

**Virtual Workshop for NGOs:
Refugee Protection in the Context of COVID-19**

July 2020

REPORT

The *Virtual Workshop for NGOs: Refugee Protection in the Context of COVID-19* was organised in July 2020 by the Rohingya Working Group (RWG) of the Asia Pacific Refugee Rights Network (APRRN), in collaboration with the Bangladesh Rohingya Response NGO Platform (NGO Platform). The objective of the workshop was to examine current protection concerns faced by NGOs in the context of COVID-19, learn good practices, and identify strategies to address existing and emerging challenges in the context of COVID-19. The workshop was designed for mid-level to senior managers in local and international NGOs working with refugees in Cox's Bazar, within and outside of the Protection Sector, but was designed to build capacity for protection monitoring across sectors.

The Virtual Workshop featured international and national/local speakers and facilitators who are refugee law experts, refugee protection researchers, and/or humanitarian practitioners. The Virtual Workshop comprised three thematic sessions:

- Protection Principles and COVID-19;
- Protection Monitoring during COVID-19: Identifying Needs, Vulnerabilities, and Risks; Referrals and Responses;
- Countering Stigma and Discrimination during COVID-19.

Methodology

As this was the first Virtual Workshop organised by APRRN, the methodology was developed with the intention to emulate a physical workshop. With the awareness that participants are experiencing “webinar fatigue” during the COVID-19 period, the Virtual Workshop was designed to be as interactive and informational as possible within a short period. After each session, the methodology was reviewed, and changes were made for the following session to improve on participant engagement, especially in the case study discussions.

The Virtual Workshop had two components: self-study materials and workshop sessions. Before each Session, participants were sent two to three short video presentations and a case study that they were asked to study prior to the Sessions. The video presentations were subtitled in Bengali to provide accessibility to Bengali speakers.

The Workshop Sessions were conducted through Zoom teleconferencing. Each session began with a presentation (if any), followed by a question and answer period with presenters, including focus on the self-study video presentations. This was followed by breakout group discussions on the case study, where participants were encouraged to focus on examining the case study through the lens of protection principles, discussing challenges that participants face in their work, and identifying strategies to address challenges. The sessions ended with a summary of the discussion on the case study, linking the discussions back to protection

principles and issues raised in the self-study video presentations. During each session, three to four polls were conducted to gauge the participants' level of engagement with the self-study materials and their understanding of the topics being discussed. Following each session, an annotated version of the case study with a compilation of the analyses from facilitators and participants was circulated.

Workshop Summary

The first session, "Protection Principles and COVID-19", was an introductory session. The first session started with a presentation by Dr Kai Von Harbou, Head of Sub-Office, Cox's Bazar, for the World Health Organisation on the Health Sector response to Covid-19 in Bangladesh and the camps. Jane McAdam then presented an overview of the 14 Protection Principles During COVID-19, developed by the Zolberg Institute on Migration and Mobility.¹ A Bengali translation of the 14 Protection Principles was provided to participants.² Subsequent presentations in the first session focused on the protection situation and COVID-19 health response in Cox's Bazar refugee camps by Hasina Akhter Huq of BRAC. The [case study](#) was a hypothetical scenario of a COVID-19 outbreak in a camp with issues related to protection, messaging, limited resources, stigma and discrimination, and confidentiality. Participants actively engaged in discussion and analysed the case study based on the 14 Protection Principles.³

In the second session, on "Protection Monitoring During COVID-19: Identifying Needs, Vulnerabilities, and Risks; Referrals and Responses", the presentations focused on protection monitoring, protection mainstreaming and identification of protection needs, vulnerabilities, and risks. As the video presentations contained substantial information, more time was dedicated to plenary discussion with presenters and the case study discussion. The [case study](#) was based on a hypothetical boat landing scenario with many protection issues linked to the content of the presentations. In this session, participants were divided into four breakout groups, where each group discussed an assigned section of the case study. Engagement in the discussions were lukewarm in some groups and highly active in other groups.⁴

In the final session on "Countering Stigma and Discrimination during COVID-19", the presentations focused on the impact of rumours and stigma on COVID-19 responses, steps to address rumours, and an examination of xenophobia during COVID-19 in Malaysia. The [case study](#) was based on the hypothetical experience of a refugee who had tested positive for COVID-19 and the consequences on his family. In this session, participants were divided into

¹ Zolberg Institute on Migration and Mobility (28 April 2020) "Human mobility and human rights in the COVID-19 pandemic: Principles of protection for migrants, refugees, and other displaced persons", accessed at: https://zolberginstitute.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/04/Human-mobility-and-human-rights-in-the-COVID_final-1.pdf

² APRRN also provided the Bengali translation of the 14 Protection Principles to the Zolberg Institute, and the translation has been made available on their website and can be accessed at https://zolberginstitute.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/07/14_Principles_Bengali.pdf

³ A compilation of discussion points from facilitators and participants for the Session 1 Case Study can be accessed at: <http://tiny.cc/3kmlsz>

⁴ A compilation of discussion points from facilitators and participants for the Session 2 Case Study can be accessed at: <http://tiny.cc/7mmlsz>

three breakout groups for discussion. Engagement from participants was highest in this particular session, as facilitators had managed to improve facilitation based on the lessons learnt from previous sessions.⁵

Participants

Out of 54 individuals who submitted applications to join the workshop, 40 participants were shortlisted based on their profiles. Overall, 29 individuals participated in at least one session, with 60% from international NGOs and 40% from national or local NGOs. Sixty percent of the participants comprised national staff, while 40% were international staff. Thirty-eight percent of participants were women. In Session 1, 28 participants attended, Session 2 had 20 participants, and Session 3 had 23 participants.

