

RESEARCH REPORT



Social Cohesion, Resilience and Peace Building Between Host Population and Rohingya Refugee Community in Cox's Bazar, Bangladesh.




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Community Recovery and Resilience Project (C2RP)
UNDP, Bangladesh



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Dhaka: June 2019

Acknowledgements

BRAC University Centre for Peace and Justice would like to thank the Community Recovery and Resilience Project (C2RP) of the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), particularly, Md. Masud Karim, for providing us with the opportunity to conduct this timely study. We are indebted to the UNDP team for their flexibility and guidance in designing the research methodology, collection of primary data and insightful comments on the draft report. We acknowledge the contribution of Mr. Faisal Ahmed, Project Officer, Partnership for Tolerant, Inclusive Bangladesh, UNDP for his feedback on the concept note of this study.

We remain grateful to Mr. Sajedul Hasan, Programme Director and Mohammed Abdus Salam, Programme Head, Humanitarian Crisis Management Programme (HCMP) of BRAC for their continuous support and cooperation during the different phases of this study.

We put on record our appreciation to Mr. Shahariar Sadat, former Academic Coordinator of CPJ, for contributing to the designing of the study and for conducting the focus group discussions and workshops. Dr. Samia Huq, Associate Professor, Department of Economics and Social Sciences, BRAC University facilitated the dissemination workshop, Mr. Zia Uddin, Research Associate of CPJ provided support during the mobilization phase of the project and Ms. Nahida Akter, Research Associate of CPJ assisted with the compilation this report.

Most importantly, CPJ couldn't have compiled this report without the free and frank sharing of experience of the Rohingya and Host communities. This report recognizes the contribution of the participants of this research whose stories and quotes fill these pages.

We hope that this report will serve as a useful primer for those wishing to undertake further studies or to initiate development programmes for social cohesion, resilience and peace building between the host population and Rohingya refugee community in Cox's Bazar.

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Acronyms

ARSA	Arakan Rohingya Salvation Army
BDT	Bangladesh Taka
CIC	Camp in-Charge
C2RP	Community Recovery & Resilience Project
CODEC	Community Development Centre
CPJ	Centre for Peace and Justice
CSO	Civil Society Organization
FGD	Focus Group Discussion
Go-NGO	Government and Non-government organization
HC	Host Community
HIV	Human Immune Deficiency Virus
ICT	Information and Communications Technology
ID Card	Identity Card
IOM	International Organization for Migration
KII	Key Informant Interview
LGED	Local Government and Rural Development
MSF	Médecins Sans Frontières
NGO	Non-Government Organization
NID	National Identity Card
RRRC	Refugee Relief and Repatriation Commission
SIM	Subscriber Identification Module
STD	Sexually Transmitted Disease
SHUJAN	Citizen for Good Governance
TV	Television
UNDP	United Nation Development Programme
UNHCR	United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees
USD	US Dollar
WS	Workshop

Executive Summary

In August 2017 Myanmar authorities unleashed systematic violence on the Rohingya community of Northern Rakhine State. Hundred of thousands of Rohingya were affected and an unknown number were killed, resulting in nearly a million people fleeing their homeland and taking shelter in the neighboring country of Bangladesh. Hosting such a large number of refugees has had significant impacts on the host population of Cox's Bazar. These impacts have led to a lack of social cohesion and negatively affected the potential for inter-communal harmony between the two communities.

A study was undertaken by BRAC University Centre for Peace and Justice (CPJ) between January to April 2019 to identify factors affecting social cohesion, resilience and peace building between the host and Rohingya refugee communities. The study consisted of a series of consultations conducted in order to compile the perspectives of different groups of host community stakeholders.

Participant included local villagers (men, women and youth) living adjacent to the camps; local government representatives; community elders; religious and ethnic minority leaders; and representatives from NGOs, educational institutions, and civil society organizations (CSOs). The consultations included thirteen focus group discussions (FGDs), five key informant interviews (KIIs), one validation session of findings, and one dissemination workshop. The dissemination workshop was organized to share key findings with stakeholders who are potential catalysts in promoting stability in the region. The aim was to draw out their recommendations on ways to strengthen social cohesion and resilience in the region.

Key Findings

- **Decline in social cohesion and empathy:** At the beginning of the refugee influx, host community residents' attitudes towards the Rohingya were deeply sympathetic. Participants recalled in detail their willingness to provide immediate humanitarian response before NGOs arrived to help. However, in the months that followed, they faced increasing difficulty in their daily lives and their sense of compassion dwindled. This coincided with Rohingya receiving more systematized aid services, which reduced the amount of face-to-face interactions between refugees and the host community.
- **Men's views:** Men and male youth villagers expressed a perceived sense of inequality in terms of access to work and wages, treatment from law enforcing bodies and loss of livelihood opportunities due to the influx. Although they expressed few grievances in terms of direct interactions with refugees, the difficulties they face in their daily lives have created a negative perception of the Rohingya. This is compounded by widespread rumors and media coverage about high levels of criminality amongst refugees, which raises anxieties amongst host communities.
- **Women's views:** Women and female youth villagers now have little direct contact with refugees, though many helped and provided immediate support at the beginning of the influx. Women and female youth villagers expressed ongoing sympathy for the Rohingyas' plight; however, they also shared many grievances such as the loss of family income and access to land for farming, grazing, and firewood.
- **Clash of cultural values:** Religious leaders and host community elders described how the Rohingyas' arch-conservative religious beliefs and customs make it difficult to find common ground. Outside observers may perceive the host and Rohingya cultures to be quite similar, but in fact little affinity is felt. Religious leaders

expressed concern about Rohingyas' religious ideology and spoke of their interest in helping rehabilitate and teach more moderate views to camp imams. The religious leaders and elders expressed a high level of compassion towards Rohingya refugees and advocated for civic education and skill development and risk of extremism: Local government officials and NGO workers echoed these views, expressing their concerns that criminality and extremism could increase if Rohingya do not receive timely education and rehabilitation services. They felt that the host community would bear various negative impacts as the result of a "lost generation" of Rohingya youth. They urged a transparent and speedy repatriation, but emphasized the need for rehabilitation if this were not possible.

- **Economic impact:** In general, the Rohingya refugee influx has had a tremendous impact on the daily lives of host community residents living closest to the camps. Economically, the competition with refugees for work willing to charge low wages has created many difficulties for residents to earn enough to meet daily needs. The loss of wages coincides with price hikes and loss of arable lands.

Positive economic changes - such as job opportunities with humanitarian agencies, increased rental income from leasing of properties, transportation business, and growth of the hospitality sector – have been captured mainly by the affluent class. The host population living in closest proximity to the camps is mainly low income and bears the impact of the negative economic impacts. Livelihood opportunities have been lost due to decreased wages and the loss of agricultural and grazing land. Meanwhile, increased prices for basic commodities due to excess demand creates an extra burden.

- **Illegal marriages:** An additional growing concern has arisen in regards to unregistered marriages in the camps, primarily between local men and Rohingya women. Many of these are second marriages for the men, whose first wives often have not consented.
- **Education:** Education has been obstructed due the use of schools for relief activities, teachers leaving teaching jobs to get high income jobs with aid agencies, the increased cost of traveling to school, and intense traffic congestion on roads. Many youth have also dropped out of school to take NGO jobs.
- **Rule of law issues:** Political instability has risen due to the influx. Participants explained how this shows up in various forms, including: increased corruption in the distribution of relief, perceived bias of law enforcement bodies toward refugees over locals, decreased access to various public services such as hospitals, and inadequate camp security and checkpoints to limit the mobility of refugees. Many participants expressed a sense of humiliation at having to present identification at checkpoints just to travel within their own communities. These dynamics lead to a sense of animosity between local people and security actors. The resulting lack of trust in authorities leads people to attempt resolving disputes privately, without referring problems to police or other security actors.
- **Sense of being outnumbered:** Participants expressed a deep sense of insecurity and the sense of being outnumbered. They worry that refugees are heavily armed and could quickly overpower them in the case of conflict. This creates a sense of helplessness.
- **Environmental impact:** The influx is causing serious environmental degradation and deforestation, including loss of access to the sea, which villagers previously could access by traveling through the forests that were cut to make way for the camps.
- **Positive aspects:** Participants also recognized that some positive opportunities have arisen from the influx. They expressed openness to future social cohesion and peace building programming, as they anticipate the long-term stay of the refugees. They requested that civic education be provided to refugees to promote peaceful coexistence in the community. They have also stressed the need for careful monitoring to prevent the assimilation of Rohingya refugees into the host population. They rejected the idea of spreading Rohingya throughout Bangladesh, stating that it is preferable to continue hosting them locally as long as they are not permitted to exit the camps.

