

HPG Working Paper

Rohingya refugees' perspectives on their displacement in Bangladesh

Uncertain futures

Caitlin Wake, Veronique Barbelet and
Marcus Skinner

June 2019



HPG
Humanitarian
Policy Group



About the authors

Caitlin Wake is a Senior Research Officer with the Humanitarian Policy Group (HPG) at ODI.

Veronique Barbelet is a Senior Research Fellow at HPG.

Marcus Skinner is a Senior Policy Advisor at the International Rescue Committee (IRC).

Acknowledgements

The authors would like to thank the Rohingya refugees in Bangladesh who participated in this research and shared their perspectives on life in the camps and their hopes for the future. Thanks to Kai Hopkins and Ground Truth for carrying out the survey, and Ioannis Papisilekas and Paul Chamberlain at Xchange for their advice and assistance at various stages of the research. Thanks to Nabila and Tarequl Islam for translation and assistance with the fieldwork. We are grateful to the peer reviewers and Christina Bennett for helpful feedback on earlier versions of this report. The authors would also like to thank Matthew Foley for his expert editing of this report. Finally, thanks to Global Affairs Canada for their comments and their support to this research.

The logo for Canada, featuring the word "Canada" in a serif font with a small Canadian flag icon above the letter "a".

This work is licensed under CC BY-NC-ND 4.0.

Readers are encouraged to reproduce material for their own publications, as long as they are not being sold commercially. ODI requests due acknowledgement and a copy of the publication. For online use, we ask readers to link to the original resource on the ODI website. The views presented in this paper are those of the author(s) and do not necessarily represent the views of ODI or our partners.

Contents

	Acronyms	v
	Executive summary	1
1	Introduction	4
	1.1 Overview of the crisis	4
	1.2 Methodology	5
	1.3 Outline of the report	6
2	Political and policy context	8
3	Challenges and aspirations of Rohingya refugees in Bangladesh	10
	3.1 Challenges	10
	3.2 Refugees' goals and aspirations	13
	3.3 Where refugees want to live in the medium and long term	14
	3.4 Self-determination and the importance of engagement	16
4	Improving the lives of Rohingya refugees in the medium to long term	17
	4.1 Rohingya refugees' views on what would improve their lives	17
	4.2 Livelihoods	18
5	Community leadership, participation and engagement	23
	5.1 Community leadership	23
	5.2 Refugee participation and engagement	25
6	Conclusion	27
	References	30

Boxes and figures

Boxes

Box 1: Pervasive worry and uncertainty	13
Box 2: Who has a shop and what does it involve?	22
Box 3: Women in leadership roles	25

Figures

Figure 1: Map of Cox's Bazar refugee population as of January 2019	7
Figure 2: Where Rohingya refugees would want to live if they were not able to return to Myanmar in the next 5–10 years	15
Figure 3: If you were to stay in Bangladesh in the next 5 to 10 years, what are the top three things that would make your life better?	17
Figure 4: Which of the following sector would you like to work in?	20
Figure 5: If you had the right to work, what would be the greatest help to you?	21

Acronyms

ASEAN	Association of Southeast Asian Nations
BDT	Bangladeshi Taka
CiC	Camp-in-Charge official
CPA	Comprehensive Plan of Action
INGO	international non-governmental organisation
IOM	International Organization for Migration
IRC	International Rescue Committee
JRP	Joint Response Plan
NGO	non-governmental organisation
OCHA	UN Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs
OHCHR	Office of the UN High Commissioner for Human Rights
RRRC	Refugee Relief and Repatriation Commissioner
UNDP	UN Development Programme
UNHCR	UN High Commissioner for Refugees
WASH	water, sanitation and hygiene

Executive summary

Bangladesh hosts over 900,000 Rohingya refugees, and their displacement is likely to be protracted (Wake and Yu, 2018). Recognising the complexities and sheer scale of the challenge of refugee hosting in Cox's Bazar, as well as other development challenges and opportunities in Bangladesh, there is a need to explore better ways to accommodate the needs of Rohingya refugees and support local communities in the medium term. Such discussions and plans must take into account the views of the Rohingya themselves. While there is good understanding of the short-term needs of Rohingya refugees and their perspectives, this does not appear to be informing planning for the medium term. This paper – based on qualitative and quantitative research with Rohingya refugees in Bangladesh – provides insight into the current political and policy context, refugees' challenges and aspirations, community engagement and what could improve refugees' lives in the medium to long term.

Political and policy context

The Government of Bangladesh's position is driven primarily by its desire to maintain national and international focus on return as the solution to the crisis, and hence on Myanmar's responsibility to create the conditions that allow this. With traditional durable solutions not an option, at least for the time being, dialogue with the Government of Bangladesh to secure a more sustainable response to the Rohingya crisis continues. Work has begun to map the role the international community could play in supporting such a policy shift. It is important that dialogue around new approaches maximises opportunities for learning from previous efforts at international responsibility-sharing in Jordan, Lebanon and Ethiopia. It is also critical that any medium-term response in Bangladesh is grounded in an understanding of what refugees and host communities believe is most important to them.

Challenges and aspirations of Rohingya refugees in Bangladesh

While the focus of this research was on the next 5–10 years, it is clear that, if the day-to-day challenges refugees face are not addressed, they will continue into the

future. Refugees identified their immediate concerns as living conditions, lack of firewood or stoves, healthcare, water, sanitation and hygiene (WASH) support and protection, inadequate food and insufficient supplies. Broader challenges include education, marriage and livelihoods. Their responses indicated some clear goals and aspirations, including safe return to Myanmar when conditions are in place, access to education and a better future for their children, improved living conditions and the ability and means to support themselves and their families. If they were to remain in Bangladesh, most refugees wanted to stay where they were currently living, preferring the status quo – even when it was difficult – to the uncertainty and risk of change.

Improving the lives of Rohingya refugees in the medium to long term

Refugees felt that their lives would first and foremost be improved through education, then better living conditions, then the ability to support themselves. Most refugees we interviewed wanted to be able to support themselves and their family through work, seeing it as a way to generate income and meet their needs, a way to be active rather than idly thinking about traumatic experiences and a way to protect against inconsistent levels of aid and concerns that aid would not continue indefinitely. While some refugees worked informally or volunteered, it is not legal for refugees to work in Bangladesh, and barriers to generating an income included lack of opportunities, limited freedom of movement and old age or injury. While the economic situation in the camps means that more women have become breadwinners and are undertaking non-traditional work, and it was evident that displacement had begun to change some minds about work and gender norms, both men and women preferred women to do home-based work. Findings from interviews indicated that, of the many refugees who did want to work, they primarily wanted to do home-based work (such as sewing), start or expand a business or work for a non-governmental organisation (NGO). These findings have implications for the type of response needed in Bangladesh: one that combines market-based opportunities, educational opportunities and vocational training.

Community leadership, participation and engagement

Generally, the research found that refugees participated in and engaged on issues such as short-term needs and assistance, but not on medium- to long-term needs, aspirations and plans. The research found Rohingya leadership groups had a similar outlook to individual refugees on what is needed to support refugees in the medium to long term. However, the relationship between refugees and leadership groups was characterised by a lack of trust, and leadership groups were not always considered legitimate by individual refugees. Community leadership among Rohingya refugees is fragmented and seems increasingly marked by competition and conflict between civil society groups. As a result, engaging with Rohingya refugees and ensuring that their perspectives are represented in higher-level policy dialogues is challenging. The top-down nature of community leadership, whether through the formal *majhi* system or through more grass roots groups that may not always be representative of the wider community, may explain or have contributed to a general sense of disengagement or a lack of participation by individual refugees we interviewed. While one avenue for supporting more effective engagement could be through ‘engineering’ a less fragmented and healthier civil society dynamic among refugees, our evidence calls for more investment in gathering individual perspectives as a way to represent diverse perspectives.

Recommendations

In order to ensure that refugee perspectives are integrated in future policy discussions on their future, and based on the findings of this research, the study recommends the following in Bangladesh:

Recommendation 1: Continue to press for adequate levels of funding to improve living conditions in camps for Rohingya refugees

As displacement becomes protracted and funding declines, the situation facing Rohingya refugees in camps in Cox’s Bazar could quickly worsen, and could be used to motivate premature return. Instead, responses should look historically at the importance of maintaining adequate conditions in the camps, including improving the provision of basic services (shelter, WASH, healthcare), and improving community representation and social cohesion (as outlined below).

Recommendation 2: Effective communication and engagement of refugees

Clear communication with refugees about their options and the intentions of the Government of Bangladesh would help ease anxiety and tension. Immediate action could include strengthening current communication strategies on humanitarian aid to incorporate more information on medium-term issues, as well as clearer engagement on government positions. This would need action from humanitarian organisations present in the camps already engaging with refugees on short-term needs, as well as in discussion with the government. Future plans for relocation or voluntary return will need to involve careful community consultation based on an understanding of the Rohingyas’ desire not to be uprooted again. Communication and community engagement should as far as possible be face-to-face; household visits in particular would reach women who may not leave their homes.

Recommendation 3: Continue with surveys on medium-term aspirations and support

The international community, in particular stakeholders involved in discussing solutions to the Rohingya crisis, should continue surveying refugees’ medium- to long-term aspirations, support and needs. Representative quantitative surveys should be accompanied by qualitative methods. Based on the evidence gathered in this study, individual interviews with refugees in their homes would best ensure that refugees’ views are gathered in ways that fit with their preferences. Such research and gathering of perspectives should seek to encapsulate the views of host and affected Bangladeshi communities, to ensure that policy changes also address their grievances. Quantitative and qualitative work is needed to ensure that women are engaged, and their voice, priorities and potential are well represented.

Recommendation 4: Improve community engagement, community relationships and camp governance

While individual engagement is refugees’ preferred approach, it is also a symptom of the fragmentation of community life and leadership. Further study and effort should be geared towards identifying opportunities to build trust among refugees, and between refugees and leadership structures, including through increased refugee representation and strengthened accountability and oversight mechanisms for existing governance structures. Community engagement should be structured in a way that ensures participation and representation (in particular women’s perspectives) and empowers the Rohingya

people to find solutions to their displacement in the short, medium and long term. Three elements would be needed to take this forward:

- Building political will among the Bangladeshi authorities and international donors to engage the Rohingya in the ways suggested above, and to finance capacity-building assistance.
- The election of camp-level representatives can play a positive role in improving representation, but such efforts must be combined with training of camp leaders in the principles and practices of community representation; supporting refugees and their representatives with legal training so they understand Rohingya rights and national legal frameworks; efforts to elevate the leadership role played by women; and steps to reduce the risks faced by women in leadership roles through complementary efforts to encourage communities to accept women's roles in community leadership.
- Providing support to the Rohingya to develop community groups and leadership structures that are more representative and legitimate. This would require donors becoming less risk-averse in their engagement with the Rohingya population, as well as recognising the difficulties that might arise through non-engagement with groups considered more politically risky. Engagement with civil society groups could have positive long-term effects on the future of the Rohingya population in Myanmar – as well as a medium-term impact on their lives in displacement.

Recommendation 5: Adopt strategies to contribute to the self-reliance of refugees

The Government of Bangladesh and donors must prioritise the removal of barriers to education and livelihoods, and the provision of multi-year funding for these sectors, in order to reduce refugees' dependence on aid and their vulnerability to exploitation and negative coping strategies.

- **Livelihoods:** recognising the likely duration of Rohingya displacement, multi-year funding should prioritise cash programming and longer-term livelihood and vocational training for refugees, including opportunities for women. Critically, livelihoods actions must also seek to play a gender-transformative role by addressing the risks of gender-based violence faced by women seeking work, and address laws, policies and social norms that reinforce and exacerbate gender inequalities and limit women's economic empowerment.

- **Education:** provision of education for child refugees is critical to avoid a 'lost generation' unable to meet their own needs. Priority must be placed on securing government agreement on the official language for refugee education, the Learning Competency Framework and Approach, and, with multi-year donor funding, expanding investment in teacher training and the provision of formal inclusive primary and secondary education and technical and vocational education and training.

Recommendation 6: Focus international dialogue on the priorities articulated by refugees

Refugees were clear about what would make the most difference to their lives in the medium term and improve their futures. Actors involved in discussing a medium-term solution to the refugee situation in Bangladesh, including with the government, should focus their efforts on improving access to quality education for Rohingya children, improving living conditions and shelter and supporting the right to work, including the right to own a business outside or within the home, and the right to freedom of movement.

- Relevant stakeholders, including the UN High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR), the International Organization for Migration (IOM) and refugee-focused NGOs, could play a larger role in ensuring that refugee voices are represented in high-level political and policy discussions in ways that are not tokenistic or a misrepresentation through diaspora or community groups that may or may not reflect the perspectives of refugees. This may be through committing to supporting the recommendations outlined above.
- The same stakeholders should identify opportunities for Rohingya to present these issues and concerns directly to relevant policy-makers.

Recommendation 7: Develop, fund and deliver a medium-term development plan for Cox's Bazar that addresses priority needs as articulated by refugee and host populations

In the longer term, continued efforts are needed to agree an ambitious longer-term commitment to a local development plan for Cox's Bazar. This will require coordinated multi-year donor and private sector funding for local community and infrastructural investments and the identification of policy reforms (such as the right to work and freedom of movement) that can contribute to mitigating the impact of refugee hosting, support refugees in contributing to local growth and development and increase social cohesion between affected communities.

1 Introduction

1.1 Overview of the crisis

In 2017, over 700,000 Rohingya fled from Myanmar to Bangladesh, joining hundreds of thousands who had already sought refuge there. Today, Bangladesh hosts over 900,000 Rohingya refugees (UN, 2019).¹ A 2018 report of the Independent International Fact-Finding Mission on Myanmar established that crimes against humanity were committed in Rakhine State, and concluded that there is sufficient grounds to investigate and prosecute senior members of the Tatmadaw (the Myanmar army) for genocide (Human Rights Council, 2018).

The 2019 Joint Response Plan (JRP) (UN, 2019) underlines that both the cause of and the solution to the Rohingya humanitarian crisis are ultimately to be found in Myanmar. This requires steps to address the historic discrimination faced by the Rohingya in Rakhine. It also calls for steps to address the root causes of the crisis through the implementation of the Rakhine Advisory Commission recommendations, as endorsed by the Myanmar Government, including removing restrictions on freedom of movement of the Rohingya and the creation of pathways to citizenship. However, progress on these steps remains limited and there is no indication that conditions conducive to refugee return will emerge in Rakhine State, at least in the medium term. This highlights the need for international and regional efforts to maintain assistance to Rohingya refugees in Bangladesh, alongside sustained attention on conditions in Myanmar and the promotion of measures to address the root causes of the crisis.

In the meantime, nearly a million stateless² refugees are living in limbo in Bangladesh in inhospitable areas prone to hazards and disasters. The displacement

of so many people in such a short time has created the world's largest and densest refugee camps, with population density as high as 8m² per person (the minimum standard, according to international best practice, is 45m² (OCHA, 2018: 13)). The Government of Bangladesh, with resources and support from local, national and international stakeholders (donors, multilateral banks, humanitarian organisations and others), has led the herculean effort to respond to the immense task of supporting the displaced Rohingya. These efforts have been commendable, not least as many countries, including wealthy ones, are stepping back from their obligations to protect people seeking safety from conflict and violence. However, the rights and freedoms of refugees are limited, the operational space for non-governmental organisations (NGOs) is constrained and there are limits on forms of programming that could contribute to refugee self-reliance, such as education, livelihoods and cash. While conditions in the camps have stabilised, the severity of the crisis and the limits on humanitarian programming mean that activities remain to a large extent oriented towards meeting immediate needs.

