STRENGTHENING GENDER ANALYSIS
in the Rohingya refugee response

Several humanitarian agencies operating in the Rohingya refugee camps are making concerted efforts to focus on gender and implement programmes that empower women and girls. Despite this focus, efforts are constrained by a lack of analysis, which would enable a deeper understanding of how gender shapes the individuals experience of the crisis. Limited gender analysis means that few practical or evidence-based recommendations are generated in support of gender focused programming in Cox's Bazar.

This report reflects on the way in which an analysis of gender issues, including pre-crisis gender roles and relations, as well as current gender dynamics within the Rohingya refugee camps **can support improved gender sensitive humanitarian programming.** It is based on discussions with key informants (KIs) from the humanitarian community, participation in cluster, sub-cluster, and working group meetings in Cox's Bazar and a review of secondary data.

The report begins by explaining what is meant by gender analysis, before summarising why this is necessary within the Rohingya crisis. It then **outlines a five-step workflow, as advocated by CARE International in their Rapid Gender Analysis (RGA) tool.** The CARE approach is recommended by the IASC Gender Handbook to ensure gender analysis is as meaningful and as useful as possible. The latter half of the report highlights a series of key challenges and recommendations connected to conducting comprehensive gender analysis in the Rohingya refugee crisis.

Key challenges in conducting gender analysis in the Rohingya refugee response

Challenge 1: Reviewing secondary data not a standard practice

Challenge 2: Lack of stand-alone gender assessments

Challenge 3: Lack of women's voices in assessments

Challenge 4: Sex and age disaggregated data inconsistently collected and analysed

Challenge 5: Current analysis practices focus heavily on quantitative data

Challenge 6: Language represents a major barrier

Challenge 7: Lack of intersectional analysis

What is gender analysis?

Gender analysis in a humanitarian context seeks to understand the impact of a crisis on different gender identities by assessing their distinct needs, vulnerabilities, and capacities. Gender analysis examines how social and cultural norms shape the pre-crisis power dynamics, and gender roles and relations at household and community levels and compares this information to gender roles and relations within the current context. For example, the distribution of responsibility for domestic chores may differ from pre-crisis circumstance, to in-crisis circumstance.

Crises have the potential to deepen pre-existing gender inequalities and increase vulnerabilities; however, they also present an opportunity to address gender inequalities and open new avenues for promoting equality and the empowerment of certain gender identities. Humanitarian interventions can only hope to successfully facilitate such opportunities if they are informed by gender analysis. Evidence generated from a thorough gender analysis can affect those changes by informing strategic planning and being incorporated throughout the humanitarian programme cycle. This is required to ensure the response benefits all those affected, particularly the most disadvantaged, and that programming does no harm. Evidence-based recommendations should address the barriers and constraints faced by particular groups in accessing humanitarian assistance and assess the potential of programming to undertake transformative change by addressing structural and root causes of gender inequality (ODI 2019; Oxfam 09/2018).

Why understanding gender matters in the Rohingya refugee response

Women and girls comprise 55% of the total refugee population. Most are affected by human rights abuses, sexual and gender-based violence (SGBV) and domestic violence (ISCG 30/03/2019). In Rohingya society gender roles relate to power structures that are shaped by cultural tradition. Violence and humiliation are often considered normal practice in a marriage (BBC MEDIA ACTION 08/2018). Rohingya women are restricted from participating in most aspects of public life, including education, due to the practice of *purdah*, which dictates that after reaching puberty, women should not be seen by men other than their husbands or male relatives (Ripoll et al., 2017, Kamal Zafari, 2018; BBC MEDIA ACTION 08/2018). Property in Rohingya society is distributed according to Islamic Sharia Law. Women can receive property in the family, but this can be easily challenged when there is a brother in the family. A woman's property is usually administered by a male relative. In Rohingya society there is a lack of formal female leadership, and a lack of community women's groups, limiting the opportunities to hear women's voices (Joint Agency Research Report 08/2018). Despite humanitarian efforts that promote the role of women, these traditional cultural practices continue place women and girls in a more vulnerable position, limiting access to education and livelihood activities including cash for work schemes implemented by aid agencies.

Traditional gender role and relations shape how different people experience crises. When humanitarian assistance fails to understand how gender impacts the different needs, vulnerabilities and capacities of the affected population, it risks delivering inequitable assistance and even reinforcing pre-existing inequalities. If different groups are neither consulted in order to identify specific needs, nor provided with the space to participate in the process of designing and delivering humanitarian assistance, vulnerable groups are unlikely to be reached. This may result in certain groups being overlooked and adopting harmful coping mechanisms.

