THE ROHINGYA CRISIS

Human Rights Issues, Policy Concerns and Burden Sharing

Edited by

NASIR UDDIN

Sustainable Rohingya Repatriation in Myanmar
Some Criteria to Follow

Bayes Ahmed, Md. Touhidul Islam, Peter Sammonds, S. M. R. Arfanul Alam, Mohammad Shaheenur Alam, Anurug Chakma, Fahima Durrat and Obayedul Hoque Patwary

13.1. Introduction

On 25 August 2017, the Myanmar Army (Tatmadaw) started a brutal crackdown on the non-armed Rohingya civilians in Northern Rakhine; the military in uniform was accompanied by the local Rakhines (the local Buddhist majority communities in Rakhine) who took part in the attack with machetes and wooden sticks (Human Rights Watch 2017). The Médecins Sans Frontières (MSF) estimated that at least 9,400 people lost their lives (6,700 due to violence) in Myanmar between 25 August and 24 September 2017, and at least 730 of them were children under the age of five. Experiences of violence have ranged from gunshots and burns to sexual violence and rape, especially against women and girls (MSF 2018).

The United Nations (UN) termed this brutality as a textbook example of ethnic cleansing and the gravest of crimes against humanity (UN 2017). To flee the persecution, the Rohingya migrated to the nearby Muslim-majority country, Bangladesh by crossing the Naf River. From a humanitarian perspective, the Government of Bangladesh (GoB) opened its borders for the Rohingya and provided basic life-saving assistance—food, healthcare and makeshift shelters. The local Bengali host communities also welcomed them wholeheartedly. Various international organizations responded immediately to support the Rohingya.

With more than 1.3 million Rohingya refugees in total (Uddin 2020), Bangladesh now has the world's largest refugee camp located in Cox's Bazar district (Figure 13.1). As of 31 March 2021, the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) has registered 884,000 Rohingya who are living in 190,000 households/shelters and identified more than 733,350 Rohingya who arrived after 25 August 2017 (UNHCR 2021). The rest of them are unlawfully staying outside the official camps in Bangladesh as undocumented individuals (Ahmed 2010; Uddin 2020).

Bangladesh hosted Rohingya refugees in the past too, and they were repatriated in Myanmar once in 1978 and again in 1991–1992 (Human Rights Watch 2000). Although both the governments of Bangladesh and Myanmar signed an agreement for the repatriation in November 2017 following the exodus, two consecutive attempts failed to execute voluntary repatriation due to the Rohingya's mistrust in the process and fear of recurrence of the persecution all over again (Uddin 2020). Consequently, safe, dignified, voluntary and sustainable repatriation necessitates a thorough understanding of the refugees' perspective.

The Rohingya unquestionably want to go back to their 'homeland' in Myanmar (Uddin 2020) but only after their criteria for repatriation are fulfilled. What are those criteria and how far are they feasible given the current mindset of Myanmar towards them? This chapter focuses on the criteria set by the Rohingya refugees and critically analyses the challenges of fulfilling them. In doing so, it also depicts the life of the Rohingya in Myanmar that has been accompanied by
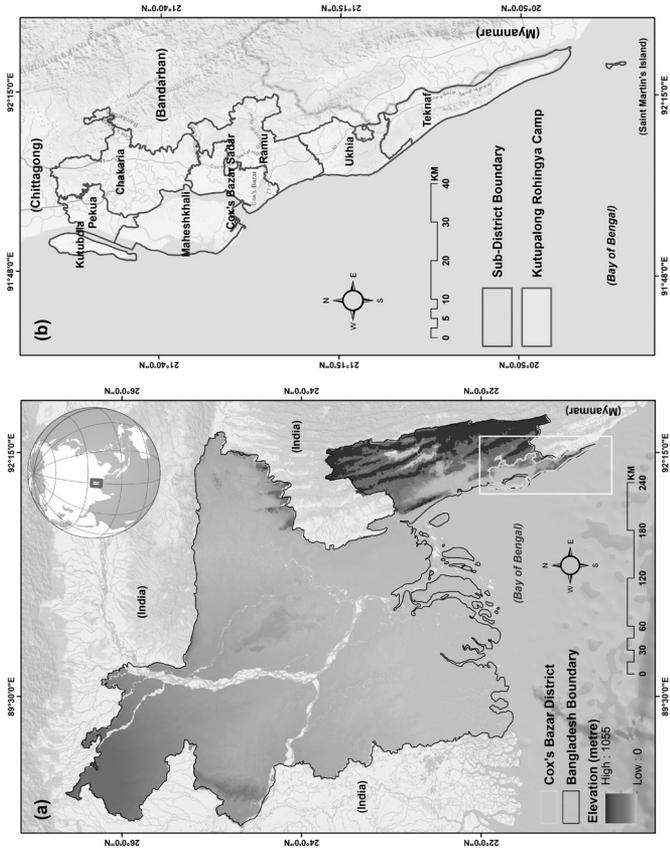
Figure 13.1 *Location of (a) Cox's Bazar District in Bangladesh (b) Kutupalong Rohingya Camp in Cox's Bazar*

Disclaimer: This figure has been redrawn and is not to scale. It does not represent any authentic national or international boundaries and is used for illustrative purposes only.

Source: Bayes Ahmed, 2021.

systemic oppression and targeted violence against them. Unlike other discourses of repatriation from state actors' point of view, this chapter sees the process from the perspective of a non-state actor, in this case, the Rohingya refugees.

To reach the objective, 600 Rohingya were randomly surveyed in their shelters in the Kutupalong Rohingya camp in Cox's Bazar, Bangladesh (Figure 13.1) and three focus group discussions (FGDs) were conducted with Rohingya refugees in Bangladesh between September and November 2018.

13.2. Methodology

A mixed-methods research technique (qualitative and quantitative) was applied for the research based on which this chapter has been prepared. A series of activities were undertaken to develop tools and techniques to understand the criteria for successful voluntary repatriation from a Rohingya refugee perspective. The research was funded by the British Academy (Award Reference: IC2\100178) under its 'The Humanities and Social Sciences: Tackling the UK's International Challenges Programme 2017'.

First, a scenario workshop titled 'Rohingya Health and Disaster Simulation' was organized at University College London on 30 November 2017. Second, a questionnaire development workshop was held on 6 August 2018 at the University of Dhaka, where journalists, academicians, development/non-governmental organization workers and security sector actors with ground-level experience in their respective fields evaluated the pre-prepared draft questionnaire and made recommendations taking the ethical, security and the field-level contexts into consideration. Finally, the questionnaire was revised incorporating some of the feedback by the experts and was tested by the project team in the Rohingya camps from 9–18 August 2018. The questionnaire was translated to Bangla. All the research assistants and local volunteers/translators were adequately trained.

All sorts of ethical approvals and fieldwork permissions were taken from the concerned authorities: the Ministry of Foreign Affairs,

Bangladesh; the Ministry of Disaster Management and Relief, Bangladesh; and the Office of the Refugee Relief and Repatriation Commissioner, Cox's Bazar. All the essential guidelines and research ethics were strictly maintained during the fieldwork. Nothing untoward regarding ethics, safety and security occurred during this project.

13.2.1. Qualitative FGDs

For the qualitative survey, three FGDs were conducted with 'Rohingya men' in the no man's land between Myanmar and Bangladesh in Tumbru, Naikhongchari, Bandarban district, and with 'Rohingya elderly persons' and 'women only' in the Kutupalong Rohingya camp (Figure 13.1) in Cox's Bazar, Bangladesh in September 2018. All the qualitative interview narratives were transcribed, translated into the English language and later systematically analysed.

