

JOINT PROTECTION MONITORING REPORT

830

Focus Group Discussion (persons reached)

385

Home Visits

1,098

Key Informant Interviews (persons reached)

61%
Men

39%
Women

9%
Disabilities

	Female	Male
Children (0-17)	3%	11%
Adult (18-59)	30%	37%
Elderly (60+)	6%	13%

The Joint Protection Monitoring framework is implemented by the Protection Sector since 2022 to promote the systematic and regular collection, verification, and analysis of protection risks and incidents for the Rohingya refugee population in Cox's Bazar.

The Joint Protection Monitoring reports serve to inform protection programming and advocacy through a common and standardized evidence-based information collection. This document offers a better understanding of the protection situation in the camps through a joint analysis of risks, threats, vulnerabilities, and protection incidents.

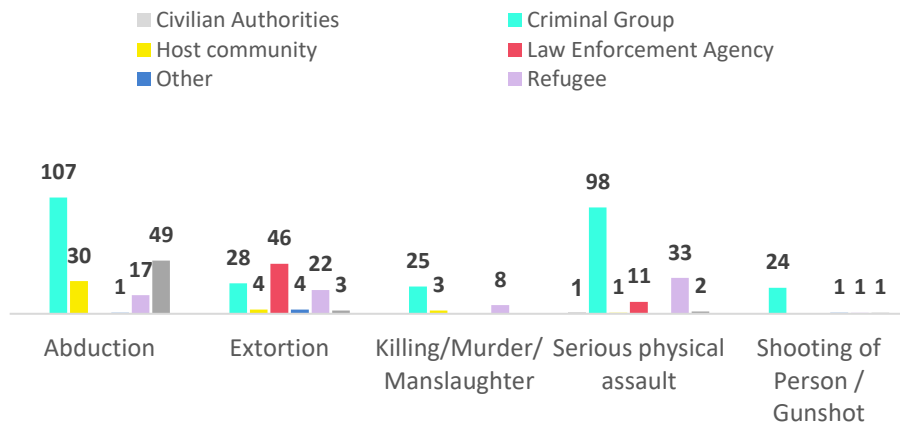
Six agencies (UNHCR, IOM, IRC, DRC, OXFAM and HI) conduct protection monitoring as part of core programming, covering 33 camps and an estimate of 930,729* refugees. This report also reflects the contributions of the Gender-Based Violence (GBV) and Child Protection (CP) Sub-Sectors as well as of the Anti-Trafficking Working Group and the House, Land and Property Technical Forum.

SAFETY AND SECURITY

Refugees, host communities and humanitarian actors faced a complex security and protection environment amidst continuing violence and increased criminality in the camps. A total of 520 serious protection incidents¹ affecting 1,227 Rohingya refugees have been recorded across the camps in Ukhiya and Teknaf during the reporting period (Jan-March 2023). The safety and security incidents included - abduction (204), serious physical assault (146), extortion (107), killing/murder/manslaughter (36) - of which all victims were refugees), and shooting of a person/gunshot (27). Overall, there was an increase of 47% in total reported incidents in comparison to the last quarter of 2022 (Oct-Dec). Most of the incidents for this Quarter were registered in camps 8W, 8E, 10, and 11 in Ukhiya. The increase in security incidents and violence is mostly because of intensified criminal group and gang activity, including disputes over the control of illicit activities. As such, perpetrators of incidents were overwhelmingly members of criminal groups/gangs; responsible for 54% of the incidents, while law enforcement personnel were found to be mainly responsible for extorting refugees in cash or in-kind (e.g., mobile phones) when caught outside the camps accounting for 11% of the reported incidents.

The occurrence of refugee abductions increased even within the reporting quarter - from 14 incidents reported in January to 173 reported in March. Almost in all incidents, the victims reported being subjected to abuse and released on ransom payments. During the reporting period, 52% of abductions were allegedly perpetrated by criminal groups with most

Alleged perpetrator per category by incident



*UNHCR Data portal link available for the Population statistics [here](#).

¹ For this report, the serious incidents collected are related to the following incident categories only: abduction, extortion, killing/murder/manslaughter, serious physical assault, and shooting of person/gunshot.

reports coming from Camp 8W, with a significant number being perpetrated by unknown actors. Law Enforcement Authorities (LEA) faced challenges in rescuing the victims as their families were often reluctant to report incidents due to fear of reprisal.

Allegations of harassment, beating, verbal abuse, and arbitrary arrest of which 67% are allegedly committed by criminal groups, 23% by refugees, and 8% by law enforcement personnel, continued to be reported mainly in camps 8W, 8E, and 10. Criminal groups are reportedly responsible for up-scaling control over illicit business including human trafficking and drug trafficking (mainly *Yaba* pills and crystal meth).