Displacement for newly arrived refugees is likely to be protracted (Wake and Yu, 2018). Indeed, refugees who arrived following the 2017 violence in Myanmar joined approximately 200,000 already living in protracted displacement in Bangladesh (UN, 2019: 10). The JRP for 2019 acknowledges that 'sustained advocacy efforts are required to recognize the legal status of refugees in Bangladesh and address important protection issues, especially with regard to civil documentation, access to justice, the right to education and access to livelihood, while at the same time pursuing sustainable solutions' (UN, 2019: 30). Regional experience of long-term encampment illustrates the imperative of securing

1 The Government of Bangladesh has not signed the 1951 Refugee Convention. It uses the term 'forcibly displaced Myanmar nationals' to refer to the Rohingya, and some stakeholders involved in the response acquiesce to the use of such language. In this report, we refer to the Rohingya in Bangladesh as Rohingya refugees. This terminology is of great importance in describing the Rohingya, a stateless population who would clearly satisfy the criteria for refugee status under international law.

2 Most Rohingya who have fled Myanmar are also stateless, having been denied citizenship in Myanmar. As a result, voluntary return as a truly durable solution would need to be characterised by both the assurance that persecution of the Rohingya will end, as well as assurance of citizenship with appropriate rights and documentation. Based on the *jus soli* provision in the 1951 Citizenship Act of Bangladesh, everyone born in Bangladesh should automatically acquire citizenship at birth (Kiragu et al., 2011). However, Bangladesh refuses to allow the births of Rohingya babies in Bangladesh to be registered and they are denied their right to a nationality (de Chickera, 2018), rendering a new generation of Rohingya stateless.

these outcomes. Analysis by the International Rescue Committee (IRC) of encamped internally displaced Rohingya in Sittwe in Myanmar found evidence that overcrowded shelters were leading to excess morbidity from preventable diseases and increasing the risk of intimate partner violence and child marriage (IRC: 2017: 2). In Thailand, where the IRC has worked with refugees from Myanmar in camps for over 30 years, the lack of livelihoods opportunities and stress contribute to high levels of domestic violence, suicide and gender-based violence, including early marriage and intimate partner violence. Evidence of similar trends is beginning to emerge in Bangladesh. Recognising the complexities and sheer scale of the challenge of refugee hosting in Cox's Bazar, as well as other development challenges and opportunities in Bangladesh,³ there is a need to explore better ways to host Rohingya refugees and support host communities in the medium term (Huang and Gough, 2019). Such discussions and plans must take into account the views of the Rohingya themselves.

Given the scale of the refugee crisis in Bangladesh, it is not surprising that national, regional and international stakeholders, including donors, multilateral banks and humanitarian organisations, have employed a variety of funding and response mechanisms to address the situation. In July 2018, UNHCR led a Solidarity Approach to ensure that 'support is maintained for the refugees and host communities in Bangladesh' (UNCHR, 2018a). Global and bilateral dialogues are taking place between donors, multilateral banks, UNHCR, IOM and others with the Bangladeshi Government to discuss the Rohingya situation in Bangladesh, including both short- and longer-term solutions.

While there is good understanding of the short-term needs of Rohingya refugees and their perspectives, gathered through surveys and in humanitarian organisations' needs assessments, refugee perspectives do not appear to be informing planning for the medium term. This is problematic for two main reasons. First, research and policy work has consistently recognised the importance of incorporating refugee perspectives in programme and policy design to uphold refugees' dignity and rights and to ensure accountability (UN, 2018). Indeed, the Global Compact on Refugees notes that responses are most effective when they meaningfully engage those they are intended to assist and protect and includes a commitment to refugee and host community participation with a particular focus on women, youth and persons with disabilities (UN, 2018).

Second, recent experience has shown that failing to include refugee voices and perspectives in medium- to long-term planning leads to sub-optimal results (see Barbelet et al., 2018). Analysis of the design and implementation of the Jordan Compact has highlighted how failing to integrate refugee perspectives undermines the positive impacts of policy reform on refugee lives and livelihoods (Barbelet et al., 2018).

With this in mind, this research seeks to understand what refugees see as most helpful in supporting their goals for the medium and long term, including if they had to stay in Bangladesh. The research also set out to understand how far refugees' individual perspectives were known and reflected in community leadership structures. It is based on the belief that the perspectives of refugees on these issues are not 'nice to know', but critical to informing dialogue, advocacy and interaction of key international stakeholders with the Bangladeshi Government on the Rohingya refugee situation.

1.2 Methodology

The study employed quantitative (random sample survey) and qualitative (semi-structured interviews, focus groups) methods, with the report based primarily on the latter. Quantitative surveys were conducted with 943 Rohingya refugees in 24 sites in Ukhia and Teknaf in the last quarter of 2018. The surveys were carried out by Ground Truth Solutions, an independent NGO that provides the humanitarian sector with data on the views of affected people. The surveys covered a range of different topics (Ground Truth Solutions, 2019). The questions for this research were:

- If you were not able to return safely to Myanmar in the next 5 to 10 years, and you could decide where you lived with your family, where would you want to live?
- If you were to stay in Bangladesh for the next 5 to 10 years, how would you like to support yourself and your family?
- If you were to stay in Bangladesh for the next 5 to 10 years, what are the things that would make your life better?
- Which sectors would you want to work in?
- If you had the right to work, what would be the greatest help to you?

The semi-structured interviews were carried out in Cox's Bazar in late January–early February 2019. They were based on these questions, with additional ones on

3 Bangladesh has made impressive gains in terms of human development. However, 63 million Bangladeshis still live below the poverty line, and the country remains vulnerable to political, economic and natural-hazard-related shocks (UNDP, 2019).

refugees' current situation and community engagement and leadership within the Rohingya camp communities:

- What are the main challenges and issues in your life today?
- What are you hoping for your life now? What are your goals and objectives?
- Since coming to Bangladesh, have you ever been consulted by community leaders or aid actors about what you want in the medium to long term?

For the qualitative research 40 interviews were conducted (22 women, 18 men) in the following locations (see Figure 1): Shamlapur, Unchiprang and various camps in Kutupalong Balukhali and Nayapara. A gender-, age- and diversity-sensitive framework was used to guide participant selection, which was conducted through a combination of purposive and snowball sampling. The refugees interviewed were all part of the 'new' influx, most having been in Bangladesh for a year and a half (range 5–24 months). Their ages ranged from 18–70 (most were in their twenties and thirties), the majority were married with children and a quarter were individuals who would be considered by standards commonly used in humanitarian assessment to have an additional vulnerability (i.e. they were elderly, widowed, single parents or had a physical disability).

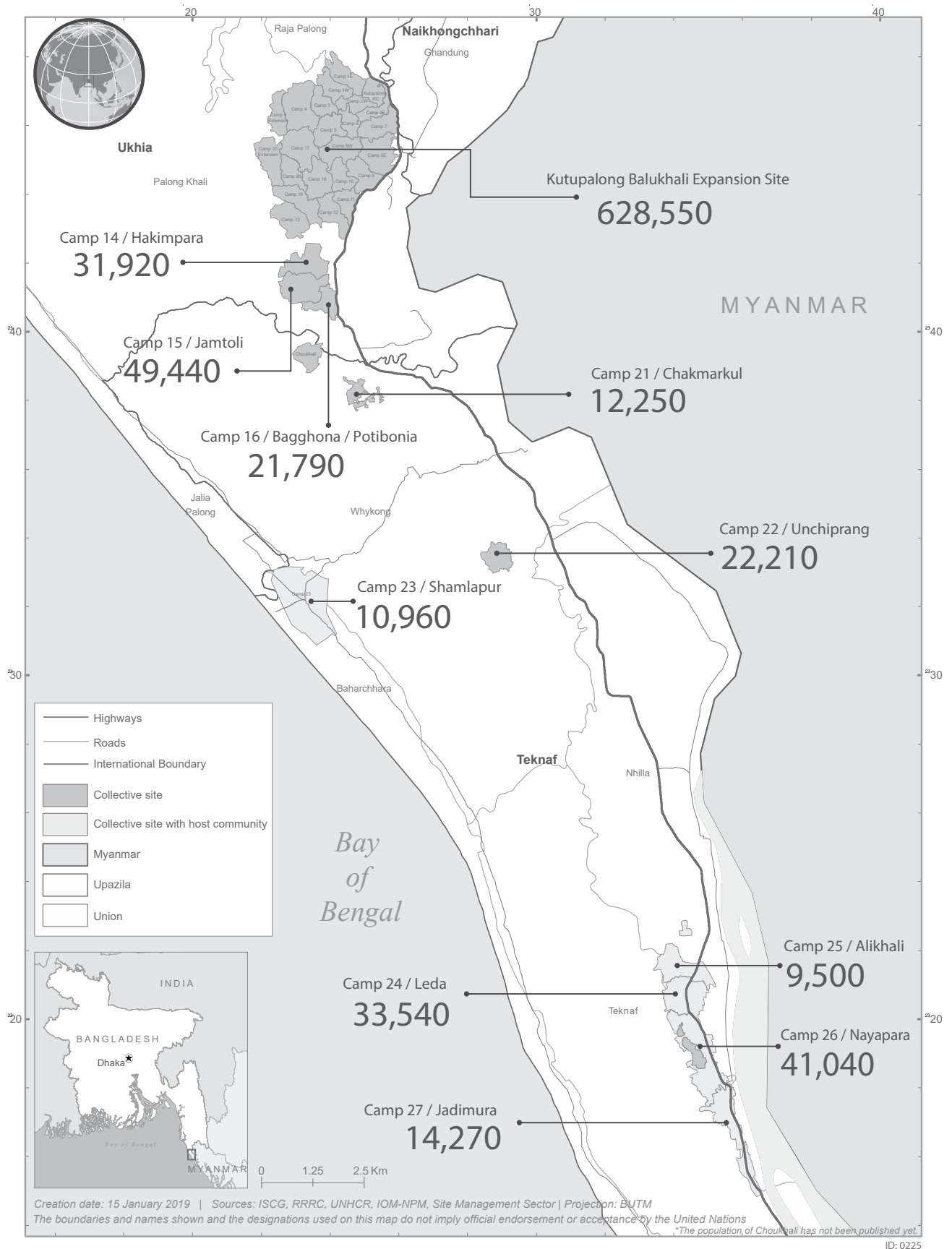
Two key informant interviews were conducted with refugee leaders of community-based organisations in the camps. Five focus groups were also held: four with refugees living in Shamlapur (two with women, two with men – some of these refugees were part of the 'new' influx; others had been born in Bangladesh or had been in Bangladesh for many years). One focus group was with a group of male *majhis* (refugee leaders) from Kutupalong Balukhali. The data collected during the research was analysed by gender, and this report notes where findings differed between men and women.

The research has several limitations. First, while the survey sampling was representative at the response level, it cannot be used to fully understand the views of Rohingya within any one particular camp. Conversely, the qualitative research is not generalisable. Findings from the interviews nevertheless provide important insights into how a diverse sample of Rohingya refugees sees their future. Second, we worked with Bangladeshi research assistants from Cox's Bazar who translated during interviews and focus groups; as there is significant but not complete overlap between Chittagonian and Rohingya languages, some nuance may have been lost in translation. The surveys were conducted by enumerators who speak Bengali and Chittagonian, and who received Rohingya language training. This helps with translation challenges, but cannot remove them entirely. Lastly, conducting research in the camps was logistically difficult, as space constraints prevented private conversations. While interviews were generally conducted in the privacy of refugees' shelters, they were often in the presence of family or friends at some point, which could potentially have affected responses.

1.3 Outline of the report

Chapter 2 situates the research in the broader policy discussions around options for supporting the Rohingya in displacement, and various durable solutions. Chapter 3 outlines refugees' aspirations, including where they would like to live in the medium to long term, as well as the challenges they raised during interviews about their lives in Bangladesh. Chapter 4 focuses on what refugees think would support their livelihoods and improve their lives in the medium to long term. Finally, Chapter 5 delves into community leadership and organisation, relations with individual Rohingya refugees and the views of refugees on how best to integrate their perspectives in global dialogues. Chapter 6 outlines conclusions and recommendations.

Figure 1: Map of Cox's Bazar refugee population as of January 2019



Source: ISCG (2019a).

2 Political and policy context

Since August 2017, the national and international response to the situation in Rakhine State, Myanmar, has come under intense scrutiny. Following her mission in 2019, Yanghee Lee, the Special Rapporteur on the situation of human rights in Myanmar, concluded that ‘it is evident that Myanmar is not working to create conditions for return’ (OHCHR, 2019). Progress against key elements of the Rakhine Advisory Commission recommendations has been limited, and the prospect that conditions conducive to return can be established remains minimal.

The challenges facing refugees who arrived in 2017 are familiar from previous refugee influxes. A review by UNHCR of its response to the caseload of refugees who fled Myanmar for Bangladesh in the 1970s and 1990s documents lack of legal status, tensions with host communities, protection risks, including gender-based violence, poor shelter, limited access to services and restrictions on the provision of support that could contribute to refugee self-reliance, namely freedom of movement, education and livelihoods (2011: 8–15). The same review noted that there were ‘relatively few options for UNHCR to pursue in Bangladesh. Resettlement has been stopped. Voluntary repatriation to Myanmar is currently not foreseeable. Local integration cannot be officially pursued. Self-reliance remains the only option, but without freedom of movement or the right to work, this remains an elusive quest’ (ibid: 23). The same could be said of the situation in Cox’s Bazar today. The speed of displacement and the rapid growth of camps in Bangladesh, the level of congestion, difficult topography and climatic risks, including monsoons and cyclones, have combined to create significant risks and challenges to accessing basic services for refugees (UNHCR, 2018b: 2–7), compounding the severe trauma experienced during flight. Camp congestion is a critical part of the government’s justification for the proposed relocation of 100,000 refugees to Bhashan Char, a silt island three hours off the coast of Bangladesh in the Bay of Bengal. At the time of writing relocation was on hold pending a full assessment of conditions and the scope for the delivery of assistance, and clear and accurate information to allow refugees to make an informed decision over relocation.

While the 2018 JRP, developed in partnership with the Government of Bangladesh, included a focus on ‘Preparing for durable solutions in the short- and mid-term by promoting refugee self-reliance’ (OCHA, 2019b), the 2019 JRP reflects a much more limited policy and operational space, with fewer references to refugee livelihoods and none to formal education (UN, 2019). Regulations and procedures limit non-UN actors from delivering any assistance not considered ‘life-saving’ (UNHCR, 2018b).

The government is alive to the risks associated with the presence of a large uneducated and unoccupied refugee population in Cox’s Bazar. Concerns around radicalisation, crime (including drugs) and negative coping strategies (including child labour, early marriage and human trafficking) are important themes in discussions of the crisis among senior government officials in Dhaka and affected communities in Cox’s Bazar, where the burden of hosting the refugees is being acutely felt. Cox’s Bazar is one of Bangladesh’s poorest districts, with approximately 33% of the population living below the poverty line (Lemma et al., 2018: 5). Service provision is limited. A survey of host communities found that, of those who reported being unhappy about the Rohingya presence, 72% said this was due to competition over services (ISCG, 2019: 27).

