

Forcibly Displaced Myanmar Nationals (Rohingya) in Bangladesh: Governance Challenges and Way out

Executive Summary

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Executive Summary

1. Background and rationale

The intrusion of forcibly displaced Myanmar nationals (Rohingya) in Bangladesh is a long-standing crisis. During the period between 1978 and 2017, the Rohingya people took shelter in Bangladesh after fleeing from torture and repression of the Myanmar government. In 1978, some 2,00,000 Rohingyas came to Bangladesh, among whom 1,80,000 returned through bi-lateral discussion and repatriation process, 10,000 died, and 10,000 remained missing.¹ In 1982, the Rohingyas were discarded from citizenship in the newly adopted citizenship law by the Myanmar government, following which a stressful relationship was created between the government and Rohingyas. The influx continued and more Rohingyas came in 1991, 2012, 2014 and 2016. In August of 2017, the influx was massive in terms of volume and time. About 80% of them were women and children.² The United Nations has called the Rohingyas “the world’s most persecuted minority group” and described the atrocities by Myanmar’s authorities as “ethnic cleansing”.³ Amnesty International has described it as a “crime against humanity”.⁴

The Rohingya crisis has not only adverse impact on the bilateral relationship between Myanmar and Bangladesh, but has also raised concerns for many countries and the international community including the United Nations. Bangladesh, which was not in the list of the UN High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) on top refugee-hosting countries before 25 August 2017, has emerged as the sixth largest refugee hosting country in the world.⁵

Managing this huge and sudden influx became a logistical nightmare for the local administration and organizations. However, collective efforts were put in by the government, international organizations, non-governmental organizations and lots of personal and community based organizations to manage the situation.

TIB conducted a quick study in 2017 considering the possible risk and importance of various challenges in overall management of the sudden Rohingya influx. The study identified the short, medium and long-term challenges as well as the risks of governance challenges and corruption in the arrival, found of shelter, and distribution of relief and other assistance. According to recent reports of different newspapers and media this challenges are still prevailing and in some cases extended. Moreover, as the Rohingya people’s stay in Bangladesh has become prolonged, the management of this large population appeared to be a big challenge to the government as well as to the concerned stakeholders. This study has been undertaken to review the present condition of governance challenges in Rohingya management.

1.1 Objective

The main objective of this study is to identify the governance challenges in the management of forcibly displaced Myanmar (Rohingya) nationals in Bangladesh. The specific objectives are:

1. To review the initiatives and the activities taken for the Rohingya and the coordination of related stakeholders;
2. To identify governance challenges as well as irregularities and corruption in relief management; and

¹ <https://www.amnesty.org/en/latest/news/2017/10/myanmar-new-evidence-of-systematic-campaign-to-terrorize-and-drive-rohingya-out/>

² <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2017/sep/16/rohingya-babies-dying-refugee-aid-crisis-myanmar>

³ <https://theconversation.com/the-history-of-the-persecution-of-myanmars-rohingya-84040>

⁴ *Ibid.*

⁵ COAST and CCNF, *Crisis within the Crisis*, July 2018.

3. To make recommendations to overcome the challenge in the overall management.

1.2 Methodology and Scope

This is a qualitative study, where literature review, key informant interviews (KII) and observation have been used as methods of data collection. Interviews were conducted with all major stakeholders including officials of the Office of the Refugee Relief and Repatriation Commission (RRRC), Camp in Charge (CIC), Inter-sector Coordination Group (ISCG), Office of the UN Resident Coordinators, Cox's Bazar District Commissioner's (DC) office, NGO Affairs Bureau (NGOAB), Civil Surgeon of Cox's Bazar, Department of Forest in Cox's Bazar, Upazila Nirbahi offices (UNO) of Ukhiya and Teknaf, local, national and international organizations who are working at camp level, international aid agencies, non-government organizations, private sector and Rohingyas.

This study covered the activities and initiatives of stakeholders regarding Rohingya management and the basic humanitarian assistances (food and nutrition, health, education, water supply and sanitation, safety and security). Data have been analyzed on the basis of six indicators of good governance (transparency, accountability, coordination, capacity, responsiveness and corruption control). In addition, the economic, social, environmental, political and security related risks and impacts have been reviewed. The primary data used in research is collected from July to October 2019.

