16 Days of Activism- Camp Level Consultation Report

Background

The 16 Days of Activism against Gender-Based Violence (GBV) is an internationally recognized campaign observed annually from 25 November to 10 December, beginning on the International Day for the Elimination of Violence against Women and concluding on Human Rights Day. The campaign serves as a global call to action to end violence against women and girls in all its forms. It mobilizes governments, civil society, and communities to advocate for prevention, protection, and accountability.

2025 Global Theme

The theme for 2025 is "UNiTE to End Digital Violence against All Women and Girls", reflecting the urgent need to address emerging forms of abuse facilitated by technology. Digital violence encompasses a spectrum of harmful behaviors, including:

- Non-consensual sharing of intimate images (image-based abuse)
- Cyberbullying, trolling, and online harassment
- Online grooming and sexual exploitation
- Doxxing and stalking through digital platforms
- AI-generated deepfakes and manipulated content

These forms of violence have severe emotional, social, and physical consequences for women and girls, particularly in vulnerable contexts such as refugee settings. In the Rohingya camps of Cox's Bazar, limited digital literacy, shared device usage, and growing reliance on online platforms for communication and services exacerbate these risks. Women and girls face heightened exposure to exploitation, blackmail, and reputational harm, while cultural stigma and fear of retaliation create barriers to reporting and accessing support.

Why GiHA WG is Leading Camp-Level Consultations

The Gender in Humanitarian Action (GiHA) Working Group, under the Inter-Sector Coordination Group (ISCG), leads the annual observance of the 16 Days campaign in Cox's Bazar. In 2025, GiHA WG prioritized camp-level consultations and advocacy events to:

- Raise awareness among Rohingya communities about digital violence and its impacts.
- Promote safe and responsible digital practices, including privacy protection and secure communication.
- Engage community leaders, youth, and women's groups in dialogue to foster collective responsibility.

- Strengthen coordination among GBV and Protection actors to ensure survivor-centered responses and clear reporting pathways.

These consultations were designed not only as awareness sessions but as participatory platforms to capture community perspectives, identify emerging risks, and co-create solutions tailored to the refugee context.

Expected Outcomes

Through these camp-level engagements, GiHA WG aimed to achieve:

- Enhanced community understanding of digital violence, its manifestations, and consequences.
- Commitments from influential leaders (e.g., Imams, Majhis) to disseminate preventive messages in sermons and community gatherings.
- Youth mobilization through creative formats (art, sports, cultural activities) to champion digital safety.
- Identification of barriers to reporting and practical recommendations for improving access to confidential, survivor-centered services.
- Evidence-based inputs to inform GiHA WG's strategic planning, advocacy, and integration of digital safety into GBV programming.

By embedding these objectives within the broader humanitarian response, GiHA WG seeks to ensure that digital safety becomes a core component of gender equality and protection efforts in the Rohingya refugee response.

Participation & Coverage

Total participants across eight camps: 714 (Female: 304; Male: 246; Girls: 104; Boys: 60). Camps covered: 1E, 1W, 3, 4, 4 Extension, 14, 18, 25.
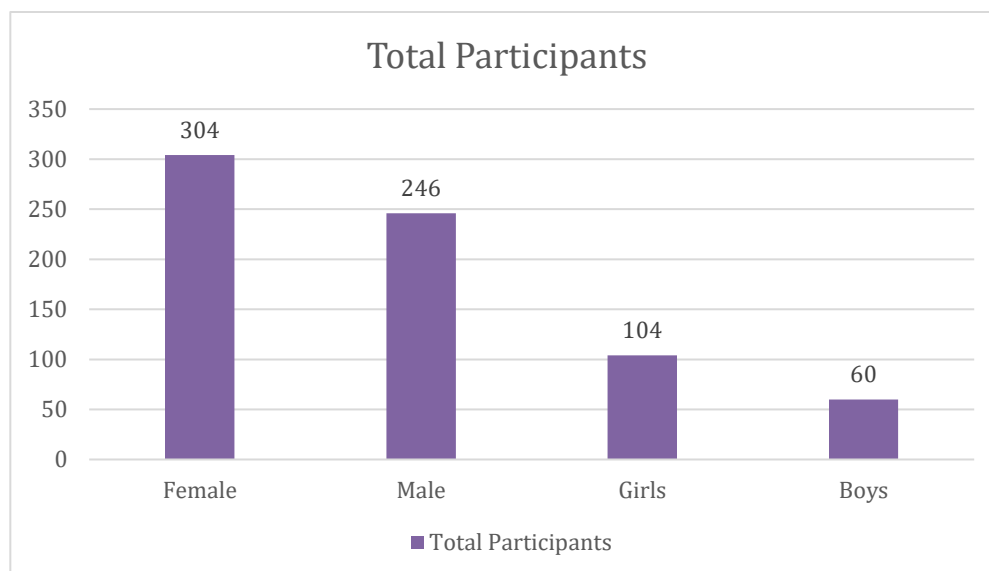
Activities

