



Shafiullah Khata, Ukhiya, Cox's Bazar Bangladesh

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The views in this Rapid Gender Analysis are those of the author alone and do not necessarily represent those of the CARE or its programmes, or the GAC or any other partners.

Cover page photo: Community women attending regular sessions at the WGSS in camp 12

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Abbreviations

CIC	Camp in Charge
IOM	International Organization for Migration
DRC	Danish Refugee Council
IGA	Income Generating Activities
GAC	Global Affairs Canada
SMC	Site Management Committee
WGSS	Women & Girl's Safe Space
WFP	World Food Program
NFI	Non-Food Items
MHM	Menstrual Hygiene Management
BNPS	Bangladesh Nari Progati Sangha
JNUS	Jago Nari Unnayan Sangstha
UNHCR	United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees
WASH	Water, Sanitation and Hygiene
GUK	Gana Unnayan Kendra
DMU	Disaster Management Unit

Executive Summary

The current Rohingya refugee crisis is regarded as one of the world's worst humanitarian crises of the twenty-first century. Myanmar's Rohingya Muslims are a stateless Muslim community that have faced systematic discrimination and targeted persecution in Myanmar's Rakhine State for decades. As the Myanmar government refuses to give Rohingya any citizenship rights, the vast majority of Rohingya have no legal documentation which is effectively making them stateless and trying to escape from the military's campaign of violence, killing, rape, arson, and other grave abuses.¹

Bangladesh has taken in the greatest number of refugees thus far. Since 25th August 2017 a large number of Rohingya people has fled into Bangladesh from Myanmar after facing statelessness, targeted violence and discrimination. As of February 2022, there are 923,179 people and 194,091 households in 33 camps in Kutupalong and Nayapara area of Cox's Bazar District.²

There is limited to no participation and/or influence of Rohingya women in decision making or leadership roles within the humanitarian response in Cox's Bazar Refugee Camp. Societal and religious norms of the Rohingya are patriarchal and tend to favor men's participation and leadership over that of women; however, there are opportunities identified to support greater participation and leadership of women in public life.

¹ Bangladesh is Not My Country. (2018). Human Rights Watch. <https://www.hrw.org/report/2018/08/05/bangladesh-not-my-country/plight-rohingya-refugees-myanmar>

² 2021 Joint Response Plan - Rohingya Humanitarian Crisis 2021, (2021), UNHCR. Available at: https://www.humanitarianresponse.info/sites/www.humanitarianresponse.info/files/documents/files/2021_jrp_with_annexes.pdf

Introduction

This Rapid Gender Analysis on Power and Participation (RGA-P) is part of the Women Lead in Emergencies (WLiE) project in **Camp 12, Balukhali, & Camp 16, Shafiullah Khata, Ukhiya, Cox's Bazar, Bangladesh**. This project is funded by Global Affairs Canada (GAC) to support crisis-affected women to participate in more meaningful ways in community and public life and in humanitarian response in Camp 12, Balukhali, and Camp 16, Shafiullah Khata, Ukhiya, Cox's Bazar.

Meaningful participation means that women can be active in public and humanitarian decision-making if they choose, feel able to freely voice their opinions, and have actual influence over the decisions that are taken.

Objectives of the Rapid Gender Analysis on Power & Participation (RGA-P)

This is the initial Rapid Gender Analysis on Power and Participation (RGA-P) report conducted in Camp 12, Balukhali, and Camp 16, Shafiullah Khata, Ukhiya, Cox's Bazar, focusing on Rohingya refugees from Myanmar. The purpose of the RGA-P is to evaluate the impact of the crisis on gender dynamics, power relations, and the participation and leadership of women and girls. The report aims to achieve three primary objectives:

1. Analyze the extent to which crisis-affected women and girls have access to decision-making forums and processes, as well as their influence within these contexts.
2. Identify practical and promising strategies to enhance the participation of women and girls in decision-making within Camp 12, Balukhali, and Camp 16, Shafiullah Khata, Ukhiya. These strategies will be beneficial for the project team, partners, and the women's and girls' groups involved.
3. Identify gaps that require further assessment and analysis to develop a comprehensive understanding of women's and girls' participation and leadership in Camp 16 over time.

