

JOINT PROTECTION MONITORING REPORT

1,066

Focus Group Discussion (persons reached)

338

Home Visits

709

Key Informant Interviews (persons reached)

	Female	Male
53% Men		
47% Women		
8% People with disabilities		
Children (0-17)	1%	0%
Adult (18-59)	35%	38%
Elderly (60+)	11%	15%

The Joint Protection Monitoring framework is implemented by the Protection Sector since 2022 to promote the systematic and regular collection, triangulation, 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 organizations (UNHCR, IOM, IRC, DRC, OXFAM and HI) conduct protection monitoring as part of core programming, covering 33 camps and an estimate of 944,154* refugees. This report also reflects the contributions of Child Protection (CP) and GBV Sub-Sectors as well as of the Anti-Trafficking Working Group and the Housing, Land and Property Technical Advisor.

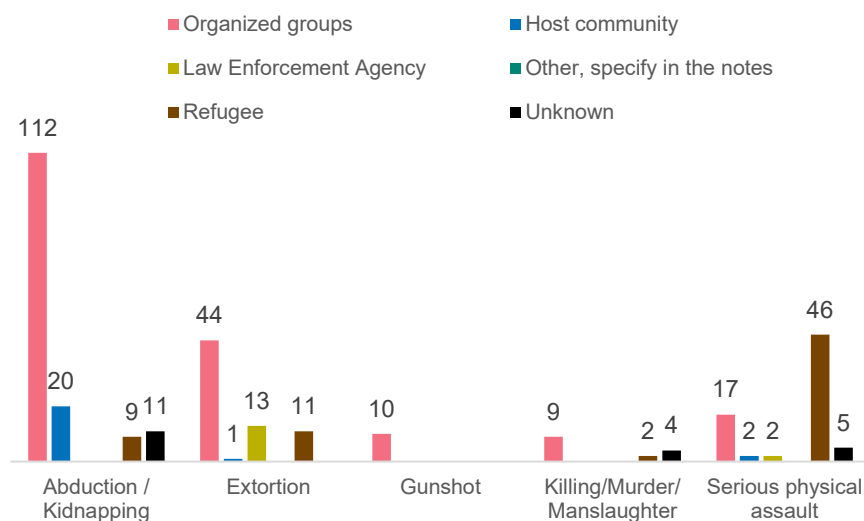
Executive Summary: The escalation of the conflict between the Myanmar Armed Forces (MAF) and the Arakan Army since early February has impacted the overall protection of refugees inside the camps in Ukhiya and Teknaf. An alarming trend of adults, youth, children -including adolescents- (all of whom male refugees) have been reported to be forced, intimidated, manipulated, or enticed to join organized groups. Some of these refugees have been taken for military training and then to the Rakhine State for fighting purposes. Abductions and kidnappings were reported during daytime inside the camps with an increased number of children reportedly being taken for ransom. In early March, 3 children were found dead, and one was severely injured as a result of gunfighting between two organized groups outside camp 20 Ext.

SAFETY AND SECURITY

A total of 318 serious protection incidents¹ directly affecting 604 Rohingya refugees have been recorded across the camps in Ukhiya and Teknaf during the first quarter of 2024. Major safety and security incidents include – abduction/kidnapping (152), extortion (69), gunshots/suspected use of firearms (10), killing/ murder/ manslaughter (15) and serious physical assault (72).

There was an overall decrease of 25% in the total number of reported protection incidents in comparison to quarter 4 (2023). However, the intensification of fighting between the Myanmar Armed Forces (MAF) and the Arakan Army in the Rakhine State of Myanmar has had an impact in the refugee camps where organized groups are recruiting adults, youth, children -including adolescents- to join the ongoing conflict in Myanmar².

