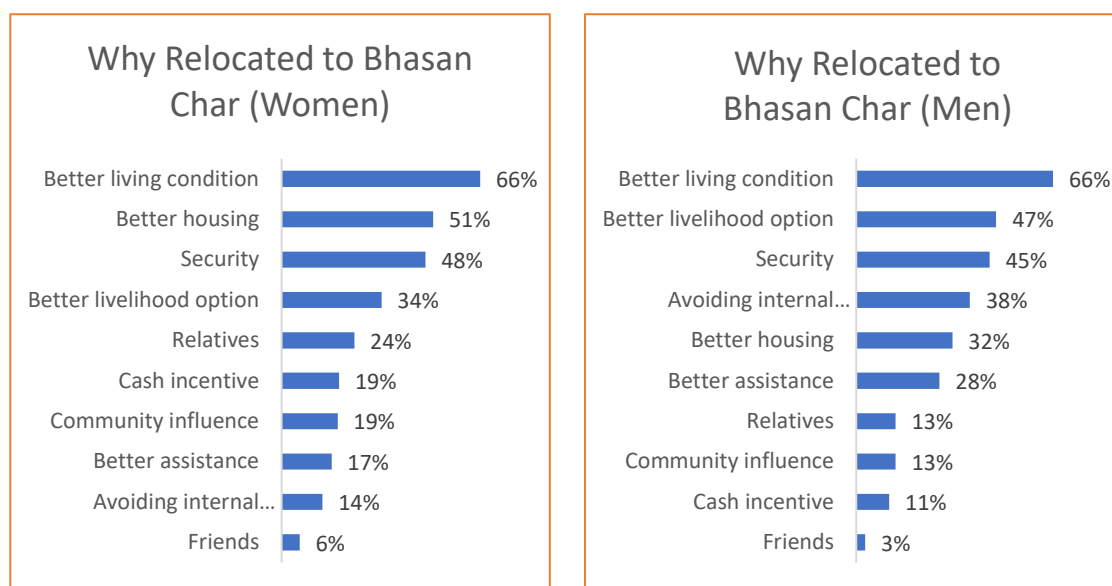
widespread violence, and human rights abuses. Only 10 Rohingya people arrived in Bangladesh after 2017.

Arrival in Bhasan Char

The majority (70%) of the survey respondents relocated from Cox's Bazar to Bhasan Char in 2021; 2% arrived in 2020, 28% in 2022 and 1% in 2023.²⁶

Motivation for Relocation

“We wanted a better lifestyle and living conditions – that’s why we came here” – female respondent, FGD.

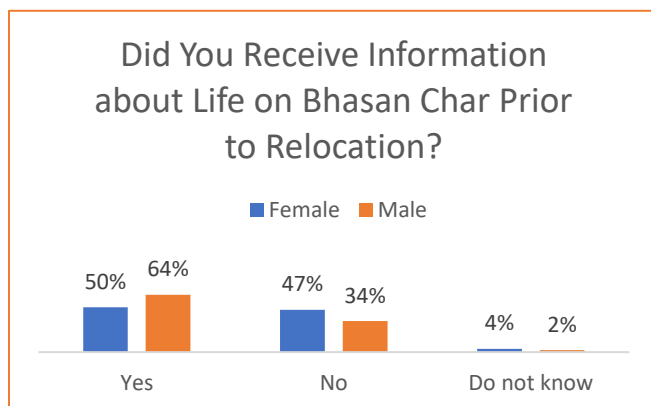


Our study reveals how traditional gender roles and expectations affected their decision to move to Bhasan Char. For example, women prioritized better housing (51%), security (48%) and better livelihoods (34%) as reasons for relocation; men prioritized better livelihood (47%), security (45%) and avoiding internal conflict (38%). It is also notable that more women (19%) than men (11%) considered cash incentive/assistance of BDT5000 per person as a good reason to move.

Information about Bhasan Char

Our data show that more men (64%) than women (50%) received information about what their life in Bhasan Char would be like prior to their departure from Cox's Bazar. Nearly half of women respondents (47%) received no information, compared to 34% of men, even though several promotion initiatives were conducted by the CiC offices, *majhi* and community volunteers to encourage the Rohingya community to

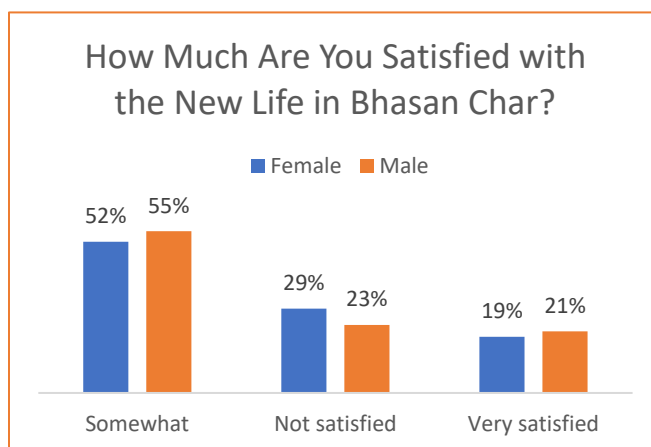
²⁶ Bhasan Char Population factsheet (as of 30 June 2023) shows that 16,475 relocated in 2021, 12,453 in 2022 and 1,331 from January 1 to June 30, 2023.



relocate. It is possible that women’s restricted mobility and household responsibilities prevented them to have good access to information.

Satisfaction with Life on Bhasan Char

Among the respondents, 20% (19% women, 21% men) reported being ‘very satisfied’ with their new life on the island. The data also identified a large proportion of respondents (in total, 53.5%, 52% women, 55% men) choosing the ‘somewhat satisfied’ option²⁷. If we combine these data, total 73.5% of the respondents (71% women, 76% women) consider they are somewhat satisfied with life in Bhasan Char.

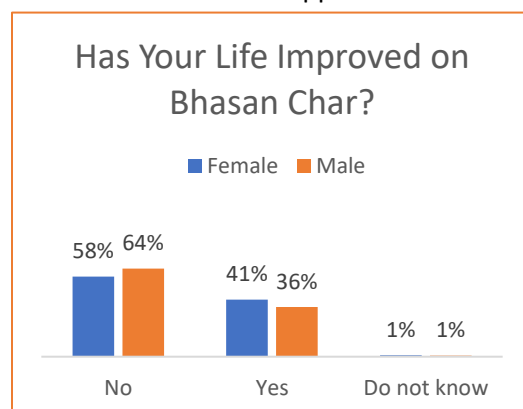


“Here, everyone can go out and move around without fear of various armed groups like ARSA, Al Yakin, which was very unlikely in Cox’s Bazar camps”. Some FGD respondents, both women and men, expressed satisfaction with new life in Bhasan Char pointing out improved security and housing and WASH facilities. On the other hand, three in-depth interviews participants (an

adolescent boy, an adult man and a young mother) expressed a preference to go back to Cox’s Bazar, explaining that they are struggling with limited livelihood opportunities and food assistance.

Quality of life on Bhasan Char

While the majority of the respondents seem to be somewhat satisfied with new life in Bhasan Char, many of them consider their life has not improved after the relocation. Limited livelihood opportunities can be one factor that does not lead the respondents to simply say their life has improved. For instance, some women in FGDs stressed that it was not possible to survive on a diet of dried fish, an expression which captures the frustration of the Rohingya men and women living on the island. Our survey data shows more men (64%) than women (58%) perceived that life has not improved in Bhasan Char. This gap between male and female responses might reflect the prevalent gender role in the Rohingya community; while many Rohingya people consider that men should contribute to



²⁷ Although the survey questionnaire did not disaggregate ‘somewhat satisfied’ and ‘somewhat dissatisfied’, the data collection team was trained to select ‘somewhat’ when it was meant by ‘somewhat satisfied’.

their family as bread winner, the livelihood opportunities are very much limited on Bhasan Char.

Life of Persons with Disabilities on Bhasan Char

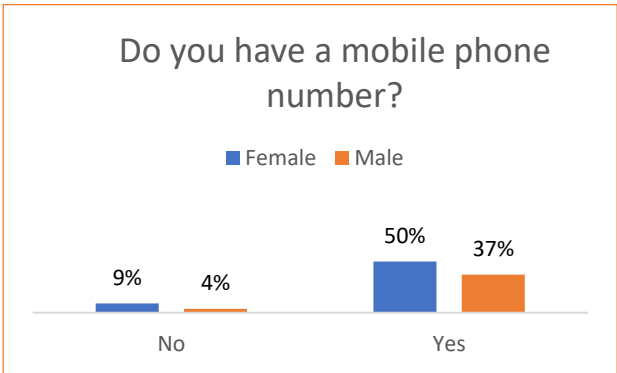
The research team attempted to capture the views of persons with disabilities and their families regarding how they perceive the new life in Bhasan Char. They conducted an in-depth interview with a girl who has walking and speaking limitations, with some communication support from her mother. During the Cyclone Mocha when all the Rohingya residents were taken to a safe space, the mother recounted her family’s sufferings her family faced with their daughter due to her limited mobility and speech. Her mother explained that *“we had to take our 17-year-old daughter to the cyclone shelters without the provision of supportive devices such as wheel chairs and walking sticks.”*

A father of a boy with disabilities said, *“My son is physically challenged, and Bhasan Char is not good for him... in the Cox’s Bazar camp there was a separate center for people with disabilities like my son. It provided nutritious food and my son was happy. No such facilities are available in Bhasan Char. I’m in great trouble with my son.”* In terms of wheelchair use, our survey team also observed ramps are available only on the ground floor of cyclone shelters or community centers. Many NGO/INGO offices are located on other floors which restricts wheelchair users from accessing various services. Comparing access to services for people with disabilities in Cox’s Bazar and Bhasan Char, a KII respondent said, *“In Cox’s Bazar there were some opportunities, although not enough. But here in Bhasan Char there aren’t enough services available for people with special needs. Some NGO service providers provide door-to-door services, but this should be increased more.”*

These accounts illustrate the need to review the selection criteria of people willing to move to Bhasan Char. Support needed by persons with disabilities who wish to move to Bhasan Char needs to be identified prior to their departure. Bhasan Char infrastructure conditions need to be explained to their caregivers in advance.

Mobile Phone Access

While Rohingya people are not allowed to possess a SIM card in Bangladesh, our survey shows that more than 85% of the households own a mobile phone number. A woman in an FGD explained that men are the main users of the mobile phones. Some children also use them. She also explained that women use the phones only for incoming calls especially when there is no family members left in their shelters.



6. Key Findings and Analysis

6.1 Gender and Governance

6.1.1 Gender Roles and Relationships

The following table presents Rohingya community perceptions regarding who should engage with what tasks at the household level. It identifies some notable differences in the perceived roles and responsibilities assigned to men and women within the Rohingya community.

Who do you think should be engaged with the following tasks?

Task	Women (%)	Men (%)
Farming/household gardening	84	84
Collecting humanitarian assistance (cash)	46	87
Childcare	99	25
Collecting water	94	25
Collecting firewood/gas cylinder	31	90
Housework, including cleaning	99	7
Cooking	99	5
Managing livestock/poultry	85	65
Buying food	46	85
Caring for relatives	91	79
Tailoring	95	35
NGO work	40	96
Planning parenthood	95	97

Our survey shows there is a clear gendered division of labor in the Rohingya community. For instance, domestic work such as childcare, collecting water, housework, cooking, and tailoring, is considered to be the work suitable for women. For men, on the other hand, those that require travel outside of their house such as collecting humanitarian assistance, collecting firewood, buying food, and engaging in NGO work is considered more appropriate. These tasks such as farming/household gardening, managing livestock, taking care of relatives, and planning parenthood considered to be suitable for both women and men.

The existing study²⁸ points out that some Rohingya women after arriving in Cox's Bazar are taking on non-traditional gender roles, particularly in the form of participating in NGO's in-camp activities as paid volunteers. The same study also explains that empowerment and economic development programs, primarily targeting women and girls, created a backlash and increased tension and violence within households and the community, especially in a context where men have been unable to fulfill their traditional role as breadwinner. Promoting gender equality is a wide-spread approach among UN agencies and NGOs that provide support to the Rohingya community in Cox's Bazar. They continue to provide same services in Bhasan Char as well. However, transforming gender dynamics in any society takes time and can incur backlash from those who do not wish for such drastic change. Sensitivities to pay close attention

²⁸ Ahsan, Monira (15 Sep 2020). "An intersectional analysis of gender amongst Rohingya refugees and host communities in Cox's Bazar, Bangladesh" UNHCR, CARE and ActionAid. Retrieved July 2023. Link: https://reliefweb.int/attachments/6b69cc90-e03e-3419-8199-a82b4a40691f/Coxs-Bazar-Gender-and-Intersectionality-Analysis-report_2020.pdf

to changing gender dynamics and its implications among the Rohingya community are needed for humanitarian organizations.

Household Level Decision-making

The survey asked a set of questions about the necessity of getting permission from the family for 13 different situations. The results of these questions also confirm the prevalence of rigid gender norms.

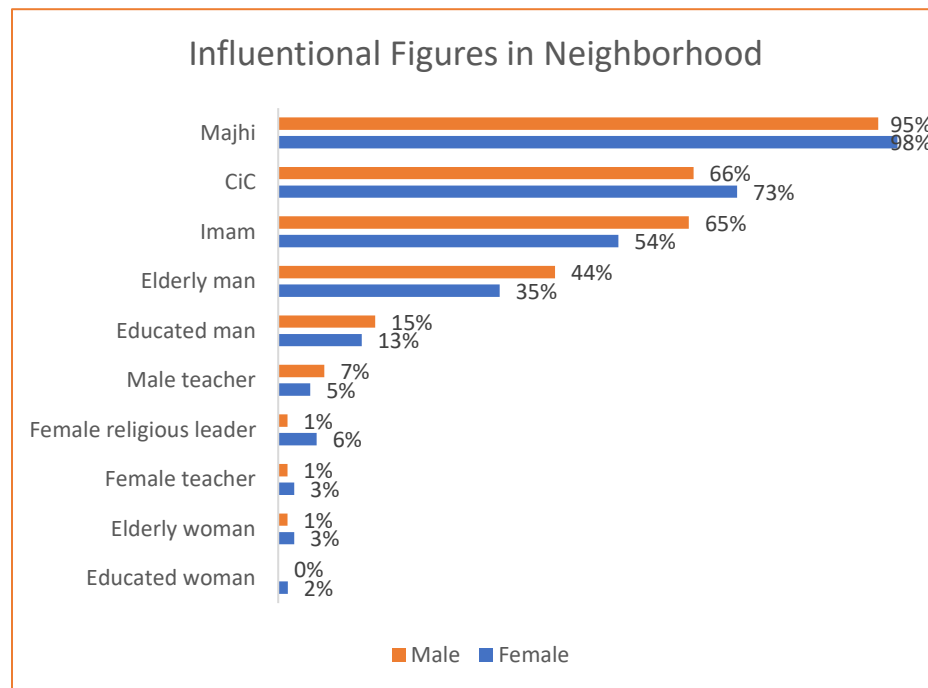
Do you need to obtain permission to make the following decisions?

