

# Rohingya Refugee Crisis and Its Impact in Bangladesh: A Critical Study on Governments' Repatriation Steps, Domestic Employment Opportunities and the Role of NGOs

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**Abstract:** Rohingya as the worlds' most persecuted ethnic group deserves a peaceful solution via international law and human rights act. Neighboring country, Bangladesh is not much capable enough to take ample responsibilities and burden. Repatriation can be a probable strategic settlement to ensure international peace and security. By means of existing reality, some interest groups within the country are highly encouraging them not to return their country of origin. This group has certain economic benefits from the influx, keeping the host economy into consideration. Vis-à-vis financial and other strategic interest create unsuccessful repatriation procedures that curtail security prospects of Bangladesh. As huge Rohingya influx creates a surplus labor at Cox's bazar area, economically a very large group is in crisis situation and a small group is benefitted on it. This research endeavors to find out a linkage between the political aspect and the economic aspect, besides it examines whether economic factors or political factors are responsible for repatriation failure. This study tried to find out the economic impact of the influx in different groups and after that it focused on probability of such allegation. This paper also provides the probable measures to solve the matter in further occurrence.

**Keywords:** Rohingya Refugees, Forcefully Displaced persons, Rohingya Economy, Repatriation, Non- Governmental Organizations.

## I.INTRODUCTION

Bangladesh, the South Asian country with limited resources and huge population, showed the magnanimity to host as many as 11, 46,796 persons<sup>1</sup> of the Rohingya community, who were forcefully displaced from their country of origin .More than 743000<sup>2</sup> fled to Bangladesh after the military crackdown in Myanmar in 2017.Till date Bangladesh accommodates 4.7<sup>3</sup> percent of global refugee, while their

population itself is only 0.31%<sup>4</sup> in the globe. This entire population is accommodated in the southern belt of the country, in one single district of Cox's Bazar, specifically in Teknaf and Ukhiya. As of 2011 census, the population of which is 4, 71,768only.<sup>5</sup> Thus, the Rohingya people in the district supersede the host Bangladeshi community by 2.43:1. After the immediate case of influx, the situation is at a deadlock for last two years with, in fact, no remarkable progress in drawing a solution to the problem. Although the United Nations has condemned what it called the "Ethnic Cleansing" of Rohingyas in Myanmar, it has so far failed to put adequate pressure on Myanmar to create favorable conditions for the return of refugees. It is apparent that Myanmar authorities do not have a real intention of taking them back, although they have talked about starting the repatriation process several times.<sup>6</sup> Sheltering such a huge burden for an infinitive period of time posits a substantial threat on national economy, security and environment. Economically a very large group among the host community is affected; the economic pattern of the area got changed. Emergence of a very small group of people who got new scopes of work, both legally and illegally, as a consequence of the influx, is, allegedly, manipulating the political process of repatriation of Rohingya. Government has planned for the repatriation twice but it has been failed both the times. Since the repatriation will be solely 'Voluntary', thus the will of the Rohingya people is of utmost importance. Now, if the Rohingya people could be convinced that they are enjoying better living here, the process of repatriation is going to be near to impossible. As per allegation goes, this is what going

<sup>4</sup>Ibid

<sup>5</sup>Bangladesh Bureau of Statistics. (2013). *District Statistics 2011: Cox's Bazar*. Dhaka: BBS.

<sup>6</sup>Muhiuddin, K. (2019, August 25). *Opinion: Foreign aid is a hindrance to Rohingya repatriation*. Retrieved October 26, 2019, from Deutsche Wallace: <https://www.dw.com/en/opinion-foreign-aid-is-a-hindrance-to-rohingya-repatriation/a-50157682>

<sup>1</sup> Inter Section Coordination Group. (September, 2019). *Situation Report Rohingya Refugee Crisis*. Cox's Bazar: UNDP.

<sup>2</sup>Ibid

<sup>3</sup>Ibid

on in this case. Presence of the community in the country is indeed a matter of tension for Bangladesh. Since there is issue of interest for Myanmar, it is likely that it will try to prolong the process. However Dhaka has to continue with its proactive approach in drawing out a solution to the issue.

## II. OBJECTIVE OF THE STUDY

The primary objective is to give a detailed eye on the economic aspect of the issue mostly, and to relate the economic aspects with the role of NGOs and governments' repatriation steps. Specific objectives will be as followings:

- Analyze the economic disorder created in post influx scenario.
- To find out the employment opportunities created by influx.
- To bring out the parties benefitted from the influx.
- To analyze the probable condition of repatriation procedure.
- To find out a critical linkage between the role of NGOs and repatriation prospects

## III. RESEARCH QUESTION

The central research question will be-

- What are the impacts of Rohingya refugee crisis in Bangladesh?
- To what extent Rohingya refugee crisis is becoming an unending conjuncture and what are the role of host country's government and NGOs in repatriation procedures?

## IV. LITERATURE REVIEW

This paper endeavors to find out a research gap, why and how Rohingya refugee crisis is becoming an unending crisis and what are the roles of government and NGOs in repatriation process. Rohingya refugee crisis strained the bilateral relations between Myanmar and Bangladesh since the late 1970s. This problem emanated from widespread violations of human rights against the Muslim minority in Myanmar. This caused massive Rohingya influx to Bangladesh. This eventually caused disputes between Bangladesh and Myanmar and non-traditional security crisis in the border areas.<sup>7</sup> As nontraditional security is not likely the traditional security concern that only focuses on military forces and now voluntary repatriation that promotes international peace and security is a matter of great concern for the host country.

It has been concerned issues that the problem of security threat should be an issue for which multiple actors share responsibility among themselves, local populations, host country, donor states, regional organizations, the UNHCR and its operational partners. For a resolution of the problems faced by the stateless Rohingya refugees, a multi-faceted approach

is required. In fact, it is important to materialize a collaborative effort between the government and civil society to contain the social and economic impact of protracted refugee situation.<sup>8</sup> International cooperation, Myanmar's good intention for repatriation and NGOs motivation can be a good way for voluntary repatriation.

