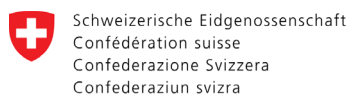




Executive Summary

Social Norms, Economic Approaches

The potential for addressing GBV
through economic interventions in
the Rohingya refugee response



Swiss Agency for Development
and Cooperation SDC





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List of acronyms

ACF	Action Contre la Faim	IRC	International Rescue Committee
CaLP	Cash Learning Partnership	ISCG	Inter-Sectoral Coordination Group
CBA	Cash-Based Assistance	KAP	Knowledge, Attitude, and Practice
CBI	Cash-Based Intervention	KII	Key Informant Interview
CFW	Cash for Work	MoWCA	Ministry of Women and Children's Affairs
CBT	Cognitive Behavioural Therapy	MPG	Multi-purpose Grant
CiC	Camp-in-Charge	ODI	Overseas Development Institute
CTP	Cash Transfer Programming	RRRC	Refugee Relief & Repatriation Commissioner, Office of the
CVA	Cash and Voucher Assistance	SMEP	Site Management Engineering Programme
DfID	Department for International Development	SMS	Site Management Services
DRR	Disaster Risk Reduction	SSWG	Safe Space for Women and Girls
DSS	Department of Social Services	UAM	Unaccompanied Minor
FDMN	Forcibly Displaced Myanmar Nationals	UCG/T	Unconditional Cash Grant/ Transfer
FGD	Focus Group Discussion	UN	United Nations
GBV	Gender-based Violence	UNICEF	United Nations Children's Fund
GBVIMS	Gender-based Violence Information Management System	UNFPA	United Nations Population Fund
HRW	Human Rights Watch	WASH	Water, Sanitation and Hygiene
ICLA	Information, Counselling or Legal Assistance	WE	Women's Empowerment
ID	Identity Document	WFP	World Food Programme
INGO	International Non-Governmental Organisation	WFS	Women Friendly Space
IOM	International Organization for Migration	WRC	Women's Refugee Commission
IPV	Intimate Partner Violence		

Glossary

Conditional Cash Transfers	Direct payments of cash on which there are no conditions placed on the beneficiary to receive it.	Intimate Partner Violence	Physical, sexual, and emotional abuse and controlling behaviours by an intimate partner.
Cash for Assets	A form of Cash for Work in which the beneficiary receives cash in return for work performed on projects relating to community assets or infrastructure.	Mahji	Rohingya community leaders appointed by both communities and local government.
Cash for Work	A form of Conditional Cash Transfer in which the beneficiary is paid for performing a specific job.	Multi-purpose Grant	Cash transfer calculated to provide the amount of money required to cover, fully or partially, a household's basic and/or recovery needs.
Cash Plus or Complementary Programming	Cash programming in which CTP is combined with other activities or modalities.	Polygyny	Polygamy in which a man has more than one wife.
Cash Transfer	Direct payments of money, physical or electronic cash, to a recipient.	Purdah	An Urdu word meaning "curtain," it is commonly used among Muslim and some Hindu communities across South Asia.
Cash Transfer Programming	All the various mechanisms of cash transfers used to implement a programme.	SCOPE	WFP's platform that manages the entire programme intervention process for voucher, cash, and in-kind transfer modalities.
Cash/Voucher for Training	Conditional form of transfer entailing payments made on condition of attending one or more training sessions.	Unconditional Cash Transfers	Direct payments of cash on which there are conditions that must be met by the beneficiary in order to receive it.
Children	Any person under the age of 18.	Upazila	An administrative region in Bangladesh that is the equivalent of a county or sub-district.
E-Transfer or Digital Payments	Disbursement mechanisms that extend to mobile money and mobile vouchers, including smart cards.	Voucher	Piece of paper, token, or electronic coupon that can be exchanged for goods or services.
Gender-based Violence	Violence perpetrated against an individual because of their gender. The term captures violence against both women and men, but women and girls constitute the majority of the victims.		

Executive summary

This report was commissioned by UNICEF to develop an evidence-base on the potential for addressing gender-based violence in the Rohingya Refugee Response through economic interventions, seeking to understand the contextual risks, drivers, challenges, and possibilities.

Why consider an economic intervention to address GBV among Rohingya in Cox's Bazar?