	Yes (Need Permission)	
	Women	Men
Getting a job with an NGO	51%	34%
Visiting the nearest shop	51%	2%
Buying or selling food items for the family	55%	32%
Buying a small item for yourself (e.g., cosmetics, clothes)	45%	16%
Visiting your birth relatives living next door	34%	10%
Visiting your birth relatives living in Myanmar	22%	7%
Relocating to Bhasan Char	69%	57%
Migrating back to Cox's Bazar	69%	57%
Visiting nearest healthcare location (health post, community clinic, mobile outreach service) for yourself	37%	12%
Visiting nearest health care (health post, community clinic, mobile outreach service) for your children	39%	39%
Whether to have a child or not	58%	64%
Whether your child should attend a learning centre	41%	42%
Choice of food (what to eat for daily meals at home)	30%	48%

The overall trend in these questions is that more women consider they need to obtain permission than men in many situations, including getting a job with an NGO, going out for shopping, and visiting a healthcare service provider for themselves. Among those situations, the survey identified particularly wider gaps between women and men for these questions that involve women's travel outside of the house; visiting the shop nearby (51% women, 2% men), visiting relatives (34% women, 10% men), and visiting healthcare location (37% women, 12% men). Many men also consider that they need permission from the family for some actions. These include whether to have a child or not (64% men), relocation to Bhasan Char (57%), migrating back to Cox's Bazar (57%). Our data show that men tend to consider getting approval when the action or the decision is needed for the family. In contrast, they consider they do not need to get approval from the family for the actions that are taken for themselves. One might want to argue that patriarchal view of men as protector of the family is being reflected in our data.

6.1.2 Community and Household Level Decision-making

Influential Decision-makers



When asked who the respondents consider influential in their neighborhoods in Bhasan Char, 98% of women and 95% of men selected the *majhi*²⁹. A *majhi* in the context of the Rohingya response is commonly understood as community leader who links the Rohingya community to government authorities. The *Maji* system, which was initially introduced to respond to the influx of Rohingya people in early 90s, was revived

after 2017 in Cox's Bazar³⁰. As pointed out in the report by Translators without Borders, the *majhi* system in Cox's Bazar has been criticized because of "the lack of representation, impartiality, transparency, accountability, and gender inequality³¹".

Our KII participants explained that in Bhasan Char as well, *majhis* are not selected directly by the community, and hence, they are not held accountable to the entire community. They are chosen by the National Security Intelligence (NSI) and they coordinate with the CiC office, NSI and SMS for various problems, complaints and disputes identified in their community. A *majhi* is appointed for every cluster (residential unit) in Bhasan Char and each cluster has a *majhi* and supporting volunteers. Some participants in our study raise concerns about the abuse of power by *majhis*; not only do some *majhis* maintain polygamous relationships but they favour particular community people for arranging food assistance or giving travel permission. As it has been demanded in Cox's Bazar, it would be reasonable to set specific selection criteria for *majhis* in consultation with Rohingya community to enhance the transparency of the *majhi* system, which has become a critical element of Rohingya community governance in Bhasan Char.

The second and third popular answers to this question respectively are CiC (73% women, 66% men) and *Imam* (54% female, 65% male), followed by elderly man (35% women, 44% men). What should be noted here is that all these considered influential are male; only a small number of respondents considered

²⁹ The most common interpretation of the term *majhi* is 'cluster leader'. Translator without Borders (1 Oct 2020). "The Language of Leadership: The words that define how majhis are seen and understood in the Rohingya refugee response". Retrieved July 2023. Link: https://translatorswithoutborders.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/10/TWB_Bangladesh_Majhi_Report_FinalEN.pdf.

³⁰ *ibid*

³¹ *ibid*

female religious leaders, female teachers, elderly women or educated women as influential leaders in their neighborhood.

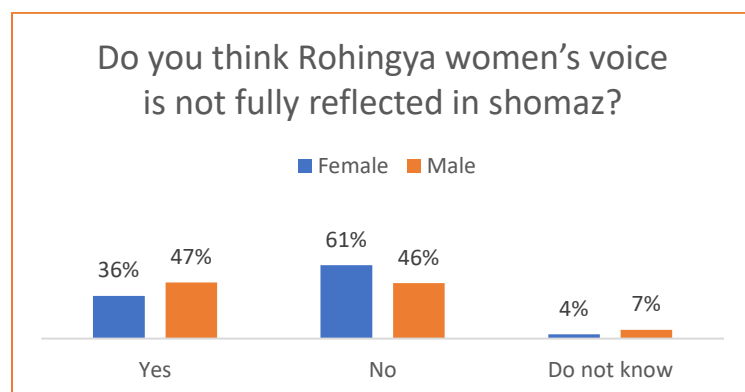
Our KII and FGD participants affirm that there is no representation of women in community decision making bodies. This largely reflects the conventional gender roles in the Rohingya community in Bhasan Char.

Being a Member of Community-led Structures

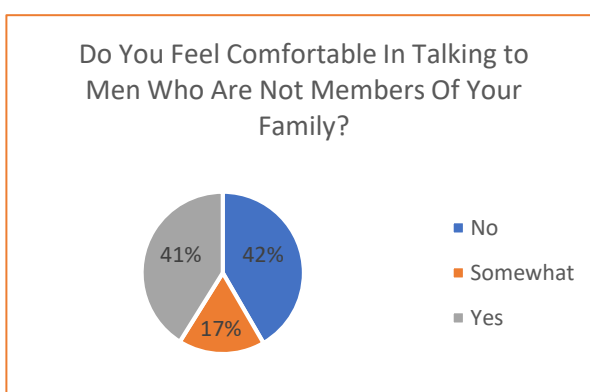
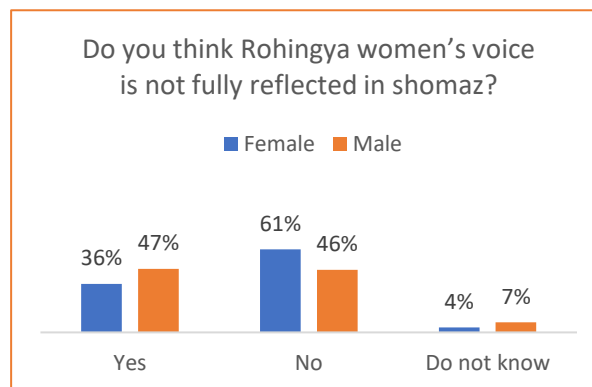
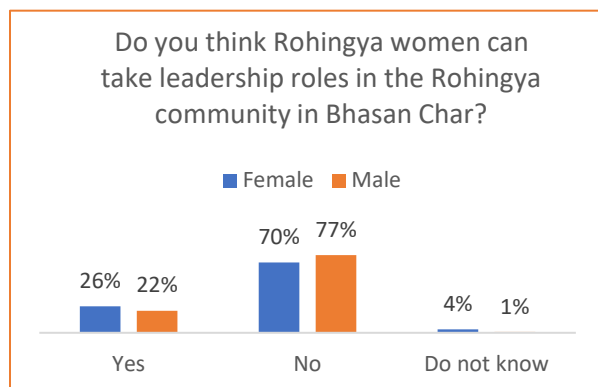
The majority of the survey respondents, both women and men, do not belong to any Rohingya-led structures or community groups; only 29% of women and 14% of men mentioned being part of such groups. During qualitative data collection, four male religious leaders in a FGD informed us that 47 *Taleem* groups exist in Bhasan Char, but unlike in the Cox's Bazar camps, they are not properly functional. A *majhi* in KII also said that in Bhasan Char there is no Rohingya organizations or Rohingya-led committees, other than mosque committees.

A study conducted by IOM & UN Women in Cox's Bazar reports that several women-led civil society organizations were formed after the latest influx of Rohingya people to Bangladesh. They were not formed for the purpose of religious education or under supervision of religious leaders³². The most notable of these are Shanti Mohila and Rohingya Women's Empowerment and Advocacy Network (RWEAN), who conduct a range of activities related to women's rights and awareness-raising. Women-led organizations are yet to be formed in Bhasan Char; however, the survey found that some Rohingya women and men (29% and 14% respectively) belong to NGO-facilitated community structures and attend meetings regularly. These include fire safety group, WASH committee, block development committee, water users' group and block hygiene committee.

6.1.3 Opportunities and Challenges for Women's Leadership



³² Danny Coyle, Marie Sophie Sandberg-Petterson, and Mohammed Abdullah Jainul (2020). "Honour in Transition: changing gender norms among the Rohingya." Bangladesh: IOM & UN Women. Retrieved July 2023. Link: <https://reliefweb.int/report/bangladesh/honour-transition-changing-gender-norms-among-rohingya-april-2020-0>



"No one wants women to be leaders in our society"- a male FGD participant's voice clearly represents the perception of women's leadership among the Rohingya community in Bhasan Char.

Our survey presents a pessimistic view of women's leadership among the Rohingya community; 73.5 % (70% women, 77% men) of the total respondents believe that Rohingya women cannot become leaders in their community in Bhasan Char. This view is in aligned with other findings from this RGA.

The gendered division of labor is very much prevalent in their community, and many consider women are suitable for engaging with domestic work rather than getting a job outside of their houses (see 6.1.1). This pessimistic view about female leadership is also reflected in a fact that there is few women who are considered influential in the community in Bhasan Char (see 6.1.2)

In Cox's Bazar, on the other hand, various initiatives have been taken to promote Rohingya women's leadership by international and Bangladesh humanitarian organizations. Rohingya women have been encouraged to work as community volunteers and participate in project management committees. However, despite all the efforts, the majority (73.5%) of the Rohingya people consider Rohingya women are not suitable for leadership roles and many women (42%) also feel uncomfortable in talking to men outside of their household. These results are understandable in consideration of Rohingya women's lack of experiences working outside of their houses and their low level of education when they resided in Myanmar.

Additionally, a KII respondent reflected on unique challenges to women's leadership in the context of Bhasan Char; she considers that the first line of resistance would come from the male *majhis*, who have better access to communicate with community men. She added that the objection could also rise from the NSI; because of security concerns, they will not permit female leadership. The CiC would also foresee risks for women taking leadership roles due to the lack of acceptance in Rohingya communities.

Limited access to information and skills development opportunities, as well as religious and social restrictions including conventional gender roles and expectations loom large as barriers for women who want to take on leadership roles. A male respondent pointed out that *"in any leadership role, people need*

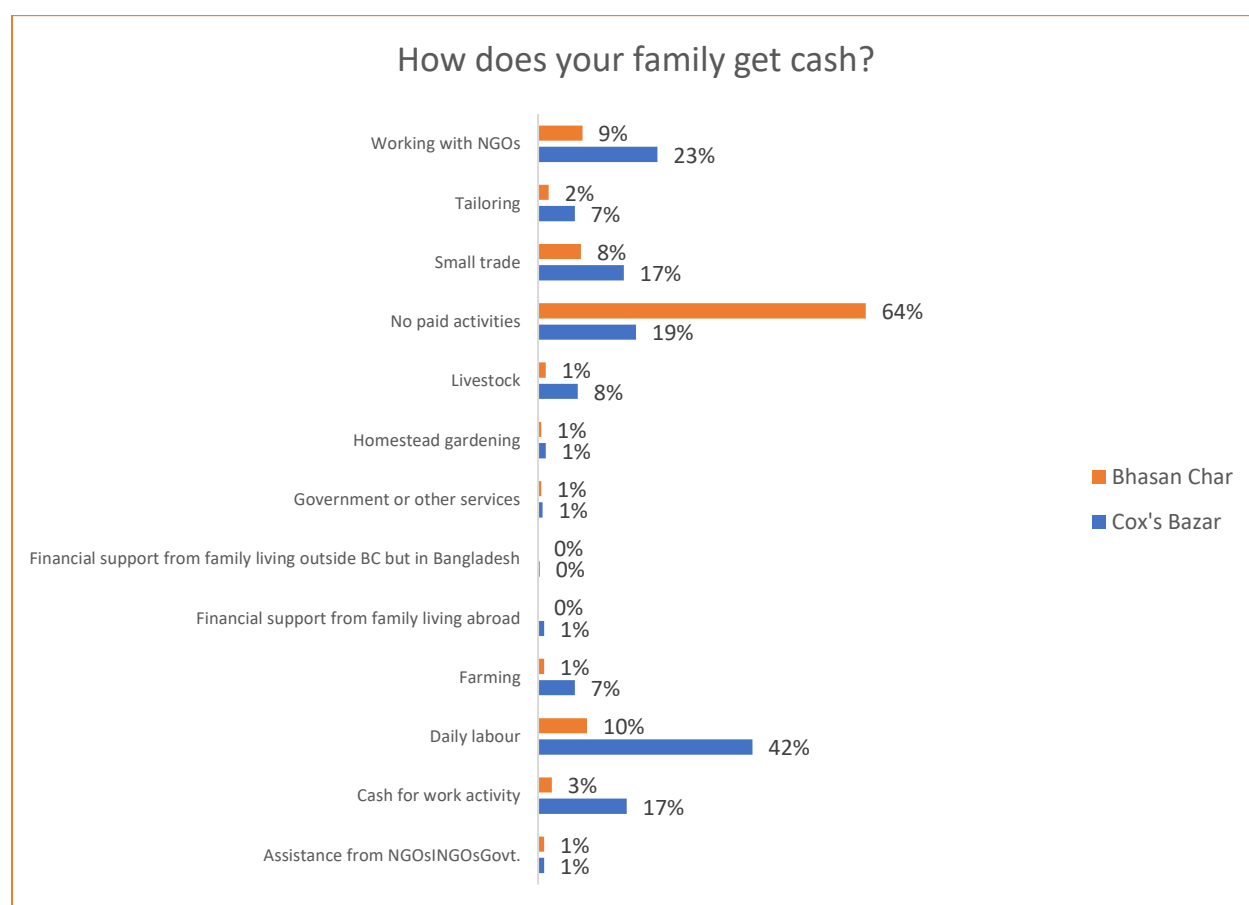
to be sufficiently trained and skilled. These opportunities were somewhat available in Cox's Bazar but not on Bhasan Char".

On the other hand, some religious leaders in FGD expressed the importance of women's leadership particularly for the purpose of addressing women specific issues. This perception of women's leadership is a byproduct of conventional gender roles in a sense that religious leaders acknowledge women's leadership so long as they remain inside the traditional female sphere. Through this survey, the team did not explore what the idea of leadership means to Rohingya women and men of all diversities. The meaning of leadership itself needs to be challenged, reinterpreted, and diversified so various Rohingya women of diversities can realize their full potentials as leaders. It should be emphasized that 24% (26% women, 22% men) still consider Rohingya women can take on leadership roles in their community.

6.2 Livelihood Opportunities and Challenges

6.2.1 Livelihoods and Income

Livelihood Opportunities in Bhasan Char



Our survey asked about respondent's access to cash assistance or cash generation activities both in Cox's Bazar and Bhasan Char. The major difference between Cox's Bazar and Bhasan Char is that 64% of respondents answer that their family do not have means to earn cash in Bhasan Char, whereas only 19%

selected the same answer when they were asked about their experiences in Cox's Bazar. In a similar note, the survey shows access to daily labour and NGO work is much more limited in Bhasan Char. In Cox's Bazar, 42% of respondents stated they earned cash through daily labour and 23% from NGO work. On the other hand, after they arrived in Bhasan Char, such opportunities have decreased significantly (10% for daily labor and 9% for NGO work). The same trend is observed for other livelihood or income generation activities such as cash for work (17% in CXB vs 3% in BC), farming (7% in CXB vs 1% in BC), small scale trading (17% in CXB vs 8% in BC).