While some in the host community and local officials recognise the potential to mitigate these concerns through the expansion of services such as education and livelihoods, national government policy remains opposed to medium-term programming. The government’s position is driven primarily by its desire to maintain national and international focus on return as the solution to the crisis, and hence on Myanmar’s responsibility to create conditions that allow this. The fact that the November 2018 repatriation attempt was unsuccessful refocused international attention on the conditions in Rakhine that continue to deny the opportunity for the Rohingya to return. Yet with return still the priority for the Government of Bangladesh, it is clear that dialogue on medium-term self-reliance initiatives in Cox’s Bazar will only be possible if they believe the international community remains similarly committed to return. As such, credible international pressure on Myanmar remains a prerequisite for steps to address conditions for the Rohingya in Bangladesh.

However, with China blocking efforts at the UN Security Council to even discuss the crisis, few credible means are available to compel a change in Myanmar's behaviour to allow for return.

The emphasis placed on repatriation underscores the government's strong reluctance to sanction any response that appears to suggest that Bangladesh is taking long-term responsibility for newly arrived refugees, including self-reliance initiatives, resettlement or relocation of refugees elsewhere in Cox's Bazar or Bangladesh (other than Bhashan Char). Finally, it is important to note that some Rohingya will also oppose interventions that reduce pressure on Myanmar to create conditions conducive to allow them to return.

It is also important to recognise how current regional attitudes to refugee hosting are shaped by historic policies, including the Comprehensive Plan of Action (CPA) agreed in 1989 in response to a surge in Indochinese refugees. The historical reluctance to align the CPA with human rights and the 1951 Refugee Convention has to some degree contributed to a persistent attitude within the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) and among South Asian states that they are not bound by the norms and principles of an international, rights-based refugee response – a scenario with potentially significant implications for the medium-term response in Bangladesh and efforts to secure policy reforms in support of a more sustainable refugee response.

With traditional durable solutions off the table, at least for the time being, dialogue with the Government of Bangladesh to secure a more sustainable response to the Rohingya crisis continues. Following her February 2019 visit to Bangladesh, then UK Secretary of State for International Development Penny Mordaunt stated that it was 'time to look beyond short-term life-saving assistance support, to give [refugees] the skills they need to create sustainable lives both for themselves and their families' (Gov. uk, 2019). UN Special Rapporteur Yanghee Lee has also encouraged the government 'to begin to engage in longer-term planning ... A failure to do so will not only have negative consequences for the refugee population but also for Bangladesh, including most significantly, the host community' (OHCHR, 2019).

In a 2011 review, UNCHR called for 'international development actors to support area-based programmes that would bring jobs, services and other tangible benefits to refugees and local residents alike' (2011: 24). Some steps towards a response that meets the needs of refugees and host communities have been taken. All programming under the JRP must include an element of work with the host community, although only a limited number of people have benefited from such interventions (Ground Truth Solutions, 2019: 2). Both the World Bank (Lawder, 2018) and the Asian Development Bank have committed funding to support services for all affected populations. However, a longer-term approach to the crisis in Cox's Bazar would require a significant shift in government policy. Current efforts to support host communities in Cox's Bazar do not constitute the type of comprehensive development plan that might encourage the government to change its approach to the crisis and recognise the potential benefits of longer-term support to displacement-affected communities.

Work has begun to map the role the international community could play in supporting such a policy shift. The Centre for Global Development has published proposals for a responsibility-sharing agreement between international and regional actors and Bangladesh. Building on the experience of development financing and beyond-aid solutions in Jordan, Lebanon and Ethiopia, the proposals include trade concessions, labour mobility agreements, foreign direct investment, climate financing and resettlement (Huang and Gough, 2019: 1). While these suggestions offer promise, it is clear they are some way from adoption as elements of the international response to this crisis. Furthermore, it is important that dialogue around new approaches maximises the opportunity for learning from previous efforts at international responsibility-sharing. In each case (Jordan, Lebanon, Ethiopia), results could be enhanced through greater emphasis on area-based approaches, and by ensuring that the design of interventions is rooted in an understanding of the perspectives, aspirations and skills of displaced and host communities themselves. It is critical therefore that the design of a medium-term response in Bangladesh is grounded in an understanding of what refugees and host communities believe is most important to them. This report seeks to make a contribution to these efforts.

3 Challenges and aspirations of Rohingya refugees in Bangladesh

This chapter explores the perspectives and aspirations of Rohingya refugees on the challenges they face and foresee in their lives, their next 5–10 years in Bangladesh and where they would like to live. We have made this our focus because our previous research on the livelihoods of Rohingya refugees in Malaysia (Wake and Cheung, 2016) and on the livelihoods of Central African refugees in Cameroon (Barbelet, 2017), Turkey and Jordan (Bellamy et al., 2017) illustrated the importance of understanding refugees' goals and aspirations, including how they change over the course of protracted displacement, and how they affect refugees' behaviour and interactions with aid actors. Our previous research and the research presented in this report draw on Levine's insights on sustainable livelihoods. Levine (2014: 5) asserts 'People will only choose a strategy from among those that they feel are possible for them ... the possibilities which people see depend partly on what is there, but also on their own perceptions – their perceptions both of the options available and of themselves and what they can do'.

Three overarching findings emerge from listening to Rohingya refugees' views about the future. The first is that their perceptions of what is possible are cautious and constrained. Second, they have had to reorient their expectations and hopes for life. This was particularly hard for those who had assets and a relatively comfortable economic position in Myanmar, and who have struggled with trauma, loss and difficult living conditions in the camps. Lastly, their hopes for the future emerge from and are intrinsically linked to their present, difficult reality in the camps. The following provides more detailed analysis and examples.

3.1 Challenges

Both men and women identified similar challenges. While the focus of this research was on the next 5–10 years, it was clear that, if the day-to-day challenges

refugees face are not addressed, they will continue into the future: as one man in Kutupalong said, if his short-term problems are not resolved, they will become long-term problems. Many of the challenges refugees face are intrinsically interconnected, and trade-offs are often made in order to address them.

3.1.1 Immediate challenges

Living conditions. The refugees we spoke to shared the following concerns about shelter conditions: size of shelters relative to family numbers, camp congestion, quality of shelters, particularly given variations in seasonal temperatures and the monsoon season and, finally, limited lighting. One 21-year-old man in Unchiprang expressed his need for a different shelter, as 12 members of his family, including his parents and siblings, were currently living together in a small shelter. One refugee in Kutupalong said:

This camp it is so congested, it is not open. Since this block is near host community and they don't allow refugees to enter the children cannot play, they say if you come we will harm you. Since there is not enough space for children to play they have to stay at home and mothers have to look after children. We are living as confined people that's why we want to move to another camp so we can move more easily.

Having to pay rent to the Bangladeshi owners of the land on which their shelter sat was a pressing concern for some interviewees in Balukali, Kutupalong, Shamlapur and Nayapura. During a focus group in Shamlapur, one man explained that they initially had to pay 2,000 Bangladeshi Taka (BDT) (\$24) a month in rent to the owner of the land. The military had asked them if they had to pay rent, but they told them 'no' because they were worried it would get the landlord into trouble. The landlord recently increased their rent to 5,000 BDT (\$59), which they were unable to pay. They had reported this to the UN and hoped to

be moved to another camp where they would not have to pay rent. Similarly, a 50-year-old woman in Kutupalong said that, because their shelter was near the host community, they had to pay 1,000 BDT (\$12) to the host community initially, then 200 BDT (\$2.37) per month. They reported this to the Camp-in-Charge official (CiC: an official mandated by the government to assume all camp management responsibilities), who told the host community to stop demanding money from the refugees, but they started demanding 1kg of rice instead. The woman said that they were not in a position to pay rent, so they wanted to go back to Myanmar.

As the experiences of the refugees above illustrate, there is a risk that conditions in the camps – in this specific instance, inability to pay rent – have led some refugees to consider moving or even returning to Myanmar. This raises concerns about how conditions in the camp – stemming from both humanitarian access and levels of aid – may affect Rohingya refugees’ decisions about their future. It is essential that humanitarian actors monitor this in the context of any discussions around return, given the historical precedent of coercive tactics being used to compel the return of Rohingya refugees from Bangladesh to Myanmar in the late 1970s, including attacks on refugees (by Bangladeshi security and government officials) and withholding food and other essential assistance to compel refugees to return (Lindquist, 1979; Crisp, 2018).

Lack of firewood or stoves. Despite efforts to distribute gas stoves to refugees,⁴ those we interviewed repeatedly mentioned lack of gas stoves, gas cylinders and firewood as a problem. This is a significant issue given that assessments show that the risk of violence when collecting firewood is a serious concern for refugees (OCHA, 2019b). Refugees who had been given gas stoves were apparently entitled to regular refills, yet many we interviewed said their gas cylinder had run out and they had no way to refill it. One 34-year-old in Kutupalong with six children said: ‘we have a gas stove and cylinder and the gas is empty and we don’t have money to buy more and for firewood ... if we go to the nearest village we are afraid because people threaten to kill us. It has been two months since we got the cylinder and we don’t remember which NGO gave it to us’. Another refugee in Kutupalong, who had also been given a gas stove and had run out of gas, said: ‘Women are burning their clothes and plastic in order to cook food, others are taking wood and bamboo from their houses

and burning this in order to cook. They are really suffering’. The refugees were not allowed to leave the camp or work, and thus were unable to buy more gas or firewood.

Healthcare. Refugees described two issues with healthcare: that they could not access the level of (secondary) care they needed, and that the quality of care was low. The recent JRP affirms these and other challenges, including limited availability of treatment for non-communicable diseases, quality of care issues and heavy demand on the services available (while the standard is one round-the-clock primary health centre per 25,000 people, in the camps each centre serves more than double that, 54,000 refugees) (UN, 2019: 39). Refugees we interviewed from various camps expressed dissatisfaction and mistrust regarding health facilities. For example, numerous refugees asserted that there was some sort of corruption taking place at NGO-run clinics, which meant that treatment was inadequate.

Refugees noted that health problems were caused or exacerbated by conditions in the camp (such as poor sanitation), and cited numerous barriers to care. In a focus group, one woman said ‘my brother is sick and we don’t have enough money for treatment because our parents are poor so it would be better if we could get treatment. There is an NGO hospital and they do treatment there, but the treatment is not good, if you have fever they just give tablets but they cannot treat any bigger disease. If we have a bigger problem the NGO can refer us to the hospital but otherwise we cannot go. Even if we are referred if we do not have money we cannot go’. Several refugees who worked as volunteers said they used their wages to access private Rohingya or Bangladeshi doctors, while others said they were unable to overcome challenges associated with healthcare – including limited access to quality care and lack of trust in certain health facilities – because they lacked money and freedom of movement.

WASH and protection. The JRP highlights a range of challenges related to water, sanitation and hygiene (WASH), including access, uneven coverage and high contamination levels in tube well spouts; for sanitation, ‘53% of households have access challenges including distance, overcrowding, location, and overflowing’ (UN, 2019: 43). Refugees we interviewed described similar problems, including poor-quality latrines and an inadequate number of nearby latrines, resulting in queues. One refugee in Kutupalong said that, in their area, there were 125 households and

4 According to the February 2019 Situation Report for Cox’s Bazar, more than half of the refugee population, as well as some 7,000 host community households, were receiving gas as an alternative cooking fuel to curb deforestation and mitigate protection risks of firewood collection. LPG distributions were due to reach 240,000 households in the coming months (ISCG, 2019b).

only two latrines, meaning they had to stand in a long queue and children defecated on the road, which led to people getting sick. One woman noted that the latrines were far from her shelter, and she felt she had to wear a burka if she needed to use the latrine (this is an issue because not all women owned a burka). Refugees also raised concerns about the quality and availability of water, and linked this to poor hygiene and overall cleanliness; when discussing the poor construction of the camps and his concern about water safety, one man in Kutupalong said ‘Everywhere in [the] camp it is dirty’. UNHCR has identified the need to remedy the lack of locks, lighting and appropriately segregated hygiene facilities (UNHCR: 2018b: 2), factors known to contribute to increased protection risks for refugees, including gender-based violence. Some refugees also mentioned fears or reports of children being kidnapped from the camps.

Inadequate food rations and lack of diversified diet.

Food rations exemplify both the scale and limitations of current aid provision: ‘Around 860,000 refugees regularly receive minimum food assistance, yet only 240,000 have opportunities to diversify their diet beyond the minimum package of rice, lentils and oil’ (UN, 2019: 11). Many refugees we interviewed cited inadequate rations (primarily insufficient quantity, though some also cited poor-quality oil and food) and lack of diversified diet (particularly the absence of vegetables, fruit, fish and meat). Lack of choice was repeatedly mentioned by refugees. Some received vouchers, which expanded their choices but did not necessarily enable them to access the diversity or quantity of food they wanted. The following describes the situation of a refugee family in Unchirang:

The ration we get sometimes it is not enough for us because we have six children in the family and we have to borrow. We sell sugar and buy fish or fruits. The ration is not always enough for us. During the election we could not get our ration ... we had to buy 25kg of rice we had to borrow money 720 TK and I am still unable to return that money. While borrowing the money I told the person I will sell firewood and return the money. But until now I have not been able to return the money. So I do not go to collect firewood my husband goes to collect firewood. Whenever he goes to collect firewood the forest department people forbid him to collect and cut trees. They say that we will receive gas stove. It will take time meanwhile we have no stove. If we have to buy firewood a small firewood is 100 BDT (\$1.18) but we do not have that money and now we cannot collect it.

Insufficient supplies. Refugees, particularly women, noted a lack of basic supplies, such as cooking pots, jugs for water, blankets and clothing – specifically burkas. Numerous refugees described having fled Myanmar with nothing because they were ‘running for their lives’; one 34-year-old mother of six said ‘we didn’t have a chance to bring anything with us because things were on fire when we fled so we don’t have much here and are really living a miserable life’. One 28-year-old woman from Balukali described not having enough clothes, plastic sheets, blankets, pitchers to collect water or cooking pots. While those who brought money with them from Myanmar or who managed to find work in Bangladesh were able to buy the items listed above and other necessities in the camps, those without money relied on whatever aid items were distributed.

3.1.2 Broader challenges

Education. Education, a primary aspiration for many refugee families, was also a source of concern. Specific issues revolved around access (in some areas there were no nearby learning centres), quality (some parents said the learning centre only taught ‘basic things’, and that their children were not learning important skills such as writing) and supplies (such as no books). While costs associated with private tuition or schooling were prohibitive for some, others mentioned working or selling rations so they could hire a tutor or send their child for religious education. Education is well recognised as an important way for the Rohingya ‘to break the cycle of poverty, violence and injustice’ (UN, 2019: 11), yet the challenges facing the education sector in the response – including access, quality, varied curricula and lack of accreditation – are formidable (BROUK, 2018). Further barriers stem from the government not approving essential educational policies and the locations of schools/ learning centres.

The most divisive aspect of education was the language of instruction, which was linked to cultural and religious identity, beliefs about the future and potential return to Myanmar. It remains an issue on which the Government of Bangladesh is yet to provide direction – at present it further restricts the ability of humanitarian actors to address refugees’ education needs. Some wanted their children to be taught in Burmese and English; at a focus group of older men in Shamlapur, one man said ‘It would be better to get a chance to study for higher education with Burmese language. We do not want to learn Bengali. We want to learn in Rohingya so we do not lose our culture’. At a focus group of younger men in Shamlapur, another said they wanted their children to learn

Arabic, along with English and Burmese. A number of refugees wanted their children to learn Bengali, based on the possibility that they could be in Bangladesh for years, but the Bangladeshi Government does not permit Bengali as the language of instruction.

