

Joint Response Plan 2023 – Review of Objectives, Indicators, and Targets from a Gender Perspective

Gender in Humanitarian Action Working Group
Cox's Bazar, Bangladesh
4/24/24

Abbreviations

CERF	Central Emergency Fund
FDMN	Forcibly Displaced Myanmar Nationals
GAM	Gender with Age Marker
GBV	Gender-based violence
GEEWG	Gender Equality and Empowerment of Women and Girls
GiHA	Gender in Humanitarian Action
IASC	Interagency Standing Committee
IP	Implementing partner
JRP	Joint Response Plan
LSDS	Livelihoods and Skills Development
MEL	Monitoring, evaluation and learning
NFI	Non-Food Items
SADD	Sex and age disaggregated data
SADDD	Sex, age and disability disaggregated data
SMSD	Site Management and Site Development
SOGIESC	Sexual orientations, gender identities and expressions, and sex characteristics
WASH	Water, sanitation and hygiene

Contents

1. Background.....	4
2. Classifying objectives and indicators by the extent of focus on GEEWG.....	5
3. Review of the 2023 JRP Objectives, Indicators and Activities from a gender mainstreaming perspective	6
3.1 Sector Objectives and Indicators	7
3.2 Objectives and indicators specified under the sub-section “Clusters”.....	9
3.2.1 Protection	10
3.2.2 Site Management and Site Development (SMSD).....	10
3.2.3 Food security	11
3.2.4 Education	11
3.2.5 Health	11
3.2.6 Nutrition	11
3.2.7 Shelter/Non-Food Items (NFI)	12
3.2.8 Water, Sanitation and Hygiene (WASH).....	12
3.2.9 Emergency telecommunications	12
3.2.10 Coordination	12
3.2.11 Livelihoods and Skills Development (LSDS)	12
3.2.12 Bhasan Char Response	13
3.3 Activity indicators and targets.....	13
4. Conclusions.....	14

1. Background

Gender Equality in Humanitarian Policy

Ensuring and promoting gender equality is a central guiding principle of humanitarian action. It is enshrined in the 1951 Refugee Convention¹ and its optional protocol, along with various international frameworks and commitments². These mandate humanitarian actors to incorporate gender mainstreaming through the twin-track approach of integrating gender considerations across all programming and operations, on par implementing dedicated interventions focused on gender equality. For example, the New York Declaration for Refugees and Migrants (2017)³ underlines the importance of a gender-responsive approach to issues involving refugees and migrants (paragraph 22) and to “ensur[ing] that our responses to large movements of refugees and migrants mainstream a gender perspective, promote gender equality and the empowerment of all women and girls and fully respect and protect the human rights of women and girls” (paragraph 31), ensuring interventions are implemented to prevent and respond to gender-based violence.

The updated Inter-Agency Standing Committee (IASC) Policy on Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women and Girls (GEEWG) in Humanitarian Action, launched in January 2024 (page 3) emphasises the need for “[b]older and more targeted actions [...] at various levels and by all IASC actors.”⁴ The IASC Policy on GEEWG has as its first priority area that of analysis, design, implementation and monitoring, inclusive of guidance to ensure sex, age and disability disaggregated data (SADDD) is collected; rapid gender analyses are implemented at the start of a new crisis and as often as necessary, for example when changes occur in the context; and to ensure response plans pursue a twin-track approach to gender mainstreaming.

Beyond ensuring that gender perspectives are incorporated into humanitarian action and into monitoring, IASC GEEWG policy furthermore stresses the need to “facilitate the leadership role and contribution of crisis affected women and girls in the planning, implementation, monitoring and evaluation of any response strategies that directly impact their lives and those of their dependents and wider communities.”⁵ In other words, the meaningful participation and leadership of women and girls needs to be ensured.