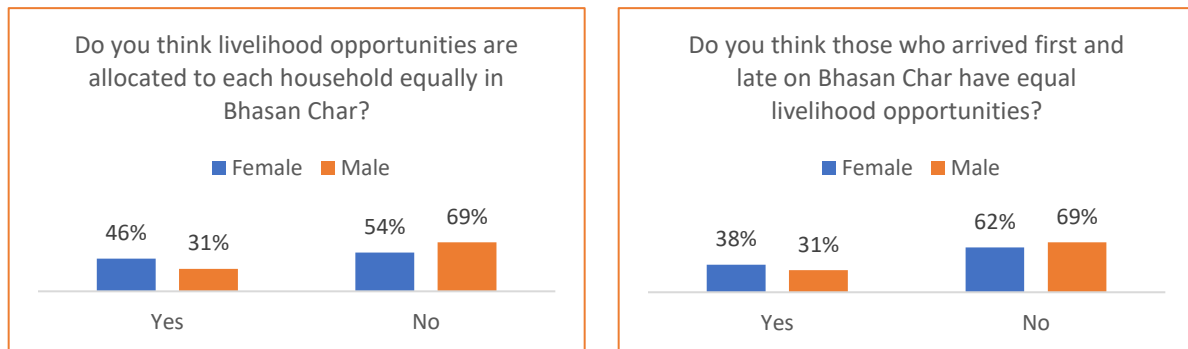
Our study illustrates a grim picture of livelihood and income generation opportunities for the Rohingya community in Bhasan Char, particularly in comparison with the situation in Cox's Bazar. During qualitative data collection, both women and men in the Rohingya community repeatedly expressed their concerns and need for a stable income in Bhasan Char to fulfil minimum, basic family needs. Conversations with NGOs working in Bhasan Char also revealed that despite their dedicated support to the community, there is still a huge gap to be addressed. A WFP report published in July 2022 points out that 30% percent of Rohingya households do not engage in any income generating activities in Bhasan Char³³. Our study shows increased needs of livelihood support in Bhasan Char.

Existing Livelihood Opportunities in Bhasan Char				
Particulars	Male Respondents		Female Respondents	
	Female	Male	Female	Male
Working with NGOs	80%	83%	62%	69%
Daily labour	76%	73%	24%	12%
Small trade	50%	48%	6%	12%
Farming	43%	42%	19%	14%
Cash for work activity	40%	46%	23%	6%
Livestock	33%	36%	47%	45%
Homestead gardening	21%	28%	34%	40%
Other	11%	26%	3%	12%
Tailoring	13%	17%	74%	64%
Assistance from NGOs/INGOs/Govt.	11%	3%	8%	4%
Not applicable	6%	1%	10%	3%
Government or other services	5%	0%	2%	0%

The survey further explored livelihood opportunities in Bhasan Char from a different angle; the respondents are asked to identify livelihood opportunities available for women and men on the island. The most common livelihood opportunities women observed are tailoring, working with NGOs, raising livestock, and homestead gardening. Male respondents consider such options as working with NGOs, daily labor, small trading, and farming exist in Bhasan Char. While these selections appear to be reflecting the traditional gender roles and expectations in the Rohingya community, it is interesting to note that NGO work is recognized as available livelihood options for both women and men on the island. It should also be noted that these selections do not represent actual availability of these livelihood opportunities.

³³ WFP (7 July 2022). "Bhasan Char Rapid Food Security Assessment Report", Retrieved July 2023. Link: <https://reliefweb.int/report/bangladesh/bangladesh-bhasan-char-rapid-food-security-assessment-july-2022>

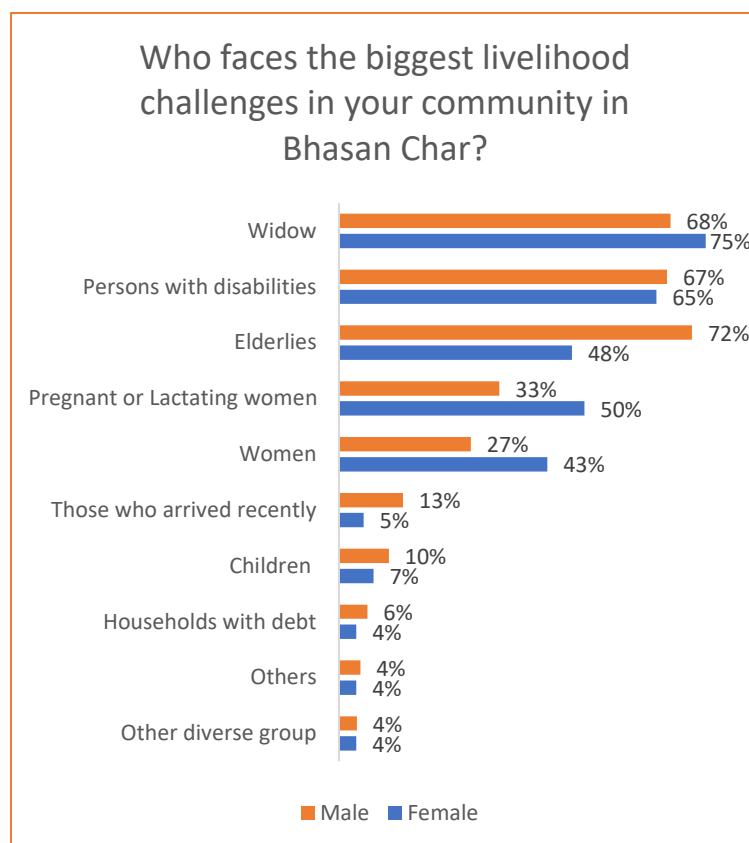
Equal Distribution of Livelihood Opportunities



The research team also asked a few questions to assess how Rohingya people perceive the fairness in accessing livelihood support in Bhasan Char. 60% of respondents (54% women, 69% men) stated that livelihood opportunities are not equally distributed among Rohingya households in Bhasan Char, with more men showing dissatisfaction than women. The same tendency is observed for their perception of equalness between those who arrived to Bhasan Char early and late; the total 65.5% (62% women, 69% men) consider the accessibility to livelihood opportunities differ depending on the timing of their arrival.

For both questions, men are showing slightly higher dissatisfaction. One way to understand the perceptual difference would be the gendered, societal expectation for men. Men being put under the pressure of getting stable income for the family might be more sensitive to the fairness in obtaining livelihood opportunities in the island.

Groups Facing Livelihood Challenges



To better understand the difficulty Rohingya people are going through in terms of livelihood opportunities, the survey also asked the respondents to identify which social groups face most significant livelihood challenges in Bhasan Char. The top 5 identified groups include widows, persons with disabilities, elderly people, pregnant or lactating women, and women in general. The data show there is a notable gendered gap in the perception of vulnerabilities of elderly people; more men (72%) consider elderly people are facing big challenges than women (48%). On the contrary, for such groups as widows, pregnant or lactating women, and women in general, more women consider they are facing the challenges than men.

The survey result clearly shows many Rohingya people consider women, with some conditions in particular, are facing

livelihood challenges in Bhasan Char. It goes beyond the scope of the RGA to clarify what actual challenges these women are facing in Bhasan Char; however, it is not difficult to imagine that their new lives in a new unfamiliar setting have not been easy. Detailed assessment needs to be conducted to capture their reality as well as to understand what community-based protection mechanisms already exist or are going to emerge in Bhasan Char, where new communities are being reformed by relocated Rohingya individuals.

Struggles of Rohingya Youth in Bhasan Char

Kiron (pseudonym), a 14-year-old boy, lives with his mother and nine-year-old sister, in the southern part of Bhasan Char. Before coming to the island, they lived in Cox's Bazar, with his father. In the middle of 2021, his father married again without his mother's permission, left their home and started living with his new wife.

Without support, Kiron's mother's situation was very insecure, and she decided to place her son with the Ukhiya host community to work for a year on a poultry farm. Conditions were extremely harsh, but Kiron had no say in the matter. Each month he earned BDT 6,000. He gave all the earned money to his mother.

Without an adult male in the house, life in Cox's Bazar was very difficult. For instance, Kiron's neighbour quarreled constantly with them over trivial matters, and then one night someone stole everything from their house. After this incident, his mother decided to move to Bhasan Char.

In December 2021, Kiron arrived on Bhasan Char with his mother, younger sister, and grandmother, but soon encountered another sad moment, when their grandmother passed away. On their arrival in Bhasan Char the government authority provided them each with BDT 5,000. Kiron is unable to read because he did not attend school, although he can write his name. In Bhasan Char, Kiron often goes fishing with older men, which is very dangerous. He goes out to the seas even when the seas are rough, but it helps them to catch fish, which is not provided by WFP. Rather than selling the fish, he and his family eat it all, and he dries any that is left over.

Kiron's family has access to a small parcel of land in Bhasan Char provided by the authorities. Last winter he tried to grow potatoes, corn, radishes and nuts, but he did not get the yield he hoped for, as the soil is salty and not fertile. This season he is trying again with eggplants and peppers, but he is unable to say how it will turn out. Fertilizers are expensive and not generally available. In the daytime, Kiron works on his land alone. Kiron has three goats, and sometimes cuts grass to feed them.



When asked about his childhood in Myanmar, Kiron says, ***"We had a small wooden house in Burma. In front of my house, there was a pond. I spent the whole day in the pond. I don't remember anything else."*** He adds, ***"I only remember the day we ran away and came to Bangladesh. We walked for two days and came to the river bank. Then we came to Teknaf by boat with other people."***

Kiron thinks back on his days in Bhasan Char, "It's too hot here. All my friends still stay in the Cox's Bazar camp. I don't have anyone to play with here. And there are different vegetables in the camp [in Cox's Bazar], but there's none available here. All my relatives live in Cox's Bazar. I want to see them, but I can't. My mother regrets all the time that we relocated to here."

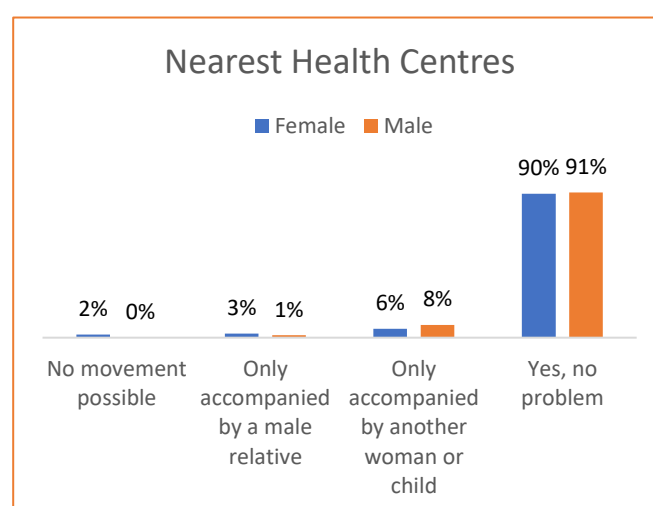
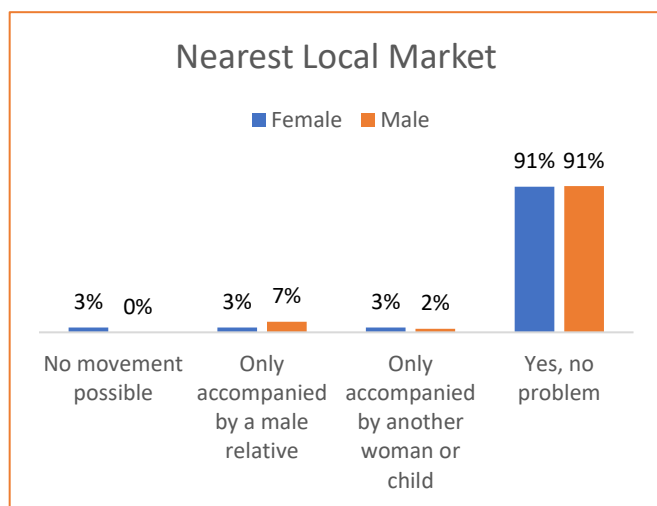
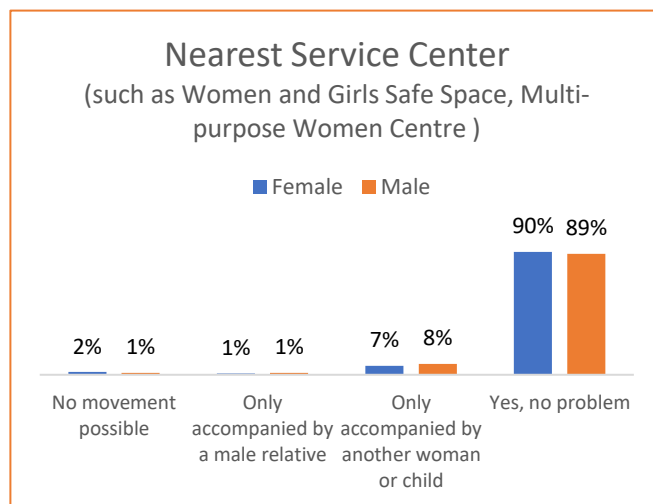
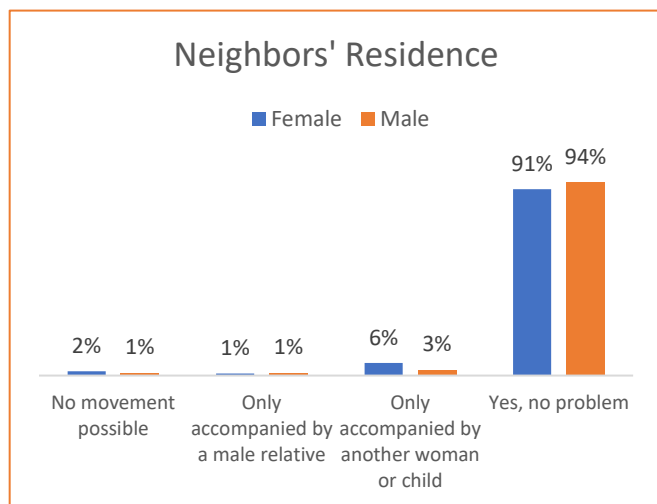
6.2.2 Perceptions of Mobility and Women's Paid Work

"In Bhasan Char, there's no opportunity or permission for mass gatherings." said a majhi in our KII. He added, *"Three or four people can't gather in the street or even hang out in shops during the day. No movement is permitted at night and the NSI maintain strict vigilance over us."* Our survey examined

mobility trends and prevailing factors limiting movement, particularly for women as it has significant implications on Rohingya women's participation in livelihood activities.

Women's Mobility

How freely can you travel to the following places by yourself?



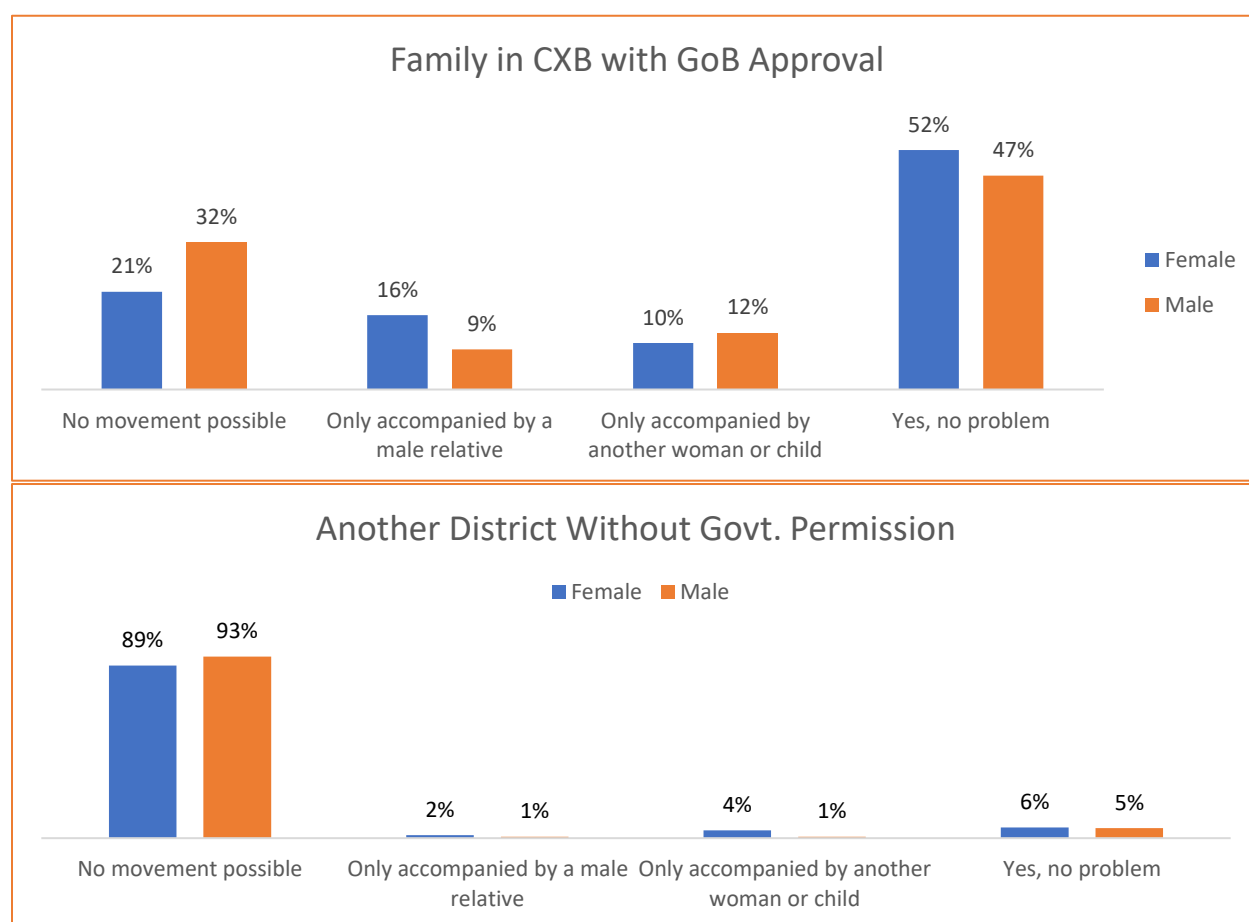
The survey team asked four questions to see how freely the respondents can travel inside their community in Bhasan Char, presenting four different scenarios: visiting a neighbor, the nearest service center, a local market, and the nearest health center. The respondents can select the answer from “not possible”, “with a male relative”, “with another woman or child”, or “no problem”.