Alleged perpetrator per category by incident



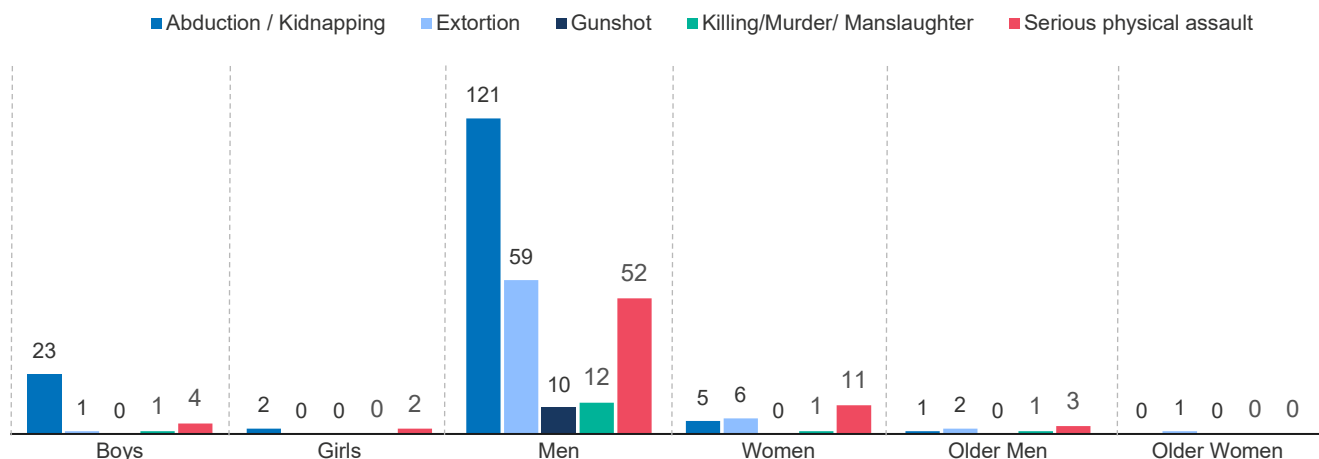
¹ For this report, the serious incidents collected are related to the following categories only: abduction, extortion, killing/murder/manslaughter, serious physical assault, and gunshot.

*UNHCR Data portal link available [here](#)

² During the reporting period, the Sector did not include number of incidents of recruitment as part of their monitoring exercise. This category will be included for Quarter 2.

Confrontations between rival groups were reported during the first quarter of 2024. Camp 4, 4 Ext. and 20 Ext. have seen a notable deterioration in security situation during the end of 2023 and February 2024, marked by 45 serious protection incidents, including 5 killings, amid the ongoing disputes between organized groups. Law Enforcement Agencies have attempted to address such dynamics through continuous security operations. In February and March 2024, authorities arrested several key ARSA members from camp 4Ext, 20 and 20 Ext.

Demographic of Serious Protection Incidents*



*There was one reported incident of a person with disabilities being extorted.

Although killings decreased by 38% in comparison to quarter 4 (2023), the presence of organized groups in several camps (4, 6, 8W, 11, 14, 17 and 18) increased mobilization efforts to enlist refugees through large meetings and/or the use of coercion and intimidation. Young people, children, adolescent girls, single women, widows, and people with disabilities were identified as being at particular risk. Recruitment incidents were reported allegedly in camps 9, 10, 18, and 19 specifically. The community informed organized groups were offering up to 80,000 BDT to families/individuals who agreed to join them and go to Myanmar to fight.

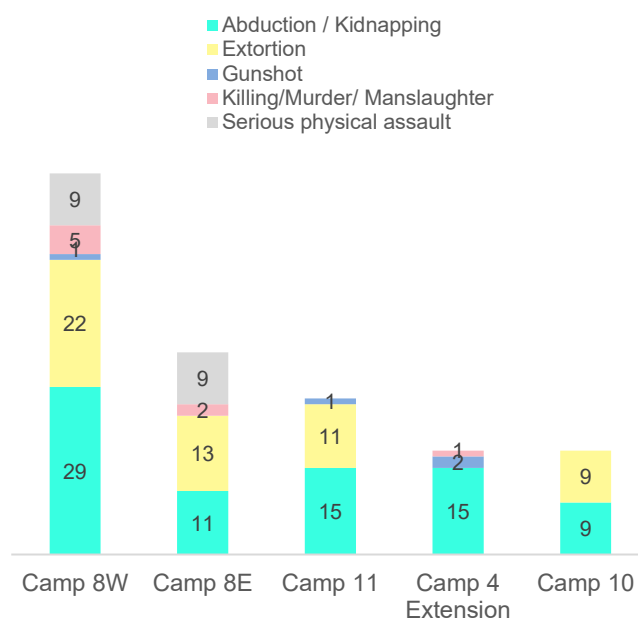
Abduction cases have seen a notable increase both within the camps and in the adjacent host community. Rohingya refugees, including children, are being abducted by members of armed groups. They are subjected to beatings and coerced into paying a ransom to secure their release. Those unable to fulfil these demands face further violence or are being killed. In Camp 26, an abduction case of a 4-year-old boy was reported; the child was physically abused and after being held for ransom for one-week APBN rescued and handed him over to his parents.