Marriage. While refugees viewed marriage as an important part of a good future, the disruption of displacement and lack of money to pay the dowry that is expected in Rohingya culture has created significant challenges. While payment of a dowry is seen as problematic by some international humanitarian actors, the practice of the dowry was spoken about by Rohingya refugees as part of their cultural practice. One elderly woman said, 'I have daughters and I cannot let them go out to work because they are not married and I cannot marry them off because I cannot pay [the] dowry so I am worried'. An 18-year-old female orphan in Unchiprang said: 'I do not have any parents and we do not have enough money and cannot marry me. The suitors coming demanding a lot of money. I am worried about that ... This is a big issue for me'. While both men and women raised this issue, it disproportionately affected women and was seen as a pervasive concern for some of those we interviewed. While child marriage was not raised as a key concern by refugees we spoke with, early marriage for girls is common among Rohingya communities (Plan International: 2018: 19). Pressures created by the challenging conditions facing refugees in Bangladesh, including limited income and education opportunities, risk an increase in early or forced marriage.

Livelihoods. Lastly, refugees cited inability to move freely, work and support their families as a challenge. Issues around this and livelihoods more broadly are discussed in Chapter 3.

The challenges outlined above provide insight into the lives and struggles of Rohingya refugees in Bangladesh. Although many are immediate issues – such as improving WASH and education – they stand to have a long-term impact on the lives of the Rohingya. They also frame the way Rohingya refugees think about their medium- to long-term future. While many of the Rohingya we spoke to are actively navigating these challenges as best they can with the resources they have, such as by selling rations to pay for other necessities, limited assets and restrictions on everything from education to freedom of movement mean that refugees are highly constrained in trying to overcome these challenges and improve their lives.

Box 1: Pervasive worry and uncertainty

The challenges identified in this study (inability to meet basic needs, overcrowded camps, lack of livelihood opportunities) have been strongly associated with symptoms of depression among Rohingya refugees in Bangladesh (Riley et al., 2017). Many interviewees are affected by a pervasive sense of worry and uncertainty about the future. One 40-year-old with nine children said 'I am very worried about my future and about my children's futures. I am thinking will they be able to have success in their future? I am worried about my children's education and how much can they educate themselves in such circumstances'. A 35-year-old man with three children, who put significant value on education, said that his hair was turning grey because he was so worried about the future. These feelings of anxiety reflect patterns found in other protracted emergencies.

3.2 Refugees' goals and aspirations

When asked about their goals and aspirations, both men and women identified quality education for their children as a top priority. Yet the latest JRP reports that, among refugees in the camps, 'approximately 50% of pre-primary and primary learners – as well as 97% of youth and adolescents – lack access to quality education or learning opportunities' (UN, 2019: 11). Some refugees we interviewed spoke of the negative impact of not having received education themselves in Myanmar or Bangladesh; as one refugee who runs a small education programme in the camps said: 'There are so many registered camps in Bangladesh, the people who were living in Bangladesh before they have already destroyed their lives because they didn't have education ... If they live in camp for a long time they won't have access to education and their community will be destroyed, even those who were educated will forget what they knew before'. Refugees linked education to a better future, power, livelihoods and hope: 'the most important asset is education, if you are educated you can do anything' and 'we understand that education is power in our life. We want to give higher education to our children to build their lives'.

Previous research on refugee livelihoods (Barbelet and Wake, 2017) illustrated the difficult trade-offs many refugees must make when living in protracted displacement. This study supports this, suggesting

that Rohingya refugees in Bangladesh are making sacrifices to ensure that their children receive an education, including selling rations to pay for private tuition or education in the camps, or sending their children outside camps so they could receive religious education or attend state schools.⁵

Beyond education, there were notable gendered differences in the goals and aspirations of the Rohingya men and women we interviewed. When asked about their goals and aspirations, most men said they wanted to return to Myanmar. The issue of returns is explored in detail below, as part of a broader discussion of where refugees would like to live. Women were less likely to identify returning to Myanmar as a goal (although a few did); their goals pertained to improving the living conditions and situation of their family in Bangladesh. This included better WASH and healthcare, and less crowded, more robust shelters. When discussing their goals and what they hoped for their lives few refugees raised the issue of work, but this is not to say it is not important to them, as evident from responses to questions about supporting their families and livelihoods (discussed in Chapter 4).

Some refugees found it hard to express any goals and aspirations at all; one 28-year-old woman said that she does not ‘hope for anything in this country because it’s not our country. Life is so uncertain here. Just praying and living somehow’. When asked what he hoped for, a 35-year-old man we interviewed in Kutupalong said ‘What should I hope for my life? If we can’t get these things in this camp then there is nothing but die. If we go back to our country without justice, then the military will start killing us’.

3.3 Where refugees want to live in the medium and long term

3.3.1 Returning to Myanmar

As noted earlier, returning to Myanmar was a priority for many of the men we spoke to. Some identified the conditions under which they would return, including citizenship or identity documents,⁶ justice for perpetrators of violence and the freedom to return to their previous land or homes. This desire to return

to Myanmar is in line with survey findings from 2018, including those by Habib et al. (2018: 81), who reported that, of the more than 3,000 Rohingya heads of household surveyed, 79% wanted to return to Myanmar as soon as possible. Similarly, Xchange (2018: 33) found that 97.5% of the Rohingya surveyed would consider returning to Myanmar, but only if certain conditions were met (namely Myanmar citizenship, being recognised as Rohingya, freedom of movement and religion and rights and dignity). It is interesting to note the discordance between this finding and the ill-fated attempt to begin repatriating Rohingya refugees late last year, in which not a single refugee agreed to return to Myanmar. Little to no progress has been made on Rohingya refugees attaining citizenship or justice, violence in Rakhine continues and research indicates that military clearance operations have destroyed villages where the Rohingya previously lived, making it unlikely that refugees would be able to return to their original homes (Amnesty International, 2018).

While some of the Rohingya men we interviewed expressed a clear desire to return and the conditions under which they would do so, others were less certain. One man in his fifties said ‘I am thinking about my future, how much I will be able to educate my children, and when we will go back to Myanmar, and what happens later when we go back to Myanmar. Is it true we will get identity in Myanmar or not? We are highly confused about it’. Such confusion can be linked to a lack of clear information on conditions in Myanmar and what has changed since the refugees were forced to flee. One refugee said he was waiting to see what happened to Rohingya IDPs in Myanmar as an indication of what might happen to them. Others, in particular women respondents, expressed conflicting views about returning, and were less certain about what they wanted or expected for the future. A 34-year-old woman with six children said ‘In Myanmar they tortured us a lot, burned our houses, killed our cattle. We might go back if we get justice, but still we don’t want to go if another country will take us ... If you tell us to go back to our country we will get killed after two years – if you tell us to go back I will just lie down in front of a truck and die here, I don’t want to go back’.

5 In March 2019, a month after our fieldwork, the Bangladeshi Government cracked down on Rohingya children attending Bangladeshi schools, leading some to be expelled (McPherson and Paul, 2019).

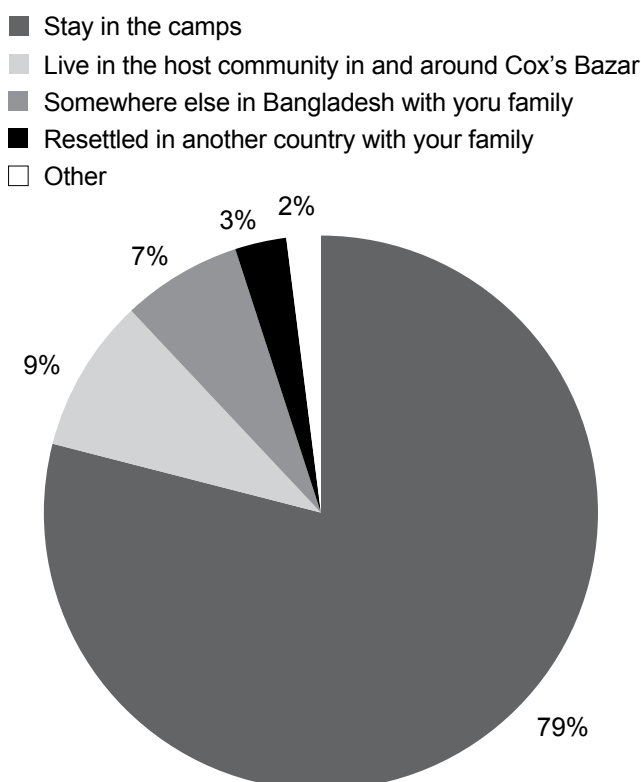
6 Caution should be exercised in equating identity documents or citizenship with an automatic improvement in security and rights in Myanmar, when there is little to suggest this would be the case. Even those with appropriate documentation in Rakhine continue to face restrictions and discrimination, as do other minority groups, such as the Chin. This matters because, if Rohingya were to be offered a form of documentation acceptable to them, this may increase their willingness to return even if it does not fundamentally alter the discrimination they are likely to face.

Some refugees described the violence they experienced while in Myanmar and their fears about going back; as earlier research (Xchange, 2018: 37) found, ‘most people’s fears can be seen to be derived from their previously lived or witnessed traumatic experiences, including rape, torture, and the murder of adults and children, among other incidents’. One man we interviewed, in his late fifties, said that he did not want to go back to Myanmar currently ‘because the military killed a lot of Rohingya people and this fear is still carrying in our mind and we are thinking that if we will go back to Myanmar either today or tomorrow the military will attack us again and we don’t want to face that another time’. A widow we spoke to with five children shared similar concerns: she described her husband and small children being killed and said there was nothing for her in Myanmar – no matter what, she did not want to return.

3.3.2 Options if they do not return

We also asked refugees where they would want to live if they were not able to return to Myanmar in the next 5–10 years. Of those who took part in the quantitative survey, 79% wanted to stay in their current camp with their family and those they currently lived with. The qualitative research confirmed these results.

Figure 2: Where Rohingya refugees would want to live if they were not able to return to Myanmar in the next 5–10 years



When asked why they wanted to stay in the camps, refugees said they felt settled where they were, close to relatives and people they knew, and did not want the disruption of moving again. Some explained they had never travelled from the area around their home since coming to Bangladesh – during a focus group in Shamlapur, one woman said ‘Since we have come here from Myanmar 15 years ago I have never seen anything outside Shamlapur. Before we didn’t know anything about other areas, that’s why we have never gone outside Shamlapur, and we didn’t have enough transport fare which is why we couldn’t go outside. Now there are checkpoints and the military wouldn’t allow us to pass. The furthest any of us have gone is Shamlapur market and nearby there’. Refugees also cited mutually understood language, cultural familiarity and established relationships with those in the local community as being reasons to stay: one man said ‘here in the camp the locals are cooperative to us so that’s why I want to live here’; another said ‘If we will move from here anywhere in Bangladesh we will not be able to adjust because the local language here is similar. Their language is similar so we are adjusted here and we can easily understand what the locals want. We are familiar to the locals and the locals are familiar to us’.

Few refugees said that they wanted to stay where they were because they felt their living conditions would improve. Rather, the status quo was preferred to the uncertainty and risks of change. One woman at a focus group in Shamlapur said she was worried that if she was registered as a refugee she would be sent back to Myanmar, and she did not want to go. One elderly woman said that she had heard that refugees could be relocated to an island (Bhashan Char), but did not want to go. Refugees have so far been highly reluctant to move there: as Antara (2019) writes, ‘The assurance of a relatively-comfortable life on the remote island, made by the Bangladeshi Government, is not enough to convince them. Most Rohingya refugees are unwilling to relocate there as they fear death by starvation, floods, and a lack of humanitarian aid’. As it stands, the possibility of being sent to an isolated island like Bhashan Char exemplifies the very real concerns Rohingya refugees have about moving from where they are currently.

For the few who wanted to live elsewhere in Bangladesh, this was mostly to escape overcrowding or their destitute situation in the camps, because they had family living elsewhere or because they could envision a better future elsewhere. One 35-year-old woman in Unchiprang said ‘I would like to stay in Cox’s Bazar. In town. It is a bit congested here. The

town would have facilities. I can educate my children well. And we can work there and live a beautiful life'. Such findings illustrate both the importance of the systematic provision of clear information regarding any relocation, and the potential support among some refugees for localised relocation. While such steps are opposed by the government, analysis by Human Rights Watch has identified six relocation sites in Ukhiya sub-district that could accommodate 263,000 people (Human Rights Watch: 2018: 3).

Over half of women interviewed, and some men, were interested in moving to another country (Saudi Arabia was cited most frequently as a country where they could practice their religion and where their children could receive an education). Several men mentioned wanting to work in another country – a 21-year-old in Unchiprang said 'If I could not go back to Myanmar I would go to Saudi or Malaysia to support my family, and there I would do some job and by getting money I could support my family in this camp'. However, only a handful of interviewees had heard of resettlement or had a comprehensive understanding of what it was. Some had heard about people being moved to another country by the UN, and had some understanding of the outcome of resettlement, but not the process. When we explained resettlement, some refugees expressed interest in living in countries including Australia, Canada, the US or the UK, which were seen as places where they could create a better life for their children. A 50-year-old woman in Kutupalong said 'we want to go to another country, wherever you would like to take us we will go, we don't have relatives in any other country but we will go to another peaceful country like Malaysia, Australia, we just want to go to any peaceful country. We don't want to stay in the camp'.

Other refugees were reluctant to be resettled because they perceived it as relinquishing any chance of returning to Myanmar or having their Rohingya identity recognised. During a focus group in Shamlapur one man said 'Actually I do not want to migrate to another country. I expect to go back to Myanmar. If we go to Australia, Canada or America we will not get our real identity, we will not get the freedom of human rights – that is why we want to go back to Myanmar to get our real identity as Rohingya'. There was a sense that, if they move further away, the government of Myanmar would never allow them back, and some refugees found simply being close to Myanmar comforting; as one said: 'Myanmar is very close to

[the] Bangladesh border when we see Myanmar we feel good. We are living now in Bangladesh but can feel we are still in Myanmar'.

3.4 Self-determination and the importance of engagement

Refugees were cautious in discussing their lives in the camp, their aspirations and where they want to live in the medium to long term. Similar findings have been reported in other protracted camp-based refugee settings, including among refugee youth in Malawi, some of whom had ambitious hopes for life outside the camps but were unable to see their futures in them (Healy, 2012). This was similar for the Rohingya refugees we interviewed, whose answers were underpinned by a strong sense that they lacked control over their future. This emerged most clearly from discussions around where they wanted to live; one 35-year-old man reflected the views of many when he said: 'You understand our suffering and know best where we should go [to live]'. Several refugees surrendered their hopes about the future to Allah. One 48-year-old widow in Unchiprang said, 'Allah has taken us here and we will live here. I am afraid to live [in] other places in Bangladesh. If Allah wishes then we can return to our country. Allah has brought us here from Myanmar and I want to live here peacefully.'

It is not surprising that some Rohingya conveyed their views of the future as though it was entirely out of their control. In Myanmar the Rohingya had limited control over their lives due to restrictions on movement, education, marriage, the number of children they could have, access to healthcare and other key aspects of their lives (Milton et al., 2017). While they may have escaped persecution, their identity as refugees is characterised as dependent on assistance and as enjoying little autonomy; as Oh (2018) writes: 'For the Bangladeshi authorities, the Rohingya refugees have been constructed as simple, acquiescent subjects who require a strong guiding hand in managing their challenging circumstances. Given this view, the likelihood that the refugees will not be trusted to know what is best for them during their stay and eventual repatriation is a worrying prospect'. This highlights the need for far greater effort to ensure that refugees are able to make decisions about their lives, and makes meaningfully engaging with the Rohingya on what they want in the medium term all the more important.