13.2.2. Quantitative Survey

The sample size was determined through a stratified random sampling method (Krejcie and Morgan 1970; Lavrakas 2008). The data collection phase started in September and continued till November 2018. All the enumerators were trained and introduced to the research instruments (code of conduct, ethics, safeguarding and fieldwork-related risks). This study covered *Kutupalong* (202 respondents), *Lambashia* (121 respondents), *Modhurchora* (159 respondents) and *Tanzimar Khola* (118 respondents) areas. Finally, in total, 600 Rohingya refugees were surveyed in their respective shelters. A Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS) database was prepared from the survey.

13.3. Results

The quantitative results of the survey have been generated from the analysis of the SPSS database, while the FGDs have been analysed for the qualitative part. It should be noted that the Rohingya are referred to as Forcibly Displaced Myanmar Nationals by authorities in Bangladesh.

Table 13.1 *Age Distribution of the Rohingya Respondents*

Age Group[a] (Years)	Frequency	Frequency (%)	Valid (%)
Youth (18-24)	91	15.2	15.4
Primary working (25-54)	422	70.3	71.3
Mature working (55-64)	57	9.5	9.6

Source: Fieldwork in Cox's Bazar, September-November 2018.
Note: [a] The age group was classified as per the definition set by Index Mundi, https://www.indexmundi.com/burma/age_structure.html (accessed on 24 April 2021).

13.3.1. Demographic Information

The respondents were primarily male (62%) and aged between 25 years and 54 years (71%). No children and vulnerable people were interviewed (Table 13.1). All of them were Muslims, born in Myanmar (97% from Maungdaw Township), and they speak the Rohingya language. Among them, 94 per cent were married, and 74 per cent of them had never entered Bangladesh before the 2017 exodus.

13.3.2. Life in Myanmar

The primary occupation of male respondents in Myanmar was farming (40%), business (20%) and day labour (10%). Farming activities included crop cultivation and raising cattle and poultry. Businesses mainly included running small grocery shops and tea stalls. The women were mostly involved in non-income generating activities like that of housewives (75%). However, 20 per cent of women were involved in agricultural activities (Figure 13.2). About 62 per cent of the respondents lived below the poverty line and 25 per cent had no land in Myanmar. The average household poverty line was calculated considering the mean household size of 4.8 persons in Sittwe Township (UNFPA Myanmar 2014) and the threshold of 1,241 Myanmar Kyat[1] in per capita terms (The World Bank Myanmar 2017).

[1] 1 US Dollar ($) = 1,025 Myanmar Kyat on 1 January 2015.
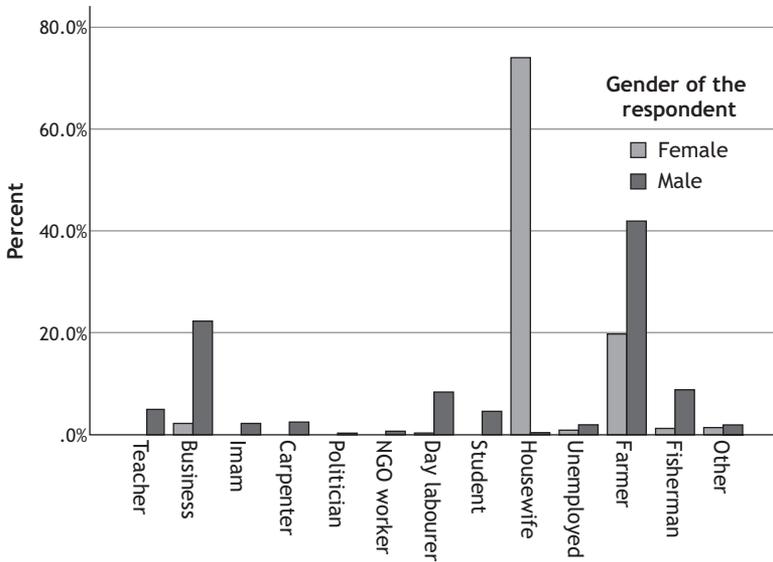
Figure 13.2 *Profession of the Respondents in Myanmar by Gender*

Source: Fieldwork in Cox's Bazar, September–November 2018.

13.3.3. Gender-based Violence and Torture

Women respondents from households living below the poverty line were found to be the most vulnerable. For example, about 65 per cent of women in Myanmar did not enjoy the right to gender equality (Figure 13.3a); 45 per cent of them left Myanmar because of sexual violence (Figure 13.3b); 72 per cent faced physical torture (Figure 13.3c); 78 per cent did not enjoy the right to free speech (Figure 13.4a); 62 per cent had no job opportunities/income-generating activities (Figure 13.4b) and approximately 55 per cent women from low-income households in Myanmar had no freedom of movement (Figure 13.4c).

The qualitative narratives depict the type of violence and the tools and techniques used by the Myanmar Army and the local Rakhines/Moghs against the Rohingya women. Though no children and vulnerable people were interviewed, the adults in the FGD groups described the horrific

(a)

Avg Monthly Household Income

Below Poverty   **Above Poverty**

Gender of the respondent
- Female
- Male

Did you enjoy the right to gender equality in Myanmar?

(b)

Avg Monthly Household Income

Below Poverty   **Above Poverty**

Gender of the respondent
- Female
- Male

Did you leave Myanmar because os sexual violence?
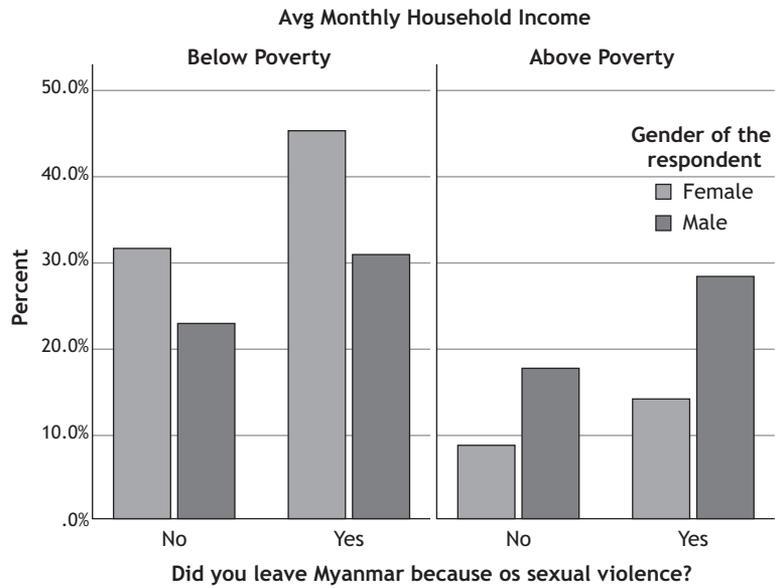
(Figure 13.3 Continued)

(Figure 13.3 Continued)
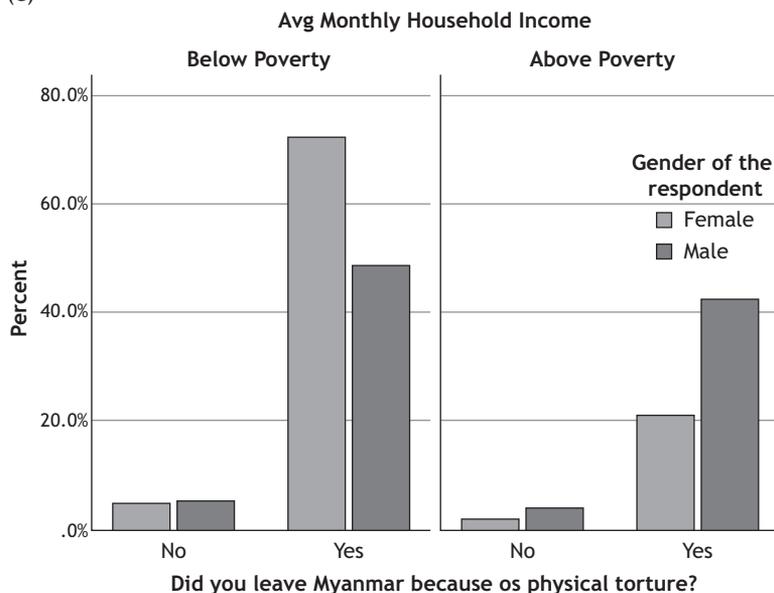
(c)

Avg Monthly Household Income

Figure 13.3 *Responses on (a) Gender Equality, (b) Sexual Violence and (c) Physical Torture by Gender and Income*

Source: Fieldwork in Cox's Bazar, September–November 2018.

scenario of torturing and killing of children and the elderly people too, especially in August 2017. During the attacks by the Myanmar Army and the local Rakhines, while youths and energetic ones were fleeing the persecution, children, the elderly and women fell behind. The women's group was asked to describe the violence. One participant said that she had two daughters, they were abducted, raped and shot dead.

