ROHINGYA REFUGEE INFLUX AND INSTABILITY NEXUS: A CASE STUDY OF BANGLADESH

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Declaration

I am aware of the University's policy on Academic Dishonesty, and, except where appropriately acknowledged this thesis is my own work, has been expressed in my own words and has not previously been submitted for assessment, 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.

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Date: 31 October 2019

Abstract

Being denied basic human rights and citizenship in Myanmar, Rohingyas are the largest single stateless ethnic group in the world. In the 1970s the Rohingya started crossing the border to seek refuge in Bangladesh due to state persecution in Myanmar. But the recent 2017 influx has broken all previous records in terms of refugees moving within a short period of time. Within three to four months almost 800,000 Rohingya refugees crossed the border to seek refuge in Bangladesh. As a developing country, Bangladesh already has many problems. The recent large influx is now a major national crisis for Bangladesh that threatens internal stability. To understand how refugee influxes become a source of instability in host countries, this thesis reviews literature on challenges of hosting refugees in developing countries. For a better understanding of the impact of refugees in developing countries, this thesis examines how the refugee influxes affect the politics, economy, society, and environment of the developing host communities where the host communities are poor. Based on available secondary sources this work explores how the Rohingya refugee inflows, especially the 2017 influx, affect the political, economic, social and environmental existence of Cox's Bazar district of Bangladesh where all the refugee settlements are located. The increasing pressures on the host communities has led to growing tensions between local people and refugees, replacing the initial peaceful cooperation of locals in giving shelter to Rohingya refugees. This situation has contributed to a growing sense of instability in Bangladesh. Although the Government of Bangladesh (GoB) has attempted to bring about a durable solution of this crisis, these efforts have been largely unsuccessful and the Rohingya refugees in Cox's Bazar are likely to remain a source of growing instability in the foreseeable future.

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ACRONYMS AND ABBREVIATIONS

AQIS	Al-Qaida in the Indian Subcontinent
ARSA	Arakan Rohingya Salvation Army
ACAP	Assessment Capacities Project
APHR	ASEAN Parliamentarians for Human Rights
BIPSS	Bangladesh Institute of Peace and Security Studies
BBC	British Broadcasting Corporation
CSC	Citizenship Scrutiny Card
FAO	Food and Agricultural Organization
FDI	Foreign Direct Investment
GoB	Government of Bangladesh
HRW	Human Rights Watch
ICG	International Crisis Group
ISCG	Inter Sector Coordination Group
IOM	International Organization of Migration
IRC	International Rescue Committee
IS	Islamic States
JMB	Jamatul Mujahedeen Bangladesh
MSF	Médecins Sans Frontiers
MFDM	Ministry of Food and Disaster Management
NPM	Needs and Population Monitoring
PLO	Palestine Liberation Organisation
PFLF	Popular Front of Liberation of Palestine
RRRC	Refugee Relief and Repatriation Commission
RSO	Rohingya Solidarity Organisation
SEZ	Special Economic Zones
TWS	Teknaf Wildlife Sanctuary
TRC	Temporary Registration Certificates

UNDP	United Nations Development Programme
UNICE	United Nations Children Fund
UNHCR	United Nations High Commission for Refugees
WHO	World Health Organization
WFP	World Food Programme

Chapter 1: Introduction

1.1 Global Refugee Problem

The movement of refugees is a global issue. People fleeing their homes due to war, conflict and persecution is a continuing international phenomenon. The phenomenon started to become serious following World War 2 when millions of people escaped their home countries in search of security and protection. Over the last few years, more people are being forced to flee their home countries due to persecution and conflict than at any other time since the establishment of the United Nations (United Nations High Commission for Refugees (UNHCR) 2015, p. 5). A recent report of the UN Refugee Agency demonstrates that millions of people worldwide have been forced to flee due to terrorism, human rights violations, war, threats to their own security, political oppression, interreligious and interethnic conflict, natural calamities or to escape from poverty (UNHCR 2018a).

The 2017 Rohingya refugee influx has put Bangladesh in a challenging position regarding the protection of the refugees. The multidimensional impacts of the refugees have even become a challenge for the internal stability of Bangladesh. This thesis will attempt to identify the possible steps that should be taken by the Government of Bangladesh (GoB) in joint collaboration with its neighbouring countries and international communities to address the refugee crisis and the stability issues of Bangladesh.

The focus of this study is the impacts of previous and recent Rohingya refugee influxes into Bangladesh. As a developing country, Bangladesh has many problems. Yet on humanitarian grounds Bangladesh has been providing shelter to more than 1 million Rohingya refugees. At the very beginning of this influx the local Bangladeshi communities near the border area played a mainly voluntary role in sheltering the Rohingya refugees on the grounds of humanitarian assistance. But, the recent refugee crisis is creating many problems in Cox's Bazar where all the registered and unregistered Rohingya refugee camps are located. The two officially registered camps are controlled by the GoB, but supervised by the UNHCR. These two camps were established in 1992 by the GoB when thousands of Rohingyas fled their homes to save their lives from persecution by the Burmese army (Isaacs 2016). In addition,

there are many unregistered camps scattered throughout Cox's Bazar, especially in Teknaf and Ukhiya Upazilas.

This study will be mainly focusing on how the Rohingya refugee crisis is continuously creating pressures on the internal stability of Bangladesh. Like many developing countries with refugee problems concerning political, economic, social, environmental, and law and order issues, Bangladesh is also facing the same impacts with the Rohingya refugees. These problems are gradually becoming a major threat to the internal stability of Bangladesh. So, the study will try to cover all the impacts of Rohingya refugees on the local communities, and how these impacts are a growing concern for the internal stability of Bangladesh. Therefore, the thesis will focus on some of the best examples of peaceful refugee integration in some developing countries to address the possible negative impacts and will discuss how Bangladesh can learn from those lessons.

1.2 What is Instability?

Since the study discusses the refugee influx and its impacts on the stability of Bangladesh, it should be clear how the influx is contributing to the change in the political environment, and thus is affecting the internal stability of Bangladesh. Shepherd (2010) argues that stability means the predictable political environment. Alesina et al. (1996) defines political instability as the propensity of executive change through constitutional or unconstitutional ways, and notes it increases policy uncertainties. On the other hand, political instability can be defined in other ways like the tendency for regime or government change, incidence of political upheaval or violence in a society, instability in policies, etc. (Gale 2008). As the thesis will look at the impacts of hosting refugees in Bangladesh, it will critically analyse only how Bangladesh as a developing host country is being affected by the Rohingya refugee influxes, and how the influxes, especially the recent 2017 influx, are contributing to the internal instability of Bangladesh. Before going into the multidimensional impacts of hosting refugees in developing countries, it is important to discuss briefly the definition of a refugee, who are the Rohingya refugees, and the significance of the study.

1.3 Who is a Refugee and why the Rohingyas are Refugees?

Refugees are those displaced people who cross a national border to escape persecution and seek asylum in other countries where they are protected by international law and eligible for humanitarian aid (Jastram & Achiron 2001). The 1951 Refugee Convention defines a refugee as, 'someone who is unable or unwilling to return to their country of origin owing to a well-founded fear of being persecuted for reasons of race, religion, nationality, membership of a particular social group, or political opinion' (UNHCR 2019a). This is a legal definition, internationally recognised and used for determining whether a person fulfils the criteria to be recognised as a refugee. There are also many obligations for the host countries who are signatories to the Refugee Convention. According to the Refugee Convention the host countries are obligated to provide free access to courts, administrative assistance, identity papers, travel documents, ensure freedom of movement, education, religion, employment and must cooperate with the UNHCR in terms of refugee related functions. It is also mentioned in the convention that the host countries shall not discriminate, expel or refoul refugees to the country they fled from (UNHCR n.d.). It is also widely accepted that non-refoulment is part of customary international law which means countries which are not even parties to the 1951 Refugee Convention hosting refugees, must respect the principle of non-refoulment. Non-refoulment is a fundamental principle of international law that forbids a country from sending back people who seek asylum to the countries of their origin if there is a well-founded fear of persecution based on their race, religion, nationality, membership of a particular social group or political opinion (Trevisanut 2014).

According to Grinvald (2010, p. 19), most refugees flee in search of protection, basic rights and moreover, the security of their future. The recent refugee problems in Myanmar-Bangladesh have brought the Rohingya refugee crisis into the international limelight. The Rohingyas who have been identified as the 'world's most persecuted minority' at this time are a Muslim ethnic minority group from the Rakhine state of Myanmar (Figure 1.1), just south of Bangladesh (Leider 2018). Since the late 1950s, the Muslim leaders and students of North Arakan (Rakhine State) have begun to use the term 'Rohingya' to ensure their ethnoreligious identity as the region's Muslim community. Recently the term became widely

used in the international media after the genocide committed by the Burmese army on the Rohingya Muslim people in 2012 (Leider 2018, p. 2).

According to Karim (2017), the word 'Rohingya' is a name used by the Arakan Muslim to identify themselves, it is a contested term. The Buddhist community in Myanmar uses the term 'Kalar' and 'Benagalis' to define the Rohingyas and the Burmese government explicitly prohibits the word 'Rohingya'. Nevertheless, international media and communities use the term 'Rohingya' in recognition of the rights of the Rohingya people. Many scholars and political analysts claim that the Burmese government is adopting this strategy to deny the historical linkage of Rohingya people with this region (Uddin 2015).

Image removed due to copyright restriction.

Figure 1.1: Bangladesh and Myanmar
Source: Amnesty International 2017

1.4 Significance of the Study

Gomez et al. (2010, p. 1) argue that most refugees are found in countries neighbouring their countries of origin, most of the host countries of the world are developing countries. Bangladesh, as a neighbouring country, has been giving shelter to the Rohingyas for almost two decades. It is known that during the period of 1991-1992 almost 250000 Rohingyas fled Myanmar and came to Bangladesh to take shelter (Human Rights watch (HRW) 2000). Since 25 August 2017 to date a total of 741,357 Rohingya refugees have arrived in Bangladesh and of them, almost 58 percent are children in a vulnerable situation (United Nation's Children Fund (UNICEF) 2017; UNHCR 2019b). More recently in April 2019, UNICEF (2019) demonstrated that the newly arrived Rohingya refugees and the already existing 300,000 Rohingya refugees had settled in Cox's Bazar District which forms the world's largest refugee camps. It is estimated that the total number of Rohingya refugees is now almost 1 million, but different media claims that the number might be more than this. Generally, till today, most of the Rohingyas are still living in different camps throughout Cox's Bazar. A recent report from UNHCR (2019c) reveals that there are almost 34 refugee camps of which only two are registered camps in Cox's Bazar. Most of the Rohingyas are still living in these unregistered camps. On the other hand, Bangladesh is neither the signatory of the 1951 Refugee Convention nor the 1967 Protocol (UNHCR 2009), so it is a major challenge for Bangladesh to deal with the already existing Rohingya refugees and the recent influx.

Beside the serious humanitarian crisis of the Rohingya issue, it is also undeniable that the refugee crisis is becoming a threat to the internal stability of Bangladesh. This study explores the significant challenge to Bangladesh of the multidimensional impacts of the Rohingya refugee crisis on the country's internal stability.

1.5 Research Questions

How do Rohingya refugee influxes, especially the 2017 influx contribute to the internal instability of Bangladesh?

Since 2017, when the Rohingya refugees started fleeing Myanmar and taking shelter in Bangladesh, the gradual deterioration of the political, economic, social, environmental and

law and order situations have become a big problem for the internal stability of Bangladesh due to excessive pressures on the local communities. In response to the research question 'how do the Rohingya refugee influxes contribute to the internal instability of Bangladesh', the aim of this thesis is quite broad. The following sub-questions will help to narrow the research and will help to guide the way for further studies.

Sub-questions:

1. How has the Rohingya refugee crisis, especially the recent 2017 influx, been contributing to the dissatisfaction of local communities, and thus fuelled internal instability?
2. How does the GoB deal with the legal protection and non-refoulment of Rohingya refugees as a non-signatory of the 1951 Refugee Convention and 1967 Protocol?

1.6 Data Collection and Outline of the Thesis

Due to time constraints, it was not possible to collect primary data, therefore this thesis uses secondary sources. The first chapter highlights the refugee problem in Bangladesh, indicates the significance of the study, the focus of the study and defines who are refugees and who are Rohingyas. The second chapter highlights the impacts of refugees on developing host countries through a review of the relevant literature. To collect peer reviewed articles the thesis used eight online databases: Taylor & Francis Online, ScienceDirect, JSTOR, Google Scholar, Wiley Online Library, ProQuest, Oxford University Press, and Cambridge Core. Aiming at having the most accurate articles on this particular chapter while searching for data through databases, the thesis has used the key words: Impact, hosting, refugees, developing countries, security, and instability. To make the chapter more contemporary to this issue, it has mainly analysed the resources from the last ten years. The third chapter provides a history of the Rohingya refugee issue in Myanmar, the 2017 refugee influx and the present situation in Bangladesh. Therefore, peer reviewed articles, academic books, statistical data from GoB websites and Humanitarian organisations, world's leading newspapers' reports, citizenship policies of Myanmar and reports of the international humanitarian or aid organisations who

are working with the Rohingya refugees have been used as data for this chapter. The fourth chapter uses scholarly articles on multidimensional implications associated with the internal stability of Bangladesh due to the Rohingya refugee influx. In addition, it will draw on recent investigating reports of the world's leading newspapers on Rohingyas refugee crisis and its impact on Bangladesh, peer reviewed articles on refugees and security, and statistical data from GoB websites. The fifth chapter will look at GoB initiatives and policies used to address the crisis. In addition, the study will review some peaceful refugee integration policies of other developing countries which might be applicable to Bangladesh, and make recommendations for future management of the issue.

