

TRANSFORMING RELATIONSHIPS

A Closer Look at the Conflict Dynamics and Conflict-Sensitive Good Practices in Relation to the Situation of the Rohingya Refugees to Bangladesh



Prepared by



CHAKRAYAN

uniting ideas and needs with action and change

Prepared for
NETZ

December 2021

ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

The journey of a thorough analysis into conflict dynamics exploring transformative changes was educational and full of discovery. The Team at CHAKRAYAN would like to extend gratitude towards SHED for their cooperation on the ground.

The members of Rotnapalong, Palongkhali and Baharchora unions as well as the Rohingya women, men, adolescents in Kutupalong and Shaymlapur have provided innate perception, valuable recommendation and not to mention their time to make this endeavour successful. We thank all of them for their cooperation.

We are also indebted to the representatives of the office of the RRRC, APBN, UNHCR and the civil society for their valuable suggestions. Thank you to the NETZ team as well for the valuable inputs at the planning stage, the patience to see the assignment go through to completion and last but not the least, useful feedback on the draft report.

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CHAKRAYAN
December, 2021

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ACRONYMS

APBN	Armed Police Battalion
ASK	Ain o Shalish Kendra
ARSPH	Arakan Rohingya Society for Peace and Human Rights
BGB	Border Guards Bangladesh
BLAST	Bangladesh Legal Aid and Services Trust
CBO	Community Based Organisation
CCNF	Cox's Bazar CSO NGO Forum
CIC	Camp in Charge
CSO	Civil Society Organisation
CXB	Cox's Bazar
DPBSC	Department of Peace Building and Social Cohesion
DP	Development Partners
ED	Executive Director
FGD	Focus Group Discussion
GAGE	Gender and Adolescence: Global Evidence
GBV	Gender Based Violence
GOB	Government of Bangladesh
IGA	Income Generating Activities
IOM	International Organisation for Migration
ISCG	Inter-Sector Coordination Group
IRC	International Refugee Committee
JNUS	Jago Nari Unnayan Shangashtha
KII`	Key Informant Interview
NGO	Non-Government Organisation
RRRC	Refugee, Relief and Repatriation Commissioner
SG	Survivors' Group
SHG	Self Help Group
SHED	Society for Health Extension and Development
SOP	Standard Operating Procedure
UN	United Nations
UNDP	United Nations Development Programme
UNFPA	United Nation Population Fund
UNHCR	United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees
UNO	Union Nirbahi Officer
UP	Union Parishad
WASH	Water, Sanitation and Hygiene

1. EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The study “Conflict dynamics and conflict-sensitive good practices in relation to the situation of the Rohingya refugees to Bangladesh” was undertaken by CHAKRAYAN for NETZ during the second half of 2021. The objectives of the study were:

1. To identify the dynamics of conflicts between the Rohingya refugees and host community in Bangladesh.
2. To analyse the root causes of these violations/conflict
3. To identify the practical examples of conflict sensitive efforts in dealing with the conflicts

Rohingyas have been seeking shelter in Bangladesh to evade violence by Myanmar authorities since 1970s. With the massive influx in late 2017 around one million Rohingyas are currently living in temporary shelters in Ukhiya and Teknaf in the Cox’s Bazar district. Before the influx, local residents (host communities) and Rohingya communities had amicable and empathetic relationship. But with the increased Rohingya population larger than the local population, the weariness and resentment grew stronger among the local community. Tensions and conflicts evolved and went through changes during 2018 – 2021, with recent incidents turning violent and bloody within the camps.

The consultant team used a mix of conflict dynamics tools and participatory research tools for the field observations. Apart from review of secondary materials for current situation and good practices in other countries, primary collection of information through FGD, interactive conflict analysis tools and KII were used.

The focus of the study was to analyse conflict dynamics for transformative changes including analysis of the scenarios and recommendations for potential interventions by engaging all parties involved (primary, secondary and tertiary). The findings were the basis of five **scenarios**, explored through five aspects of the conflict dynamics that are either connectors or dividers of peace building efforts:

- (a) *Conflict between old and new arrivals*: this relates to the status, contentions and entitlements in line with Rohingyas living in registered and unregistered camps.
- (b) *Tension between the host communities and Rohingyas*: The evident displeasure of local communities for protracted existence of Rohingyas without any future possibilities of repatriation as well as humanitarian workers’ alleged preferential attitude towards Rohingyas have fuelled the already complicated situations.
- (c) *Conflict with the law*: The internal armed conflicts – which more often than not outreaches the peripheries of the local communities including drug and human trafficking are also adding to the increasing complications.
- (d) *Humanitarian Aiders’ roles in conflict dynamics*: Inequity in benefits and resources allocation, ignoring obvious predicaments of the locals are further adding to the complexities of the on-going frictions.

(e) *Roles of the NGOs' groups in conflict resolution*: Various NGOs are working in both the areas and contributing to the well-beings of both of the communities, including efforts to initiate social cohesion for transformative changes.

Two sets of recommendations were provided that are summarised below based on an analysis of conflict dynamics and exploring connectors and dividers for peace building:

For intervention partners:

- a) Undertake regular, coordinated and gender responsive conflict analysis;
- b) Identify common grounds for solidarity and common approaches for transformative changes;
- c) Prioritise consensus building on the basis of a differential but harmonised approach to transformative changes;
- d) Include gender and conflict sensitive analysis and intervention by building capacities of implementing agencies;
- e) Include voices of women and youths in addressing conflict;
- f) Promote and develop leadership skills of women and youths in conflict dynamic analysis for transformative changes;
- g) Incorporate long-term 'initiatives' to bring together women from the host and Rohingya communities to connect them on common interest, issues and concerns including GBV;
- h) In order to initiate communication and dialogue between two communities, develop awareness raising and capacity building efforts with the local administration, focusing on conflict resolution;
- i) Review and update existing coordination mechanism between social cohesion actors, including overall protection, GBV and child protection for more gender and conflict sensitive responses;
- j) Consolidate a referral guide and SOP for all relevant stakeholders for immediate response to conflict issues;
- k) Organise women only safety groups in both host and Rohingya communities;
- l) Ensure greater roles of local NGOs to access funds to implement programmes including interventions for transformative changes;
- m) Develop and promote holistic approach with a shared localised strategy in Rohingya response;
- n) Promote self-reliance within Rohingya communities, particularly the women and the youth, by providing skill development opportunities as well as linkages to local markets for livelihood options;
- o) Attempts to eradicate differences and 'myths' surrounding "Rohingyas-inside-the-camps" by organising social and cultural events, such as, theatre and musical events, sports, and such. Printed and digital media could be utilised to understand commonalities to address conflicting issues. Specific tools could be prepared and usable by different actors in conflict dynamics; and
- p) Inclusion of psychosocial and trauma counselling for survivors of violence and conflict within the existing humanitarian and development response in CXB.

Recommendations for advocacy with GOB:

- a) Improve camp security, both technical and human surveillance, effective engagement to disarm the armed groups within camps, apprehend human and drug trafficking and rescue victims of violence, specifically survivors of GBV;
- b) Hold periodic consultation to develop strategies for protection of the camps as well as the host communities;
- c) Strategize synergic quotient to security and justice measures for gender sensitive social cohesion programmes in both communities;
- d) Advocacy on inclusion of issues concerning Rohingyas in national policy frameworks including transformative conflict management as well as roles of women and youth in peace building inter and intra local and Rohingya communities. This should include both the mainland and the remote Bhashanchar Island;
- e) Shifting focus from temporary measures for immediate or near repatriation to the longer term interventions as well as resource mobilisation for a prolonged crisis. This includes allowing extended education and livelihood opportunities for Rohingyas with coordination between different actors to scale up the efforts;
- f) Include different ministries, law enforcement agencies, RRRC office and local administration in Ukhiya and Teknaf to ensure a comprehensive government approach in transformative changes;
- g) For easy mobilisation, ensure several entry and exit points around the fenced check-points supplemented with agreed upon curfew time for entering and exiting; and
- h) Greater coordination with the humanitarian actors and development community in responding to protection and conflict issues with sustainable interventions.



