

Key Gender Findings from ISNA 2025

Gender in Humanitarian Action Working Group

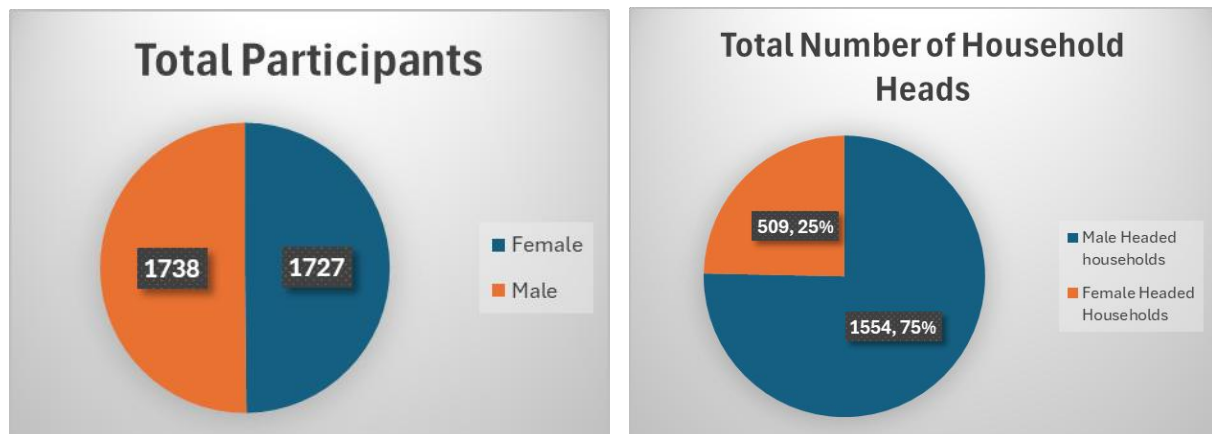
ISNA 2025 GiHA Summary Brief – Rohingya Refugee Response

This summary presents key gender related findings from the ISNA 2025 assessment with a focus on Gender in Humanitarian Action (GiHA) in the Rohingya refugee context. It aims to inform partner engagement and advocacy by highlighting the gender specific priority needs across sectors with attention to how these are shaped by social norms and roles. It also focuses on the service gaps, specially disparities in access to essential services for women, men, girls, boys, gender diverse population of any age group particularly in relation to mobility, decision making power, access to and control over resources etc., This draws attention on the gendered risks and vulnerabilities such as gender based violence, exploitation, unequal caregiving service and burden of work in the household responsibilities.

Gender Distribution of Respondents

Among 3465 respondents, number of females: 1727; and number of males: 1738 among them male headed households were 1554 and female headed households were 509 participants.

- Female: 49.84%
- Male: 50.16%



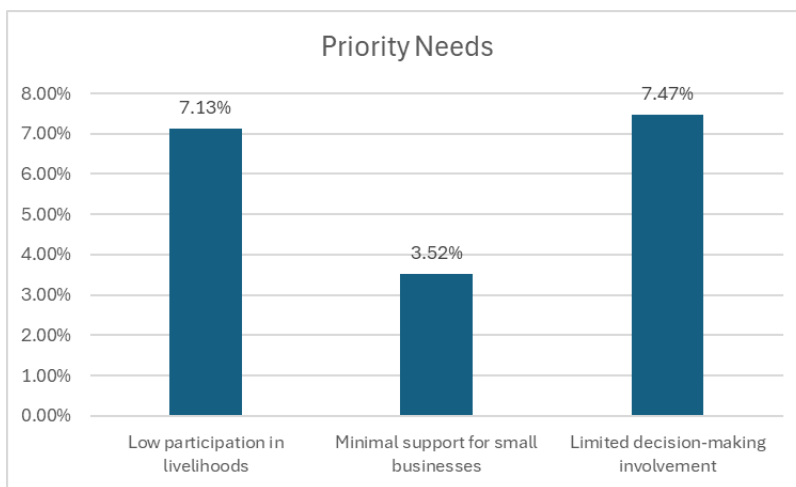
The survey achieved a nearly equal representation of male and female respondents, which is excellent for gender-inclusive analysis. But there is a significantly higher proportion of male respondents are household heads compared to female respondents

which reflects traditional gender roles or socio-cultural norms in the surveyed population, where men are more commonly recognized as household heads.