Mapping Gender Equality in the Cox’s Bazar Response

In 2023, the Gender in Humanitarian Action Working Group (GiHA WG) in Cox’s Bazar identified that despite progress, there remained a critical need to enhance gender mainstreaming across the sectors of the Rohingya refugee response, ensuring that the response includes gender transformative initiatives, and that the Joint Response Plan (JRP) indicators track progress on gender equality. This, followed the review of the Gender and Age Marker (GAM) undertaken by the GiHA WG in 2023, which identified that while 91 per cent of the project appeals received the highest GAM code 4 and a further nine percent the second-highest GAM code 3, the actual integration of gender transformative approaches in project appeals was much more limited.

¹ [The 1951 Convention Relating to the Status of Refugees](#), and its [1967 Optional Protocol](#).

² Bangladesh is not a signatory of the Refugee Convention.

³ [A/RES/71/1](#).

⁴ [IASC Policy on GEEWG in Humanitarian Action](#).

⁵ *Ibid.*

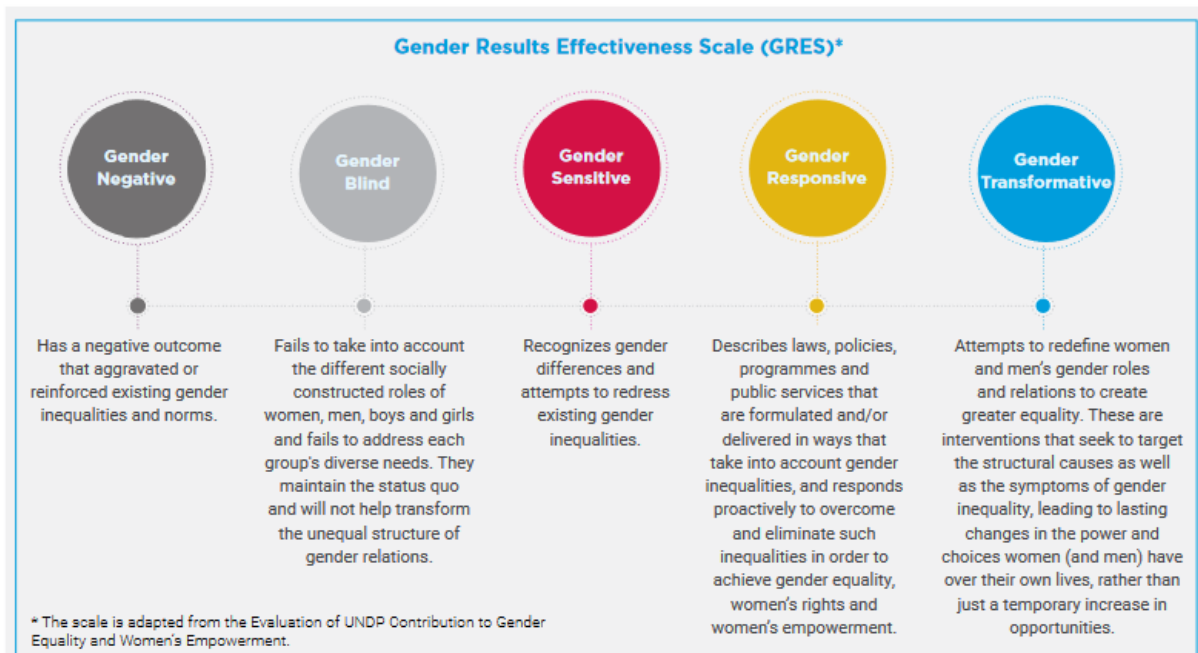
This report presents an analysis of the extent to which the objectives and indicators of the Joint JRP 2023 incorporate a gender equality perspective. The aim of the analysis is to support the development of evidence-based guidance on gender mainstreaming by the GiHA WG, including guidance on better, more gender transformative indicators for the upcoming JRP 2025, in line with commitments put forward by *inter alia* the IASC [Gender Equality Policy 2024](#). The analysis points to similar findings as in other humanitarian crisis settings, namely, that sex disaggregation of data and gender analysis is inconsistent, and all too often limited despite common perceptions which hold the opposite to be true.⁶ Greater investment and accountability to collect and use sex-disaggregated data and gender analysis is needed by humanitarian actors in Cox's Bazar.

