

Rohingya Refugee Response Youth Working Group - Terms of Reference

1. Background

The Youth Working Group (YWG) was established in December 2018 and has been a pivotal force in addressing the major gaps in opportunities and services for adolescents and youth in Cox's Bazar, Bangladesh, following the largest-scale influx of Rohingya refugees in August 2017. Operating initially under the Education Sector until 2023, the scope of the Youth Working Group has been updated to reflect the new mandate under the ISCG structure, functioning as a cross-sectoral group, addressing the need for systematic and coordinated programming for Rohingya and Bangladeshi host community youth.

2. Context

Residing in the world's largest refugee camp, Rohingya youth aged 15 to 24 make up more than 21% of the almost 1 million Rohingya refugees in Cox's Bazar¹. Underserved with limited access to services that address their unique developmental needs, youth remain exposed and vulnerable to various risks including recruitment to fight in the conflict in Myanmar or recruitment into armed gangs in the camps, child marriage, early pregnancy, human trafficking, grooming and coercive recruitment in organized gangs, labour exploitation, and substance abuse. The vast majority of youth aged 15 and older reportedly do not access learning opportunities² with 90% reporting no engagement in regular income-generating activities³.

Rohingya refugee youth face bleak and limited futures as they are unable to meet their immediate basic needs and are at high risk of violations of their rights, well-being, and security. Recognizing the significant capacities and potential of youth, they are often excluded from key partnerships in humanitarian responses and decision-making contributing to negative coping mechanisms⁴.

The lack of meaningful engagement opportunities stems from a lack of data, inadequate policy focus, limited advocacy efforts and limited space within the humanitarian architecture to discuss youth needs and potentials. This leads to a cycle of exclusion of youth needs in humanitarian programme design leading to the absence of youth-appropriate services that meet their unique needs, with 37% of young Rohingya refugees suffering from moderate to extreme levels of Childhood Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder.⁵

¹ UNHCR Population Data, July 2023

² Joint Multi-Sector Needs Assessment MSNA 2023

³ Ready to Learn, Eager to Earn NRC 2023 [link](#)

⁴ What About Us Youth Inclusion in the Rohingya Response NRC 2022 [link](#)

⁵ UNFPA MHPSS survey, 2024

3. Objectives of the Working Group

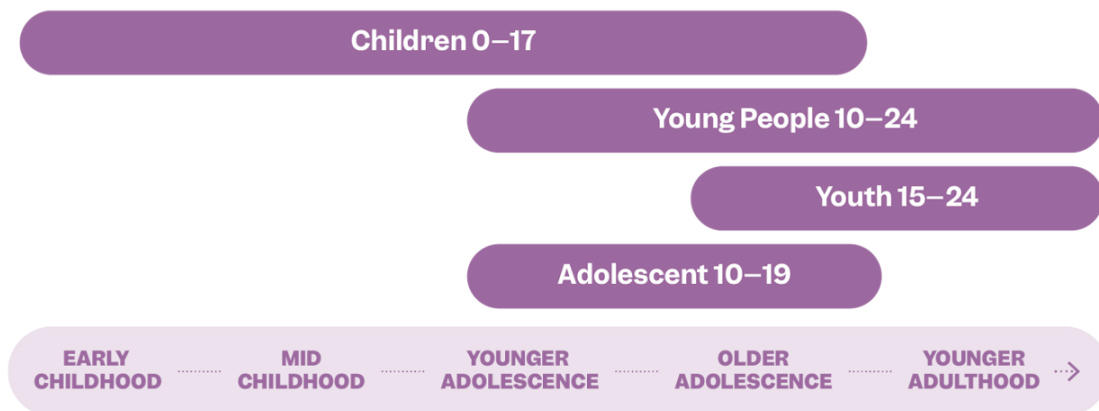
a. Youth Definition:

The United Nations defines 'Youth' as being aged 15–24 years, further distinctions made by UN agencies define 'adolescents' as being aged 10–19 years and young people as 10–24)⁶. This is further disaggregated as per the following:

Children (ages 0–17), youth (ages 15–24), adolescents (ages 10–19), young people (ages 10–24), young adolescents (ages 10–14), older adolescents (ages 15–19), older youth (ages 20–24), young adults (ages 18–24)

While definitions of youth may vary in different contexts, the YWG will adopt the UN definition of youth to ensure consistency with global frameworks for reporting purposes.

