

JOINT PROTECTION MONITORING REPORT

This report was updated on February 2024 to reflect 3 additional verified killing that took place during Quarter 2 of 2023. To access the original version go to this [link](#).

1,175

Focus Group Discussion (persons reached)

604

Home Visits

839

Key Informant Interviews (persons reached)

53%
Men

Female

Male

47%
Women

Children (0-17)

5%

6%

Adult (18-59)

35%

37%

19%
People with disabilities

Elderly (60+)

7%

10%

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.

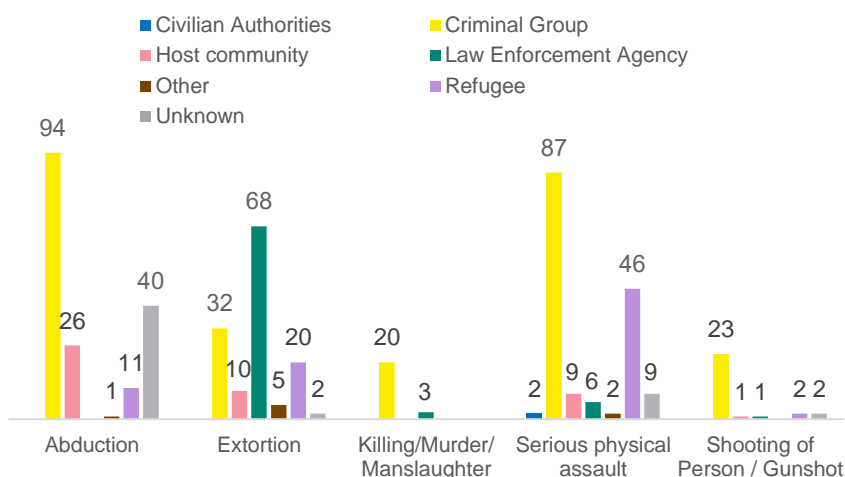
Six agencies (UNHCR, IOM, IRC, DRC, OXFAM and HI) conduct protection monitoring as part of core programming, covering 33 camps and an estimate of 931,447* refugees. This report also reflects the contributions of the Gender-Based Violence (GBV) and Child Protection (CP) Sub-Sectors as well as of the Anti-Trafficking Working Group and the House, Land and Property Technical Forum.

Executive Summary: Abduction for ransom and forced disappearance in the camps rose alarmingly during the first half of 2023 in comparison to the same reporting period for 2022 with a total of 367 registered cases representing a 490% overall increase. On June 2, five Rohingya young males and one host community shopkeeper were abducted from camp 25; the 16-year old boy had his hand cut before being released as a message for families to pay the ransom. The modality in which refugees are kept hostage upon ransom illustrates the vulnerability of the population and poses a considerable threat to the overall security and well-being of the community. There were 31 reported killings during the Second quarter of 2023 and an increase of 11% of the overall protection incidents. House, land and property incidents rose by 66% in relation to last Quarter as refugees are not able to pay for their shelters or services to the host community; diminishing food support is escalating evictions and tensions between host communities and refugees.

SAFETY AND SECURITY

A total of 530 serious protection incidents¹ affecting 1,080 Rohingya refugees have been recorded across the camps in Ukhiya and Teknaf during the second Quarter of 2023. Major safety and security incidents include - abduction (172), serious physical assault (161), extortion (137), killing/ murder/ manslaughter (23) - of which all victims were refugees-, and shooting of a person/gunshot (29). Growing concerns of abductions and gunfights between rival criminal groups continued to be reported almost regularly in various camps. There was an overall increase of 11% in the total number of reported protection incidents in comparison to the first Quarter (Jan-March). Most of these incidents were reported in camps: 7, 8W, 8E, 9, 10, 11, 12, 13, 15, 18 and 19. Despite Law Enforcement Authorities' intensified activities to reduce crime in several camps during the second Quarter of 2023, the number of confrontations between criminal groups trying to ensure control

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.

over some camps has increased significantly, resulting in retaliating killings of members of the rival groups. Security operations led in Ukhiya areas resulted in the arrests of several alleged criminal group members, reportedly including high-profile members/leaders of the group, with the majority on charges of possessing arms or committing murder.