At-a-glance data representation:

Priority Needs

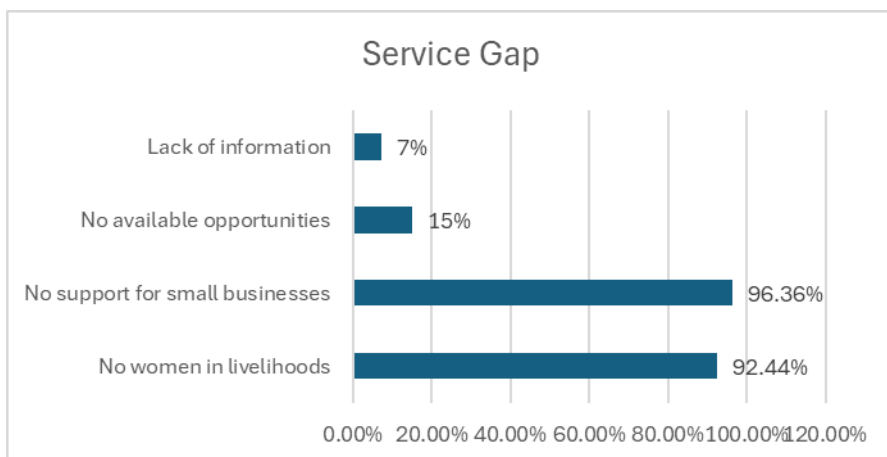
- Low participation in livelihoods: 7.13%
- Minimal support for small businesses: 3.52%
- Limited decision-making involvement: 7.47%



The ISNA 2025 data highlights critical gendered gaps in participation, empowerment, and economic inclusion among Rohingya women. With only 7.13% of women engaged in livelihood activities and a mere 3.52% receiving support for small businesses, economic opportunities remain severely limited. This lack of access to income generation is compounded by minimal involvement in decision-making spaces—only 7.47% of women regularly participate in community forums.

Service Gaps

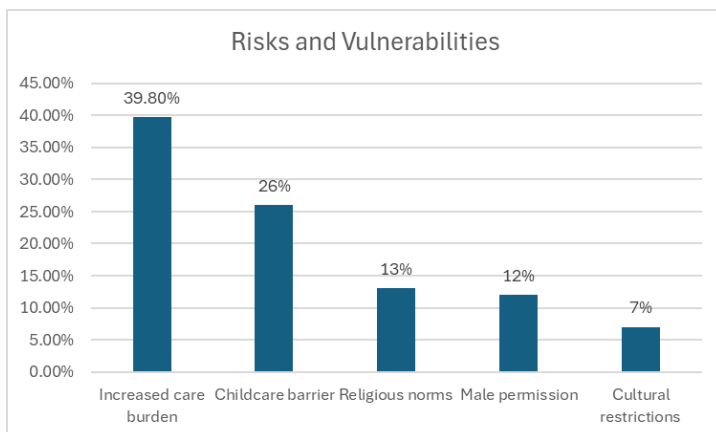
- No women in livelihoods: 92.44%
- No support for small businesses: 96.36%
- No available opportunities for livelihood or training: 15%
- Lack of information: 7%



The data reveals significant service gaps that obstruct women's access to economic empowerment and decision-making opportunities in the Rohingya camps. A staggering 92.44% of households reported that no women are engaged in livelihood or income generating activities, and 96.36% indicated that no support was received for small businesses—highlighting a near-total absence of economic inclusion for women. Furthermore, 15% of respondents cited the lack of available opportunities as a barrier, while 7% pointed to a lack of information. These figures underscore systemic shortcomings in outreach, program accessibility, and service delivery. Addressing these gaps requires not only expanding livelihood and business support programs but also ensuring that information reaches women effectively and that opportunities are designed to be inclusive and responsive to their specific needs and constraints.

