

Government of Bangladesh- United Nations Framework on Skills Development for Rohingya Refugees/FDMNs¹ and Host Communities

Background

In order to facilitate the voluntary and sustainable repatriation of refugees/FDMNs to their place of origin in Myanmar, efforts may be taken during their temporary stay in Bangladesh to build their skills and capacities in sectors commensurate with opportunities available in Rakhine State. There is also the need to mitigate the impact of a large presence of Rohingya refugees/FDMNs on host communities. This is reflected in the various annual versions of the Joint Response Plan (JRP) for the Rohingya Humanitarian Crisis.² The establishment of a programme for skills development will therefore serve to support the sustainable return and reintegration of Rohingya refugees/FDMNs in Myanmar, including by:

- Ensuring clear links between activities and skills in the camps to those in the Rakhine State, Myanmar; hence focusing on portable skills aimed at capacitating Rohingya refugees/FDMNs for voluntary and sustainable return to Myanmar.
- Providing Rohingya refugees/FDMNs with meaningful ways to remain engaged while in exile to help mitigate different risks.
- Further supporting and capacitating vulnerable host community members who have been affected by hosting refugees/FDMNs for several years.
- Continuing UN engagement with Myanmar authorities for recognition of skills development and capacity building activities for Rohingya Refugees/FDMNs in Bangladesh.

The National Task Force (NTF) on Forcibly Displaced Myanmar Nationals (FDMNs), chaired by the Foreign Secretary of Bangladesh, agreed to permit skills and capacity development activities for Rohingya refugees/FDMNs and affected host community members, as well as provision of education to Rohingya children in the Myanmar curriculum by humanitarian actors.

Following the signing of the Memorandum of Understanding on UN engagement on Bhasan Char in October 2021, the UN will support the Government of Bangladesh in facilitating, skills and capacity building opportunities, and trade training activities on the island. Existing activities will be complemented by livelihood activities, where possible. This will include the opportunity for modest financial compensation, within parameters agreed with the Government of Bangladesh. Existing activities on the island, including fishing, livestock rearing, and gardening will be strengthened on the basis of coordinated planning and delivery among actors. Activities will be commensurate with opportunities available in Rakhine State and humanitarian actors will work towards better preparing Rohingya for their sustainable return and reintegration in Myanmar.

As part of this effort, a Skills Development Framework has been developed. This framework covers two distinct target groups—Rohingya refugees/FDMNs and host communities- and allows for independent implementation of the programs in a parallel manner. It will guide efforts to streamline the various activities, existing and planned, in Cox’s Bazar and Bhasan

¹The Government of Bangladesh refers to the Rohingya community in Bangladesh as “Forcibly Displaced Myanmar Nationals (FDMN).” The United Nations (UN) system refers to this population as Rohingya refugees, in line with the applicable international framework.

² <https://www.humanitarianresponse.info/en/operations/bangladesh/document/2021-joint-response-plan-rohingya-humanitarian-crisis-may-2021>

Char while considering the specificities of the two locations, and, in regard to Cox's Bazar, the two distinct communities involved (Rohingya refugees/FDMNs and host communities). The framework recognizes the Government's policies and priorities, based on voluntary repatriation to Myanmar as the primary solution for the Rohingya refugee/FDMN population. This is aligned with the Rohingyas' wish to return to their home country.

Situation Overview

Cox's Bazar District is home to a total Bangladeshi population of over 2.6 million³. The situation has been compounded by the significant population increase following the Rohingya refugee influx and the birth of children inside the camps, which has adversely affected existing infrastructure, resources and the local economy⁴, including the food security and nutrition situation in some areas, and stretched the capacities of local governance institutions and civil servants, resulting in constraints on the delivery of public services.

In the district of Cox's Bazar, in response to the increase in the demand for products and services, and driven by the growing tourism industry, additional investments have been made in infrastructure and expansion of local markets, which has resulted in increased job opportunities. However, the high unemployment rate among the workforce in the host community, particularly the youth and women, remains of serious concern. Investment in skills development, entrepreneurship promotion and linking businesses for the host community are critical in addressing poverty in the district.

Objectives of Skills Development Framework

Skills development initiatives for Rohingya refugees/FDMNs and host communities will be implemented with a view to achieving the following overarching objectives:

- Support Rohingya refugees/FDMNs to build capacity by developing skills which are portable, commensurate with livelihood opportunities in Rakhine State and in support of their voluntary return and sustainable reintegration in Myanmar.
- Support the application and practice of acquired skills and capacities to mitigate challenges in the camps and on Bhasan Char.
- Strengthen the institutional capacities of existing skills training institutions for the host community members to be able to roll out market-driven, quality occupational, entrepreneurial, and business managerial skills enabling them to capitalize on the emerging employment and entrepreneurship opportunities in the district.

Overview of Skills Development Approaches and Activities

For Rohingya Refugees/FDMNs:

To prepare Rohingya refugees/FDMNs for repatriation to Myanmar, the context and situation in Rakhine State has been reflected in the development of this Framework. According to the GoB-UNHCR Joint Registration exercise, the three primary occupations held by the Rohingya in Rakhine State before fleeing to Bangladesh include domestic work, agriculture, and community work.

³ Bangladesh Bureau of Statistics Population Census 2011, with World Bank 2017 projections.

⁴ UNDP, 2018. Impacts of the Rohingya Refugee Influx on Host Communities.