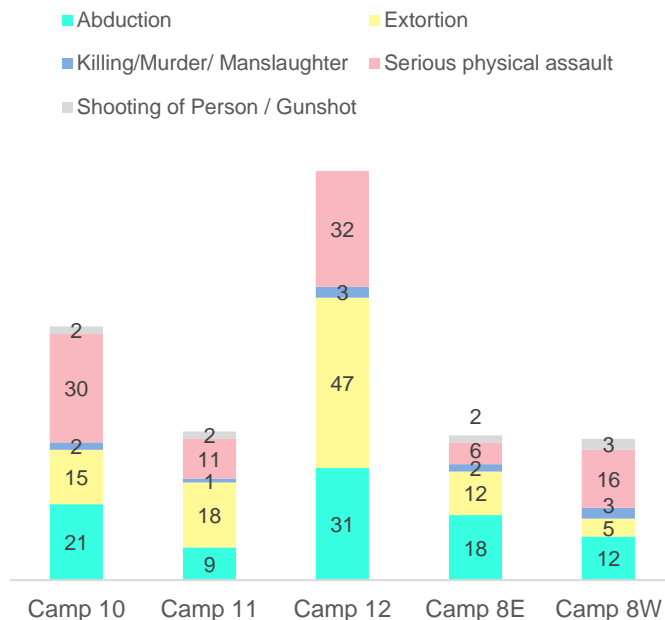
Abductions for ransom remained prevalent and on the rise among the recorded protection incidents; 55% of all abductions were allegedly perpetrated by criminal groups followed by “unknown actors” (23%). Host communities and refugees were also said to be involved in committing abductions and kidnappings. Low reporting of this incidents prevails out of fear of reprisals and therefore refugees often rather pay ransom and have their relatives returned. In camp 25, five Rohingya young males and one host community shopkeeper were abducted; a 16-year old boy was released with one of his hands cut off and the remaining victims were released with injuries, clearly showing physical safety concerns in/around the camps continuously.

Extortion remains a continuous concern in the Camps, with likely underreporting. Violators included personnel from the law enforcement authorities, criminal groups, refugee community leaders, host community members, and others. Some of the extortion incidents were related to requests for payment when refugees crossed checkpoints, ranging from 50-200 BDT during the daytime to up to 5000 BDT during night-time. Refugees reported being harassed to give up their mobile-phones and in some situation's food rations. Refugees engaged in fishing are often obliged to share their catch at checkpoints.

Allegations of harassment, beating, and verbal abuse continued to be reported mainly in camps 8W, 10, and 12 mainly by criminal groups (54%) followed by refugees (29%) and host communities (6%). Killings and shootings of persons remained high during the reporting period with young men accounting for most of the victims and Majhi's facing acute protection risks as they are perceived to be actively collaborating with the Law Enforcement Authorities, including in night patrolling, and are then threatened by criminal groups. Young men and educated refugees continue to raise safety and security concerns as they are more likely to be coerced into joining criminal groups.

With limited livelihood opportunities and a reduction in assistance,² refugees find it difficult to meet their basic needs and therefore remain at risk of adopting harmful coping practices. During the period of April to June 2023, in number of instances, threats linked to abductions and killing by criminal groups have forced refugees to be relocated to other camps or within the same camp. Movement of refugees in host locations seeking for daily work observed to have been increased, which could also be due to the reduction of assistance, where they may face legal or administrative actions or could be exploited by the local employer.

Top 5 camps by incidents reported



In the period under review, 137 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 (66%), trafficked under the promise of paid labor and ended up in forced labor. In addition, 34 children (12 girls and 22 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 (44%) or were brought to Chittagong (30%).

