

REFUGEE YOUTH NETWORK (RYN)

# IMPACT REPORT 2021-2023

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# Acknowledgment

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# Introduction

## About RYN

The Refugee Youth Network (RYN) is a non-profit initiative founded in November 2021 by a group of refugee youth leaders from various communities. RYN is led by refugee youth, aiming to empower, mobilize, and provide peer support to young people forcibly displaced in Malaysia. Through various projects focusing on Higher Education, Mental Health, Skills Training, Capacity Building, and Emergency Support, RYN serves as a platform for these endeavors.

## The Problem

By the end of February 2024, the UNHCR in Malaysia had officially registered around 187,020 refugees and asylum-seekers. Approximately 90% of this population comprises Rohingya-ethnic refugees from Myanmar, with an additional 5% hailing from various minority ethnic groups within Myanmar. The remaining 5% represents individuals originating from countries like Pakistan, Somalia, Syria, Yemen, Afghanistan, Sri Lanka, Iraq, and Palestine. Notably, within this demographic, an estimated 50,000 individuals are minors under the age of 18.

Despite the substantial refugee population, Malaysia has refrained from ratifying the 1951 Refugee Convention or the 1967 Protocol. Consequently, refugees and asylum seekers lack official recognition by the government, resulting in constrained access to fundamental human rights including employment, affordable healthcare, and education. The absence of legal status often forces refugees into low-wage jobs, making it challenging to meet their basic needs while exposing them to vulnerabilities like exploitation, arrest, and detention.

The existing refugee support system falls short in catering to the specific needs of young refugees, leading to their exclusion from critical advocacy platforms. Recognizing this gap, a team of 8 refugee youths established the Refugee Youth Network. This initiative empowers these youths and proactively identify and assist vulnerable young refugees, ensuring they receive the necessary support for improved access to holistic and dignified opportunities.

## Mission

To provide the tools, knowledge, and skills to enable refugee youth to take action and to address their needs and the needs of their community.

## Vision

Our goal is to empower youth to create systemic change and take the lead in advancing refugee rights in Malaysia.

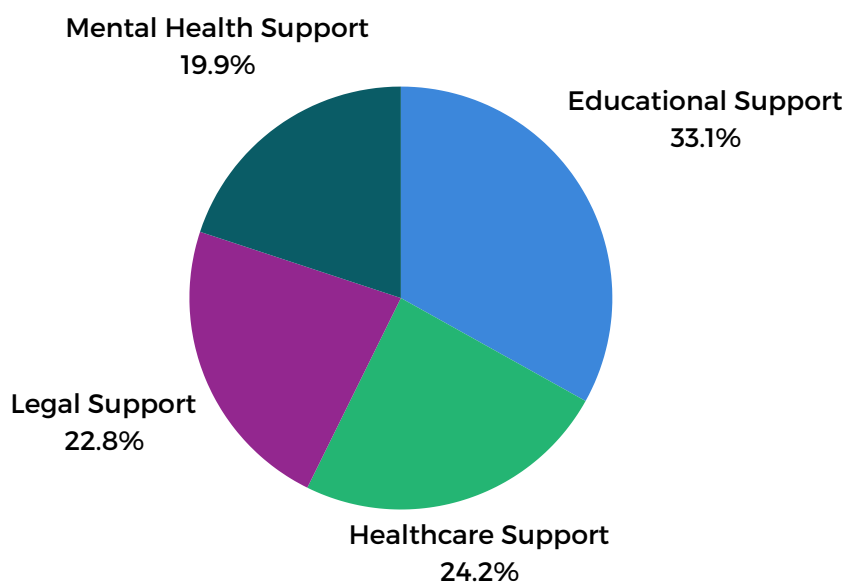


*Photo: RYN Team in 2021*

# Needs Assessment

Prior to the establishment of RYN, our team conducted a focus group discussion (FGD) in January 2022. This session engaged 15 refugee youth leaders representing diverse regions such as Myanmar, Afghanistan, Yemen, Somalia, Sudan, Sri Lanka, Pakistan, and Iraq. The primary objective of this meeting was to explore RYN's mission and objectives while gathering valuable insights into the distinct needs of refugee youth within these communities.