2. Classifying objectives and indicators by the extent of focus on GEEWG

This report refers throughout to various degrees to which gender is considered in programming as well as in monitoring, evaluation, and learning (MEL). These different levels are often defined slightly differently by different agencies and Appealing Partners, but more or less correspond to the categories of:

- Gender negative (also sometimes called gender discriminatory or gender exploitative),
- Gender blind,
- Gender sensitive,
- Gender responsive, and
- Gender transformative (see Fig. 1).

Figure 1: Gender Results Effectiveness Scale



Source: UN Women (2020). [UN Women Rapid Assessment Tool](#)

⁶ See e.g. Care International, Feinstein International, Tufts University & UN Women (2023). [Sex, age \(and more\) still matter. Data collection, and use, in humanitarian practice.](#)

2.1. Using standard indicators

Unlike the Sustainable Development Goal (SDG) indicators, no parallel set of established indicators exist for humanitarian crisis settings. The UN Central Emergency Fund (CERF) has developed a set of standard indicators, which applicants are encouraged to use in their project proposals. While a helpful general guide for developing indicators for different areas of humanitarian action, the indicators are largely gender blind. The collection of sex, age and disability disaggregated data (SADDD) is essential to ensuring that humanitarian services deliver, and monitor access and inclusion of women and girls of different ages, including those with disabilities in service delivery. However, many of the CERF indicators either do not refer to people, or refer to people in without suggesting a sex-disaggregation of data, which would be a minimum requirement to ensure gender sensitivity. These gender-blind indicators refer, for example, to 'beneficiaries,' 'households' or 'communities,' without further disaggregation. Further disaggregation would for example mean tracking male- and female-headed households separately, or men and women within communities.⁷

2.2. Developing Gender-Transformative Indicators

For indicators to measure gender transformation, there needs to be a formulation of *what* is being transformed (e.g. gendered power dynamics, gender roles or norms, attitudes and practices, or structural barriers), with a focus on outcomes and impacts, rather than activities. This also requires first measuring a baseline level at the outset of the intervention, so that it is possible to compare the impact of the intervention with the situation prior to its implementation. Examples of indicators that track gender transformative change include, for example:

- Proportion (and number) of active female refugees in leadership/management structures. This allows for measuring change to restrictive gender norms which see women as being less capable to perform leadership functions.
- Attitudes of women and men on the acceptability of violence in a relationship. This allows for measuring if programming on GBV has shifted one of the root causes of domestic and intimate partner violence.⁸

Ideally, progress should be measured against a baseline established at the beginning of the project or programme, and indicators should not only track quantitative, numerical (sex disaggregated) data such as the number of women trained, but also qualitative data based on quantifiable, but subjective criteria, such as changes in perceptions related to gender stereotypes, to better understand the ways in which transformative change has (or has not) occurred.

3. Review of the 2023 JRP Objectives, Indicators and Activities from a gender mainstreaming perspective

⁷ OCHA (March 2022). [Standard indicators. Central Emergency Response Fund \(CERF\).](#)

⁸ For further examples, see Hillenbrand E, Karim N, Mohanraj P and Wu D. (2015). [Measuring gender-transformative change: A review of literature and promising practices.](#) CARE USA. Working Paper

This section provides an analysis of the extent to which gender is mainstreamed into the objectives, indicators and activities of the 2023 JRP⁹. (Of note, there is some discrepancy between the objectives and indicators which are listed on the webpage under “[Logframe](#)” and what is listed on the webpage under “[Clusters](#)”).¹⁰