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



137

Refugees Identified

69

Men

34

Women

22

Boys

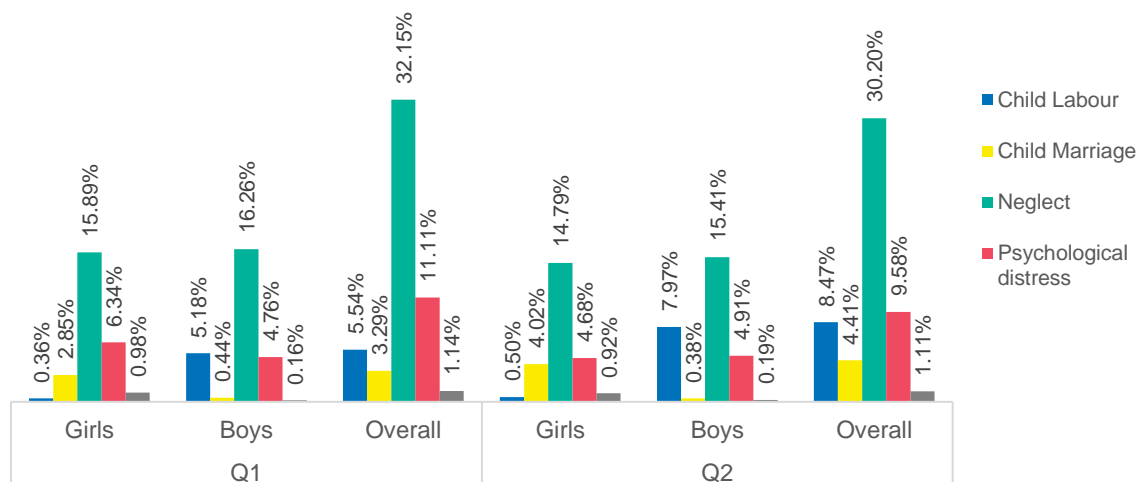
12

Girls

² Since June 1 (2023), the entitlement of the food voucher was reduced from USD 10 to USD 8 (equivalent to BDT 840). Additionally, from May 1 (2023), the number of bathing soaps people receive per month was reduced from 2 to 1.

During the second quarter of 2023, there was a slight decrease in the number of reported child protection incidents, in which neglect affecting both girls and boys remains a predominant concern. The graph below shows the difference in incidence of the most reported child protection incidents between Quarter 1 and Quarter 2.

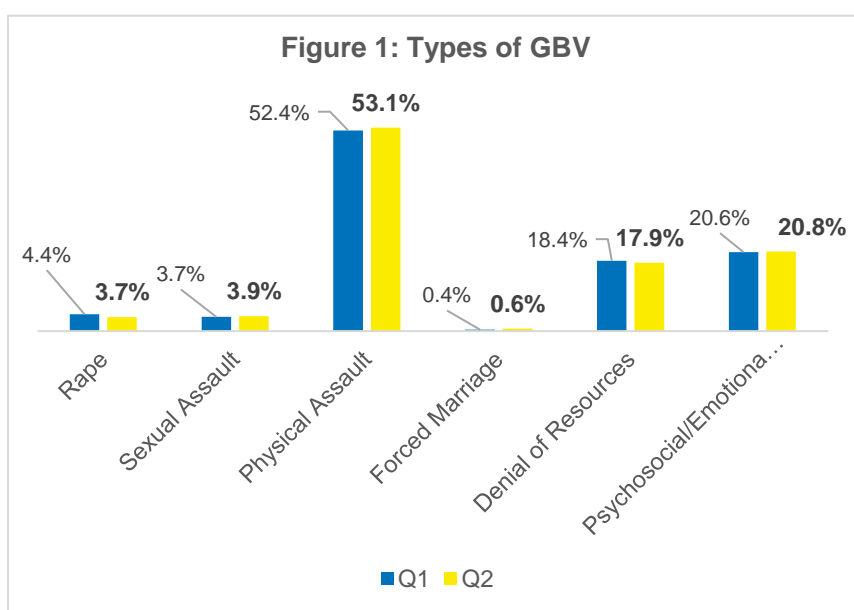
Top five child protection concerns in % for Quarter 1 and Quarter 2



Child labor remains a concern due to various reasons, including increased economic pressure in the families. For the reported child labor cases during the period, there was an increase of 3% compared to Quarter 1 and there was a higher prevalence of boys. Amongst the reported cases, around 28% of the children are engaged in the worst forms of child labor. Child marriage continues to affect girls disproportionately with a total of 92% of the cases involving girls, while the remaining 8% pertain to boys. In general the results showed a slight decrease of 1% in comparison to Quarter 2.