The vast majority of refugees spontaneously self-settled following their arrival in 2017 around the existing registered camps and makeshift settlements. Service facilities were rapidly developed, in a context of land scarcity and very high congestion. The early stages of the WASH response, for example, did therefore not undertake gender analysis to inform the design and implementation of activities and the construction of facilities. This has led to women and girls facing major barriers to accessing WASH facilities. Cultural restrictions that impact mobility, along with safety concerns, mean women and girls have difficulty accessing latrines and bathing facilities as most as non sex segregated. Negative coping strategies, such as bathing inside the shelter, can have adverse impacts on WASH outcomes themselves, and also outcomes in other sectors, such as Health. Additionally, lack of consultation on the location of water points means women and girls, primarily responsible for water collection, face harassment and other protection risks when collecting water (Oxfam 09/2018; ACAPS 03/2019; ISCG 03/2019). Oxfam implemented a project that brought together female architects to work closely with a group of Rohingya women to better understand the barriers to accessing WASH facilities and how to overcome these. Many of these issues are now well documented and understood

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amongst WASH actors, and steps are being taken to address these concerns. However, it is challenging and costly to make critical changes in facility design to ensure the access of women and girls once the facilities have already been constructed, particularly in the camps where space is so limited. This exemplifies why a comprehensive gender analysis is a necessity from the first stages of a response (ISCG 30/03/2019; (Oxfam 09/2018).

Conducting gender analysis

CARE International present a five-step workflow called the Rapid Gender Analysis (RGA). The RGA can help guide a process to develop a better understanding of the gender dynamics of a crisis (CARE 2019):

1. **Review existing gender information.** As with any assessment plan the first step is to conduct a secondary data review of available information. The objective of this is to acquire enough information on gender roles, expectations, relations, and power dynamics to compare pre-crisis data with current data and learn what has changed as a result of the crisis. This SDR will help to identify the information gaps and inform the design of the data collection process that follows.[1]

2. **Conduct primary assessment:** collect additional gender information since the beginning of the crisis. Based on the outcome of the secondary data review, assessments should be designed that specifically target information gaps regarding how gender roles and relations have changed as a result of the crisis.[2]

3. **Analyse the collected gender information.** Relevant data may be collected, but often such data is not properly analysed. Data should be analysed according to an analysis framework designed prior to the assessment.

4. **Make practical recommendations for programming based on analysis.** Programme design needs to be informed by the findings of gender specific data and analysis. Better analysis will help to explain existing gaps and therefore enable appropriate recommendations for whether certain programmes target all women, girls, men and boys, or specific groups. Gender analysis should both inform programming decisions about responding to immediate needs and identify entry points in order to address longer term, gender focused transformative agendas.

5. **Share gender analysis with other actors.** In any humanitarian context sharing information can generate efficiencies in time and resources. Current practices in the Rohingya response show that some agencies share their gender related reports in a timely manner, while others keep their reports strictly for internal use. Promoting a culture of sharing is a process. Organisations may be more inclined to share over time, as they see the common value the shared information provides.

Key challenges and recommendations in conducting gender analysis in the Rohingya response

Throughout each of the five steps highlighted before, there are several key challenges associated with conducting gender analysis in the Rohingya refugee response.

Challenge 1

Reviewing secondary data as a starting point for gender analysis has not been a common practice among humanitarian actors in Cox's Bazar. Many agencies have not regarded secondary data review as a key first step in analysis in general. A major challenge to conducting a proper, gender focused SDR is that there is insufficient published anthropological data on the pre-crisis context of the Rohingya, including on gender roles, gender relations, power dynamics and social norms. This information deficiency renders in-depth gender analysis incomplete. This problem is not specific to information on gender dynamics. The response suffers from a general lack of reliable pre-crisis information on the Rohingya.

Recommendations

All assessment processes should begin with review of existing information to gather an understanding of the current information landscape in order to target outstanding information needs.

The humanitarian community in Cox's Bazar needs to share and store data and reports in an accessible way to improve efficient use of existing information and reduce duplication. The ISCG assessment registry is an example of an existing platform.

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[1] Conducting an SDR is an essential first step required in order to design and plan an assessment and analysis process. ACAPS emphasises that the purpose of an SDR is as follows: to learn what is known, what is uncertain, and what is unknown; to understand the primary audience and know what it needs and when; to clarify the main questions and the analytical objectives; to reflect on the context of the analysis and consider ethical issues, to understand what factors can influence or affect the analysis, the issue, the participants, or the audience; to break the issue down into components, to better understand it and choose the best analytical approach/framework; and then to design the data collection exercise based on the findings of the SDR. See ACAPS Analysis Workflow.

