



**XCHANGE**  
RESEARCH ON MIGRATION

# SnapShot Survey





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# About us

## Xchange



At Xchange, we believe in the power of data to transform how the public perceives human migration. Xchange was established to investigate and document human movement across countries of origin, transit, and destination, through on-the-ground engagement with all stakeholders - above all, migrants themselves. We seek to provide policy makers, state bodies, non-governmental organisations, and the general public with accurate data on migration informed directly by our field research.

We believe that through the exchange of migration-specific research and data, we can generate greater awareness of the phenomenon of human migration. Our goal is to cast a spotlight on the gaps in information found along main migratory routes for the benefit of all, not in the least migrants themselves.



## MOAS

# MOAS

MOAS is an international humanitarian organisation dedicated to providing aid and emergency medical relief to refugees and migrants around the world. Today, MOAS is working in Bangladesh to provide emergency medical care and assistance to Rohingya refugees fleeing violence and persecution in Myanmar.

In response to the critical need for medical services and provision, in September 2017 MOAS established two 'Aid Stations' in Unchiprang and Shamlapur, where Rohingya refugees can receive primary and secondary medical care and where the local Bangladeshi population can access emergency services.

“

I have been living in Shamlapur for 27 years but I have not had any treatment like what MOAS gives me.

*40-year-old Rohingya woman*

”



# Introduction

## About the Survey

February 25, 2018 marked the six-month anniversary of intensified flight from northern Rakhine State. On August 25 last year, Myanmar's military launched renewed 'clearance operations,' ostensibly in response to attacks on police posts by Rohingya insurgents. Since then, 671,000 Rohingyas have fled across the border to Bangladesh; while arrival numbers have slowed, a trickle of refugees continue to cross the border, escaping ongoing persecution.<sup>1</sup>

Xchange was on the ground as the crisis in Myanmar unfolded. Between September-October 2017, our team collected 1,360 testimonies that documented both the journeys taken by Rohingya refugees entering Bangladesh, as well as detailed accounts of the human rights violations that had been committed against them that, in turn, forced them to flee.

As the name of the survey suggests, this situational report, conducted in partnership with our 'sister organisation' MOAS, was intended to shed light on the daily lives and struggles of both recently arrived Rohingya refugees and longer-term refugee residents, all of whom were beneficiaries of MOAS Aid Station services. In doing so, we sought to uncover livelihood, protection and security issues within the camps.

## Context

The Rohingya, a distinct Muslim ethnic group predominantly hailing from northern Rakhine State in Myanmar, have faced decades of protracted displacement, discrimination, and restrictions on freedom of movement imposed by Myanmar government, as well as growing inter-communal tension with local Buddhist communities.<sup>2</sup>

Several waves of Rohingyas fleeing persecution in Myanmar have occurred over the past four decades.<sup>3</sup> State-perpetrated forced displacement campaigns – most notably in 1978 and 1991/1992, and more recently in October 2016,

The Rohingya  
'Snapshot' Survey:  
collecting first-hand  
data on the everyday  
lives of residents  
of Unchiprang and  
Shamlapur.

In January and  
February 2018, we  
collected 1,584  
surveys from Rohingya  
refugees in Cox's  
Bazar, Bangladesh.  
This is what we found.

<sup>1</sup> Figures correct as of 25 February 2018: ISCG, *Situation Report: Rohingya Refugee Crisis Cox's Bazar*, 25 February 2018 available at: [https://reliefweb.int/sites/reliefweb.int/files/resources/180225\\_weeklyis-cg\\_sitrep\\_final.pdf](https://reliefweb.int/sites/reliefweb.int/files/resources/180225_weeklyis-cg_sitrep_final.pdf)

<sup>2</sup> Xchange Foundation, *The Rohingya Survey 2017 (2017)* available at: <http://xchange.org/reports/TheRohingyaSurvey2017.html>

<sup>3</sup> IOM Bangladesh *Needs and Population Monitoring (NPM), Site Assessment (SA) Round 8: Site Profiles* (February 2018), available at: [https://reliefweb.int/sites/reliefweb.int/files/resources/npm\\_sa\\_r8\\_-\\_site\\_profiles.pdf](https://reliefweb.int/sites/reliefweb.int/files/resources/npm_sa_r8_-_site_profiles.pdf) pg 1





have sent hundreds of thousands across the border to Bangladesh, and many survivors of these previous campaigns remain resident in Bangladesh to date.<sup>4</sup> The most recent bout of violence in Rakhine State began August 25 2017. The Myanmar government claims an insurgent group, the Arakan Salvation Army (ARSA), attacked around 30 border posts in northern Rakhine State, killing 12 members of the security forces. The Myanmar military responded with a brutal crackdown. Respondents to our Rohingya Survey 2017 witnessed, or experienced themselves, incidents including:<sup>5</sup>

- **Entire villages being razed (63% of respondents)**
- **Mass shootings (40% of respondents)**
- **Killings witnessed (46% of respondents)**
- **Sexual abuse of women (13% of respondents)**
- **Children murdered (5% of respondents)**

These events forced hundreds of thousands of Rohingya to flee their homes across the border to Bangladesh.

“

I came to Bangladesh before: in 1978, 1992, and after August 25, 2017. I will never go back to Myanmar again. I lost everything there.

*73-year-old Rohingya woman*

”



<sup>4</sup> ISCG, Humanitarian Response Plan 2017: September 2017-February 2018: Rohingya Refugee Crisis (Oct 2017) pg 6 available at: <https://www.humanitarianresponse.info/en/operations/bangladesh>

<sup>5</sup> See: Xchange Foundation, The Rohingya Survey 2017 (2017) available at: <http://xchange.org/reports/TheRohingyaSurvey2017.html>



## Geography

The majority of Rohingya Muslims hail from the northern areas of Rakhine State in north-western Myanmar. In the wake of the August 25 violence, most Rohingya residents fled to Cox's Bazar district in Bangladesh, a thin peninsula that comprises that country's south-eastern coast.

