

2023

# Livelihoods and Skills Development Sector Lessons Learned



**LIVELIHOODS**  
SKILLS DEVELOPMENT  
**SECTOR**

**Introduction:**

The Livelihoods and Skills Development Sector, operating within the framework of the 'Government of Bangladesh – United Nations Framework on Skills Development for Rohingya refugees/FDMNs and Host Communities', strives to address the critical issue of sustainable livelihoods for Rohingya refugees and host communities in Bangladesh. With the endorsement of the framework in August 2022, the Sector has been diligently working towards building the skills and capacities of Rohingya refugees, aligning them with the available livelihood opportunities in Rakhine State. The ultimate goal remains to support voluntary and sustainable repatriation to Myanmar when conditions permit.

Throughout 2023, amidst challenges and successes, the Sector and its partners have endeavored to respond comprehensively to the needs of refugees. Emphasizing the importance of skills-building, sector partners significantly scaled up pre-vocational and vocational skills training in 2023. In the meantime, the Sector has facilitated access to livelihood opportunities by enabling refugees to apply their acquired skills through volunteer engagement within the Sector or by fostering partnerships with relevant sectors and partners. However volunteer positions remain limited and only 50% of the graduates in 2023 were placed in volunteer work or other income generating activities.

Apart from the Refugee Community (RC), the Sector has coordinated the efforts from partners in the diversified and sustainable livelihoods projects in the affected Host Communities (HCs) of Ukhiya and Teknaf. Despite these efforts, a persistently high unemployment rate exists, particularly among youth and women in the host communities. In response, the Sector has redirected its focus towards developing sustainable employment and entrepreneurship-oriented skills that are recognized, certified, and market-driven. Furthermore, in close collaboration with the Government, the Sector partners are expanding its support to vulnerable Bangladeshi households in Ukhiya and Teknaf through vocational skills training, enhancing institutional mechanisms, and strengthening the skills of training providers.

As we reflect on the lessons learned through case studies from the implementation of activities in 2023, it is imperative to acknowledge the ongoing commitment and collaboration of all partners involved. Moving forward into 2024, the Sector remains dedicated to bolstering access to economic opportunities, strengthen resilience of both refugee and host communities, enhancing market linkages within the camps, and ensuring sustainability in livelihood interventions. Through collective efforts and adaptive strategies, LSDS endeavors to create lasting impacts and improve the lives of Rohingya refugees and host communities alike. The Sector appreciates all the efforts from the partners and ISCG to make this lessons learned exercise come into existence.

**Acknowledgement:**

The Sector has developed the document with the inputs provided by the participating partner organizations. The Sector appreciates the collaboration and support from the relevant stakeholders in bringing this useful documents to light.

### Overview of the Sector in 2023

Sector Objectives	Links to Strategic Objectives
1. Support skills and capacity building of Rohingya refugees that can support their sustainable reintegration in Myanmar	SO1, SO2 ,SO5
2. Support Rohingya Refugees in utilization of gained transferable vocational skills within existing camps and humanitarian sector response needs/areas	SO1, SO2 ,SO5
3. Support vulnerable host communities in diversified vocational skills development and sustainable livelihoods options	SO1, SO2 , SO4, SO5

### Key priorities in 2023

- In view of the protracted nature of the Rohingya response, there was a need to establish LSDS to strengthening connection between education and skills development and empower refugees to utilize the life and vocational skills gained through trainings.
- To align with the objectives of the GoB/UN Framework on Skills Development for Rohingya Refugees and Host Communities
- Linkages to other Sectors: **FSS, Education Sector, Protection Sector, SMSD, Shelter, Wash.**

### Appealing Partners in 2023

- 26 (6 UN agencies, 12 INGOs, 8 NNGOs)

## Key Achievements from January - December 2023:<sup>1</sup>

### Refugee Community:

#### Activity

- + Vocational skills training – HC/LC & RC
- + Unconditional Cash (off-farm) – HC/LC
- + Technical skills training - HC/LC & RC
- + Soft Skills – HC/LC & RC
- + Services (off-farm) – HC /LC
- + Off-farm activities - utilization of the vocational skills within the camps through LSIDS IPs response and daily volunteering allowance
- + Off-farm activities - utilization of the vocational skills within HC and LC
- + Off-farm activities – referral of semi-skilled and skilled volunteers after the vocation training is provided by LSIDS to other Sectors’ response (WASH, Health, Shelter/SCCCM, etc.)
- + Input/tools to skill training graduates in camps for IGA/ volunteers engagement
- + Conditional Cash (off-farm) – HC/LC & RC

# 21,916



### Reached Beneficiaries

 **5,287**

Male (18-59) reached

 **15,508**

Female (18-59) reached

 **537**

Elderly male (60+) reached

 **573**

Elderly female (60+) reached

 **11**

Individuals with unknown s...

### Host community:

#### Activity

- + Vocational skills training – HC/LC & RC
- + Unconditional Cash (off-farm) – HC/LC
- + Technical skills training - HC/LC & RC
- + Soft Skills – HC/LC & RC
- + Services (off-farm) – HC /LC
- + Off-farm activities - utilization of the vocational skills within HC and LC
- + Conditional Cash (off-farm) – HC/LC & RC
- + Awareness Raising

# 10,678



### Reached Beneficiaries

 **LSDS 38**

Male (18-59) reached

 **6,782**

Female (18-59) reached

 **27**

Elderly male (60+) reached

 **19**

Elderly female (60+) reached

 **2,712**

Individuals with unknown s...

<sup>1</sup> \*\*\* The numbers are based on the 5W reporting to LSIDS by partner organizations reporting against JRP 2023.

# Partners' Case Studies 2023



## Programme Partner: Action Against Hunger/Action Contre la Faim (ACF)

### HIGHLIGHTS

- A total of 66 male beneficiaries were reached
- Project Location: Sabrang union, Teknaf, Cox's Bazar

### Key Achievements

- 21 host community members received Masonry training.
- 20 host community members received Mobile Phone Repairing training
- 20 host community members received Electrical House Wiring training
- 5 host community members received AC/Refrigerator Technician training

### Empowering Nurul Through Skills Development

Nurul Islam, hailing from the coastal area of Sabrang union in Teknaf Upazila, Cox's Bazar district, faced formidable challenges due to poverty. Despite his passion for electronics, lack of formal training limited his opportunities for economic advancement. In July 2023, Nurul's fortunes changed when ACF initiated a youth empowerment project in Sabrang Area. Through the 'Shah Porir Dwip Bazarpara Jubo Unnoyon Club,' he gained access to vital support and resources. Engaging in various social development activities and receiving training in basic electronics, Nurul found a pathway out of poverty. With newfound skills and tools, he transitioned from a day laborer to a respected electrician, doubling his income to 8,000 Taka monthly.

Nurul's transformation not only reduced his reliance on risky labor-based activities but also empowered him to contribute positively to his community. His success story serves as a beacon of hope and inspiration for others facing similar challenges. Now, equipped with both economic stability and social support, Nurul dreams of opening his own shop. This aspiration, once distant, now feels achievable, thanks to the project's comprehensive assistance. Nurul Islam's journey exemplifies the power of targeted interventions and community support in breaking the cycle of poverty. Through his determination and the assistance provided by the youth empowerment project, he has not only transformed his own life but also become a catalyst for positive change in his community.



*“Prior to the training, I did not know the appropriate usage of electric tools, but I know now. I do not need to do other labor-based activities and I can call myself an electrician now. It makes me feel empowered and respected.”*

*Nurul learns bookkeeping practices to support his business. Photo© ACF/Rozina Akter*

**Programme Partner: United Nations High Commission for Refugee (UNHCR)**  
**Implementing Partner: BRAC**

## HIGHLIGHTS

- A total of 1,109 participants were reached in 2023 with training; 609 were women (55%) and 500 of them were men (45%).
- This included 8 participants with disabilities.
- BRAC livelihoods and skills development program reached 10 Rohingya camps in Ukhiya and Teknaf – Camps 1E, 2W, 3, 4 Extension, 7, 8E, 9, 14, 16, and 25

## Key Achievements

- Youths from the Rohingya community received training in five distinct trades, including Sewing Machine Operation, Electrician (Building), Solar (PV) System Installation and Maintenance, Agricultural Crop Production, and Community Health.
- The assessment involved 543 participants, of whom 91% were competent.
- A total of 320 participants were employed for wage earning (placed as volunteers in the camps) or were self-employed following the successful completion of 360 hours of skills training.

