

---

2-2024

## Soft skills training for Rohingya and host community youth in Cox's Bazar, Bangladesh

Md. Noorunnabi Talukder  
*Population Council*

Abdullah Al Mahmud Shohag  
*Population Council*

Ishtiak Morshed  
*Population Council*

Sigma Ainul  
*Population Council*

Md. Irfan Hossain  
*Population Council*

*See next page for additional authors*

Follow this and additional works at: [https://knowledgecommons.popcouncil.org/focus\\_adolescents](https://knowledgecommons.popcouncil.org/focus_adolescents)



Part of the [Community-Based Learning Commons](#), and the [Family, Life Course, and Society Commons](#)

**How does access to this work benefit you? Click here to let us know!**

---

### Recommended Citation

Talukder, Md. Noorunnabi, Abdullah Al Mahmud Shohag, Ishtiak Morshed, Sigma Ainul, Md. Irfan Hossain, Mohammad Muktedir Hossain, Sharif Mohammed Ismail Hossain, and Ubaidur Rob. 2024. "Soft Skills Training for Rohingya and Host Community Youth in Cox's Bazar, Bangladesh." Dhaka: Population Council.

This Report is brought to you for free and open access by the Population Council.

---

**Authors**

Md. Noorunnabi Talukder, Abdullah Al Mahmud Shohag, Ishtiaq Morshed, Sigma Ainul, Md. Irfan Hossain, Mohammad Muktedir Hossain, Sharif M.I. Hossain, and Ubaidur Rob



# SOFT SKILLS TRAINING FOR ROHINGYA AND HOST COMMUNITY YOUTH IN COX'S BAZAR, BANGLADESH

MD. NOORUNNABI TALUKDER  
ABDULLAH AL MAHMUD SHOHAG  
ISTIYAK MORSHED  
SIGMA AINUL  
MD. IRFAN HOSSAIN  
MOHAMMAD MUKTADIR HOSSAIN  
SHARIF MOHAMMED ISMAIL HOSSAIN  
UBAIDUR ROB

FEBRUARY 2024



POPULATION  
COUNCIL

Ideas. Evidence. Impact.



# SOFT SKILLS TRAINING FOR ROHINGYA AND HOST COMMUNITY YOUTH IN COX'S BAZAR, BANGLADESH

MD. NOORUNNABI TALUKDER  
ABDULLAH AL MAHMUD SHOHAG  
ISHTIAK MORSHED  
SIGMA AINUL  
MD. IRFAN HOSSAIN  
MOHAMMAD MUKTADIR HOSSAIN  
SHARIF MOHAMMED ISMAIL HOSSAIN  
UBAIDUR ROB

FEBRUARY 2024





The Population Council confronts critical health and development issues—from stopping the spread of HIV to improving reproductive health and ensuring that young people lead full and productive lives. Through biomedical, social science, and public health research in 50 countries, we work with our partners to deliver solutions that lead to more effective policies, programs, and technologies that improve lives around the world. Established in 1952 and headquartered in New York, the Council is a nongovernmental, nonprofit organization governed by an international board of trustees.

Population Council  
House 49, Road 28, Gulshan 1  
Dhaka 1212  
Bangladesh  
Tel: +880 222292276  
email: [info.bangladesh@popcouncil.org](mailto:info.bangladesh@popcouncil.org)

[popcouncil.org](http://popcouncil.org)

**Suggested citation:** Talukder, Md. Noorunnabi, Abdullah Al Mahmud Shohag, Ishtiaq Morshed, Sigma Ainul, Md. Irfan Hossain, Mohammad Muktedir Hossain, Sharif Mohammed Ismail Hossain, and Ubaidur Rob. 2024. “Soft Skills Training for Rohingya and Host Community Youth in Cox’s Bazar, Bangladesh.” Dhaka: Population Council.

# Table of Contents

<i>List of Tables and Images</i>	iv
<i>Acknowledgments</i>	v
<i>Executive Summary</i>	vi
<i>List of Abbreviations</i>	x
<b>I. Background</b>	1
<b>II. Goals and Objectives</b>	1
<b>III. Program Overview</b>	2
Phase 1: Piloting	2
Phase 2: Roll out	3
<b>IV. Program Development</b>	4
A. Partnership development	4
B. Government approval	4
C. Module development	4
D. Capacity development: Training of trainers	5
<b>V. Program Implementation</b>	6
A. Implementation	6
The mode of training	6
Selection of participants	6
Delivery of training	6
B. Monitoring	7
C. Post-training assessment	7
<b>VI. Program outcome</b>	8
A. Trainee profile	8
Demographics	8
Education and occupation	9
B. Pre-post test	10
Knowledge of gender and reproductive health	10
Attitude towards gender and mental health	11
Knowledge of financial management	13
Trainee perception	15
C. Trainee's views	16
Perspectives from Rohingya trainees	16
Perspectives from host community trainees	20
D. Program stakeholder's insights	22
<b>VII. Discussion</b>	28
A. Knowledge and perception test	28
B. Post-training assessment	29
<b>VIII. Conclusion and Recommendations</b>	32

# List of Tables and Images

**Table 1.** Age and marital status of Rohingya and host community trainees

**Table 2.** Education and occupation of Rohingya and host community trainees

**Table 3.** Knowledge of gender, maternal health, and reproductive health among Rohingya and host community trainees

**Table 4.** Attitude towards gender and mental health among Rohingya and host community trainees

**Table 5.** Awareness of and attitudes toward financial management among Rohingya and host community trainees

**Table 6.** Training purpose and relevance perceived by Rohingya and host community trainees

**Image 1.** Pilot training sites in Rohingya camps, Ukhiya

**Image 2.** Roll-out training sites in Rohingya camps, Ukhiya

# Acknowledgments

This report presents the outcome of the training program “Soft Skills Training for Rohingya and Host Community Youth in Cox’s Bazar, Bangladesh,” designed and implemented by the Population Council. We gratefully acknowledge the contribution of two individual donors, Jerry Cunningham and Diane Cunningham, for their financial support to carry out the program. The authors wish to acknowledge the cooperation and contribution of many individuals.

We highly appreciate our partnership with Research, Training and Management International (RTMI) and Underprivileged Children’s Education Program (UCEP) in implementing the program. The cooperation of Mohammad Muktadir Hossain, Head of Field Support Program, RTMI, and Md Akter Hossain, Deputy Manager of UCEP Cox’s Bazar TVET Institute is gratefully acknowledged.

We are indebted to Mohammed Mizanur Rahman, Commissioner, Refugee Relief and Repatriation Commission (RRRC), Md Shamsudduja, Additional Commissioner, RRRC, and Sadhana Tripura, Senior Assistant Secretary, RRRC, for their consent and cooperation to conduct the training program in the Rohingya camps. We are grateful to Md Ahsan Habib, Camp-in-Charge (CIC) of Camp 5, Sarwar Kamal, CIC of Camp 9 and 10, and Md Sujauddola, CIC of Camp 18 for extending cooperation and providing the conference room to use as the training venue in their respective camps.

We are thankful to the Population Council’s training team members, Abdullah Al Mamun, Ahsan Al Mobin Sawrab, Esrat Marjina Sultan Lucky, Jannatunnesa Sikdar, and the training coordinator, Mohammad Yunus, for organizing and conducting training in the camp and the host community. We sincerely thank *Majhis* (Rohingya community leaders) of four camps for their collaboration in identifying training participants.

Special thanks are due to the government and nongovernment program managers for their insights and suggestions and to the training participants for sharing their experiences and providing feedback on the program.

Finally, warm thanks go to our Population Council colleagues, especially Dipak Kumar Shil, Md Kamruzzaman Bhuiyan, and Md Joynal Abedin for providing day-to-day managerial and administrative support to the program.



# Executive Summary

## INTRODUCTION

The Population Council in collaboration with Research, Training and Management International (RTMI) and Underprivileged Children's Education Program (UCEP) pilot tested a soft skills training intervention in two Rohingya camps and a vocational training center in the host community in Cox's Bazar, Bangladesh in 2022. As a follow-up to the pilot program, the Council along with its partners rolled out soft skills training in four Rohingya camps and a vocational training center in the host community in 2023. The purpose of this training was to improve the personal, social, and financial management skills of Rohingya youth, which would be of use on their return to Myanmar or during their interim period of stay in Bangladesh. In addition, the training was intended to help host-community youth develop financial management skills and life skills.

## APPROACH

The roll-out phase executed the same training course as the pilot phase. The soft skills training package consisted of two modules: life skills and financial literacy. In the camp, each training course was conducted in 15 sessions (life skills 10, financial literacy 5) in four weeks, and the duration of each session was one hour. In the host community, the training course was comprised of 16 sessions (life skills 10, financial literacy 6). The program employed two interventions: (i) soft skills training for Rohingya youth, and (ii) soft skills training embedded in a vocational training course for host community youth. Rohingya and host community males and females between the ages of 15 and 29 years were the beneficiaries of the training program. The roll-out phase was intended to reach more young populations and hence included two new camps in addition to continuing the training intervention in two pilot camps and at UCEP's technical training center. The duration of the roll-out phase of the soft skills training program was 12 months, January to December 2023.

## OUTCOME

A total of 1,062 Rohingya youth received soft skills training in four camps under the roll-out program. In the host community, 42 youth attended the training. We conducted a pre-post knowledge test and a post-training perception test among all trainees for a quick assessment of the training. We also conducted a post-training assessment to gather perspectives from training participants and insights from program managers on the soft skills training program.

### A. Trainee profile

#### ***Age, marital status, and education***

The mean age of Rohingya and host community trainees was 22 years. Among Rohingya trainees, females were older than males by four years while the mean age was exactly the same between male and female trainees in the host community. Overall, the proportion of Rohingya trainees currently married was more than double that of the host community trainees (56% vs. 26%); the high marriage rate among Rohingya females created the difference. Among Rohingya female trainees, 81 percent were currently married while only 32 percent of female trainees in the host community were married. Large gaps exist in the educational status of Rohingya and host community trainees. Forty-two percent of Rohingya trainees reported never attending school, with a large gender gap (female 64%, male 20%). On the other hand, all host community trainees have been to school; all males completed study beyond secondary education whereas 86 percent of females so reported.

## B. Knowledge and perception test

### ***Knowledge of gender and reproductive health***

Regarding life skills training, a pre-post comparison indicated a substantial improvement in knowledge on gender, maternal health, and reproductive health among Rohingya trainees. Before the training, awareness was low, as less than 20 percent of Rohingya trainees regardless of gender were knowledgeable on those issues. After the training, 77–99 percent of Rohingya trainees became aware of gender, maternal health, and reproductive health issues, and improvements were more pronounced among females. Overall, the post-training awareness was relatively higher among host community trainees than Rohingya trainees.

### ***Attitude towards gender equality***

Life skills training contributed to substantial improvements in attitude towards gender equality among both Rohingya and host community trainees. Before the training, Rohingya trainees had a less supportive attitude towards gender equality than host community trainees (Rohingya 6–23%, host community 24–38%). After the training, more than 98 percent of Rohingya trainees developed a positive attitude towards gender equality, and the improvements were similar across males and females. On the other hand, a positive attitude towards gender equality became almost universal among host community trainees after the training.

### ***Knowledge of financial management***

Financial literacy training resulted in considerable improvements in personal financial management among both Rohingya and host community trainees. Before the training, financial management of savings and loans was understood by less than one-sixth of Rohingyas, but this rose to over 96 percent as a result of training. In the host community, the training helped all male trainees become fully versed in savings and loan management skills, and female trainees reported nearly identical responses.

## C. Post-training assessment

At the beneficiary level, in-depth interviews were conducted with 20 Rohingya and host community trainees to get their feedback on the soft skills training program and the benefits they perceived getting from this training and the access to technical training opportunities. At the program level, key informant interviews were conducted with 10 program managers to understand their insights/ideas on the potential for scaling up the soft skills training intervention and on the integration of soft skills training into other training programs in the camp and host community.

### ***Trainees' views***

**Relevance and benefits of soft skills training.** All training participants in the camp and host community considered the soft skills training relevant to their interests and needs. In both the camp and host community, life skills training increased awareness about malpractices such as child marriage, domestic and gender-based violence, and substance abuse, and improved attitudes towards good practices such as gender equality, family planning, nutrition, and personal hygiene practices. The training also promoted positive behavior and improved confidence, communication skills, and adaptability. As information deprivation is more profound among Rohingya women, because community norms restrict their mobility, these trainings greatly benefit women. Similarly, financial literacy training gave participants savings skills, improved their spending patterns, reduced their loan-seeking practices, and motivated them to seek earning opportunities. This training was particularly useful for Rohingya trainees as it was considered an added skill for obtaining jobs.

