

## Gender in Humanitarian Action Working Group (GiHA WG) Cox's Bazar, Bangladesh 2025

### TERMS OF REFERENCE

#### 1. Background and Context

Protecting human rights and promoting gender equality must be central to humanitarian action. The needs of women, men, girls and boys are different, and often these differences are amplified during humanitarian crises. In humanitarian preparedness and response, women's leadership, and capacity as agents of change represents an untapped resource. As the UN Secretary General in his 2020 report (S/200/946) on Women, Peace and Security (WPS) emphasized, *"the protection and leadership of crisis affected women and girls is essential for effective and sustainable humanitarian action, when women are meaningfully engaged, and their needs are directly addressed, humanitarian action is more efficient and effective, the transition to recovery is accelerated, and community-wide resilience is enhanced."*

The humanitarian crisis in Cox's Bazar, triggered by the mass displacement of over 700,000 Rohingya refugees from Myanmar in 2017, continues to place immense pressure on both refugee and host communities. The crisis disproportionately affects women and girls and the most vulnerable and marginalized Rohingya refugee and host community groups, including women and girls with disabilities, single women, female-headed households, and persons of diverse gender identities and sexual orientations. Gender inequalities are further exacerbated by the protracted displacement context and related rapidly declining resources, gaps in humanitarian services, and heightened insecurities alongside the impacts of natural disasters.

Social vulnerabilities, amplified by the humanitarian crisis, are not homogenous in nature, and the concerns, needs, risks and interests of Rohingya and host community women, men, girls and boys are different and distinct. Within the response, women's leadership remains underutilized, and women and girls face high insecurities, mobility restrictions and multiple barriers influenced by regressive gender norms. In turn, men and boys are often expected to protect their communities, putting them at risk of injury or death in conflict. In the camps, abductions and armed incidents pose threats to particularly men and boys. There is the need for gender-responsive approaches that consider diverse needs and vulnerabilities, and that are tailored to the context.

In Cox's Bazar, the Gender in Humanitarian Action Working Group (GiHA WG) is the access point within the Rohingya refugee response (RRR) for technical guidance and coordination on gender mainstreaming across the Rohingya refugee response (RRR). Functioning under the Inter Sector Coordination Group (ISCG), the GiHA WG promotes both dedicated and integrated approaches to gender equality in the Rohingya response. It aligns with global standards and accountabilities set forward by the IASC Gender Policy, GBV in Emergencies Guidelines, the Global Compact on refugees, and the Women, Peace and Security agenda as set forward by United Nations Security

Council Resolutions. The Government of Bangladesh, signatory to these global commitments as well as the Convention on the Elimination of all Forms of Discrimination against Women and the Beijing Platform for Action, has committed to promote gender equality and women's empowerment (GEWE) in the National Standing Orders on Disasters.

## 2. Purpose and Core Functions

The GiHA Working Group purpose is to ensure that gender equality considerations are addressed across all phases of humanitarian action—preparedness, response, and recovery—so that the distinct needs and priorities of women, men, girls, boys, gender diverse persons, and women and girls with disabilities are addressed equitably, with particular attention to promoting the leadership of women in the response and to accountability to affected people (AAP). It supports full and effective gender-responsive programming by providing guidance on gender mainstreaming through integrated as well as dedicated approaches across the ISCG and its sector coordination mechanisms as well as the Joint Response Plan (JRP).

The Working Group provides cross-sectoral and inter-agency support across four key focus areas:

- i. Coordination,
- ii. Technical advice, guidance, and capacity development,
- iii. Assessments, analysis, and monitoring, and
- iv. Advocacy and communications

The GiHA WG promotes joined-up approaches on critical GEEWG issues across the humanitarian-development-peace nexus, serving as a platform for collaborative initiatives and dialogue.

**Coordination:** Convening gender focal points across the sectors to share information, identify gaps, and strengthen synergies to advance gender equality in the Rohingya refugee response across the humanitarian-development-peace nexus. Promoting cross-sectoral learning and best practices.

**Technical Guidance:** Supporting sectors to integrate gender considerations into planning, monitoring, reporting and guidance. This includes support to the use of the IASC Gender with Age Marker as well as camp-level community engagement tools.

**Capacity Development:** Supporting capacity development to strengthen the capacities of humanitarian actors on gender-responsive programming and operations, delivering learning sessions and training for GiHA WG members, sectors, ISCG, and humanitarian actors in the camps.

**Assessment, Analysis & Monitoring:** Contributing and supporting gender analyses and assessments, and ensuring the use of sex-, age-, and disability-disaggregated data (SADDD). Tracking progress using gender indicators and standard tools such as GAM.

**Information & Knowledge Management:** Identifying and analyzing recent developments, needs, gaps, and good practices, and routinely sharing these with the ISCG and ROCT. Ensuring information flow between the national GiHA WG and the Cox's Bazar GiHA WG.