Risks and Vulnerabilities

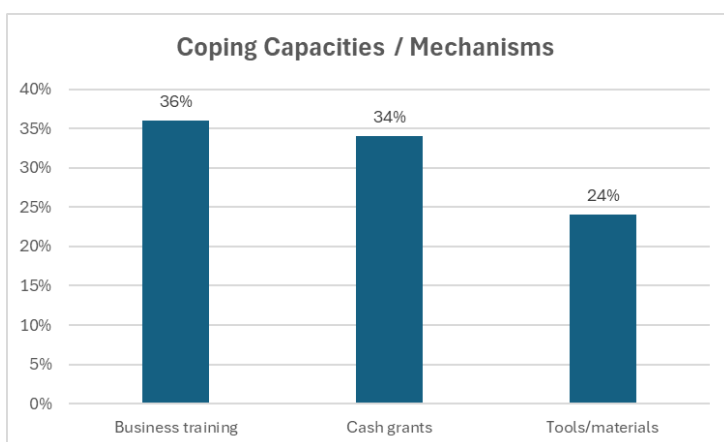
- Increased care burden compared to one year ago: 39.8%
- Childcare barrier: 26%
- Religious norms: 13%
- Male permission: 12%
- Cultural restrictions: 7%



The data highlights a range of gendered risks and vulnerabilities that significantly impact Rohingya women's ability to participate in daily lives and access to opportunities. Nearly 40% of women reported an increased burden of care work over the past year, which not only limits their time but also reinforces traditional gender roles. Childcare responsibilities were cited by 26% of respondents as a direct barrier to engaging in livelihoods or training. Additionally, deeply rooted social norms continue to restrict women's autonomy: 13% of respondents pointed to religious norms, 12% to the need for male permission, and 7% to cultural restrictions which is preventing the women in household from joining livelihood or training opportunities.

Coping Capacities / Mechanisms

- Business training: 36%
- Cash grants: 34%
- Tools/materials: 24%



The ISNA 2025 data highlight the proactive strategies Rohingya women are retaining to build economic resilience, even in the face of significant structural barriers. Among the small percentage of women who received support, 36% benefited from business

training, 34% received start-up cash grants, and 24% were provided with tools or materials such as sewing machines. These forms of support, though limited in reach, demonstrate the potential for targeted interventions to enhance women's economic agency. Scaling up such initiatives could play a crucial role in strengthening women's coping capacities, especially when aligned with efforts to reduce care burdens and address restrictive social norms.

Detail Analysis:

1. Domestic & Care Work Burden¹

Data on own time spent on care work

- Female: 55.83% of respondents
Increased: 39.80%
- Male: 44.17%
Increased: 22.01%

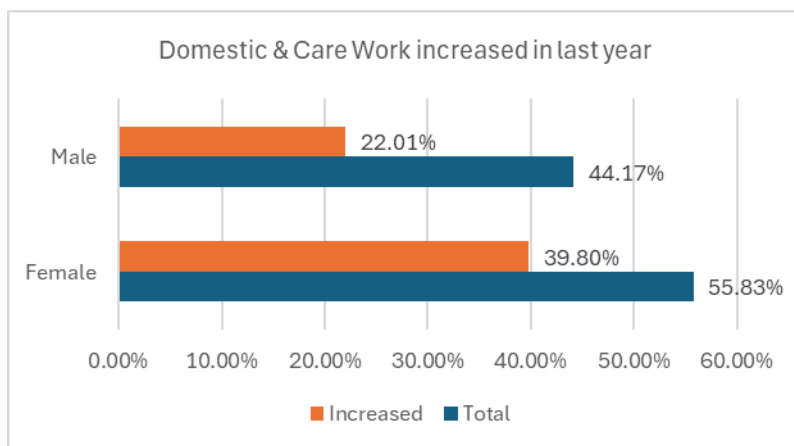
Gendered Dimensions of Domestic and Care Work Burden

The ISNA data reveals a stark gender disparity in the distribution of domestic and care work responsibilities within households. Across all roles—whether self, spouse, daughter, son, or elderly—women consistently report a higher increase in time spent on unpaid care work compared to men over the past year.