**Quality of soft skills training.** When asked about the quality of the training and what appealed to them, participants highlighted three things: (i) interactive sessions and multiple ways of presenting information and ideas, (ii) trainers' friendly behavior, and (iii) engagement over a long training. Overall, Rohingya participants reported that they enjoyed the sessions because lessons were understandable as trainers explained everything

to the level of their understanding and provided clear answers to their questions with examples. Similarly, host community trainees noted the efficiency of the trainers in effectively delivering sessions.

**Access to technical training opportunities.** All Rohingya trainees reported a lack of technical training opportunities in the camp. Although technical training is generally prohibited inside the camp, some UN agencies and nongovernmental organizations (NGOs) provide technical training to a limited extent. Available skills training for men include masonry, road construction, small-scale business, computer operation, mobile phone repair, stool/bench making, and fence making, while sewing, embroidery, prayer-cap making, and bamboo work training (hand fan and basket making) were available for women. Unlike the Rohingya camp, technical training is provided in the host community by government institutes and private organizations. Host community trainees reported that electrical wiring, mobile phone servicing, computer operation, mechanical work, poultry farming, mushroom culture, and driving are some of the common technical trainings available for men, while sewing, parlor work, and embroidery training are available for women.

**Future aspirations.** Rohingya trainees expressed interest in having income-generating training in Bangladesh. Training on computer operation, English Language, solar work, electrical and mechanical skills, gas stove repair, and mobile repair and servicing were the most widely mentioned skills of interest among male trainees. Aspirations for females mostly revolved around skills in tailoring, sewing, embroidery, and handicrafts that they can do from home. Computer operation and medical assistance training are two other major skills of interest among women. Gender stereotypes exist, but a slow shift of cultural norms and the participation of women in various kinds of work outside the home were noted. Host community trainees underlined the necessity of long-term technical and income-generating training because the existing training programs are provided to a limited extent and most of the youth are not included.

### ***Program stakeholders' insights***

**Relevance and quality of soft skills training.** Program managers found the training relevant and necessary for the lives of Rohingya and host community youth and identified an increase in demand for soft skills training in both the Rohingya camp and host community. They strongly perceived the necessity of the training for Rohingya youth because they had been deprived of basic life skills in Myanmar, and this training could be instrumental for them after repatriation. They reported, however, that most of the life skills and financial literacy training programs in the camp are not well organized, nor follow a standard curriculum. Program managers underlined the need for research to develop training modules and methods. It is important to note that the Population Council followed a systematic and rigorous process to develop the soft skills training module and interactive session plans, which can be used as a model for other organizations in the camp and host community.

**Integration of soft skills training.** UN agencies and NGOs have been providing soft skills training both in the camp and host community. But many of these organizations do not have the capacity or resources to cover the population due to infrastructural barriers, such as training space and electricity in the camp, while it is a funding issue for the host community. The majority of program managers reported the necessity and possibility of integrating soft skills training programs within existing UN and NGO programs. In their opinion, integration would require a coordinated effort of the concerned stakeholders, and the process depends on effective negotiation with government agencies and donors.

There are concerns among program managers about merging the soft skills training with other larger programs. Program managers indicated that integration is possible but to a limited extent in the camp. Policy restrictions, deficiency in capacity, organizational indigenous policies and priorities, insufficient funding, and inadequate coordination among implementers were reported as the major barriers to soft skills training integration in the camp. In the host community there is no policy restriction, but the availability of funds and organizational policies and priorities remain key obstacles. Program managers further mentioned that

integration is relatively easier in the camp as people are homogenous and their need for similar training has been accentuated in different reports.

#### **Prerequisites for integration of soft skills training.**

- Engagement of program stakeholders – Refugee Relief and Repatriation Commission (RRRC), Camps in Charge (CICs), UN agencies, and NGOs – can play the most critical role in integrating soft skills training with existing larger programs in the camp. For the host community, local government officials and private training providers were identified as key stakeholders.
- There is a clear need to develop a standard curriculum and uniform guidelines for the life skills and financial literacy programs in order to facilitate a standardized implementation of training, ensure better coordination among the implementing agencies, and help the implementers and donors avoid overlapping. It is necessary to consider certain criteria to develop the guidelines: (i) duration of training, (ii) fixing target group, (iii) standardized module, and (iv) minimum number of sessions for the training.

## **CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS**

Overall, the processes and findings of the soft skills training intervention implemented by the Population Council are encouraging. The guidance and support of the RRRC and CICs was a key factor in the smooth and timely implementation of the training program. In general, all training participants considered the training a useful platform for learning personal, social, and financial management skills. Although several UN agencies, NGOs, and private organizations are actively working in the camps and host communities, the coverage of soft skills training programs is limited and uneven against increasing demand for training. While the relevance, demand, quality, and effectiveness of soft skills training were recognized, challenges like uneven coverage, integration obstacles, and policy restrictions were highlighted. A holistic and coordinated approach incorporating the government and other program stakeholders, systematic monitoring of the programs, and policy advocacy is deemed to be instrumental in addressing the existing gaps and fostering a standard and sustainable soft skills program for both the Rohingya and host community.

### **Recommendations**

1. A well-devised action plan to increase coverage of soft skills training in both the Rohingya camp and host community is needed, for which early and consistent involvement of key government and other program stakeholders is necessary.
2. It is necessary to bring those who are providing soft skills training under a common platform to work toward a standardized implementation of training.
3. There is a clear need to develop a standard curriculum and uniform guidelines for soft skills training so as to avoid overlapping among implementing agencies and ensure a standardized implementation of training.
4. Integrating soft skills training with UN and NGO programs and private training centers is considered an essential and viable solution for program sustainability and effectiveness.
5. It is important to test the feasibility of integrating a soft skills curriculum by introducing the standard module to a selected number of UN and NGO programs in the camp and to vocational training centers in the host community, and to assess the impact on beneficiaries' learning and livelihood outcomes.
6. Life skills and financial literacy are valuable for everybody, not only for work but also everyday life. There is a need for the Bangladesh government to create national policies that will guide the development, integration, and delivery of soft skills training in the technical and vocational training system in the host community.

# List of Abbreviations

AIDS	Acquired Immuno-deficiency Syndrome
CIC	Camp in Charge
CV	Curriculum Vitae
FDMN	Forcibly Displaced Myanmar National
GOB	Government of Bangladesh
HIV	Human Immunodeficiency Virus
INGO	International Nongovernmental Organization
IOM	International Organization for Migration
MCP	Myanmar Curriculum Pilot
NGO	Nongovernmental Organization
RRRC	Refugee Relief and Repatriation Commission
RTMI	Research, Training and Management International
TVET	Technical and Vocational Education and Training
UCEP	Underprivileged Children’s Education Program
UN	United Nations
UNHCR	United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees
WFP	World Food Program

## I. BACKGROUND

Bangladesh has been hosting nearly a million Rohingyas in the camps in the Cox's Bazar district for the past six years.<sup>1</sup> The Government of Bangladesh (GOB) recognizes the Rohingyas who have taken shelter in the camps in Cox's Bazar as forced migrants and foreign nationals. The government does not grant formal refugee status to Rohingya populations, instead they define them as Forcibly Displaced Myanmar Nationals (FDMNs). The Bangladesh army has registered the Rohingyas and provided them with individual camp ID cards. The Bangladesh government, with support from the United Nations (UN) and other humanitarian agencies, is working to meet their most immediate needs, including accommodations, safe water, food, sanitation, reproductive as well as maternal and child health care, and other basic services. The cumulative efforts of the GOB and development partners to ensure basic humanitarian assistance for Rohingyas are praiseworthy.

The GOB, in collaboration with development partners, also provides opportunities for informal education at "learning centers" for children inside the camp. In addition, a landmark decision by the Bangladesh government in January 2020 paved the way for the introduction of the Myanmar Curriculum Pilot (MCP) to expand access to formal education for Rohingyas in the camp targeting children and adolescents in grades six to nine. However, Rohingya youth have limited opportunities for learning and skills building. For Rohingya youth, some opportunities are available for life skills training in the camp and informal income generation activities. Still, there is a strong need among Rohingya youth to receive training for improving their life skills and livelihood skills.

The people living in two subdistricts of Cox's Bazar – Ukhiya and Teknaf – are the main hosts of the Rohingya refugees who fled from Myanmar to Bangladesh. According to the Bangladesh Bureau of Statistics, Cox's Bazar is one of the lowest-performing districts in Bangladesh in terms of education and skills training, with about 33 percent of the population living below the poverty line. Following the influx, the host community has been affected by increased competition in the daily labor market, leading to lower income. Moreover, prices for daily commodities have increased in the region. Many poor and disadvantaged groups are adopting negative coping strategies to secure their livelihood, e.g., child marriage or poorly paid daily labor. It has been difficult for host community populations to cope with the new circumstances and earn a living. It is necessary to take initiatives to help vulnerable individuals in the host community to develop both life skills and livelihood skills.

In 2020-21, the Population Council conducted a livelihood needs assessment study among Rohingya youth, which indicated a clear need for skills training. Subsequently, in 2022, the Council, in collaboration with Research, Training and Management International (RTMI) and the Underprivileged Children's Education Program (UCEP), implemented a pilot program on soft skills training among Rohingya and host community youth in Cox's Bazar. Based on the positive response from the pilot and increasing demand for this training among more Rohingya and host community youth, the Council rolled out the soft skills training intervention among more Rohingya and host community youth in 2023.

## II. GOALS AND OBJECTIVES

The purpose of the soft skills program was to provide Rohingya youth with training on life skills and financial literacy, which would be useful on their return to Myanmar or during their interim period of stay in Bangladesh. In addition, the training was intended to help host community youth develop their life skills and financial management skills. The specific objective of the roll-out program was to understand the perspectives of training participants on the relevance and usefulness of soft skills training and the perspectives of program managers on potential scale-up of training.

---

<sup>1</sup><https://data.unhcr.org/en/country/bgd#>

### III. PROGRAM OVERVIEW

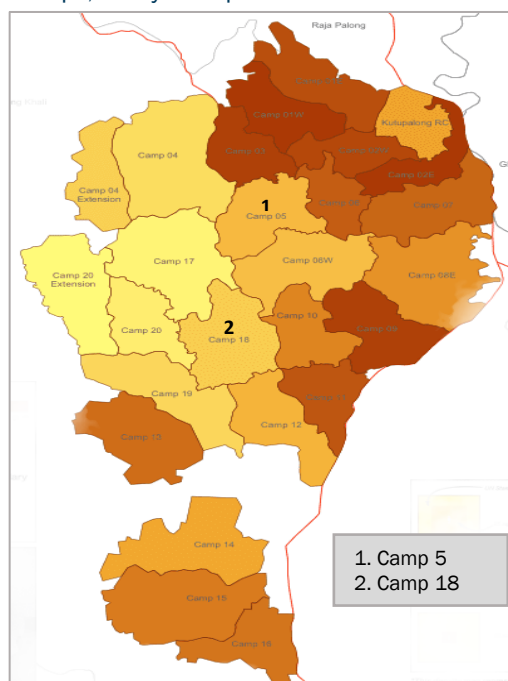
#### Phase 1: Piloting

In 2022, the Population Council in collaboration with RTMI and UCEP piloted a life skills and financial literacy training intervention in the Rohingya camps and the host community in Cox’s Bazar, Bangladesh. Prior to starting the training program in the camps, approval from the Refugee Relief and Repatriation Commission (RRRC), Government of Bangladesh (GOB) was obtained. The Population Council team designed, established, and managed a camp-based life skills and financial literacy training program for Rohingya youth and provided life skills and financial literacy training to host community youth through institution-based vocational training.

#### Approach

Rohingya and host community males and females between the ages of 15 and 29 years were the beneficiaries of the training program. This pilot program was executed in two phases: development and implementation. The duration was nine months, starting in April 2022. The program employed two interventions: (i) soft skills training for Rohingya youth, and (ii) soft skills embedded in vocational training for host community youth.

Image 1. Pilot training sites in Rohingya camps, Ukhiya. Map source: ISCG



**PROJECT OVERVIEW**

**INTERVENTION 1**

- **Target population:** Rohingya youth aged between 15 and 29
- **Location:**
  - Phase 1: Two camps in Ukhiya, Cox’s Bazar
  - Phase 2: Four camps in Ukhiya, Cox’s Bazar
- **Number of trainees:**
  - Phase 1: **159** (male 79, female 80)
  - Phase 2: **1,062** (male 523, female 539)
- **Training modules:** Life Skills, Financial Literacy
- **Training course duration:** 15 hours

**INTERVENTION 2**

- **Target population:** Host community youth aged between 15 and 29
- **Location:** Cox’s Bazar Sadar
- **Number of trainees:**
  - Phase 1: **80** (male 40, female 40)
  - Phase 2: **42** (male 20, female 22)
- **Training modules:** Life Skills, Financial Literacy
- **Training course duration:** 16 hours

**Intervention 1: Soft skills training for Rohingya youth.**  
Training for Rohingya youth was conducted in two camps: Camp 5 and 18. Camps were selected in consultation with RRRC and Camp-in-Charge (CIC) of the respective camps. CIC offices in two camps were used as training venues. In each camp, two male and two female groups received training. In total, eight groups of youth (male 4, female 4) received training. Each group was designed to accommodate 20 participants. The training was conducted in 15 sessions and the duration of each session was one hour.