The Naf River makes up the majority of the border between the two countries, and formed an obstacle that most Rohingya crossed on their journeys to Bangladesh. Where possible, across shallower sections of the river, refugees crossed by foot; otherwise, Bangladeshi smugglers ferried passengers across in river boats in places where the river was impassable by foot. Some Rohingya residing further south made a maritime journey from the coast in Maungdaw Township in Rakhine State to coastal towns and villages in Bangladesh.<sup>6</sup>



<sup>6</sup> Xchange Foundation, *The Rohingya Survey 2017* (2017) available at: <http://xchange.org/reports/TheRohingyaSurvey2017.html>



Cox's Bazar district has a population of 2,290,000. It is one of Bangladesh's poorest districts, with chronic food insecurity and malnutrition at moderate levels; poverty levels are also above the national average.<sup>7</sup> The Rohingya refugees who fled across the border after August 25 mostly found refuge in Ukhia and Teknaf upazilas in Cox's Bazar.<sup>8</sup>

MOAS' primary health centres serve the communities of Shamlapur and Unchiprang, located in Teknaf Upazila. As detailed below, the two sites present unique challenges for the Rohingya communities living there: Unchiprang is a remote, makeshift camp that has provided an insecure home for more than 21,300 Rohingya refugees. Shamlapur is a lively farming and fishing village with a population of approximately 30,000 locals who host approximately 7,000 Rohingya refugees living in makeshift accommodation.

“

"I am very happy because when I was in Myanmar I didn't have any treatment like what is available at MOAS Aid Station.

60-year-old Rohingya man

”

# Methodology

## Data Collection

The Xchange research team on the ground in Bangladesh administered electronic surveys at two MOAS Aid Stations in Unchiprang and Shamlapur (Teknaf) over a period of one month (January 14th - February 14th, 2018).

In constant remote communication with the Senior Research Advisor and guidance from MOAS operational staff on the ground, two Rohingya enumerators fluent in the Rohingya language and Bangla, the national language of Bangladesh, were deployed at each Aid Station. All surveys were conducted in person with the use of an electronic application and were immediately uploaded to the for analysis to minimise data loss. The questionnaire contained questions focused primarily on:

- **Basic demographic characteristics of the respondents and their households;**
- **Children's education;**
- **How people spend their time in the camps;**
- **Employment opportunities;**
- **Feelings of safety.**

<sup>7</sup> ISCG, Humanitarian Response Plan 2017: September 2017-February 2018: Rohingya Refugee Crisis (Oct 2017) pg 9 available at: <https://www.humanitarianresponse.info/en/operations/bangladesh>

<sup>8</sup> .An upazila (Bengali) is a geographical region in Bangladesh used for administrative or other purposes which function as sub-units of districts.





Most questions were closed-ended and multiple-choice, with options derived from relevant literature and previous interviews in the camps with key informants. In the final section of the survey, respondents were given the option to comment freely on any topic of concern to them. This yielded more than 500 answers which were typed into the survey on the spot, and subsequently categorised in the data processing phase.

## Target Population and Sampling

Sampling was done in a simple random manner without replacement: no respondent was interviewed more than once. For the purpose of this survey, only Rohingya residents of the camps were interviewed: both those who identified as 'new' (those that arrived in August 2017 or later) or 'Old' Rohingyas, who had arrived after previous waves of displacement.<sup>9</sup> Only data from respondents over the age of 16 years was collected, processed and analysed. The enumerators interviewed as many people as possible during an 8-hour workday over the course of the month. Each enumerator interviewed an average of 27 people per day, resulting in a total of 1624 interviews; 1,584 were deemed relevant for further analysis.

More than 8,000 patients visited the MOAS Aid Stations in Shamlapur and Unchiprang over the course of the one-month data collection period.<sup>10</sup> Based on MOAS' estimates of visitor numbers, the number of Rohingya refugees older than 16 years did not exceed 3,000 during the data collection period. Our sample of more than 1,500 respondents can therefore be considered broadly representative of the population visiting the two Aid Stations in Unchiprang and Shamlapur.<sup>11</sup>

## Limitations

Data collected concerning the households in question is only representative of the demographics of the clientele visiting the Aid Stations, and cannot be assumed to be generally representative of the populations of the two camps as a whole. Additionally, multiple members of the same household may have been surveyed, and as such exact numbers of children mentioned by parents could not be identified. Therefore, the proportion of children in and out of education could only be approximated.

Challenges in validity and reliability were moderated both by employing experienced enumerators and conducting weekly online meetings to discuss the status of the surveys and any difficulties that had arisen with data collection. The enumerators, as Rohingya refugees themselves and fluent in both Rohingya and Bangla, could clarify questions posed by the respondents. However, both enumerators were male and most respondents were female. This may have negatively influenced the accuracy of some responses, as female respondents may have been reluctant to fully disclose information.

<sup>9</sup> Most respondents were residents of the two refugee camps where the Aid Stations are located (Shamlapur and Unchiprang). However, there was also a small number of respondents (36) that visited the Aid Stations from other refugee camps, such as Kutupalong, Balu Khali, and Jamtoli.

<sup>10</sup> This figure includes patients who visited more than once as well as Bangladeshi nationals. It is worth noting that both MOAS Aid Stations collect their own data on the number of visits they get per month, but do not record a precise number of patients treated. Therefore, numbers quoted here are an estimate of the population sample size (Rohingya refugees older than 16 years old that visited the Aid Stations).

<sup>11</sup> At a 95% confidence level, the data collected have an estimated margin of error of 1,12-1,69. It should be noted that this survey cannot be considered representative of the whole population of the camps.