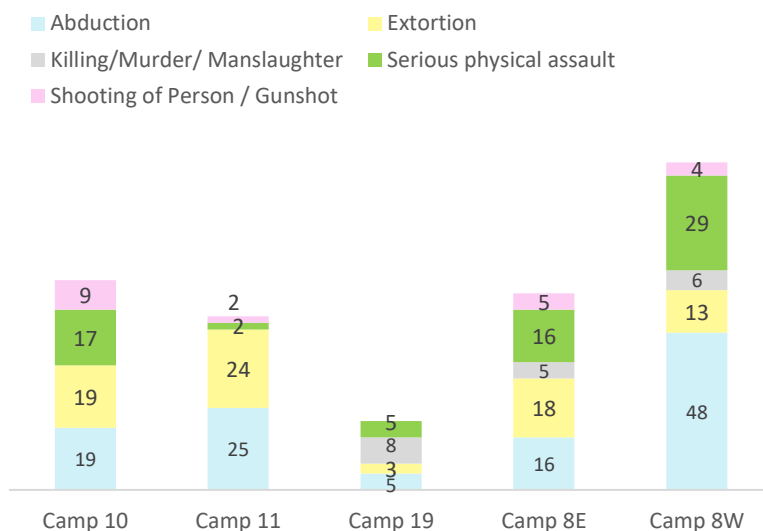
Major extortion incidents involving food were reported in Camp 19 during the month of March. These incidents include 110 Rohingya families who were obliged to provide rice, pulses, oil, eggs, onions, and salt, amongst other items, as a monthly fee to host community members owning the shelters. Cases of extortion were allegedly perpetrated also by law enforcement personnel, criminal groups, host community members, and refugees, as well as by Mahjis (community leaders).

As an emerging trend, use of firearms between criminal rival groups has been reported to occur more often in camps 1W, 6, 8W, 8E, 9, 10, 11 in Ukhiya and 24 in Teknaf, with at least 4 refugees killed and 7 injured in the crossfire.

Refugees reported that criminal groups intensified their activities to mobilize refugees to join their respective groups to engage in activities related to drug trafficking, robbery, and human trafficking. Young male refugees – particularly those who speak English – are repeatedly targeted. In some camps, the movements of refugees within the camps have been restricted at night by authorities due to security reasons.

Operations by LEA in the Ukhiya camps to restore security during the reporting period resulted in the arrest of several suspected members of criminal groups, with the majority facing charges of possessing arms or murder. Some refugees reported a fear of being arbitrarily arrested by LEA during such operations.

Top 5 camps by incidents reported



Safety concerns and lack of or limited access to basic services triggered movements of refugees towards perceived safer areas or areas with more availability of services across the camps. On occasions, self-relocation happens within the camps or across camps, mostly spontaneously without the formal involvement of authorities. There were 16 relocation concerns recorded including threats by criminal groups that triggered movements of people to perceived safer areas, affecting approximately 51 families comprising 217 individuals. In Camp 12, a family moved because their shelter was destroyed by the authority following an allegation that the household members were involved in a criminal group.

On March 5, a devastating fire broke out in Camp 11 in Ukhiya destroying around 2,800 shelters. More than 5,274 refugees were relocated to the other camps. The 35 families moving from camp 11 to camp 22 was coordinated with the CiC, other families relocated spontaneously to other camps or stayed within the camp in temporary shelters.

Secondary Displacement²:

From Camp	To Camp	HH	Individuals
Camp 6	Camp 1E	1	5
Camp 11	Camp 22	35	155
Camp 12	Camp 13	1	6
Camp 15	Camp 1W	1	3
Camp 18	Camp 9	1	1
	Camp 19	1	1
	Camp 4	1	1
Camp 19	Camp 19	1	9
Camp 21	Camp 15	1	12
Camp 22	Camp 22	2	5
Camp 25	Camp 12	1	4
	Camp 15	2	5
	Nayapara RC	1	3
	Camp 10	2	7

² Secondary displacements refer to refugees moving from their original camp to another camp -or within the camp- due to safety and security concerns or availability of services.

For the period of Jan- Mar, 105 cases of human trafficking within Bangladesh were reported. The profile of victims, type of trafficking, and modus operandi of traffickers remained largely the same, as in the previous quarters. Most human trafficking victims were male (65%), trafficked under the promise of paid labor which ultimately ended up in forced labor. In addition, 14 children (5 girls and 9 boys) were identified as victims of trafficking. “Home” (shelter) was indicated as the main place for recruitment or initial engagement into the trafficking situation (80%) and the majority remained in Cox’s Bazar (66%) or were taken to Chittagong (30%).

More details in the Quarterly Dashboard produced by the Anti-Trafficking Working Group (AT WG), available [here](#).

