

JOINT PROTECTION MONITORING REPORT

1,113

Focus Group Discussion (persons reached)

130

Home Visits

1,120

Key Informant Interviews (persons reached)

56%
Men

44%
Women

12%
People with disabilities

| | Female | Male |
|-----------------|--------|------|
| Children (0-17) | 0% | 1% |
| Adult (18-59) | 35% | 42% |
| Elderly (60+) | 8% | 14% |

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 965,467* 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.

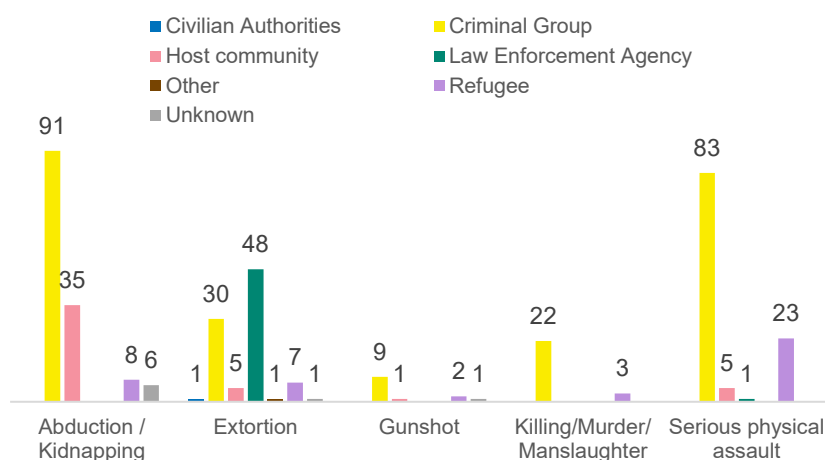
Executive Summary: There was an increase of 20% in the number of killings and an overall decrease of 28% in the total number of reported protection incidents in comparison to the second quarter (April-June) of 2023. Abduction remains a major concern; in Teknaf and in some camps of Ukhiya (3, 4, 7 and 20) a trend of refugees being held for ransom in Myanmar and released when relatives in Bangladesh pay ransom was reported. Criminal groups intensified activities to mobilize refugees to support their group, targeting, particularly, young male refugees. On July 7, an alleged senior leader of ARSA, was killed in camp 18 resulting in the death of five criminal group members, including two residents of camp 8W. Accusations of refugees collaborating with other criminal groups have resulted in physical assault of male refugees and heightened risks for Majhi's and community leaders.

SAFETY AND SECURITY

A total of 383 serious protection incidents¹ affecting 560 Rohingya refugees have been recorded across the camps in Ukhiya and Teknaf during the third Quarter of 2023. Major safety and security incidents include – abduction (140), serious physical assault (112), extortion (93), killing/ murder/ manslaughter (25) - of which all victims were refugees-, and gunshots (13).

Despite a 28% decrease in the total number of reported protection incidents in comparison to Quarter two, confrontations between criminal groups trying to maintain or establish control over some camps in Ukhiya have kept the same levels of security instability since January 2023. Most protection incidents were reported in camps: 1W, 2E, 3, 7, 8W, 8E, 9, 10, 11, 12,

Alleged perpetrator per category by incident



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

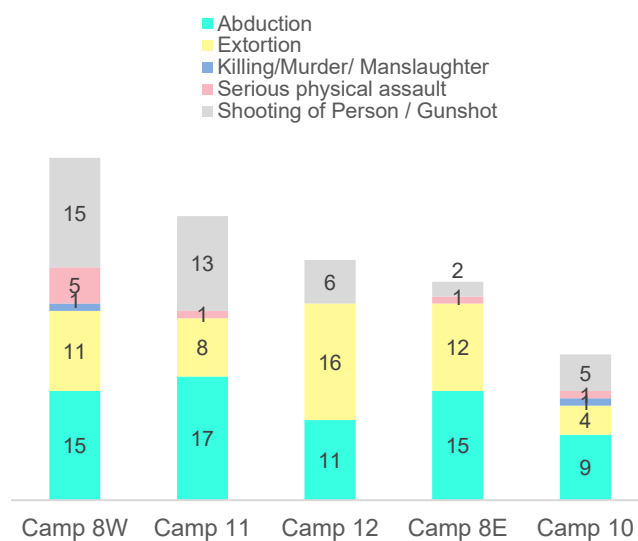
15, 17, NYP and RC. In addition to murder incidents, which showed an increase of 20% in comparison to last quarter², abduction perpetrated by criminal groups as an act of retaliation against their rival group remains a significant trend. Criminal groups continue to abduct members of opposing groups - accounting for 65% of allegedly perpetrators- to extort information on their activities and for the purpose of ransom to finance their activities.