Chapter 2: Challenges of Hosting Refugees in Developing Countries

2.1 Introduction

The influx of refugees into developing countries poses different types of impacts based on the real conditions of the host countries. It has been documented that the impacts of refugees on the host countries are mainly economic, political, social and environmental (Gomez et al. 2010). All the impacts have very close interrelations with each other, hence the impacts are inseparable. Kreibaum (2016, p. 263) argues that most of the refugee literature only looks at the displaced persons while the impacts on the host people living close to the refugee settlements remains under researched. This impact is likely to be more pronounced in developing countries who have difficulties with the refugees (Kreibaum 2016, p. 263). Numerous efforts have been taken to measure the positive and negative impacts of refugees on host countries or communities (Miller 2018, p. 1) however, there is a lack of theoretical background and assessment tools that can respond to the effects of refugees in host countries (Alshoubaki and Harris 2018, p. 161). Therefore, the study is trying to identify the impacts of refugees on developing host countries based on the existing literature of experiences of developing countries who have received millions of refugees. The chapter reviews the literature on refugees' impact on developing host countries mainly based on four aspects – economic, social, environmental and security. This chapter will focus on the issue of why a refugee influx has the potential to become a threat for the stability of developing host countries.

It has been documented that developing countries that host refugees for protracted periods experience long-term economic, social, political, and environmental effects (Gomez et al. 2010). Baez (2011) notes that developing countries receiving a sudden and large number of refugees from neighbouring countries may face the problem of overpopulation, which leads to higher competition for resources in the host country. It also needs to be discussed how the environmental impacts of refugees can be connected with other impacts on the host country. The 1996 'UNHCR Environmental Guidelines' highlights six categories of environmental impact: degradation of natural resources, irreversible impacts on natural resources, impacts

on health, impacts on social conditions, social impacts on local communities, and impacts on the economy (Martin 2005, p. 332).

2.2 Political Instability and Security Challenges of Hosting Refugees in Developing Countries

According to Dzimbiri (1993, p. 4) refugee influxes to host countries have both positive and negative impacts. Having multidimensional impacts, a refugee influx can affect the political stability of host countries in several ways. Another important negative impact of refugees in host countries can be the political groups which are formed by the refugees. According to Salehyan and Gleditsch (2006) refugee communities who have been living in their host countries for a long time can form political organisations – especially rebel groups in their host countries, and these political organisations may become a strong platform and make demands for policy changes by the host government, and thus create pressure on the domestic political processes in such a way which is not welcome by the host states.

It is also argued that large refugee flows can upset the economic and social equilibrium of the local host communities in the receiving areas, and thus contribute to spark discontent and feelings of threat to local communities in the receiving states (Salehyan and Gleditsch 2006, p. 342). Besides that, there is always a chance of civil war in host countries just because of the refugee influx. Salehyan and Gleditsch (2006, cited in Alshoubaki and Harris 2018, p. 156) give more importance to the spread of civil war in host countries because of the intolerable economic burden of the refugees on the host communities and most importantly, their very close connection with the rebel social network in border areas. They also argued that refugees often bring fighters and ideologies to establish their political interests in host countries and therefore, this becomes a challenge for the host countries to deal with the situation. For instance, in 1970 the Palestine Liberation Organisation (PLO) and Palestinian refugees put the Jordanian government into an awkward situation when the Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine (PELF) hijacked three foreign aircraft which resulted in a massive military action taken against the Palestinian refugees.

There is also a probability of the host countries using the refugees for political purposes. Whitaker (2002) discussed the matter clearly outlining how the political context of receiving countries plays a significant role in the refugee settlement. For example, in the Congo, the protesters and opposition groups recruited the Rwandan refugees to bring a change of government and finish the corrupt regime of the dictator Mobutu. Thus, refugees can become a political tool of their host countries, especially in developing countries. So, it can be said that the political impacts of refugee can be caused by the political affiliation between the refugees and host communities, serious negative political externalities, and rebel mobilisation.

The concerns regarding security issues are often raised by countries who host refugees. Several studies have been conducted on this. The influx of refugees from neighbouring countries leads to violence in the host country and also can be a source of conflict diffusion (Salehyan and Gleditsch 2006, p. 335). It is considered by Loescher (2002, p. 48) that most of the host governments view refugee movements as a security threat for the host communities and states. He also strongly argues that refugees are both a consequence of conflict and a cause of conflict and instability.

The host countries may also have security concerns related to terrorism and violent extremism (Miller 2018, p. 6). Refugees often carry past experiences of persecution by their government of origin state, thus they intend to take revenge against their government using the land of their host countries. Refugees can therefore play a negative role in destabilising their host countries through maintaining rebel social networks. Rashid (2008, cited in Gomez et al. 2010, p. 12) also highlighted that refugee camps located in border areas often become a fertile ground for rebel organisations to recruit members for insurgency and carry out operations against their origin state. Loescher (2002) demonstrates that refugee camps can be a safe place for the armed groups who could be the sources of insurgency and terrorist movement so the refugee camps become a security threat both for host and origin countries of the refugees. For example, the Afghan refugees in Pakistan became involved in armed resistance against the communist regime and its backers in Afghanistan in the 1980s.

Jacobsen (2002a, p. 587) also highlights military recruitment as one of the major problems both inside and outside refugee camps, and sometimes the militias can have full political

control of entire camps. For example, the Kakuma refugee camps of Kenya, Rwandan camps in Goma can be cited, as this situation happened in those refugee camps. He also added that crimes often times go unpunished due to the absence of any well-defined rule of law, and hence there is a chance to spread out in the local communities. In some countries when most of the refugees generally live outside camps, it is often difficult to separate the combatants and criminals from refugees which encourages the local people to nurture the perception that all refugees are a big threat for local communities (Jacobsen 2002a, p. 587).

The other significant threat for the receiving state of refugees is the spreading of arms among the refugees for arms movement or other purposes and radical ideologies of the refugees. Weiner (1993, p. 106) stated that armed refugees can be a big threat to the stability and security of the host state. Kirui and Mwaruvei (2012, p. 162) asserted that refugees in many developing countries can form armed groups with political objectives and can be engaged in warfare. Thus, they begin military retaliation, make their relationships with their host states complicated and become a threat for their citizens. For example, it can be seen that the armed Palestinian refugees in Lebanon who formed the Palestine Liberation Organisation (PLO) became a threat for the stability of their host country Lebanon, and were solely responsible for promoting the civil war in 1975 which subsequently led to conflict between the Lebanese army and the PLO (Weiner 1993; Salehyan and Gleditsch 2006, cited in Gomez et al. 2010, p. 13).

Another important element regarding the security issues created by refugees is the bilateral tensions between sending and receiving countries (Loescher 1993, cited in Salehyan & Gleditsch 2006, p. 342). It is also argued by Salehyan and Gleditsch (2006, p. 335) that the refugee influx is not only the result of political turmoil but also can be a cause of conflict between two countries. In addition, Salehyan (2008 p.787) highlights that refugees are not only the unfortunate product of war, but also can be the catalyst for conflict between states. To support this argument Salehyan and Gleditsch (2006, cited in Salehyan 2008, p. 790) also argued that the refugee influx from neighbouring states can increase the probability of civil war just because of the extreme ideologies of some refugees that contributes to violence. For example, Jordan was involved in a bloody civil war in 1970 when it tried to expel PLO fighters from its sovereign land who were operating within the refugee camps in Jordan. Kirui and

Mwaruvie (2012, p. 162) also demonstrated how the influx of refugees badly affects the bilateral relationship of the sending and receiving states because of being a political force for their country of origin and the way they react to the politics of the host country and their worst political relationship with their country of residence. Following this argument Salehyan (2008), also added that the refugee influx develops conflict between the sending and receiving states, and this situation may create a militarised interstate tension between these states. As a result, the host countries take military actions to protect their borders and avert the refugee inflows. On the other hand, the origin states of the refugees also take actions against the host countries blaming the host country for sheltering the people who were involved in violence. As a consequence, according to Salehyan (2008, p. 791), the refugee sending states may directly attack host states blaming the receiving states for protecting their political opponents and also for encouraging refugee militarisation.

There are also some arguments which are contrary to the negative impacts of refugees. Since refugees flee their countries mostly because of war or conflict, they have a serious psychological aversion to conflict, especially those who experienced violence personally. In addition, refugees can play their role to ensure global security and justice by giving their testimony against the persecutors or war criminals from their home countries (Miller 2018, p. 7). In addition, Jacobsen (2002b, p. 96) pointed out that the reality of seeing the refugees as passive victims who always bring trouble to their host countries, fails to see the ways they pursue their livelihoods and in doing so contribute to the economy of the host country.

2.3 Economic Challenges of Hosting Refugees

It is argued that most of the developing countries with low incomes and fiscal constraints who host refugees barely satisfy their own citizens in terms of healthcare facilities, education and social services, and exclude many, even before the influx of refugees (Dadudh and Niebuhr 2016, p. 7). How refugees affect the host countries' economies is little understood because of the lack of any impact evaluation method (Taylor et al. 2016, p. 7449). In addition, Ruiz and Vargas-Silva (2013) argue that with a few exceptions, there are only a few economic studies on refugees or displaced populations. Hence, there is significant debate over the positive and

negative economic consequences of the refugee presence in developing countries. Because of the forced and involuntary migration, the movement of refugees is different from migration. Considering this fact, the effect of the refugee diaspora is different from that of the immigrants. Therefore, host countries do not consider the refugees as voluntary immigrants, and hence specific measures are taken (Kouni 2018, p. 79). Due to the specific nature of the refugee problem and due to the scarcity of research, it is worth studying both the negative and positive effect of refugees on developing the host countries' economies.

Despite having assistance programs, refugees may create an economic burden for the host countries (Ruiz and Vargas-Silva 2013, p. 778). For example, Jordan as a developing country has received thousands of refugees in different eras, including from Palestine, Iraq, and Syria (Alshoubaki and Harris 2018, p. 159). According to the Ministry of Planning and International Cooperation (cited in Fakih and Ibrahim 2016, p. 66), the influx of Syrian refugees in Jordan required the host government to increase public spending, especially on the infrastructure needed to supply water, electricity and municipality services which amounted to approximately US$1.7 billion as of 2013. In addition, the annual cost of having a student enrolled in primary school was US$877, while it was US$1,195 for a student to enrol at secondary level, which resulted in an additional cost of US$81.4 million to enrol approximately 78,531 Syrian children in 2013 (Fakih and Ibrahim 2016, p. 66). The Jordan government also spent approximately US$167.8 million providing health services to the 600,000 Syrian refugees in 2013.

Another important economic impact of hosting refugee is the failure of the host countries to attract investment because of the fragile investment environment (Dadudh and Niebuhr 2016, p. 9). The unstable conditions caused by the refugee influx badly affects the trust between consumers and investors, resulting in the loss of foreign investment (Deppler & Kincaid, 1999). Lozi (2013) asserted that the turbulent conditions due to the refugee influx worsened the economic conditions in Jordan, cutting back investment and tourism. He also demonstrated that there was a sharp drop of Foreign Direct Investment (FDI) to 40 percent in Jordan by the end of 2011 due to the refugee influx (p. 120). In 2011, Jordan received only 12.1 percent of net FDI for the MENA region where most of the refugee settlement are located.

Refugees in most of the developing countries are hosted in isolated remote border areas that give them little access to natural resources (UNHCR 2011, pp. 2-3). Hence, due to any sudden influx of refugees the unemployment rate can be increased in refugee prone areas. For example, the Food and Agricultural Organization (FAO) (2013, cited in Fakih and Ibrahim 2016, p. 67) highlights how the influx of Syrian refugees has decreased the employment opportunities in the agricultural sector which is considered as a main income source for 60 percent of the Jordanians living in rural areas. It is also mentioned in the report that the recent influx of refugees in Jordan has caused increasing competition for unskilled work between local and refugees, which resulted in the dropping of wages to only JD 150 for 30 days (FAO 2013, p. 36). Besides that, Jordanians living in the same communities as the non-camp refugee population also faced a sharp increase in rent prices and lower labour wages. This is in combination with the already existing trend of increasing food prices. Jordanians who were already living below the poverty line (JD 68 per month) feel the impact of refugees most resulting in tensions between the refugees and local Jordanians (FAO 2013, p. 36).

Refugee influx does not always have negative impacts. It can also bring many positive impacts in developing host countries. The presence of international aid agencies in refugee prone areas can help the local economy flourish. Taylor et al. (2016, pp. 7451-7452) argue that UN agencies and other donors invest in developing the camps which provides employment to local people and aid workers. This spending undoubtedly brings a positive impact on local communities. Research has found positive impacts of refugees in some developing countries like Malawi, Jordan, Pakistan and Tanzania either through the camps that have been stimulating local economies with greater demand or through attracting international actors who bring resources, technology and employment opportunities to the remote areas where refugees camps are located (Milner 2009 and Miller 2017).