Rohingya children, Camp in Shaymlapur

INTRODUCTION

Bangladesh has been hosting the largest group of people in refugee-like situation in the world, officially termed as ‘forcefully displaced population from Myanmar’ or in less diplomatic terms – the Rohingya refugees. With an exodus in phases due to intense military operations against both armed and unarmed groups, the south eastern district of Bangladesh Cox’s Bazar hosts close to a million Rohingyas in temporary settlements¹. But Rohingyas fled to Bangladesh from the 1970s, although a smaller number were repatriated in the 1990s.

The local communities were sympathetic towards them mostly, so roughly around 300,000 Rohingyas were living around and along with local communities in Cox’s Bazar – until the more recent influx in 2017. First humanitarian assistance in 2017 has also been voluntary from the local communities, along with earlier arrive Rohingyas. With such a large number of people added to the existing population in Cox’s Bazar especially in 2017 – the district struggles to accommodate the new arrivals and their livelihood, manifested into fear and mistrust between Rohingyas and local communities. The other layers of the dynamics include strains and stretches within the Rohingya groups depending on their arrival timeline, the relationship among the national and international humanitarian actors and Rohingyas in conflict with law. The conflict dynamics took further twists and turns during the pandemic, when humanitarian assistance in the camps was scaled down to as the government defined ‘essential services’ (which included GBV services), increased presence and fear of armed groups, completing the barbed wire, incidents of fire in the camps, to go or not to go to Bhasanchar or across the sea en route to Malaysia.

NETZ Partnership for Development and Justice (in short, NETZ) promotes human rights and justice in Bangladesh with a focus on the most vulnerable and marginalized people. NETZ supports in strengthening democratic institutions and seeks to transform conflicts by including diverse groups of actors related to a conflict to prevent violence. NETZ highlights that these conflicts are complex and multi-dimensional, with different actors involved having a variety of interests and objectives. During 2018 to 2019, international and national organisations have undertaken assessments on conflict dynamics, social cohesion and peace building in Cox’s Bazar, among the residents of both Rohingya camps and in Ukhiya and Teknaf sub districts. With the pandemic and post pandemic precautions, overall services for both communities were scaled down to essential services. While there was an increase in securitisation because of deteriorating law and order situation, there have been very few relevant assessment during 2020 and 2021. Therefore, a qualitative evidence based study on conflict dynamics and conflict sensitive practical examples in relation to the situation of Rohingya population in Bangladesh and among the local communities in Cox’s Bazar was undertaken during the second half of 2021. The purpose was to have a useful knowledge platform to explore the entry points for different stakeholders including the government in adopting peace building efforts in a non-violent conflict transformation approach.

¹ According to ISCG, as of 31 October 2021, the Rohingya population in the camps in CXB are 901,703. There is no clear explanation why the estimation has slightly come down from one million

The study is to focus on a qualitative analysis of the following objectives:

1. To identify the dynamics of conflicts between the Rohingya refugees and host community in Bangladesh.
2. To analyse the root causes of these violations/conflict
3. To identify the practical examples of conflict sensitive efforts in dealing with the conflicts
4. To explore the links between social cohesion and entry-points of both of the communities to initiate peace building efforts in sustainable manners.

2. METHODOLOGY

NETZ do not have direct intervention in CXB; but had partial involvement through the partnership with a research based NGO, Research Initiative Bangladesh (RIB). The methodology used for the assignment include - desk review of secondary materials available online on social cohesion, conflict transformation and peace building; Focus Group Discussion (FGD) with a cross section of representatives from the host and Rohingya communities; (women, adolescents, local administration, media, teachers, religious and community leaders), Key Informants Interviews (KII) with representatives of government, humanitarian actors, law enforcing agencies, development partners and human rights activists working with local communities and Rohingyas in Cox's Bazar.

Conflict often is personal, meaning issues that affect individual's interests and opportunities which, if left alone, evolve into community or group conflict. The team also explored tools utilised by international organisations to identify and resolve conflict².

Do no harm principles and conflict sensitivity were considered for the team composition – which was kept small the lead consultant, the gender and participatory tool expert and the coordinator – all with previous background in interacting with local and Rohingya communities in CXB as well as other relevant stakeholders. Do no harm principle was also considered in identifying target groups. Informed consent were taken wherever necessary for documentation and photography. Gender sensitivity was a key concern throughout the field work and exchange with various stakeholders.

2.1 Desk Review



Although conflict transformation in CXB is a new focus for NETZ, they already have an analysis on micro conflicts through their project intervention in the northern region of Bangladesh. NETZ also provided some useful documents and the project document for review. The consultants reviewed an array of reports and assessments both on the humanitarian crisis of the Rohingyas taking refuge in Bangladesh but also on global

² Also took into consideration the guide provided by NETZ - *Conflict Analysis Framework: Field Guidelines and Procedures*, Global Partnership for the Prevention of Armed Conflict, 2015

experiences on transforming conflict towards social cohesion and peace particularly where refugees and local/host communities are concerned.

2.2 Focus Group Discussion (FGD)



The primary focus of NETZ assignment is to understand the conflict dynamics in CXB. The multi-faceted tension palpable in the area is highly compatible to the objectives of this assignment. In order to understand the complexity of the conflict it is imperative to undertake situation analysis. FGDs was utilised as the ideal conduit to get the pulse of the tension within as well as outside of the communities.

A host of FGDs were undertaken in the host communities (Ratnapalong and Palongkhali in Ukhiya and Shaymlapur union in Teknaf) as well as in Rohingya camps (Camp 2E and 2W in Ukhiya and Camp 23 in Teknaf). The process was participatory, open and encouraging for participants to speak freely. Due to the limitations (as described in the methodology) very few visual tools were used. The proceedings of the discussions were recorded with the participants' consents. The groups were small in size; a total of 7-8 maximum number of participants took part in FGDs. Open ended and semi structured questionnaire were prepared in easy Bangla. Each of the FGD was one hour to one and a half hour long. The detailed Participants' Lists are attached in [Annex-I](#).

Open-ended and probing questionnaire was developed for this purpose. Participatory tools were designed for participants to get involved interactively to showcase their understandings, analysis and if possible, a potential way forward to conflict resolution. Each of the FGDs were one and a half hour long to understand the communities' perceptions of conflict dynamics. Following table exhibits the number of FGDs and participants.

Focus Group Discussions (FGDs)

Unions	Participants	Total FGDs
<u>Ukhiya</u>	Women: 2 in host communities Men: 2 in host communities Adolescents: 2 in host communities Community Leaders ³ : 2 in host communities	4 FGDs in Rotnapalong 4 FGDs in Palongkhali
<u>Camps in Ukhiya</u>	Registered Camps: Majhis and Adolescent Boys Unregistered Camps: Women, Adolescent Girls, Men and Community Leaders	2 in Lambashia Bazar 4 in SHED premises

³ The Rohingya Community leaders, such as, Majhis, Imams, Teachers and so on will be interviewed individually. The team's past experience led to the conclusion that one-to-one discussion with them will be more successful in terms of sharing information.

<u>Teknaf</u>	Mixed Group of Women from the host community and Rohingya camp Rohingya men Rohingya Women Rohingya Young Adult Girls	1 in Shaymlapur camp 3 in Baharchora Union
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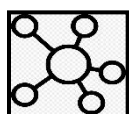
A total of 8-10 participants were engaged in each of the FGDs. Apart from the FGDs with the community leaders (UP members, Media reps, teachers – both from regular schools and madrashas), the rest of the FGDs were singular gendered. This gave the less vocal participants (mostly women and adolescents) opportunities to express opinions freely and comfortably. The team followed NETZ approved Code of Conduct.

2.3 Application of Conflict Analysis Tools



Participatory approach using interactive tools were designed to understand the participants' perceptions of conflict dynamics. The following tools were utilised for this purpose.

2.3.1 The Conflict Relationship Map



This tool encourages interactive participation of the group. It is important to understand the roles played by different people in conflict situations, e.g. some seeks out points of contentions and then ignite the simmered fire into a roaring ones – the Enablers and some pours water into the fire to manage the burn and ultimately stop the fire – the Gatekeepers. This exercise is appropriate to analyse those complex power relations (influencer, abettors and mediators) as well as to identify 'points of entry' for programmes to address conflict dynamic for long lasting transformative changes.

2.3.2 The Dividers and Connectors Analysis



This particular tool is utilised in identifying factors to bring people together, such as women from both the host and Rohingya communities – **the connectors**. The tool also pinpoints factors that push people apart, such as the new and earlier arrived Rohingya population- **the dividers**. This is a tool for examining conflict sensitivity and can be used for ensuring that humanitarian and development programming is sensitive to conflict factors.