**Intervention 2: Soft skills training for host community youth.**  
Training for host community youth was conducted at UCEP’s Technical and Vocational Education and Training (TVET) center in Cox’s Bazar. Participants of UCEP’s vocational course were selected for soft skills training. Four groups of youth (male 2, female 2) were enrolled in the soft skills training program. The training was conducted in 16 sessions and the duration of each session was one hour.

## Outcome

In this pilot phase, a total of 239 Rohingya and host community youth received the training. In two camps, 159 Rohingya youth received training (male 79, female 80). From the host community, 80 local youth (male 40, female 40) received the training at UCEP's training center in Cox's Bazar.

## Phase 2: Roll out

### Approach

The roll out was the expansion phase of the soft skills training intervention piloted in 2022. The duration of the roll-out phase was 12 months, January–December 2023 (Phase 2). This roll-out phase involved the technical repetition of the pilot training course, reaching larger young populations. In addition to continuing the training intervention in two pilot camps and at UCEP's technical training center, two new camps were included. The training was provided to the same age group, i.e., young populations aged 15–29 years in the camps and host community. The roll-out phase implemented the same intervention as the pilot phase, and a post-training assessment was added.

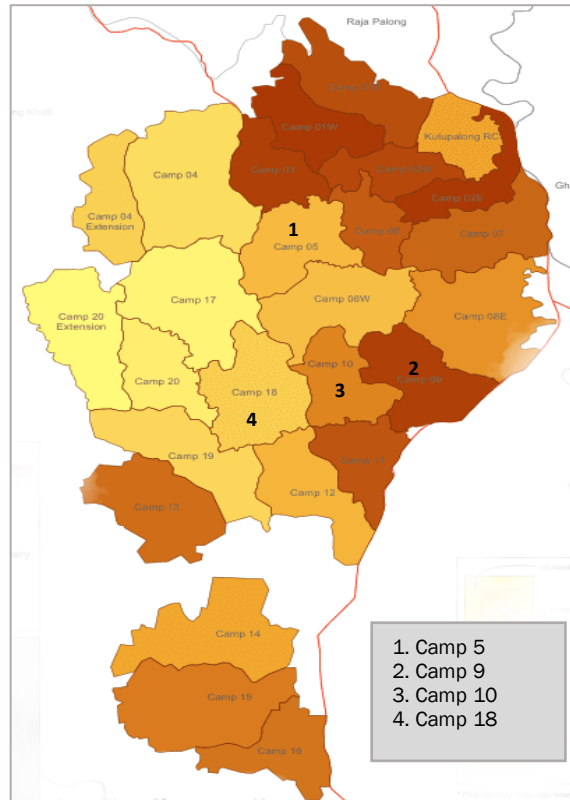
### Post-training assessment

The roll-out phase was designed to gather perspectives from training participants on the relevance and usefulness of soft skills training and from program managers on the potential for scaling up the training intervention and on opportunities and challenges to integrate soft skills training into other training programs both in the camp and the host community.

## Outcome

Under the roll-out phase, 1,104 Rohingya and host community youth received training. In four camps, 1,062 Rohingya youth received training (male 523, female 539). From the host community, 42 local youth (male 20, female 22) received training at UCEP's training center in Cox's Bazar.

**Image 2.** Roll-out training sites in Rohingya camps, Ukhiya. Map source: ISCG





## IV. PROGRAM DEVELOPMENT

### A. Partnership development

This training intervention program was a follow-up activity to the Rohingya livelihood assessment study conducted in 2020-21 by the Population Council,<sup>2</sup> which found strong desire among Rohingya youth for livelihood training and income-generation activities to improve their living conditions. After the closure of the livelihood assessment study in December 2021, the Council utilized findings from that study and insights from a national-level roundtable meeting to develop a soft skills training program for Rohingya and host community youth in Cox's Bazar.<sup>3</sup> At the event, the necessity of creating opportunities for skills training for Rohingya youth was emphasized.

With the purpose of introducing soft skills training in the Rohingya camp and host community, the Council formed partnerships with two local well-established private-sector training providers, RTMI and UCEP in the first quarter of 2022. RTMI coordinated with RRRC and CICs to ensure smooth implementation of the training activities in the camp. Similarly, a partnership between the Population Council and UCEP was established to provide soft skills training to host community youth in Cox's Bazar. Upon receiving approval from the RRRC and CICs (GOB's local administration for the Rohingya population), the pilot program started in April 2022 and continued for nine months ending on December 31, 2022.

The 2023 roll-out program included the implementation of soft skills training, followed by an immediate post-training assessment. The activities of the roll-out phase were conducted by the same Population Council personnel in Dhaka supported by a training team in Cox's Bazar. Active partnerships with RTMI and UCEP were in place.

### B. Government approval

The RRRC and CICs were well informed about the training program, involved from the beginning of the program, and supported throughout the whole program period. We obtained approval from the RRRC for Phase 1 of the training program in April 2022 and Phase 2 in March 2023, and RTMI coordinated with the RRRC to obtain approval. In Phase 2, two new camps were included (Camps 9 and 10). Inclusion of new camps was also requested in the extension phase and was approved in May 2023. New camps were selected in consultation with CICs. Like the pilot phase, CIC offices were utilized as training venues in the roll-out phase.

### C. Module development

The development of training modules included three activities: (i) assessment of training needs, (ii) designing the training package, and (iii) designing training methods. In the pilot phase, the Council designed and developed "Life Skills" and "Financial Literacy" modules for the trainers. To develop the modules, the Council team considered government policies and humanitarian aspects for the Rohingya population. Available standard national and international training modules and other documents were mapped, reviewed, synthesized, and translated.

---

<sup>2</sup>Talukder, Md. Noorunnabi, Md. Irfan Hossain, Abdullah Al Mahmud Shohag, Eashita Farzana Haque, Iqbal Ehsan, Joseph P. Falcone, and Ubaidur Rob. 2022. "Assessment of Economic Opportunities for Young Rohingyas in Bangladesh." Dhaka: Population Council.

<sup>3</sup> Roundtable discussion on "Skill Building of Rohingya and Host Community Adolescents and Youth: Opportunities and Challenges." The Daily Star, November 30, 2021.

The Life Skills Module contains 10 sessions and the Financial Literacy Module contains 6 sessions. The Life Skills Module focused on gender equality, gender-based violence prevention, child marriage prevention, nutrition, family planning methods and services, safe motherhood, HIV/AIDS awareness and prevention, drug addiction prevention, mental health, and decision-making skills. The Financial Literacy Module included sources of income, savings skills, loan sources and management, financial planning, budget preparation, banking (host community only), and income-generation activities.

These modules were structured with a participatory training technique. Each training session consisted of multiple methods,

- Financial Literacy Module**
- Sources of income and expenses
  - Savings skills, strategies
  - Loan sources and management
  - Budget preparation for self and financial planning
  - Banking and digital financing system (host community only)
  - Income-generation activities

which included lecture, structured discussion, questions and answers, experience sharing, case analysis, group exercise, and individual assignment. The same modules with the same training methods were utilized in the roll-out phase. For the roll-out phase, the Council team revisited and refined the training modules based on findings from the pilot phase, particularly the observations from program managers and trainers. The Council reduced the content of some sessions and included a new topic (safe motherhood) into one session of the Life Skills Module as per the suggestion of the donor.

**Life Skills Module**

- Exploring self, knowing one's strength and weakness
- Gender equality and role
- Child marriage prevention
- Gender-based violence prevention
- Nutrition
- Family planning methods and services
- Safe motherhood awareness
- HIV/AIDS awareness and prevention
- Drug addiction prevention
- Mental health
- Decision-making and problem-solving skills

## D. Capacity Development: Training of Trainers

In the pilot phase, two trainers (male 1, female 1) and one field coordinator were selected and trained to provide training. The roll-out phase required four trainers to conduct sessions. Of the existing two trainers, one dropped out. The Council recruited three new trainers. After the recruitment, the Council team trained four trainers (male 2, female 2) and one field coordinator. The team conducted a 5-day training course for trainers, who received intensive training on modules, session facilitation skills, training methods, management and evaluation, and risk mitigation. Training modules were shared with the partners, and they were invited to the training. Trainers were monitored during the delivery of training sessions among Rohingya and host community youth, and a feedback system was in place to enhance trainers' skills and clarify any content.

## V. PROGRAM IMPLEMENTATION

### A. Implementation

#### *The mode of training*

A 15-hour training package was provided (life skills, 10 sessions; financial literacy, 5 sessions) in the camp, and a 16-hour training package was provided in the host community. The training course was conducted over four weeks. In each camp, training sessions took place three days a week between 9.00 am and 1.00 pm. Both male and female groups received training on the scheduled topic on the same day. For example, female groups received training between 9.00 am and 11.00 am, followed by a male group between 11.00 am and 1.00 pm or vice versa. Similarly, in the host community, sessions were conducted for two hours between 9.00 am and 4.00 pm on alternate days of the week.

#### *Selection of participants*

In consultation with CICs, the representatives of GOB's local administration for the camp, RTMI and the Population Council jointly selected training participants among the Rohingya youth. UCEP, with technical support from the Council, selected host community participants. Similar to the pilot phase, separate male and female groups were formed from training participants. The roll-out phase increased the group size. In the roll-out phase, each group was expected to accommodate 30 participants compared to 20 in the pilot phase.

In the pilot phase, four groups of Rohingya youth received training every month in two camps, and two groups of host community youth received training at UCEP's training center. The training sessions were conducted for two months in the last quarter of 2022. During this phase, 12 groups of trainees (8 Rohingya groups and 4 host community groups) received training.

The total number of trainees increased more than four times in the roll-out phase. In four camps, eight groups of Rohingya youth received training every month. The training sessions were conducted over a period of six months. During this phase, 42 groups of trainees (40 Rohingya groups and 2 host community groups) received training.

#### *Delivery of training*

- Training for Rohingya youth was conducted in two camps in the pilot phase and four camps in the roll-out phase. In both the pilot and roll-out phases, the CIC offices were used as training venues. CICs attended the inauguration of each of the groups in their respective camps. In each camp, male and female groups received training separately. The Council's training team organized and conducted training in the camp.
- In the host community, students of UCEP's vocational training program were selected for soft skills training. The Council provided training at UCEP's training center in Cox's Bazar. Similar to Rohingya training, host community youth received training in gender-segregated groups.

The number of trainees in the host community decreased in the roll-out phase. In the host community, UCEP started to deliver soft skills training sessions to vocational students in March 2023. Due to a shortage of participants, no further training was held after March 2023. UCEP could not continue soft skills training as the number of students they enrolled for new vocational courses was inadequate.

## B. Monitoring

The Population Council developed and utilized three monitoring checklists to conduct quick knowledge and perception tests among trainees. The methods used for monitoring the training program in the pilot phase were utilized in the roll-out phase. The same instruments were used.

- **Pre-post knowledge test.** A pre-post test was conducted to measure changes in the knowledge level of training participants. All trainees were interviewed before and immediately after the training. Separate checklists for life skills and financial literacy modules were used. Participants were presented a checklist with statements and asked to rate them as right-wrong or as adequate-inadequate.
- **Trainee perception.** A post-training perception checklist was used to understand trainees' reaction/feedback on the usefulness of the training course. Trainees were presented with a checklist of statements on the objective and relevance of the training and asked whether they agreed with those statements or not.
- **Training monitoring.** Program managers from the Council and RTMI observed training sessions to assess the capacity of trainers and the availability of training resources.

## C. Post-training assessment

In the roll-out phase, a quick post-training assessment was conducted to understand the immediate outcome of the training. The program employed qualitative methods where data were collected through in-depth interviews with training participants in the Rohingya camp and host community, and key informant interviews were conducted with program managers working for the camps and host community.

- **In-depth interviews with trainees.** After the completion of the training program, in-depth interviews were conducted with 20 purposively selected participants who received soft skills training in order to get their feedback on the training program, their perceived benefits of the training, opportunities and challenges to utilize training, and access to technical training and employment opportunities.
- **Key informant interviews with program managers.** Key informant interviews were conducted with 10 program managers – 3 government officials for camp administration and 7 UN and nongovernmental organization (NGO) program managers – to get their insights/ideas for the structured scale-up of the training intervention or potential next steps.