Our data show quite similar patterns for these four different situations. Approximately 90% of both women and men selected the answer that indicates they have no issues traveling to all four locations by themselves. This is a tremendous improvement particularly for women in comparison to the time when

they started living in Cox's Bazar after 2017³⁴. Furthermore, for the majority of men and women, what matters the most is a consent or approval from his or her family, rather than she or he has a company. It affects women's mobility more conspicuously as we have seen in 6.1.1.

The remaining 10% selected other three options that show some conditions for the movement. What is indicative among the remaining 10% is that a very small percentage (2% to 3%) of women consider they cannot travel by themselves at all for all four situations. On the other hand, a small percentage of both women and men require the company of either male or women/child when they travel outside of their house.

How freely can you travel to the following places by yourself?

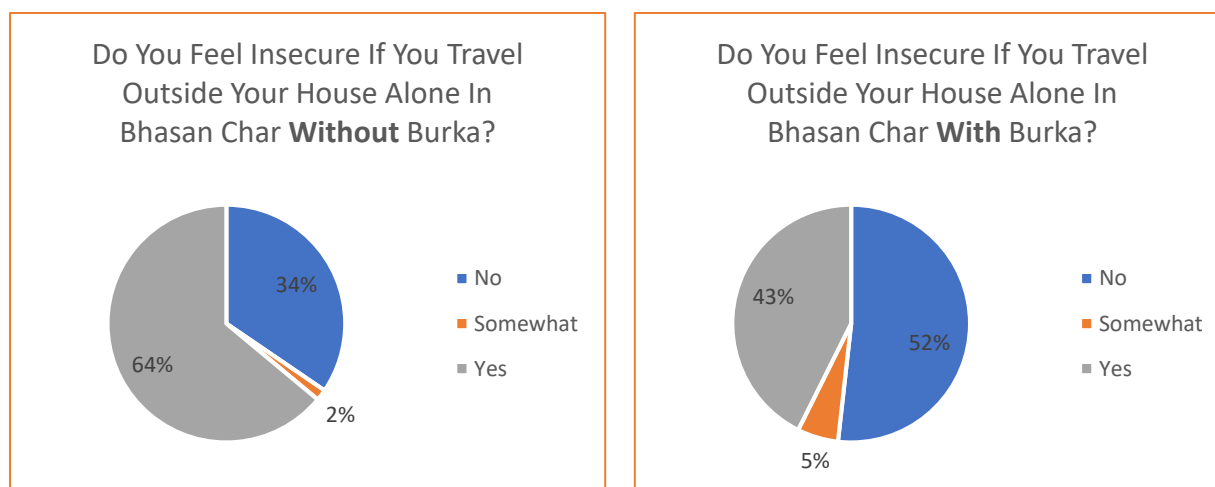


The survey team also asked questions about the respondents' perception about their travel outside of Bhasan Char. The first question is about their family visit to Cox's Bazar with the GoB approval and the second question is about a general visit to another district without the GoB Approval. For the first

³⁴ Women's freedom of movement was much more restricted when they started living in Cox's Bazar after 2017. Please see Plan International's report for details. "Adolescent Girls in Crisis: Voices of the Rohingya", 2018 ([Adolescent Girls in Crisis: Voices of the Rohingya](https://www.plan-international.org/publications/adolescent-girls-in-crisis-voices-of-the-rohingya) | Plan International ([plan-international.org](https://www.plan-international.org)))

question, a total 49.5 % (52% women, 47% men) of the respondents showed their willingness to travel to Cox's Bazar by themselves. On the other hand, 23.5 % (26 % women, 21% men) of the respondents consider they can travel if another person or child accompany them. For the second question, even though the majority of the Rohingya people (89% women, 93% men) consider they cannot travel without the GoB approval, a small percentage of both women (6%) and men (5%) selected the answer that they can still travel.

These data suggest that the Rohingya people, both women and men, in general understand that their movement outside of their community largely depend upon the GoB's approval. However, what is more interesting for our study is that more women show their willingness to travel by themselves to Cox's Bazar or travel to another district without the GoB's permission. Migrant smuggling has been a major issue among the Rohingya community living both in Myanmar and Bangladesh since many years ago and Rohingya women also engage with such undocumented international movements³⁵. Our data suggest that some Rohingya women, even though their movement can be very much shaped by traditional gender roles of the community, they consider they can make such bold move by themselves when it is needed.

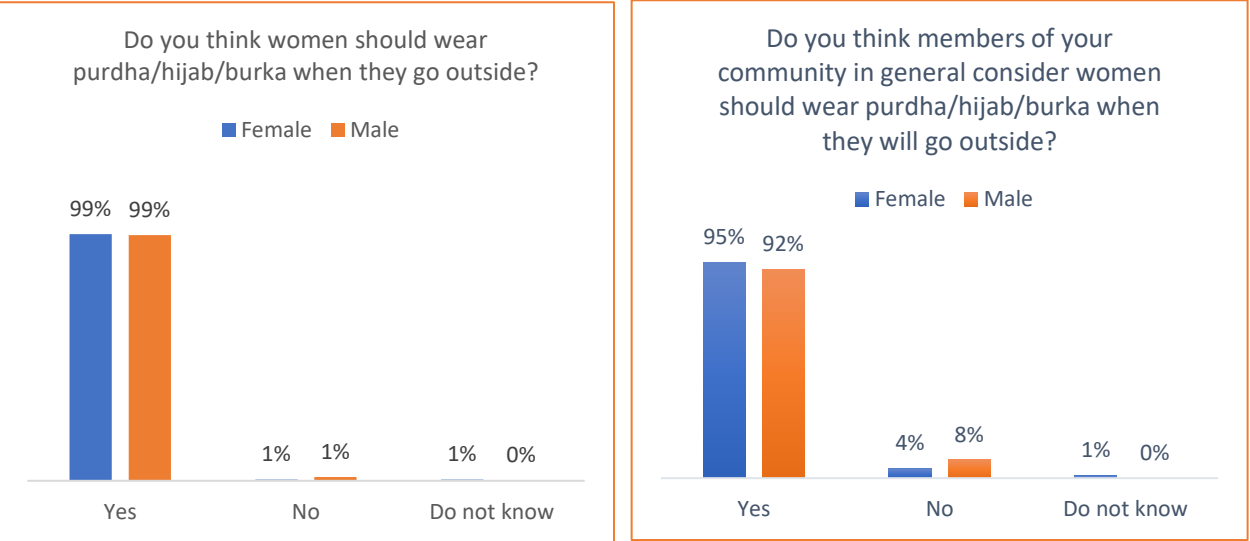


Wearing a Burka and Sense of Security

³⁵ UNHCR Regional Office for South-East Asia, "Mixed Maritime Movements in South-East Asia in 2015", 2016

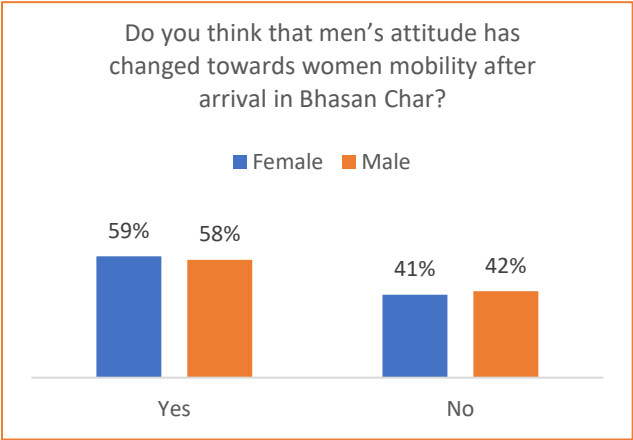
Covering women’s head, face and the body by a single cloth called Burka is commonly practiced among the Rohingya women. Rohingya women’s mobility cannot be understood without reference to their practice of wearing a Burka. According to our data, 64% of women consider they feel insecure when they are outside of the house without wearing a Burka. When they are wearing a burka, on the contrary, the percentage drops to 43%. Our data certainly indicate that a Burka helps some Rohingya women feel more secure.

If we look at community perception of wearing a burka, we can understand that overwhelming majority



of Rohingya women and men consider Rohingya women should wear Burka. On the other hand, when the respondents were asked about how they consider other community members think about wearing a Burka, we see a subtle difference in their response; even though it remains the same that the majority of the Rohingya community perceive their community members expect women to wear a burka, a small percentage of both women and men (4% women, 8% men) selected the answer that does not support such expectation. Unfortunately, the survey team did not examine what make some Rohingya women and men consider the community does not expect women to wear a burka. A nuanced study is needed to develop better understanding of this alternative view about the community expectations on burka.

Men’s Attitude towards Women’s Mobility



A joint report by the Asia Foundation and Centre for Peace and Justice, BRAC University convincingly argues that women mobility has improved in Cox’s Bazar compared to the time they lived in Myanmar. In that report, 43% of households reported that women go out of the shelter for not so urgent or necessary reasons in Cox’s Bazar, which had been reportedly uncommon in Myanmar. Women’s increased mobility is seen by some camp residents, both men and women, as essentially negative but unavoidable change that violates their modesty,

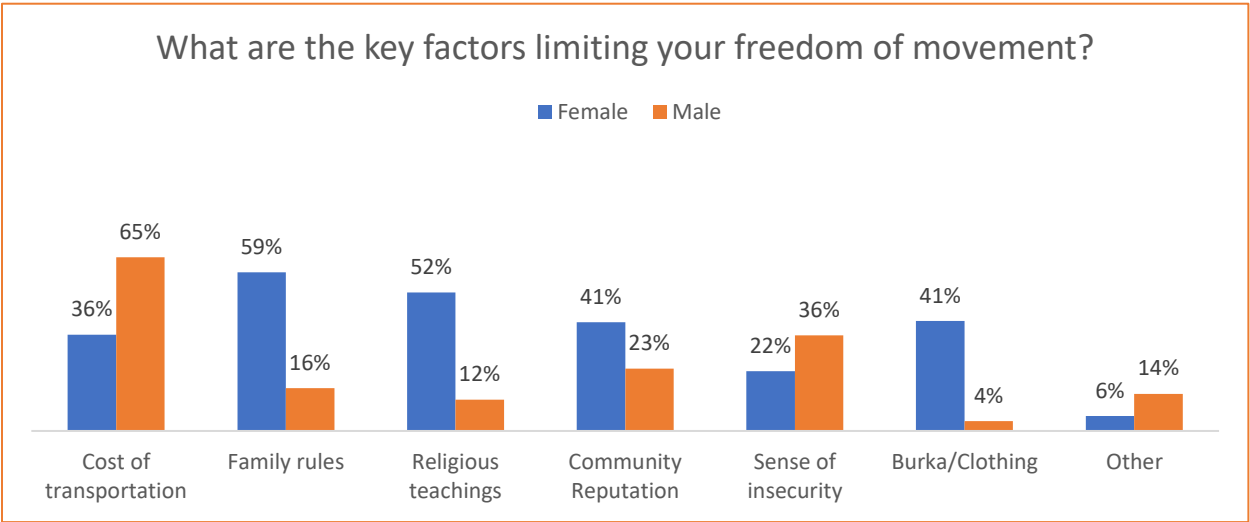
the same report explains³⁶. Similar to this study, this RGA recognizes the improved mobility of women after their relocation to Bhasan Char.

When the respondents were asked whether Rohingya men’s perception towards women’s mobility has changed after their arrival in Bhasan Char, 58.5% of them (59% women, 58% men) has acknowledged the change. It is unclear whether this change has been perceived negatively or positively in our survey. However, since around 90% of the respondents consider both women and men can travel by themselves in their community on Bhasan Char as we reviewed in this section, it seems reasonable to regard it as a positive change.

There are a number of factors that support such change in Bhasan Char. One can be the improved general security in Bhasan Char; Rohingya people may feel more secure living in an environment where protected by drones and Closed-circuit Television Camera (CCCTV) inside their community in Bhasan Char. Better road conditions in Bhasan Char could be another factor helping Rohingya women to have safer and better access to various facilities in their community. Also, the serious lack of livelihood opportunities on the island may lead Rohingya men to acknowledge that women go outside of their residence to support the family. Lastly, the absence of radical religious groups on the island can be another significant factor that makes Rohingya men to think it is safe for women to move around in the island.

Barriers to Freedom of Movement

While the survey suggests the improved mobility among Rohingya women on Bhasan Char, it also



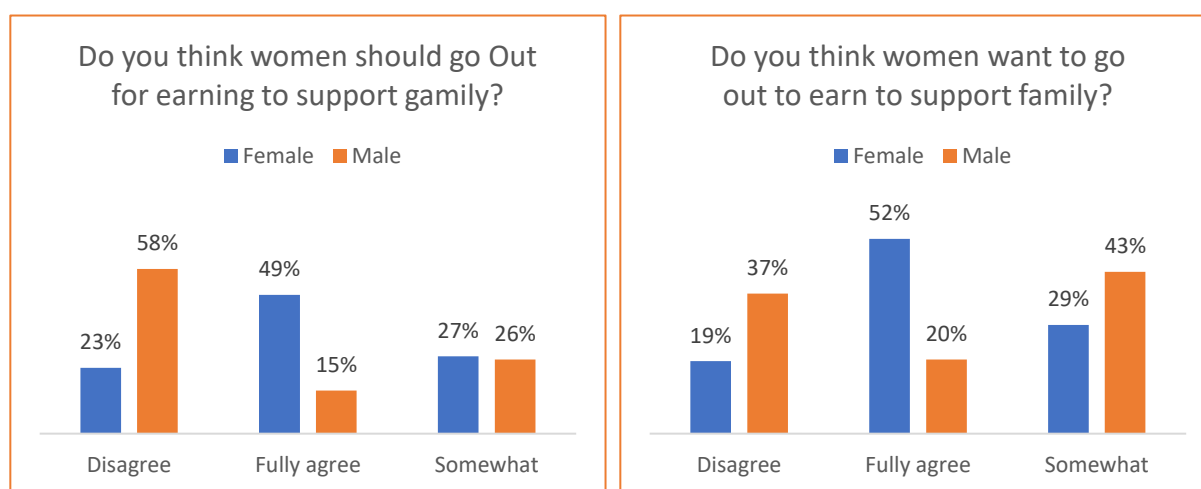
indicates the barriers to freedom of movement are largely gendered. Our data show that the two biggest barriers to freedom of movement is the cost of transportation (65%) and sense of insecurity (36%) for men.

