

Anti-Trafficking Working Group

2024 End-Year Report

March 2025

Contents

Background	1
Situational Analysis.....	2
ATWG Activity Highlights in 2024.....	4
Stories from Partners	5
ATWG Member Organizations	7

Background

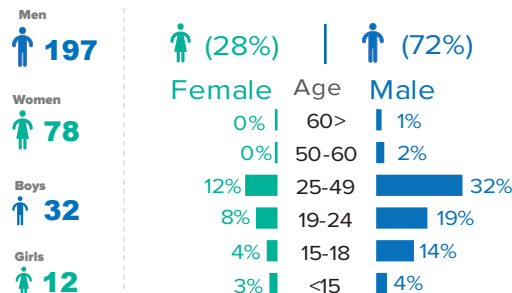
ATWG: The Anti-Trafficking Working Group (ATWG), consisting of 15 organizations from the UN Agencies and civil society organizations, continue providing services and activities in the Rohingya refugee camps in Cox's Bazar to ensure the prevention of and responses in human trafficking cases involving Rohingya refugees. The main activities include:

- Case management for victims of human trafficking (VoTs);
- Awareness raising on risks and consequences of human trafficking through information sessions and tailored messaging;
- Community-level coordination meetings within protection and anti-trafficking actors
- Data collection and situational analysis on the situation of human trafficking in the refugee camps:
- Skill development projects for VoTs;
- Capacity building of humanitarian actors on identification and screening of VoTs, and
- Advocacy efforts for inclusion of refugees in the national anti-trafficking framework.

Human trafficking in Cox's Bazar affects both the Rohingya refugee population and the host community. For the Rohingya, who lack legal status and access to formal employment, promises of better opportunities often lead to exploitation, including forced labour, sexual exploitation, and even trafficking to other countries. The proximity of Cox's Bazar to maritime routes further facilitates the trafficking of individuals, particularly via sea routes to destinations in Southeast Asia and the Middle East. Addressing this issue requires a coordinated response that includes better-resourced law enforcement, awareness campaigns, and sustainable livelihood programs for both the host and Rohingya communities. As of July 2024, Cox's Bazar courts are handling approximately 50 trafficking-in-persons (TIP) cases involving individuals from both the Rohingya and host communities. These cases underscore the persistent human trafficking challenges faced by populations in Cox's Bazar district.

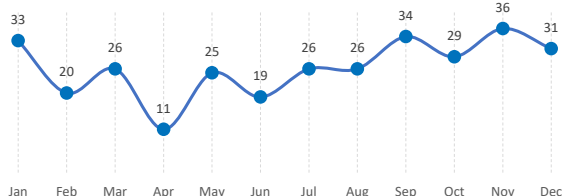

316

Total victims of trafficking identified

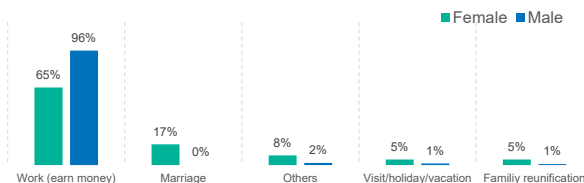


Lower numbers of detected child cases may indicate under-reporting due to lack of awareness about child trafficking in the community, or care-givers being perpetrators of trafficking.

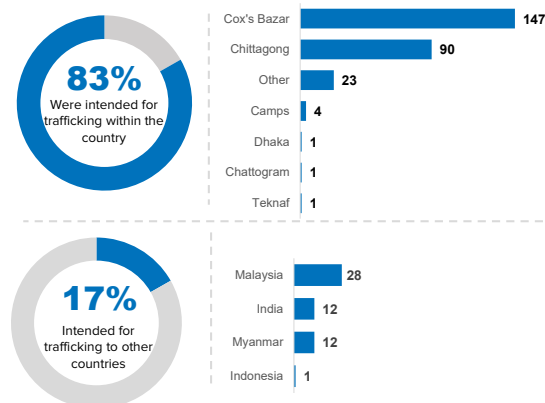
Monthly trend of identification of trafficking victims