Taylor et al. (2016, p. 7452) demonstrate that if the refugees are given the opportunities to interact with the local economy it can however bring positive economic outcomes for the host country. For example, Congolese refugees in Rwanda generate more income than the cash aid they receive. The International Rescue Committee (IRC) (2016, p. 5) highlights the negative impact of Syrian refugees at the very beginning of their arrival in Jordan, but as time passes, they have been become important actors who have been boosting the local markets of Jordan. According to Betts and Collier (2015) Jordan was not able to compete with low-income

countries for cheap labour, nor was it able to compete with advanced economies on technology and innovation. But surprisingly, the refugee crisis offered Jordan the chance to change the situation to a positive transition. As a result, Jordan took initiatives to establish Special Economic Zones (SEZ) near the refugee camps and some urban areas targeting the employment of refugees and local Jordanians (Betts and Collier 2015).

Sometimes, the economic burden of refugees on developing host countries can be a cause of political discourse. For example, Francis (2015) argued that the economic burden of Syrian refugees mostly accrues to the poor Jordanians, and subsequently made the refugees the scapegoat for the worst economic situation of the Kingdom. Though there are many positive economic impacts due to refugees in Jordan, the negative impacts are more visible than the positives. Generally, the Syrian refugee crisis affects Jordan's negative economic trends in three main ways: the extension of public and social services to the refugees from the government funds; sharp increases in costs of finite goods like housing; and competition over jobs in informal sectors which worsened the economic situation of the poor Jordanians (Francis 2015). Francis (2015) also highlights the political challenge for the Jordanian government regarding the economic burden of refugees on host communities. A survey conducted in 2015 demonstrates that 95 percent of Jordanian workers believe that the Syrian refugees are taking their jobs, and thus, contributing to the political narrative of marginalisation of Jordanians and have the potential for political destabilisation (Francis 2015).

2.4 Socio-cultural Challenges of Hosting Refugees

Due to refugee influx, many developing host countries face different forms of socio-cultural changes, such as ethnic, religious, linguistics and ideological tensions between the host communities and refugees. The socio-cultural impacts of refugee inflows in developing countries are very difficult to measure. There is also the probability of posing a threat to cultural values and norms of the host communities if the influx of refugees is sizeable. However, the tension can be minimised if the refugees and host communities share the same culture, religion and language making it easier to integrate them with the host communities (UNHCR 2007a).

Alshoubaki and Harris (2018, p. 163) also described the social impacts of refugee inflows in host countries in two categories – 'cultural gap and ethnicity changes' as the first category, and 'social disorder, population density and complexity of refuges as a lost generation' as the second. Cultural gap and sudden change in ethnic balance may affect the social harmony of the local communities. For instance, it is argued that refugee influxes can affect the host societies through bringing a massive change in ethnic balance and competition over resources and public services (Gomez et al. 2010). In addition, Betts (2009) also asserted that a hostile relationship between the refugees and host communities occurs just because of the inequalities and unhealthy competition over the scarce resources and limited public services. In regard to the second category, UNHCR (2011, p. 3) argued that 'when large numbers of refugees arrive in a country — and especially when they are in a destitute situation and do not share ethnic or cultural linkages with the host community — there is always a risk that social tensions, conflicts and even violence might arise '. In addition, it is also strongly claimed by the Institute for Market Economics (1999, cited in Miller 2018, p. 5) that economic integration of the refugees is easy, but the social integration is more difficult. Their studies proved that for a long period refugee presence increases social problems like drug trading and abuse, smuggling, prostitution, armed robbery etc. (Codjoe et al. 2013, p. 445). In addition, the refugee influx can play a role in altering the ethnic balance in the host country which forces the local communities to feel vulnerable. Therefore Brown (1996, p. 576), highlights how the sudden refugee influx aggravates ethnic problems and brings a dramatic change in the domestic balance of power. Supporting this argument Salehyan and Gleditsch (2006, p. 343) demonstrated that a sudden refugee influx can change the domestic ethnic balance, resulting in discontent among local communities towards the refugees as well as the government that gives access to the refugees. Thus, the large sudden influx of refugees can lead to the local people being threatened in their social status and contributes to sparking conflict.

According to Martin (1992, p. 11), social instability may arise as a consequence of the sudden presence of refugees in the traditional social structures of host countries. He also added factors might lead to this instability just because of barriers deriving from the differences of cultures and values of the refugees and host communities, and thus may lead to miscommunication. This may also lead to fuel deep concerns like racism, ethnocentrism and

xenophobia. Thus, the refugee influx can endanger the social stability of host countries, especially in those developing countries where ethnic rivalry among groups already exists, the central government is weak and the political system is poor. But, when the refugee presence among the mainstream host society becomes a threat for security and safety of host communities, it can be considered the socio-political impact of refugee presence. The socio-political implications are often the results of refugee's political mobilisation in host countries associated with their country of origin. These political implications may affect not only the host country's' political structure, but also international relations.

Conversely refugee presence can increase human security because economic activities can ensure social and economic interdependence between the refugees and local communities, and can improve social networks through exchange of labour, food and assets (Jacobsen 2002b, p. 95). Refugees living with local communities in a host country or those in camps or settlements for a long time might show different social outcomes for refugees and hosts. For example, since October 1993, more than 250,000 Burundian refugees have crossed the border into Tanzania followed by 250,000 Rwandan refugees making a total somewhere between 500,000 and 700,000 in Benaco camp in Ngara district of Tanzania: this later became the second largest city in Tanzania (Rutinwa 1996, p. 295).

2.5 Environmental Challenges of Hosting Refugees

In different corners of the world, refugee movements have had a serious impact on the environment including destruction of forests, soil erosion, water supply and wildlife (Perlin 2018, p. 25). According to Alshoubaki and Harris (2018, p. 160), the influx of refugees creates demand on the environment of their host countries and therefore, puts pressure on scarce natural resources. The impact of each refugee influx depends on the types of settlement. It is often difficult to determine the impact of self-settled refugees which is even less studied than the camp or settlement refugees (Jacobsen 1997, p. 25). Most of the refugee literature actually highlights only the impacts of settlement refugees. It is also argued by Jacobsen (1997, p. 26) that self-settled refugees often have daily contact with the host communities, while refugees in camps do not. He also added, types of settlement affect the environmental

impact of the settlement patterns, and refugees can be settled in several possible ways, each with their different environmental outcomes. One way could be the self-settlement where refugees settle themselves among the communities and they are unregistered, and the other way is voluntary settlement in refugee camps where they are registered, and often receive aid from government and international agencies (Jacobsen 1997). The environmental degradation associated with refugee influx is debateable. Those who favour keeping refugees in camps strongly argue that since environmental degradation is associated with a sudden influx of refugees, it is better to keep them in camps so that environmental damage can be contained rather than spreading throughout the receiving region. They also argued that since refugees living in camps receive relief from aid agencies, this will help to reduce their burden on local resources (Jacobsen 1997). But there is a risk of concentrating huge numbers of refugees in camps. The initial problem is the 'Start-up' costs. After land has been selected for refugee camp settlements, at least partial deforestation occurs to clear land for the camp. There are also ecological effects of clearing the land for refugee camps (Gurman 1991 and Zetter 1995, cited in Jacobsen 1997). For example, Dadaab complex in Kenya, where there was a significant ecological consequence associated with land clearance for refugee camps (Jacobsen 1997).

Studies of the environmental impact of camp settlement are very important to deal with the refugee influx. It is argued that camp settlement includes the urgent cutting down of trees and clearing the lands for the construction of camps. Thus, the refugee camps become the source of increasing the strain and depletion of existing natural resources (Jocobsen 1997, cited in Alshoubaki and Harris 2018, p. 161). Gurnman (1991, cited in Jacobsen 1997, p. 21) highlights the refugee camps as a unique set of environmental problems and risks (Gurnman 1991). Additionally, Martin et al. (2017) considered that refugees are often settled in a place which is already environmentally vulnerable. It is also argued by Miller (2018, pp. 4-5) that any protracted refugee situation often causes environmental issues like food insecurity, loss of wildlife habitat and poor sanitation.

The most negative environmental impacts of refugees are deforestation, water pollution, soil erosion, and wildlife destruction. According to Perlin (2018, p. 26), deforestation is the most prominent concern associated with refugee influx. For example, the impact of Rwandan

refugees in the Congo in the 1990s, when 3,758 hectares of forest were desolated by the refugees within just three weeks. Another environmental impact associated with refugees is water and soil contamination and water shortages. Improper sanitation systems of refugee camps may contaminate soil, surface water and ground water (Perlin 2018, p. 26).

There are several reasons why the refugees are called the exceptional resource degraders. Refugees are the poorest of the poor, who overuse the renewable resources in an unsustainable way without considering the future impact because of uncertainty (Jacobsen 1994; Hoerz 1995, cited in Kibreab 1997, p. 26). In addition, misguided government policy is also responsible for environmental degradation by the refugees. For example, the policy of Sudan, like most of the African countries, aims for only a temporary solution of the refugee crisis through allocation of inadequate land and other renewable resources to the refugee communities without considering future consequences (Kibreab 1997, p. 25). Another reason could be the unfamiliarity with the host environment. It is argued by Jacobsen (1994) and Hoerz (1995) (cited in Kibreab 1997, p. 29) that due to not having much experience with the new environment often their previous resource management system is not applicable to the new environment. As a consequence, refugees often use lands in unsustainable ways.

According to Martin (2005, p. 330), environmental scarcity and competition over resources are part of the politics of everyday life. It is also argued that influxes of refugees in a particular area may place considerable stresses on natural resources which can lead to social tensions in these areas (Black and Sessay 1997; Bisset 2001, cited in Martin 2005, p. 332). The sudden influx of refugees creates demand for resources with long term implications (Okok 2017, cited in Aregai and Biedemariam 2019, p. 39). This brings about competition between the host community and refugees. Competition for scarce natural resources often becomes a cause of conflict between the host communities and refugees (Crisp 2003, cited in Aregai and Biedemariam 2019, p. 39). Martin (2005) asserted that scarce natural resources are considered to be the indirect causes of conflict between the two communities because of the refugees' sudden access to the natural resources which leads to environmental tension.

Compared to the negative impacts of refugees on host countries' environment, the positive impacts are few and difficult to assess. Yet refugee presence may cause a positive environmental effect just because of the projects conducted by international aid and

development agencies to protect the environment. For example, Rutinwa and Kamanga (2003) considered that Tanzania has had positive impacts on the environment in this way. Nevertheless, the environmental impacts may be a serious concern for the local population's day to day life, and have the potential to fuel the political movement against the government regarding policies to be taken to ensure their rights to the local resources they have been using for many years.

2.6 Conclusion

Currently 80 percent of the world's refugees are living in their neighbouring countries, and 57 percent are in three developing countries: Syria (6.7 million), South Sudan (2.7 million), Afghanistan (2.3 million) (UNHCR 2019d). So, it is clear that the majority of the world's refugees come from the developing countries and they are also seeking refuge in their neighbouring developing countries. The literature highlights the impacts of refugees in developing countries has both positive and negative sides. After reviewing the major impacts, it is found that due to the influx of refugees, competition between the refugees and host communities over the scarce resources, increased and this can lead to conflict. Increase in unemployment, worsening law and order, and environmental degradation are the major impacts. It is important to study how policies regarding refugees can ensure a greater economic benefit for host communities in the long term, it is also important how host countries use the skills of the refugees for the development of their countries. If refugees have greater opportunities to utilise their skills, then it will be a positive outcome for both parties. There is still a need for research on the impacts of hosting refugees in developing countries and why the world should take shared responsibility for refugees.

The next chapter will provide an overview of the Rohingya migration to Bangladesh, followed by an analysis of the impacts of hosting a million refugees in Bangladesh in chapter 4, and the policies of the GoB to manage the crisis in chapter 5.

Chapter 3: Rohingyas in Myanmar and Their Flows to Bangladesh

3.1 Introduction

The word 'Rohingya' and the historical origin of Rohingyas are both debateable issues in Myanmar. Rohingyas have been living in Myanmar for a long period of time, but the majority Burmese recognise them as illegal Muslim immigrants who came from Bangladesh. Before the military government came into power in 1962, Rohingyas were recognised as citizens and enjoyed all the rights like the other ethnic groups in Myanmar, but Rohingyas gradually became vulnerable during the military regime. The military regime did everything possible to exclude Rohingyas from Myanmar. Many state policies were adopted which were very discriminatory towards the Rohingya people. The historic citizenship law of 1982 completely shut the door for Rohingyas to claim their basic rights, especially their citizenship rights. Since then, persecution has been going on against the Rohingya people which forced them to leave Myanmar. Thus, the Rohingyas became the largest stateless nation in the world. The exodus in 2017 was their fourth and largest exodus. Therefore, this chapter provides a background on the Rohingyas in Myanmar since World War 2 and how their situation became increasingly vulnerable as time passed. This chapter will explain how the Rohingyas became a refugee crisis and bring Bangladesh into focus as the largest host of Rohingya refugees.

3.2 The Rohingyas in Myanmar

The word 'Rohingya' and the historical origin of Rohingya Muslims are both very controversial in Myanmar. Many believe that Rohingyas have been living in Myanmar for centuries and are the descendants of Muslim Arabs, Moors, Persians, Turks, Mughals and Bengalis who came mostly as traders, warriors and pilgrims who came either overland or by sea-routes (Chowdhury 2006, cited in Kipgen 2013, p. 300). But the general perception of the people of Myanmar is that Rohingyas are illegal Muslim immigrants who came from neighbouring Bangladesh, and it must be noted there are other Muslim ethnic groups across Myanmar who are not Rohingyas, but only the Rohingyas are excluded among the 135 ethnic groups

recognised by the government (Kipgen 2013, p. 300). On the other hand, according to the 1982 citizenship law, there are three types of citizen in Myanmar: citizen, associate citizen and naturalised citizen (Refworld 1982). According to this law, people who lived in Myanmar prior to 1823 or were born to parents who are citizens are recognised as citizens. Associate citizens are those who received citizenship through the 1948 Union Citizenship Act, and persons who lived in Myanmar before 4 January 1948 and applied for citizenship after 1982 are recognised as naturalised citizens (Refworld 1982).