"The Bangladesh government has said that some non-government organizations (NGO) were impeding the progress on the start of the repatriation of Rohingya refugees from the country to Myanmar".<sup>9</sup> Government of Bangladesh is always in good aspires for collective cooperation and voluntary repatriation but some more NGOs are trying to maximize their own interest rather than national interest.

Information Minister Dr Hasan Mahmud said certain non-government organizations (NGOs) from home and abroad are behind halting of the Rohingya repatriation, besides he mentioned "We hope that the repatriation must commence soon as the government has been pursuing all diplomatic efforts at the highest level".<sup>10</sup>

A Report namely, 'Impacts of the Rohingya Refugee Influx on Host Communities' by UNDP published on October 2018 states that, "The damaging effects of hosting so many people in the areas of some hill districts had an adverse effect on the local economy. Price of rice has increased significantly because rice is also the staple food for Rohingya community. The survey found rice prices in Teknaf and Ukhiya post-influx to be Taka 38 per kg during May-June 2018, lower on average than the national price by Taka 6 per kg (BDT 44 in April 2018). Survey data shows that mean wages of all laborers declined from BDT417 pre-influx to BDT 357 post-influx, or a decline of 14 percent in Teknaf (in Ukhiya it was 6 percent). The agricultural wage in Ukhiya is said to have fallen at a much higher rate. Agricultural wage in Teknaf has apparently fallen by 11 percent. These figures tell us that there is now an abundant pool of agro-laborers and they are coming from the refugee population, who are mostly working close to their camp area."<sup>11</sup>

To summarize the impacts of price hike created by Rohingya Influx, the UNDP Report states, "Price hikes can also benefit traders and certain farmers who are able to take advantage of market mechanisms. There is a clear boost on business volume (driven by consumer spending and sales) resulting from the influx and continued presence of 1 million refugees demanding various staple foods as well as consumer necessities. New markets have sprung up while old markets

<sup>8</sup> Ahmad, I. (2010). *The Plight of the Stateless Rohingyas: Responses of the State, Society & the International Community*. University Press Ltd ,Bangladesh

<sup>9</sup> IANS. (2019). *Some NGOs Impeding Progress of Rohingya Repatriation: Bangladesh,India.com*

<sup>10</sup> Certain NGOs are behind halting of Rohingya repatriation: Hasan. (2019). *The Business Standard*

<sup>11</sup> UNDP. (2018). *Impacts of the Rohingya Refugee Influx on Host Communities*. Dhaka: UNDP.

<sup>7</sup> Parnini, N. ed (2013). *The Rohingya Refugee Crisis and Bangladesh-Myanmar Relations*, *Asian and Pacific Migration Journal*.

are functioning on overtime.”<sup>12</sup> According to a survey published on August 28, 2018 conducted by ‘Xchange Foundation’ 75.5% of surveyed population of 1697 persons from Teknaf and Ukhiya perceives that the job opportunities have increased after the influx of the Rohingya.<sup>13</sup> An Introduction to International Protection, a report published by UNHCR covers the various terminologies regarding Refugees. It covers the definitional aspects of the term ‘Refugee’, why would somebody be called as Refugee and why some would not. This is covered in the report with legal references of 1951 Convention on Refugees. This report basically focuses on the need of International Protection for Refugees and the international legal framework for the International Protection of the Refugees.<sup>14</sup>

An Article Rohingya refugee asylum in Bangladesh written by Tasnim Tabassum describes about the camps where the Rohingya community is living. It narrates the standard of living for the Rohingya people focusing on the habitation and location pattern. The article mainly emphasizes the potential threat to the environment and the damages being occurred upon the environment of the localities. Environmental perspectives like Forest Resources, Ecological Imbalance, Environmental Degradation, Biodiversity, Natural Resources etc. are the primary discussions of the paper.<sup>15</sup>

Situation Report published by Inter Section Co-ordination Group (ISCG) is published on a monthly basis. This basically covers the entire process of humanitarian aids and the international and local organizations working for the Rohingya People. This report compiles the entire activities of the organizations and helps to conduct the activities by a co-ordinate planning among all the bodies working for the Rohingya Community in Bangladesh.<sup>16</sup> The report shows Foreign Aid is a hindrance to Rohingya repatriation written by Khalid Muhiuddin in Deutche Wallace makes a comparison of life standard of Rohingyas in Bangladesh and in Myanmar, their country of origin. The report comes to a perception based deduction saying, “It is common sense that if Rohingya refugees are having a better life in Bangladeshi camps than the one they experienced in Myanmar, they will see little reason for going back to Myanmar.” But the deduction was not backed by any academic research.<sup>17</sup>

<sup>12</sup> *Ibid*

<sup>13</sup> Xchange Foundation. (2018, August 28). *The Rohingya Amongst Us: Bangladeshi Perspectives on the Rohingya Crisis Survey*. Retrieved September 21, 2019, from Xchange Foundation:

<sup>14</sup> United Nations High Commission for Refugees. (2005). *An Introduction to International Protection*. Geneva: Office of the United Nations High Commission for Refugees.

<sup>15</sup> Tabassum, T. (2017). *Rohingya Refugee Asylum in Bangladesh*. Retrieved October 26, 2019, from Forum for Physical Development of Bangladesh: <http://fpd-bd.com/?s=rohingya+refugee+asylum+in+bangladesh>

<sup>16</sup> Inter Section Coordination Group. (2019). *Situation Report Rohingya Refugee Crisis*. Cox's Bazar: UNDP.

<sup>17</sup> Muhiuddin, K. (2019). Opinion: *Foreign aid is a hindrance to Rohingya repatriation*. Retrieved October 26, 2019, from Deutche Wallace: <https://www.dw.com/en/opinion-foreign-aid-is-a-hindrance-to-rohingya-repatriation/a-50157682>

All of these literatures bring us to a clear idea that, economically there are two groups created due to the influx-

- The mass people who are badly hampered in terms of economy, i.e. price hike, low labor cost etc., due to the influx.
- Another handful of people who are benefitted economically by getting employment opportunity due to the influx.