Promise During Recruitment



Intended Destination of Trafficking Victim



Context

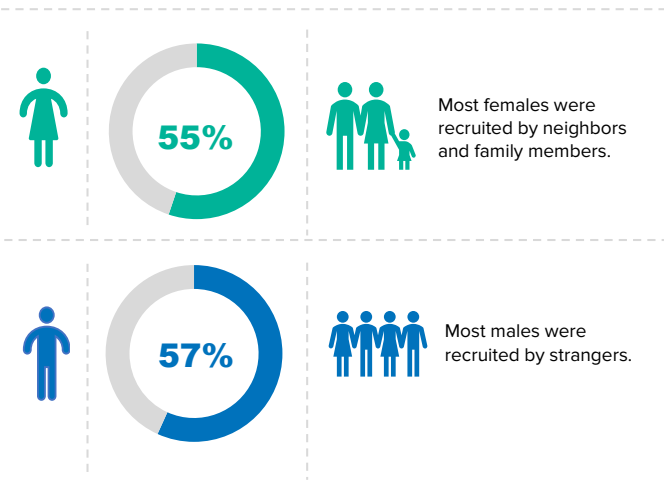
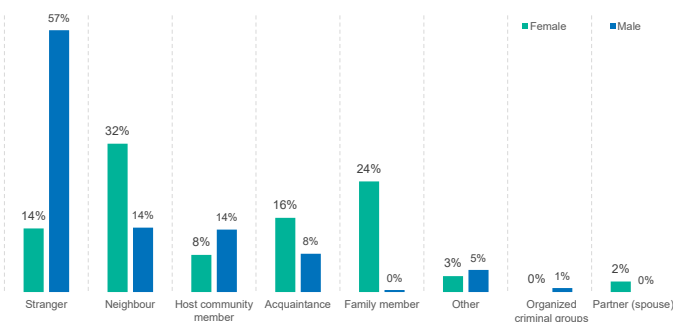
The data in this dashboard is based solely on information collected by ATWG members during service provision. It reflects only those individuals who have undergone a full assessment against global trafficking indicators in the context of seeking services. As such, it does not capture the broader population affected by trafficking and is likely a significant undercount. Underreporting is also influenced by factors such as fear of retaliation, stigma, and the potential dangers associated with disclosing trafficking experiences, including fear of retaliation by perpetrators.

In 2024, ATWG partners identified **316 individuals affected** by human trafficking, with **72% being male and 28% female**. Most cases involving men were recruited by strangers, host community members or neighbours in the camps, while women were primarily affected by neighbours or family members.

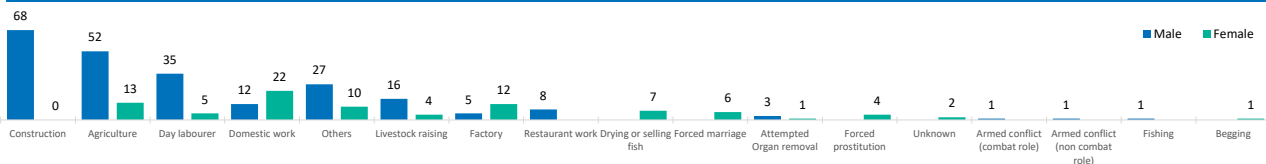
Men were predominantly trafficked for heavy labour such as construction, agriculture, day labour, fishery, forestry, livestock raising, and restaurant work, with construction alone accounting for the largest share of male cases. In contrast, **women** were trafficked for a broader range of purposes, including domestic work, factory jobs, agriculture and forced sex work. Almost half of all identified trafficking incidents occurred within the Cox's Bazar district.

These statistics may be subject to change as new information becomes available.

Recruiter



Actual Activity During Exploitation



Since January until December 2024, ATWG partners screened a total of 30 individuals (13 men, 5 women, 9 boys, and 3 girls) identified as Non-Victims of Trafficking (Non-VOTs) among Rohingya refugees. Half of the cases were kidnapping cases, 30% were smuggling of migrants, and 15% experienced internal movement within the country.

Sources: ATWG Data

Revised date: 18 Jun 2025

Situational Analysis

Analysis on the Trafficking Situation in 2024

In 2024, the ATWG members identified 316 refugees (197 men, 78 women, 32 boys, and 12 girls) as victims of human trafficking. Patriarchal norms within the community often dictate men or the oldest son as breadwinners of the family. This encourages and pressures men to find work opportunities outside the camp to meet the family needs, which makes men more vulnerable to human trafficking. Rohingya men usually hear about jobs when meeting different people inside and outside the camp. Rohingya women seeking work interact with the brokers and recruiters through neighbours, distant relatives, or some female brokers who are well known as job providers. Women-headed households, because of divorce, separation, or widowhood with many children, can be easily targeted by the brokers.