In Teknaf camps, abduction/kidnapping for ransom, drug trafficking and violent robbery remain prevalent. In both Teknaf area and camps 3, 4 and 7 in Ukhiya, families reported relatives being held in Myanmar for ransom when intending to continue their journey to another country via Myanmar and only released when ransom is paid by family members in Bangladesh. Despite this situation, arrest of perpetrators remains notably low, and refugees are afraid of reporting to the authorities due to fear of reprisals.

Extortion incidents, while still highly underreported, showed a decrease of 32% in relation to Quarter 2. Payment of bribes and arbitrary arrests, involving primarily Law Enforcement Agents (52%), followed by criminal groups (32%), continue to impact refugees particularly when crossing check points. The amount of money requested ranges between 50-200 (BDT) during daytime and it can increase to up to 5000 (BDT) at night.

Allegations of harassment, beating, and verbal abuse towards refugees continued to be reported mainly by criminal groups (72%). Shootings (including the use of firecrackers) decreased by 45% during the reporting period but continues to occur as means to control territory and intimidate communities. Young refugees account for most of the victims and Majhi's remain at high risk as they are perceived to be actively cooperating with Law Enforcement Agencies. Men and young boys continue to raise safety and security concerns as they are more likely to be coerced into joining criminal groups or assaulted by criminal groups at food distribution sites for their belongings and food rations. Women expressed fear of young boys being recruited by criminal groups in the camps as early as 10-12 years of age by getting promises of financial support for their families if they join the criminal groups and act as "informants".

Top 5 camps by incidents reported



Secondary Displacements³:

| From Camp | To Camp | # of HHs | # of Refugees |
|-----------|---------|----------|---------------|
| Camp 15 | Camp 3 | 1 | 1 |
| | Camp 13 | 6 | 24 |
| Camp 19 | Camp 19 | 4 | 12 |
| Camp 1E | Camp 1E | 1 | 8 |
| Camp 21 | Camp 16 | 1 | 1 |
| Camp 22 | Camp 22 | 4 | 20 |
| | Camp 12 | 1 | 4 |
| | Camp 15 | 2 | 10 |
| Camp 25 | Camp 26 | 1 | 6 |
| Camp 6 | Camp 20 | 2 | 12 |

As a result of the reduction of the last food voucher entitlement and adjustment to assistance,⁴ refugees are left without choice but to adopt negative coping practices, which may drag some of them also to engage in illegal activities to earn additional money. In Teknaf camps (primarily camps 21, 22, 24 and 27) criminal members in host community are taking advantage of refugees' circumstances to engage them in illicit activities. Psychological and mental wellbeing of older women and men has declined as a result, with both intimate partner violence (IPV) and conflicts escalating due to stressful living conditions. Male refugees feel embarrassed by the fact that they cannot provide for their families and women are frustrated as they cannot cook proper meals and care for their relatives. Threats linked to abductions and killing by criminal groups have forced refugees to be relocated to other camps or within the same camp. An estimate of 100 individuals driven from 16 camps heading - presumably- to neighboring countries.

² During Quarter 1, the Sector reported a total number of 36 killings of which 19 cases were verified. For quarter 2, the Sector reported a total number of 31 cases of which 20 cases were verified. For this quarter all killing incidents were verified.

³ 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.

⁴ For the first time, the response to the Rohingya's protracted crisis has led to the reduction of refugees' food assistance and soap distribution, and an adjustment of assistance in Liquid Petroleum Gas (LPG) as of September 2023.