Recommendations

A number of recommendations were noted by the study participants, who asked that the recommendations be taken into account for policy change. Notably, the participants made various recommendations related to the promotion of social cohesion and peaceful co-existence in order to enhance resilience between Rohingya refugees and the host community.

- The poor and the ultra-poor are adversely affected by the influx, as they lack adequate human as well as financial capital to reap benefits resulting from the refugee influx. Therefore, it is advisable to provide material support for the poorest segment of the host population.
- The host community urged the introduction of the regulation on labour market access for refugees. They advise that a proper regulatory framework should be put in place to ensure that all work is strictly reserved for the host community population, with daily minimum wages set strictly at BDT 600.
- The host population requested to provide support for creating employment and industrialization by introducing interest free loans and subsidies for small enterprise like poultry, fisheries, crops and vegetables farming.
- It was strongly suggested that the segregation and restrict the mobility of refugees as well as monitor Rohingya refugees to procure Bangladeshi national identity documents to prevent integration. The local government representatives recommended that Rohingya refugees should not be taught Bangla lan-guage and local culture as it could help them assimilate.
- It was frequently raised that old roads should be repaired and widened to organize road and traffic management and new roads should be built to ease traffic congestion and overcrowding.
- The host population requested for coordination between the CiC, RRRC, local elders, camp majhi and other influential leaders for dispute settlement, land management, while a financial compensation package should be provided to those who lost access and/or ownership to grazing and paddy lands, and other forest resources.
- It was recommended to provide civic education for host and refugee youth (separately) for them to understand political systems and become civically engaged community members. Education to refugees regarding civic values, and moderate religious views is important to prevent further social chaos and to orient them to live in a peaceful and harmonious society.
- The host people suggested that separate education institutions could be established for Rohingya refugee children and youth in order to ensure their education and thereby better future. It will also promote their good character as law-abiding and respectful people.
- Access to justice should be ensured for both communities and rampant corruption should be addressed to ensure rule of law and justice. Any kind of radical and terrorist activities like ARSA should be controlled, and intelligence agencies should eradicate the spate of silent abductions and killings that have been occurring inside the camp.
- Ensure social cohesion and peaceful coexistence of the host and Rohingya refugee communities by resolving conflict promptly inside the camps by ensure coordination amongst NGOs, the Upazila administration, the Union Parishad members, and Rohingya refugees camp leaders.
- There is a need to improve the drainage and sewage systems in the refugee camps and host communities to maintain a better hygiene, sanitation and ecological management. This will help reduce the incidence of communicable and water-borne diseases.

1.1. Background

Bangladesh has been experiencing an influx of Rohingya refugees in the Southeastern Cox's Bazar region since the 1970s. The largest-ever movement of Rohingya into Bangladesh occurred in August and September 2017. Presently, Bangladesh hosts over 1 million Rohingya refugees from the 2017 and earlier influxes who fled Myanmar to escape long-standing persecution and violence. According to UNHCR, as of May 2019 an estimated 910,908 Rohingya refugees were taking shelter in Cox's Bazar District (Table 1).

Table 1: Historical Rohingya refugee influx in Bangladesh (1977-2019)

Year	Number of refugee migration	Remarks
1977-78	200,000	Repatriation of 180,000 by 1978-79
1991-92	250,000	Repatriation of 230,000 by 1993-97
1993	1,000	Repatriation of 800 by 1998-99
2019	910,908	As of 31 May 2019, no repatriation
People in need are approximately 1.3 million (including 330,000 people in host community)		
628,405 refugees in Kutupalong and Balukhali Extension site.		
273,870 refugees in other settlements/camps.		
<i>Source: Situation Report Rohingya Refugee Crisis, Inter Sector Coordination Group, March 2019</i>		

According to MSF (Doctors without Borders), during 25 August to 24 September 2017, at least 9,400 people lost their lives in Myanmar. Of these, at least 6,700 died due to violence. MSF also estimated that at least 730 children under the age of five were killed in this period. MSF data shows that at least 21.5 percent of the recently displaced Rohingya population experienced direct violence during the same period. Findings from MSF health surveys corroborate the widespread use of sexual violence against Rohingya women and girls in Northern Rakhine State. Bangladesh has thus inherited a deeply traumatized population with dire needs for support and rehabilitation. This has placed further strain upon the host communities of the Cox's Bazar District, already an economically disadvantaged peripheral region of the country.

Bangladesh has offered safety and shelter to Rohingya refugees; a coordinated aid response has resulted in more stable camp conditions and access to basic needs. Meanwhile, the host community (HC) continues to experience substantial burdens as a result of hosting the refugee response. (Table 2).

Table 2: Number of host population and Rohingya refugee population

Location	Host Community (HC) population (Population census 2011)	Rohingya refugee population (as of January 2018)
Ukhia Upazila	207,400	761,059
Rajapalong Union	66,174	24,118
Palongkhali Union	38,139	733,970
Teknaf Upazila	307,300	129,737
Wykong Union	59,153	33,330
<i>Source: IC Net Limited</i>		

The Bangladesh government and local population alike have been internationally commended for extended their cooperation in addressing the immediate food, shelter, and survival needs of the refugee population. However, the host population of Cox's Bazar faces various types of adversity in terms of livelihoods, access to various public services, access to education and health care, quality of life, law and order, and environmental issues. These adverse impacts are due to the protracted and prolonged refugee crisis and create a climate of discomfort and tension in the region.

¹ BANGLADESH REFUGEE EMERGENCY Population Fact Sheet (as of 31 May 2019) Available at: <https://reliefweb.int/sites/reliefweb.int/files/resources/68946.pdf> [accessed on 15 June 2019]

1.2 Objectives of the Study

The overall objective of a study undertaken by BRAC University Centre for Peace and Justice (CPJ) between January to April 2019 was to identify the issues impede and promote social cohesion, resilience and peace between the host population and Rohingya refugee communities. The specific objectives of the study were as follows:

- To diagnose the impacts of the Rohingya refugee influx on the host communities living directly adjacent to the camps;
- To map the emerging concerns that might affect prospects for social cohesion and peace between the Rohingya refugee and host communities;
- To evaluate host communities' awareness about and recommendations on ways to increase social cohesion, resilience and peace, and;
- To issue a set of policy recommendations for key actors aiming to promote social cohesion, peaceful co-existence, reduction of tensions, and enhancement of resilience between the host and refugee populations.

1.3 Study Methodology and Implementation

The study employed a qualitative approach throughout each stage. It serves as a pilot study to begin mapping the host population's perceptions, attitudes, and recommendations in relation to the refugee influx. A limited geographical area was covered: two unions (Rajapalong and Ukhia Upazilas) were purposively targeted due to their adjacent location to the camps. Thus, findings cannot be generalized across a wider area, but shed light on the experiences of host communities most intensively affected by the crisis.

The data collection tools used were focus group discussion (FGDs) and Key Informant Interview (KIIs), which were conducted in the compounds of local families while adhering to ethical and security considerations.

The researchers asked only three prompts, and allotted the great majority of discussion time to listening to participants' views:

1. What did you experience when the large influx of Rohingya refugees first arrived to this area (in 2017)?
2. What is your experience hosting the Rohingya refugees near your villages now?
3. If you had the opportunity, what recommendations would you make to the Government of Bangladesh?

The participants engaged were identified as stakeholders who are potential catalysts in promoting stability through greater social cohesion, resilience and peace in the host community. Through the discussions, the researchers tried to attain a more in-depth understanding of the concerns, needs and potential avenues of support that could strengthen the host community's ability to tolerate, benefit from, and participate in the Rohingya response.