In addition to the FGD, a survey was disseminated in seven languages including English, Malay, Arabic, Persian, Somali, Burmese, and Urdu, garnering 135 responses from youth across various demographics and cultural backgrounds. This initiative led to the identification of four key focus areas for our forthcoming programs, as illustrated in the chart below.



# Impact at a Glance

# 623

Refugee youth supported through capacity building and skills training programs.

# 128

Refugee youth supported through emergency funds projects on mental health, education, and other medical needs.

# 751

Combined total of refugee youth who participated in all of RYN's programs and projects from 2021 to 2023



# Capacity Building Programs

Since our establishment until 2023, we have organized a total of 14 events and programs that aimed at building the capacity and uplift the skills of refugee and asylum seeker youths in Malaysia. Below are some highlights of these programs:

## 01

### Online Gender-Based Violence Training



Eighteen refugee women leaders have completed a comprehensive 2-day training program aimed at equipping them with the necessary skills to safeguard themselves and their communities against online gender-based violence, encompassing cyberbullying, harassment, and other forms of online abuse. This training initiative took place on October 24th and 25th, 2021, in partnership with the KRYSS Network.

## 02

### Refugee Education Showcase



On August 6, 2022, RYN organized the inaugural Refugee Education Showcase. This hybrid event sought to facilitate interactions between refugee youth and various educational institutions such as universities and colleges offering scholarship programs, educational courses, and support services for refugees. Additionally, it offered a networking opportunity for the youth to engage with the guest speakers. The event attracted 106 refugees and featured 13 representatives from universities and organizations offering tertiary education services.



# 03

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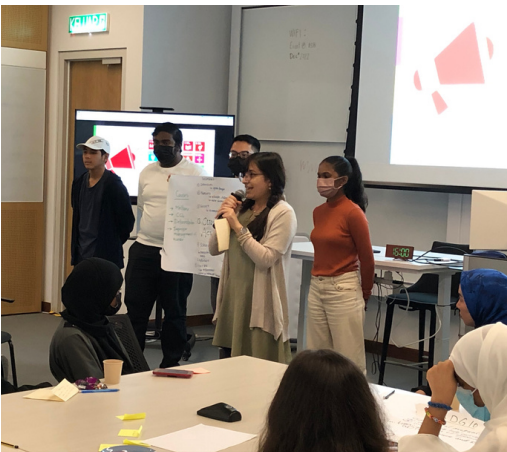


## Psychological First-Aid (PFA) Training

In September 2022, we successfully conducted PFA training for 25 refugee youth advocates. The primary objective of this training was to equip them with the necessary knowledge and resources in mental health to enhance their ability to support community members experiencing mental or emotional challenges. Collaboratively, we established a comprehensive framework encompassing guidelines, criteria, and a referral system for case management and intake.

# 04

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## Presentation Skills Training

Twenty-seven refugee youth representing nine distinct countries engaged in a comprehensive one-day training session focused on honing presentation skills, pitching techniques, and public speaking. The training session, which integrated the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals, took place on December 13, 2022, through a collaborative effort with the ASEAN Research Center.

# 05

## Muay Thai & Self-Defense Classes



We collaborated with a social enterprise named Discover Muay Thai to conduct more than 15 classes, engaging a total of 30 participants over several months. The training sessions were designed to offer refugee youth instruction in the art of Muay Thai, a form of martial arts renowned for its advantages in self-defense techniques, mental well-being, and potential career opportunities.

# 06

## Futsal Tournaments

In collaboration with Youth Empowerment Support, two futsal tournaments were organized within distinct refugee communities and with local participants in December 2022 and June 2023, respectively. Both events garnered attendance from over 100 individuals and featured more than 10 teams hailing from a variety of nationalities, including Rohingya, Somali, Chin, Afghan, Sudanese, Yemeni, and Malaysian representatives. Notably, the tournaments included participation from two girls' teams representing a refugee high school. The significance of organizing such events lies in providing a secure platform for these youths, particularly the girls, to engage in football without stigma or discrimination.



# 07

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## Barista Training



In collaboration with Cottle Coffee Academy in Kuala Lumpur, we organized a comprehensive two-day Barista Training program for 10 enthusiastic refugee youths aspiring to pursue a career in the realm of coffee. The participants, coming from diverse backgrounds including Myanmar, Syria, Yemen, Somalia, Iran, South Sudan, and Pakistan, were aged between 16 and 25. This training encompassed fundamental coffee preparation techniques, mastering espresso crafting, operating coffee machinery, emphasizing hygiene practices, and enhancing customer service skills.