In the period under review, 91 cases of human trafficking within Bangladesh were recorded. The profile of victims, type of trafficking and modus operandi of traffickers remained largely the same. Most of human trafficking victims were male (71%), trafficked under the promise of paid labor and ended up in forced labor. In addition, 25 children (3 girls and 21 boys) were identified as victims of trafficking. Refugees' homes/shelters were indicated as the main place for recruitment or initial engagement with the traffickers and the majority remained in Cox's Bazar (66%) or were brought to Chittagong (18%).

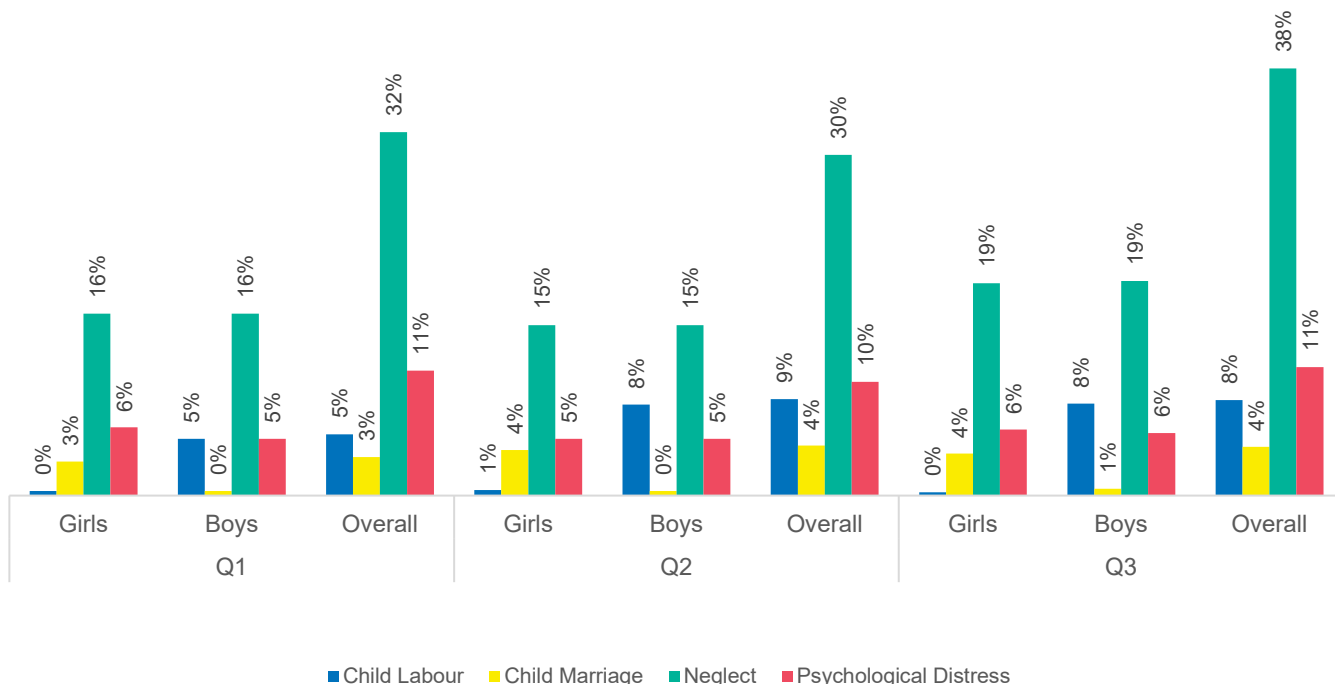
More details in the Quarterly Dashboard produced by the Anti-Trafficking Working Group (AT WG), available [here](#).



During the second quarter of 2023, the protection situation for children was highly impacted by ration cuts. Violence and insecurity in the camps keep posing challenges for children's well-being and their care givers; neglect had an increase of 8% in comparison and continues to impact girls equally as much as boys. Refugees struggle to ensure adequate care for their children as resources are limited and families are under considerable strain.