## Empowering Refugee Women and Ensuring Sustainable Livelihoods through Skills Development Training: A Case Study of Rani Bala

Rani Bala's narrative embodies resilience and defiance against societal constraints. Fleeing Myanmar in 2017, she confronted the harsh realities of life in the Kutupalong refugee camp. Following her father's demise, Rani, at just 20 years old, embraced the responsibility of providing for her family. Yet, her aspirations faced relentless opposition due to her status as a Hindu minority woman. Despite familial discouragement and societal norms dictating women remain confined to domestic roles, Rani's determination drove her towards vocational training. Enrolling in BRAC's Sewing Machine Operation course marked a pivotal moment in Rani's journey. Excelling in her studies, she defied expectations and shattered stereotypes. Through sheer perseverance, Rani secured a volunteer position with an NGO, elevating her family from financial instability to a semblance of stability. Her story transcends personal triumph; it symbolizes the transformative power of education and opportunity. Rani envisions a future where women like her are revered for their contributions, challenging entrenched misconceptions within her community. The UNHCR – BRAC vocational training initiatives have not only empowered Rani but have also catalyzed a ripple effect of change, amplifying the voices of refugee women like her on a broader scale.



*"Women who work hard can accomplish anything." However, my community's people are unaware of it. They think women should stay at home and take care of the family while only men should work.*

*Unfortunately, there are no wage earners in my family. Through the BRAC livelihoods and skills development program, I succeeded in breaking societal norms."*

*Rani Bala working with a sewing machine. Photo© Israt Jahan Farah, Project Officer, BRAC.*

**Programme Partner: United Nations High Commission for Refugee (UNHCR)  
Implementing Partner: Center for Natural Resource Studies (CNRS)**

## HIGHLIGHTS

- The total number of beneficiaries reached with trainings is 869, with 470 being female (54%) and 399 being male (45.9%).
- Six trainees with disabilities were enrolled, with four being male and two being female. CNRS introduced portable skills development programs at Camp 21 (Chakmarkul), Camp 26 (Nayapara), and Camp 27 (Jadimura) in Teknaf Upazila.

## Key Achievements

- CNRS offered portable skills development training to Rohingya refugee youth aged 18 to 24. Training trades included Agriculture Crop Production (ACP), Community Health Worker (CHW), Concreter, Solar (PV) System Installation and Maintenance, and Aid to Midwifery and Nursing (Caregiving). 54% of the trainees enrolled in the program were female.
- CNRS has three training centers, two of which are newly established, with one being the largest training center located in the refugee camps in Cox's Bazar.
- 233 trainees were placed in various service-providing Organizations within the refugee camps, constituting 26.8% of the total enrolled trainees.

## From Housewife to Healthcare Hero: Asiya Khatun's Transformative Journey

Asiya Khatun, a 23-year-old Rohingya Refugee woman, has emerged as a beacon of inspiration following her completion of a 360-hour Community Health Worker (CHW) training program led by the Center for Natural Resource Studies (CNRS). Transitioning from a housewife to an employed individual marks a significant milestone in her life's trajectory. Initially grappling with low self-esteem and limited English proficiency, Asiya found solace in her husband's unwavering support, propelling her towards progress. Throughout the training, Asiya confronted various challenges, including societal biases and family health issues. However, her resilience and dedication enabled her to master an array of medical skills and communication protocols. Subsequently, she secured employment as a medical distributor at Gonoshasthaya Kendra, assuming the role of a technical assistant at CNRS. Asiya's remarkable journey serves as a catalyst for positive change within her community. Her newfound financial independence not only supports her family but also garners respect from her peers. Moreover, Asiya's story has inspired other Rohingya women to enroll in similar training programs, catalyzing empowerment and fostering societal advancement. In her steadfast pursuit of personal and communal growth, Asiya embodies resilience, determination, and the transformative power of education and opportunity..