3.3.3 Scenario Development



This tool suggests two or three possible stories about the future of the conflict area, as a tool for discussing ways to influence which of the potential futures comes true. Based on the interactions among actors and analysing the issues, the consultants have put together five different scenarios in the CXB transformative context, without alternate options. This is a slight adaptation of the original tool as usually used.

The tools described in 3.3.1, 3.3.2 and 3.3.3 require time and abject participation by the FGD attendees. The team could only successfully carry out the ‘Conflict Relationship Mapping’ in three FGDs. The participants seem more comfortable in orally sharing than spending time in developing outputs using interactive materials on paper. This, however, did not restraint free flow of information which is presented in the relevant section on ‘case stories’ (Chapter 7).

2.4 Key Informants Interviews (KII)



The team conducted a number of in-depth interviews with key and pertinent informants on the issues of conflict dynamics particularly in CXB. Most of the KIIs were conducted digitally (via Zoom), few on phone and rest physically during field visits. Semi-structured and open-ended questionnaire was developed for this purpose. Each interview was at least 45 minutes long. The pertinent issues from the in-depth discussions are included in the section on case studies to reiterate and confirm certain findings.

A detailed list of Key Informants ([Annex-II](#)) and the questionnaire ([Annex-III](#)) are attached at the end of the narrative report.

3. A STORY OF PERSEVERANCE

The agreement for this assignment was signed back in 15 April, 2021. The study recommendations are based on the five thematic case stories. It was necessary to amass information as well as scrutinise all the nuances, feelings and perceptions of conflict as seen by the people who are most affected by it. Unfortunately GOB issued a critical alert due to COVID-19 and a general lockdown – meaning no public gathering, no appearances in public or traveling only in case of emergencies for at least 15 days with

possibility of extension ensued. The team had to reschedule and alternate plans to carry out community consultation face to face rather than digitally.

Due to COVID induced restrictions, entry to campsites was heavily guarded and people with written permission from RRRC office were allowed to go in. The humanitarian actors' activities were limited to health and WASH service providers. The team wrote to RRRC office asking permission to visit camps and waited three months (with interim periodic reminder via email and telephone) without getting any response. Finally the team decided to go ahead anyway to conduct FGDs with host communities' residents and one team member spent almost all of the day at the RRRC office waiting for the approval letter. Later the team was told that the RRRC do not see any significance in allowing "another" survey when the organisations granted permission in the past did not even show the courtesy to send a copy of the "survey findings" (the report) to RRRC office.

The team utilised their personal and professional connection to access meetings with the RRRC and the Additional RRRC. They both were cordial and patiently listened to the requests. In the end both agreed to be interviewed and be on records with their opinions, mostly. The team, however, had to move forward without the permission to conduct 'informal' FGDs with the camp dwellers. SHED, the CXB based NGO organised consultation at their office premises. SHED also kindly allowed the team to conduct FGDs with their groups in the host communities. This was a blessing, since NETZ do not have an office or any other form of support system in CXB.

The study took eight months to complete. The team is proud to be a part of such an important theme for future possible intervention. The team hope their efforts, willingness, patience and perseverance will be fruitful in guiding NETZ towards possibilities to address and analyse conflict dynamic to establish transformative and positive changes in the lives of the host communities and the camp residents.

4. ROOT CAUSES OF CONFLICT

The tensions within the Rohingyas and between Rohingyas and the local communities have become more intense soon after the major influx in 2017 and then a further escalation after the massive gathering to commemorate the influx in 2019. But the dynamics of Bangladeshi – Rohingya goes back several hundred years, with a more recent manifestation during the last few decades. A brief descriptive section on the historical background of Rohingya and host community relationship is provided to understand the nuances and intricacies of the layers of relationships.

It is important to note that despite the differences today, there is a common history and background of the population of Cox's Bazar and Muslim population of Rakhine. Cross migration and refuge between Cox's Bazar and Rakhine goes back for centuries. First Muslim settlers in Arakan were Arab and Moghul traders, as well as Bengali migrant workers. Major influx from the then Arakan and later Rakhine state of Myanmar was not in 2017, but began much earlier in the 1700s.



Bengali migrant workers in Arakan, during British rule [Image collected from open source]

Arab traders came to both Chittagong and Akiab ports and the first Muslim settlers were in both greater Chittagong and in Arakan in the 8th Century and in the 1430s. In 1784, Burman King Bodawpaya conquered independent Arakan and included into Burma. Due to the kingdom's oppression, about 30,000 Arakan Muslims escaped to South Chittagong (which is now known as Cox's Bazar). Captain Hiram Cox, Superintendent, East India Company, Palonki outpost (Cox's Bazar) was given the responsibility of relief and rehabilitation of the refugees. Each family was provided with land and food grains for 6 months. But Captain Cox passed away before the relief and rehabilitation programme was completed and the rehabilitated Arakan Muslims became the first official inhabitants of Cox's Bazar, followed by other settlers from Chittagong region. In 1811, a rebel group of insurgents conducted raids from the area against Burman king. Chin Bya, one such rebel leader was captured Arakan, but he retreated back to Cox's Bazar after not getting protection from the British. During 1824 – 1947, Arakan was ruled by the British Empire. Series of uprisings for independent Arakan continued during the British rule, even with rebels using Cox's Bazar for escape and protection. In such political turmoil the Muslims from Cox's Bazar went to Arakan region as migrant workers and eventually settled there. Myanmar never accepted these Bengali migrant workers as their own, though originally their ancestors were from Arakan and considers them as illegal migrants from Bengal/Bangladesh. Historical truth is that these migrants are on both sides of the border at present – Arakan/Rakhine muslims who migrated to Cox's Bazar are the ancestors of the present day local communities in Cox's Bazar. The Bengali migrants who settled in Rakhine several centuries back are the present day Rohingya.

So historically, culturally, linguistically and in terms of religion – Rohingyas and the local Bangladeshi



Rohingya massacre, 1947 [Image from open source]

community have much more in common than remembered or discussed in present times. It will be good to have a re-learning process of history at the community level both for the locals and the Rohingyas, in order to find common ground for peace building that is a positive transformation. In fact, before the influx in 2017, there were about 300,000 Rohingyas in the two sub districts Ukhiya

and Teknaf who arrived at different times from the 1970s.

They lived in relatively much more at peace and harmony up to mid-2017 as neighbours. With so much in common, the social relationship had only grown over the years. Based on previous studies and the experience of the consultants, it can be clearly said that even in 2017 the host community at the initial stage was welcoming and empathetic towards the plights of Rohingya community fleeing from atrocious violence, abuse and killings. The members of host communities, not only provided them shelter, food and basic necessities, but opened their heart to embrace the survivors to make them feel comfortable and safe. The 2017 influx created an imbalance with a larger number of Rohingyas in Ukhiya and Teknaf than the local population.

The literature review also provides community perceptions on the nature and possible required steps for conflict transformation for social cohesion in CXB. In once humanitarian feedback report in 2020, Rohingyas talked about pressure on access to services that sometimes create tension⁴. This includes access to bathing facilities, toilets, water points and quarrels due to long time in the queue. For those living in local host communities, sometimes Rohingyas are thrown out of their sheds by the landowner

GBV is a major concern, especially it is mostly by intimate partner and the women are scared to seek any support except for medical treatment. Rohingyas are also weary of the role of government appointed majhis and head majhis (community leader) who are in fact brokers of service providers for the Rohingyas and government/humanitarian actors. Majhis as a major power holder has been very explicit ever since the 2017 influx. About their relationship with the host communities, Rohingyas have said that the local communities misbehave with them and sometimes create obstacles for the Rohingyas to have access to service points.

