

THE ROHINGYA REFUGEE CRISIS: SOCIAL, ECONOMIC AND ENVIRONMENTAL IMPLICATIONS FOR THE LOCAL COMMUNITY IN BANGLADESH

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Abstract

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.

Declaration

I certify that this thesis does not incorporate without acknowledgment any material previously submitted for a degree or diploma in any university; and that to the best of my knowledge and belief it does not contain any material previously published or written by another person except where due reference is made in the text.

Lily Myat

Date: 30.6.18

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List of Acronyms

ARRA	Administration for Refugee and Return Affairs
ARSA	Arakan Rohingya Salvation Army
ASEAN	Association of South East Asian Nations
BIPSS	Bangladesh Institute of Peace and Security Studies
BBS	Bangladesh Bureau of Statistics
CPD	Centre for Policy Dialogue
EU	European Commission
GoB	Government of Bangladesh
HRW	Human Rights Watch
HuJI	Harkat-ul-Jihad-i-Islami
ICJ	International Court of Justice
ICC	The International Criminal Court
IAWG	Inter-Agency Working Group
ICG	International Crisis Group
IRC	International Rescue Committee
IPS	Inter Press Service
IMF	International Monetary Fund
IOM	International Organization for Migration
ISCG	Inter Sector Coordination Group
GDP	Gross domestic product
MoU	Memorandum of Understanding
MSF	<i>Medecins Sans Frontieres</i>
NLD	National League for Democracy
NGOs	Non-Governmental Organizations
NRC	Norwegian Refugee Council
NRS	Northern Rakhine State
NYT	The New York Times
OCHA	United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs
OIC	Organization of Islamic Cooperation
RAB	Rapid Action Battalion
RRRC	Office of the Refugee Relief and Repatriation Commissioner
RSO	Rohingya Solidarity Organization
SLORC	State Law and Order Restoration Council
SRH	Sexual and Reproductive Health
TWS	Teknaf Wildlife Sanctuary

UN	United Nations
UNDP	United Nations Development Programme
UNDRIP	United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous People
UNHCR	United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees
UDHR	Universal Declaration of Human Rights
WHO	World Health Organization

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Chapter 1: Introduction

According to a 2015 report by the United Nations (UN) High Commissioner for Refugees (Edwards 2016a; UNHCR 2015, p. 5), more people are being driven from their homes by persecution and conflict than at any other time since the UN was established. The June 2018 report by the UN Refugee Agency, *Global Trends* (UN 2018), documents the plight of hundreds of thousands of people worldwide who have been forced to flee from human rights violations, terrorism, threats to their personal security, war, political oppression, interethnic and interreligious conflict, natural disasters, or to escape poverty. Refugees are displaced people who seek asylum from these threats and have crossed a national border into another country where they are protected by international law and eligible for humanitarian aid (Jastram & Achiron 2001; Mohammad 2011; UNHCR 2018a). The numbers of refugees reported by the UNHCR is four times more than just a decade ago, combined with the knowledge that large-scale, uncontrolled movements of people make violent extremism more likely due to poor governance, conflict and lack of security. (Idris 2017).

Grinvald (2010, p. 19) states that most refugees flee in search of safety, basic rights, protection and support, and to secure their future. Many nations have signed the 1951 Refugee Convention, which sets out the legal obligations of member countries to protect and provide sanctuary to refugees (UNHCR 2018a). However, there are implications for the host country accepting refugees, not the least of which are the impacts on local communities. (Alix-Garcia & Saah 2009; Madanat 2013; Vas Dev 2002). Such is the situation in Bangladesh, which has been hosting large numbers of Rohingya Muslim refugees who fled interethnic and interreligious violence and persecution in Myanmar over the past three decades (Martin, Margesson & Vaughn 2017, p. 1). Together with international humanitarian aid agencies, Bangladesh has been attempting to meet their commitment to provide basic shelter, food and water, and healthcare needs for an estimated 500,000 refugees in early 2017. (Lewis 2018; Milton et al. 2017, p. 1). However, the increasing numbers of Rohingya and their extended occupancy of inadequate, temporary camps pose a serious dilemma and huge burden for Bangladesh.

This already desperate refugee situation worsened dramatically after a violent confrontation between Rohingya insurgents and security forces on 25 August 2017 in the northern part of Rakhine state. The event triggered a wave of violence, extrajudicial killings, rapes, and burning of Rohingya villages by the security forces whose actions were described as 'ethnic cleansing' and 'crimes against humanity' by the United Nations Assistant Secretary General for Human Rights, Andrew Gilmour (UN News 2018). More than 688,000 Rohingya fled across the border to Cox's Bazar district, where they joined the relative security of refugee camps or spread out to other areas seeking refuge (Fossvik 2018). Consequently, the already cramped and abysmal conditions in Cox's Bazar were overwhelmed and in 2018 was one of the fastest growing and most serious global refugee crises in (UNHCR 2018b).

While the focus of global concern is usually directed to the plight of refugees and the need for aid and protection of vulnerable groups, the impact on the local population in host countries, though equally as challenging, is often ignored (Gomez & Christensen 2010). The impact of a large influx of refugees suddenly arriving in a host country can be both positive and negative in effect. It can be positive because of the additional resources and economic assistance that is provided by NGOs and donors. Employment opportunities increase for locals and infrastructure development improves the economy in refugee settlement areas (Khatun 2017, p. 24). The negative impacts may be even more influential because the damaging effects on the social, economic, environment, and security aspects of the community can be devastating and long lasting, placing enormous strain on the fabric of the local community (Alam 2018a).

For example, in times of emergency, refugee camps need to be well constructed and should not be established in an area not otherwise fit for human habitation. Nonetheless, when they are hastily built or expanded to accommodate a sudden influx, as is the case in Cox's Bazar, the socio-economic impacts on the livelihoods of the local population can be enormous. Moreover, the excessive use of land and resources accelerates environmental degradation (Rahman 2010, p. 237). The Rohingya refugee camps are located near forested areas and the refugees collect fuelwood for cooking, and cut trees to make shelter, causing significant deforestation. There is enormous pressure on employment. Locals are dependent on day labour, but the daily wage decreased due to the over-supply of workers, while the cost of living rose. (Khatun 2017, p. 24).

With this background in mind, the thesis examines the effects of Rohingya refugee inflows on the local community of Cox's Bazar, filling a gap in the academic studies of the subject. While a large body of literature studies Myanmar's treatment of the Rohingya, documenting the human rights abuses and violence, the challenges faced by Bangladesh receives rather less attention. Therefore, a central aim of the thesis is to correct the imbalance in the existing literature. It focusses on the impacts on the local community as well as the limited resources possessed by the Bangladeshi government, even with the support of the international community.

The sustainable and peaceful cohabitation of mostly Bengali locals and the Rohingya is essential for the stability of Cox's Bazar. Rohingyas have sought refuge in Bangladesh for decades; many live as semi-permanent residents with little hope of ever returning home. Discussions between Bangladesh and Myanmar concerning repatriation have not made progress, despite years of talk and intervention by other nations and NGOs. The safety of Rohingya cannot be guaranteed, plus a lack of interest by Myanmar in providing assurances. No realistic solutions are identified, leaving the government and local community to carry the burden indefinitely. The thesis argues that the relationship between refugees and the local community needs extra understanding to safeguard a sustainable, nonviolent coexistence. The thesis critically assesses the options open to the Bangladesh Government to manage the crisis.

The Rohingya are a distinct ethnic, linguistic and religious community from the north-western Rakhine region of Myanmar. It differs significantly in culture and religion from other ethnic groups in Myanmar, particularly the Buddhist majority, and somewhat from Bangladeshis (Milton *et al.* 2017, p. 6; Shams 2015). However, similarities include some aspects of culture, shared Islamic religion, and Bengali (Bangla) language, though with varying dialects (Albert 2017; Siddique 2012). It is reasonable to suggest that there is greater compatibility than between many other refugee and host groups. However, it is also important to recognise that as early as the 18th century there were tensions between the local Rakhain and Arakan (now known as Rakhine) refugees from war-torn regions to the east during the pre-colonial period and the first Anglo-Burmese War (1824-1826) (Kipgen 2013; Siddique 2012; *The War* 2017).

The Bengali majority exhibited considerable sympathy and tolerance for the Rohingya from a humanitarian perspective, and the government made significant efforts to provide basic needs with the assistance of UNHCR; despite the challenges (Datta 2015, pp. 134-135). The extent of the challenges is the reason why, it is argued, the status quo is an unacceptable alternative to repatriation (Alamgir & Rubel 2018; Bennet 2017).

1.2. Area of the Study

Cox's Bazar District, as shown in Figure 1, is located in the eastern and southernmost portion of Chittagong Division, comprising 2,491.85 km² of mainly low-lying coastal land with large tracts of mixed agricultural areas and rugged forested hills further inland (Lewis 2018). Cox's Bazar Sadar (town), is centrally situated on the west coast facing the Bay of Bengal, as shown in the Figure 1. The climate and environment are influenced by its location in the tropical monsoon zone, which produces heavy rainfall (averaging 4,285mm annually), high temperatures, and distinct wet and dry seasons (BBS 2016). The tropical, coastal situation of Cox's Bazar exposes it to frequent natural disasters, such as floods, tropical cyclones, tornadoes, and tidal bores, which combine with the effects of climate change, deforestation, soil degradation, and erosion to produce many challenges (Lewis 2018). After 2010, overdevelopment for tourism took its toll on the coastal environment and limited resources available to the population (Shahzalal 2016).

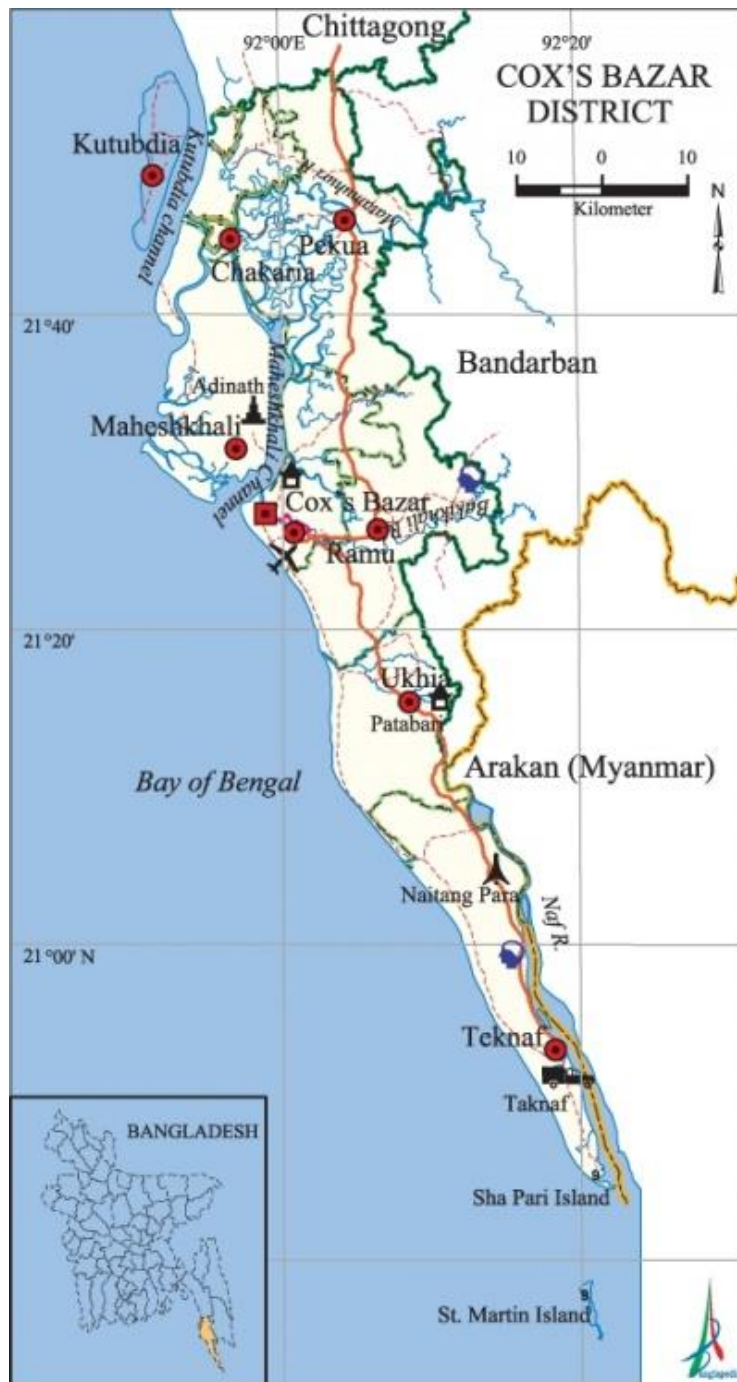


Figure 1: Map of Cox's Bazar District (Source: *Banglapedia* 2012).

The local economy is mainly based on tourism and hospitality, fishing, aquaculture, and small-scale agriculture (Lewis 2018). The population is Bengali Muslim majority, with some Buddhists, Christians and Hindus, and with a relatively small but diverse group of remote, indigenous ethnic communities. (Bangladesh Ethnobotany Online Database n.d.) Bangladeshis conceptualise their self-identity by their religion, which is the dominant influence on social structures, despite the ethnic diversity. In Cox's Bazar, most of the locals living in the hills areas are of Rakhain ethnic origin, one of at least 45 culturally distinct indigenous communities, according to the World Bank (World Bank 2008). The total District population of 2,655,000 (BBS 2016) nearly doubled since the 1990s, due at least in part

to the influx of Rohingya refugees, but it also grew because of internal migration in search of work in the thriving tourist centre of Cox's Bazar township.

The Rohingya refugee camps are distributed at various sites in Cox's Bazar District, The Bangladesh Government was long frustrated that the international community did not apply enough political and diplomatic pressure on Myanmar to deal with the root cause of the Rohingya problem, which is the treatment of the Rohingya over many decades. The Bangladesh Government was also underwhelmed by the inadequate level of international assistance. Dialogue is essential to reach an acceptable compromise that will jointly address the challenges; however, talks to 2018 have been hindered by the complexity of the problem and were not as productive as hoped for (Safi 2018). Circumstances changed daily, as UN agencies, other nations, humanitarian NGOs, and global media weighed in, while the Bangladesh Government awaited the international response to the Rohingya crisis.