**Advocacy and Communications:** Preparing and disseminating strategic and analytical briefs, including actionable recommendations for RRR actors and the national GiHA WG where relevant. Organizing joint advocacy campaigns and events, for example, to observe the International Women's Day and 16 Days of Activism Campaign.

**Specific priorities** include to advance partnerships and collaboration, advancing gender-responsive budgeting, planning and monitoring pursuing an intersectional lens to ensure that the needs of the most vulnerable and marginalized women and girls, in all their diversity, are addressed in the RRR.

### 3. Membership

#### 3.1 GiHA WG Membership

The GiHA WG comprises gender focal points from humanitarian agencies participating in sectoral coordination and contributing to the JRP. Membership is organizational, requiring a nominated focal point and alternate. Efforts are made to ensure balanced representation in terms of gender and international vs. national and local actors.

**Women-Led and Women's Rights Organizations (WLOs/WROs)**<sup>1</sup> play a key role by contributing lived experience and grassroots insights. Their engagement helps ensure women's and girls' voices are integrated into the response. The GiHA WG provides a platform to ensure meaningful participation of WLOs/WROs in the RRR. The local **Department of Women Affairs** representative is invited to participate as well, ensuring sustainability and linkages with the National-level GiHA WG.

Members of the WG are expected to contribute for the greater interest of gender equality and empowerment of women and girls without being limited to their own organization's projects/activities, and to perform the following functions:

- Attend and actively participate in the GiHA WG meetings.
- Share relevant information to support a coordinated response to the RRR.
- Participate in and contribute to the implementation, monitoring and reporting on GiHA WG activities as identified by its Work Plan.

A GIHA WG member loses the right to vote after failing to attend three consecutive meetings.

---

<sup>1</sup> Definition in Annex A

GiHA WG membership will be reviewed every **six months** in GiHA monthly meetings. Existing members will suggest names for new membership according to availability, interest, and technical capacity. Final changes in the composition or membership will be determined by the ISCG Principal Coordinator in consultation with the ROCT, with technical advice from UN Women. The designation of members, with an alternative back-up, will be made in agreement with the heads of organizations with demonstrated capacity in gender analysis and mainstreaming.

#### **4. Modes of Operation**

**Meetings:** The GiHA WG meets monthly, with additional meetings held as needed. Chaired by the GiHA Coordinator, meetings may include observers (e.g., sectors, donors) as relevant. Agendas and minutes are shared with members and uploaded to the ISCG website. Periodic multi-stakeholder forums may also be convened to enhance coordination and spotlight key gender issues.

**Task Force/Technical Working Group (TWG):** The GiHA WG may form time-bound Task Forces to carry forward particular work. A Technical Working Group, comprising WLO/WRO representatives, will ensure guidance from WROs informs the work of the GiHA WG and broader RRR.

**Work Plan:** Developed through a participatory process, the annual GiHA WG work plan aligns with the National GiHA WG priorities, IASC Policy and outlines deliverables supporting sectoral and Inter Sectoral Coordination Group (ISCG) and relevant to the needs of Rohingya Refugee Response.

**Reporting arrangements:** The GiHA WG is accountable to and reports to the ROCT on strategic issues, liaising with the National GiHA WG for guidance. It participates in the ISCG on all operational matters relevant to gender equality.

**Harmonization and Avoidance of Duplication:** The GiHA WG harmonizes its annual work plan with National GiHA WG and with other relevant sectors to ensure complementary actions and avoid duplication of efforts.

**Linkages with the Sectors:** With the engagement and guidance of the Inter-Sector Group Coordinator, the GiHA WG ensures close collaboration, communication and coordination with the sectors and sub-sectors to ensure complementarity of the efforts, avoid duplication and maximize resources, as well as amplifying advocacy efforts.

**Linkages with National and Regional GiHA Structures:** The Cox's Bazar GiHA Working Group will maintain close collaboration with both the National GiHA Working Group, co-chaired by UN Women and the Department of Women Affairs (DWA), and the Asia-Pacific Regional GiHA Working Group (AP GiHA WG). These linkages ensure coherence, knowledge exchange, and alignment of priorities across humanitarian coordination levels. Key modalities of engagement include: information sharing and alignment with national policies and RRR guiding documents; joint advocacy initiatives; technical exchange and learning; policy influence, and coordination across structures (ref: Annex 2).

**Note:** The Terms of References, including membership of the WG and modes of operation, will be reviewed, and revised on a regular basis, taking into account evolving programming across the RRR.