By addressing these objectives, this report aims to shed light on the challenges and opportunities for women's and girls' empowerment, highlighting areas for improvement and providing valuable insights for future interventions.

Background to the forcefully displaced Rohingya population and humanitarian crisis

Myanmar's Rohingya Muslims are a stateless Muslim community that have faced systematic discrimination and targeted persecution in Myanmar's Rakhine State for decades. As the Myanmar government refuses to give Rohingya any citizenship rights, the vast majority of Rohingya have no legal documentation which is effectively making them stateless.³ On August 25, 2017, violence erupted in Myanmar's Rakhine State which triggered massive exodus of Rohingya population to Bangladesh. Approximately 884,000 Rohingya people have been registered as of the Government-UNHCR joint registration exercise 2020. There are currently 923,179 people and 194,091 households in 33 extremely congested camps in Cox's Bazar District.⁴ This includes

³ Seppo, M., Corliss, S., & Gigauri, G. (2019). 2019 JOINT RESPONSE PLAN FOR ROHINGYAHUMANITARIAN CRISIS (pp. 1-96, Rep.). UNHCR. [https://reliefweb.int/sites/reliefweb.int/files/resources/2019_JRP_for_Rohingya_Humanitarian_Crisis_\(February_2019\).compressed_0.pdf](https://reliefweb.int/sites/reliefweb.int/files/resources/2019_JRP_for_Rohingya_Humanitarian_Crisis_(February_2019).compressed_0.pdf)

⁴ 2021 Joint Response Plan - Rohingya Humanitarian Crisis 2021, (2021), UNHCR. Available at: https://www.humanitarianresponse.info/sites/www.humanitarianresponse.info/files/documents/files/2021_jrp_with_annexes.pdf

52 percent Rohingya women and girls⁵. In two large settlements, Kutupalong and Nayapara, refugees have naturally relocated in and around current refugee communities, straining already-scarce services and resources.

During the ethnic conflict, as a minority group in Myanmar, Rohingya population, particularly women and girls have suffered from physical violence and basic human rights violations. Rohingya women in the refugee camps endure significant mental health and physical abuse resulting from domestic violence. Many women and girls experience violence and violation of their rights such as child and human trafficking, child marriage and gender-based violence. According to some estimates more than 50% of girls are married before 18 years of age.⁶

Rohingya refugees are a conservative community who have strong restrictive socio-cultural beliefs and gender norms that affect women and girls' mobility, access to information, access to basic services, decision making powers⁷ as well as create obstacle towards women empowerment.⁸ As Rohingya women have limited access to education and employment in the camp, they are more vulnerable. However, there is a growing recognition that women can play a pivotal role in sustainable transition, recovery, and peacebuilding.⁹

Demographic profile

Camp 12 is comprised of total 27,672 individuals and 5,537 households.¹ Amongst the total individuals 14,194 (51.29%) are female and 13,478 (48.71%) are male. Camp 16 is comprised of total 21,931 individuals and 4,555 households. Amongst the total individuals 11,180 (50.97%) are female and 10,751 (49.02%) are male. The tables below show the sex and age disaggregated data of the population of camp 12 & 16. Further information on the profile of refugees within Camp 12 & 16 specifically is limited.

Table 1 Sex and Age Disaggregated Data of Camp 12 population

Sex and Age Disaggregated Data				
Female breakdown by age				
Area: Camp 12	Age 0-4	Age 5-17	Age 18 and up	Total
%	13.47	34.08	52.45	100 %

⁵ Rohingya Refugee Response Gender Analysis (pp. 1-70, Rep.). (2018). UNHCR.