[2] For detailed information on lessons learned from assessments in Cox's Bazar see ACAPS Lessons Learned: Needs Assessments in Cox's Bazar, April, 2018.

Challenge 2

There is a **lack of stand-alone gender assessments** In Cox's Bazar. Some efforts have been made to incorporate a gender focus into different needs assessments. However, the gender-related questions in assessments have mostly been centered on current needs, disaggregated by sex, and have included a few questions that are specific to women and girls. Assessment methodologies do little to target information regarding the underlying dynamics that may influence needs. As a result, many information gaps remain, and gender analysis can only occur to a limited extent.

Recommendations

More in-depth gender analysis, which can take the form of a stand-alone exercise, is needed to address analysis gaps and focus more on gender relations, power dynamics, and the link between gender and humanitarian needs.

Challenge 3

There is a **lack of women's voices** in response data. In the assessment landscape, the majority of key informants and respondents are male; therefore, women's concerns go underreported. Cultural barriers limit women's access to education and restrict social mobility thereby preventing women from assuming leadership roles. Some organisations are making efforts to engage more women in community roles including as school teachers, midwives and tea shop vendors, albeit this must be done sensitively. While women need to be offered these opportunities there must be certainty that engagement with such activities does not place them at any greater risk from others in the community, particularly as public cash for work schemes go against the notion of the *purdah*..

There is a common recognition that women only focus groups are a more effective way of ensuring female representation in data collection exercises but despite this progress, overall, assessments largely remain informed by male voices (ISCG 30/03/2019; ACAPS 04/04/2019; JOINT AGENCY RESEARCH REPORT 08/2018).

Recommendations

Ensure women are interviewed by female enumerators only. Enumerators should work closely with protection actors in the response throughout the assessment process to ensure data is collected in a manner that maximises female respondents' ability to speak freely (ACAPS 04/04/2019). Consider that it may be necessary to conduct interviews in private spaces in order to reach women who may not be comfortable in a public space (ACAPS 04/04/2019). Make use of women led community centres as safe spaces to lead focus group discussions for women.

Challenge 4

Sex and age disaggregated data is not collected or analysed consistently. The importance of collecting and analysing sex and age disaggregated data (SADD) is generally accepted in Cox's Bazar and there are good examples of how SADD has helped to inform programming, including interventions in response to gender-based violence, or targeted nutrition services, amongst others. However, there are still examples of assessment methodologies and analysis that do not incorporate SADD, this may be due to the fact it is often considered time consuming. Failure to draw upon SADD is a missed opportunity to address needs that may be specific to certain groups. For example, sexual and reproductive health (SRH) interventions may overlook the specific needs and challenges faced by Rohingya adolescent girls and boys (ISCG 2018). Often there is a lack of understanding as to why SADD is important, or how to practically use it to inform programming decisions.

Recommendations

Collecting disaggregated data must be widely recognised by all agencies and sectors as the first step towards identifying vulnerable groups and understanding how needs between groups differ.

Efforts must be made to ensure that the purpose of SADD is widely understood in order to ensure that it is consistently used by humanitarian actors.

Humanitarian organisations and sectors should prioritise trainings on how to collect, analyse and practically use SADD to support programming.

Once collected, SADD must be analysed, taking into account other known vulnerability characteristics, cultural practices and gender roles, to help understand the relationships and power dynamics between different population groups.

Challenge 5

Current analysis practices overly focus heavily on quantitative data. The methodology design of most assessments largely focuses on generating quantitative data, as numbers are required to inform timely humanitarian planning. The gender component of quantitative analysis is therefore mostly limited to sex and age disaggregated data (SADD). While this data is important (as highlighted above), to simplify an understanding of gender analysis to SADD, is reductive. Often this quantitative data is not complemented by qualitative data that provides a deeper understanding and greater context to the numbers. It is commonly assumed that quantitative evidence is more credible than qualitative, since the latter is considered subjective and less scientific. However, a

dichotomy of objective versus subjective evidence leads to gender analysis that is incomplete and lacking nuance.

Recommendations

There needs to be a common recognition that qualitative information is essential for understanding gender relations and power dynamics and that a stronger understanding of these issues is necessary in order to make better sense of the quantitative data and provide a more complete analysis.

Challenge 6

Language represents a major barrier to the collection and interpretation of data in the Rohingya refugee camps. A Translators without Borders Study revealed that 36% of Rohingya refugees do not understand a simple sentence in Chittagonian (TWB 10/10/2018). Language barriers are of particular concern when talking with women as illiteracy rates amongst Rohingya women are generally higher than men, Women are also less likely to understand the Chittagonian dialect than men due to the fact that they are less exposed to it (TWB 10/2018). Language has the potential to influence assessment results by influencing the quality of the data collected and its interpretation. Jargon and technical vocabulary may not be familiar to refugees and result in misinterpretations, especially when enumerators themselves are not familiar with terms. This is an issue for assessments in general, though language around gender related issues has proven to be of particular concern. When IOM enumerators were asked about the challenges they face when collecting gender focused data, they highlighted concerns around the use of gender sensitive language and the fear of misrepresentation. Rohingya women have developed a social dialect that is particularly sensitive to terms that relate to body and sexuality. In fact, Rohingya language does not allow an easy expression of sexual violence (TWB 10/2018).

Recommendations

Technical jargon should be avoided and instead language should be clear, consistent and straightforward. Concepts that are ambiguous should be provided with context and standardized examples should be provided. Research should be conducted that aims to provide a better understanding of the Rohingya language (ACAPS 04/04/2019).

If used appropriately there are available resources[1] on gender-focused language for the Rohingya refugee crisis should lead to improved data by supporting efforts to develop methodologies that overcome language barriers (TWB 10/2018).

Challenge 7

Intersectional analysis encourages humanitarian actors to think beyond gender as a single category by considering other factors that shape identity including sexuality, ethnicity, disability and education, among others (ODI 2019). This analytical approach is recognised by few actors in the Rohingya response as important, mostly at a theoretical level and less so as a practical tool. Some organisations are concerned that by applying intersectional analysis, refugees are categorised according to severity of need, while all are in need of protection and humanitarian assistance. While these concerns are legitimate, intersectional analysis can provide a better understanding of how people's lives are shaped not only by one diversity factor, but by the intersection of different identities. Analysis of diversity factors helps to uncover power dynamics that shape vulnerability and may render some individuals from within the same group at higher risk. The ability to identify people based on vulnerabilities helps to design appropriate interventions for each group, ensuring that while programmes are serving everyone, the most vulnerable groups are more clearly identified to ensure they do not miss out on critical support (ODI 2019; IASC 05/06/2018).

Data required to effectively complete intersectional analysis is largely unavailable. Assessments often fail to target specific groups within the Rohingya camps who may face more complex barriers to participation. For example, cultural norms make it very difficult for adolescent girls to leave their homes, people with certain disabilities may be less mobile, and the LGBTQI individuals face social stigma and are less able to make themselves known (Women's Refugee Commission 11/2018). Some organisations in Cox's Bazar are specifically focusing on providing assistance to people with disabilities; however, an intersectional approach to examine how gender intersects with disability is not yet reflected in gender analyses. Inclusion of issues relating to LGBTI groups are similarly absent, although one KI mentioned efforts that are underway to identify how to reach out to LGBTI individuals in the refugee camps. Intersectionality can help to ensure that programmes are more inclusive and reach the most vulnerable groups (ODI 2019).

Recommendations

The humanitarian community needs to move beyond a theoretical understanding of intersectionality. Assessment methodologies must be designed to help address intersectional inequalities more effectively. Organisations that have a mandate to focus on a specific vulnerable group should not forget to consider how one specific vulnerability may relate to another. More research needs to take place that seeks to understand why certain groups may be less able to participate is assessments. Enumerators should work closely with protection actors in the response throughout the assessment process (ACAPS 04/04/2019).

Challenge 8

Gender analysis needs to be understood **as a means to an end.** Gender analysis is a process of collating and analysing data through a gender lens, in order to make evidence-based gender sensitive programming decisions. Organisations in Cox's Bazar vary in their practices of analysing gender data, but the quality, depth, and effective use of analysis are widely shared concerns. Relevant data may be collected, but often such data is not properly analysed. This occurs, in part, because gender analysis is not fully understood. Collected gender related data is rendered useless if it is not analysed to produce practical recommendations to better integrate gender into programming. Therefore, gender analysis needs to be understood as a part of a larger process intended to support the end goal of better and more inclusive programming.

Recommendations

Specific gender actors in the response should endeavour to promote a better knowledge and understanding of the role and importance of gender analysis amongst humanitarian organisations and all sector leads.

Foster an understanding of gender analysis as being integral to all response initiatives rather than an add on component.

Challenge 9

Time and resource limitations impact upon the quality of gender analysis. Most organisations tend to rely on gender focal points to complete gender analysis. These focal points are also largely held responsible to ensure gender is mainstreamed in programming. Gender experts may not necessarily be experts in designing and providing analysis. It is a common misconception that gender experts are also able to provide the technical analysis required to support programming.

Recommendations

The humanitarian community needs to acknowledge the different roles of a gender experts and skilled analysts. Both roles are essential to appropriate gender analysis and should complement and reinforce one another. However, they provide different functions and should therefore be invested in separately.