## VI. PROGRAM OUTCOME

### A. Trainee profile

#### Demographics

The age and marital status of Rohingya and host community trainees are presented in Table 1. The distribution of Rohingya trainees varies substantially by age and sex. In the Rohingya camp, female participation was largely concentrated among older groups while higher participation of younger males was observed. Approximately two-thirds of male trainees were aged 15–19 years, which was much lower at 16 percent among female trainees. On the other hand, the largest share of female trainees belonged to 25–29-year-olds. Forty-six percent of female trainees were aged 25–29, which was threefold that of 25–29-year-old males.

In the host community, male participation was highly concentrated in younger age groups, while distribution of female trainees was inconsistent across age groups. The 20–24-year-olds constituted the largest proportion among female trainees (59%). Overall, one-third of host community trainees were aged 15–19 years with a notable gender gap (male 40%, female 27%). The mean age of Rohingya and host community youth was 22 years. Among Rohingya trainees, females were older than males by four years while the mean age is exactly the same between male and female trainees in the host community.

**Table 1.** Age and marital status of Rohingya and host community trainees

Demographic characteristics	Rohingya			Host community		
	Male	Female	Total	Male	Female	Total
<b>Age</b>						
15*–19	63.3	16.4	39.5	40.0	27.3	33.3
20–24	21.2	37.3	29.4	40.0	59.1	50.0
25–29*	15.5	46.3	31.1	20.0	13.6	16.7
Total	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0
<b>Mean age (years)</b>	19.9	23.9	22.0	21.9	21.9	21.9
<b>N</b>	<b>523</b>	<b>539</b>	<b>1062</b>	<b>20</b>	<b>22</b>	<b>42</b>
<b>Marital status</b>						
Currently married	30.8	81.2	56.3	20.0	31.8	26.2
Never married/widowed/ divorced/separated	69.2	18.8	43.7	80.0	68.2	73.8
Total	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0
<b>N</b>	<b>523</b>	<b>539</b>	<b>1062</b>	<b>20</b>	<b>22</b>	<b>42</b>

\*Includes 4 trainees aged 14 years, 38 trainees aged 30-34 years.

A stark contrast is observed in marital status between Rohingya and host community trainees, and between males and females within the cluster. Overall, the proportion of Rohingya trainees currently married is more than twofold that of host community trainees (56% vs. 26%); it is the marriage rate among Rohingya females that created the difference. Eighty-one percent of Rohingya females are currently married, which is much lower at 32 percent among host community females. Likewise, the marital status among males is relatively higher among Rohingya trainees than host community trainees (31% vs 20%). In the host community, the proportion of young females who are currently married is higher than their male counterparts (32% vs. 20%). More than two-thirds of female trainees in the host community were not currently married, indicating their higher aspirations to be economically active in a conservative society like Cox’s Bazar.

## Education and occupation

Table 2 presents differentials in the educational attainment and occupational status of Rohingya and host community trainees. Overall, 42 percent of Rohingya trainees reported never attending school. Approximately two-thirds of female trainees reported having no education, which is more than three times that of males. On the other hand, all host community trainees have been to school and all males completed study beyond secondary education, while 86 percent of females so reported.

Of the Rohingya trainees who ever attended school in Myanmar, half were educated below primary level. Three-quarters of female trainees who ever attended school could not study beyond primary level and the primary incompleteness rate was 39 percent among male trainees in the camp. The level of education was substantially higher among male trainees than female trainees. Sixty-one percent of male respondents had completed primary, continued secondary, or completed secondary education compared with 27 percent of females. None of the females were educated beyond the secondary level, while it was only 3 percent among males.

Among Rohingya trainees, only 3 percent were economically active at the time of training, with a notable gender gap. The rate of employment was almost nil among Rohingya female trainees while 6 percent of male trainees reported involvement in any economic activities. Fourteen percent of male trainees were students, while none of the females so reported. On the other hand, none of the host community trainees were employed at the time of training because they joined UCEP's vocational training program, in which soft skills training was provided, to prepare themselves for employment.

**Table 2.** Education and occupation of Rohingya and host community trainees

Social characteristics	Rohingya			Host community		
	Male	Female	Total	Male	Female	Total
<b>Education</b>						
Never attended school	20.0	63.8	42.2	0.0	0.0	0.0
Ever attended school	80.0	36.2	57.8	100.0	100.0	100.0
Total	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0
<b>N</b>	<b>523</b>	<b>539</b>	<b>1062</b>	<b>20</b>	<b>22</b>	<b>42</b>
<b>Level of education</b>						
Primary Incomplete	38.7	72.7	49.4	0.0	0.0	0.0
Primary Complete	13.6	11.8	13.1	0.0	0.0	0.0
Secondary Incomplete	44.4	15.5	35.2	0.0	13.6	7.1
Secondary Complete or Higher	3.3	0.0	2.3	100.0	86.4	92.9
Total	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0
<b>N</b>	<b>419</b>	<b>194</b>	<b>613</b>	<b>20</b>	<b>22</b>	<b>42</b>
<b>Occupation</b>						
Unemployed	79.8	99.6	89.9	100.0	100.0	100.0
Employed	6.3	0.4	3.2	-	-	-
Volunteer	0.4	0.0	0.2	-	-	-
Student	13.5	0.0	6.7	-	-	-
Total	100.0	100.0	100.0	-	-	-
<b>N</b>	<b>523</b>	<b>539</b>	<b>1062</b>	<b>20</b>	<b>22</b>	<b>42</b>

## B. Pre-post test

The Population Council developed and utilized checklists to conduct a knowledge test among the trainees. All participants took the test prior to the training (pre-test) and immediately after the training (post-test) to figure out how much they comprehended. The purpose of the test was to assess trainees' immediate retention of knowledge and ideas. Separate checklists for life skills and financial literacy training were used.

### ***Knowledge of gender and reproductive health***

Regarding life skills training, a pre-post comparison indicated a substantial improvement in knowledge on gender, maternal health, and reproductive health among Rohingya trainees. Before the training, awareness of the seven knowledge statements mentioned in Table 3 was low, as less than one-fifth of Rohingya trainees regardless of gender had adequate knowledge of gender, maternal health, and reproductive health. After the training, 77–99 percent of Rohingya trainees became aware of those issues, and changes were more pronounced among females than males. After the training, almost all the female Rohingyas became aware of four gender and reproductive health issues: legal issues on early marriage among girls, nutrition during menstruation, risks of early childbearing for girls, and HIV transmission routes. Before training, only 15 percent of female trainees were aware of skilled attendance at birth (safe motherhood) and risks of unprotected sex, which rose above 70 percent after the training. Despite a fivefold increase in awareness on safe motherhood and risks of unprotected sex, one-quarter of female trainees did not have correct knowledge on those two issues.

Like female Rohingyas, male Rohingyas demonstrated greater improvements in awareness of gender and maternal health, accounting for 86–100 percent of responses. Improvements in awareness of sexual health were a little lower. Before training, male awareness on two sexual health issues (HIV transmission routes and risks of unprotected sex) was extremely low at 10–12 percent; this jumped to 77–80 percent after the training.

On the other hand, the host community trainees, particularly males, exhibited even greater improvements in awareness of gender, maternal health, and reproductive health. In the host community, pre-training awareness was relatively higher among female trainees than their male counterparts. After training, all female trainees in the host community became aware of nutrition during menstruation, safe motherhood, risks of early childbearing among girls, and risks of unprotected sex, and 91 percent became aware of legal issues related to child marriage. A more than fivefold increase was observed in awareness of HIV transmission routes among females, yet 23 percent revealed ignorance on that issue. On the other hand, males exceeded females in terms of awareness level, and all the male trainees demonstrated awareness on all seven knowledge statements.

**Table 3.** Knowledge of gender, maternal health, and reproductive health among Rohingya and host community trainees

Knowledge indicator	Rohingya						Host community					
	Male		Female		Total		Male		Female		Total	
	Pre	Post	Pre	Post	Pre	Post	Pre	Post	Pre	Post	Pre	Post
<b>Percent aware that:</b>												
Marriage before age 18 for girls is a punishable offense for family members	13.8	99.8	16.7	99.1	15.3	99.4	20.0	100.0	27.3	90.9	23.8	95.2
Girls need to eat more nutritious food during menstruation	11.1	92.2	11.3	99.1	11.2	95.7	5.0	100.0	68.2	100.0	38.1	100.0
Pregnancy at an early age brings health risks for pregnant mother and child	9.6	92.2	16.3	99.6	13.0	96.0	35.0	100.0	50.0	100.0	42.9	100.0
Mothers are at risk of death if they take assistance from unskilled persons during childbirth	10.7	86.4	15.2	72.5	13.0	79.4	10.0	100.0	50.0	100.0	31.0	100.0
A man or woman who has unprotected sex with more than one person is at risk for sexual diseases	9.6	79.7	13.5	74.4	11.6	77.0	25.0	100.0	36.4	100.0	31.0	100.0
HIV does not spread through coughing, sneezing, and mosquito bites	11.5	76.5	9.6	98.7	10.5	87.8	30.0	100.0	13.6	77.3	21.4	88.1
Taking and selling drugs is an illegal, unlawful activity	10.7	98.3	8.3	98.7	9.5	98.5	15.0	100.0	50.0	95.5	33.3	97.6
<b>N</b>	523	523	539	539	1062	1062	20	20	22	22	42	42

### **Attitude towards gender and mental health**

Table 4 indicates substantial improvements in attitude towards gender equality among both Rohingya and host community trainees. Responses to four statements – gender role of males and females in any society can be changed, men should spend time and energy on household work, it is not true that gender equality is a condition where women enjoy more rights/opportunities than men, and violence against women is a punishable offense – were used to measure attitudes on gender equality. Before the training, Rohingya trainees had a less supportive attitude towards gender equality than host community trainees. Among Rohingya youth, pre-training attitudes towards gender equality were low and inconsistent across males and females (male 3–38%, female 9–18%). Overwhelmingly, 99–100 percent of Rohingya trainees developed positive attitudes towards gender equality by attending the training, with similar knowledge levels across males and females. Similarly, as a result of the training, all host community male trainees fully agreed with four



gender-equality indicators, and female trainees reported nearly identical responses on three of the four indicators.

**Table 4.** Attitude towards gender and mental health among Rohingya and host community trainees

Attitude indicator	Rohingya						Host community					
	Male		Female		Total		Male		Female		Total	
	Pre	Post	Pre	Post	Pre	Post	Pre	Post	Pre	Post	Pre	post
<b>Percent agreeing that:</b>												
Gender role of males and females in any society can be changed	5.2	99.2	18.0	99.6	11.7	99.4	20.0	100.0	27.3	81.8	23.8	90.5
Men should spend time and energy on household work	3.4	100.0	9.8	100.0	6.7	100.0	15.0	100.0	40.9	95.5	28.6	97.6
It is not true that gender equality is a condition where women enjoy more rights/opportunities than men	3.6	97.9	9.1	99.3	6.4	98.6	25.0	100.0	22.7	100.0	23.8	100.0
Violence against women is a punishable offense	37.5	98.5	9.3	99.4	23.2	99.0	25.0	100.0	50.0	100.0	38.1	100.0
Taking dowry as gift from bride side to groom is not a good practice	23.1	97.1	13.5	99.3	18.3	98.2	15.0	100.0	63.6	100.0	40.5	100.0
Unemployed youth are at higher risk of drug use than employed youth	1.7	75.1	49.2	98.0	25.8	86.7	25.0	100.0	36.4	95.0	31.0	97.6
Mental stress can be handled with positive thinking and self-control	51.8	60.6	26.5	73.8	39.0	67.3	70.0	100.0	54.5	95.5	61.9	97.6
It is not true that one should consider only the positive aspects of a situation when making decisions	11.3	89.5	7.6	87.8	9.4	88.6	25.0	95.0	59.1	100.0	42.9	97.6
<b>N</b>	523	523	539	539	1062	1062	20	20	22	22	42	42

On mental health issues, the perception of Rohingya trainees irrespective of gender improved remarkably, yet 33 percent did not agree that mental stress can be handled with positive thinking and self-control and 11 percent did not concur that one should consider both positive and negative aspects of a situation when making decisions. In the host community, all male trainees agreed that mental stress can be handled with positive thinking and self-control (male 100%, female 96%), while a reverse response rate by gender was reported for the statement that one should consider both positive and negative aspects of a situation when making decisions (male 95%, female 100%).

### ***Knowledge of financial management***

As shown in Table 5, the financial literacy training resulted in substantial improvements in awareness of personal financial management among both Rohingya and host community youth. Pre-training awareness of personal financial management was extremely low among Rohingya trainees, with a small male-female difference. Before the training, male Rohingyas were less skilled in savings and loan management than their female counterparts (male 8–12%, female 11–15%). After the training, 96 percent of Rohingya trainees or more were skilled in savings and loan management, with a nearly similar response rate between men and women. In the host community, savings and loan management skills were known to 12–45 percent of trainees before the training, with notable gender differences. As expected, the training helped all host community males to gain savings and loan management skills; all female trainees exhibited awareness of loan management skills, and 77–100 percent exhibited savings skills.