Figure 1: Definition of Youth by IASC Guidelines on Working with and for Young People in Humanitarian and Protracted Crises



b. Why Youth:

With the growing global recognition of the challenges youth face and their unique needs in humanitarian crises as well as their capacities, the 2016 World Humanitarian Summit emphasized the urgent need to safeguard the rights of young people and engage them in humanitarian response efforts. Additionally, the Global Refugee Youth Consultations in 2015-2016, the 2015 Doha Youth Declaration on Reshaping the Humanitarian Agenda, and the 2015 United Nations Security Council Resolution 2250 on youth, peace, and security all emphasize the importance of meaningful engagement of young people at subnational, national, regional, and global levels. Making up more than 21% of the forcibly displaced Rohingya population in Bangladesh, youth can play a vital positive force in emergency preparedness and response, and while youth

⁶ <http://www.unesco.org/new/en/social-and-human-sciences/themes/youth/youth-definition/>

have wide-ranging capacities and unique needs, they often get lost between programming for children and programming for adults excluding them from being represented in key strategic documents and contributing to a cycle of marginalization. In addition to being a highly vulnerable group at risk of being coerced, intimidated, manipulated, or enticed to join organized gangs.

c. Objectives:

The YWG will serve as a cross-sectoral group dedicated to mainstreaming the needs and capacities of young people at strategic and operational levels across various sectors of the humanitarian response, with the following key objectives:

- **Services:** Promote and increase age-and gender-responsive and inclusive programmes that contribute to the protection, health, education and development of young women, young men, girls and boys within humanitarian settings
- **Participation:** Support systematic inclusion of engagement and partnership with youth, in all phases of humanitarian action through sharing of information and involvement in decision-making processes at all levels, including budget allocations
- **Capacity:** Recognize and strengthen young people's capacities and capabilities to be effective humanitarian actors in prevention, preparedness, response and recovery, and empower and support local youth-led initiatives and organizations in humanitarian response, such as those targeting affected youth, including young refugees and internally displaced persons living in informal urban settlements and slums
- **Advocacy:** Advocate for increased allocation of resources intended to address the needs and priorities of adolescents and youth affected by humanitarian crises, including disasters, conflict and displacement, and identify ways to more accurately track and report on resources allocated to young people in humanitarian contexts
- **Data:** Ensure the generation and use of age-and sex-disaggregated data pertaining to adolescents and youth in humanitarian settings

4. Tasks include:

- **Coordination and Harmonization**
 - Facilitate coordination and joint initiatives to prioritize youth in sectors, working groups and organizations working with youth programming.
 - Collecting, documenting and sharing needs and gaps/lessons learned/best practices among working group members.
 - Update mapping and activities focusing on youth, based on a developed template with disaggregated and inclusive data for Youth, including activities led by grassroots organizations.

- Maintain the platform to collaborate and launch initiatives, provide quality assurance, share resources, and collect evidence to support adolescent and youth-focused programming and organizations.
- Protection and Safeguarding: Ensure that all activities, tools, and interventions are designed with a strong focus on protection and safeguarding, particularly for children adolescent youth. This includes adhering to child protection standards, consent, respecting privacy, and ensuring that the participation of younger youth does not expose them to risks.
- Cross-Sectoral Collaboration: Facilitate collaboration across sectors to ensure that the differentiated needs of adolescent and adult youth are consistently considered in all interventions. Encourage sectors to share best practices and lessons learned to improve the effectiveness and inclusivity of youth participation.
- Monitoring and Evaluation: Implement age-sensitive monitoring and evaluation processes to assess the impact of activities and tools on different youth sub-groups (15-17 years old and 18-24 years old). Ensure that feedback mechanisms are adapted to the capacities and needs of each age group to capture accurate and meaningful insights.