 **105**
Refugees Identified

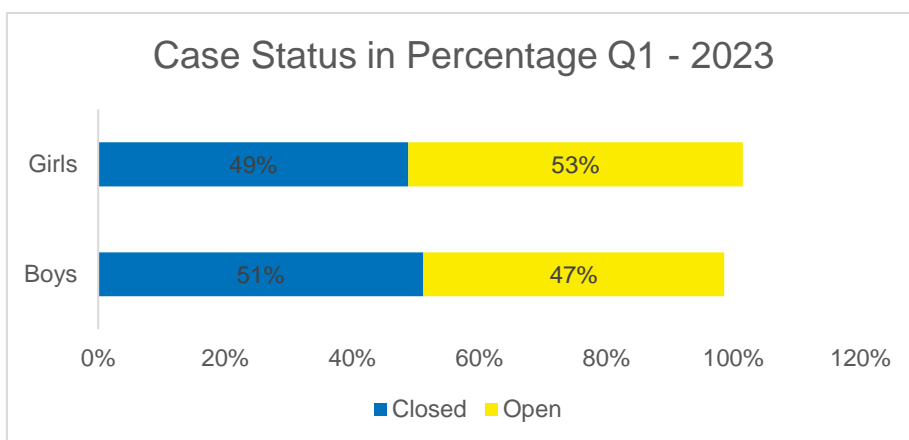
 **59**
Men

 **32**
Women

 **9**
Boys

 **5**
Girls

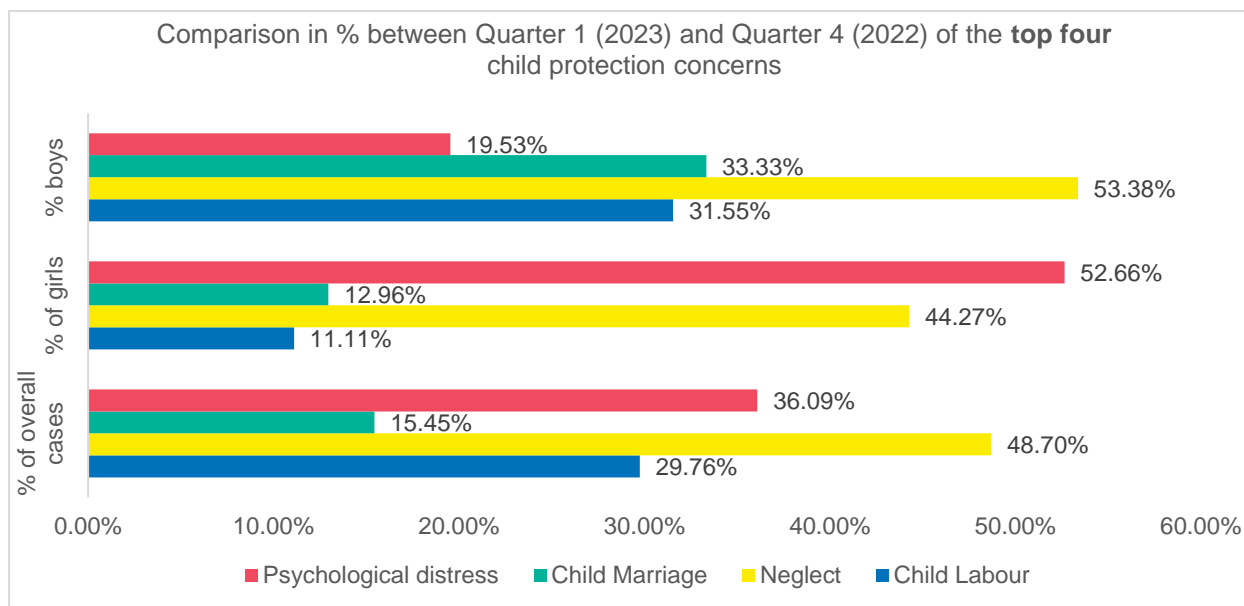
Violence and security incidents continue to pose protection risks for Rohingya children and caregivers. Consequently, children, parents, and caregivers handle basic needs and safety concerns by engaging in harmful coping practices such as child labor and child marriage. Negligence from parents, caregivers, and community members prevails as they must commit to additional tasks and search for livelihood opportunities while dealing with high levels of stress due to conditions in the camps.



Child Protection Cases reported by partners in the CPIMS - Child Protection Information Management System.