Women were raped and killed, boys were shot dead or put in jails, the children were trodden to death and some of them were tossed in the fire. One of the common killing methods for youth and children was slaughtering. Many children died of hunger on the way to migrating to the Bangladesh border. One participant said that she had a baby boy who died on the way to Bangladesh border and she had no option but to leave it there in the jungles.

(a)
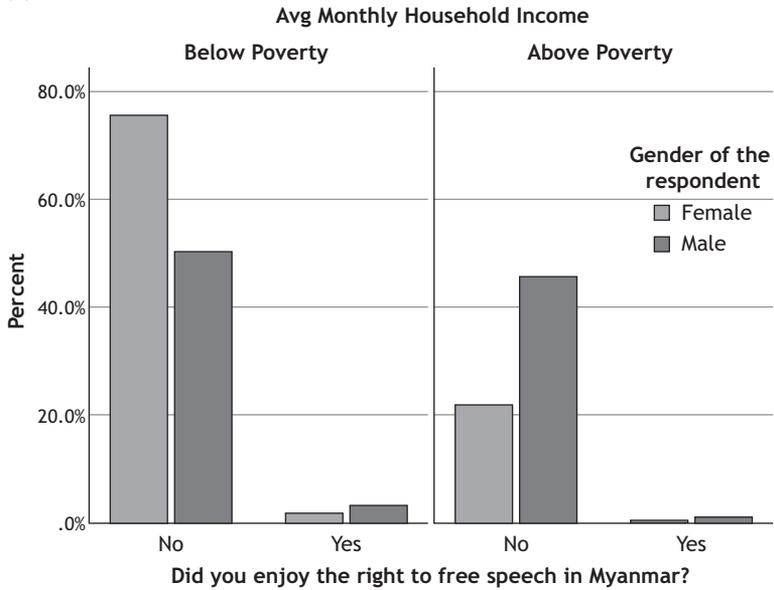
(b)
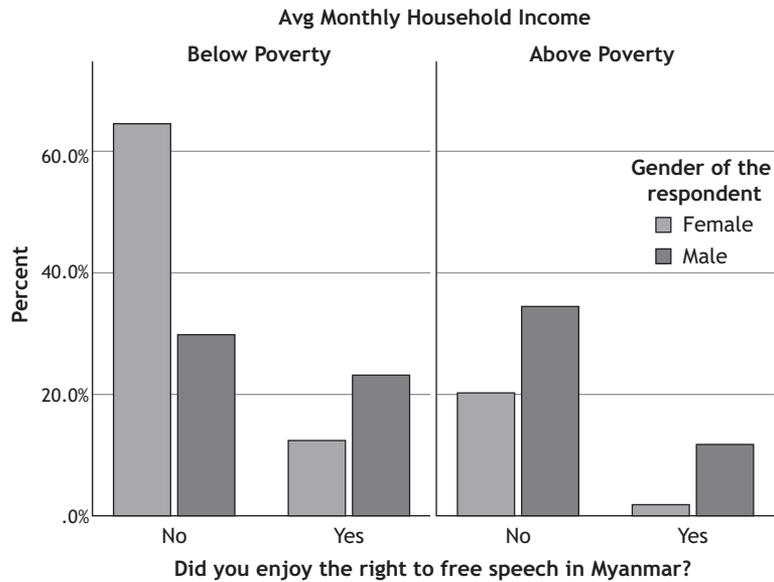
(Figure 13.4 Continued)

(Figure 13.4 Continued)

(C)

Avg Monthly Household Income
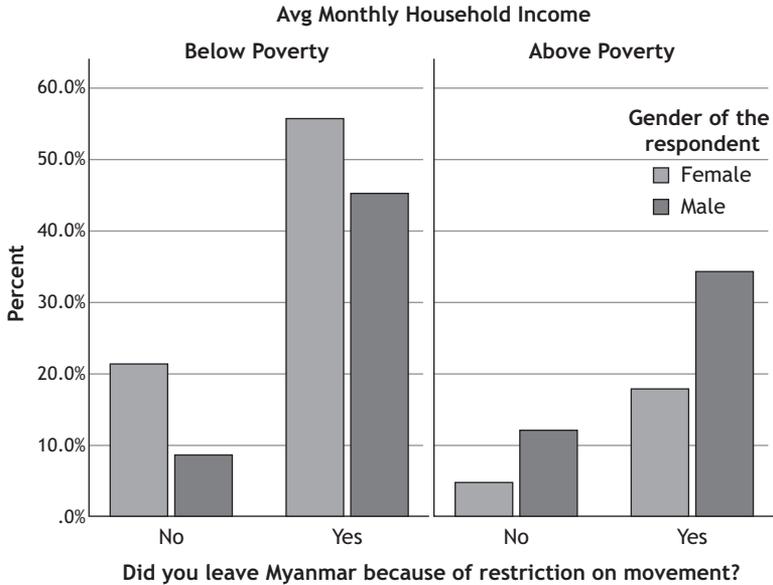
Figure 13.4 *Responses on (a) Free Speech, (b) Employment Opportunities and (c) Freedom of Movement by Gender and Income*

Source: Fieldwork in Cox's Bazar, September–November 2018.

'Enforced disappearance' had become a tool for the Myanmar army used especially against young boys and girls. Some of the youth were put in jail. To quote an elderly man,

> The Burmese Army came in a large group and cordoned our communities and then abducted young boys; we don't know where they are.

On the first night of the attack in August 2017, the local Rakhines and the military abducted many young girls from the villages. They were raped; some of them were spared alive and the rest were killed (Figure 13.5).

Women	Children	Youths	Elderly People
• Rape • Slaughtering • Shooting • Abduction	• Slaughtering • Trodding to death • Burning	• Shooting • Abduction • Slaughtering • Confinement	• Shooting

Figure 13.5 *Various Types of Violence Committed by the Myanmar Army and the Rakhines on the Rohingya based on Different Age Levels and Gender*

Source: Focus group discussions, Bandarban and Cox's Bazar, September 2018.

The torture of women and children by the Myanmar army and the local Rakhines proves that the violence towards Rohingya women and children was extremely severe in Myanmar. Besides women and children, 85 per cent of the male respondents were subject to physical torture.

13.3.4. The Long-run Cycle of Oppression

The criteria set by the Rohingya have a direct linkage with the long-run cycle of oppression against them. Men had no access to the formal job market, but they were involved in farming and fishing for survival. About 92 per cent of the male respondents had no freedom of speech, and 80 per cent of them were not allowed to move about freely in Myanmar. The Myanmar government imposed restrictions on going from one village to another. The Rohingya needed to bribe the police at various check posts, and sometimes, the personnel took away all their money while during security checks. What is more oppressing is that Rohingya could not take a seat if any local Rakhine was travelling in the same vehicle. Thus, they had to travel standing. The restrictions and harassment made it even more difficult to avail of the necessary services.