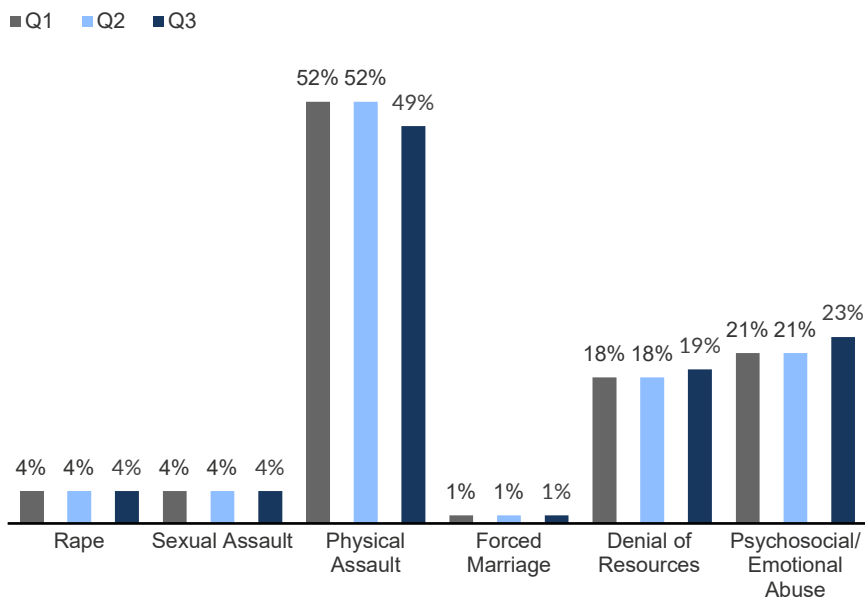
11% of child protection cases correspond to psychological distress; as the security environment in the camps worsens and some families are often exposed to criminal groups actions including abductions, extortion, physical assault and shootings. Pressure due to scarce income and families failing to provide enough food and hygiene supplies contributes to the mental and emotional well-being of children.

Top 4 Child Protection Incidents Reported by Quarter



Central amongst the child protection concerns is child labor corresponding to 38% of the overall reported cases with a notable gender disparity, being more prevalent among boys. Economic pressures within the camps -aggravated by the reduction in assistance- continues to push boys and young men into labor to support their families. Lack of opportunities for higher education is still pointed out as a problem for boys who were reported to be engaging in gambling and recruited into criminal activities. Child marriage continues to affect girls disproportionately with a total of 85% of the cases and it remains highly under reported due to the normalization of the practice amongst the community. Distribution of cases shows an even spread across different age groups, with 29% of cases corresponding to children aged 0-5 years, 36% in the 6-11 years and 34% for those aged 12-17 years.

Types of GBV incidents



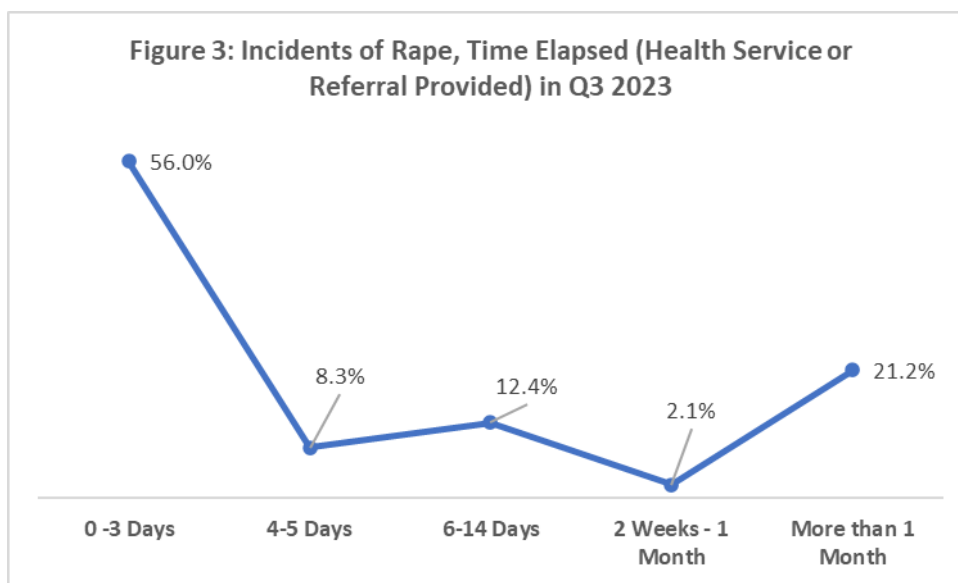
Physical assault was reported as the most common type of GBV for this quarter, accounting for 49% of the incidents, followed by psychological and/or emotional abuse (23%) and denial of resources (17%).