### **Annexes**

Annex 1. Members and contact details

Annex 2. Modalities of engagement – National- and Cox's Bazar GiHA WGs

Annex 3: Key Definitions

## Annex 1. Members

Members from the following organizations will form the GiHA WG:

Non-Sector Members	Sector Members	Working groups/ Networks	WLOs/ WROs
IFRC	Education	PSEA Network	RWWS
IOM	Health	AAP	BTS
FAO	Food Security	EPR	JNUS
UNFPA	Livelihoods and Skills Development	Age and Disability	BNPS
UNHCR	Nutrition	Youth	
UNICEF	Protection including CP and GBV		
UN Women	SCCCM		
WFP	WASH		
UNESCO			
WHO			
ILO			
UNDP			
NGO Platform			
Care			
Plan International			
Oxfam			
Action Aid			
BRAC			
Nari Maitree			

## 5. Contact Details

Focal	Email
Inter Sector Coordination Group (ISCG)	Mehbuba Jabin (mehbuba@iscgxcb.org)
Inter Sector Coordination Group (ISCG)	BUSCONI RICCI ODDI Filippo (filippo@iscgxcb.org)

## Annex 2. Modalities of engagement – National- and Cox’s Bazar GiHA WGs

- **Information sharing and alignment:** The Cox’s Bazar GiHA WG will contribute updates, best practices, and key findings (including regional GiHA indicators) to national and regional GiHA platforms, and in turn integrate relevant guidance and policy recommendations from those groups into local coordination efforts.
- **Participation in joint initiatives:** The WG will actively participate in joint advocacy campaigns, capacity development initiatives, and research efforts led by the national and regional GiHA mechanisms.
- **Technical exchange and learning:** WG members and Chairs will engage in peer learning opportunities, particularly in areas such as intersectionality, localization, gender in disaster response, and emerging humanitarian trends.
- **Policy influence:** By aligning with the National and Regional GiHA WGs, the Cox’s Bazar GiHA WG contributes to broader policy and programmatic coherence, ensuring local priorities and evidence inform national planning and regional strategies.
- **Coordination across responses:** Where relevant, the WG will coordinate with other humanitarian contexts in Bangladesh (e.g., climate-induced displacement) and regional response frameworks to support integrated approaches to gender equality in crisis settings.

### Annex 3. Key Definitions

**‘Sex’** describes the biological difference between males and females and is determined at birth for life. The term **‘gender’** refers to the social differences between females and males throughout the life cycle that are learned, but which, though deeply rooted in every culture, are changeable over time and have wide variations both within and between cultures. Gender determines the roles, power and resources for females and males in any culture.

**‘Gender analysis’** examines the differences in the lives of women, men, girls, and boys of concern and applies this to policy development and service delivery. A **‘gender lens’** allows us to see the inherent and different needs, capacities and other realities of women compared to men and of boys compared to girls. Then we look at the men and women together, the boys and girls together, as well as the influence of men and women on boys and girls, to see how they interact, how they share power, obligations and opportunities and make decisions. The gender lens is a tool for doing basic gender analysis. Gender analysis will: 1) ensure we do not unwittingly or unintentionally do harm, and 2) help all to participate, fulfil their rights and meet their needs, thereby contributing to gender equality.

**‘Gender mainstreaming’** is the process of assessing the implications for women and men of any planned action, including legislation, policies, or programmes, in all areas and at all levels. It is a strategy for making women's as well as men's concerns and experiences an integral dimension of the design, implementation, monitoring and evaluation of policies and programmes in all political, economic, and societal spheres so that women and men benefit equally, and inequality is not perpetuated. The ultimate goal is to achieve gender equality.

**‘Gender equality’** addresses three issues:

- i) **Rights**, equal access to social, economic, political, and legal rights.
- ii) **Resources**, equal control over productive resources, including education, land, information, and financial resources.
- iii) **Voice and agency**, equal power to influence resource allocation and investment decisions in the home, the community and at national levels.

When we speak of gender equality, we speak of each woman, girl, boy and man, as well as transgender and intersex people, being able to exercise their human rights. That includes having choices and a say in their life as a refugee, an internally displaced people or a resident of a host community. Gender Equality Programming is, therefore, about providing programmes which enable everyone to exercise their rights. From our perspective as humanitarians, we are interested in **gender equity**, or substantive gender equality, or the process of being fair to males and females. This means:

- Taking actions to give disadvantaged people a **fair share** of benefits,
- Giving on the **basis of needs and necessities**,



- Introducing **special measures** to compensate for historical and social disadvantages.

**‘Women-led organization’** is an organization with a humanitarian mandate and/or mission that is: 1. governed or directed by women; or 2. whose leadership is principally made up of women, demonstrated by 50% or more occupying senior leadership positions (definitions by IASC).

**‘Women’s rights organization’** is **1.** an organization that self-identifies as a women’s rights organization with primary focus on advancing gender equality, women’s empowerment and human rights; or **2.** an organization that has, as part of its mission statement, the advancement of women’s/girls’ interests and rights (or where ‘women,’ ‘girls,’ ‘gender’ or local language equivalents are prominent in their mission statement); or **3.** an organization that has, as part of its mission statement or objectives, to challenge and transform gender inequalities (unjust rules), unequal power relations and promoting positive social norms (definitions endorsed by the IASC, Gender Reference Group (GRG) and the Grand Bargain Localization Workstream and UN Women).