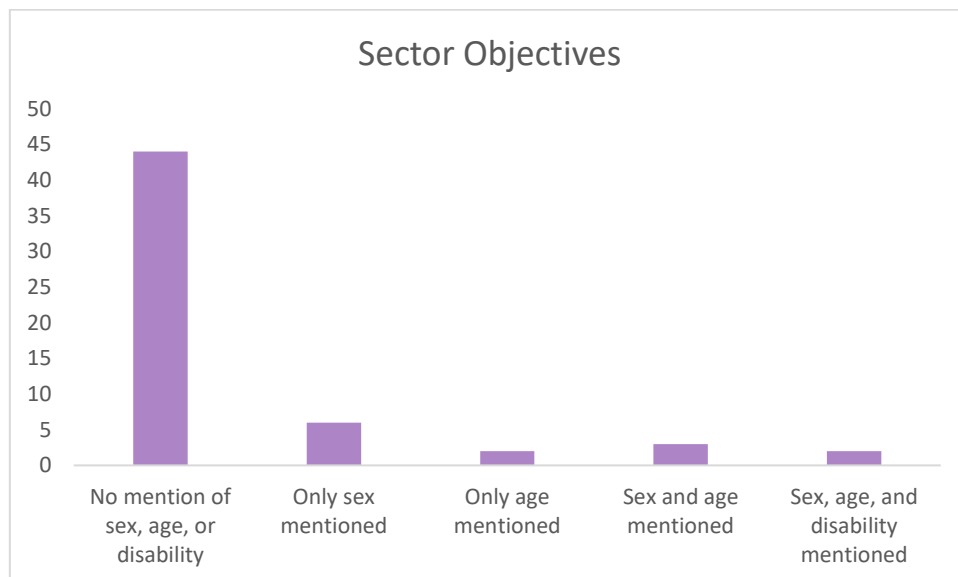
Altogether 59 indicators are included in the 2023 JRP at the objectives level as listed under the logframe section of the website, and 100 targets at the activity level. Both at the objective and activity levels, and all indicators are quantitative only. Whilst all of the indicators for objectives are accompanied by targets, at the activity level, only 100of the stated indicators have targets (55.6 percent).

Limitations The analysis is based on the indicators as included on the 2023 JRP site, rather than what is being collected as MEL data on the ground, as the latter is not publicly available. Thus, it is entirely possible that for example indicators do not specifically mention SADD or SADDD, but that this data is nevertheless being collected by implementers. However, this cannot be verified based on the information that has been made publicly available on the JRP website.

3.1 Sector Objectives and Indicators

A review of the JRP 2023 objectives showed that the majority of the 57 sector objectives were gender blind (44 objectives, or 77.2 percent), with a further six (10.5 percent) mentioning age (with no sex); only two mentioning sex (3.5 percent); three mentioning sex and age (5.3 percent); and a further two (3.5 percent) mentioning sex, age, and disabilities (see Fig 2).

Figure 2: Sector Objectives of JRP 2023



The two sector objectives for education mention age, but not sex, referring to children as an overall category:

⁹ <https://humanitarianaction.info/plan/1143/article/unhcr-rohingya-jrp-online-dashboard>

¹⁰ Although the term “Clusters” is used on the website, it should refer to sectors

Provide safe and equitable availability and access to Myanmar curriculum for Rohingya refugee/FDMN children and support education services for host community children, as required.

and

In order to ensure 100% roll-out of the Myanmar curriculum, support access to quality learning services for Rohingya refugee/FDMN children.

Sex is referenced with respect to women and girls only; none of the sector objectives refer to men, or to persons of all genders. Objectives referencing sex and age all identify particular sub-categories (e.g. 'boys and girls under five, adolescent girls, and pregnant and lactating women' in Health and Nutrition objective 2). The two objective which mention sex, age and disability are protection sector objectives 2 and 4:

Promote a community-based approach to the response and protection mechanisms and facilitate meaningful access to tailored services for persons with specific needs (older persons, persons with disabilities, women and children) with the aim of mitigating exposure to protection risks, strengthening the resilience of communities in order to build capacity for repatriation and reintegration, in Myanmar, as well as by supporting active and effective communication between humanitarian actors and Rohingya refugees/FDMNs

and

Ensure that boys and girls, including adolescents, facing life-threatening risks of abuse, neglect, violence, exploitation, and severe distress have access to well-coordinated and gender- and disability-responsive, child and youth protection services.