Reports of lost or missing children were recorded almost daily and continue to contribute to the high percentage of neglect cases. Confirmed cases of child trafficking were also raised during this quarter by 41%³. In some camps, children are being abducted and returned to their families upon ransom payment, which creates widespread fear among children to move across/within the camp(s).

Child protection partners have been reporting an increase in gunfights between armed groups that has resulted in injured children. Economic hardships and social and safety challenges continue to have an impact on children’s overall well-being and development. During the reporting period, there were two reports of attempted suicide from one of the camps involving teenage girls due to acute mental health and psychosocial challenges.



Quarter 2 had a slight decrease in the reporting of gender-based violence (GBV) incidents⁴. Despite this decrease, reporting organizations' focal points believe that Quarter 2 may have a higher number of reported incidents because only 10 out of 13 reporting organizations contributed data to this report⁵. Caseworkers in the focus group-discussions (FGD) mentioned that the food ration cuts in June had a considerable impact on the family dynamics, subsequently resulting in increasing intimate partner violence (IPV). They also raised the concern that refugees are moving to different neighbouring countries like Thailand or Malaysia for the purpose of income generation and marriage which is putting women at heightened risks including trafficking. Despite the various efforts to

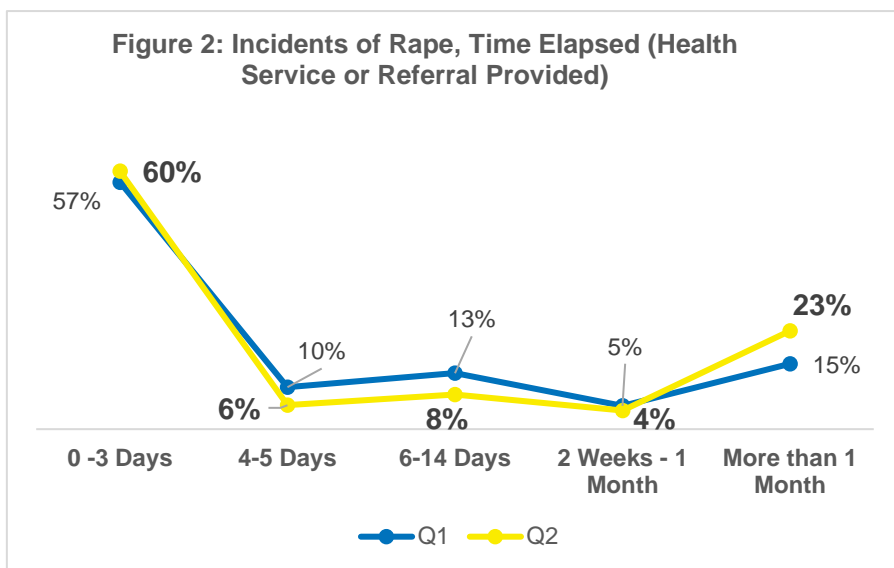
³ Anti-Trafficking Working Group Dashboard

⁴ Intersected incidents can only be reported as 1 type of GBV in GBVIMS (based on GBV classification tool and the process of elimination, determining the most specific incident type that applies to the reported incident.). More details in the monthly and quarterly GBV factsheet [here](#)

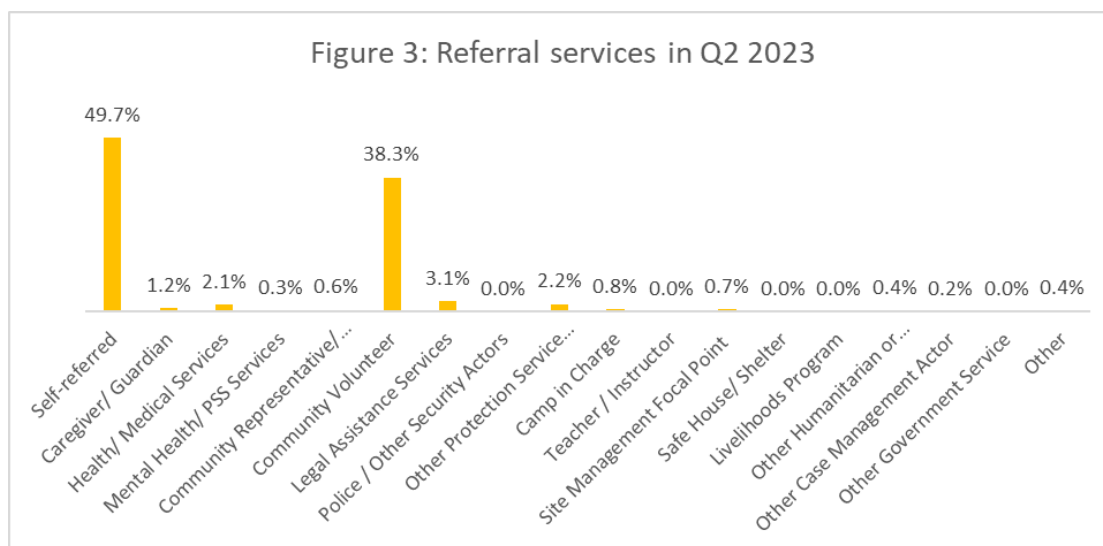
⁵ GBV facilities and services from three reporting organizations were interrupted due to the fund constraints.