Participants Feedback

At the end of the final session, an online evaluation form was distributed to participants. Seventeen participants submitted their feedback. The feedback received was overwhelmingly positive. The following is a summary of the feedback:

1. Methodology

- Most participants liked the combination of self-study video presentations and case study discussions. They found most of the videos to be informative and helpful in increasing their understanding and ability to engage with the workshop discussions.
- Most participants enjoyed the case study discussions, especially the breakout group discussions. Several stated that they found the case studies practical and very relevant to their work. One participant stated that the case studies used “are the ones in reality/that are likely to happen and make us seriously think about what we must do”.
- One participant stated that the workshop gave her/him ideas on how to make an online workshop interactive.

2. Content

- Most participants found the content to be informative and relevant to their work.
- One participant stated, “Discussions are based on existing problems and evidence based and also tried to explore possible solutions for protection of Rohingya refugee in COVID-19 era”.
- Participants expressed that their key takeaways from the workshop were the protection principles to apply in their work; the need to incorporate a feedback mechanism in humanitarian response; building trust with community; mitigating conflicts and rumours in camps; protection mainstreaming and monitoring should be in the center of humanitarian response; differences between trafficking and smuggling; sensitivities; and the rights of refugees.
- One participant suggested that Session 3 could have delved deeper into “concrete examples/suggest mini project concepts for action against stigma and discrimination”.

⁵ A compilation of discussion points from facilitators and participants for the Session 3 Case Study can be accessed at: <http://tiny.cc/dmmlsz>

- One participant stated, “I can better explain the protection rationale for non-protection activities and refer to fundamental rights. That helps advocating for protection-informed activities under our projects”.
3. Other suggestions and feedback
- Two participants expressed that they faced technical challenges due to poor internet connectivity which prevented effective participation.
 - One participant suggested that Session 2 could have included more experienced facilitators from the Bangladesh Rohingya response.
 - One participant suggested that translation to Bangla language would increase understanding and participant levels.
 - One participant noted that the workshop materials will be used for discussions with her/his own colleagues.
 - Most participants suggested more workshops be organised. Participants requested workshops on protection, gender-based violence, preventing sexual exploitation and abuse, communication, evidence-based policy advocacy, empowerment of refugees, communications with communities, vulnerability assessment, case management, and remote mental health and psychosocial support.

Annex 1: Workshop Outline

Date	Session 1: 1 July 2020 (4:00-6:00pm Bangladesh time)	Session 2: 8 July 2020 (4:00-6:00pm Bangladesh time)	Session 3: 15 July 2020 (4:00-6:00pm Bangladesh time)
Theme	Protection Principles and COVID-19	Protection Monitoring During COVID-19: Identifying Needs, Vulnerabilities, and Risks; Referrals and Responses	Countering Stigma and Discrimination during COVID-19
Speakers/ Trainers	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Dr Kai Von Harbou, Head of Sub-Office, Cox's Bazar, World Health Organisation: <i>Health Sector: Overview of Situation and Strategic Response</i> • Professor Jane McAdam, Director, Kaldor Centre for International Refugee Law: <i>14 Protection Principles During COVID-19</i> • Hasina Akhter Huq, Area Director, Humanitarian Crisis Management Programme, BRAC: <i>Key Protection Concerns in Cox's Bazar Refugee Camps</i> 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Istiaque Ahmed, Associate Protection Officer, UNHCR: <i>Protection Monitoring and Protection Mainstreaming</i> • Fojail Ahmed Nohel, Sr Protection Monitoring Officer, International Rescue Committee (IRC): <i>Protection Monitoring During COVID-19</i> • Brian Barbour, Regional Refugee Protection Advisor, Act for Peace & APRRN: <i>Recognising Protection Needs, Vulnerabilities, and Risks</i> • Chris Lewa, Director, The Arakan Project: <i>Boat Crisis Case Study</i> 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Becky Roby, Advocacy Manager, Cox's Bazaar, Médecins Sans Frontières: <i>COVID-19 and Stigma: Impact on Rohingya Refugees in Bangladesh</i> • Irene Scott, Project Director, COVID-19, Internews: <i>Rumours, Stigma, and COVID-19</i> • Khandokar Hasanul Banna, Lead Training and Liaison Manager, Rohingya Response, BBC Media Action: <i>Community Voices to Mitigate and Counter Stigma and Discrimination</i> • Lilianne Fan, International Director, Geutanyoe Foundation & Chair, Rohingya Working Group, APRRN: <i>Lessons Learnt from Malaysia</i>
Facilitator	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ipshita Sengupta, NGO Platform • Brian Barbour, Act for Peace & APRRN 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ipshita Sengupta, NGO Platform • Brian Barbour, Act for Peace & APRRN 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ipshita Sengupta, NGO Platform • Brian Barbour, Act for Peace & APRRN
Videos	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. 14 Principles of Protection for Migrants, Refugees, and Other Displaced Persons by Professor Jane McAdam from the Kaldor Centre for International Refugee Law 2. Key Protection Concerns in Cox's Bazar Refugee Camps by Hasina Akhter Huq from BRAC Bangladesh 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 3. Protection Monitoring and Protection Mainstreaming by Istiaque Ahmed, UNHCR 4. Protection Monitoring During COVID-19 by Fojail Ahmed Nohel, IRC 5. Recognising Protection Needs, Vulnerabilities, and Risks by Brian Barbour, Act for Peace, Kaldor Centre for International Refugee Law & APRRN 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 6. Rumours, Stigma, and COVID-19 by Irene Scott from Internews 7. COVID-19 and Xenophobia: Lessons Learnt from Malaysia by Lilianne Fan, Geutanyoe Foundation and APRRN
Case studies	Comprehensive Case Study: Issue spotting	Case Study: Boat landings, four breakout groups	Case Study: COVID-19 positive Rohingya refugee, three breakout groups