Neglect and psychological distress were found to be the major child protection concerns for Quarter 1, representing 44% of the overall reported child protection cases. There has been a substantial increase (49%) in neglect cases followed by a 36% increase in cases of psychological distress compared to the previous quarter (Q4 of 2022). Rise in insecurity has contributed to high levels of anxiety and distress; during the reporting period there were three cases of children -3 boys and 1 girl- injured in daylight crossfire in camps 2W and Nayapara registered camp. These trends indicate a growing concern in terms of deterioration of psychological well-being. Trends related to lack of care are closely linked to overpopulation, challenges related to foreseeable prospects, resource scarcity within the Rohingya community, and the divorce of parents that can result in the abandonment of children from previous marriages, which further exacerbates the difficulty in providing adequate care for children. The caregivers themselves also experience significant burnout, as they carry the overwhelming responsibility of looking after multiple children, without getting adequate psychological help and support and with limited recreational options.

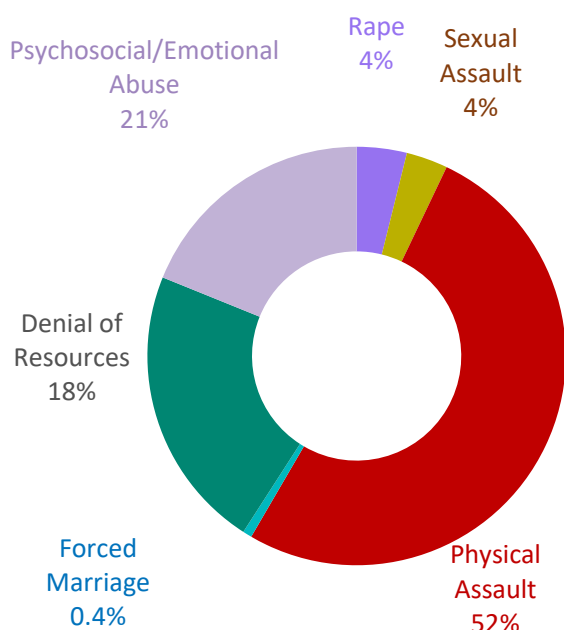
During Quarter 1, reported child labor cases increased by 30 compared to the last Quarter of 2022. Rohingya children have been affected by this issue and are driven by factors such as families pushing them to work for income, seeking pocket money, or succumbing to peer pressure. Some children even venture to other areas in search of work, taking on hazardous tasks like welding and construction.



Child Protection Cases reported by partners in the CPIMS - Child Protection Information Management System.

Similarly, child marriage was found to be the second most pressing concern with a 15% rise in the reported cases compared to the previous quarter. This issue disproportionately affects girls in the Rohingya community as perceived security risks for women and girls tend to be mitigated by guaranteeing security from the husband when they get married. Forced marriage is also prevalent due to a lack of family income and adherence to traditional practices.

Type of reported GBV Incidents³



The reporting of physical assault decreased by 2% while psychological/emotional abuse has also increased by 2% in comparison to the previous quarter.

Overall, limited income-generating opportunities and lack of recreational options for the community, coupled with the worsening security situation in the camps, where girls and women are sometimes targeted by organized criminal groups/gangs for forced marriage or sexual violence (as reported during focus groups discussions), has exacerbated risks of Gender Based-Violence (GBV).

During the period, women were reported to be marrying (both voluntarily and involuntarily) as a means to ensure their own survival and safety from the criminal groups and their members, and to minimize risks of sexual violence and other forms of abuse within the community. Moreover, the absence of marriage and divorce registration continues to increase women's vulnerabilities to forced marriage, domestic violence, and difficulties to access justice in cases of abuse. It has also been reported that refugee women marry unknown men as a way to move to neighboring countries - mostly Thailand and Malaysia – with no certainty of the

life and conditions they might find, which may further put them at risk of trafficking, sexual violence, and exploitation. Additionally, the deterioration of the security situation in the camps has increased the risk for women and girls to adopt harmful coping practices for survival.

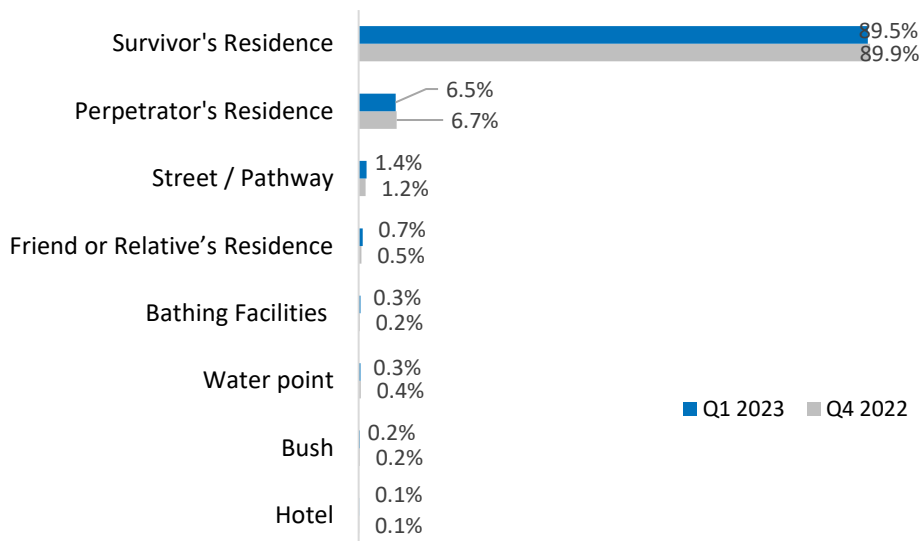
³ Incidents reported in the GBV – Information Management System (GBVIMS)