Key Findings:

- Female respondents (55.83%) reported a significant increase in their own time spent on care work, with 39.80% indicating that this burden has grown since last year. Whereas the workload remained the same for 10.32% of the respondents indicates more care work burden persists over the year.
- In contrast, male respondents (44.17%) reported a lower increase, with only 22.01% noting a rise in their care work responsibilities and 10.67% remaining the same compared to last year. This indicates, though the care work burden for male respondents increased still that is significantly lower than the female respondents.

¹ Compared to one year ago, has **your own** time spent on domestic or care work:
Increased/Decreased/Remained same



Respondents' care work increases from last year

This disparity is consistent across household roles:

- **Spouses/Partners:** Female spouses reported a 22.24% increase on their male partner's time spent on domestic work, while male spouses reported a 44.31% increase on their female partner's —suggesting some shift in men's engagement in the domestic work, which increased compared to last year but still unequal as women's engagement also increased.
- **Daughters vs. Sons:** Daughters reported a higher increase (female respondents said 40.56%+male responded said 37.57% =78.13%), reinforcing gendered expectations for girls. Whereas for sons the domestic work increased 57.05% (Female respondents said 24.30%+male responded said 32.75%= 57.05%).
- **Elderly Women vs. Men:** Elderly females (36.98%) reported slightly higher increases than elderly males (25.92%), again reinforcing household dynamics or caregiving needs.

This data underscores the persistent gendered norms that shape household labor dynamics. Women continue to bear the brunt of unpaid domestic and caregiving responsibilities at any age, a trend that appears to be intensifying. The disproportionate increase in care work among women not only reflects entrenched gender roles but also signals potential implications for their economic participation, mental well-being, and access to opportunities outside the household.

The relatively lower increase among men suggests that shifts in household labor distribution are not occurring equitably, despite broader conversations around gender equality. This imbalance can exacerbate existing vulnerabilities, particularly for women

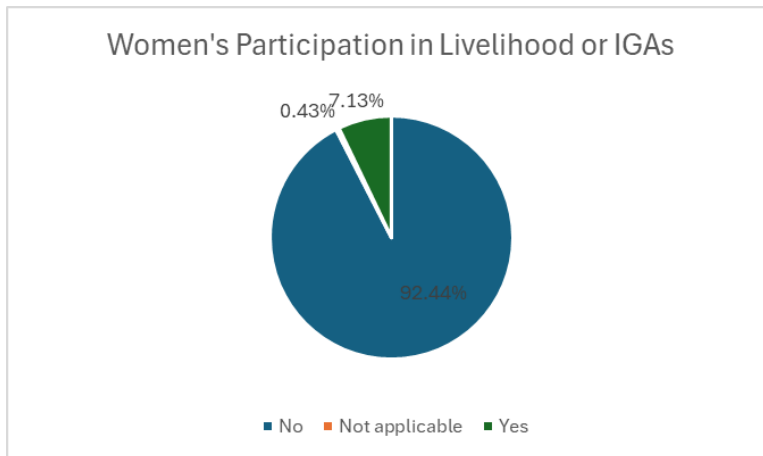
and girls who may already face barriers in education, employment, and community engagement.

2. Rohingya Women's Participation in Livelihoods²

Gendered Barriers to Women's Income Generation

Data on Women's Participation in Livelihoods:

- Only 7.13% of households reported women participating in income-generating activities.
- 92.44% said no women were involved.



The ISNA data paints a stark picture of the limited involvement of women in income-generating activities within the community. Only 7.13% of households reported women participating in such activities, while an overwhelming 92.44% indicated that no women were involved in any form of livelihood engagement.

Underlying Barriers to Participation

The reasons cited for this exclusion reveal deeply entrenched gender norms and structural barriers:

- Household chores/childcare (26%): This reflects the disproportionate burden of unpaid domestic and care work shouldered by women, leaving them with limited time and energy for economic activities.

² In the past 3 months, are there any women in your household actively participated in any livelihood or income-generating activities (e.g., cash-for-work, small business, home-based work for small income)?

What are the main reasons preventing the women in your household from joining livelihood or training opportunities?