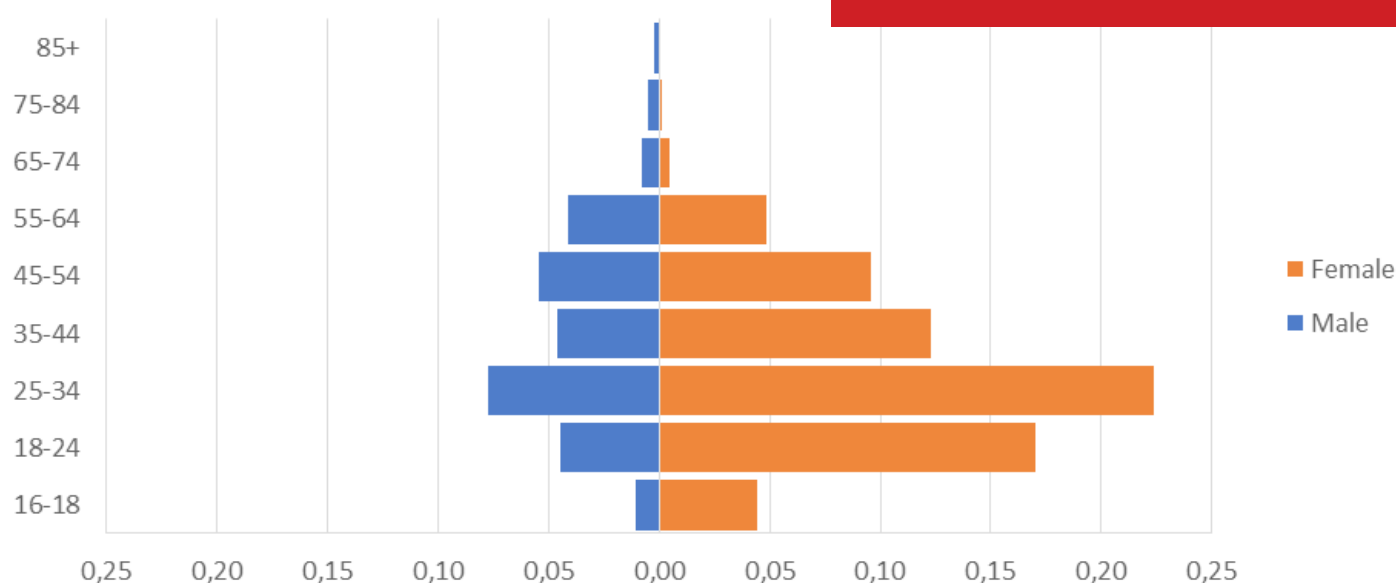
# Key Findings

## Demographic Data

### Gender – Age

A large proportion of the new arrivals in Cox's Bazar since August 25, 2017 are women and girls and unaccompanied or separated children.<sup>12</sup> Two thirds (71%) of the respondents visiting the MOAS Aid Stations over the course of the survey period were women. The median age of the sample is 30 years.

Gender-Age Group Distribution  
(All Respondents)



More than half of respondents were between 16 and 35 years old. Respondents over 65 years of age account for only 2% of the total population, the majority of whom are male and reside in Shamlapur.

53% (839) of respondents lived in Unchiprang; 45% (709) lived in Shamlapur. The remaining 2% were residents from other camps in the region, e.g. Katupalong, Balu Khali, Jamtoli, and Thangkhali. One in three respondents (32%) from Unchiprang were male, compared with one in four respondents (25%) from Shamlapur. One in four respondents (27%) from Shamlapur were female aged 25-34 years.

<sup>12</sup> ISCG, Humanitarian Response Plan 2017: September 2017-February 2018: Rohingya Refugee Crisis (Oct 2017) pg 25 available at: <https://www.humanitarianresponse.info/en/operations/bangladesh>

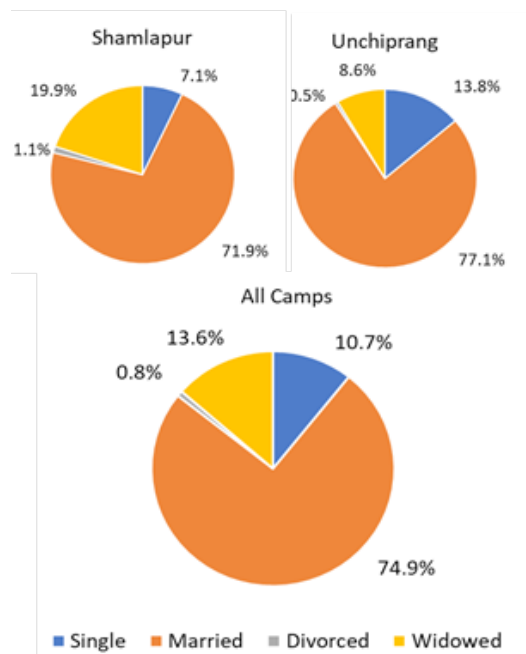


## Marital Status

75% of respondents stated they were married. More than 83% of men surveyed stated they were married, compared to 71% of female respondents. 25-34-year-olds are equally represented in both married and divorced groups. 17% of female respondents were widowed (mostly aged 55-64) compared with only 4% of males. In Shamlapur, 20% of respondents were widowed, which was more than double the respective percentage (and absolute number) for Unchiprang.