But any academic literature is hardly found, that can relate this economic aspect with the political aspect that plays an important role to repatriate the Rohingya.

## V. METHODOLOGY

### *Research Type:*

The methodology used in this research will be exploratory in nature. Both primary and secondary sources of data have been used for this research work. Relevant books, journals, published articles, reports, electronic and internet sources are used and duly accredited to make this paper more informative and logical. Number of Talk Shows was also reviewed from internet for expert opinion. A good number of newspaper articles from various national dailies had been an important source of data, due to the contemporarily of the topic.

### *Data Collection Methods and Sampling:*

At first, survey was done by data collected through questionnaire from 2 groups of people-

- Government officers responsible for Rohingya camps were selected through Cluster Sampling.
- NGO officials were selected through Convenient Sampling Method. Due to the sensitivity of the topic and restrictions in movement, this method was chosen.

Apart from these, expert opinion was also taken from the scholars of universities in different issues relevant to research work.

### *Rationale of Methodology:*

At the initial stage of my research work, researchers have collected relevant literature about Rohingya issue and its economic impact. Then have prepared the questionnaire to collect data from survey. Researchers have conducted the survey by verbal conversation over phone in person and then answered; questionnaire was collected from the respondents over emails. Then data was computed and analyzed logically. Later on expert opinion was collected from university scholars, government officials and NGO workers with experience at different relevant tasks. Later, this paper has followed the theoretical framework to describe the point of the study.

### *Theory Selection:*

Realism is the theoretical tool that is used in this research work. The fact of Rohingya influx can be interpreted by ‘Push-Pull Theory’. From the relevant idea of Push- Pull

Theory, “Populations with ‘refugee’ statuses are among the most affected by push factors in a country or region. ‘Refugees’ are often faced with genocide-like conditions in their country of origin, usually because of authoritarian governments or populations opposed to religious or ethnic groups.”<sup>18</sup> The Rohingya community was pushed out from their country of origin, Myanmar.

Bangladesh, the receiving state, had opened its border considering the humanitarian ground from a liberal point of view. But the situation is at a deadlock for 2 years and the Rohingya community has become a potential threat to national security of Bangladesh. Thus, Bangladesh government has shifted its stance point and working for repatriation for the Rohingya community to their country of origin, Myanmar. According to the core definition of Realism, “Central to that assumption is the view that human beings are egoistic and desire power. Realists believe that our selfishness, our appetite for power and our inability to trust others leads to predictable outcomes.”<sup>19</sup> From individual perspective, the roles of NGOs are also justified under the theory of Realism. The selfish and power seeking nature of the state is narrowed down to a micro level of individual’s self-interest; while it comes down to the level of NGOs from the case of Myanmar, a state. Thereby, it has been tested the hypothesis from a realistic point of view considering the factors such as self-interest, national interest, push pull theory, national security etc.

## VI. SIGNIFICANCE OF THE STUDY

The Rohingya situation in Bangladesh is in a deadlock for more than couples of years. Still the process of repatriation delayed miserably for twice. After 2 long years, the government is suspecting some ‘mischief’s of the Rohingya in the area. Even the idea did not yet travel up to all levels. It is still in the forums of scholars only. It is a matter of great concern that if the responsible persons of the government are at all aware of the situation there or if they were aware of the situation so long or not, the situation can be different. Thereby, researchers inspired of selecting such a topic due to the gravity of the fact and the growing concern that is being generated for sheltering community for an infinitive period of time where the solution to the issue is an immediate need for all parties involved in the issue.

## VII. ROHINGYA COMMUNITY AND CONTEXT

### *History of Rohingya: Conflict and the influx*

Rohingya is the Muslim ethnic minority group originated from the North-Western part of Arakan state. This is adjacent

to the bordering Naaf river of Bangladesh. There had been number of times that the Myanmar government denied the Rohingya ethnic group as Citizens. The inflow of influxing Rohingya in Bangladesh took place in 1978, 1991-92, 1996-98 and most recently in 2017. The outflow of the Rohingya population took place in 1978-79 and 1995. In the recent case of influx in 2017, the case is allegedly a textbook example of ethnic cleansing. Even the UN has condemned Myanmar for the atrocities on the Rohingya. It has also banned some few Generals of Myanmar Army with allegation of mass killing and ethnic cleansing.<sup>20</sup> The recent case of influx is the most horrific one amongst all, from recent past. Previously, every time they intruded Bangladesh, they could be repatriated into their country of origin, to their family. But this time, the entire ethnic group has been uprooted from Myanmar. This is obviously a reason for delay in the repatriation.

### *Status of Rohingya community in Bangladesh:*

According to 1951 convention on Refugees, the definition of Refugees needs to comply with few criteria of the inclusion clauses. The Article 1-A(2) of the 1951 Convention states that a refugee is any person who: “owing to well-founded fear of being persecuted for reasons of race, religion, nationality, membership of a particular social group or political opinion, is outside the country of his nationality and is unable or, owing to such fear, is unwilling to avail himself of the protection of that country; or who, not having a nationality and being outside the country of his former habitual residence as a result of such events, is unable or, owing to such fear, is unwilling to return to it.”<sup>21</sup>

But this will not be applicable for the case of Rohingya in Bangladesh. There are mainly two reasons for it-

Firstly, the 1951 Convention is only binding upon the signatories. Bangladesh is not a signatory of the convention.<sup>22</sup> A diagram is added below that shows variables for being refugee and how Rohingya case is a factor for Bangladesh and Myanmar.

<sup>18</sup>Rosenberg, M. (2019, September 02). *Push-Pull Factors in Immigration*. Retrieved October 23, 2019, from Thought Co: <https://www.thoughtco.com/push-pull-factors-1434837>

<sup>19</sup>Antunes, S., & Camisão, I. (2018, February 27). *Introducing Realism in International Relations Theory*. Retrieved October 02, 2019, from e-international Relations: <https://www.e-ir.info/2018/02/27/introducing-realism-in-international-relations-theory/>

<sup>20</sup>Muhiuddin, K. (2019, August 25). *Opinion: Foreign aid is a hindrance to Rohingya repatriation*. Retrieved October 26, 2019, from Deutsche Wallace: <https://www.dw.com/en/opinion-foreign-aid-is-a-hindrance-to-rohingya-repatriation/a-50157682>

<sup>21</sup>United Nations High Commission for Refugees. (2005). *An Introduction to International Protection*. Geneva: Office of the United Nations High Commission for Refugees.