The security situation in some areas of Ukhiya (camp 3, 4, 4 Ext and 5) significantly deteriorated during the reporting period as a result of continuous disputes and attacks between rival organized groups contesting control over the territory. To avoid arrest, several leaders and key organized group members left the camps to hide in the surrounding hilly areas. The geographical location of the Teknaf camps continues to pose particular security challenges given their location at an entry point of the drug trafficking and smuggling route.

Extortion incidents registered a 17% decrease compared to quarter 4. Allegations of harassment, beating, and verbal abuse towards refugees also decreased by 15% in comparison to quarter 4. Lack of trust and fear of retaliation together with the requirement for substantial evidence held up victims from reporting abuse and harassment incidents to service providers or authorities.

Lack of adequate solar lights at the communal latrines in blocks across the camps, continued to pose safety and

Top 5 camps by incidents reported



security risks for women and girls in the camp as absence of proper lighting enables perpetrators to commit acts of sexual abuse and harassment. Diminishing livelihood opportunities, and lack of proper education system contributed to raising child protection incidents, such as child labor and exploitation, child marriage and missing children. There were increased reports of Yaba trading in camps by young boys and girls in addition to online gambling contributing to an escalation in domestic violence. Volunteers and Majhi's still remain at high risk of being threatened and assaulted as they are perceived to be actively cooperating with Law Enforcement Agencies and/or as key actors to ensure refugees' support to organized groups. Refugees continue to raise concerns for children and adolescents as they are at higher risk of being recruited by armed groups.

During the first quarter of the year, 79 cases of human trafficking of refugees within Bangladesh were recorded. The profile of victims, type of trafficking and modus operandi of traffickers remained largely the same in comparison to quarter 4 (2023). Most human trafficking victims were male (82%), trafficked under the promise of paid labor and ended up in forced labor. In addition, 13 children were identified as victims of trafficking. Refugees' homes/shelters were indicated as the main place for initial engagement with the traffickers and the majority remained in Cox's Bazar (54%) or were reportedly taken to Chittagong (29%).

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



CHILD PROTECTION

A wide range of protection issues severely impacted the rights and well-being of children in the camps during the first quarter of 2024³. Reports of child recruitment have surged between quarter 4 (2023) and quarter 1 (2024). The analysis of recent data reveals that armed groups are increasingly using children for multiple purposes, including child labor, drug trafficking, fighting and as informants. Recruitment means often involve community meetings and promises of financial incentives, such as one-time payments of 15,000 taka or daily wages of 800 taka. Other methods include gathering and recruiting practices that entice children and their families with benefits in exchange for their "services," protection, or perceived friendship. Armed groups may also coerce children through threats, forcing them to commit crimes or join these groups to later hold these actions against them. Some organized groups have been reported to manipulate refugees with false promises of preferential repatriation, citizenship, and other benefits.

A significant majority of adults (74%) have observed mental health, behavioral and psychological problems among children and 53% of KIIs reported them as severe issues. 11% of the total cases reported in the CPIMS+ pertain specifically to mental health and psychosocial support issues. Children expressed that their psychological distress stems from family conflicts, uncertainty about the future, harsh scolding, restricted movement, and feeling insecure.

KII respondents (72%) pointed out that children are engaged in labor that hinders their education and playing time: 8% of the total cases reported in CPIMS+ involve child labor. The types of labor vary with boys primarily found carrying loads, working in agriculture, or shops, and girls predominantly engaged in domestic chores, sewing, tailoring, or agriculture. Children highlighted economic struggles and inadequate educational opportunities as their primary motivators to enter the workforce, driven by family discouragement and a desire for monetary independence.