2. Stakeholders in Rohingya Management

1.3 Government Stakeholders

The Ministry of Foreign Affairs and the Ministry of Disaster and Relief Management are leading the entire management of Rohingya humanitarian response at the central level. Besides, other ministries are providing sector-specific supports. The NGO Affairs Bureau gives approval of humanitarian projects to different local, national and international non-government organizations under FD-7. The RRRC, DC office of Cox's Bazar and UNO offices of Ukhiya and Teknaf are working for local level management. In addition, law enforcing agencies have been working to ensure law and order situation in the Rohingya camps.

1.4 Non-government Stakeholders

The Strategic Executive Group (SEG) is playing the leadership role at central level where the Chief of Mission of International Organization for Migration (IOM), the United Nations Residence Coordinator, the Representative of United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) has been acting as co-chair for the coordination of humanitarian stakeholders. Besides, there is an Inter-Sector Coordination Group (ISCG) for coordinating different sectors (food, education, shelter, health etc.) at the field level.

3. Initiatives for Rohingyas

In the study of 2017, TIB recommended a number of initiatives to overcome the governance challenges for the management of Rohingya camps. The initiatives related with some of the recommendations undertaken by the concerned authority are as follows.

- Preparation of a list of orphan children (36,373 children identified);
- Establishment of 'complaint feedback response management' to resolve complaints;
- An assessment to identify the damage of environment, forestry and diversity and provide recommendation;
- Introduction of different types of cards (Biometric card, Family Count Number (FCN) card, RCN card, Fuel card and Food card) instead of previous relief token system;
- Publication different reports of humanitarian response periodically by ISCG and RRRC;
- Estimation of the yearly financial needs for humanitarian assistance.

In addition establishing 28 CIC offices and appointing CIC to manage camps; building shelters in Bhashanchar for Rohingya settlement; starting joint verification data collection for repatriation of Rohingya; undertaking household waste recycling project for household waste management; supplying LPG as an alternative fuel to 1,27,852 families; initiating E-voucher system (BDT 770-780 per person) to provide food for individual Rohingya and to prevent corruption and irregularities at camp level, and

electing community representatives through voting in two blocks of two camps of are some other notable initiatives.

4. Governance challenges in Rohingya management

4.1. Lack of coordination

Coordination gap exists between government and non-government stakeholders engaged in Rohingya management. Among the Government stakeholders the RRRC, DC and UNO offices are playing same role in monitoring and regulating the activities of NGOs, especially providing permission and clearance certificate and checking the quality and quantity of relief materials. As a result there are allegations of delay in the process of getting project approval, work permission, project completion certificate, and assessment of relief. Moreover, there is gap in sharing of information between DC and RRRC offices that creates misunderstanding on various issues related to camp management. For example, lack of communication and avoiding tendency of roles and responsibilities between DC and RRRC offices with regard to the mass gathering of Rohingyas held on 25 August 2019 was observed.

On the other hand, in some cases there are lack of coordination and replication of works during project implementation at camp level. For example, despite inadequacy of space, two organizations were given approval to build learning center in one camp.

4.2. Lack of capacity in camp management

Shortage of Human resources: The human resources are not adequate for camp management. A total of 12 CICs and 22 Assistant CICs are in charge of 34 camps. In most cases one CIC has to carry out the responsibilities of three to five camps at the same time. Thus the supervision of camps are hampered, and the dependency on ‘Majhi’ has increased for managing relief distribution tasks, creating the risk of irregularities and corruption.

Lack of training of CICs on ‘humanitarian principles’: Humanitarian assistance management is considered different from the conventional administrative management. Moreover, there are some obligations to comply with humanitarian principles in accordance with international law. In addition, special training is needed to manage people in refugee situations who have been deprived of various civil rights. However, the CICs lack skills and training especially in complying with the ‘humanitarian assistance principles’ in managing the camps. Allegations of misconduct and physical abuse on Rohingyas are raised against some CICs and Assistant CICs. It may be noted that nine CICs have received training on humanitarian principles.