<sup>22</sup>Parker, B. (2017, October 24). *Bangladesh resists greater UNHCR role in Rohingya crisis*. Retrieved October 26, 2019, from refworld: <https://www.refworld.org/docid/59eef8bc4.html>

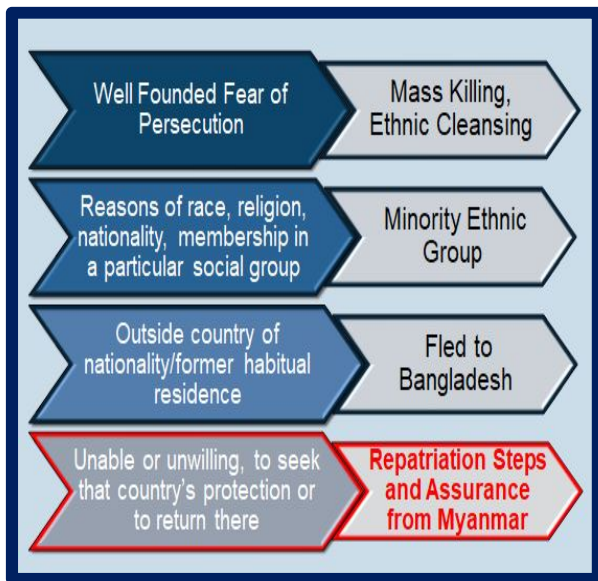


Figure: Definition of Refugees and variation in Rohingya Case.

Prepared By: Authors construct

Secondly, Myanmar government has assured the safety of the Rohingya in the Rakhine state. They have also invited the international community to justify their claim.<sup>23</sup>

Apart from all these, if Bangladesh accepts Rohingyas as refugees, the government will have certain obligations for them. From a realistic point of view, Bangladesh will not shoulder the responsibility of such a huge burden. Keeping all these factors into consideration, the Rohingya people are not called ‘Refugees’ in Bangladesh. According to the official statement of government, the Rohingya people are termed as ‘Forcefully displaced Myanmar Nationals’.

### VIII. ROHINGYA ECONOMY

#### Brief analysis on Rohingya economy:

The two *Upazilas* of Cox’s Bazar had experienced a growth of population by some around a million within just few months in the post influx scenario of 2017. This huge population is directly affecting the economic phenomenon of that area. A new economic pattern has been developed in the area centering this community. This community has got a massive inflow of foreign aids, in terms of cash and products like-daily necessities, foods and grains etc. At times, the supply is much more than requirement. As a result these products are coming into the local community at a cheaper rate, thereby changing the market equilibrium. Moreover, such huge manpower is putting stress on the local workforce by reducing their wage. Ultimately, a new economy is created in the region due to the presence of Rohingyas. This is what the researcher termed as ‘Rohingya Economy’.

<sup>23</sup> UNB, Dhaka. (2019, September 24). Bangladesh, China, Myanmar to jointly evaluate progress over Rohingya repatriation. *The Daily Star*.

How Rohingya people are involved with earning, a table is attached -

**Table 7.5. Main source of income for the Rohingya refugees (%)**

Main source of income	Share of total respondents
Unskilled wage labour	12.2
Gathering and selling of firewood or other	2.8
Skilled wage labour	2.3
Zakat	0.1
Sale of humanitarian assistance	20.8
Casual day labour	18.9
Remittances from abroad	1.0
Basic needs assistance (cash/in kind)	4.6
No income source	73.2
Fishing	0.3
Petty trade/street vending/small business	13.6
Agricultural production and sales	0.3
Other	0.0

Note: The distribution does not add to 100 since multiple responses were allowed for every individual. Source: Calculation based on NPM Round 11.

Figure: Source of Income for Rohingya  
Source: UNDP Report, 2018.

#### Impacts on Bangladeshis:

According to a survey conducted by UNDP, impact of Rohingya population among the Bangladeshis, at least 404 households were taken as a sample and the data collected from the sample through questionnaire was processed. This chapter uses the data as secondary source and tries to evaluate the impact of the influx on the Bangladeshi Community and tries to find out relevant Findings for this research.

#### Impacts on Daily Wages:

Wages for agricultural and other unskilled labor are falling, both in Teknaf and Ukhiya of Cox’s Bazar. This is because the Rohingya people are working as day laborers at a lower labor rate than the workers of host community. The survey data show that the mean wages of all laborers, as reported by households, declined from BDT 417 pre-influx to BDT 357 post-influx, which means that, post-influx wages have fallen by more than 14 percent in Teknaf. The figure for Ukhiya is about 6 per cent. However, agricultural wages in Ukhiya have fallen by a much higher rate. The mean agricultural wage rate in Teknaf has fallen by 11 percent in the post-influx period; the figure for Ukhiya is 17 per cent.<sup>24</sup> For better understanding a graph is added-

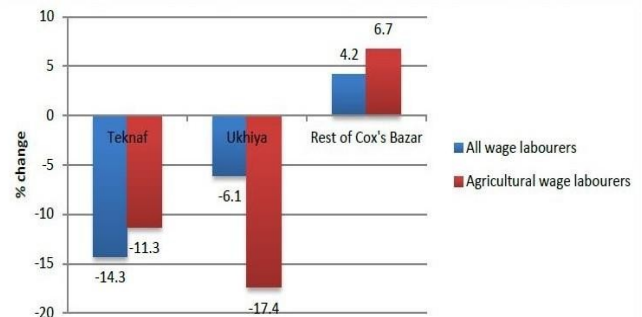


Figure: Impacts on Wages of Daily Labor.  
Source: UNDP Report, 2018

<sup>24</sup> UNDP. (2018). *Impacts of the Rohingya Refugee Influx on Host Communities*. Dhaka: UNDP.