<https://reliefweb.int/sites/reliefweb.int/files/resources/rr-rohingya-refugeeresponse-gender-analysis-010818-en.pdf>

⁶ Shamsi, Tasdidaa & Naima, Halim. (2019). Empowering Rohingya Women for a Sustainable Refugee Camp. 5. 130-145.

https://www.researchgate.net/publication/343635789_EMPOWERING_ROHINGYA_WOMEN_FOR_A_SUSTAINABLE_REFUGEE_CAMP

⁷ Empowering Women and Girls in Bangladesh's largest refugee camp, EU Commission,

https://ec.europa.eu/echo/news-stories/stories/empowering-women-and-girls-bangladeshs-largest-refugee-camp_en

⁸ Rohingya Refugee Response Gender Analysis (pp. 1-70, Rep.). (2018).UNHCR,

<https://reliefweb.int/sites/reliefweb.int/files/resources/rr-rohingya-refugeeresponse-gender-analysis-010818-en.pdf>

⁹ Shachi, S. M. (2018, March). Rohingya Refugees: The Woes of Women. Inter Press Service.

<http://www.ipsnews.net/2017/12/rohingya-refugees-woes-women-part-one/>

#	1,912	4,837	7,445	14,194
Male breakdown by age				
Area: Camp 12	Age 0-5	Age 6-18	Age 18 and up	Total
%	15.31	39.19	45.50	100 %
#	2,063	5,282	6,133	13,478

Table 2 Sex and Age Disaggregated Data of Camp 16 population

Sex and Age Disaggregated Data				
Female breakdown by age				
Area: Camp 16	Age 0-4	Age 5-17	Age 18 and up	Total
%	16.90	33.62	49.47	100 %
#	1,890	3,759	5,531	11,180
Male breakdown by age				
Area: Camp 12	Age 0-5	Age 6-18	Age 18 and up	Total
%	17.80	37.54	44.64	100 %
#	1,914	4,037	4,800	10,751

Methodology

To carry out this RGA-P, a 10-person (7 female & 3 male) assessment team from CARE Bangladesh and two local women led/ women's rights organization (WLO/WRO), Bangladesh Nari Progati Sangha (BNPS) & Jaago Nari Unnayan Sangstha (JUNUS), carried out primary data collection between February 22 and March 24, 2022, in Camp 12, Camp 16 and within the host community. Data collection was done in Camp 16 in order to interview a women's rights organization that operates in that camp. The data enumerators were from the host community and fluent in Rohingya language. The assessment team received 2 days training on how to conduct an RGA-P, pre- and post-assessment briefings and details of gender-based violence referral pathways specific for the assessment location.

Research methods included: Focus group discussion, Key informant interview, Community mapping & Individual Story. The RGA-P also builds on secondary resources published by key players in the Rohingya refugees' response such as UNHCR, EU Commission, CARE International and other International INGOs. UNHCR's database was also consulted to verify refugees' population and demographic characteristics.

Table 1 Methods breakdown with Sex Disaggregated Data

Method Breakdown Sex and Age Disaggregated Data

Focus Group Discussion						
Area: Camp	Women	Men	Girl	Boy	Total	
16						
Block D3	1	1	1	1	6	
Block D6	1	1				
Key Informants Interview						
Area:	Women Leader	Male Leader	WRO F M		Protection Focal	Total
Block D3 (Camp 16)	1	1				7
Block D6 (Camp 16)	1	1			1	
Camp 16			1			
Community Mapping						
Area: Camp	Women	Men	Girl	Boy	Total	
12						
Block D3	1			1	4	
Block D6		1	1			
Individual Storytelling					Total	
Area: Camp	Women	Girl				2
12						
Block D6	1	1				

This research has several **limitations**. Many of the women were not able to participate in FGDs or KIKs due to the household responsibilities they had to attend to and thus there were fewer participants than envisioned. For any future data collection for updates to this RGA-P, the team should aim to advise the women in advance of the meeting and / or schedule the meeting for a different time of day. An interview with the Site Management focal point at Camp 16 was initially planned, as it was considered crucial for gathering key insights. Unfortunately, due to time constraints, this interview could not be conducted. Future RGA-Ps should aim to have greater diversity of who it is able to speak with, ensuring an inclusive approach. Only one person with a disability was interviewed and the barriers people with disabilities may face should be given greater emphasis in future reports. This is the final draft of the RGA-P in camp 12 Balukhali & 16 Shafiullah Kata, Ukhiya, Cox's Bazar. Research will continue and any new RGA-P will be conducted if there is another opportunity.

