



Refugee Women for Peace and Justice Mid-Year Report



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About Refugee Women for Peace and Justice

Mission

The mission of Refugee Women for Peace and Justice is to amplify the voices of Rohingya women to advocate for their rights and freedom for peace and justice for the Rohingya and other Refugees and displaced people. Refugee Women for Peace and Justice (RWPJ) will create a safe space for Rohingya Refugee and displaced women in Cox's Bazar, Bangladesh and other Asia-Pacific countries to access education, employment, and to advocate for Refugee and human rights.

Not *for* Refugees but *with* Refugees

International organizations working to improve the situation of Rohingya Refugees say they work *for* Rohingya Refugees. RWPJ works to shift that language and mindset so that they work *with* Rohingya Refugees. RWPJ believes that we as Rohingya Refugees know best what we need, and need to be included in making the decisions that affect us. We don't want to see people speaking for us; we want to speak for ourselves. And, we believe that sustainable solutions are not those that are imposed on us, but the solutions that come from us. That is why we believe in helping Refugees to engage with the decision makers in their local areas to help them get immediate responses to their problems, as well as facilitating meetings between young Refugee leaders and policy makers in the international community for long-term sustainable solutions. RWPJ will carry their voices and deliver their messages to the right people at the right time.



Our Vision

Violence has forced Rohingya Refugees from their ancestral homes in Myanmar (Burma) to Bangladesh since at least the 1990s. Bangladesh is now the home of nearly 2 million Rohingya Refugees who have come in waves fleeing violence in the 1990s, fleeing the conflicts of 2017, and again in August, 2024. Bangladesh has been hosting Rohingya Refugees for decades. Some older Rohingya Refugees returned to Myanmar (Burma) twice, only to be forced to flee a third time. These people have almost lost hope and Rohingya are at the risk of being forgotten by the world. We don't want to measure the success of the international community's response by the number of years it has been supporting the Rohingya; we want to measure their success and our success by how many sustainable, peaceful, and just solutions are created for the Rohingya. While RWPJ works with Rohingya Refugees in the camps, we never forget that the most important goal is for the refugees to peacefully, sustainably, and justly return to their ancestral homes. This solution can not be created by materials, food or cash, but through education, knowledge, skills and advocacy. This is how we will see peace, justice, and a permanent end to the Genocide for Rohingya.



pictured: Rohingya women at an RWPJ training

Our Founder: Lucky Karim

Lucky Karim is a Rohingya refugee from Burma (Myanmar) who, in August 2017, was compelled to flee her homeland amidst genocidal attacks perpetrated by the Burmese Military. Following six years of resilience in Bangladesh's Cox's Bazar camp, she resettled in the United States in December 2022. Commencing her career at the tender age of 15 in 2018 within the refugee camp, Lucky dedicated herself to serving her community by collaborating with numerous international humanitarian organizations to provide vital assistance.

One of first Rohingya women in the camps who was proficient in English and capable of bridging communication with the international community by age 17, Lucky defied odds to pursue higher education at the esteemed Asian University for Women in Chittagong. Despite childhood adversities in the refugee camp, her determination propelled her forward.

Now recognized as a prominent human rights activist, Lucky collaborates closely with US government officials, stakeholders, policymakers, and UN agencies, focusing on addressing the Rohingya crisis and broader issues in Burma. At just 19 years old, she testified before the Tom Lantos Human Rights Commission at Congress in 2023, advocating for the rights of women and advising policymakers on measures to ameliorate the situation in Burma and Southeast Asia. With her influential voice resonating globally, Lucky remains a catalyst for positive change, tirelessly working to uplift her people and effect meaningful progress on the international stage. Lucky has written a memoir about her life which will be published World Refugee Day - June 20th, 2025.



Lucky Karim is also a Refugee Fellow at Refugees International.

The Development of RWPJ

To the Refugee Women for Peace and Justice community:

It's an honor to contribute to RWPJ. In the face of one of the world's gravest human rights catastrophes, we offer a hopeful and positive response with goals of peace and justice.

RWPJ incorporated in the United States in August, 2024. Founder Lucky Karim recruited an international, five-person Board of Directors with extensive experience with the Rohingya, in Refugee rights, and with non-governmental organizations. By September, 2024, RWPJ was recognized by the IRS as a registered, 501(c)3 non-profit organization.

In the following months, RWPJ clarified its mission and work plans, hired me as its first worker, set up administrative and financial systems, and identified and pursued potential funding. RWPJ recruited an experienced, three-person Rohingya Field Team in Cox's Bazar, Bangladesh, which began working in November, 2024. Their inspiring work is reviewed in the following pages.

In February, the RWPJ Board of Directors voted to hire Founder Lucky Karim as RWPJ's first Executive Director. In this role, she continues to oversee the RWPJ's work and the RWPJ team. She meets with funders and potential funders, sharing about RWPJ's work and vision. She also meets regularly with governmental and non-governmental leaders and decision makers involved in Rohingya Refugee issues to advocate for the Rohingya Refugee community.