*Impacts on Fishermen:*

In Teknaf, fishing is the profession of nearly one in three since August 2017, there is a ban imposed on fishing in the Naf River, for security reasons. This puts significant pressure on an almost 30,000–35,000 fisherman and their families. Many fishermen have been compelled to work as wage laborers. The UNDP report suggests the fishing communities of the Naf River is one of the groups that is most affected by the refugee crisis.<sup>25</sup>

*Impacts on Prices:*

The Prices of commodities saw a two sided affect. There were two types of Products that were involved with the communities. The relief items received and the daily requirements. Rohingyas are selling large quantities of in-kind assistance received as relief items. Local shopkeepers reported reduced prices of products that were smuggled out of the camps. On the other hand, the daily necessities for Rohingya purchases push prices up. The net effect suggests slightly decreased price pressures on the food products most relevant to the poor.<sup>26</sup>

*Impacts on Tourism Industry:*

Tourism is a major industry in Cox's Bazar district, mainly centering Cox's Bazar Sadar upazila. Though there are a good number of foreign aid workers visiting Bangladesh due to the Influx, the sector has shown a declining trend because of the various security and other restrictions now imposed along the Bangladesh– Myanmar border. The tourism industry is already fairly underdeveloped, largely because of infrastructural deficiencies, which are now worsening.

*Illegal Trade Opportunities Created for Bangladeshis:*

According to a research conducted by 'Centre for Policy Dialogue', the following opportunities of Illegal Trade are being enjoyed by local Host Community. But exploitation of such opportunities is only possible by the local elites or the influential persons. These local elites often exploit such scope and trying to be benefitted out of the influx. Few of such opportunities of exploitation for the Bangladeshi People are as follows:

Newspaper reports indicates that crime syndicates involved in Rohingya trafficking charge between BDT 20,000 and BDT 50,000 to smuggle the Rohingya who are reluctant to stay in the camps. During the field visit, several aid workers have also echoed similar concerns, especially regarding women trafficking to international markets for unethical activities.<sup>27</sup>

<sup>25</sup> Bangladesh Bureau of Statistics. (2018). *District Statistics 2017: Cox's Bazar*. Dhaka: BBS.

<sup>26</sup> UNDP. (2018). *Impacts of the Rohingya Refugee Influx on Host Communities*. Dhaka: UNDP.

<sup>27</sup> Khan, T. I. (2018). *Implications of the Rohingya Crisis for Bangladesh*. Retrieved October 28, 2019, from Center For policy Dialogue: <https://cpd.org.bd/wp-content/uploads/2018/01/presentation-Implications-of-the-RohingyaCrisis-for-Bangladesh.pdf>

The earlier two inflows of Rohingya have created a group of females who are already working in this profession. The newly coming Rohingya females are at a risk of being provoked by the established prostitutes of the community. This new comers can be easily made victims due to their poor living conditions.<sup>28</sup>

Reports find that, many Rohingyas have paid bribes to some government officials Bangladeshi Identities like NID, Passports etc. This is what is helpful for them to avail the social services and get into the localities. The location is very vulnerable for drug toddlers. Myanmar, being one of the three states of Golden Triangle, is a hub of Yaba and other narcotics. The necessitous Rohingyas might be allured into distribution of drugs into Bangladesh.

*Benefits from the refugee influx:*

The economic impacts of the influx, on the Host Community, are quite varied. The 'Rising Prices and Falling Wage' nature hurts the poorest and most vulnerable groups mostly. But there are also a handful of those who benefit from the changed circumstances. For example, low wages help relatively richer population segments to exploit the services of wage laborers at a cheaper cost. Price hikes can also benefit traders and certain farmers by exploitation of market mechanisms. There is a clear boost on volume of business because of the continued presence of 1 million refugees demanding various staple foods as well as consumer necessities. New markets have emerged up while old markets started functioning overtime

## IX. REPATRIATION

Bangladesh has a long record of performing humanitarian obligations towards refugees residing in her territories and has always followed the principle of non-refoulement, without having a national law or acceding to any international instruments.<sup>29</sup> Rohingya community in Bangladesh started their influx to Bangladesh from 1991. As many as 250000 Rohingyas were accommodated in the country. But the recent influx of 2017 has made the situation unbearable for Bangladesh as a nation. Currently Bangladesh hosts as many as 11, 43,364 people of the community, according to official statement. Surprisingly, the host population of that area is way less than that of migrant group.

*International Legal Framework:*

There are basically two international entities that provides legal basis for refugees in international arena. Those are:

- The 1951 Convention is the first legal framework that embodied multiple issues about the refugees for the first time. It gave a complete definition of Refugees for the first time. Article 33(1) or the 'Principle of Non- Refoulement' is the cornerstone of

<sup>28</sup> Ibid

<sup>29</sup> Mohammad, N. (2012). Refugee Protection Under the Constitution of Bangladesh: A Brief Overview. *Bangladesh Refugee Watch*, 141 156.

international protection. The article prohibits the repatriation of the refugees in any of the states where their life may be endangered or threatened.<sup>30</sup>

- The second is the 1967 Protocol. The aim of the 1967 Protocol was to acknowledge the applicability of the 1951 Convention to contemporary refugee movements. This independent instrument allows states to accede to it, even if they are not the parties to the 1951 convention.<sup>31</sup>

#### *Legal Bindings on Bangladesh:*

The principal framework for this sub-branch of international refugee law is customary international law. At one level, non-refoulement protects the refugees against forced return.<sup>32</sup> But International instruments such as the 1951 Convention is binding only upon the signatory states. However, even when the states are not party to any convention, they follow some internationally accepted and recognized standard which is often termed as the customary international law. In the same way Bangladesh, though not a signatory of 1951 Convention, has hosted Rohingya Community in their country and want to repatriate them, voluntarily, on the basis of Customary International Law.