# 08

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## Problem-Solving Strategies Training



We collaborated with a professional trainer from MiStory Enterprise, who specializes in working with Afghan refugees, to conduct a comprehensive four-month training program for a cohort of 70 Afghan refugees in Malaysia. This initiative was carried out in partnership with the HUMA Cultural Center. The training curriculum covered a diverse range of topics, including problem-solving, critical thinking, self-empowerment, conscious mindfulness, and project management.

09

## Art Therapy & Well-Being Nature Trip



In partnership with the Malaysia Kachin National Association, we organized a day-long excursion to a waterfall for a cohort of 60 refugee youths hailing from various Myanmar ethnicities, including Kachin, Karen, Falam, Mon, Chin, among others. The itinerary encompassed hiking, mindfulness exercises, and art therapy sessions, fostering a sense of unity among the participants and facilitating cross-cultural interactions.

10

## Graphic Design Course



In collaboration with the Somali Women Association Malaysia (SWAM), we orchestrated a 3-month Intensive Graphic Design Course tailored for a cohort of 7 Somali refugee women. The curriculum delved deeply into graphic design principles, focusing on a wide spectrum of Adobe Illustrator skills. The participants honed their abilities in creating posters and designs through adept manipulation of vector shapes, mastering tools such as the Pen Tool, Pathfinder, Blob Brush, and Gradient.

# 11

## Well-Being Trip & Networking Event

In collaboration with the Chin Refugee Youth Organization (CYOM), a group of 50 refugee youth participated in a day-trip to Malacca City. The excursion was designed to facilitate networking, motivational discussions, and team-building exercises. Feedback from the participants indicated a heightened motivation to engage in youth-led initiatives within their communities. As a result, CYOM intends to host additional projects to foster collaborative efforts among these youth, empowering them to spearhead community programs.



# Emergency Fund Projects

In addition to capacity-building programs, we have allocated funds to support emergency projects aimed at meeting the needs of refugee and asylum-seeking youths in Malaysia. The following outlines key aspects of these projects:

## (1) Mental Health Counselling

Through our collaboration with the mental health service provider, HumanKind, we facilitated counseling sessions for 92 refugees in need of mental health support. These clients come from 11 different countries. RYN extended support by offering these individuals qualified psychological counseling at a reduced rate of RM40 per hour (equivalent to approximately USD 9), in addition to interpretation services and transportation allowances. The recipients of these sessions were grappling with various mental health challenges such as anxiety, depression, stress, emotional regulation difficulties, trauma, and panic attacks. Notably, 24 of these refugees were awaiting registration with UNHCR, a segment often overlooked by other service providers.

### Themes Identified:

- Anxiety on the day to day
- Depression
- Family pressures
- Family/friends conflict
- Stress and emotional management
- Panic attacks
- Trauma
- Learning about emotions and understanding themselves better



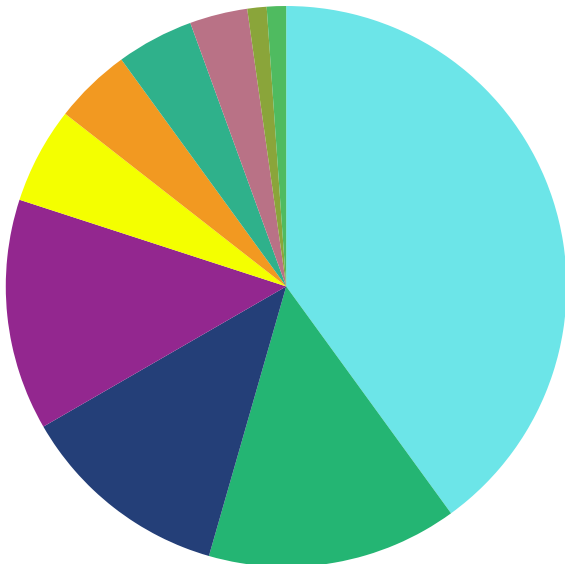
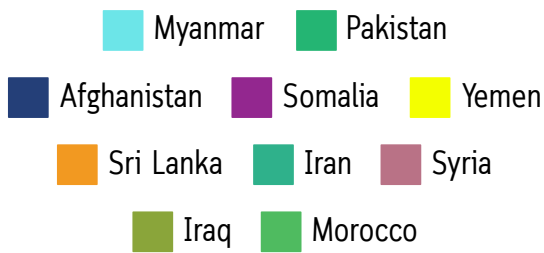
Photo Credit: Canva

