



KEY HIGHLIGHTS

99 cases of trafficking and exploitation have been identified and directly assisted by IOM and partners, including 35 girls, 31 women, 8 boys and 25 men*

*Figures include cases identified and assisted until September 2018.

TRENDS

Exploitative and forced labour, debt bondage, child labour, survival sex, and abusive working conditions for children, women and men

REPORTED INSTANCES

Labour and sexual exploitation of adults and children; recruitment, transportation and harbouring of Rohingya men for ransom; recruitment of young women as domestic workers who are forced into prostitution; provision of forged travel documents to facilitate trafficking abroad and abduction of adolescent girls with the purpose of forced marriage

SITUATION UPDATE

Since 25 August 2017, an estimated 708,000 Rohingya have crossed into Bangladesh fleeing violence in Myanmar's Rakhine State, increasing the total Rohingya population in Cox's Bazar to more than 921,000. New arrivals are living in spontaneous settlements and are in need of humanitarian assistance. **The challenges faced by both the Rohingya refugees and the host communities as well as a lack of general awareness of the risks associated with human trafficking in the camps have created favorable conditions for criminal networks to strengthen their presence and expand recruitment.** Protection is integral to the Rohingya Humanitarian Crisis Response and addressing protection needs ensures the well-being and safety of the most vulnerable in the population.

Between September 2017 and September 2018, IOM Counter-Trafficking Programme in Cox's Bazar has identified 99 cases of trafficked and exploited Rohingya, including 26 women, 31 underage girls, 25 men and four underage boys under forced labour. A total of nine females (including four underage girls) have been found to be sexually exploited, while four people did not experience exploitation because they were able to leave/run away before the actual exploitation occurred. While the number of confirmed cases is not

representative, mainly due to the limited access to reliable data, IOM confirms that Rohingya children, women, and men are targets for fraudulent recruitment, abduction, forced prostitution, debt bondage, abusive working conditions, and forced labour. IOM's research methodology consisted of interviews and Focus Group Discussions (FGDs) with more than 280 Rohingya (children, women, men) and local authorities conducted in four locations (Shamlapur host community and Leda, Kutupalong and Balukhali camps) over a 4-month period. Additional information was collected through consultations with local NGOs, media and other actors present on the ground.

With almost no alternative sources of income or livelihood opportunities, Rohingya refugees are often willing to take whatever options are available, despite the risks involved for them and their children. The trafficking cases were reported to IOM or through partners by Rohingya with varying arrival dates in Bangladesh, including Rohingya who have lived in Bangladesh for several years as well as by those who have arrived since August 2017. Some Rohingya were targeted by traffickers on arrival.

IOM AREAS OF INTERVENTION IN COX'S BAZAR



Case management and referrals



Capacity building



Mental health and psychosocial support



Establishment and strengthening of Counter-Trafficking Committees (CTC)



Awareness raising on the risks of human trafficking and safe migration practices



Family tracking and reunification of victims of trafficking

INCREASING ABUSE OF CHILDREN

Rohingya children are increasingly subjected to domestic servitude, forced labour and sexual exploitation. Girls and boys as young as 7-years-old are recruited to work as maids (girls), shop workers, fishers and rickshaw pullers. Though promised monthly wages ranging between BDT 1,500-2,000 (USD 18-24), these children are paid significantly less than promised, or not paid at all. **In most cases, the children are not allowed to communicate with their families and are subjected to excessive working hours.**

Among the identified cases, two sisters (8 and 16-years-old) were reportedly exploited in domestic work, with working hours lasting from 8am to 3am, in addition to being subjected to verbal and physical abuse. In one reported case, a 14-year-old girl was repeatedly raped by the owner of the house where she worked, and a 15-year-old girl was gang raped by recruiters during transit, prior to her final destination as a domestic worker in Cox's Bazar. Anecdotal evidence of violence has also surfaced, including a 6-year-old girl who was accused of theft and then beaten, resulting in severe injuries including a displaced rib and deformed back. As a means of survival, children are coerced into criminality or forced to beg by their parents.

The security actors currently in charge of managing the camps and monitoring the movements of the Rohingya have found cases of adults who attempted to take children to whom they were not related to out of the camps. This includes one case whereby an adult man tried to transport an underage girl to another part of Bangladesh to work as a maid. After the frontline personnel identified a mismatch of information given by the adult man and child, both were returned to the camps. FGDs with Rohingya in the camps flagged cases of attempted abduction of children from their tents or on their way to and from latrines at night, which were prevented by the Rohingya community, as well as cases of attempted transportation of children from the camps prevented by the security actors.

An NGO partner identified a case whereby an attempt was made to traffic a child from one of the camps. The respective family was promised that the girl would be married to a Rohingya man living and working abroad. She was taken out of the camps and provided with false identification but was rescued in the process and referred to the NGO by the local government. Other key informants suggested that older Rohingya arrivals have sent their children abroad for domestic work where there are established diaspora networks. Women and girls who migrate abroad for work are particularly vulnerable to abuse, with previous instances of sex trafficking and forced labour having been reported.

Furthermore, other reports from local NGOs indicated that Bangladeshi and Rohingya women and children have been used as drug mules and smuggling couriers traveling through jungle routes to avoid border and police checkpoints. Adoption with the promise of

schooling (Madrasah) has taken place in a few cases with Rohingya and vulnerable Bangladeshi children. Concerns have been raised by partners as well as by participants in FGDs conducted by IOM over suspicion of abduction of children from the camps. In a few cases, Rohingya have taken justice into their own hands by beating up or holding persons hostage. Reportedly, there was one boy kidnapped from a camp and returned only 12 days later after his family paid ransom.