The Rohingya community has been living in Myanmar for centuries, and are a distinct ethnic group, but their citizenship and basic rights have been denied by the Burmese government following independence in 1948 (Kipgen 2013, p. 300). Despite having a history of living in Myanmar for a long time, the Rohingya presence in Myanmar today is very divisive, and they are widely disliked by the majority Buddhist people. The Rakhine Buddhists regarded them as illegal immigrants who came from neighbouring countries with the help of the British administration prior to independence. Historically, the relationship between the Rohingyas and the local Buddhist communities have been problematic and consequently, it has become politicised as time passes (Siddique 2012).

However, persecution and discrimination started prior to the independence of Myanmar. During World War 2, the Japanese army occupied the area and formed an administrative ruling government with their Buddhist allies and started oppressing the Rohingya Muslim community. Therefore, in response to this oppression Rohingya people joined the British army to fight not only against the Japanese army, but also against the Arakan allies of Japanese army in Myanmar, and conducted several massacres against the Buddhists (Kreibich, Goetz and Murage 2017). According to Wolf (2017, p. 8), the supporting roles of Rohingya to the British formed a traumatic cognitive memory among the Buddhist communities of Rohingya people as 'anti-Buddhist' as well as 'anti-national'. Hence, after the defeat of Japan and the end of World War 2, granting independence in 1948 Buddhists majority formed the government, and this cognitive memory not only determined the formulation and implementation of sectarian policies by the new decision makers, but also fuelled the growth of anti-Muslim sentiments within the Buddhist society (Wolf 2017, p. 8). It is also to be noted that the British could not fulfil their promise to the Rohingyas to form an autonomous state after the War (Abrar 1995, pp. 3-5).

According to Ayako (2014, pp. 25-26) in the 1930s, the Rohingyas were called Bamar Muslim and had a good relationship with the non-Muslim inhabitants. The best period for the Rohingyas was the 1950s or in the years between independence and the military coup led by General Ne Win in 1962, when they were recognised by many Burmese political leaders as being a people and race belonging to the larger fabric of Burma (Constantine 2012). In a democratic environment they got their National Registration Card (NRC) after 1951 when the compulsory registration law came into force. If the NRC was lost or defaced citizens were issued with 'Temporary Registration Certificates' (TRC) also known as 'White Cards' recognised as a temporary document until the issuance of a new NRC (International Crisis Group (ICG) 2014, p. 11). But in 1962, the military government under General Ne Win adopted a 'Burmanisation Policy' to nationalise all the land, trade, finance and banking sector and all businesses (Devi 2014, p. 46). Ayako (2014) also shows that the military government established policies to assimilate and absorb all ethnic groups as much as possible under the umbrella of a Buddhist Burmese State. Thus, as part of the Burmanisation policy, the military government encouraged anti-Muslim or anti-Rohingya sentiment which led to them becoming more marginalised and excluded from all political, social and economic rights in Myanmar. Then in 1989, a citizenship inspection process was carried out across Myanmar, and those who fulfilled the requirements to be recognised as citizens under the 1982 law had their NRCs replace by the new 'Citizenship Scrutiny Cards' (CSCs). It is a fact that most of the Rohingyas surrendered their NRCs, but never got their CSCs (ICG 2014, p. 11). It is an undeniable truth, the whole process was neither in accordance with the law nor were proper procedures followed, rather it was an arbitrary deprivation of citizenship of Rohingya people which has rendered them stateless since 1995. And instead of issuing CSCs, the government began issuing TRCs to many Rohingyas, who currently hold such cards which means the citizenship status of these cardholders is undetermined and requires further verification (ICG 2014, p. 11). Therefore, Yue and Mensah (2017, p. 473) considered that the Rohingyas who once lived in the Rakhine region are now considered as 'Bengalis' and their status is 'non-citizen' and they are unwanted or illegal immigrants who face human rights violation and persecution.

3.3 A Brief Historical Background of the Rohingya Problem

Myanmar was under the military regimes for a long time from 1962 to 2011. The military regime always treated Rohingyas as illegal immigrants and frequently executed military operations to punish the 'illegal infiltrators' (Grundy-Warr and Wong 1997). Despite the development of many legal instruments, the Rohingyas were always intentionally kept out of government policies which have stripped them of their citizenship rights and effectively made them stateless and provided a basis for discriminatory and arbitrary treatment (Pugh 2013, p. 4). To promote the concept 'unity in diversity', the union treaty was signed by General Aung San and other political leaders on 12th February 1974 (Ahmed 2010, p. 15). This treaty included all ethnic groups in Myanmar except the Rohingyas and thus they were deprived of the rights of citizens (Murshid 2017). Moreover, as a part of state policy, in 1978 the Myanmar government operated an operation called 'Operation Dragon King' which forced 300,000 Rohingyas to flee to Bangladesh to escape rape, murder and intimidation (Cheung 2012, p. 51). The main purpose of Operation Dragon King was to register citizens in Northern Arakan and expel so called foreigners (mainly the Rohingya Muslims) before a national consensus (Elahi 1987, p. 231). The brutal operation was executed by immigration officials and military together targeting the forceful evacuation of Rohingya villages through intimidation, rape and murder (Smith 1991, p. 241).

Under the Citizenship Law of 1982, the Myanmar government intentionally excluded Rohingyas which made them the only stateless people in this world (Parnini 2012, p. 284). Since then, continual violence against the Rohingya people has been going on by the anti-Muslim activists backed by Burmese military to participate in communal riots and acts of violence such as the torching of an Islamic boarding school by an anti-Muslim mob which resulted in the death of numerous students and teachers (ICG 2013). After the historical transition from military to democratic government in 2015 when the free national election took place, the Rohingyas hoped to get back their human rights and not be subjected to further persecution. However, their hopes proved unrealistic even under a democratic government and the same events have been happening as before, such as the latest riot in August 2017 which forced more than 600,000 Rohingyas to flee to Bangladesh to escape persecution (Martin, Margesson and Vaughn 2017, p. 1). In 2016, Myanmar's first

democratically elected government came to power, but critics say it has been reluctant to take necessary steps for Rohingyas and other Muslims for fear of alienating Buddhist nationalists and threatening the power-sharing agreement the civilian government maintains with the military (Albert and Chatzky 2018).

3.4 Rohingya Refugee Crisis

Despite progress from military rule to democratic governance, the human rights violations against the Rohingya people by the Myanmar government and the Buddhist community in Rakhine state have reached a catastrophic scale. The underlying causes of the current crisis is not only the religious context, but also has economic, historical and political dimensions (Walton and Howard 2014). According to Martin, Margesson and Vaughn (2017), the main factors behind the seriousness of the Rohingya crisis is the rapid growth of unchecked acts of terror and ultra-nationalist Buddhist fundamentalism. For example, the Buddhist militant monks of Myanmar have used the '969 movement' mainly targeting the Muslims, especially the Rohingyas. The '969 movement' has been used to spread hate speech against the Rohingyas and became a bar to establishing religious pluralism (Palatino 2013). Buddhist extremists succeeded in establishing the historical argument that the Rohingyas are illegal immigrants who came from Bangladesh, and therefore they don't have any rights to remain in Myanmar. This claim helped the Myanmar government to deny citizenship and resist calls from international communities to protect the rights of all ethnic groups who are suffering discrimination (Brooten 2015). Consequently, Buddhist fundamentalists were able to establish to the general public their claim that the Rohingya Muslims are a threat to the religious faith, cultural heritage, and particularly to the society in Myanmar, and consider them terrorists (Galache 2017; The Economist 2017). Generally, the Buddhist principles dictate that monks and followers will be moral in behaviour, virtuous, and not harm others. But, the ultra-nationalist Buddhist movement and Myanmar government go beyond the virtues and are responsible for thousands of Rohingya being persecuted and displaced from their homes, and for many international humanitarian organisations it is modern 'ethnic cleansing' by Myanmar (DeHart 2013; HRW 2013a).

On the other hand, a significant study by Karim (2017) argued that despite religious and ethnic aspects of the Rohingya crisis, there are many economic and political reasons behind the crisis. According to him, political power struggles and greedy exploitation of Myanmar's rich natural resources by the military government, along with multi-national development companies play hidden roles behind the crisis which rarely receive the attention that it deserves. For example, the Arakan state land has been taken from the Rohingya owners with little compensation to run natural resource development projects. Another example is the gold mining project that seized more than 500 acres of land in Kachin state which forcefully uprooted local communities for corporate gain and profit of the corrupt government and military officials (Karim 2017). Additionally, in Arakan state, the border relationship with India and China has led to exploitative commercial interests in infrastructure development, especially the establishment of gas and oil pipelines (Karim 2017).

Many difficulties and challenges have been hampering the international community's efforts to find a solution to the Rohingya crisis (Wilson 2019). Within weeks of the start of violence in 2017, UN officials labelled it as 'genocide' and 'ethnic cleansing', and international media regularly reported the killings and rapes of the Rohingya civilians (Auger 2018). The Rohingya refugee crisis emerged as the world most concerning humanitarian refugee and human rights crisis after the 25th of August 2017 outbreak of violence throughout the Rakhine state of Myanmar. The UN defined the crisis as the 'World's fastest growing refugee crisis' and described the military violence of the Burmese army as a 'textbook example of ethnic cleansing' (BBC 2018a). According to Médecins Sans Frontiers (MSF) (2019), at least 6,700 Rohingya including at least 730 children under the age of five were killed during the month due to the violence. It is reported that after August 2017, at least 288 villages of the Rohingya people were totally destroyed by fire while nearby ethnic Rakhine villages were left intact according to analysis of satellite images (HRW 2017) as shown in Figures 3.1 and 3.2.

Figure 3.1: Satellite images show destroyed Rohingya village
Source: HRW 2017.

Figure 3.2: Villages seen on fire in the Maungdaw Township
Source: HRW 2017.

There were many acts of previous violence against the Rohingyas, but not as widespread as in 2017. After these incidents, international communities and social media began to question the role of Aung San Suu Kyi as a recipient of the Nobel Peace Prize and the role of the Burmese military's participation in what the media called a crime against humanity (Htusan

& Mendoza 2017; Murdoch 2018). Despite the international community's criticism against the Myanmar government and military for not acting to avert the crisis, the Myanmar government has claimed that the crisis was caused by Rohingya insurgents who had attacked military posts and killed soldiers (Karim 2017).

Along with many others, Bangladesh as the host country that has directly been affected by the refugee influxes for more than two decades, denounced the Burmese government for this humanitarian crisis and human rights violations against the Rohingya people and appealed to the international communities for aid to tackle the influx of Rohingya refugees (Kipgen 2014, p. 237).

3.5 Bangladesh as a Host Country of Rohingya Refugees

As a neighbouring country, Bangladesh is the first responder to the Rohingya refugee crisis with regards to providing food and security, acceptance of Rohingyas to enter its territory, and offering shelter (UNHCR 2018b). Bangladesh has been hosting Rohingya refugees for a long time. Since the independence of Myanmar in 1948, Bangladesh has witnesses four influxes of Rohingya refugees. The first was recorded in 1948 during the independence of Myanmar (Roy 2019, p. 4). The second was in 1978 due to repressive state practices in Myanmar that forced 200,000 Rohingyas to take refuge in Bangladesh, but that influx was brief as the majority were repatriated in a short period of time based on an agreement between the Bangladesh and Myanmar governments (Roy 2016, cited in Roy 2019, p. 4). The third influx in 1991-1992 again forced some 250,000 Rohingya to flee to Bangladesh to escape serious state persecution in the northern Rakhine state of Myanmar (UNHCR 2007b). The violence that began on 25th August 2017 forced a mass exodus of Rohingyas into Bangladesh. This is the last and fourth influx and more than 700,000 Rohingyas fled Myanmar to escape serious state persecution. They joined with the 300,000 Rohingyas already living in Bangladesh in different unregistered camps in Cox's Bazar following previous waves of displacement. As of 2018, more than one million Rohingya refugees are living in Cox's Bazar district in a vulnerable and traumatised condition (Inter Sector Coordination Group (ISCG) 2017, 2018a, 2018b; International Organization of Migration (IOM) 2018).

The present situation of Rohingyas in Bangladesh is mainly camp based in Cox's Bazar district. Most of the Rohingyas are living in 28 collective sites and 99 locations dispersed across local communities. Among them, 28 collective sites are in Teknaf and Ukhiya comprising 22 new spontaneous sites, three makeshift settlements, two refugee camps, and one collective setting in the host community area. Among the 99 dispersed sites within host communities are 41 locations in Teknaf Upazila, 25 in Ukhiya Upazila, 20 near Cox's Bazar town and ten in Ramu Upazila (IOM 2018). The sudden influx of some 700,000 refugees in 2017 has had a serious negative impact on Bangladesh, according to Mohammad Abul Kalam, the head of Bangladesh's Refugee Relief and Repatriation Commission in Cox's Bazar (Beaubien 2019). The following will focus on the present refugee settlement and aid for them in Cox's Bazar district where the Rohingyas have been living in refugee camps. Since the Cox's Bazaar district is very close to the Myanmar border, most of the Rohingyas first arrive in this district. Hence, all the Rohingya refugee camps are located in this district. According to the Bangladesh National Portal (2019), the total area of Cox's Bazar district is 2491.86 square km and the total population was 22,890,990 as of 2011 national census.