<https://reliefweb.int/sites/reliefweb.int/files/resources/Impacts%20of%20the%20Rohingya%20Refugee%20Influx%20on%20Host%20Communities.pdf>

Considering the differences in location, topography, population density, environmental threats and susceptibility to natural hazards the types of skill development initiatives offered in Cox's Bazar and Bhasan Char will vary. As such activities may include the following:

A. For Cox's Bazar Rohingya refugee/FDMN camps

Agricultural activities:

- Kitchen and homestead gardening
- Chicken and turkey rearing at household level integrated with an animal health component to prevent the outbreak of disease
- Integrated farming system (fishpond culture and vegetable production)
- Climate smart agriculture

Core skills training:

- Literacy and numeracy under informal learning and the Myanmar Curriculum Pilot

Training:

- Electric maintenance
- Plumbing/maintenance of WASH infrastructure
- Weaving, knitting, , and repairing household items that can be used in the camps (such as COVID-19 masks and sanitary napkins)
- Tailoring
- Hairdressing/barbering
- Jute products
- Plastic recycling
- Repairing of gas-stoves and solar panels
- Production of liquid and solid soap, handwashing liquid etc.
- Production of toilet cleaning liquid (e.g. Harpic)
- Production of dairy products (butter, cheese, yogurt)

Financial and digital literacy:

- Basic digital skills

B. For Bhasan Char Rohingya refugee/FDMN project

Agricultural activities:

- Kitchen and homestead gardening
- Improving the use of seed and soil fertility
- Skills to cultivate and harvest fruits, crops, and spices
- Buffalo and lamb farming
- Crab cultivation
- Bio-flock fish cultivation
- Integrated farming (within the same place e.g. fish, vegetables, fruits, duck and chicken production)
- Fruit gardening (e.g. banana, papaya)
- Production of bakery items
- Production of dairy products (e.g. butter, cheese, yogurt)
- Animal husbandry

- Mushroom cultivation
- Salt cultivation
- Chicken and duck farming

Core skills training:

Literacy and numeracy under informal learning and the Myanmar Curriculum Pilot

Training

- Electric maintenance
- Plumbing/maintenance of WASH infrastructure
- Masonry and carpentry
- Weaving, knitting, and repairing household items that can be used in the camps (such as COVID-19 masks and sanitary napkins)
- Tailoring
- Hairdressing/barbering
- Jute and bamboo products
- Plastic recycling
- Repairing of gas-stoves and solar panels
- Production of liquid and solid soap, handwashing liquid etc.

With a view to the sustainable reintegration of the Rohingya in Myanmar, the UN may issue proof of competencies, as recognized by industries in Myanmar, in order to help improve the employability of Rohingya in Myanmar. The format and text of that document will be finalized in consultation with the Government of Bangladesh.

The data of Rohingya refugees/FDMNs participating in skill development and other competency improving activities under this Framework will be exchanged between, and jointly owned by, the Government of Bangladesh and UNHCR in hard copy and electronic format. The Government and UNHCR will act as custodians of all personal data. UNHCR will consolidate and securely host the data on its servers and maintain and continuously update to incorporate new information as it arises. The electronic format may be in a generic database application, Extensible Markup Language (XML) or a spreadsheet will be submitted by UNHCR to the Government on a monthly basis. No data of host community participants under this Skill Development Framework will be added to the UNHCR database. These data will be maintained and used by GOB authorities as and when required.

The Skill Development Framework will allow implementing agencies/INGOs/NGOs to contribute allowances to Rohingya refugees/FDMNs participating in projects preferably through e-vouchers, within parameters agreed with the Government.

For the Host Community:

To ensure the market relevance of skills training programs, skills and training needs of the labor market will be systematically assessed and validated. The results will be the basis for the development of training programs.

For the host community, this Framework is aligned with the National Skills Development Policy and aims at developing more sustainable employment and entrepreneurship-oriented skills which are recognized, certified and market-driven. This will be done by 1) leveraging

employment potential in the high growth economic sectors 2) building employability of the local people through market-driven skills training and entrepreneurship support services:

- **Vocational skills training** following the National Technical and Vocational Qualifications Framework (NTVQF), on quality assured and market-responsive trades and occupations will be promoted for the host community. For this, skills training institutions will be established as required and supported to develop training curricula and materials responding to the current need of skills.
- **Gender-targeted non-traditional occupations and livelihood courses** to allow greater participation of women. These courses will be offered on the basis of the skills need assessments in the district.
- **Developing institutional mechanisms and capacities for re-skilling** and re-tooling of existing workers working **in a variety of sectors in partnership with the private sector**.
- **Skills development for youths and adolescents with focus on** expertise including digital and financial expertise, communication and networking skills, problem solving skills, personality development.
- **Capacity building of skills training providers**, including teachers, skills assessors, business development providers, and private sector organizations such as industry-skills councils and chambers of commerce to support the development of businesses and market-driven skills.
- **Capacity building of district line agencies** to build on existing skills development programmes for host communities in Cox's Bazar including in management of formal and workplace-based skills training aligned to the Bangladesh National Qualification Framework (BNQF), Labour Market Information System (LMIS) and employment support services.
- **Entrepreneurship and business development programs** to strengthen the overall market systems of the high growth economic sectors in the district, entrepreneurial opportunity mapping and entrepreneurship ecosystem development with relevant sectors.

Areas to be covered under this framework for the host community may include:

- Establish nursing training center from where training on caregiver, midwifery, long term Nursing courses will be carried out.
- Medical Assistant Training School (MAT school)
- Digital and financial literacy
- Communication and networking skills
- Freelancing (data entry, software development)
- Electric and electronic training
- Production of dairy products (e.g., butter, cheese, yoghurt)
- Course on tourism and hospitality management
- Bio-floc fish cultivation
- Any other trade a needed.

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