Both genders equally (80% of both male and female) faced restrictions on practising Islam in Myanmar (Figure 13.6). For Muslims, praying at the Mosques is a group activity. Especially, the prayers on Friday (*Jumu'ah*) necessitate members of the community to be together

Avg Monthly Household Income
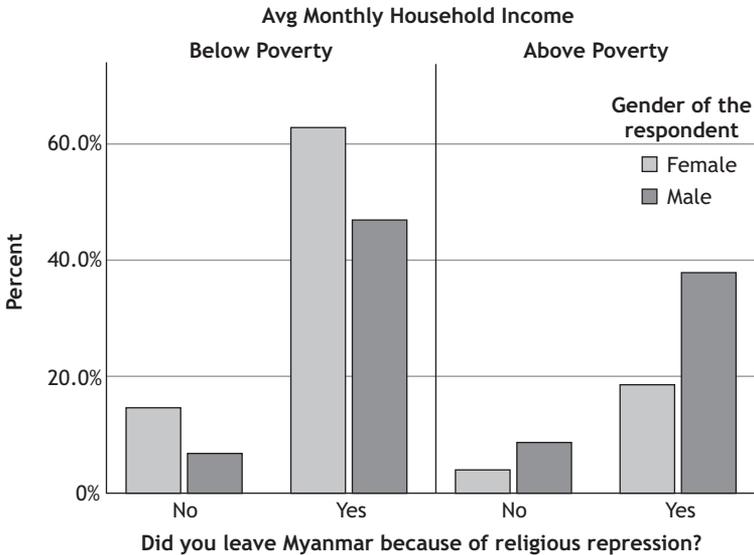
Figure 13.6 *Responses on Religious Oppression by Gender and Income*

Source: Fieldwork in Cox's Bazar, September–November 2018.

at the Mosques. But the Rohingya community cannot gather at the Mosques to perform prayers. The military banned gathering of more than five people in the Rohingya villages. The Mosques along with the madrasas (Islamic religious schools) were razed during the attacks in August 2017.

Among the respondents surveyed, 92 per cent had no citizenship right, 95 per cent had no right to identify themselves as Rohingya, 73 per cent had no right to marriage, 97 per cent had no right to justice and 77 per cent had no right to property. The situation became more difficult when the Myanmar government brought Moghs[2] from other

---

[2] The participants, Rohingya refugees used the term Mogh/Magh to refer to the local people in Rakhine who are by religion Buddhists. Their counterparts in Bangladesh are called Rakhines who fled the persecution by the Burmese ruler in their land in 1784; more than 100,000 of them still live in Ramu sub-district in Cox's Bazar as Bangladeshi citizens (Rashid 2019).

places and made them settle them in Rohingya villages. The Moghs grabbed their land with the help of the government authorities and made the Rohingya landless. The settlers took over the property and the cattle of the villagers. The ancestral property of the Rohingya is now under the ownership of Moghs and they have been isolated in captive villages.

Among the respondents, 47 per cent had no housing facilities, 34 per cent had no facilities for pure drinking water, and 56 per cent had no sanitary facilities. About 57 per cent of the respondents had no access to healthcare facilities. There were no healthcare facilities in the villages. At a distant place there is a hospital, but most often they could not visit it because of movement restrictions. One FGD participant described that if anyone sneaks into Bangladesh for treatment, they cannot come back to Myanmar. The government authority labels the person as Bengali and stops them from entering the village.

Education facilities were limited to the Rohingya population in Myanmar. Among the respondents of the quantitative survey, 58 per cent had no access to education. One of the male groups reported that children were allowed to study up to grade 10 and thereafter, the school authorities forbid the Rohingya students from attending the school. The women's group described that this restriction is even harder for girls—they can study up to grade four or five. At schools, children were taught Burmese and English. No one in the group ever had a chance to study at a university. Being asked by the interviewer if anyone in the group attended a university, one Rohingya participant replied, 'No, we cannot even go from one village to another. Forget about college, we cannot even go for an excursion'.

While all the other major ethnic groups in Myanmar can attend schools and universities, for the Rohingya community, education has remained a luxury that can even cost their life. Overall, both male and female respondents confronted different types of violence and tortures. They were deprived of basic human rights and community services and facilities in Myanmar, particularly respondents from low-income households (Figure 13.7).
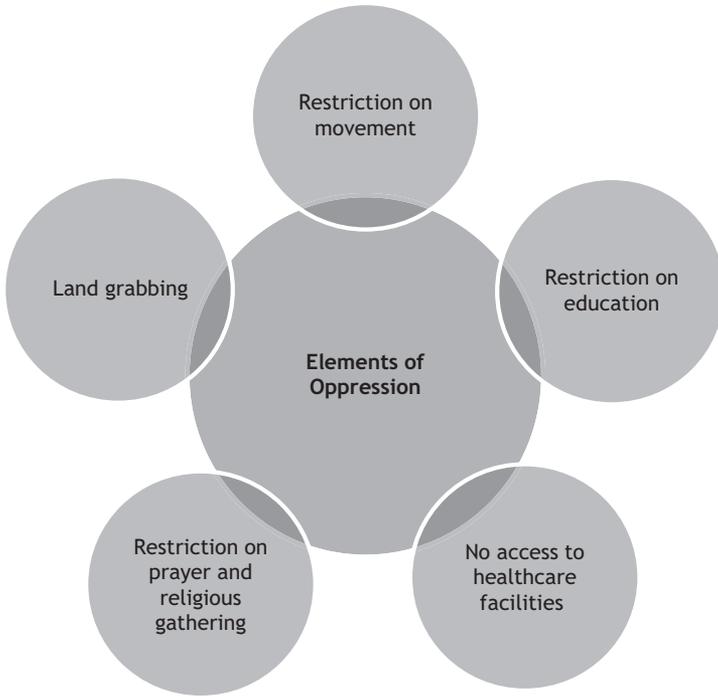
Figure 13.7 *Elements of Oppression used against the Rohingya Community by the Myanmar Authorities in Rakhine*

Source: FGDs, Bandarban and Cox's Bazar, September 2018.

13.3.5. Criteria for Sustainable Repatriation

This section deals with the criteria set by the Rohingya refugees for successful voluntary repatriation. To identify the criteria for successful repatriation in Myanmar, it is pertinent to understand the drivers that forced them to flee to Bangladesh. This section uses quantitative analysis first and then qualitative analysis for an explanatory purpose.

In the case of quantitative analysis, a binomial logistic regression model was applied on SPSS software (version 25). Before conducting the analysis, it was tested that all the observations were independent, the data did not show multicollinearity, there were no significant outliers and the categories of the dichotomous dependent variables

and all independent variables were mutually exclusive and exhaustive (Field 2018; Pallant 2020).

A detailed interpretation of results obtained from the binomial logistic regression model for the dependent variable—'Do you think the right to citizenship is important for your return to Myanmar?'—is explained in Table 13.2.

Table 13.2a, 'Omnibus Tests of Model Coefficients', provides the overall statistical significance of the model (namely how well the model predicts categories compared to no independent variables). The model is found statistically significant ($p < 0.0005$; 'Sig.' column).

Table 13.2b, 'Model Summary' can be referred to understand how much variation in the dependent variable can be explained by the model. This table contains the Nagelkerke R Square value. The explained variation in the dependent variable based on the model is 22.3 per cent (Table 13.2b).

Table 13.2 *Logistic Regression Predicting the Likelihood of Ensuring Citizenship Rights for Repatriation in Myanmar Based on Household Income, Educational Facilities, Experience of Physical Torture and Availability of Jobs in Myanmar*

Table 13.2a Omnibus Tests of Model Coefficients (Model Fit)

		Chi-Square	df	Sig.
Step 1	Step	44.926	4	0.000
	Block	44.926	4	0.000
	Model	44.926	4	0.000

Table 13.2b Model Summary (Variance Explained)

Step	-2 Log Likelihood	Nagelkerke R Square
1	191.311[a]	0.223

Note: [a] Estimation terminated at iteration number 8 because parameter estimates changed by less than 0.001.