Since the intensification of conflict in August 2017, the informal settlement of Rohingya refugees in Cox's Bazar district has expanded into one of the largest refugee settlements in the world and now hosts almost one million refugees (UNHCR 2018b). According to the Bangladesh government, before the August 2017 influx, an estimated number of 200,000-500,000 Rohingya refugees were living in this district, where only 33,131 documented refugees have been living in two government-run registered refugee camps (Milton et al. 2017, p. 2).

Figure 3.3 and Table 3.1 identify the total refugees by camp in Cox's Bazar district.

Image removed due to copyright restriction.

Figure 3.3: Refugee population density (as of 15 September 2019)
Source: UNHCR 2019c

Camp Name	Registered/Unregistered	Total Refugees
Kutupalong RC	Registered	18,200
Nayapara RC	Registered	27,222
1E,1W,2E,2W,3,4,4Ext,5,6,7,8E,8W,9,10,11,12,13,17,18,19,20,20 Ext	Unregistered	613,276
14,15,16	Unregistered	103,150
21	Unregistered	13,172
22	Unregistered	22,215
23	Unregistered	10,210
24/Leda	Unregistered	33,540
25	Unregistered	9,497
26	Unregistered	41,007
27	Unregistered	14,269
Total		905,758

Table 3.1: Refugee Population in registered and unregistered camps in Cox's Bazar

Source: UNHCR 2019c

3.6 Conclusion

The history of Rohingyas and challenges they are facing clearly shows the complexity of the crisis which has arisen in Myanmar and has been badly affecting Bangladesh. The above-mentioned literature demonstrates that the Rohingya refugee crisis emerged not only based on ethnic conflict, rather it has many economic and political reasons like the exploitation of natural resources of Rakhine state where most of the Rohingyas have been living. Therefore, it can be seen that there are many underlying reasons behind the Rohingya crisis which include religious and ethnic contexts, historical, geopolitical, and economic aspects. So, by examining each of these interconnected dimensions of the issue, it can be said that all these work in a way to create a serious problem of human rights abuse with no evident solutions, thus forcing thousands of Rohingya people to flee from their homes and seek refuge in

neighbouring Bangladesh. In the next chapter, the study will look at how the Rohingya influx plays a significant role in destabilising their host country, Bangladesh.

Chapter 4: Rohingya Refugee Influx and Internal Stability of Bangladesh

4.1 Introduction

As a developing country, Bangladesh is still struggling to overcome many challenges regarding its internal stability. The recent Rohingya refugee crises have been creating multidimensional pressures on politics, economy, society, and environment of host communities that has been fuelling the internal stability of Bangladesh (UNDP 2018). While the host communities in the Cox's Bazar region showed a sympathetic response to the recent influx, over time discontent has been growing because of the excessive pressures from the presence of a large number of refugees. This chapter starts by examining how the large refugee presence plays a significant role in shaping the political atmosphere of Bangladesh. As political impacts, vote bank politics of Bangladeshi politicians using the Rohingyas or including them in voter list to win the election, potential radicalisation of refugees by religious extremists, and degradation of law and order in Cox's Bazar district will be discussed. Secondly, the chapter analyses how the large number of refugees affects the local economy of Cox's Bazar area, especially the livelihood options of the local communities. Thirdly, the negative impacts of the refugee influx on social harmony, prostitution, health security of local people will be explored, followed by a brief discussion of the environmental degradation as a consequence of refugees increasing pressure on local resources. This chapter relies on peer reviewed articles for its sources as well as UN reports, different research papers from research organisations, and news reports in renowned newspapers.

4.2 Impacts on the Politics of Bangladesh

The refugee presence in Bangladesh has for a long time had implications on domestic politics, both alleged and proven. For example, a recent study conducted by the Bangladesh Institute of Peace and Security Studies (BIPSS) shows that local politicians and legislators often use the Rohingya refugees for their political interest (2017, p. 6). It has been alleged that many political groups have exploited the weaknesses of the democratic environment in Bangladesh by using the Rohingyas as a vote bank. This involves enrolling the Rohingyas on to voter lists with the help of local authorities who provide them with false nationality certificates,

Bangladeshi birth certificates, national identity cards and even passports (Wolf 2017, p. 18). Using Rohingya in vote bank politics during elections has had support or direct influence from the central government and has enabled many refugees to obtain Bangladeshi passports to move to other countries (Chowdhury 2019, p. 7). For example, a report of Aljazeera (2019) reveals the deportation of 250 Rohingya to Bangladesh by Saudi Arabian authorities where most of those Rohingyas had a Bangladeshi passport. Hence, the question of how they get passports without having citizenship of Bangladesh arises. However, there are three other ways in which the refugee crisis has impacted on Bangladesh politics, as discussed below. These are how religious extremists can exploit the protracted refugee situation, how the crisis fuels the increase of the crime rate in Cox's Bazar, and the impact on public service delivery.

4.2.1 Exploitation of the Rohingya Refugees by Religious Extremists

The recent outbreak of violence in Rakhine state in Myanmar, and the influx of refugees in Bangladesh has given a new security dimension to the Jihadist narrative in Bangladesh. Many Bangladeshis, the majority of whom are also Muslim, have supported the decision of the government to give shelter to the Rohingya people. Felix-Joehnk (2017), in his opinion piece published in the *New York Times*, states that the decision of the GoB to allow the Rohingya refugees into Bangladesh could hamper the balance between secularism and religion in Bangladeshi politics. He pointed out that Hefazat-e-Islam, a religious based extremist movement whose headquarters are in Chittagong adjacent to the Rakhine state in Myanmar, has already announced a 'jihad', or fight against the enemies of Islam against Myanmar if the army do not stop persecuting the Rohingya Muslim people. Therefore, Felix-Joehnk (2017) contends that the Rohingya crisis is giving Hefazat-e-Islam a greater role in Bangladeshi politics, and gives them a space to erode the liberalism and secularism of Bangladesh.

Expelled from Myanmar and alienated in Bangladesh, Rohingya refugees are vulnerable to being recruited by militants to defend their political interests through violent ways like the arms movement (Rahman 2010, p. 235). Jamat-e-Islami is one of the religion-based political organisations in Bangladesh. Islamic militant groups related to Jamat-e-Islami have recruited Rohingya refugees since the 1990s, and continue to do so in the context of the recent refugee

influx (Idris 2017, p. 8). One of the underlying issues is the economic and political vulnerability of the refugees, which enables radical Islamic militant groups like Islamic State of Iraq and Syria or the Islamic State of Iraq and ash-Sham (ISIS) to lead them towards violence (Cookson 2017, cited in Idris 2017, p. 8). Some of the Bangladeshi militant groups think it is their Islamic duty to fight against Myanmar as an answer to the ongoing violence against the Rohingya (Bashar 2017, pp. 6-7). It is argued that the crisis has been regularly highlighted by the Islamic States (IS) in their online portal and they expressed strong will to make Bangladesh their platform to attack Myanmar. Arakan Rohingya Salvation Army (ARSA), a militant group of Rohingyas, has already shown their capacity to motivate and recruit Rohingyas from refugee camps for cross-border fighting against the Burmese military and smuggling small arms and drugs which may pose a threat to the law and order situation and the internal stability of Bangladesh (Haque 2016, p. 863). Rohingya radical groups like the Rohingya Solidarity Organisation (RSO), Arakan Islamic Front, and Rohingya Patriotic Front are very active in the borderlands between Myanmar and Bangladesh (Milton et al. 2017, p. 7). The militancy of Rohingya groups may cause international tension between Bangladesh and Myanmar since these groups use the sovereign land of Bangladesh to operate their militancy.

The international networks of Rohingya militant groups can pose challenges for the internal security of Bangladesh. It is alleged that militant groups are using international connections with donors in the Middle East and Pakistan to fund their militant activities (Wolf 2017, p. 23). It is also argued by Vatikiotis (2017) that the Arakan Rohingya Salvation Army (ARSA) has connections with Islamic extremists from Bangladesh. According to Swedish journalist Bertil Linter, the Rohingya extremist groups are inspired by extremist groups from the Middle East and South Asia which can destabilise Bangladesh (AsiaNews 2018). As early as 1978, the Saudi charity Rabitat-al-Islam provided a huge amount of aid to build hospitals, mosques and madrasas (Islamic schools) in Ukhiya, south of Cox's Bazar where currently most of the Rohingya refugees are living, and consequently encouraged radicalisation of some Rohingya leaders and activists (AsiaNews 2018). It is also claimed that in the 1980s and 1990s, the Rohingya Solidarity Organisation (RSO), established close relationships with the radical political organisation, Bangladesh Jamaat-e-Islami and, especially, even its more radical youth wing, the Islami Chhatra Shibir (AsiaNews 2018). Ullah (2011, p. 156) argues that many

Rohingya refugees have been funded by Harkat-ul-Jihad-i-Islami (HuJI) and Jamat-i-Islam to undertake illegal activities within Bangladesh and in border areas.

There are indications that Jamaat-ul-Mujahideen Bangladesh (JMB), an Islamic terrorist underground organisation of Bangladesh, listed as a terrorist organisation by the United Kingdom and officially banned in Bangladesh, is trying to build relationships with the Rohingyas (AsiaNews 2018). Al-Qaida in the Indian Subcontinent (AQIS) is also active in Bangladesh and currently Bangladesh is facing domestic threats from different extremist groups (Zahid 2017). A UK-based counterterrorism expert was quoted as saying that 'There have been ties between JMB and the insurgency [in Myanmar], as arrested JMB members by law enforcement agencies in different times have confessed to helping Rohingya' (Zahid 2017). Hence, there is much probability of exploiting the situation of Rohingyas by extremists in Bangladesh and elsewhere in the name of helping, and the long-term protracted refugee situation will become a major threat for this region as Bangladeshi and foreign extremist groups take advantage of the hopelessness of a million Rohingyas without a future (Brewster 2019; Bashar 2017, p. 5). While the GoB has been fighting against religious-based terrorism, the Rohingya crisis has added concern to the complete security pattern of the country (Bashar 2017, p. 5). Therefore, it can be said that the Rohingya refugee crisis has become a potential threat for the internal security and stability of Bangladesh (Rahman 2010; Parnini et al. 2013, p. 141).

4.2.2 Increase in Crime in Cox's Bazar District

In the context of uncertainty over Rohingya repatriation, crimes like abduction, theft and drug trading have increased in the refugee camps in Cox's Bazar, and since August 2017, at least 31 Rohingya refugees have been killed, allegedly by their fellow Rohingyas (Molla 2019). Between January and September 2019, 44 Rohingya refugees, including one woman, were killed by the law enforcement agencies including the Rapid Action Battalion (RAB), police and Border Guard Battalion (BGB) in several gunfights over their suspected involvement in drugs trafficking, robbery, human trafficking and abduction (Islam 2019). Since the influx began in 2017, some 328 cases have been filed against 711 Rohingyas for involvement in various crimes, according to Cox's Bazar police (Molla 2019).

The availability of drugs and arms in refugee camps areas will greatly jeopardise the security situation in Cox's Bazar and affect the whole country (BIPSS 2017). Due to their proximity to border areas, international criminal organisations may use impoverished Rohingya refugees as couriers for drugs and arms smuggling. The availability of arms and drugs would not only jeopardise local law and order, but also benefit the domestic terror organisations to fuel their activities (BIPSS 2017). There is a growing perception among the local communities that drug trafficking, addiction and smuggling have been increasing in Cox's Bazar district due to the influx. High unemployment, poverty and the refugee crisis are fuelling the growth of this underground economy and criminal activity (UNDP 2018, p. 108). Despite having sympathy because of their plight, the host communities have a negative view of the Rohingya refugees as uneducated and criminal (UNDP and UN Women, 2017). Refugee Relief and Repatriation Commission (RRRC) officials indicate that the uncertainty over their future leaves the Rohingyas in despair, which can be an important reason behind the involvement of Rohingyas in crimes, and subsequently, increase tensions among the refugees and local host communities (Molla 2019). It cannot be denied that these problems arise to a large extent from the failure of the GoB and international communities to develop a sustainable solution to this crisis, as will be discussed in chapter 5.

4.2.3 Impact on Public Service Delivery

The suddenness of the recent refugee influx aggravates the challenges of public service delivery of government in Cox's Bazar district, particularly to the local communities living around the refugee camps. The service delivery is beyond the capacity of the government and aid agencies which is fuelling the tensions between the refugees and host communities. consequently, the crisis affects the whole governance system of Bangladesh in terms of public service delivery. Public service delivery related to housing, roads, business infrastructure, health services and education is under great pressure. For example, refugee camps are built on cultivable land, road congestion has increased, business infrastructure has collapsed, local government healthcare facilities have come under pressure due to failure to cope with the sudden demands and the local school dropout rate is increasing as school going children are becoming engaged in income-generating activities at refugee settlements (UNDP 2018, p. 8).