- Religious norms (13%) and cultural restrictions (7%): These point to societal expectations and traditional beliefs that confine women to the private sphere, discouraging or even prohibiting their public and economic engagement.
- Lack of permission from male family members (12%): This highlights the role of patriarchal control in limiting women's autonomy and decision-making power regarding their participation in the workforce.
- Lack of available opportunities (15%): Even when women are willing and able to work, structural limitations such as inadequate access to jobs, skills training, or financial resources further hinder their economic empowerment.

The data underscores a systemic exclusion of women from economic life, driven by both gendered expectations and institutional barriers. The interplay between unpaid care responsibilities and restrictive social norms creates a cycle of dependency and marginalization, preventing women from achieving financial independence and contributing to household and community resilience.

3. Support for Women's Entrepreneurship³

Data on Support for Women's Entrepreneurship

Only 3.52% of households received support for small businesses.

Among those:

Business training: 36%

Start-up cash grant: 34%

Materials/tools: 24%

Gendered Barriers to Women's Entrepreneurship

The ISNA data reveals a significant gap in support for women's entrepreneurship, with only **3.52%** of households reporting receipt of assistance for small business initiatives. Among those who did receive support, the types of assistance varied:

³ Are there any women members in your HH who have received any support for starting or expanding a small business in the past 12 months (e.g., materials, cash grant, business training)?

If YES, please specify the type of business support received

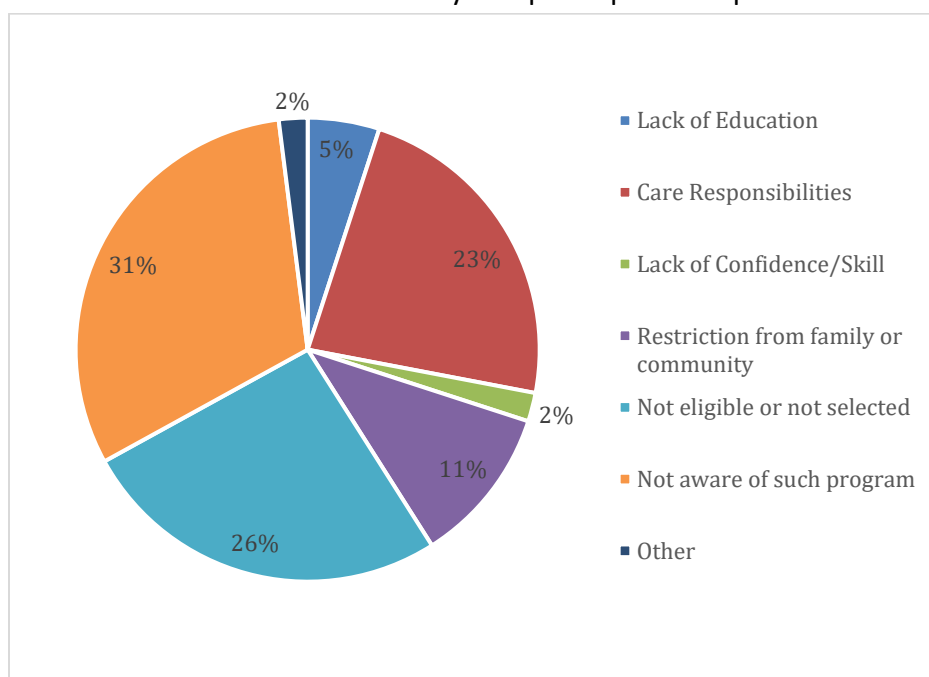
If NO, what were the reasons?

While these forms of support are critical for enabling entrepreneurship, their limited reach suggests that most women remain excluded from such opportunities.

Barriers to Accessing Support

The reasons cited for not receiving support further highlight the gendered nature of exclusion:

- **Lack of awareness of programs (31%):** This points to a communication gap, where information about available resources is not reaching women—possibly due to limited mobility, literacy, or exclusion from community networks.
- **Not eligible or not selected (26%):** This raises concerns about the criteria used for selection and whether they are inclusive of women's realities and constraints.
- **Care responsibilities (23%):** Reflecting the ongoing burden of unpaid domestic and caregiving work, which limits women's time and ability to engage in entrepreneurial activities.
- **Family/community restrictions (11%):** Indicative of patriarchal norms that restrict women's autonomy and participation in public or economic life.