4 Improving the lives of Rohingya refugees in the medium to long term

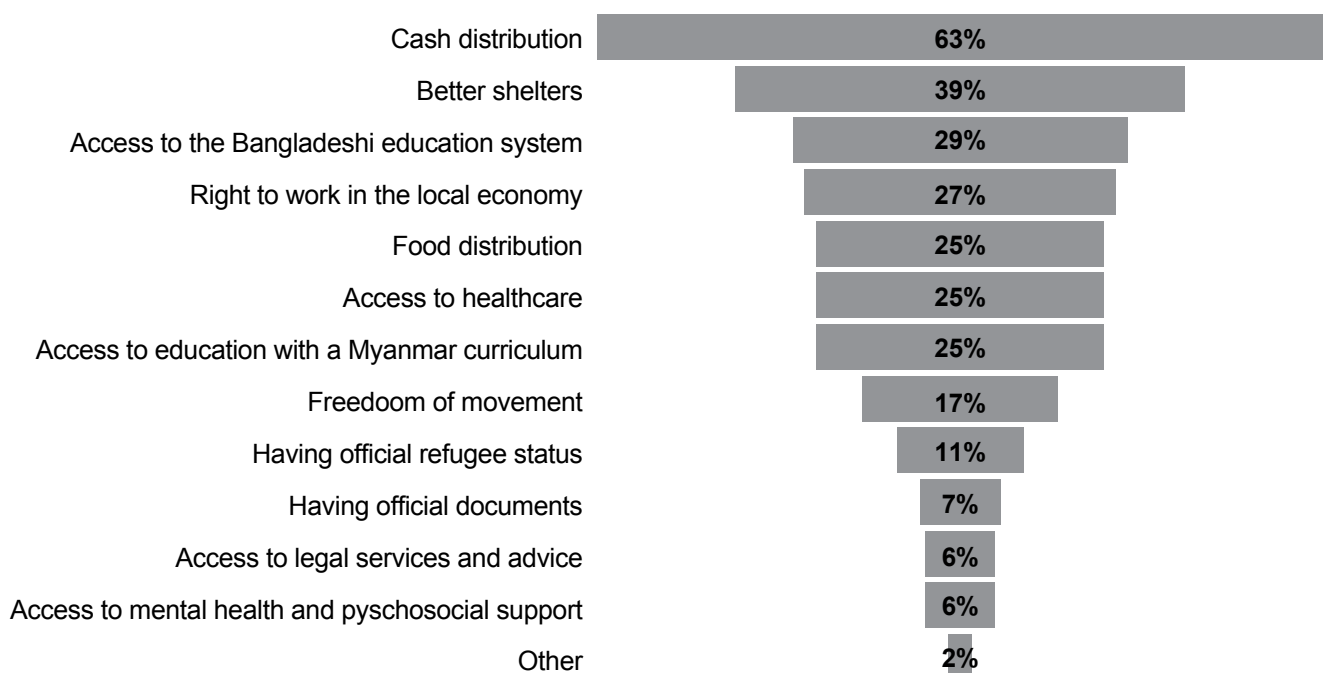
Refugees who participated in this research tended to identify three things that would make their lives better: education, improved living conditions and opportunities to support their families. This is in line with research identifying key coping mechanisms among Rohingya refugees in Bangladesh as seeking a better future for their children, participating in religious practice, practicing good hygiene, spending time with family and working (Riley et al., 2017: 316). This chapter focuses primarily on the last strategy: work. Building on research on refugee livelihoods in other situations, including Rohingya refugees in Malaysia (Wake and Cheung, 2016) and Syrians in Jordan (Bellamy et al., 2016), this chapter considers what refugees did in Myanmar, what they are doing now and what they aspire to do in the future.

4.1 Rohingya refugees' views on what would improve their lives

Interviews with refugees clearly outlined what would make their lives in Bangladesh better and what their key priorities were. Women generally wanted better living conditions, including better shelters and a brighter future for their children. In our quantitative survey, the top responses were better shelters (39%) and education, whether in the Bangladeshi education system (29%) or with a Myanmar curriculum (25%).

Other things that would improve their lives included better access to and quality of healthcare and improved WASH, rations and roads. According to the quantitative

Figure 3: If you were to stay in Bangladesh for the next 5–10 years, what are the top three things that would make your life better?



survey results, 63% of refugee respondents said that cash distributions would make a long-term difference to their lives. In interviews, cash to invest in businesses was repeatedly mentioned as the main form of assistance refugees wanted to support their livelihoods, rather than skills training or the creation of community groups for cooperative work or savings.

More broadly, some mentioned wanting rights and independence – as one man said, ‘we want to live like people here and have the opportunity to walk outside of the camp. So as a human, with rights of the human – now [we are] treated as animals’. Refugees saw freedom of movement both as valuable in itself, and as linked with other rights, goods and services, including access to healthcare, education, employment and business opportunities.

4.2 Livelihoods

4.2.1 Livelihoods in Myanmar

Rohingya refugees we interviewed described having livelihoods in Myanmar based around land (including agriculture and rearing livestock), fishing, running a business (such as a general shop, computer or barber shop, selling goods such as bamboo) and working as a tailor, midwife, teacher, day labourer, village chairman or moto driver, or in a restaurant or mosque.⁷ The majority of male respondents described diverse livelihoods that involved two or more of the above activities, while a minority of women also worked (as tailors, midwives or on the family’s land), though they said there were few opportunities and it was not usual for women to work outside the home. Some, particularly land and shop owners, spoke of having successful livelihoods and relative wealth in Myanmar. When considering if and how skills can be transferred to their lives in displacement, it is notable that agricultural work is contingent on land. While the majority of displaced Rohingya are highly unlikely to be able to access significant plots of land in Bangladesh, we observed refugees cultivating small vegetable gardens in the camps. Refugees’ skills related to business and services are also transferable. By building on existing skills among refugee and host communities it could be possible to deliver capacity-building programmes in areas such as teacher training to deliver both improved livelihoods opportunities for individuals and educational outcomes for communities.

4.2.2 How refugees currently support themselves

Approximately two-thirds of the refugees we spoke to depended entirely on aid, primarily food rations. Many said that it was not enough, and some sold their rations for cash to buy more diversified food (such as vegetables and fruit), firewood or other necessities, and to pay for education for their children. This was reflected in a recent report from Ground Truth Solutions (Ground Truth Solutions, 2019: 12), where 43% of the Rohingya surveyed sold aid items to meet cash needs.

Barriers to generating an income included lack of opportunities (we both observed and were told by refugees that cash for work and small markets existed in some camps, but not in others); refugees could not travel to find work; and old age or injury prevented them from working. Both men and women described working as *majhis* (though the majority are male), but they do not receive a salary. One man in his twenties said that he and his two brothers were able to work but there was no work for them to do – instead, their families relied on food rations, which were insufficient. Another man in Shamlapur noted that he had no freedom of movement to look for work, no land for cultivation and no money to invest, for instance in a fishing net to catch fish for consumption or sale. One man, who had tried to work, said ‘Whenever we go to do fishing the military tell us not to do this work, we are not allowed to do this work because we are a refugee’. Across the camps, there was a sense among refugees that the assistance they received was inadequate and unlikely to be sustainable.

Refugees have no legal right to work in Bangladesh. To date, large-scale livelihoods programmes have focused on host communities, whereas the focus regarding refugees has been on informal and ‘portable skills’ development (such as through vocational training and vegetable gardening for consumption and sale) (UN, 2019). Opportunities for refugees to generate income in the camps exist, though they tend to be limited, ad hoc and small-scale, such as cash for work programmes run by UN agencies or INGOs (where refugees are paid to help construct or monitor things in the camps) and small shops and business (such as refugees selling food, wood, goods or services to other refugees).

For a third of our interviewees, someone in the household undertook an income-generating activity. For men we interviewed, the top three forms of work

7 Most respondents in the qualitative interviews said that they or someone in their family had worked in Myanmar. This finding aside, our findings are broadly aligned with research from Xchange (2018: 20), which undertook a representative survey of 1,703 respondents among the ‘new’ Rohingya refugees in Bangladesh. This found that 49% of respondents had at least one professional skill (such as tailoring, sewing, fishing, farming and driving).

were running a small shop selling food and drinks in the camps, working as a paid ‘volunteer’⁸ for an NGO or UN agency and daily cash for work (such as construction in the camps). Volunteers for NGOs earned between 250 and 400 BDT (\$3–\$4.75) per day, and undertook duties such as keeping drains clean, food distribution, filling water tanks and maintaining latrines. Most of those who worked lived off a combination of aid and their earnings. Five women we interviewed worked for NGOs as volunteers (earning between 6,000 and 12,000 BDT (\$70–\$140) per month doing work such as enumeration) or doing cash for work (250 BDT (\$3) per day doing manual labour in the camps). One woman, a 27-year-old mother of six in Kutupalong, learned how to sew as a child in Myanmar and had recently been given a sewing machine by an NGO. She was capable of sewing all kinds of clothing, but struggled to earn 100 BDT (\$1.20) a day because people in her area had no money to buy clothes. She said if a company placed an order she would be able to run a viable business.

4.2.3 Men and women’s views on Rohingya women working

We asked both men and women what they thought about Rohingya women working in Bangladesh. Most men and women had what they described as a ‘conservative mindset’ about women working: most women did not want to work outside the home, nor did men want them to, and some did not allow it. One 34-year-old married woman in Kutupalong said ‘husbands don’t allow us to work in any office because there are men and we are not allowed to work next to a man. If we can be a teacher they will allow us ... because it is in the home and also because it is just with children. Men think that the women will become shameless if they go outside and they won’t want to live inside the curtain and be covered’. Their views were linked to purdah (the practice of female seclusion, based on social and religious beliefs) and expectations of women as caretakers. As one 20-year-old father of three in Balukali said: ‘We are conservative-minded ... the woman has no right to go out to do any job their only right is to stay in the house and after marry then go to the groom’s house.

If you train our young women in their house about tailoring it would be better for them’.

Men’s reluctance towards women working outside the home does not mean that they do not want women to work and generate an income. While both challenge traditional gender norms, most men were receptive to the idea of women generating an income as long as it was through home-based work such as sewing. The economic situation in the camps means that, by necessity, more women have become breadwinners and are undertaking non-traditional work, and it was evident that displacement had begun to change some minds about work and gender norms.⁹ For one man, his family structure (wife and three female children) and circumstances in Bangladesh had begun to shift his views, and he accepted that circumstances in Bangladesh were such that it would be better if women could work. Even so, women’s increasing economic role in the household is causing friction (Ripoll: 2018: 2). Female volunteers working for NGOs in the camps face harassment, intimidation and sometimes violence as a result of their increased participation in employment outside the home.

Addressing these challenges will require responding to the limited receptivity among men and women for women to work outside the home,¹⁰ and to build livelihoods training and programming from this starting point. One way to do this would be to explore home-based businesses (which some NGOs are already doing) and links to viable markets, or for male and female ‘champions’ within the refugee community to sensitise others to potential opportunities for different types of work. Programmatic strategies should seek to promote women’s economic opportunities with a combination of other interventions: violence prevention, women’s leadership promotion, and tackling policies and social norms that deny women their rights to assets and resources. It may also be useful to look at the experiences of Rohingya people, including women, in other countries the region. For example, norms around women working have changed for female Rohingya refugees over the course of protracted displacement in Malaysia (Wake, 2014).

8 As noted in HPG research on capacity and complementarity in the response to Rohingya refugees in Bangladesh (Wake and Bryant, 2018: 8), the title and terms of such ‘volunteer’ work are not without criticism: ‘While it is positive that refugees can contribute their capacity to the response – many working alongside Bangladeshi colleagues and contributing equally – the title of volunteer (rather than staff) and low stipend fails to adequately reflect their contributions. More broadly, many refugees worked for UN agencies and INGOs in Myanmar, and have other valuable skills, experience and capacity that are currently not being utilised in the response’.

9 See Goldsmith and Karim (2019) for further discussion.

10 We acknowledge that hypothetical questions about livelihoods can be challenging and it is difficult to assess how receptive refugees may ultimately be to women working outside the home – refugees’ receptivity may change were concrete employment options available.

4.2.4 How refugees want to support themselves

In answer to our quantitative survey questions about how refugees would like to support themselves if they were to stay in Bangladesh for the next 5–10 years, most said in-kind assistance, followed by working for a wage, cash distributions and (for a smaller number) wanting to migrate for work elsewhere in the region. The first choice, in-kind assistance, reflects the status quo, as about 860,000 refugees regularly rely on food assistance (UN, 2019: 11). In interviews the order differed slightly, with most refugees saying they wanted someone in their household to work or a combination of work and aid (most wanted cash, and a smaller number in-kind aid). Refugees saw work as a way to generate income and meet their needs, be active and distract from thinking about their traumatic experiences and protect against inconsistent levels of aid and concerns that aid would not continue indefinitely:

We want to earn money doing jobs. If we receive assistance we will remain lazy. We want to earn the money.

If we get to work here and earn our livelihood and also get cash that would be better, we could send our children to school. If we work we

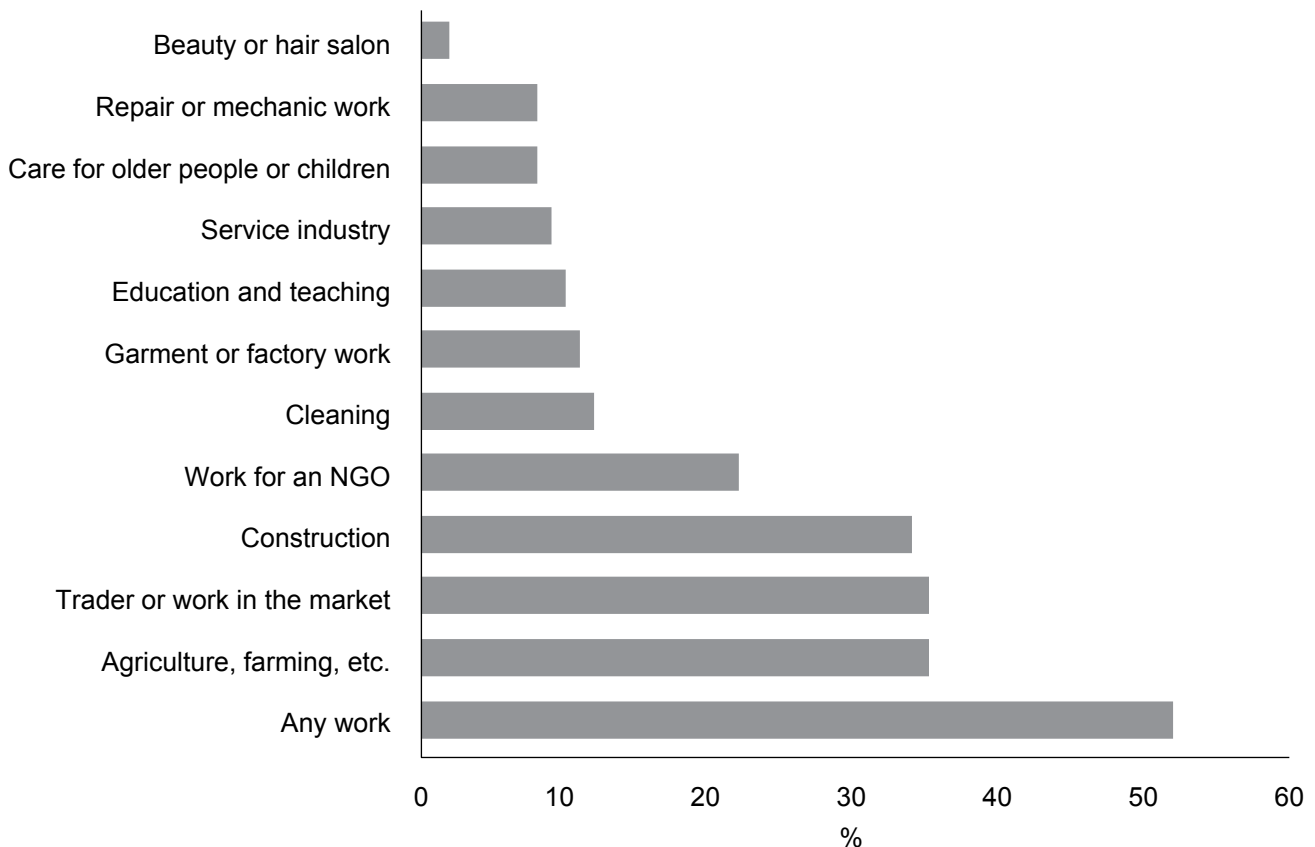
wouldn't be reminded of the tortures we faced in our own country and also if there is work for them to do, for men and for women, that would be good for us. If we are sitting all day and not able to work we will just be reminded of the torture we faced in our country.

