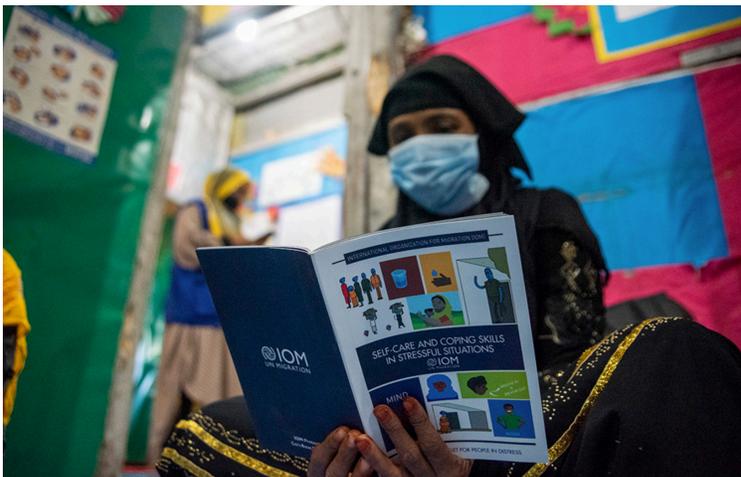


OVERVIEW

IOM teams in Asia and the Pacific have continued adapting existing programs in response to widespread reported increases in Gender-Based Violence (GBV) during the COVID-19 pandemic, as well as heightened protection risks, among migrants and other vulnerable populations. These reports on their own are alarming, and yet the reality may in fact be far worse: cultural factors and stigma associated with GBV, together with ethical and safety considerations in collecting related data, mean many cases go unreported. New approaches have also been put in place to respond to simultaneous emergencies, including tropical cyclones, floods, and increased conflict, while combatting the spread and impact of COVID-19 on migrant women, men, boys and girls, including stranded and returning migrants, refugees and internally displaced persons (IDPs).

IOM is implementing GBV activities in line with the Organization's [Institutional Framework for Addressing GBV in Crises](#), which comprehensively guides IOM's approach on GBV prevention, risk mitigation and response. Despite the pandemic, IOM continues working to mitigate GBV risks in ongoing and secondary crises, support survivors by facilitating access to survivor-centered and multisectoral services, and address GBV root causes by working closely with communities to progressively transform the conditions that perpetuate GBV.



Sessions on the new "Self-Care and Coping Skills in Stressful Situations" booklet are held regularly in Women and Girls Safe Spaces and the community, Cox's Bazar, Bangladesh.

MITIGATING RISKS OF GBV

As part of commitments in the GBViC Action Plan to equip frontline staff and volunteers with appropriate skills and knowledge to respond to GBV disclosures, IOM continued building capacity of staff and safely referring GBV survivors to adequate services.

IOM Afghanistan assisted persons with specific needs, including unaccompanied and separated children, women at risk, and persons with disabilities, in six provinces. Support included Cash for Protection and referral to services, including GBV services.

In Indonesia, together with the Deputy for Protection of Women's Rights of the Ministry of Women Empowerment and Child Protection (MOWECP), IOM developed *Guidance on Gender Responsive Shelters Management for Community Based Shelter During the COVID-19 Pandemic*. This Guidance complements the *Handbook on the Preparation of Shelter Facilities for Self-Quarantine and Isolation of COVID-19 based on Community*, issued by the Ministry of Social Affairs, as well as the *Protocol on Assistance of Violence Against Women Cases During the COVID-19 Pandemic*, issued by the MOEWCP.

IOM in Cox's Bazar launched the "Self-Care and Coping Skills in Stressful Situations" booklet for Rohingya and Bangladeshi communities, accompanied by audio recordings. Sessions on the booklet are conducted in Women and Girls Safe Spaces (WGSS) and communities on strategies for reducing stress, information on GBV and protection services, self-care and COVID-19 prevention. Rehana, one of twelve female community leaders who attended a training of trainers and sensitizes other women on healthy coping mechanisms, said: "I feel fortunate to have been selected for this training and consider it my duty to pass on this valuable information to other women so they can too be relieved of their daily stress."