Approximately 40% of adults acknowledged that child marriage is happening in their communities, with causes linked to cultural beliefs, poverty, and romantic entanglements among the youth. Child marriage accounts for 5% of the total reported cases in the CPIMS+ emphasizing its substantial but often overlooked presence. The repercussions, including early pregnancy and educational disruption, indicate the profound impact on children's health and future. Children reported that they feel pressured into these unions due to cultural norms, insecurity, and economic needs.

A large number of adults (73%) have seen child neglect by caregivers, attributed to a lack of awareness, domestic violence, and unemployment. Child neglect represents 32% of the total cases reported in the CPIMS+, highlighting its importance among the community. Emotional and physical distress setbacks children in developing and integrating with

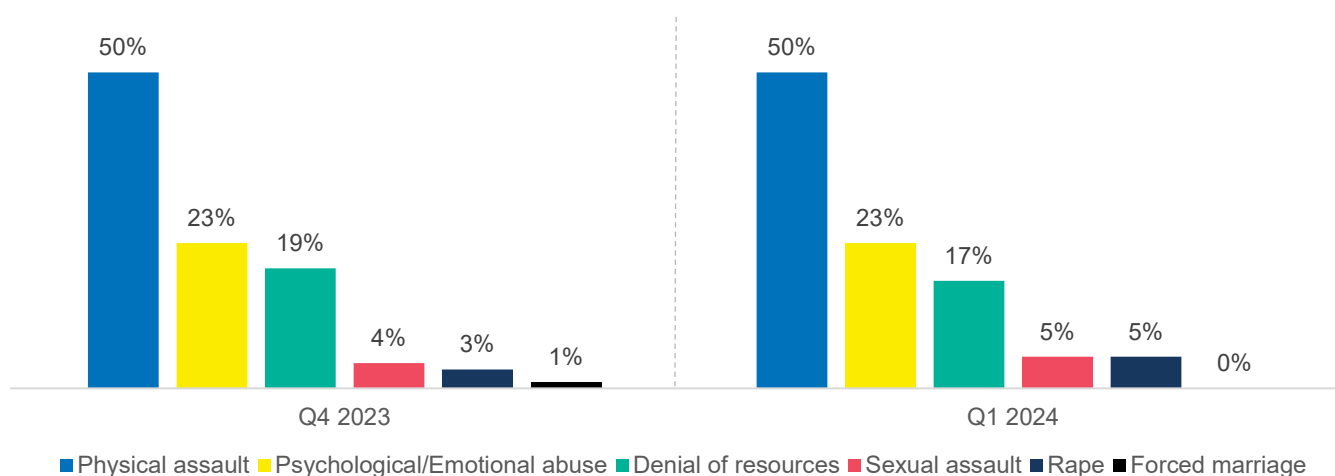
³ Data has been gathered from the Child Protection Situation Monitoring (CPSM) initiative launched in Q1 2024. It includes inputs from 1,321 key Informant Interviews (KII) comprising community leaders, teachers, Mahjis, child protection workers, and volunteers, alongside 920 adolescents (458 boys and 462 girls) who participated in 88 Focus Group Discussions (FGD). Additionally, the Child Protection Information Management System (CPIMS+) records child protection cases managed by CPSS partners in the camps.

their communities. Children also reported the linkage of child neglect to economic hardships and gaps in caregiver knowledge.

GENDER BASED VIOLENCE

For the first quarter of 2024, physical assault was reported as the most common type of gender-based violence accounting for 50% of the incidents reported under the GBVIMS, followed by psychological/emotional abuse (30%) and denial of resources (17%). According to the gender-based violence camp focal points, sexual violence remained highly under-reported accounting for 10% of the cases: rape accounted for 5% and sexual assault for 5%. Of all reported incidents in quarter 1, 75% are linked to Intimate Partner Violence (IPV) with a slight decrease compared to the 76% reported during quarter 4, 2023.

