



**READY TO LEARN,  
EAGER TO EARN:**  
**A youth-led market and  
wellbeing assessment  
in Rohingya camps**

**Cox's Bazar, Bangladesh  
April 2023**

**NRC**

NORWEGIAN  
REFUGEE COUNCIL

# READY TO LEARN, EAGER TO EARN: A youth-led market and wellbeing assessment in Rohingya camps

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**Photographs:** Sadia Rahman/NRC

**Norwegian Refugee Council**

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**Cover photo:** Sadia Rahman/NRC

*Youth Enumerators practice data collection together in Camp 2 East, March 2023*

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## Acronyms

AAP	Accountability to Affected People
BDT	Bangladeshi Taka
CFS	Child-friendly Space
CiC	Camp-in-Charge
FDMN	Forcibly Displaced Myanmar Nationals
FGD	Focus Group Discussion
GBV	Gender-based Violence
IOM	International Organization for Migration
JRP	Joint Response Plan
KII	Key Informant Interview
LPG	Liquefied Petroleum Gas
NGO	Non-governmental Organisation
NRC	Norwegian Refugee Council
PSEA	Prevention of Sexual Exploitation and Abuse
PSS	Psychosocial Support
RRRC	Refugee Relief and Repatriation Commission
UNESCO	United Nations Education, Scientific and Cultural Organization
YWG	Youth Working Group

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Photo: Sadia Rahman/NRC

A Youth Enumerator during data collection training, March 2023



# 1 Overview

In early 2023, the Norwegian Refugee Council (NRC) worked with young Rohingya women and men to assess market, labour, and wellbeing needs of youth within five refugee camps in Cox's Bazar district of Bangladesh. This assessment will inform NRC to develop relevant skills-based educational opportunities for targeted Rohingya youth and to provide holistic support for youth on their pathways towards self-reliance. This assessment focuses on youth aged between 18 and 24 in line with the definition of youth adopted by humanitarian agencies in country.<sup>i</sup> Beyond programme delivery for displaced Rohingya in Bangladesh, this assessment will contribute to future use of the NRC Youth Wellbeing Framework globally.

## 1.1 Background

The Rohingya, a Muslim minority mostly present in Myanmar, have faced generations of persecution along ethnic and religious lines. Lacking recognition as citizens of Myanmar and vulnerable to waves of targeted violence, Rohingya have been fleeing to Bangladesh as refugees since the 1970s. Since August 2017, when tensions in Rakhine State escalated between the Myanmar military, local militias, and Rohingya communities, the displaced Rohingya population in Bangladesh has swollen to roughly 1 million people. In the following five years, most Rohingya have lived in refugee camps located within Ukhia and Teknaf upazilas<sup>ii</sup> in Cox's Bazar district, close to the Myanmar border.

Officially referred to in Bangladesh as Forcibly Displaced Myanmar Nationals (FDMN), Rohingya in camps live with restrictions on access to formal education and prohibitions against work and income generation. With little hope of potential integration within the host country or return to Myanmar under safe and dignified conditions, Rohingya refugee communities in Bangladesh are entirely dependent on the provision of aid from local and international humanitarian organisations and United Nations agencies.<sup>iii</sup>

Donor influence and support for the Rohingya refugee response is dwindling, access constraints and complex bureaucratic requirements hamper the swift provision of aid, and coordination structures struggle to drive humanitarian response toward long-term planning and service provision. As of April, only 12 percent of funding needs detailed within the Rohingya crisis Joint Response Plan (JRP) 2023 are met. Meanwhile, protracted deprivation coupled with fresh crises in the forms of fires, flooding, and years of Covid-19 restrictions have amplified the severity of needs for Rohingya.<sup>iv</sup>

Vulnerable to risks including child marriage, early pregnancy, human trafficking, involvement in armed groups or criminal activity, labour exploitation, and substance abuse, youth in particular remain underserved by a network of actors that focuses primarily on adults or

children, including for education interventions that tend to be targeted towards the provision of basic education. Adolescent girls and young women face heightened vulnerability in addition to tighter movement restrictions and more severe cultural and social constraints. Youth groups, when they have been formed, are often forcibly disbanded and in general participation by the refugee community in the direction and delivery of humanitarian programming remains limited and tokenistic.<sup>v</sup> Only 11 percent of youth indicate that they feel safe living in the camps and 32 percent of youth report always feeling sad. 48 percent of youth report sleeping problems attributed to the poor conditions in which they live. Youth in general have indicated a sense of being held in captivity in camps, with 4 percent mentioning suicidal ideation.<sup>vi</sup>

Without access to quality, relevant education or dignified work, Rohingya refugee youth face bleak and limited futures. Within the camp setting, they are unable to meet their immediate basic needs and are at high risk of violations of their rights, wellbeing, and security.

## 1.2 Assessment Objectives

**The primary objective of this youth-led assessment was identification of skills development needs for Rohingya youth residing in refugee camps of Cox's Bazaar.**

Relevant skill sets are anticipated to increase employability or income generating opportunities for youth in alignment with market needs within the camp settings and thus contribute towards improved youth wellbeing. Findings illuminate possible trade-based vocational training options for consideration within NRC Education and Livelihoods programming to increase opportunities for youth to find decent and sustainable work, either through employment with existing businesses or through entrepreneurship activities. Additionally, findings reveal in-demand supplementary skills that are likely to boost the capacity of youth within the workplace and increase the appeal of youth candidates for employment.

To reach the primary objective, the assessment sought to understand four key areas of information regarding the labour market within camp settings.

- 1. Demand** – from existing employers or business owners in regard to the skill sets they seek from potential employees, and in terms of labour gaps for goods or services within the market relevant to potential avenues of self-employment or entrepreneurship for youth.
- 2. Supply** – the assessment examines the priorities of youth in regard to the employment and/or income-generating pathways they are seeking, what existing skill sets youth may already offer, and what barriers youth face when seeking employment or initiating income-generating activities.
- 3. Labour market support functions and infrastructures** – including what opportunities already exist for skill-building and professional development, and an understanding of how commerce is conducted within the camp settings.
- 4. Rules, norms and regulations of the labour market** – including informal market dynamics. This aspect is relevant to overall understanding of market function in addition to barriers faced by both candidates and potential employers.

In addition to the primary objective, further objectives of the assessment included:

- Ensuring the voices and perspectives of refugee youth are firmly integrated into NRC programme development related to skills-development training and other relevant youth programming which contributes to improved wellbeing.
- The identification of barriers (policy, structural, and religious/socio-cultural) and opportunities related to social engagement (such as networking, volunteering, and increased roles in family or communal decision-making).
- The identification of relevant youth participation initiatives within camps.
- Empowering youth participants to take the first steps in building networks and establishing connections with business leaders and other key community members within local settings; and
- Building the capacity of participating youth themselves.

**These secondary objectives were achieved by ensuring that participation of youth remained the focus throughout the assessment exercise.** Design and planning of the assessment was structured to ensure that youth made key decisions related to the assessment itself and led data collection. From the first point of engagement with youth, the NRC team ensured that participating youth understood the importance of their leadership and contributions within the assessment exercise, why the exercise is being conducted, and how the assessment findings will be utilised.



Photo: Sadia Rahman/NRC

Youth Enumerators during a consultation workshop in Camp 2 East, February 2023



# 2 Executive Summary

This assessment focuses on market and labour dynamics to inform relevant, appropriate, and accessible skills development training opportunities for youth in Rohingya camps in addition to seeking an understanding of overall needs to allow for the development of holistic programming that improves youth wellbeing.

## METHODOLOGIES

**This assessment was youth-led.** Rohingya youth from within **five targeted camps** (Camp 2 East, Camp 3, Camp 4, Camp 10, and Camp 13) influenced the design, planning, and delivery of the assessment and were responsible for data collection and entry. In addition to the objective of **understanding market and demographic dynamics to select the most suitable skills development training options in future programming**, the assessment activity was intended to ensure that voices and perspectives of refugee Rohingya youth are firmly integrated into programmatic development, to build capacity of participating youth, and to support participating youth to take a leadership role within their communities.

A **mixed-method approach** was followed in this assessment. **Secondary data** was reviewed in initial stages to inform the assessment approach and ensure participants understood already available information. **Qualitative data** was collected through consultations with Youth Enumerators in addition to focus group discussions (FGDs) with broader groups of youth within targeted camps. **Quantitative data** was also sought through interviews with external stakeholders including business owners or managers, other professionals (such as healthcare workers, teachers, and administrators) and community leaders, as well as through market observations in each camp. Where possible, data was **disaggregated** by sex.

## KEY FINDINGS

What is the overall current context for Rohingya youth in camps?

**Basic needs (especially shelter, food, and water) are not met for youth and their families.** Beyond physical health, youth have a narrow understanding of the concept of wellbeing and are **unable to identify or utilise healthy coping mechanisms**. Youth have little opportunity for development, with **access to formal education or employment prohibited**, few training programmes, and education services provided by humanitarian actors primarily targeting younger children at primary level. Overall, more than 90 percent of youth engaged in focus group discussions (FGDs) are not engaged in any regular income generation. Youth also seek **freedom of movement outside camps**, which is currently not allowed. Nonetheless, **Rohingya youth are ready and eager to engage in learning and work.**

What are the most valuable technical skill sets for Rohingya youth?

Based on youth voices and market dynamics, the most valuable skills sets are:

- **Teaching**
- **Tailoring**
- **Mechanics**
- **Business management and shopkeeping**
- **Mobile repair and electronics**
- **Carpentry**
- **Furniture production**
- **Fabric painting**
- **Computing, including photocopy and printing services**
- **Hospitality**

Youth would also benefit strongly from **second language learning**, particularly English, Arabic/Urdu, and Bangla. **Supplementary skills are also critical**, including problem-solving, teamwork, and leadership, alongside literacy and numeracy (including financial literacy).

What holistic support should be offered to youth alongside skills training?