The research team conducted 13 FGDs, 5 KIIs, a separate session for the validation of findings and a policy dissemination workshop. Various stakeholders participated, including local villagers (including men, women, male and female youth), local government representatives, community elders, religious leaders, ethnic minority leaders, academics, journalists, NGOs, CSOs and local government administrators. In the selection process, certain characteristics were considered including the person's profession, his or her role in the society, gender, age and residence. Through their participation, the team was able to assemble a variety of information, opinions, views, concerns, complaints and requests. The FGDs and KIIs were conducted in January and February 2019 and lasted approximately 2 hours. The validation session was conducted with 26 out of the 181 total FGD participants on 8 April 2018.

Table 3: Study implementation at a glance

Date	FGD/KIIs/ Workshop	Category of participants	Number of Participants	Locations
2 st January Monday	1st FGD	13 Aged Women (Age 26+)	26	Palongkhali Union, Ukhia
	2nd FGD	13 Young women (Age 16-25)		
22 nd January Tuesday	3rd FGD	16 Aged Men (Age 26+)	29	Palongkhali Union, Ukhia
	4th FGD	13 Young Men (Age 16-25yrs)		
4 th February Monday	5th FGD	18 Young women (Age 16-25)	31	Rajapalong Union, Ukhia
	6th FGD	13 Aged Women (Age 26+)		
5 th February Tuesday	7th FGD	13 Young Men (Age 16-25yrs)	28	Rajapalong Union, Ukhia
	8th FGD	15 Aged Men (Age 26+)		
25 th February Monday	9th FGD	13 Religious and minority leaders.	27	Palongkhali Union, Ukhia
	10th FGD	14 Local government representatives, Community elders.		
26 th February Tuesday	11th FGD	10 Local government representatives, Community elders.	22	Rajapalong Union, Ukhia
	12th FGD	12 Religious and minority leaders.		
27 th February Wednesday	13th FGD	13 NGOs, CSO, Academics, Journalist, politicians, Civil society representatives.	18	Ukhia Upazila, Cox's Bazar
	5 KIIs	5 Government officials.		
8 th April 2019	Validation Workshop	Grassroots people, Religious leaders, Government officials, Local Government representatives, academics and NGOs	26	Ukhia Upazila
25 th April 2019 Thursday	Dissemination Workshop	Representatives from RRRRC, CIC, UNHCR, BRAC, Action Aid, Action for Hunger, Journalist, Police Administration etc.	45	Cox's Bazar
Total participant in 13 FGDs, 5 KIIs, one validation workshop and one dissemination workshop : 252				

Finally, on 25 April 2019, the research team organized a dissemination workshop in which key stakeholders of the refugee crisis attended, including the RRRRC, UN agencies, NGOs, district and Upazila administrators, police and other security agency representatives, journalists, and other civil society actors. After reviewing the key findings of the study, participants shared their views and worked in breakout groups to put forward recommendations on addressing the issues identified by the FGD participants.

1.4. Profile of Research Participants

The participants of FGDs were from varying backgrounds as follows:

- **Host Female:** Most of female participants were housewives and some were students studying at different colleges and madrassas in the locality. A small number were working with NGOs. The rate of early marriage among the illiterate women participants was noticeable.
- **Host Male:** Most of the male participants' profession were day laborers and farmers. Some worked as NGO workers and livestock tenders. Some qualified as extreme poor.
- **Local Government Representatives and Community Elders:** There were many representatives from Palongkhali and Rajapalong Union Parishad of the Ukhia region (a grassroots tier of local government in Bangladesh), and several participants were community leaders, politicians and professionals.
- **Religious and Ethnic Minority Leaders:** Most of the religious leaders were from Muslim community and work as Imam of different mosques and teachers of Religious madrasah. Participants from the ethnic minority community were Bangladeshi Buddhist, and Hindu.

- **NGOs, Professionals and Civil Society Representatives:** Around a dozen of representatives took part at the dialogue who are from different NGOs i.e. BRAC, MUKTI, CODEC, World Vision, Film for Peace, Help Cox's Bazar, IOM, local Newspapers, Citizen for Good Governance (SUJON), college and school teachers. In the policy dissemination workshop, around 45 representatives from UNHCR, BRAC, Action Aid, UNDP, Action for Hunger project etc. took part.
- **Government Officials:** There were participants from the office of the Refugee Relief and Rehabilitation Commission (RRRC), Camp in Charge (CIC), District Police Administration, Upazila administration, Upazila Social Welfare Departments, Upazila Forest Department, Village Police, the National Security Intelligence and officials of education department at Upazila level.
- **Age Diversity:** We sought to understand opinions from diverse aged groups, hence the host community men and women were above 26 years old and the youth were between 16-25 years old.
- **Religion:** Participants were Muslim, Hindu and Buddhist.

1.5 Study Location

The village-level dialogues took place in three separate areas of Ukhia Upazila of Cox's Bazar: Palongkhali Union, Rajapalong Union and Ukhia Upazila center. The dialogue sites, Gozaghuna and Goyalmara, are two villages in Palongkhali Union, both located less than 2 miles east from the Bangladesh-Myanmar Border and several miles west of the Bay of Bengal. These villages are close to the Balukhali and Thangkhali refugee mega-camps (Camps 8 – 20 extension).

The proximity to Myanmar has meant that villagers have long lived with a sense of insecurity and a fear of drug smugglers, thought to cross frequently from Myanmar. The focus group participants living closest to the border had directly witnessed the 2017 violence as it played out across the border, watching helicopters shoot at fleeing people from the air and flames and smoke rising from burning villages.

Gozaghuna is hilly and forested, with houses spread out from each other. There are rice paddies nearby, with some but not all villagers owning paddy and grazing lands. The village is easily accessed by road, located adjacent to the main Cox's Bazar-Teknaf Highway. Despite this accessibility, there is a lack of access to educational institutions. Due to the area drawing many domestic tourists, the area is protected by the tourist police, which is viewed as a weaker institution compared with the police in other regions.

The village of Foliyapara is located in Rajapalong Union directly south of Ukhia town center, near the entrance to the "Army Road" that was constructed in 2018 to run through the middle of the refugee camps. Camp 4 Extension, the Northeastern-most camp within the mega-camp, begins approximately 2 kilometers from the village along the same road. Thus, residents of Foliyapara are amongst the population most directly affected by traffic by aid vehicles, which park on the outskirts of the village and pass through on the narrow road throughout the day. The roads in the village are unpaved and not built to withstand heavy vehicles.

The village is located just west of the main Cox's Bazar – Teknaf Highway, with the Bay of Bengal beaches approximately 8 km to the west and the Myanmar border roughly four kilometers to the east. Between Rajapalong and the sea lies the makeshift Kutupalong mega-camp, where over 500,000 Rohingya refugees are sheltered.

Along with the greater Ukhia Upazila region, Rajapalong Union is situated in an outlying part of the country; the peripheral-center relationship can be a contentious one. The local population suggests feeling disenfranchised from and culturally distinct from mainstream Bangladesh; this may subject them to stereotypes and marginalization. A substantial number of army, police and civil servants are stationed in but not native to the region.

2.1. Initial Response to the Influx

Participants spoke at length about their experiences supporting and saving the lives of the fleeing refugees. Some became emotional when recalling their memories watching mass numbers of people crossing the Naf River and lining the roads. Many of the women described how they helped give shelter, food and support to refugees throughout the onset of the refugee influx. They recalled helping people bathe, donating their own clothes, and even helping pregnant women deliver babies on the roadside. They saw people wandering in the rain disoriented, and many pregnant women holding sickly infants. They expressed the strong feeling of compassion they felt upon witnessing the suffering of other human beings. Many also reflected on feeling of a sense of Muslim solidarity. Male participants described witnessing the violence as it occurred on the other side of the border, seeing plumes of smoke rise from burning villages, and watching throngs of panicked Rohingya refugees running toward them. They followed TV and social media updates about the crisis and had a well-informed understanding of the attacks. They also knew about the role of Al-Yaqin or Arakan Rohingya Salvation Army (ARSA) in the events leading up to the influx.