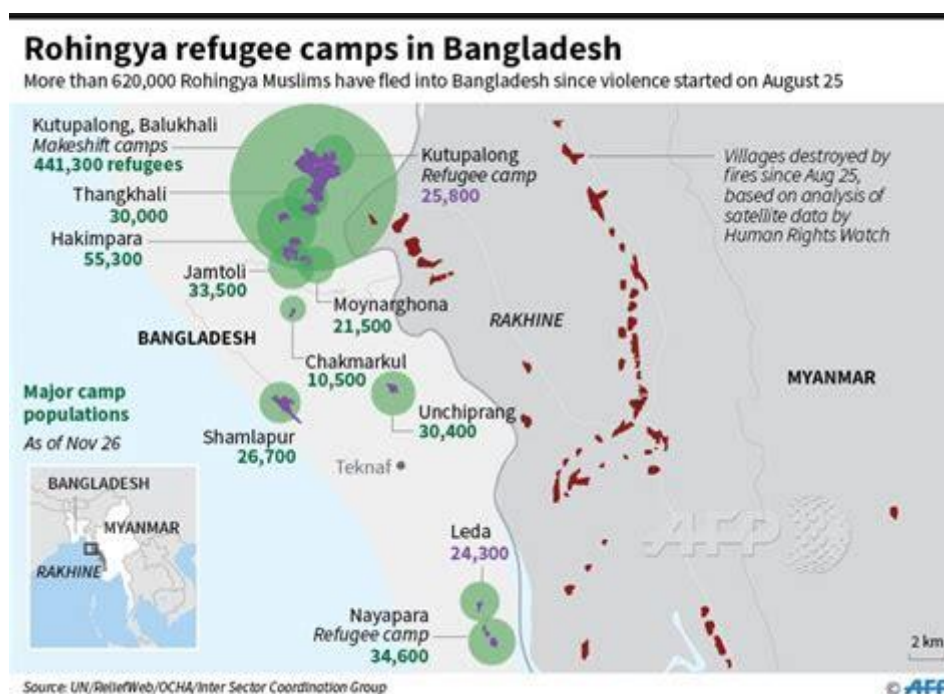


Figure 2: Locations of Rohingya refugee camps and numbers of people living in camps following the 25th August 2017 surge of refugees from Myanmar. Source: AFP (2017).

The Rohingya crisis did not start in August 2017. Over 200,000 refugees were already settled semi-permanently at Cox's Bazar. The sensitivity of the issue and the existing concerns that there are few policy options with outcomes acceptable to both Bangladesh and the Rohingya is essential for understanding how the local community and national government responded to the post-August 2017 crisis. Nonetheless, it is not possible to accept the status quo, as the sudden influx of refugees overwhelmed existing facilities. Fleeing Rohingya were forced to live in dreadful conditions in temporary camps with little hope for the future.

1.3. Thesis Statement

This thesis will assess the socio-economic and environmental impact of the influx of Rohingya refugees on the local Bangladeshi community and the challenge of managing the crisis facing the government. The thesis explores possible policy options available to the government as it reaches for viable solutions to the crisis, in conjunction with the international aid agencies and non-government sector. The thesis argues that the best compromise solution to the crisis is the orderly repatriation of the Rohingya to Myanmar, but with internationally monitored guarantees that their human rights, safety, and security will be protected. Furthermore, the thesis identifies that the underlying interreligious and interethnic causes of the conflict in Myanmar must be resolved, and that the citizenship and national identity of the Rohingya must be recognised and safeguarded as part of the repatriation and resettlement process. The thesis concludes that the likelihood of this solution being agreed to by Myanmar is doubtful, at least in the short term, but that diplomatic and political pressure by other governments and the United Nations could produce concessions and eventually pave the way for a resolution.

1.4. Significance of the Study

The Bangladesh Government has been very generous towards Rohingya refugees over a number of decades. However, the government's goodwill and resource capacities are placed under enormous strain, with new challenges related to security, pollution, deforestation, and clashes between local inhabitants and refugees. Therefore, the search for viable solutions to the refugee crisis, from the perspective of the local community and government, is an urgent task, to which this thesis hopes to contribute.

Another important motivating factor for this thesis is that Bangladesh is a developing country lacking in strategic vision and policy formulation for solving the refugee crisis. The immediate challenge, as identified in the thesis, is to ensure that refugees receive appropriate aid in a timely fashion, not least because this will help reduce negative socio-economic and environmental impacts. The medium to longer-term challenge is to identify the ways and means to help the Rohingya safely return to Myanmar. This thesis contributes to the academic literature on the Rohingya crisis evaluating the impact of the dramatic August 2017 escalation in the refugee crisis and its impact on the host population of Cox's Bazar.

1.5. Research Methodology

This research uses secondary data collected from peer-reviewed journal articles, books, international, government, and non-government organisation reports, and grey literature, including some articles published in electronic and print news media. (Levy & Ellis 2006). The acceptability of a thesis depends on using an appropriate methodology and should have the benefit of adequate support from credible, academic sources for its observations, assertions, and conclusions

(Northeastern University 2012). According to Creswell, Hanson, Clark Plano and Morales (2007), a qualitative research design is appropriate for a study which draws primarily upon the research of others through a review of published literature.

This thesis contributes to the academic literature on the Rohingya crisis, evaluating the impact of the dramatic August 2017 escalation in the refugee crisis and its effect on the host population of Cox's Bazar. The latest and most dramatic inflows of refugees to Bangladesh after August 2017 had not received significant attention in the published literature at the time of writing. This is due to the speed with which the most 2017/18 crisis developed.

1.6. Outline of the Thesis

The thesis is divided into six chapters. Chapter 1 is the introduction, which offers background on the Rohingya crisis and its social economic and environmental implications for host country, the thesis statement, significance of study, research objectives, and methodology. Chapter 2 reviews earlier literature and current on the Rohingya presence in Cox's Bazar. Chapter 3 is a history of the Rohingya as an ethnic and religious minority group and the stakeholders' points of view towards the Rohingya. Chapter 4 discusses human rights violations and strategies for all stakeholders. Chapter 5 evaluates the impacts of Rohingya refugees on the local Cox's Bazar population. Chapter 6 discuss countermeasures to deal with the crisis, followed by the Chapter 7 conclusion.

1.7. Conclusion

This first chapter introduced the key issues surrounding the Rohingya ethnic minority in Myanmar, briefly mentioned human rights violations, and explained briefly why they were forced to flee. The huge refugee influx after 25 August 2017 created inter-generational impacts on the local community and enormous socio-economic and environmental challenges. Consequently, the crisis required careful study to identify solutions that involve international aid agencies and the non-government sector to serve the interests of all stakeholders. The next chapter outlines the theoretical framework and reviews the literature.

Chapter 2: Conceptual Framework and Literature Review

2.1. Introduction

In academic research, conceptualizing the subject matter establishes a rationale for the research (Radhakrishna, Yoder & Ewing, 2007). A conceptual framework, defined as a collection of interrelated concepts and ideas forms the basis interpretations and conclusions (Berman, 2013, p. 2). It helps improve the goal of the study, advance thesis questions, choose suitable approaches, and identify possible limitations of the research (Lederman & Lederman 2015, p. 597; Le Compte and Goetz (1993).

Creswell (2013) argues that the literature review provides a solid foundation for developing frameworks for research. The chapter begins with important definitions of terms often referred to in writings on the refugee crisis. It discusses the conceptual framework, followed by a literature review of the refugee crisis issue, which emphasises the socio-economic and environmental impacts on the host government and local community (Levy & Ellis 2006).

2.2. Definition of Terms and Concepts

Definitions of terms used in this thesis are as follows:

2.2.1. Refugee

“It is difficult for anyone who has never been forcibly displaced to imagine what it is like to be a refugee” – Kofi Annan, former Secretary-General of the United Nations (Ullah, 2011).

The refugee issue is a key and regular feature of human relocation. The United Nations Conventions of 1951 and its Protocol of 1967 define a refugee as an individual who is forced to flee their native country across an international border due to oppression, social disturbance, or war. It is clear from this definition that large numbers of people are refugees in need assistance and protection (UNHCR 2018a). Affected states and the UNHCR determines an individual’s refugee status through an administrative process (George 2009, p. 34). Often, refugees effectively become stateless people, because they cannot return home for fear of reprisals or continuing persecution. The historian Joseph Reese Strayer argues:

“A man can lead a reasonably full life without a family, a fixed local residence or a religious affiliation, but if he is stateless he is nothing. He has no rights, no security and little opportunity” (*The Lancet*, 2016, p. 217).

2.2.2. Host Community

Vas Dev (2002, p. 3) states that a host community is any independent nation which by proactive choice or through incapability to act accepts asylum seekers and permits them to reside on their land on short or long-term basis. According to the Administration for Refugee and Return Affairs - Ethiopia (ARRA), host communities can be welcoming of refugees and live in relative harmony, upholding the

rights of refugees and sharing natural resources (ARRA 2011, p. 34). However, in some circumstances the host population exhibits a negative response due to dissatisfaction with the impact of refugees on the local economy, social and political life, and security and safety (Vas Dev 2002, p. 4).

2.2.3. Difference between Refugee and Migrant

An individual may choose to shift to another country for several reasons and under different situations. Migration occurs because of financial factors, and for socio-cultural, environmental and political reasons (Parkins 2011, p. 12). Often, people are forced to migrate due to religious and ethnic conflict, war, and poverty (Grinvald 2010, p. 17). The term refugee and migrant are sometimes used interchangeably; however, the two terms have distinct meanings. The UNHCR (2018) states that:

A refugee is someone who has been forced to flee his or her country because of persecution, war, or violence. A refugee has a well-founded fear of persecution for reasons of race, religion, nationality, political opinion or membership in a particular social group. Most likely, they cannot return home or are afraid to do so.

An individual who moves from one country to another seeking better opportunities, for example employment or living conditions, is defined as a migrant (Sengupta, 2015). These distinctions are important, given the global problem of large-scale movements of refugees, and displaced and stateless people.

2.2.4. The Distribution of Load and Welfare among Host Communities

The refugee presence creates burdens but may also bring benefits to the host community. The presence of refugees is usually accompanied by humanitarian aid agencies, which is beneficial for some locals, whereas others struggle to access basic resources (Whitaker 2002, p. 339). For example, demand for the daily needs of refugees can result in price increases to the disadvantage the host community (Madanat 2013, p. 3). Thus, the refugee impact on a host population depends on many local, national and international factors, which may be both positive and negative.

2.2.5. International Refugee Laws and Principles

The relevant principles and laws for this thesis's explanation of and Bangladesh's legal view of the Rohingya refugee issue are the UN's Universal Declaration of Human Rights, the 1951 Geneva Convention refugee laws and its 1967 Protocol and the principle of non-refoulement.

The Universal Declaration of Human rights (UDHR), adopted by the UN General Assembly in 1948, specifies in Article 14(1) that: "Everyone has the right to seek and to enjoy in other countries asylum from persecution" (UN n.d., p.1). This is the fundamental right that defends individuals from persecution.

The 1951 Geneva Convention and the 1967 Protocol includes the basic definition of a refugee, their legal status in the host country and the state's responsibility in collaboration with the UNHCR (Jastram & Achiron 2001).

For refugees, the principle of non-refoulement provides additional directions for the safety of refugees and asylum seekers and an essential element of the prevention of torture and inhuman treatment that preserved in Article 7 of the 1966 International Convention on Civil and Political Rights (European Union Agency for Fundamental Rights 2016). As per Article 33 (1) of the 1951 Convention, a contracting country cannot refuse entry to a refugee or force their return to areas where life or independence is endangered because of nationality, religion, race, or membership of any specific group. As a member of the UN, Bangladesh is obliged to uphold these international laws and meet its obligations toward Rohingya refugees (Mohammed 2011; UNHCR 1992).

2.2.6. Discrepancies between Rights of Citizens and Rights of Refugees

The Rohingya, according to the UNHCR in 2003, were persecuted and deprived of basic rights, freedom, and Myanmar citizenship, making them powerless and stateless (UNHCR 2003). From a humanitarian perspective, Bangladesh provided for the Rohingya's basic needs per international refugee law after allowing refugees to enter and reside. However, in reality, the government did not fully protect refugees and failed to provide for them as they would citizens. The Rohingya did not have the same access as citizens to social, economic, and political rights, and were not allowed freedom of movement or employment (Imran & Mian 2014a). Arguably, this was because the government lacked appropriate strategies to deal with the impact of long-term crisis on the local community, which struggled to adapt (Martin, Margesson, & Vaughn 2017).

2.3. Literature Review

One of the fundamental purposes of the thesis is to evaluate the impact of Rohingya refugee influx and camp construction on the local community, and the challenges related to refugee aid management. A number of case studies of refugee conditions and their impact on host communities offer insights into Bangladesh's challenges.

A significant study by Maysadt and Verwimp (2009, pp. 1-2) demonstrated that large refugee influxes have many and varied social, economic, political and environment impacts on existing social and economic structures. According to the authors' study, the refugee camps in Bangladesh were established in remote and disadvantaged areas where host populations already struggled with poverty and poor living conditions. Maysadt and Verwimp conclude that the influx of Rohingya influx had a significant impact on the quality and sustainability of the lives of local people living in refugee settlement areas. Since their study a decade ago, there has been a dramatic increase in the number of Rohingya fleeing to Bangladesh, with a corresponding increase in impact.

2.3.1. Rohingya Community

Myanmar considers the Rohingya as illegal migrants in Northern Rakhine State (NRS) and, as such, they are not allowed basic citizenship rights (Azad & Jasmin, 2013, p. 26). There is a large body of literature on the history and development of issues involving the Rohingya (Ahmed 2010; Alam 2012; Brooten 2015; Deppermann 2013; Haque 2016). However, this thesis focusses on the events and consequences arising from the increase in conflict that has taken place over the past year.

On 25 August 2017, activists of the Arakan Rohingya Salvation Army (ARSA) attacked more than 30 police security posts, provoking a violent reaction from the security forces. According to *Medecins Sans Frontieres* (MSF), an international medical humanitarian aid organisation, at least 6,700 Rohingyas and 730 Rohingya children under age of five were killed during the violence. (MSF 2017). Amnesty International estimated that Myanmar security forces raped and sexually ill-treated Rohingya women and girls. According to the human rights organization, at least 288 villages in the northern part of Arakan were partly or completely demolished by fire in late August 2017 (Amnesty International, 2018). Over 655,000 Rohingya fled to Bangladesh during the months after 25 August 2017. Before August, an estimated 307,500 Rohingya refugees were already living in refugee camps. Reports show that the Myanmar military committed serious human rights violations, crimes against humanity, genocide, and ethnic cleansing (Martin, Margesson & Vaughn 2017, pp. 1-2).

2.3.2. Impacts of Refugees on Host Communities

One of the important purposes of this thesis is to evaluate the impact of the Rohingya Refugees Crisis on the host community. The range of impacts depends local conditions and the pattern of refugee-host relationships (Mayastadt & Verwimp 2009, pp. 1-2).

2.3.2.1. Socio- Economic Impact of Refugees on Host Communities

In the host country, sudden, unexpected inflows of refugees can cause catastrophic disruption to already fragile ecological balances, resulting in social and economic strains (Lee 2005, p. 74). The refugee influx may destabilise traditional balances in settlement areas based on ethnicity, religion, community values and beliefs, and provision of social services, all of which may cause clashes. (Betts 2009, p. 9). The refugee presence generally creates security challenges for the social life of the local population, due to an increase in incidences of robbery, assassination, prostitution and drug trafficking (Gomez & Christensen 2010, p. 11).

According to an article in the *World Bank Economic Review* by Alix-Gracia and Saah (2009, p. 166), the economic impact of a refugee presence on the host population is both positive and negative. New positive livelihood opportunities often develop for the host population, though at the same time, competition over the use of natural resources may generate tensions. A significant study by Kobia and Cranfield (2009, p. 6) claims that refugees can be a threat because if they are unemployed they are a burden, yet if they are employed they create pressure on the local job sector. The effect of

these complex factors depends on social sustainability and the level of economic development, where rising competition to use limited resources and rivalry for employment opportunities increases pressures (Deikun & Zetter 2010, p. 6).