create a survivor-friendly environment in the camps, GBV survivors continue to face challenges in some camps from the Majhi's and perpetrators. During the reporting period, the Quarter 2 data analysis session showed that Majhi's and perpetrators from some camps were threatening to restrict survivors not to report incidents to humanitarian actors. In some instances, Majhi's were allegedly trying to manipulate and/or prevent access to targeted services for GBV survivors.

Amongst all reported types of GBV, physical assault remained higher and is also interlinked with denial of resources, emotional abuse, and forced/child marriage, mostly in a situation of polygamous marriage or dowry exchange. Despite marriage registration systems established in each camp under the camp administration authority refugee men are choosing their own traditional system to arrange marriages with the intervention of Majhi's and religious/community leaders. This is problematic as Majhi's can take this opportunity to demand bribes or extort families to report the age of the child as adult and facilitate the process of child marriage. Majhi's have also been found to use these arranged marriages as a form of resolution of rape and abuse cases.



During the reporting period, sexual violence decreased slightly from 8% to 7.5% in relation to Quarter 1. This small decrease can be attributed to continuous awareness sessions on sexual assault, rape, and adequate GBV–Sexual Reproductive Health integrated services. Irrespective of the slight decrease, overall, incidents of rape have increased by 3% in comparison to the previous Quarter. Stigma and lack of awareness around cases of rape remain an ongoing constraint within the communities as girls and women jeopardize their marriage when reporting such incidents; in situations where rape survivors are children, caregivers try to hide the incident at the initial phase due to the fear of disclosure and threats from perpetrators. 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.



Women and girls raised safety and security problems. One of the concerns is related to the lack of adequate functional lights at the communal latrines, which has resulted in difficulties for women and girls when accessing these facilities at night. Moreover, a significant number of solar lights on the streets are no longer working, increasing the risks of violence against women and girls while they move outside the home during the dark hours. It is also reported that during dark times and if there are no lights, some men are involved in locking the latrine doors while women and girls are inside and take advantage of the situation to commit gender-based violence. During the reporting quarter, the referral for the services was done, mostly, by GBV survivors themselves (50%) followed by community volunteers (38%).