Not all of the sector objectives on the JRP website have indicators attached to them, but of the 59 indicators attached to objectives and posted on the website, 20 (33.9 percent) do not refer to people (hence have no disaggregation by sex or other denominators); 23 (39 percent) refer to people, but include no sex disaggregation; three (5.1 percent) have sex disaggregation or are sex specific; seven (11.9 percent) have age disaggregation or are age specific; and six (10.2 percent) mention sex, age and disability disaggregation (Fig. 3), which is the standard promoted by the IASC.

Indicators

As with the sector objectives, where indicators mention people in the aggregate, this is mostly in reference to households, number of staff or Rohingya refugees/Forcibly Displaced Myanmar Nationals (FDMN), for example,

Number of host community individuals participating in disaster risk reduction/natural resource management activities.

All age-specific indicators referenced children, youth, and/or adolescents. In the case of health indicators, age-specific indicators referenced specific age groups (e.g. children under 5). The indicators which specifically include SADDD are in education and in livelihoods and skills development under for example:

% of targeted Rohingya FDMN/refugee and Host community children, adolescents, and youth aged 3 to 24 accessing inclusive and quality learning opportunities (disaggregated by sex, age, and disability)

Where objectives do mention that do mention sex, age, and disability, the indicators are themselves not necessarily stated as being SADDD, as for example with the protection objective mentioned above:

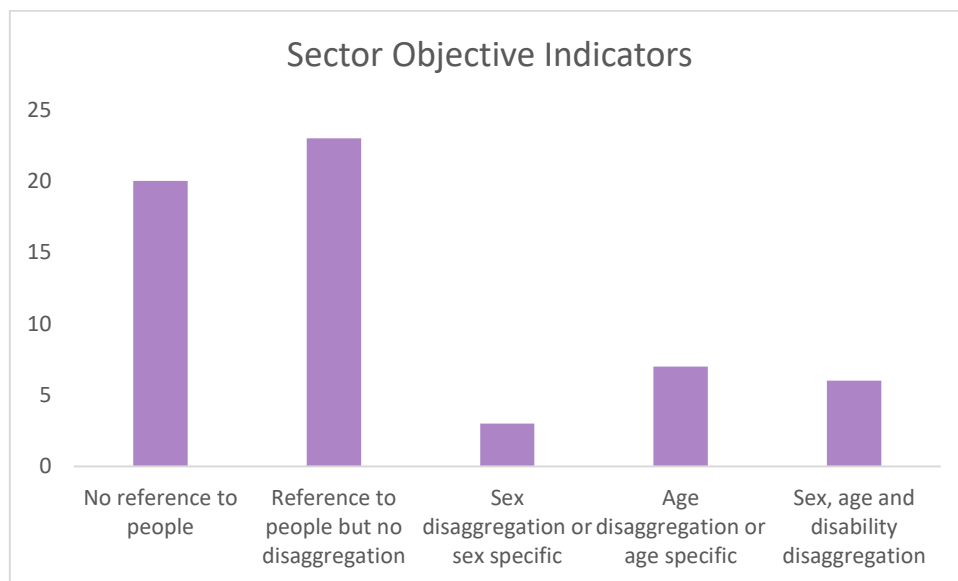
Objective:

Promote a community-based approach to the response, support community protection mechanisms, and facilitate meaningful access to specialized services for persons, such as older persons, persons with disabilities, vulnerable women and children. This is with the aim of mitigating exposure to risks, strengthening the resilience of communities in order to build capacity for return and reintegration in Myanmar, as well as by supporting active and effective communication between humanitarian actors and Rohingya refugees/FDMNs.