The Rohingya crisis resulted in significant differences in the tourism sector between Cox's Bazar, which became known as a place of refugee camps, and other areas further north in Bangladesh (Lewis 2018). For example, the tourist attractions and hotel and restaurant businesses in Cox's Bazar and along the border with Myanmar were affected adversely due to fewer tourist arrivals since the beginnings of the Rohingya crisis and widespread publicity about problems in the area (Panday 2004, pp. 100-101). Maystadt and Verwimp (2009, p. 1) state that the economic structure, agriculture sector and local livelihoods can be affected by the presence of refugees, particularly in large numbers, because of competition in the labour market and increased price of daily goods. The United Nations (UN-HABITAT) announced in May 2018 that it and a number of other NGOs was organising a joint assessment of the impact on livelihoods, the local economy, employment opportunities and socio-economic impact on the Cox's Bazar community.

Thus, it can be seen that the UN and the UNHCR were increasingly concerned about the impact of refugees on local communities. Sattar (2017) reveals that Bangladesh Government sought unsuccessfully for some time to foster tourism in the southern and border regions to help alleviate poverty, and plans mooted to relocate the entire Rohingya population from Cox's Bazar to enable tourism development. Nonetheless, the UNHCR was concerned, asking the government to ensure that any relocation was done with prior consultation and voluntary participation, and the proposed area was viable. The government reportedly has approved a plan to resettle Rohingya refugees to Hatiya Island or to another island in the Bay of Bengal, a move that was reported by numerous domestic and international news outlets, including Reuters (2018) and NDTV (2018). In interviews with the government, Bangladesh Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina said that putting Rohingya on the low-lying island would be a "temporary arrangement" to ease congestion at the camps in Cox's Bazar (Sen 2017). Cookson (2017b) points to economic adjustments caused by the decline in tourist numbers and the increase in the number of aid workers congregating at Cox's Bazar. However, Cookson had no immediate answers to the problem of impacts that the refugees are causing. In general, the literature tends to focus primarily on the challenges posed to the international community by the Rohingya refugee crisis influx. Few writers put forward specific suggestions for managing the crisis. Identifying a clear path to resolving the Rohingya refugee crisis was an elusive goal.

2.3.2.2. Violence as a Social Impact

A study by Akhther and Kusakabe (2014 pp. 225-226) shows that gender-based discrimination and violence increased among the Rohingya at Cox's Bazar. As refugees, they are not permitted to search for employment; however, the support provided by the Bangladesh Government and NGOs is limited. This situation leaves Rohingya families with no choice but to supplement their livelihoods

through any means possible. Because the movement of Rohingya men is restricted by law due to violence that has occurred in the past, women must often perform menial work outside the refugee camps to support their families. However, the refugee women face humiliation both inside and outside of the home and are vulnerable to violence due to their low position in the family hierarchy and the cultural boundaries or gender-based stereotypes that exist in Muslim society (Akhter & Kusakabe, 2014, p. 230).

A number of authors have attempted to explain the aggressiveness found among the Rohingya population by pointing to the violence and discrimination they have been subjected to in their lives. Resentment and the desire for revenge against those who have perpetrated atrocities against the displaced Rohingya may pose a serious risk of radicalization by fundamentalist organisations (Cookson 2017b; Fair & Oldmixon 2015, p. 5). Consequently, Rohingya may decide to join militant groups, such as Rohingya Solidarity Organization (RSO), Ai-Qaeda, Jama'atul Mujahidden Bangladesh (JMB), or Harkat-ul-Jihad-al Islam (Huji), which may represent a threat for national and regional security (Wolf 2014, p. 4). According to Wolf's study from the security perspective, Rohingya refugees are encouraged by their situation to disregard the law and order system by involving themselves in criminal activities, such as robbery, arms and drug trafficking, that increases the level of security threat and frustration among the local population (Wolf 2014, p. 5). They are also vulnerable to being recruited by corrupt local politicians who use Rohingya refugees to further their own illegal interests. These kinds of connections can represent a threat to security for local and national level authorities (Janny & Islam 2015, p. 93). Rohingyas also attempt to acquire illegally a Bangladeshi passport and birth certificate to enable them to gain work in the Middle East. Their involvement in many criminal activities has been documented in a number of studies and widely covered by the news media, which has created a problem for Bangladesh's image internationally (Imran & Mian 2014, p. 238).

2.3.3. Political Significances of Refugee Flows and Settlements Issues

Another influence that refugees have on a host state is their political impact. A number of studies show that the security and political influences of refugees tend to have an adverse impact on society and politics of host administration (Gomez & Christensen 2010, p. 13). There is a probability that some refugees can be involved in internal political activities of host country and influence the bilateral relationships of the government (Omeokachie 2013, p. 43). Das (2018) claims that Bangladesh is concerned about the political impact of Rohingya crisis; for example, one of the ministers of the government, Obaidul Quader, has raised concerns that the extremist group Islamic State may try to conduct militancy in the region and radicalize Rohingya. A significant study by Lee (2005, p. 76) has shown that refugees pose a threat to internal stability of host country through conflict with local population.

2.3.4. Environmental Impacts of Refugees on the Host Country

Another important observation in Rohingya refugee camps is that the temporary shelter facility coverage is inadequate. As a result, refugees cut down trees to construct their shelters and collect firewood for cooking which are main causes of rapid deforestation near refugee camp areas (Janny & Islam 2015, p. 97). Moreover, competition for land for agricultural purposes, and sharing water points, toilets and other facilities often creates conflict between refugee and local community groups (Tani, et al. 2014, pp. 25-27). Due to the size of recent Rohingya influx, it is difficult to accommodate them within refugee camps. The major issues related to environmental challenges are situations of unhygienic living conditions in camp, water pollution, deforestation, and over exploitation of natural resources that affect the lives of local population (Datta 2015, p. 143). These circumstances of overcrowded and unhygienic conditions in refugee camps also contribute to the spread of diseases, such as HIV, diarrhea, and malaria, among other transmittable diseases, all of which can affect local populations as well as refugees (Atim 2013, p. 6).

According to Bangladesh Bureau of Statistics (2011), the Teknaf Wildlife Sanctuary, which is the only proclaimed game reserve forest in Bangladesh, has 11615 ha of restricted forestry zone in the southeast part of the country. However, the excessive usage of natural forest resources by local population and Rohingya refugees during the period 1989-2009 has caused decreases in the forest area of about 45% (Asik & Masakazu 2017, p. 230). Therefore, it can be seen from the literature that the long-term Rohingya presence in Bangladesh for several decades has had serious negative impact on natural resources and environment, as well as upon the lives of local people and the sustainability of the whole region (Omeokachi 2013, p. 46; Rahman 2010, p. 237).

2.4. Conclusion

Numerous studies have described overall influences of refugees on host communities. Many such studies have attempted to capture the overwhelming dimension of this humanitarian problem and sought to identify aspects of it that may help to reveal potential solutions. Yet, there appear to be few if any instances documented in the literature where effective long-term solutions have been found or where examples have been given of successful initiatives that have overcome a major refugee crisis, such as the one that has developed in Myanmar. While the literature discusses the Rohingya crisis and the influences of Rohingya refugees, a viable solution remains an obvious area of oversight.

It is clear from the literature that Rohingya crisis has reached a critical stage as a complex and overwhelming dilemma for Bangladesh and global humanitarian community. Consequently, this research sets out to achieve a very difficult task: to study all the aspects of Rohingya refugees on local people of Cox's Bazar and to search for a workable solution that meets the needs of Rohingya

and Bangladesh. The next chapter will provide the background history and overall situation of the Rohingya and will explore reasons behind the development of the current refugee crisis.

Chapter 3: History of Rohingya Community and Their Flows to Bangladesh

3.1. History and Background

The origins of the Rohingya in Arakan, Myanmar are well documented in the literature and are said to date from the 7th century AD. Their ancestry can be traced to Arab, Moor, Pathan, Moghul, Central Asian, and Indo-Mongoloid people who settled in the region over several centuries (Walton & Hayward 2014). Today, Rohingya display considerable cultural diversity, but still carry Arab names, Muslim faith and traditional customs. As such, they are regarded by some ethnologists, anthropologists, and linguists as a distinct indigenous race of Burma; however, others question the legitimacy of their identity (Siddique 2012). This chapter covers the history of Rohingya and reveals the background that helps explain some of the reasons behind the conflict that has arisen between Rohingya and other groups in Myanmar leading to their persecution. The first section defines the background and history of Rohingya. The second part describes Myanmar state policy towards Rohingya and the reasons behind the conflict. The last portion covers the challenges that the Rohingya face, stakeholders' perspective for Rohingya, and overall condition of Rohingya.

Kipgen (2013, p. 300) states that Rohingya community have lived in Myanmar for centuries and are a distinct ethnic group in Myanmar. However, since Myanmar (formerly Burma) gained its independence from Great Britain and became an independent republic in 1948, the government has not regarded the Rohingya as one of the recognised ethnic minorities in the country and has denied them citizenship and basic rights. Despite the long history of Rohingya settlement in Myanmar, their existence today is a divisive issue and they are widely disliked by Buddhist majority of the population. Rakhine Buddhists regard the Arakanese Muslim community as illegal migrants who came to Burma from neighbouring countries, mainly from the area to the west that was formerly the southeastern Bengal region of India, which later became East Pakistan (1955-1971) and is now Bangladesh (since gaining independence in 1972), with the assistance of the colonial British administration prior to independence. Historically, the relationship between the majority Buddhist population and minority Muslims in Myanmar has been problematic and controversial with serious conflict having often occurred. Consequently, the demand for ethnic identity and basic rights has become politicized where, on one side, the Arakanese identify themselves as 'Rohingya' and on the other side the Buddhist inhabitants described themselves as 'Rakhine' (Siddique 2012).

However, discrimination and persecution of the Rohingya occurred even prior to Burma's independence. During the Second World War, the area was occupied by the Japanese army from 1942-1945 which formed an administrative ruling government with their allies in the majority Buddhist faction and began an organized oppression against the Rohingya community. In response to Japanese attempts to expel or eliminate them, many in the Rohingya community joined with British and Allies in fighting against Japanese military forces in Burma (Mirco, Goetz & Murage 2017).

Rohingya support for British rule intensified Buddhist thinking against Muslim community who regarded their support for the British as anti-Buddhist and anti-national. Therefore, after the war and the formation of the independent republic of Burma, the new government already had well-formed views and bias against Muslim minority (Wolf 2017, p. 8). Once Burma became an independent nation, the British could not fulfill the promise they had given to the Rohingya about forming an autonomous state for them, which left the Rohingya in limbo (Abrar 1996, pp. 3-5).

In 1950s, there was a period when the situation of the Rohingya in Burma had improved somewhat. They were recognized by many political leaders and Rohingya legislators were elected to parliamentary positions (Constantine 2012; Devi 2014, p. 6). In 1951, the government provided National Registration Cards to the Rohingyas and they gained the rights to vote in the 1960s general election (International Crisis Group [ICG] 2014, p. 11). However, in the military government of Ne Win, the situation changed dramatically when the government adopted the 'Burmanisation Policy' of 1962 when land, trade, education, business, and the banking sector were nationalized (Devi 2014, p. 46). Government policies of forced assimilation were enacted to integrate and absorb minority ethnic groups as much as possible under the umbrella of a Buddhist Burmese State (Ayako 2014). Following those events, the Rohingya did not support the Rakhine political parties involved in the new policies, which generated more hostilities and rioting between the two groups (Shams 2015). The national government was aware of this conflict, and encouraged anti-Muslim sentiment in the province, which led to the Rohingya being increasingly marginalized and excluded from social, economic, and political rights. Yue & Mensah (2017, p. 473) states that nearly 2 million Rohingyas once lived in Rakhine region but they are now not considered as citizens of Myanmar and must register as 'Bengalis', which has reinforced their status as non-citizens and unwanted, illegal immigrants who face human rights violations and persecution.

3.2. Identity Formation of Rohingya Community and Challenges

Although the Rohingya community is not recognised by Myanmar government as one of the 135 ethnic groups that make up the population of Myanmar, they strongly self-identify as both ethnic and indigenous (Ayako 2014; Parnini 2013a; Siddiquee 2012). Ayako (2014, pp. 1-2) states that in 1930s, the Rohingya were called Bamar Muslims and described themselves as Muslims who had respect for the traditions and customs of Myanmar. At that time, they regarded themselves as indigenous citizens of Myanmar and had good relationships with non-Muslim inhabitants. The word 'Bamar' refers to the dominant Burmese ethnic community of Myanmar, while the word 'Burmese' is a more general term encompassing all members of the numerous ethnic groups in present day Myanmar. However, in this multi-ethnic community, Rohingya people are now not included. The word 'Rohingya' is derived from the word 'Rohang' that is the earliest name for the Rakhine (Arakan) region of Myanmar (Kipgen, 2013, p. 300). The word 'Rohingya' is how people in the Arakan Muslim community refer to themselves, whereas the Arakanese Buddhists identify them as 'Kalar' and

Bengali people, as does the national government (Karim 2017). The government of Myanmar prohibits the use of the term 'Rohingya' within government circles and has attempted to discourage the media and other countries from using the word to describe the refugees who have fled from persecution or the population of Rohingya that remains in Myanmar (Chambers 2015; *The Guardian* 2016). Nevertheless, the international community of nations and humanitarian NGOs continue to use 'Rohingya' as the correct term in recognition of their rights to self-identification. A number of scholars and political observers have suggested that Myanmar government employs this strategy to deny the existence of the Rohingya ethnic individuality, and their historic linkages with Rakhine region, which enables and justifies the government in its treatment of the Rohingya as 'illegal immigrants' with no nationality or fundamental rights under citizenship law (Chambers 2015; Uddin 2015; Ventura 2014, p. 5-6).

3.3. Military Government and Policy of Myanmar towards Rohingya

When the union treaty was signed on 12th February 1974 by Aung San and other national leaders, the union of Burma was formed, supposedly ushering in a period of democratic policies promoting the concept of 'unity in diversity' (Ahmed, 2010, p. 15). However, the Rohingyas were singled out by the government and the military as one group that did not receive approval as having the rights of other citizens (Murshid 2017). Throughout the period of political upheaval from 1962 to 1988, Myanmar military government increased the level of persecution against Rohingya community to purge them from the country (Akhter & Kusakabe, 2014, p. 227). The 'Dragon King Operation' (Operation *Nagamin*), directed in 1978, forced 300,000 Rohingya to flee to Bangladesh to escape immigration officers and military personnel who conducted a strategic campaign of intimidation, rape, and murder (Constantine 2012). Human Rights Watch (2013a) estimates that thousands of Rohingya were arrested and tortured, with many deaths going uncounted. Bangladesh was overwhelmed by the flood of refugees and sought aid from international humanitarian community. Further pressure was applied by creating excessive financial and political challenges in Rakhine region that hit Rohingya communities hard. According to the Citizenship Law 1982, Myanmar Government excluded Rohingyas from citizenship and made them stateless (Ahmed 2010; Parnini, 2012, p. 284). Therefore, they had no rights to property or land and could be evicted from areas that had been settled by them for decades. In 1988, the State Law and Order Restoration Council (SLORC) grabbed lands from Rohingya community to construct a military camp, without providing them any compensation, and made the stateless Rohingyas become homeless as well. They were forced to resettle in unfamiliar, remote mountain areas in Burma.