# 92

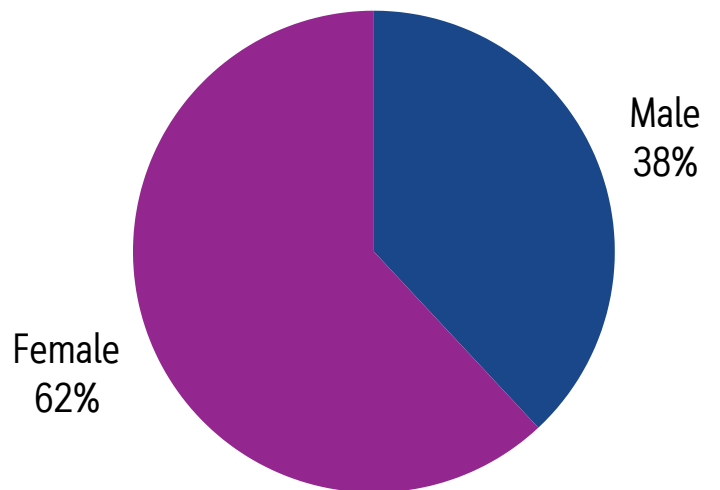
Refugee youth supported with Counselling Sessions



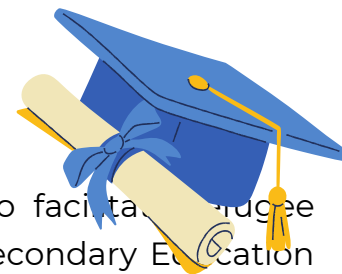
## Countries of Origin:



## Sex:

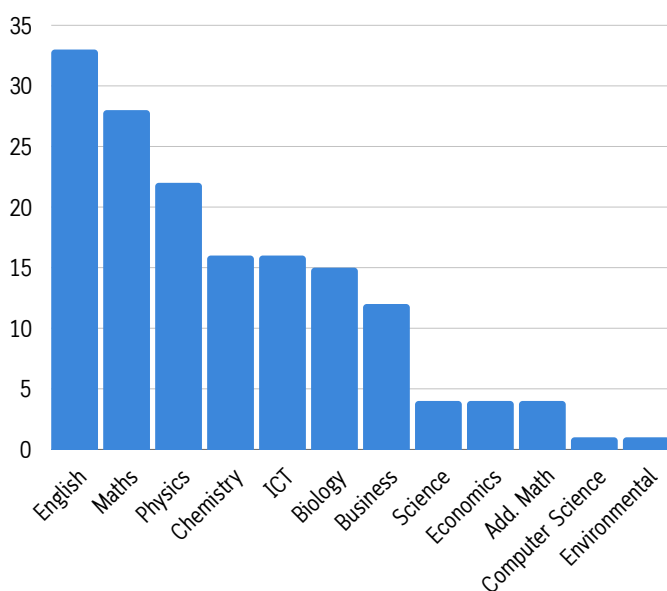


## (2) IGCSE Scholarship Fund

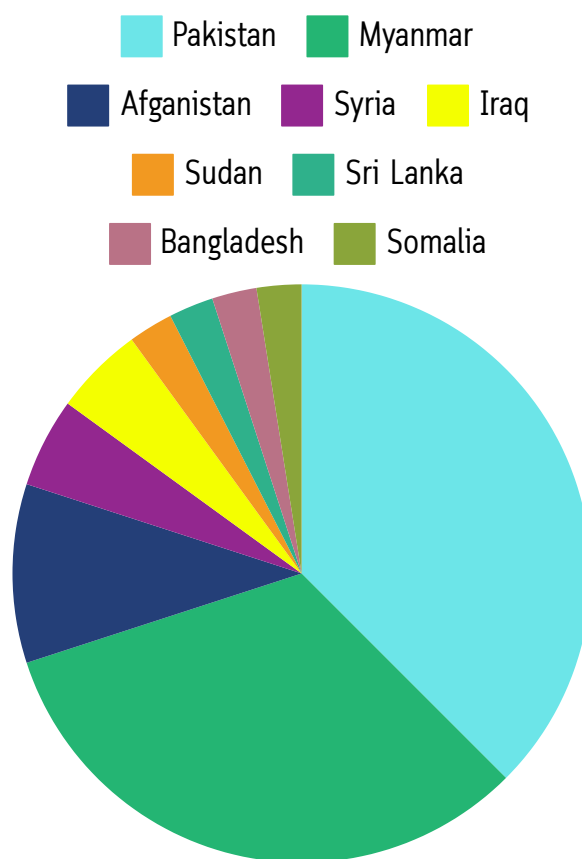


We established an IGCSE Scholarship Fund designed to facilitate refugee youth in taking the International General Certificate of Secondary Education (IGCSE) examination, a credential of considerable significance for college and university admissions. By partnering with Sri Emas International School, we secured a 40% discount in exam fees for our students. This initiative enabled the support of 30 students from various refugee communities who underwent rigorous assessments and met the necessary criteria for the examination. In 2023, 25 students successfully completed the exams, while 5 individuals will undertake the assessments in June 2024 due to medical reasons necessitating a postponement.

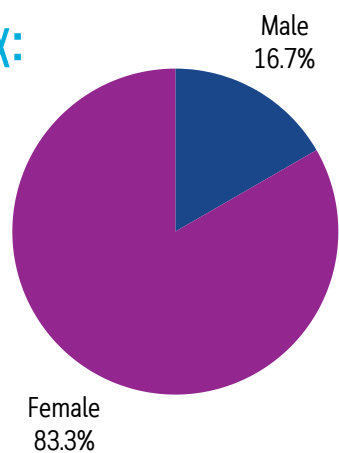
### Subjects:



### Countries of Origin:



### Sex:





# Emergency Fund Projects

## (3) Medical, Rental and Food

In partnership with the Refugee Emergency Fund (REF), a refugee-led organization in Malaysia, we identified 6 refugees who were faced with an emergency situation and needed financial assistance for their medical, rental and food support.

### Cases Supported:

- Chemotherapy cost for a 50-year old cancer patient and single mother
- Transportation and food support to a 3-year old Somali cancer patient
- Medical bill paid for a 7-month old Rohingya child diagnosed with lung infection
- Food support to a Rohingya mother of 3 kids,
- Rental support to an unemployed Burmese family of 5 kids,
- Chemotherapy for a 34 year old Rohingya Oral Cancer patient and father of 3 kids.



# Testimonies

## IGCSE Student from Myanmar

*"It was phenomenal, an interesting journey that I took in my life. I can't help but feel seriously grateful for how it's turned out. The coolest part? The financial stress? Yeah, it's practically non-existent now. Thanks to the scholarship, I could actually focus on studying without constantly worrying about debts. Past 2 years, they were a bit of a rollercoaster. But guess what? The scholarship wasn't just about the money; it was like having a cheerleader in my corner, pushing me through the tough bits. Those exams are tough, no doubt. But they give me a purpose, to show what I've learned. I like to continue my studies for these subjects. I want to get to a great university after my A Level. I would like to once again thank you all."*

## Afghan participants from HUMA CB training

*"I learned how to remove challenges from my own path and what path brings me closer to express my idea in a beautiful way, and among the benefits of the sessions, I learned to increase self-confidence and never let obstacles cause me to move away. I want it to be my love and desire"*

## Myanmar participant in the art therapy event

*"I have learned that we, the youth, need to engage in this type of activity more. Meeting each other holds significant value and marks the beginning of success. I felt very peaceful in my mind, recharging myself. For the next time, I believe we need more engagement activities to get to know each other better."*

## Somali participant in the Graphic Design Course

*I've been learning Adobe Illustrator for the past month. I've been enjoying the course and have learned a lot about the unique tools Illustrator offers. I particularly love creating my own illustrations because it allows me to be creative and have fun. When I have to recreate something, I feel the pressure to be perfect, but with my own art, I can let my creativity flow. My instructor is amazing, and I'm grateful for the opportunity to learn from them. Thanks to Ms. Hafsa and SWAM/RYN for providing this opportunity."*