Locations of Reported incidents

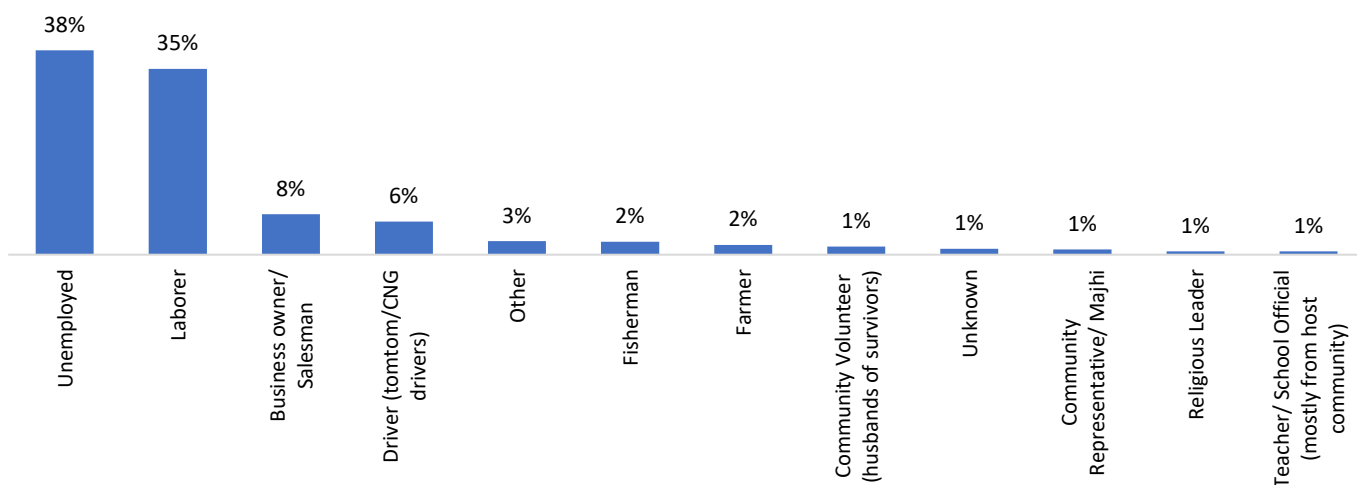
During this Quarter of 2023, among the reported cases, Intimate Partner Violence (IPV) accounted for 82% of GBV cases occurring in the camps, predominantly at the survivor’s residence. The perpetrators are primarily husbands, and acts of IPV include physical assault and denial of resources (in cases of polygamy where alimony isn’t provided).

Incidents of GBV continued to be reported in the camps at locations such as water points and bathing facilities; most of the survivors in these locations are either adolescent girls or unmarried women; however, underreporting from this age category prevails due to the stigma associated with rape and sexual abuse, which are considered as acts of humiliation that makes marriage difficult for those who are survived from such acts of violence. During Focus Group Discussions, women echoed that the reduction in humanitarian assistance and congestion owing to shelter proximity to one another have contributed to increased violence and risks of GBV.

Women further stated that there is no robust deterrence system (for instance, a system criminalizing polygamy) for men having multiple marriages. Although the CiC (Camp in Charge) is the designated authority to legitimize new marriages in the camp, the Majhis and community leaders continue to arrange marriages traditionally, often charging money (which could also be considered extortion) to both parties of the marriage. This situation enables men to have multiple intimate relationships and marriages, which have resulted in a higher number of reported IPV incidents. Beliefs, defective social values, harmful norms and structures that promote and tolerate unequal power relationships between men and women continue to be the constant underlying factors for GBV across the 33 camps.