Since then, there has been continual violence perpetrated against Rohingya communities, often by Buddhist anti-Muslim activists with the support of the military, such as the incident in March 2013, when rioting and numerous deaths resulted from the burning of an Islamic boarding school and the murder of students and teachers (ICG 2013). This and similar events have been part of a continuous

process of oppression and assault that continues to present day (Akhter & Kusakabe, 2014, pp. 228). From the recent literature, we can also see that some elements of the Rohingyas in Myanmar have not been entirely passive and non-violent in the face of persecution and discrimination that they have been forced to endure. For example, the ARSA assaulted a Myanmar police check post in 25 August 2017, where 12 police officers were killed in the fighting. As evidenced by this and other determined attacks, members of the Rohingya can and will form resistance groups to strike back in retaliation at their antagonists (Martin, Margesson & Vaughn 2017). While these attacks by the Rohingya cannot be considered unprovoked, they have been unhelpful internationally to the Rohingya cause and have been used to support the spread of anti-Muslim propaganda and to fuel Buddhist nationalism (Walton & Hayward 2014).

After the transition from military to democratic government, which began in November 2015 when reasonably free legislative elections took place, the Rohingya may have hoped that they would be guaranteed human rights and not be subjected to further violence and discrimination. However, that hope has proven to be unrealistic, as has been demonstrated by the latest wave of rioting and anti-Muslim sentiment in August 2017 when more than 600,000 Rohingya fled to Bangladesh (Martin, Margesson & Vaughn 2017, p. 1).

3.4. The Reason behind the Conflict in Myanmar

In Rakhine region, the human rights violations instigated by Myanmar government and Buddhist community over the past decades has reached a catastrophic scale, despite the progress that the country has made in transitioning from a military dictatorship toward a democratic form of governance. The unchecked growth in acts of terror and the rise of ultra-nationalist Buddhist fundamentalism are the main factors that have increased the seriousness of Rohingya crisis in Myanmar (Martin, Margesson & Vaughn 2017; Gibbens 2017). However, the underlying causes of current crisis are somewhat complex in that there is not just a religious context, but also economic, historical, and political dimensions of the problem (Walton & Hayward 2014).

An example of the ways that Buddhist religious belief is being manipulated by militant monks in Myanmar to further their agenda is the usage of the numerical religious symbol '969', which has been adopted by anti-Muslim movement with some devastating consequences. In Buddhist belief, numerical symbolism is important, and the '969' symbol represents 'The Three Jewels' (Buddha, *Dharma*, and *Sangha*) of their religion, reminding followers of the core values of Buddhism: peace, virtue, morality, equality, and enlightenment (UNHCR 2012). Since 2012, the '969' sign has been misused by militant Buddhist monks to encourage hatred and discrimination and has become the symbol of pro-Buddhist nationalist movement. The dominant narratives in these Buddhist sermons are to justify fear and hatred of Muslims in general and the Rohingyas in particular (Marshall 2013). The '969 Movement' has used hate speech that plays on the concerns and anxieties of people which

has resonated with many in the Buddhist community and has undermined any hope of establishing religious pluralism, equality, and peaceful coexistence in the newly formed democracy (Palatino 2013).

Buddhist extremists employ the historical argument that the Rohingyas are illegal immigrants from neighbouring Bangladesh who are, therefore, a 'foreign incursion' and have no right to remain in Myanmar. This claim is underwritten by the implicit agreement and support of Myanmar government, which has denied citizenship to Rohingya and resisted calls from international humanitarian community to recognise the rights of all ethnic communities and provide adequate protection for those people who are suffering discrimination (Brooten 2015).

Furthermore, proponents of the '969 Movement' point to the social and political context of Myanmar Buddhists who they say are surrounded and threatened by Islamic majority countries in the region, such as Bangladesh, Pakistan, Indonesia, and Malaysia. Fear of Muslim extremists in global context helps to fuel local concern among Myanmar communities who are now more open and connected to the outside world and its communication media than they were under the former military regime. Consequently, Buddhist fundamentalists claim that the Rohingyas is a threat to religious faith, cultural heritage, and society in Myanmar, and consider them terrorists (Galache 2013; *The Economist* 2017). Ironically, the precepts and teachings of Buddhism dictate that monks and followers will be virtuous, moral in behaviour, and not harm others. Yet, the ultra-nationalist Buddhist movement and Myanmar Government have been complicit in many atrocities and are responsible for hundreds of thousands of Rohingya people being oppressed and displaced from their homes, or worse, in a calculated campaign of violence described by human rights organizations and UN senior officials as 'ethnic cleansing' (*BBC News* 2016; DeHart 2013; HRW 2013b; Uddin 2015).

A significant study by Karim (2017) identifies the importance of political and economic reasons for humanitarian crisis in Myanmar, even though Western media and NGOs tend to emphasize religious and ethnic aspects of the conflict. Karim regards political power struggles and greedy exploitation of Myanmar's rich natural resources by government and military officials, together with multi-national development companies, as a hidden cause of conflict that rarely receives the attention that it deserves. For example, Arakan state land has been confiscated from Rohingya owners with little compensation while major infrastructure and natural resource development projects have been forced ahead by several government agencies with no stakeholder consultation. A further example is a gold mining project that seized more than 500 acres of land in Kachin state, uprooting local communities for corporate gain and for the profit of corrupt political and military officials (Karim 2017).

An association of India and Korean companies along with Myanmar military administration is working in the 'SHWE' gas field in Arakan state of Myanmar, which is one of the biggest gas fields in Southeast Asia. It is intended to become the state's largest source of foreign revenue (SHWE Gas Movement 2006). In Arakan state, the border relationship with China and India has led to exploitative

commercial interests in infrastructure development, particularly for establishment of oil and gas pipelines. In September 2013, the China National Petroleum Company arranged with Rakhine to share receipts of oil and gas from the Shwe Gas Field (Karim 2017). These projects invariably involve forced relocation of villagers and farmers by Myanmar army (*Tatmadaw*), which confiscates private lands, property, and agricultural fields, leaving local people dispossessed (Arakan Gas Research Team 2006). Rohingyas are particularly vulnerable to these exploitative practices because their communities are often located in remote regions rich in natural resources, there is little supervision or oversight in these areas by humanitarian NGO organisations, and the Rohingya lack of citizenship prevents them from having any rights to land or property or protection under natural law.

Therefore, it can be seen that there are a number of underlying reasons for the Myanmar conflict, which include religious and ethnic contexts, but also have, historical, geopolitical, and economic aspects. By examining each of these interconnected dimensions of the issue in Myanmar, it can be seen that they work together with complex interdependencies in a kind of perverse harmony to create a wicked problem of human rights abuse with no simple solution.

3.5. Concerns of International Community towards Rohingya

“The situation has spiraled into the world’s fastest-developing refugee emergency and a humanitarian and human rights nightmare,” said United Nations chief, António Guterres, as he informed the 15-member Security Council of recent events in Myanmar (UN 2017b).

The UN secretary general called the Rohingya crisis a disaster of catastrophic extent and, according to the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR), the conflict in Myanmar is tantamount to ethnic cleansing by the government and military. After 25 August 2017 outbreak of violence, the situation emerged as the world’s most concerning humanitarian refugee and human rights crisis. Consequently, the UN Secretary General asked Myanmar to take immediate initiatives to stop military actions and begin arrangements for voluntary repatriation of Rohingya refugees from Bangladesh (BBC News 2018). There had been previous violence reported by world press and social media sites, but events in August, were beyond comprehension or acceptance, resulting in widespread condemnation of Myanmar’s government. The New York Times (NYT) and Inter Press Service (IPS) played a significant role to highlight the massive scale of the crisis and the tragic scenario of Rohingya victims. Studies show that the Rohingyas Facebook page presented an effective appeal to human rights agencies to stand beside the Rohingyas (Brooten, Ashraf & Akinro 2015, pp. 718-719). Along with many other nations, Bangladesh denounced Myanmar government for excessive oppression of the Rohingyas and appealed for international aid to help deal with massive influx of refugees (Kipgen 2014, p. 237).

After the incident of August, the international community and social media began to openly question the role of Aung San Suu Kyi, who is the Leader of the National League for Democracy in Myanmar and also the role of Myanmar military forces in perpetrating what some have called crimes against

humanity (Htusan & Mendoza 2017; Murdoch 2018). Both have been criticized by international communities for not acting to avert the crisis. As yet, the situation remains unresolved, with the Myanmar government claiming that the crisis was caused by Rohingya insurgents who had attacked military posts (Karim 2017). Thus, the events in Myanmar have reached what appears to be a culmination of the interreligious conflict that has been happening for many years, one that has changed Myanmar's national policy and international relationships and could be a significant obstacle in Myanmar's path to democracy (International Crisis Group, 2017; Walton & Hayward 2017).

3.6. The Rohingya Refugees in Bangladesh

'I was born in Burma, but the Burmese government says I don't belong there. I grew up in Bangladesh, but the Bangladesh government says I cannot stay here. As a Rohingya, I feel I am caught between a crocodile and a snake' said a 19-year-old refugee at Nayapara camp, Bangladesh (*Frontières-Holland* 2002, p. 8).

Bangladesh shares a 271-kilometre-long common border with Myanmar and the Bengali speaking Rohingya living in Rakhine state have historically had close relations with Bangladeshi Muslims across the border. Bangladesh and Myanmar have traditionally maintained relatively stable diplomatic relations despite periodic discontent. However, in recent times, human security and geo-political challenges have increasingly affected the bilateral relationship of the two countries (Ibrahim 2016, p. 26; Parnini 2013, p. 287). In 1992, Bangladesh and Myanmar contracted a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) regarding the repatriation of Rohingya refugees with limited involvement of UNHCR. Since then, however, few if any Rohingya refugees have agreed to return Myanmar because of the security concerns (Ventura 2014, p. 25). Amid growing tensions over the continuing influx of Rohingya refugees, there have been other challenges to diplomacy since the escalation of violence in late 2017. Most recently, Bangladesh lodged a formal complaint with Myanmar over suspicions that Myanmar military has been laying landmines along the border to discourage refugees from crossing (Das 2017). Myanmar is not a signatory to the 1997 UN Mine Ban Treaty, and recent evidence suggests that the military are actively barbed-wire fencing and mining the common border with Bangladesh.

In conclusion, the background history of the Rohingyas and the challenges they are facing due to persecution that have been described in this chapter clearly show the complexity of the problems that have arisen in Myanmar and Bangladesh. It is also clear that humanitarian and security issues have reached a crisis point requiring the involvement of international community in seeking a resolution to the problem. The next chapter will focus on human rights violation issues and the responses of stakeholders to deal with this crisis.

Chapter 4: Human Rights Violation against Rohingya and Responses to Address the Refugee Crisis

4.1. Introduction and Background to the Global Human Rights Movement

The foundation of modern international human rights policy and obligation of nations towards all people is the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR), as adopted by UN in December 1948 (UN 2017a). The UNHCR recognises the fundamental rights of all persons to basic freedoms and equality no matter their nationality, gender, ethnicity, language, race, or religion. Since promulgation of this foundation for protecting human rights, there have been numerous treaties, regional agreements, covenants, and domestic laws established around the world to guarantee individuals equality, justice, and freedom from persecution under the laws of their respective governments. Additionally, human rights also include the right to work, rights of access to education, freedom of worship, and freedom of movement. Among the core principles of the UDHR, a number of important areas of concern have evolved in more recent times. For example, there has been an increasing focus of international law on the plight of disadvantaged groups that have endured discrimination due to circumstances of conflict, persecution, and displacement (UNHCR 2007a).

Most nations, including Myanmar, have now ratified versions of human rights protection and have agreed to enforce and abide by their obligations and duties under the treaty (UNHCR 2017). One of the regional groups of nations that have adopted a charter on basic human rights is the Association of South East Asian Nations (ASEAN), of which Myanmar is now a member and has, since 2009, ratified and agreed to its provisions for protection of human rights (Arendshorst 2009). However, Myanmar's human rights record since signing the document, as in the past, has been deplorable and oppressive of Myanmar's people, as well as threatening security and prosperity of its regional member neighbours. In Myanmar on the question of human rights, the UN (2005, Agenda Item 9) has stated that, 'Extrajudicial killings, rape and other forms of sexual violence (are) persistently carried out by members of the armed forces', and that torture, imprisonment, forced labour and other forms of persecution are regularly imposed on minority groups in the country, particularly the Rohingyas.

According to the UN (2017) and human rights NGOs (Amnesty International 2017), the Rohingya is 'one of the most persecuted minority groups' in the world and is facing many challenges for survival in Myanmar. The State restricts their movement, they have limited access to needs of livelihood and basic rights and are excluded from citizenship. Thus, they have been identified as a stateless community devoid of rights to land ownership, to employment, or to education in Myanmar (European Commission 2018).

Human rights violations and persecution against the Rohingyas occurs daily in Myanmar. Despite signing international conventions of protecting human rights of people under its jurisdiction, Myanmar has failed to protect the rights of Rohingya, even though the UN, UNHCR and aid agencies have pressured the government for many years to meet its humanitarian obligations (UNHCR 2017; Zawacki 2012, p. 21). Myanmar claims that Rohingyas migrated illegally to Arkan region from the south part of India, particularly from Bangladesh, prior to Myanmar gaining independence (Azad & Jasmin, 2013, pp.26). Consequently, the government refuses to provide citizenship to the Rohingyas, (Taylor, 2009, pp.156-157). Hence, they have been forced to flee to neighboring countries to escape the violence (Farzana, 2011, p. 217).

The next section of this chapter begins with an overview about Rakhine region followed by a description of the challenges faced by the Rohingyas, with special focus on the significance of the outbreak of violence on 25th August 2017. Then follows a discussion of the legal framework that applies to the refugees in Bangladesh, and the chapter finishes with a discussion of the stakeholders' response towards the Rohingyas.

4.2. Rakhine State Overview

Arakan is the former name of Rakhine State, which is situated between Chin State to the north, Magway Bago and Ayeyarwady regions to the east, and the Bay of Bengal is to the west (Min 2016). To the northwest corner of Rakhine is the Chittagong division of Bangladesh. Sittwe is the capital of Rakhine State. According to 2014 census, the total population of Rakhine is 2,098,807 (enumerated) and (not enumerated) population is 1,090,000 (Department of Population 2015). The total area is 36,778.0 square kilometers. There was an estimate that approximately more than 1 million Rohingya people were living in Myanmar before the 2016-2017 crisis, but those estimates are difficult to confirm because Rohingyas are not usually included in census figures (Mohammad et al. 2017). Rakhine has been plagued by violent conflict not only between government forces and ethnic groups, but also between Rohingya Muslims and Rakhine Buddhists (Mirco, Goetz & Murage 2017).

4.3. Human Rights Violation in Myanmar

One of the essential principles of human rights is that all human beings should be treated equally in their rights and dignity (Ullah 2011, p.149). As human beings, the Rohingyas have the right to live with freedom and respect. According to Human Rights Watch (HRW) (2016), the Rohingyas have been wrongly excluded from citizenship and are constrained from freedom of movement, education, employment and basic necessities of their livelihood by the Myanmar Government. They are often described as one of the most vulnerable and persecuted minorities in the world who are being excluded from basic rights and from their rightful nationality as citizens of Myanmar (Hofman 2016; Tonkin 2015). In recent times, the Rohingyas have experienced documented military suppression and abuse in 1978, 1991-1992, 2012, 2015, and 2016-2017. Consequently, the UN and the Human

Rights Watch (HRW) have defined the persecution of Rohingya as 'ethnic cleansing' (Lone & Naing 2017, UN News 2014).