Top types of GBV reported (by %)



Degradation of security and safety in the camps have left women and girls in a more vulnerable situation, reducing their mobility outside their shelters, compromising their access to services and adopting harmful coping mechanisms, including child and forced marriage. During community consultations, women and girls demonstrated a common understanding and acknowledgment of various forms of GBV associated with the forced recruitment of men and boys by armed groups. Some sexual incidents reported by females are also linked to the current situation, considering that risks increase based on the absence of men and boys in the family.

Upon triangulation with the GBV camp focal points, who directly work with women and girls, 60% of GBV camp focal points (across 33 camps) perceive GBV is increasing in their respective camps, 35% think the situation remains similar, while 5% think it's decreasing in the past three months.

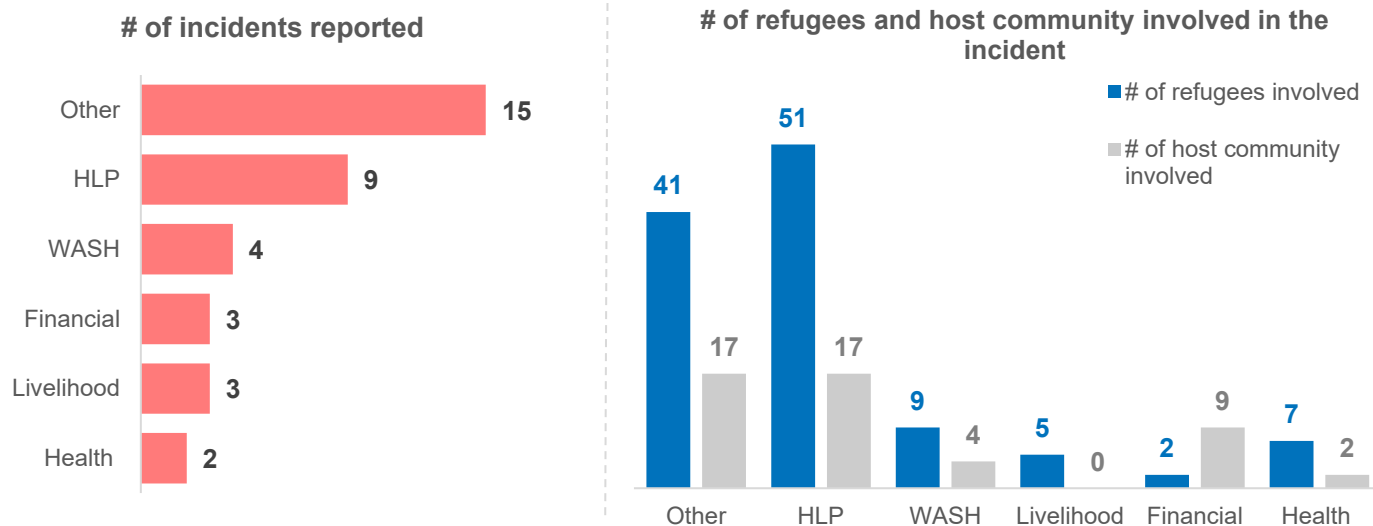
For all rape incidents reported within 72 hours, 88% were treated/referred within the 72 hours critical window. This means the large majority of survivors are able to access lifesaving clinical management of rape (CMR) services that can prevent HIV transmission, provide emergency contraception early on, and importantly that survivors are able to access full GBV CM services including MHPSS care early, ultimately improving their recovery outcomes. Among all reported GBV incidents for this quarter, 74% of survivors have reported prior GBV incidents.

*For a full comprehensive report with more in-depth GBV risk monitoring, please refer to the [GBVSS GBVIMS factsheet \(Q1, 2024\)](#) on Rohingya Refugee Response website.