The religious leader participants spoke of responding to the humanitarian crisis before the government had yet begun to do so. They took charge of advocating to local schools, colleges, madrasahs, and family compounds to shelter the refugees, and some gave spontaneous public lectures at mosques and villages among host communities urging people to welcome and help the Rohingya. Others conducted public speaking throughout the locality to raise funds and generate humanitarian assistance. Local government representatives and community leaders played an influential role in handling the influx and organizing the necessary facilities.

2.2. Shifting Attitudes

2.2.1. Attitudes of local women

The initial outpouring of compassion displayed by the host community to the fleeing Rohingya refugees has gradually given way to more negative views. The women shared that they felt a high level of compassion when the Rohingya refugees first crossed the border. Many had helped directly, providing shelter and food. However, while they still feel compassion for the Rohingya refugees and their plight, their feelings have grown more negative over time. Some examples of this negativity derive from rumors and general stereotypes against the Rohingya refugees, while other complaints highlight the daily inconveniences and sacrifices host communities have been forced to make without receiving adequate compensation. Exacerbating this dynamic is the perception that the Bangladesh Army is biased toward the Rohingya refugees and likely to side with them during disputes. In order to tolerate the situation moving forward, the women requested compensation, material aid, and equal treatment towards host communities.

The animosity the women now experience does not seem to be personally directed. When asked to share any negative interactions with the Rohingya refugees that they had experienced firsthand, very few examples were raised. The women commented that they had overheard a few Rohingya refugees “speaking roughly” in business dealings. Few women had engaged directly with the Rohingya refugees since the original weeks of the crisis, and only a small number had set foot in the camps. The women who had interacted with Rohingya refugees mentioned that they were polite and friendly.

This indicates that daily difficulties and the lack of compensation for losses are the main grievances the women experience directly, while many of their negative perceptions about the character and behavior of refugees largely came about from hearsay and rumors. While the situation has caused many problems, these were not necessarily viewed as the fault of the Rohingya refugees themselves.

The participant groups of women villagers were found by the research team to be the most compassionate and open-minded about long-term policies. This may be due to several of them having Rohingya refugee relatives

and feeling personally compelled to help refugees. Although the issue of men taking Rohingya refugees as second wives had directly affected some of the women, they were not visibly upset about this. The most visibly upsetting issue to them was the economic impact on families' daily wages and livelihoods, along with significant daily inconveniences such as traffic on the roads and overcrowding.

The women said they understood these inconveniences to be due to the situation and not the fault of individual Rohingya refugee themselves. Several of the women remarked that "this could happen to anyone" and steered the conversation back toward empathy when other women raised complaints. Some of them expressed strong empathy towards Rohingya refugees and recalled Bangladesh's own plight during the War of 1971, when large numbers of Bangladeshi were similarly displaced. The women were agreeable to the facilitators' suggestions that win-win solutions were viable and could help overcome the sacrifices they are currently making by hosting the refugee population.

The women did note grievances that are important to address. For generations, many local families have built their livelihoods on land that is technically government owned, but held customarily by locals. The land was suddenly taken back by the government in order to shelter the Rohingya refugees with no compensation provided to those who had long tended it. Among the landless and poor families, the loss of income is a serious concern that has multiple repercussions, including poor families becoming unable to meet nutrition needs. The women's generally calm demeanor around these grievances may suggest that the problems are still in an early stage but could become more problematic over time, causing social cohesion to be disrupted.

2.2.2. Attitudes of local men

Perceptions about the Rohingya refugees have shifted and male villager participants had become more embittered in the 17 months since the initial exodus in August 2017. Amongst the groups of male participants there was a general sense that Rohingya refugees "have it better" than host communities due to receiving widespread aid and support. Due to weak law enforcement, Rohingya refugees frequently leave the camps to sell goods and to work, but host community members say they are strictly prevented from taking advantage of similar opportunities in the camps. The men believed that as non-citizens, Rohingya refugees are not beholden (or do not feel themselves beholden) to the rule of law and enjoy exceptional protection by authorities. They also feel vulnerable, outnumbered by a refugee population they fear may be armed.

Despite receiving some benefits such as free tube-wells and latrines, daily inconveniences such as traffic, congestion, environmental degradation and even NGOs looting sand for camp building projects build up to create a sense of frustration and unfairness. The men remarked that many Rohingya refugees have become "very rich" due to receiving vast sums of aid; despite helping refugees during their time of need, Rohingya refugees "don't care about us now" and lack gratitude. The men felt that the Bangladesh Army favored the Rohingya refugees over locals. Day laborers expressed suffering due to being unable to work for the low wages Rohingya refugees are willing to accept. Some were frustrated that outsiders have secured lucrative jobs with NGOs, but due to having lower levels of education, they and their children are unable to compete for the same roles.

The male participants of Rajapalong Union also shared the same opinion. The men recalled their initial impressions of the crisis, sharing the secondary trauma they experienced upon witnessing the misery of the fleeing refugees. However, this compassion had given way to frustration and animosity. While a few vocal participants dominated the conversation, the overall tone was negative in comparison to previous focus groups conducted under the project. However, even the participants who had the most hostile views and advocated for the Rohingya refugees to be sent back to Myanmar were supportive of education and job training for them, feeling that the host community would be safer if Rohingya refugees could be rehabilitated. Among villager men who attended the workshops, those who had had the most direct interaction with the Rohingya refugees expressed higher levels of compassion and tolerance than those who had less direct exposure.

Two men in the young men's group were more negative and vocal than the others; their angrier attitude began to override the accepting attitudes of more soft-spoken participants. Most felt strongly that Rohingya refugees should be confined to the camps. When presented with the idea of partial economic integration, many were open to the option but preferred Rohingya refugees to hold the most menial jobs while reserving higher-level

skills training for locals. However, many were open to both Rohingya refugees and locals receiving skills training in parallel. They saw the need for Rohingya refugees to have some educational opportunities and felt their own communities would be better off if Rohingya refugees were encouraged to become educated and “develop good character.” Some were open to locals working alongside Rohingya refugees under such schemes, though most felt it better for them to work separately. Rohingya refugees were frequently blamed for social problems during the workshops, but when pressed participants acknowledged that locals are also partially responsible.

2.2.3. Attitudes of religious leaders, ethnic minority leaders and local government representatives

The religious elders of Palongkhali and Rajapalong Union cited various concerns, but displayed overall tolerant attitudes toward the Rohingya refugees. The religious leaders who attended workshops described their moderate stance, tolerance of diversity, and embrace of secular education and civic values. Many were affiliated with the Islamic Foundation of Bangladesh, the predominant mainstream government-sponsored religious network. While they did not state so explicitly, they seemed to be wary of the Rohingya refugees’ parochial, conservative religious outlook. They perceived the Rohingya refugees as opposed to secularism; one spoke about how they as religious leaders were willing and able to help introduce more moderate religious teachings. They regretted not yet having an opportunity to do so. They lamented that because the Rohingya “are from a bad society,” they have “never had the chance to become civilized” and could learn better conduct while being hosted in Bangladesh.

Attitudes of the Union Parishad (local government institution) members were the least friendly and sympathetic of those encountered throughout the 14 groups the study team spoke with over the course of this study. At the grassroots level, the researchers observed significant levels of tolerance despite many grievances. In contrast, while the Union Parishad members fell short of recommending that the Rohingya refugees be sent back to Myanmar, they saw long-term support as untenable. The Union Parishad Chairman and one other member spoke at length throughout the duration of the discussion, so it was not possible to determine the feelings of other members. Despite their higher levels of hostility, all participants still felt that education and rehabilitation were important in order to promote positive social behaviors amongst the Rohingya refugees and expose them to the rule of law. Despite their close proximity to government, the Union Parishad members felt strongly that higher-level government officials and security forces have been siding strongly with the Rohingya refugees at the expense of locals.

2.2.4. Attitudes of government officials, NGOs, Journalist and civil society members

Two of the workshop sessions were conducted with representatives of NGOs, local civil society organisations (CSO) and officials from local administration and various government agencies. Similarly to previous groups consulted, they raised a number of concerns about criminality in the camps and the impact of the refugee crisis on the host community. The NGOs, civil society and government representatives understood the Rohingya refugees issue in ways that varied from the views of the local village and Union Parishad members who had been the participants of the previous groups. They took a bird’s eye view and observed trends around social values and criminality. They drew clear links regarding the need for civic education to mitigate criminality and extremism. Like participants during previous sessions, the participants’ confidence in government was generally low. They did not trust the government to implement the necessary social reforms, particularly in regards to education and strengthening rule of law, which they feel are critical to prevent the worsening of social tensions.