Needs related to **mental health services and psychosocial support (PSS)** for Rohingya in general, including youth, are unmet, and **youth lack safe spaces to learn, work, and socialise**. Young women are especially concerned about safety and security, alongside the social and cultural challenges they face outside the home. While youth are eager to engage in training, with **95 percent of FGD participants indicating availability to attend a six-month course**, engagement in trainings and transitions to work would be strengthened by the provision of **stipends** from the start of skills development trainings. Following training, youth should be supported with **job placements, internships, apprenticeship schemes, or scaffolding for meaningful entrepreneurship**.

What barriers to training, employment, or income-generating opportunities do youth face?

Alongside the prohibitions on formal education or employment for Rohingya refugees, differentiated youth demographics face additional barriers:

- **Women and girls are highly restricted by social and communal norms** that limit learning or working outside the home, especially alongside men or boys. The range of employment options considered appropriate for women is very narrow. Women and girls are concerned about their **safety and security** more than men and boys.
- **Youth with disabilities are highly marginalised**. They are less likely to be employed than able youth. Accommodations are not made to ensure accessible learning spaces or workplaces. Youth with disabilities face **discriminatory attitudes**.
- **Men and boys face limited opportunities for employment**. Education opportunities are insufficient despite comparatively reduced barriers. As they are more likely to enter the workplace, men and boys are vulnerable to exploitative working conditions.

Employment opportunities in camps are very limited and revolve around **informal markets** and work associated with the **provision of aid**. The **median cost of starting a business in the camps is 60,000 BDT**, and employers in camps **cannot afford to recruit new staff** even when needed for business operation.

## SELECT RECOMMENDATIONS

For organisations working with Rohingya youth in refugee camps:

- Advocate for official approval for youth to learn, work, and access targeted opportunities outside camps with camp authorities and government agencies.
- Ensure provision of support for youth to meet basic needs.
- Increase availability of general education services for youth (including secondary level education) and support youth to obtain certification of schooling and training (even if certification is not formalised).
- Offer skills development opportunities relevant to youth interests and preferences, market needs and dynamics, and labour gaps.
- Ensure quality of trainings and learning opportunities, not just accessibility.
- Give stipends to youth during attendance to skills development trainings.
- Offer a supplementary curriculum alongside any technical skills development training.
- Integrate education about wellbeing, mental health, and psychosocial support (PSS) into supplementary skills components of vocational training programmes.
- Consider entrepreneurship support following skills development training.
- Work and coordinate with employers present in camps to increase opportunities for youth to be hired as entry-level workers in safe, accessible, and fair workplaces.
- Conduct further study to understand how youth with disabilities can be reached and supported with skills development opportunities and conduct awareness raising within camps on capacities, needs, and interests of persons with disabilities.
- Conduct activities to improve community acceptance of education and employment for women and girls.
- Conduct youth-led programming wherever possible.
- Avoid raising expectations of youth without follow-through.

For donors:

- Advocate for Rohingya youth to have access to education, income generation, and movement outside the camps to relevant government authorities.
- Continue and expand programming that supports Rohingya youth, including:
  - The provision of accelerated education, secondary education, technical or skills development education and training, and access to tertiary level education opportunities.
  - Integrated livelihoods and education programming that supports youth to transition from learning pathways to employment or meaningful entrepreneurship.
  - The provision of support to reach basic needs that explicitly targets youth as a differentiated demographic.
  - Holistic programming that aims to improve overall youth wellbeing.
  - Youth-led assessments, activities, or programming.
- Ensure funding for youth programming is flexible to allow for the needs of young women, young men, and youth with disabilities to be met.
- Continue and expand cash and voucher support for Rohingya youth.
- Invest in longer-term funding cycles to allow for more effective programme delivery for youth.

# 3 Methods

This assessment utilised the NRC Youth Wellbeing Framework developed to inform youth-related activities throughout the humanitarian programme cycle. It consists of three foundational domains that support youth wellbeing – safety, basic needs, and education, and eight wellbeing dimensions – social, emotional, self-confidence, economic, community contribution, critical thinking, physical health, and personal values.

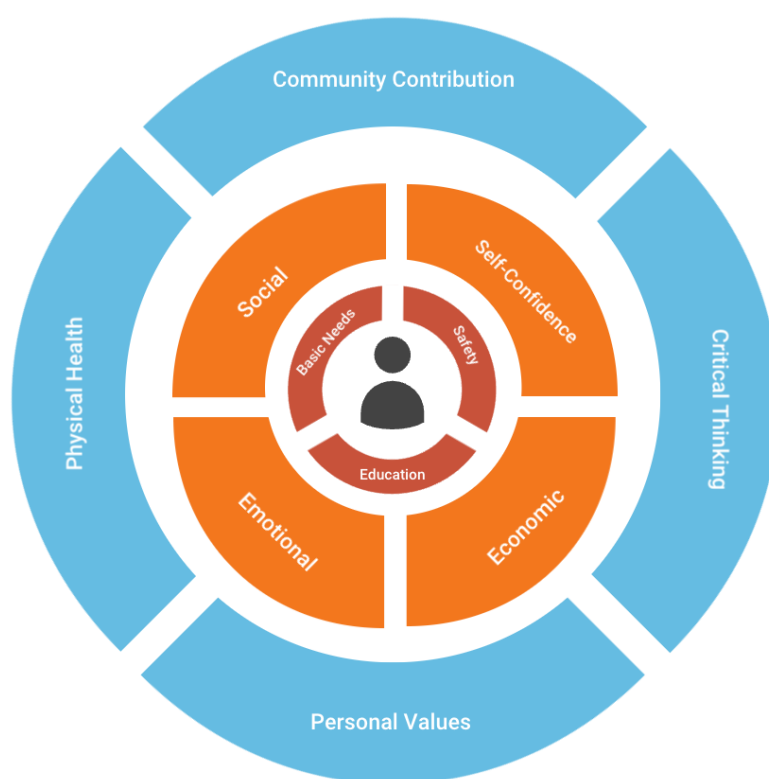


Figure 1. Youth Wellbeing Framework

As this assessment also had a market and labour orientation, data collection tools were developed integrating aspects of the Youth Wellbeing Framework toolkit and market-orientated quantitative tools developed for use outside of Bangladesh and contextualised to the Rohingya camp context.

Prior to data collection, youth were engaged in consultation sessions focusing on overall youth wellbeing within the camp settings, discussion on cross-cutting themes relevant to the assessment exercise, and contextualisation of data collection tools in addition to practical data collection training.

## 3.1 Contextual Analysis and Identification of Cross-Cutting Themes

The assessment commenced internally with a desk review of available secondary data. NRC analysed the current context of Rohingya camps in Cox's Bazar district with regard to accessibility, facilities, services, and humanitarian coordination to gain an initial understanding of the youth demographic, the provision of support, and existing opportunities for skills development and for youth-focused or youth-led programmes. NRC also analysed the current safety and security context, legal and documentation issues, specific risks within the context by gender, and mental health concerns and support. With regard to basic needs, NRC analysed the economic situation as pertains to youth, educational opportunities and access, and barriers associated with education or livelihoods. NRC also considered the extent to which particular groups within the youth demographic may be further marginalised.

NRC in coordination with participating youth identified five cross-cutting themes relevant to the youth-led assessment as follows:

- Livelihoods and food security
- Youth wellbeing
- Gender
- Inclusion and participation
- Accountability to affected people

These themes supported the development and focus of the assessment throughout the design, data collection, and analysis.

*See Annex 1 for elaboration of cross-cutting themes.*

## 3.2 Participants and Parameters

The assessment commenced in late January 2023 and followed three phases:

- 1. Preparation:** five weeks from 22 January to 23 February, including development of methodology, work plan, and budget; context analysis; development of data collection tools in consultation with participating youth; identification of crosscutting themes; development of consultation workshop and data collection training packages; and delivery of consultation workshops with youth.
- 2. Data collection:** four weeks from 26 February to 23 March, including data collection training; delivery of key informant interviews (KIIs), focus group discussions (FGDs), and market observations; and data entry and cleaning.
- 3. Analysis and reporting:** four weeks from 26 March to 20 April, including data analysis and preparation of reporting.

The assessment was initially targeted toward six Rohingya camps.

- Camp 2 East
- Camp 3
- Camp 4
- Camp 8 East
- Camp 10
- Camp 13

Due to escalating tensions and concerns about the security of assessment participants and NRC staff, data collection was not possible in Camp 8 East. Youth participants from this camp were nonetheless involved in consultation workshops and data collection training prior to the planned commencement of data collection.

In total, 24 youth were initially identified as Youth Enumerators across the six camps. NRC intended a gender-balanced approach (two women and two men) per camp. NRC sought participants from within an existing pool of youth who had previous involvement in NRC activities with demonstrated commitment to humanitarian work and NRC's mission to provide support to the displaced community. NRC sought participants with at least basic literacy and numeracy skills with the capacity to learn simplified data collection and entry (both on paper and through the Kobo Toolbox). Throughout the data collection phase, Youth Enumerators were supported by NRC staff who remained accessible to answer questions or address concerns raised by Youth Enumerators during interviews, FGDs, or market observations. Youth Enumerators also participated in daily debriefings with NRC team members during data collection.

24 participants (12 women and 12 men) participated in consultation workshops ensuring a gender balance up to this stage of the assessment. From the stage of data collection training, the assessment was completed by a team of 23 Youth Enumerators (ten women and 13 men) due to incompatible schedules and competing commitments for initially selected youth.

**“If someone says something, we can say it to someone else, but we can't say the name of the person.”**

Youth Enumerators quickly grasped key principles of data collection. Above, one Youth Enumerator describes the principle of anonymity during a training session.

Additional to the Youth Enumerators, youth from within targeted communities participated in FGDs during data collection. FGDs included between five and 12 youth and were usually sex-segregated. In total ten FGDs were held across the five camps (five male FGDs, three female FGDs, and two mixed gender FGDs).

External stakeholders participated in the data collection as key informants. These included business owners and managers within camp markets, other professionals (such as teachers, health workers, and members of camp administration) and community leaders. External stakeholders were identified by Youth Enumerators themselves following a mapping of relevant roles for each category during consultations and training. This helped to strengthen the relevance of KII respondents to the youth demographic. While Youth Enumerators were encouraged to seek women informants, due to the comparatively lower proportion of women engaged in income-generating activities or positions of leadership within the community, only 18 percent of overall KII respondents were female. Further demographic details related to the three categories of key informants are presented in the table below.