*"I never imagined I could become someone like this. I am a changed person now because of the CHW training received from UNHCR – CNRS. Anything is achievable with determination."*

*Asiya Khatun assisting a community member with her knowledge gained from CHW. Photo © CNRS/Anabil Khisa*



**Programme Partner: Danish Refugee Council (DRC)**  
**Implementing Partner: Environment and Social Development Organization (ESDO)**

## HIGHLIGHTS

- The total number of beneficiaries reached was 100(50 women and 50 men)
- Activity-wise, the total number of beneficiaries reached included:  
 Doormats-50 beneficiaries women-50);  
 Solar panel repairing-50 beneficiaries (men-50)

## Key Achievements

- Provided 16-day long skills development training consisting of 12 sessions on making household's usable items (doormats) from garments jhoot waste to 50 women at host community (Palongkhali-25 and Jaliapalong-25)
- Provided 16-day long skills development training consisting of 10 sessions on solar panels repairing and maintenance for 50 Rohingya men at 2 Camps (Camp5: 25 beneficiaries and Camp 8E: 25 beneficiaries)
- Production of plastic chips through shredding machine: engaged CfW: 20 beneficiaries in Patabari, Rajapalong (host)

## A Brighter Future for Ms. Chunu Rani Chakma and Her Family

Ms. Chunu Rani Chakma, a 23-year-old married woman hailing from Telkhola, an underprivileged village in Palongkhali union of Ukhiya, faced immense socio-economic challenges, living hand-to-mouth with her school-going son. However, her fortunes changed when DRC, in collaboration with implementing partner ESDO, provided her with a 16-day hands-on skills training program. This initiative equipped her with the expertise to create doormats using garment jhoot waste, supported by essential resources such as the jhoot material and a handloom machine. With determination and newly acquired skills, Ms. Chakma began producing doormats, swiftly finding a market for her products within her locality and nearby markets. Selling 70 doormats at . 65 Taka per piece, she earned 4,550 Taka, a significant sum for her vulnerable family. Expressing her gratitude towards DRC and ESDO, she highlighted how this training transformed her into an earning member, enabling her to support her family and invest in her children's education. Ms. Chakma's success story underscores the transformative impact of skill-building initiatives in empowering marginalized individuals and communities. With a steadfast commitment to her newfound craft, she envisions a brighter future for herself and her family, affirming her determination to continue this endeavor.



*"I am very grateful to DRC and ESDO for this training and now I am an earning member of our family. I will continue this task in future."*

*Ms. Chunu Rani Chakma (23), Telkhola, 6 No. ward, Palongkhali union, Ukhiya. Photo: Md. Abdul Hai Khan, DRC*

## Program Partner: Friends In Village Development Bangladesh (FIVDB)

### HIGHLIGHTS

- 40 females have received training in tailoring, food processing and handicrafts including basic literacy, numeracy skills and startup capital
- 10 older persons have received cash stipends to continue their businesses
- The project covered wards 4,5,6,7,8 of Nhila Union, Teknaf Cox's Bazar

### Key Achievements

- 40 vulnerable women and young girls received training on skills development
- 40 individuals in the host communities were supported with start-up capital for commencing their own planned small businesses/enterprises
- 10 households (with older persons as beneficiaries) received cash support to smoothly operate their businesses

### Rupa's Empowering Entrepreneurship Journey

Rupa Akter, a 20-year-old resident of West Pankahli, Nhila, Cox's Bazar, faced significant financial challenges in supporting her large family of 10 members. Despite these hardships, Rupa harbored a deep-seated passion for tailoring since her childhood, aspiring to establish a successful business while also providing financial support to her family. Her aspirations found a pathway to realization through her association with FIVDB starting in 2023.

FIVDB provided Rupa with a comprehensive training program encompassing tailoring, food processing, handicrafts, as well as business development, literacy, and numeracy skills. Moreover, she received an investment grant that served as the catalyst for her entrepreneurial journey. With determination and newly acquired skills, Rupa launched her own tailoring business, thereby fulfilling her long-held dreams.

Rupa's journey epitomizes the transformative impact of initiatives like FIVDB's projects in rural communities. By nurturing individuals' skills and providing them with the necessary financial support, such programs empower people like Rupa to translate their passions into sustainable livelihoods. Rupa's success not only signifies her personal achievement but also serves as an inspiration for others in similar circumstances, showcasing the potential for positive change and economic empowerment in rural areas..