This is consistent with our findings in the Rohingya Survey 2017, which detailed the atrocities that prompted the mass movement of the Rohingya from Myanmar to Bangladesh, in which large numbers of males were murdered during the 'clearance operations' that followed the events of August 25.<sup>13</sup>

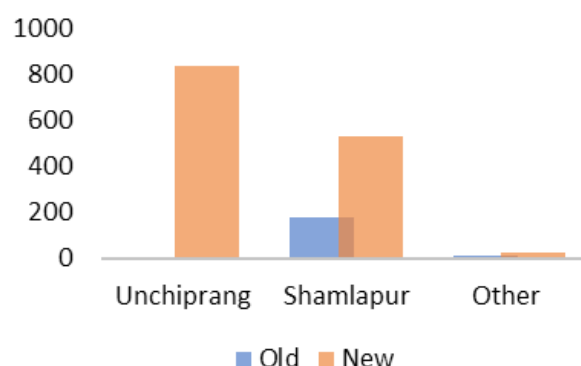
Those who stated they were single belonged predominantly to the two youngest age groups (i.e. up to age 25). In Unchiprang, 14% of respondents stated they were single. This was twice the number (both absolute and percentage-wise) of those in Shamlapur.



## Time of Arrival - Immigration Status

The vast majority of respondents (88%) described themselves as recent arrivals, having been resident in Myanmar prior to the events of August 25, 2017. The remaining (nearly 200) respondents arrived before August 2017, of which 40% belonged to the 25-34 age group. As demonstrated in our findings, Shamlapur is a coastal host village which sees refugees living in close quarters with local Bangladeshis and a well-established population of refugees (25%) that arrived before August 2017. Unchiprang, on the other hand, consists almost entirely of newly-arrived Rohingya refugees.

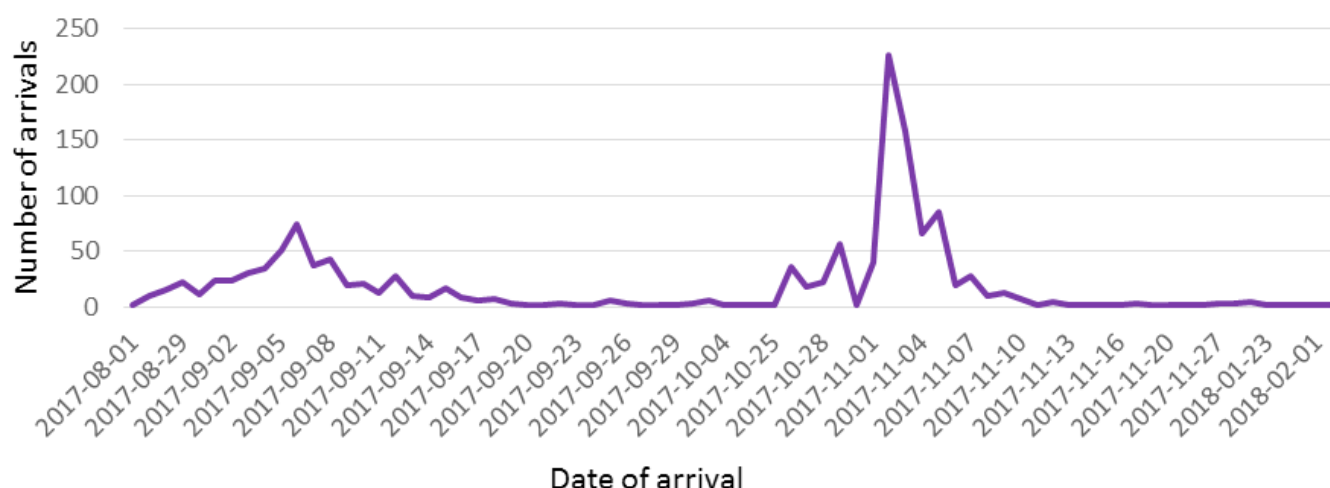
New and Old Rohingya  
(per camp)



<sup>13</sup> See: Xchange Foundation, *The Rohingya Survey 2017 (2017)* available at: <http://xchange.org/reports/TheRohingyaSurvey2017.html>



Arrivals over time  
(since August 2017)



The reported dates of arrival matched were congruent with periods of mass exodus of Rohingyas from Myanmar into Bangladesh. However, the majority of respondents arrived in Bangladesh from mid-October 2017 onwards: 43% of the sample (680) arrived during November 2017. This can be explained by ongoing persecution and violence towards Rohingyas well after the August 25 attacks, including the ongoing burning of Rohingya villages.

The Bangladeshi government is reluctant to grant refugee status to the Rohingya, as their main aim is to secure the return of the Rohingyas to Myanmar.<sup>14</sup> Consequently, the Rohingya have been, and continue to be, limited in their ability to find employment and move outside the camps and educate their children.

99% (1,572) of respondents reported having some form of identification document - a 'Myanmar National's registration card. This is a new form of ID issued by the Bangladeshi government upon arrival in Bangladesh that gives its holder limited rights only within the camps. 100% of post-August 2017 Rohingya arrivals possessed some form of identification. Five percent of Rohingyas that arrived earlier did not possess any identification documents.

<sup>14</sup> Bangladesh is not a signatory to the Refugee Convention and only recognises 33,000 of the estimated 1 million Rohingya in Bangladesh as refugees, who arrived in previous waves of violence. See: House of Commons International Development Committee, Bangladesh and Burma: the Rohingya crisis Second Report of Session 2017-19 (9 January 2018) available at: <https://publications.parliament.uk/pa/cm201719/cmselect/cmintdev/504/504.pdf> pg 26





## Household Demographics

More than half (55.9%) of the respondents stated they lived in households with five to nine other people in total. 39.5% stated that they lived with one to four other people. Unchiprang had higher rates of more than 10 people per household than did Shamlapur, reflecting its status as a new camp set up after the mass arrivals following August 25, with limited space and cramped living quarters.

“

I have seven daughters here with me. I have been living life with hardship because I have no son to earn an income for the family.