Women and girls reported that men are leaving them to search for better job opportunities and resources to different areas of the camps and/or countries. However, when departing, men often end the relationship without informing their partners and their whereabouts remain unknown to their families. Men that are staying in the camps are frustrated due to limited income opportunities, leading to an

increase in reported IPV -corresponding to 79% of all types of incidents reported for this Quarter-. The majority of GBV incidents occur in domestic spaces such as the survivor's and perpetrator's residences. In addition to opportunity constraints for refugees, cuts in food assistance have had a disproportionate impact on women-headed households as they face social stigma and insecurity when seeking employment outside their homes. Pregnant and lactating women stated to be struggling to feed themselves and their babies properly.

Amongst all reported types of GBV, physical assault is the highest incident to be reported with a slight 2% decrease in comparison to Quarter 2. Physical assault remains closely connected to the denial of resources for women, emotional abuse, and forced child marriage, with a higher frequency of occurrence in situations of polygamous marriage or dowry exchange.

Sexual violence remained the same for the reporting period with rape and sexual assault accounting for 8% of the overall GBV incidents. Stigma around sexual assaults and rape keep posing challenges for girls and women to disclose cases as it jeopardizes their chances of marriage or to get married. These cases are only reported by the caregivers when the pregnancy is already visible, and survivors are at higher risk of health-related issues and timely referral to other services. Reported increase of drug use amongst men poses a threat to women and girls as large sums of money is constantly demanded from female-headed and single-mother families to buy these.



Theft has become a common threat, particularly in areas lacking solar lighting. Vulnerable households led by women, the elderly, or those without adult male members are often targeted. Thieves sometimes darken targeted blocks by stealing street solar light components before stealing various items, including ration supplies from vulnerable families. To prevent theft, many families now take turns staying awake at night. However, older people and women face difficulties

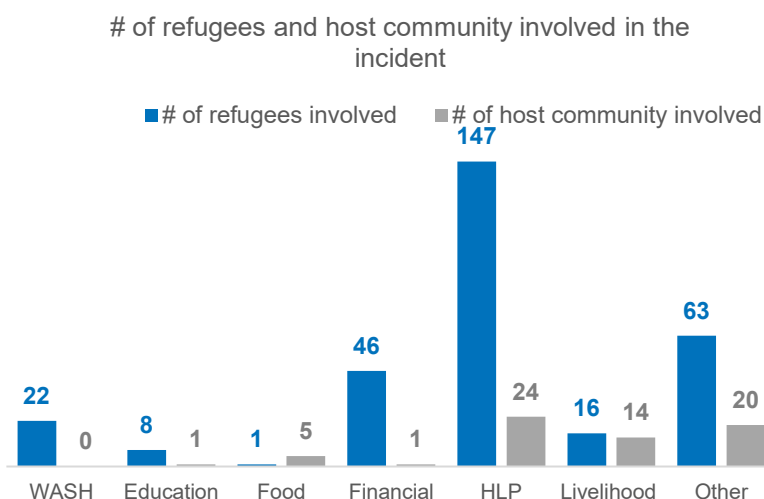
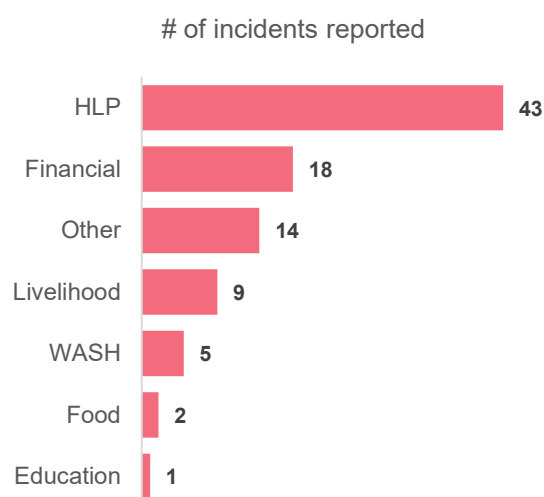
in maintaining these security measures and reported to need torch lights and solar lights to enhance this protective measure. Lack of adequate solar lights at the communal latrines in several blocks continue to pose safety and security risks for women and girls in the camp as absence of proper lighting enables perpetrators to commit acts of sexual abuse and harassment. Fear of retaliation and the requirement for substantial evidence hinder victims from reporting sexual abuse and harassment incidents to service providers or authorities.