They also said they did not trust the government to prevent the integration of Rohingya refugees into Bangladesh society. However, several took a pragmatic stance on this issue, as they believed that Bangladesh will be hosting Rohingya refugees for the long-term. As such, they felt that a degree of social integration may be the most realistic and safest option. Verification of refugees using biometric data was identified as one way to allow for some integration without allowing refugees to become completely assimilated into Bangladesh. The participants were also able to envision win-win economic solutions that could strengthen the local economy while addressing refugees’ needs, though they continued to doubt whether those development goals could realistically be achieved given all the current challenges, corruption and deficiencies in government.

Participants identified a variety of issues the host community is facing due to the refugee influx. Some of them are economic while others are social, cultural and political. However, they also identified opportunities that have been created due to the crisis. The following section unfolds the various dimensions of impact of the crisis on the lives of the host population.

3.1. Economic Impact

3.1.1. Conflict around labor markets

The most serious problem for host communities is the fall of wages for daily laborers. Refugees travel into the host community to seek work at the lowest wage prices; as a result, they dominate the local labour market while the poor people of the host community lose job opportunities. Many women reported that their husbands previously earned 500 BDT (6 USD) per day, but only about 300 BDT per day now. This was very upsetting and the source of a strong sense of injustice for many. The women complained that refugees receive aid and have far fewer expenses than locals. The women said they had heard that Rohingya refugees were willing to work for 100 or 200 BDT per day, which is an impossible for locals to subsist on.

Although many jobs for day laborers had been available during the early stages of the response, many of the initial projects had ended and temporarily employed people have become jobless again. A young woman explained that Rohingya refugees have stronger agricultural knowledge and are skilled at preparing products made of bamboo. Others said they are also good at heavy labour such as road construction. Even some host community residents themselves were keen to hire refugees to staff shops and run road construction activities as their labour is cheap and they are willing to do work that locals don't want to do. A young man reported that Rohingya refugees are also willing to work very long hours (10-15 hours/day, in comparison to 8 hours for locals), making their labor appealing to local business people. A representative from CODEC, a local NGO stated,

“Some NGOs are recruiting Rohingya refugee youth volunteers to perform low-cost labour rather than hiring host community staff at higher wages. He added that the Rohingya refugee youths are unskilled and less educated than host. Many Rohingya refugees are involved in host community labour and are hired due to their willingness to accept cheap wages. Elsewhere, locals have lost their jobs and cannot earn sufficient wages to cover livelihood needs”.

3.1.2. Price hike of daily essentials

The second most agitating factor, felt particularly strongly amongst host community men, were the hikes in market prices. Rohingya refugees sell their aid items and prices for some commodities are undercut while other prices have soared. This has been advantageous to wealthy shopkeepers but caused poorer ones to go out of business. Several participants mentioned that it has become cost-prohibitive for their families to buy fish, which has quintupled in price. The community believes Rohingya refugees are able to pay sky-high prices due to generous remittances sent from relatives abroad. They claimed that Rohingya refugees are even able to garner a significant amount of savings. There was a rumor that Rohingya refugees paid double the going rate for cows to be sacrificed during Kurban Eid and had no problem doing so, due to having profited off of selling aid items. The impact of the crisis on business seems to vary by sector; one man who has a wood business said that his business was largely unaffected by the Rohingya refugees presence.

3.1.3. Constraints on grocery business

Participants described that the most affluent and influential people of the host community are benefiting from the exodus by building new brick houses to rent to NGOs for office space, and by opening different business enterprises near the camps. In contrast most of the poor are adversely affected, such as vegetable vendors and small-scale grocery shopkeepers. One woman's husband, a fruit seller, had abandoned his business because he found it impossible to turn a profit as the Rohingya refugees people were reluctant to buy things from locally-

run shops and preferred to patronize the businesses of other Rohingya. Many locals had gone into the camps to do business, but were kicked out by block captains (majhis). One man said he received a death threat when his plans to open a shop in the camp bazar were made known.

3.1.4. Scarcity of jobs at NGOs

In the early phase of the crisis, there was a high rate of job creation for host community residents to join NGOs. Many educated people and uneducated people alike got jobs, but complained that NGOs had either stopped hiring or slowed their hiring of the local population. Some participants alleged discussion that NGOs were declining to hire certain host community job applicants even though they had been “recommended” by a respected local elite. One participant said many NGO officials were hiring their relatives from around the country to take up positions in Cox’s Bazar.

3.1.5. Loss of access to grazing land and forests

Before the refugee influx, people could easily access government forests to gather firewood, bring animals to graze, and even to build houses and farm. Though technically government owned, many parts of the forests were treated as a “commons” and used as a source for various resources. After the influx this land was used to build the camps and consequently people had to give up their access to it. They expressed a felt sense of connection to the land as part of the rhythm of their daily lives, and when the land was requisitioned they experienced a sense of sacrifice beyond financial loss.

3.2. Socio-cultural

3.2.1. Unregistered marriage and family disputes

According to a group of women participants, Rohingya refugee women are “exceptionally beautiful” and local men “easily become fascinated” by them. There is a growing number of “short-term marriages” as well as divorces. These marriages are unregistered and often undertaken without the original wife’s permission. This has become a major source of tension between local husbands and wives, and has led to broken families and disputes. As one woman said, “The Rohingya refugee women receive rations so the lazy men from here are happy to relax with them and have no need to work.” It was difficult to measure how frequently this is actually occurring, but it was a topic of much speculation and gossip. In contrast, host community women say that they are generally not interested in Rohingya refugee men because the men are less educated than them. They complained that Rohingya refugees are polygamous.

3.2.2. Traffic and crowding

Roads are constantly full of traffic, which causes significant loss of productivity. Young school going children face substantial risks when crossing the road, and parents are afraid of their children being affected by road accidents as well as by having so many strangers on the roads. During public exam days, many students were unable to reach the exam hall on time, which negatively affected their grades. Marketplaces are very crowded, leading to a sense of insecurity and causing arguments. The road quality has been deteriorated and noise has been increased. A government education officer participating in one of the workshops estimated that 100 people had been killed in various road accidents since the influx. The community feels an increased sense of vulnerability because large numbers of unknown people are continuously passing through their village. The traffic also greatly exacerbates problems with dust.

3.2.3. Crime and drugs smuggling

The host women felt that the rate of theft had increased notably. Rohingya refugees and local criminal networks were thought to be working together on robberies, mainly petty theft of household items such as solar panels and cooking pots. The men felt that many Rohingya refugees were involved in methamphetamine (yaba) usage and trafficking and had enticed host community youth to become addicted to it. It is well known that Myanmar is a yaba producer country; the participants felt that Bangladesh has been victimized by the drug trafficking problems created by its neighbour. The women said that beggars have always come, but there are five times more of them now, mostly Rohingya refugees. One woman described the Rohingya beggars as polite and understanding.

3.2.4. Adverse impact on education

One of the most common complaints was scarcity of teachers in schools and colleges, as many teachers have quit school jobs to join NGOs. In one local school, 5 of 18 teachers had done so; this has resulted in crowded, unruly classrooms for the remaining teachers to manage. Schools are attempting to address this problem through various insufficient coping mechanisms, such as combining classrooms and having older students help teach younger ones. A recent moratorium was locally imposed on the issuance of birth certificates due to corruption and many Rohingya attempting to get them. As birth certificates are a requirement for school enrollment, many children currently face delays in starting kindergarten.

Local schools are also affected by noisy aid and construction projects. They are sometimes used by NGOs as places to distribute relief items; this also causes disruption. According to a local education official participating in one of the workshops:

Despite our recommendation that schools and NGOs should conduct relief activities in the school playground only on Fridays, our suggestion was overridden by community leaders who benefit financially from these activities; also there is a lack of space and few other places are available to host these activities. Schools, colleges and madrassas were all closed for several months during the 2017 influx as all were being used to shelter thousands of Rohingya refugees.