Lack of financial capability: From 2017 to 2019, the full amount against the need of humanitarian assistance for Rohingyas has not been assured. The amounts received against the need in 2017, 2018 and 2019 (till October) was 73%, 69% and 55% respectively. As a result, different sector-based funds especially for food and nutrition, health, education, shelter, safety and security, water supply and sanitation services were inadequate and thus the required services were disrupted. According to key informants, importance of the Rohingya crisis to the international community is gradually decreasing. Under these circumstances, the financial aid will also be reduced. Consequently, the responsibility of the humanitarian assistance to the Rohingyas will fall upon Bangladesh with a huge financial burden on the government and the people of Bangladesh. It may be noted that despite the uncertainty of repatriation and prolonged stay of the Rohingyas, the Government of Bangladesh has not taken any initiative to assess the financial cost or has come up with any strategic plan.

4.3. Challenges in ensuring transparency and accountability

There is an obligation for the NGOs to follow a special process (FD-7) in receiving project grants for the humanitarian assistance for the Rohingyas under the supervision of the NGO Affairs Bureau. However, there are allegations of corruption and irregularities in the use of such grants. On the other hand, the government has no controlling and accountability structure for the UN agencies and their implementing partners. There are allegations that the UN agencies and their implementing partners do not proactively disclose their expenditure (operating expenses, program costs). It is also notable that there is no structural standard and quantity verification system for relief distributed by the UN agencies and its partner organizations.

Although it is mandatory to allocate 25% of the grants for the host community, it is not maintained, and also there is no guideline or structure on how to follow this rule. In addition, some of the international organizations are accused of spending higher amount for administrative functions than for programs. Besides, there is a tendency for non-cooperation by some of international organization regarding information disclosure although there is a rule to inform CICs about NGOs' ongoing programs at the camp level and amount of the allocated money. Information on the list of NGOs working in the camps, proceedings of coordination meetings, and humanitarian support programs are not adequately provided on the RRRC website. Moreover, this website is not updated regularly.

On the other hand, it is alleged that the standard ratio between operational cost and program cost of the UN agencies and the partner organizations is often higher. According to the information of seven UN organizations, during 2017-2019 (October), the highest operational cost is incurred by UN Women (32.6%), while the lowest operational cost is incurred by UNICEF (3%). It may be noted that the program cost include all costs of the implementing partners, technical support, warehouse, food procurement and supply, and contract. Under these circumstances the actual operation cost of the programs implemented with funds received from the UN organizations can be ascertained only by the respective implementing organizations. However, this portion will definitely be more than the ratio provided below.

Table 1: Operational and Program Costs of Seven UN Organizations in Providing Assistance to Rohingyas (2017-2019)

UN Agency	Operational Cost (%)	Program Cost (%)
UN High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR)	25.98	74.02
International Organization for Migration (IOM)	14.7	85.3
World Food Program (WFP)	10.3	89.7
UN Population Fund (UNFPA)	18.0	82.0
UN Children's Fund (UNICEF)	3.0	97.0
World Health Organization (WHO)	17.0	83.0
UN Women	32.6	67.5

Source: Office of the UN Resident Coordinator, 30 October 2019

4.4. Challenges in grievance mechanism

Most Rohingyas are not aware of the 'Complaint Feedback Response Management' which has been set up to receive and settle complaints at camp level. Concerned officials in camps have been accused of treating Rohingyas harshly. Due to lack of publicity and lack of sensitivity of the official most Rohingyas rely on the informal procedure (through Majhi) for complaint redress that creates the risk of corruption. On the other hand, there are no formal complaint mechanism in RRRC and the DC office.

5. Challenges in humanitarian assistance

5.1. Food and Nutrition

The estimated financial needs for food and nutrition in 2019 was US\$ 255 million and US\$ 48 million respectively, but till October US\$ 159 million and 17 million was received respectively, which is only 62 and 35 percent respectively of the need⁶. Nevertheless, there is increased pressure on food assistance due to relocation, displacement, new infiltration and disasters.