Table 13.2c Classification Table^a (Category Prediction)

	Observed		Predicted		Percentage correct
			Do you think the right to citizenship is important for your return to Myanmar?		
			No	Yes	
Step 1	Do you think the right to citizenship is important for your return to Myanmar?	No	0	30	0.0
		Yes	0	551	100.0
	Overall percentage				94.8

Note: ᵃ The cut value is 0.500.

Table 13.2d Independent Variables in the Equation

		B	S.E.	Wald	df	Sig.	Exp(B)
Step 1ᵃ	Avg. monthly household income (1)	0.921	0.407	5.122	1	0.024	2.512
	Did you enjoy educational facilities in Myanmar? (1)	2.169	0.748	8.411	1	0.004	8.750
	Did you leave Myanmar because of physical torture? (1)	1.862	0.472	15.562	1	0.000	6.437
	Did you enjoy employment opportunities in Myanmar?	1.447	0.756	3.666	1	0.056	4.251
	Constant	0.204	0.453	0.202	1	0.653	1.226

Note: ᵃ Variable(s) entered in step 1: avg. monthly household income, did you enjoy educational facilities in Myanmar? Did you leave Myanmar because of physical torture? Did you enjoy employment opportunities in Myanmar?

After determining the model fit and explained variation, it is common practice to use the binomial logistic regression model to predict whether cases can be correctly classified (i.e., predicted) from the independent variables. Logistic regression estimates the probability

of an event (in this case, the importance of the right to citizenship for repatriation) occurring. If the estimated probability of the event occurring is greater than or equal to 0.5 (better than even chance), SPSS Statistics classifies the event as occurring (e.g., 'yes' to citizenship rights as a repatriation criterion). If the probability is less than 0.5, SPSS Statistics classifies the event as not occurring (e.g., no for citizenship rights). The model correctly classifies 94.8 per cent of cases overall (see 'Overall Percentage' row in Table 13.2c).

Finally, one can assess the contribution of each independent variable to the model and its statistical significance using Table 13.2d. The Wald test ('Wald' column) is used to determine statistical significance for each of the independent variables. The statistical significance of the test is found in the 'Sig.' column. From these results, it is found that households from the low-income group ($p = 0.024$), without having access to educational facilities in Myanmar ($p = 0.004$), left Myanmar because of physical torture ($p = 0.000$) and did not enjoy formal employment opportunities in Myanmar ($p = 0.056$) added significantly to the model prediction (Table 13.2d).

The odds ratios of each of the independent variables in the 'Exp(B)' column inform the change in the odds for each increase in one unit of the independent variable. For example, for the educational facilities variable, an increase in one unit (i.e., a household not enjoying educational facilities in Myanmar) increases the odds by 8.750. What this means is that the odds of demanding the right to citizenship for repatriation in Myanmar ('yes' category) is 8.750 times more for households that did not have access to education as opposed to those who had access to educational facilities in Myanmar (Table 13.2d). In simple words, the results can be summarized as follows.

A binomial logistic regression model was performed to ascertain the effects of monthly household income, educational facilities, the experience of physical torture and availability of jobs in Myanmar on the likelihood that the Rohingya respondents will demand the right to citizenship for successful repatriation in Myanmar. The Logistic Regression model was statistically significant $\chi^2(4) = 44.926$, $p < 0.0005$. The model explained 22 per cent (Nagelkerke R^2) of the variance in demanding citizenship rights and correctly classified

95 per cent of cases. Respondents from households who lived below the poverty line, who had no access to education, who fled Myanmar due to physical torture, and who had no jobs in Myanmar are consecutively 2.5, 8.8, 6.4 and 4.3 times more likely to support citizenship rights for repatriation in Myanmar (see Table 13.2).

Following Table 13.2, the binomial logistic regression model was applied for the remaining repatriation criteria as dependent variables (rights to decision making, Rohingya identity, gender equality, marriage right, religious freedom, free speech, justice, property, peaceful situation and other basic provisions) and their association with Rohingya living experiences in Myanmar as independent variables. The results are summarized in Table 13.3.

The independent variables were broadly classified into four groups: demographic and socio-economic, civic rights, community facilities and services and experiences of violence and torture. For each statistically significant association ($p < 0.005$), a tally was marked for an independent variable, and then it was summed up to calculate the overall priority. Later, the independent variables were labelled as high ($\Sigma > 5$), medium ($\Sigma = 3-5$), low ($\Sigma = 1-2$) and no-priority ($\Sigma = 0$) based on applying a random classification method (Table 13.3).

13.3.6. Demand for Socio-economic, Civil Rights and Community Services

According to the participants of the FGDs, the Rohingya have been living in the Rakhine state of Myanmar for hundreds of years and they are one among the numerous ethnic groups in Myanmar. The participants stated that though the history of Burmese oppression of the Rohingya is long, it reached a peak in 1982, when all their citizenship rights were taken away by the Myanmar government.

The participants also stated that their parents and grandparents had valid documents of citizenship, for example, an identity card and documents for owned properties. One participant insisted that they still have the identity card, but the government denies its validity since 1982. The refugees strongly believe that without citizenship rights, life will not be normal in Rakhine again. They will not be able

Table 13.3 Criteria for Safe and Dignified Repatriation of Rohingya in Myanmar

| Parameters for Judgement | | Rohingya Repatriation Criteria [p-value/Exp(B)] | | | | | | | | | | |
		Citizenship	Decision-Making	Rohingya Identity	Gender Equality	Marriage Right	Religious Freedom	Free Speech	Justice	Property Right	Peaceful Situation	Basic Provisions	Sum of Importance
Demographic and Socio-Economic	Age												0
	Gender					0.000 (2.068)						0.037 (2.174)	2
	Income Level/Poverty Status	0.024 (2.512)											1
	Employment/Profession											0.027 (2.374)	1
Civic Rights	Land Ownership			0.014 (2.145)					0.007 (1.835)	0.000 (2.481)	0.000 (2.897)	0.002 (2.100)	5
	Citizenship Right		0.003 (3.150)			0.001 (3.451)							2
	Decision Making												0
Life In Myanmar	Rohingya Identity				0.013 (3.616)				0.021 (2.681)		0.045 (4.500)		3
	Gender Equality												0
	Marriage Right							0.036 (1.633)					1

Table rotated in source; "Life In Myanmar" is the overall row-group label.

Life In Myanmar		(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	(6)	(7)	(8)	(9)	
Civic Rights	Religious Freedom		0.000 (3.268)				0.000 (2.882)	0.000 (3.647)			3
	Free Speech										0
	Justice			0.003 (4.706)							1
	Property Right		0.005 (2.217)		0.001 (2.217)	0.006 (1.828)			0.005 (2.407)		4
Facilities and Services	Healthcare Facilities				0.036 (1.670)				0.000 (2.658)	0.000 (3.119)	3
	Educational Facilities	0.004 (8.750)			0.011 (1.799)						2
	Vaccination									0.007 (1.850)	1
	Housing			0.000 (4.591)							1
	Pure Drinking Water										0
	Sanitation Access										0
	Employment Opportunities	0.056 (4.251)	0.037 (1.688)								2

(Table 13.3 Continued)

(Table 13.3 Continued)

Parameters for Judgement	Citizenship	Decision-Making	Rohingya Identity	Gender Equality	Marriage Right	Religious Freedom	Free Speech	Justice	Property Right	Peaceful Situation	Basic Provisions	Sum of Importance
Rohingya Repatriation Criteria [*p*-value/Exp(B)]												
Physical Torture	0.000 (8.750)	0.002 (3.264)	0.001 (3.571)									3
Burning Houses												0
Military Attack					0.004 (2.704)		0.027 (2.430)					2
Restricted Movement		0.000 (4.566)	0.023 (2.032)	0.000 (4.999)	0.000 (2.877)	0.000 (2.606)	0.000 (6.908)	0.006 (1.942)		0.000 (2.925)	0.000 (2.468)	9
Religious Repression		0.000 (3.716)		0.000 (2.976)	0.001 (2.464)	0.000 (3.372)	0.000 (3.481)	0.000 (3.176)	0.000 (3.373)	0.000 (15.138)	0.000 (6.304)	9
Sexual Violence				0.000 (2.300)	0.000 (2.242)	0.000 (2.824)	0.000 (2.978)	0.000 (3.897)	0.000 (2.473)	0.001 (2.150)		7

Life In Myanmar — Violence and Torture

Scale	Label (Sum)	No Priority (Σ = 0)	Low Priority (Σ = 1-2)	Medium Priority (Σ = 3-5)	High Priority (Σ > 5)
	Color Code				

to own property and will be stripped of all facilities and services that they need to lead a life. Also, if they return to Rakhine without proper and documented assurance of citizenship, they fear that they will face everything from exploitation to mass killing to rape to confinement to abduction all over again.