3.2.5. Perceived immorality

The participants alleged that NGO workers are engaged in intimate relationships with Rohingya refugee women, and said that many unregistered marriages were taking place between host male and Rohingya women despite legal restrictions that prohibit marriage between Rohingya refugees and Bangladeshis. The participants felt that the refugees were aspiring to escape the camp and seek permanent settlement in Bangladesh; marriage is seen as a way to achieve this. The religious leaders in the group observed that these immoral affairs were adversely affecting the local culture and violating religious norms. The religious leaders also stated that many Rohingya refugee girls and women are involved with sex work and other type of socially unacceptable activities. NGOs were also promoting gender integration, and female NGO staff wear risqué attire, unprecedented in the area.

3.2.6. Impact on local ethnic minority populations

According to one ethnic minority leader, Buddhists and some other ethnic minority people earn their livelihoods by collecting firewood and pinewood from the forest and by doing animal husbandry in forest and grazing lands. But due to deforestation and the loss of access to forest and grazing land, people are suffering and struggling to meet their basic livelihood needs. They are angry because even after complaining numerous times to government officials, not a single solution has yet come about.

Elsewhere, locals living further from the camps traditionally work as subsistence fishermen. However, due to instability in the border areas and government operations against drug traffickers, locals can no longer go to the river to fish.

3.2.7. Behavioral and social interaction and potential sources of conflicts

Participants remarked that they had observed refugees acting aggressively in public areas and “talking roughly.” A few male villagers with the most hostile views amongst participants described the Rohingya’s prone to conflict, ungrateful, malicious, and involved in criminal activity. One of the men with the most hostile views remarked, “We made a mistake. We gave our sympathy to the Rohingya refugees but they are very dangerous. They are born dangerous from the time they are babies.” One religious leader said, “The host Bangladeshi people were overwhelmed with emotion and showed immense sympathy and empathy towards the Rohingya refugees. But the refugees always pursue their own interests and want to take advantage out of our generosity.” But some female participants said some Rohingya echoed the view that, “They (Rohingya refugees) are not from a good environment, so their behavior is bad.” One woman said “They went through a lot of conflict so they don’t know how to behave in a good society.”

3.3. Political grievances

3.3.1. Rohingya refugees as favoured by army and law enforcement agencies

Almost every participant complained about the role of the Army in managing the refugee response. Several male participants stated that when Rohingya refugees complain to the Army about disputes with host community members, the Army always takes the side of the refugees. They believe the Army to be “heavily biased” toward refugees and that the Army is present only to protect refugees’ interest, claiming that locals have been beaten by soldiers during disputes with Rohingya. Some participants expressed their belief that the Army bestows preferential treatment on the Rohingya in order to uphold international support and funding.

Daily life has a militarized quality that was not a factor previously; locals have to pass through checkpoints when traveling and are frequently suspected of being refugees, which causes humiliation in addition to being time consuming. There is a sense that refugees are not beholden to the rule of law. When having a problem with a Rohingya person, participants said that locals are often unwilling to contact law enforcement. They feel the bureaucratic process is burdensome and pointless, as there will be no chance of the offending Rohingya being apprehended. A member of the Union Parishad said:

The present chairman of the Union Parishad is a fugitive and was imprisoned several times due to false cases filed against him. The role of the Army is very questionable. If any of host community residents speak up against the Rohingya refugees, then the Rohingya refugees come to complain to the Bangladesh Army and the Army personnel beat the host people every time.

Finally, participants explained that law enforcement agencies show preferential treatment to upper class Bangladeshis who are benefitting financially from the crisis. In contrast, the poor are afraid to attempt accessing justice and are instructed by officers to simply keep their distance from the refugees in order to avoid conflict.

Box 1: List of problems identified by host community men and women

1. Conflict around labor market	12. Disputes over land acquisition
2. Traffic Jam and crowding	13. Family dispute and domestic violence
3. Impact on education	14. Perceived Immorality
4. Rise of market prices	15. Misery of minority people
5. Constraint in grocery business	16. Behavioral and Social interaction and potential sources of conflicts
6. Scarcity of NGOs job for locals Crime and drug smuggling	17. Xenophobia
7. Criminality and insecurity	18. Deterioration of hygiene condition
8. Insurgency	19. Environmental degradation
9. Army and law enforcing agencies are biased to refugees	20. Loss of access to grazing land and forests
10. Loss of access to services and institutions	21. Corruption
11. Access to health care	22. Tendency to decamp
	23. Difficulty in getting passport and national ID

3.3.2. Corruption

One male participant alleged that 140,000 Rohingya refugees are on aid distribution lists but absent from camp. He heard this from local NGO workers and believed that the discrepancy was due to many Rohingya having escaped the camps, as well as many refugees doubly registering their families for aid. Illegal marriages are also seen as a major source of corruption because many Rohingya refugee women aspire to settle in Bangladesh and are eager to marry local men for documents. Several participants expressed pity for these women, sensing that their husbands would not remain loyal and were using them for short-term “marriages.” In contrast to the good salaries received by NGO staff, mid-level government officials earn significantly less; this entices police and lower-level public officials to engage in acts of corruption including bribery and extortion. Some participants believed that many government officials secure the opportunity to work in the area because of insider connections to top-level officials, whom they convince to post them in the Upazila with a goal of profiting unethically and illegally from the response. In other cases, it is believed that NGO staff and government officials collude together in bribery, misuse of power, and embezzlement of resources.

3.3.3. Loss of access to government services and institutions

Because so many Rohingya refugees have attempted to procure false documents, locals face delays and challenges in accessing birth registration services. A moratorium was recently imposed on the online registration process to get a National ID Card (NID); due to this young children are denied admission at local schools. Police at checkpoints regularly take bribes of 100 to 150 BDT from Rohingya refugees traveling to Cox's Bazar and beyond. There is heavy scrutiny alongside highly profitable corruption, as Rohingya refugees now pay large bribes for documents. Government authorities were seen by participants as being too busy dealing with refugee issues to attend to the needs of their local constituents. Rohingya frequently leave the camps to access local hospitals and clinics, causing longer queues and affecting the quality of services. Camp clinics are required to treat both refugees and locals, but one woman said she had been denied treatment for not being Rohingya.

3.3.4. Intention to decamp

Many participants believe that the Rohingya have begun making plans to integrate into Bangladesh society and are taking strategic long-term measures in planning to do so, such as becoming fluent in Bangla and learning Bangladeshi history in order to pass undetected as locals. This was seen as unacceptable and a major concern. According to one NGO representative:

Rohingya refugees are recently intending to decamp – they aspire to stay permanently and mix with the mainstream Bangladeshi population. Some immoral locals have been providing assistance to facilitate this. Rohingya refugees are taking great measures to prepare for integration, such as vigorously building relationships with locals, learning Bangla and the local culture, and saving money to bribe the police while smuggling out of camp.

Another NGO participant said he had encountered several Rohingya living in Rajshahi District, a western district of Bangladesh located 600 kilometers from Cox's Bazar. Rohingya refugees need to pay only 50 to 100 Taka bribes to police at checkpoints.

3.4. Social fears and concerns

3.4.1. Xenophobia

The majority of participants, most vocally the local government representatives, said they felt that Rohingya refugees staying in Bangladesh long-term would be “very harmful” because Rohingya refugees would “mix with our culture and our children will adopt their bad mindset.” They felt there to be a “huge difference” culturally and socially. A local government representative said “Under the guise of a friendly and soft Muslim brotherhood, Rohingya refugees want to occupy our area permanently in order to have a better life than in Myanmar.”

3.4.2. Criminality and insecurity

The crime rate has been rising and people feared that it will intensify in the near future. Recently, several murder cases took place and participants alleged that local political cadres had hired some Rohingya were hired as hit men in order to accomplish political goals. Inside the camp, drug trafficking, theft and murder have also taken place.