Key IOM GBV and Protection Achievements for Migrants in Asia and the Pacific in 2020

-  **465,250+** individuals reached with messages on COVID-19, GBV and other Protection-related issues.
-  **1,750+** case management assessments completed for persons with specific needs, including unaccompanied children and single females.
-  **162,875+** vulnerable individuals in 13 countries provided with protection assistance and services.
-  **1,800+** clinical and non-clinical staff trained on GBV and protection core concepts, including PSEA.

CONTACTS

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MITIGATING RISKS OF GBV (CONT.)

Due to travel restrictions imposed to contain the virus, innovative approaches were adopted to continue capacity building of country offices from the regional office, with trainings and guidance on GBV and protection provided to over 130 IOM and partner staff.

- 15 staff from IOM and implementing partners in Fiji were trained on safe distributions and GBViC for shelter and NFI distribution to persons in extremely remote islands affected by cyclone Harold.
- 30 Protection caseworkers and managers with IOM Afghanistan supporting migrants at transit centers and final location destinations were trained on GBViC, IOM's Institutional Framework for addressing GBViC, and implementing a safe and ethical response to disclosure of GBV incidents. 25 staff from IOM and Korean NGOs were trained by the Regional Protection & GBV Specialist and IOM Cox's Bazar GBV Officer on the same topics.
- 35 Mental Health and Psychosocial Support staff, Heads of sub-office, Field Assistants, and support staff in Indonesia were trained on GBViC, IOM's Institutional Framework for addressing GBViC and safe and ethical response to disclosure of GBV incidents.
- In response to non-GBV hotlines reporting an increase in calls related to domestic violence and other GBV-related incidents, the Regional Office trained 25 MHPSS, Counter-Trafficking and COVID-19 hotline operators and managers in the Philippines and Sri Lanka on GBViC and how to respond to difficult calls in a safe and ethical manner, including GBV and suicide calls.

The Regional Protection and GBV Specialist also supported the inter-agency GBV Guidelines Implementation Support Team to facilitate a regional stocktaking workshop for Asia and the Pacific from 18 – 20 October on GBV risk mitigation during the COVID-19 pandemic. The workshop focused on food security, social protection and cash sectors. Further information about this workshop, including recording and materials, can be found on the GBV Guidelines website.

As co-chair of the Inter-Agency regional PSEA Taskforce, IOM continued providing assistance to countries setting up inter-agency mechanisms. The regional office also contributed to global, [regional](#) and local efforts to mark the 16 Days of Activism against GBV.



Virtual training on Gender-Based Violence in Crises for staff from IOM and Korean NGOs, 27-28 October 2020, Republic of Korea.



IOM is working with female entrepreneurs and local business owners to design and locally produce reusable menstrual pads for dignity kits, Marshall Islands.

SUPPORTING GBV SURVIVORS & CONTRIBUTING TO WOMEN'S EMPOWERMENT

With the Gender and Protection Cluster, IOM Marshall Islands is running a project with female entrepreneurs and local business owners to design and locally produce reusable menstrual pads for dignity kits. IOM works with local NGOs and supports inclusion of persons with disabilities in referral mechanisms, ensuring migrant communities can access information on referral systems.

IOM Philippines engaged 187 Internally Displaced Persons, mostly women, in cash-for-work activities that support positive coping mechanisms. Target beneficiaries produced personal protective equipment (e.g., face masks) and dignity items (e.g., washable sanitary pads and *malong*, traditional wraparound skirts).

IOM Bangladesh in Cox's Bazar continued its GBV programming via 10 WGSS and one shelter for GBV survivors, which adapted activities to continue to provide timely information and services, while also ensuring safe access to psychosocial support, recreational activities and life-skills training sessions. For more information, see [this video about WGSS in Cox's Bazar during COVID-19](#).

IOM also sensitized communities on Menstrual Hygiene Management (MHM) and distributed dignity kits - modified for the COVID-19 context and including MHM items - in camps and host communities. For more information, see [this video about IOM's MHM activities](#) in Cox's Bazar during COVID-19. A four-day training on Clinical Management of Rape and Intimate Partner Violence was held for 50 health care providers. Training on GBV core concepts, safe referrals, counter-trafficking, Psychological First Aid and PSEA was held for 345 clinical and non-clinical staff.

During the pandemic, the Women's Participation Project in Cox's Bazar continued empowering and supporting women to participate in decision-making structures, ensuring their needs are met. Women were trained to make cloth face masks to protect their families and communities from COVID-19. For more information, see [this video on the women's committees in Cox's Bazar](#).