CARE's analysis triangulated data from four primary assessment tools with secondary data review (see list of references) and included validation of the findings by CARE teams familiar with working in camp 12, Balukhali,

& camp 16 Shafiullah Kata, Ukhiya, Cox's Bazar. The report findings will also be validated and corrected with women's groups participating in Women Lead in Emergencies once activities begin.

Women's Participation and Leadership in Camp 12, Balukhali, & Camp 16, Shafiullah Kata, Ukhiya, Cox's Bazar

In both of the camp's decision-making structures, there is a predominance of men. Women are present in a variety of groups, including those for the Water User Committee, the WASH Committee, the WGSSs groups, and the Cyclone Preparedness Program, where women regularly voice their opinions and participate in decision-making. However, Majhis are the chosen camp leaders who collaborate with other humanitarian organizations, Camp in Charges, and community members on a regular basis. There are no women serving on these committees, despite the fact that they are the primary decision-making bodies in the community at large. In both camps, there are no elected female Majhi or formal female camp leaders. The Majhis, who are leaders within the Rohingya community, mentioned in the interviews that they consult with women in the community prior to making any significant decisions, especially those that directly impact women, girls, and other community members. They ensure that community members have direct access to them, facilitating open communication at any time about issues that individuals would like the Majhi to represent to the Camp in Charge.

Women's participation in the decision-making process is restricted to community consultations where they can express their thoughts and voices. Although there has been an increase in the representation of women in various groups across multiple sectors, such as Disaster Risk Reduction (DRR) as cash workers, and site management sectors through Women Participation Projects (WPP), along with the formation of women groups through Gender-Based Violence (GBV) program interventions like outreach groups, awareness sessions groups, and life skill groups, women continue to have limited representation in key positions of influence and decision-making. These groups, owing to their informal nature, do not have a direct line of communication with the camp administration for decision-making. The community at large does not widely recognize the necessity for enhanced women's involvement in formal decision-making entities. Moreover, the voices of women who do attend community meetings are often neither sought nor taken into consideration during public decision-making processes. Analysis indicates that the primary reasons for this include the community's deeply ingrained patriarchal mindset and security concerns expressed by women.

Governance, decision-making and accountability structures in Camp 12, Balukhali, & Camp 16, Shafiullah Kata, Ukhiya, Cox's Bazar

The Government-led disaster management structure, led by the Ministry of Disaster Management and Relief (MoDMR), is responsible for managing the refugee response and thus for the governance of the Rohingya camps and settlements. The Refugee Relief and Repatriation Commissioner (RRRC) represents the MoDMR in the Rohingya response. A camp is divided into blocks but the number of blocks in a camp is not fixed. Planning for the humanitarian response takes place at the camp and block level. The humanitarian coordination structures that are currently in place in the camps foster community participation and empowerment through promotion of community representation in various blocks and camp committees. But unfortunately, women are underrepresented in those committees. Specific figures on women's representation should be collected and included in future updates to the RGA-P.

The **RRRC appoints civil servants on a rotational basis to act as Camp-in-Charges (CIC)** in all camps and settlements. These individuals are the government's representatives at the camp level. They are responsible for daily administration, coordination, and delivery of services, in conjunction with the Camp commander from the Bangladesh Army.

The *Majhi* system that operated in makeshift settlements was then also introduced by the Bangladesh Army in newly constituted settlements. The *Majhi* system uses unelected refugee appointees to support with the estimation of refugee populations, goods distributions, and communication with the refugee community.