Responses to two financial planning questions – “One should develop/have a financial plan to start any income-generating activity” and “Considering local demand is necessary to select an income-generating activity” – indicated extremely limited pre-training awareness among Rohingya trainees, with a small gender difference in responses (male 8–16%, female 4–11%). This awareness was relatively higher among host community trainees with a marginal gender difference (male 25–35%, female 36%). The training was found to contribute to greater improvements among men than women. In the host community, all male training participants became fully aware of those financial planning ideas while 96 percent of female trainees or more so reported. Among Rohingya trainees, 93–94 percent of men reported such awareness, while corresponding female responses were 96 percent and 69 percent.

**Table 5.** Awareness of and attitudes toward financial management among Rohingya and host community trainees

Indicator	Rohingya						Host community					
	Male		Female		Total		Male		Female		Total	
	Pre	Post	Pre	Post	Pre	post	Pre	Post	Pre	Post	Pre	Post
<b>Percent agreeing that:</b>												
<b>Personal financial management</b>												
Saving is possible for people of low-income	10.9	98.9	14.7	99.7	12.8	99.3	5.0	100.0	18.2	77.3	11.9	88.1
A box at home is not the safest place for keeping extra money or saving	8.0	99.8	11.7	99.1	9.9	99.4	15.0	100.0	31.8	100.0	23.8	100.0
Loans are not the only source of money for starting a business	12.1	96.6	10.9	99.3	11.5	97.9	45.0	100.0	27.3	100.0	35.7	100.0
One cannot avoid paying an installment of his/her loan when they want	11.3	94.3	14.8	97.4	13.1	95.9	50.0	100.0	40.9	100.0	45.2	100.0
It is not true that only educated and rich people can take services from a bank	10.9	85.9	11.9	93.7	11.4	89.8	25.0	100.0	63.6	100.0	45.2	100.0
<b>Financial planning</b>												
It is not true that people with low incomes do not need a budget	14.2	96.4	7.2	98.1	10.6	97.3	20.0	100.0	40.9	63.6	31.0	81.0
It is not true that planning to buy a house is a short-term goal	11.3	73.6	10.4	48.8	10.8	61.0	10.0	100.0	36.4	90.9	23.8	95.2
One should develop/have a financial plan to start any income-generating activity	16.3	94.3	10.8	96.3	13.5	95.3	35.0	100.0	36.4	100.0	35.7	100.0
Considering local demand is necessary to select an income-generating activity	8.0	93.1	3.9	68.7	5.9	80.7	25.0	100.0	36.4	95.5	31.0	97.6
<b>N</b>	523	523	539	539	1062	1062	20	20	22	22	42	42

### **Trainee perception**

A monitoring checklist was utilized immediately after the training to assess trainees' perceptions of the usefulness of the training course. All participants reported gaining new knowledge and ideas from this training program that would help them in their personal life. The training was assumed to build their social life management skills, as all participants consented that the training would be helpful to identify and deal with social challenges in the community. Training also provided them with a platform to learn basic health management skills. All participants reported on the acquisition of knowledge and ideas on personal financial management through this training. Overall, the post-training perception was strongest among host community females.

The role of the training in broadening a network with the community and peers was acknowledged by almost all the participants (Rohingya 100%, host community 95–100%). Training was considered relevant in regard to their interests and needs by more than 95 percent of participants irrespective of location. All expressed their intention to use the knowledge and skills gained from training in the future.

**Table 6.** Training purpose and relevance perceived by Rohingya and host community trainees

Perception indicator	Rohingya				Host community			
	Male		Female		Male		Female	
<b>Percent agreeing that:</b>	Very much	To some extent	Very much	To some extent	Very much	To some extent	Very much	To some extent
Gained new knowledge and ideas from this training program that would help in my <b>personal life</b>	99.8	0.2	100.0	0.0	95.0	5.0	100.0	0.0
Training would be helpful in <b>identifying and dealing with various social challenges</b> in my community (social life management skills)	99.2	0.8	99.8	0.2	95.0	5.0	100.0	0.0
Training helped me gain basic skills for maintaining <b>physical and mental health</b> properly (basic health management skills)	99.4	0.4	97.8	2.2	95.0	5.0	100.0	0.0
Training would be helpful in maintaining my <b>personal financial issues</b> (financial skills)	99.2	0.6	99.1	0.9	90.0	10.0	100.0	0.0
<b>Broadened</b> network/contacts with my community/peers through this training	99.8	0.2	100.0	0.0	80.0	15.0	100.0	0.0
Found the training <b>relevant</b> to my interests and needs	98.5	0.4	95.0	1.7	85.0	10.0	100.0	0.0
Use the knowledge and skills gained from training in the <b>future</b>	96.8	3.1	93.5	6.5	95.0	5.0	100.0	0.0
<b>N</b>	523		539		20		22	

## C. Trainee's views

To understand the trainee's feedback on the Population Council's soft skills training program, we conducted in-depth interviews with 20 Rohingya and host community trainees. In the Rohingya camp, 8 male and 8 female trainees were interviewed, and 5 were employed (male 4, female 1). In the host community, 2 male and 2 female trainees were interviewed and of them only one male trainee was employed. The purpose of the interviews was to understand the importance and relevance of the training to their lives, needs, and aspirations on economic opportunities. The following description highlights the views of Rohingya and host community trainees about the soft skills training they received.

### **Perspectives from Rohingya trainees**

#### **Relevance and benefits of life skills training**

All participants indicated that the soft skills training they received was aligned to their interests and needs and that the training shaped their life skills knowledge. Most Rohingya participants reported increased awareness and improved confidence and communication skills as a result of the life skills training. As information deprivation is more pronounced among Rohingya women, because Rohingya community norms restrict girls' mobility, these trainings greatly benefit women, as noted by several participants.

*"I think life skills training is very relevant and holds utmost importance for our community, because the majority of the Rohingya are not educated and so they do not adapt well to new life situations and how to communicate well. As a result, we get easily attracted to bad things such as drugs."*

– Rohingya male, age 23, married, employed

*"We learned about violence and its forms, we learned about money management, we learned how to communicate with people in better ways and many other things.... We create awareness and encourage community members to learn skills and do some useful work to earn. I encourage women that with training of handicraft and embroidery they can earn."* – Rohingya female, age 18, unmarried, employed

From the life skills training, major takeaways mentioned by Rohingya participants were awareness about child marriage, dowry, respectful behavior towards women, family planning, personal hygiene, and health practices. In addition, the trainees mentioned a significant impact on self-awareness in many dimensions of their lives, increased confidence and adaptability to deal with unprecedented situations, and increased awareness of their rights and responsibilities.

- **Created awareness about malpractices such as child marriage, dowry, domestic and gender-based violence, and substance abuse, and promoted positive behavior and rights.**

*"We learned many things from this training. We learned how to communicate with people confidently, how to save money, and how to respect others. We learned about taking care of health, such as which food is healthy and hygienic and which is not, which food contains iron, etc. We also learned about child marriage and its adverse impact on families....This training also made us aware of our rights. This training is equally important for men and women. However, women will greatly benefit from it because they do not go outside."* – Rohingya male, age 23, married, employed

*"The life skills training contributed to my life remarkably because the living conditions in the camps were not good. The training motivated me to avoid drugs, smoking, and other bad behaviors. I can use life skills training in my work and life, which will help me avoid bad things. I benefited from the life skills training; it helped me tackle difficult situations. It also creates awareness about family planning."* – Rohingya male, age 20, unmarried, employed

### Relevance and benefits of financial literacy training

Rohingya trainees mentioned that the financial literacy training was particularly useful because they were able to translate what they learned into day-to-day practice. They reported that it improved their money and loan management skills, and encouraged them to save, spend thoughtfully, and seek earning opportunities.

- **Better money management practice, inspired saving, and reduced loan-seeking attitude.** Rohingya trainees said that the training benefited them as they learned the importance of having savings and getting familiar with balancing their earnings and savings. They identified the differences in that they were used to spending all their earnings without much planning, which had now changed. Women particularly shared that financial literacy training was something new and inspiring for them. The trainees also mentioned that their loan-seeking practices were reduced.

*“Financial literacy training matched my needs. Earlier, many people didn’t know how to spend their earnings. But after getting the training, we are now well informed about that.... We women were previously unclear about financial issues. The training makes us understand these issues well.”*  
– Rohingya female, age 24, married, unemployed

*“The financial literacy training was highly relevant to my interest. I particularly enjoyed the session in which they talked about saving money. We attended the training and started to have savings for the betterment of our future. Trainers suggested that if the husband and wife both started to earn, it would be easier to have savings. In such cases, it won’t be required to take loans from others.”* – Rohingya female, age 27, married, unemployed

*“At the beginning, the training seemed not as helpful. But when I joined a job, I realized that I learned how to spend my earnings and savings from the training. Now, I can utilize those skills. Earlier, we used to spend without much thinking, but now we think a lot before spending any money. This training helps us greatly.”* – Rohingya male, age 19, unmarried, employed

- **Increased motivation and enhanced communication skills to seek employment.** Participants talked highly about being inspired by the training to create a better future, and shared that they were more prepared to search for employment options. After receiving training, they felt confident about communicating with people and searching for opportunities. They also reported being better prepared to communicate with high officials like CICs, NGO officials, and concerned authorities, when seeking job opportunities.

*“Earlier I didn’t know I can learn skills and earn my living, how to communicate with people that I want work ... whom to go to and how to start the process. Nobody told me. After the training, I thought I could also do something and if I learn skills, I can have a job.... One month after this training, I got my job. My job is to visit the field and assist in teaching kids.”* – Rohingya female, age 18, unmarried, employed

- **Training was considered as an added skill and helped in obtaining jobs.** Some participants mentioned the training experience helped them to secure a job. They wrote about it in their curriculum vitae (CV), which added value to their experience and recruiters preferred that.

*“The soft skills training was helpful to get a job. I mentioned this training in my CV and got a job one month after completing the training. People who didn’t receive any training couldn’t manage a job yet.”* – Rohingya male, age 23, married, employed

### Quality of soft skills training

When asked about the quality of the training and what appealed to them, participants highlighted three things: (i) pictorial presentation and multiple ways of presenting the idea, (ii) trainers’ friendly behavior, and (iii) engagement over a long period.

- **Visuals and interactive sessions were appealing.** Rohingya participants reported that they enjoyed the sessions because lessons were understandable. They highlighted trainers’ patience and the usage of

multiple resources, which appealed to them. They mentioned that the selection of topics was relevant to their interest, and the trainers were amicable when conducting sessions.

*“The quality of soft skills training was good. The training continued for a longer period, and the behavior and teaching style of the trainers of the Population Council were good. They explained the issues multiple times if we didn’t understand anything. Alongside this, the usage of banners, posters, and pictures was useful for effective understanding.”* – Rohingya female, age 27, married, unemployed

- **Trainers’ attitudes and way of communicating matters.** Rohingya participants were highly pleased with the trainers’ capacity and skills. They mentioned that the information provided by the trainers was fully understandable, as trainers explained everything to the level of their understanding and provided clear answers to their questions with examples.

*“Everything was all right. They explained everything clearly, and that’s why we understood everything. And when we didn’t understand something, the trainers showed us pictures, which made things clear to us.... We understood everything and the training was very useful for us.”*– Rohingya male, age 19, unmarried, employed

- **Longer engagement created comprehensive understanding of topics.** The participants also highlighted the importance of longer engagement and appreciated its comparative benefits over shorter training.

*“The trainings that other organizations provided in the camp were of much shorter duration; only one to two hours long, maximum of a few days. But this training (Population Council) continued for a long time at a stretch, which helped us to take up the learning more comprehensively. As they provided long-term training, it was easy for us to remember. Other training was very short, and we can’t remember those.”* – Rohingya female, age 24, married, unemployed

### **Access to technical training opportunities in the camp**

In-depth interviews with participants revealed limited opportunities for technical training in the Rohingya camp. Rohingyas receive skills training mostly from UN- and NGO-supported programs. The participants mentioned that a few Rohingyas have skills like computer operation, gas stove repair, or other mechanical work, but market competition prevents them from sharing those skills with other individuals in the camp.

*“There are no such opportunities to learn technical skills inside the camp. No NGOs provide technical training in the camp. Rohingyas who possess these skills don’t teach others because they earn through those skills. Here, regularly, people need solar panel fixing; people from the host community come and take a lot of money to fix this. If we could have learned this skill, we would have done it by ourselves and could earn money in the camp.”* – Rohingya male, age 19, unmarried, employed

There is less variety in trainings for women as opposed to men. Females mostly received training in home-based work such as sewing, tailoring, prayer-cap making, and handicrafts (bamboo-made fans, bowls, and baskets), whereas training on agricultural skills, masonry, road construction, mobile phone repair, computer operation, and bamboo work (stool/bench and fence making) were available for men. Many reported livelihood training opportunities decreased in recent times compared to earlier years.