SOCIAL COHESION AND PEACEFUL COEXISTENCE

A total of 39 incidents were reported during quarter 1 showing an increase of 50% of the total number of overall incidents reported in relation to quarter 4 (2023). Incidents involved 164 individuals, with 70% of these incidents relating to refugees and the rest to host communities. Incidents reported as "others", which include disputes over the sale of counterfeit gold, disagreements regarding the division of income from joint business ventures, conflicts arising from borrowed money retrieval, and quarrels related to loan repayments, were the main problem faced by refugees and host communities. Housing, Land and Property (HLP) related issues were reported by refugees and host communities with a

total of 9 incidents reported. There were 4 incidents related to WASH where communal water points and latrines caused the social conflict leading to disputes and negative attitudes towards Rohingya refugees. There were 3 incidents linked to financial conflict and lack of resources amongst the population and 3 related to accessing livelihood opportunities. During the reporting period, there was a significant number of young boys and adults allegedly engaging in online gambling which has caused conflicts within their families.



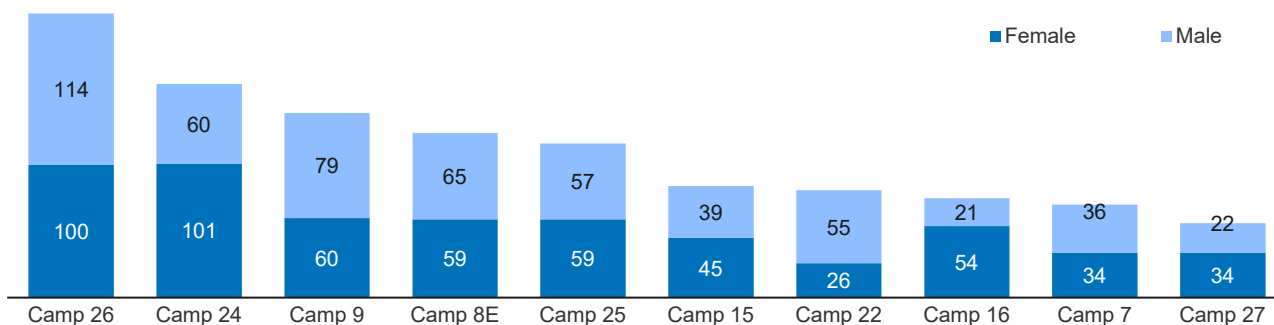
Housing, Land and Property (HLP) right remained a mayor challenge during the reporting period for the peaceful coexistence of refugees and host communities. Across the camps, there were 1,521 HLP cases registered of which 49% correspond to female refugees. Out of the cases reported, 369 (24%) cases were related to eviction or threats of evictions. The rest of the cases included rental dispute, conflict over shared resources, encroachments, and boundary disputes, frequently occurring between neighbours.

Lack of access to HLP rights continue to put refugees at risk; both physically and mentally. HLP cases reported during this period usually ended in physical assaults and/or in emotional distress for those that received eviction notices; particularly female-headed households. Additionally, the unaffordable house-rents expose refugees to practices of exploitation and abuse.

A common practice of host landowners collecting rice and oil from refugee shelters as rent payments was reported across various camps. Instances of aggression and verbal abuse towards Rohingya families have become distressingly common, particularly when they resist giving away portions of their monthly rations. Failure to provide these rations as rent has resulted in households losing their accommodation, threats of eviction or violent reprisals. Acts of vandalism and deliberate destruction of property further exacerbate the challenges faced by Rohingya refugees. Thieves and vandals target shelters, food storage areas, and communal facilities, causing significant damage and loss to the already limited resources available to the refugees and trust amongst the community members. The use of violence and intimidation tactics to perpetrate these crimes instills a pervasive sense of insecurity and fear within the refugee community, hindering their ability to rebuild and recover from such incidents. Thievery is a constant concern within the community, with burglaries occurring both during daytime and nighttime.

Observations also highlighted the emergence of a syndicate within the host community, pushing individuals to exclusively sell LPG and nutrition products to the syndicate. This syndicate monopolized the trade of humanitarian assistance within the camp, with reports suggesting that some Rohingya individuals may have been complicit in facilitating these activities. Rohingya refugees are reportedly involved in managing on-the-ground buying and selling operations while members of the host community oversee administrative matters. Incidents where host communities imposed arbitrary rental fees on refugees or illegal taxes to secure their right to stay on a given land is a continuous concern over the reporting period. Raising concern about land disputes among the refugees and host community was specifically noticed in camp 9 and 19. In camp 9 for instance, a landowner gave a notice to families residing on his land to vacate the land threatening that if they do not leave willingly, they will be forcibly evicted. In Camp 24, LPG cylinders were distributed with a delay, and some families ran out of gas before the next distribution. As a result, they opted to collect firewood from the nearby forest. That has led to frequent incidents and physical assaults by the host community.