⁶ ISCG (22 October, 2019) *Rohingya Refugee Crisis: Joint Response Plan 2019 funding update*, Cox's Bazar, Bangladesh.

Some NGOs are accused of not estimating demand of relief distribution properly. Relief is often insufficient in the families where most members are adult. In addition, there are allegations of distributing products below the appropriate weight and of lower quality. In many cases the distributed rice sacks contain 26-28 kg even though marked 30 kg. Moreover, there is no diversity in distributed food items. Only rice, oil and pulses are provided under the free food distribution program. Although e-vouchers system is being implemented to ensure food diversity, 2.9% (26,542) of the total Rohingya population is covered under this. As a result, most of the Rohingyas have to buy the necessary item from outside. According to the Nutrition Survey (2019), 19.3% of children suffer from malnutrition and 50% from anemia in camps. In addition, 7.3% of children between the ages of 8 and 20 months get the minimum acceptable diet. It is noteworthy that no special initiatives have been taken in ensuring food security for disabled and elderly person. In many cases, the disabled and the elderly persons are facing difficulties due to distance of the distribution point, thus to collect the relief they obliged to give a portion of the relief to the helper for assistance.

The LPG gas supply program has started to reduce dependency on forest for fuel. But so far 46% of the families have received LPG gas.

5.2. Health

Till August 2019, US\$ 31 million was received, which is only 35 percent of the total need for health assistance in 2019⁷. There are seven field hospitals and 162 health centers set up for Rohingyas' primary health care, which is not adequate against the number of patients and treatment of various diseases. There are no facilities for surgical treatment and blood supplying in urgent need in these hospitals. In addition, the treatment facilities and awareness programs on malaria, TB, HIV, Hepatitis-B in camps are inadequate⁸. At present there are 600 registered HIV/AIDS patients in the camps, although the actual number is assumed to be much more⁹. Yet no screening system for detecting HIV/AIDS has been introduced in the camps. Moreover, despite the fact that diphtheria is almost eradicated in Bangladesh, the risk of epidemic of diphtheria in Rohingya camps is significant. Till August 2019, 8,641 diphtheria cases was found and among them 45 died.

There is lack of family planning campaign in the Rohingya camps. Every day on an average, about 85-90 children are born in the camps.¹⁰ Many Rohingyas complained that hospitals and health centers does not provide all medicines according to prescription. Most of the cases they provide few drugs and often provide only paracetamol. Some Rohingyas alleged that they were compelled to seek help from *dalals* (broker) in government hospitals and give money for receiving services.

5.3. Education

Till August 2019, US\$ 30 million (50 percent of the need) was received against the demand of US\$ 59 million for education assistance.¹¹ In the absence of an approved curriculum different organizations follow different curricula in the learning centers. A number of 117,000 Rohingya teenagers lives in the camps. Due to the absence of an education system, they gradually have lost interest in education, and a tendency to work outside the camp and criminal activities has increased.¹² Most Rohingya parents are reluctant to educate their teenage girls due to social taboo. In addition, many learning centers were closed because of the short-term nature of projects.

5.4. Water and Sanitation

Till August 2019, US\$ 30 million (22 percent of the need) was received against the demand of US\$ 137 million for water and sanitation.¹³ Many Rohingyas are compelled to collect water from distantly located tube wells due to unplanned installation. In most camps there are no separate toilet facilities for

⁷ *Ibid.*

⁸ Civil surgeon office, Cox's Bazar, 22 August 2019.

⁹ *Ibid.*

¹⁰ *Ibid.*

¹¹ *Ibid.*

¹² ISCG (January-December 2019) *Rohingya Refugee Crisis: Joint Response Plan 2019*, p 35, Cox's Bazar, Bangladesh.

¹³ *Ibid.*

women and men. In some camps people have to stand in long queue due to lack of adequate toilets. In most cases toilets are not maintained and cleaned, although site management offices are responsible for this. As a result, the toilets become unusable within a few days. Moreover, because of the unplanned and delicate drainage system in the camps, the drain water overflows during the monsoon which creates roads water logged.