To operationalize the 2025 global theme - UNiTE to End Digital Violence against All Women and Girls – GiHA WG coordinated a series of integrated activities across eight camps, combining awareness, dialogue, and community engagement. Each event began with advocacy rallies and Orange Day marches, creating visibility and signaling collective commitment to ending digital violence. These were followed by thematic discussions and participatory dialogues, where community members explored definitions of digital violence, identified high-risk platforms such as WhatsApp, Imo, TikTok, and Facebook/Messenger, and shared lived experiences of image-based abuse, grooming, and coercion. The sessions emphasized safe digital practices and clarified reporting pathways through Women-Friendly Spaces, CiC offices, and Protection focal points. To mobilize adolescents and foster inclusive participation, art exhibitions and competitions were organized, allowing youth to express perspectives on digital safety through creative mediums. In some camps, sports activities such as girls' football, alongside cultural engagements like henna painting, chess competitions, and interactive games, were incorporated to attract diverse age groups and normalize conversations around gender equality. These formats were complemented by distribution of visibility items—shawls and solar torches branded with campaign messages— to women leaders, reinforcing their role as influencers and extending advocacy beyond event venues. Collectively, these activities were critical for breaking silence and stigma, promoting behavioral change, and embedding digital safety within community norms. They provided safe spaces for dialogue, empowered women and youth as change agents, and strengthened trust in formal reporting mechanisms, thereby advancing GiHA WG's strategic objective of fostering a gender-responsive humanitarian response.

Camp-wise Discussions & Outcomes

The consultations across eight camps revealed a shared understanding among participants that digital violence is a growing and urgent concern in the Rohingya refugee context. Community members described digital violence as harmful acts facilitated through social media and messaging platforms, including Facebook, Messenger, WhatsApp, Imo, and TikTok. Women and girls reported experiences of image-based abuse, where personal photos were leaked or shared without consent, often after relationship breakdowns. These violations were linked to severe social stigma, family conflict, and emotional distress, with some cases escalating to coercion and trafficking. Participants recounted instances where leaked images were used to blackmail women into maintaining harmful relationships or agreeing to unsafe migration plans, underscoring the intersection between digital violence and broader protection risks.

The psychological and social consequences of online harassment were repeatedly emphasized. Women spoke of isolation and reputational damage, while adolescents noted restrictions on mobility and participation in community life following incidents of digital abuse. Religious and community leaders acknowledged these harms and committed to integrating preventive

messages into Friday sermons and Majhi meetings, signaling an important entry point for normative change.

Risk perception varied across platforms, with Messenger consistently identified as particularly unsafe due to unsolicited contacts and deceptive profiles. Fake accounts and impersonation were reported as common tactics for exploitation, while shared device usage and low digital literacy compounded vulnerabilities. Practical safety measures—such as using strong passwords, logging out from shared devices, and avoiding unknown contacts—were discussed, but participants stressed the need for structured digital literacy training to build confidence and resilience.

Barriers to reporting emerged as a recurring theme. Shame, fear of retaliation, and lack of clarity on available services deterred survivors from seeking help. While Women-Friendly Spaces, CiC offices, and Protection focal points were identified as preferred referral options, stigma and confidentiality concerns remain significant obstacles. Suggestions included establishing visible reporting mechanisms within camps and ensuring anonymity to encourage disclosure.

Youth engagement featured prominently in the discussions, with adolescents actively participating in art competitions and sports activities that complemented thematic dialogues. These creative platforms amplified young voices and fostered peer-led advocacy for respectful digital behavior. Women leaders, recognized through the distribution of visibility items such as shawls and solar torches, expressed readiness to champion awareness within their communities, reinforcing the importance of localized leadership in sustaining campaign momentum.

Overall, the consultations illuminated both the depth of digital violence and the community's willingness to confront it. Participants articulated clear expectations for capacity-building initiatives, including training on safe device use, awareness campaigns targeting men and boys, and stronger accountability measures to curb harmful practices such as fake SIM card usage. These insights provide a robust foundation for GiHA WG's strategic planning and underscore the need for integrated interventions that combine awareness, prevention, and survivor-centered response.

Key Risks Identified

- **Image-based abuse:** Non-consensual sharing of intimate photos and videos, often as revenge after breakups.
- **Online grooming and coercion:** Exploitation through fake relationships, sometimes linked to trafficking.
- **Impersonation and fake accounts:** Use of women's photos to create fraudulent profiles for abuse.
- **Cyberstalking and harassment:** Persistent monitoring and threats via messaging apps.
- **Deepfakes and doxxing:** Emerging risks noted in some camps, involving manipulated content and exposure of private information.

- **Platform-specific vulnerabilities**: Messenger perceived as least safe; WhatsApp, Imo, TikTok also widely used and risky.
- **Shared device risks:** Lack of logout practices and password security increases exposure.
- **Barriers to reporting:** Stigma, fear of retaliation, and limited awareness of formal pathways.

Cross-Cutting Analysis

The consultations across eight camps revealed consistent patterns in the nature, drivers, and consequences of digital violence, as well as systemic gaps in prevention and response. While each camp presented unique nuances, several overarching themes emerged that underscore the urgency of integrated interventions.