It is not only the citizenship, the Rohingya also want the associated elements under the citizenship rights. The elements stated in the FGDs are:

1. The guarantee of the availability of services like healthcare and education facilities. They want these services to be equally distributed the way all other ethnic groups in Myanmar enjoy them now.
2. The assurance of being treated equally like all other ethnic groups in Myanmar and for this to happen, they demand the recognition of the Rohingya as an ethnic group. They want the right to own property especially repossession of the property that was given away to the Rakhines/Moghs. Without the right to property, they will lose their livelihood.
3. National identity card is a documented form of citizenship. Like all other people in Myanmar, they want national identity cards.

13.3.7. Safety, Security and Justice for the Genocide

Safety and security were mentioned every time the participants talked about repatriation. In order to avoid further mass killing, the Rohingya want international protection while resettling in the Rakhine state. The FGD participants believe that it is not possible to repatriate in Myanmar without the protection of the international community. If the Rohingya refugees are sent back without the required protection, they will become the victims of mass killing again.

Being asked what should the international community do for the repatriation, the participants stated that all nations in the world should get united for a permanent solution to the Rohingya problem. They urged the international community to come forward to creating sustainable solutions for the refugee crises all over the world.

While talking about justice for genocidal violence, the participants mentioned that they want justice especially for killing their children.

The results show that the Rohingya are keen to repatriate subject to the Myanmar authority ensures their free movement, religious freedom and stop sexual violence towards women (high priority). They also demand rights to land and property ownership, healthcare facilities and recognizing their Rohingya identity (medium priority). Lastly, they require access to employment, education, marriage and citizenship rights, no military attack in their villages and bringing justice for them (low priority). No major influence of demography and socio-economic conditions (except land ownership) were found in their decision making. Overall, the Rohingya want protection from violence and torture followed by ensuring their civic rights and freedom to availing community facilities and services.

13.4. Discussion

This section discusses the results with a special focus on the criteria set by the Rohingya refugees and the challenges of the voluntary repatriation (UNHCR 1996) of them in Myanmar. By looking at the criteria set by the respondent Rohingya refugees, it can be inferred that they possess a deep sense of fear, mistrust and uncertainty.

The Rohingya are depicted as 'one of the most persecuted ethnic minorities in the world' (UN 2017), who are being forced to live a 'sub-human life' (Farzana 2017; Uddin 2020). It tells a part of the big story. Historically, the Rohingya have been tortured, killed and forcibly displaced at least five times—during the late 1700s and early 1800s, the 1940s, 1978, 1991–1992 (Human Rights Watch 2000) and in 2017. As the country 'Bangladesh' came into existence in 1971, the repatriations in 1978, 1991–1992, and the recent attempts are more relevant here. The repatriation processes in 1978 and 1991–1992 did not guarantee any sustainable solution to the Rohingya crisis. Even, the whole process is doubted as not a fair voluntary repatriation (Ahmed 2010; Ibrahim 2016). As a result, the Myanmar government and the local Rakhines/Moghs erupted in violence again and again in an attempt to drive the Rohingya out of the Rakhine state of Myanmar. Looking at the pattern of the violence in 2017 against the Rohingya, it can be said that it is a continuation of the previous ones.

Currently, more than a million Rohingya refugees are living in camps in Bangladesh (Uddin 2020). But they can neither stay for the rest of their life at the camps nor can they be assimilated in the host country because of Bangladesh's socio-economic conditions. Moreover, settlement in a third country is a long and complex process which in the case of Rohingya seem nearly impossible. The only viable solution to this crisis is repatriation to the country of origin. But the repatriation is not only 'going back home', it is a complex political process. The following is a discussion on the challenges of the criteria:

13.4.1. Stopping all Kinds of Violence and Oppression

According to the results, this criterion ranks high in priority. There is little or no possibility of voluntary repatriation of the Rohingya refugees without ensuring their safety and security in Myanmar. But Myanmar's denial of atrocities makes it complex to ensure their safety and security. Myanmar is criminalizing the victims while morally empowering the local Rakhines/Moghs and the army for the violence. Myanmar even failed to create a safe zone for the victims. Needless to say, this kind of action will give impetus for further violence in the region.

The Rohingya have been oppressed historically. Looking at the description and timeline of the oppression against the Rohingya, it can be deduced that it is systematic. Myanmar government put restrictions on education for the Rohingya community. If an ethnic group remains out of educational facilities for a longer period, they fall behind in every aspect of life. Thus, the Rohingya are not skilled enough for any formal job; they earn a livelihood through agricultural activities, day labour and small businesses such as owning a grocery shop within their community.

Restrictions on movement and communications (no internet, TV, radio, telephone, or mobile phone) made it even more difficult for them to be aware of the happenings in the outside world. This is how an entire ethnic group loses the ability to communicate with the international community, raise voice against oppression in a more political way, earn a standard livelihood and even understand the right method

for asking for their rights. The history, approaches and the process of the oppression show that the oppression in Rakhine is planned, systematic and targeted at a specific ethnic group.

13.4.2. Ensuring Social and Civil Rights that come from Citizenship

While there is strong proof in various historic documents that the Rohingya are the nationals of Rakhine state (Karim 2016), the Myanmar authority labels them as 'illegal Bengali' and 'immigrants from Bangladesh' (Reuters 2018). This falsified labelling will keep the Rohingya alienated in the mindset of the Burmese and thus, there is hardly any chance that Myanmar will accept the proposal of granting them citizenship and/or recognizing them as one of the ethnic groups in Myanmar. Ironically, unless the Rohingya are granted citizenship, the existing social and civil rights will not be available for them in Myanmar.

The repatriation agreement signed between Bangladesh and Myanmar in November 2017 shows that the Myanmar government imposed some conditions for the process to complete. One of those conditions is presenting any document as proof of their residence in Myanmar. This condition is tricky. First, the Rohingya have been denied citizenship since 1982 that made it virtually impossible to prove their citizenship status (Ahluwalia and Miller 2018). Second, they left Rakhine to flee the persecution by the army and the local Moghs, and in a situation like that no one would stop and search for old citizenship documents when their houses were on fire, women were being dragged out of homes, children killed and elderly people shot. As most of the Rohingya houses were burnt down to ashes, it is highly unlikely that any of the documents, including that of residence, will have been spared.

13.4.3. Availability of Community Services and Facilities

The Rohingya are denied educational and health services in the Rakhine state of Myanmar. There is no hospital in the villages and children are not allowed to study after grade 10. Without health services and education facilities, life will not be normal in Rakhine. It is still not

sure whether Myanmar will ensure these, though there is a mention of these services and facilities in the 2017 repatriation agreement.