Women, on the other hand, cited family rules and religious faith (59% and 52%, respectively) as key factors limiting their freedom of movement. 41% of women also mentioned the need to dress appropriately with

³⁶ The Asia Foundation and Centre for Peace and Justice, BRAC University. August 2020. “*Navigating at the margins: family, mobility and livelihoods amongst Rohingya refugees in Bangladesh*”. Retrieved July 2023. Link: https://asiafoundation.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/09/Navigating-the-Margins_Family-Mobility-and-Livelihoods-Amongst-Rohingya-in-Bangladesh.pdf

burka and community perception as other factors limiting their movement. Rohingya women's views about the constraints on their mobility is well captured by a middle-aged married women's comment in the KII. She said, "some women had no burka to wear, and it's a social norm for married women to maintain *purdah* by wearing a burka during travel. Social norms also tell women to get her husband's permission to leave house. And husbands don't like their wife to mingle with others. All these make women stay at home."

6.2.3 Perception of Women Getting Work Outside of Their Household



"Women working outside the home is against prescribed Islamic rule" is a firm belief constantly expressed during FGDs and KIIs with Rohingya community members in Bhasan Char. However, existing literature³⁷ shows that such perceptions and practices around women's economic participation, leadership and empowerment are positively changing after their arrival in Cox's Bazar. After Rohingya people arrived in Bangladesh, they had to go through drastic lifestyle changes for their survival. One of the biggest changes is that women started having broader opportunities to engage in activities that take place outside of their households. This survey also documents the changing but conflicting expectations for women in terms of their financial contribution to the family in Bhasan Char.

When female respondents were asked if they agree to the statement that Rohingya women want to go out of their household to financially support their family, 52% of them provided the positive answer. This is contrasting with 19 % of women who disagree with the statement. 49 % of the female respondents also consider that women should provide financial support to the family. The female participants in our FGD also expressed the same views, at the same time as requesting more training for women due to their lack of education and work experiences. The male responses to these questions are quite different from those of Rohingya women. Only 20% of the male respondents agreed to the statement that Rohingya women want to work to support the family and only 15% conceded to the idea that women should support the family financially.

These conflicting views between Rohingya women and men suggest that gender norms in the Rohingya community on Bhasan Char is in the process of being negotiated. The lack of livelihood opportunities in

³⁷ GIHA WG (2022), "Four Years on: Shifting Gendered Perceptions and Experience"

the island is forcing women to consider getting themselves engaged with income generating work, which goes beyond their conventional gender roles. For Rohingya men, on the other hand, such change is something difficult to accept easily, even though their circumstances have drastically changed after the repetitive relocation from Myanmar to Cox's Bazar and Cox's Bazar to Bhasan Char. This is a good instance that shows only economic incentives cannot change social norms, and more nuanced studies need to be conducted to develop better understanding of both men's and women's perception about women establishing new social role in the community.

Such conflicting views do not exist only between women and men. ³⁸A 17-year-old adolescent girl said in an FGD that "It is better to work to earn some money and contribute to the family, rather than staying at home and struggling with different problems". She continued that "but, our parents don't allow us to work outside because of religious perceptions." This comment clearly suggests that intergenerational gaps also exist among the Rohingya community with regard to the role of Rohingya women in Bhasan Char.

Food Assistance in Bhasan Char and Potential Impact of Ration Cuts

Food Assistance in Cox's Bazar

Since the last mass influx of Rohingya people in 2017, WFP have been providing food and nutrition assistance to the displaced Rohingya community living in the camps in Bangladesh. 100 % of Rohingya people living in Cox's Bazar camps receive food support via e-voucher as of June 2023.

The Minimum Expenditure Basket (MEB) for Rohingya refugees was initially established in 2018, shortly after the massive influx in 2017, as a benchmark to assess the adequacy of assistance provided to refugees and to ensure that their basic needs are met. In 2018, the General Food Assistance (GFA) programme began transitioning from in-kind to value vouchers, the transfer value was set at USD 9.00 per person per month, enabling the refugee families to choose from a list of 10 food items in six WFP e-voucher outlets supplied by local traders.

On an annual basis, the food MEB was adjusted for inflation, which steadily increased the GFA transfer value from USD 9.00 in 2018, to USD 10.00 in 2019, USD 11.00 in 2020, and USD 12.00 in 2021. In June 2022, the GFA transfer value was briefly increased to USD 13.00, responding to the sudden food price rise owing to the global food crisis. However, in November 2022, the transfer value was reversed to USD 12.00, not as a ration cut, but as an exchange rate correction, since the Bangladeshi Taka depreciated against US Dollar. In 2022, WFP established Fresh Food Corners located in the same premises as the e-voucher outlets, offering fresh vegetable, fruits, live chicken and fish. While all population can purchase from the FFCs, vulnerable households such as those headed by women, children, older people and those with persons with disabilities, were provided with an additional USD 3 fresh food voucher to enhance their nutrition status.

In March 2023, the funding shortage of WFP forced them to reduce the value of their food voucher from USD 12.00 to USD 10.00; then in June 2023, to USD 8.00, resulting in a total of 33% reduction. Despite this, the fresh food vouchers were maintained throughout the year to minimize the impact of the ration cut on vulnerable families.

Food Assistance in Bhasan Char

Two types of food assistance service are available in Bhasan Char as in June 2023: a fixed commodity voucher and an e-voucher. Through e-vouchers, households receive a monthly ration worth of USD 15 that they can use to purchase packaged foods such as rice, oil, and salt, as well as fresh produce from a local commercial market. The rest of the households redeem their commodity vouchers for a fixed food basket of 11 items. Food assistance service providers visit door-to-door and prioritize People with disabilities (PWD), lactating mothers and elders for distribution of EVoucher.

In Bhasan Char, the eVoucher system started in December 2022 in some residential clusters. The service is expanding into other clusters, enabling residents to purchase packaged items, such as rice, oil, salt and sugar. Fruit and vegetables can be purchased at 'Market 2,' a small commercial area operated by Bangladeshi traders on the island, by using either eVoucher or cash. WFP has a plan to cover all residential clusters with the eVoucher scheme by December 2023. The Bhasan Char Rapid Food Security Assessment (July 2022) documents that 88% of respondents asked for the eVoucher modality to receive food assistance from WFP.

Potential impact of ration cuts in Bhasan Char

Refugee Emergency Vulnerability Assessment (REVA)³⁹ conducted in 2022 revealed the Rohingya community on the island is more vulnerable than the community in Cox's Bazar due to its high reliance on livelihood-based coping strategies. The report also points out that the percentage of households having access to an adequate diet is lower in Bhasan Char. The survey considered the Rohingya population on the island as being more vulnerable, with 99% classified as 'moderately' or 'highly vulnerable'. These findings are in aligned with our RGA.

In communication with WFP staff via email, they shared a view that Rohingya on the island are even more vulnerable that ration cuts will have a detrimental consequences on their life in Bhasan Char. In case the population remains around 30,000 people, WFP can continue supporting the Rohingya until the end of 2023 without changing their current food assistance plan. In case WFP has to introduce ration cut in Bhasan Char, it will affect Rohingya's food security, health and nutrition (particularly for women and children), cognitive development and security in the camps. Repercussions cannot be overstated for a population who entirely rely on humanitarian assistance. In the FGD conducted under our RGA, some Rohingya participants themselves expressed concerns about the impacts of potential food ratio cuts in Bhasan Char.

As our RGA revealed vividly, the Rohingya community in Bhasan Char already heavily relies on a varying coping mechanisms. For example, the next section 'Support Networks and Coping Strategies' of the RGA report (6.2.4) illustrates that Rohingya in Bhasan Char adopted different strategies such as choosing less preferred food, borrowing food from other community members, reducing the amount of food intake and/or the number of meals per day once in a week. Moreover, our survey also finds that that Rohingya people think that child labour and polygamy is unavoidable when their family faces financial crisis (6.3.3).

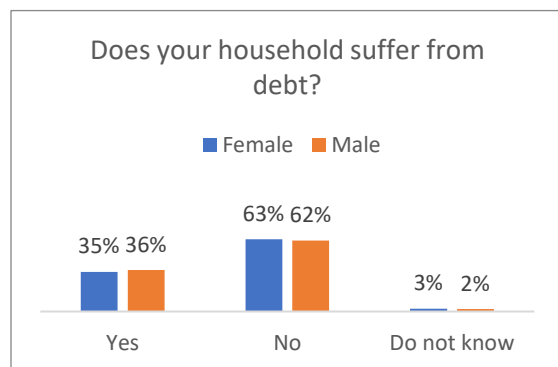
The ration cuts on Bhasan Char will create conditions for adopting increasingly dangerous coping strategies. These can include engagement with human trafficking, unsafe migration, and drug trade, all

³⁹ WFP (June 2023). "Refugee Influx Emergency Vulnerability Assessment Reva - 6) Report". Retrieved July 2023.

Link: https://docs.wfp.org/api/documents/WFP-0000150690/download/?_ga=2.238209414.784528505.1690173732-497685824.1684129786

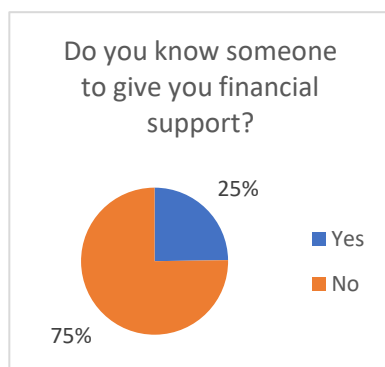
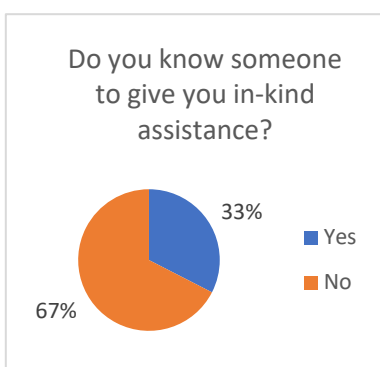
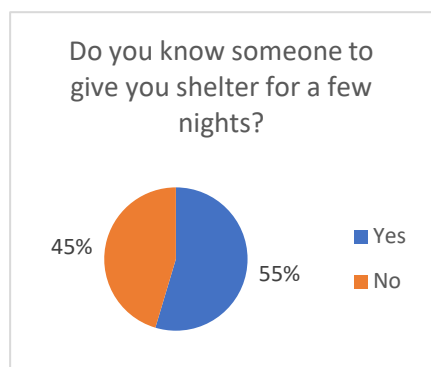
of which are perilous attempts to get over livelihood challenges in Bhasan Char. Women, girls, and boys would face higher risk of getting involved with unsafe and dangerous sex work both inside and outside Bhasan Char. Violence and insecurity in the camps can increase. There will be a higher risk of young and disempowered men and boys in hopeless situations getting associated with violent extremism, which is already proliferant in Cox's Bazar.

6.2.4 Support Networks and Coping Strategies



In the earlier section (6.2.1), the RGA revealed that livelihood has been one of the most significant challenges that Rohingya people face in Bhasan Char. Income generation opportunities in the island has largely decreased due to the limited number of opportunities to work as volunteers with NGOs. It has become even more difficult to find unofficial casual labour work in the island compared with Cox's Bazar. In our survey, 65% of the respondents reported that they do not own any livestock in their households. Similarly, 53% of the respondents reported that they do not own their own house

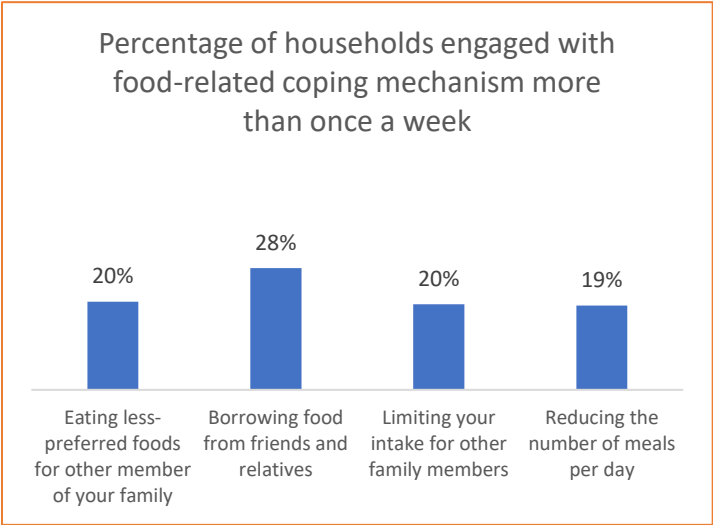
materials at all. 35% of them also said they suffer from debt, suggesting humanitarian assistance they receive is not sufficient to meet their daily needs.



On the other hand, supporting networks do exist among the Rohingya communities in Bhasan Char. When asked if they have someone rely on when they need a shelter for a few nights, 55% of the respondents provided a positive answer. When it comes to in-kind assistance that they need for their survival in the new environment, 33% of them said that have someone who they can depend upon. The percentage gets the smaller but 25% of the respondents admit that they can rely on someone financially as well. Rohingya people help each other in an unfamiliar island setting amidst the process of their community being re-established. However, it also needs to be noted that a large portion of Rohingya community members conversely consider they have no one to rely on for shelter (45%), kind-assistance (67%), and financial support (75%). These data suggest that there is a pressing need of strengthening a community-based protection mechanism, through which a comprehensive support is provided to relocated Rohingya people in Bhasan Char.

Food-related Coping Strategies

Bhasan Char Rapid Food Security Assessment conducted by WFP in July 2022 reveals high vulnerability of Rohingya community in Bhasan Char. In this assessment, 40% of the Rohingya people are considered highly vulnerable and 45% are moderately vulnerable, based on their calculation of economic vulnerability, livelihood coping strategies, and food consumption scores. Our RGA was conducted more than 6 months after the WFP’s assessment in April and May 2023. Nevertheless, the RGA still points out similar tendency regarding the livelihood vulnerability of the relocated Rohingya communities.



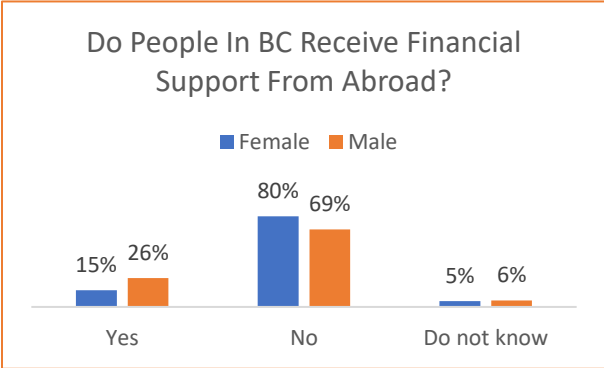
The survey assessed how the Rohingya people in Bhasan Char deal with food insufficiency by asking how often the respondents must adopt food-related coping strategies of different severity. The results show that more than approximately 20% of the respondents have had adopted the following strategies at least once in the last 7 days.

- Choosing less preferred food
- Borrowing food from other community members
- Reducing the amount of food intake
- Reducing the number of meals per day

These data are in line with anecdotal data we gathered through the KIIs and FGDs. According to a male NGO worker in KII, the amount of rice every family receives is not so sufficient that the families consume all the rice before the next distribution, necessitating them to sell house essentials to buy additional food. According to his observation, this tendency is more conspicuous among the single household families. A women participated in a FGD also said that Rohingya people with many children need to borrow money from others to buy essential goods such as clothes, medicine, and food.