## Details of key informants

<b>Business owners or managers</b>	<p>Tailoring, hospitality, salon services, mechanical repair, sale of goods (grocery items, betel nut).</p> <p>Between one to 20 years of experience, however, only 20% had been working in their business area prior to displacement.</p> <p>27% women within this category, primarily in Camp 2 East.</p> <p>Three informants reported disabilities (vision challenges).</p>
<b>Other professionals</b>	<p>Health workers, Islamic teachers, language teachers (Burmese), learning centre teachers, security guards.</p> <p>Between one to 18 years of experience, however, only one person (Islamic teacher) worked in this profession prior to displacement.</p> <p>8% women in this category.</p> <p>One informant reported disability (challenges with walking).</p>
<b>Community leaders</b>	<p>Religious leaders, majhis,<sup>vii</sup> activists, and community volunteers.</p> <p>Between one to five years of experience in these roles.</p> <p>14% women in this category.</p> <p>No informants reported disabilities.</p>

Table 1. Details of key informants

### 3.3 Qualitative Data Collection

Qualitative data was sought from assessment participants at different stages of the exercise. Within the preparation phase, Youth Enumerators shared qualitative inputs relating to youth wellbeing during consultation workshops. Youth Enumerators also elaborated priorities of Rohingya youth within camp settings at this stage in addition to suggesting prospective solutions to youth challenges and needs. Inputs from youth also helped to expand NRC's understanding of the labour market landscape within camps particularly through discussion on relevant external stakeholders.

Qualitative data was also sought during formalised data collection primarily through FGDs. During these discussions, Rohingya youth respondents, led by their peers, shared their experiences, needs, and concerns in relation to camp conditions; their economic situations; their access to education, training, and work opportunities; their responsibilities inside and outside the home; their personal and professional aspirations; their places within their communities; and the extent to which they feel they are in control of their lives.

While other data collection tools were primarily quantitative, provision was made for limited scope for qualitative inputs on key points during both interviews and market observations.

### 3.4 Quantitative Data Collection

Quantitative data was collected through key informant interviews (KIIs) and market observation surveys. Youth Enumerators led the collection of both sets of data, either in pairs or small groups within their camps.

A total of 33 KIIs were conducted across the five camps. KII questions were dependent on the category of respondent (business owner or manager, other professional, or community leader) and revealed information about the nature of commerce within the camp settings, the demographics of workers and employees, technical and supplementary skills required for different trades, market and labour gaps, and barriers to accessing work disaggregated by sex and disability status.

Additionally, 12 market observations were conducted within five camps. During market observations, Youth Enumerators noted the types of businesses operating within their camp setting, items and services available (or in demand but not available), the likely origin of goods available within the camp (local, domestic, or international), the numbers and demographics of customers and clients availing themselves of goods and services, and features of supporting market infrastructure. Youth Enumerators were encouraged to complete market observation surveys by watching market dynamics and engaging in discussion with vendors and customers.

### 3.5 Data Analysis

Following data collection, NRC conducted thematic, frequency, and bivariate analysis of data focusing on identifying the most in-demand skill sets (technical and supplementary skills) within the camps; supporting parameters for the provision of training and access to work or entrepreneurship activities to be considered during programming targeting youth livelihoods; barriers to education, training and work faced by Rohingya youth in the camps; and the overall context currently experienced by youth within camps.

### 3.6 Study Limitations

This assessment was a youth-led exercise. In addition to seeking market-focused data, youth participation in and influence on the assessment were goals themselves. NRC anticipated that Youth Enumerators would not reach the same quality of data collection and entry skills as professional enumerators who would be hired for similar assessments. While NRC attempted to mitigate this concern through training and support to Youth Enumerators, data collected was still of a lower quality than would be acceptable for a standard assessment. Nonetheless, results have emerged from the collected data in which NRC has confidence.



Due to the non-traditional nature of this assessment, NRC kept the assessment scope limited in terms of both the number of camps targeted and the scale of data collection within each camp. Rather than aiming for a statistically representative sample, NRC sought to conduct data collection on a scale manageable for the Youth Enumerators within the available timeframe. The scope of the assessment was further reduced by the removal of one camp (8 East) due to security concerns.

Several languages were engaged during the assessment exercise. The assessment preparation, consultations, trainings, data collection, and debriefings were conducted between Bangla, Burmese, Chittagonian, English, and Rohingya depending on who was engaged and whether oral or written communication was feasible at that point of the exercise. Data was collected orally between Youth Enumerators and FGD or KII respondents in Rohingya and then written or entered digitally in English, Bangla, or Burmese as was most accessible for the relevant Youth Enumerator(s). In instances where data was initially transcribed in Bangla or Burmese, a later translation was made to English. While every effort was made to ensure clarity and consistency between translations, working across so many different languages may still have impacted meaning.

A gender balance has not been achieved in the assessment. This is largely contextual due to social and cultural constraints applied to women and girls and the lower availability of female respondents for KIIs. Data collection tools were designed to reveal sex-segregated needs, opportunities, and barriers for youth, however, except for within sex-segregated FGDs a majority of male respondents have answered questions related to women and girls based on their perceptions of female experiences. Additionally, it was challenging for many Youth Enumerators to input collected data at a disaggregated level. Youth Enumerators also reported greater challenges in finding female participants for FGDs and in ensuring young women felt sufficiently comfortable to share during discussions. Further, while a gender balance was sought between Youth Enumerators, male enumerators typically had greater prior access to education than female enumerators and were thus more comfortable with the exercise and its requirements and more comfortable working between different languages.



Photo: Sadia Rahman/NRC

Digitalisation test of data collection tools, March 2023

# 4 Study Findings

Within this section, quantitative and qualitative finding from the assessment are summarised and presented to answer four key questions: What is the overall current context for Rohingya youth in camps? What are the most valuable technical skill sets for Rohingya youth? What holistic support should be offered to youth alongside skills training? What barriers to training, employment, or income-generating opportunities do youth face?

The presented findings reflect inputs from consultations with Youth Enumerators triangulated with data collected through key informant interviews (KIIs), focus group discussions (FGDs), and market observations.

## 4.1 What is the overall current context for Rohingya youth in camps?

### YOUTH PERSPECTIVES AND EXPERIENCES

During consultation sessions and FGDs, youth emphasised access to employment (being permitted to work) to generate income as their highest need. This answer was consistently highlighted by different groups across targeted camps and was not differentiated by gender. Following access to employment, education opportunities (secondary schooling, higher education, and vocational training) were emphasised. Youth also seek freedom of movement outside camps and safety and security within the camps (particularly female respondents) and aspire to repatriation.

In regard to basic needs, youth indicated that shelters are insufficient or of inadequate quality, and do not accommodate larger families. Access to water was also highlighted within FGDs. Female respondents indicated that tubewells are challenging to access. Respondents also raised concerns about values of rations, limited LPG provisions and access to healthcare.

Rohingya youth living in camps have a narrow understanding of the concept of wellbeing largely centred on physical health. Following consultation sessions, Youth Enumerators were better able to identify a more holistic range of wellbeing needs as well as activities in their daily lives important to maintaining their own wellbeing. Youth emphasised spending time with their friends and family as critical to their wellbeing. Youth were not able to identify and describe their coping mechanisms during stressful events, but were able to identify stressful experiences such as natural hazards or “man-made calamities”.

**“He is not my real brother, but I love him more than my brother because he always helps people. When someone needs money, he lends money. If anyone quarrels, he can solve the issue.”**

Youth emphasise social connections within the camp setting as important to their wellbeing. A Youth Enumerator describes a peer they see as a role model during a consultation session.

When asked about support pathways to address the above needs, youth heavily emphasised the need for government cooperation, in addition to support from humanitarian agencies and their communities. At a localised level, youth identified community leaders (especially majhis), Camps-in-Charge (CiC)<sup>viii</sup> and other camp officials, and NGO workers from within their communities as key stakeholders.

Individual youth or particular groups of youth in FGDs highlighted some specific concerns. Within Camp 2 East, male youth wanted to emphasis that in their community youth are marrying as soon as they reach the age of 18, which they perceive as problematic, and requested support to address this issue. Small numbers of youth also touched upon irregular migration, particularly to Malaysia, as an opportunity for greater prosperity and better quality of living.

**“My friend has gone to Malaysia for a big salary. My friend has a big business.”**

Youth are vulnerable to irregular migration which offers hope for decent work and prosperous lives despite risks.

Youth want to engage as active community members and play critical roles in supporting their families. This includes providing financial support where possible, although only eight percent of FGD respondents indicated regular income generation. Youth also support their households and family members with cooking and other domestic duties, caring for parents, household management, making clothes, and assisting younger family members with education and study. Men in particular support with income generation and household management, and women support extensively with cooking and other housework.

**“As I am the eldest in my family, I have to support my family both financially and physically.”**

A young man describes his responsibilities during a focus group discussion.

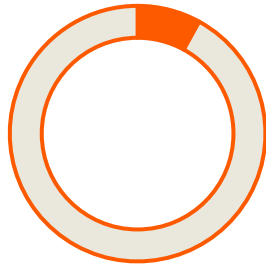


Chart 1. Only 8% of FGD participants report regular income generation.

Many youth in camps do have previous exposure to education, particularly at primary school level or through madrasas.<sup>ix</sup> Respondents also indicated engaging in home-based learning and self-study over recent years. However, very few youth had engaged in secondary education and no youth consulted had participated in tertiary education. Youth strongly aspire to higher education, particularly as a means to improve their living conditions and the lives of their families.

Aspirations about meaningful career pathways are largely restricted to work observed within the camps, and include mechanical repair, mobile repair, sale of goods (clothes, shoes, fruit, vegetables, dry foods), tailoring, fabric painting, salon services, healthcare, and teaching. However, youth also aspire to computer literacy and a business management skill set.

**“I’m good at learning new skills like mechanics and working with electronics.”**

A young man describes his capacities during a focus group discussion.