According to Wolf, the Rohingya crisis is a result of several factors based on historical controversies, religious conflict, economic factors, and political aspects (Wolf 2017, pp. 2-3). The UN has described the previous security actions by Myanmar armed forces as 'crimes against humanity'. However, the most recent persecution by the military, according to observers of the conflict, has been motivated by the desire to permanently remove the Rohingyas forcefully from Myanmar (Safi 2017). For example, Kipgen (2014, pp. 235-238) argues that the rapid series of persecutions against the Rohingyas by the military and Rakhine Buddhist organisations since October 2012, has been more violent, more deliberate, and more organized than the previous actions against them. Attacks inflicted on villages, houses and Mosques have been coordinated and devastating with the apparent intention of driving out the Rohingyas (HRW 2013, p. 4). UN special investigator on Myanmar, Yanghee Lee, has backed up the assertion that the State desires to expel Rohingya from Myanmar forever (*The Independent* 2017). There is ample evidence from past few years to support this assumption. For example, in January 2014, local Buddhist and Myanmar security forces combined in a fierce attack on Rohingyas, causing tens of thousands to seek asylum across the border in Bangladesh (Brooten 2015, p. 137).

The worst violence has occurred since August 2017 after the ARSA insurgents retaliated against several Myanmar security check posts in Rakhine, killing (reportedly) 12 police officers. After 25 August, violence has escalated, and the military crackdown has resulted in more than 688,000 Rohingya fleeing to Bangladesh. While Myanmar claims that it is taking security action against terrorists, the human rights abuse against women and children in particular, which have included systematic rape and murder, has been called ethnic cleansing by humanitarian organisations (Safi 2018; Siddiqui 2017). Moreover, Nyan Win, a spokesperson for the Myanmar National League for Democracy (NLD), has stated that the Rohingyas are not an ethnic group, but rather they are illegal immigrants with no claim to rights in the country (Freeman 2017).

Therefore, Myanmar appears to have neither concern for Rohingya welfare or protection, nor concern about world condemnation of the human rights abuses that are being committed. In recent months, whole villages have been burnt to the ground and Rohingyas forced to witness their women being violated, while many men and even children have been summarily executed or have disappeared without trace (BBC News 2017). When confronted with evidence of these atrocities, including satellite images of more than 1200 burnt homes, as shown in Figure 3, government officials claim that the Rohingya burned their own houses, which is a claim that a UN Human Rights Chief has totally rejected and has told the military to 'stop pretending'. The head of UNHCR in Bangladesh, John McKissick, described the situation graphically: Security forces have been "killing men, shooting

them, slaughtering children, raping women, burning and looting houses, forcing these people to cross the river" into Bangladesh (BBC News 2016, 24 November).



Figure 3: Rohingya villages burned from 25 August-25 September Source: Human Rights Watch 2017

Another method of human rights abuse being employed by Myanmar Government is restricting access to health and medical care. Medicine Sans Frontiers (MSF) is an international, independent, medical humanitarian NGO that provides emergency support to affected peoples who suffer due to conflict, disaster, and lack of health care. In February 2014, government excluded MSF from Rakhine region because of accusations that the MSF doctors and medical staff were biased against government over the conflict with the Rohingya. Hence, actions by the government deprived nearly one million Rohingya from the only medical support to which they had access. In March of the same year, the offices of the UN and many NGOs in Switte, capital of Rakhine, were attacked by armed civilians, with the result that 300 international aid workers were displaced and hindered from providing support and health care to local people (Brooten 2015, p. 135). Again, the NGOs were accused of being advocates for Rohingya and supporting their cause in the conflict, which resulted in anger and resentment in local Buddhist community. This anger among Buddhist community, it is alleged, was galvanized and coordinated by military personnel who would not have dared to openly attack an international NGO themselves (Brooten, Ashraf & Akinro 2015).

Since then, the military have been active in conducting widespread 'anti-terrorist' operations in Rakhine district to 'eradicate the threat of separatists' and have worked in concert with local Buddhist crowds, which will burn villages and attack and kill Rohingyas with the support of military forces (BBC News 2017). Myanmar has prohibited news media, foreign government observers, and NGOs from entering these areas to report on the atrocities taking place. Thus, a silent genocide is being perpetrated while the world stands by unable or unwilling to bring the crisis to an end (*The Independent* 2017).

Apart from being subjected to intimidation and extreme violence, the Rohingyas are prevented from any form of employment or livelihood by government restrictions on movement, otherwise seeking food necessary to sustain them. This is a clear violation of human rights. The military has now effectively cut off foreign aid and the food supply to Rohingya in northern part of Rakhine. Consequently, many are malnourished or starving, as has been reported by aid workers and doctors treating refugees who have arrived recently at camps in Bangladesh (Klug 2018). A report by Amnesty International (2018) released in February has provided further evidence and confirmation of the military strategy of using food supply as another weapon to starve out the Rohingya and expel them from Myanmar. Given the longstanding and continual nature of the violence and abuses of the Rohingyas over many years, it is significant that in its most recent 2017/18 report Amnesty International stated, "The human rights situation deteriorated dramatically" (p. 1).

It is clear that, since 25th August 2017, persecution of the Rohingya in Arakan state has increased dramatically (Amnesty International 2018) and the violence has been driving large numbers of Rohingya across the border to Bangladesh where they faced enormous difficulties meeting their needs as refugees (Karim 2017). Human rights abuses and inter-ethnic violence in Myanmar is not a matter of recent news, but rather a situation of 'business as usual' that has existed in the country for many decades, perhaps even before it became an independent nation. However, the stepped-up violence in recent months signals a change in both the intensity of abuses against Rohingya, and also in the determination of the government to drive them out of the country (European Commission 2018, p. 1).

4.4. Legal and Administrative Framework for Rohingya Refugees

The 1951 Refugee Convention and its Protocol 1967 (UNHCR 1992) together are the most inclusive tools adopted to ensure the fundamental rights of refugees and to legalize their position in countries of asylum. These laws are essential to international administration of refugee safety and to ensure the refugees can receive basic humanitarian assistance. Moreover, it has also enabled the practice of the protection and monitoring provided by UNHCR. Bangladesh is not a signatory of the 1951 Convention and its subsequent Protocol of 1967, but it has signed the 1948 Universal Declaration of Human Rights, which creates pressure on Bangladesh to fulfill its responsibility for Rohingya refugees. The August 2017 refugee crisis was only the latest in a number over the decades involving

persecution of the Rohingya in Myanmar by security forces. Since 1978, from humanitarian perspective, Bangladesh has received thousands of refugees due to the military operations in Myanmar (Mohammad et al. 2017, p. 1842). Over the years, some of the refugees have been repatriated to Myanmar under UNHCR supervision, but most of those who have fled Myanmar since early crackdowns began in 1990s still remain in Bangladesh Government managed refugee camps near the border between the two countries (Azad & Jasmin 2013, p.1).

According to the Constitution of Bangladesh, in Part II, Fundamental principles of state policy, in Article 25 Promotion of international peace, security and solidarity, 1 (b), there are specific references to support of oppressed peoples throughout the world who struggle due to colonialism and racialism. Article 31 offers equal protection for 'each citizen' and 'every individual staying in the country for time being'. Therefore, the state is committed to working for victimised people or asylum seekers by following international laws. Bangladesh cannot require any Rohingya refugee to return to Myanmar if there is a risk to their safety there (Mohammad 2011, p. 405-410). In 1993, UNHCR signed a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) with Bangladesh emphasising the importance of repatriation and care-and-management support for Rohingya refugees that ensures security and voluntary repatriation (Alam, 2012, p. 129).

In Bangladesh, there are no national laws or legal framework to legalise the administration of refugee matters or ensure the rights of refugees (Mohammad 2011, p. 418). In 2005, through diplomatic engagement with Myanmar government and collaboration with the UNHCR, a repatriation process was commenced to repatriate 200,000 Rohingya. However, the process was stopped because of political instability in Myanmar and lack of response and interest of Myanmar government (Ministry of Foreign Affairs 2014, p. 1).

Bangladesh has formulated a "Strategy Paper on Addressing the Issue of Myanmar Refugees and Undocumented Myanmar Nationals in Bangladesh" in 2014. The most noteworthy features of this paper are to highlight the reasons behind this systematic persecution and exclusion of Muslim minorities in Rakhine state and the engagement of international community with Myanmar to facilitate the rehabilitation and repatriation of the Myanmar nationals (Abrar 2015). It emphasizes the enhancement of capacity building of border security from a national security perspective to stop illegal entrance and advocates a process of registering the unlisted Rohingyas. It proposes to provide basic humanitarian services and mentions about a 'security dialogue' with Myanmar and the regional level collaboration (Abrar 2015).

Humanitarian agencies impose conditions on voluntary repatriation that makes the process lengthy (HRW 2017). UNHCR promoted the standard repatriation process based on voluntary repatriation guidelines if the circumstances of refugee origin country have favorable conditions (Abrar 1996). Since the camps are already over occupied and a huge burden on host country, Bangladesh is

unwilling to extend its service and protection to Rohingya refugees because it fears that this would attract further refugees.

In a recent development, Bangladesh signed another MoU with the UNHCR related to voluntary repatriation of Rohingya refugees (*The Daily Star* 2018). Under this agreement, UNHCR will arrange the repatriation process that includes having consent of refugees for voluntary return, taking care of transit camps, logistics and transport facilities, as stated by Refugee Relief and Repatriation Commissioner of Bangladesh. UNHCR will provide essential protection, assistance and funds until the Rohingya return to Myanmar (*The Daily Star* 2018). However, the present situation in Myanmar is not yet encouraging for safe and sustainable return of Rohingya refugees. Though asylum in Bangladesh has many limitations for Rohingya refugees, it remains the only viable option at this time.

4.5. Relationship between the Local Community in Bangladesh and Rohingya Refugees

According to Abey (2013, p. xi), a host community offers hospitality and tries to act according to international law, guidelines and principles of UNHCR which are based on the relationship between host and guest. The local population in such circumstances has little scope to do anything about refugee influx in their land. The relationship between host population and refugee may develop into a conflict based on several aspects. There may be social, cultural, linguistic and religious differences that can lead to problems arising between the two groups, such as in Cox's Bazar, Bangladesh where the number of refugees has created strain on relationships (UNDP & UN Women 2017).

Bangladesh has shown sympathy for Rohingya refugees, but local communities have opposed the decision to allow them to stay among them for any length of time (UNDP & UN Women 2017). Although there are cultural and religious similarities between two groups, many locals consider the refugees to be uneducated, rough, and possibly represent a criminal threat to residents. There is also resentment among locals about the environmental damage resulting from refugee camps and their foraging for firewood and other resources from forest areas that have caused deforestation and erosion. Consequently, locals have called on the government to isolate and manage refugee camps better, restrict where refugees can travel, and ensure they do not create an adverse impact on local communities.

4.6. Situation Overview of Rohingya Refugee Camps

Bangladesh officially estimated that there were 300,000 Rohingyas already living in camps at Cox's Bazar district (Rahman 2010) before the 25 August 2017, refugee influx. The population now is much greater and is described as desperate and unsustainable, even with humanitarian support by Bangladesh Government and international aid agencies. Rohingya refugees live in congested

refugee camps and are vulnerable to flood, landslide, and environment related hazards (Inter Sector Coordination Group [ISCG], 2018, p. 1). The huge refugee influx in 2017/18 has increased the total of Rohingya population in Bangladesh to nearly one million, mainly in refugee camps at Cox's Bazar district, as shown in Figures 4 and 5 (European Commission 2018, p. 3).

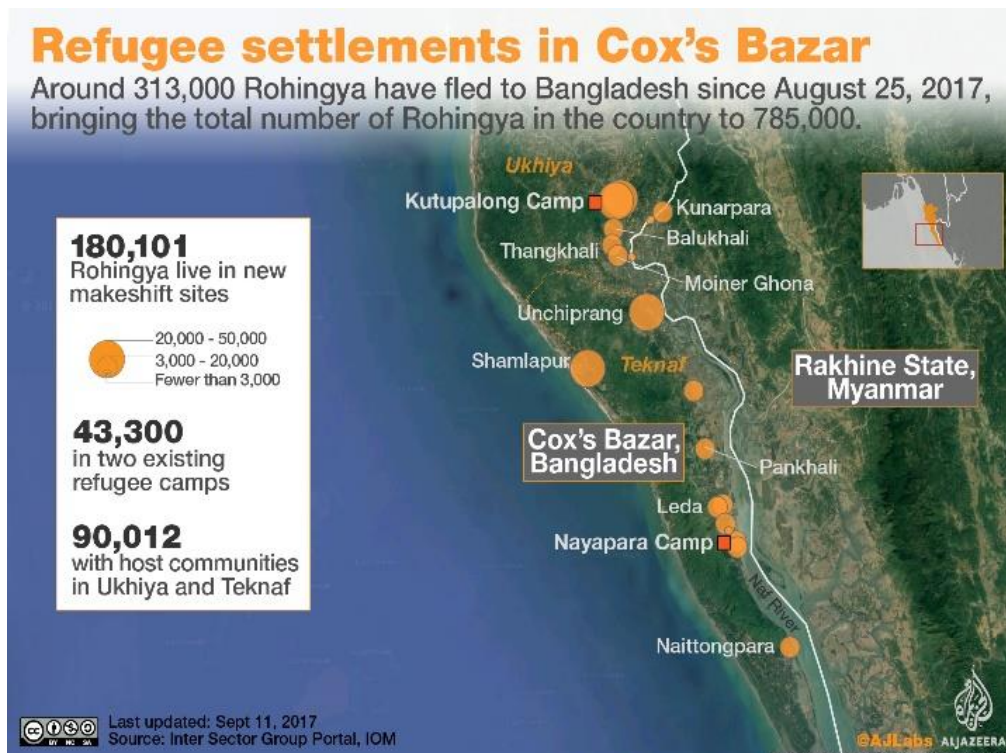


Figure 4: Refugee settlements in Cox's Bazar. Source: Inter Sector Coordination Group (2018)



Figure 5: Refugee camp at Cox's Bazar. Source: Inter Sector Coordinating Group (2018)

Although international aid agencies have been active in supporting the refugees with the provision of emergency temporary shelters, food, and medical treatment, the immense scale of the task has made it difficult to ensure the welfare of the estimated 1,167,000 population (ISCG, 2018, pp. 3-4). In particular, sanitary water supply, toilet, and hygiene conditions are not only a concern in refugee camp areas but also for the local communities in that area where the capacity of infrastructure and basic services has been overwhelmed by the sheer weight of human pressure. Consequently, the UN is taking steps to employ 300,000 local Bangladeshis as part of the humanitarian support program for the Rohingya refugees (Schlein 2017). However, the task is becoming more difficult every day with seemingly no real, long-term solution available.