Alleged Perpetrator's Occupation



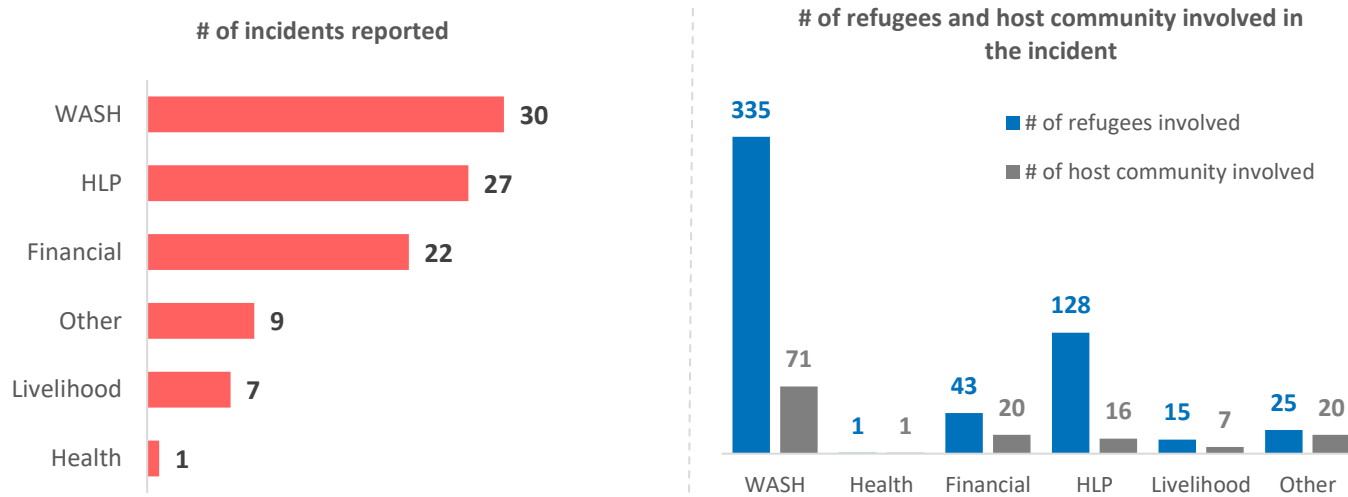
The perpetrators’ occupation is interrelated with the previously mentioned contributing factors of GBV, which include a lack of income-generating opportunities and services, a lack of recreational options, and a lack of positive engagement opportunities, which are either limited or non-existent across the camps. Deeply rooted gender norms, where only men are perceived to be the main source of income and women are not supposed to work outside the household, also contribute to increasing frustration and anger underlining the need for income-generating opportunities. This situation was reported in all camps and has resulted in an increase in tensions among family members and is reported to have affected conjugal and intimate relationships.

Focus group discussions held during this period revealed that an increased number of men are seeking work in other countries leaving their families behind, which is also causing further risk of GBV and other forms of abuse for women and girls in the camps.

Perpetrators, either unemployed or daily wage laborers represent 73% of all offenders in the camp. Furthermore, in some instances, men are reportedly involved in trading illegal drugs within the camps and committing substance abuse which results in increased violence, particularly intimate partner violence.

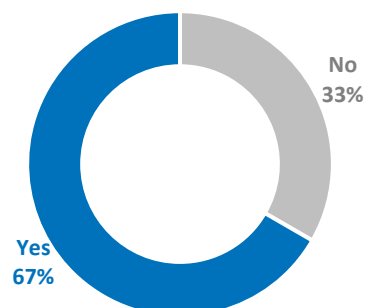
SOCIAL COHESION AND PEACEFUL COEXISTENCE

The camps adjoining host communities continued to observe tensions and friction between refugees and the host community. A total of 96 incidents have been reported, involving 682 individuals, with 80% of these incidents involving refugees and 20% the host community. The most affected camps were Camp 22 and Camp 15. These incidents were mainly linked to the use of/lack of resources amongst the population including accessing WASH facilities (including latrines and water points), disputes over housing and land (including evictions), employment opportunities within the community, debts or financial issues, quarrels between refugee and host community families.



Additionally, in camps 3 and 4, host community members were reported to be charging 300 BDT per month for rent of their shelter⁴. Those who cannot afford the monthly payment are being harassed and evicted by the host community as refugees are often pressured to pay higher rent to landowners for the land they use for shelter, predominantly in Teknaf camps. Disputes related to debt and gambling were reported during the reporting period. Refugees raised concerns over an increase in burglary and robbery incidents. Authorities intervened in 67% of the cases to settle/resolve disputes with the host community, with an increase of 4% in relation to the previous Quarter, while 33% of the cases weren't attended by authorities, citing the disputed services are meant for host communities and not for refugees.

Peaceful Co-existence Authorities intervened?



For the first Quarter of 2023, a total of 27 House Land and Property (HLP) incidents were reported affecting 1,309 refugees which correspond to 262 eviction cases reported across various camps. Camps 25 and 26 were the camps with the highest number of eviction incidents and/or threats during this Quarter. The trend of the upsurge in evictions has persisted in the current year, with a notable eviction threat case reported in Camp 26. In addition to eviction incidents, a total of 385 individuals were affected by rental disputes in the first Quarter of 2023. These disputes add another layer of complexity

⁴ The absence of tenancy documentation and regulation of the rental market leaves Rohingyas vulnerable to arbitrary rental price increment and increased risk of forced evictions.

to the HLP challenges for refugees in the camps, in addition to the pre-existing factors related to competition over shared resources, widespread tenure insecurity, and lack of availability of suitable land for shelter (due to risky geographical areas). Separately, host community members have also been reportedly involved in the kidnapping of refugees, which often use this tactic to settle financial and family disputes, particularly in a situation of mixed marriages between refugees and host communities.