Additionally, youth in FGDs indicated that they have received prior trainings, and do have an existing skill set. Prior trainings topics include life skills, stove repair, horticulture, prevention of sexual exploitation and abuse (PSEA) and gender-based violence (GBV), leadership, and human trafficking. When asked to describe their capabilities, youth indicated the capacity to teach, understanding of GBV issues, leadership skills, understanding of family planning, tailoring, fabric painting, cooking, cleaning, artistic skills, and athletic skills. Women highlighted cooking, cleaning, and tailoring as their predominant skill sets, while men indicated tailoring and teaching. Youth also highlighted their capacity and eagerness to learn.

Notably, 95 percent of youth engaged in FGDs indicated their availability to attend a six-month skills development training course. When asked about support they would need to consistently access and engage in training, youth asked for skilled trainers, incentive payments, certificates in their own names,<sup>x</sup> safe spaces, and sufficient training materials for practical instruction.

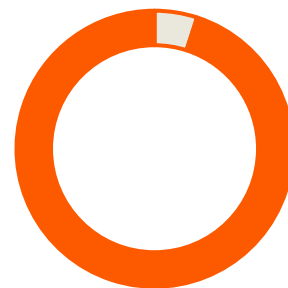


Chart 2. 95% of FGD participants indicate availability to attend a six-month course.

In the camp setting, where availability of space is a significant issue for housing, community services, markets, and recreation, youth were consistently unable to indicate safe social spaces where they could meet friends, engage in recreation, or participate in community engagement projects.

When asked to give an age range defining youth, a majority of key informants confirmed the range of 18-24 years, with some informants categorising adolescence (from age 12) as within the youth range, and one informant defining youth as extending up to age 35.

## MARKET AND LABOUR DYNAMICS

According to business owners, managers, and other professionals identified and interviewed by Youth Enumerators, the education level of workers in camps is low. When asked to indicate education levels of their employees, colleagues, or peers within the labour market, neither group mentioned knowing any workers with a university level education. The most frequently cited highest level of education attained was primary to middle school, followed by no education. Education levels skewed higher for workers identified by teachers, healthcare workers, and camp administrative officers, reflecting higher levels of education sought for candidacy within these professions. Business owners or managers were not able to identify any workers who had attained secondary level education.

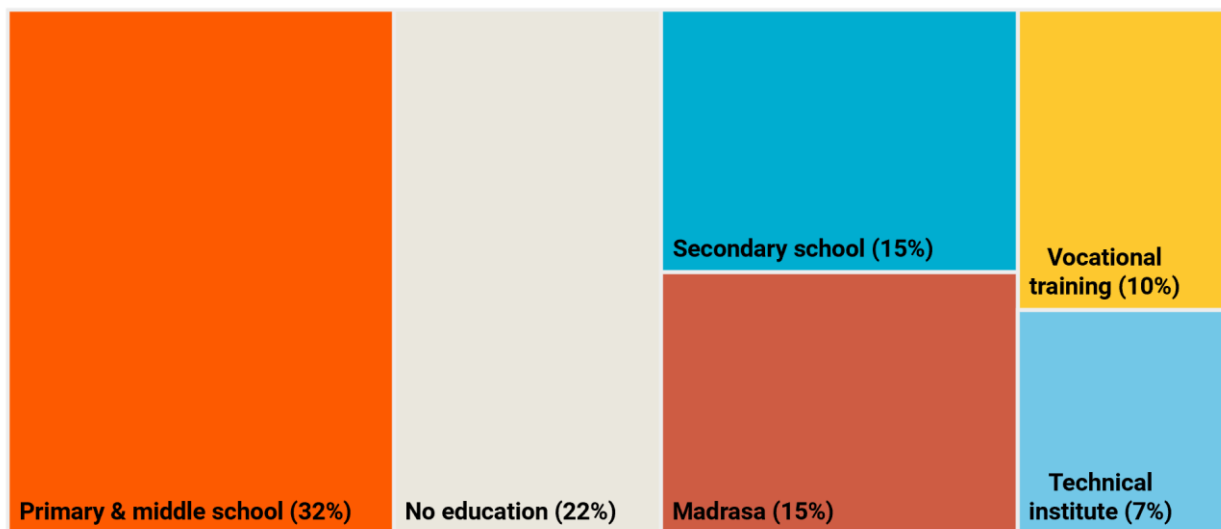


Chart 3. Highest levels of education of workers in camps mentioned by key informants.

When asked about access to skills development for youth, only a minority of key informants, namely community leaders, were able to identify opportunities. These were limited to learning centres operated by humanitarian agencies delivering the Myanmar curriculum. No informants were able to identify technical or vocational training opportunities within their communities.

Key informants were similarly asked to share the years of experience of their employees, colleagues, or peers upon job entry. Business owners or managers were significantly more likely to identify workers who were hired with no specific experience (frequency eight versus frequency one for category of other professionals) indicating greater ease of access within this market sphere.

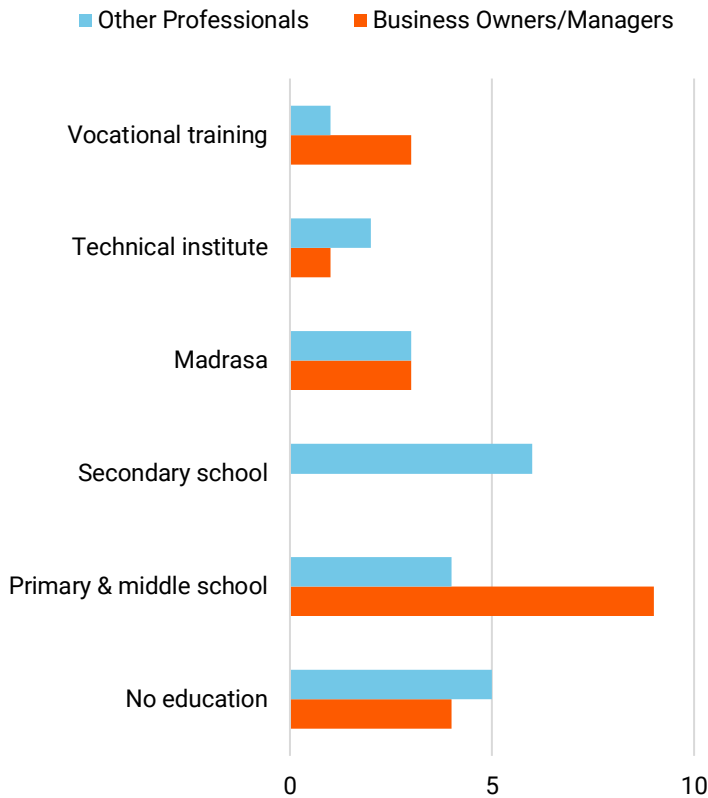


Chart 4. Highest levels of worker education in camps differentiated by key informant category.

In regard to other market dynamics, camp markets are served primarily by goods produced elsewhere in Bangladesh (frequency 11) followed by goods imported from Myanmar (frequency eight) and goods produced locally within Cox’s Bazar district (frequency six). A limited scope of goods are available from India or imported from other countries.

Despite the informal nature of camp markets, financial services are available, with money changers accessed by 35 percent of respondents.

During market observations, the only social spaces observed in proximity to markets by Youth Enumerators were mosques.

## 4.2 What are the most valuable technical skill sets for Rohingya youth?

### YOUTH PERSPECTIVES AND EXPERIENCES

Participating youth shared a range of inputs about what kinds of jobs or work they would prefer to seek and what training topics in which they would be most interested. Young women described a more narrow range of career pathways through desired trainings and employment opportunities than young men, likely reflective of the additional social and cultural constraints faced by women within the Rohingya community. Preferred trainings generally aligned with preferred jobs for all groups, however, all groups described a greater range of trainings than jobs, including some which did not correspond with mentioned employment (such as bodybuilding, gym management, musical instrument training, and autobody skills) likely reflecting a desire to expand skills for personal satisfaction – or resignation about the income-generating potential of particular skill sets within the context experienced by youth. The below table presents the range of employment and training pathways described by participating youth. Items in bold text represent inputs emphasised by multiple focus groups.

Gender	Most preferred jobs	Most preferred training
Women	Tailor Fabric painter Teacher Sale of cosmetics	Teaching Ending GBV Fabric painting Business management Tailoring
Men	Mechanical repair Shopkeeper (clothes, shoes, dry food) Teacher Businessperson Computing Community leader Mobile repair Photocopy/printing Tailor	Mechanical repair Tailoring Autobody skills (vehicle painting) Electronic repair Engineering Fabric painting Hospitality Mobile repair Photocopy/printing Solar repair
Mixed	Doctor Tailor Teacher Businessperson Shopkeeper	Teaching Bodybuilding Computing Fabric painting Gym management Musical instruments Tailoring

Table 2. Preferred jobs and trainings described by youth FGD participants.

Youth are also fatigued by opportunities expressed by NRC or other humanitarian agencies which do not manifest, and are wary of raising their hopes and expectations.

**“I would like to tell NRC that since NRC has started working in our camp, they told us they would provide vocational training but still we did not get any.”**

A young woman from Camp 3 expresses her frustrations.

## MARKET AND LABOUR DYNAMICS

Due to the informal nature of camp markets and the prohibition on formal work, the range of business opportunities accessible to Rohingya is limited. Business owners and managers interviewed indicated the nature of their businesses as, in order of prevalence: serving food or drinks, tailoring, sale of goods (grocery items, produce, meat or fish, clothing), photocopy or printing, mechanical repair, carpentry, food production, salon services, and construction. However, many business owners reported that their enterprises were multifaceted and focused on disparate arenas of work (such as salon services offered alongside mechanical repair and photocopy or printing). The prevalence of vendors and available services represented in KIIs aligns with observations made by Youth Enumerators during market surveys.

Both business owners and other professionals indicated that customers and clients regularly make requests for goods or services that they cannot provide and that are not widely available within the camps, particularly furniture. Additionally, informants indicated that camp markets are not saturated even with the most widely available goods or services, expressing that demand for venues serving food or drinks, tailors, mechanical and tom-tom<sup>xi</sup> repair, food production, and sale of general goods exceeds available supply.