Indicators:

- *Number of community-led initiatives to enhance community-based protection mechanisms and participation;*
- *% of refugees that feel safe where they live.*

Figure 3: Sector objective indicators



3.2 Objectives and indicators specified under the sub-section “Clusters”¹¹

On the JRP 2023 website, there is a further set of objectives and indicators in a drop-down menu under the “Cluster” tab . Please note that these do not fully overlap with the Sector Objectives and Indicators presented under the “Logframe” section on the webpage.

¹¹ Please note that even though in the response, the term ‘sectors’ rather than ‘clusters’ is used, the JRP webpage lists objectives and indicators separately under the heading ‘clusters’

3.2.1 Protection

The (General) Protection sector includes the Child Protection and Gender-Based Violence Sub-Sectors, and altogether nine (9) indicators have been included for the three. There are no qualitative or impact indicators for any of the three. However, the indicator “percentage of refugees who feel safe where they live” is the closest to a qualitative indicator in the whole JRP.

Under the protection sector, sex, age, and/or disabilities are mentioned in three out of five sector objectives, with one referencing older persons, persons with disabilities, vulnerable women and children; one referring to boys and girls, including adolescents; and one is focused on gender-based violence (GBV) prevention and response. However, apart from one indicator that uses the percentage of children and adolescents and one indicator that refers to the percentage of GBV survivors, the other indicators do not mention any degree of disaggregation.

Four out of the nine indicators attached the protection objectives refer to persons but include no sex- or other disaggregation. Of the nine, two refer to children as a category and one refers to GBV survivors.

3.2.2.1 Child Protection Sub-Sector (CP-SS)

The objective for the CP-SS (Protection Sector Objective 4) is formulated in a way that is sex- and age-specific:

“Ensure that boys and girls, including adolescents, facing life-threatening risks of abuse, neglect, violence, exploitation, and severe distress have access to well-coordinated and gender- and disability-responsive, child and youth protection services.”

However, the two indicators attached to this objective are age-specific in that they refer to children and adolescents (though one only indirectly through the percentage of camps and host communities reached through child protection initiatives), but neither mention sex-disaggregation.

3.2.1.2 Gender-Based Violence Sub-Sector (GBV-SS)

The objective for the GBV-SS (Protection Sector Objective 5) references gender in the context of GBV, but is neither sex- nor age-disaggregated:

“Enhance access to survivor-centered services by responding to individual needs, preventing, and mitigating GBV risks, and supporting survivors of GBV in the Rohingya refugee/FDMN camps and targeted areas in host communities.”

Similarly, the indicator does not mention sex- or age-disaggregation but rather uses the collective term GBV survivors.

3.2.2 Site Management and Site Development (SMSD)

Sex, age, and/or disabilities are not mentioned in any of the three objectives of the SMSD sector, nor do any of the 11 indicators identified to track progress against sector objectives refer to them. There

is only one indicator, which is quantitative, that refers to persons but this does not incorporate sex- or other disaggregation.

3.2.3 [Food security](#)

No references are made to gender, age, and/or disabilities in any of the four objectives, nor are any of the six indicators disaggregated by sex or other denominators, nor are they gender specific. All six indicators are quantitative and use the aggregate term 'household' or 'vulnerable household' as the only measuring unit, such as the first indicator for the first objective:

Percentage of refugee households using a consumption-based coping strategy.

3.2.4 [Education](#)

Gender or disabilities are not mentioned in any of the three objectives, though two are age-specific in that they refer to children:

Objective 1: Provide safe and equitable availability and access to Myanmar curriculum for Rohingya refugee/FDMN children and support education services for host community children, as required.

Objective 2: In order to ensure 100% roll-out of the Myanmar curriculum, support access to quality learning services for Rohingya refugee/FDMN children.