#### *Repatriation Steps of Rohingya:*

Bangladesh government is planning repatriation of Rohingya people in two dimensions-Those are Permanent voluntary repatriation to Myanmar and the mid-level temporary relocation in Bhashan Char.

#### *Permanent Voluntary Repatriation:*

Bangladesh and Myanmar signed a repatriation agreement on 15 January 2018. The agreement will see a total of 646,072 refugees sent back to Rakhine over a two-year period. The process of repatriating the first batch of Rohingya refugees was slated to start on 23 January but it has been delayed due to administrative issues.<sup>33</sup> Following a series of meetings and discussions between an enthusiastic Bangladesh and an unwilling Myanmar, the two countries attempted to begin repatriation on November 15 last year, but the effort failed mainly due to the unwillingness of the Rohingyas, and objections from the international community on different grounds.<sup>34</sup> Later the second attempt was made with prior

preparations. Bangladesh agreed to facilitate the commencement of repatriation on interactions of a high-level delegation from Myanmar with representatives of the displaced people at camps in Cox's Bazar on July 27-28 this year.<sup>35</sup>

As per the commitment to the principle of voluntary return, the Government handed the list of 3,450 individuals so far verified by Myanmar to UNHCR through the United Nations Resident Coordinator in Dhaka. From the list, UNHCR interviewed some 1276 individuals till 22<sup>nd</sup> and none were agreed to repatriate expressing their deep concern on their security issues. On that day too, even after having all administrative preparations, the repatriation was not again started. Thereby, the repatriation of Rohingya did remain a 'mirage'.

#### *Temporary Relocation Plan:*

##### *Bhashan Char: The Prison Island?*

Bhashan Char, which means "floating island," started to form in the Bay of Bengal 20 years ago from sediment building up at the mouth of the Meghna River.<sup>36</sup> It is a small, sediment island in the south coast of Bay of Bengal. Bangladeshi authorities would begin relocating Rohingya refugees that they have constructed residential areas with all facilities on the island by mid of March. In early 2018, Bangladesh began constructing roads, shelters and floodwalls on the island, and it has spent an estimated \$280 million (€247 million) completing the project.<sup>37</sup>

#### *Failure of Bangladeshi Plan:*

Bangladesh plans to shelter around 100,000 Rohingya in 1,440 buildings it has built on the island. "As Rohingya was accommodated in Bangladesh, it is the privilege of Bangladesh where to keep them", said Mozammel Haque, Minister of the Cabinet of Government.<sup>38</sup> The foreign Minister, AK Abdul Momen also added that, the temporary settlement plan of 23000 families was planned so that the Rohingya could be saved from the adverse effect of monsoon in the camps in Cox's Bazar.<sup>39</sup>

Initially, the Rohingyas were also in a dilemma; one of the fractions did not support the relocation when the other supported saying that anything will be better than Myanmar.

<sup>30</sup>United Nations High Commission for Refugees. (2005). *An Introduction to International Protection*. Geneva: Office of the United Nations High Commission for Refugees.

<sup>31</sup>United Nations High Commission for Refugees. (2005). *An Introduction to International Protection*. Geneva: Office of the United Nations High Commission for Refugees.

<sup>32</sup> Gilbert, G. (n.d.). *The International Law of Voluntary Repatriation*. Retrieved October 26, 2019, from UNHCR: <https://www.unhcr.org/en-lk/5ae079557.pdf>

<sup>33</sup> Kapoor, R. (2018). The Repatriation of the Rohingyas: A Flawed Bangladesh-Myanmar Agreement? *ISAS Insights*.

<sup>34</sup> Rahman, T. (2019, August 22). *No Rohingya turn up for repatriation*. Retrieved October 26, 2019, from Dhaka Tribune: <https://www.dhakatribune.com/bangladesh/rohingya-crisis/2019/08/22/no-rohingya-turn-up-for-repatriation-to-myanmar>

<sup>35</sup> Bhuiyan, H. K. (2019, August 25). *Rohingya repatriation: Bangladesh dismisses Myanmar's non-cooperation allegation*. Retrieved October 26, 2019, from Dhaka Tribune: <https://www.dhakatribune.com/bangladesh/rohingya-crisis/2019/08/25/rohingya-repatriation-bangladesh-dismisses-myanmar-s-non-cooperation-allegation>

<sup>36</sup> Islam, A. (2019, March 15). *Rohingya reject relocation to Bangladesh's island 'prison camp'*. Retrieved October 26, 2019, from Deutsche Welle: <https://www.dw.com/en/rohingya-reject-relocation-to-bangladeshs-island-prison-camp/a-47933027>

<sup>37</sup> *Ibid*

<sup>38</sup> *Ibid*

<sup>39</sup> Momen, A. (2019, August 26). *Ajker Bangladesh*. Retrieved October 19, 2019, from Independent Television: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=P5rO91X-Xw4>

But at last, the Planning of the Government failed finally when the Rohingya community did deny to be relocated into Bhashan Char. Thus, the process is yet to begin. But still Dhaka is hopeful with its proactive enthusiasm and handed over a fresh list of 50000 Rohingyas to Myanmar recently.<sup>40</sup>

**X. NGOs for ROHINGYA**

Local and International Non-Governmental Organizations work for the Rohingya in the camps in Cox’s Bazar with the mandate of Global peace, humanitarian support etc.<sup>41</sup> There are about 130 NGOs registered for the Rohingya people in Cox’s Bazar.<sup>42</sup> The NGO Affairs Bureau under the Prime Minister’s Office (PMO) is the only regulatory body for governing the activities of the NGOs in Bangladesh.

*How Do NGOs Work? :*

Though almost 96 NGOs (after banning) are working for Rohingya people in Teknaf and Ukhiya, according to the Director General of NGO Affairs Bureau, there is no office of the Bureau in the Rohingya dominating area or even in Cox’s Bazar. It operates centrally from the PMO in Dhaka.<sup>43</sup> The projects undertaken by the NGOs are conducted in collaboration with the local administration of Cox’s Bazar. Only the approvals of projects are taken from the Bureau. The rest of the activity is hardly monitored by any of the organizations, neither the Bureau nor the local administration, though is supposed to be monitored by the later.