4.7. International Laws and Conventions on the Refugee Issue

Generally, an individual has the rights to ask asylum in another country. The Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR) was formulated in 1948 and guarantees an individual's rights to nationality and citizenship. The UDHR ensures the right to ask for asylum in another country to avoid oppression (Yasmin 2017, p. 71). Asylum has two fundamental features: first, every country has a right to approve asylum for refugees and, second, as of UDHR 1948, Article 14 (1), every individual has a right to pursue asylum in another country to avoid persecution in terms of religion, politics, ethnicity, and other issues in his own state. The right is more positively recognized by international law under universal drive for human rights (Mohammad 2011, p. 403). Significantly, Myanmar is a signatory to the UDHR treaty and has agreed to abide by its provisions for basic human rights. However, regardless of the agreement, Myanmar has failed to provide the Rohingyas with the rights of freedom, citizenship, and life security (UNHCR 2007b, p. 20). Razzaq & Haque states that the Article 29 of UNDRIP clearly sets out the land rights of indigenous people, but the Rohingyas are deprived of their land rights and forced to seek asylum in another country (Razzaq & Haque 1995, p. 40). Therefore, it can be argued that Myanmar has violated Article 15 of the UDHR by not identifying Rohingya as an ethnic group in the Citizenship Act of 1982 and by not recognising their universal and indigenous rights. Furthermore, it is clear that international laws and conventions to which Myanmar is a party have been ignored in its dealings with the Rohingya crisis, which has led to many instances of human rights violations, discrimination and racially-based restrictions in law, policy, and practice (Amnesty International 2018).

4.8. United Nations Perspective on Human Rights and Rohingya Refugees

After the formation of the United Nations (UN) in 1945, numerous agencies and offices had been established to monitor human rights issues around the world. Moreover, the Security Council and General Assembly had also taken responsibility to formulate recommendations in the matter of social and economic council and the recommendations associated with development and human rights (Deppermann 2013, p. 297). The UN Refugee Agency, UNHCR, is responsible for permanent

solutions to refugee crises and coordinates international safety for refugees, manages the activities of NGOs and government humanitarian agencies and assists the refugees in their voluntary repatriation or resettlement (Imran & Mian 2014, p. 228). In response to the increasing scale of refugee problem, the UN High Commissioner for Refugees recently announced a special initiative for protecting refugee conditions and endorsed the need for strong solutions and improvements in living standards for the increasing no of long-term refugees in the world. (Kiragu, Rosi & Morris 2011, p. 1). Though the UN has a commitment to human rights, if an adjudicatory authority identifies any gap in the human rights system, the International Court of Justice (ICJ) will examine the gap (Deppermann 2013, p. 298). The International Criminal Court (ICC), which is a part of UN human rights system, was formulated in 1998 by the Rome Statute. The ICC has jurisdiction in matters of investigating serious human rights violations that include crimes against humanity, war crimes and genocide. The ICJ has played an active role in the formulation of international human rights law and hearing cases of violations. The UN Security Council has permitted ICJ, the authority and responsibility to implement the rulings of the ICC (Deppermann 2013, pp. 299-301).

Clearly, the ICC and the ICJ can play an active role in working to prevent or to stop human rights violations against refugees or other people suffering from persecution, such as the Rohingya, and can take action to mitigate the refugee crisis (Deppermann 2013, p. 315). The UNHCR can also apply legal pressure to governments in discussions on resolving refugee crises, such as in the case of the attempts to establish MoU for the repatriation of Rohingya refugees under UN supervision that will ensure safety and dignity (*The Daily Star*, 2018). However, Myanmar has so far thwarted attempts by other nations and UN agencies to force a resolution and to bring a cessation to the state sponsored violence against the Rohingya. Furthermore, Myanmar has refused permission for ICC or other humanitarian observers to enter the country for the purposes of assessing the situation. As Myanmar is not a signatory to the Rome Statue treaty, it has so far remained outside the jurisdiction of the ICC. Consequently, the ICC has begun a formal investigation into the circumstances in Bangladesh and Myanmar; to determine the actions conducted by Myanmar military, or civilian, amount to genocide or crimes against humanity (Ochab 2018).

4.9. The Responses of Stakeholders to Deal with the Rohingya Crisis

There are many stakeholders who have an interest in or are concerned about the humanitarian crisis unfolding in Myanmar and Bangladesh, especially those who can affect or be affected by the refugee issues there (Brooten, Ashraf & Akinro 2015, p. 725). For example, the Rohingya crisis has featured prominently in international news media and periodic reports which have an interest in informing the world about the conflict. Their coverage of the dilemma faced by the human communities and NGOs has been frequent and widespread across social media services (Brooten, Ashraf & Akinro 2015, p. 730). Therefore, the world press has played a significant role as stakeholders in the issue and has

widened the knowledge and involvement of many other organisations and people who now have concerns about the Rohingya.

In addition, a number of key NGOs have critical roles to play as stakeholders in the process of resolving the crisis. For example, the UN and UNHCR has led a range of other humanitarian organisations in providing support for the Rohingya in Bangladesh and in promoting self-reliance programs, constructing shelters and latrines in refugee camps, and offering education with the support of the State (Kigaru, Rosi & Morris 2011, p. 9). Although the UN, European Union, and governments of other countries with an interest in the crisis cannot interfere in the state sovereignty of Myanmar, a number of other nations, including the United States, Bangladesh, Malaysia, and Indonesia, have sought to formally intervene in the conflict (Kinacioglu 2012, p. 16).

Regional organisations, such as ASEAN, and neighbouring countries have also expressed concern about the ongoing conflict in recognition that there could be a wider threat to their security and impacts of greater numbers of refugees being displaced in an already volatile situation (Thuzar & Rieffel 2018; Zawacki 2012, p. 18). Some fear that a regional guerilla war between religious factions (Muslims and Buddhists) could seriously affect political and economic stability in Southeast Asia.

Furthermore, the inter-religious dimension of the conflict in Myanmar has a significant potential to attract many other stakeholders from global Islamic community. For example, at a recent (May 2018) meeting of foreign ministers and diplomats of the 53 nation members of OIC, delegates called for international action, including sanctions, against Myanmar over the Rohingya Muslim crisis (AFP 2018).

Hence, it can be seen that the stakeholder interest in Rohingya crisis has widened and deepened as the conflict has intensified and spread across national boundaries with refugees who have fled violence. That, as one Malaysian Foreign Minister stated recently, “makes this matter no longer an internal matter, but an international matter” (*Al Jazeera* 2016). Rohingya crisis is not only a humanitarian crisis, it is generating risks for security, environment, overall situation in Bangladesh, and it is having an influence on regional collaboration and international relationships. The next chapter will further discuss several types of impact, which have been caused by prolonged Rohingya presence in Bangladesh and the adverse effects on local population.

Chapter 5: Rohingya Refugee Influx and Its Impact on Bangladesh

5.1. Introduction

For a developing country such as Bangladesh that struggles to meet the basic needs of its people and overcome the persistent challenges of overpopulation, the Rohingya refugee influx after August 2017 created tremendous pressure on social, economic, and environmental aspects of local communities and Bangladesh's national resources. Mohammad (2011, p. 402) demonstrates that, in the twenty first century, the growing problem of refugees and forced immigration of people and the need for management of the increasing number of regional crises are acknowledged as some of the key challenges for national and global administration. The Rohingya dilemma is called the world's fastest growing refugee crisis (McDonald 2018). Risking death by sea and on foot, more than half a million-refugees fled from northern Myanmar to Bangladesh due to the destruction of their villages and oppression by military forces (BBC News, 2018). This chapter intends to evaluate the effects of Rohingya crisis on Bangladesh and the local community of Cox's Bazar in terms of social, economic, and environmental factors.

5.2. Bangladesh and the Rohingya Refugees

Rohingya refugee crisis has turned into one of the most prolonged crises in the world due to more than twenty years of continuous Rohingya influx in Bangladesh (Milton et al. 2017, p. 2). Bangladesh shares its land borders with Myanmar and India. It is the world's eighth most densely populated country. The total border area between Bangladesh and Myanmar is 170 miles in length (James 2006, p. 120). Galache states that the border area along the Myanmar side is known as Maungdaw district where the Rohingya comprise 80 % of the total population (2017). McDonald (2018) claims that, after 25th August, 2017, more than 700,000 Rohingya fled to Bangladesh, adding to the overburden of thousands of refugees already living there. The Rohingyas crossed into Bangladesh through the land border and coastal areas, most of which are not adequately secured against unauthorized entry.

5.3. Camps for Rohingya Refugees

'Life is not well; we're just suffering well.' – 23-year-old Rohingya woman in Nayapara camp, Bangladesh (Frontieres-Holland 2002, p. 12).

Bangladesh has been the first responder to Rohingya refugees with regards offers of shelter, acceptance of refugees to enter its territory, provision of food and security (UNHCR 2018b). However, since the intensification of conflict in late 2017, the informal settlements of Rohingya refugees at Cox's Bazar district have expanded into one of the largest refugee settlement areas and is now hosting an estimated one million refugees in inadequate space and with limited resources

(UNHCR 2018b). Before the 25th August 2017 outbreak of violence in Myanmar, Bangladesh Government estimated that about 200,000-500,000 undocumented Rohingya refugees were living in nearby towns or villages, while a total of 33,131 documented refugees were staying in two government run refugee camps (Milton et al. 2017, p. 2).

According to International Crisis Group (ICG) (2018, p. 6), the total projected cost for humanitarian operation of refugee camps will be around US\$1.2 billion per year. In the process of building these refugee camps, forests are cleared, which causes erosion and destabilizing of soils leading to water and sanitation system failure during the monsoon season. A UN report (Miles 2018) estimates that the health and welfare of 100,000 refugees is at risk from flood and landslides in camp areas. Local government has begun to work to deal with cyclone and landslide disaster coordination with national government agencies and concerned stakeholders (UNDP 2017 & UN Women, p. 10).

Statistics on Rohingya refugees living in different camps and makeshift settlement areas are described in Table 1, according to the previous refugee influx up to 2015, and in Table 2, which shows the extent of increases after 25th August 2017 until April 2018.

Table 1: Information about registered Rohingya refugees and unregistered refugees from Myanmar presently staying in Bangladesh as at 2015.

Variables	Frequency
Refugee camps	2
Registered Rohingya refugee	Number
Nayapara camp, Teknaf	19,311
Kutupalong camp, Ukhiya	13,820
Undocumented Rohingya refugee	Number
Leda camp, Teknaf	15,000-20,000
Salampur, tekna	8000-10,000
Near Kutupalong camp (Tall), Ukhiya	40,000-50,000
Disseminated in Cox's Bazar and other districts	300,000

(Source: Office of Refugee Relief and Repatriation Commissioner, 2015).

Table 2: Rohingya refugee numbers and camps in Bangladesh as at 12 April 2018, after 25th August 2017, when nearly 700,000 Rohingyas fled to Bangladesh.

Camp name	Number of Rohingya
Kutupalong refugee camp	13,933
Kutupalong expansion	604,104
Hakimpara	31,280
Jamtoli	46,196

Bagghona	22,076
Chakmarkul	12,597
Unchiprang	22,100
Leda MS	9,800
Nayapara RC	19,353
Thangkhali	43,500

(Source: Inter Sector Coordination Group, BBC, 2018).

The total area of Cox's Bazar district is 2491.86 square km and, according to 2011 census, its total population is 22,890,990 (Deputy Commissioner's Office 2018). Refugee camps are mostly situated in remote areas where the economic circumstance of local inhabitants is not stable. Consequently, there is an anti-Rohingya sentiment generated among local people due to the competition that has been created in local livelihood sector by the burden of refugees (Milton et al. 2017, p. 6). Although, the local community is generally tolerant in welcoming the Rohingyas, the strain is rising among them due to the continuous refugee influx and their decade's long presence (McDonald 2018).

Bangladesh had imposed some restrictions on refugee camp residents, as well as for those who live outside the camp due to security considerations. For example, refugees need to obtain permission to travel outside the camp and do not have freedom of movement (Milton et al. 2017, p. 6). Karim states that the government has established a civilian authority and all aid agencies must have the approval from them to work for the refugees. Bangladesh military force has been allocated responsibility for the management of refugee camps and control of entry to camps, as well as monitoring of aid related issues to prevent illegal activities (Karim 2017). Bangladesh police and the Ansar Bahini (a paramilitary internal security force) are responsible for law and order in Cox's Bazar district.

Recognising the need for additional space and facilities to house the growing number of refugees, Government has allocated 3000 acres of land for building refugee camps at Cox's Bazar district (Solomon 2018). Aid agencies continue to construct essential infrastructure in limited space and challenging situations, providing basic needs and medical care (OCHA, 2017). Miles (2018) states that the World Health Organization (WHO) has immunized more than 500,000 Rohingyas against Diphtheria and has provided second dose vaccination for about 350,000 Rohingya children. The WHO also offers 2500 anti-toxin doses for the treatment of the diseases. Meanwhile, the state and aid agencies are engaging in partnership to deal with flood risks and for the protection of Rohingyas and to ensure necessary services for women and children during predicted natural disaster time (McDonald 2018). Since the previous refugee influx, UNHCR has been working toward registering all Rohingya refugees and providing comprehensive assistance and jointly working with aid agencies for their rehabilitation (Kiragu, Rosi & Morris 2011, p. 2). The UN and the International Organization for Migration are working with Bangladesh Government to provide humanitarian support for

Rohingya refugees (OCHA 2017). According to the UNHCR (2018), humanitarian groups aim to ensure the basic needs for both refugees and the local population, support for sustainable solutions, and support resilience among the victimized community.

5.4. Impacts of the Rohingya Crisis

5.4.1. Social Impact of Rohingya Refugees

Social impact encompasses health issues, law and order situations, and considers how the local population perceives Rohingya refugees. Bangladesh was already facing challenges from previous refugee influx when additional pressure was exerted on social and economic structure after August 2017. Unexpected refugee presence can be a threat to inter-communal harmony and create challenges for vital social values, such as culture, religion, and language structure, of local people (OCHA 2018). Mahmud (2017) states that the total area of Ukhiya and Teknaf, where most of the camps are situated in Bangladesh, is 651 sq. kilometres and has about half a million inhabitants. In addition to the local population, an estimated one million Rohingya refugees are now living in those two areas. Alam (2018a) claims that the birth rate among Rohingya refugees is higher than among Bangladeshi people. Humanitarian aid observers predict that Rohingya women in the camps will give birth to an estimated 48,000 babies in 2018, which will create further pressure on local population.

Recent studies (International Rescue Committee 2014, p. 25; Janny & Islam 2015, p. 97; UNDP & UN Women 2017) have demonstrated that, while the focus of aid relief is on Rohingya refugees, there is dissatisfaction among poor local Bangladeshis who are also affected by this crisis but are receiving little assistance from aid agencies. This social effect is causing a breakdown in the relationships and in the level of animosity directed at the refugees. In addition, Uddin (2012, p. 129) claims that Rohingya influx has been generating a number of other social difficulties, such as their involvement in arms and drug trafficking, human trafficking, criminal activities, and prostitution in Cox's Bazar region. It has been alleged (BBC News 2017) that Rohingya women are involved in drug trafficking and prostitution as an easy means of earning money, and these illegal activities are having adverse effect on Bangladesh. Datta (2015, pp.136 -137), in an econometric study, describes how poverty generates insecurity and insecurity produces poverty for the Rohingyas who whatever must do they can for survival, even if it involves criminal activities.