### Additional goods or services requested in camps

<b>Food items</b>	Rice, fresh fish, noodles, baked goods, moringa soup, Myanmar coffee
<b>Clothing items</b>	Shoes, uniforms, and raincoats for school children
<b>Documentation services</b>	Birth certificates, vaccine cards
<b>Education and training</b>	English language instruction, Burmese language instruction
<b>General items</b>	Umbrellas (particularly for school children), stationery items
<b>Financial services</b>	bKash <sup>xii</sup> services
<b>Household items and materials</b>	Furniture, water filters, shelter materials (bamboo and tarpaulins)

Table 3. Additional goods or services requested by customers or clients in camps that are currently unavailable or are not widely available.

All categories of informants were asked to share perceptions of the most needed professions in camps. Teaching and tailoring were widely emphasised, followed by a range of technicians (mobile repair, mechanic, photocopy or printing operator), construction workers and carpenters, and food and hospitality workers. Highly skilled professions, such as doctors and engineers, were not emphasised. Agricultural work (farming) was also not emphasised, despite being a key economic sector in Rakhine state, likely due to restricted space in camps.



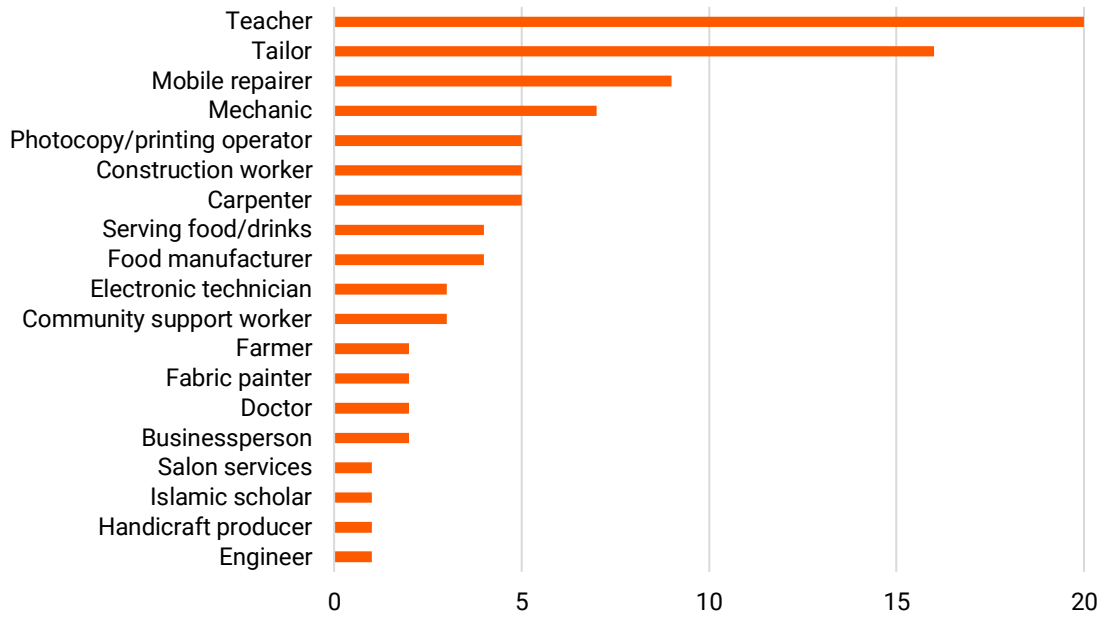


Chart 5. Most needed professions in camps according to key informants.

When asked if their businesses needed more employees, 20 percent of business owners or managers indicated that they would employ more people if they could. However, 67 percent of respondents emphasised that they cannot afford to hire more employees.

All categories of key informant were asked to share their perceptions of the most needed technical skill sets for job-seekers within the camp setting. Answers largely aligned with perceptions of most needed professions. Tailoring and teaching were the most heavily emphasised skill sets, followed by hospitality and a range of technician skills.

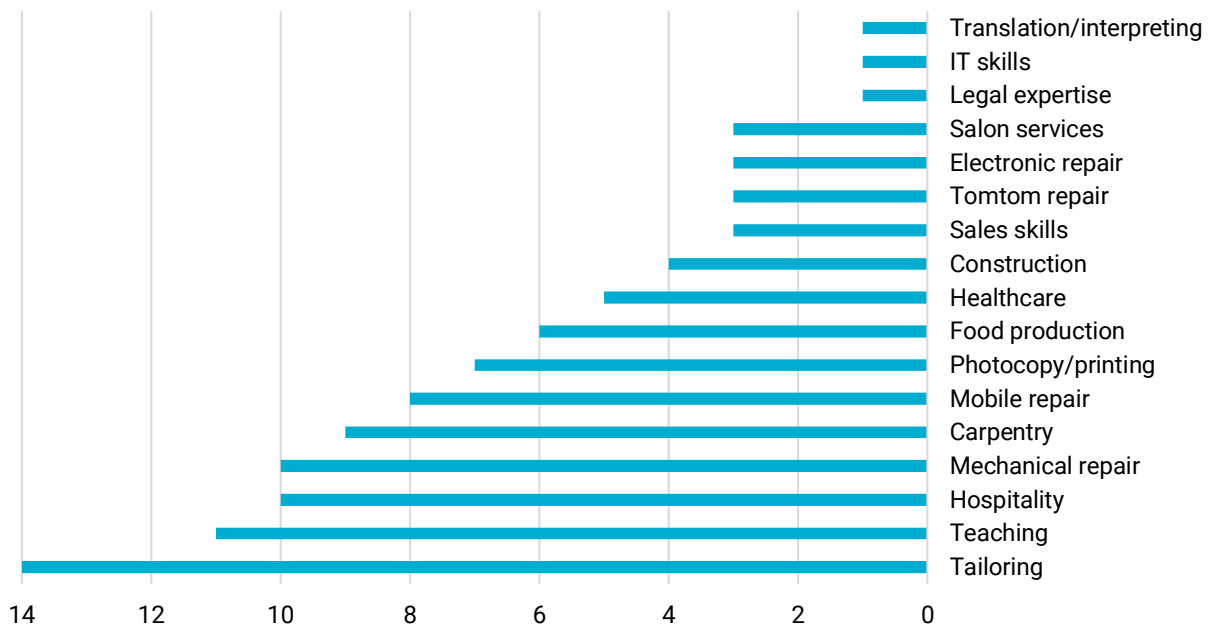


Chart 6. Most needed technical skill sets in camps according to key informants.

When observing clientele during market surveys, Youth Enumerators noted that vendors selling meat and fresh produce had the most customers throughout the day. Vendors offering mobile repair services were also highly frequented, as were vendors selling clothing. Youth Enumerators consistently emphasised that the most frequented vendors were popular because of the quality and range of goods they offer, while those with fewer customers were less affordable. These points were mentioned during all 12 market observations across the camps. Additional reasons given for popularity of vendors includes convenience in regard to location and good customer service.

Items produced locally in high demand are, in order of prevalence: fish, meat, grocery items, furniture, clothes, and personal care (grooming) items. Items not produced locally in high demand are, in order of prevalence: medicine, carpentry or mechanical tools, clothes, meat, houseware, furniture, electronic items, and stationery. Handmade items are available within camps, and were observed in seven markets.

## 4.3 What holistic support should be offered alongside skills training?

### YOUTH PERSPECTIVES AND EXPERIENCES

Beyond offering technical and vocational training, Rohingya youth living in camps need holistic services to support their wellbeing and their transitions from training to income generation. Youth reported that continued literacy and numeracy education would boost their confidence to seek employment or start their own small businesses, and described a number of mechanisms and modalities that would help them to overcome challenges in finding work. These include:

- Increased general education levels
- Access to formal education, vocational training, and higher education
- Increased availability of job opportunities
- Improved communication about existing job opportunities within the community, especially roles offered with humanitarian organisations
- Home-based learning opportunities (particularly for women)
- Improved acceptance from community leaders and camp authorities, namely CiCs
- Permission from CiCs and the Refugee Relief and Repatriation Commission (RRRC) to formally work
- Increased awareness of human rights for women within the community
- High quality trainings with skilled instructors and sufficient training materials

Young women stressed the need to improve community awareness and acceptance of women's work outside the household, and for innovative approaches to training and work that could increase acceptance. Both men and women emphasised that support from camp authorities to allow Rohingya refugees to work is critical. Both groups also mentioned that any training opportunities provided to youth must be meaningful and of good quality, with instructors who are skilled in their technical specialities and capable of teaching well.

## MARKET AND LABOUR DYNAMICS

To increase youth employability, confidence, and job-seeking capacity, supplementary skills are needed. All categories of key informants were asked to share perspectives of the most needed supplementary skills within camps, yielding insight into a range of prioritised learning, employability, and personal development skills. Problem solving was emphasised by all categories of respondents and was most mentioned (frequency 18) followed by leadership and teamwork (frequency 14). Literacy (frequency 12) and numeracy (frequency nine) were also highlighted. Notably, basic accountancy and numeracy are equally emphasised. In regard to language skills (frequency four), respondents indicated skills in English, Arabic/Urdu,<sup>xiii</sup> Bangla, and Rohingya were required, with English and Arabic/Urdu the most mentioned.