While RWPJ's work so far in service of the Rohingya community is truly heartening, I am even more hopefully thinking of the rapidly growing impact that RWPJ will make in the future.

Yours,



Tom Clowes
RWPJ Program Officer



Our Work So Far

In November and December, 2024, RWPJ began its first project, “16 Days of Activism.” In this campaign, our RWPJ Rohingya field team met daily with Rohingya women in the camps in Cox’s Bazar to discuss and work against gender-based violence. RWPJ also distributed hygiene kits for women.

In December, RWPJ began an emergency GoFundMe fundraising campaign. Over US\$1500 was raised and dispersed to forcibly displaced Rohingya in Myanmar.

In January, 2025, RWPJ began training sessions led by the RWPJ Field Team. Each of the two RWPJ Trainers met twice a week with ten Rohingya women in the camps to provide information on basic skills (like how to sign one’s name), Refugee rights, women’s rights, human rights, and camp governance. RWPJ provided over 40 training sessions to women in the Rohingya camps.

Starting in June, 2025, RWPJ will make available micro-grants, materials, and supports to the women who attended training sessions so that they can start their own embroidery businesses, and also provide education.

In addition, RWPJ Executive Director Lucky Karim continues to meet regularly with high-level officials in Washington, DC; at the UN; and in Cox’s Bazar; to advocate for the Rohingya Refugee community in the face of cuts to food allocations, ongoing insecurity, and constant human rights abuses.



Our Focus Areas

Education: RWPJ provides basic education for Rohingya women and girls in the camps so they can more fully participate in their society. Through our classes, Rohingya women and girls learn to write their names, sign and use important documents, memorize the name of their camp or block, and know the camp administrators assigned to them. All these learnings help them to advocate for themselves and speak up for their rights. RWPJ believes that our work can help them to find peace within their area and make them feel that they are human beings, full and proper members of the local and international community, and have the same value, dignity, and rights as anyone else.

Livelihood: RWPJ will support Rohingya women to enter the workforce through self-employment, with a focus on helping those already in vulnerable situations. We know that many refugee women already have valuable skills in embroidery, clothing production, meal and snacks preparation, and the arts. Furthermore, these women already know to whom they would market their products and services and how their business can be profitable. What they need from RWPJ is some basic materials to get started and a small amount of guidance (and encouragement) as they start. So, RWPJ will provide short small business development training and micro-grants of start-up materials. RWPJ will then continue to monitor and support their work.

Advocacy: RWPJ will provide leadership training on democracy, human rights, and Refugee rights so that Rohingya will have a seat at the table of decision-makers as they make the crucial decisions that affect Rohingya lives and futures. RWPJ will recruit a team of committed young Rohingya community members willing to stand up and fight for their rights for their community to make decisions about the issues that affect them. RWPJ will facilitate meetings with the young leaders' local and regional authorities, UN agencies, and other bodies. RWPJ will use its experience and connections to help the young leaders overcome the many restrictions placed on their movement, communication, and publications. RWPJ will also use its organizational connections to arrange virtual meetings and events where the young leaders will meet with and present to international stakeholders, policymakers, and the international community.

About the Rohingya

The Rohingya people were stripped of their citizenship in Myanmar (Burma) and violently forced from their homes in Rakhine State in the Rohingya Genocide. The Rohingya people have been denied their citizenship and all other basic human rights in Burma (Myanmar) for generations, were forced to flee their homes more than ten times since the 1990s, and in August, 2017, more than a million Rohingya fled home to escape the Genocide and are sheltered in Cox's Bazar, Bangladesh. However, leaving their homes over and over again did not solve their problems and the Genocide was not over when a million of them fled their homes. It has been continuing in many different ways, even in the camps. They lack basic human rights, education, livelihood, and live in unstable conditions in Bangladesh as well as Malaysia, Indonesia, Thailand, India, and other countries. Because of this persecution, most Rohingya Refugees do not read or write and receive little or no formal education. Policymakers make decisions that affect the lives of Rohingya refugees in a top-down manner with little if any input or participation from Rohingya Refugees themselves, making long-term solutions hard to find. We believe that Rohingya Refugees know best what Rohingya Refugees need. But, Rohingya Refugees rarely have a seat at the decision-making table.

Because of the vulnerable situation of Rohingya Refugees in general and because their human rights aren't being recognized, Rohingya women and girls face additional challenges. Many face sexual violence, domestic violence, or human trafficking. Many are forced to get married off as youth as young as 12. Then they are not allowed to be outdoors for any purpose. Many are divorced after giving birth to children, their parents are no longer able to serve them, and it is challenging for them to support themselves and their family. The women therefore go through a lot of mental issues; they are also often discriminated against or abused by the society because of their status.



RWPJ Board

Begun
Tomal Hossain
Marie Sophie Pettersson
Lucky Karim, Executive Director (ex officio)