*"I received financial aid of 12 thousand Taka from FIVDB, which I invested in acquiring a sewing machine. This support brought happiness and marked the beginning of a new chapter in my life and developed my entrepreneurship and decision-making skill more efficiently. I want to expand my business further and include other unemployed girls into my business so that they can also support their families in need and become empowered in life."*

*Rupa Akter making cloth with her sewing machine. Photo© FIVDB staff*

## Programme Partner: International Organization for Migration (IOM)

### Implementing Partner: Prottiyashi, SHED

#### HIGHLIGHTS

- 932 (504 women, 428 male) received vocational skills development training in Camp 11, 15, 20 Ext and 24)
- 1,350 beneficiaries (1,174 female, 176 male) received business development and non-formal technical skills training from host and local communities
- 442 beneficiaries (385 women, 57 men) received cash support to start business from host and local communities

#### Key Achievements

- 269 vocational training beneficiaries become competent from the independent assessment
- 75 beneficiaries who received vocational training started wage earning as Community Health Workers
- 154 beneficiaries who received vocational training started self-employment and began earning their own income

#### Empowering a Marginalized Individual to Become a Health Volunteer

Noor Kolima, a young Rohingya woman residing in a camp in Cox's Bazar, Bangladesh, faced significant challenges after fleeing Myanmar with only a Class 3 education. Despite her limited formal schooling, her aspirations to support her husband and family remained strong. However, opportunities were scarce until Prottiyashi, with the support of IOM, intervened by offering vocational training within her camp.

Opting for the Community Health Worker program, Noor Kolima embarked on a comprehensive training journey. Through this initiative, she acquired a diverse skill set, including first aid, maintaining medical standards, managing health records, and monitoring household health status. Graduating from the training, she commenced volunteering with the World Health Organization (WHO), engaging in educating caregivers about vaccination practices for infants.

Noor Kolima's dedication and newfound expertise have earned her respect within her community. Her role as a primary health counselor not only contributes to community well-being but also serves as a beacon of hope for other women in similar circumstances. By actively encouraging others to participate in skill development programs, she exemplifies the transformative potential of such initiatives in empowering marginalized individuals and fostering community development. Noor Kolima's journey underscores the resilience and determination of Rohingya women and the positive impact of accessible vocational training opportunities.



*“I want to thank Prottiyashi and IOM for supporting my dream to achieve financial independence by acquiring a new skill which I could apply for the greater benefit of my community. Now I can guide my community especially mothers with newborn babies for better health and ensure their access to primary health care when necessary.”*

*Noor Kolima in a health counseling session. Photo© Prottiyashi*

## Programme Partner: United Nations High Commission for Refugee (UNHCR) Implementing Partner: NGO Forum

### HIGHLIGHTS

- In 2023, a total of 1,326 learners (57% female and 43% male) have been enrolled in five different trades in 8 camps - KTP RC, NYP RC, Camps 2E, 2W, 4 Ext., 5, 17, and 26.
- 128 people with disabilities (58% women) participated in vocational training programs

### Key Achievements

- 756 Rohingya refugees completed level-1 skills training in five different trades: Sewing Machine Operation, Electrician (Building), Solar (PV) System Installation and Maintenance, Concreter and Bakery and Pastry Staff, out of them 616 passed the final assessment
- 570 Rohingya refugees were enrolled in the new batch
- UNHCR established 8 skills development training centers and 4 production centers to enhance the skills of Rohingya youths

### Empowering Resilience: Halima's Journey from Struggle to Success

Noor Halima, a resilient 23-year-old residing in Kutupalong Registered Camp in Cox's Bazar, exemplifies overcoming formidable challenges. Born into a family displaced from Myanmar in 1992, she endured early hardships, especially after her husband deserted her during pregnancy, leaving her to support her unborn child alongside her mother and four siblings.

Facing financial strain due to lack of skills and livelihoods opportunities, Noor Halima's fortunes changed upon enrollment into a UNHCR/NGO Forum skill training programme. With unwavering determination, she successfully completed the Sewing Machine Operation course, eager to enhance her abilities.

