

## **Burmese women in Delhi: Present Challenges and Future prospects**

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India is home to a large population of Chins from Burma who have fled their country due to ethnic and religious discrimination by the successive military regimes. While a substantial number of these migrants stay in the North Eastern states of Manipur and Mizoram, a significant number have migrated to New Delhi and stay in western parts of the city having being recognized as Refugees by the UNHCR.

This paper aims to focus on the living situation of the women refugees who though have fled religious discrimination, arbitrary detention/imprisonment, exploitation and sexual abuse in their home country continue to face economic, health, social and psychological challenges in Delhi. Of special concern are the young single Burmese girls (unaccompanied minors) who come to seek refugee status and face grave exploitation in Delhi with no family to shelter them. Some of these young girls work as maids in the houses of local population or are hired as housekeepers by some expat families living in Delhi. They are made to work in virtual servitude and are subjected to sexual and physical abuse.

By virtue of working in the UNHCR Refugee Status Determination unit I have been interacting with the Burmese women very closely with respect to the concerns they face as refugees in Delhi.

This research paper seeks to answer the following questions:

1. What are the protection problems being faced by Burmese women refugees in Delhi? How can the refugee community themselves help in addressing protection concerns of Burmese women in the absence of a National Legal Framework in India?
2. What are the financial, health related and psycho-social challenges being faced by Burmese women (with special reference to those who are divorced, are single parents or are unaccompanied minors)?
3. How can UNHCR help Burmese women become self-reliant economically? What livelihoods schemes/projects could the community run on its own in future to secure the refugee women financially?