I wished we got to work and could earn our own livelihood and buy whatever we want, like vegetables. If you distribute cash it will only be once or even if you keep giving us cash, your bank account will finish and that will not work – if we can work we can support ourselves.

Some refugees, including but not only older people and people with a disability, mentioned that they did not want to work and preferred to receive cash or rations. As in any community, not everyone will be able to work, and there needs to be a sufficient safety net to support those whose life circumstances restrict them from working.

Findings from our quantitative survey show that refugees wanted to work in a wide range of sectors. While there was variation in gender preference for each profession, women said they wanted to work in all of the sectors listed in Figure 4 below.

Figure 4: Which of the following sector would you like to work in?

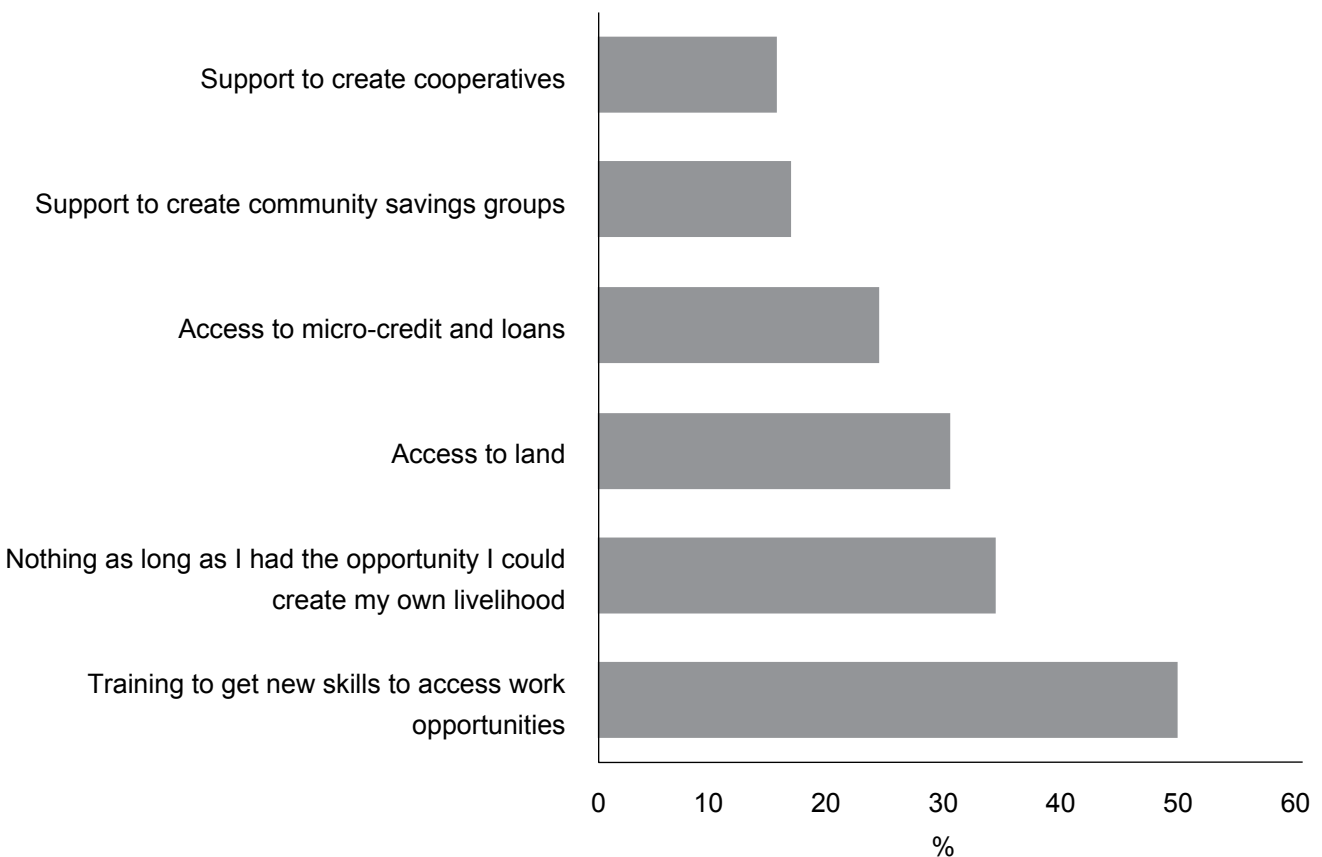


Findings from interviews indicated that, of the many refugees who did want to work, they primarily wanted (either themselves or a male in their household) to run a business or receive cash so they could start or expand a business, or work for an NGO. Given that the Rohingya have no access to national micro-credit programmes, this indicates the value of cash provision and community savings groups. In Lebanon, research conducted by the IRC found that, for each dollar of cash assistance spent, \$2.13 was created in local markets, highlighting the potential for host communities to benefit from an expansion of cash programming (IRC, 2014). Other less mentioned options were construction, being a guard or cleaner, gardening or fishing and, for women, tailoring or teaching. All of these livelihood options involve work Rohingya people did in Myanmar or are doing now in the camps. While some said they were willing to learn new skills and do any type of work, others had more limited views of what was possible. For example, one 55-year-old woman

in Unchiprang described how lack of education had limited opportunities for successive generations of her family. She felt that it would be possible to cultivate land because she knew how to do that from Myanmar, but they had no access to education and her children were illiterate and uneducated, and ‘that is why they cannot do things’. She wanted her grandchildren to be educated to open up better jobs. These findings have implications for the type of response needed in Bangladesh: one that combines market-based opportunities, education opportunities and vocational training.

When asked in interviews what would help them most if they had the right to work, refugees said cash (in the form of a one-off payment) and loans to help them start a business (see Figure 5). Some men and women mentioned training, primarily women wanting to learn how to sew. A few women had already attended NGO-run sewing training and been promised sewing machines, though they had not received them.¹¹

Figure 5: If you had the right to work, what would be the greatest help to you?



¹¹ While some NGOs may have intended to provide sewing machines, government restrictions may ultimately have prevented them from doing so.

Box 2: Who has a shop and what does it involve?

In most of the camps we visited we saw small-scale, Rohingya-run businesses selling goods such as dried and fresh food, clothes and household items and offering services such as barbering, tailoring and transportation. Most of the refugees we interviewed aspired to open a shop or business, in part because of the restrictions limiting other livelihood options such as fishing.

According to the refugees we spoke to, opening a shop in the camps takes investment – in goods to sell as well as rent for the land, and the cost of building the shop. The men we interviewed who had a shop had all either sold their land in Myanmar and used the money to open their shop in the camps, or they had brought jewellery with them and sold it, using the proceeds to open the shop. One Rohingya shop owner we interviewed, who also volunteered for an INGO, said he had been a businessman in Myanmar and that helped him start his business, where he sold the same goods as he had back home. Another man, who had worked in construction and day labour in Myanmar, sold his gold jewellery and opened a shop on the advice of his relatives. A man working as a barber said that he had only earned 30 BDT (\$0.36) so far that day, but had to pay the Rohingya shop owner 80 BDT (\$0.95) per day, highlighting that customer numbers, and hence income, are variable.

One Rohingya-led organisation interviewed in the camps described a broader range of possibilities for livelihoods, including fishing, rearing chickens, growing vegetables, small-scale sewing and larger garment production, motorcycle maintenance, construction, making furniture and producing products like biscuits and soap. There is some overlap between these suggestions and sectors identified in previous (unpublished) analysis conducted by ODI on potential labour market integration of Rohingya refugees in Bangladesh. This analysis – which identified key growth sectors in Cox’s Bazar and considered skill levels, ability to absorb female employment and the geographic concentration of activities, among other things – indicated that Rohingya participation could be possible in sectors such as fishing, salt extraction, tourism, manufacturing and construction. There are indications that small-scale, informal work by Rohingya in some of these sectors is already occurring, and there seems to be strong interest among refugees in entrepreneurial market-based activities within the camps. More analysis would be required to better understand the complexities of labour market integration, including fiscal incentives, host community/refugee dynamics, skills assessments and skills and language training.¹² Any analysis regarding the economic lives and contributions of refugees must involve refugees themselves in identifying perceived risks and opportunities – otherwise it is likely to be misaligned with their realities and aspirations, and unlikely to win their support.

12 Also see Huang and Gough (2019) for a broader exploration of medium-term support to Bangladesh in responding to Rohingya refugees, including trade and investment, labour mobility, special economic zones and infrastructure investment, private sector investment, resettlement and development and climate finance.

5 Community leadership, participation and engagement

This research also aimed to understand how far individual perspectives were known and reflected in community leadership structures. Community leaders and community groups (*majhis*, newer activist community groups and traditional community groups) were asked the same questions as refugees, as well as questions exploring how they interacted with refugees and external stakeholders. Rohingya refugees were asked whether they had been asked about their views on medium- to long-term issues and how they would prefer to have these views gathered and represented in order to ensure high-level discussions on their future included their perspectives. Representing refugee voices in high-level political and policy discussions is critical, but often results in either token representation or misrepresentation through diaspora or community groups that may or may not reflect the perspectives of refugees. In the case of Rohingya refugees, diaspora or community groups engaged in these discussions often do not live in the same locations as the refugees they say they represent, and it has been unclear how Rohingya refugees in Bangladesh feel about such representation. With the large-scale displacement of Rohingya into Bangladesh, multiple groups are competing for influence within and outside the refugee population. While the research found a generally similar outlook among leadership groups on what is needed to support people's lives in the medium to long term, the relationship between the refugees and leadership groups was marked by a lack of trust in some leaders, and leadership groups were not always considered legitimate by individual refugees.

5.1 Community leadership

Community leadership¹³ among Rohingya refugees is fragmented and seems increasingly marked by competition and conflict between different civil society groups. As a result, engaging with Rohingya refugees and ensuring that their perspectives are represented in higher-level policy dialogues is challenging: it can be difficult to understand how different groups relate to

each other and the dynamics between them as well as gauge their legitimacy and representation. As a result, many humanitarian actors have decided not to engage with these groups for fear of their political agenda, at times resulting in a lack of effective engagement with Rohingya refugees.

The camp management structure and the CiCs significantly affect community leadership and community relations. CiCs are mandated by the government to assume all camp management responsibilities. Officials sit under the Refugee Relief and Repatriation Commissioner (RRRC) in the Ministry of Disaster Management and Relief (see UN, 2019: 20–21). As part of their mandates, CiCs 'liaise closely with all actors and monitor service delivery overall in the camps, ensuring gaps and duplications are identified and addressed' (UN, 2019: 21). Their mandate also includes community outreach and participation and informal justice mechanisms – an area where assessments show challenges associated with the quality of justice provision, the discrepancy between women's interests and the actions taken by camp management, lack of female representation and corruption (IRC, 2019: 6, 15). As per the 2019 JRP, 'a new community representation model within the camps should progressively be implemented that includes grassroots community organisations and religious leaders' (UN, 2019: 21). According to the JRP, 'several community groups have been established by CiC, agencies and other actors at the camp level to support service delivery and maintenance, and represent groups of the population' (UN, 2019: 21).

Community representation and the organisation of community life has been approached in a very top-down way, and has been significantly shaped both by aid agencies and by government officials. Several refugees we interviewed said that their community leaders, the *majhis*, were chosen and appointed by CiCs rather than by the refugees themselves, undermining their legitimacy; some refugees felt that *majhis* were selected, not because

¹³ Community leadership here refers to how the community organises itself including through more political and/or violent means. Community leadership does not refer to NGO-supported community organisation.

of their representativeness or legitimacy in refugee communities but because they could speak Bengali. The JRP suggests that the government might be moving towards a more standard approach to camp management as implemented by UNHCR in other refugee situations, which involves refugee electing their representatives.

Originally set up by the Bangladeshi security forces in response to the influx of Rohingya refugees in the early 1990s, the *majhi* system was abandoned in 2007 and revived in 2017. The mechanism has been controversial in part because it directly replicated the top-down, unaccountable leadership systems used in Myanmar. The *majhis* are unpaid posts responsible for liaising between individual refugees and the CiCs, and to a lesser extent aid agencies. In that sense, they can be influential given their mandate and their privileged access to CiCs. The *majhis* also have de facto control over aid distributions, leading to perceptions of corruption. Speaking in a focus group discussion, the leader of one Rohingya community group told the study that ‘the *majhi* system is the worst of our community. Block the *majhi* government system!’

Other civil society structures include:

- A UN camp management system piloted by UNHCR and IOM, with the engagement of the government. The aim is to replace the *majhi* system, and have individuals elected by refugees to support camp management.
- Politically oriented community groups, including diaspora groups and newer activist groups. Diaspora and diaspora-linked groups within the camps aim to maintain a degree of influence through funding activities and providing assistance within the camps. Newer activist groups appear to be more grassroots, with a focus on organising refugees around key issues. These more nascent groups are in direct competition with diaspora groups over influence and resources. Not all of them are perceived to be in touch with the realities of refugee life in Bangladesh, or to share the interests of ‘new’ refugees.
- More traditional community groups involved in service provision or addressing particular needs (such as education, the delivery of humanitarian assistance or women’s empowerment). Their objectives are somewhat less political than others.

There are also reports of armed political groups and criminal groups, which compete for influence and economic power (Lewis et al., 2019).

These groups are characterised by their fluidity, and the lines between them can be blurred. The fragmented nature of community leadership among Rohingya refugees in Bangladesh mirrors similar patterns in other Rohingya refugee settings. Competition and mistrust were, for instance, a feature of Rohingya community-based organisations’ relationships and interactions in Kuala Lumpur (Wake, 2016), as issues and tensions from Myanmar continued to affect community relationships in Malaysia.