Our data do not significantly show the gendered gap to these coping strategies; however, more detailed analysis is needed to better understand how other vulnerability factors will affect these food-related coping strategies, since the community raises concerns for particular groups as already reviewed in 6.2.1. Similarly, the impacts of these behaviors need to be analyzed taking into consideration of other factors such as pregnancy status, lactation status, and health condition.

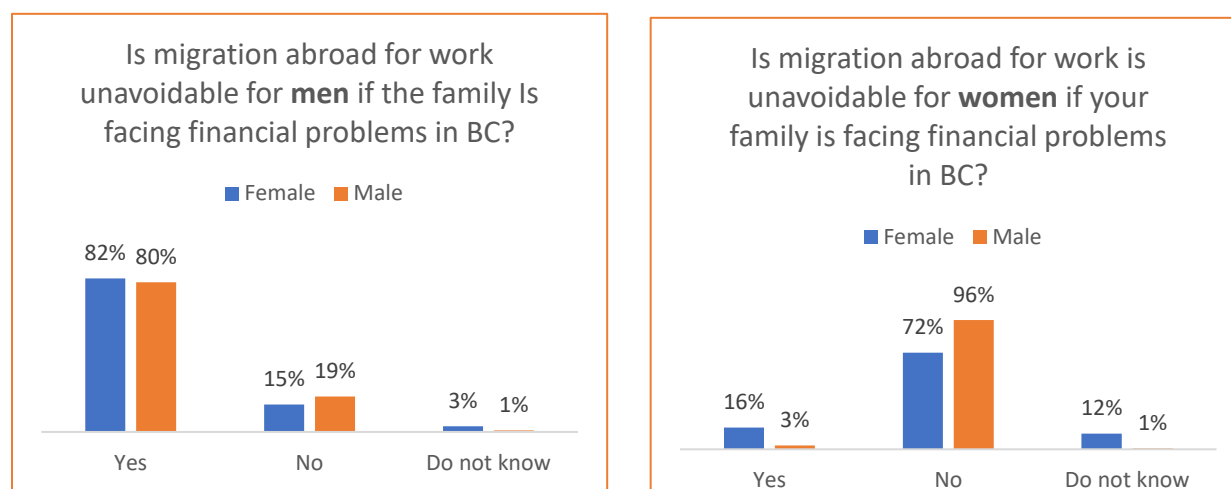
Support from Overseas and Migration



Unofficial cross-border movement of Rohingya people catches international attention every now and then even before the most recent mass influx of Rohingya people in 2017. For instance, a UNHCR report published in 2015 estimates 170,000 people traveled by sea from northern Rakhine state in Myanmar or Cox’s Bazar in Bangladesh between

2015 to 2017⁴⁰. A study conducted by the Asia Foundation and Center for Peace and Justice, Brac University⁴¹ also reports that as high as 39% of camp households in Cox’s Bazar have at least one family member living outside of Bangladesh, out of which 58% reside in Malaysia. In the same report, 21% of their assessed households report that they receive remittances from abroad.

Our survey also reveals that approximately 20% of the respondents acknowledge that some Rohingya relocated to Bhasan Char receive remittances from outside of Bangladesh. A *majhi* in our KII also explained that due to lack of livelihood opportunities and financial crisis, many people are trying to migrate to other countries secretly, understanding that it is perilous. The same *majhi* also shared that with help of brokers, many girls and women attempted to migrate to Malaysia by sea, but some were rescued and transported back to Bhasan Char.



Rohingya people’s perception about migration abroad is very much informed by prescribed gender roles. Nearly 80% of both male and female respondents consider that Rohingya men going overseas for work is unavoidable to get over the financial challenges. On the other hand, such bold action as migrating abroad is considered unacceptable for Rohingya women by Rohingya men (96%) and Rohingya women (72%). Despite the fact that many Rohingya women still face mobility challenges inside Bhasan Char, it is worth noting that 16% of Rohingya women think it is unavoidable that women go overseas for work. An existing study also points out that Rohingya women migrate to other countries for marriage⁴². Whatever the reasons motivate Rohingya women or men to migrate abroad, preventing or risk mitigation actions need to be taken as many Rohingya women and men are facing severe livelihood challenges on Bhasan Char.

6.3 Gender-based Violence and Protection Concerns

⁴⁰ UNHCR, 2016, “Mixed Maritime Movements in South-East Asia in 2015”

⁴¹ The Asia Foundation & Center for Peace and Justice, Brac University, 2020, “Navigating at the Margins: Family, Mobility and Livelihoods amongst Rohingya Refugees in Bangladesh”

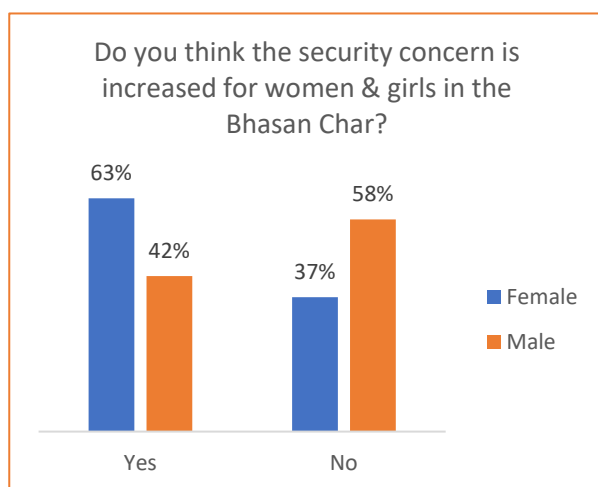
⁴² UNHCR, 2021, “Left Adrift at Sea: Dangerous Journeys of Refugees across the Bay of Bengal and Andaman Sea”

Even for Rohingya people who fled from extreme violence in Myanmar, insecurities that encompass gender-based violence continue to be one of the most fearful threats in Cox’s Bazar. Plan International’s study conducted in 2018 documents that many Rohingya women and girls began their new life in Cox’s Bazar, in fear of unfamiliar environment in an unknown country. Not only some of them actually fell victims of gender-based violence in Myanmar, some were exposed to the site of violence on the way to Bangladesh. Starting a new life in an unfamiliar camp setting surrounded by unknown neighbors led many of them to keep staying only inside their tiny makeshift shelters even after they arrived in relatively safer Cox’s Bazar.⁴³

Arriving in Bangladesh did not mean that Rohingya women and girls became free of GBV risks. A study conducted by International Rescue Committee in 2019 reports that 27 % of the screened Rohingya women and girls experienced GBV in the camps in Cox’s bazar, stating this percentage could be underrepresenting the reality as many women and girls refused participating in the screening. Later in 2021, IRC also published a brief note that pointed out that Rohingya women and girls were facing increased risks of GBV following the onset of the COVID-19.

Although these IRC reports mainly talk about intimate partner violence, GBV risks that Rohingya women and girls face in the Cox’s Bazar camps vary. An assessment conducted by UNICEF and Child Protection sub-sector⁴⁴ points out that Rohingya people are concerned about a wide range of protection risks which include child labour, neglect, child marriage, trafficking in persons, abuse, and child pregnancy, many of which fall in the broad category of GBV. Our RGA in Bhasan Char also suggests that security issues or gender-based violence in a broad sense has been a huge concern among the relocated Rohingya community on the island.

6.3.1 Perceptions of Security and Safety Concerns in Bhasan Char



In the earlier section, the RGA uncovered that “security” was one of the major reasons why Rohingya people decided to leave Cox’s Bazar for both Rohingya women and men. Many Rohingya men, as high as 38% of them, specifically point out the intra-community conflicts as a reason that rendered them to relocate to the island. In FGDs and KIIs as well, many Rohingya women and men expressed a sense of relief after arriving in Bhasan Char referring to the improved security situation. On the other hand, when the respondents were asked if security concerns are increased in Bhasan Char for Rohingya women and girls, they provided somehow

puzzling answers; 64% of women and 42% of men consider women and girls are facing increased security issues on the island.

⁴³ Plan International, 2018, “Adolescent Girls in Crisis: Voices of the Rohingya”

⁴⁴ Child Protection Sub-sector and UNICE, 2021, “Findings from the Child Protection Assessment in Rohingya Refugee Camps in Cox’s Bazar”

In order to elaborate Rohingya people's perception of security and safety concerns in Bhasan Char, the survey asked both female and male respondents to select what they consider as security threats in the island. The table summarized below show the answers they selected for their own gender.

What are the security concerns for men and boys / women and girls in Bhasan Char?

	Female	Male
Moving outside alone at night	75%	20%
Sexual violence or harassment	46%	1%
Domestic or Intimate Partner violence	45%	5%
Feeling pressure to get married early	35%	3%
Moving outside alone daytime	16%	1%
Human Trafficking	15%	31%
Abduction	6%	21%
Drug abuse	1%	39%
Association with gang groups	0%	26%

Security concerns selected by the respondents show women and men have significantly different understanding of security threats for their own gender group. For instance, for women and girls, fear for physical violence such as “walking outside alone at night” (75%), “sexual violence or harassment” (46%), and “domestic or intimate partner violence” (45%) are the major concerns they have in their community. It should also be noted that 35% of female respondents selected “pressure to get married early” as security threat as well. In contrast, the top 3 security concerns that male respondents selected for their own gender group included “drug abuse” (39%), “trafficking” (31%) and “association with gang groups” (26%). While many consider security situation in general is better in Bhasan Char than Cox's Bazar, boys and men are still concerned about the risk of getting involved with some anti-social behaviors, which can be perhaps associated with extremist groups.

Many in our FGD or KII point out that the unique infrastructural setting of Bhasan Char actually increases the security and safety risks of both Rohingya women and men. For instance, as Bhasan Char is not included in the national power grid, the residential area is covered by complete darkness after the sunset. A *Mahji* in FGD explained that women and girls face security challenges because of the lack of electricity from the earlier time the relocation started. Some girls in fact have been assaulted at night in their residential area, he added. Several women and men also told the survey team that unoccupied shelters on the island are used for anti-social activities, sharing the story of gang groups using unoccupied shelters to hold other men captive demanding a ransom.

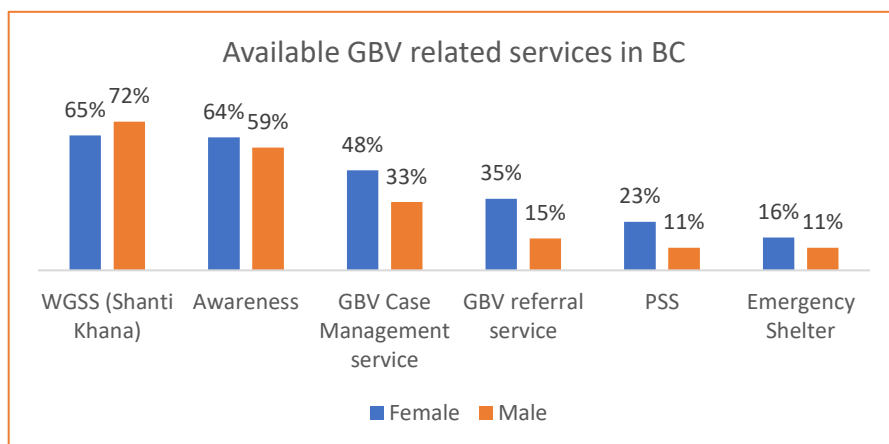
The security situation in Bhasan Char is better than that in Cox's Bazar especially in a sense that the intra-community conflicts are significantly less active in the island. However, the data and anecdotal stories from the survey suggest that women, girls, men, and boys of all diversities face a different set of security and safety concerns in their daily life. Adequate protection measures will continue to be needed in Bhasan Char, taking into consideration of unique protection risks of diverse Rohingya people.

Khadiza's Journey: Battling Dowry and Gender-based Violence

Khadiza Bibi (pseudonym) (31) lives in Bhasan Char with her five children, after moving there from Balukhali camp, Cox's Bazar. Her parents passed away when she was very young, but she completed primary school. Her uncle arranged her marriage when she was 22 to a young man aged 19. Because of the age difference, her uncle was forced to give a large amount of money and two oxen as dowry. Then just a few years into their marriage her husband became abusive, and despite her uncle's constant attempts to protect her, he began torturing her ruthlessly for money. Khadiza started working as a cleaner for an INGO but she had to hand over her entire salary to her husband at the end of each month. All of sudden, however, her spouse married another woman and deserted her and the children.

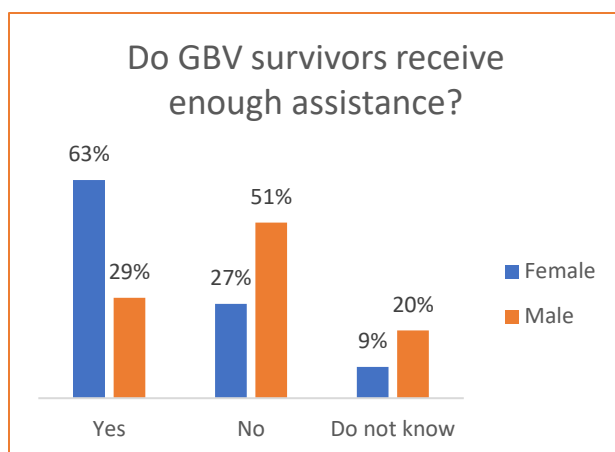
Khadiza complained to a *majhi* and a CiC in the Cox's Bazar camp. She received assurances of support but the husband continued to abuse her. That is the reason why she decided to move to Bhasan Char understanding that she can receive BDT 5,000 every month in Bhasan Char. Khadiza says, "They told me I'd live how people live in Canada, so finally, a year ago, I moved to Bhasan Char, but now I'm suffering worse than before. They don't give me the money they promised and I can't get a job here. I can't afford all the costs of my five children." She said, "My only companion is my tears. My husband was able to marry another woman, but I can't, because I have five children. If I had the power, I'd first fight for my own justice, and then for those who are suffering like me." Khadiza wants to return to Cox's Bazar to find work and live comfortably.

6.3.2 Recognition of GBV-related social services



According to our survey data, a good number of the respondents are aware that GBV-related services are available in Bhasan Char. Those include 'Women and Girls Safe Space' (WGSS also known as Shanti Khana - 65% women and 72% men), awareness raising activities (64% women, 59% men), and GBV case management (48% women and 33%). In addition, as high as 63% of the female respondents consider that GBV survivors on the island receive sufficient support services. In contrast, over the half of the male respondents consider support for GBV survivors are not enough in Bhasan Char.

and GBV case management (48% women and 33%). In addition, as high as 63% of the female respondents consider that GBV survivors on the island receive sufficient support services. In contrast, over the half of the male respondents consider support for GBV survivors are not enough in Bhasan Char.