5.5. Safety and security

Till October 2019, US\$ 34 million (39 percent of the need) was received against the demand of US\$ 86 million for safety and security.¹⁴ Due to the shortage of funds, there are inadequate security and protection in Rohingya camps.

The security situation in camp is normal during the day, but deteriorates during night. Out of 32 camps, there are no security personnel under CIC except in two registered camps. Due to lack of security, CICs and Assistant CICs do not stay in these camps at night. As a result, more crime incidents occur in the camps compared to two registered camps. It is alleged that Joint Forces patrol usually only in areas where communication is comparatively better.

The lack of security, protection and stability in Myanmar and the uncertainty of relocation in Bangladesh created psychological trauma, violent attitudes and criminal tendency among Rohingyas. This resulted in rise of crimes including murder, kidnapping, rape and drug trafficking. According to the Cox's Bazar District Superintendent of Police, the total number of cases till August 2019 is 471 where the total number of accused is 1,088. Moreover, there are a number of cases of domestic and gender-based violence and sexual harassment in camps. Orphans and young married girls are the most victims.

Seven terrorist groups are alleged to be active in various camps. Due to threats some women working as volunteers in camps quit their job. Besides, human trafficking especially trafficking in women occurs regularly in the camps by the camp-based *dalals*. Around BDT 10,000-20,000 is paid initially to the *dalals* and after reaching the destination another BDT 1,50,000-2,00,00 has to be paid. Sonadia of Maheshkhali, JT Ghat, Nazira Tech, Sohlandi Ghat of Cox's Bazar Municipality, Chowlandi Ghat of Sadar and Baharchara Silkhali points of Teknaf are used as the sea routes for trafficking.

On the other hand, some Rohingyas who are financially solvent are accused of getting into the mainstream of Cox's Bazar local population by using large amounts of money and the influence of locally powerful elites. Going out of the camps illegally can be observed as a common occurrence although Rohingyas are not allowed to move out of the camps. In order to get out, Rohingyas usually come into contract with some 'tom-tom' drivers and pay them BDT 250-300 for using different routes to avoid Moriccha check post. Additionally the police in the check post is also accused of helping them to move out from the camps by taking bribe of BDT 500-1000.

6. Irregularities and corruption

6.1. Government stakeholders

Some officials in the NGO Affairs Bureau are alleged of delaying project approval (FD-7) and demanding money along with gifts to expedite the approval process. Some officials in the DC office is also alleged of delaying project approval for at least 7-15 days and in some cases for more than a month. NGO's have to pay unauthorized money of BDT 20,000-50,000 and BDT 50,000-70,000 respectively to the some officials in upazila and district administration offices to collect the completion certificate for each project. Moreover, NGO's are forced to pay money in the name of renovation of the district administration and UNO offices and donate to a local autistic school during approval. In addition, some CICs are also alleged of extorting money and demanding unofficial benefits such as airline tickets, transportation and hotel facilities for visiting relatives for giving approval / clearance the project.

Due to different verification systems to check the quality and quantity of relief materials, there is lack of coordination, irregularities, corruption and delay. There are allegations against some of the concerned

¹⁴ *Ibid.*

committee members of the DC office that it extorts BDT 2,500–3,000 from each relief-carrying truck in the name of checking the quality and quantity of the relief materials. Any organization not agreeing to pay the money experiences delay of 5-15 days to get the clearance, while organizations that pay the bribe usually get the relief quickly checked. Moreover, the samples of relief taken to check the quality and quantity are not returned, and in some cases organizations are forced to give more sample.

A section of CICs are alleged to extort BDT 2,000-5,000 for supervising each program implemented by the NGOs. In failure of providing the amount, the concerned CIC does not cooperate with the NGO in following programs.

6.2. Non-government stakeholders

There are different allegations against some NGOs in conducting activities at the camp level. Some local, national, and international NGOs are alleged to have been using products of poor standards in implementing various programs (such as building shelters, establishing sanitary latrines, setting up learning centers, community mobilization), not working according to program design, and to be engaged in irregularities and collusive corruption in association with contractors in procurement process. In addition, some NGOs allegedly pay less money for daily remuneration than actual contract to the volunteers. Many NGOs employ Rohingyas which is against the rule. Moreover, some NGOs are allegedly playing roles in anti-repatriation propaganda, including providing support to Rohingya gathering, T-shirt distribution, distribution of sharp materials and cash among Rohingyas. It may be mentioned that the NGO Affairs Bureau stopped all program and bank activities of two NGOs in response to specific allegation of violation of conduct by them.

