

# SAFE FROM START: ROHINGYA WOMEN EMPOWERMENT PROJECT

## BACKGROUND

Malaysia is not a signatory to the 1951 Refugee Convention or the 1967 Protocol, nor does the country have any legal or administrative framework for refugees and asylum seekers. Refugees and asylum seekers are subjected to arrest, detention and deportation. Section 55 of the Immigration Act permits the Minister of Home Affairs to exempt any person from any provisions and hence the Minister has authority and discretion to regularise the stay of asylum seekers and refugees. Unfortunately, this provision has not been invoked for purposes of refugee protection. Malaysia has ratified the Convention on the Elimination of all Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW) and the Convention on the rights of the Child (CRC), and has in place a Domestic Violence Act 1994 and Child Act 2001 to protect the rights of women and girls.

Under these extremely vulnerable environments, refugee women and girls are faced with greater obstacles due to added complexities that surround them which include among others: gender disparities, risk of SGBV, lack of freedom and limited access to learning skills and income opportunities. In addition, as many of the refugee groups are patriarchal, women are discouraged from participating in community management and leadership structures. The few who are in leadership and management position may not have the relevant skills, experience and knowledge to carry out their role as community leaders. This is in addition to the limited support they receive from their male leaders and community elders. Studies from The Baseline Socio-economic Study (2016)<sup>1</sup> with the Rohingya community reveals the following:

- High level of employment amongst household members
- 92% reported not having savings; Incidence of high debt, 54%
- 40.7% have no formal education; 49% have primary/secondary education: linked to low skilled work opportunities
- Low enrolments in a UNHCR or other charitable livelihood's programme
- Livelihood challenges: sickness, injury, police harassment, job security/loss of employment
- Gender imbalances exist: only 8% of female respondents (15-60 years) are employed compared to 85% of male respondents

Mental Health Study conducted by University of New South Wales among 750 Rohingya families in Perak in close co-ordination with Rohingya refugee community based organisation, RSM shows 60% of women and children facing domestic violence that leads to family breakdown. 60% of the family living in unhygienic environment while majority facing poverty due to lack of education, skills and knowledge. 70% of the sample respondents showing mental health issues.

## OBJECTIVE, EXPECTED RESULTS & TARGET BENEFICIARIES

Safe from the Start is a community based project aims to enhance community engagement in SGBV (Sexual and Gender Based Violence) prevention and response through livelihoods programming. A total of 9 refugee community based organisations are selected for this project. One of the organisation is Rohingya Society Malaysia, based in Ipoh, Perak.

### Rohingya Society Malaysia (RSM)

RSM was formed on 16/02/2010 to serve Rohingya community with co-operation from Government, UNCHR and other stakeholders. Among the organization's objectives are to eradicate illiteracy, women and youth empowerment. Their key activities includes case management and referrals for assistance, provide funeral services, facilitate marriage and divorce certificates, providing primary education and vocational training, family

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mediation, prayer services and other. They have branches in 7 locations including Ipoh. The Ipoh branch conducts similar services to their members.

RSM Ipoh Office is located at 12A, Persiaran Datu, Ipoh, Perak. The Office has been operating since 2011. The community in Ipoh is familiar with RSM Ipoh and seeks information and support the Office. The community leaders estimated that there are about 4480 Rohingya individuals in Perak of whom 70% are males and 30% are female. There is an estimated 300 children below the ages of 17 years old. UNHCR's registered population database indicates that there are 862 individuals in Perak. Of this, 81% are male and 19% are female. There are 108 children below the age of 17 years old. Of the total numbers, 33% are family composition and 67% singles. As a response to the findings of the Mental Health Survey, RSM Ipoh with support of local NGOs and UNHCR intends to conduct community outreach and cultural development project. The project will emphasize on building awareness on family planning, hygiene, gender based violence among some 120 families within Ipoh. RSM also aims to initiate Women Support Group, as a medium to prevent and respond to Sexual and Gender Based Violence.

### Women Support Group

Under the Safe from the Start Project, the Office aims to work hand in hand with RSM and local NGOs to establish a women support group that provides avenue for the Rohingya women to gather and help each other, discuss their experience and learn from each other. Considering the cultural barrier, illiteracy and fear of authorities that generally hinders Rohingya women from participating in empowerment program, the project will start small, with 15 Rohingya women. They will be trained with relevant livelihood skills in the beginning, followed by income generating activity to build their knowledge and self-confidence. Next year, the women group will be supported with their leadership skills to manage the Women Support Group.