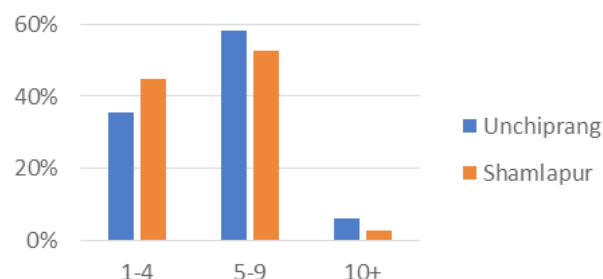
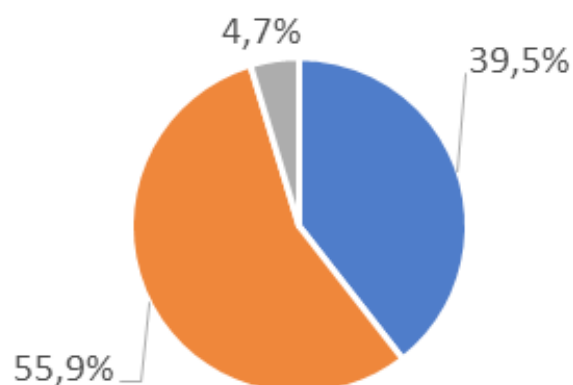
35-year-old Rohingya woman

”

Traditionally, Rohingyas households would have a male family breadwinner and ‘head of household’.<sup>15</sup> 78% (1206) of respondents stated that their heads of households were male. One in five (19%) heads of households were younger than 25 years old, and one in three (32%) households was headed by a person older than 45 years old.

However, refugee settings have challenged these norms, forcing more women into traditionally male roles. One in five (20%) households in Unchiprang and one in four (24%) households in Shamlapur has a female ‘head.’

Number of people in household (all respondents)



Number of people per household (per camp)

<sup>15</sup> Santiago Ripoll et al., *Social and cultural factors shaping health and nutrition, wellbeing and protection of the Rohingya within a humanitarian context* Sussex Institute of Development Studies / UNICEF (October 2017) pg11 available at: <https://opendocs.ids.ac.uk/opendocs/handle/123456789/13328>



## Employment

Rohingyas struggle to access formal, legal, employment due to the lack of recognition as refugees by the Bangladeshi government.<sup>16</sup> This is reflected in our findings, where 54% of respondents stated they were looking for employment. This suggests that many Rohingya wish to find employment but struggle to do so. One-third (32%) of the respondents seeking employment were younger than 25 years old.

60% of men and 51% of women were seeking work. The high rate of females seeking employment may further indicate the shifting responsibilities between genders from men to women in the camps.

Across the two camps, almost all respondents from Unchiprang stated they were seeking employment. Shamlapur, however, had very few. This could be due to the increased informal employment opportunities in Shamlapur, a host village with a lively farming and fishing economy.

## Covering household needs

Most Rohingya refugees, particularly those who arrived in Bangladesh after August 25, 2017, brought very few possessions with them. What they were able to take from their homes was bartered and spent on their journeys across the border or to pay for materials to construct shelter once in Bangladesh.<sup>17</sup> As a result, many respondents could not rely on savings or possessions to provide for themselves and their families once settled in the camps.

The most common means of paying for household needs in both camps, was through financial assistance from a family member, and selling food aid and non-food aid items. However, these differed between respondents from Unchiprang and Shamlapur.

<sup>16</sup> However, sometimes authorities give implicit approval for refugees to work without status. See: Roger Zetter & Heloise Ruauzel, *Refugees' Right to Work and Access to Labour Markets – An Assessment*, KNOMAD (September 2016) pg 24 available at: <https://www.rsc.ox.ac.uk/publications/refugees-right-to-work-and-access-to-labor-markets-an-assessment-part-1>

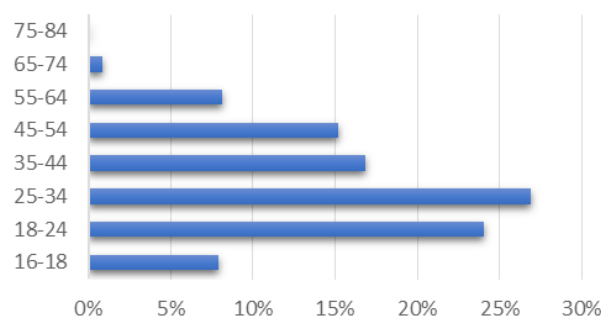
<sup>17</sup> ISCG, *Humanitarian Response Plan 2017: September 2017-February 2018: Rohingya Refugee Crisis* (Oct 2017) pg 6 available at: <https://www.humanitarianresponse.info/en/operations/bangladesh>

“

My husband is an educated person, but he is living without work.

25-year-old Rohingya woman

”