SOCIAL COHESION AND PEACEFUL COEXISTENCE

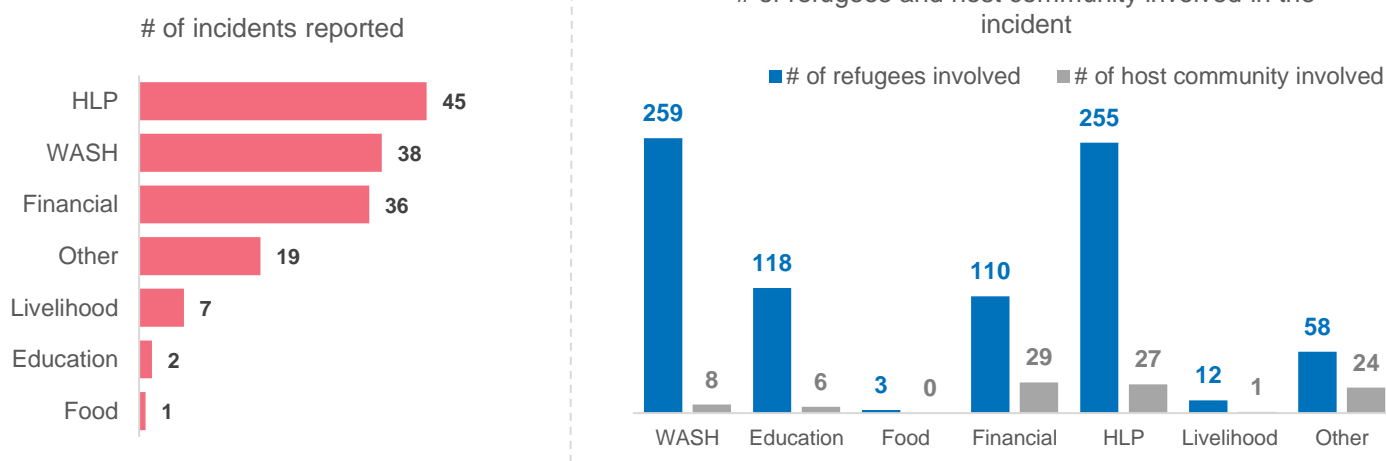
A total of 148 incidents have been reported during Quarter 2, involving 910 individuals, with 90% of these incidents corresponding to refugees and the rest to the host community. These incidents were mainly related to the use of/lack of resources amongst the population including accessing WASH facilities (including latrines and water points), house, land, and property issues (including evictions) and quarrels between refugee and host community families.

Conflict between refugees and house-owners from the host-community relating to rent remains a challenge in several camps. The reduction for food ration from 10 to 8 USD/person that started on June (2023) impacted refugee families given that price of commodities in Bangladesh rose high and the local population is already struggling to meet their basic needs. There were reports in Camp 19 on the tension between the Rohingya community and the host community regarding the collection of rations by host communities. Some refugees are not able to pay for their shelters to the host community by sharing some of the food portion they had before the reduction. The lack of job opportunities and diminishing food support continue to escalate the tensions between the two communities.

Increased incidents of Housing, Land and Property (HLP) were reported in the camps and host communities. HLP issues rose by 66% in comparison to Quarter 1. From April to June 2023, a total of 870 cases were reported, facing various HLP challenges. Approximately 3% of these cases involved people being forced to leave the shelter and receiving eviction threats. Some 38% of the cases were about disputes over shared resources, while 36% of the cases were related to people struggling with paying higher rent or facing other rental issues for their shelters. Another 23% of the cases were linked to disagreements over the use of shared resources, pathways, encroachments, and other boundary disputes. Several cases of blocking pathway access and encroachment were particularly observed during the shelter construction after the fire incident in Camp11.

Amid these challenges, a trend emerged during this period – an increase in people relocating to different camps due to safety concerns, impacting the personal safety of the people as well as living safely in their own place. A total of 94% of eviction cases reported in 2023 of families who were forced to leave their shelter are still open.

Incidents of quarrels between the host community and Rohingya families/communities have been reported due to disputes over the equal distribution of water and WAHS-related issues with an increase of 27% during this Quarter compared to Quarter 1.



There were reports of the host community deliberately cutting the trees and soil in the land-slide prone areas in camps 19, 20, and 20E for instance to force the refugees to leave the area. Numerous incidents of preventing the refugees from fetching the water from the water supply points in camps were recorded resulting in quarrels and sometimes even physical disputes among the host and the refugee families. With disputes between the host and the refugee community increasing over land use, refugees are often urged to pay higher rent to a landowner for the land they use for shelter. If unable to pay, the refugees are evicted or threatened for eviction, causing additional challenges for refugee families. Minor problems are usually resolved by the Majhi's and block leaders, but major problems are directed to the CiC who will either resolve them personally or refer it; if the Majhi's and block committee cannot resolve the conflict, then the problem is referred to the police for resolution, who often takes money from either or both the parties to solve the issues. In 50% of these circumstances, authorities were not involved or did not intervene.

As in earlier quarters, refugees going outside of the camp for livelihood and other purposes activities continue to encounter with hostile behaviour from the local population. Serious security incidents were reportedly perpetrated by host-community members including incident of murder (one incident), abduction for ransom and human

trafficking/smuggling. Additionally, there were reports of Rohingya individuals working as daily laborers in host communities facing difficulties when receiving payment from their employers, and in the absence of the right to work, they often become the victim of exploitation and abuse from the host employer.