However, it should be noted that this data does not necessarily indicate the full extent of trafficking in the camps due to possible underreporting of cases. The underreporting of cases is attributed to various reasons including unwillingness to disclose the human trafficking case to anyone, including camp-based Anti-Trafficking focal points, due to potential stigmatization of the victims among the communities, fear of retaliations by human traffickers after reporting cases to humanitarian actors or the authorities, as well as widely shared mistrust towards the authorities. It is also true that, despite continuous efforts by the ATWG partners, many refugees are unaware of reporting methods and services available for human trafficking victims.

Victims of trafficking are forced into various exploitative activities, with distinct gender patterns. Males are more often exploited in labour-intensive sectors like construction (30.8%), agriculture (23.5%), and day labour (15.8%). In contrast, females are predominantly found in domestic work (28.2%), factory work (15.4%), and in the dataset, only females were affected by forced marriage (7.7%) and forced sex work (5.1%). This data underscores the gender-specific nature of trafficking, highlighting the different sectors where males and females are exploited.

The relationship between victims and their recruiters in trafficking cases show significant gender differences. Male victims are mainly recruited by strangers (57.5%), while female victims are more often recruited by neighbours (32.6%) and family members (23.3%). Acquaintances also play a larger role for females (16.3%) than males (8.4%). Recruitment by host community members is relatively balanced. The data indicates that female victims are more often recruited by individuals within their social circles, while male victims are more frequently targeted by strangers. This underscores the need for tailored interventions addressing the specific recruitment dynamics for each gender.

Throughout the year, ATWG partners screened 30 individuals identified as non-victims of trafficking (Non-VOTs), with cases involving kidnapping, smuggling of migrants, and internal movement within the country.

2024 Trend Comparison Compared to the Previous Years

Fewer cases were identified in 2024 with 316 victims of human trafficking compared to the previous year (418 cases). This does not necessarily mean the decline in the human trafficking cases, but could instead show a decline in victim identification. In the camps, ATWG is aware of several

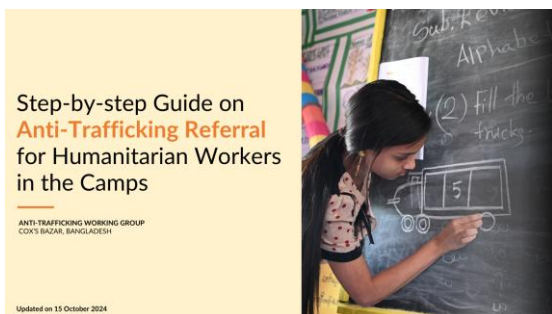
instances this year where possible victims of trafficking, who were apprehended by the police and later released, failed to show up for victim of trafficking screening interviews. It is possible that, this year, more victims of trafficking are being coerced into not reporting the incident to humanitarian actors. However, the exact reasons of underreporting compared to 2023 are unconfirmed.

In 2024, a slight increase was observed in male and girl victims, with a corresponding decrease in female and boy victims. The percentage of women victims decreased from 27.3% to 24.5%, while the percentage of men victims increased from 59.1% to 61.8%. The proportion of boy victims saw a minor decline from 11.0% to 10.0%, whereas the percentage of girl victims rose from 2.4% to 3.8%. Notably, the percentage of non-binary victims dropped from 0.2% to 0%.

Based on case data analysis, new trends emerged where a small number of victims were exploited in the form of forced marriage, recruitment to armed conflict, and attempted organ removal in 2024. From 2023 to 2024, recruitment by strangers increased from 28.0% to 45.5%, while recruitment by neighbours and acquaintances decreased from 30.1% to 19.2% and 16.3% to 10.6%, respectively. This shift indicates a growing trend of victims being targeted by strangers.

ATWG Activity Highlights in 2024

- World Day against Trafficking in Persons (10 July 2024):** This year's theme "Leave No Child Behind in the Fight Against Human Trafficking" emphasized the urgent need to end child trafficking, noting that one in three trafficking victims globally is a child, with girls being disproportionately affected. In Cox's Bazar and Bhasan Char, 15 ATWG partners organized various activities, reaching over 7,123 Rohingya refugees directly and 587,520 through radio broadcasts. Activities included awareness sessions, radio broadcasts, art activities, community dramas, film screenings, trainings and workshops, and a panel discussion.
- Step-by-step Guide on Anti-Trafficking Referral in the Camps:** The guide provides a clear guideline to all humanitarian actors in the camps on how to respond to and refer a human trafficking case to necessary services. This document was distributed to both anti-trafficking focal points in the camps and other humanitarian actors working in different sectors. The document enables humanitarian actors present in the refugee camps to identify potential human trafficking victims, provide basic counselling and necessary referrals to relevant actors, and flag cases to the anti-trafficking focal points in each camp. Available in [English](#) and [Bengali](#).