13.4.4. Justice for the Genocide Victims

One of the major demands by the Rohingya among the criteria for repatriation is the justice for genocide victims through which the culprits will be meted out punishments and the Rohingya will get compensation for the loss of life of their near ones and property. The gateway to justice would be the recognition of the genocide in the first place. While Myanmar acknowledged that there have been war crimes in Rakhine (ICJ 2021), they have deliberately denied the act of genocide.

The mass killing, rape and torture intended to destroy the Rohingya minorities fall under the definition of genocide, according to Article 2 of the Convention on the Prevention and Punishment of the Crime of Genocide (ICJ 2021). But the description of the genocidal violence as a 'clearance operation' by Myanmar and 'ethnic cleansing' by the international community demeans the merit of the violence. Ahluwalia and Miller (2018) argue that despite the increased international commitment towards refugees in the last three decades, they failed the most vulnerable human beings miserably. They argue that the politics around the exclusivity of the term 'genocide' and terming the most inhuman brutality as 'mere ethnic cleansing' contributed to that failure (Ahluwalia and Miller 2018).

However, the International Court of Justice (ICJ), on the appeal of Gambia, ordered Myanmar six provisional measures including the prevention of further genocide and not to destroy the pieces of evidence of genocide which is the first step towards the desired justice for the Rohingya people (ICJ 2021). Rohingya need to wait for a few years to receive the complete verdict by the ICJ in the Gambia vs Myanmar case.

13.5. The Geopolitical Race

If the repatriation needs to be voluntary, there is no way other than eradicating the mistrust and fear from the minds of the Rohingya, and only Myanmar can do that. The geopolitical race in the region gives the Rohingya crisis a complex shape (Bose 2019).

Bose (2019) argues that both China and India are focusing more on the geopolitical position and the mineral resources of Myanmar. China has invested US$7.3 billion in Rakhine. The geographic position of the state is important for the Belt and Road Initiative of China. During the economic sanction on Myanmar by the United States and Japan, China supported Myanmar's military and economy through trade and investment. On the other hand, Narendra Modi, the current Prime Minister of India, is a right-wing politician who along with the nationalist organization Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh spread Islamophobia among the Indian nationals that turned them against the 'Muslim Rohingyas'. Bose also argues that the Hindu–Buddhist peace zone is an attempt by Hindu nationalists to avoid the influence of the China–Pakistan axis. The United States did not do anything more than condemning the killing and assisting financially. While taking actions to protect human rights and establishing democracy in other parts of the world, the international community and the United States largely remained silent in the case of Rohingya.

However, China helped Bangladesh by influencing Myanmar in signing an agreement for the repatriation; Bose (2019) calls it 'the only tangible option' for Bangladesh. Another challenge for the repatriation and integration of the Rohingya in Myanmar is the internal political culture and religious practice. Wei and Yishuang (2019) suggest that the internal dimensions of Myanmar should be taken into consideration while thinking about the repatriation of the Rohingya. They argue that 80 per cent of Myanmar's citizens are Buddhists; for them, the Muslim Rohingya are a threat to the Buddhist culture and their national security for the image resulted due to the attacks of the Arakan Rohingya Salvation Army on Rakhine police posts. The politics of vote will not allow any political party to grant the Rohingya civil rights. The repatriation of the Rohingya and their assimilation in Myanmar might attract more Rohingya to the region.

Overall, historical disputes, religion, culture, national security and the domestic politics of Myanmar all together resist the granting of civil rights and repatriation of the Rohingya. Therefore, to create a safe and secure environment for the Rohingya in Myanmar, necessary steps should be taken to make the Rohingya acceptable to the Burmese people.

13.6. Recent Developments

In Bangladesh, the stateless Rohingya are currently living in dire humanitarian conditions inside overcrowded camps, where they are concurrently facing natural (cyclone/storms, flooding and landslides) and anthropogenic hazards (fire, human-trafficking, drugs), health hazards (mental stress and diseases) and COVID-19 pandemic (Ahmed 2021; Ahmed et al. 2018). To save them from natural disasters and ensure their better living standards, the GoB has started to relocate 100,000 of the most vulnerable Rohingya to Bhasan Char—a remote island in the Bay of Bengal (Zaman et al. 2020).

At present, there is a growing concern among the Rohingya and host community. The Rohingya crisis is adversely contributing to the rising price of daily essentials, creating job scarcity for labourers, challenging livelihood patterns of low-income families and reducing agricultural cultivation and production in Cox's Bazar. Local people perceived that the crisis in various ways distressed social fabrics adversely affected the education sector—both in the short and long terms—and degraded environmental balance through deforestation, hill cutting, losing biodiversity and generating competition over access to fresh drinking water (IRDR 2019).

Most recently, on 1 February 2021, the Myanmar military seized full control of authority following a coup and overthrew the country's ruling party and detained State Counsellor Aung San Suu Kyi. Civil resistance and demonstrations emerged in opposition to the coup, however, the security forces continued to kill hundreds of civilians and increase systematic attacks on peaceful protesters (UN News 2021). Regrettably, the Myanmar military chief Min Aung Hlaing, who is now in power, is also accused of war crimes and the genocide of Rohingya Muslims (ICJ 2021). The social-political-cultural context of Myanmar is complex, highly dynamic and changing rapidly in recent years (Ibrahim 2016). However, this sudden and unexpected transformation in Myanmar's internal political atmosphere will definitely shed uncertainty on the Rohingya repatriation process.

In addition, because of the ongoing global-level COVID-19 pandemic, most developed countries are struggling to keep their economic activities functional. For example, the UK government's borrowing

has reached the highest level (£303 billion) since the end of the second World War. As a result, they have decided to cut the foreign aid budget from 0.7 per cent to 0.5 per cent of total national income and reduce humanitarian assistance by more than £500 million (BBC 2021). This kind of decision could be a major risk factor to the continuing humanitarian aid for the refugees in registered camp contexts.

Overall, regional geopolitics, internal tensions between the refugees and host communities, social-economic-cultural disparities, political instability in Myanmar, pre-existing vulnerabilities of the Rohingya and global recession due to the COVID-19 pandemic could jeopardize the achievements so far and bring a dearth of insecurities in the entire region. To overcome such limitations, regional and global-level cooperation for finding durable solutions for the Rohingya refugees is required straight away.

13.7. Conclusion and Way Forward

This chapter described the Rohingya refugees' criteria for their sustainable repatriation in Myanmar based on primary field-level research. It examined the linkages between the criteria and their experience of violence in the Rakhine state in Myanmar. It also critically evaluated the feasibility of meeting the demands of the Rohingya for successful voluntary repatriation. The repatriation process is not only about leaving the overly crowded camps in Bangladesh, but it is also about deciding a future for the Rohingya and the generations to come. While the existing literature discusses the Rohingya repatriation from a global and regional perspective, this chapter sheds light on how the Rohingya themselves want to shape their future and the challenges they face in doing so.

Two of the three UN-recognized methods used worldwide for the durable solution to the refugee crises—local integration and resettlement (UNHCR 2016)—seem nearly impossible in the case of the Rohingya refugees due to the economic and demographic condition of Bangladesh as the host country and lack of interest from a third country (Rashid 2019). The only option left is voluntary repatriation. For a successful and 'truly voluntary' repatriation process, it is important to understand what the refugees themselves think rather than explaining the process from the policymakers' perspectives. To do so,

this chapter investigated the inside stories of the repatriation criteria from the Rohingya's perspective.

The short-term actions that would increase the chances of voluntary repatriation are (a) creating a safe zone in Rakhine for the Rohingya minority, (b) reaching out to the citizens of Myanmar through various programmes to alleviate the hatred against the Rohingya and (c) mediating among the parties involved in the geopolitical race in Myanmar. In order to increase the political and economic pressure on Myanmar to prevent the recurrence of the violence and ease the safe repatriation of the Rohingya, sanctions on all kinds of economic investments in Rakhine should be imposed on the condition of the peaceful settlement of the dispute. In the long term, the application of multiple mechanisms to create political will of Myanmar towards resolving the Rohingya crisis should be considered. This may include requesting the United Nations Security Council for deploying UN peacekeeping mission in Rakhine.

