

## WHAT IS HUMAN TRAFFICKING?

Trafficking in persons is a crime and a serious violation of human rights, which takes place in every country. Trafficking in persons is a process that includes the exploitation of boys, girls, men and women. Often through deception, physical or psychological coercion, or debt bondage, victims of human trafficking may be in situations of sexual exploitation, forced labour, servitude, slavery or organ removal.

The Protocol to Prevent, Suppress and Punish Trafficking in Persons, especially Women and Children that supplements the United Nations Transnational Organized Crime Convention came into force in 2000 and defined the crime of human trafficking. According to the UN Protocol, trafficking in persons comprises an act of the trafficker(s), by particular means such as force, fraud or coercion, for the purpose of exploitation; if the victim is a child, only an act for the purpose of exploitation is required. Trafficking can be domestic (internal), whereby the entire crime occurs within a country, or it can be international – the criminal elements occurring in more than one country.

Since September 2017, the International Organization for Migration (IOM) in Cox's Bazar has responded to human trafficking that affects Rohingya in camp settlements and Bangladeshi in host community areas. As of August 2019, IOM has directly identified 96 Rohingya victims of trafficking who had been in the camp settlements. Approximately half of the Rohingya victims assisted by IOM had been living in Bangladesh before August 2017 (pre-influx) and the other half comprises those Rohingya who had come to Bangladesh since August 2017 (with the influx). Most of the victims were born in Myanmar and a few of them were born in Bangladesh.

This analysis is based on IOM's caseload and excludes the hundreds of victims identified and assisted by other partners in Cox's Bazar. Therefore, the trends described were compiled from Rohingya who were directly assisted by IOM. The trends provide some insight to the current trafficking context affecting the Rohingya but do not indicate the prevalence of human trafficking in the district. Human trafficking is a crime that is often underreported for many reasons including but not limited to lack of general awareness on the complex dynamics of human trafficking, the services available for victims, the verbal, physical and psychological coercive tactics used by the trafficking network, and stigma and discrimination against victims.

## ANALYSIS OF TRAFFICKING TRENDS AFFECTING ROHINGYA IN COX'S BAZAR



### RECRUITING VICTIMS OF TRAFFICKING – HOW THE PROCESS STARTS

According to IOM case information, the trafficking process often starts with an offer by stranger, who is usually a Bangladeshi man. As a recruiter, he will target other men and boys. There are some Bangladeshi women recruiters who will target girls and women. There are a few recruiters, who have been doing this for some time.

The recruiters usually place the victim as a domestic worker in an urban area or city. Sometimes the recruiters receive money from the "employer" directly. The recruiters are thought to give that



\*The picture is taken from IOM CT comic book

money to the victim's family, as part of the promises to pay. But the recruiters mostly do not handover the money to the family. Because the recruiters receive payment every time there is a placement, he or she may rotate the "worker" to receive more money from the "employer."

In some cases, recruiters are relatives of the victims. Victims have indicated to IOM that they assumed family members benefitted financially when the recruiter/relative received payment from the employer.

Sometimes neighbours or acquaintances are part of the recruitment process because they are familiar with

potential victim's family's situation, in particular about their sufferings and needs. Neighbours can influence the victim's family, providing information about a recruiter or contact information. Occasionally, the neighbours have received some money for their involvement in the recruitment process.



## TRANSPORTING VICTIMS TO LOCATIONS FOR EXPLOITATION – WHAT HAPPENS NEXT



\*The picture is taken from IOM CT comic book

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According to IOM case information, most of the victims were transported to Chattogram, and some were transported to Dhaka or within Cox's Bazar district such as Teknaf, Ukhia, Patiya, Keranirhat, Hathazari, Alikadam and other locations. Buses and auto-rickshaw (Tom-tom or tuc-tuc) were the most common modes of transport that the recruiter arranged. Buying or falsifying identification documents (e.g. replacing the photos) was another tactic used to conceal the Rohingya victims from authorities. Sometimes paths through the forests or boats were used to circumvent security check points on main roads.



## HOW VICTIMS WERE EXPLOITED – WHAT JOBS WERE THEY FORCED TO DO

According to IOM case information, most of the victims were exploited as a domestic worker or care giver, cultivation/agriculture related worker, or in brickfields, construction, or factories etc.

Demand for domestic workers and care givers is very high as it is very cheap, and no technical skills are required.

Harvest season is a short period that demands workers in agriculture and cultivation. A few areas in Cox's Bazar district have many brickfields and require more labourers and offer low wages. Fisheries and fish processing

factories are some of the different small factories where the victims were exploited in Chattogram and Cox's Bazar.