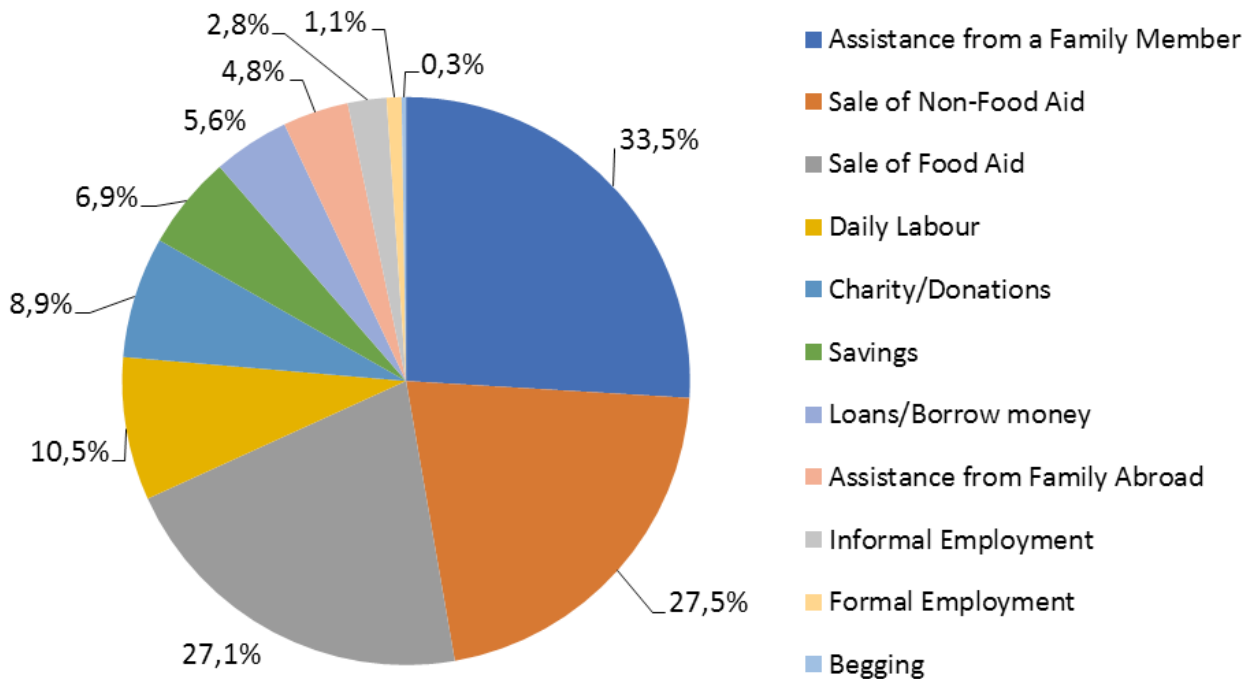
Looking for Employment  
(by age group)





In Unchiprang, one in four respondents (26%) stated that they relied on financial assistance from a close family member, i.e. their child, a partner, or a sibling, whereas the corresponding percentage for people from Shamlapur was 39%.

### Paying for household needs (% of total population)



Anecdotal evidence and other studies<sup>18</sup> have indicated that many Rohingya choose to sell their relief support to local Bangladeshi populations to earn money to buy more diverse foods, beyond the food aid distributed within the camps, which primarily consists of rice, lentils and potatoes. In Shamlapur, almost half (47%) of respondents sold their non-food aid items, whereas in Unchiprang considerably fewer did this (10%). 28% and 25% of all respondents from Unchiprang and Shamlapur, respectively, paid for household needs by selling food aid.

Charity and donations<sup>19</sup> represented a means of covering household needs for Rohingya refugees exclusively in Unchiprang (16% of respondents). Respondents from Shamlapur relied on informal employment (particularly fishing) and receiving loans, and five percent (32) mentioned relying on financial assistance from a family member who lives abroad.

“

I am really upset for my child because I lost my husband five years ago and now my child goes to school in the morning and then to the beach to collect fish for the family.

40-year-old Rohingya woman

”

<sup>18</sup> Eline Severijnen and Linda Ridwan Steinbock, *Childhood Interrupted: children's voices from the Rohingya refugee crisis* (February 2018) pg 9 available at: <https://reliefweb.int/sites/reliefweb.int/files/resources/Childhood%20Interrupted%20Non-embargoed%20low%20res.pdf>

<sup>19</sup> Financial or food aid mostly by locals and others.



## Children

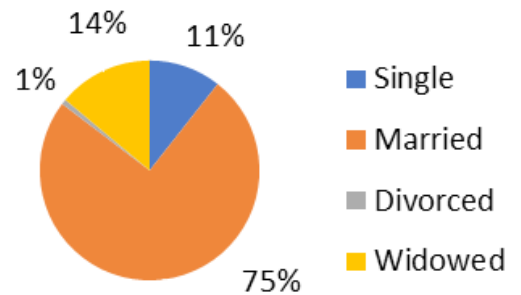
77% (1,217) of respondents stated they have at least one child between the ages of three and 17. On average, each respondent stated they had at least two children. 40% of all respondents, or half of all parents, said they have at least one son and one daughter.<sup>20</sup> Though most parents reported being married at the time of the survey, 1 in 4 parents reported that they did not have a partner (single, divorced, or widowed).

“My wife died two years ago, and I came to Bangladesh with my two sons. I have been living with them in Bangladesh; I send them to school, and I also cook for my family.

60-year-old Rohingya man

”

Marital status of respondents with children



## Education

Approximately 60% of the Rohingya in Cox’s Bazar are children.<sup>21</sup> The absence of legal status or national identity document prevents Rohingya children from enrolling in Bangladeshi government schools<sup>22</sup> and for many years, refugee children were prohibited from accessing formal education within or outside the camps.<sup>23</sup>

<sup>20</sup> This could be attributed to the fact that the Myanmar government had apparently imposed a restriction on the number of children married couples could legally have in the townships of Maungdaw and Buthidaung in northern Rakhine State. This edict, however, was not strictly enforced. See: Fortify Rights, *Policies of Persecution: Ending Abusive State Policies Against Rohingya Muslims in Myanmar* (February 2014) available at: [http://www.fortifyrights.org/downloads/Policies\\_of\\_Persecution\\_Feb\\_25\\_Fortify\\_Rights.pdf](http://www.fortifyrights.org/downloads/Policies_of_Persecution_Feb_25_Fortify_Rights.pdf)

<sup>21</sup> ISCG, *Humanitarian Response Plan 2017: September 2017-February 2018: Rohingya Refugee Crisis* (Oct 2017) available at: <https://www.humanitarian-response.info/en/operations/bangladesh> pg 18

<sup>22</sup> ISCG, *Humanitarian Response Plan 2017: September 2017-February 2018: Rohingya Refugee Crisis* (Oct 2017) available at: <https://www.humanitarian-response.info/en/operations/bangladesh> pg 18

<sup>23</sup> UNHCR, *Bangladesh: Analysis of Gaps in the Protection of Rohingya Refugees* (May 2007) pg 29 available at: <http://www.unhcr.org/protect/PROTECTION/46fa1af32.pdf>

“

I am safer in Bangladesh than in Myanmar, but I have been disappointed that my children have no educational opportunities.