Majhi Committee and Masjid committee are the two more formal decision-making bodies within the Rohingya community in the camps. The *Majhi* Committee is comprised of a Super head *Majhi*, Head *Majhi* & Sub *Majhi* (further research is needed on the number of members in the masjid committee and the hierarchy). There has been no mention of women in these groups and committees. There is a super head *Majhi* who represents the entire camp, as well as head *Majhis* for each block and sub *Majhis* for each sub block. From key informant interviews, we found that *Majhis* are elected through a voting system by the community, CIC and site management committee. They are the ones who make the decisions about who gets access to services and assistance first and who's rights are or are not respected. Masjid governing committees are established in conjunction with the imams of each block. These committees play a significant role in shaping the culture and norms of the community.

Block and Camp Committees with elected representatives provide direct support in camp management.

The Para Development Committees (PDCs) aim to bring together refugees and host communities to identify common needs and ease potential tensions. PDCs are selected in community meetings.

Table 3: Governance structures and their responsibilities

No.	Name of the entities	Responsibility
1	The Ministry of Disaster Management and Relief (MoDMR)	Oversees the multi-hazard disaster response plan in the camp location, which includes the formation of Cyclone Preparedness Program (CPP) groups. These groups operate under the Government of Bangladesh and receive support from the Bangladesh Red Crescent Society.
2	The Refugee Relief and Repatriation Commissioner (RRRC)	Oversees the camp's wide range of activities, including security, construction of roads, shelters, and infrastructure, as well as monitoring the activities of all the International Non-Governmental Organizations (INGOs) and Non-Governmental Organizations (NGOs).
3	Camp-in-Charges (CIC)	Oversees the comprehensive management of the camp, including construction, registration of births, deaths, marriages, divorces, etc., and coordinates with all humanitarian agencies and focal persons.
4	<i>Majhi</i> Committees	Collaborates with the Camp in Charge, Site Management Committees, and other humanitarian agencies. Additionally, they represent the opinions and values of the community members to the Camp in Charge and other humanitarian agencies. Committee members coordinate and engage in discussions among themselves regarding various challenges and opportunities present in the camp.
5	Block Committees	Collaborates and communicates with Site Management Committees regarding site management-related activities and relay the needs of the community from each block.

6	Camp Committees	No information was found about this committee's presence in camp 12 & 16
7	Para Development Committees (PDCs)	No information was found about this committee's presence in camp 12 & 16
8	Masjid Committees	Includes Imams and other individuals with religious knowledge. Primarily, the committee makes decisions regarding religious education for children and the management of the masjid. Additionally, they play a crucial role in resolving communal conflicts.

The Camp in Charge (CIC), UN Agencies, and NGOs/INGOs operating in the affected area constitute the formal structures that make decisions regarding the camp population's access to assistance, rights, entitlements, and services. In both camps, WFP oversees food distribution. In Camp 16, IOM and CARE manage the distribution of Non-Food Items (NFI), while CARE and Mukti distribute Menstrual Hygiene Management (MHM) and dignity kits to women and girls. Education-related initiatives in Camp 16 are overseen by BRAC, and CARE is the focal point for the WASH sector as well as site management. In Camp 12, WFP handles food distribution, and DRC, IOM, CARE, and Action Aid manage NFI distribution. MHM and dignity kits are distributed by CARE, Action Aid, and GUK to women and girls. Education initiatives are overseen by BRAC, CODEC, and DAM. The Red Crescent and FRIENDSHIP primarily supervise health facilities, while DRC oversees site management.