On the other hand, local communities do not trust Rohingyas and consider them mostly as immoral or criminals, they are also responsible for security risks. Both communities agree in a few points too – increased access to services for host communities, acknowledgement of the difficulty for the hosts with the sheer number of Rohingyas, access to education for the Rohingyas, camp labours and volunteers from

⁴ *What Matters: Humanitarian Feedback Bulletin on Rohingya Response*, Issue 43, 2020

the host communities. Many local community members also think that Rohingyas became refugees due to their own fault. In another summary report drawn from a series of perception surveys by the Bangladesh Red Crescent Society, the host community identified key challenges for the local communities are: 1. Reduced access to livelihood in the formal and informal sector, 2. Increased crime and conflict, 3. Higher price for goods and services and 4. Overpopulation⁵. Tension and sometimes violence also can be observed during collection of firewood, aid distribution points and water points. They also feel the Rohingyas assert cultural dominance and in turn undermining local traditions and custom. Unregistered Rohingyas who are earlier arrivals, think more positive and also have strong bonding with the host communities. With a combination of myths and fears, host communities feel outnumbered and maybe pushed out of the area someday. It is also important to note that unsubstantiated misreporting or biased reporting also create mistrust among the two communities and also within the two communities. Responders for the perception survey also recommend that humanitarian and development services should be up scaled for the host communities, access to further employment opportunities and dispel/contain misinformation about both communities. Host communities also feel that Rohingyas should have proper access to health services. Inclusive nature of services for both communities, intergroup dialogue and positive use of media can ease off quite a bit of the tensions, as several community perception documents highlight. Despite the differences, majority of the local community have at least one Rohingya friend, as one of the surveys in 2018 suggest. Friends can play an important role as catalysts in creating better understanding among two communities.

In order to explore the current conditions of conflict and social cohesion in CXB, the literature review also covered an analysis of current status. The official position of the Bangladesh government that it is a short term stay for the Rohingya population in Cox's Bazar and Bhashan Char, although informally government officials also agree that this is a prolonged crisis. One interpretation is that Bangladesh fears that by acknowledging the indefinite period of hosting, will ease the pressure off on Myanmar and can also become the pull factor for other Rohingyas in Myanmar. It has become even more uncertain with the coup earlier in the year.

In this context, Bangladesh government has adopted an increasingly securitized approach to Rohingya refugees⁶. Securitisation began soon after the 1st anniversary of the influx on 25 August 2018, where a large gathering was held to generate public and international support. Instead of encouraging, the government feared that such large gathering is a show of force by the Rohingyas and therefore a threat to local communities as well as local law and order situation. Access to cell phones was slowed down in the camps, fencing around the camps started off with watchtowers constructed at regular intervals within

⁵ Community Feedback: Social Cohesion, Bangladesh Red Cross and IFRC, 2020; Exploring Host Community Attitudes Towards Rohingya Refugees in Bangladesh, Jerin, Ismet, Mazumder, Md. Kamruzzaman, Journal of Mental Health and Psychosocial Support in Conflict Affected Areas, 2019 and *Rohingyas Amongst Us: Bangladeshi Perspective on the Rohingya Crisis Survey*, Xchange Foundation, 2019

⁶ *Fading humanitarianism: The Dangerous Trajectory of the Rohingya Refugee Response in Bangladesh*, Daniel P. Sullivan, Refugee International, 2021 and *A Sustainable Policy for Rohingya Refugees in Bangladesh*, International Crisis Group, Asia Report No. 303, 2018

the barbed boundaries and a special police force, Armed Police Battalion. Government also went ahead on its own with the relocation of about 100,000 Rohingyas to Bhashan Char, a remote island of silt. By mid-2021, more than 18,000 have been relocated and the next phase of the relocation resumed in November 2021. Even though a standoff has been cleared between the UNHCR and the government through a MoU, independent assessments have not been allowed. Access to livelihood and education has not restarted as yet and no confirmed timeline except some piloting in these two areas.

There is also a shift in the authoritarian lines of responsibility, from the national to the camp. The Camps-in-Charge (CiCs) have gained greater autonomy over humanitarian project approvals. Security agencies have also gained greater influence, with the creation of a cabinet-level National Committee on Coordination, Management and Law and Order, led by the Ministry of Home Affairs in December 2020. The new committee has a broad mandate covering coordination of Rohingya-related activities including maintaining law and order in the camps. The National Task Force (NTF) led by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs still nominally leads the Rohingya response, but there is clear overlap although the NTF has not been active in the last one year. The Joint Response Plan (JRP) for 2021 was scaled down by the government and was approved in May 2021. Meanwhile the government has not made any public reference to a more updated Rohingya strategy since the brief strategy made public in 2013 by the government. Rohingyas themselves remain largely left out of decisions affecting their everyday lives. Failure to empower refugees and to offer them education, livelihoods, and other opportunities to build their self-reliance will only push the community further into despair and perhaps be vulnerable to be recruited for criminality and violent extremism.

Based on studies on conflict dynamics in 2018 – 2019, some of the humanitarian actors working in CXB took initiatives to address the conflict and to introduce programmes for social cohesion and peace building. These included one-to-one discussion with the major players of both the communities as well as forming groups and providing them with capacity building/leadership trainings on peace building. The conflict dynamics have changed during the pandemic with the rise of GBV by mostly intimate partners in both local and Rohingya communities, increase in criminality including armed conflict in the camps and scaling down of services during the pandemic as ordered by the government. The interventions are also not gender responsive and does not take into account the need for separate approaches to analyse and respond to how conflict affects women and girls⁷. As such, GBV risks faced by women and girls both at home and outside are linked to poor gender-sensitive humanitarian response. All these factors has created a need to adapt the already initiated transformative peace building in CXB – to be effective.

Current protection environment in the camps⁸:

⁷ *Doing Right by Women and Girls in Cox's Bazar: Gendering perspectives on Social Cohesion*, Saferworld, 2021

⁸ *An Agenda for Dignified and Sustainable Rohingya Response in Bangladesh*, Act for Peace, May 2021

Insecurity:

- Tensions between refugees and host communities: Growing anti-Rohingya sentiment and xenophobia.
- Increase in criminal activities: kidnappings, extortions, extra-judicial killings, drug and human trafficking
- Violent clashes between rival Rohingya gangs that operate with impunity and vie for control of the camps

Gender-based Violence:

- High prevalence and low reporting of GBV incidents. GBV risks restrict women and girls' access to public services and facilities like WASH facilities, water collection points and affects free movement around the camps.
- COVID-19 pandemic exposed women to greater GBV risks but restricted access to services.
- Female Rohingya volunteers have faced stigmatisation and harassment.

Limited access to justice:

- Rohingya refugees governed by complex web of formal and informal justice systems delivered through a variety of administrative and discretionary rules and regulations.

Refugee Repatriation focused policy and its impacts:

- Immediate prospects for safe, dignified and voluntary repatriation are dim
- Increasing aid dependence and weakened community resilience
- Increasing insecurity creates fear and desperation
- Continued isolation has increased anti-Rohingya sentiment and increased social tensions with host community

Humanitarian Space and operational constraints:

- Suspension of NGO activities
- Increased surveillance of humanitarian actors.
- Bureaucratic barriers to humanitarian projects
- Lack of transparency and clear policies

Secondary protection impacts of COVID-19:

- Since April 2020, the humanitarian footprint, including protection presence, has been reduced.
- Services related to protection, site-management, shelter repairs, livelihoods and education were deemed as 'non-essential' during this period.
- Protection risks grew, community networks broke down, economic vulnerabilities increased and depleted trust between refugees and service pr

5. LESSONS LEARNT: CONFLICT TRANSFORMATION IN OTHER PARTS OF THE WORLD

There are some relevant documents on lessons learnt and good practice regarding conflict transformation in different parts of the world.

In the Middle East, an important example is in the northern part of Levant region – Syria and Lebanon. There are approximately 1.5 million Syrian refugees including 20,000 Palestinian Syrian refugees in Lebanon. About 78% of them do not have formal legal status in Lebanon⁹. The population of locals in Lebanon is about 4.2 million. World Bank estimated in 2013 that 30% of its population is Syrian refugees. Syria and Lebanon have almost 50 years of love-hate relationship. During the prolonged Lebanese civil war (1975 – 1990) the Syrian military fought with different factions of armed Palestinian refugees, driving both Lebanese and Palestinian civilian refugees to other countries in the Middle East. On the other hand the more recent Syrian civil war which began as part of an extended Arab Spring in 2011, still continues in 2021 – driving Syrian civilians to seek refuge in other countries of the Middle East including Lebanon. Lebanon has already been troubled with its own political, economic and security challenges that include Lebanese factions in the Syrian conflict. In particular, tensions between non camp Syrian refugees and Lebanese local communities are high, including occasional eruption of violence.