- **Youth Engagement**

- Create participatory approaches for engaging youth and create referral pathways among partners to reflect youth's participation in the programme cycle.
- Dealing and Communicating with Adolescent Youth: All working group deliverables should ensure that members who work directly with adolescent youth (15-17 years old) receive specialized training on how to effectively and appropriately communicate with this age group. This training should cover techniques for building trust, understanding the unique developmental needs of adolescents, and ensuring that communication is clear, respectful, and age appropriate.
- Tailoring Engagement Activities and Tools: Develop age-appropriate engagement strategies, where activities and tools for adolescent youth may involve more guidance and support, with content and delivery methods that consider their cognitive and emotional development. In contrast, adult youth can be given greater autonomy and responsibility, engaging in more advanced or specialized activities and tools.
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- **Advocacy**

- Support stronger and clearer linkages between sectors, including more targeted information sharing and advocacy efforts regarding the unique needs of youth to sectors, humanitarian actors and government entities relevant to Rohingya and the Host Community, such as the Deputy Commissioner, the RRRRC, Youth Development office, and local Education authorities such as the District Education office.

- Advocate for greater attention and develop an evidence base to support more robust adolescent and youth programming in the Joint Response Plan (JRP).
- **Capacity building**
 - Support further rollout of IASC Youth Guidelines
 - Build the capacity of humanitarian actors on programming for adolescents and youth and ensure active participation of young people in humanitarian efforts with technical advisory support.
- **Integration of Climate Action and DRR Strategies**
 - In coordination with the Energy & Environment Network (EEN), toward the existing Strategy for Climate Action (2023-2025), work on the below action points:
 - Creating cross-sectorial documents on the guidance and recommendations on engaging youth for Climate Action and DRM strategies for implementing partners
 - Coordination and Advocacy and capacity building for youth engagement around Climate Action and DRM strategies
 - Supporting the integration of green skills into Climate Action and DRM strategies in coordination with SDTWG
 - Coordinating social cohesion activities between Youth from both refugee and host communities around Climate Action and DRM.

5. Key principles of YWG

The following principles will underpin the actions of the YWG at the various stages:

- Young people as positive assets and rights-holders: Acknowledging young people as 'assets' and 'rights-holders' rather than 'problems' or 'threats'.
- Meaningful participation: Young people must participate in planning, implementation, monitoring, and evaluation as a basic right.
- Giving away power: Adolescents and youth are partners, not simply beneficiaries.
- Equity, non-discrimination and inclusion: Effective programmes break down barriers to participation regardless of sex, age, disability and other factors.
- Commitment: Meaningful engagement with young people must be built into all phases of the humanitarian programme cycle (HPC)
- Accountability: The views and contributions of young people affected by crises should be incorporated into all phases of the HPC through commitments related to leadership/governance, transparency, feedback and complaints, participation, design, monitoring and evaluation
- Do no harm: Young people need a physically, socially and emotionally safe and supportive environment.

- Safeguarding: agencies and partners working with and for adolescents and youth must set up effective systems in place to safeguard youth, particularly vulnerable groups.

6. Participation in the Youth Working Group

Participation in the YWG is on an organizational basis. It is expected that this mechanism will be made up of representatives from international, local and national NGOs, ISCG, UN agencies, youth led organizations, donors and entities from the Government of Bangladesh and entities from the private sector. It is also expected that each participating organization select one person as its representative.

- Active participation and experience in one or several of the (sub)sectors and cross-cutting bodies related to the Youth Working Group (education, child protection, health, protection, GBV, Communication with communities, food security and livelihoods, and skills development, SCCCM, EEN etc.)
- Willingness to share expertise, and technical materials, and work collaboratively on behalf of the Working Group
- Professional background relevant to the objectives of the Working Group (youth programming and/or education)
- Special skills, such as curriculum and/or material development, strategy and policy, research and assessments, effective writing, resource mobilization, and/or advocacy
- Participation in coordination bodies (relevant sectors) and presence in camp-level service mapping

7. Roles and Responsibilities of the Co-Chairs and the Sector

The co-coordinators are expected to be represented by organizations with experience in youth and adolescents and that permanently engage with the sector coordination system. UNFPA and NRC will be the co-coordinators of the working group and will represent the interest of all members of the group in a neutral fashion. The co-coordinators will facilitate the overall functioning of the Working Group.

Their role is to:

- Set the agenda for meetings.
- Provide facilitation for the meetings.
- Minute the meetings including follow-up of action points.
- Call for meetings and dissemination of minutes.
- Facilitate the function of the YWG on day to day.
- Maintenance of the YWG mailing list (Google Group).
- Arrange a venue for the YWG meeting.