The research found that the more grassroots community and diaspora groups were better connected (compared to the *majhis*) to the outside world, donors and NGOs. In that sense, they appeared to be more powerful and influential than the *majhi* structure and had a much wider network and longer reach outside the camps. The *majhis*, by contrast, must go through the CiCs to reach aid agencies, donors and others. During a focus group discussion with *majhis*, it was clear that their first channel of communication was from the refugees to the CiCs, which they referred to during the discussion as ‘the military’. Running in parallel, more grassroots community groups seem to have developed direct contacts with stakeholders within and outside the camps and appear to have coalesced around issues such as human rights and justice in Myanmar, or organising protests around aid provision or return issues. It was unclear the extent to which these groups are imposing their agendas on refugees, in particular pushing the idea of return to Myanmar or maintaining conservative religious norms, and not allowing refugees to voice other positions. A recent article on the rise of politically minded Rohingya groups in the Bangladesh camps explains how

the political awakening has been accompanied by a surge in violence, with militants and religious conservatives also vying for power, more than a dozen refugees told Reuters. They described increasing fear in the camps, where armed men have stormed shelters at night, kidnapped critics and warned women against breaking conservative Islamic norms (Lewis et al., 2019).

Box 3: Women in leadership roles

One of the grassroots organisations consulted during the research was led by women, organised mainly around issues linked to education. The emergence of women in community leadership roles marks a change in gender norms from Myanmar, where as noted above women are rarely allowed to leave their homes. Another grassroots organisation told the study that 50% of their leadership was made up of women. While a sign that attitudes may be changing among Rohingya men, none of the women leaders was present during the focus group discussion where this was raised, and women did not seem to be present in important meetings, for instance with donor representatives. A recent report by IRC notes instances where women have been actively blocked from effective participation in community decision-making and community affairs (IRC, 2019). Male *majhis* highlighted during focus group discussions that there were women *majhis*, and that there had been a push to ensure female leadership in the camps.¹ However, male *majhis* have reportedly sought to block female participation in the *majhi* system, for instance in informal justice (see IRC, 2019). Women in leadership roles have reportedly been threatened by religious groups in the camps (Lewis et al., 2019).

The top-down nature of community leadership, be it through the formal *majhi* system or more grassroots groups that may not always be representative of the wider community, may explain or have contributed to general feelings of not disengagement or lack of participation among individual refugees we interviewed. While one avenue to support more effective engagement could be through ‘engineering’ a less fragmented and healthier civil society dynamic among refugees, our evidence calls for more investment in gathering individual opinions as a way to represent diverse perspectives.

5.2 Refugee participation and engagement

Generally, the research found that refugees participated in and engaged on issues such as short-term needs and assistance, but not on medium- to long-term needs, aspirations and plans. Even with

regard to short-term assistance, survey evidence suggests that Rohingya refugees do not feel that their opinions are taken into account when decisions about aid provision are made (Ground Truth Solutions, 2019). A large number of refugees we talked to said that they had not been engaged in any way, and were grateful to be listened to and given an opportunity to give their perspectives.

Refugees spoke of individual face-to-face dialogue as the best way to engage them, particularly in their homes, where they could talk more freely about their personal circumstances. According to one male interviewee:

This system you are doing now where you discuss things directly with us is the better way. Many men, many minds. We do not all have the same views, so it is best to consult individually.

One refugee woman felt that engaging with refugees in their homes also had the benefit of interlocutors seeing their living conditions at first hand:

Just like you, if you go and visit the houses and see the situation then better. If you go visit the house, you can see the situation and you can understand the situation better. And in some meetings some women will come and then some women will not come.

A Christian Aid assessment provides further evidence of refugees’ preference for verbal and face-to-face complaints mechanisms and individual meetings (Christian Aid and Gana Unnayan Kendra, 2018: 5).

Others felt that group meetings and small group gatherings were more effective because they enabled wider consultation. Refugees we interviewed also felt that small group gatherings would be better because they entail less work for researchers or others carrying out the consultation. Group meetings were mentioned by both men and women, though in practice the research team found focus group discussions difficult to facilitate, particularly as men were reluctant to disagree in public or in front of other men. This may also have been a function of the make-up of the research team (white, young women), which may not have been best suited to facilitate such discussions.

Interviews with refugees also highlighted the lack of trust most had that their leaders, including the *majhis*, would automatically represent their views and interests, in particular in relation to women. As one refugee woman said:

It is better to go to every house, to ask the women. But if you ask the majhi, he might miss something and not say everything about our problems. If you visit households, then you will know our problems.

While trust was a strong factor explaining these views, refugees interviewed also felt that the community leader would not know their individual situation given the general lack of engagement.

A March 2019 survey suggests that Rohingya refugees (both men and women) feel the *majhis* (89%), agency volunteers (52%) and camp or block committees (only 32%) are trusted information channels (Ground Truth Solutions, 2019). Our finding does not directly contradict the survey results, but rather highlights that, while refugees trust these leaders as sources of information, they do not trust them as messengers of their perspectives back to the CiCs, government, donors or aid agencies. In other words, the *majhis*, agency volunteers and camp or block committees may be seen as giving the right information about aid in the camp, but most of the refugees we interviewed did not think these structures could be trusted to represent their views or interests. As one refugee man put it:

I do not trust the majhi because the Bangladeshi military selected the majhi among us who know good Bengali language and go

speak to local people ... but the majhi does not come to us or discuss with us about our needs ... It is better if you come here and openly talk with us.

The perspectives of the refugees we interviewed confirmed the value of doing this research, and the importance of gathering the perspectives of refugees to inform higher-level policy discussions. While the research team tried to conduct focus group discussions, it became clear that individual interviews allowed refugees to more openly discuss their perspectives. Giving refugees an opportunity to frame their answers within their own experience of the conflict in Myanmar and their displacement in Bangladesh was valued by interviewees. The survey approach allowed the research team to provide some understanding of how representative some views were over others. It allowed us to compare the views in the survey with those obtained during interviews conducted after the survey. However, individual interviews in refugees' homes appeared to not only address the knowledge gap around refugee perspectives, but also provide a sense of participation and voice to refugees. To be more representative of the diversity of the refugee population, research would need to be carried out on a larger scale than was possible in this study. It would also need to be repeated, as a one-off study can only shed light on a moment in time.

6 Conclusion

This research asked refugees what would be most helpful to them in meeting their medium- and long-term needs. Their responses indicated some clear goals and aspirations, including safe return to Myanmar with full rights as citizens, access to education and a better future for their children, improved living conditions and the ability and means to support themselves and their families. As outlined here, credible and sustained international pressure on the governments concerned is essential to achieve these conditions in Myanmar, and open up the policy space for medium-term response programming in Bangladesh.

This study is intended to support and inform ongoing dialogue, advocacy and interactions of key international stakeholders, including the World Bank, other multilateral banks, UNHCR and NGOs, with the Bangladeshi Government on finding a solution to the Rohingya refugee situation. Durable solutions – in particular safe and voluntary return – are dependent on addressing the root causes of displacement and creating the right conditions for return in Myanmar. However, given the intractable situation there, continued efforts to ensure the right level of funding goes to short- and medium-term responses are required. At present the 2019 JRP requests just under \$1 million, but is only 15.8% funded (OCHA, 2019b), and the 2018 appeal, at the acute stage of the crisis, was only ever 69% funded (OCHA, 2018). Evidence from past refugee crises shows that funding tends to decrease after the first few years and as refugees enter protracted displacement (Crawford et al., 2015). With the Rohingya crisis slipping down the political agenda and competing priorities for funding, it seems unlikely it will go against this trend.

Rohingya refugees framed their aspirations and priorities in the context of the current challenges they face: feeding their families and having to live in crowded and congested camps. Yet the research found that most – 79% of those surveyed – wanted to remain where they currently were to avoid unsettling themselves and their families, stay close to relatives and near the border with Myanmar and preserve their right to return to Myanmar. Women were not as likely as men to identify returning to Myanmar as a priority, and were consumed by improving their immediate living conditions in Bangladesh, including better

WASH, sanitation and hygiene, healthcare and less crowded, more durable shelters.

While education and improved shelter were the main priorities for refugees, most of those we interviewed wanted to be able to support themselves and their family through work. The survey we conducted identified that, if refugees had the legal right to work, skills training would be most helpful in improving their livelihoods. However, the majority of refugees we interviewed during our visit to Cox's Bazar felt that cash loans would be most helpful as it would enable them to start a business. Displacement and the harsh economic situation refugees found themselves in led most men and women to have a positive outlook on women working, albeit inside the home.

The study also found that refugees had not systematically been engaged on their views regarding their short-term future, and had never been engaged at all on their medium- to long-term needs. The refugees we spoke to welcomed the individual interviews conducted as part of the study. While some felt that community leaders including *majbis* could represent their views, many did not trust their leaders and wanted to give their views directly.

Gathering the perspectives of refugees on their own situation and their perspectives on their future and what would best help them in displacement must be part of the policy discussion on the future of Rohingya refugees in Bangladesh. Only by doing this can international stakeholders who wish to uphold better rights, dignity and lives for Rohingya refugees in Bangladesh identify opportunities to pursue the right priorities for refugees. Voluntary and safe return to Myanmar is an aspiration for many (though not all) of the refugees we talked to, and this is supported by the Bangladeshi Government. The international community needs to continue working with the Government of Bangladesh on advocating and acting to support the creation of the right conditions for return to reduce anxiety and tensions among and between the Rohingya and host communities.

However, there also needs to be a recognition of the intractable nature of the situation and the difficulties involved in creating the right conditions for return.

Continuing to engage the Government of Bangladesh on medium-term solutions is critical. Having gathered refugees' perspectives, the challenge will be ensuring that they are properly considered and used to inform the response. The goals and aspirations of refugees and their perspectives on what would make a difference to their lives in the medium term are currently constrained by strong policy positions on the part of the Government of Bangladesh on access to education and the legal right to work. The government continues to fear that moderating these policies will encourage more Rohingya across the border, and increase resentment among impoverished people in the host environment. There are signs that the government may be relaxing some policy positions on third-country resettlement, and there may be opportunities for further dialogue on access to education with the World Bank's education programming under their refugee sub-window fund. These developments show that, while it will take time, sustained dialogue between donors, governments, multilateral banks and other international organisations can shift the policy environment. Continuing to ensure that these efforts are in line with the goals and aspirations of refugees and their perspectives will require further work on engaging with refugees.

In order to ensure that refugee perspectives are integrated in policy discussions on their future, and based on the findings of this research, the study recommends the following in Bangladesh:

Recommendation 1: Continue to press for adequate levels of funding to improve living conditions in camps for Rohingya refugees

As displacement becomes protracted and funding declines, the situation facing Rohingya refugees in camps in Cox's Bazar could quickly worsen, and could be used to encourage premature return (see Crisp, 2018). Instead, responses should look historically at the importance of maintaining adequate conditions in the camps, including improving the provision of basic services (shelter, WASH, healthcare), and improving community representation and social cohesion (as outlined below).

Recommendation 2: Effective communication and engagement of refugees

As a starting point, clear communication with refugees about their options and the intentions of the Government of Bangladesh would help ease anxiety and tension. Immediate action could include strengthening current communication strategies on humanitarian aid to incorporate more information on medium-term issues, as well as clearer engagement on government positions. This would need action

from humanitarian organisations present in the camps already engaging with refugees on short-term needs, as well as in discussion with the Government of Bangladesh. Future plans for relocation or voluntary return will need to involve careful community consultation based on an understanding of the Rohingyas' desire not to be uprooted again. As pointed out in this report, communications and community engagement should endeavour to be face to face, including household visits to reach women who may not leave their homes.

Recommendation 3: Continue with surveys on medium-term aspirations and support

The international community, in particular stakeholders involved in discussing solutions to the Rohingya crisis, should continue surveying refugees' medium- to long-term aspirations and needs. Representative quantitative surveys should be accompanied by qualitative methods. Based on the evidence gathered in this study, individual interviews with refugees in their homes would best ensure that refugees' views are gathered in ways that fit with their preferences. Such research and gathering of perspectives should further extend to encapsulate the views of host and affected Bangladeshi communities so as to ensure that policy changes also benefit them in addressing legitimate grievances among host populations. Quantitative and qualitative work is needed to ensure that women are engaged and their voices, priorities and potential are well represented.

Recommendation 4: Improve community engagement, community relationships and camp governance

While individual engagement is refugees' preferred approach, it is also a symptom of a fragmented community life and leadership. Further study and efforts should be geared towards identifying opportunities to build trust among refugees and between refugees and leadership structures, including through increased refugee representation and strengthened accountability and oversight mechanisms for existing governance structures. Community engagement should be structured in a way that guarantees participation and representation (in particular women's perspectives) and empowers the Rohingya people to find solutions to their displacement in the short, medium and long term. Three elements would be needed to take this forward:

- Building the political will among the Bangladeshi authorities and international donors to engage the Rohingya in the ways suggested above, and to finance capacity-building assistance.

- The election of camp-level representatives can play a positive role in improving representation, but such efforts must be combined with training of camp leaders in the principles and practices of community representation; supporting refugees and their representatives with legal training so they understand their rights and national legal frameworks; efforts to elevate the leadership role played by women; and steps to reduce the risks faced by women in leadership roles through complementary efforts to support communities to accept the new role women play in community leadership.
- Providing support to the Rohingya to develop community groups and leadership structures that are more representative and legitimate. This would require donors being less risk-averse in their engagement with the Rohingya population, as well as recognising the risk of non-engagement with groups considered more politically risky. There is a supportive, capacity-strengthening role that donors and implementing agencies can play to make engagement with the Rohingya population easier. The environment in Bangladesh is much more permissive than in Myanmar and there is a critical opportunity to engage with civil society groups that could have positive long-term effects on the future of the Rohingya population in Myanmar – as well as a medium-term impact on their lives in displacement.

Recommendation 5: Adopt strategies to contribute to the self-reliance of refugees

The Government of Bangladesh and donors must make removing the barriers to education and livelihoods, and the provision of multi-year funding for these sectors, a priority to reduce refugees' dependence on aid and their vulnerability to exploitation and negative coping strategies.

- **Livelihoods:** recognising the likely duration of Rohingya displacement, multi-year funding should prioritise the delivery of cash programming as well as longer-term livelihood and vocational training opportunities for refugees, including opportunities for women. Critically, livelihoods actions must also seek to play a gender transformative role by addressing the risks of gender-based violence faced by women seeking work and take steps to change laws, policies and social norms that reinforce and exacerbate gender inequalities and limit women's economic empowerment.

- **Education:** provision of education for child refugees is critical to avoid a 'lost generation' unable to meet their own needs. Priority must be placed on securing government agreement on the official language for refugee education, the Learning Competency Framework and Approach, and with multi-year donor funding, expand investment in teacher training and the provision of formal inclusive primary and secondary education and technical and vocation education and training.

Recommendation 6: Focus international dialogue on the priorities articulated by refugees

Refugees were clear about what would make the most difference to their lives in the medium term and improve their futures. As a result, actors involved in discussing a medium-term solution to the refugee situation in Bangladesh, including with the Government of Bangladesh, should focus their efforts on improving access to quality education for Rohingya children, improve living conditions and shelter and support the right to work, including the right to own a business outside or within the home, and the right to freedom of movement.

- Relevant stakeholders including UNHCR, IOM and refugee-focused NGOs could play a larger role in ensuring that refugee voices are represented in high-level political and policy discussions in ways that are not tokenistic or a misrepresentation through diaspora or community groups that may or may not reflect the perspectives of refugees. This may be through committing to supporting the recommendations outlined above.
- The same stakeholders should identify opportunities for Rohingya to present these issues and concerns directly to relevant policy-makers.