An example of this problem was covered by BBC News in November 2017, when a Rohingya girl named Halima shared her experiences after coming to Bangladesh. According to the interview, she was forced to engage in prostitution for two months, before being rescued by Bangladesh police. However, she again engaged in prostitution because she had no money or support (BBC News 2017). Lee (2005 p. 77) argues that local people are made unhappy by some of the activities of Rohingya which are against the ethics, values, and religious views of local Bangladeshi people.

Furthermore, Lee states that both local people and Rohingyas are also in competition for employment opportunity, education, welfare, and health facilities, which can be reason for conflict to arise between two groups. The Inter-Agency Working Group on Reproductive Health In Crises (IAWG) has requested that the international community guarantee sexual and reproductive health (SRH) for Rohingya women and girls. Without immediate initiatives for improved maternal health care and control of sexually transmitted disease (STD), mortality of mothers and newborns will increase. Due to the rape and violence, many Rohingya women were forced to endure in Myanmar before they fled to Bangladesh, significant numbers have been infected with disease and are suffering malnutrition. Therefore, the spread of STDs among Rohingya in the camps and local people also is likely to present challenges for health professionals and lead to worsening of circumstances for all (IAWG 2018).

Another social problem that affects the life of local people is the socio-cultural aspect. For example, some Rohingya women want to marry local Bangladeshi men, but the government has prohibited marriage between Bangladeshi and Rohingya refugees. Thus, intermarriage and integration between the two groups is being prevented under law, and there are instances where police are engaged in apprehending individuals who have married secretly and hoped to avoid detection (SBS News 2017). These heavy-handed attempts by the government to contain the situation in the refugee camps may result in further animosity, mistrust, and discrimination towards the Rohingya. Consequently, Shyamol (2017) claims that the law and order situation and environment in Cox's Bazar has deteriorated noticeably, which is a view that is shared by district administration officials and law enforcement agencies.

Datta (2015, p. 141) also found that many Rohingyas are living outside the refugee camps and are mixing with local people by claiming to be citizens of Bangladesh, which has allowed them to buy land in Cox's Bazar district, to become voters in elections, and to use illegal means to obtain Bangladeshi passports to travel abroad. These are alarming developments for the authorities, as there are reports that some 50,000 Rohingyas have travelled to Saudi Arabia as foreign workers by using Bangladeshi passports (*The Daily Star* 2017). However, there are also concerns, as reported by Bangladesh Institute of Peace and Security Studies (BIPSS) in 2017, that Rohingya may be vulnerable to recruitment by Islamic extremists who already view the situation in Myanmar as an opportunity for a 'humanitarian jihad' militant activity that would threaten security in the region.

5.4.2. Gender-based Violence among the Rohingya

As has been discussed previously, there is a tendency in local Bangladesh communities to regard the Rohingya as being uneducated, rough, potentially criminal, and prone to aggression (UNDP & UN Women 2017, p. 2). Gender violence is an example of how this aggression may be seen to be reflected and reinforced by the stereotypes and inequalities within Rohingya society. Benjamin and Fancy (1998, p. 14) defines gender-based violence as 'violence targeted to a person because of

their gender that affects them because of their special roles or responsibilities in society'. With this definition in mind, Alam (2018b) finds that young Rohingya women often face sexual harassment and even violence from their own community members within the refugee camps. Moreover, early and forced marriage is a concerning issue for girls among Rohingya refugees. Akhter and Kusakabe (2014) claim that refugee camp women and children often face the risk of sexual abuse while using toilets and collecting water, which may be far away from the safety of their shelter. The authors also describe how Rohingya men's experiences of conflict, oppression, and frustration may be expressed through domestic violence against their wives or other family members. Akhter and Kusakabe (2014, p. 238) found that Rohingya men are often prevented from seeking gainful employment due to restrictions on their movement away from the camps, together with limited opportunities for unskilled work. By necessity, Rohingya women may become the income earners in the family, which can result in dysfunctional relationships and disharmony in families where there are fixed gender stereotype expectations. Apart from domestic violence that the women face, there are also risks of harassment and exploitation where they work due to their low socio-economic status.

5.5. Political Impact of Rohingya Refugees

Since the early beginnings of the Rohingya crisis, Bangladesh has been a somewhat unwilling partner in accepting refugees at their border and allowing refugee camps to be set up. Urged by international pressure and the promises of support in the form of humanitarian aid, the government has shown remarkable sympathy and tolerance for refugees. There have been numerous diplomatic attempts to resolve the crisis on its border, but little progress has been made. On the contrary, the crisis has worsened in past year, since August 2017, leaving many commentators to conclude that there is no resolution in sight. Alam (2018a) argues that Bangladesh is unable to establish the international diplomatic assistance, which is required to end the crisis. However, Bangladesh and Myanmar have signed a bilateral agreement on 23 November 2017 to repatriate the refugees, and Bangladesh wants to complete the repatriation within two years. This plan seems unlikely to succeed, since the security for Rohingya in Myanmar has not improved, there has been no talk of allowing citizenship and human rights for them, and voluntary repatriation is unlikely to be a course that many refugees would choose given the risks they would be returning to (Alam 2018a).

Generally, there is public support for the government's decision to allow asylum for Rohingya refugees and this decision may have an impact on next national election in early 2019 depending on how the refugee crisis evolves (Idris 2017, p. 2). A seminal study by Bangladesh Institute of Peace and Security Studies (BIPSS) (2017 p. 6) demonstrates that local legislature and politicians often use Rohingya refugees to further their own political interests, which can be a significant concern for Bangladesh. BIPSS (2017, p. 7) also claims that the refugee crisis has caused Bangladesh to lose the political and economic support of two of its closest allies, India and China, because both have

sided with Myanmar and have enormous economic and strategic interest there. As a result, a new diplomatic alignment is taking place in this region that can have negative impact on Bangladesh.

5.6. Economic Impact of Rohingya Refugees

The sustainability of economic markets is accomplished through continual balancing of supply and demand - between worker and accessibility of work. Rohingya crisis could interrupt the consistency in society and more challenges might ascend when vast numbers of unemployed refugees pursue livelihood opportunity (BIPSS 2017, p. 4). It is quite understandable that the refugees will go outside the refugee camp seeking employment and come into confrontations with local community, creating instability in society. Baldwin and Marshall (2018) point out that most refugee camps are in remote areas where majority of inhabitants are poor and depend on daily wages earned through unskilled labour. However, the authors found that Rohingya refugees are now competing for the available jobs and will undercut local workers. For daily work, local Bangladeshi labour demands 500 takas (\$6), while Rohingya labourers are available at 300 takas, resulting in the employer engaging the cheaper Rohingya labourer. This is causing a grave deterioration of livelihood opportunity for the already poor local community who subsist day to day on their meager earnings. The inadequate work opportunity and low income causes local people to sell their small assets and livestock and take mortgages just to keep families provided for (UNDP & UN Women 2017, p. 7). Yasmin (2017, p. 417) adds that when people from rural population lose their income and move to another place for better income, it represents a serious threat for social and economic stability and sustainable economic growth for Bangladesh.

Furthermore, Cookson (2017b) argues that Bangladesh is a small country that has a delicate economy with limited resources, overpopulation and limited agricultural land. Consequently, Bangladesh's economic development can be seriously hindered by huge Rohingya influx combined with its over population and high birth rate. The GDP per capita of Bangladesh was recorded at US \$ 2029.60 in 2016 and is equivalent to only 8% of the world's average (*Trading Economics* n.d.).

The flow of foreign aid and enlarged international expenditure for support of Rohingya refugees can be of benefit to the economic growth of Bangladesh. For example, Parnini (2013 p. 288) claims that the UNHCR, donor governments and NGOs are providing aid to help the refugee influx, that has gained some good results, such as employment opportunity has increased for local citizens. Khatun (2017, p. 24) also claims that there have been benefits in local economic structure, including changes in small business sectors that have opened up opportunities for local people. Many Bangladeshi laborers have found lucrative employment with humanitarian aid agencies and development partners.

However, Alam (2018a) claims that the overall cost to the government for refugee settlement areas, is a burden for national economy. Cookson (2017b) shows that Cox's Bazar is one of the key tourist

destination points in Bangladesh, but the huge refugee influx has had an adverse impact on tourism income. Khan's study in 2017 (p. 25) shows that, due to the ongoing situation of unrest, the number of tourist travelling to the region has decreased. Tour operators claim that they will lose more than half million tourists in this season. The cross-border trade with Myanmar and fishing in the Naf River have also deteriorated due to the restrictions by the government which has had a disproportionate economic impact on Bangladesh (UNDP & UN Women 2017, p. 9).

5.7. Security Impacts of Rohingya Refugees

The Rohingya refugee crisis is no longer a simple humanitarian issue but now poses a potential threat to internal security and stability of Bangladesh and may represent a wider threat to transnational security in the Southeast Asian region (BIPSS 2017; Ministry of Foreign Affairs 2014, p. 2; Parnini, Othman & Ghazali, 2013, p. 141). The ARSA militant group has already shown its ability to recruit Rohingya jihad soldiers from refugee camps for cross-border fighting and smuggling of small arms and drugs, which jeopardise law and order and threaten security (Haque 2016, p. 863; ICG 2018, p. 8). Furthermore, Alam (2018b) claims that the radical Islamist group al-Qaeda recently made an online appeal asking Bangladeshi Muslims to support Rohingya by conducting extremist activities against Myanmar. Milton *et al.* (2017, p. 7) states that a number of radical groups, including Rohingya Solidarity Organisation (RSO), Arakan Islamic Front, and Rohingya Patriotic Front that are active in border areas between Bangladesh and Myanmar, include Rohingya in their activities. Ullah (2011, p. -156) reports that there are claims Harkat-ul-Jihad-i-Islami (HuJI) and Jamat-i-Islam has been active in funding Rohingya refugees to undertake illegal activities, within Bangladesh and along the border. As much of the threat to security posed by the Rohingya and extremist groups is covert and unlikely to be readily detected, it seems that there is likely to be a great deal more activity taking place than is known about, which suggests that the security dilemma has yet to be fully realised or measured.

5.8. Environmental Impacts of Rohingya Refugees

Khatun (2017, p. 23) claims that Bangladesh is already facing the challenges of environmental degradation due to refugee influx for decades, but the recent refugee influx has been far more influential. Some of the key environmental impacts arising from the Rohingya presence are in relation to natural disasters lack of supply of drinking water and proper waste management. Ahmed (2018) argues that additional refugee influx to existing local population generates excessive demand for natural resources with long-term challenges for a sustainable environment. According to Bangladesh forestry department, the Rohingya presence has caused the stripping away of 4,000 acres of forest areas. Moreover, Ahmed (2018) refers to a study by the WHO that reports the reduction and pollution of ground water supplies due to environmental degradation, especially deforestation and the

resulting soil erosion and lowering of the water table from rainfall runoff. Refugees cut trees for fuel and to construct their shelters, leaving barren earth where there were once trees and fruit plantations.

Teknaf Wildlife Sanctuary (TWS) is a reserve forest area of 28,688 acres of land, which is at risk due to overexploitation of forest resources by local population and Rohingya refugee (Alam *et al.* 2014, p. 233). The effect of deforestation has a serious impact on the livelihoods of local population because they are deprived of natural resources and adequate, water supply (UNDP & UN Women 2017, p. 9). Imran and Mian (2014, p. 239) have shown that the refugee crisis has become a matter of genuine apprehension for Bangladesh due to the rising pressures on the environment which is hampering the conservation and protection of the limited bio-diversity in natural areas.

The removal of natural forest cover by the overburden of human population in those refugee camp areas sets in motion a cascade of environmental effects that will result in complete degradation of the whole eco-system needed to support life. Consequently, the aid group Doctors Without Borders has reported that “in Hakimpara refugee camp, a quarter of shallow tube wells have dried up” because deforestation has resulted in rainfall runoff to the sea rather than recharging the underground aquifers (Ahmed 2018). In addition, the WHO warns that inappropriate construction of latrines near to tube wells have polluted the ground water and threatened the health of people with diseases, such as dysentery and cholera (Ahmed 2018). Thus, it can be seen that the refugee crisis is seriously affecting the environment in Bangladesh, which already faces many other challenges (BIPSS 2017, p. 6).

5.9. Health Impact of Rohingya Refugees

As the crisis has unfolded in Bangladesh, international healthcare organisations have expressed increasing concern about health conditions and transmittable diseases in refugee camps, which may become widespread among refugees and local population due to lack of access to medical care and adequate hygiene (Alam 2018a). Masud *et al.* (2017, p. 21) who studied the health problems, found that most of the Rohingya refugees who are suffering from diseases are not registered and may be carrying several communicable diseases, such as hepatitis B, tuberculosis, HIV, skin diseases, and malaria. Bangladesh Institute of Peace and Security Studies (BIPSS) (2017, p. 3), is concerned that the infectious diseases could devastate the health support in refugee camps, as well as the possibility of being spread among local people due to the movement of Rohingyas from one place to another place for work.

A number of authors and organisations have commented on health dilemma of environmental degradation in camp areas and unhygienic conditions, which pose considerable risk of affecting the local community (Haque 2016, p. 865; Khatun 2017, p.28; Janny & Islam 2015, p. 97). They are particularly concerned about the primitive toilet facilities that create contaminated water and environs, as dysentery and other gastro-intestinal diseases are a significant cause of illness and

death, especially in children. Masud et al. (2017, p. 23) and Datta (2015, p. 139) have discussed reproductive issues in refugee camps, especially lack of awareness regarding family planning, which increase birth and infant mortality rate, early marriage and other health challenges, and the problem of sexual transmitted diseases. Furthermore, Parnini (2012, p. 236) points to the seriousness of drug addiction and related diseases, such as HIV and hepatitis, that have rapidly increased due to Rohingya involvement in drug smuggling.

5.10. Drug and Arms Trafficking

Bangladesh Government estimates that more than 500,000 undocumented Rohingyas are distributed through Cox's Bazar and Chittagong district. Many are facing extreme poverty and may become involved in criminal activities just to survive (Datta 2015, p. 136). Shyamol (2017) claims that Bangladesh law enforcement agency sources are aware of the illegal activities of Rohingyas, some of whom are involved in the trafficking of 'Yabba', which is a highly addictive mix of methamphetamine and caffeine mostly produced in Myanmar, medicines, and wine smuggling in Chittagong and Cox's Bazar. Yasmin (2017, p. 405) points out that the geographical proximity of the Golden Triangle, the opium producing area where Thailand, Laos and Myanmar boundaries join, and the even more important opium producing area of the Golden Crescent, covering the Afghanistan, Iran, and Pakistan border area, make Bangladesh's location perfect for heroin smuggling and international trade in illicit drugs. Thus, these Rohingya are generating an internal security threat for Bangladesh through their connections with arms smuggling, trafficking in drugs, and other criminal activities. Bangladesh military security forces and police are very alert to these crimes and frequently conduct operations to detect and arrest criminals; however, the task is daunting and is hampered by lack of border control and widespread corruption (BIPSS 2017, p. 5).