Often Rohingyas are bound to pay BDT 500-1000 for receiving token and BDT 2,000-3,000 for settling complaints to ‘Majhis’.

Table 2: Amount of bribe/ unauthorized money for different services

Sector/issues	Amount (BDT)	Actor/ Perpetrator
Approval of FD-7	Not specified	Some officials of NGOAB
To assess quality and quantity of Relief	2,500-3,000 (per truck)	Some members of DC office related committee
Project completion certificate	20,000-50,000	Some officials of UNO office
	50,000-70,000	Some officials of DC Office
	20,000-25,000 (in some cases)	Some officials of CIC offices
To get out of camp	250-300	Broker, ‘TomTom’ driver
Human trafficking	10,000-20,000 (Primarily) 150,000-200,000 (after reaching the destination)	Broker
To get token for special relief	500-1,000	Majhi
Camp-based complaint redress	2,000-3,000	Majhi

7. Challenges in Repatriation

For Rohingya repatriation Bangladesh and Myanmar signed two agreements titled ‘Arrangement on Return of Displaced Persons from Rakhine State’ on 27 November 2017 and ‘physical arrangement to take forward the field-related activities’ on 16 January 2018. However, the repatriation initiatives taken on 15 November in 2018 and 22 August 2019 were unsuccessful.

The root cause of the Rohingya crisis is the failure of the Myanmar government to ensure internal governance. So, the primary responsibilities of repatriation of Rohingyas falls upon the Myanmar government. however, it has not been able to create a conducive environment for the repatriation. As a result, the Rohingyas still do not have confidence in the process. On the other hand, the international

partners lack adequate initiatives for repatriation. China, India and Japan have a very important role in putting pressure to Myanmar to resolve the Rohingya crisis. Although these three countries are also known as friends of Bangladesh, they have played their roles in favor of Myanmar out of their own interests. Moreover, there is a delay in the listing and joint verification process of the Rohingya family. Although this process started on 24 June 2018, till 30 September 2019 data collection of 660,887 has been completed.

8. Risks of prolonged stay of Rohingyas

A wide range of local and national level effects and risks emanate from the prolonged stay of Rohingyas and their delayed repatriation.

8.1. Economic Challenges

The availability of Rohingya labor has reduced the opportunities of employment for the local people in Ukhiya and Teknaf, as the local population is engaging Rohingyas in various daily activities (salt cultivation, shrimp hatchery, cultivation etc.). Thus, the wage of the local day laborers have decreased more than 15 percent on average.¹⁵ Besides, the price of goods in the local market has increased due to higher demand. For example, the price of vegetables, fish and meat has increased 50-60 percent.¹⁶ The roads of Ukhiya and Teknaf upazilas are affected by higher traffic due to movement of relief trucks and aid workers' vehicles. According to the Department of Roads and Highways (2019), traffic in this area has increased 2.5 times, while transportation costs for the local has also increased.

The expenditure of the government has increased for providing administrative and programmatic support to the Rohingyas. According to the financial data received from the Ministry of Finance, Bangladesh government has so far disbursed BDT 23.08 billion (from 2017 to 2019) from own fund through different ministries and departments for Rohingya management.

Table 3: Amount disbursed by Bangladesh Government for Rohingya Management (2017-2019)

Ministry/ Division/ Department	Disbursed amount (million BDT)	Sector/ issue
Ministry of Disaster Management and Relief	32	To build cut wire fence
Directorate General of Health Services	24.5	To Build Male and female ward in two Upazila Health complex
Security Services Division	45.5	Purchase logistics for ID card
Ministry of Social Welfare	13.2	Program for protection of orphan children
Local Government Division	296.8	Road maintenance, supply of drinking water and sanitation
Prime Minister's office	22,659.1	To build infrastructure for Shelter
Public Security Division	9.097	Daily allowance and contingency for Army personnel
Total	23,080.2	