Top 10 Refugee Camps with highest HLP cases



ACCESS TO JUSTICE

From January to March, 11,694 refugees were reached through legal awareness sessions across 33 camps on protection mechanisms, legal procedures, right to legal aid and free legal services. During the legal awareness sessions, refugees raised concerns regarding the worsening security situation in camps, as well as the increased incidents of abduction and human trafficking. Some participants also expressed their concerns regarding the recent violence in Northern Rakhine State and the situation on the Myanmar-Bangladesh border. Most of them highlighted the importance of ensuring safety and security of victims as sometimes they do not feel safe in seeking justice or assistance from legal service providers due to fear of retaliation by the organized groups and perpetrators.

Free legal assistance continued to be delivered through camp-based trained lawyers supported by refugee paralegal volunteers, and include legal counselling, legal representation, and mediation support. From January to March, 9,923 refugees (70% male and 30% female) benefited from legal assistance services. Among them, 95 refugees were assisted with filing legal complaints in police stations and courts and 244 refugees were represented in legal proceedings in courts. Legal assistance was provided mostly in cases where refugees were victims of serious physical assault, human trafficking, abduction, killing, and sexual violence. During the reporting period, 960 cases were referred to legal partners for mediation, 74% of which were successfully resolved, predominantly addressing family and financial disputes among refugees.

Informal or traditional justice mechanisms prevailed over the formal justice system in the camps during the first months of 2024, with varying degrees of effectiveness. Lack of confidentiality when processing cases if reported to Majhi's and/or community leaders (such as Imams or teachers) was raised during the reporting period; most refugees stated 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 survivors report GBV issues to community leaders, they face challenges to access justice as they are often asked to identify the perpetrators or provide evidence. Some Majhi's exploit the situation by demanding money from the victims to resolve the incident.

ACCESS TO SERVICES

During quarter 1, there was a sharp increase of 242% in barriers to access to services for refugees with a total of 1,101 refugees reported to have faced challenges when accessing essential services. Raising concerns around safety limited refugees' overall access to services.

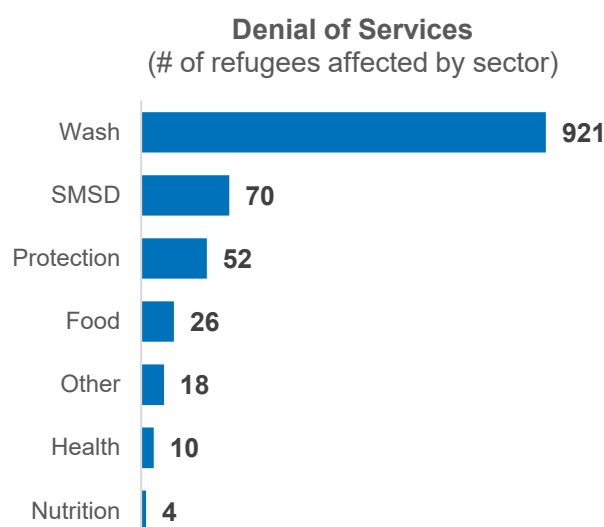
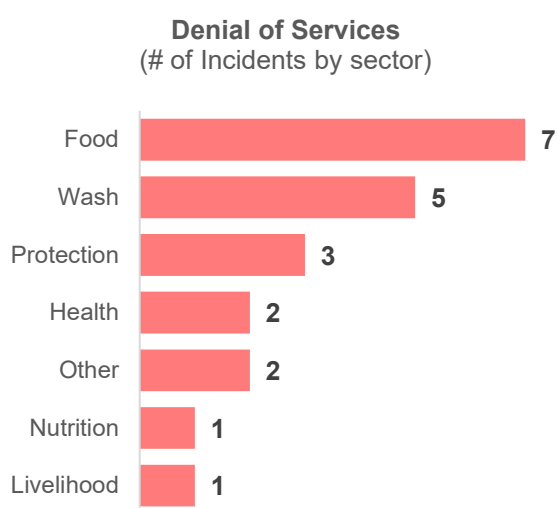
Arbitrary costs and bribes were reported to be requested to access essential services such as shelter and legal assistance which further exacerbates inequalities and excludes refugees who are unable to pay. Landowners in some camps in Teknaf requested payment to resolve legal disputes, indicating that money serves as a tool to achieve justice. Those with financial means are favored in legal judgments, often influenced by the Block Majhi. In a similar instance, some refugees that had the means settled a legal dispute with the Majhi with gold instead of currency. Additionally, a fee of 500 taka per person was requested to be paid to the Block Majhi in one of the camps in return for the submission of names of community members for daily labor assignments.