5.11. Conclusion

There is a consensus in the assessments by government authorities, humanitarian aid agencies, health professionals, environmental authorities, and law enforcement agencies that the presence of Rohingya refugees in Bangladesh is leading to numerous impacts there that are having serious, long-term negative effects on society, the nation and region. Rohingya crisis is a wicked problem and a complex challenge for Bangladesh. The concluding argument in the case of the Rohingya is that the unequal access to resources and opportunities is the main cause of conflict between local people and refugees. However, it is clear that the effects of the crisis in Bangladesh are more complex and widespread, reaching far beyond the local communities where refugee camps exist, to the national, regional, and even international levels. Therefore, an immediate strategy and comprehensive solution should be sought to deal with Rohingya crisis and to protect the local population and Bangladesh from threat. The next Chapter 6 will discuss some of the potential countermeasures for Bangladesh to overcome this crisis.

Chapter 6: Countermeasures to Address the Rohingya Issue

Countermeasures are generally regarded as actions that can be or are taken in response to a danger or threat and are useful to obtain a tactical solution or outcome (Nissel 2006). Most often countermeasures are applied against an antagonist or challenging situation and are frequently associated with operations of security, defense, policing, or law. Between states and nations, countermeasures are often applied against one state for 'wrongdoings' by another. However, countermeasures in international law are most notable for being extremely difficult to enforce; hence, governments tend to apply political diplomacy in attempting to resolve conflicts between nations. In the case of Rohingya crisis, Myanmar has clearly committed 'wrongdoings' and has inflicted serious consequences upon Bangladesh; however, diplomacy has had little effect. Nevertheless, one of the potential countermeasures to the crisis is to continue diplomacy in the hope of a peaceful dispute settlement.

According to an International Crisis Group (2018, p. 1) report issued 16 May, the two major players in this drama, Bangladesh and Myanmar, have agreed to a framework for voluntary repatriation of Rohingya refugees. However, none have returned, understandably, due to the uncertainty of their security in Myanmar, and smaller numbers of refugees continue to flee to Bangladesh. This strongly suggests that human rights violations in Rakhine are still occurring and, without UN being permitted access to the unstable region, any plan for resolving the crisis through voluntary repatriation is a distant hope rather than a practical option. The ICG has discounted any possibility of Myanmar being forced to take back refugees. That could result in the breakout of serious cross-border hostilities and military-scale conflict between the two nations. Likewise, the non-refoulement principle (UNHCR 1992) enshrined in international human rights law forbids any country from forcibly returning refugees to a place where they will be subjected to persecution. Therefore, it can be seen that under the present circumstances, neither country is willing or able to address this crisis, nor are the Rohingya refugees, of their own volition, able to take a reasonable path to a resolution. Accordingly, this chapter will examine the consequences if nothing is done and will discuss what counter measures should be considered to overcome the challenges that Bangladesh and the Rohingya are facing before the problem becomes institutionalized.

6.1. Prospects for resolving the Rohingya refugee crisis

Cookson (2017a) argues that if the Rohingya refugees are unable to go back to Myanmar in the next one to two years or perhaps forever, then the refugee presence will be perpetual and weigh heavily on the socio-economic structure and overall situation of Bangladesh. In addition, the local population, especially in Cox's Bazar area, may become hostile and dissatisfied with the Rohingya presence. A recent study by ICG (2018, p. 4) demonstrates that most of the Rohingya refugees are wishing to return to their homes in Myanmar if the security, basic rights and dignity will be ensured there.

However, some would prefer to permanently settle in Bangladesh, but the government has so far resisted this idea.

Bangladesh and Myanmar governments decided on a bureaucratic, procedural approach to repatriation beginning on 23 January 2018 and to be completed “preferably within two years” (ICG 2018, p. 2). However, according to a Crisis Group Asia (CGA) report of 2018 (p. 11), the Bangladeshi government is inclined to force Rohingya refugees back to Myanmar if the situation in Cox’s Bazar is not favorable or deteriorates. The local community and government have shown sympathy for Rohingya, but at the same time the administration announced clearly that it was organising temporary arrangements for refugees, not for the long-term stay.

Clearly, Bangladesh expects Myanmar to take the refugees back, but according to the latest CGA report (2018), Myanmar government has not made any advancement in creating conditions that are more favorable. There is little prospect that the security situation in Rakhine state will improve sufficiently in the short term, making repatriation extremely problematic. Hunt (2018) states that Bangladesh government has submitted the names of 8000 Rohingya families, while Myanmar did not yet take them back. According to an ICG (2018, p. 3) report in June, no refugee had returned to Myanmar via official means. Myanmar government has declared repeatedly that the mandatory infrastructure development to accommodate Rohingya repatriation is ready, but in the form of highly guarded and restricted camps that will assist only a limited number of returnees. According to the same report, Myanmar demolished many burned Rohingya villages to make new roads, security structures, and power lines in Rakhine state. Furthermore, the state encouraged other ethnicities to settle in remaining villages, which decreases the possibility that the Rohingyas will be able to return to their homes. The UN refugee agencies and humanitarian groups have asked for a rethink of the plan for Rohingya repatriation procedure and show concern about the inability to guarantee security to Rohingyas (Siddiqui & Tarrant 2018). In Rakhine state, local political activists and people opposed to the Rohingya repatriation process and the local administration have worked to undermine and threaten the success of any repatriation attempt (ICG 2018, p. 4). Thus, the central plan for resolving the crisis by repatriation appears to be deeply flawed.

6.2. The attempts of stakeholders to come up with a solution

Bangladesh government has sought international funding and support for its repatriation plan, hoping to gain international acceptability through diplomatic initiatives in partnership with the UNHCR (Sen 2017). AH Mahmood Ali, Bangladeshi Foreign Minister, has emphasised the necessity for a peaceful solution at a meeting with UN officials on 20th February 2018. He highlighted the adverse impacts of the crisis on overall situation in Cox’s Bazar and the consequences of long-term refugee presence there, which could result in breakdown of relationships and more serious conflict. He spoke about Bangladesh’s initiatives in cooperation with Myanmar through the establishment of a border liaison office to discuss security issues. Through sustained bilateral meetings, reciprocal understanding and

collaboration with Myanmar government, there are hopes, however doubtful, that the repatriation process can be restarted.

However, a number of authorities and stakeholders have suggested there are other steps and countermeasures that can be taken, either in conjunction with repatriation, or independent of it, to resolve the situation successfully. If the repatriation plan is viewed as an 'all eggs in one basket' approach, then it makes sense to have counter measures in place that may offer better options. For example, Kipgen (2014, p. 243) states that Bangladesh Government planned to undertake initiatives in Cox's Bazar that would create employment opportunities, improve market conditions and ensure establishment of infrastructure in health and education sectors. However, until now these countermeasures have not been executed well enough to improve the situation in Cox's Bazar. Bangladesh has also proposed the idea of relocating some Rohingya refugees to areas where their impacts on locals would not be felt. Some plans have been mooted and initial work may already be underway, but the idea has been widely criticised and it is doubtful that the plan will offer more than a temporary distraction from the need to resolve the wider issues and promote countermeasures that are more feasible.

For example, there has been criticism of the limited efforts made by other nations to apply pressure to Myanmar to stop human rights abuses and take responsibility for the welfare of all its people, not just the privileged majority Burman population (Imran & Mian 2014). Likewise, Asian regional associations, such as South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation (SAARC) and Association of South East Asian Nations (ASEAN), have been criticised for inactivity on the issue, although both Indonesia and Malaysia have attempted to intervene with Myanmar on behalf of the Rohingya. Most recently, Indonesia's President met bilaterally with Myanmar's leader at the 32nd ASEAN Summit in Singapore (April 2018) to voice concern over the treatment of the Rohingya Muslim minority (Sapie 2018). More effort by these organisations would be a useful countermeasure against human rights abuses in Myanmar.

Moreover, Ullah (2017) claims that Bangladesh can undertake negotiations with particular states that have significant influence with Myanmar, such as China and India, to gain their support in the issue. Furthermore, as a member of the Organization of Islamic Cooperation (OIC), Bangladesh could organise a campaign among Islamic nations and NGOs to collect funds for the Rohingya and can take a leadership role in the worldwide campaign against the brutal oppression of Rohingyas.

The ICG (2018, p. 15) report also emphasises the importance of the international community continuing to pressure Myanmar to stop the violence and permit access in Rakhine region for the UN and humanitarian agencies. These recommendations are in agreement with those of the Rakhine Advisory Commission Report presented by former UN chief, Kofi Anan (Advisory Commission on Rakhine State 2017, p. 27). The Myanmar State Counsellor Aung Sun Suu Kyi appointed Kofi Anan to conduct a yearlong study tasked with finding remedial solutions to the long-simmering differences

between Rakhine Buddhists and Rohingya Muslims. Anan's report places further pressure on Myanmar to provide the Rohingya with a chance to live with dignity and safety, reconsider the citizenship law and maintain international standards (Kofi Anan Foundation, 2017, p. 2).

Perhaps it was the Prime Minister of Bangladesh, Sheikh Hasina, who best stated the most suitable range of countermeasures when she addressed the United Nations in 2017 on the Rohingya crisis (Ali 2017). She recommended a five-point plan to overcome the refugee crisis. Initially, all conflicts against all groups of people should stop. Secondly, she demanded that the UN team should be allowed to enter the affected areas in Myanmar and determine the real situation. Thirdly, she stated that the Rohingya should be permitted to live there with honor and self-respect in a secured area under supervision of UN. Her fourth argument was to establish a workable arrangement for repatriation and, lastly, she called for the full implementation of Kofi Anan's Commission Report (*The Indian Express*, 2017).

However, Myanmar authorities took little notice of the Kofi Anan report, which they have reportedly said was done by 'by a foreign personality', and the matter has now been referred to the UN Security Council and the International Criminal Court (Deppermann 2013, p. 291). If asking for Myanmar's cooperation does not produce results, perhaps a countermeasure of UN charges of 'crimes against humanity and genocide', under Articles 2 and 15 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR), together with efforts to extradite senior Myanmar officials to stand trial, may succeed where diplomacy has not (ICG 2018; Ventura 2014, pp. 97-99). Deppermann's (2013) case study of the legal implications of the Rohingya crisis suggests that the UN's International Court of Justice (ICJ) in The Hague may offer the only hope of stopping the acts of terror and violence against minority groups in countries such as Myanmar, which are the root causes of the wider global humanitarian crisis. So far, the ICJ has been powerless to influence any real change in Myanmar or to prosecute any of the main actors in the ongoing process of ethnic cleansing of the Rohingya community.

The next and last chapter will provide the conclusion to this research, suggest areas for further research, and provide recommendations for the future.

Chapter 7: Conclusion

The plight of refugees worldwide today is a grim reminder of the inability of international human rights organisations, democratic nations, and humanitarian aid agencies to prevent the persecution, violence, and abuse of people which is forcing them to flee their homes. According to the UNHCR, forced migration in 2017 has reached unprecedented levels and is threatening security in nearly every region of the world. Although it is but one part of a much larger global dilemma, the Rohingya crisis and its impact on Bangladesh has become one of the most serious humanitarian crises in the world. As such, it is vital that research helps to reveal more about these refugee events and to learn ways of preventing them or resolving the multitude of problems that eventuate, particularly for host countries.

This thesis sought to identify the social, economic, and environmental aspects of the Rohingya refugee impact on Bangladesh and local community. Nonetheless, the government, political leaders and citizens have shown sympathy towards the Rohingya for decades, adhering to international law and allowing refugees to enter and stay on its land temporarily. The impacts of Rohingya refugees on host community and Bangladesh as a whole are multifaceted, with positive and negative aspects. On the one hand, the research findings disclose some positive economic implications, which include new livelihood opportunities for local people through offering jobs with aid agencies; business prospects generated through advancement of markets; and funds resulting from provision of development aid. Social facilities, such as education and health support, have been enhanced and become more accessible to local population, as well as for the Rohingya.

On the other hand, this study argues that the host community has experienced serious negative consequences, such as increased competition for employment; price hikes for daily essentials; decreased daily income; high transport costs; environmental degradation; exposure to disease; and refugee involvement in criminal activities. Tourism has declined leaving many locals without jobs. The limited availability of medical care and dirty and overcrowded refugee camps, particularly after the post-August 2017 influx, are of great concern to the local community. The probability of spreading transmittable diseases is seen as a grave threat to the health of the local population because of interactions with the Rohingya. Refugees generate a large amount of waste and poor toilet systems in the camps have adverse effects on the environment and health of the local population. Therefore, the long-term Rohingya presence in Bangladesh for several decades has had serious negative impact on natural resources and environment, as well as upon the lives of local people and the sustainability of the whole region. Bangladesh lost significant forest area, land and hills for constructing refugee camps, which is affecting bio-diversity. After August 2017 with the significant increases in refugee numbers, the environmentally devastation worsened, especially as the refugees destroyed vast areas of the forests for wood to use as fuel.

Security issues are also paramount in the minds of many local people who view the Rohingya as rough and prone to criminal activity. They are known to be involved in the drug trade and arms smuggling. Some Rohingya have made contact with terrorist groups threatening the security, freedom and happiness of the host population. The result is that the law and order situation, the environment, and the livelihoods of locals living in areas of refugee camps have all deteriorated. The local population feels sidelined because refugees are entitled to aid whereas locals are not, even though they struggle equally because of the refugee influx. These challenges have generated dissatisfaction, disadvantage, and frustration among local community.

There are many implications arising from these findings, which need to be acted upon by government agencies, NGOs, and international aid donors to bring about change and improvement for local people who have had to bear the consequences of this crisis. Further research is needed to involve local people in identifying solutions to their problems and ensuring they are part of the processes of resolving issues for the benefit of both the host community and refugees.

A further aim for the thesis was to identify possible workable solutions, strategies, and policies from the perspective of host community and Bangladesh. It concluded that optimum solutions, such as repatriation of the Rohingya, are unlikely in the short and medium terms, despite negotiations between the governments of Bangladesh and Myanmar, and with the international aid agencies and NGOs. The crisis, at the time of writing in 2018, was ongoing and no closer to a solution. Nevertheless, in a recent development, Bangladesh has signed another MoU with the UNHCR related to voluntary repatriation of Rohingya refugees (*The Daily Star* 2018). Under this agreement, UNHCR will arrange the repatriation process that includes having consent of refugees for voluntary return, taking care of transit camps, logistics and transport facilities, as has been stated by the Refugee Relief and Repatriation Commissioner of Bangladesh.

However, before any Rohingya can safely return to Myanmar, the underlying interreligious and interethnic causes of the conflict must be resolved, and the citizenship and national identity of the Rohingya must be recognised and safeguarded as part of the repatriation and resettlement process. In this regard, the thesis has explained that there are a number of underlying reasons for the conflict in Myanmar, which include religious and ethnic contexts, but also have historical, geopolitical, and economic aspects. Consequently, there is greater complexity to the problem there than might be evident to many observers.

The thesis concludes that the likelihood of this solution being agreed to by Myanmar is doubtful, at least in the short term, but that diplomatic and political pressure by other governments, regional organisations, and the UN could produce concessions and eventually pave the way for a resolution. The challenge is for concerned stakeholders to convince Myanmar to play an active role to stop the forced migration, ensure the security and rights of the Rohingyas and, ultimately, to recognise them as citizens of Myanmar. Only then will repatriation begin. Unfortunately, this will take time and, in the

meantime, the Rohingya crisis will remain a major burden for both the host community and government. The challenge in the short term is to ensure that the situation does not deteriorate further.

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