

## **Brief note to clarify what humanitarian partners mean by “HLP rights” in the Rohingya response**

**10 March 2026**

### **1. Purpose**

The purpose of this note is to clarify what is meant by Housing, Land and Property (HLP) rights for Rohingya refugees/FDMNs in Bangladesh. It addresses the concern that advocating for HLP rights may imply calling for refugees to be allocated land in Bangladesh, granted ownership, or permitted to remain permanently. That is not at all what we mean by HLP rights for refugees, rather it means to ensure minimum protection that prevents harm, reduces disputes, and supports proper camp management and service delivery.

### **2. What HLP rights mean in general**

HLP rights are recognized as part of basic human rights and refer to a spectrum entitlement pertaining to ownership, utilization, transfer, and habitation of land and any fixed assets, and protection from interference with one's home, including eviction. A key element of HLP rights is security of tenure, which means the assurance that people can live where they are settled without fear of forced removal, coercion, or exploitation, and the reduction of protection risks linked to housing and land disputes.

### **3. HLP rights are not the same for everyone**

The content and scope of HLP rights can differ depending on a person's legal status, therefore, the rights and entitlements of Bangladeshi citizens are not the same as those of foreigners legally residing in Bangladesh, nor those of refugees/FDMN in terms of HLP. For example, Bangladeshi citizens may acquire land and obtain freehold ownership under national law, while foreigners and refugees generally cannot do so unless authorized by the Government. Similarly, citizens may freely choose where to reside, while refugees are settled in designated areas according to Government policy. Recognizing these distinctions is essential.

### **4. What HLP rights DO NOT mean for Rohingya refugees/FDMN**

For the Rohingya response in Bangladesh, “HLP rights” do not mean any of the following:

- Refugees/FDMN have the same HLP rights as Bangladeshi citizens.
- The Government of Bangladesh should allocate land to refugees as owners or recognize them as landholders.
- Refugees/FDMN should be allowed to buy land and obtain ownership in Bangladesh (unless future Government laws/policies explicitly permit it).
- Refugees/FDMN should permanently reside in Bangladesh or retain the land they currently occupy indefinitely.
- Refugees/FDMN can choose where to settle in Bangladesh or build shelters without Government authorization and established camp norms.

### **5. What HLP rights DO mean for Rohingya refugees/FDMN in Bangladesh**

When humanitarian partners refer to “HLP rights” for refugees/FDMN, we mean practical protections that align with international standards on adequate housing and basic protection,



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within the existing Government-led camp policy and the overall legal framework with regards to land and immovable property. These include:

**a) Access to adequate shelter and basic services**

Refugees/FDMN should have access to shelter that meets minimum adequacy standards as per internal law, including reasonable protection from weather and hazards, sufficient space for the family, and safe access to essential services such as WASH and health services, consistent with camp norms and available resources.

**b) Security of tenure within the Government settlement framework**

Refugees/FDMN should have a recognized and respected right to reside in the shelter/plot allocated to them under Government policy and camp management arrangements, if they comply with applicable camp rules. This “security of tenure” does not confer ownership; it means protection from arbitrary interference and clarity that the allocated shelter/plot is their place of residence.

**c) Protection from eviction and forced displacement**

No person or group, including host community members, criminal groups, or others, should be permitted to evict refugees/FDMN from their allocated place of residence, including through assertions of ownership. Where relocation is required for legitimate reasons (e.g., safety, disaster risk reduction, essential infrastructure), it should follow clear procedures, be communicated in advance, and be managed in a way that minimizes harm and maintains protection safeguards, as per international law.

**d) Protection from illegitimate rent charges and exploitation inside camp boundaries**

Where refugees/FDMN reside within camp boundaries, they should be protected from illegitimate rent demands, payments extracted under pressure, or charges for access to services. Such practices undermine camp management, increase protection risks, and can raise tensions and insecurity.

### **6. Why this clarification matters**

A clear shared understanding of HLP rights in the Rohingya response supports the joint efforts of humanitarian agencies and the Government to deliver effective services, protect vulnerable people, and improve social cohesion and peaceful co-existence. When security of tenure is weak, refugees are more exposed to eviction, exploitation, and coercion, and humanitarian operations face disruption. Clarifying that HLP is about protection and stability within the existing settlement framework (not ownership or permanence) helps prevent misunderstandings and supports coordinated action.

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