The data underscores how structural and socio-cultural barriers intersect to limit women's access to entrepreneurship support. Even when programs exist, they are not designed or communicated in ways that are accessible to women, especially those facing mobility constraints or household responsibilities. Eligibility criteria may not

reflect women's realities (e.g., informal work, lack of documentation). On top of that, care burdens continue to be a major constraint.

This lack of support not only hinders women's economic empowerment but also perpetuates dependency and reinforces gender inequality within households and communities.

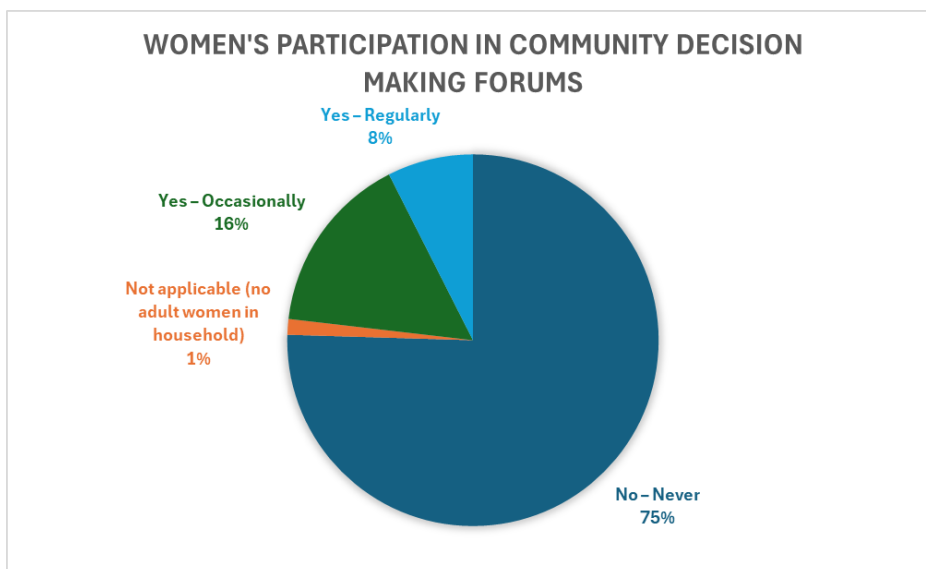
4. Women's Participation in Decision-Making⁴

Analysis of Women's Participation and Voice in Community Decision-Making

The ISNA data reveals a concerning lack of inclusion of women in community-level decision-making processes:

Data on Participation in Community Forums:

- Only 7.47% of households reported women regularly participating in community forums.
- A striking 75.47% indicated that women never participate in these forums.



⁴ Are there any adult women (18+) in your household involved in any community-based decision-making forums or groups (e.g., camp committees, women's groups, youth groups, religious or dispute resolution groups)?

Do you (women in the HH) feel that your views and opinions are heard and considered in decisions about services or assistance in your community?

This data highlights a significant gap in women's direct involvement in formal community platforms. The extremely low rate of regular participation suggests systemic barriers that prevent women from engaging in spaces where decisions are made.

Perception of Women's Voice in Community Decisions:

- Yes – Always: 21.70%
- Yes – Sometimes: 34.83%
- No – Never/Rarely: 41.59%

The perception data aligns with the participation figures, reinforcing the notion that limited physical presence in forums correlates with diminished influence in decision-making. With nearly three-quarters of women excluded from community forums, it is unsurprising that among those who participated in decision making forums, 41.59% of respondents feel women's voices are not heard.