The sudden influx has significantly stretched already struggling local government institutions and the ability of civil servants to perform their duties (UNDP 2018, p. 83). Many government officials of Cox's Bazar indicated that much of their time is spent on refugee related work. Overall, it is estimated that the local administration has to spend more than 50 percent of their time on Rohingya matters which is resulting in the delay of public service delivery to local citizens (UNDP 2018, p. 7). The government offices also have to maintain protocol duties for local and foreign dignitaries, including celebrities, to visit refugee camps. As a result, most of the government officers feel very stressed, and this is affecting their physical and mental health (UNDP 2018, p. 84).

The overall health care facilities in Cox's Bazar district were limited even in the pre-2017 period. This situation has worsened since the influx began. Teknaf and Ukhiya Upazila (sub-district) health complexes and district hospitals are required to meet the emergency needs of the refugees (UNDP 2018, p. 89). This has affected the health service delivery to the local citizens. Currently all the health programs for Rohingya refugees are run by the NGOs under the direct supervision of the Director General Health Services (DGHS) and the Cox's Bazar Civil Surgeon. Provision of medical services to the refugees by DGHS is funded by the United Nations Children Fund (UNICEF) and World Health Organization (WHO), and partly the GoB. The perception that local people are not receiving the same level of health care service as the refugees is causing discontent among the local communities as refugees receive free medication while they have to pay (UNDP 2018, p. 90).

The recent refugee influx also badly affects the education sector in Cox's Bazar. It is a deep concern that the school dropout rate has increased since the influx began. Students from schools affected by the influx are skipping classes to sell goods in refugee settlements to earn money. Parents are also restricting their girls from going to school because of the security concerns. As a result, public examination results from affected schools have gradually deteriorated (UNDP 2018, p. 90). To manage the refugee influx, many school and college buildings were used as shelter centres, which disrupted the regular activities in the schools. Law enforcement agencies and security forces, along with various agency personnel who are involved in humanitarian projects, also used schools as support or coordination centres which badly hampered the regular schooling of students in Cox's Bazar (UNDP 2018, p. 89). A large number of students and teachers have found well-paying jobs with international agencies and

NGOs operating in the area. While these generating income-earning opportunities benefit some individuals, this situation affects the overall education activities in the host communities.

4.3 Economic Instability of Local Communities

The Rohingya refugee influx has a multi-dimensional economic impact on host communities. Balancing supply and demand of workers and accessibility of work is very important for a sustainable economic market. According to BIPSS (2017, p. 4) the Rohingya refugee influx can affect the local labour market balance when vast numbers of unemployed refugees and local people pursue whatever means are necessary to make a living. Despite the work prohibition on refugees in Bangladesh, many employers employ refugees paying a very low wage exploiting their situation of economic hardship. The refugee settlements are in remote areas of Bangladesh mostly in Ukhiya and Teknaf Upazilas where most of the refugees and local communities are poor and live on daily earnings (Baldwin and Marshall 2018). To pursue their livelihood, refugees compete with local inhabitants for employment, by undercutting local wages which results in the deterioration of the livelihoods of local poor communities. The immediate effect of hosting about one million Rohingya refugees is a dramatic rise in prices of daily essentials by around 50 percent, while wages for the day labourers have decreased, and subsequently some 2,500 households fell below the poverty line in Cox's Bazar (UNDP 2018). According to the UNDP study, falling wages for agriculture and unskilled work affected 70 percent of the respondents in Teknaf and 50 percent in Ukhiya (UNDP 2018, p. 4).

The impact on Teknaf is the result of the high reliance of local communities on fisheries which provide one-third of employment. In August 2017, when a ban was imposed by the GoB on fishing in the Naf river due to security reasons, 30,000 to 35,000 fishers and their families lost their livelihood. The average yearly income of fishers ranged from Bangladeshi taka 40,000 to taka 90,000 (USD $1=85 Bangladeshi taka) before the influx, and their income is now almost zero from this source due to the GoB-imposed ban on fishing for an uncertain period (World Food Programme (WFP) 2017). Many fishers were compelled to work as daily labourers, but competition from refugee workers has reduced even these employment opportunities (UNDP

2018, p. 6). Therefore, the local officials from the GoB indicate that the fisher communities of the Naf river are the most affected communities of the refugee influx.

Tourism plays an important role as an income source for the local communities of Cox's Bazar: it too has been badly affected by the refugee influx (Cookson 2017). According to the UNDP (2018, p. 89), since 2017 tourism in Cox's Bazar area has dramatically declined due to many security issues and restrictions. The cross-border trade between Bangladesh and Myanmar has also slumped because the government-imposed restrictions imposed for uncertain periods of time have been affecting the economy of the Cox's Bazar area as well as the whole country (UNDP & UN Women 2017, p. 9). There is no doubt that the refugee industry creates job opportunities for some groups like those who are eligible for working with humanitarian organisations, but as a whole the negatives impact outweighs the positive impacts. Therefore, Alam (2018) concludes that the refugee influx is a huge burden on the national economy.

4.4 Impact on Social Harmony

The Rohingya refugee presence in Cox's Bazar district has a negative impact on the social lives of the local people. Bangladesh was already facing many challenges due to previous refugee influxes and the 2017 influx exacerbated pressures on the society of the host communities. The main pressure comes with the sudden change in population structure. The 700,000 refugees already outnumber the local population. As Mahmud (2017) shows, the Ukhiya and Teknaf Upazila of Cox's Bazar district, where most of the refugee camps are situated, had only half a million inhabitants before the influx.

Intermarriage between the Rohingya and local Bangladeshis is an issue over which there is growing tension among the local communities. To address this issue a law was introduced by a court in 2014 to ban Rohingya Muslims from getting married to Bangladeshi citizens (BBC 2018b). The law indicated that a person can be sentenced to seven years in prison if found to have married a Rohingya (BBC 2018b). The law was introduced to prevent hundreds of thousands of refugees from seeking a back door into citizenship. Explaining the law, government officials stated they believed wedding certificates were being used to claim legal

documents including Bangladeshi passports. This government attempt to regulate inter-community relations has resulted in mixed reactions from the Rohingyas and local communities. A report of the Xchange Foundation (2018a) reveals that there is a high rate of intermarriage between Rohingya women and local Bangladeshi men. It also came out in the report that Bangladeshi men were not concerned about the intermarriage prohibition while women expressed deep concern about it. 'If they find any pretty Rohingya girl, they try to convince her Rohingya parents, who, in turn, find it secure to give their girl to the boys of the local community. On the other hand, the boys of the local community think that they never have to give them any ornaments or money to get married. That's why it's easier for the boys of local communities to get married [with Rohingya instead of Bangladeshi girls]', according to Shameem, a service provider in Baharchhara in Ukhiya (Xchange Foundation 2018a). This shows that beauty, low bride price, and the insecure legal status of the Rohingya girls attracts the local Bangladeshi males to marry them. In contrast, Bangladeshi local women consider intermarriage a threat to them and society, and hence, those marriages often cause marital discord within Bangladeshi families (Xchange Foundation 2018a).

According to Uddin (2012, p. 129) the Rohingya refugee influx also generates other social security issues like involvement of a number of Rohingya refugees in arms and drug smuggling, human trafficking, involvement in crimes, and prostitution in Cox's Bazar district. It is also pointed out by Shyamol (2017) that the law and order, and the overall environment of Cox's Bazar has deteriorated noticeably after the recent influx. As previously mentioned, there is a widespread perception among Bangladeshis living in the area that crimes like kidnapping, robberies, and theft have been increasing due to the massive influx. Moreover, there are many reports of clashes between refugees and local people, and between refugees and law enforcement agencies (UNDP 2018, pp. 11-12). Local people perceive that youth are sacrificing their long-term career prospects for short-term financial gains by taking up employment with NGOs instead of attending schools or colleges. Hence, there will be a long-term impact on the whole human capital development of the region (UNDP 2018, pp. 108-109).

Bangladesh is a culturally conservative country. Therefore, illegal sex or sex business or prostitution is prohibited in Bangladesh. The increase of prostitution in Cox's Bazar is a

growing concern for the local people. It has been claimed that it is mostly Rohingya women who are involved in prostitution (Iqbal 2017). The impact on the local communities may be in the form of a perception of moral degradation of people, therefore local people are not happy with the increase in prostitution which they consider as anti-social to the local cultures (Lee 2005, p. 77). According to Glinski (2017) most of the sex workers are longer term residents who came in previous refugee waves, but the recent influx of Rohingya refugees may fuel the trade. The number of Rohingya sex workers is still unidentified. In part this is due to the prohibition of prostitution so there are no government data or reports on the number of prostitutes, not only in Cox's Bazar but also all across Bangladesh. Hence, most of the information regarding involvement in prostitution by Rohingya women is anecdotal newspaper reports. One such report cites Noor, a local Bangladeshi negotiator between prostitutes and customers, claiming that there are at least 500 Rohingya sex workers in the Kutupalong refugee camp (Glinski 2017).

Finally, dissatisfaction in terms of aid relief for the poor local people who are also equally affected by the Rohingya refugee crisis is another important issue for the social disharmony in this affected area (IRC 2014, p. 25; Janny and Islam 2015, p. 97; UNDP & UN Women 2017). The affected local communities receive a little assistance from the aid agencies and this encourages animosity between local people and refugees. For example, locals in Teknaf and Ukhiya indicated negative feelings of being ignored by the humanitarian organisations (Assessment Capacities Project (ACAPS) & Needs and Population Monitoring (NPM) 2018).

4.5 Impact on the Environment

Bangladesh had already been facing environmental problems due to the previous refugee influx, but the 2017 influx has exacerbated them (Khatun 2017, p. 23). The presence of huge numbers of Rohingya refugees causes environmental security issues including pressure on drinking water, waste management, cropping land, and forests and the interconnected impacts can trigger natural disasters. The pressures of densely populated refugee camp areas have a serious environmental effect resulting in considerable degradation of the whole eco-system of this area.

About 5,731 tube wells were installed to supply water to the refugees between August 2017 and December 2017, but almost 21 percent had become non-functional by the end of January 2018 due to the excessive dependence on groundwater which lowered the water levels in the refugee settlement areas (ISCG 2018c). This ultimately resulted in the limitation of freshwater for locals, especially in Teknaf in Cox's Bazar district and Naikhongchhari in Bandarban district, where at 25-30m below ground level the bedrock surface makes it a costly option to obtain fresh water. Moreover, the irrigation wells are drying up because the water table has fallen as a result of watershed destruction. This may result in intrusion of salt water which may render fresh water sources unusable (UNDP 2018, p. 86). Reports by Doctors Without Borders and the World Health Organization (WHO) reveal that in Hakimpara refugee camp in Ukhiya Upazila (Sub-district) many tube wells have dried up due to deforestation, and the construction of many tube wells near latrines has polluted the ground water, posing a serious threat to people's health (cited in Ahmed 2018).

The refugee presence in Cox's Bazar is straining the capacity of local solid waste management. It is reported that with about 10,000 tons of solid waste being produced every month, its management is now a big challenge. As a result, water resources and agricultural land are being contaminated by human waste (UNDP 2018, p. 59). This has been found to be the case in areas near the Balukhali-Kutupalong refugee camp (ISCG 2018c). The problem arises when rain water washes down the contamination and waterborne diseases spread to both refugees and host communities. It is reported that 2.8 million litres of drinking water, along with 43.5 million litres for daily use, is needed for the host communities in Naikhongchhari (in Bandarban) and in Teknaf and Ukhiya (in Cox's Bazar). After the influx, another extra 13.8 million litres of water, including 3.4 million litres of drinking water is needed for the refugees (UNDP 2018, p. 60). Thus, the massive demand for fresh water, along with continuous contamination, has deepened the water crisis.

It is clear that the rapidly increasing pressure on natural resources has become a serious challenge for a sustainable environment (Ahmed 2018). Deforestation after the 2017 refugee influx has accelerated as refugees cut trees for fuel and to construct their shelters, leaving barren earth which once was full of trees and different plantations. As a result, deforestation is badly affecting the livelihood of the local people who relied on access to forest resources

(UNDP & UN Women 2017, p .9). Alam et al. (2014, p. 233) also highlight the risk to the Teknaf Wildlife Sanctuary (TWS), a forest reserve of 28,688 acres, due to the overexploitation by Rohingya refugees and local people which is badly affecting the protection and conservation of the bio-diversity in natural areas (Imran and Mian 2014, p. 239).

The UNDP (2018, p. 5) found that about 5,000 acres of reserve forests and 1,500 hectares of wildlife reserve have been destroyed due to refugee settlements. Between August 2017 and March 2018, at least 100 hectares of crop land were damaged in Teknaf and Ukhiya. In addition, 5,000 acres of land have been rendered useless as a result of sandy soil flowing down from the mountain slopes deforested by the housing activities of the refugees. According to the forest department of Cox's Bazar, the recent refugee influx has destroyed 4,818 acres of forest reserves worth US$55 million (UNDP 2018, p. 68). The following table clearly demonstrates the volume of deforestation in Cox's Bazar due to the influx (Table 4.1).