ACCESS TO JUSTICE

Between April and June 2023, a total of 11,098 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 case 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. As in the previous quarter, mediation was predominantly provided on family-related issues and financial disputes between the refugees.

Crimes in most camps remain underreported as refugees fear repercussions from the alleged perpetrators and do not see the immediate benefit from the lengthy prosecution/judicial process as part of the formal justice system. Informal settlement of dispute, including sometimes even for serious crimes such as rape, by the community/camp leaders or members of criminal groups remain an ongoing concern to ensure access to justice in line with human rights standards, as these informal settlements are done through bribes or involved parties are forced to follow the decisions taken.

Refugees who married before the marriage registration process -which started in January 2020- face difficulties to get divorce certificate. Also, refugees who do not fulfil the conditions of marriage, do not apply for marriage certificate⁶. This, coupled with perceived slow process or refugees' to register marriages and divorces across the camps continue resulting challenges for the legal partners to determine the rights (e.g., dower, child custody) and mediate successfully during disputes as no official documentation is available Child marriages and polygamy continue to occur through the same informal mechanism.

Most refugees reported feeling reluctant to report protection incidents as survivors/victims hesitate to share or report their experiences to camp authorities or service providers due to various concerns. This hesitancy is often driven by fears of further risk of victimization and potential damage to their family's honour. Furthermore, even when victims do report the issue to the community leaders (block leaders of Majhis), they face various challenges in accessing justice as they are often asked to identify specific perpetrator or providing evidence. Some Majhi's exploit the situation by demanding money from the victims to resolve the problem. Additionally, in some cases, when victims directly report to legal aid providers and/or camp authorities against the perpetrators, the Majhis are often found extorting people and rendering the informal justice unduly. In many incidents, particularly within vulnerable families, victims hesitate to share or report their experiences. Fear of retaliation and the requirement for substantial evidence hinders victims from reporting sexual abuse and harassment incidents to the service providers or authorities.

Informal or traditional justice mechanisms continue to prevail over the formal justice system in the camps with varying degrees of effectiveness or fairness while entertaining disputes and offenses at the community level. A lack of confidentiality when processing cases if reported to Mahjis and/or community leaders.

ACCESS TO SERVICES

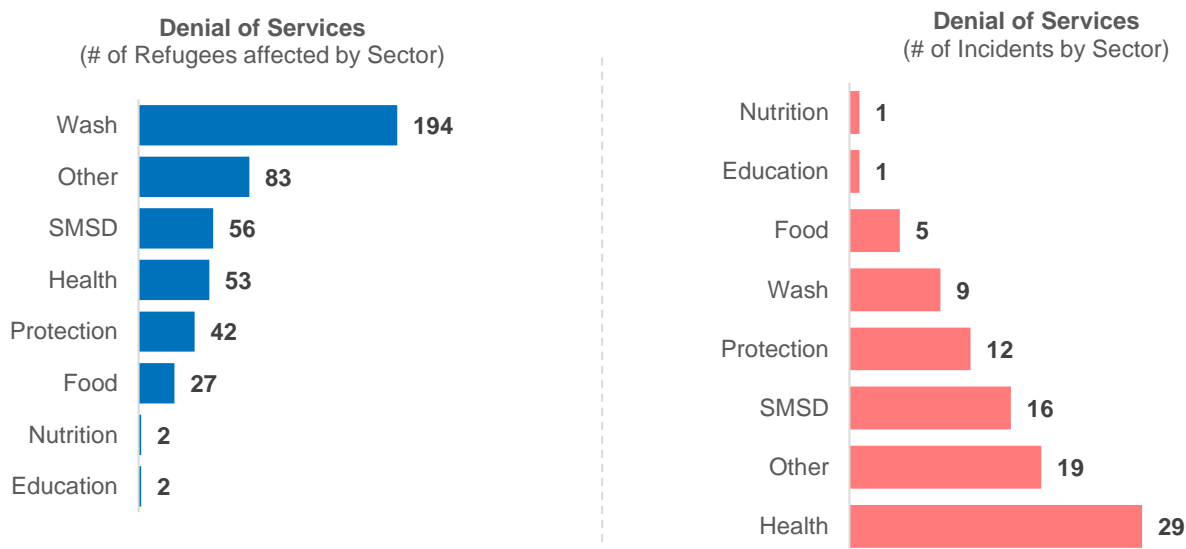
During the reporting period, 459 refugees from the camps faced challenges in accessing essential services due to various reasons. Discrimination and/or exclusion by service providers, movement constraints for various reasons, distance, and long queues, were observed as barriers to accessing services. Additionally, Older persons, pregnant or breastfeeding women, persons with serious medical conditions, and persons with disabilities continue to face challenges to cope with the impact of food ration cuts or meeting specific requirements. Some refugees reported previously selling a portion of rations to meet other needs such as continuing health treatment outside the camps, which they can no longer do given the current food supply situation.