Participants discussed criminal and gang activity ongoing in the camps. They assumed that this was connected to ARSA (locally usually referred to as Al-Yaqin); participants believe that gang members associated with armed groups know martial arts and are adept at using weapons. They are believed to be responsible for robbery, abduction, ransom cases, and the use of force and threats to maintain power over the people. They also commit crimes in collusion with local criminal networks. An ethnic minority leader said, “I have never seen a single crime around my house in my whole life. But recently I have witnessed it several times.” While most of the stealing is still petty, participants feared that in coming days refugees would be emboldened to commit bigger crimes.

Locals know Kutupalong Registered Camp (Camp 2) as a complex place and a “land of criminality.” The “old” Rohingya refugees who arrived after 1991 dominate the camp criminal networks and have established a nexus

of power alongside host community criminal actors. One NGO representative stated, “There are two sides of the camp: the day environment and the nighttime environment. During the night, no host community people willingly enter the camp as it is very dangerous.” Participants said they had heard of a new armed group recently emerging in Nayapara Camp, and local people have been feeling fearful of the group’s potential future misdeeds.

In contrast, the participants noted that robbery along the Cox’s Bazar-Teknaf Highway has decreased markedly due to the mass presence of law enforcement and intelligence agencies.

3.4.3. Sense of being outnumbered and deprioritized

As Rohingya refugees have become the majority population in the area, locals feel a growing sense of insecurity due to being outnumbered. The participants estimated that 2,000 host families live inside the camp and are surrounded on all sides by refugee shelters, which limits their mobility and ability to access resources.

Host community leaders explained their feeling that, as citizens of Bangladesh, they have constitutional and civic rights; citizens should be prioritized by the government at all times. But they are not receiving such consideration and feel deprived of justice and honor. For example, refugees have been given gas cooking stoves to contend with the loss of available firewood, but the host community has not, though the loss of firewood supply affects the two communities in similar ways. And while Rohingya refugees receive electrically powered and deep tube-wells, those installed in the host community are only 150 to 200 feet, which is insufficient. Participants blamed UNHCR and other agencies for these inequities, saying they have failed to provide adequate support and consideration to the host community.

Compounding the perception of preferential treatment is the fear that, as a new majority population, Rohingya are imposing their own cultural views upon the local area. One host community religious leader explained that he had tried to conduct a public religious lecture inside the camp. But he was threatened by a group of Rohingya refugees who said they would kill him if he returned. This may be indicative of the dominance of archconservative religious views in the camps; the local mullahs described themselves as proudly moderate, and want to promote tolerant views amongst the Rohingya refugees but are thus far unable to do so.

The Rohingyas’ repressive gender norms may also play a role. A madrassa teacher in attendance said, “When a group of host community girls went to work for NGO jobs inside camp schools, they were beaten by some Rohingya refugees because some Rohingya refugee people think the camp job should be restricted for the Rohingya refugees only.” The teacher noted that many Rohingya refugees oppose women to work outside of the home due to religious conservatism, and that this could be another reason for the violence against the women NGO staff.

3.4.4. Conspiracy theory and rumors

A few participants claimed that Rohingya had been posting on social media that “both sides” of Arakan (meaning the Bangladesh and Myanmar sides of the Bay of Bengal) are Rohingya indigenous territory and rightfully theirs to occupy. The idea that Rohingya are embarking on a territorial occupation strategy was a source of anger and animosity for the participants who believed it to be the case.

The Union Parishad Chairman spoke at length about a conspiracy in which Rohingya refugees are plotting to dominate and settle permanently in the area. He believes that Rohingya refugees are mobilizing around the idea that the entire Teknaf and Ukhiya region is part of their homeland, and rightfully theirs. He also said that he was frustrated about the lack of willingness amongst the Rohingya refugees to fight against the Government of Myanmar. He said he felt that ARSA was too weak and needed to get stronger in order to attack the Myanmar Army and assert the Rohingya refugees’ right to live in Myanmar. He felt the Rohingya refugees should follow the example set by the freedom fighters of Bangladesh in their struggle for liberation from Pakistan. He believed that some NGOs working in the camps were secretly advocating against the government policy of repatriation and advocating for the Rohingya refugees to stay permanently in Bangladesh. They advised the Rohingya refugees that unless they receive a security guarantee and citizenship from the Myanmar, they should not go back to Myanmar.

3.5. Health and Environmental

3.5.1. Unhygienic practices

Many participants described the camps as breeding grounds for disease – the workshop occurred in the midst of a chicken pox outbreak. The participants commented that refugees are unhygienic and unaware of environmental pollution; they are unfamiliar with how to use toilets, which constantly emanate a bad smell. Others recognized that refugees might have little control over sanitation conditions in the crowded camps. According to participants, few host community people are willing to enter the camps because of bad odors and lack of hygiene.

3.5.2. Environmental degradation

Participants said they are regularly bothered by bad smells and a feeling of being cramped due to the high population density inside the camp. The amount of garbage is massive, there is no proper waste management system, and the loss of forest cover has made the environment hotter and much dustier. Waters in the canals have become black and dirty. The forest was developed as the result of a laborious 20-year forestry plan, but was cut down without any explanation or community consultation. Previously, the average depth of a tube-well in the host community was 100 to 150 feet. Now, due to the increased population density and increased water consumption, there is scarcity of water and reduced flow from the established tube-wells, and there is shortage of sufficiently deeper wells. NGOs have even illegally harvested sand from beaches for use in camp construction projects.

3.6. Conflict resolution

Participants described the host community population as calm and resilient, and said they are reluctant to report problems to police to avoid the hassle, waste of money and time it takes to pursue formal access to justice. Most of their problems occur around interpersonal and intra-community disputes, and conflicts can be resolved internally by engaging with local government representatives, particularly the chairman and members of the Union Parishad. Recently, a high number of disputes have been reported over land acquisition. Now, when there are disputes with Rohingya refugees, the Army, majhis and camp-in-charge (CiC) are also involved; the participants felt that this arrangement does not work well because the CiC and army are biased toward the refugees. Since the refugee influx, they find the chairman and members too busy with camp activities and business related to the response to attend to their needs as before.

The refugees follow their camp mullahs and majhis, and their own disputes are normally resolved through local collaboration with the imam, majhi and the host Union Parishad Chairman. But the majhis are seen as very powerful; they often take an authoritarian stance and are involved in bribery. The participants described their sense that even religious leaders inside the camps feel helpless and that their voices are unheeded. In contrast, the majhis form a power nexus together with host community leaders; due to the lack of other governance mechanisms the majhis had become omnipotent in their rule over the refugees.

3.7 Opportunities and Barriers to Social Cohesion

Nearly every participant – but most vocally the Union Parishad members - strongly recommended that the government and humanitarian agencies not implement any integration-based programming, whether in schools, the workforce or social functions. Without a large-scale civic education process first taking place to orient Rohingya to the rule of law and civic values, any exercise in integration would create clashes and jeopardize the existing peace and stability. Participants largely viewed the Rohingya as illiterate and unwilling to obey rules and regulations. They described them as ungrateful for the support they have received, and unaccountable to any formal law. Many participants referred to Rohingyas' use of "bad language" in everyday conversation. A young man said that behind every interaction occurring between Rohingya refugees and locals, there is some form of self-interest or rent-seeking motivation.

The researchers' discussions with NGO and local government official participants were more nuanced. One government education officer said that it would be necessary to provide Rohingya youth with civic and peace education. Another government education officer said that the government should not prohibit Rohingya refugee youths from learning Bangla language and social studies, because there was no other way to make them amicable, prepared for the workforce, well socialized, and aware of Bangladeshi law. Without some degree of integration and rehabilitation, the youth would inevitably become involved in criminal activity, and militant groups would easily be able to recruit them for participation in cross-border insurgency.

The Union Parishad members stood strongly against the option of teaching Bangla language and Bangladeshi culture to the refugees, as it would increase their ability to decamp, integrate with the mainstream population, and seek permanent settlement in Bangladesh. This would make the repatriation process impossible. A teacher stated:

The government must ensure efficient security measures; in particular, biometric data collection and a comprehensive verification process must take place so that Rohingya refugees can be identified in case they decamp to other parts of the country.

Despite the complaints, there were also recollections of more easeful direct interactions that had taken place between participants and refugees. Some of the male youth participants said that they had played football with Rohingya refugee boys who came from the camp. They also said that the Rohingya boys were shy and reluctant to be friends with them, but they had no problem playing together.

