

THE EXCLUDED

A rapid study on the Host Community Life in the Rohingya Refugee Camps in Cox's Bazar, Bangladesh

The report, "The Excluded— the Host Community Life in the Rohingya Refugee Camps in Cox's Bazar, Bangladesh," highlights the significant challenges faced by the 2,860 Bangladeshi households, comprising 1.5% of the total population within Rohingya refugee camps. A rapid study by the COAST Foundation unfolds the difficulties not only for the Rohingya but also for Bangladeshi families in the camps, aiming to propose solutions for improved coexistence and humanitarian response in the camps.

Methodology: This study applied both qualitative and quantitative methods. For qualitative data, 162 Key Informant Interviews (KIIs) were conducted with different stakeholders like UP (Union Parishad) chairman, UP members, and Bangladeshi nationals living inside the FDMN (Forcibly Displaced Myanmar Nationals) camps, and 10 Focus Group Discussions (FGDs) were held with a mixed group of Bangladeshi nationals living inside the FDMN camps. For quantitative data, 200 staff members were simultaneously deployed in FDMN camps for data collection. At the beginning of the study, COAST approached relevant government offices and Local Government Institute (LGI) representatives to learn the exact Bangladeshi household numbers and their population residing inside the FDMN camps, only to find there is no such official data. COAST then mobilized staff members in all FDMN camps with prior approval from the RRRC (Refugee, Relief, and Repatriation Commissioner) office. In the individual CiC (Camp in Charge) offices, enumerators were able to find data on Bangladeshi nationals, but they are not AGD (Age, Gender, and Diversity) --based. Later, the study cross-checked its own data with the CiC offices and the UPs, and the accuracy rate was found to be 95%.

Findings: 2,860 Bangladeshi households face challenges underscoring the importance of support for their well-being. Among this population, 51% is Male and 49% is Female. Around 80% of the 7,445 eligible Bangladeshi citizens obtained their National Identification Number (NID), and the remaining 20% are in the process of obtaining it. Approximately 859 (30%) of the population in the study identify as day laborers, facing direct competition with

Rohingya counterparts who accept lower wages. The "Other" category, with 795(28%) family heads, includes various occupations and income sources. Only 6(0%) individuals hold government jobs, while 421 (15%) are engaged in small businesses, highlighting the economic diversity.

The educational landscape in FDMN camps includes 2,301 students in primary schools, 1,059 in high school, 301 in college, and 109 in university. Despite this, the overall education rate is 25% and it pledges the necessary holistic interventions for their education. In terms of receiving relief support, 424 (15%) households affirm receiving relief support, while 2,376 (85%) do not. Out of the 424 families receiving relief support, 96 (23%) receive it regularly, while 328 (77%) receive it irregularly, underscoring a significant gap in supporting host community people.

Safety concerns among Bangladeshi nationals in FDMN camps, wakening from potential violence by Rohingya groups, hinder peaceful coexistence. Parents fear allowing children to go to school alone due to security worries, and the increasing clashes and shootings deteriorate the situation, leading to hesitancy in leaving homes, even in emergencies. Safety

issues extend to farmland and nighttime, highlighting the urgent need for comprehensive interventions to address the safety and security concerns of the host community. The host community in FDMN camps faces hurdles in freedom of movement, being questioned despite showing identification. Hindered permission for transport, even in emergencies, is a major challenge, underscoring difficulties in accessing essential services and navigating the camp surroundings during their needs.

The encircled host community faces rising social tensions due to increasing marriages between Rohingya and host community members, impacting the younger generation and leading to conflicts. Bangladeshi girls in the camps struggle with marriage proposals due to limited transport and living conditions, causing frustration among parents. The linguistic shift among host community children adopting Rohingya slang raises concerns about the long-term impact on local cultures and identities.

The waste on hilly ridges inside the camp fence causes an environmental threat, affecting small-scale fishing, and access to clean water, and making agricultural land unusable. Cattle thefts increase financial losses, affecting economic well-being. Bangladeshi day laborers are losing job opportunities to Rohingya counterparts, with concerns about family safety hindering their search for work.

Major Recommendations: We have received several recommendations from various stakeholders, including the host community, Union Parishad, CICs & RRCs,

ISCG/UN/INGOs (Inter Sector Coordination Group, United Nations, International Non-Government Organization) aimed at addressing the challenges. Primarily, these suggestions include— repatriation as the ultimate solution to this crisis. Provide small-scale relief to the most vulnerable local families living within the camps. Provide orientation to newly appointed law enforcement agency members on the Rohingya response and equal treatment for both communities. Share the host community people database with every checkpoint to facilitate hassle-free movement in and out of the camp areas. Give access to community representation on platforms addressing problems and seeking solutions. Ensure the safety and security of school-going children and also consider vehicle support, where required. Increase surveillance and patrolling of law enforcement agencies inside the camps. Allocate a dedicated section in the camp hospitals to provide members of the host community with streamlined access to medical care. Initiate advocacy with the funding agencies to maximize the ratio of jobs between Rohingya and host community teachers. Take consideration of bazar-related disputes raised through lease and regularise the bazar management system. Enforce stringent regulations regarding the use of polythene in the camps. Think about social cohesion elements and avoid unintended negative impacts during designing activities for the Rohingya response.

Restricted Freedom of Movement: A violation of our civil rights

I am Yesmin Akter, 25 years old (actual name withheld to protect her identity), residing inside Camp 8 East in Balukhali. We live within an enclosed area with iron fencing, and we constantly face difficulties when entering and exiting the camp. The authorities do not permit the use of vehicles, even in critical emergencies. I experienced this when I was pregnant, having to walk to the hospital for my delivery and returning with my baby on foot. We are consistently told that we need CiC permission to use vehicles inside the camp. We now request unrestricted movement of us inside the camps and urge the authorities to also allow us to use vehicles during emergencies, as we are part of the encircled local host community residing here in the camp.



Secretariate: **COAST Foundation.**

Dhaka Office: Metro Melody (1st Floor), House# 13, Road# 2, Shyamoli, Dhaka 1207.

Cox's Bazar Office: House No: 75 Block: A Light House Road, Kalatoli, Cox's Bazar.