

The Rohingya are an ethnic Muslim minority group who are denied basic human rights and citizenship by the Myanmar government. Since the 1970s, the Rohingya have been forced to flee across the border to Bangladesh in significant numbers from northern Rakhine State due to religious, cultural and political persecution. Bangladesh has faced an ongoing refugee crisis ever since. From 25 August 2017 the cross-border situation deteriorated rapidly, with eight hundred thousand fleeing Myanmar over the subsequent months. In June 2018, more than one million Rohingya refugees were living in refugee camps and different settlement areas in the Cox's Bazar District of Bangladesh. This placed intolerable burdens on the local population as well as local authorities and the national government. The thesis analyses the complex connections between the prolonged refugee presence and the local community. It examines the socio-economic structures forming in Cox's Bazar before the August 2017 influx, the security challenges, and the environmental impacts of overuse of the region's natural resources. The thesis assesses the difficult challenges faced by the UNHCR, international community and humanitarian organisations, in cooperation with the Bangladeshi government, since August 2017. It concludes that the decades long refugee presence in Cox's Bazar has both positive and negative socio-economic impacts. Some positive impacts include improvements in the provision of social services, market expansion, growth in the number of small businesses and new livelihood opportunities. Though the Bangladeshi Government is fulfilling all its humanitarian commitments, such as providing temporary shelter, it wants to begin repatriation as soon as is practical. However, there is a little probability that the refugees will be able to return to Myanmar in the short term due to political instability, security concerns and lack of interest by the Myanmar government in negotiating a deal. The thesis concludes that the adverse implications of the crisis are greater than the positive impacts, resulting in local instability and conflicts. The pressure is on the Bangladeshi Government to formulate strategies in partnership with the international community to force the Myanmar Government to begin repatriation and guarantee that the human rights and safety of the Rohingya will be respected.