Primary data indicated that both men and women in national and international organizations have decision-making capabilities, regularly consulting on their needs. However, in terms of public decision-making and leadership positions, women's participation remains significantly limited. It is noteworthy that within the Ukhiya and Teknaf areas, there are a total of 33 camps, and all the Camps in Charge (CIC) for these camps are men.²

“IOM, CARE Bangladesh, and WFP are the key organizations that make decisions regarding services and resources. Majhis are sometimes selected by the Bangladesh Army and Camp in Charge. Men who possess educational qualifications, such as fluent reading and writing, are most often selected. The selection typically focuses on men in the age group of 30-45 years. There are no formal female leaders in the camp, but educated women who work with NGOs/INGOs, as well as the wives of the Majhis, possess some degree of influence.” – (Male KII Participant – Camp 16)

“The agencies responsible for making decisions include UNHCR, IOM, DRC, and CARE. Relief is typically distributed in a large field situated in front of the CIC office. The Majhi plays a significant role in deciding who receives expedited relief and services, along with staff members from the aforementioned organizations. Female staff members, aged between 18 and 49 years, are also involved in the decision-making process. Community members eligible to receive relief materials are identified through the distribution of tokens, which is facilitated by the Majhi.” – (Female KII – PWD, Camp 12)

Women's organizations, groups, and activists

The **women and girl safe spaces (WGSS) in the camp** areas are where the majority of women's groups are formed. WGSS predominantly form life skills groups, Girls Shine groups and community outreach groups for their continuous activities with the community's women and girls. These groups meet on a regular basis at

the WGSS and in their respective blocks. At the block level, religious groups of female preachers meet on a regular basis to recite The Holy Quran and discuss religious teachings.

The national and international organizations working in both camps with different sectors like WASH, Site Management, Education etc. have developed several groups consisting of women participants. Groups like Water Users Committee, Play Lab Groups, Disaster Management Unit (DMU) are just a few examples and Female Religious Preacher Groups are example of community led female groups who come together and recite the Holy Quran.

“There is regular communication among us, we talk now and then. If different opportunities come up, we actually inform each other.” – (FGD Adult Women – Camp 12)

In 2019, **UN Women launched an initiative for supporting women's leadership with the help of the camps' CICs** and local WROs. The project's main goal was to elect female Majhis from the community and train them in leadership skills and other related areas. There was initial positive engagement from the Camp in Charges and women in the community. However, the community did not respond positively to this initiative. Shortly after the launch of the initiative, the COVID-19 shutdown, and restrictions on protection activities during the COVID-19 period hindered progress. The project has since been closed, and the female Majhis who were elected and trained are no longer active. Further information is needed regarding the female Majhis who were initially elected, and the processes involved.

Key organizations which are working for women's rights in camp 12 & 16 include CARE, IOM, Action Aid, GUK Mukti, BRAC, IRC, and one Women Led Organization BNPS (Bangladesh Nari Pragati Sangha). Various women's groups, including GBV (Gender Based Violence) awareness groups, Women Participation Project groups, and Life skill groups, are developed as part of the organization's numerous initiatives. These groups regularly gather in the facilities of various organizations to talk about issues including generating revenue, gender-based violence, safety precautions, and skill development. These organizations focus on empowering women by developing the skills of women. Improving women's capacity in practical life skills and leadership to promote their involvement in decision-making. These groups are all unregistered and informal.

“Many of us in the group are neighbors, and we convene not only in the Women and Girls' Safe Space (WGSS) but also in our courtyards and homes to elaborate on the topics we learned about during the meetings and sessions. Additionally, we discuss income-generating opportunities provided by various organizations in our camp.” – (Women FGD Participants – Camp 16)

Barriers to women's participation and leadership in decision-making in Camp 12, Balukhali, & Camp 16, Shafiullah Kata, Ukhiya, Cox's Bazar

Patriarchal Social Norms: Women's participation in decision-making is hampered by the Rohingya community's strong patriarchal attitude. According to our overall research, there are women with adequate leadership and community engagement qualities in the camp, but they are not present on decision-making platforms such as Majhi Committee, Masjid Committee etc. According to the data gathered, both women and men believe that women's presence in decision-making bodies is important, but, the situation is quite different. Both girls and women claim they want to express their opinions and thoughts, but they are usually unable to do so because they are shy and social norms dictate that women and girls do not speak out publicly, let alone go in front of males on a public platform.

