

Malaysia



Photo: ICMC / J. Loo



International Catholic
Migration Commission

Restoring Dignity. Inspiring Change.

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Context

There are more than 100,000 asylum seekers and refugees in Malaysia, the majority of whom are originally from Myanmar. In the absence of a formal legal framework governing refugees, these groups are not distinguished from undocumented migrants and face risks of arrest, detention and deportation.

Women, girls and children from a range of Burmese refugee communities living in overcrowded urban conditions are particularly vulnerable to abuse and exploitation as a result of their irregular immigration status, the lack of social support or work rights, and social exclusion in a male-dominated society.

Where the RWPC works



Home visits



Refugee learning centres, youth centres and schools



Community and religious forums



Hotlines and referral sources

Operations

Since 2010, ICMC has worked within Burmese refugee communities to address and reduce the risk of sexual and gender-based violence (SGBV), and to assist SGBV survivors and their families with their urgent and long-term needs.

Starting in Kuala Lumpur and expanding into the Klang Valley and Penang State, this work is dynamic, progressive and multifaceted, evolving each year to address new aspects and perspectives of SGBV. To ensure the long-term value of its projects and extend their impact beyond Malaysia, ICMC also responds to the onwards movement of refugees by identifying new beneficiaries for training and assistance on an ongoing basis, equipping them with transferrable skills to be used after resettlement, and building awareness on sexual and gender-based violence within communities.

ICMC's operations in Malaysia give strong emphasis on building trust and constructive relationships with key actors and communities. At the heart of this approach is the Refugee Women's Protection Corps (RWPC), a dedicated body of volunteers recruited and trained by ICMC. Comprising both female and male volunteers from different Burmese refugee groups, the RWPC provides access to refugee communities and increases the reach and effectiveness of ICMC's projects.

“ I gained a lot of knowledge on how to live a better and healthier life and how to cope with anger. This helped me to refrain from drinking and to bring about changes in my life ”

A man who participated in a training session on sexual and gender-based violence in Malaysia.

Activities

Supporting the Refugee Women's Protection Corps

ICMC supports the Refugee Women's Protection Corps (RWPC) as it works within Burmese refugee communities to reduce, prevent and address sexual and gender-based violence (SGBV) through:

- outreach and awareness-raising activities in homes, schools, community centers and religious institutions;
- peer counselling for SGBV victims and families in person and by telephone;
- targeted projects to address the effects of SGBV on children and youth; and
- hotlines in Kuala Lumpur and Penang, a dedicated email address and other referral sources to assist SGBV survivors make disclosures and respond to their emergency protection, safety and medical needs.

ICMC also maintains and improves the RWPC by recruiting and training new volunteers on an ongoing basis, and ensuring that it remains composed of both male and female representatives from a range of Burmese refugee communities.

Promoting children's safety and awareness on sexual and gender-based violence

The Children's Safety Programme (CSP) is an important component of ICMC's work to reduce, prevent and address SGBV. Through the CSP, Burmese refugee children receive SGBV awareness training in schools and primary learning centers, and teachers receive specialized training which focuses on SGBV as it affects children.

ICMC also develops a range of creative means to reinforce the key messages of the CSP, such as a coloring book which explains acceptable and non acceptable touching. The booklet is translated into Burmese and distributed to children upon completion of their training.



PROTECTION

ICMC addresses and reduces the risk of SGBV through a number of activities:

- outreach and awareness raising;
- peer counselling for SGBV victims and families.

It responds to protection, safety, and medical needs of SGBV survivors:

- access to safe shelters and support services, such as medical care, interpretation, transportation, psycho-social support and counselling;
- hotlines and other referral sources to assist survivors make disclosures and respond to their urgent needs;
- emergency cash and material assistance.

ICMC improves the capacity of communities to prevent and respond to SGBV:

- supporting the Refugee Women's Protection Corps;
- training for refugee community organizations;
- mini-grants for community projects designed to reduce SGBV and/or assist survivors.

It addresses the effects of SGBV on children and youth by providing:

- play therapy for children who have witnessed or experienced abuse;
- SGBV and children's safety awareness raising for children and youth;
- SGBV awareness training for teachers.

Improving the capacity of the community to prevent and respond to SGBV

ICMC supports the community in preventing and responding to SGBV by providing refugee community organizations with:

- awareness training on sexual and gender-based violence;
- technical skills to write proposals for and develop SGBV awareness and prevention projects; and
- mini-grants for projects designed to reduce SGBV and/or assist survivors.



One of the winning drawings of the "Awareness Through Art @ Penang" competition. Rohingya and Burmese school children were asked to express the themes of "respect" and "staying safe".

Our local partners

- Enrich Counselling and Therapy Centre
- Life Line Association Malaysia
- Malaysian Child Resource Institute
- Pusat Kebajikan Good Shepherd (PKGS)
- Women's Aid Organisation (Pertubuhan Pertolongan Wanita)
- Women's Centre for Change (WCC) Penang.

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Key figures

In 2014, ICMC provided assistance to

100 victims
of SGBV

623 students
received training about personal safety

185 boys and girls
received training to prevent SGBV

The ICMC-trained volunteers of the RWPC reached out to

4,287 adult refugees

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