Source: Finance Division, Government of the People's Republic of Bangladesh, 3 November 2019

The largest portion of humanitarian assistance for Rohingyas usually comes from different agencies of the United Nations. According to the ISCG 'Joint Response Plan' report (October 2019), US\$ 506 million have been received against the need of US\$ 920 million till October 2019. Of this, the UN agencies' (UNHCR, WFP, UNICEF, IOM, UNFPA, FAO, UN Women, WHO) fund is US\$ 443 million, which is 88 percent of total amount received. But now the question arises whether the UN agencies will be able to bear the cost or raise fund in the long run. According to the key informants, the government of Bangladesh did not have to spend a large amount of money for Rohingya crisis. If Bangladesh government have to spend or carry even a fraction of the necessary support for the Rohingyas, it will be a huge pressure on the national budget of Bangladesh. The Center for Policy

¹⁵ Policy Research Institute (PRI), *Rohingya crisis and the host community*, 31 July 2019.

¹⁶ *Ibid.*

Dialogue (CPD) (2018) estimated the yearly expenditure for Rohingyas considering the repatriation of 300 Rohingyas per day under the physical arrangement agreement. According to its assumption, if the Rohingyas stay in Bangladesh till 2025, the cost would be US\$ 4,433 million while if it would extend until 2026 and 2030, the cost would be US\$ 5,898 million and US\$ 10,456 million respectively.¹⁷ But these expenditures do not include the administrative costs of the government, in which only direct expenditure on humanitarian assistance of the Rohingyas has been considered.

8.2. Social Challenges

The host community of Ukhiya and Teknaf Upazilas has become the minority on its own land after hosting the Rohingya since 2017, and accounted for only 34.8 percent of the total population. In the past, the population density per square kilometer in Ukhiya and Teknaf was 792 and 680 respectively, at present which has increased to 3,468 and 2,085 respectively.¹⁸ Bangladesh has also been included in the list of food insecure countries due to the Rohingya crisis. According to the report of 'Global Network's Against Food Crisis' in 2019 the number of people at risk of food insecurity in Cox's Bazar is 1.3 million. Both locals and Rohingya are included in this risk.

Special contingent of doctors, nurses and medical support personnel were requisitioned from the Directorate General of Health Services (DGHS) to cope with the mounting additional demands arising from the Rohingya influx. The Cox's Bazar District Hospital and Teknaf and Ukhiya Health Complexes are being upgraded to meet the additional demand. They are spending more than 25 percent of their total resources for Rohingyas' health care. Thus, it has become difficult for the local people to get medical care.¹⁹ Apart from this, there is risks of transmitting HIV/AIDS among the locals through the AIDS-affected Rohingyas.

Due to the Rohingya crisis, 50 percent of the human resources and logistics support of the local administration is currently deployed to support Rohingya activities.²⁰ Hence, service recipients of Ukhiya and Teknaf, including Cox's Bazar district experience various difficulties in receiving government services.

8.3. Security Challenges

The prolonged stay of the Rohingyas poses a risk of spreading Rohingyas inside Bangladesh. Till August 2019, total 59,176 Rohingyas were arrested from different districts,²¹ whereas this number was only 690 in October 2017. Rohingyas are collecting birth certificate, national identity card, passport, mobile SIM cards in collusion with some dishonest employees of Police, Passport Office, Election Commission and local public representatives. Moreover, due to lack of proper control and supervision of the government, 500 thousand Rohingyas are using mobile phones and are active in YouTube channels in the camps. This is likely to pose a security risk along with national interests.

There are seven active terrorists groups in the camps. Members of these groups are engaged in kidnapping, collecting ransom, killing for not getting ransom, and 'yaba' and human trafficking. Moreover, local businessmen, political workers, reporters and law enforcement officials are attacked by some Rohingyas due to drug peddling, land grabbing and various conflicts. A political activist was killed on 22 August 2019. Following this, on 24 August angry locals attacked a Rohingya camp and vandalized temporary homes and NGO offices and blocked the road from Teknaf Municipality to Leda Point for three and half hours. In 2019, International Crisis Group (ICG) expressed concern that the Rohingya crisis could lead insecurity and instability in southeastern Bangladesh.