All the four indicators accompanying the three objectives are quantitative; of the four, one incorporates disaggregation by sex, age and disability; one incorporates disaggregation by sex and age; one indicator references girls' education; and one incorporates no disaggregation ().

% of Teachers/ Facilitators, Master Trainers and Teacher Educators who demonstrated improved teaching skills on pedagogy, subject matter and assessment (second indicator for objective 1)

3.2.5 [Health](#)

Gender, age, and/or disabilities are not mentioned in any of the three objectives of the health sector, nor do any of the sector's six indicators refer to them, either. (One health sector objective has no indicator). None of the indicators incorporate disaggregation by, or explicitly refer to gender, age, and/or disabilities. However, one out of the six indicators is age-specific (deaths per live births) and one indicator contributes to the tracking of changes in gender equality (maternal mortality rate).

3.2.6 [Nutrition](#)

Of the three nutrition sector objectives, one mentions "boys and girls, adolescent girls and pregnant and lactating women"; one mentions "boys and girls and pregnant and lactating women"; and the third does not mention either gender, age, or disability.

Of the six nutrition sector indicators, five refer to persons; and none incorporate sex-disaggregation. (One does not refer to persons: “percentage of partners who submitted the 5W/monthly report in a timely manner using harmonised tools”). Two indicators are age specific – one for children, one for infants.

3.2.7 Shelter/Non-Food Items (NFI)

Gender, age, and/or disabilities are not mentioned in either of the two sector objectives. While all of the six indicators refer to people, all use the aggregate household level and none incorporate any disaggregation, such as by female- or male-led households.

3.2.8 Water, Sanitation and Hygiene (WASH)

The WASH sector has altogether three objectives, none of which make references to gender, age, and/or disabilities. Of the six indicators, one is specifically focused on tracking contribution to gender equality (“percentage of women and girls accessing menstrual hygiene material according to WASH Sector standards”). Of the remaining five, one indicator refers to the percentage of people, but with no disaggregation, whereas the remaining four do not refer to people (e.g. “percentage of water quality tests meeting minimum water quality standards at HH level.”)

3.2.9 Emergency telecommunications

Gender, age, and/or disabilities are not mentioned in any of the three objectives, and no indicators are provided for the sector.

3.2.10 Coordination

Gender, age, and/or disabilities are not mentioned in any of the five objectives, and no indicators are provided for coordination.

3.2.11 Livelihoods and Skills Development (LSDS)

Gender, age, and/or disabilities are not mentioned in any of the three objectives, but nonetheless all five indicators are disaggregated by sex, age, and disabilities, making this the only sector to do so consistently. Examples include:

% of targeted refugees completed comprehensive vocational training - successful completion and receipt of certification (at least once, based on equivalent hours per formally recognized curriculum/ certification programs) (gender, age and disability-disaggregated) (indicator for objective 1)

% of targeted refugees earning incentives / daily volunteer allowances from vocational skills utilization within LSDS (gender, age and disability-disaggregated)” (first indicator for objective 2)

3.2.12 Bhasan Char Response

Of the 20 objectives listed for the response in Bhasan Char:

- One mentions older persons, persons with disabilities, vulnerable women and children, protection objective 2:

Promote a community-based approach to the response, support community protection mechanisms, and facilitate meaningful access to specialized services for persons, such as older persons, persons with disabilities, vulnerable women and children. This is with the aim of mitigating exposure to risks, and strengthening the resilience of communities in order to build capacity for return and reintegration in Myanmar.

- Three mention children (in protection and education, with one of the education indicators specifically referencing girls' education), e.g.

Education: 1. Provide learning opportunities for Rohingya refugee/FDMN children, in particular through the rollout of the Myanmar Curriculum in the Myanmar Language.

Education: 2. Support access to learning opportunities with particular focus on girls' education, in an enabling environment for Rohingya refugee/FDMN children.

- One mentions GBV (protection):

Protection: 4. Enhance access to survivor-centred services by responding to individual needs, preventing, and mitigating GBV risks, and supporting survivors of GBV.