From these data, the research could deduce the following table on how the NGOs work, specifically for the case of Rohingya.



Figure: How do the NGOs work for Rohingya?  
Prepared by: Researchers construct  
Data Source: Director General, NGO Affairs Bureau

*Actions for violating laws:*

If any NGO is found violating the terms and conditions, it has to go through a very lengthy process for disposal. At first, when allegation comes, the NGOs are temporarily banned to perform any activities. Then a Show Cause Notice is given to them. On getting the reply of Show Cause, the bureau formulates an Investigation Committee for Detailed Inquiry. Basing on the findings of the inquiry, the final verdict is given for against the NGOs.<sup>44</sup> The entire process is too much lengthy and time taking indeed. The sequence of actions against NGOs is shown via a diagram-

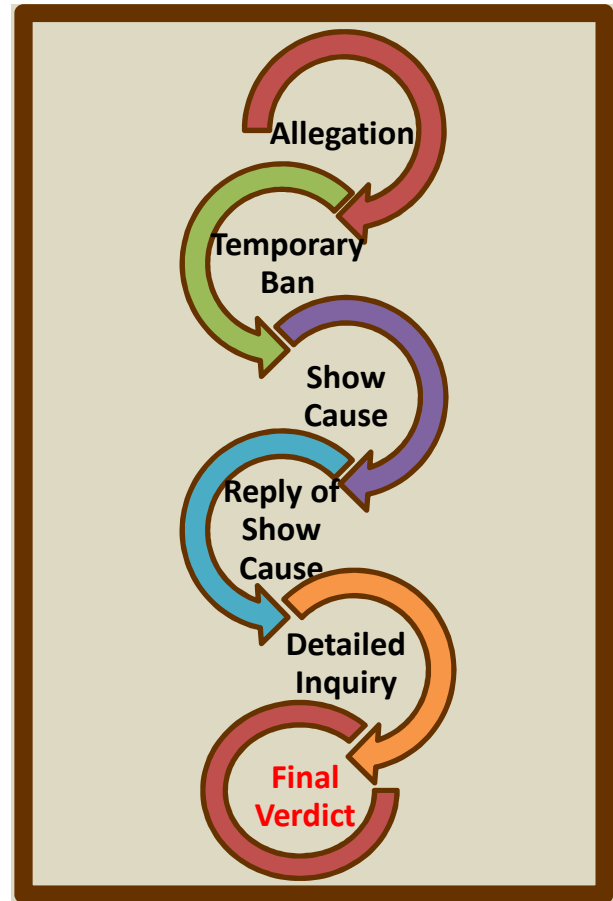


Figure: Sequence of Actions against NGOs  
Prepared by: Researcher  
Data Source: Director General, NGO Affairs Bureau

**XI. FINDINGS**

*Trio Functionality:*

The functions of NGOs are basically operated from three locations.<sup>45</sup> Keeping the Rohingya issue into consideration, three entities are involved with the entire process- The NGOs, NGO Affairs Bureau and the Local Administration of Cox’s Bazar. But then, a fine co-ordination among all the three

<sup>40</sup>UNB, Dhaka. (2019, October 15). *Fresh list of 50,000 Rohingyas handed to Myanmar: Foreign minister*. Retrieved October 26, 2019, from The DAily Star: <https://www.thedailystar.net/rohingya-crisis/resh-list-50000-rohingyas-handed-myanmar-1814065>

<sup>41</sup>Ibid

<sup>42</sup>Ibid

<sup>43</sup>Salam, A. (2019, September 25). *Ekattor Journal*. Retrieved October 19, 2019, from Ekattor TV: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=rzx7bd-6WkA>

<sup>44</sup>Salam, A. (2019, September 25). *Ekattor Journal*. Retrieved October 19, 2019, from Ekattor TV: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=rzx7bd-6WkA>

<sup>45</sup>Ibid



bodies is always questionable. The centralized nature of the NGO Affairs Bureau is can question the functionality of the regulatory body itself. Diversification and strengthening it is a requirement of time for especially this case of Rohingya. How this three organs operates is drawn via a diagram -

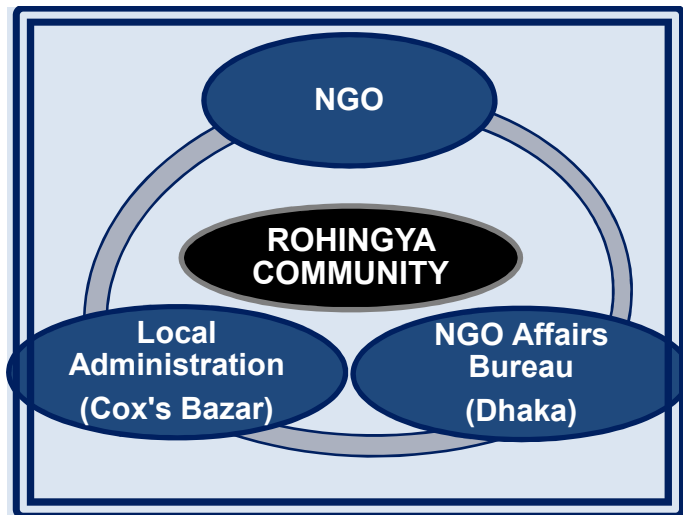


Figure: Trio Functionality  
Prepared by: Researchers construction  
Data Source: Director General, NGO Affairs Bureau

#### *Lengthy process of Disposal:*

In the recent case, 41 NGOs for violating terms and conditions was 'temporarily' banned<sup>46</sup> on August 31, 2019.<sup>47</sup> There are multiple steps in the 'Sequence of Action' against NGOs if there is any allegation of violation of the terms of conditions. After such strong and apparent claim; still the action taken could not even reach up to the third stage. Still they are in Show Cause Stage. Till date there is no final verdict of any of the case is seen on Newspaper or any other news sources. From these two aspects, deduction can be made that the process of disposal for any NGO is quite lengthy.