Securing a job at taUNHCR's production center managed by its partner NGO Forum, Noor Halima experienced a life-altering transformation. This opportunity provided her with the means to provide her family with essentials like warm clothing and nutritious food. Grateful for the support and the valuable training offered, she emphasized the added benefit of a daycare center at the production facility, allowing her to work without concerns about childcare.

Noor Halima's journey epitomizes resilience and the empowering potential of skill training. Her story highlights how acquiring new skills can lead to meaningful employment, financial stability, and an improved quality of life. Through her perseverance, she showcases the profound impact of seizing opportunities and leveraging education to overcome adversity.



*"I am happily working and providing for the essential expenses of my family."*

Picture: Halima's happy moment with her son  
Photo© Mitaly Islam

## Programme Partner: UN Women

### Implementing Partners: ActionAid Bangladesh, BRAC and Oxfam

#### HIGHLIGHTS

- A total of 4,317 women (3,167 Rohingya women and 1,150 host women), including 48 persons with disabilities and 20 transgender people, received informal livelihood training on tailoring, motor driving, handicraft and beauty parlour through the 5 Multi-Purpose Women's Center (5 MPWCs in Camp 3, 4, 4ext, 5, 18 and 3 MPWCs in Ukhiya and Teknaf host, and Cox's Bazar Sadar local community)

#### Key Achievements

- 1,035 host community women have achieved enhanced economic security because of income-generating activities through participation in income-generating activities facilitated by the project. Notably, 1,035 women generated an average monthly income of 4,000 Taka through small businesses such as beauty parlour, tailoring, handicraft in 2023

#### A tale of women's empowerment in Cox's Bazar

In Teknaf, Cox's Bazar, Hasina Begum has transformed her life and community by starting a successful grocery shop, aided by UN Women's Multi-purpose Women's Centre (MPWC), managed by Oxfam and funded by the Swedish International Development Cooperation Agency (SIDA). Despite facing limited access to services and opportunities, Hasina's business now earns 12,000-15,000 BDT (108-135 USD) monthly, enabling her to support her children's education. Hasina's influence extends beyond her business. She actively prevents child marriages, raises awareness about dowry and drug issues, and leads community infrastructure projects. Her leadership and economic independence have earned her respect in her community.

Hasina was part of 822 women who received financial and planning support from the MPWC. These centers offer a comprehensive range of services, including leadership training, livelihoods, life skills, psychosocial support, sexual and reproductive health services, and childcare. Since 2018, UN Women has supported eight women's centers, assisting both Rohingya and host communities. In 2023 alone, these centers provided lifesaving information to 119,555 women and girls, livelihood training to 4,721, and educational opportunities to 510. Hasina's story illustrates the transformative power of MPWCs, highlighting the importance of supporting women's empowerment for broader social change.



*"I am thrilled as I can now financially support my family, ensuring my two daughters and son can go to school. My goal is to nurture them into well-educated and compassionate individuals for the future," shared Hasina.*

*A Tale of Women's Empowerment. Photo© Courtesy of Oxfam Bangladesh*

## Programme Partner: United Nations Population Fund Implementing Partners: Mukti Cox's Bazar and GUK

### HIGHLIGHTS

- 3,712 women and adolescent girls were trained, including 89 women with disabilities
- Participants lived in Camps: 1W, 11, 12, 13, 15 and 19
- Host Community members also benefitted in Ukhiya, Teknaf, Cox's Bazar Sadar, and Moheshkhali

### Key Achievements

- 2,050 adolescents (Host: 1,200 / Camps: 850) and 2,112 female caregivers (Host: 1,200 / Camps: 912) of adolescent age enrolled in a livelihood programme focusing on sewing reusable sanitary pads
- 1,600 women and adolescent girls (89 persons with disabilities) from camps enrolled in a livelihood programme focused on mosquito net making, tailoring, and handicraft production
- 8 Adolescent and Youth Centers and 3 Women-Led Community Centers are operating to provide a safe space for young people, women and men to gather, socialize and learn life and livelihood skills together

### Sewing Dreams: From Tailoring Reusable Pads to Self-Reliance

Nur Begum, a 40-year-old widow from a rural village in Bangladesh, faced immense challenges following her husband's passing, leaving her with seven daughters to support. With limited education and skills, she resorted to working as a maid to make ends meet. However, her life took a positive turn when she encountered UNFPA-supported life skills training opportunities.