### **Economic participation in the camp**

In the camp, the Rohingya people mainly survive on humanitarian assistance and rations received, yet most turn to different income sources now and then to meet the daily needs of their households. In the interviews with the participants, daily labor was reported as the key economic involvement. Small business activity, NGO work inside the camp, and teaching/tutoring services were also mentioned as other major economic activities.

*“I do not work anything mentionable. I do work as a volunteer (at an NGO)... I go out at 10 am for a camp visit and return by 2 pm after submitting my report for that day. Nobody else in my household*

*works. With ration and my income, we are passing our days somehow.” – Rohingya male, age 23, married, employed*

*“I conduct field visits and take classes for kids.... I spend some money from there, some I save. We also get rations from the government; we have a small vegetable shop from which we have some earnings. My father does not work regularly. Sometimes he works at the International Organization for Migration (IOM) and gets some infrequent money from there and my job.” – Rohingya female, age 18, unmarried, employed*

Rohingyas are not allowed to work outside their camp, nor do they have much training to learn new skills. They rely primarily on the skills they acquired in Myanmar. They acquired skills like agriculture, shopkeeping, business, animal rearing, sewing, and fish-net making from their ancestors in Myanmar. Moreover, many training participants reported that they were younger and studying in Myanmar and did not have the opportunity to acquire any technical skills. The trainees identified different barriers, e.g., lack of land, capital, resources, and instruments to continue agricultural work, cattle rearing, and fish-net making in the camp.

*“Here (in the camp) we do not have land to cultivate, no cattle, that is why we do not have any work or earnings. In Myanmar we had those, so we could do any work we wanted; here we cannot. We could move from one place to other in Myanmar; here we can’t. If we could move places, we could do work here, could do business.” – Rohingya male, age 19, unmarried, unemployed*

### **Future aspirations**

Rohingya trainees expressed their interest in having long-term income-generating training to get involved with economic activities in Bangladesh. Training on computer operation, solar work, electrical and mechanical skills, gas stove repair, and mobile repair and servicing were the most widely mentioned skills of interest among male Rohingyas. Language training (English) was also mentioned by many. Computer operation training was in high demand and technical skills training was viewed to be the future.

*“We could earn from online if we get access to computer training. We, the students, are very interested in learning about computer operation and attending computer courses. But the network facility is very poor in the camps, and if free network facilities were provided, we could learn computer operation.” – Rohingya male, age 18, unmarried, unemployed*

*“Technical training should be provided to the children so that they can survive after returning to Myanmar. Agricultural and house construction skills would be helpful to earn their livelihood. Technical training, such as repairing solar and electrical work, needs to be prioritized.” – Rohingya male, age 19, unmarried, unemployed*

Gender stereotypes were found in future aspirations for training. Aspirations for females mostly revolved around skills in tailoring, sewing, embroidery, and handicrafts, which they can do from home. Restriction of mobility and cultural norms for females were noted in their responses. However, a few participants mentioned other skills and aspirations beyond home-bound activities for women that include computer operation and medical assistance training for Rohingya women. A slow shift in cultural norms and women’s participation in various kinds of work were also mentioned by a few participants.

*“For women, they can do sewing, which can be done from home. Many know handicrafts with bamboo, they can be trained.... Also, women are now doing work as volunteers in NGOs. Women who are educated are now slowly getting opportunities for work.” – Rohingya female, age 23, married, unemployed*

*“It would be better if we could get any training to deal with a sudden health emergency. It takes time to go to a hospital, and the doctors may not be available. In such cases, the situation may get worse... say in the case of pregnancy-related care, one may suffer severe pain, and it sometimes takes time to reach a doctor. If we (women) can receive training on the primary services about pregnancy care, we could handle the emergency.” – Rohingya female, age 24, married, unemployed*



### **Perspectives from host community trainees**

Host community participants reported that soft skills training added significant benefits to their personal life and financial management skills. They mentioned several dimensions of the training that influenced their life skills and practices and livelihood skills and contributed positively to their regular lives. Most host community participants mentioned their improved communication skills and self-confidence. Training participants further mentioned that financial management skills were impactful in their daily lives.

### **Relevance and benefits of life skills training**

Host community training participants reported that the soft skills training was relevant to their needs and interests. In regard to life skills training, the major contribution mentioned by host community trainees was on increased awareness about child marriage and drug abuse, situation management capabilities, food, health and hygiene consciousness, and improved communication skills. Furthermore, life skills training was reported to improve their health-seeking behavior and make them aware of rights and responsibilities.

*"The training was effective for our life. Earlier, we didn't know much about life skills, but we learned many things from the training, and now we can explain it to others as well. It was also helpful for our health and well-being. We felt ashamed about our physical issues and tried to keep it secret.... I previously lacked the courage to communicate with others, but this training has brought many changes in my life."* – Host community female, age 21, married, unemployed

*"Life skills training brings major changes in our lives. It changes our lifestyle. Earlier, we didn't visit hospitals even for major diseases, but now we are used to consulting physicians even for minor issues. We learned these from the training."* – Host community female, age 21, married, unemployed

*"We learned the adverse effects of drug abuse and the importance of employment from this training. We realized that if we get training, our skills will be increased and we will get preference in getting jobs."* – Host community female, age 20, unmarried, unemployed

### **Relevance and benefits of financial literacy training**

Host community trainees reported that the financial literacy training changed their financial practices, improved their spending patterns, and habituated them to balance earnings and expenses. The financial literacy training made them aware of how to save, improved their loan management capabilities, and motivated them to seek employment opportunities.

*"This financial literacy training was relevant for me. I learned how to earn money from this training. I also learned how to have savings and the importance of savings in our lives. It also taught me how to take bank loans, which was relevant to my life.... Moreover, this training contributed to my professional life, and my knowledge has increased through the training, which I have been able to utilize in my work life."* – Host community male, age 22, married, employed

*"Of course, financial literacy training was effective. Earlier, we used to spend our money rapidly. Now, we take time. We consider the burdens of borrowing money. We learned from the training how to maintain savings, which makes our life easier."* – Host community female, age 21, married, unemployed

*"This training benefited us tremendously. It trained us in how to talk with people. We used to make rapid decisions, but now we take time before making any financial decision. We learned how to communicate with people."* – Host community female, age 21, married, unemployed

### **Quality of soft skills training**

Host community training participants reported that the quality of the soft skills training was satisfactory. They noted the efficiency of the trainers in delivering effective sessions. They appreciated the usage of pictorial items and the allocation of sufficient time for practical understanding.

*"Trainers of the Population Council used to explain everything clearly, and that's why we understood everything well. They used posters and boards to make us understand everything. If we didn't*

*understand anything, they explained that to us."* – Host community female, age 21, married, unemployed

### **Access to technical training opportunities in the host community**

Unlike in the Rohingya camps, technical training is provided by government institutes, e.g., the Department of Youth, the Department of Women Affairs, and private organizations, such as UCEP in the host community. Electrical wiring, mobile phone servicing, computer operation, mechanical work, poultry farming, mushroom culture, and driving are some of the common technical trainings available for host community men, and sewing, parlor work, and embroidery training are common trainings for women.

### **Economic participation in the host community**

Training participants noted several employment options available for men and women. Agricultural work, business, electrical work, driving, cattle rearing, mobile phone servicing, and hotel and restaurant work are available for men, while sewing, prayer-cap making, and embroidery-related work opportunities exist for women.

*"My primary income source is electrical work. One month after getting the soft skills training, I got involved with electrical work and have been continuing it for four months. I received electrical work-related training from UCEP and want to establish myself as a self-independent."* – Host community male, age 22, married, employed

Despite having greater technical training opportunities, the training participants identified that financial constraints, family issues, work scarcity, lack of networking and experience, and poor education negatively impact employment opportunities for host community men and women.

*"I don't have the capital to buy a sewing machine and start working. It is not possible to manage our family with my husband's earnings. That's why I am facing some issues.... Another reason is my husband and mother-in-law don't allow me to work outside. That is why I can't get involved with any job."* – Host community female, age 21, married, unemployed

### **Future aspirations**

Host community youth restated the necessity of long-term technical and income-generating training because the existing training programs are provided to a limited extent, and most of the men and women are not covered. Male trainees in the host community expressed further interest in electrical wiring, driving, agriculture, business, mobile phone servicing, hotel management, computer operation, and English language training. On the other hand, female trainees were keen to have training in sewing, embroidery, agriculture, business, parlor work, and prayer-cap making.

*"I previously received training, but it did not support me in generating income. Language training (English), computer training, and job-interview-related training could be more effective in this regard.... There are many training programs, but I am interested in computer and language learning that will help me earn."* – Host community female, age 21, married, unemployed

## D. Program stakeholder's insights

A number of organizations including UN agencies and international and national NGOs provide soft skills training in the Rohingya camp and host community. To seek opinions on the overall training implemented in the camp and host community and suggestions on the scope of replication/integration of soft skills training interventions in the Rohingya camp and host community, we conducted guided interviews with three government officials in charge of camps and seven program managers from UN agencies, international nongovernmental organizations (INGOs), NGOs, and private training institutes.

### Situation of soft skills training

Program managers articulated their opinions about life skills and financial literacy training programs in the Rohingya camp and host community. They underscored the necessity of such training for Rohingya youth, noting that because youth had been deprived of basic life skills in Myanmar this training could be instrumental for them after repatriation. Moreover, they identified an increase in demand for life skills training in both the Rohingya camp and host community. They noted that Rohingyas are becoming aware of the benefits of life skills training, as they perceive that the training helps ease social and religious stigma; therefore, they have become more interested in attending similar training programs. It was also found that the demand for financial training has increased because individuals can prepare themselves to earn money.

*"The demand for life skills training has increased among Rohingyas. When they first arrived in Bangladesh, they lacked confidence. But now we learned from them that they are interested in improving confidence and life skills through this training."* – Government official

*"NGOs are conducting awareness sessions, and that's why Rohingyas are overcoming their hesitations and superstitions. The more aware they are, the higher the demand would be. They are the direct beneficiaries of this training, and I think the demand will be increased in the future."* – Program manager, Private training institute

*"Earlier, these issues were unaddressed. Now, we are all working on it, and that's why people understand that these are necessary. In the early days of Rohingya influx, daily necessities were prioritized. But these are somewhat sorted, and now skills issues are getting prioritized. In short, the demand has increased ... the host community, those who suffered after Rohingya influx, also have some demand of it."* – Program manager, International NGO

### Coverage and quality of soft skills training

- **It is necessary to increase coverage in both the Rohingya camp and host community.** Program managers opined that training is well covered in the camps compared to the host community. In the host community, training is concentrated in Teknaf and Ukhiya subdistricts but less prioritized in other subdistricts of Cox's Bazar. Program managers recommended increasing the coverage of the training for both the Rohingya camp and host community. Additionally, the majority of program managers suggested increasing the duration of the existing training programs.

*"The coverage is extremely poor in the host community. The way this training is targeted and organized in the camps is not happening in the host community.... The training has not been conducted at the union, village, or ward level. From that perspective, I think that this training is more common in the camps, and the host communities are lagging behind."* – Program manager, Private training institute

- **Infrastructural and funding barriers stand in the way of increasing coverage.** Many of the organizations that provide soft skills training in the camp and host community do not have the capacity and resources to cover much of the population due to infrastructural and funding barriers. The primary infrastructural barriers in the camp include training space and electricity, while it is a funding issue for the host community.
- **Soft skills modules should be prepared based on the needs and demands of target groups.** Program managers found the training relevant and necessary for the lives of Rohingya and host community

youth. They reported the consistency of the training for Rohingyas and host communities and the effective use of modules by a few implementers like the Population Council. However, they raised concerns about the instances of copying training modules by many implementers in the camp and hence emphasized the need for background studies to develop training modules. The necessity of an interactive approach for the delivery of training sessions to facilitate effective understanding was also underscored.

*“The quality of soft skills training provided by the Population Council in the camp and the host community is good. Many copied other modules. Background study is needed to prepare a module. A module should be prepared based on the target group and considering the suitability of the topics for Rohingyas.”* – Government official

*“Most of the Rohingyas in the camp are uneducated. To provide them with such training, things should be explained in a clear and easy way. Things should be explained in their preferred way. It is a matter of concern whether the trainers are prepared or capable enough to train them.”*  
– Government official

- **Soft skills training programs need to be well organized and standardized.** In the camp, basic skills training is provided in accordance with the “skills development framework,” and implementers generally share their program activities in sector-coordination meetings. This framework is used to monitor the listed training activities and track standards (e.g., duration of training) to ensure the minimum quality of the training. Program managers reported that the majority of soft skills training programs are not adequately well organized, and the organizations do not follow standardized curriculum in the camp. Program managers reported that better quality training was being provided in the host community than in the Rohingya camp.
- **Family planning and social activism should be included in the training program.** Program managers noted the necessity of including additional topics, e.g., family planning, social communication, and social activism to support better training outcomes among Rohingyas.