#### *Weaknesses of NGO Affairs Bureau:*

The NGO Affairs Bureau is the only institution which is the regulatory body for the NGOs in Bangladesh. That too, doesn't have any office in Cox's Bazar. There exists a 'Trio of Functionality' for NGOs working for the Rohingya people. In this regard Madhab Chandra Das, Associate Professor, University of Chittagong said, "NGO Affairs Bureau doesn't have any capacity to supervise the NGOs at grass root level. They are not that decentralized." Mr. Ashiqul Islam, an expert on Rohingya issue and an internationally recognized Researcher pointed out that, "Any NGOs working needs to go through specific terms and condition. But the fact is

government doesn't have any structured mechanism to regulate the NGO workers in every camp. It is not possible by the government."

#### *Luxurious life of NGO workers:*

The language of Rohingya and the locals of Cox's Bazar are almost same which allows the Rohingyas to merge quickly with the locals. Many local students, who previously had no job, are now working with the various development partners in different capacities. A student passing HSC is eligible for these jobs.<sup>48</sup>

From a Telephone Interview of Mr. Saber Azad, High Official of a reputed NGO of Bangladesh said that, Almost 50% of the NGO officials are locals of Cox's Bazar. They get an advantage because of their language similarity. They lead a very high standard of life. The facility is more than that enjoyed by NGO workers of any other area. The salary given to the NGO workers of Rohingya issues is almost 2 to 3 times more than others. The contemporarily of the issue, availability of funds and intensity of work- all these results to such high salary for the NGO Workers in the Rohingya Camps. Moreover, among all the communities involved with the Rohingya, only these NGO Workers are at good terms with the Rohingya.

The Foreign minister of Bangladesh Mr. AKA Momen has said in a Talk Show, The govt. made a plan of temporary mid-level settlement in Bhashanchor. But a group which is providing them humanitarian support is instigating them not to accept the settlement process. There are certain interests of them too. There (in Bhashanchor) they have to go using boats, and it creates suspension to Rohingya that they need to lead a miserable life during flood and cyclone.<sup>49</sup>

All of these factors have made Rohingya Influx as a new employment generating sector giving job opportunities to many new and also make their stay in the area very smooth and posh. Relocation or displacement of this community will cause huge loss for them. Thus this can be strongly said, they have certain interests if Rohingyas are not repatriated or relocated into Bhashanchor.

#### *Exploitation of Beneficiary groups:*

Apart from the NGOs there are certain political and economic elites who are also benefitted from the Rohingyas living here. The illegal trades done by Rohingyas are patronized by the economic and political elites of that area. This vulnerable population can be misguided and utilized for Drug Business, prostitution etc. The cheap labor and the low cost products can be taken interest of by exploiting the market mechanism.

<sup>46</sup>Salam, A. (2019, September 25). *Ekattor Journal*. Retrieved October 19, 2019, from Ekattor TV: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=rzx7bd-6WkA>

<sup>47</sup>The Daily Star. (2019, September 01). *Rohingya Camps in Cox's Bazar: Activities of 41 NGOs halted for 'misdeeds'*. Retrieved September 21, 2019, from The Daily Star: <https://www.thedailystar.net/frontpage/rohingya-camps-coxs-bazar-activities-41-ngos-halted>

<sup>48</sup> Khan, T. I. (2018, January 16). *Implications of the Rohingya Crisis for Bangladesh*. Retrieved October 28, 2019, from Center For policy Dialogue: <https://cpd.org.bd/wp-content/uploads/2018/01/presentation-Implications-of-the-RohingyaCrisis-for-Bangladesh.pdf>

<sup>49</sup> Momen, A. (2019, August 26). *Ajker Bangladesh*. Retrieved October 19, 2019, from Independent Television: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=P5rO91X-Xw4>

*Key Finding:*

The economically benefitted class is mainly comprised of NGO Workers and Local Elites. Both of these interest groups have certain losses if Rohingyas are displaced from their current location of Cox's Bazar. Mentioning these groups, Professor Das said, "These interest groups don't really want a successful repatriation. Sometimes they are misguiding the Rohingyas not to return to their country of origin". Mr Ashiqul Islam Khan added that, "sometimes some NGOs are provoking people for getting funds from international donors. Most of them are locals in my sense"

Moreover the life that the Rohingya people are leading now is way better than that in Myanmar. The foreign Minister of Bangladesh said, "Their living standard here is much better than the miseries of Myanmar." With this rate of supply of aids, it is likely that they won't return. Thereby, indirectly, the foreign aids are causing their prolonged stay. Considering all these fact we can say that there had been logic of provocation of local Bangladeshi who contradicts with the process of repatriation attempted by the government.

*Recommendations:*

From the research conducted and analyzing the findings of the research, the following recommendations can be made to the policy makers to be looked after:

The NGO Affairs Bureau of Bangladesh, is not a structurally that strong to counter any such claims. Thus, NGO Affairs Bureau has to be made stronger by either of the two ways-

1. Decentralizing its governance by establishing a branch especially for Rohingya

2. Ensuring the checks and balance by local arrangement like Local Administration.

- The overall security measures Should be key matter of concern
- The intelligence collection mechanism is also not so strong in the camps. The intelligence collection mechanism has to be made stronger so that the crime can be resisted as early as possible.
- The Vulnerable Host Community like the Wage Laborers and the Fishermen should get special compensation and financial support from the government. The vulnerable host community should be included in aid planning of the donors as well.

Overall diplomacy and international negotiation is main mechanism to resolve this crisis.

## XII. CONCLUDING REMARK

Analyzing all the findings from the research, among all the beneficiary groups; though direct allegation against NGOs augments the negative notion about them, but the similar is also a fact for other beneficiaries. Thereby the repatriation of Rohingyas is the best possible solution to the issue. Thus, the government, through its all wings, should remove the internal

barriers in the process. The policy of the government should be more hardliner in any such allegation. Thereby, through strict monitoring and exemplary punishment, the barriers can be removed, in case it emerges further.

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