The Livelihoods Unit of UNHCR Malaysia seeks qualified and experienced service provider based in Ipoh, Perak to develop and implement group development and women empowerment activities among 15 Rohingya women. The overall objectives of the training is to improve their self-reliance and group cohesiveness among the women.

Expected results from the intervention are as follows:

Objective: Self-Reliance and Livelihoods Improved		
Output 1: Access to training and learning enabled		
Impact Indicators:	Indicators:	Target/Expected results:
	% of persons of concern (18-59 yrs) with own business/self-employed for more than 6 months	29-32%
Performance Indicators:	# of PoC receiving life-skills training for livelihoods purposes (literacy, leadership, vocational)	15 women

## ROLES AND RESPONSIBILITIES OF THE SERVICE PROVIDER

### PROPOSED ACTIVITIES

Taking the guidance from *'Field Guidance for Artisanal/SGBV joint programming'* the proposed intervention will focus on adjusting current programming to build cohesive groups. It includes therapeutic activities, group development and vocational training.

## Activities

<b>1) Focus group discussion / Assessment (Baseline Data)</b>	
Description	An in-depth assessment through focus group discussions will be conducted to gauge their current socio-economic situation, affiliations and interest and skill levels among others. This session will also be used to consult them on project implementation arrangements.
Date/Duration	July 2017 / 1 month
<b>2) Leadership training 1: Professional development &amp; Communication Skills</b>	
Description	The aim of this training is to strengthen the capacity and capabilities of women groups to manage group communication, resolve conflicts, make group decisions, and also expose women groups to social enterprises to develop their entrepreneurial mindset.
Date/Duration	Sept – Nov 2016 / 3 months (10 sessions x 2 hours = 20 hours)
<b>3) Functional Literacy Training</b>	
Description	Communication skills for the marketplace is the core focus of this training. It teaches them the necessary vocabulary and communication skills associated with their day to day needs and respective vocational skills/business they are learning. It will also teach them basic numeracy skills.
Date/Duration	Aug – Oct 2017 / 3 months (20 sessions x 2 hours = 40 hours)
<b>4) Vocational training</b>	
Description	A market-oriented vocational skill training will be identified upon completing the focus group discussion/assessment. The training can be an advanced training to enhance their current skills, or a new skill that would complement or strengthen their goal towards running a group business.
Date/Duration	Aug – Sept 2017 / 2 months (10 sessions x 3 hours = 30 hours)

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## LOGISTICAL ARRANGEMENTS

The design of the training course should take into consideration the participants and the artisan groups' needs and challenges, such as the following:

- i. Market Based Vocational training
- ii. Training Venue
- iii. Training Schedule

- iv. Community coordinator/mobilizer
- v. Child Care Arrangement
- vi. Interpreter service
- vii. Transport Arrangement for Beneficiaries/Participants

The Service Provider is responsible for all necessary logistic arrangements throughout project implementation. UNHCR will, however, supply necessary information to facilitate such arrangements.

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## REPORTING AND FINAL ASSESSMENT

The Service Provider is required to submit a midterm and final progress report for each group on the intervention, achievement and impact.

## OPERATIONAL DETAILS:

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### SERVICE PROVIDER QUALIFICATION

- Legal entity which is allowed to operate in Malaysia;
- Be committed to UNHCR core mandate – refugee protection;
- Has relevant expertise in the relevant training programmes;
- Good knowledge on refugees’ situation in Malaysia.
- Prior experience working with refugees is an added advantage

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### GUIDING PRINCIPLES

- The service provider should continuously consult and include refugees in decision-making processes.
- Training modules must aim to build the capacity of refugee artisans/beneficiaries towards establishing and operating a sustainable refugee-owned business through group development, skills acquisition, leadership and/or business development using experiential teaching methodologies.

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### IMPLEMENTATION ARRANGEMENT

Effective Date : As soon as possible  
Project duration : July – December 2017 (6 months)  
Project Location : Ipoh, Perak