8.4. Environmental Challenges

Environmental risks including increased soil erosion, deforestation, depletion of drinking water and endangered wildlife are some of the significant impacts of the Rohingya crisis. An amount of 750 tons

¹⁷ Centre for Policy Dialogue (CPD), 'Implications of the Rohingya crisis', 2018.

¹⁸ COAST and CCNF, *Crisis within the Crisis*, July 2018.

¹⁹ *Ibid.*

²⁰ *Ibid.*

²¹ Police Super Office, Cox's Bazar, August 2019.

of wood is collected from the protected forests as a primary source of fuel for daily cooking for the families living in the camps. The Ministry of Environment, Forests and Climate Change (2019) estimated that the construction of Rohingya camps in Cox's Bazar district resulted the loss of about 6,164 acres of protected forest land worth around BDT 24.20 billion, as well as the loss of biodiversity worth BDT 14.09 billion. In addition, the crisis have negative impacts on the wildlife including the obstruction of elephant trails. According to experts, if this trend of deforestation continues, the entire forest area of Cox's Bazar will be seriously damaged. The water crisis in Ukhiya and Teknaf has become more pronounced due to extraction of ground water.

9. Conclusion

The arrival of Rohingyas in Bangladesh in 2017 were so rapid and pervasive that it posed a big challenge to the stakeholders. However, various challenges, including lack of coordination, inter-communication and monitoring exist in the current management framework. Corruption and irregularities are somewhat institutionalized in humanitarian assistance of Rohingya. Different beneficiary groups have emerged at different levels. The lack of human resources is disrupting the camp management and supervision activities. In addition, there is lack of transparency due to the absence of a central database and lack of information disclosure in humanitarian assistance programs. The Rohingya crisis is losing its significance to the international community, as a result of which the fund for sectoral humanitarian assistance is also decreasing. Moreover, specific initiatives to proceed repatriation are also absent among the international communities. If the repatriation process does not start or the problem is prolonged for uncertain period, it would increase the financial risk and pressure on the economy of Bangladesh in the long run. However, the government of Bangladesh has so far not taken any strategic plan to tackle the negative impacts as well as the financial risk.

10. Recommendations

Enhancing coordination and capacity

1. The humanitarian assistance projects targeted to Rohingyas need to be given special importance and instead of the existing system, the approval and clearance of the project should be made through the NGO Affairs Bureau and the RRRC.
2. The verification of relief materials should be done engaging the concerned stakeholders near the camps.
3. The RRRC workforce needs to be increased. Security forces have to be deployed under each CIC at the camp level. CIC's stay at camp in the night must be ensured.
4. Necessary training on 'humanitarian principles' need to be provided to the camp management personnel and ensure its compliance.
5. International organizations including the United Nations and its agencies must take effective measures to ensure fund for humanitarian assistance to the Rohingyas according to the needs.
6. A working strategy needs to be developed for adopting specific programs involving the local people who have been affected by the influx of Rohingyas.
7. The Bangladesh government has to adopt a strategic plan to tackle the negative impacts of Rohingya crisis including its financial expenditure and showcase it to the international community.

Ensuring transparency and accountability and corruption control

8. The information on humanitarian assistance projects including expenditure, implementation and progress should be published in an integrated website and updated regularly.
9. The oversight role of CICs should be strengthened to monitor the activities of NGOs at camp level to control irregularities and corruption while implementing humanitarian projects. The individuals and organizations involved in collusive corruption should be brought under accountability.
10. A structured 'Complaint Redress System' should be introduced at the RRRC office to address grievances related to humanitarian assistance activities and project implementation. The publicity of existing system of grievance redress at the camp level should be increased.
11. Rohingya representatives must be elected.

Repatriation related

12. Diplomatic initiatives have to be taken with various states, UN, international organizations and donor agencies to expedite the repatriation process of Rohingyas in the shortest possible time.

13. The rational expectation of the Rohingya population should be addressed in any agreement related to repatriation.