32-year-old Rohingya woman

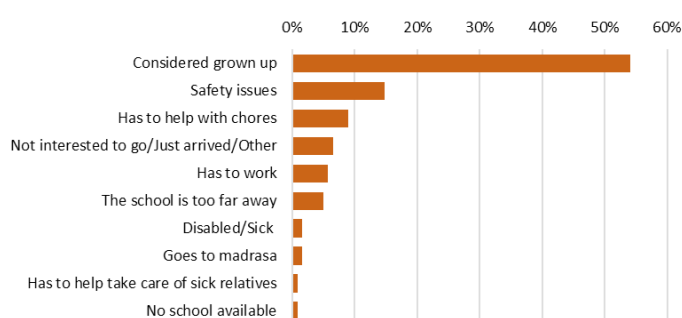
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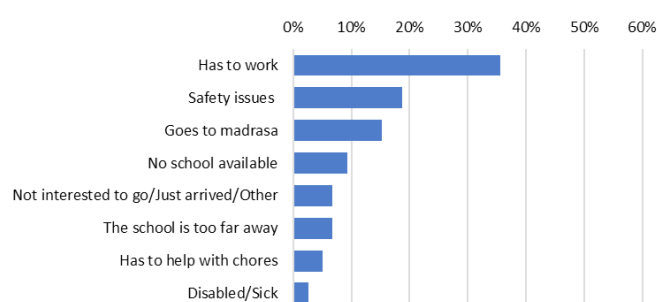


However, in 2015 the provision of non-formal education, including ‘temporary learning centres’ for young children, were permitted for Rohingya children in makeshift settlements. Our findings demonstrate that the majority of Rohingya refugee girls and boys do attend some kind of education, often informal temporary learning centres (often directed towards young children of primary school age) or religious education in madrasas: 86% (784) of respondents who had at least one daughter (and 87% of respondents with at least one son) stated that their child received some form of education. 79% of respondents with only two children, of which one is male and one is female, said that both of their children attend some form of education.

#### Most common responses to why **female** children do not receive education



#### Most common responses to why **male** children do not receive education



However, there were also parents who said their children do not receive any form of education. The most common reason for both girls and boys not in schooling was due to their parents fearing for their children’s safety. Respondents also frequently stated that their children did not attend any form of education due to ‘needing to work’ and, where females were concerned, for reasons that can be attributed to purdah, or modesty.<sup>24</sup> Older girls were expected to stay in the home with the family due to Rohingya cultural norms. This occurs upon the perceived commencement of puberty when girls are considered ‘grown up’ (from 12-13 years old).

Just over half (51%) of the parents whose daughters were not receiving any form of education stated that their daughters were grown up and therefore did not need to attend any form of schooling. In addition to this, it was stated frequently that girls helped with everyday household chores, like cleaning and washing.

Our findings indicated that young boys in the camps were expected to be the family breadwinners.<sup>25</sup> More than one in three parents (35%) who had at least one son not receiving any form of education said that their child had to work to help the family instead of going to school. Some respondents (15%) added that their son went to a madrasa, or Islamic religious school.<sup>26</sup>

<sup>24</sup> Purdah is practiced in certain Muslim and Hindu societies, and literally translates as curtain. Women are ‘screened’ from other men by staying primarily within the home, or by wearing a veil when outside.

<sup>25</sup> Santiago Ripoll et al., *Social and cultural factors shaping health and nutrition, wellbeing and protection of the Rohingya within a humanitarian context* Sussex Institute of Development Studies / UNICEF (October 2017) pg11, 13 available at: <https://opendocs.ids.ac.uk/opendocs/handle/123456789/13328>

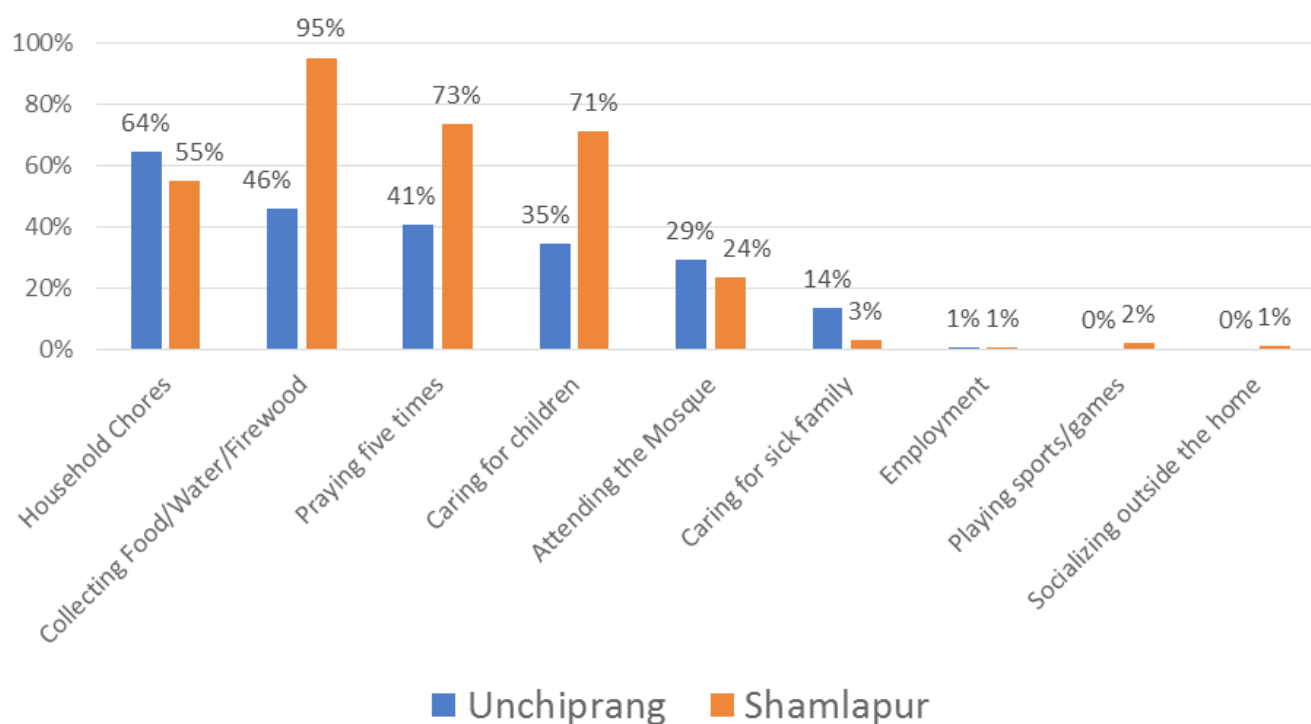
<sup>26</sup> However, it should be noted that the high numbers in attendance of education could have included a large proportion of parents who consider Madrasahs as formal education facilities.