More than half of the Rohingya population now living in Cox's Bazar is female, many of whom experienced violence. As refugees, these same women and girls remain targets of gendered violence, which is chronically underreported and often normalised. In line with their mandate to protect children, UNICEF is responding to such human rights abuses like child marriage, domestic violence, and trafficking, and evaluating strategies to address these challenges. This report explores the possibilities of reducing or mitigating GBV through economic programming, including cash transfers, as an approach that alone, or in combination with other initiatives, can efficiently tackle the drivers of GBV through a responsible and appropriate intervention.

This report seeks to address knowledge gaps in understanding gendered violence and cash programming in humanitarian contexts through tackling two intersecting challenges:

- Identifying and understanding the root causes and drivers of **Gender-based Violence (GBV)**, a complex and multifaceted phenomenon rooted in cultural, political, and societal norms, and which includes a range of violent behaviours that have different drivers and cultural significance.
- Examining the potential to address those drivers through **Cash Transfer Programming (CTP)**, an umbrella term referring to programmes that provide beneficiaries with cash or vouchers. This approach offers a flexible and resource-efficient instrument to positively influence multiple sectors, yet CTP is under-researched in humanitarian contexts, particularly as related to GBV outcomes and limited in the Rohingya response by restrictions on such interventions.

The Rohingya situation is becoming a protracted crisis, and so **thinking in the long term about transformative, and sustainable programming is a priority**. This transition demands greater sensitivity to the experiences, perspectives, concerns, and aspirations of different segments of the refugee population, and will require implementers to look beyond basic needs.

What were the research objectives?

This report assesses **the appropriateness of economic interventions (including cash transfers) to address Rohingya refugee women and girls' experiences of GBV in Cox's Bazar**. This overarching aim was broken down to three key sub-objectives focusing on the refugee crisis in Cox's Bazar:

1. Understand the relationship between GBV and economic stressors.
2. Assess the relevance and feasibility of economic interventions for preventing and mitigating GBV.
3. Provide recommendations to prevent and mitigate GBV.

To achieve these objectives, Samuel Hall undertook mixed methods field research, including both qualitative and quantitative research, speaking with the Rohingya community and programming actors in Cox's Bazar, as well as thematic experts. This involved over 800 quantitative surveys and over 60 qualitative FGDs, interviews and case studies. In addition, Samuel Hall sought to analyse and contextualise findings from the field within existing literature and understandings of the context – to consider the relationship between CTP and GBV, the potential positive outcomes and negative risks, and to highlight gaps in knowledge.

How do GBV, social norms, and economic factors intersect in Cox's Bazar?

The Rohingya community continues to face economic hardship, and while programming to support them has made progress across several sectors, restrictions on work mean that many households are reliant on aid and have limited access to work or income opportunities, resulting in high levels of household need – a majority of households surveyed had no income. **The study highlights how the high incidence of GBV, with 42.5% of women in this study reporting experiencing violence in the home, is directly related to the community's conservative norms around gender and exacerbated both by stress on households linked to the economic situation and a cultural acceptance of certain forms of GBV.** Pressure to conform was felt by all – and as such, women's access to resources and information was limited by segregation, and socio-cultural gender values strongly impacted community attitudes towards women working, participating in public life, or household decision making. In particular, the boundaries understood for women in terms of work were clear – that income generation of any kind by women, if done at all, should take place in “safe,” gender-segregated spaces, and should not impact men's primacy in decision making. In this context, underlying sociocultural drivers of GBV emerged as more significant than economic factors in exacerbating violence.

The challenges posed by the market situation in the camps, and in the surrounding communities, are significant. For economic approaches to succeed, these markets are key. There are limited income opportunities, aside from Cash-for-Work programmes

and some small-scale business or income generation – 83% of respondents cited more jobs as the key opportunity needed to improve their situation. In addition, value chains are lacking or disjointed, markets are weak – in no small part due to restrictions on economic interaction between host and refugee communities – and production is difficult due to lack of space, skills, and resources. The camp context also poses a variety of other relevant challenges – common security challenges included fear of sexual harassment or assault for women leaving the home, the lack of policing or security at night, and the absence of formal justice systems in the camps. These issues are clearly linked to GBV, especially lack of legal access and lack of repercussions for perpetrators of GBV.

GBV, cash and livelihoods programmes are operational in the camps, but to varying degrees – and often small-scale – and still facing significant limitations, not least government resistance to economic interventions. Actors in the camps flagged the difficulties in engaging women and some reported backlashes against programming that targets women. **The success of female-focused programmes was rooted in gaining community buy-in, particularly from leaders and from male household members.** These findings indicate the need for programming that is underpinned by understanding of social norms, and which ultimately seeks to shift them through positive engagement at a community level, with not only female beneficiaries but male household members and community leadership.