When a dispute arises in the camp, the Majhis or Community/Block leaders are involved to resolve the minor issues, while major problems are referred to the Camp in Charge (CiC) for resolution or further action. In some cases, if the Majhis and community leaders are unable to resolve the dispute, it is referred to the police for resolution/further action. During the reporting months, on occasions, refugees have reported being extorted, including by the police during the dispute resolution process, which also creates challenges to social cohesion.

In the absence of a legal and regulatory framework - as the Rohingyas have no tenure rights (apart from refugees registered in Nayapara and Kutupalong camps) - many refugee families affected by the fire in Camp 11 refused to accept the proposed site plan designed to integrate fire mitigation measures on the basis that they had 'bought/paid' for the land they use or previous shelter they occupied and will therefore not accept smaller plots or fewer shelters designed under the new site plan.

ACCESS TO JUSTICE

Refugees continue to report various constraints regarding access to justice and the informal justice mechanisms within the camps. The involvement of Majhis or even the involvement of criminal group members in mediating disputes, including handling serious crimes, often deters refugees from reporting incidents to LEA, diverting them away from the formal justice system. In addition, it is also to note that, the backlog of cases in the Bangladeshi justice system already leads to significant delays in the investigation and prosecution process. The general mistrust among refugees towards LEA, particularly the police, further exacerbates their reluctance to report incidents, as they fear raids, arbitrary arrest, and confiscation of documentation. The practice of individuals being released after paying bribes to the police, even in cases involving criminal groups, contributes to the lack of trust between law enforcement and the refugee community.

The informal justice system, mediated by Mahjis and sometimes by criminal groups, takes precedence over the formal justice system on occasions, resulting in exploitation, especially when mediators demand payment as a form of "punishment", primarily benefiting themselves. Despite the risks of exploitation, refugees often seek assistance and resolution of their problems through Mahjis. Some camp management authorities believe that reporting issues to the police through legal partners is a time-consuming process and prefer that all problems be directed to the CiC office's support staff as an informal mechanism to resolve disputes.

Maintaining confidentiality in processing cases reported to Mahjis or CiC support staff remains a persistent concern within the community. Women, particularly those who are single or head households, are hesitant to report their concerns to them due to fear of exposure and potential stigmatization. This fear of being identified and judged discourages them from seeking justice through a formal response mechanism.

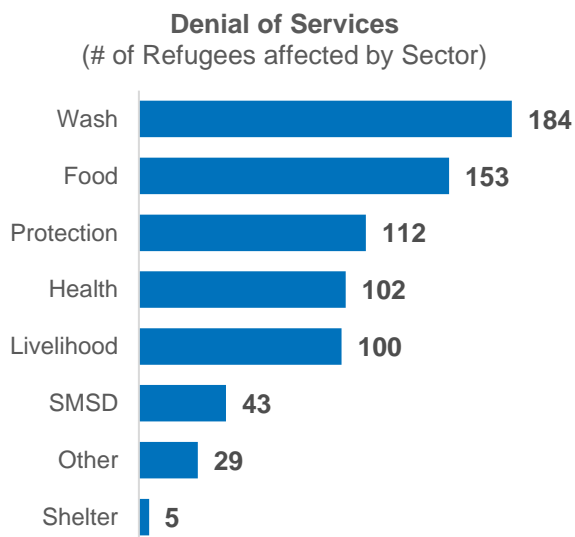
Another significant issue concerning access to justice is the registration of marriages between Bangladeshi nationals and Rohingya refugees, which is prohibited. This issue has serious implications, particularly for the children born from these marriages as they are left without any form of birth registration, which is crucial for establishing legal identity, nationality, family linkage, and age verification, therefore are left to face difficulties in accessing essential services such as healthcare, education, and protection.

In general, new-born babies who are delivered at home encounter difficulties in accessing services due to the absence of birth certificates/notification documents and the requirement for approval from CiC and data entry. These factors lead to delays in receiving essential support, including medical assistance.

ACCESS TO SERVICES

A total of 70 incidents involving 728 individuals have reported facing challenges in accessing services during this quarter. Among the reported incidents, 66% of individuals experienced denial of services, while 34% faced unequal access to services. The camps most affected by denial of or unequal access to services were camps 22, 10, and 11.

During the reporting period, the community has identified several barriers to accessing services. These barriers include a lack of required documentation, movement restrictions due to security concerns, services that are not inclusive of gender, age, and disability, limited transportation options, and socio-cultural reasons.