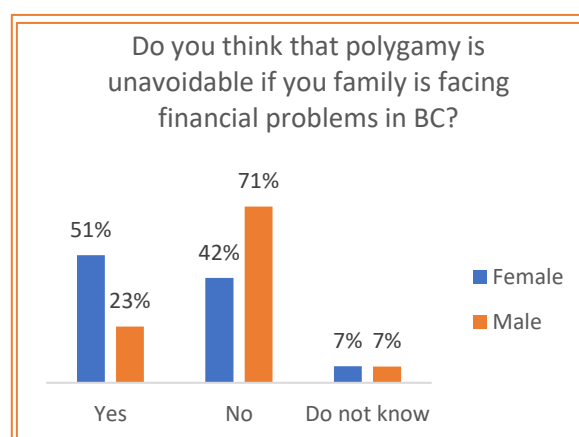
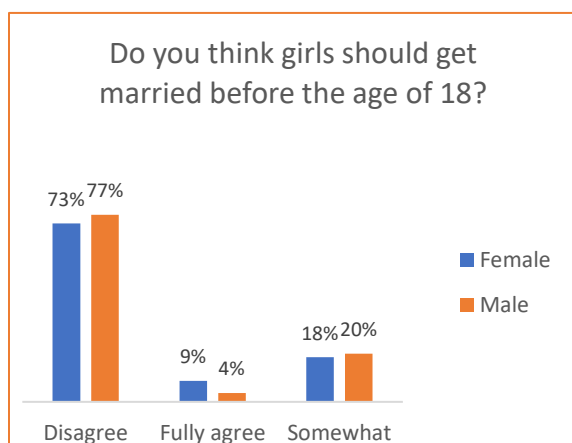
These conflicting data appear to be suggesting that the relocated Rohingya people in Bhasan Char simply do not have proper understanding of GBV or protection risks and/or available relevant services in their community. For instance, Bhasan Char Inter-Agency Operational Update, published by UNHCR in March 2023 points out the lack of shelters, the comprehensive GBV services, and quality case management system on the island⁴⁵. Similarly, the same report published in April 2023 indicate harmful practices such as child marriage and child labor are highly prevalent in the community⁴⁶.

Because of the lack of understanding about GBV and protection risks in Bhasan Char, combined with the sensitivity of these issues to talk about openly, the community members, women in particular, appear to be having an optimistic view about available GBV-related services in their community.

In our qualitative data collection, on the other hand, some voices that criticize the current GBV-related services on the island were also captured. For instance, some women participated in FGD complained that WGSS is located too far away from their shelters and that they stopped receiving GBV-related information after they arrived in Bhasan Char. One religious leader also commented that legal aid services is not easily available for residents in Bhasan Char. In his perception, girls are constantly harassed on the island but they have nowhere to go to seek support for the problem. CiC also stated that few Rohingya people know the reporting mechanism to address GBV. The Protection Sector is aware of the lack of support and services for various protection risks in Bhasan Char; hence, these comments more convincingly suggest the need to develop a comprehensive approach to address these issues in Bhasan Char.

6.3.3 GBV and Negative Coping Mechanism

In earlier sections, the RGA revealed that many Rohingya people who relocated to Bhasan Char are struggling with the lack of livelihood opportunities (see 6.2.1). Simultaneously, it was explained that relocated Rohingya communities are already deploying a wide range of coping mechanism; some skip

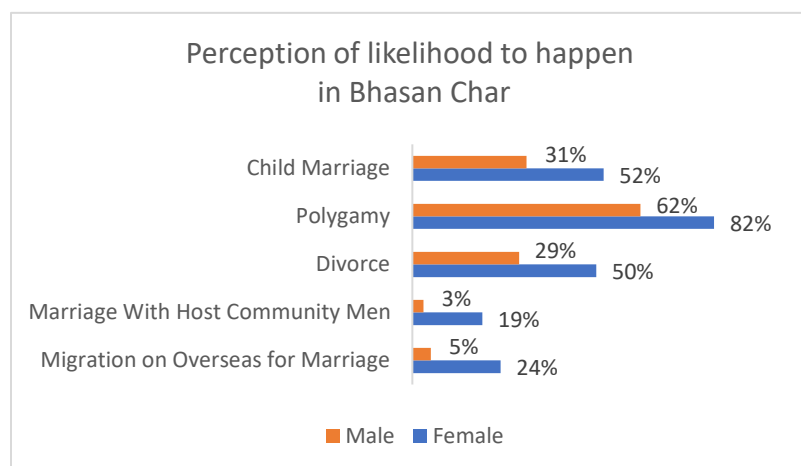


⁴⁵ UNHCR, Bhasan Char Inter-Agency Operational Update, March 2023

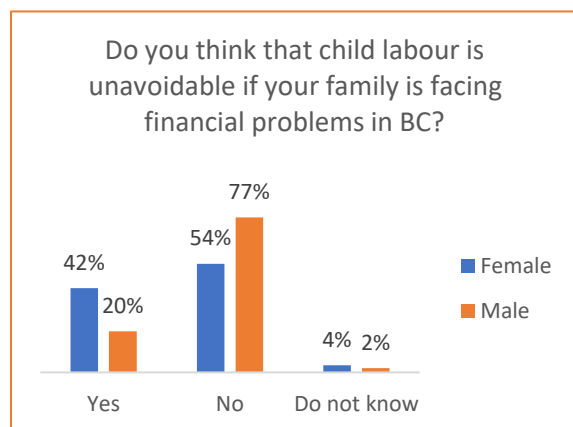
⁴⁶ UNHCR, Bhasan Char Inter-Agency Operational Update, April 2023

their meals and some borrow food from others (see 6.2.5). However, for Rohingya people who need to survive in a challenging environment of Bhasan Char, coping mechanism that they can select is very limited. Our survey results give a warning that the relocation to Bhasan Char has been increasing the risk of GBV or harmful practice as Rohingya people may likely to resort to them as negative coping mechanism.

For instance, the survey data show that even though around 75% of the respondents (73% women, 77% men) do not consider child marriage is a favorable practice, 41% of female respondents and 15% of male respondents consider child marriage is unavoidable when their family is facing financial challenges. Similar questions were also asked about child labour and polygamy, both of which are confirmed to be prevalent in Cox's Bazar⁴⁷. The survey results were also similar for both cases; 42% women versus 20% men and 51% women versus 23% men consider child labour or polygamy respectively is unavoidable for the good of their family.



The survey also included questions asking what harmful practices or risky behaviors are expected to increase in the community. As high as 82% women and 62% men consider that more people will engage with polygamy in Bhasan Char in future. This is possibly reflecting the reality that polygamy is already practiced among many Rohingya people in Bhasan Char. One Majhi in FGD pointed out that out of 120 families in his residential area, 31 families are already engaged with polygamy.



Other than polygamy, quite high percentage of both women and men (around 50% of women and around 30% of men) predicted the increase of child marriage and divorce. The percentage is much smaller than these marital practices, but some respondents also conceive that “marriage with host community men” and “overseas migration for marriage” will increase in the community in future.

One thing to be noted in understanding these trends is that marriage is considered an important custom that provides protection to Rohingya women. This is a system highly embedded in prevalent gender dynamics in the Rohingya community and unfortunately it does not always provide free protection to Rohingya women. One *majhi* explained in KII that “Polygamy and child marriage on Bhasan Char is already prevalent, similar to the situation in Cox's Bazar. Many

⁴⁷ Child Protection Sub-sector and UNICEF, 2021, “Findings from the Child Protection Assessment in Rohingya Refugee Camps in Cox's Bazar”

people borrow money to arrange a dowry. If the family has relatives abroad, they ask them for money”. Even though the dowry is banned in the hosting Bangladesh society, it is widely practiced among Rohingya communities in Cox’s Bazar. Traditionally, the amount of dowry increases as a bride gets older and this is one of the driving factors of child marriage. If the family cannot provide enough amount of dowry for their daughter, the bride is often put in a vulnerable position within the married family, which frequently leads to domestic violence. Many female participants in FGD reported such cases as an example of the consequence of livelihood challenges for women.

It is also important to highlight that more women than men consider that these harmful practices are unavoidable or will increase in future when asked about their views on them in Bhasan Char. More detailed studies are needed to understand why there is such a perceptual gap between Rohingya women and men about these harmful practices. However, one interpretation could be that women tend to internalize prescribed gender norms and values not solely for their own benefit, but also with consideration for their family and community. Lack of access to quality education or networking opportunities outside of their household could be another factor that renders Rohingya women to accept these harmful traditions.

6.3.4 How to Address Protection Concerns

category	Female	Male
Approach community leaders/Imam/ Majhi	64%	73%
Info Hub/FIC	48%	51%
Seek support from family	39%	31%
Talk with friends/ relatives	34%	14%
Seeking psychosocial support from civil society/NGOs	17%	20%
Seek support from religious leaders	19%	15%
Access to friendly spaces for children	14%	8%
Do not know	9%	9%
Access to centres for women and girls or men and boys	10%	7%
Engaging in conflict	5%	4%
Other (CIC, NSI, Hotline, Volunteers)	2%	8%

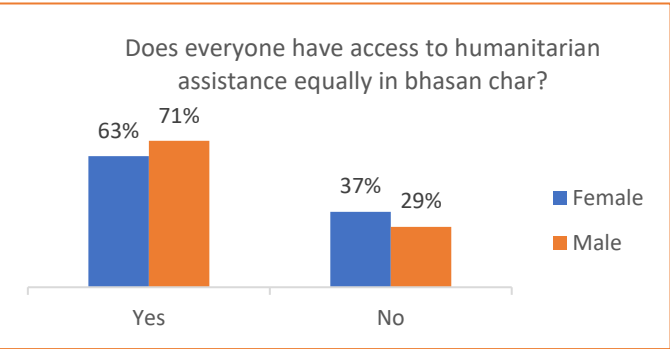
As a strategy to address protection risks, the most popular one among the respondents was the consultation with community leaders such as *majhi* and *imam*; 64% of women and 73% of men selected this option. This is in aligned with the RGA’s earlier finding that Rohingya people consider community leaders such as *majhi*, CiC, and *imam* most influential in the relocated Rohingya community (See 6.1.2). After the community leaders, 48% of women and 51% of men chose to approach Info Hub/FIC, which is a service provided by BDRCS to collect feedback and complains from Rohingya community members.

39% of women and 31% of men answered to seek support from family and similarly 34% of women and 14% of men selected the option of going to talk to friends or relatives. Unlike two other previous options of accessing community leaders or NGO services, the percentage of women who chose these options are higher than that of men. The lack of mobility among Rohingya women, as the RGA explored in the earlier

section, can be one factor that stands as a barrier for Rohingya women to access community leaders or NGO services. However, the lack of existing female leadership in the community should be reminded here as well. For Rohingya women to consult with such sensitive issues as GBV or other protection issues in a dignified manner, female leaders are essential in the community.

The lack of trust for law enforcement agencies on the island was mentioned during the FGD as well. According to some participants in the session, Rohingya people in general are reluctant to trust the police to seek support for GBV issues because they fear harassment or being asked for bribes. These views echo their views of community leaders including *Majhi* and *imam* as explained in the earlier section 6.1.2. The RGA clearly captures the increasing trends of protection risks in Bhasan Char due to the lack of livelihood opportunities and limited governance systems. Further studies on the formal and non-formal protection mechanisms are urgently needed.

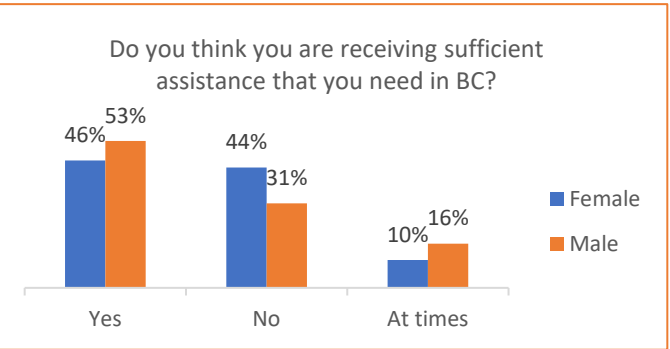
6.4 Perception of Humanitarian Support and Priority Needs



Equal Access to Humanitarian Assistance

66% of the respondents (63% female, 71% male) consider equal access to humanitarian assistance is provided among the Bhasan Char residents. This result is slightly different from the similar question asking about the equal distribution of livelihood support in 6.2.1, for which 46% of women and 31% of men considered the support provision is equal. These data suggest that Rohingya people in

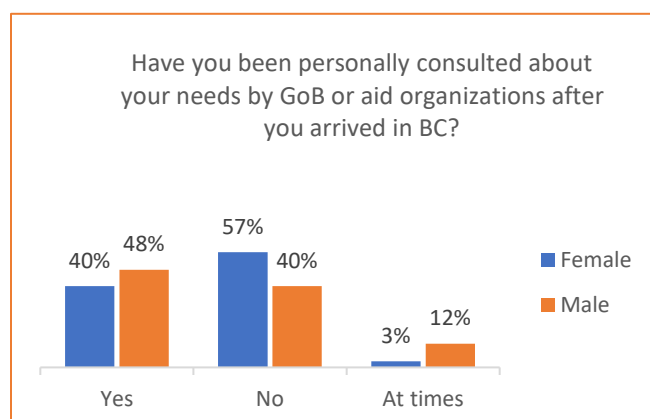
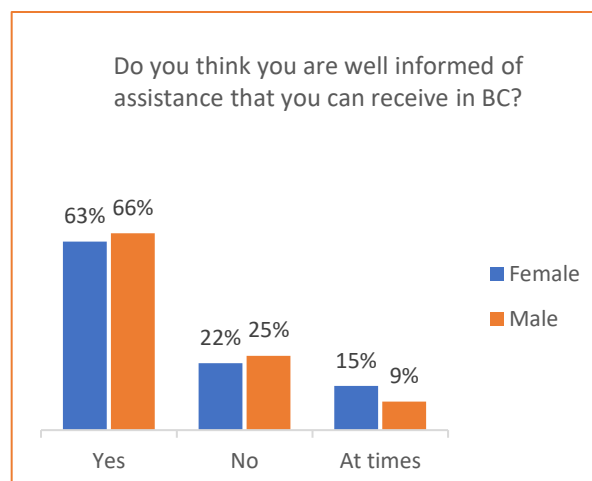
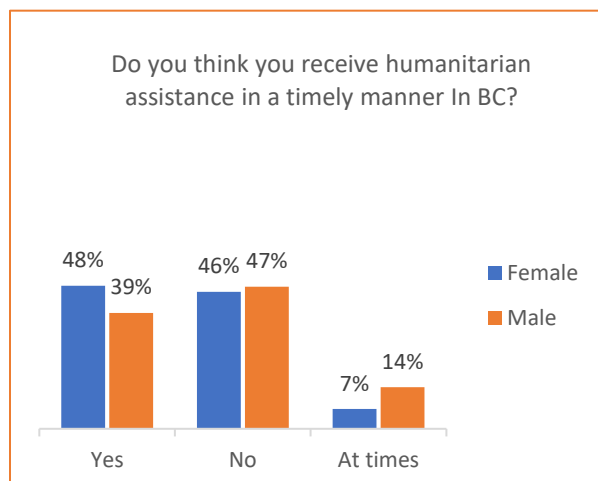
general consider that they have equal access to humanitarian assistance in Bhasan Char; however, for livelihood support, Rohingya people, particularly men, have been developing a sense of unfairness.



Quantity and Timeliness of Received Humanitarian Assistance

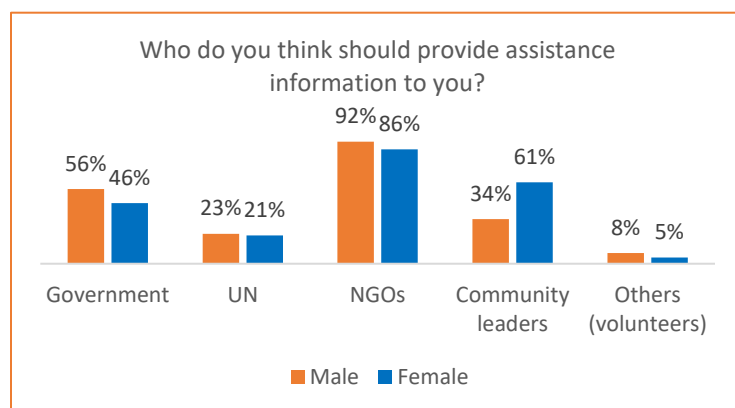
50% of the respondents (46% female and 53% male) reported that they receive sufficient amount of humanitarian assistance in Bhasan Char. As for the timeliness of the provided assistance, 44% of the respondents (48% women, 39% men) consider that they receive the assistance in a timely manner. As these data show, there are conflicting views for both

quantity and timeliness of the humanitarian assistance. The isolated nature of Bhasan Char makes Rohingya people rely on external aid. Hence, the government of Bangladesh together with humanitarian partners need to pay even more attention to sufficiency and timeliness of assistance.