One study to address the complex challenges in Lebanon suggests with evidence that strengthening and capacity and role of local government in mitigating rising conflicts and ensure transformative peace building among both communities¹⁰. It is also suggested that community leadership should be nurtured among the Syrian refugees and facilitate a process where their representatives could interact with both local authorities and the Lebanese community leaders. The report also suggest that information campaigns highlighting the challenges and views of Syrian refugees for their social inclusion in Lebanon. Another report also suggest that coordination and collaboration of both Syrian and Lebanese community leaders can defuse tensions with the help of local government and security forces, for access to services and economic opportunities for both communities¹¹. Greater coordination of humanitarian agencies, NGOs, civil society groups and private sector is also suggested to empower a cross sector of local actors. For improving local community – Palestinian refugee relations in Lebanon, positive dialogue was also established between Lebanese communities and Palestinian refugee self-governance Popular Committees through a UN joint programme. Active role of youth and women were ensured.

⁹ Source: UNDP and Human Rights Watch websites

¹⁰ *Dialogue and Local Response Mechanisms to Conflict Between Host Communities and Syrian Refugees in Lebanon*, SFCG and UNHCR, 2014

¹¹ *Social Cohesion between Syrian Refugees and Urban Host Communities in Lebanon and Jordan*, World Vision International, 2015



In different counties of Africa, some community based approaches have worked better than others in local transformative peace building. Local peace committees were able to resolve conflict and tension between farmers and herders of livestock in South Kordofan, Sudan k *Camosite in Shaymlanur* codes of practice that has worked for ages¹².

in South Sudan used performance and dialogue in secondary schools to engage on peace and development. In Burundi, local peace groups

Mix Community in Shaymllapur, Teknaf known as 'Peace Clubs' mobilised citizens to monitor and report violence to the relevant authorities during electoral process. Peace committees have been able to defuse tension even among armed groups in conflict, like in East Democratic Republic of Congo (East DRC) especially near strategic road blocks by rival groups and also to prevent GBV as a weapon of conflict. These Peace Committees received assistance from local chiefs, for instance providing meeting space or cultivable land to bear their expenses. Also in Eastern Sudan, livelihood opportunities enhanced through vocational training, business skills, microfinance for both local and refugee communities as part of partnership between humanitarian and development organisations, has helped reduce tension and increase socio-economic integration of both communities¹³. For local and refugee communities in and near Bonga camp in Ethiopia, UNHCR introduced participatory environmental management to restore depletion of bio diversity and forests. This initiative included both refugee and local communities and had created a mutual understanding and appreciation of preserving the environment. Another project in Guinea helped create income generating opportunities that benefitted local communities, refugees and IDPs. Self-help groups in all these communities were trained and encouraged to take up entrepreneurial initiatives that included setting up Community Based Production Centres. This project also helped reduce tensions among the local and refugee communities. In Uganda, UNHCR facilitated a process of negotiations with the government to integrate services (and not social integration) for the refugees into regular government structures and policies. In Tanzania international and national NGOs organised series of conflict resolution meetings in a three year project, which included representatives of village leaders, community members, refugee leaders, camp residents, UNHCR and camp management. In the backdrop of Tanzanian refugee law which prevents any kind of positive interaction of the two communities, dialogue facilitated by humanitarian actors not only helped resolve conflicts but also build positive social relationships between the two communities. Similar joint meetings and workshops were also conducted in Sierra Leone with refugee-local community participation, reduced tensions and helped sharing of

¹² *Local Peace Building: What Works and Why*, Peace Direct, Alliance for Peace Building, 2019

¹³ Helpdesk Research Report: Preventing Conflict Between Refugees and Host Communities, Governance and Social Development Resource Centre, 2012

resources like agricultural land. By producing and targeting goods for refugees, the local communities had tangible economic benefits particularly for the poor in local communities. Never Again Rwanda, a NGO, organised regular dialogue, psychosocial counselling and collaborative projects among divided and tense communities after the Rwanda genocide of the 1990s. This improved the well-being of the individuals as well as helped improve trust among the communities.

In Kenya, a combination of several projects for both refugee and local communities have had good impact on peace building and conflict transformation. More than 360,000 refugees live in the northern part of Kenya. Another UNHCR programme piloted peace education in Dadaab and Kakuma refugee camps that included orientation on conflict prevention by themselves and conflict resolution through mediation. The initiative had good results in reducing conflict and even had refugee volunteers in expanding the approaches for peace building within their communities. Through another project, access to services, living conditions, sustainable livelihoods, peace building were enhanced for both communities. Yet another project supported access to services and sustainable livelihoods for local community around the two camps. Meanwhile NGO initiative facilitated youth groups to develop their networks in order to prevent recruitment of youth for violent extremism in Kenya and Burundi.

Closer to home in the South Asia region, some good practice examples are also available on social cohesion and conflict transformation. After the communal riots in 2010 in Kandhamal district, Oddissa, India, CBOs mobilised Traditional Village Committees to Panchayat Raj institutions in creating space for community peace dialogues, mapping root causes of conflict and ensuring inclusive participation in religious and traditional festivals¹⁴. Apparently it was reported that 38 people were murdered and 54,000 people were homeless in the communal violence in 2007 – 2008. Women played an active and leading role in the peace building process, ensuring better public services for all communities, especially on access separate toilet facilities for men and women and addressing GBV. Lessons learnt from the project include analysis of the root causes and impact of the conflict/s, identify areas of intervention and adoption of a development approach to peace building.

Elsewhere in Sri Lanka after their long span of civil war, Centre for Peace Building and Reconciliation brought young people from different religious identities for joint cultural activities. In Afghanistan, UNHCR project included both refugees and local communities in labour intensive income generating projects in areas of refugees. The programme focused on reforestation, road improvement and watershed management. Jointly working as labour in these initiatives, mutual trust and cooperation has evolved between refugees and local communities. Similar initiative has worked well in Nepal with the involvement of local communities and Bhutanese refugees. In Timor Leste, a UNDP project during 2010 -2013 had a programme approach of building government capacity on addressing communal conflict, greater participation of women in peace building and promoting conflict sensitive analysis¹⁵. The project was

¹⁴ *Facilitating Community Based Approaches to Peace Building Processes in Kandhamal district, Odissa*, Jana Vikas, Trocare, 2015

¹⁵ *Support to the DPBSC summary project document*, Yimor-Leste, UNDP, 2010

taken to support peace building efforts after the bloody violence in 2006 – 2007. To institutionalise peace building, UNDP supported the setting up of the Department of Peace Building and Social Cohesion (DPBSC) that includes three units – Dialogue and Mediation Unit, Community Strengthening Unit and Monitoring and Evaluation Unit. For enhancing women’s participation, policy framework had been designed as gender sensitive and women in the work of the department had been mainstreamed.

Overall it seems that promoting joint interventions through projects can have lasting impact on transforming conflict towards peace building and social cohesion. These projects should include both humanitarian and development components. Youth and women have a comparatively higher success in the peace building process. Local authorities need to be educated and involved in mediating disputes to organising inclusive community dialogue among communities impacted by conflict.

6. STAKEHOLDERS’ ANALYSIS

Based on the information amassed from the field through FGDs and KIIs and desk review, key actors in establishing or barricading efforts of transformative changes in terms of social cohesion has been put together.

Communities and community groups:

Men and women from both local and Rohingya communities are often those affected by the conflict and often pawns in the power play within conflict dynamics. Humanitarian agencies initiatives have promoted leadership and representation to bring their voice into policy decisions, but so far has not been able to rise beyond suspicion or even being muted by different entities. Women and men’s community groups have had better success in engaging to support the humanitarian work inside the camps. Leadership building within host/local communities has also been successful through NGO-CSO interventions. In both communities, women’s group has had good examples as champions promoting women’s empowerment and addressing the root causes of GBV in their communities. Community leaders such as teachers, religious leaders, elders still play an important role in community disputes and development. One additional stakeholder in the camps are the block leaders known as Majhis and their supervisor is a head Majhi. They are often the interlocutor between the Rohingya community and humanitarian actors – with both a positive and challenging role in conflict dynamics within the camps.