SOCIAL COHESION AND PEACEFUL COEXISTENCE

A total of 92 incidents have been reported during Quarter 3 with a 38% decrease in relation to Quarter 2. Incidents involved 368 individuals, with 60% of these incidents corresponding to host communities and the rest to refugees. House, Land and Property (HLP) related issues remain the main challenge faced by refugees and host communities followed by financial conflicts, and lack of resources amongst the population including accessing livelihood opportunities, WASH facilities and food.

Quarrels and escalating tensions between refugees and house-owners from the host-community relating to rent remains a concerning trend for refugees in most of the camps but particularly in camps 1E, 1W, 9, 14, 16, 26 and 27. Refugees who go outside of camp for livelihood activities, especially after the food ration cut, are facing hostile treatment from host communities and acute risks of trafficking by being promised work in agriculture, construction, domestic work, livestock raising, and day labor.

There was an overall increase of 18% of HLP cases for this quarter in comparison to Quarter 2. Amongst these cases, 4% involved individuals who were forced to leave their shelters due to eviction threats, underscoring the ongoing issues related to housing security.



Disputes over rental issues accounted for 39%, including struggles with higher rent and rental disagreements, while 37% were related to disputes over shared resources. Additionally, 20% of cases were linked to conflicts over the usage of pathways, encroachments, and boundary disputes. Landowners from host communities are demanding up to 200.00 BDT from single households to pay for land rent. If refugees fail to pay what is requested, they are evicted; at least 350 families in Camps 25 have faced eviction threats by the landowner and host communities.

Other incidents impacting social cohesion amongst host communities and refugees involve disputes over the sale of counterfeit gold, disagreements regarding the division of earnings from joint business ventures, conflicts arising from borrowed money retrieval, and quarrels related to loan repayments. Some disputes escalated to verbal abuse and physical fights. In 51% of these circumstances, authorities were not involved or did not intervene.

 **ACCESS TO JUSTICE**

Between July and September 2023, 6,836 refugees availed of legal services which include counselling, effective mediation of disputes by legal actors, assistance to file a case with the police and in courts, representation in court, legal support for victim of trafficking and release from detention after intervention by legal actors. Most frequent serious crimes brought before court through the legal partner were murder, physical assault, trafficking, and rape. As in Quarter 2, mediation was predominantly provided on family issues and financial disputes between refugees.

The detention of refugees moving out of camps by Law Enforcement Agencies increased during the reporting months. Between July and September, the police and local authority detained about 200 refugees who were working and/or living in local community areas in Cox's Bazar, Ukhiya and Bandarban.

Informal dispute resolution, including sometimes for serious crimes such as rape, continues to be conducted in the camps by influential community leaders and, in some case, members of criminal groups. This trend of protection incidents and dispute resolution being managed by criminal groups was reported across several camps. In one camp, a criminal group was reported to be asking for cooked meals from each household in exchange for the protection being provided by them against other criminal groups. In blocks where presence of criminal groups is reportedly higher, Majhi's are also being forced to go to criminal groups to resolve protection related issues in exchange for money. As a result, refugees are restraining from accessing service providers and community leaders for any protection-related issues out of fear they will be confronted by criminal groups.