The data draws a clear connection between low participation and limited voice. Without regular engagement in community forums, women are systematically marginalized from decision-making processes about services and aids. Social norms and mobility constraints are likely to contribute to this exclusion

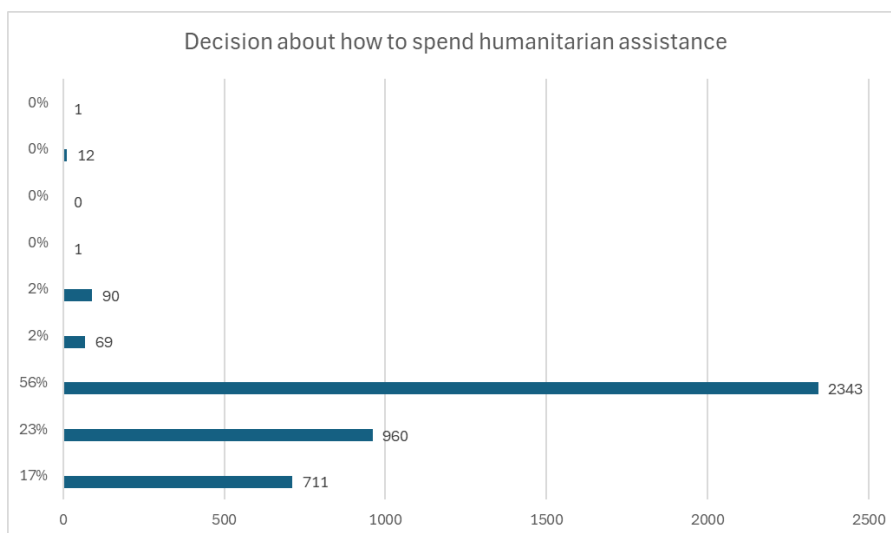
5. Control Over Humanitarian Assistance⁵

The ISNA data shows that 56% of households report joint decision-making over humanitarian assistance, which is a positive indicator of shared responsibility. However, a closer look reveals persistent gendered power dynamics:

- Men alone make decisions in 23% of households.
- Women alone make decisions in only 17% of households.

While joint decision-making is the most common arrangement, men still hold more individual control over humanitarian resources than women. This imbalance reflects broader patterns of patriarchal authority and gendered financial control within households.

⁵ In your household, who usually makes the final decision about how to spend humanitarian assistance (cash or in-kind)?



GiHA Recommendations Based on Findings

These intersecting factors create a complex web of constraints and vulnerabilities that limit women's mobility, decision-making power, and access to services. The findings collectively point to a need for targeted interventions that amplify women's voices, expand their economic choices, and ensure their safety and dignity in humanitarian response planning. Here are some specific recommendations based on the ISNA findings are stated below:

1. Strengthen Gender-Sensitive Livelihoods

- Expand safe, culturally appropriate income opportunities for women.
- Address key barriers: childcare, mobility, and male permission.
- Engage men and boys to foster supportive environments.
- Ensure community consultation to highlight the positive impact of women's economic participation.

2. Promote Women's Leadership and Decision-Making

- Support women's participation in camp committees and community forums.
- Build capacity and confidence through training and mentorship.
- Establish quotas or reserved seats for women in community forums.
- Promote women's financial literacy and access to resources.
- Empower women to have equal say in household decisions, especially regarding humanitarian assistance.

3. Reduce Unpaid Care Burden:

- Support systems, such as accessible childcare and eldercare services, can alleviate the burden on women and enable greater participation in public and economic life.
- Promote shared household responsibilities through awareness campaigns.
- Policy and programmatic interventions must prioritize the redistribution of unpaid care work to promote gender equity.
- Community sensitization is essential to challenge traditional norms and encourage shared responsibilities within households.
- Redistribute Care Work through promoting male engagement in domestic tasks through community sensitization and role model campaigns.

4. Improve Access to Information and Support

- Use gender-sensitive communication channels to inform women about programs and entrepreneurship support.
- Engage female community volunteers and leaders to disseminate information.
- Ensure flexible eligibility criteria that reflect women lived realities.
- Provide supportive services such as childcare and transportation to enable participation.

5. Monitor and Evaluate Gender Outcomes

- Disaggregate all data by sex, age, and disability.
- Include gender indicators in sectoral assessments.
- Track progress on women's participation, leadership, and access to services.

6. Adopt Gender-Transformative Programming

- Challenge and shift harmful norms that restrict women's mobility and economic participation.
- Invest in childcare, skills development, and safe work environments.
- Engage men and community leaders to address cultural and permission-based constraints.
- Promote community-level advocacy to foster equitable household and community dynamics.