Armed gangs: This is the most lethal, controversial and recent phenomena. During and after the influx in 2017, as well as during previous moves from Myanmar to Bangladesh, activists linked to armed rebel groups in Myanmar has also come into Bangladesh. Unconfirmed reports suggest that some of these men have regrouped in CXB Rohingya camps and have also managed to access firearms and automatic weapons. It is not clear if the source of these arms are within Bangladesh or outside. During the pandemic, several factions (at least 3 but could be more) have emerged and unfortunately have used their militia training to looting and trafficking of drugs. Several of them have been gunned down either through in-fighting or through encounters with law enforcing agencies, as well as arresting some of these activists –

but the groups still exist. Because of these groups the conflict dynamics in CXB now includes armed conflict and extreme and brutal forms of violence. Transformative change of the conflict management will have to take into account disarming such groups and promoting non-violence among them.

Religious Leaders: Imams (or Muslim religious leader from mosques) play a very important role and have a lot of influence on both Rohingya and local communities. CXB is relatively conservative area and views of Imams are very seriously adhered to and they are seen as role models. Their potential in conflict transformation has good potential, but yet to be explored fully.

Political Leaders: Because of the high profile attention to Cox's Bazar that factors in the Rohingya crisis, cross border crime and geo political positioning of Bangladesh, political leaders in CB have an important role related to conflict and transformative peace building. Since the 1970s Rohingyas have come to and gone from Bangladesh, with some remaining and integrating within the local communities with common cultural, religious and family linkages. Longer they have lived in Bangladesh, the more their naturalisation has been. Local politicians do consider the naturalised Rohingyas as a possible constituent. On the other hand, politicians play a big role in either extending a humanitarian hand to the Rohingyas or advocating for their repatriation to Myanmar (although with lesser impact on policy response for the latter).

Government authorities: With a shift in government policy, the CiCs hold greater autonomy in recommending the future of humanitarian projects and the camp management. Although office of the RRRC has the coordination role, the CiCs have an unwritten role to carry forward strict and securitised policy decisions. The office of the DC and UNOs have a coordination and supervisory role for the local councils and local communities. Any conflict-sensitive and responsive initiative that would want to engage both with the local communities and Rohingyas, would have to work closely with CiCs, UNOs and UPs. It is also important to consider the role of law enforcing agencies such as district police, APBN, RAB and BGB to contain violence and crime to maintain peace both within the camps but also in the interaction between the camp population and the local population.

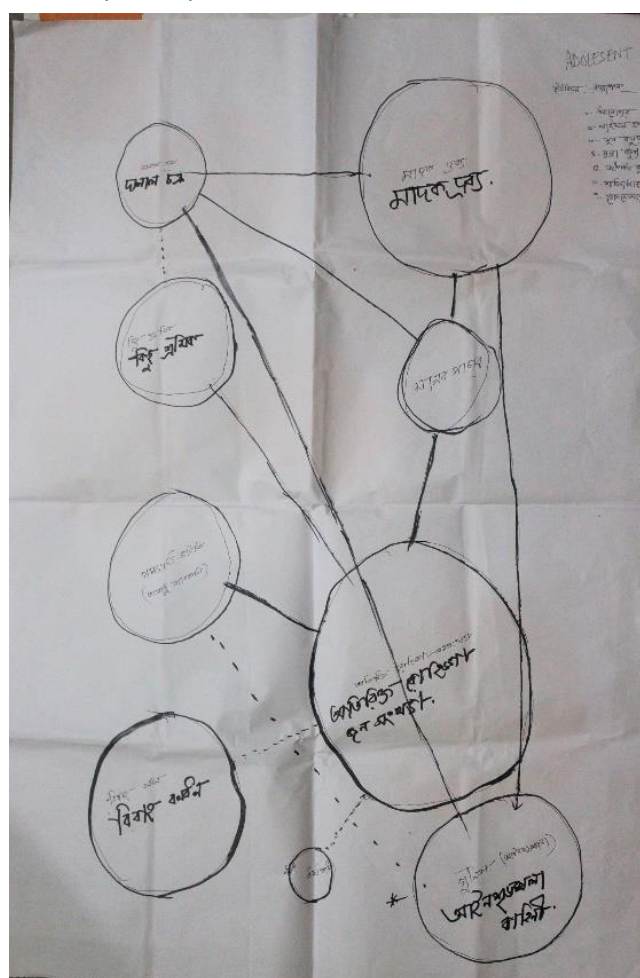
Union/Upazilla Member or Chairperson: All the UP and Upazila Chairpersons in Ukhiya and Teknaf are men. Some of the dynamic women members try to play a proactive role specially in relation to women's education, empowerment and GBV. Some of the members play a pro-active role in dispute resolution within the local communities, including on GBV. Only a few have had regular interaction with Rohingyas either as labourers, so mistrust and misconceptions rule. Humanitarian agencies engage with some of the Chairpersons through workshops where stakeholders include others who work with the Rohingyas, thus opening avenues for perception change.

Media: CXB has a number of daily newspapers and online media services. They report regularly on Rohingya related issues. However, there is a lack of ethical standards particularly while reporting on the Rohingya issue – sometimes reporting unsubstantiated stories. The local correspondents of national print and broadcast media follow the codes and rules of their main office. There is only one or two women journalist in CXB. But generally, the reporting is anti-Rohingya and biased by local politics. Humanitarian agencies occasionally organise workshops and guided visits, which helps to clarify some of the

misconceptions and develop closer ties with the media. Few leading journalists have a more neutral view, but they still do not play the role of a catalyst in having more balanced and neutral reporting. They can be allies but also barriers to transformative change of conflicts within communities in CXB. They have a good potential to be a positive force.

Civil Society Organizations (CSOs): With interest and assistance from UN agencies and international NGOs, the local NGOs and CBOs have begun to take small steps in intra community dialogue on social cohesion. If their capacities could be enhanced with tools and techniques of community mobilisation for transformative peace building, they can be a very important actor for longer term initiatives for positive and transformative conflict management.

As part of the stakeholders' analysis, conflict relationship mapping exercises were undertaken. Following is a sample output of the exercise.



The Conflict Relationship Mapping was drawn by the adolescents – girls and boys in Rotnapalong. It enabled them to engage in detailed preliminary discussion on the issues of conflict (human and drug trafficking, drug abuse, rape, inter-marriage, child labour, overcrowded camps) and the pertinent ‘perpetrators’ (enablers – dalals, corrupt members of law enforcement agencies, corrupt businessmen) to gradually leading to identifying how to address those issues. The process is time consuming and the analysis requires lengthy and insightful communication to ultimately specify ways and means to engage the enablers in dialogues with recognised ‘moderators’ (gatekeepers) to reach common solutions for transformative changes. The lines represent interlinks and overlapping relationship between the concerns of conflict and the enablers. Due to shortage of time, roles of gatekeepers to contain conflict could not be discussed. It is possible to arrive at a detailed step-

by-step analytical resolutions to conflict dynamics engaging whole community to initiate peace building process.

On the basis of the stakeholder analysis and conflict relationship mapping, the study team explored the ‘three box’ analytical tool for linking the dividers, connectors and key actors in Cox’s Bazar for transformative peace building.

FORCES FOR PEACE →	PEACE	← FORCES AGAINST PEACE	KEY ACTORS
<p>Mutual interest for work (as labour, employer)</p> <p>Women's solidarity against GBV</p> <p>Common history of the region, culture and religion</p> <p>Fear and the need for protection from crime, hate, violence</p> <p>Prolonged stay for the Rohingyas with no option for relocating anywhere</p> <p>Youth, women and men role models setting examples of social cohesion</p>		<p>Control over criminal activities, power and illegal access to money</p> <p>Mistrust among local communities and Rohingyas</p> <p>Competition for access to work</p> <p>Misinformation about Rohingyas</p> <p>Vested interest groups trying to exploit the inter and intra conflicts for their own benefit</p>	<p>Majhis</p> <p>Armed gang leaders</p> <p>Camp in Charge (CiCs)</p> <p>Criminal groups</p> <p>Law enforcing agencies</p> <p>Religious leaders</p> <p>Community leaders</p> <p>UP/Upazila chairpersons</p> <p>Journalists</p> <p>Politicians</p> <p>UN and international humanitarian agencies</p> <p>NGOs</p> <p>CBOs</p>

7. SCENARIOS FOR CONFLICT TRANSFORMATION

The following five ‘most-likely’ cases are premised on the five specific themes based on current conflict dynamics in CXB; the analysis also include dynamic facets, root causes, attempts for mitigation and positive initiatives to bring in social cohesion. These have been developed based on the series of consultations both in groups and individually with relevant stakeholders. It also takes into account a connector-divider analysis of each of the proposed positive scenarios.