“Women are generally not included in any decision-making bodies. Occasionally, the heads of female-led households are present in these platforms or decision-making bodies, but this is usually because they don't

have adult male members in their family. In families with adult male members, women are not present in decision-making bodies, primarily because their families do not approve.” (Men FGD – Camp 16)

“We do consultations with women, but our community does not accept women's leadership. But if the CIC asks women to lead, we will try to comply. Although there is a large proportion of educated women leaders in NGOs/INGOs which work in our society, but there are no women in our Rohingya community who leads.” (Male Leader KII – Camp 12)

Women's participation and leadership are hampered by strict socially determined **gender norms and expectations** which creates unequal roles and responsibilities between men and women, with the expectation that women will be responsible for caring for children and elderly and other HH related tasks. Household tasks including caring for children and the elderly are thought to be solely the job of women. As a result, most women do not have the time to participate, and they are sometimes prohibited by the family members, both men & women, from participating in decision-making and leadership activities. Sometimes there is a lack of interest from women in participating in such activities as they are not used to the prospect of engaging publicly in decision making spaces. Prior to displacement and during the initial period of arriving in the camp, women were not involved in livelihood activities due to gender norms. The main source of income in Myanmar (home country) was agriculture; however, after arriving in the camp **women along with men, are now both involved with various types of income generating activities** available in the camps, as agricultural opportunities are less prevalent and the need for both spouses to work is necessary. **Women are now taking up jobs as volunteers, community group organizers, midwives, teacher etc.** as a result of national and international organization's initiatives such as creating job opportunities to include women in income generating activities, but they are still expected to do all of the domestic tasks and be the only caretaker of the family members. Greater analysis of the risks, barriers and opportunities associated with women playing a greater role in the public spaces in the community should a focus of future research.

“Generally we don't attend meetings or be present in the platforms where other men are present. Because we think it's not our place. Men from our community attends and that's enough. Most of the time we also don't know what to say and we are shy to talk in front of men” – (Women FGD – Camp 16)

Access to education and information is another barrier women and girls face in order to participate in decision making spaces and leadership (WRO staff, KII). With less access to education and information, women and girls have fewer opportunities to participate in the decision-making process.

“Barriers regarding women's participation in decision making are 1) women has never played any responsible role or duties so they don't know how to take important decisions, 2) They have lower rate of education 3) They feel shy to go in front of men 4) Men household members negatively influence them to not to go out or raise their voice in front of room full of men 5) They have their household chores which they must do, for that reason and time constrains they don't participate in the decision making platforms” (Men KII)

Security concerns are another major barrier for women's participation in decision making and leadership. Both unmarried and married women are afraid of being raped or kidnapped and to be victim of trafficking as this is a known high risk of gender-based violence in the camp and in particular at night in places where there is lack of lightings.

Younger women face greater obstacles in participating in decision-making compared to middle-aged women. Owing to their seniority, the opinions of middle-aged women are given more weight, and they face fewer restrictions in attending and participating in meetings. Single women, in particular, find their participation in communal events as well as decision-making platforms or groups to be severely limited.

A lack of freedom of movement for women and girls due to social norms for men and women interacting in the same spaces presents another barrier. Both male and female family members of unmarried women & girls do not let them leave the house alone as they are afraid that they [the woman/girl] will fall in love with a man in the community and elope with them. The majority of the time, husbands “allow” their wives to go to a WGSS meeting, but they will not allow them to attend any gathering when men are present. The situation for unmarried women is far worse than it is for married women, because until they are married, the women are looked at as a burden to the family.

“For unmarried teenage girls there are some risks like there is fear of them falling in love and eloping and getting married before they are 18 years old. So, they [parents] don't let teenagers go out. – (Adolescent FGD Participant – Camp 12)

Risks from supporting women's participation and leadership in Camp 16, Balukhali, Ukhiya, Cox's Bazar

Men and women from the communities noted that if women actively participate in decision making and take up leadership roles there might be some unrest in both families and communities, with some men noting that women's participation and or leadership would be disrupting social harmony.