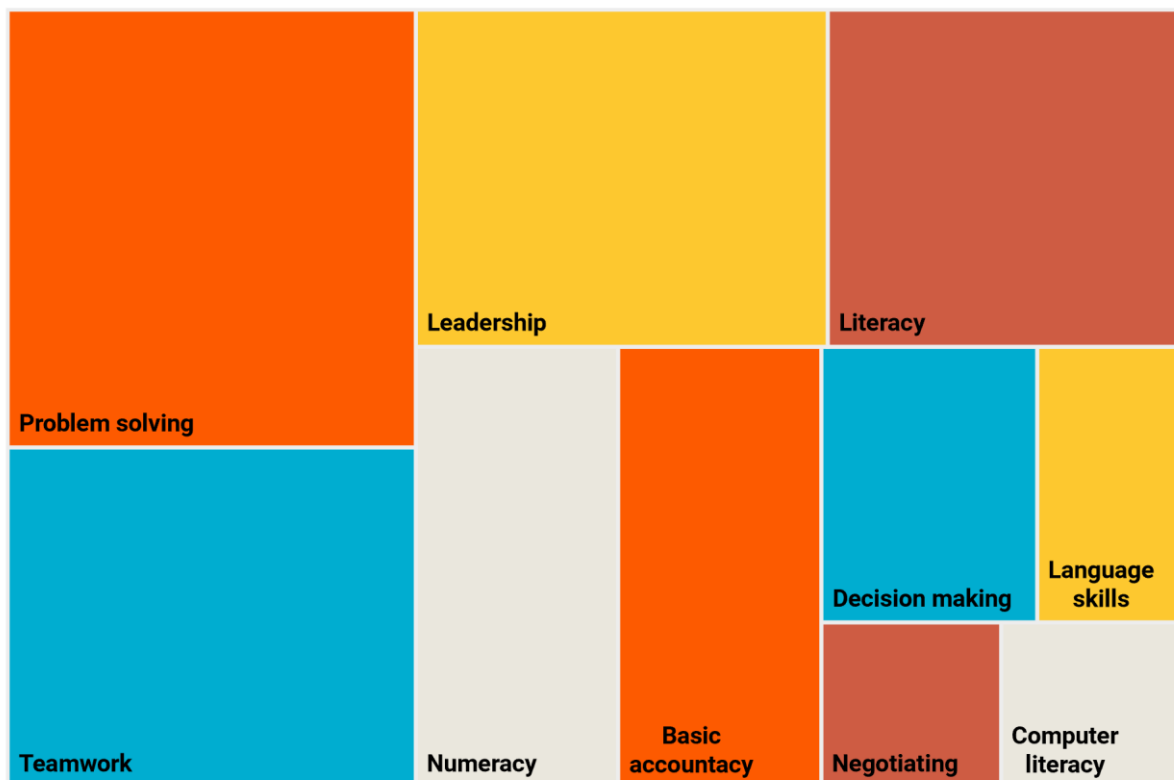


Chart 7. Supplementary skills needed by job seekers according to key informants.

When asked if their businesses or employing institutions would be willing to partner with a vocational training programme to provide on the job training to youth, a significant majority of business owners and other professionals responded positively. Community leaders also indicated knowing of workplaces that would engage in partnership. Necessary contributions to workplaces to deliver apprenticeships were indicated at between 5,000 to 50,000 BDT, with business owners indicating the lowest needed contributions (5,000 to 10,000 BDT).

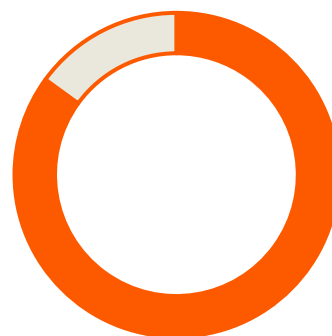


Chart 8. 85% of respondents indicate their place of work would partner with a training programme.

Interview respondents also explained further support to youth that could be offered alongside vocational and supplementary skills training. These suggestions included:

- Stipends for youth when attending courses
- Job placement support
- Mentoring and coaching during business start up or internships/apprenticeships
- Financial start up support (20,000 to 50,000 BDT)
- Material start up support (dependent on trade of trainee)
- Childcare services

Informants also emphasised the need for quality instruction in both technical and supplementary skills. With this point raised by both youth themselves and all categories of key informants, it is clear that while access to education remains an issue for Rohingya youth living in camps, meaningful and quality teaching and learning when they are in the classroom is also a concern.

Business owners and other professionals were also asked to describe their main challenges when running their business or engaging in their work. Debt was heavily emphasised by business owners, as was availability of goods and lack of space for vendors in camps. Both categories of respondents highlighted that obtaining permissions from camp authorities was a key challenge.

#### Challenges in running businesses or engaging in work

<b>Safety and security</b>	Risk of fire, road safety in camps, armed attacks
<b>Administrative</b>	Permissions from CiC to work or to run a business, risk of business closure by police, accountancy and note keeping, producing resumes or certificates of previous training or work experience
<b>Working conditions</b>	Fair treatment from employers, sufficient and appropriate times to eat and sleep
<b>Financial</b>	Debt (especially for business owners), insufficient funds to repair or maintain machinery, workers spending their own funds to complete duties, low salaries
<b>Logistical</b>	Distance between workplace and home, lack of spaces for vendors, availability of goods (especially imported items)

Table 4. Business owners and other professionals describe their challenges in running business or engaging in their duties.

To ensure job placements, apprenticeships, or internship schemes are successful, it will be necessary to consider the range of challenges expressed by business owners and professionals in camps and offer support especially in obtaining permissions, ensuring work places are fair, safe, and accessible, and ensuring additional financial burden is not placed on employers.

Youth Enumerators observed a limited range of supporting market infrastructure during market observations. These included health facilities, child-friendly spaces, learning centres, madrasas, mosques, humanitarian agency distribution points, and NGO information points. Additionally, some financial services, largely for currency exchange, are available within camp settings, and Youth Enumerators also reported the possibility of conducting domestic financial transfers (through bKash). According to market observations, it is primarily men who are accessing financial services.

## 4.4 What barriers to training, employment, or income-generating opportunities do youth face?

### YOUTH PERSPECTIVES AND EXPERIENCES

Although very limited, there are opportunities for training, employment, or income generation within the camps. However, these are largely inaccessible to youth, who indicated in FGDs that opportunities are insufficient with youth demand far exceeding supply and restrictions from camp authorities as their primary barriers. Additional challenges encountered by youth when looking for work were reported, including:

- Insufficient funds for start up costs (clothes, materials)
- Time management in regard to household duties
- Communities do not permit women to work
- NGOs are not employing women candidates
- Youth do not have appropriate qualifications for existing roles
- Safety and security (especially noted by women)
- Payments required by camp authorities to obtain permission to work

Focus group participants believe it is harder for youth to find employment than for older adults, and that young women face challenges additional to young men.

**“There are many armed groups who fight with each other and sometimes attack the community.”**

A young man describing issues of safety and security within the camp context, and how this impacts his feeling of control over his own life.

Business owners and managers were asked about demographics of candidates they would be willing to hire if their were no administrative, financial, or other barriers to recruitment, and other professionals were asked the same question in regard to their employers. From responses to these questions, it is apparent that the most disadvantaged youth are persons with disabilities, while the group facing the fewest obstacles is young men. Young women and candidates with no experience would be considered for employment at roughly equal rates.

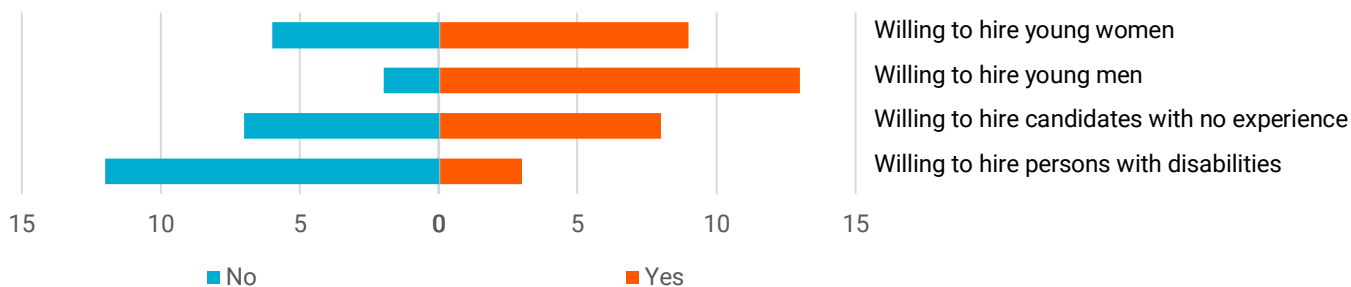


Chart 9. Business owners or managers describe candidates they would be willing to hire.

Between businesses and institutions employing other professionals, persons with disabilities are less likely to be considered for employment by business owners. Young men are more likely to be considered by institutions employing professional workers, but are also highly likely to be hired by business owners. Both sets of prospective employers are roughly equally likely to consider or exclude young women and candidates without experience.

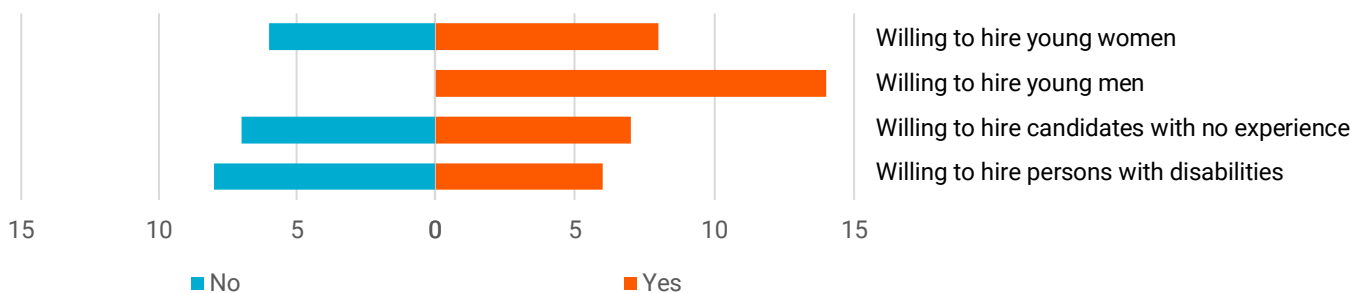


Chart 10. Other professionals describe candidates their employers would be willing to hire.

When asked why they would not consider each demographic, most respondents were reluctant to expand on their answers. However, the minority of respondents who did share further offered the following insights.

#### Reasons offered for excluding candidates from consideration

<b>Young women</b>	Lack of experience, cultural restrictions, cannot work in certain settings (e.g., mosque, madrasa)
<b>Young men</b>	Lack of experience, unreliability of candidates
<b>Persons with disabilities</b>	Not suitable for office work, cannot move heavy items, cannot perform full duties, workplace would need additional accommodations

Table 5. Reasons from prospective employers for demographic exclusion from work.