*“Rohingyas should be aware and given family-planning-related training. Family planning should be prioritized. If they don’t understand family planning, they will not understand financial issues. They should also be aware of issues related to social communication and social activism. They should understand which act is a crime and which acts will be appreciated by people.”*  
– Government official

### **Situation of technical skills training**

Program managers reported that the Rohingya population generally acquired technical skills from their ancestors, and institution-based opportunities are limited for them. Although technical training is generally prohibited inside the camp, it is reported that some UN agencies and NGOs provide technical training to a limited extent. Program stakeholders illustrated the necessity of providing technical training in the camp.

*“There are not enough technical training opportunities in the camp, but available income-generating opportunities are useful for them. Technical training opportunities should be increased, and there should be secured funding, gap analysis, and assessment to identify the work scope and opportunities. Need-based analysis and higher-level advocacy are also required.”*  
– Program manager, International NGO

Technical training opportunities are reported to be fewer for the camp than for the host community because of policy restrictions, funding shortages, and capacity issues. In the camp, mostly basic skills training is provided abiding with policy restrictions. Under livelihood training, tailoring, prayer-cap making, handicrafts, bamboo work (baskets, chairs), baking, fisheries, and homestead vegetable gardening are provided while technical training is offered for electronic device repair, mobile servicing, gas stove use and maintenance, and solar installation and repair.

*“NGOs are trying to provide technical training in the camps, but in many cases they can’t continue that for a longer period. They have some funding-related issues. They are trying to provide bamboo work and solar-repairing-related training.”* – Government official

A few of the program managers noted that the area of training varied based on gender, as males are provided with market-based trainings whereas females are provided with home-based skills trainings. Among the Rohingya population, a greater number of women are likely to get training and participate in awareness sessions, whereas males are more likely to get and participate in skills-based training. Due to the low education level, the capacity of Rohingya trainees to learn was limited, particularly among females. In contrast, host community females can easily learn what is taught.

*“The host community people are advanced compared to the Rohingyas. A host community woman could easily learn and apply if she gets training. But in the case of Rohingyas, no matter whether they are men or women, it is difficult for them to receive that because they don’t have an education. In comparison, host community men and women are in a better position.”* – Program manager, Private training institute

### **Integration of soft skills training**

The majority of program managers reported the necessity and possibility of integration of soft skills training within existing UN and NGO programs as they implement similar programs in the camp. The program managers, however, mentioned an overlapping in soft skills training specifically in the camp. In their opinion, integration would require a coordinated effort of the concerned stakeholders. The process of integration depends on effective negotiation with donors and government agencies. Program managers highlighted the importance of greater coordination among the government administrators for the Rohingya population (RRRC and CICs) and development partners for a successful and effective integration process.

*“There should be coordination between CIC and focal persons of different sectors to avoid overlapping in the camps.... For the host community, coordination is needed among the Upazila Nirbahi Officer, the Upazila Chairman, the Union Chairman, and other organizations that intend to provide the same training.”* – Government official

*“I think your organization (Population Council) can integrate the soft skills training by negotiating with the donors and CIC. You are already working in the camps, and if you have funding you can negotiate with the CIC and other organizations. First, you must communicate with the donors about the possible opportunities. Another way is to negotiate with the CICs. You must make them understand that UNHCR, IOM, the World Food Program (WFP), and ActionAid are working on it, and you also have the funding and resources to work. You should highlight the gaps; that’s how you might be able to work on the gaps.”* – Program manager, NGO

### **Barriers to integrating soft skills training**

- ***Policy restrictions, deficiency in capacity, absence of monitoring, and inadequate coordination are the major barriers to soft skills training integration in the camp.*** Despite an overwhelmingly positive response about the possible integration process, program managers shared their concerns about merging the soft skills training with other larger programs. They indicated that integration is possible but to a limited extent in the camp given the organizations have indigenous policies, priorities, and implementation strategies. Largely, interviews with program managers revealed policy restrictions, deficiency in capacity, absence of data surveillance and monitoring, insufficient funding, and inadequate coordination as the major barriers to soft skills training integration in the camp.

*“I think policy is the biggest barrier there. In part it determines what happens and how every organization should function in the camp. Besides, I think coordination is a massive barrier, data is another barrier, but the biggest barrier among those is policy, certainly.... There is no policy restriction in the host community. For the host community, it is a matter of resources which can be a factor.”* – Program manager, UN agency

*“Integration might be possible but to a limited extent. As every organization has their own policy, criteria, and implementation strategies, it is difficult to integrate. It is not like it can’t be integrated. It is possible, but coordination is needed.” – Program manager, NGO*

- ***The diversity of implementers with different requirements and policies is a challenge for integration in the host community.*** It is possible to integrate soft skills training with private training centers in the host community in collaboration with the local government authority. Although the absence of policy restrictions was noted as a facilitating factor for smooth integration in the host community, the availability of funds/resources remains a key obstacle. Moreover, every organization, government or private, has its own policy and procedure, which is another challenge for integrating soft skills training into the existing vocational and technical training program. Program managers stated that integration is relatively easier in the camp as people are homogenous and their need for similar skills training has been accentuated in different studies.

*“It will be difficult to integrate into the host community. It will be easy for the camps because they are the same people and similar skills can be provided. But in the host community, everyone provides training differently. Besides, the donors are different for the training programs, and their requirements are prioritized while designing the training programs.... It can’t be integrated without a similar modality.” – Program manager, Private training institute*

#### **Prerequisites for integration of soft skills training**

- ***Stakeholder engagement is crucial for integrating life skills and financial literacy training.*** In the camp, UN agencies and NGOs along with CICs can play the most critical role in integrating these trainings with existing larger programs, as stated by program managers. Program managers suggested bringing those who are providing such training under a platform and working in coordination for successful integration.

For the host community, program managers identified the local government officials and private training providers as key stakeholders. They further mentioned that private training centers can coordinate with the government administration at the local level and NGOs to include soft skills training in existing programs.

- ***It is necessary to develop uniform guidelines and a model curriculum for a life skills and financial literacy program.*** In general, most program managers agreed that a uniform guideline would ensure better coordination among the implementing agencies and would help implementers and donors avoid overlapping. Program managers stated that it is the responsibility of the government agencies and development partners to develop uniform guidelines. The first key element needed to develop a uniform guideline is mutual understanding between the government, development partners, and the NGOs. Program managers recommended considering certain criteria to develop uniform guidelines: (i) duration of training, (ii) fixing target group, (iii) standardized module, and (iv) minimum number of sessions for the training.

*“I think a uniform guideline is needed for the training implementers and donors to avoid overlapping and implement uniform life skills and financial literacy training. Some things should be considered for a uniform guideline: Everyone should be brought under the same platform, and there should be a standardized module, a well-defined target group, and a minimum number of sessions.” – Program manager, NGO*

Program managers also recommended developing a standard curriculum for soft skills training programs through stakeholder consultation, and any implementers can adopt from that package as per the needs of their own program and target populations.

*“It has to be a formalized approach that needs to be done and designed in consultation with the other sector partners. It should be a complete package where anybody can go and take up the package and conduct it using all the tools. It should have all the resources that a facility would*

*need to conduct that inside the camp. For example, if you are pushing a life skills curriculum, it is necessary to provide training of trainers within the camp and build agency capacity, and then you can hold training throughout the year. It should be a complete package.... It should be that you have a baseline curriculum that functions in a certain way ... this package should be able to be updated every year based on the new changing needs.” – Program manager, UN agency*

### **Policies to impact opportunities for technical training**

The government’s policies do not allow the provision of technical training in the camp. There are limited opportunities for Rohingyas to receive some basic training, which they need for survival provided that they are repatriated as soon as possible. Strict government policies exist to restrict technical training inside the camp, and program stakeholders echoed the same. As the primary focus of the Bangladesh government is the quick repatriation of Rohingyas to Myanmar, the government is not interested in allowing long-term training projects or activities for the Rohingya population; rather, the government allows the provision of basic minimum skills necessary for Rohingyas’ survival in the camp and after their repatriation.

*“The government is not interested in providing them with technical training. Whenever you provide them with technical training, you should award them with certificates. We don’t want that, and we don’t have such policies in planning. In the case of life skills training, certification is not required, and that’s why we selected this training.... However, they can be provided electrical, handicraft, sewing, bamboo work, embroidery, barber, and automobile repair training, which they could use after repatriation.” – Government official*

- ***There is a need for relaxing Government of Bangladesh (GOB) policies on livelihood opportunities in the camp.*** Program managers from NGOs and INGOs shared their concerns about the existing policy restrictions imposed in the camps. Nevertheless, they considered it necessary to offer technical training for Rohingyas and ease such restrictions. A program manager highlighted that the gradual decrease in food supply and lack of technical training make living difficult for Rohingyas in the camp, and their increased low-paid engagement also creates a chaotic situation in the host community. The program manager urged coordinated efforts and well-defined guidelines to facilitate opportunities for Rohingyas to receive technical training.

*“These issues should be discussed at RRRRC, sectoral, and high official meetings. They could decide whether these restrictions can be reduced. The food supply of Rohingyas is decreasing, and they are not getting any technical training. What should they do? They are working for a low wage in the host community, and their increased movement in the host communities is creating issues. RRRRC should have guidelines about it. What should be done to ease the restrictions needs to be discussed in coordination meetings where the Secretary and higher UN officials participate.”*  
– Program manager, International NGO

Regarding policy restrictions, a program manager shared his notion that the restrictions are gradually shrinking and Rohingyas are learning the Bangla language and other technical skills, which is facilitating their access to the job market. However, there is no government or private sector initiative to ease the restrictions. Program managers highlighted the need for proper advocacy to ease the restrictions for the Rohingya population.

*“The government has regulations that Rohingyas will not be allowed to participate in any such training which will affect the host community. Earlier, it was prohibited to train them in the Bangla language, sewing, and other skilled jobs. But now those regulations have been eased. They are now learning Bangla and other skills, which is creating job markets for them. However, the government or the private sector still has no initiatives to ease those restrictions completely.” – Program manager, NGO*

An INGO official working in the Rohingya context expressed his doubts about a quick repatriation and suggested that restrictions be eased to ensure their livelihood opportunities.

*“It would be the most impactful thing if the government lifted the livelihood restrictions. There exists a complete restriction right now.... We need to lift the restriction at least so that Rohingyas would be free to live as they wish. We all have the perception that the Rohingyas will not be repatriated soon. It would be better to lift restrictions on livelihood opportunities.”* – Program manager, International NGO

- **GOB regulation on reserving 25 percent of Rohingya budget for the host community.** In the host community, the government institutes (the Department of Youth and government polytechnic institutes) and private training centers provide vocational and technical training. In addition, UN agencies and NGOs provide training in the host community. Overall, training opportunities for host community youth have increased significantly after the Rohingya influx because of the government’s regulation of reserving 25 percent of Rohingya budget for the host community. Moreover, the number of NGOs working in Cox’s Bazar has increased and facilitated better training opportunities for the host communities to fulfill the increased demand for trained human resources for camp operations.



## VII. DISCUSSION

The Population Council in collaboration with RTMI and UCEP implemented a pilot program on soft skills training in two Rohingya camps and the host community in Cox's Bazar, Bangladesh in 2022. Rohingya and host community males and females between ages 15 and 29 years were the beneficiaries of this training program. The purpose of the training was to help Rohingya and host community youth in developing their life skills and financial management skills. In 2023, the training program was rolled out in four camps and the host community, with the objectives of understanding: (i) training participants' perspectives on the relevance and usefulness of soft skills training, and (ii) program managers' insights on potential scale-up of training. This section highlights the key observations from program monitoring and post-training assessment of the soft skills training program.

### A. Knowledge and perception test

In 2023, a total of 1,104 Rohingya and host community youth received training (Rohingya 1,062; host community 42). For a quick assessment of the training, we conducted a pre-post knowledge test and a post-training perception test among trainees.

#### Demographics

The mean age of Rohingya and host community youth was 22 years. Among Rohingya trainees, females were older than males by four years due to the greater participation of older females, while the mean age was exactly the same for male and female trainees in the host community. Overall, the proportion of Rohingya trainees who are currently married is more than double that of host community trainees (56% vs. 26%); the high marriage rate among Rohingya females created the difference. Among Rohingya female trainees, 81 percent are currently married, which is much higher than the 32 percent of host community female trainees.

#### Education

Large gaps exist in the educational status of Rohingya and host community trainees. Forty-two percent of Rohingya trainees reported never attending school, with a large gender gap (female 64%, male 20%). On the other hand, all host community trainees have been to school, and all male trainees completed study beyond secondary education, while 86 percent of female trainees did.