What are the risks in using CTPs to address GBV in the Rohingya community?

This report highlighted a range of key risks associated with programming in Cox's Bazar, including:

- **Negative programming impacts:** Creating adverse impacts on beneficiaries as a result of programming that does not adequately assess risks.
- **Low or no impact:** Failing to create impact, should the programming strategies utilised not address critical underlying factors that drive GBV.
- **Sustainability:** Creating programming that does not offer longer-term impacts, or risk return to status quo after programming, may further negatively impact resilience and wellbeing.
- **Challenging perception of male roles:** Programming seeking to address GBV must acknowledge and engage with the social norms that underpin all forms of GBV.
- **Host community flow-on impacts:** The host community already experience impacts as a result of the crisis, and failure to consider these poses harm to this community as well as to the Rohingya.

Several existing small-scale programmes in Cox's Bazar have shown that successful GBV programming is possible, and these successes may be built on in the design of

CTP that targets GBV – these strategies include components engaging with men and boys, and with community in general, as well as GBV awareness raising, and efforts to increase female leadership in camp justice systems.

How can programming actors address GBV through CTP or livelihoods programmes?

Limited but growing evidence suggests that cash can potentially address GBV in humanitarian contexts in a range of ways, including relieving household economic tensions, reducing the need for negative coping mechanisms, such as child marriage, forced marriage, polygyny; targeting women may also increase women’s decision-making power within households, leading to greater levels of empowerment, changes in gender imbalances, and connecting women to social support networks.

Key distinctions must be drawn in considering programming that seeks to reduce or prevent GBV in comparison to that which might seek to provide support or relief to survivors of GBV. There are two major ways in which programming may seek to address GBV – by working to prevent and reduce incidence of GBV, and by providing support to survivors of GBV in order to minimise negative impacts and improve recovery. Programming that seeks to mitigate the impacts of GBV on survivors needs to consider the critical needs of those who have experienced GBV, often different to what is needed for prevention efforts. Similarly, while short-term programmes may be able to address small, immediate or one-off drivers and barriers, there is nonetheless a **clear need for long-term programmes to transform or shifting the socio-cultural norms that underpin GBV among the Rohingya.** Based on the findings outlined in Chapters 1 and 3, and the risks highlighted in Chapter 4, the report recommends the following guidelines for economic approaches to GBV in Cox’s Bazar:

- 1. Advocacy to Government Stakeholders:** Advocacy efforts are critical to create the policy environment in which economic programming is possible and can be operationalised.
- 2. A Sustainability Approach:** Develop programming with a view to creating longer-term and sustained impacts on the Rohingya women and children.
- 3. Targeting Beneficiaries for High Impact & Reduced Risk:** Consider the risk and opportunities in targeting economic interventions, given the context and the likelihood of perverse incentives.
- 4. Harnessing the Power of Economic Interventions:** Cash can be used in conjunction with other forms of economic intervention to address the variety of needs identified.
- 5. Undertaking Holistic Programming:** Cash programming or economic interventions that seek to shift social norms and/or reduce GBV can be strengthened by non-economic components.

- 6. Committing to a Gender-Transformative Approach:** This approach fundamentally acknowledges unequal power structures, and constructively challenges harmful social norms.
- 7. Adopting a Learning Approach:** Evaluate, learn from, and build on past iterations of programming.

This report recommends **careful consideration of the specific goals of the programme**. Programmes that may be effective in addressing child marriage, for example, may have little or no impact in addressing domestic abuse; in some cases, interventions that might tackle one form of GBV may create adverse outcomes for another. Addressing GBV broadly through economic approaches is far less likely to be successful than efforts that seek to tackle the particular and nuanced characteristics of different forms of GBV present in the camps. To that end, participatory, contextualised assessments that consider market characteristics on a camp level are fundamental to successful efforts to create economic programming that addresses GBV.

Overall, programming that supplements economic strategies with other elements, and which aligns economic strategies with needs and drivers specific to the forms of GBV they seek to address, are likely to be the most successful in creating sustainable impact.



Camp 21, Chittagong, Bangladesh: A Rohingya boy carries various goods to be sold inside one of the many makeshift market inside Camp 21.



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