3.8 Opportunities Resulting from the Refugee Influx

Women and men participants alike acknowledged various benefits that had arisen from the response, but felt that these were mainly reserved for educated and non-local Bangladeshis, with poor people suffering the brunt of the problems while gaining few of the rewards. A remarkable number of job opportunities with high salaries had been made available to the small number of well-educated and locally influential people. The response has also opened up opportunities to learn new knowledge and has brought a sense of visibility, with many more interactions now taking place between locals and educated Bangladeshis from Dhaka and elsewhere, as well as with foreigners arriving to work on the response.

The number of vehicles providing local transportation services has increased, but due to heavy traffic the travel takes longer. Several new roads have been constructed, but all the old roads have been breaking down due to the operation of heavy vehicles. A number of new NGOs have arrived to set up clinics and hospitals; this has somewhat enhanced medical services in the locality, especially for pregnant women. The increased access to maternal care and delivery services was one of the most frequently mentioned benefits. Some NGOs are also building new school classrooms in the host community. Participants also acknowledged receiving material aid such as tube-wells, latrines, blankets, hygiene kits, and household items from NGOs, but said these are inequitably distributed. Also, participants explained that they are accustomed to using their own private household latrines and tube-well rather than sharing these amongst the community, so were unappreciative of the community latrines and wells donated by NGOs.

Some goods are available at cheaper prices than before, including rice, lentil, oils and cosmetics, which refugees sell to locals. Elsewhere, the local markets have expanded greatly, now running seven days a week compared to twice weekly before. Participants appreciated the increased market access but noted that most of the markets are owned and controlled by locally influential people, so this access brought limited financial benefit to local sellers. Similarly, due to increasing demands from the larger population, goods and groceries are now more widely available throughout the area though at higher prices. Families who happened to live inside or adjacent to the camps have benefitted well by selling or renting land at expensive rates to refugees as well as to NGOs and NGO staff.

A number of recommendations were noted by the participants, who asked that they recommendations be taken into account for policy change. Notably, the participants made various recommendations related to the promotion of social cohesion and peaceful co-existence in order to enhance resilience between Rohingya refugees and host community. They were vocal about the types of policies, compensation and support they feel are necessary to overcome the problems caused by the influx. Recommendations largely fell along the following thematic lines:

Material support for the poorest host population: The poor and the ultra-poor are adversely affected from the influx, therefore GO-NGOs should provide food rations and launch feeding programs for them. The adverse impact of the refugee influx on the livelihoods of the poorest is apparent in various ways, including loss of access to livelihoods from land, grazing land, forest resource collection, and fishing in the Naf River. The poorest lack adequate human as well as financial capital to reap benefits resulting from the refugee influx, such as through NGO jobs, renting houses, transportation and hospitality businesses, and so on. It is advisable to provide gas cylinders to compensate the poor for their loss of access to firewood and to prevent further deforestation.

Regulation on labour market access for refugees: As explained above, Rohingya refugees are officially banned from working outside of the camps, but this is not being enforced. Participants urged the introduction of an economic scheme that provides vocational training and job opportunities to both refugees and the host population. They urge that refugees should not be allowed to go outside the camp for any purpose. They advise that a proper regulatory framework should be put in place to ensure that agricultural work and other day labour is strictly reserved for the host community population, with daily minimum wages set strictly at BDT 600.

Support for creating employment and industrialization: The host population needs support in terms of skills training along with startup capital to initiate poultry farming, fisheries, crops and vegetable farming, already primary sources of livelihood in the region. To start such small enterprises, they requested interest-free loans and subsidies for agricultural and forestry development. Government officials who participated in the study recommended massive investment to open a special economic zone in the area for export-oriented goods, service production and processing where host community and refugee workers can be employed separately and contribute to different stages of production. This would enable everyone to secure employment and refrain from criminal activity.

Young participants felt that vocational training should be provided to youths and students. Their recommended areas of training include: automobile and motorbike mechanics, ICT training, handicrafts training, small-scale industrial training, modern agricultural techniques, and fishing and fisheries training. A subsidy should also be provided to support local farming. A representative of the Social Welfare Department who participated said there are currently 27 community welfare programmes, which are unproductive and far below the number needed. These have to be upgraded and accelerated through modernization and further investment.

Segregation and restrict mobility of refugees: Participants stood completely opposed to any kind of integration between refugees and the local population. They requested that strong advocacy be undertaken by the international community to find solutions for their repatriation. There should be strict monitoring and restrictions on Rohingya refugees procuring Bangladeshi national identity documents in order to prevent integration. Some of the participants, especially Union Parishad members, recommended that Rohingya refugees should not be taught Bangla language and local culture as it could help them assimilate. Some of the participants even suggested that a wall be built around the camps to segregate Rohingya refugees from the host community. There are about 1000 families inside the camps, confined to live alongside the refugees. They need extra support to cope up with the sudden and drastic change in life and livelihood.

Dispute settlement, land management and compensation: Coordinated dispute resolution and planning is needed between the CiC, RRRC, local elders, camp majhi and other influential leaders. The Union Parishad members are capable of settling disputes but should be fairly empowered. Financial compensation should be provided to those who lost access to grazing and paddy lands, and other forest resources. If the government needs to repossess land, formal policies and procedures should be followed.

Road and traffic management: Old roads should be repaired and widened, and new roads should be built to ease traffic congestion and overcrowding. Tube-wells donated by agencies should be dug to 800 feet instead of the current 150 feet. Tube-wells and latrines should be given to individual households, as people are not fond of using community toilet and tube-wells nowadays.

Hygiene, sanitation and ecological management: Drainage and sewage systems must be improved in the refugee camps and host communities to reduce bad odors and water pollution. This will help reduce the incidence of communicable and water-borne diseases. Massive reforestation projects should be restarted where tree plantations have been destroyed.

Education and health: There should be adequate numbers of schools with adequate numbers of classrooms and quality teachers. A competitive salary should be provided to host community schoolteachers to ensure retention. An Upazila Education Officer recommended that vehicles be provided to education officials, who face difficulties to monitor 77 schools with over 25,000 students without any office-owned transportation. Also, host people suggested that separate education institutions be established for Rohingya refugee children and youth in order to promote their good character as law-abiding and respectful people.

Civic education additionally should be provided for host and refugee youth (separately) for them to understand political systems and become civically engaged community members. Some youth participants recommended that a playground be made for refugee and host community children to play together, which will help to build social cohesion and peace.

There should be sufficient hospitals and health care facilities for both host and refugee community considering the local prevalence of various diseases and increased demand for health care services.

Education for refugees: Provide refugees with life skills on a variety of topics ranging from public health, hygiene, civic values, and moderate religious views to prevent further social chaos and to orient them to live in a peaceful and harmonious society. Provide family planning education and support refugees to reduce the camp birth rate. Teach older children in their native language (Rohingya and Burmese) because they may need it when they go back one day.

Make Rohingya leaders, including camp majhis, religious leaders and elites, aware of Bangladeshi law, rules and regulations in order to hold the community accountable to the rule of law. Teachers who can communicate in the local languages (Chittagonian, Rohingya, and Burmese) should be hired to teach refugee children. Also, amongst refugees, age-segregated classrooms are needed and should be considered goal, though this is seen as a major challenge because most of the Rohingya children have not received basic elementary education and children of many ages are at similarly low learning levels.

Rule of law and justice: Ensure that rule of law and justice are applied equally to all. Army and law enforcement agencies should act without bias and should not take bribes. Checkpoints should be managed with transparency; bribing should be strictly punishable. Disputes between the two communities should be resolved peacefully. Access to justice should be ensured for both communities and rampant corruption should be addressed. Any kind of radical and terrorist activities like ARSA should be controlled, and intelligence agencies should eradicate the spate of silent abductions and killings that have been occurring inside the camp.

Social cohesion and peaceful coexistence: Ensure peaceful coexistence of host and Rohingya refugee communities by any means necessary; emerging conflicts should be resolved promptly inside the camps by engaging all relevant stakeholders. Ensure coordination amongst NGOs, the Upazila administration, the Union Parishad members, and Rohingya refugees camp leaders.





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