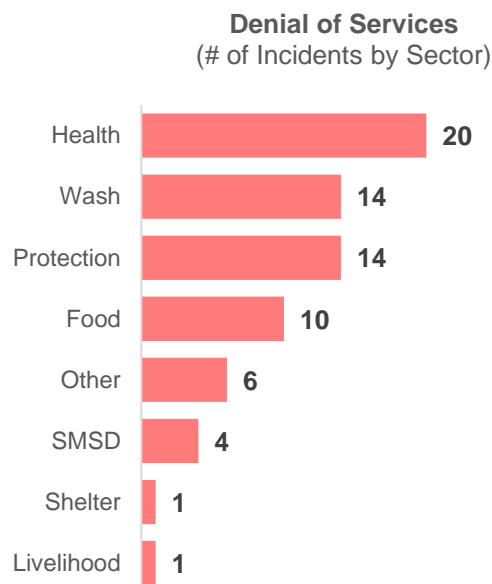
Regarding livelihoods and assistance delivery, the reduction in WFP ration voucher value in March from 12 USD to 10 USD (equivalent to BDT 1,089) has been expressed as a major concern by the refugee community. The decrease in WFP voucher value, coupled with rising food prices, is likely to have a negative impact on the health and nutrition of Rohingya families, leading them to opt for new coping (including harmful) practices including borrowing money or taking on debt. In addition, the reduction in ration vouchers could contribute to various issues such as violence, acute malnutrition, child labor (to bring in additional income to families), aggressive behaviours, and exploitation. Moreover, restrictions imposed by local authorities prevent refugees from running businesses of their own in the camps, resulting in limited livelihood and

income-generating activities available for refugees.

Challenges persist in finding qualified teachers to provide Rohingya children with appropriate education in the Myanmar curriculum, which as per the instructions of the host Government needs to be taught in Burmese, a language which is not widely spoken among potential teachers in the refugees community. The lack of opportunities for higher education continues to frustrate refugee youth in the camps and expose them to harmful coping practices such as engaging in criminal activities, gambling, child labour, and early marriages.

Different factors contributed to limiting or preventing having equal and adequate access to WASH services across the camps in Teknaf during the reporting period. Water distribution in these camps only reaches 50% of the targeted individuals. Abuse of power or harassment by some Majhis and neighbors surrounding the water points created additional obstacles for some refugees to access the service.

Refugees have highlighted that persons with disabilities face extreme challenges in accessing WASH and health services, particularly at water points and toilets, due to various access barriers, mobility challenges, and long distances to these facilities. Limited availability of lab tests and 24/7 health facilities in the camps poses challenges for Rohingya individuals in obtaining timely health support, particularly in emergency cases.



 **RECOMMENDATIONS**

The below recommendations follow key issues identified by the Protection Monitoring agencies during the reporting period for action and follow-up protection and other humanitarian actors in coordination with the Protection Sector:

- Advocate for the prioritization of funding to address the negative impact of the reduction in the food voucher value implemented in March 2023. Additionally, emphasize the importance of expanding livelihoods programming to enable the refugee community to meet their needs through income generation activities.
- Advocate for increased patrolling by LEA both inside and in the vicinity of the camps in order to prevent, mitigate and reduce violence against refugees perpetrated by criminal groups.
- Strengthen ongoing training and capacity-building for LEA to ensure protection-sensitive policing in refugee settings and guarantee timely interventions to mitigate social tensions between refugee and host communities
- Advocate with camp and LEA to actively promote and support refugees' access to formal justice mechanisms by ensuring that crimes are promptly and thoroughly investigated and prosecuted to effectively combat impunity and discourage criminal activities.
- Strengthen complaint mechanisms and enhance community engagement so that refugees are able to report any misconduct committed by LEA.
- Advocate for improved access to services for individuals with disabilities, ensuring their needs are met and that they can fully benefit from available assistance and support.
- Advocate for a regulatory framework for land administration inside the camps in line with humanitarian principles/standards and HLP rights (e.g., discourage the sale of shelters, liaise with humanitarian partners during Basan Char relocation to reallocate vacated shelters based on priority needs, support HLP dispute resolutions).
- Enhance activities that support community-based child protection mechanisms to prevent and respond to child protection concerns including enhancing safety measures and risk mitigation, focusing on those child protection concerns.
- Advocate for more livelihood opportunities, vocational skills training, and income-generating activities to prevent harmful coping practices such as child marriage, child labor, and other forms of exploitation and abuses.
- Advocate with camp authorities for registration and issuance of the civil documentation, including registration of marriages, new-born babies, or unregistered children.
- Continue advocacy to strengthen and increase delivery of psychosocial support services, including tailored GBV prevention activities, including through the engagement with men and boys.