## Life in the Refugee Camps

Most respondents in both Unchiprang and Shamlapur primarily spent their time engaged in either practical chores or religious activities. Religion plays an important role in Rohingya daily life, whereas 'fun' activities such as playing sports and socialising were identified far less by respondents. This possibly demonstrates the lack of facilities for such activities as well as the fact that socialising - for men - is conducted in a religious setting, at the mosque. The responses paint a picture of an austere existence largely defined by religious devotion: collecting food, water, and firewood (70%), helping out with household chores (61%), praying five times a day and reading the Holy Quran (57%), as well as taking care of their children (53%)<sup>27</sup> were the activities reported by the majority of the respondents.

How do you spend your life in the camp?  
(% of respondents per camp)



In Unchiprang, most respondents (64%) were overwhelmingly occupied with household chores and collecting the basics necessities for survival. Moreover, the reported rates of caring for family members who might be sick or disabled in Unchiprang were much higher than in Shamlapur (14% compared to 3% of respondents). On the other hand, in Shamlapur, apart from the daily collection of food, water, and wood (95%), most people prayed and cared for their children (73% and 71% respectively), indicating a sense of stability in life in comparison with people in Unchiprang, most of whom are recent arrivals.

<sup>27</sup> The sum of percentages exceeds 100% as each participant could provide more than one answers to the corresponding question.



# Conclusion

This survey sought to gain a snapshot into the daily lives and struggles of both recently arrived Rohingya refugees and longer-term refugee residents. Though this study cannot be used to derive generalities for the populations of both camps, it gives a strong indication of the daily struggles the residents of both camps face. Life in both Unchiprang and Shamlapur camps is complex and challenging for the Rohingya refugees that reside there.

The number of people per household in both camps is large (three out of five respondents lived in households with more than five people). There are a sizeable number of female-headed households, particularly in Shamlapur. This could indicate potential protection risks and difficulties for women and children, particularly considering the cultural importance of purdah and the large numbers of individuals in one household.

Due to the lack of recognition of their refugee status in Bangladesh, Rohingyas are unable to participate fully in family life, nor integrate into local Bangladeshi communities: though employment is strongly desired (more than half of respondents indicated that they are seeking work), they cannot legally do so; both male (60%) and female (51%) respondents were seeking work. This demonstrates that their status as refugees with limited options and a lack of financial security may be affecting cultural gender norms. These pressures can affect family structures negatively, and put women at higher risk of gender-based violence.

Consequently, residents in the camps have found innovative ways to survive, predominantly through family loans, and selling food and non-food items locally. Moreover, time in the camps is split primarily between religious observation and household chores, with little time for socialisation or recreational activities outside of the mosque or madrasa.

Children's educations are also restricted, with very few formal educational opportunities, especially for older children. The most frequent reason for both female and male children not attending school was due to the parents fearing for their children's safety. Additionally, due to cultural factors, girls over the age of 12 may be kept out of schooling (51% of parents supported this). Likewise, young boys are expected to work to provide for their families (35% of parents supported this).

“

I came with my husband from Myanmar and he divorced me one month ago. I have been living alone with my nine-year-old child.

*19-year-old Rohingya woman*

”

“

I am very happy after arriving in Bangladesh. When I remember the incidents that occurred, I never want to go back to Myanmar.

*20-year-old Rohingya man*

”



Despite these complex difficulties experienced by the respondents in both Unchiprang and Shamlapur refugee camps, 99.9% of respondents stated that they feel 'safe' in the camps<sup>28</sup>. The universality of this answer likely indicates that, on the whole, respondents felt safer in Bangladesh than they did in Myanmar. Anecdotal evidence and respondents' final comments infer that 'safety' can be understood as emotional wellbeing and security, which was considered incomparable to the previous horrors the respondents endured in Myanmar.

In the final, open-ended, survey question, 24 female respondents stated that they would not return to Myanmar because of the trauma they had experienced there. Additionally, and corroborating our findings in The Rohingya Survey 2017, a small number of respondents stated they would return only subject to receiving official identification documents by Myanmar authorities, with their rights and beliefs respected.



“

I am very happy after arriving in Bangladesh because when I was in Myanmar I couldn't sleep properly at night. I stayed without food there and my sons never had any opportunities like education, medical treatment, or food.

50-year-old Rohingya woman

”

“

I am very happy in Bangladesh. While I was in Myanmar, I couldn't even sleep properly because I was afraid anything might happen at any time. I don't want to go back to Myanmar.

65-year-old Rohingya man

”

<sup>28</sup> Only 2 female respondents out of the 1,584 interviewed said they do not feel safe in the camps, for reasons of privacy or safety within the confines of their house.





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