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## CONTROL TACTICS AND EXPLOITATION TRENDS IN COX'S BAZAR – SUMMARY OF CASES

According to the IOM case information, victims worked for long hours and received little money compared to the amounts promised when they were recruited. In some cases, they received no money for their work. If victims asked about their promised wages, they were beaten or threatened to be handed over to law enforcement because of their refugee identity.

During the exploitative period, victims had very limited or no communication with their family. Victims waited for a certain period of time to receive their money/wages. They ran away when they got the chance and realized that they would not

be paid. Sometimes they were helped by a stranger or well-wisher to return to their family in the camp settlement.

The overwhelming majority of cases, which IOM assisted, were victims who were trafficked for labour exploitation. The reasons for this significant caseload imbalance – many identified trafficking victims of labour exploitation and few identified victims of sexual exploitation – are unclear to IOM but may be related to religious and social conservativeness, lack of awareness about legal rights as a victim of trafficking, fear, stigma, shame, or it could be related to gaps in outreach efforts or field presence.



### 1. WOMEN AND GIRLS

IOM assisted more victims of trafficking who were Rohingya women and girls than Rohingya men and boys. Although the reasons are unclear to IOM, they could be linked to the high demand for women and girls as domestic workers, socio-economic challenges or, in contrast, could be linked to the camp context that is more restrictive and thus prompts Rohingya women and girls to seek alternatives outside of the camp, or it could be linked to the family situation. For the latter, IOM has assisted Rohingya women and girl victims who had no family members, came from women-headed households, or the males in the family were unemployed, severely injured or ill.

Human traffickers (through the recruiters) approached Rohingya women and their families with offers of money and a better future. The women were recruited by neighbours, strangers or brokers who promised a better life. According to IOM case information, the women victims of trafficking were exploited in Chattogram and different subdistricts of Cox's Bazar as domestic servants, in the brick fields, dry fish factories, and so on where their movement was restricted, did not receive wages, were threatened, beaten or raped by the employers. Polygamy, according to victims assisted by IOM, was

also a reason because her husband abandoned her (and her children) to marry another woman.

The guardians of Rohingya girl victims, who were assisted by IOM, often had a role in the decision-making process, particularly during the recruitment phase. Sometimes the recruiter obtained the guardian's consent for the girls to be given a child labour role. False information and promises to parents pressured girls to go and perform that job to support their family. In a few cases, girls were sexually exploited for trafficking, and were also raped by the human trafficker(s). Sometimes the girl victims were promised to do specific work, such as be a caregiver, but later they had to do much harder work such as be a caregiver and complete all household work.

According to IOM case information, the girl victims were transported to Chattogram, Cox's Bazar, and Dhaka where they were forced to be caregivers and domestic workers. In addition, the demand for Rohingya girls seems to be higher than Rohingya women as domestic workers because, compared to adult women, girls are thought to be easier to recruit, be a cheaper cost, as well as easier to control and force to work for more hours.



False promises were used to recruit a number of Rohingya women and girls victims of trafficking who were assisted by IOM. For instance, a young girl received an offer to go to a nearby city where she was supposed to be a caregiver. The recruiter told her that she had to take care of one baby. The girl thought she would have a better life, including good food and clothes, in the city. In addition, she was told that she would receive BDT 2,500 per month. When the girl arrived in the city, she realized that she had to do all the housework, from early morning to midnight. Often, she was beaten by the employers when they were not satisfied with her work. Although she was forced to work for nine months, she received BDT 5,000 instead of her promised salary.



## 2. MEN AND BOYS

According to IOM case information, there is limited scope inside the camp settlements where Rohingya men can earn a sufficient amount of money for self-reliance. Given the context and socio-cultural norms, Rohingya men feel social pressure to maintain the family.

The demand for Rohingya men as cheap (or free) labourers is high, particularly in cultivation or agriculture, and construction works. Men have more mobility in the camp and access to public spaces, and therefore may have more social opportunities to find jobs.