7.1 Conflicting relationship between Registered and Unregistered Rohingyas (Old VS New)

It is to be noted that, 300,000 Rohingyas came to Bangladesh between 1990 and 2016, out of which 30,000 were registered. The Rohingyas arrived pre-influx were living in peaceful harmony with the residents of host communities. The hostility became visible only after the droves of humanitarian actors came into the area and brought a bundle of services with them. A recent example of that confusion and protests around the launch of a WFP food card for all camp dwellers – both registered (Rohingyas living in CXB for nearly 25-30 years) and unregistered (the new arrivals during influx in 2017¹⁶). The easy camaraderie has turned into a battle of status and entitlements.

Scenario: *The mosque near the registered camp was a common place for prayer for both registered and unregistered Rohingyas. Being god fearing and conservative Muslims, mosque plays a very important role in Rohingyas’ lives. Very recently, the registered Rohingyas refused to let unregistered Rohingyas to enter the mosque and do their Zohor prayer. The verbal disputes soon turned into a violent fistfight. Small pieces of iron rods were pelted on shed roofs¹⁷, injuring a number of Rohingyas.*

The Imam of the mosque along with his peers attempted to calm the situation; they went from shed to shed, asked for CIC’s intervention and held meetings with majhis from both of the warring sides. While discussing with the Rohingyas, the Imams emphasised the fact that severe punishments, e.g. apprehended by APBN members and forceful removal away from families could happen if the situation continues. They also recited Islamic philosophy that the mosque is a shelter condoned by Allah and it should not be embroiled in violence. A peaceful solution, agreed upon by both the parties and documented in written resolution which is kept at the CIC office, has effectively put a stop to the conflict with a view for transformative change.

While the newly arrived Rohingyas shared the details of the tension, the registered Rohingyas denied the accusations vehemently. The old and current *majhis* of registered camp in Kutupalong brushed

¹⁶ The Rohingyas who came to Bangladesh 15-30 years ago, are partly recognized as ‘Registered Refugees’ by the UN and Bangladeshi government. They live in the registered camps and has been granted certain privileges, which were curtailed after the influx to retain control over the chaotic situation in Ukhiya and Teknaf.

¹⁷ The sheds have only tarpaulins as ceilings and the iron rod ‘bullets’ easily penetrated into sheds and caused serious physical injuries to anyone inside the sheds

off the incident as a 'one-off' and that it is a side-effect of too many people living in too confined places with stress, insecurity and uncertain futures. Any small interaction often tend to go out-of-hand quickly but never cause anyone terminal damages, they further divulged.

There could be several factors dividing the Rohingya community. This could include deep rooted mistrust and inherent tendency to access resources as well as services provided by humanitarian aid agencies. Rohingyas have been persecuted, denied rights and treated as outsiders in their own country for a very long period of time. One can only imagine the plights they went through – fearing for their lives in every waking hour have made them wary. Their situations have improved only slightly in Bangladesh; where they are provided with resources for daily needs but limited freedom of movement and no right to formal education or any opportunities for higher studies. Rohingya children who were born in Bangladesh and have never been to Myanmar are not allowed rights like any other Bangladeshi born children. Even in such scenarios, registered Rohingyas claim their entitlements should be better than the new arrivals due to the length of period they have been in Bangladesh. On the other hand the new arrivals feel their wounds are more recent and will take time to heal, while Bangladesh still remains a foreign and alien land for them even after a few years. So the dynamics of conflict is more about access to limited resources and services for the overcrowded camps and the feeling of di-prioritised for either being a newcomer or an old timer.

The CIC and his associates can play a major role in containing these feuds. CIC has the ultimate power to enact peace agreements – both formal and informal, with a view to control any violent situation within the campsites. The Armed Police Battalion (APBN) has been brought in officer in Ukhiya. They have erected watch towers in strategic places for eagle view supervision. The camps are in the process of being barbed-wired by the Bangladesh Army to restrict movement outside the camp areas. Community leaders like the majhis, Imams and elders (including those living in Bangladesh for a long time) can provide leadership and ensure role models in their community who can bring benefits for all by understanding, compassion and inclusiveness. Focusing on the common denominator that they all are part of a deprived community and their closeness and unity will only create a better image as well as trust for Bangladeshis and the rest of the world. Organisations working with the Rohingya can also provide guidance in leadership building for social cohesion, which can bring transformative results.

A significantly small number of Rohingyas have access to weapons, as shared by an APBN official in different occasions. It is possible to monitor the situation on a regular basis to avoid any sudden uprising or armed conflict. Device based surveillance is the most desirable mode of security measure, however human surveillance – elected/selected groups with representations from NGOs, GOs, communities and so on could play a vital role in providing protection, surveillance, reporting and quick assistance for any outbreak of violence. APBN with the help from members of other law enforcement



agencies regularly visit inside the camps as a monitoring activity to minimise scopes for armed conflict inside the camps, which may always not be enough. More sustainable protection measures from a security and crime point of view is needed as a policy response.

Rohingyas are traditionally patriarchal and women are accustomed to living in men's shadows. Through various discussions, on-to-one and in groups, Rohingya women revealed that they rely completely on men for "everything"¹⁸. Rohingya women have no decision making power. Even though the ration cards are in their names, the ultimate decision of how these rations will be utilised depends on the husbands/fathers/brothers. The GBV situation during the COVID-19 lockdown has reported increased dangerously. In June 2021 IRC published a report on the GBV status in camps stating that due to lack of services, GBV related reports were not recorded; however, through various health and women centres run by IRC, data on GBV situation during lockdown was collected. According to the findings, violence against women and girls, mainly physical, have increased to 94% and almost all were perpetrated by intimate partners or family members¹⁹.

The data from the Gender and Adolescence: Global Evidence (GAGE) study shows that Rohingya women and adolescent girls continued to be affected by domestic, sexual and gender-based violence, including risks of being trafficked, while women and girls from the host communities are complex unaddressed protection needs which include risks of child marriage for adolescent girls. The study also produced a policy brief citing the lack of funding and coverage to undertake programmes

¹⁸ In 2018 during a needs assessment exercise regarding the GBV situation in Rohingya and host communities, Rohingya women easily shared that their husbands are right in hitting them if they are not performing their duties properly; many revealed that their husbands hit them for not salting the curries enough or not cooking items their husbands asked for lunch/dinner.

¹⁹ GBV Trends among Rohingya Refugees in Cox's Bazar: COVID-19 update; published in July 2021 (https://reliefweb.int/report/bangladesh/gbv-trends-among-rohingya-refugees-cox-s-bazar-covid-19-update?gclid=CjwKCAiAnO2MBhApEiwA8q0HYX1JuFy6AcJ8YOMXq4bAUVSJEyxXIBUocCucWPEV85QKQ8iCrM5VZBoCWm4QAvD_BwE)

for protection of the GBV survivors. The recommendation includes accelerating addressing protection gaps and ways to mend them to protect women, particularly the adolescent girls²⁰.

In light of the analysis pertaining to inter Rohingya conflict, it would be prudent to recommend addressing violence perpetrated on the basis of gender, age and accessibility to services relating to protection. Gender sensitive common approach as well as criteria for access to services including opportunities for livelihood interventions should be considered. Efforts to initiate gender and diversity sensitive community dialogues among community leaders in Rohingya community would be useful to address conflict and recommendations to contain them. GBV responsive interventions will bring women from the earlier and later arrivals together as both communities have similar experiences of GBV. Women leaders from both communities can also play a crucial role in resolving tensions and disputes even if these are started off by men.

The pertinent attempt to solve this particular conflict for transformative changes will be the willingness on both sides to negotiate by mutual communication and understanding. The international, national and local humanitarian aiders can play a significant role; they can motivate the Rohingyas for communication, select a neutral space for the dialogue, facilitate and overlook the process. A mere policing to detect and impede volatile situation will only solve the problem temporarily. Use of communication tools, techniques and technologies to reach mutual understanding and respecting their common history could be the way to go forward for transformative peace building.