Location	No. of refugees staying at site	Occupied land (acres)	Destroyed project forest area (acres)	Destroyed natural forests (acres)	Losses from forestation projects (Tk. million)	Losses from natural forests (Tk. million)	Total loss (Tk. million)
Kutupalong, Ukhiya	218,000.0	1,767.5	570	1,197.5	509.9	1,019.1	1,528
Balukhali 1 and 2, Ukhiya	126,900.0	1,114.0	550	564	704.5	480	1,184.5
Balukhali Dhala, Ukhiya	63,000.0	310.0	152.7	157.3	136.3	13.4	149.7
Tajnimar Khola, Ukhiya	56,250.0	451.0	192.5	258.5	199.1	220.0	419.1
Hakimpara, Mokkarbeel, Jamtolee, Begghona, Ukhiya	93,550.0	516.0	281.0	235.0	333.4	200.8	534.3
Shofillyakata (East + West), Ukhiya	13,000	201.2	92.5	108.7	96.2	92.5	188.7

Kerontoli, Chakmarkul, Teknaf	16,020.0	79.8	78.8	100.0	60.5	0.9	61.3
Putibunia, Teknaf	30,000.0	88.6	0.0	88.6	0.0	75.4	75.4
Nayapara, Teknaf	20,100.0	245.0	82.0	163.0	100.0	138.7	238.7
Leda, Teknaf	15,000.0	45.0	0.0	45.0	0.0	38.3	38.3
Total	651,820	4,818.1	1,999.5	2,917.6	2139.0	2,279.1	4,472.7

Table 4.1: Deforestation as a result of the refugee influx
Source: Forest Department, Cox's Bazar Sadar (town) cited in UNDP (2018, p. 68).

As previously mentioned, Teknaf and Ukhiya Upazilas are the most affected areas of Cox's bazar. Table 4.2 demonstrates the actual volume of deforestation in these two Upazilas.

Upazila	Land acquired (in acres)	Lost forest assets (in million)	Created forest assets lost (in million)	Daily firewood need (in camps)
Teknaf	125	US$6.0	US$0.36	50
Ukhiya	5000	US$60.2	US$28.3	650

Table 4.2: Impact on forestry in Teknaf and Ukhiya Upazilas
Source: Forest Department, Cox's Bazar Sadar, cited in UNDP 2018, p. 69.

In Table 4.2 the 'land acquired' column refers to the forest land used for the refugee settlements and 'created forest assets lost' means the value of forest assets that was destroyed due to the refugee settlements after the 2017 influx. The table shows that more than 5,000 acres has been taken over in these two Upazilas for refugee settlements and 700 tons of firewood are needed per day, leading to huge losses of forest assets. So, deforestation, contamination of water and its sources due to refugee settlements in Cox's Bazar district are the main environmental issues that fuel discontent in the host communities.

4.6 Conclusion

The Rohingya refugee crisis is a complex challenge for Bangladesh. The discussion demonstrates that the Rohingya crisis has multidimensional impacts on the host

communities, especially the communities who live in Teknaf and Ukhiya Upazilas of Cox's Bazar. The recent influx has put an extraordinary burden on these local communities which are already facing weak socio-economic development. The presence, and the recent massive influx, of Rohingya refugees is mainly causing unequal access to limited resources like water, land, public service delivery etc. which results in conflict between the local people and refugees. This crisis puts Bangladesh in a politically vulnerable position. Since Cox's Bazar district is geopolitically very important for Bangladesh, the impacts of the refugee influx on local communities have become a national challenge. The impacts not only affect the local people's perceptions but has also changed people's thinking regarding the crisis across Bangladesh. Therefore, it is very important for the government to keep its eyes on the crisis so that the discontent of local people cannot create broader instability in the country. Finding a durable solution for this crisis has become an urgent challenge for Bangladesh. Therefore, it is vital to study how the GoB will continue to deal with refugees as quickly as possible to bring a sustainable solution.

Chapter 5: Government of Bangladesh (GoB) Response to the Rohingya Crisis

5.1 Introduction

For more than three decades Bangladesh has been seeking a peaceful solution to the Rohingya refugee crisis without involving any conflict with Myanmar. As mentioned in the first chapter of this thesis, giving shelter to thousands of Rohingya refugees has become a big burden for Bangladesh. Bangladesh has been trying to solve the crisis in two ways. The first is developing a bilateral relationship with Myanmar regarding the crisis, and the second is to seek cooperation from international organisations and various countries to give greater priority to solving this crisis. But, unfortunately, these efforts have been largely unsuccessful because of the reluctance of the Myanmar government to repatriate refugees, as has occurred in past influxes. The question of Bangladesh lacking a national refugee policy has dominated the national discourse since the influx of 2017, therefore this chapter will discuss the issue of refugee status of the Rohingyas in Bangladesh. In the absence of a national refugee policy and non-signatory of both the Refugee Convention and Protocol, how has the GoB been dealing with the ongoing refugee crisis, and what are the possible ways Bangladesh can adopt to bring a solution for the sake of national stability?

5.2 Refugee Status of Rohingyas in Bangladesh

None of the laws governing immigration in Bangladesh make any reference to refugees or asylum seekers, therefore, all those without a visa or permit are recognised as illegal, and must be charged under the Foreigners Act of 1946 (Cheung 2012, p. 58). However, Bangladesh has a long tradition of giving shelter to those people fleeing persecution and human rights violations in neighbouring countries. Article 31 of the Constitution of Bangladesh provides legal protection to citizens of Bangladesh wherever they are, both in their country and abroad, and to non-citizens while they are in Bangladesh, if they are not causing any problem to the life, liberty, body, reputation and property of any person (Mohammad 2012, 148). Article 25 of the Constitution also highlights the promotion of international peace, security,

and solidarity which indirectly asserts that Bangladesh will extend its support to oppressed peoples throughout the world. Bangladesh's history of hosting refugees is mainly based on these two principles. Bangladesh has neither acceded to the 1951 Convention relating to the status of refugees, nor its 1967 Protocol or any other regional instrument or declaration on refugees. Therefore, it is difficult to determine whether refugees will be protected by Bangladesh's constitutional provisions or not. As a consequence, the lack of a legal and administrative framework for refugees and asylum seekers in Bangladesh puts the refugees at serious protection risk as there are no mechanisms to guarantee their rights (Chowdhury 2019, p. 308).

Bangladesh is signatory to other international human rights treaties like the 'Convention against Torture and Other Cruel Inhuman or Degrading Treatment or Punishment', 'Optional Protocol of the Convention against Torture', 'Convention of the Rights of the Child' etc. which indirectly protect the rights of refugees and asylum seekers. But these human rights provisions are not enforceable in court of laws unless specific provisions are incorporated into domestic laws through separate legislation (Mohammad 2012, p. 151). Previous waves of Rohingya into Bangladesh, especially in 1978 and between 1991 and 1992, were also considered humanitarian crises and Rohingyas were registered by the GoB through an executive order which ensured their refugee status (Mohammad 2012). The lack of a legally-binding framework has led to slow-moving and ad hoc policies as well as logistical hurdles and a huge backlog in terms of registering refugees. So, the big question is why, despite the protracted refugee situation, the GoB is still reluctant to introduce legislature and institute policies to clarify the position of refugees and asylum seekers (Mohammad 2012).

5.3 How the Government of Bangladesh (GoB) has been Dealing with the Rohingya Crisis

Bangladesh has a long history of dealing with refugees during and after the independence war of 1971, therefore it had a domestic advisory and refugee management system before the current Rohingya refugee crisis. However, the existing policy capacity and advisory policy system is not adequate to deal with large influxes such as the 2017 refugee crisis,

consequently the country needs a coordinated and multi-sectoral approach to handle the crisis (ISCG 2018a).

In 2012, when violence erupted in Rakhine state, the GoB adopted push-back policies, including arrest and deportation of Rohingya refugees trying to enter Bangladesh territory, and also blocked international aid organisations on the grounds that aid may encourage Rohingyas to cross the border and enter Bangladesh illegally (Yesmin 2016; BBC 2012). Justifying the push-back policies, the government claimed that it has no obligation to provide sanctuary, and also imposed restrictions on the activities of non-governmental organisations in pre-existing Rohingya refugee camps in Cox's Bazar (HRW 2013b, p. 276). At the very beginning of the 2017 influx Bangladesh tried the same approach, but, eventually could not apply them because of the excessive pressures of Rohingya flows. The government faced pressure from UNHCR and other international organisations to adopt a more realistic strategy to tackle the crisis (Milton et al. 2017). Therefore, to address the crisis, a deal was signed between Bangladesh and Myanmar on 15 January 2018 to repatriate thousands of refugees over a 2-year period (The Republic of the Union of Myanmar, President's Office 2018). The government also accepted international assistance. Most of the protection-related assistance, like registration of refugees and needs assessment, has been provided by multilateral organisations, mainly UNHCR and IOM along with other international aid organisations (Xchange Foundation 2018b). To handle this crisis, the GoB has designed the Rohingya Refugee Crisis Response Plan, which prioritises the provision of life-saving assistance, and importantly many national and international organisations, humanitarian agencies and civil societies extended their support to the government's efforts (ISCG 2017, cited in Chowdhury 2019, p. 307).

The GoB crisis management focuses on both internal or domestic and external policy advisory services, and their interactions (Chowdhury 2019, p. 305). The concerned ministries of the GoB and its public service agencies are involved in the internal policy advisory system while the intergovernmental organisations and international non-governmental organisations and independent consultants make up the external policy advisory system. Thus, the combined internal and external policy advisory systems provide substantive expertise which enables the representation of different societal groups in the system (Chowdhury 2019, p. 305).

Administratively, the domestic policy advisory and refugee management system means the Ministry of Food and Disaster Management (MFDM), along with other concerned ministries are responsible for managing refugee related issues. The MFDM has also delegated responsibility to the Office of the Refugee Relief and Repatriation Commissioner (RRRC), a governing body of the GoB responsible for the provision of humanitarian assistance to Rohingya refugees in Bangladesh. Basically, the RRRC is leading the project along with the site management taskforce which includes UNHCR, IOM, and other key implementation agencies (Chowdhury 2019, pp. 308-309). Thus, the involvement of international organisations shows the political will of the GoB to manage the crisis in a transparent and democratic way and highlights the achievements of the current elected government to the regional and international states, non-state actors, and other international organisations. This helps to attract more resources, expertise and advice into Bangladesh.

To manage the crisis the UN led Strategic Executive Group has introduced the 'Joint response plan for Rohingya humanitarian crisis, January-December 2019'. The plan which was adopted in 2018 sets out a comprehensive program based on three strategic objectives – deliver protection, life-saving assistance and foster social cohesion (Strategic Executive Group 2019). According to the plan, as main stakeholders, the GoB and world leading humanitarian organisations will accelerate the plan to enhance the strength of government leadership and accountability, and the active participation of Rohingya refugees in decisions affecting their lives. As well as the refugees, the plan also targets the affected host communities: thus, it also aims at mitigating the discontent of the local people. The plan requires US$920.5 million for 2019 to maintain priority response efforts, but up until the present time only US$371 million has been received from international aid agencies and the governments of many developed countries (Financial Tracking Service 2019). The following (Figure 5.1) shows the Rohingya refugee response coordination mechanism.

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Figure 5.1: Mechanism of Rohingya refugee response coordination
Source: Executive Strategic Group (2019, p. 22).

A clear and effective coordination system is essential for stakeholders that are involved in such an emergency situation. The humanitarian response is led and coordinated by the GoB. Strategic guidance and national level government engagement is provided by the Strategic

Executive Group (SEG) in Dhaka, co-chaired by the Resident Coordinator of IOM and UNHCR. Regarding operational coordination, the RRRC organises the coordination meeting in Cox's Bazar on a regular basis. At the camp level, coordination is led by Camp-in-Charge (CICs) officials under the RRRC's office, who are mandated by the GoB for camp management (Strategic Executive Group 2019, pp. 20-21).

5.4 Options for the Government of Bangladesh (GoB) to Manage the Crisis

According to the international laws, especially the UNHCR, there are three long-term solutions to refugee problems: voluntary repatriation, resettlement, or integration (UNHCR 2019e). In the case of Bangladesh, repatriation occurred in 1978, but after 1992 almost all the repatriation was involuntary (Abrar 1995). After 2005, all kinds of repatriation processes were postponed and the UNHCR argued that repatriation cannot be a viable solution for the Rohingya refugee crisis (UNHCR 2007, cited in Azad and Jasmin 2013, p. 26). But the recent 2017 influx has compelled Bangladesh to negotiate with Myanmar to repatriate the Rohingya refugees who came after 2016. Bangladesh does not allow the Rohingya refugees to integrate into the local communities, and in 2010 Bangladesh stopped resettlement to several third countries on the grounds that this may work as a pull factor which would encourage more Rohingya people to cross the border (Azad and Jasmin 2013, p. 26). Bangladesh is currently thinking about relocating Rohingyas to other places within Bangladesh as discussed in further detail below.

5.4.1 Repatriation

Millions of refugees prefer to go home if their repatriation is safe and dignified, and their country of origin gives their commitment to help them reintegrate (UNHCR 2019f). It is also argued that repatriation of refugees should be voluntary, which means it must be free and well-informed, and their physical, legal, and material safety with full restoration of national protection is ensured as the condition of sustainable return (UNHCR 2007c). The politics of refugee repatriation are often complex and become even more complex when refugees are

stateless. Refugees and stateless persons are two distinct classification in terms of their rights and protection (Faulkner and Schiffer 2019, pp. 145-146). While refugees lack protection from their country of origin, stateless persons lack citizenship - 'the right to have rights' (Bradley 2014, p. 111). According to UNHCR (2017), worldwide there were an estimated 1.5 million stateless refugees, and nearly two-thirds of them are Rohingya refugees from Myanmar currently living in Bangladesh. This creates difficulties for their repatriation (Faulkner and Schiffer 2019, p. 146).

