

ADDRESSING THE UNCERTAINTY OF MENTAL HEALTH SUPPORT PROVIDED TO THE ROHINGYA REFUGEES IN COX'S BAZAR

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Rohingya refugees have fled to Bangladesh in consecutive waves of displacement, the last of which has started in August 2017 following mass violence in Myanmar. Correspondingly, the greatly increased mental health needs are paired with limited or inadequate resources for mental health care, particularly human resources and physical infrastructure. Recognizing that addressing the need for better mental health services is a crucial pathway towards finding a durable solution for the Rohingya refugees in Cox's Bazar, our Task Force aims to address the uncertain safety within current international mental health support by proposing several policy recommendations.

First, our Task Force conducted in-depth contextual research on the Rohingya refugees in Bangladesh, understanding the background of the refugee mental health situation, current policy efforts, and current barriers which hinder the effectiveness of these policies. A deeper analysis of the pre-existing situation reveals that there is a lack of coordination within the Mental Health Gap Action Programme (mHGAP) implemented by the World Health Organization to increase capacity for mental health care provision in primary health care settings. Second, this paper conducted research on the wider geo-political context, through case study comparisons with Kenya and Syria to better inform our policy recommendations. The former case study allows us to draw best practices within Low-to-Middle Income Countries (LMICs) whereas the latter case study allows us to determine and avoid certain

practices which leads to the ineffectiveness of tackling mental health issues within the refugee camp context.

Consequently, the examination of broad literature surrounding effective coordination as well as the implementation and effectiveness of mhGAP across different stakeholders and context has enabled our group to make informed policy recommendations, which aim for the long-term effectiveness of mhGAP programme that benefits the Rohingya refugees. Our policy recommendations target the integration of informal healthcare stakeholders within Bangladesh's public sectors, creating an online portal for coordination of resources and healthcare management, and the establishment of a centralized MHPSS umbrella organization to coordinate action within Cox's Bazar.

Within each policy recommendation, this report then addresses several limitations hindering the effectiveness of these policies before reaching a conclusion. Whilst each policy is not without limitations, we justify our suggestions to reaffirm their value and effectiveness, thereafter reinforcing how they allow for the provision of better quality mental health services in primary health care settings for both host and Rohingya populations. Ultimately, these policies are crafted with the UNHCR's primary purpose at the back of our mind, that is, to safeguard the rights and well-being of refugees.