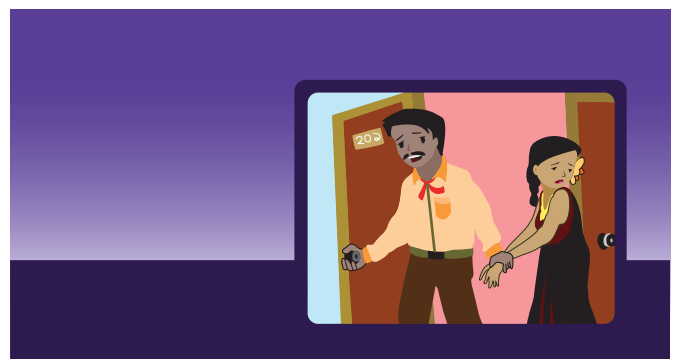
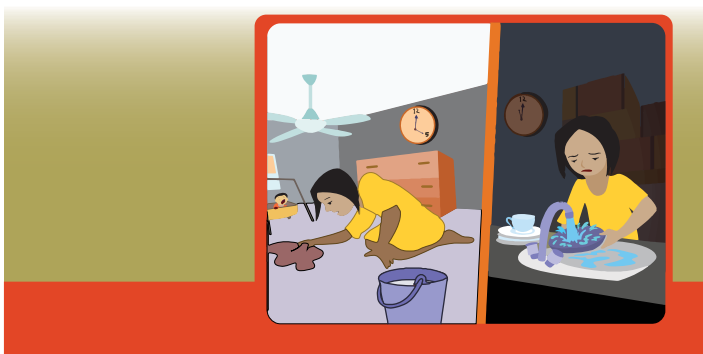
Rohingya men victims, who were assisted by IOM, were forced to work and did not receive promised wages.

Sometimes the men were not allowed to communicate with their families. They were under threat, afraid, and were beaten when they demanded their wages. The Rohingya men who were victims of trafficking were transported to Chattogram to work in brickfields and agriculture.

Rohingya boy victims, who were assisted by IOM, came from families that had no other person to earn an income and there was pressure for the boys to fill this gap. Boy victims were recruited with false promises and forced to labour in factory or construction work. In addition, boys were transported and exploited on farms and in agriculture in Chattogram and Cox's Bazar.



False promises and deception were used to recruit men and boys. For instance, one Rohingya boy, who lived with his family in the camp settlement, did not have enough food or clothes. One day, a stranger approached the boy, offering him a job in cultivation and promising to earn sufficient money. He was promised to receive BDT 7,000 per month as a salary. When the boy started his job, he realized that he had to work many hours every day. The boy worked for four months, and the employer ignored his requests for the promised wages. Eventually, he received BDT 14,000 (two payments of BDT 7,000), but not the promised salary. In addition, the employer threatened to hand him over to the law enforcement due to his refugee identity.



## REFERRAL PROCESS FOR VICTIMS OF TRAFFICKING

At any given time, IOM provides training and orientation on human trafficking issues and promotes the referral process to a range of stakeholders. Consequently, various stakeholders refer possible cases of human trafficking to IOM for identification and assistance. IOM has received the most referrals from “Majhis,” who are Rohingya community leaders in the camp settlements in Cox’s Bazar. The Majhi often has strong relationships with both service providers and the Rohingya in the camps. Information sessions about Protection issues and services are conducted by humanitarian partners for the Majhis, who in turn can share the information with the other Rohingya in need of assistance.

IOM also receives many referred cases by Rohingya community members. Referrals from community members happen when IOM conducts community outreach session about the tactics that human traffickers use to deceive, recruit and exploit people. Audience members of the outreach sessions approach IOM staff and share possible incidents.

Women Support Groups, which were formed by the Site Management actors in different camps, also serve as a referral point to IOM, sharing information about possible women and girls who were trafficked.

Sometimes the victim him or herself, or the victim’s neighbours, relatives or friends, may approach IOM for assistance. Finally, other IOM staff, NGO and INGOs have been points of referral.

Depending on the information referred, IOM will interview the potential victim of trafficking, with his or her consent, to understand whether the elements trafficking in persons, according to the UN Protocol occurred. A risk assessment is also conducted to ascertain the threats and security issues that might affect the victim of trafficking, his or her family or loved ones, IOM staff or partners.

The victim of trafficking’s immediate needs that are identified during interviews may be provided through the following from IOM: health services, temporary shelter, family reunification, clothing and dignity kits, cash for work to reduce the risk of re-trafficking, and referred to psychosocial support activities in the camps.

Much of this multisector assistance is coordinated within IOM units and other partners. \*



\*The picture is taken from IOM CT comic book

## BANGLADESH GOVERNMENT INITIATIVES TO COMBAT HUMAN TRAFFICKING

In Bangladesh, “The Prevention and Suppression of Human Trafficking Act, 2012” came into effect to restrain and suppress human trafficking, to ensure the protection of victims of the offence of human trafficking and their rights, and to ensure safe migration.”

The Government of Bangladesh revised and launched the 2018-2022 national plan of action (NPA) to counter human trafficking, focusing on the operationalization and enforcement of the existing Act through better inter-agency coordination, victim support and other activities such as the improved training of officers and the harmonization of existing laws. The NPA is the basis for the Counter Trafficking Committee, which are chaired by District Deputy Commissioner, Upazila Counter Trafficking Committee chaired by UNO and Union Counter Trafficking Committee chaired by Union Council Chairman. The core function of these committees focuses on capacity building, implementation of approved action plan, monitoring, supervision and regular meetings.