After two years of the recent influx, the pressure for repatriation is increasing from locals and it has become a national foreign policy concern for Bangladesh. As mentioned above, an agreement has been signed between Bangladesh and Myanmar for repatriation of Rohingyas. The agreement looks like the MoU signed in 1992, but the result will also be like the previous repatriation if the Rohingyas are not granted full citizenship rights in Myanmar (Grundy-Warr and Wong 1997, p. 88). Repatriation of refugees to Myanmar is the only permanent solution to relieve the huge burden on Bangladesh however the reality reveals Rohingya refugees will be unable to return to Myanmar for the foreseeable future (ICG 2019) because return of the Rohingya refugees with dignity can hardly be met, at least in the near future (Bowden 2018, p. 5).

According to the agreement, Myanmar agreed to take 1,500 refugees per week, and Bangladesh aims to repatriate all eligible refugees within two years. However, the agreement covers only those refugees who arrived between October 2016 and March 2018 (Xchange Foundation 2018b). It is said that a total of more than 700,00 refugees arrived in this time period, meaning that it will take ten years to repatriate all refugees at the rate stipulated by Myanmar (Xchange Foundation 2018b). Bangladesh was scheduled to begin repatriation of Rohingya refugees on 23 January 2018, but on 22 January the GoB suddenly announced that the repatriation had been delayed due to the unchanged conditions in Rakhine state, and a belief that safe voluntary repatriation was still not possible at that point in time because of Myanmar government's unwillingness to provide a conducive environment for returnees (ASEAN Parliamentarians for Human Rights (APHR) 2018, p. 8).

In September 2019, another attempt at repatriation was made and 3,000 refugees were scheduled to return to Myanmar but this did not go ahead for the same reasons as the failed previous attempts (Petersen and Rahman 2019). Unwillingness of the Rohingya refugees to return to Myanmar has become a major problem which highlights the challenges of repatriating stateless people to a country that does not want them.

5.4.2 Resettlement

Due to ongoing war or persecution, many refugees often cannot go home. In such a situation, without other options, resettlement of refugees to a third country can be another solution to a refugee crisis. Resettlement is the transfer of refugees from an asylum country to another country for permanent settlement. According to UNHCR (2019g), there were 20.4 million refugees at the end of 2018, but fewer than one percent were resettled that year. Resettlement is a protection tool for refugees whose life, liberty, safety, health or other fundamental rights are at risk in the country of asylum, and can be a durable solution and mechanism for burden and responsibility sharing among states (Azad and Jasmin 2013, p. 26). For example, when voluntary repatriation or local integration is not an option, resettlement may then be appropriate. Resettlement was not available for Rohingyas until 2006. The GoB did not show any interest in any countries offering resettlement. In 2007, only 23 Rohingya refugees departed for Canada. Later, many developed countries came forward to accept some Rohingyas as refugees as part of the resettlement process (Azad and Jasmin 2013, p. 31), however in 2010, the GoB suspended the resettlement process considering it would act as a pull factor for the new waves of refugees from Myanmar. Since then, remaining in Bangladesh is the only option for Rohingya refugees who sought refuge there.

5.4.3 Local Integration

Local integration refers to the legal, economic and political process of integrating refugees as members of the host society (UNHCR 2001). Local integration is the solution in which a country of asylum gives legal residency to the refugees. In local integration, the country of asylum offers permanent residency with the possibility of citizenship. Official local integration

is not considered in Bangladesh. Generally, the refugees are not allowed to leave the camps without permission from the authority as the government perception is that their access to the labour market would constitute local integration (The Daily Star 2010, cited in Cheung 2012). Nevertheless, many unregistered self-settled Rohingyas outside the camps have achieved automatic de facto integration after years of stay in Bangladesh because of similarities of language and religious faith (HRW 2000).

Bangladesh is already confronted by population growth and high poverty rates, and is often affected by natural disasters. Currently, Bangladesh is not well placed to cope with this protracted refugee situation, therefore, the government has no way to allow local integration of Rohingya refugees into host societies. Nevertheless, de facto integration is happening in two ways: illegal collection of Bangladeshi documents and intermarriage with Bangladeshi nationals (Azad and Jasmine 2013, p. 31). It was very easy a few years ago to obtain a Bangladeshi nationality certificate which is issued by the village level union council chairman, but it is now difficult to obtain as the government instituted a nationwide digital database of citizens in 2008 (Azad and Jasmin 2013, p. 31). In addition, employment is also a major process of integration. Many self-settled Rohingyas are living side-by-side with local poor Bangladeshi families in slums in Cox's Bazar, and thus they become integrated into the local communities (Azad and Jakea, 2013). As noted above, local integration is not allowed for the camp-based refugees, and the integration process mostly depends on the political climate and attitudes of the host community (Cheung 2012, p. 58). Thus far, Bangladesh has been focusing on providing transitory relief rather than longer term integration into Bangladeshi society (Venugopal 2018).

Bangladesh can think of another option from the recent initiatives taken by Latin American countries to tackle the Venezuelan refugee crisis (Camilleri and Hampson 2018). Due to political upheaval and economic disaster, an estimated 1.6 million Venezuelans have left their country and sought refuge in neighbouring countries and other countries all over the world. This large exodus has been creating pressures on host countries. To tackle the crisis, many Latin American countries have adopted policies based on the international legal obligation of refugees and the principle of collective responsibility (Camilleri and Hampson 2018, p. 6). As part of the policies, governments avoid border closures, and give the Venezuelans employment opportunities, and access to social services like education, health, and housing.

Moreover, those Latin American countries who have been sheltering displaced Venezuelans have provided alternative forms of pathways to legal settlement instead of taking hard policies against refugees which represents the tangible expressions of solidarity and political good will of Latin American governments (Camilleri and Hampson 2018, p. 6).

5.4.4 Relocation

Since all the above-mentioned options are going to be inapplicable to working out a solution to the refugee crisis in Bangladesh, the government is currently thinking about the relocation of Rohingyas to different places in Bangladesh as a temporary solution for the crisis affecting the Cox's Bazar area. According to the Bangladeshi Refugee Commissioner Abul Kalam, 20,000 refugees have already been relocated to safer areas, and another 20,000 are waiting for relocation in the next few months (HRW 2018). But the refugees frequently express anxiety about being separated from their neighbours who are their main source of emotional support, and most importantly their closest link to their homeland (HRW 2018). Firuzaa, a Rohingya women said to HRW in an interview that, 'When we came from Myanmar, many people were separated from their families, many were ill. We don't want to be separated again' (HRW 2018).

In May 2015, the GoB had planned to relocate Rohingya refugees to Hatiya island in the Bay of Bengal (Figure 5.2) to reduce the disruption of tourism in Cox's Bazar (The Guardian 2015).

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Figure 5.2: Hatiya island
Source: Siddiquee (2017)

A report of the the Guardian (2017) reveled that GoB again proposed a similar plan to relocate the Rohingya refugees to Thengar Char, a low-lying island described by many officials as uninhabitable. Figure 5.3 shows Thengar Char island.

Figure 5.3: Thengar Char island in map
Source: Berlinger and Pakharel (2017)

According to a report by CNN, Thengar Char island is about 30,000 hectares in size mostly uninhabited and flooded during heavy rain or the monsoon season (Berlinger and Pokharel 2017) (see Figure 5.4). It is therefore not a suitable location to accommodate the refugees.

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Figure 5.4: Thengar Char island
Source: Berlinger and Pakharel (2017)

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Figure 5.5: The Bhashan Char island
Source: Conrad, Islam and Czimmek (2019)

More recently it was announced that the GoB will soon relocate 100,000 refugees to the floating island 'Bhashan Char' (Conrad et al. 2019) (Figure 5.5). According to Paul et al. (2018), the Bangladesh Navy along with Chinese construction crews from the Sinohydro company have prepared the uninhabited 'Bashan Char' island for relocating 100,000 Rohingyas. In May 2018, Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina said to the executive director of the UN Population Fund that to reduce the suffer of Rohingya refugees in Cox's Bazar, her government will relocate 100,000 refugees to Bashan Char island until their repatriation (Today's World News 2018).

But some argued that if they send them to this island it would be a kind of immigration detention centre with the prospect of being indefinitely restricted to a dangerous and unsustainable island (HRW 2018). In addition, a survey conducted by Xchange Foundation (2019) reveals that 98.7 percent of respondents were well informed about the plans of the GoB to relocate Rohingya refugees from Cox's Bazar to Bashan Char. Only 1.6 percent of respondents were willing to move to this island, while 98.4 percent refused to move for two reasons: unsafe living conditions on the island, and not wanting to live further away from their homeland.

5.5 Conclusion

The reluctance of the GoB regarding the formation of a national refugee policy makes the Rohingya refugee crisis difficult to manage. It is the sole responsibility of the GoB to establish a refugee policy to draw up guidelines to manage the crisis. Based on the UNHCR guidelines to solve refugee problems, Bangladesh has three options: resettlement, local integration and repatriation. Considering the pull factor of resettlement, the GoB suspended the resettlement process. Integration is also not possible because of population growth and the limited resources of Bangladesh. So, Bangladesh has pursued the option of repatriation, which turned out to be impossible because of the unwillingness of Rohingyas due to lack of a favourable environment in Myanmar, especially their citizenship rights. Hence, Bangladesh has no way but to look at temporary solutions to alleviate local pressures, like relocation of Rohingya refugees to places within Bangladesh territory.

Chapter 6: Conclusion

The Rohingya refugee problem is one of the world's major refugee crises. Bangladesh has been giving shelter to Rohingya refugees for more than three decades. Bangladesh has been showing openness to Rohingya refugees, but the large 2017 influx has created tremendous pressures on the Cox's Bazar district and poses a serious problem for Bangladesh without the prospect of durable solutions. The presence of such a large number of refugees continuously affects the political, economic, social, and environmental existence of Cox's Bazar. As a result, conflict between the locals and refugees has become a threat for the internal stability of Bangladesh. Bangladesh also tries its best to bring about a durable solution of this crisis, but it is still a major challenge for Bangladesh because of its non-signatory status to the Refugee Convention and Protocol.

This research has focused on the challenges of hosting refugees in developing countries. Drawing on the literature on other developing countries who have become hosts to a large number of refugees the thesis has discussed the various ways in which refugee influxes affect the politics, economy, society, culture and environment of the host countries. In most cases, the presence of a large number of refugees in developing host countries is a burden for the government and society. Discrimination, lack of job opportunities, sudden changes in population structures, insecure feelings among host communities, cultural shock, and environmental degradation due to the refugee influx, result in discontent among host communities. Hence, there is a probability of internal instability in developing host countries because of the discontent of host communities.

Bangladesh, as a developing host country to the Rohingya refugees, has been facing multidimensional political, economic, social and environmental pressures for three decades. Vote bank politics of corrupt politicians, exploitation of the Rohingya refugees by extremist groups, increases in serious crimes like drugs and arms trafficking, robbery, killing, and abduction emerge as political pressures for the host communities as well as the government. The current crisis has badly affected public service delivery. The presence of more than one million refugees in Cox's Bazar severely affects the livelihood options of the local people. Competition for jobs, decreases in labour wages, a dramatic rise in cost of necessary daily

commodities, and sudden loss of earning sources, are the main reasons for the discontent among the local people. The sudden change in population structure, and social disputes like intermarriage between local Bangladeshis and Rohingyas, and moral degradation of the youth are also playing significant roles in the growing discontent. Environmental degradation in the main reception sites also gives rise to conflict between refugees and local people. Loss of land, and surface and underground water contamination surrounding the neighbourhood of the refugee camps, has resulted in a water crisis both for the refugees and the host communities. Therefore, competition over limited resources has become the major reason for conflict, thus fuelling internal instability in Bangladesh.

The Rohingya refugee crisis is a complex challenge for Bangladesh. Bangladesh has been trying to solve the crisis in diplomatic ways since the first influx in the 1970s. While previously Bangladesh sought to repatriate Rohingyas through bilateral negotiation with Myanmar, this has not been an acceptable or feasible solution in the current situation. Due to an unfavourable environment for Rohingyas in Myanmar, they are very unwilling to go back there. Bangladesh has already stopped resettlement of Rohingyas in third countries. Due to extreme poverty and high population growth rate, and continuing natural calamities, the GoB is unable to integrate one million refugees. Hence, the three best possible options – voluntary repatriation, resettlement and integration, suggested by UNHCR seem to impossible for Bangladesh. To relieve the crisis at the local level, the GoB is thinking about moving some Rohingyas to other places away from Cox's Bazar. But there are also many questions regarding the relocation process, such as is Bangladesh trying to put the refugees in worse places than the refugee camps: some also compare the process to putting the refugees in detention centres. Hence, the relocation process is also likely to be impossible at this time. Policies like those in South America where governments have cooperated to manage the large influx of Venezuelans refugees and facilitate their integration into host societies are unlikely to work for the Rohingya refugee crisis because of the low illiteracy rate of the refugees and the language differences between them and people in neighbouring countries. The South American countries are better able to integrate Venezuelans because many are middle class and speak the same language, Spanish (Camilleri and Hampson 2018). Considering all these options, the Rohingya refugee problem is an endless crisis in this world.

Finally, it must be concluded that local people's attitudes towards Rohingya refugees are changing day by day and their sympathy is fading fast due to the above-mentioned problems that are continuously fuelling discontent among the local people. The Rohingya refugee situation is a protracted one that requires a long-term approach. For these two reasons, steps must be taken as quickly as possible to tackle the crisis and instability before it spirals out of control and compromises Bangladesh's internal stability.

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