## MARKET AND LABOUR DYNAMICS

Despite theoretical inclusion or exclusion of young men, young women, candidates without experience, or persons with disabilities, the existing labour market within the camps offers a somewhat different picture to the previous responses. Business owners who are seeking employees are more likely to hire entry-level candidates than candidates with previous experience in their sector of work – 57 percent of interviewed business owners who employ one or more people recruited workers with no relevant experience upon hiring. This is likely due to the challenge of finding experienced people within the camp setting and candidates without experience accepting lower wages.

Additionally, three business owners employed persons with disabilities to perform tailoring work, serve food or drinks, or engage in mechanical repair. Only one business owner, who is a woman herself, employed a woman (as a tailor) within her workplace.

Between business owners, there was no theoretical distinction in terms of which industries would hire men or women. Businesses responding positively to hiring both demographics included tailoring, hospitality, mechanical repair, carpentry, and sale of goods. Those who were theoretically willing to employ persons with disabilities included tailoring, hospitality, food production, mechanical repair, and sale of goods. When asked what types of disabilities could be accommodated in their workplaces, most business owners did not offer insights, but those who did specified vision impairments and speech impediments or lack of speech.

Among other professionals, all respondents who affirmed that their workplaces would employ women or persons with disabilities were involved in teaching. Similarly, most respondents did not expand on which disabilities could be accommodated by their employers, but the minority who did share insights mentioned vision impairments and challenges walking.

Community leaders were also asked to share perceptions of the main barriers to employment for these groups. Responses were largely in line with barriers described by youth themselves, with a heavy emphasis on lack of training and education. Although discrimination is mentioned as a barrier for persons with disabilities, lack of interest in training is also described, showing likely insufficient understanding of the needs and desires of this group.

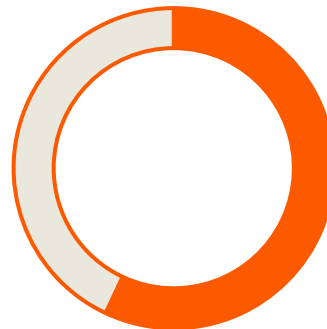


Chart 11. 57% of interviewed business owners who employ one or more people recruited workers with no relevant experience upon hiring.

**Just one**

business owner interviewed employs a woman in her enterprise.

## Main barriers to employment described by community leaders

Young women	Lack of training and education, insufficient safety and security, lack of permission from community, prohibitions against men and women working or being trained together
Young men	Lack of training and education, poor quality of training available, lack of work opportunities
Persons with disabilities	Lack of training and education, lack of interest in training, discrimination, unsuitable accommodations in prospective workplaces (e.g., learning centres), physical challenges due to hilly areas in camps, NGOs not providing equal opportunities

Table 6. Main barriers to employment described by community leaders.

Within market settings, Youth Enumerators paid attention to which goods or services are offered by men and women. While most goods and services are more likely to be offered by men, the sale of medicine and the sale of meat and fish was observed to be managed primarily by women during the time of market observations. Mobile repair was observed to be exclusively offered by men, which is in line with other data collected regarding this service.

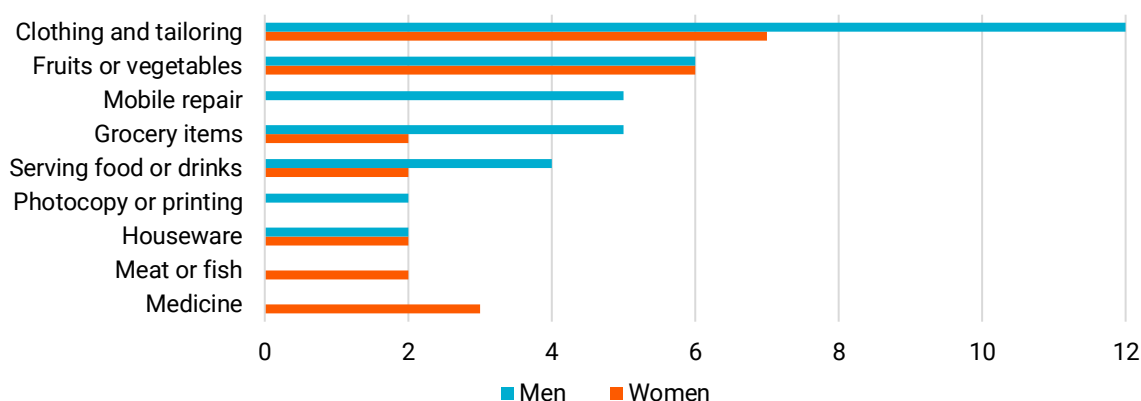


Chart 12. Goods or services observed offered primarily by men or women in camps.

Finally, Youth Enumerators also sought to understand from vendors the average costs to start a business. Responses to this question varied widely from a few thousand up to 500,000 BDT, with the median cost of business start up indicated as 60,000 BDT.

**60,000 BDT**  
Median cost of business start up in camps.



# 5 Recommendations

The following recommendations are developed in consideration of the youth voices that drove this assessment, and the findings from data that were collected by youth themselves.

## 5.1 Organisations working with Rohingya youth in refugee camps

### SKILLS DEVELOPMENT PROGRAMMING:

- **Offer skills development opportunities relevant to youth interests and preferences, market needs and dynamics, and labour gaps.** Based on findings from this assessment, technical trades relevant to skills development include:
  - Teaching (for both men and women)
  - Tailoring (for both men and women)
  - Mechanics (particularly for men)
  - Business management and shopkeeping (for both men and women)
  - Mobile repair (for both men and women – while this is not considered an accessible employment pathway for women currently, women are largely unable to access mobile repair services due to the lack of women service providers)
  - Carpentry and furniture production (particularly for men)
  - Fabric painting (for both men and women)
  - Computing, including photocopy and printing services (for both men and women)
  - Hospitality (for both men and women)
- **Ensure quality of trainings and learning opportunities, not just accessibility.** For education and training to be meaningful for youth and have a real impact, quality teaching and learning needs to take place in the classroom. Focus on skills and capacities of instructors and ensure instructors are effective teachers as well as experts in their technical skill sets. Ensure training venues are safe, appropriate, and accessible and are well equipped with necessary training materials.
- **Consider innovative and alternative training modalities for vulnerable demographics, including women and youth with disabilities.** This could include home-based learning. Consult with these groups during programme planning and design to determine appropriate and workable modalities.

- **Conduct further study to understand how youth with disabilities can be reached and supported with skills development opportunities.** Seek to understand how disabilities can be accommodated in training facilities, learning centres, and workplaces.
- **Consult with youth in general when designing any skills development programming.** Discuss scheduling, locations of trainings, and expectations and responsibilities of learners, instructors, and implementing agencies. Ensure youth voices and perspectives have meaningful influence on programme design.
- **Support in market creation and awareness for emerging skill sets.** While fabric painting is an accessible area of skills development for both men and women, the market for this service within camps is relatively small. Training in this and other emerging skill sets can be accompanied by youth-led market campaigns to generate clientele.
- **Offer second language training options.** English and Arabic/Urdu are both highly relevant second languages for Rohingya youth in camps, in addition to Bangla.
- **Work and coordinate with employers present in camps to increase opportunities for youth to be hired as entry-level workers.** This can include raising awareness about the benefits of youth employment and supporting prospective employers to take on youth in apprenticeship, internship, or job placement schemes. Some employers, especially small businesses, will likely need additional support in initial stages to recruit youth. This could include:
  - Financial support to businesses who are unable to afford to take on new employees despite need.
  - Material support to workplaces tailored to sector of work.
  - Direct advocacy to camp authorities to obtain permission to recruit new employees.
- **Ensure youth enter safe, accessible, and fair workplaces if conducting apprenticeship, internship, or job placement schemes.** Ensure employers understand their obligations to provide safe workspaces that are free from discrimination or exploitation. Ask employers to sign a Code of Conduct and ensure this code is understood by all parties. Ensure youth are not exposed to additional risk when travelling to and from workplaces.
- **Consider entrepreneurship support following skills development training.** It may not always be possible, appropriate, or preferred to find job placement, apprenticeship, or internship opportunities. Youth can be supported to start their own small businesses independently or in collectives. Support youth with start up grants, start up kits, and/or coaching and mentorship to engage in individual or collective business development.
- **Offer stipends to youth during attendance to skills development trainings.** This will help youth to meet their basic needs and support their families from the first day of programming.
- **Align training with niche market demands to better meet community needs and maximize scope for income generation.** For example, tailoring trainees could produce school uniform items for children attending learning centres in camps, and hospitality trainings could focus on production of in demand foods not yet available in camp settings.

## SUPPLEMENTARY SKILLS:

- **Offer a supplementary curriculum alongside any technical skills development training.** Topics within this curriculum should include problem solving, teamwork, leadership, literacy, numeracy, financial literacy and basic accountancy, sales techniques, customer service, and professional conduct. This supplementary curriculum can build on existing curricula utilised by organisations (such as NRC's Youth Life Skills Framework) where relevant.
- **Integrate education about wellbeing, mental health, and psychosocial support (PSS) into supplementary skills components of vocational training programmes.** Youth have narrow understandings of the concept of wellbeing and discussions on mental health are not widely accepted within the community. Youth will benefit from learning and support in this area, and outcomes related to learning and overall wellbeing will likely improve.
- **Support women in particular with financial literacy and financial management.** Financial abuse is a form of domestic abuse to which women are particularly vulnerable. Increasing understanding of financial literacy and management for women reduces these risks and increases capacity of women to manage their lives as independent adults.

## HOLISTIC YOUTH PROGRAMMING AND SUPPORT:

- **Conduct youth-led programming wherever possible.** While this presents additional challenges to implementing organisations and increases programmatic timelines, empowering youth to influence and lead programming builds capacity and confidence, improves wellbeing, and increases programmatic relevance.
- **Increase availability of general education services for youth (including secondary level education) and support youth to obtain certification of schooling and training (even if certification is not formalised).** Most education service providers within camp settings are focusing on younger learners, leaving youth as a neglected demographic unable to realise their right to education.
- **Offer trainings and activities that support wellbeing and personal development without an economic focus.** This could include sports, arts, and music. Rohingya youth have very limited opportunity to engage in activities that support physical and mental health without an economic or needs-based agenda and have restricted spaces for social engagement with peers.
- **Conduct activities to improve community acceptance of education and employment for women and girls.** This could include awareness raising campaigns and sensitisation, consultation meetings, and question and answer sessions to allow community members to share concerns. These activities should be youth-led wherever possible. Identify key community leaders who can be advocates for women and girls and involve them extensively in activities.
- **Ensure provision of support for youth to meet basic needs.** In addition to income, youth have highlighted shelter, water, and fuel as critical concerns in their daily lives. Ensure that when services are provided, they are accessible for all (e.g., ensure tubewells can be accessed and operated by women as well as men).