WOMEN TRAPPED

IN FORCED PROSTITUTION

FGDs mentioned instances of girls and young women recruited for domestic work or hotel maids and became trapped in forced prostitution. Community members stated Rohingya women normally do not consider prostitution as an income-generating activity, but the current lack of livelihood options forces some women to engage in survival sex. It was also mentioned that while the common price for cheap prostitution is approximately BDT 500 (USD 6), Rohingya women would be only paid by their exploiter BDT 70-100 (USD 0.8-1.20) per service.

Key informants indicated that winter is "trafficking season" in Cox's Bazar, as tourists arrive from various parts of the country as well as from abroad. **Information was obtained through interviews with NGOs that women and girls are kept in locked houses in groups of 20 to 30 people and taken to hotels and motels each night.** More broadly, local NGOs and key informants reported that girls and women in both Bangladeshi and Rohingya communities are being trafficked to India and Pakistan for labour and sexual exploitation.

The security actors in the camps reported stopping up to 60 women a day trying to get out of the camp in small groups and strongly suspected that the women - many of which appear to be underage - are travelling on traffickers' instructions. When stopped as a group, they give what seem like scripted responses, and when they are interviewed separately, they provide incoherent information on important details, such as their relationship to each other or the identity of the person they pretend to be visiting. The security actors expressed concerns that the number of women recruited to work outside the camps is much greater than they have the resources to detect. Further concern was expressed about a potential deteriorating situation once recruiters start to provide better instructions to the potential victims on how to avoid detection.

One instance was reported whereby a deceased woman was returned and the family that hired her paid BDT 50,000 (USD 600) to the victim's family as a "settlement". Forced and early marriages are also reported taking place among the Rohingya population. For many Rohingya, it is considered a coping mechanism that offers protection and economic advancement for young Rohingya women and girls.

IOM ASSISTANCE TO VICTIMS OF TRAFFICKING



DEBT BONDAGE

USED TO EXPLOIT MEN

Community groups reported that Rohingya men often work in debt bondage situations. Examples included Rohingya men who are allowed by fishermen to set-up tents on their land in exchange for work, whereby the 'debt' incurred by the men results in forced payments for fuel and penalties. According to the FGDs, when unable to work due to illness, Rohingya men are beaten by people sent by the boat owners.

The practice reportedly started before the influx and continues to thrive - in some cases men and boys have been working for the same boat owner for up to 20 years without having the ability to leave. Debt bondage, abusive working conditions, and exploitative labour are also reported in other areas of work, including salt cultivation, seaport labour, rickshaw pullers, and tom-tom drivers.

Several cases have been reported of Bangladeshi and Rohingya men who are also recruited to work overseas, and are transported to work in another country where they are harboured for ransom money - ranging from BDT 200,000 to 300,000 (USD 2,400 - 3,600).

RECRUITMENT METHODS

In the camp areas, local Bangladeshi brokers are in charge of recruitment, with women and girls mostly being recruited by female brokers. It is reported that criminal groups have increased their presence in Cox's Bazar to provide Rohingya with Bangladeshi passports and facilitate employment in Bangladesh and abroad.

Local NGOs stated that recruiters are not only Bangladeshi nationals who have connections with Rohingya who help them to find workers, but also Rohingya who already work outside the camps and are requested to recruit more people from the camps. Some Mahjis (community leaders) act as focal points for recruitment and have reported instances where they have filtered cases of deceptive recruitment.

IOM'S RESPONSE

IN COX'S BAZAR

IOM's Counter Trafficking (CT) activities started in September 2017 and include:

- Outreach sessions led by trained caseworkers to raise awareness about the risks of human trafficking and identify potential Victims of Trafficking (VoTs);
- Direct assistance to VoTs including psychological support, medical assistance, involvement in Cash-for-Work activities, access to safe spaces and safe shelters in coordination with IOM units and sub-sectors;
- Capacity building of law enforcement agents through training on identification of VoTs and case handling.



Discover IOM and partners outreach activities in this [short video](#).

IOM'S STRATEGY IN 2018

In 2018, IOM continues to scale up its CT activities. To do so, IOM has been working with implementing partners and expanding its support to the Government of Bangladesh through the following activities:

- Development of a referral network for VoTs;
- Direct assistance for VoTs, including health care, mental health care, psychosocial support and legal support to victims of trafficking;
- Awareness-raising activities for the Rohingya and the host community;
- Capacity building of law enforcement agents;
- Capacity building of government and non-government service providers;
- Strengthening the multi-sector approach in the prevention and response to human trafficking with the Government Counter-Trafficking Committee (CTC).

Taking into account the prevalence of human trafficking in Cox's Bazar with traffickers taking advantage of the desperate economic and social situations of the Rohingya refugees, there is a need to consider this population in the National Plan of Action for Combating Human Trafficking for 2018- 2020.

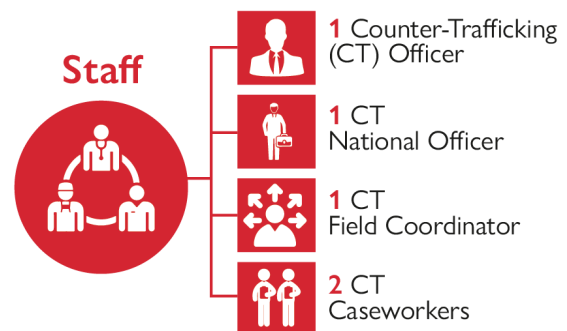
INTERVENTION ACHIEVEMENTS



967 individuals sensitised through 52 outreach sessions about the risks of human trafficking

105 law enforcement agents trained on identification of VoTs and case handling

IOM CT STAFF STRUCTURE



CT ACTIVITIES ARE SUPPORTED BY:

