

Women's Refugee Commission in Integrating Gender Perspectives into Humanitarian Aid to Respond to the Myanmar Refugee Crisis

Walda Okvi Juliana Ningsih*

¹Universitas Pembangunan Nasional "Veteran" Jawa Timur, Indonesia

Email: waldaokvi.fisip@upnjatim.ac.id*



p-ISSN: 2808-9529 (Printed)
e-ISSN: 2808-8816 (Online)

Jurnal Ilmu Sosial Indonesia (JISI)

<http://journal.uinjkt.ac.id/index.php/jisi>

VOL. 6, NO. 2 (2025)

Page: 112 – 120

Recommended Citation (APA 7th Edition):

Women's Refugee Commission in Integrating Gender Perspectives into Humanitarian Aid to Respond to the Myanmar Refugee Crisis.

(2025). *Jurnal Ilmu Sosial Indonesia (JISI)*, 6(2), 112-120.

<https://doi.org/10.15408/jisi.v6i2.46607>

Available at:

<https://journal.uinjkt.ac.id/jisi/article/view/46607>

Article History:

Received: September 30, 2025

Accepted: December 5, 2025

Published: December 31, 2025

* Corresponding Author



This is an open access article under CC-BY-SA license
© Copyright Attribution-Share Alike 4.0 International
(CC BY-SA 4.0)

Abstract. This study focuses on examining how the Women's Refugee Commission (WRC) integrates a gender lens into humanitarian aid practices for Myanmar refugees. Conflict or war has different influences and impacts on men and women, so it is important to use a gender lens when conducting humanitarian actions. Gender makes women and men vulnerable to the effects of conflict or war, but in different ways. Refugee women, girls, and children as vulnerable groups face multiple risks, ranging from limited access to basic services, economic, health, environmental, personal, and political aspects, trauma, and even gender-based violence, both direct violence and structural violence. Using a qualitative case study approach, this research explores the strategies, challenges, and contributions of WRC in ensuring that humanitarian aid is more inclusive and responsive to the specific needs of women and children. The results of this study show that gender mainstreaming by WRC increases the effectiveness of humanitarian responses and strengthens the resilience of refugee communities. This study concludes that gender matters in humanitarian action or assistance because it provides a more accurate understanding of the situation by recognizing the differences between women and men, girls and boys, and ensuring that humanitarian assistance programs fully integrate the principle of non-discrimination.

Keywords: Humanitarian Aid, Gender, Refugees, Women's Refugee Commission, Myanmar Crisis.

Abstrak. Penelitian ini fokus mengkaji bagaimana peran Women's Refugee Commission (WRC) mengintegrasikan lensa gender ke dalam praktik humanitarian aid bagi pengungsi Myanmar. Konflik atau perang memiliki pengaruh dan dampak yang berbeda terhadap laki-laki dan perempuan, sehingga penting untuk menggunakan lensa gender ketika melakukan aksi kemanusiaan. Gender membuat perempuan dan laki-laki rentan terkena dampak konflik atau perang namun dalam hal yang berbeda. Pengungsi perempuan, gadis dan anak-anak sebagai kelompok rentan menghadapi risiko berlapis, mulai dari keterbatasan akses pada layanan dasar, segi ekonomi, kesehatan, lingkungan, personal, politik, rasa trauma, bahkan menerima kekerasan berbasis gender baik kekerasan secara langsung (direct violence) maupun kekerasan struktural (structural violence). Dengan pendekatan kualitatif studi kasus, penelitian ini mengeksplorasi strategi, tantangan, dan kontribusi WRC dalam memastikan bahwa bantuan kemanusiaan lebih inklusif dan responsif terhadap kebutuhan spesifik perempuan dan anak. Hasil penelitian ini menunjukkan bahwa pengarusutamaan gender oleh WRC meningkatkan efektivitas respons kemanusiaan dan memperkuat resiliensi komunitas pengungsi. Penelitian ini menyimpulkan bahwa dalam melakukan tindakan atau bantuan kemanusiaan, gender itu penting (gender matters) karena memberikan pemahaman yang lebih akurat tentang situasi, dengan mengenali perbedaan antara perempuan dan laki-laki, anak perempuan dan anak laki-laki dengan memastikan program bantuan kemanusiaan mengintegrasikan sepenuhnya prinsip non-diskriminasi.

Kata Kunci: Bantuan Kemanusiaan, Gender, Pengungsi, Women's Refugee Commission, Krisis Myanmar.

1. INTRODUCTION

The Myanmar refugee crisis, particularly the exodus of the Rohingya ethnic group to Cox's Bazar, Bangladesh, has become one of the most complex and prolonged global humanitarian challenges of the 21st century. This crisis is rooted in armed conflict, systematic discrimination, and Myanmar's unstable internal political dynamics. Since the Myanmar military launched a military operation in 2017, a large wave of Rohingya refugees has left Rakhine State to seek refuge in Bangladesh.

According to a United Nations (UN) report, the humanitarian situation in Myanmar has worsened due to escalating conflict, natural disasters, disease outbreaks, landmines, and economic collapse. In 2024, Myanmar was recorded as the country with the second highest level of conflict in the world and one of the most dangerous places for civilians, with nearly half of its population directly exposed to armed conflict (United Nations, 2024). More than 19 million people are now in need of urgent humanitarian assistance, while around 3.5 million people have been internally displaced (IDPs).

Cox's Bazar now hosts nearly one million refugees, making it the largest refugee camp in the world. More than 70 percent of the total refugees are women and children, who face multiple challenges (WRC, 2025). Armed conflict and forced displacement always have different impacts on men and women. Men are often targeted for forced recruitment, arbitrary detention, and even execution, while women and girls face more complex vulnerabilities, ranging from sexual and gender-based violence, limited reproductive services, to socio-economic marginalization (Freedman, 2016; El-Bushra, 2020). This perspective emphasizes that humanitarian responses should not be considered gender-blind, but rather that gender matters and must integrate a gender lens so that interventions truly address the needs of vulnerable groups.

In this context, the Women's Refugee Commission (WRC), established in 1989, plays an important role in placing various issues faced by refugees on the humanitarian agenda. This organization has succeeded in placing issues of gender equality, protection from gender-based violence, and women's

empowerment on the global humanitarian agenda. The WRC continues to be at the forefront of efforts to ensure that the rights of refugee women, children, and youth are respected. The WRC provides a crisis response that addresses the unique risks faced by these groups and addresses gaps in services and protection from the earliest stages of an emergency.

In Cox's Bazar, WRC works with international agencies, local agencies, and refugee communities themselves to strengthen access to basic services, promote gender equality, and build community resilience. However, the effectiveness of these efforts is hampered by major challenges, including limited resources, patriarchal cultural barriers, and fragmented coordination among various humanitarian actors (Wake & Yu, 2018).

Studies on gender and humanitarianism have grown rapidly in academic literature. Humanitarianism is a commitment to reducing suffering and protecting the lives of civilians affected by conflict or war. Humanitarian action can be defined as actions aimed at protecting victims of armed conflict or war and providing assistance in the form of food, water, temporary shelter, health services, and so on.

Barnett (2011) explains that humanitarian action is based on seven main principles: humanity, impartiality, neutrality, independence, voluntary service, unity, and universality. However, practice in the field shows that without the integration of gender analysis, these principles are not sufficient to address the vulnerabilities experienced by certain groups. UN Women (2020) emphasizes the importance of gender mainstreaming throughout the entire humanitarian response cycle, from planning and implementation to program evaluation. This concept ensures equal access to resources, services, and protection, while promoting the empowerment of women as agents of change.

In addition, the theory of intersectionality (Crenshaw, 1991) is relevant for analyzing how layered identities—gender, ethnicity, citizenship status, and disability—reinforce the vulnerability of Rohingya refugee women. This approach emphasizes that the discrimination they experience does not stem from a single factor, but rather is an accumulation of various

forms of structural inequality. On the other hand, the human security framework (UNDP, 1994) broadens the understanding of human security to include economic, food, health, environmental, personal, community, and political aspects. This concept is relevant to understanding the complexity of the Myanmar crisis, which is not only related to armed conflict but also to multidimensional vulnerability. Meanwhile, empowerment theory (Kabeer, 1999) emphasizes the importance of providing women with access to resources, the capacity to make decisions, and collective influence to build resilience in crisis situations.

Although a number of previous studies have discussed the Rohingya crisis, most still focus on human rights aspects, Myanmar's political dynamics, or general humanitarian challenges (Mahmood et al., 2017; Smith, 2019). Relatively few studies have specifically examined the role of civil society organizations such as the WRC in mainstreaming a gender perspective in humanitarian aid. In fact, the integration of a gender lens is crucial to the effectiveness of aid programs and the quality of protection for vulnerable groups, especially women and children.

Based on this context and gap in the literature, this study focuses on the role of the Women's Refugee Commission in integrating a gender lens into humanitarian aid for Rohingya women and children's refugees amid the Myanmar crisis. This article argues that mainstreaming gender is not only important for the protection of vulnerable groups, but also improves the overall effectiveness of humanitarian responses. Using a qualitative case study approach, this research analyzes the strategies, challenges, and contributions of the WRC in responding to the Myanmar refugee crisis in Cox's Bazar. The novelty of this research lies in its focus on the intersection between humanitarian aid, gender mainstreaming, and the role of civil society organizations—an issue that has been rarely explored in refugee studies literature.

2. METHOD

This study uses a qualitative approach with a case study method to understand the strategies, challenges, and contributions of WRC in integrating a gender perspective into

humanitarian assistance for Myanmar refugees. The case study method was chosen because it allows for in-depth exploration of gender integration practices in a real-world context, namely humanitarian programs in the Cox's Bazar refugee camp in Bangladesh (Yin, 2018; Creswell & Poth, 2018). The research data was sourced entirely from secondary sources, including reports from the WRC, UNHCR, UN Women, policy documents, and relevant international journal articles. This technique was deemed appropriate because the research focused on institutional and policy analysis, where written data was more dominant (Bowen, 2009).

The analysis was conducted using a thematic approach to identify patterns and main themes, such as protection from gender-based violence, women's empowerment, and program implementation challenges (Braun & Clarke, 2006). Validity was maintained through source triangulation, cross-document comparison, and systematic coding to reinforce the consistency of findings (Flick, 2018). Thus, this study is expected to provide a comprehensive understanding of the role of WRC in mainstreaming gender in humanitarian responses amid the Myanmar refugee crisis.

3. RESULT AND DISCUSSION

3.1 Gender is an issue for humanitarian aid and Myanmar refugee crisis

Humanitarian Aid (HA) is a series of actions specifically provided for populations affected by natural disasters and armed conflicts. This assistance can take the form of food distribution, clean water provision, cash contributions, health services, and the deployment of experts, especially in the case of natural disasters (Barnett, 2011). In general, humanitarian action can be divided into three main categories: conflict (war and civil war), crisis (collapse of law and order and social safety nets), and disasters (both natural disasters such as earthquakes, floods, or droughts, and technological disasters such as nuclear incidents or chemical-biological accidents) (Ferris, 2011).

The main objectives of humanitarian aid are to save lives, alleviate suffering, and support

long-term recovery, including through reconstruction and advocacy for crisis prevention in the future (Slim, 2015). Humanitarian aid also contributes to conflict resolution and disaster risk reduction.

Humanitarian aid is involved in several stages, namely prevention, emergency response, reconstruction, and advocacy in crisis, conflict, and disaster prevention, while mobilizing support for those affected (Kusumaningrum, 2021).

As explained earlier, for an intervention to be categorized as a humanitarian action, there are seven fundamental principles that serve as normative foundations, namely humanity, impartiality, neutrality, independence, voluntary service, unity, and universality. These principles were first codified in the framework of the International Red Cross and Red Crescent, then adopted more broadly in various global humanitarian instruments (ICRC, 1996; Slim, 2015).

First, humanity. This principle emphasizes that the main objective of humanitarian action is to prevent and alleviate human suffering everywhere, protect life, and ensure respect for human dignity. In the context of the Myanmar crisis, this principle forms the basis for humanitarian organizations, including the Women's Refugee Commission (WRC), to ensure that Rohingya women and children, who are the most vulnerable group, receive adequate protection (UN OCHA, 2022).

Second, impartiality. This principle affirms that assistance must be provided based on need alone, without discrimination based on nationality, ethnicity, religion, gender, or political views. This means that every affected individual has the same right to receive assistance according to their level of vulnerability (Ferris, 2011). This principle is relevant in the context of the Rohingya, given that this group has historically experienced structural discrimination by the Myanmar state, making humanitarian aid the only means of meeting their basic needs on an equal footing.

Third, neutrality. Neutrality requires humanitarian actors to remain impartial and not become involved in hostilities or political, ideological, or religious debates. Neutrality is important so that humanitarian organizations

can gain access to conflict areas without being suspected of supporting one of the armed actors (Slim, 2015). In practice, maintaining neutrality in Myanmar is very challenging because the conflict between the Myanmar Armed Forces and various armed groups often politicizes the distribution of aid.

Fourth, independence. This principle emphasizes that humanitarian action must be autonomous from political, economic, military, or other agendas outside the humanitarian mission itself (ICRC, 1996). Independence is a crucial aspect so that organizations such as the WRC can distribute aid that is truly oriented towards the needs of refugees, not the interests of donors or certain countries.

Fifth, voluntary service. Voluntary service emphasizes that humanitarian action is carried out on the basis of humanity, not for personal or financial gain. This principle makes humanitarian work a form of global solidarity (Barnett & Weiss, 2008).

Sixth, unity. The principle of unity means that there can only be one national Red Cross or Red Crescent society in each country, which is open to all and carries out humanitarian actions throughout the country. In a broader context, unity also reflects the importance of coordination between humanitarian actors so that responses are more effective and do not overlap (Forsythe, 2005).

Seventh, the principle of universality affirms that all communities and nations possess equal rights to humanitarian assistance, alongside an equal responsibility to contribute to global solidarity. Under this principle, humanitarian action is understood as a collective commitment that transcends national borders (Slim, 2015).

However, the implementation of humanitarian aid cannot be separated from the gender dimension. Emergencies, whether conflicts or disasters, have different impacts on women, men, girls, and boys due to gender roles, social relations, and structural inequalities (El-Bushra, 2020). In conflicts, men are more likely to be involved in combat, injured, or killed. They also risk being stigmatized if they refuse to fight, and may even be executed.

Conversely, women often bear additional burdens in the household, ranging from caring for traumatized family members to meeting basic needs in conditions of material deprivation. In the context of displacement, women's traditional role as caregivers further limits their access to economic opportunities and decision-making. In addition, the risk of sexual and gender-based violence (SGBV) against women increases sharply during conflict, as documented in the cases of Rwanda, Nigeria, and Sierra Leone, where women were targeted for exploitation, while men and boys were forced to become combatants (Centre for Human Dialogue, 2006).

Natural disasters also reveal significant gender dimensions. For example, in the 2004 tsunami, more women and girls died than men due to cultural factors: they were not taught to swim, wore clothing that hindered mobility, and tended to look for their children first before saving themselves (Gender and Disaster Network, 2005). This shows that vulnerability in crises is not only determined by physical conditions, but also by social norms and gender constructs.

Humanitarian crises can also exacerbate gender inequality. In many cases, social norms restrict women's mobility, making it more difficult for them to access assistance. However, on the other hand, crisis situations sometimes open up opportunities for gender role change. In Somaliland, for example, prolonged conflict forced women to enter the public workforce, which had previously been dominated by men, leading to a shift in traditional social structures (GTZ, 2001). In other words, crises can reinforce gender inequality, but they can also be a gateway to social transformation.

Unfortunately, in practice, humanitarian aid is often not gender neutral. Many humanitarian programs assume that men and women experience crises in the same way, resulting in gender-biased intervention designs (Women's Commission for Refugee Women and Children, 1997). As a result, women's specific needs, such as nutrition for housewives or protection from sexual violence, are often neglected. An extreme example of this is when an NGO director ignored requests to provide nutritional needs for female heads of households in a refugee camp, which then

resulted in infant mortality rates in that group being four times higher than the camp average.

Thus, gender is a central issue in humanitarian action. Gender-sensitive understanding enables more effective, fair, and inclusive assistance. The role of organizations such as WRC is vital, as they not only distribute aid, but also ensure that a gender perspective is integrated into every stage of humanitarian action—from prevention and emergency response to reconstruction and advocacy. By mainstreaming gender, WRC not only protects vulnerable groups, but also strengthens the resilience of refugee communities and opens up space for long-term social transformation.

A gender perspective can make humanitarian aid more effective in a number of ways. First, it provides a more accurate understanding of emergency situations by recognizing the differences in experiences between women and men, girls and boys, rather than assuming that all groups experience the same conditions. Second, a gender perspective supports the design of more appropriate responses by taking into account the barriers faced by certain groups in participating in humanitarian efforts, so that the interventions provided truly address the needs of the entire population, not just a small portion.

Third, this approach helps empower groups marginalized due to gender discrimination—both women and certain men, such as those who refuse to engage in combat—to rebuild a more equitable society and create more sustainable peace and security. If basic needs such as food and health services are met, these groups will be better able to contribute to the reconstruction process. Fourth, a gender perspective ensures that humanitarian assistance programs fully integrate the principle of non-discrimination, particularly between men and women and between boys and girls.

Fifth, applying a gender perspective supports adjustments to changes in gender roles that often arise in the wake of a crisis. This includes support for women who become the main breadwinners through economic independence programs, assistance for men in adjusting to new roles when they no longer hold the status of main breadwinner, and

encouraging the acceptance of women and men's involvement in non-traditional fields (e.g., women working as drivers or men collecting firewood and water).

Sixth, this perspective draws attention to the dynamics of power within communities, including who has authority, who speaks on behalf of whom, and how power relations are formed. This type of analysis can help humanitarian aid reach those who really need it, rather than reinforcing existing inequalities. Recognition of powerless groups also has the potential to reduce conflict. Seventh, the gender perspective contributes to linking short-term emergency assistance with long-term support, so that humanitarian responses not only save lives, but also promote resilience and sustainable development.

In the humanitarian and protection crisis in Myanmar, widespread violations affect women, men, girls, and boys in different ways, with women suffering the most due to pre-existing gender and social inequalities, discrimination, and patterns of gender-based violence (GBV). Women and girls comprise 10.4 million of the estimated 19.9 million people in need of assistance in Myanmar in 2025.

The escalation of violence has led to a new wave of displacement, disrupted access to essential services, particularly health services for pregnant and lactating women, and limited livelihood opportunities for both men and women, pushing communities to resort to negative coping mechanisms. The spread of conflict has also raised concerns about GBV, livelihoods, human trafficking, and illegal migration among young men and women, as well as the unsafe movement of girls and adult women seeking refuge in safer locations (WRC, 2025).

Outbreaks of severe diarrhea and cholera, exacerbated by recurrent flooding, disproportionately affect women, girls, persons with disabilities, and stateless persons. This crisis exacerbates vulnerability by forcing communities to flee, reducing their access to sanitation and health services, and increasing the risk of GBV and sexual abuse and exploitation in crowded or unsafe environments (HNRP, 2025).

Table 3.1 Key Vulnerabilities of Rohingya Women and Children in Cox's Bazar

Type of Vulnerability	Description
Gender-Based Violence (GBV)	High risk of rape, early marriage, and domestic violence.
Limited Access to Health Care	Lack of maternal and reproductive health facilities.
Economic Burden	Restricted access to employment and economic dependency on humanitarian aid.
Education	Girls are more vulnerable to school dropout compared to boys.
Psychological Trauma	High prevalence of depression, PTSD, and trauma caused by conflict.

Source: UNHCR (2022); UN Women (2021); WRC (2022).

These findings show that vulnerable groups face multiple overlapping risks, emphasizing the importance of integrating a gender lens into humanitarian aid practices.

Although various gender integration strategies in humanitarian aid have shown positive impacts, implementation in the field still faces a number of significant challenges. Cultural and social barriers are one of the main factors, where patriarchal norms deeply rooted in Rohingya communities often limit women's mobility and restrict their participation in public spaces (Wake & Yu, 2018). In addition, resource constraints are also an obstacle, particularly in relation to the relatively small number of humanitarian workers who have adequate training in gender mainstreaming (Krause, 2021).

Furthermore, coordination between humanitarian actors is not yet optimal. Fragmentation among international non-governmental organizations, the Bangladeshi government, and local organizations often hinders the consistency and effectiveness of gender-based programs (El-Bushra, 2020). Thus, although gender integration is seen as an important aspect of humanitarian response, various structural and operational obstacles still need to be overcome in order to truly achieve gender equality in the context of the Rohingya refugee crisis.

3.2 Gender Integration by the Women's Refugee Commission in Humanitarian

Since its establishment in 1989, the Women's Refugee Commission (WRC) has had a mandate to ensure that the needs and rights of women, children, and youth affected by conflict and crisis are not neglected in humanitarian

programs. In its early days, WRC served as a global advocacy organization that highlighted the invisibility of women and children in humanitarian aid. WRC emphasized the importance of gender mainstreaming by encouraging international agencies, such as UNHCR and other UN agencies, to include reproductive health services, protection from gender-based violence, and women's participation in community leadership as part of humanitarian response standards (WRC, 2021). This position shows that WRC plays a more dominant role as an international advocacy actor that pushes for more gender-inclusive global policies.

One of the significant roles of the WRC was during the Myanmar refugee crisis, particularly the exodus of the Rohingya ethnic group to Cox's Bazar, Bangladesh, in 2017. In this context, WRC not only advocated at the global level, but also was directly involved in the field through research and partnerships with refugee communities. First, it conducted field-based research. One important contribution was the study "We Need to Write Our Own Names," which highlighted the importance of gender equality and the empowerment of Rohingya women in humanitarian response (WRC, 2021).

Second, focusing on gender-specific services, WRC works intensively on issues of sexual and gender-based violence (GBV), seeking to fundamentally change the way gender-based violence is handled in humanitarian settings. WRC also pays attention to sexual and reproductive health and rights by ensuring that life-saving services are available to all refugees from the early stages of any emergency.

WRC also documents good practices, challenges, and recommendations to ensure that a gender perspective is fully integrated into humanitarian assistance. Furthermore, WRC highlights the specific needs of Rohingya women regarding access to reproductive health services and contraception through the report *A Clear Case for Need and Demand* (WRC, 2019). This marks a shift from mere global advocacy to concrete action that ensures the needs of women and children are met from the outset.

Third, rights and justice focused on gender-based protection. In addition to focusing on women, WRC has broadened the understanding of gender-based violence by researching the experiences of Rohingya men and boys who have been victims of sexual violence, as outlined in the report *It's Happening to Our Men as Well* (WRC, 2018). This finding is important because it shows that although women are the most vulnerable group, the crisis also creates unique vulnerabilities for men due to the dynamics of conflict and displacement.

Fourth, as an international advocate, WRC plays an active role in advocacy at the global level, for example by joining the Women's Peace Network and more than 180 other organizations in calling on the UN Security Council to hold the Myanmar military accountable for violence against women and human rights violations (WRC, 2021).

Fifth, with a long-term transformative approach, WRC emphasizes resilience-based approaches with a focus on economic empowerment and independence that provide opportunities for refugees to earn a living. This aims to increase independence and resilience, restore their dignity and life choices, while protecting them from vulnerability. It builds the capacity of refugee women and youth to be economically independent, participate in community leadership, and fight for their rights.

This approach results in higher-quality programs that emphasize dignity and self-determination, while also improving program effectiveness and efficiency. In this way, communities and individuals become better prepared to face conditions of uncertainty in the future. WRC also emphasizes the importance of shifting humanitarian responses from short-term assistance—such as food or blanket distribution—to long-term solutions that leverage the skills of women and youth so that they can achieve sustainable economic and social success.

Sixth, Measurement and Learning, which is the development of an internal accountability system that serves to measure the achievement of strategic priorities. Through this system, WRC can identify successes and challenges, monitor impact, and evaluate the most effective

strategies for realizing the commitments of WRC and the wider humanitarian community.

WRC works collaboratively with local and national organizations, humanitarian agencies, donors, and refugees to create a better world for refugees. Furthermore, WRC establishes partnerships with refugee communities through needs-based research, solution identification, and gender-transformative policy advocacy. This approach aims to encourage continuous improvement in policies and practices in the fields of humanitarianism, development, and refugee management (WRC, 2025).

This research confirms the argument that gender matters in humanitarian aid. As a result, women, children, and youth refugees now have greater access to sexual and reproductive health services from the outset of emergencies, opportunities for safe and dignified employment, and greater involvement for marginalized individuals, including persons with disabilities, in programs and decision-making processes that affect their lives. The prevention and handling of gender-based violence is now also on the international agenda, while families and children seeking asylum in the United States receive strong advocacy support to protect their best interests.

4. CONCLUSION

This study aims to analyze the role of the Women's Refugee Commission (WRC) in integrating a gender lens into humanitarian assistance for women and children amid the Myanmar refugee crisis. The main research questions focus on how WRC strategies are implemented, the challenges faced, and their contribution to the effectiveness of the humanitarian response in the Cox's Bazar camp.

The results show that the WRC has successfully promoted the integration of a gender perspective through three main strategies: first, mainstreaming gender in humanitarian program planning; second, empowering women economically and socially; and third, protecting against gender-based violence through the establishment of Women Friendly Spaces. These strategies increase the effectiveness of humanitarian aid by addressing the specific needs of women and children, while

strengthening the resilience of refugee communities.

These findings confirm that a gender perspective in humanitarian aid is not merely complementary, but rather a prerequisite for creating a fair, inclusive, and sustainable humanitarian response. Theoretically, this study enriches the discourse on the relationship between gender-sensitive humanitarianism and refugee studies. Practically, the results provide guidance for humanitarian organizations in designing programs that are more responsive to the needs of vulnerable groups.

However, this study has limitations, as it relies solely on secondary data and document analysis and therefore does not capture the direct experiences of women and child refugees in the field. Future research is recommended to employ mixed methods, combining in-depth interviews and field surveys to strengthen the validity of the findings. In addition, comparative studies across different refugee crisis contexts could broaden the understanding of gender integration practices in humanitarian aid.

Thus, this study concludes that the role of the WRC in mainstreaming gender contributes significantly to improving the effectiveness of humanitarian assistance for Rohingya refugees. Integrating a gender lens is not merely an option, but an urgent necessity in every humanitarian practice to ensure the principles of justice, inclusivity, and non-discrimination.

5. REFERENCES

- Barnett, M. (2011). *Empire of humanity: A history of humanitarianism*. Cornell University Press.
- Barnett, M., & Weiss, T. G. (2008). *Humanitarianism in question: Politics, power, ethics*. Cornell University Press.
- Bowen, G. A. (2009). Document analysis as a qualitative research method. *Qualitative Research Journal*, 9(2), 27–40. <https://doi.org/10.3316/QRJ0902027>
- Centre for Human Dialogue. (2006). *Masculinities in conflict settings*. Centre for Human Dialogue.
- Crenshaw, K. (1991). Mapping the margins: Intersectionality, identity politics, and violence against women of color. *Stanford Law Review*, 43(6), 1241–1299. <https://doi.org/10.2307/1229039>

- Creswell, J. W., & Poth, C. N. (2018). *Qualitative inquiry and research design: Choosing among five approaches* (4th ed.). SAGE.
- El-Bushra, J. (2020). Gender in humanitarian action: From policy to practice. *Journal of Peacebuilding & Development*, 15(2), 142–157. <https://doi.org/10.1177/1542316620921342>
- El-Bushra, J. (2020). Gender in humanitarian practice: Critical reflections on the Rohingya response. *Gender & Development*, 28(1), 9–25. <https://doi.org/10.1080/13552074.2020.1717172>
- Ferris, E. (2011). *The politics of protection: The limits of humanitarian action*. Brookings Institution Press.
- Flick, U. (2018). *An introduction to qualitative research* (6th ed.). SAGE.
- Forsythe, D. P. (2005). *The humanitarians: The International Committee of the Red Cross*. Cambridge University Press.
- Freedman, J. (2016). *Gender, violence and politics in the Democratic Republic of Congo*. Ashgate Publishing.
- Freedman, J. (2016). Gendering the international asylum and refugee debate. Palgrave Macmillan. <https://doi.org/10.1057/978-1-137-53635-8>
- Gender and Disaster Network. (2005). *Gender and disaster fact sheet*. Gender and Disaster Network. <http://www.gdnonline.org>
- GTZ. (2001). *The impact of war on Somali women*. GTZ.
- International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC). (1996). *The Fundamental Principles of the Red Cross and Red Crescent Movement*. ICRC.
- Kabeer, N. (1999). Resources, agency, achievements: Reflections on the measurement of women's empowerment. *Development and Change*, 30(3), 435–464. <https://doi.org/10.1111/1467-7660.00125>
- Krause, J. (2021). Challenges to protection in armed conflict: Gender perspectives in humanitarian action. *Journal of Humanitarian Affairs*, 3(2), 45–57.
- Kusumaningrum, D. (2021). *Gender and humanitarian aid [PowerPoint slides]*. Program Studi Magister Hubungan Internasional, Universitas Gadjah Mada.
- Mahmood, S. S., Wroe, E., Fuller, A., & Leaning, J. (2017). *The Rohingya people of Myanmar: Health, human rights, and identity*. *The Lancet*, 389(10081), 1841–1850. [https://doi.org/10.1016/S0140-6736\(16\)00646-2](https://doi.org/10.1016/S0140-6736(16)00646-2)
- Slim, H. (2015). *Humanitarian ethics: A guide to the morality of aid in war and disaster*. Oxford University Press.
- Smith, M. (2019). The “Rohingya crisis” and the “two faces” of Myanmar. *Asian Affairs*, 50(4), 465–482. <https://doi.org/10.1080/03068374.2019.1684664>
- United Nations Development Programme (UNDP). (1994). *Human Development Report 1994: New dimensions of human security*. Oxford University Press. <http://hdr.undp.org/en/reports/global/hdr1994>
- United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA). (2022). *Humanitarian principles*. OCHA.
- United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA). (2024). *Myanmar Humanitarian Needs and Response Plan 2025*. Humanitarian Programme Cycle.
- Wake, C., & Yu, B. (2018). *The Rohingya crisis: Making the transition from emergency to longer-term development*. Overseas Development Institute (ODI). <https://odi.org>
- Women's Commission for Refugee Women and Children. (1997). *Refugee women and children: The neglected majority*. Women's Commission for Refugee Women and Children.
- Women's Refugee Commission. (2025). *Annual report 2025*. Women's Refugee Commission.
- Women's Refugee Commission. (2025). *The Myanmar refugee crisis*. Women's Refugee Commission. <https://www.womensrefugeecommission.org/crisis-response/myanmar/>
- Yin, R. K. (2018). *Case study research and applications: Design and methods* (6th ed.). SAGE.