

Rohingya Girls ‘Shine’ – Gender Based Violence Prevention

In partnership with BRAC and Relief International, UNHCR launched ‘Girl Shine’ in September 2021 in an effort to prevent violence against adolescent girls in the Cox’s Bazar, Bangladesh refugee camps. The curriculum, originally developed by the International Rescue Committee, was adapted for the Rohingya context by UNHCR and its partners and targets both adolescent girls and their caregivers. The programme has been initiated in 10 camps, with plans to expand in 2022.



Adolescent girls participating in the Girl Shine induction

Adolescence is a distinctly challenging and critical time for girls, during which they face new risks and social barriers. Humanitarian crises rupture existing community and state structures, such as healthcare, education, and social services, and break up or displace families and communities. This renders adolescent girls even more vulnerable. Adolescent girls living in crisis-affected communities are at increased risk of gender-based violence (GBV), including sexual violence and exploitation, and child marriage. Adolescent girls may also be forced to take on adult roles without first acquiring the needed capabilities and skills.

According to the information management systems of the GBV and child protection sub-sectors, Rohingya adolescent girls are no exception to these global trends and face risks of exploitation and violence related to their sex and age. However, if given the necessary support, it is also possible for adolescent girls to excel or even thrive despite forced displacement. UNHCR has therefore augmented its GBV programming to increase support to adolescent girls and their female *and* male caregivers. The adapted Girl Shine programme is an evidence-based curriculum designed to give young Rohingya girls the skills, knowledge, social networks, and self-confidence to help protect themselves from GBV as they navigate adolescence and beyond.

The adapted curriculum covers six core topics (trust, social & emotional skills, health & hygiene, safety, solidarity, and visioning) with 25 sessions for the girls and 14 sessions for their caregivers. The caregiver curriculum addresses broader issues of gender inequality within the family structure, with the goal of impacting girls’ experience of GBV inside the home. The curriculum helps to improve female and male caregivers’ understanding of adolescent girls’ specific needs and how to provide a supportive environment during this transition period.

During the extended periods of COVID-related lockdowns in 2021, UNHCR and partners worked on contextualizing the Girl Shine curriculum, adapting it to the Rohingya culture and translating the module contents into Bangla. When access was regained, we were ready to train trainers, identify the first cohort of participants, and launch the first sessions. Together, we are now well on our way to our 2021 goal of rolling out Girl Shine in 10 camps through two implementing partners targeting 900 participants, including both girls and their caregivers. With ongoing support from donors, we can extend our reach in 2022.