A perceived slow process for refugees to register marriage and divorce continues to lead to a higher number of informal marriages and divorces which results in challenges for legal partners working in the camps to mediate successfully during disputes as no official documentation is available. Child marriages and polygamy continue to be concluded through the same informal mechanism.

Between July and September 2023, 6836 refugees attended legal awareness sessions and 6,826 refugees benefited from different types of legal services including legal counselling, mediation of disputes, assistance to filing cases to the police and/or in courts, legal representation in court, legal support for victims of trafficking and release from detention after intervention by legal actors. Most frequent serious crimes brought before the court through the legal partners includes (attempted) murder, serious physical harm, and (attempted) rape, which were also the major crimes brought before the court during the earlier quarter.

Informal or traditional justice mechanisms continue to prevail over the formal justice system in the camps with varying degrees of effectiveness or fairness while solving disputes and offenses at the community level. A lack of confidentiality when processing cases if reported to Mahjis and/or community leaders was reported; most refugees reported feeling reluctant to report protection incidents as survivors/victims hesitate to share their experiences to camp authorities or service providers. Women and girls facing GBV, fear revictimization and potential damage to their family's honour. If female survivor report GBV issue to community leaders, they face challenges to access justice as they are often asked to identify specific perpetrator or provide evidence. Some Majhi's exploit the situation by demanding money from the victims to resolve the problem.

 **ACCESS TO SERVICES**

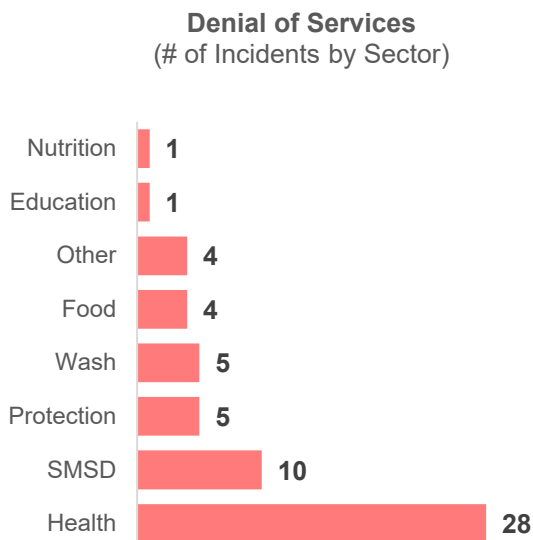
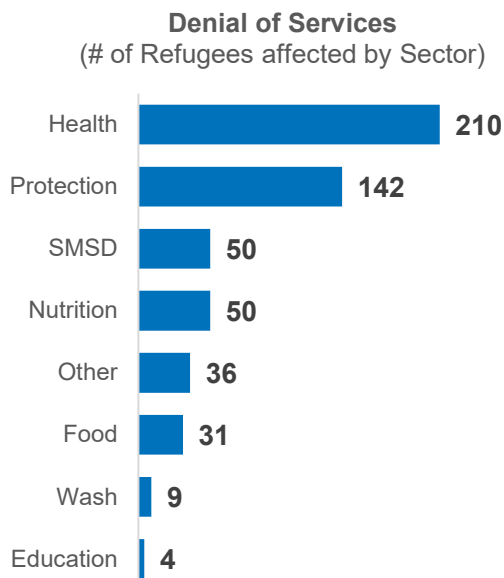
During the reporting period, 532 refugees from the camps faced challenges when accessing essential services. Reduction of food assistance -together with growing security concerns- appears to be contributing to the community's unrest and affecting their overall access to services.

Due to the limited health facilities, Rohingya refugees face challenges in accessing health support for emergency incidents. Health was the service with more access constraints for refugees in Quarter 3. Older people, persons with serious medical conditions and persons with disabilities continue to depend on their neighbours and relatives for assistance and face difficulties in obtaining essential healthcare services. Consequently, including lack of enough medicines and referrals to secondary hospitals. Lab tests and additional specialized medical exams are limited or unavailable at the hospitals in the camp, resulting in long queues, and making it difficult for most patients to get tested for diseases as a preventive measure.