Refugees also complain in several camps about the health services that are provided in the camps including lack of enough medicines and referrals to secondary hospitals. The limited presence of home-based health services has posed challenges for older people, persons with serious medical conditions and persons with disabilities, specifically those living with grandchildren and lacking relatives in the camp. These individuals heavily depend on their neighbours for

⁶ Nearly 2000 marriage and 150 divorce certificates were issued from January to June in the camps.

assistance in accessing health facilities, but in the absence of such help, they often face difficulties in obtaining essential healthcare services in a timely manner. Consequently, vulnerable individuals have no timely access to crucial health services. Refugees also struggle to obtain an adequate supply of medicine from the health facilities. The basic and advanced lab tests are limited or unavailable at the hospitals situated in the camp, resulting in long queues, and making it difficult for most patients to get tested for diseases in a timely manner. Due to the limited health facilities, Rohingya refugees face challenges in accessing health support for emergency incidents. Furthermore, there is no treatment available for chronic diseases at the camp level.

Following health access incidents, “other” incidents include instances of confiscation of Family Attestation Card by Law Enforcement Authorities that have been preventing refugees from accessing humanitarian assistance as this document is needed by refugees to access services and assistance. There were also incidents reported on refugees getting insufficient Liquid Petroleum Gas (LPG) for cooking energy, hence, larger families look for alternative energy sources i.e., cutting trees, which can be a source of dispute or matter of legal action.



Moreover, children born from mixed marriages (refugee and host community) still face challenges in registration. Consequently, they are not added to the *Family Counting Number* (FCN) creating a burden on the family as they do not receive the assistance and support, they are entitled to as a registered person. New-born babies delivered at home continue to face difficulties in obtaining birth certificates in a timely manner. It takes at least 4-5 months, with approval from CiC, to receive a birth certificate, causing hardship for children and families in accessing any services that they are entitled for, including medical support.

There was a report regarding attendance to education services as some Rohingya girls in the camp face restrictions when attending school beyond the age of 12. The reason given by parents is the fear of potential problems such as eve teasing and encounters with dangerous individuals. No incidents have been reported in the camp thus far, but the concern persists. Despite this, many adolescent girls express a strong desire to receive an education and contribute to their families and society's well-being. They seek to raise awareness among parents, community leaders, and religious figures to create better opportunities for girls to access education.

Lack of opportunities for higher education continues to be one of the most cited concerns for young people. As a consequence, young people are exposed to wider various protection risks such as being attracted or manipulated to joining criminal groups/gangs, engaging in offensive activities, as well as at risk being lured into harmful practices (e.g. use of drugs, and engaging in gambling, child labor) or survivor of violence (e.g., child marriage or exploitation).

RECOMMENDATIONS

- Advocate for an increased law enforcement presence, including investigative bodies such as the District Police, both within the camps and along their perimeters, with the goal of preventing and reducing violence against refugees, countering threats posed by rival criminal groups, and mitigating the escalation of violence. Strengthen 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.
- 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.
- Advocate with the government of Bangladesh to ensure access to learning based on the Myanmar curriculum, especially for adolescent girls, and skills development and vocational training, especially for adolescent boys.
- Continue strengthening self-reliance and capacity building within the refugee community. Intensify a 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.
- Raise awareness on the prevention of gender-based violence amongst women 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.

END