Women may face **violence in households as well as in the community** as a result of their participation and it was noted by participants that many women don't speak out against the decisions taken by the male leaders due to fear of violent backlash. There is also a risk of women who do participate and or take on leadership positions will be **stigmatized** by both men and women in the community. Protection and security risks remained at top mentioned by the community women and men.

“If women lead this community, it will not work if they start behaving like men. This will create unrest in the family. However, if the woman is outside like men are, then there will be a quarrel if the man comes home and doesn't see his wife.” – (Male Leader KII – Camp 12)

“NGO/INGO's should consult with our families. Raise awareness through Majhis and Imams as everyone in the community listens to them. If they talk about this everyone will gradually accept us as leaders.” – (Female Leader KII – Camp 12)

Promising directions for Women Lead in Emergencies in Camp 12, Balukhali, & Camp 16, Shafiullah Kata, Ukhiya, Cox's Bazar

Existing women's groups: Women are now [in contrast to prior to displacement] engaging in income generating activities (IGAs) and have strengthened their skills with the aid of UN agencies, NGO/INGOs, and CIC. There are several women's groups present in the community that are working with the stakeholders in the camp. Those groups can be pulled together and can collaborate and use their collective power to secure their meaningful involvement.

Coordination with other Agencies: Collaboration with the women's groups under the IOM-funded Women's Participation Project (WPP) is essential to align relevant activities, share insights, and work jointly to secure

support from site management in enhancing the groups' skills in Protection from Sexual Exploitation and Abuse (PSEA) and Psychosocial Support (PSS) counseling.

Women from the community suggested an expansion of case management services, greater engagement of men, boys, and religious leaders, along with the implementation of increased protection measures and the inclusion of women in income-generating activities.

Gaps and areas for further research

- Considering the RGA-P only applied qualitative methods, the triangulation of findings with quantitative data was not possible.
- There is a restriction to this study's multi-sectoral collaboration. It may have been useful to interview other sector focal points to have wider insight into how those sectors engage various women's groups.
- In-depth study of the various governance mechanisms operating within Camp 12, camp 16 and Cox's Bazar Refugee camp.
- Further RGA P analysis should include interviews/focus group discussions with women that were consulted by the Majhis and by NGOs/IGNOS to better understand that process.
- During primary data collection, only one person (adolescent girl) with a disability was interviewed. Future RGA-P research should include more inclusive approaches and prioritize data collection from other marginalized groups such as widows, those living with a disability, elderly, and other factors that may limit women's right to movement access and participation. Greater focus on the intersectionality of these factors and their impact on women's participation and leadership should also be included.
- Greater analysis on the changes in household norms and how that is impacting women's access to public spaces should be explored further. With changing contexts and more women involved in income generating activities, more data on what activities they are involved in and how they are in engaging more in public spaces would be useful for identifying new entry points for supporting women's voice and leadership.
- Figures on women's representation in various block and camp committees and specifics on the voting process for these committees as well as for other formal leadership posts within the camps.

Conclusions

Women's access to fundamental rights and services has evolved since the conflict and displacement to Cox's Bazar in August 2017. Social gender norms have shifted dramatically as women now have more opportunities for education and women are now actively contributing to the family's financial well-being. Despite this, their contribution is still underestimated and undervalued. The fundamental causes for women's restricted public voice and decision-making power are patriarchal mind set of the community, lack of opportunities, and lack

of enthusiasm from both humanitarian and Rohingya communities for integrating women into the bigger platform.

One of the major obstacles to women's participation and leadership is religious misunderstanding and men using their influence over women to regulate their mobility and activities. Women's lack of participation in decision-making has also been attributed to a lack of gender-responsive programs and the absence of any women's rights organization's engagement in the impacted community. Because of their involvement with many organizations across several sectors, women in the affected community are now more capable than they were previously. As a result, their self-assurance has increased. These groups could be a good place to start because they are already well-known in the community for their work as volunteers for various organizations.

¹ UNHCR, Population Factsheet Block Level Data, January 2022

² http://rrrc.gov.bd/site/view/officer_list/