Following health access incidents, difficulties in accessing protection service were widely reported through all camps- Women and girls reported feeling unsafe going outside their households to attend activities held at Women Friendly Spaces and Community Centers due to presence of criminal groups. Movement constraints and restriction of movement due to security incidents such as abductions and daylight shootings were observed as barriers to access services.

Reports of damaged infrastructure, including stairs and shelters, hinder access to safe and adequate shelter for refugees.

Older refugees were particularly affected by adjustments in assistance (food, soap, and LPG) as they have fewer chances of accessing income-generating opportunities to meet their needs due to age-related factors. Persons with disabilities continue to experience significant challenges as they often face physical, communication and transportation barriers to move around the camp to obtain additional financial resources and access available services. It was also observed that some elderly refugees requested to change their age on their documents to be identified as extremely vulnerable individual (EVIs) and receive fresh food from. In Camp 25 the head Majhi was reportedly sharing information to Law Enforcement Agencies of families who allegedly left the camp to go to Malaysia and the remaining family member were threatened of being blocked from all assistance support including FAC, Food and LPG. Some of the families reportedly paid Law Enforcement Agencies to let them keep their documents to access services.



Confiscation of Family Attestation Card by Law Enforcement Authorities have been preventing refugees from accessing humanitarian assistance -reported under "other" category-. There were also incidents registered on refugees getting insufficient LPG for cooking energy and reverted to alternative energy sources such as wood by cutting trees causing disputes and hindering peaceful coexistence amongst refugees and hosts communities.

 **RECOMMENDATIONS**

- Continue to monitor and advocate to ensure Law Enforcement Agencies - including investigative bodies such as district police- effectively prevent and reduce violence against refugees, maintain standard of treatment against refugees, and counter threats posed by rival criminal groups, and mitigates the escalation of violence.
- Strengthen investigation and prosecution of perpetrators of crimes in the camps -particularly for abductions and killings- to reduce impunity and threats to refugee and ensure protection and assistance for refugee victims and witnesses.
- Reinforce mechanisms to prevent and address instances of police misconduct while promoting a supportive environment for law and order.
- Advocate with camp and Law Enforcement Authorities to promote and support access of refugees to formal justice mechanisms, as well as to ensure timely investigation and prosecution of crimes to fight against impunity and deter criminal activities in the camps.
- Continue training programmes with law enforcement authorities to mitigate impact on refugees' security during law enforcement operations in the camps.
- Advocate with camp authorities to ensure a uniform and formal approach to participation of refugees in night patrols and avoid exploitation or coercion of refugees by influential actors in the camps.
- Advocate for more livelihood and skill development opportunities to prevent and address harmful coping mechanisms such as child marriage, child labor, and other protection concerns and to empower communities in particular the young people.
- Continue strengthening self-reliance and capacity building within the refugee community. Intensify an integrated protection and community-based approach by working meaningfully with the refugee community in order to prioritize critical services and activities addressing needs as jointly understood and identified.
- Food, WASH, Shelter/NFI, Health and other non-protection actors to mainstream protection in their intervention and respond in a way that reduces social tensions within the refugee community and between host and refugees.
- Address extortion practices in particular through Majhis and block leaders asking them to help mediating disputes, seeking justice and preventing violence and abuse. Provide training to Mahjis and other community leaders on their roles and responsibilities as community leaders, emphasizing integrity, impartiality, and adherence to human rights.
- Provide sufficient educational support for adolescent boys to reduce the risk of drug addiction and involvement in other illegal activities. This can include expanding access to quality schooling, vocational training, recreational activities, and mentorship programs.
- Strengthen and enhance gender-based violence prevention strategies amongst women and men in the community, particularly about the challenges faced by widowed women, women headed household and adolescent girls to promote gender equality. Provide safe spaces, support groups, and counselling services. Encourage women participation in training, meetings, and accessing service facilities.
- Intensify the use of effective awareness-raising strategies on identified risks, negative coping trends, and deeply rooted harmful social norms.
- Intensify awareness-raising on dangerous movements to prevent loss of lives and to mitigate the possibility of trafficking in person and smuggling.

END