#### Knowledge of gender and reproductive health

Regarding life skills training, a pre-post comparison indicated a substantial improvement in knowledge on gender, maternal health, and reproductive health among Rohingya trainees. Before the training, awareness was low, as less than 20 percent of Rohingya trainees regardless of gender had knowledge of those issues. After the training, 77–99 percent of Rohingya trainees became aware of gender, maternal health, and reproductive health issues, and changes were more pronounced among females than males. Overall, the post-training awareness was relatively higher among host community trainees than Rohingya trainees. In the host community, males exceeded females in terms of awareness level, and all male trainees demonstrated awareness on gender, maternal health, and reproductive health after training.

#### Attitude towards gender equality

Life skills training contributed to substantial improvements in attitude towards gender equality among both Rohingya and host community trainees. Before the training, Rohingya trainees had a less supportive attitude towards gender equality than host community trainees. Among Rohingya youth, pre-training attitudes towards gender equality were low and inconsistent across males and females (male 3–38%, female 9–18%). After the training, almost all Rohingya trainees developed a positive attitude towards gender equality and the improvements were similar across males and females. Similarly, as a result of the training, all host community male trainees exhibited a supportive attitude towards gender equality, and improvements were nearly similar among female trainees.

### **Knowledge of financial management**

Financial literacy training resulted in considerable improvements in awareness of personal financial management among both Rohingya and host community trainees. The pre-training awareness on personal financial management was much lower among Rohingya trainees than host community trainees. For example, financial management skills on savings and loan management were known to less than one-sixth of Rohingyas before training, and over 96 percent as a result of training, with a nearly similar response rate between males and females. In the host community, the training helped all the male trainees to become fully aware of savings and loan management skills, and the post-training knowledge level among females was nearly similar to that of males.

## **B. Post-training assessment**

At the beneficiary level, in-depth interviews were conducted with 20 Rohingya and host community trainees to get their feedback on the Population Council's soft skills training program as well as the perceived benefits, opportunities, and challenges to utilizing the training and access to training and employment opportunities. At the program level, key informant interviews were conducted with 10 program managers to gain their insights/ideas for the structured scale-up of soft skills training intervention or potential next steps.

### ***Trainees' views***

#### **Relevance and benefits of soft skills training**

Training participants reported that the soft skills training shaped their life skills knowledge and improved their financial literacy. All training participants in the camp and host community considered the life skills training relevant to their interests and needs. In the camp, life skills training created awareness about malpractices such as child marriage, dowry, domestic and gender-based violence, and substance abuse. The training improved attitudes towards good practices such as gender equality, family planning, and personal hygiene and health practices; promoted positive behavior; and improved confidence and communication skills. As information deprivation is more pronounced among Rohingya women, because their community norms restrict girls' mobility, these trainings greatly benefit women.

Host community trainees also found life skills training useful to increase their awareness about child marriage, gender equality, and drug abuse; improve health-seeking behavior; increase awareness of rights and responsibilities; and improve self-confidence – thus contributing positively to their daily lives. The major benefits perceived by host community trainees were situation management capabilities; food, health and hygiene consciousness; communication skills; and adaptability.

Similarly, financial literacy training made the training participants learn about the importance of having savings and improved their loan-management capabilities. This training was particularly useful for Rohingya trainees as it encouraged them to be thoughtful about spending and seek earning opportunities, and reduced their loan-seeking practices. Moreover, this training was considered as an added skill and helped Rohingya trainees obtain jobs. Likewise, host community trainees reported that the financial literacy training changed their financial practices, improved their spending patterns, got them accustomed to balancing earnings and expenses, and motivated them to seek employment opportunities.

#### **Quality of soft skills training**

When asked about the quality of the training and what appealed to them, participants highlighted three things: (i) interactive sessions and multiple ways of presenting information and ideas, (ii) trainers' friendly behavior, and (iii) engagement over a long training. Overall, Rohingya participants reported that they enjoyed the sessions because lessons were understandable as trainers explained everything to the level of their understanding and provided clear answers to their questions with examples. Similarly, host community

trainees noted the efficiency of the trainers in effectively delivering sessions. They appreciated the usage of pictorial items and the allocation of sufficient time for practical understanding.

### **Access to technical training opportunities**

All Rohingya trainees reported a lack of technical training opportunities in the camp. However, they reported the availability of some skills training, e.g., masonry, road construction, mobile phone repair, small-scale business, computer operation, stool/bench making, and fence making for men, while sewing, embroidery, prayer-cap making, hand-made fan and basket making training were available for women. Unlike the Rohingya camps, technical training is provided in the host community by government institutes (e.g., the Department of Youth, the Department of Women Affairs, government polytechnic institute) and private organizations (e.g., UCEP). Host community trainees reported that electrical wiring, mobile phone servicing, computer operation, mechanical work, poultry farming, mushroom culture, and driving are some of the common technical trainings available for men, while sewing, parlor work, and embroidery training are available for women.

### **Access to employment opportunities**

Rohingya trainees do not have technical training that would help them learn new skills. They rely primarily on the skills acquired in Myanmar, which include agriculture, shopkeeping, business, animal rearing, sewing, and fish-net making. However, they identified different barriers, e.g., lack of land, capital, resources, and instruments to continue that work in Bangladesh. Host community training participants noted several employment options available for men and women. However, financial constraints, family issues, work scarcity, lack of networking and experience, and poor education negatively impact employment opportunities for host community men and women.

### **Future aspirations**

Rohingya trainees expressed interest in having income-generating training in Bangladesh. Training on computer operation, solar work, electrical and mechanical skills, gas stove repair, and mobile repair and servicing were most widely mentioned skills of interest among male trainees. Language training (English) was also mentioned. Aspiration for females mostly revolved around skills in tailoring, sewing, embroidery, and handicrafts, which they can do from home. Computer operation and medical assistance training are two other major skills of interest among women. Gender stereotypes exist, but a slow shift in cultural norm and the participation of women in various kinds of work outside the home were also noted. Host community trainees underlined the necessity of long-term technical and income-generating training because the existing training programs are provided to a limited extent, and most of the youth are not covered.

## ***Program stakeholders' insights***

### **Relevance of soft skills training**

Program managers found the training relevant and necessary for the lives of Rohingya and host community youth. They identified an increase in demand for life skills training in both the Rohingya camp and the host community. Rohingyas are becoming aware of the benefits of life skills training, as they perceived that the training helped them to ease social and religious stigma. Similarly, demand for financial training has increased as this can prepare youth to earn money. There is a need to increase the coverage of training for both Rohingya and host community youth. Program managers strongly perceived the necessity of training for Rohingya youth because they had been deprived of basic life skills in Myanmar, and this training could be instrumental for them after repatriation.

### **Quality of soft skills training**

Program managers reported that most of the life skills and financial literacy training programs in the camp are not adequately well organized, nor do these trainings have a standard curriculum. Program managers raised concerns about the training modules and methods and emphasized the need for background studies to develop the training package. It is important to note that the Population Council followed a systematic and

rigorous process to develop training modules and an interactive session plan (see Section IV), which can be used as a model for other organizations in the camp and host community.

### **Integration of soft skills training**

UN agencies, INGOs, and NGOs have been providing soft skills training both in the camp and host community. But many of these organizations do not have the capacity or resources to cover as much of the population due to infrastructural barriers, such as training space and electricity in the camp, while funding is the issue for the host community. Overlapping in soft skills training programs is another challenge, specifically in the camp. The majority of program managers reported the necessity and possibility of integrating soft skills training programs with existing UN and NGO programs as they implement similar programs in the camp. In their opinion, integration would require a coordinated effort among concerned stakeholders, and the process would depend on effective negotiation with government agencies and donors.

### **Barriers to integrating soft skills training**

Despite an overwhelmingly positive response about the possible integration process, program managers shared their concerns about merging the soft skills training with other larger programs. They indicated that integration is possible but to a limited extent in the camp. The interviews with program managers revealed that policy restrictions, organizational indigenous policies/priorities, deficiency in implementers' capacity, absence of data surveillance and monitoring, insufficient funding, and inadequate coordination among providers are the major barriers to soft skills training integration in the camp.

Similarly, the soft skills training can be integrated with the private training centers in collaboration with the local government authorities. There is no policy restriction in the host community, but the availability of funds/resources remains a key obstacle. Moreover, every organization – government or private – has their own policy and procedure, which might make it difficult to integrate soft skills training into the existing vocational and technical training program. Program managers further mentioned that integration is relatively easier in the camp as people are homogenous, and their needs for similar skills training have been documented in several studies.

### **Prerequisites for integration of soft skills training**

- **Engagement of stakeholders.** In the camp, UN agencies and NGOs along with CICs can play the most critical role in integrating these trainings with existing larger programs, as stated by program managers. Program managers also suggested bringing those who are providing such training under a platform and working in coordination for successful integration. For the host community, program managers identified the local government officials and private training providers as key stakeholders.
- **Development of a standard curriculum and uniform guidelines.** Program managers emphasized the necessity of having a standard curriculum and uniform guidelines for the training as a way to facilitate standardized implementation of training, ensure better coordination among the implementing agencies, and help the implementers and donors avoid overlapping. It is the responsibility of the government agencies and development partners to develop uniform guidelines. Program managers recommended considering certain criteria to develop guidelines: (i) duration of training, (ii) fixing target group, (iii) standardized module, and (iv) minimum number of sessions for the training.

Program managers observed that the modules for the host community can be revised, and that many other things can be included there as the area of scope is greater for the host community while it is not easily possible in the camp. Program managers noted the necessity of including additional topics, e.g., family planning and social activism, to support better training outcomes for the Rohingyas.

### **Policies to impact technical training for Rohingyas**

Although technical training is generally prohibited inside the camp, some UN agencies and NGOs provide technical training to a limited extent. Technical training opportunities are reported to be much fewer for the camp than for the host community, because of policy restrictions, funding shortages, and capacity issues. Technical training opportunities for local youth increased significantly after the Rohingya influx because of the government's regulation of reserving 25 percent of Rohingya budget for the host community. Moreover, the number of NGOs working in the host community in Cox's Bazar has increased.

We received strong opinions from program stakeholders on whether to provide technical training inside the camp. There is a heightened concern regarding gradual decrease in food supply, and a lack of technical training further makes living difficult in the camp. As there are uncertainties about quick repatriation of the Rohingya population, the need to ease restrictions to facilitate livelihood opportunities was strongly recommended by nongovernment program managers.

## **VIII. CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS**

Overall, the processes and findings of the Population Council's soft skills training intervention are encouraging. The guidance and support of the government administration (RRRC and CICs) was a key factor for the smooth and timely implementation of the training program. In general, the soft skills training was found to be instrumental in empowering both Rohingya and host community youth. All participants found the training relevant to their interests and needs and considered it a useful platform to learn personal, social, and financial management skills. There is an increasing demand for this training in both the Rohingya camp and the host community. Although several UN agencies, NGOs, and private organizations are actively working in the camps and host communities, the coverage of soft skills training programs is limited and uneven.

Largely, soft skills programs implemented by different agencies are not adequately well organized, including some overlapping particularly in the camp. Moreover, implementing organizations do not follow standardized curriculum in the camp. Policy restrictions, deficiency in capacity, absence of data surveillance and monitoring, insufficient funding, and inadequate coordination among providers were identified as the major concerns for merging soft skills training with larger programs. Considering the relevance, demand, quality, and effectiveness of soft skills training, a holistic and coordinated approach incorporating the government and other program stakeholders, systematic monitoring of interventions, and policy advocacy is deemed to be instrumental in addressing the existing gaps and fostering a sustainable soft skills program for both the Rohingya and host community.

### **Recommendations**

1. A well-devised action plan to increase coverage of soft skills training in both the Rohingya camp and the host community is needed, for which early and consistent involvement of key government and other program stakeholders is necessary.
2. It is necessary to bring those who are providing soft skills training under a common platform to work in coordination for a standardized implementation of training.
3. There is a clear need to develop a standard curriculum and uniform guidelines for soft skills training so as to ensure a standardized training implementation and to avoid overlapping among implementing agencies. Modules should be reviewed and updated based on certain well-defined criteria and local needs.
4. Integrating soft skills training with UN and NGO programs and private training centers is considered an essential and viable solution for program sustainability and effectiveness.

5. It is important to test the feasibility of integrating the soft skills curriculum by introducing the standard module to a selected number of UN and NGO programs in the camp and vocational training centers in the host community and to assess the impact on beneficiaries' learning and livelihood outcomes.
6. Life skills and financial literacy are valuable for everybody, not only for work but also everyday life. There is a need for the government to create national policies that will guide the development, integration, and delivery of soft skills in the TVET system in the host community.



Population Council  
House 49, Road 28  
Gulshan 1, Dhaka 1212  
Bangladesh

[popcouncil.org](http://popcouncil.org)