- One mentions boys and girls under five, adolescent girls, and pregnant and lactating women (health and nutrition):

Health and Nutrition: 2. Ensure that all boys and girls under five, adolescent girls, and pregnant and lactating women can access life-saving, gender-responsive, and inclusive curative and preventive essential nutrition services, and can use the recommended maternal and child feeding practices on Bhasan Char.

No indicators are publicly available for the Bhasan Char response.

3.3 Activity indicators and targets

A final level of analysis was applied to the activity indicators of which 100 include targets, while the target was pending for 80 (altogether, the 2023 JRP is accompanied by 180 activity level indicators). All of the activity-level indicators are quantitative (numeric), and no qualitative indicators are articulated for the activities.

However, four of the quantitative indicators under GBV, education, health, and protection related specifically to gender norm efforts, , but these only measure activity results, i.e. the number of people attending gender norm change training rather than the degree of change.

Of the 100 indicators with targets,

- 64 relate to people, but do not mention sex- or other disaggregation,
- Ten specifically mention sex- and other disaggregation (e.g. age, disability), all of which were under the protection sector;
- A further 3 specify women/girls in nutrition, health, and WASH sectors; and
- 11 specify infants, child, adolescents, but are not explicitly sex-disaggregated (in the education, nutrition, health, and protection sectors).

4. Conclusions

Indicators are essential for ensuring that humanitarian actions in the context of the Rohingya refugee crisis in Cox's Bazar contribute to gender equality and women's empowerment, enabling measurement of progress on gender issues and ensuring accountability of humanitarian actors to core gender equality commitments. Developing relevant, context-specific indicators – both quantitative and qualitative, and at the lower and higher levels – to track progress is therefore an essential part of planning and implementing the Joint Response Plan, with ownership across the sectors to ensuring that the response is not only gender sensitive but contributes to transformative changes in gender equality and thereby to more sustainable results in the response.

The review of the 2023 JRP objectives, indicators and targets shows that there is significant room for improvement in integrating gender equality perspectives into these. On the whole, the review shows that:

- There is a strong focus on quantitative (numeric) indicators - no qualitative indicators are included for the 2023 JRP;
- While many of the objectives, indicators and targets make references to people, the majority are gender blind, using aggregate terms such as refugees/FDMN or households;
- The JRP 2023 includes some objectives, indicators and targets that pursue a gender responsive perspective e.g. through integration of SADDD, but none truly have a focus on, or track progress on gender transformative results;
- Where there are activities that focus on transformative norm change, the indicators fall short of tracking progress in transforming gender norms (a higher level objective), and pertain only to numbers of people attending programme activities, which does not amount to measuring changes in gender equality results;
- There is considerable scope for having more and better higher-level indicators and targets, as opposed to lower level activity-focused ones;
- The integration of SADDD- and gender responsive terminology, where present, was often integrated unevenly and not followed through at all levels. For example, it may have been present at the objective level but not at the indicator level, or vice-versa;
- No objectives, indicators or targets are specifically focused on promoting or tracking gender equality (though some do contribute to it) or women's empowerment;
- There is no mention of gender diverse persons or persons of diverse sexual orientations, gender identities and expressions, and sex characteristics (SOGIESC) more broadly;
- Further, there is no mention of men (beyond boys), neither in terms of engaging with them as holders of patriarchal norms and power and thus gatekeepers of women's empowerment, nor in terms of men's particular gendered vulnerabilities, such as forced recruitment; and



- There are missed opportunities in terms of capturing more 'downstream' gendered results, for example of measuring the gendered results of shelter, WASH, or SMSD activities.
- While the high prevalence of GAM 4 projects (91 percent) and GAM 3 (nine percent) may not reflect the realities of their implementation on the ground, on the positive side, this showed that Appealing Partners have embraced the importance of integrating gender and age perspectives into project design. This has yet to be integrated to the same degree in JRP objectives and indicators.