Determined to break the cycle of poverty and provide a better future for her daughters, Nur enrolled in self-reliance training sessions. Learning to tailor reusable menstrual pads not only provided her with a source of income but also alleviated the financial burden of menstrual products for her family. Empowered by the training and information on gender-based violence, sexual and reproductive health, and parenting adolescents, Nur emerged as a financially and emotionally independent woman.

Recognizing the importance of education and skills development for women and girls, Nur now plans to open a small tailoring business in her village. Through her resilience and determination, she has become an inspiration and advocate for women's economic empowerment and self-reliance in her community. Nur's story exemplifies the transformative impact of empowering women with skills and knowledge, enabling them to overcome adversity and thrive against all odds.



*Nur encourages girls to pursue education, challenge societal norms, and strive for self-reliance. The widowed woman's determination and resilience have become a beacon of hope for women facing similar challenges.*

*Nur Begum with her Sewing Machine. Photo© Mukti Cox's Bazar for UNFPA*

## Challenges and areas of improvement

Some of the key challenges that were common to the partners in implementing their projects in 2023 are depicted below:

### Challenges pertaining to Refugee Community:

- The low literacy levels amongst the Rohingya population of working age continued to be a barrier to the vocational skills training program. Since early 2024, the LSDS rolled out the Accelerated Adult Learning (AAL) course designed by UNESCO to address this issue by integrating basic literacy, functional literacy for English, Burmese, and numeracy with an introduction to concerned vocational and livelihood skills and vocabulary, as well as the integration of soft and life skills for the adult learner group. Successful implementation of AAL will increase the number of eligible beneficiaries for Vocational Training in the Camps. It is imperative to further expand the AAL, not only in preparation for vocational skills training, but also as an essential life skill for the entire refugee community.
- A large number of participants, especially female youth, experienced challenges to engage in wage employment because of social, family, and religious constraints. Local influencers were therefore involved by some partners to sensitize community and encourage them to participate in the program.
- An increase in camp unrest and security issues are making beneficiaries scared to join training programmes. As a self-protection mechanism, some have decided to stay in their shelters. Organised groups increased criminal activities in the camps, especially targeting male refugees. The intensification in incidents of abductions, kidnapping, robbery, and drug smuggling continue to pose serious challenges to safety and security for refugees.
- Trainee dropout was a major challenge during skills development trainings. Early marriage, internal migration, relocation, social and family barriers, as well as security, are some of the reasons contributing to drop-outs. Partner organizations' staff visited trainees' shelters and provided counseling to both trainees and parents.
- Maintaining a steady supply chain with backward and forward market linkages was challenging in the camps due to policy restrictions. The Sector will continue engaging with the Government of Bangladesh to advocate for enhanced market linkages of camp based production activities, which would create opportunities for Rohingya and Host communities.
- The number of LSDS vocational training courses and utilization of acquired skills are limited within the camps. There is a need to advocate for the inclusion of additional professional courses in order to prevent the over-saturation of similar skill sets within the refugee community.
- Facing a reduction in donor funding, partners may increase engagement with local/national Women Led Organizations/Women Rights Organizations to strengthen local capacity and ensure the sustainability of project activities

### Challenges Pertaining to Host Community:

- Some of the interested youths were not able to enrol into certain training courses due to the absence of NID and Class 8 documents (particular example was given for the motor driving course). To address this issue, the partners are encouraged to implement an alternative verification process through community endorsements and collaboration with local authorities to validate the identities and educational backgrounds of interested youths.
- Some interested member of the Host Community provided invalid NID or Birth Registration

Certificate. Following the online verification of necessary documents, those individuals were excluded from the youth club (targeting beneficiaries age 18-35). Partners are encouraged to establish a support system to assist community members in obtaining or correcting their official documents, ensuring their eligibility for youth club enrollment.

- Due to insufficient funding, many youths could not be included in partners' programs. Partners are advised to diversify funding sources and seek additional financial support from private sectors and Government (grants), and increase cost effectiveness of the program.

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