Prior Information and Consultation about Humanitarian Assistance

65% (63% female, 66% male) of the respondents said they were well-informed about the assistance available in Bhasan Char. In contrast, 44 % of the respondents (40% women, 48% men consider that they received consultation about their assistance needs after they arrived in the island. More regular consultations engaging more Rohingya women should be conducted in Bhasan Char to enhance the quality and efficiency of the service provision.

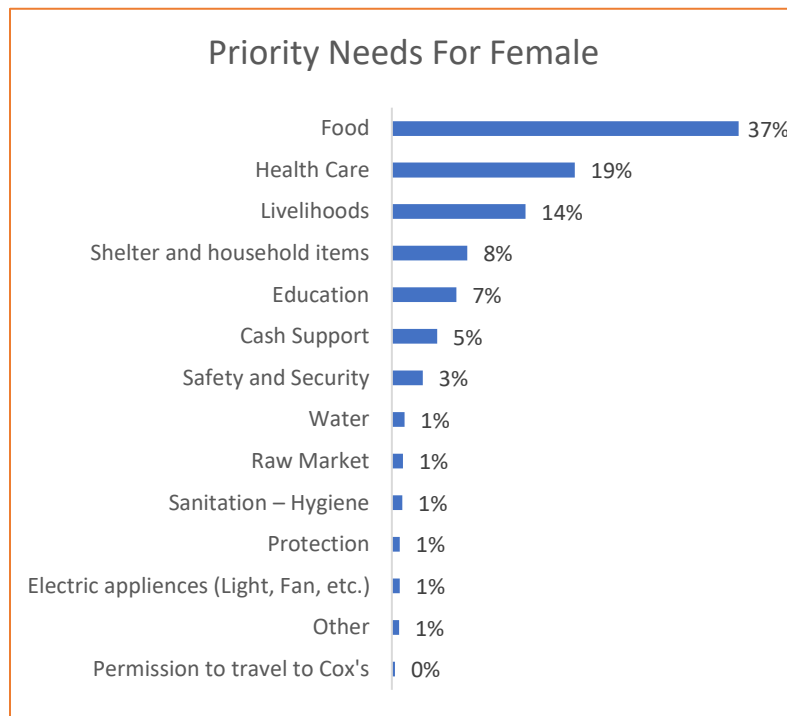


Who Should Provide Aid Information

When asked from whom they want to hear about aid information, an overwhelming majority of both Rohingya women (86%) and men (92%) selected NGOs as primary information provider. Rohingya women and men have different views about community leaders as information provider. Significantly more women (61%) than men (34%) prefer to receive such information directly from community leaders. On the other hand,

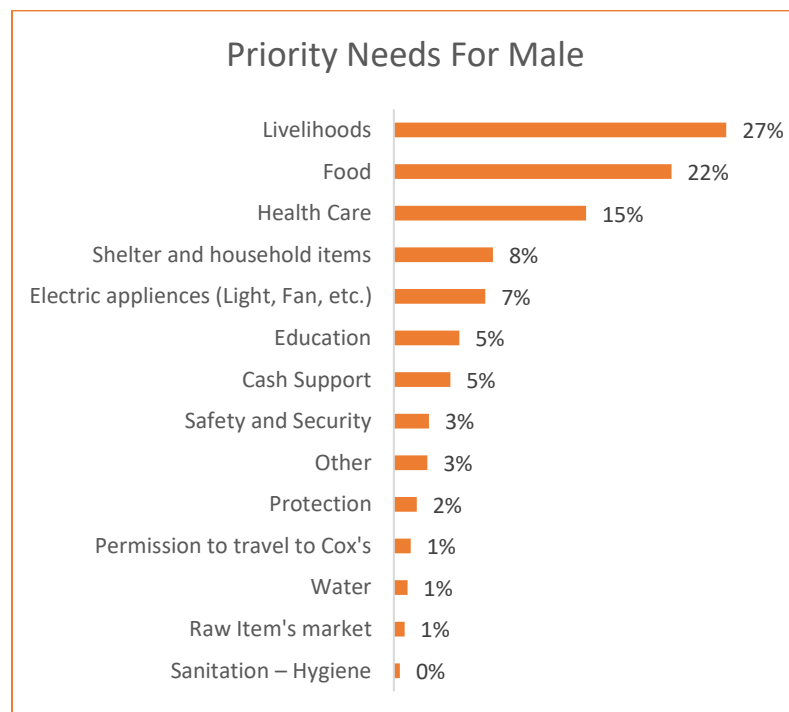
more men (56%) than women (46%) prefer that the government officials provide aid information to Rohingya communities. These data suggest that both Rohingya women and men have high trust to NGOs which provide assistance in Bhasan Char.

Priority Needs among Rohingya Community



At the end of the survey, each respondent was asked to select 3 items that their households need in Bhasan Char urgently. The chart below shows the summary of the identified needs. Both Rohingya women and men selected food, health care, and livelihood as priority needs but the order of priority differs between them. For women, it is food that they consider the most important. Conversely, men selected livelihood as support that should be most prioritized. As the RGA revealed through out the report, their perception of the priority needs are also very much shaped by the existing gender norms and expectations in the

Rohingya community



7. Conclusion

The data collection for the RGA in Bhasan Char was conducted in April and May 2023 by Care Bangladesh's dedicated data collection team. A series of unexpected incidents and conditions led the team to access a smaller number of samples than planned; however, the assessment was able to capture unique realities of the relocated Rohingya community on the island.

One of the most striking findings about the Rohingya community in Bhasan Char is the diversity of their community. Not to mention the diversity in age groups, the RGA made it clear that the Rohingya community in Bhasan Char is composed of various individuals whose backgrounds vary colorfully in terms of gender, sexuality, religion, health conditions, and physical capabilities, to name a few. This simultaneously implicates their challenges of creating a new, solid community in a unique setting of Bhasan Char.

The RGA attempted to understand the newly forming Rohingya community in Bhasan Char from the perspectives of community governance, livelihoods, and GBV and protection concerns. As for the community governance, the survey data illuminated that the Rohingya community was very much shaped by their traditional ideas of gender roles, expectations, and relationships. As a result, the community governance is indeed dominated by Rohingya men only and women and other social groups' voices are not sufficiently reflected in their governance in an effective manner. The lack of diverse voices in the political space can be partially attributed to the extremely low level of education among the constituencies.

The RGA also pointed out that the Rohingya community is facing serious challenges in livelihoods. While many Rohingya people enjoy the improved security in Bhasan Char, many households experienced the loss of livelihood activities because of the relocation. In facing livelihood challenges, some Rohingya women consider they want to support their family financially as well; however, they have to grapple with traditional social norms prevalent in the Rohingya community. In terms of mobility for women, the survey results show that Rohingya women enjoy enhanced freedom of movement in the island with some conditions such as wearing burka and/or getting approval by family. The RGA also illustrated that many Rohingya households are engaged with food-related coping mechanism and that some residents receive support from overseas.

The relocation to Bhasan Char did not mean that the Rohingya community has become free of protection concerns including GBV. In addition to the risk of physical violence, many women, girls, men and boys face increasing risks of harmful practices such as child marriage, child labour, polygamy, and human trafficking. The RGA gives a warning that there is a social environment that pushes the members of the community to engage with these practices as negative coping mechanism. It also shows that a more inclusive community governance system is needed to properly address these protection concerns in Bhasan Char.

How a person experiences humanitarian crisis varies significantly, depending on multiple factors such as gender, age, class, social position, economic status, health conditions and so on. The RGA in Bhasan Char

eloquently tells us an elaborate understanding of local power dynamics, which takes into consideration of those social differences, is vital in delivering humanitarian assistance in a fair and effective way. Humanitarian crisis can create an opportunity for drastic social changes for the affected community. The international community including the Government of Bangladesh needs to pay more careful attention to diverse voices of the Rohingya community so that no one in the community will not be left behind.

Recommendations

Two excellent studies were conducted to give analysis to changing gender dynamics among the Rohingya community in Cox's Bazar; *An Intersectional Analysis of Gender amongst Rohingya Refugees and Host Communities in Cox 's Bazar, Bangladesh*⁴⁸ and *Four Years on: Shifting Gendered Perceptions and Experience*⁴⁹. Many of the recommendations provided in these reports remain valid for the case of newly emerging Rohingya community in Bhasan Char. At the same time as encouraging readers to review these recommendations from existing studies, the RGA in Bhasan Char lists sector-specific recommendations with an aim of main-streaming women empowerment and gender equality in Bhasan Char.

Protection

- The RGA has made it clear that the Rohingya community on Bhasan Char is composed of various individuals and households that have different cultural backgrounds, capabilities, and susceptibility to vulnerability. The Protection Sector should continue mainstreaming protection concerns with other sectors, so a comprehensive approach is strengthened across the community to address varied protection risks that have different impacts on different groups in the diverse Rohingya community.
- Protection Sector has already identified the gaps in GBV-related services. Humanitarian partners should consider providing additional support to this sector so all Rohingya people in Bhasan Char from diverse backgrounds will have just access to necessary support when they face GBV-related challenges. This includes ensuring access to justice for GBV survivors. Men and boys also need to engage with GBV-related activities for various purposes.
- The Rohingya community in Bhasan Char already has supporting mechanisms even though their history in the island is quite new. It is essential to leverage existing or burgeoning support networks to enhance the resilience of the Rohingya community at large, paying particular attention to vulnerable groups who tend to be excluded from mainstream support mechanisms.
- Community governance structures and participatory mechanisms should ensure that women, girls, men, boys, and gender diverse individuals of all ages and diverse backgrounds contribute to their own protection. This can include the formation of representative committees to enable Rohingya communities to exercise their right to participate and influence the design and delivery of humanitarian programmes.
- In facing serious livelihood challenges, an increasing number of people are expected to engage with harmful practices as negative coping mechanism. Risk mitigation programs need to be

⁴⁸ UNHCR, CARE, and ActionAid (2020). *"An intersectional analysis of gender amongst Rohingya refugees and host communities in Cox's Bazar, Bangladesh"* UNHCR, CARE and ActionAid. Retrieved July 2023. Link: https://reliefweb.int/attachments/6b69cc90-e03e-3419-8199-a82b4a40691f/Coxs-Bazar-Gender-and-Intersectionality-Analysis-report_2020.pdf

⁴⁹ GIHA WG (2022), "Four Years on: Shifting Gendered Perceptions and Experience"

implemented in cooperating with the Protection sector. Community leaders as well as law enforcement agencies need to be trained on addressing harmful practices in a more inclusive and effective way.

Education

- There is a pressing need of education support for Rohingya girls and women in Bhasan Char in consideration of the fact that the majority of them have never received education before arriving in Bangladesh. Not only does education help girls and women reduce protection risks such as child marriage, human trafficking, or child labour, it also paves the way for women to take up leadership roles.
- Rohingya girls continue facing mobility challenges in Bhasan Char. To increase girls' attendance to educational services, creating an enabling environment is essential, by engaging with the entire community including men and boys as well as securing caregivers' full buy-in.
- Education plays an important role in bringing about social transformation. Investing in female education enables girls to participate in the community governance more effectively, where currently girls and women voices are not fully reflected. Education can also provide both women and men with an opportunity to openly discuss how they want to transform their society in a way that is suitable to the diverse needs of Rohingya individuals.

Health and Nutrition

- The Rohingya community in Bhasan Char has been grappling with food insecurity since the day they arrived in the island. A strong health monitoring system needs to be strengthened to keep track of adverse impacts of food insufficiency, incorporating intersectional perspectives. Equitable access to quality health services must be ensured to all Rohingya residents from different backgrounds.
- In view of declining humanitarian assistance and existing livelihood challenges, those who engage with harmful martial practices are expected to rise. It is important to strengthen a health system so it addresses the unique needs of Rohingya girls and women from all backgrounds and diversities, including mental health support. Raising awareness on Sexual and Reproductive Health Rights is critical as well.
- Health outreach programs need to be enhanced for the groups that face challenges in accessing health services. These groups include persons with disabilities and gender diverse people. The written guidelines can be developed for these groups in collaboration with Health sector in Cox's Bazar.

Food Security

- Humanitarian partners, in partnership with the Government of Bangladesh, need to demonstrate collective strength to keep providing the sufficient level of food assistance to the relocated Rohingya people. The unique impacts of food insecurities on girls, women, and other vulnerable groups within the Rohingya community need to be sensitized at multiple levels.
- The RGA shows that Rohingya women and girls have not attained an equal social position with Rohingya men and boys. Because of such structural inequality, Rohingya women and girls have more risks of having less access to food than their male counterparts. Similarly, the food insecurity

could lead to the increased tension and conflict within households. Detailed studies need to be conducted to better understand how the food security deteriorates gender equality in the Rohingya context.

- More than 20% of the Rohingya people consider they do not receive enough information about humanitarian assistance in Bhasan Char and more women than men report that they are not consulted enough for humanitarian assistance they are entitled to. In case food assistance is reduced in Bhasan Char following the same path of Cox's Bazar in future, the careful consultation with Rohingya people, particularly girls and women, is necessary to ensure everyone understands potential consequences of the reduction of food assistance.

Site Management Support, Shelter and Non-food Items

- Even though the expectations for community leaders such as CiC and *Majhi* are very high within the Rohingya community, the current community governance system does not effectively capture diverse voices and perspectives of the Rohingya community. One way to tackle this problem is to increase the number of women in leadership positions, but it requires long-term empowerment of women and girls through education and economic opportunities. In the meantime, the current *Majhi* system needs to be adjusted so it enhances the transparency of the *majhi* selection system and the decision-making mechanism. The operational guidelines and a code of conducts should be developed and put in place.
- The current infrastructure arrangements in Bhasan Char, especially low occupancy rate of the residential buildings, enhance security risks for the Rohingya community. A better community governance system needs to be introduced so the community can take lead of the control of security risks. A participatory security risk mapping exercise should be conducted by Rohingya residents from various backgrounds of different age.

Livelihoods and Skill Development Sector

- Lack of literacy skills among the Rohingya community poses a challenge in improving their livelihoods in Bhasan Char. In collaborating with the Education sector, a more robust literacy education program needs to be rolled out for all those who are willing to develop basic literacy skills. To encourage women to participate in such program, getting buy-ins from community leaders and caregivers are essential. The security situation in Bhasan Char is more suitable for women to participate in such programs than in Cox's Bazar, if adequate cares are provided.
- Giving women access to more livelihood opportunities will lead to the empowerment of Rohingya women. However, the sudden structural change in the Rohingya community can induce a backlash from individuals who do not appreciate such change. The entire community needs to be sensitized about the importance of women engaging with livelihood activities for the future of the Rohingya community. Diverse voices of women of different backgrounds also need to be made visible within the community.
- Particular groups within the Rohingya community such as persons with disabilities, elderly people, gender-diverse people, and young women tend to be left behind from participating in livelihood activities because of their accessibility barriers. A clear guideline needs to be developed for the selection of program participants in a way that takes into consideration of access barriers of different groups in the community. The livelihood sector should pay particular attention so particular groups in the community do not dominate the control of community assets.

Common Services and Logistics

The logistics sector traditionally lacks gender equality in its staff composition. The unique, isolated setting of Bhasan Char could be strengthening this tendency. Gender equality should be sensitized among humanitarian and government partners and the Rohingya community so more women or gender diverse people will have an interest to join the sector activities.

Annexes

Annex 1: Rapid Gender Analysis Household Survey Questionnaire