Forms and Patterns of Digital Violence

Image-based abuse was the most frequently cited form of harm, often involving non-consensual sharing of intimate photos and videos following relationship breakdowns. Participants also reported online grooming and coercion, where perpetrators exploited trust to manipulate women and girls into harmful situations, sometimes linked to trafficking. Impersonation and fake accounts were identified as common tactics for exploitation, alongside cyberstalking and persistent harassment through messaging applications. In some camps, discussions extended to emerging risks such as AI-generated deepfakes and doxxing, highlighting the evolving nature of digital threats in humanitarian settings.

Platform-Specific Vulnerabilities
Social media and messaging platforms—particularly Facebook, Messenger, WhatsApp, Imo, and TikTok—were repeatedly flagged as high-risk spaces. Messenger was perceived as especially unsafe due to unsolicited contacts and deceptive profiles, while shared device usage amplified vulnerabilities by limiting privacy controls and account security.

Impacts on Women and Girls
The consequences of digital violence were described as profound and multidimensional. Survivors faced emotional distress, social isolation, and reputational damage, often resulting in family conflict and restrictions on mobility. In extreme cases, digital abuse escalated to physical harm or coercion for unsafe migration, underscoring its intersection with broader protection risks.

Barriers to Reporting and Accessing Support
Despite awareness of Women-Friendly Spaces, CiC offices, and Protection focal points, stigma and fear of retaliation deterred survivors from seeking help. Participants emphasized the need for visible, confidential reporting mechanisms and greater community sensitization to normalize help-seeking behaviors.

Community Engagement and Leadership

Religious and community leaders demonstrated willingness to champion preventive messaging through sermons and Majhi meetings, while youth engagement through art, sports, and cultural activities emerged as an effective strategy for promoting respectful digital behavior. Women leaders, recognized through visibility items, expressed readiness to sustain advocacy within their blocks, reinforcing the importance of localized leadership.

Capacity Gaps and Community Expectations

Across camps, participants called for structured digital literacy training, awareness campaigns targeting men and boys, and stronger accountability measures to curb harmful practices such as fake SIM card usage. These expectations align with GiHA WG's strategic objectives to integrate digital safety into GBV programming and strengthen survivor-centered response systems.

Recommendations

Based on the findings from eight camp-level consultations and dialogues, GiHA WG should adopt a multi-pronged approach that addresses prevention, protection, and systemic accountability for digital violence in the Rohingya refugee response. The following recommendations are designed to strengthen community resilience, enhance survivor-centered services, and integrate digital safety into GBV programming:

1. **Institutionalize Digital Safety Education**

Develop and roll out a standardized digital safety curriculum across GBV and Protection actors, targeting adolescents, caregivers, and men and boys. The curriculum should cover:

- Understanding digital violence and its consequences.
- Privacy settings and account security on commonly used platforms (WhatsApp, Imo, TikTok, Facebook/Messenger).
- Safe sharing practices and prevention of image-based abuse.
- Evidence preservation for reporting and referral. This initiative will build community capacity to navigate digital spaces safely and reduce vulnerabilities linked to low digital literacy.

2. **Strengthen Confidential and Survivor-Centered Reporting Mechanisms**

Establish visible, accessible, and confidential reporting pathways within camps, ensuring survivors can seek help without fear of stigma or retaliation. Key actions include:

- Clear signage and information dissemination on Women-Friendly Spaces, CiC offices, and Protection focal points.
- Anonymous reporting options and mobile-based complaint channels.
- Integration with GBVIMS+ for secure data management and accountability. These measures will normalize help-seeking and improve timely access to protection services.

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3. **Engage Community and Faith Leaders as Change Agents**

Develop ready-to-use advocacy kits for Imams, Majhis, and other influencers, including sermon scripts and marketplace messaging materials. Regular monitoring of message dissemination during Friday Khutbas and community meetings will ensure sustained engagement. Leveraging trusted voices will help challenge harmful norms and reinforce positive behaviors.

4. **Deliver Platform-Specific Safety Clinics**

Organize hands-on sessions focused on practical skills such as:

- Adjusting privacy settings on WhatsApp, Imo, TikTok, and Messenger.
- Blocking and reporting abusive accounts.
- Safely documenting evidence for case management. These clinics should be integrated into existing community outreach and Women-Friendly Space programming to maximize reach.

5. **Mobilize Youth Through Peer-Led Digital Literacy Groups**

Establish peer learning circles for women, girls, and adolescents, combining interactive education with creative formats like art and sports. These groups will serve as safe spaces for dialogue, skill-building, and advocacy, positioning youth as champions of respectful digital behavior.

6. **Build Front-Line Capacity on Emerging Digital Threats**

Train GBV and Protection staff on handling complex cases such as image-based abuse, deepfakes, and doxxing, including:

- Validation and secure storage of digital evidence.
- Survivor-centered referral and psychosocial support.
- Risk communication and community sensitization. This will ensure frontline responders are equipped to address evolving forms of digital violence.