## IGCSE Student from Syria

*The scholarship program helped me by providing me with the opportunity to take the Cambridge exams so that hopefully in the future I can have a successful and peaceful life. For my plans after this, for now I am preparing for my chemistry and English exam coming up in May/June 2024. In the future after my exams are over I would love to do A-level IGCSE so that I have more options when I enter university. So far I finished all my exams that I was supposed to take for this year and I am happy to say I did good in these exams, and I will try my best to do as good or even better in the upcoming exams.*



# Partners

Our achievements and impact would not be possible without the invaluable support from the following partners:



humankind



# Founding Team



**ESMAIL GHAIBI**  
*Afghanistan*



**NIYA AMIR**  
*Pakistan*



**JAW TU HKAWNG**  
*Myanmar*



**AMBER MARIA**  
*Pakistan*



**ABEERA ABDULLAH**  
*Somalia*



**HLAWN KIP TIAL**  
*Myanmar*



**HASAN AL-AKRAA**  
*Syria*



**YUSRA ALI**  
*Somalia*

# Project Team



**NU NU LUSAN**  
*Myanmar*  
*Coordinator*



**AMMARA ARTHUR**  
*Pakistan*  
*Intern*





# The Way Forward

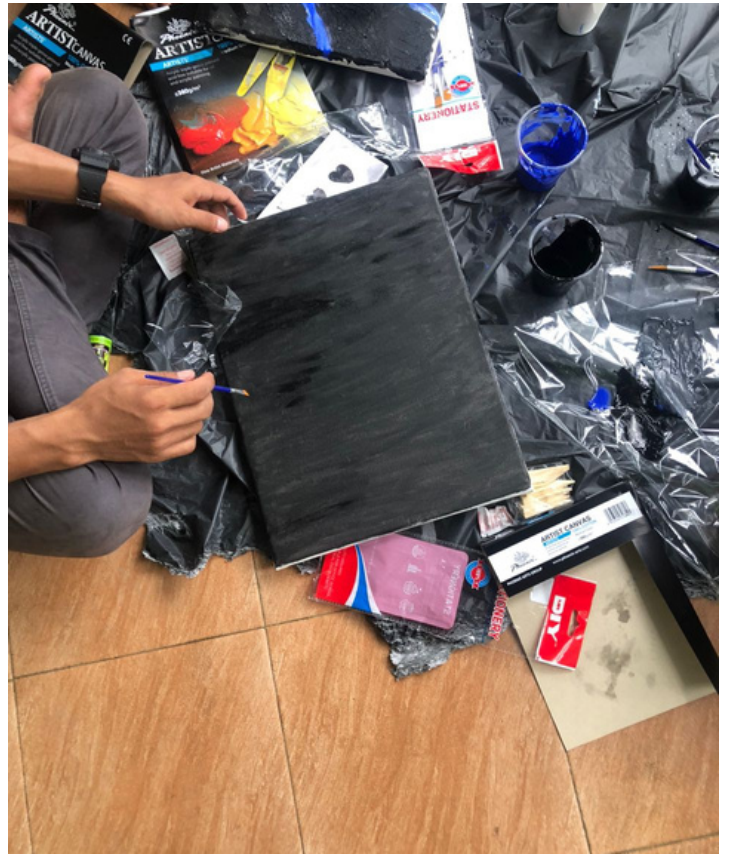
The past two years have presented significant challenges since our inception, particularly when some team members relocated to another country, resulting in a reduction in our workforce and necessitating additional resources to sustain our operations. Despite these obstacles, our dedication to the cause ensured the continuous provision of support to displaced youth across Malaysia.

Upon retrospection of the busy past two years, it became apparent that our team had insufficient opportunities to pause and assess our efforts for potential enhancements.

With this realization, the RYN team is presently engaged in a reflective process to analyze our initiatives, assess our impact, and deliberate on strategies for the future trajectory of RYN.

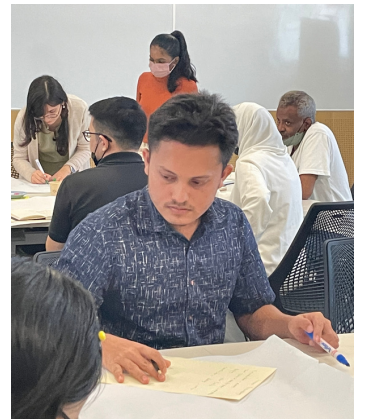
# Gallery













**We thank you for your  
continued support  
towards RYN.**

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**Stay in touch!**



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