- **Raise awareness on the risks of irregular migration in youth-focused programming.** Young men are particularly vulnerable to irregular migration due to the perceived prospects of increased income generation and better lives despite risks to their safety and security.
- **Integrate awareness of the voluntary nature of marriage in youth-focused programming.** During this study, youth highlighted concerns about pressure to marry upon reaching the age of 18 years.
- **Consider targeted support for youth within programming delivering legal assistance.** This could include support to access and retain certificates and references for work in preferred names as well as support to ensure safe working conditions.
- **Increase availability of safe social spaces for youth.** While child-friendly spaces can be found across camp settings, spaces for youth are non-existent due to the limited focus of humanitarian agencies on this demographic and concerns from camp authorities about organised youth. Safe, supervised social spaces for youth will improve overall youth wellbeing.
- **Consider providing childcare services for young women attending education or training or while engaging with workplaces.** This could be conducted by utilising existing child-friendly spaces in proximity to training locations or camp markets in coordination with other humanitarian agencies, or by establishing independent child-friendly spaces or early childhood care services.
- **Improve outreach to female candidates and persons with disabilities when recruiting staff or volunteers in camps.** Findings from this assessment reveal that even humanitarian agencies are not providing equal opportunities for employment. Do not assume that implicit biases or prejudices are not held because people work for humanitarian organisations.
- **Conduct awareness raising within camps on capacities, needs, and interests of persons with disabilities.** Within the Rohingya camps, this demographic remains underreached and underserved even after half a decade of interventions by implementing organisations. Conduct these activities in consultation with persons with disabilities and ensure their voices have meaningful influence on programme design and delivery.
- **Avoid raising expectations of youth without follow-through.** After more than five years of living in camps, youth are fatigued by perceived promises and initiatives from humanitarian agencies and other service providers that do not manifest.
- **Ensure job opportunities relevant to Rohingya in camps are appropriately circulated within the camp communities.** Consider youth-led information sharing and circulation of opportunities through Youth Working Group (YWG) camp focal points. Ensure job opportunities within NGOs are accessible to diverse candidates. This includes women and persons with disabilities.

## COORDINATION AND ADVOCACY:

- **Advocate for official approval for youth to learn and work with camp authorities and government agencies.** Improved access to education and employment will alleviate pressures on government services and aid reliance. Additionally, greater numbers of youth engaged in employment, education, or training will reduce risks of

recruitment to armed groups and the appeal of criminal activities. Advocacy can also be conducted by emphasising that repatriation will be more successful when youth are equipped with skill sets to earn a decent living upon return.

- **Advocate for government approval for youth to engage in targeted activities outside of camps.** The conditions in camps are not conducive to youth development. Engagement outside of camps broadens the scope for income generation as well as participation in social cohesion activities with host community members, offering an opportunity to potentially relieve intercommunity tensions.
- **Ensure payments are not being requested for permission to work or enter employment.** Raise concerns through appropriate channels or whistleblowing mechanisms when possible. Remind responsible persons of their legal and professional obligations.

## 5.2 Donors

- **Advocate for Rohingya youth to relevant government authorities.** This includes host community authorities, de facto authorities, and donor governments. Advocacy should include access to education, access to employment, and opportunities to engage in targeted activities outside of camps.
- **Continue and expand programming that supports Rohingya youth, including:**
  - The provision of accelerated education, secondary education, technical or skills development education and training, and access to tertiary level education opportunities.
  - Integrated livelihoods and education programming that supports youth to transition from learning pathways to employment or effective entrepreneurship.
  - The provision of support to reach basic needs that explicitly targets youth as a differentiated demographic.
  - Holistic programming that aims to improve overall youth wellbeing.
  - Youth-led assessments, activities, or programming.
- **Ensure funding for youth programming is flexible to allow for the needs of young women, young men, and youth with disabilities to be met.** Consider the additional support each of these demographics may need to successfully attain medium- and long-term outcomes and impacts.
- **Continue and expand cash and voucher support for Rohingya youth.** Youth are less able to access income generating opportunities in camps than older adults. More than five years into the Rohingya refugee crises, needs amongst this population have not reduced.
- **Invest in longer-term funding cycles to allow for more effective programme delivery for youth.** Ensure funding is adaptable in cases of emergencies or the onset of new crises.

# Annex: Cross-cutting Themes

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In 2023, NRC Bangladesh will conduct a Youth-led Assessment (YLA) to inform planning for vocational training (VT) programming to enable Rohingya youth (aged 18-24 years) to find meaningful work or engage in income-generating activities. As the assessment will be led by youth themselves, it will also empower the targeted demographic through direct skill-building and ensure youth voices steer programmatic direction. While the work will be managed by the Education Core Competency team, the assessment will cover several cross-cutting themes.

## *Livelihoods and Food Security (LFS)*

VT is geared towards supporting communities to find meaningful, dignified work or to initiate income generation through entrepreneurial activities. Education is at the core of VT, but the objectives of VT are less focused on standard education objectives and more focused on ensuring affected communities can build and sustain their livelihoods and meet their basic needs.

## *Youth Wellbeing*

The primary object of the assessment is to gather information to inform effective planning and delivery of suitable VT opportunities for Rohingya youth. However, NRC also seeks to deliver programming that will support youth holistically. Recognising that half a decade of displacement and uncertainty have negatively impacted mental health and wellbeing and leave youth feeling hopeless, disempowered, and disenfranchised, this assessment will incorporate a strong dimension of youth wellbeing.

## *Gender*

Young women and men face different barriers and may have different opportunities for work and education. Gender will be considered throughout the assessment, from ensuring that women's and men's voices are equally

heard and considered during consultation and data collection, to collecting differentiated data about the barriers, challenges, support needed, and existing options available to women and men within the camp setting.

## *Inclusion and Participation*

The assessment will engage youth at all stages (preparation, data collection, and reporting and analysis). Youth from within the targeted community will support NRC to finalise tools to be used during the assessment, lead on data collection, share their lessons learned, and discuss findings at the end of the activity. Youth will gain practical and technical experience through their participation and enable NRC to capture a greater authenticity of data particularly through leading focus group discussions (FGDs) with other youth from their communities. Youth will also lead the selection of external stakeholders to participate in key informant interviews (KIIs). Every effort will be made to ensure a diversity of youth voices are heard during the activity, particularly by seeking the inclusion of youth with disabilities in consultations and as members of FGDs.

## *Accountability to Affected People (AAP)*

This assessment will also ensure NRC is better meeting its AAP obligations. While the primary objective of the assessment is to gather data to inform VT programming, secondary (and no less important) objectives include ensuring voices of Rohingya youth lead the capture of this information and empowering targeted youth to better influence the opportunities and support available to them. Both the exercise of the assessment itself as well as the assessment findings should support Rohingya youth having control over their own futures.



Photo: Sadia Rahman/NRC

A Youth Enumerator during data collection training, March 2023

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# Endnotes

<sup>i</sup> The Bangladesh Youth Working Group (YWG) has a mandate to target members of the Rohingya and host communities aged 18 to 24 years as per the UNESCO definition of youth.

<sup>ii</sup> An upazila is an administrative unit in Bangladesh equivalent to a sub-district.

<sup>iii</sup> Norwegian Refugee Council, *What About Us? Youth Inclusion in the Rohingya Response*, August 2022.

<sup>iv</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>v</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>vi</sup> International Organization for Migration, *Rapid Mental Health and PSS Needs Assessment*, 2018.

<sup>vii</sup> A majhi is an informal Rohingya community leader. Majhis are traditionally appointed within their communities based on influence, community engagement, and personal character. Within the Rohingya camps, majhis are often appointed by Bangladeshi officials.

<sup>viii</sup> Each camp within the Cox's Bazar district is overseen by Camp-in-Charge (CiC). CiCs are the highest authority present within the camp on a daily basis and work from offices located inside camps. CiCs are appointed by the Refugee Relief and Repatriation Commission (RRRC).

<sup>ix</sup> Within this context 'madrasa' refers to Islamic instruction, especially Koranic memorisation.

<sup>x</sup> Many Rohingya report that upon arrival in Bangladesh they were administered new names as authorities and camp officials were unfamiliar with names in the Rohingya language and struggled to transcribe these on registration documentation.

<sup>xi</sup> Tom-tom is the local terminology for a three-wheeled motorised rickshaw.

<sup>xii</sup> bKash is a mobile financial service in Bangladesh operated under the authority of the national Bangladesh bank. Once money is deposited into a bKash account, it can then be used for payments, transferring, and receiving money domestically, and mobile recharging.

<sup>xiii</sup> Within the camps, some Rohingya are mobilising to protect the Rohingya language, which does not have a written form, as a means of preserving identity and culture. Two primary means of writing Rohingya are currently circulating. The first uses a Latin script, while the second uses a modified Arabic script. This is sometimes referred to as 'Urdu' depending on who is consulted. Neither system is standardised, and both have significant irregularities.

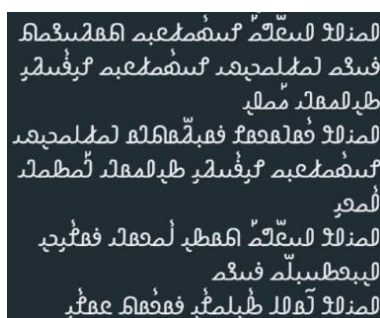


Figure 2. Example Rohingya text in Arabic/Urdu script. The text reads:

'I'm a Rohingya youth in Bangladesh refugee camp.  
I've been living in Bangladesh refugee camp for six years.  
I am a student of class 9.  
I love playing football.'