Limited access to transportation was reported during quarter 1. This exacerbates challenges to access services for refugees, particularly for persons with disabilities, elderly individuals, and those in need of urgent medical care. There was a reported incident of a refugee that expressed concern about his mother with a disability who was unable to

transport her to the hospital promptly during an emergency. Refugees highlighted that Government service facilities such as police stations are situated considerably far away which makes it harder for them to access. Compounded by the interference of brokers in various locales, refugees highlighted the need for clarification in navigating toward the correct service providers.

Access to civil documentation such as permission for marriage and certification of marriage that had happened without CiC's permission remained a challenge during the reporting period. Community leaders, imams, teachers, caregivers, and women leaders raised a variety of concerns linked to access to services, but most were related to the issuance of new registration cards, registration related to separation when a member of a family gets married, newborns, change of location due to relocation from one to another block within the camp or relocation to and from another camp. Lack of smooth transition of documentation and change of data consequently led to delaying access to services. Vulnerable families and individuals including persons with disabilities specifically faced difficulties to realize their rights and access services available in camps.

Denial of access to services relating to wash facilities in Camp 24 was raised during the reporting period as refugees had to share the water supply facilities with the host community or the host community/landowners requested from the refugees to pay for the water supply.



RECOMMENDATIONS

- Continue to monitor and advocate to ensure Law Enforcement Agencies - including investigative bodies such as district police- effectively prevent and reduce safety and security risks, maintain standard of treatment against refugees, counter threats posed by rival organized groups, and contain the escalation of violence.
- Sustain advocacy with the Government of Bangladesh to ensure that physical safety as well as appropriate and effective care and protection for children and adults, including access to justice, are effective. Provide technical capacity building and additional support as required. Perpetrators of recruitment activities shall be brought to justice in a proportionate and protection-oriented manner to end impunity and maintain law and order in the camps.
- Enhance the quality of protection risk analysis (the prevalence, nature, and scope of risks, but also drivers, reasons, and actors) to understand root causes, identify solutions and adopt prevention and response mechanisms to reduce 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.



- Agree on workable approaches, consultatively with refugees, on developing prevention and response strategies to create a safe and secure environment for refugees in the camps.
- Advocate with camp and Law Enforcement Authorities to promote and support access of refugees to formal justice mechanisms, as well as ensure timely investigation and prosecution of crimes to fight against impunity and deter criminal activities in the camps.
- Continue training programs with law enforcement authorities to mitigate impact on refugees' security during law enforcement operations 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.
- 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, community mediation skills/capacity and adherence to human rights as well as identify and work with "community champions" on developing the risk mitigation mechanism within the preview of community-based protection.
- Provide sufficient educational support for adolescent boys and youth to reduce the risk of drug addiction and involvement in other illegal activities. This can include expanding access to quality schooling, vocational or skill development training, recreational activities including Sports for Protection, meaningful community engagement opportunities, 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, youth and adolescent girls and boys to promote gender equality. Provide safe spaces, meaningful engagement opportunities, women and girls targeted sports for protection activities, support groups, and counselling services. Encourage women participation in training, meetings, and accessing service facilities and support for women empowerment and leadership developments.
- Intensify the use of effective awareness-raising strategies on identified risks, negative coping trends, deeply rooted harmful social norms and on onward movements to prevent loss of lives and to mitigate the possibility of trafficking in person and smuggling.

END