The Rohingya scenario can be described by saying that international powerhouses are busy with their calculation of investment in Rakhine, the geostrategic facilities and the political implications of supporting Myanmar. Bangladesh, being one of the densely populated and least developed countries, cannot afford to assimilate the refugees. The Burmese population in Myanmar do not consider the Rohingya as nationals of Myanmar and thus, the Tatmadaw and the local Rakhines/Moghs killed and systematically tortured the Rohingya.

It seems that the phrase, the most persecuted minority in the world, falls short to describe the plight of the stateless Rohingya. But this time, they want to go back to their 'homeland' with a durable solution. The international community and Myanmar cannot afford to fail again.

References

Ahluwalia, P., and T. Miller. 2018. 'The Rohingya Crisis: Another Failure of the International System'. *Social Identities* 24(3): 291–292.

Ahmed, B. 2021. 'The Root Causes of Landslide Vulnerability in Bangladesh'. *Landslides* 18 (5): 1707–1720.

Ahmed, B., M. Orcutt, P. Sammonds, R. Burns, R. Issa, I. Abubakar and D. Devakumar. 2018. 'Humanitarian Disaster for Rohingya Refugees: Impending Natural Hazards and Worsening Public Health Crises'. *The Lancet Global Health* 6 (5): e487–e488.

Ahmed, I., ed. 2010. *The Plight of the Stateless Rohingyas: Responses of the State, Society & the International Community*. Dhaka: The University Press Limited.

BBC. 2021. 'UK Aid Budget: Charities Call £500m Cut a Tragic Blow'. BBC News. Available at: https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-politics-56836430. (accessed on 25 April 2021).

Bose, T. 2019. 'Rohingyas: Pawns in the Geopolitical Chessboard'. In *The Rohingya Refugee Crisis: Towards Sustainable Solutions,* edited by I. Ahmed. Dhaka: Centre for Genocide Studies, University of Dhaka.

Farzana, K. F. 2017. *Memories of Burmese Rohingya Refugees: Contested Identity and Belonging*. New York: Palgrave Macmillan.

Field, A. 2018. *Discovering Statistics using IBM SPSS Statistics*. London: SAGE Publications.

Human Rights Watch. 2000. Burmese Refugees in Bangladesh: Still No Durable Solution. Available at: https://www.hrw.org/reports/2000/burma/index.htm (accessed on 23 April 2021).

Human Rights Watch. 2017. Burma: Methodical Massacre at Rohingya Village. Available at: https://www.hrw.org/news/2017/12/19/burma-methodical-massacre-rohingya-village (Accessed on 23 April 2021).

Ibrahim, A. 2016. *The Rohingyas: Inside Myanmar's Genocide*. London: Hurst Publishers.

ICJ. 2021. Application of the Convention on the Prevention and Punishment of the Crime of Genocide (The Gambia v. Myanmar). International Court of Justice (ICJ), the Hague, Netherlands. Available at: https://www.icj-cij.org/en/case/178. (accessed on 23 April 2021).

IRDR. 2019. The Rohingya Exodus: Issues and Implications for Stability, Security and Peace in South Asia. Institute for Risk and Disaster Reduction (IRDR), University College London (UCL), UK. Available at: https://www.ucl.ac.uk/risk-disaster-reduction/sites/risk-disaster-reduction/files/final_report_ba.pdf. (accessed on 25 April 2021).

Karim, Abdul. 2016. *The Rohingyas: A Short Account of their History and Culture*. Dhaka: Jatiya Sahitya Prakash.

Krejcie, R. V., and D. W. Morgan. 1970. 'Determining Sample Size for Research Activities'. *Educational and Psychological Measurement* 30 (3): 607–610.

Lavrakas, P. J. 2008. *Encyclopedia of Survey Research Methods*. New Delhi: SAGE Publications.

MSF. 2018. *"No one was Left": Death and Violence Against the Rohingya in Rakhine State, Myanmar*. Geneva: Médecins Sans Frontières (MSF),. Available at: https://www.doctorswithoutborders.ca/sites/default/files/2018_-_03_-_no_one_was_left_-_advocacy_briefing_on_mortality_surveys.pdf. (accessed on 25 April 2021).

Pallant, J. 2020. *SPSS Survival Manual: A Step By Step Guide to Data Analysis using IBM SPSS*. New York: Routledge.

Rashid, S. R. 2020. Finding a Durable Solution to Bangladesh's Rohingya Refugee Problem: Policies, Prospects and Politics. *Asian Journal of Comparative Politics* 5 (2): 174–189.

Reuters. 2018. 'How Myanmar Forces Burned, Looted and Killed in a Remote Village'. Available at: https://www.reuters.com/investigates/special-report/myanmar-rakhine-events/. (accessed on 23 April 2021).

The World Bank Myanmar. 2017. 'An Analysis of Poverty in Myanmar. Part 02: Poverty Profile. The Government of Myanmar and the World Bank'. Yangon, Republic of the Union of Myanmar. Available at: http://documents.worldbank.org/curated/en/829581512375610375/pdf/121822-REVISED-PovertyReportPartEng.pdf. (accessed on 23 April 2021).

Uddin, N. 2020. *The Rohingya: An Ethnography of 'Subhuman' Life*. New Delhi: Oxford University Press.

UN News. 2021. 'Myanmar: "Significant Action" needed by Security Council to Prevent "Bloodbath." The United Nations'. Available at: https://news.un.org/en/story/2021/03/1088822 (accessed on 25 April 2021).

UN. 2017. 'UN Human Rights Chief Points to "Textbook Example of Ethnic Cleansing" in Myanmar. The United Nations (UN), the UN News'. Available at: https://news.un.org/en/story/2017/09/564622-un-human-rights-chief-points-textbook-example-ethnic-cleansing-myanmar (accessed on 23 April 2021).

UNFPA Myanmar. 2014. 'Sittway Township Report, Rakhine State, Sittway District. The 2014 Myanmar Population and Housing Census, Department of Population, Ministry of Labour, Immigration and Population, Office No.48, Nay Pyi Taw'. Available at: https://myanmar.unfpa.org/sites/default/files/resource-pdf/Rakhine_Sittway_en.pdf (accessed on 23 April 2021).

UNHCR. 1996. 'Handbook on Voluntary Repatriation: International Protection. The United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR)'. Available at: https://www.unhcr.org/uk/publications/legal/3bfe68d32/handbook-voluntary-repatriation-international-protection.html (accessed on 25 April 2021).

UNHCR. 2016. 'The 10-Point Plan in Action. Chapter 7: Solutions for Refugees. The United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR)'. Available at: https://www.unhcr.org/uk/publications/manuals/5846d10e7/10-point-plan-action-2016-update-chapter-7-solutions-refugees.html (accessed on 25 April 2021).

UNHCR. 2021. 'Refuge Response in Bangladesh. The United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR)'. Available at: https://data2.unhcr.org/en/situations/myanmar_refugees (accessed on 23 April 2021).

Wei, Liu, and Yang Yishuang. 2019. 'Rohingyas: Pawns in the Geopolitical Chessboard'. In *The Rohingya Refugee Crisis: Towards Sustainable Solutions*, edited by Imtiaz Ahmed. Dhaka: Centre for Genocide Studies, University of Dhaka, Bangladesh.

Zaman, S., P. Sammonds, B. Ahmed, T. Rahman. 2020. 'Disaster Risk Reduction in Conflict Contexts: Lessons Learned from the Lived Experiences of Rohingya Refugees in Cox's Bazar, Bangladesh'. *International Journal of Disaster Risk Reduction* 50, 101694.