- Key messages on irregular onward movements from Bangladesh:** This document is a source document for key messages on onward movement for further communication and awareness

raising purposes. The document provides clear information on risks and dangers that onward movers may face during their journey, based on the data acquired through refugees' accounts and demographic data, as well as several opportunities in the camps that refugees might opt for as an alternative to embarking on onward movements. Available [here](#).

- **ATWG new posters:** The newly designed posters improved visibility of the message and helps promote knowledge for refugees to report a possible human trafficking case and obtain necessary services. Available in Rohingya, Burmese, Bengali, and English.



Stories from Partners

The case of Rohima Bibi (IOM)

Rohima Bibi (alias), a 24-year-old woman in the Rohingya camps in Cox's Bazar, was drawn into a trafficking scheme after being promised a well-paying job by a broker who demanded a substantial fee. To pay this fee, Rohima sold her belongings and borrowed money from relatives. In December 2021, she left the camp and was brought by traffickers to Myanmar, exposing her to numerous risks and challenges. During her journey, she often had to hide in precarious locations to evade law enforcement and border patrols.

Her situation worsened upon reaching Myanmar, where she was handed over to another group of traffickers and subsequently arrested. Rohima spent 17 months in jail under difficult conditions. After her release, she suffered further abuse at the hands of traffickers until she managed to escape with the help of another woman and return to the camp. This period of her life left her both mentally and physically strained.

IOM identified Rohima as a trafficking victim and provided her with case management support including counselling services that addressed her trauma. Recognizing her skills and interests, she was introduced to a sewing program, part of an initiative to support survivors of gender-based violence. Through sewing, Rohima received structured support that facilitated her social integration and contributed to her overall recovery within the community.

Her progress demonstrates the critical role of support systems in aiding recovery and empowerment for individuals affected by trafficking. Rohima's experience underscores the importance of vigilance and support within vulnerable communities to prevent trafficking and assist victims in rebuilding their lives.

The case of Amina Khatun (Bangladesh National Woman Lawyers' Association)

Amina Khatun (alias), an 18-year-old woman, has been living in the refugee camp with her family of nine. When her father, the sole breadwinner in the household, fell ill and could no longer work, she was obliged to start working despite her father's disagreement.

One day, a woman called Nasima offered to help Amina find a job. A few days later, Nasima offered Amina a job as a domestic worker in Chattogram, with a monthly salary of the equivalent of 60 USD along with other benefits. Amina's family believed that this income could improve their living conditions, so they agreed to let Amina take the job.

During her job, she had to work all day, completing all household chores. After a while, the owner's family started mistreating her. They slapped her, beat her, and pulled her hair if she made mistakes during her work. Sometimes, they left her starved for an entire day. In addition, they did not pay her the full salary. After working for a year, she called her father and told him about her situation. Her father came to rescue her and brought her back to the camp. The owner only paid her 250 USD in total and refused to pay the remaining amount. Upon return, Amina's physical and mental health were in poor condition.

During an awareness session conducted by BNWLA, she resonated with the messages and later contacted with BNWLA team to share her own experience. Upon hearing the story, BNWLA identified potential indicators of trafficking. A follow-up interview was conducted, through which she was confirmed to be a victim of trafficking. She received Psychosocial First Aid and received information about human trafficking. She received dignity kits, agro-farming supplies, and training. She is now living with her family and actively participates in various counter trafficking-related activities, including information session to let the community know about her experience. Thanks to the agro-farming supplies, she cultivates a small vegetable garden at her shelter, growing some types of vegetables. She is very proud of her work, and her family members are equally proud of her achievements. Not only has she grown stronger, but she also works as a volunteer, raising awareness about the dangers of trafficking.

After hearing her experience, youths in her block started conducting monthly group discussions about human trafficking. People in her community are now aware of risks of human trafficking, and they are thankful to Amina Begum for her hard work to make others aware of it.



Amina sharing her own trafficking experience to female community members.
 (Photo: BNWLA)

ATWG Member Organizations

Co-Chairs: International Organization for Migration (IOM), United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR)

Member organizations: Bangladesh Red Crescent Society (BDRCS), Bangladesh Legal Aid and Services Trust (BLAST), Bangladesh National Woman Lawyers' Association (BNWLA), BRAC, Caritas Bangladesh, Danish Refugee Council (DRC), Good Neighbours Bangladesh (GNB), Handicap International Federation – Humanity & Inclusion (HI), International Rescue Committee (IRC), Norwegian Refugee Council (NRC), United Nations Children Fund (UNICEF), Winrock International, Young Power in Social Action (YPSA)