Recommendation 7: Develop, fund and deliver a medium-term development plan for Cox's Bazar that addresses priority needs as articulated by refugee and host populations

In the longer term, continued efforts are needed to agree an ambitious commitment to a local development plan for Cox's Bazar. Such efforts will require coordinated multi-year donor and private sector funding for local community and infrastructural investments and the identification of policy reforms (such as the right to work and freedom of movement) that can contribute to mitigating the impact of refugee hosting and support refugees to make a positive impact towards local growth and development and to efforts to increase social cohesion between affected communities.

References

- Adams, B. (2019) 'For Rohingya, Bangladesh's Bhasan Char "will be like a prison"'. Human Rights Watch Dispatches, 14 March, 2019 (www.hrw.org/news/2019/03/15/rohingya-bangladeshs-bhasan-char-will-be-prison)
- Amnesty International (2017) *'Caged without a roof': apartheid in Myanmar's Rakhine State*. London (www.amnesty.org/en/documents/asa16/7484/2017/en/)
- Amnesty International (2018) *'We will destroy everything.' Military responsibility for crimes against humanity in Rakhine State, Myanmar* (www.amnesty.org/en/documents/asa16/8630/2018/en/)
- Antara, N. (2019) 'What do Rohingyas think about Bhashan Char?' Dhaka Tribune, 29 January (www.dhakatribune.com/bangladesh/rohingya-crisis/2019/01/29/what-do-rohingyas-think-about-bhashan-char)
- Barbelet, V. (2017) *Livelihood strategies of Central African refugees in Cameroon*. ODI Working Paper. London: Overseas Development Institute (www.odi.org/publications/10750-livelihood-strategies-central-african-refugees-cameroon)
- Barbelet, V. and Wake, C. (2017) *Livelihoods in displacement: from refugee perspectives to aid agency response*. London: ODI (www.odi.org/publications/10901-livelihoods-displacement-refugee-perspectives-aid-agency-response)
- Barbelet, V., Hagen-Zanker, J. and Mansour-Ille, D. (2018) 'The Jordan Compact: lessons learnt and implications for future refugee compacts', ODI Policy Brief. London: ODI (www.odi.org/publications/11045-jordan-compact-lessons-learnt-and-implications-future-refugee-compacts)
- Bellamy, C., Haysome, S., Wake, C. and Barbelet, V. (2017) *The lives and livelihoods of Syrian refugees: a study of refugee perspectives and their institutional environment in Turkey and Jordan*. ODI Working Paper. London: Overseas Development Institute (www.odi.org/publications/10736-lives-and-livelihoods-syrian-refugees)
- BROUK – Burmese Rohingya Organisation UK (2018) *The right to education denied for Rohingya refugees in Bangladesh* (<https://burmacampaign.org.uk/media/The-Right-to-Education-Denied-for-Rohingya-Refugees-in-Bangladesh.pdf>)
- Christian Aid and Gana Unnayan Kendra (2018) *Accountability assessment Rohingya response Bangladesh*. February. Cox's Bazar: Christian Aid (www.christianaid.org.uk/resources/about-us/accountability-assessment-rohingya-response-bangladesh)
- Crawford, N., Cosgrave, J., Haysom, S. and Walicki, N. (2019) *Protracted displacement: uncertain paths to self-reliance in exile*, HPG Working Paper. London: ODI (www.odi.org/publications/9906-protracted-displacement-uncertain-paths-self-reliance-exile)
- Crisp, J. (2018) "'Primitive people": the untold story of UNHCR's historical engagement with Rohingya refugees' *Humanitarian Exchange* 73 (<https://odihpn.org/magazine/primitive-people-the-untold-story-of-unhcrs-historical-engagement-with-rohingya-refugees/>)
- de Chickera, A. (2018) 'Statelessness and identity in the Rohingya refugee crisis' *Humanitarian Exchange* 73 (<https://odihpn.org/magazine/statelessness-identity-rohingya-refugee-crisis/>)
- Goldsmith, B. and Karim, N. (2019) 'From sports to work, Rohingya women face new roles in world's largest refugee camp'. Thompson Reuters Foundation, 6 February (<http://news.trust.org/item/20190206005130-d43p9?fbclid=IwAR0tJKR2ZKI11ImSzjpQGZrkr4pIBkkGCdUJr0zKacxqxn9Ms20svDvktec>)
- Ground Truth Solutions (2019) *Survey of refugees and humanitarian staff in Bangladesh* (<https://reliefweb.int/report/bangladesh/survey-refugees-and-humanitarian-staff-bangladesh-march-2019-round-1>)
- Gov.uk (2019) 'Penny Mordaunt: the Rohingya crisis must not be forgotten' (www.gov.uk/government/news/penny-mordaunt-the-rohingya-crisis-must-not-be-forgotten)

- Habib, M., Jubba, C., Ahmad, S., Rahman, M. and Pallard, H. (2018) *Forced migration of Rohingya: the untold experience*. Ottawa, Ontario: Ontario International Development Agency
- Healy, L. (2012) 'Unable to see the future: refugee youth in Malawi speak out' *Forced Migration Review* 40: 5–6 (www.fmreview.org/young-and-out-of-place)
- Human Rights Council (2018) *Report of the independent international fact-finding mission on Myanmar*, UN Doc A/HRC/39/64 (www.ohchr.org/en/hrbodies/hrc/myanmarFFM/Pages/ReportoftheMyanmarFFM.aspx)
- Human Rights Watch (2018) "Bangladesh is not my country": the plight of Rohingya refugees from Myanmar (https://reliefweb.int/sites/reliefweb.int/files/resources/bangladesh0818_web2.pdf)
- Huang, C. and Gough, K. (2019) *Toward medium-term solutions for Rohingya refugees and hosts in Bangladesh* (www.cgdev.org/sites/default/files/toward-medium-term-solutions-rohingya-refugees-and-hosts-bangladesh-mapping-potential.pdf)
- IRC – International Rescue Committee (2014) *Emergency economies: the impact of cash assistance in Lebanon. An impact evaluation of the 2013–2014 winter cash assistance program for Syrian refugees in Lebanon* (www.rescue.org/sites/default/files/document/631/emergencyeconomiesevaluationreport-lebanon2014.pdf)
- International Rescue Committee (2012) 'Poor shelter conditions: threats to health, dignity and safety' (www.rescue.org/sites/default/files/document/1664/ircsittweshelterbriefupdated.pdf)
- ISCG – Inter-Sectoral Coordination Group (2019) *Mutli-sectoral needs assessment in host communities – preliminary findings* (https://reliefweb.int/sites/reliefweb.int/files/resources/hc_msna_preliminary_findings_presentation_clean.pdf)
- ISCG (2019a) 'Bangladesh: Cox's Bazar refugee population as of 08 January 2019' (<https://reliefweb.int/map/bangladesh/bangladesh-cox-s-bazar-refugee-population-8-january-2019>)
- ISCG (2019b) *Situation report Rohingya refugee crisis. Cox's Bazar, February* (www.humanitarianresponse.info/sites/www.humanitarianresponse.info/files/documents/files/sitrep_february_2019_v3.pdf)
- Kiragu, E., Li Rosi, A. and Morris, T. (2011) *States of denial: a review of UNHCR's response to the protracted situation of stateless Rohingya refugees in Bangladesh*. Policy Development and Evaluation Services, UNHCR (www.unhcr.org/4ee754c19.html)
- Lawder, D. (2018) 'World Bank to provide up to \$480 million to aid Rohingya refugees in Bangladesh'. Reuters, 29 June (<https://uk.reuters.com/article/uk-worldbank-bangladesh-rohingya/world-bank-to-provide-up-to-480-million-to-aid-rohingya-refugees-in-bangladesh-idUKKBN1JP05J?il=0>)
- Lemma, A., Quattri, M., Hagen-Zanker, J., Wake, C., Raihan, S. and Eusuf, A. (2018) *EDIG research reports no. 4. Bangladesh economic dialogue on inclusive growth. Strategies for inclusive growth in Cox's Bazar* (<https://asiafoundation.org/wp-content/uploads/2018/11/EDIG-No.4-Strategies-for-inclusive-growth-in-Coxs-Bazar.pdf>)
- Levine, S., (2014) *How to study livelihoods: bringing a sustainable livelihoods framework to life*, ODI Working Paper. London: Overseas Development Institute (<https://securelivelihoods.org/publication/how-to-study-livelihoods-bringing-a-sustainable-livelihoods-framework-to-life-2/?resourceid=327>)
- Lewis, S., McPherson, P. and Paul, R. (2019) 'In Rohingya camps, a political awakening faces a backlash. Special report'. Reuters, 24 April (https://uk.reuters.com/article/uk-myanmar-rohingya-politics-insight/in-rohingya-camps-a-political-awakening-faces-a-backlash-idUKKCN1S000Z?utm_source=NEWS&utm_medium=email&utm_content=2nd+section+2nd+story+reuters&utm_campaign=HQ_EN_therefugeebrief_external_20190424)
- Lindquist, A. (1979) *Report on the 1978–79 Bangladesh refugee relief operation* (www.ibiblio.org/obl/docs/LINDQUIST_REPORT.htm)
- Mahony, L. (2018) *Time to break old habits: shifting from complicity to protection of the Rohingya in Myanmar* (www.fieldviewsolutions.org/fv-publications/Time_to_break_old_habits.pdf)
- McPherson, P. and Paul, R. (2019) 'Rohingya "lost generation" struggle to study in Bangladesh camps'. Reuters, 18 March (<https://reut.rs/2FktuEU>)
- Milton, A.H., Rahman, M., Hussain, S., Jindal, C., Choudhury, S., Akter, S., ... and Efirid, J.T. (2017) 'Trapped in statelessness: Rohingya refugees in Bangladesh' *International Journal of Environmental Research and Public Health* 14(8): 1–8

- OCHA – UN Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (2018) 'Bangladesh: Rohingya refugee crisis JRP 2018': response plan/appeal snapshot for 2018 (<https://fts.unocha.org/appeals/656/summary>)
- OCHA (2019a) 'Bangladesh: Cox's Bazar refugee population' (www.humanitarianresponse.info/en/operations/bangladesh/infographic/bangladesh-cox%E2%80%99s-bazar-refugee-population-08-january-2019)
- OCHA (2019b) 'Bangladesh: 2019 JRP for Rohingya humanitarian crisis (January–December)'. Summary, response plan/appeal snapshot for 2019 (<https://fts.unocha.org/appeals/719/summary>)
- OHCHR – Office of the UN High Commissioner for Human Rights (2019) 'End of mission statement by the Special Rapporteur on the situation of human rights in Myanmar' (www.ohchr.org/EN/NewsEvents/Pages/DisplayNews.aspx?NewsID=24114&LangID=E&utm_source=NEWS&utm_medium=email&utm_content=1st+section+1st+story+ohchr&utm_campaign=HQ_EN_therefugeebrief_external_20190128)
- Oh, S.-A. (2018) *Food assistance and the social construction of Rohingya refugees in Bangladesh*. ISEAS Yusof Ishak Institute (<http://hdl.handle.net/11540/8559>)
- Plan International (2018) *Adolescent girls in crisis: voices of the Rohingya* (https://reliefweb.int/sites/reliefweb.int/files/resources/voices_of_the_rohingya_report_june2018.pdf)
- Riley, A., Varner, A., Ventevogel, P., Taimur Hasan, M. and Welton-Mitchell, C. (2017) 'Daily stressors, trauma exposure, and mental health among stateless Rohingya refugees in Bangladesh' *Transcultural Psychiatry* 54(3): 304–331
- Ripoll, S. (2017) *Social and cultural factors shaping health and nutrition, wellbeing and protection of the Rohingya within a humanitarian context* (https://opendocs.ids.ac.uk/opendocs/bitstream/handle/123456789/13328/Ripoll_2017_Social_and_cultural_factors_wellbeing_and_protection_of_the_Rohingya.pdf?sequence=1&isAllowed=y)
- Stoakes, E. and Ellis-Petersen, H. (2019) 'Rohingya crisis: UN investigates its 'dysfunctional' conduct in Myanmar'. *The Guardian*, 27 February (www.theguardian.com/world/2019/feb/27/un-investigates-conduct-myanmar-rohingya)
- UN – United Nations (2018) *Global refugee compact* (www.unhcr.org/gcr/GCR_English.pdf)
- UN (2019) *2019 Joint Response Plan for Rohingya humanitarian crisis* (<https://reliefweb.int/report/bangladesh/2019-joint-response-plan-rohingya-humanitarian-crisis-january-december-0>)
- UNDP – United Nations Development Programme (2019) 'Country Information' (www.bd.undp.org/content/bangladesh/en/home/countryinfo/)
- UNHCR – UN High Commissioner for Refugees (2011) *States of denial: a review of UNHCR's response to the protracted situation of stateless Rohingya refugees in Bangladesh* (www.unhcr.org/4ee754c19.html)
- UNHCR (2018a) 'Concept note: a solidarity approach for the people of Rakhine State', July
- UNHCR (2018b) *UNHCR protection support mission Cox's Bazar, Bangladesh* (<https://data2.unhcr.org/en/documents/download/66347>)
- UNHCR (2018c) 'Rohingya refugee camps in Bangladesh switch to environmentally friendly LPG' (www.unhcr.org/news/briefing/2018/11/5bf7c79d4/rohingya-refugee-camps-bangladesh-switch-environmentally-friendly-lpg.html)
- Wake, C. (2014) 'Forced migration, urbanization and health: exploring social determinants of health among refugee women in Malaysia' (PhD dissertation, University of Victoria) (<http://hdl.handle.net/1828/5293>)
- Wake, C. (2016) *'Turning a blind eye': the policy response to Rohingya refugees in Malaysia*, HPG Working Paper. London: ODI (www.odi.org/publications/10648-rohingya-refugees-unhcr-livelihood)
- Wake, C. and Cheung, T. (2016) *Livelihood strategies of Rohingya refugees in Malaysia: 'we want to live in dignity'* ODI Working Paper. London: Overseas Development Institute (www.odi.org/publications/10449-livelihood-strategies-rohingya-refugees-malaysia)
- Wake, C. and Bryant, J. (2018) *Capacity and complementarity in the Rohingya response in Bangladesh*. ODI Working Paper. London: Overseas Development Institute (www.odi.org/publications/11251-capacity-and-complementarity-rohingya-response-bangladesh)

Wake, C. and Yu, B. (2018) 'The Rohingya crisis: making the transition from emergency to longer-term development', HPG Policy Brief 71 (www.odi.org/sites/odi.org.uk/files/resource-documents/12134.pdf)

XChange (2018) *Rohingya repatriation survey* (http://xchange.org/xchange-explores-what-return-means-for-the-rohingya-in-latest-repatriation-survey/?mc_cid=fe5a3cee7e&mc_eid=67a36a76fa)

HPG

Humanitarian Policy Group

The Humanitarian Policy Group is one of the world's leading teams of independent researchers and communications professionals working on humanitarian issues. It is dedicated to improving humanitarian policy and practice through a combination of high-quality analysis, dialogue and debate.

Readers are encouraged to quote or reproduce materials from this publication but, as copyright holders, ODI requests due acknowledgement and a copy of the publication. This and other HPG reports are available from www.odi.org/hpg.

This work is licensed under CC BY-NC-ND 4.0.

Humanitarian Policy Group
Overseas Development Institute
203 Blackfriars Road
London SE1 8NJ
United Kingdom

Tel.: +44 (0) 20 7922 0300
Fax.: +44 (0) 20 7922 0399
Email: hpgadmin@odi.org
Website: odi.org/hpg

Cover photo: Bangladesh.
Rohingya adapt to new lives in
refugee camps
© UNHCR / Andrew McConnell