Prominent Rohingya community leader Mr. Mahibullah (middle), slain by rival armed group in 2021 [collected from open source]

Armed conflicts are often used to ensure culture of fear and power play. As stated before, number of people owning arms/weapons inside the camp are small and they can be overpowered with small intervention. The intervention, however, has to be initiated by the government and in particular by law enforcing agencies and specialised armed forces. Disarming

armed faction of the Rohingyas has to be prioritised and central focus by the government for ending armed violence inside the camp. NETZ as an action strategy can take up this particular responsibility as an advocacy initiative with government representatives at different levels. Community watch groups, if they are given proper protection, can monitor the movement and actions of the armed instigators of conflict and report to the CiC or the agencies they work with.

²⁰ <https://reliefweb.int/report/bangladesh/age-and-gender-based-violence-risks-facing-rohingya-and-bangladeshi-adolescents>

7.2 Rising hostility between the Host Community Residents and the Rohingyas

Rohingya community had been routinely persecuted in Rakhine and forcibly displaced to Bangladesh for many years. Bangladeshis were living in harmony with the 300,000 Rohingyas arrived prior to 2017. This has escalated in 2016 and 2017 and the influx brought around 1 million Rohingyas to Bangladesh between 2017 and 2019. The large number of Rohingyas added to the over populated CXB and natural as well as man-made resources started depleting. Numerous international and national NGOs pouring in aids to the camps and ignoring the equally poor host community dwellers only fuelled the tension²¹.

Scenario: Morjina (39) has five children all under the age of 20. Her husband is a CNG driver and has recently left Morjina and the children to live with Joitun, a 25 year old Rohingya woman abandoned by her husband. Morjina's husband refused to provide for her and her children claiming that since he is living with Joitun – who also has four children, he cannot provide for two families with his meagre income. Being an illiterate, unskilled and inexperienced woman, Morjina is in a dire situation and blames Joitun for her present predicament.

Morjina decided to seek help from the local UP Chairman. The Chairman held a mediation with the designated members to find an amicable solution to Morjina's problems. Morjina, however, learnt that Rohingya-Bangladeshi marriages are not recognised in Bangladesh, hence they are illegal. She sent a written application to the CIC through the UP Chairman. Morjina's husband was told that since the Rohingya woman now was married to him, she was his responsibility, even though their marriage is not legal. She will no longer receive the rations due to her. Morjina's husband immediately left the Rohingya women and returned to Morjina. Morjina with the help of the UP Chairman and the Shalish Parishad managed to get a 'written promise' of never repeating the behaviour and looking after his family properly.

The women in Rohingya families living in the camps are usually provided with 'Ration Cards' by WFP to access monthly consumables and other necessary items for the families. This was decided on the basis of the fact that the women are usually responsible to cook, raise children and look after families' wellbeing and they mostly stay home. Men from the host communities are aware of the fact and this becomes a divider that contribute towards conflict. This particular fact makes the Rohingya women and their outlook (Rohingya women are considered to be pretty and attractive) lure many Bangladeshi men – married and unmarried both to get romantically involved with

²¹ The GOB has made it mandatory for international and national NGOs to allocate at least 30% of the total budgets for the betterment of host community residents both in Ukhiya and Teknaf. The multi-sectoral services will continue for the Rohingya populations and would be extended to the Bangladeshi communities living near the camps, revealed the 2020 Joint Response Plan (https://reliefweb.int/sites/reliefweb.int/files/resources/jrp_2020_final_in-design_280220.2mb_0.pdf)

Rohingya women. Rohingya women, on the other hand, gets involved with local men because of the 'security' associated with being involved with a Bangladeshi citizen and they assume they have a better chance in life as a partner of a Bangladeshi. The outlook and perception on GBV, in both communities are almost similar. While the women in host communities have specific channels for grievance remedies, the Rohingya women have only majhis, head majhis (all men) and the CICs (again all men) to ask for remedial actions. An obvious strategic effort for resolving tension for lasting positive results could involve finding common grounds and promote dialogues, advocacy and planning for protection issues for women from both host and Rohingya communities. Many organisations are already addressing the GBV issues both in host and Rohingya communities, the situation has a long way to go to be adequately addressed. The connecting factor again in this case would be the bonding of women from local and Rohingya community for a common cause – reduce GBV and discrimination at home, which is perpetuated by men in a patriarchal environment.

Bangladesh government has officially banned inter-marriages since July 2014 through a circular sent to all CICs²². This also affects the registered Rohingyas who have been in Bangladesh for decades and have families with their Bangladeshi partners. The Livelihood and Economic Inclusion Officer of UNHCR shared that if the liaison with Bangladeshi men is exposed, the families will not receive the monthly rations. This often results in the Bangladeshi men abandoning the Rohingya families. The women abandoned are left with the fact that they have been rejected twice and further complicating their already complex situation as well as leaving them more vulnerable.

The constant fear of abandonment by their husbands have led the Bangladeshi women to colour all Rohingya women as opportunist, women of low morals and ever ready to lure men into their lairs. The situation can be addressed through a mass awareness raising on the government's policy regarding inter-marriages. Attempts should be taken to include Bangladeshi men in dialogues to discourage pursuing and marrying Rohingya women and the perils of being in polygamous marriages. Various national NGOs work on disseminating information on polygamy and child marriages with a view to protect vulnerable women. They can be the trailblazers in awareness raising to strengthen the connectors for peace. The NGOs providing legal aid can also work closely with these organisations on giving free legal advice, mediation in case of disagreement. Other services could involve shelter, psychosocial support, livelihood support and capacity building trainings for vulnerable and abandoned women in the host communities.

²² <https://www.dhakatribune.com/opinion/special/2018/01/02/ban-bangladeshis-marrying-rohingya-justified-human-rights-violation>



Consultation with host community women, Palongkhali

During the FGDs, it was abundantly clear that the local residents – women and men both – have reservations about Rohingyas living in CXB for such long periods of time. They are questioning their own goodwill in providing the preliminary helping

hands to Rohingyas when they arrived in large numbers in 2017. Few men even questioned regarding the authenticity of ‘recorded atrocities’ against Rohingya in Myanmar. The regular vigilance by BGB check-points and the trials of proving their citizenship have affected Bangladeshis negatively. On top of that, the steady increase of living costs, depletion of natural resources, education of their children disrupted leading to their uncertain futures, heavy traffic delaying arrival time to destinations – particularly in cases of reaching hospitals with critical patients – all these have quadrupled the multiple issues faced by rural dwellers and the anti-Rohingya feelings have infested the locals’ minds to an alarming scale. Employment and relevant opportunities play a major role in protracting animosity between the two communities; men complained that alongside overtaking their job opportunities (by accepting lower wages than the Bangladeshi labours), the Rohingyas have failed to gain their respect and trust because many of the Bangladeshi employers (who employed Rohingyas) complained that the hired helps often steal from them.

While some of the allegations are true, these cannot be generalised and some of it seems to be based on perceptions. Bangladesh government along with the humanitarian agencies have to collaborate on improving the scale of benefits for the host communities, if not at the same level as with the services for the Rohingyas. Such efforts and any



Consultation with host community men, Palongkhali

misconception about generalising the negativity towards Rohingyas will also have to be addressed with aid and development workers. The locals feel ignored and treated like strangers in their own homes, who are also not well informed about the services they are supposed to get if some of them are in vulnerable condition. The local administration – Union Parishads can play a vital role in this regard. They can be involved in distribution of benefits supervised by national NGOs (not local, since they are from the area, there is a chance of them being influenced) as well as provide useful and transparent information on what support Rohingyas get and what additional vulnerabilities Rohingyas have. Leaflets and other pertinent information dissemination materials and communication approaches should regularly be utilised with the locals indicating what services provided by the humanitarian aiders they can avail. Periodic meetings with community leaders can be held to review the status of understanding and misunderstanding, and the communities' recommendations on how to improve the services could be forwarded to the government and humanitarian actors at the local level.

One big gap is the lack of clear knowledge by the local communities about the camp situation. It was mentioned several times during the FGDs with members of host communities that they all think Rohingyas are living in comfort without paying anything in return. They think that Rohingyas are being spoilt and since they do not work, they have plenty of time to be engaged in 'anti-social' activities.

It could be prudent to organise periodic supervised visits of specific numbers of locals (women, men and adolescents) to the camps so that they get a clear picture of how the things are inside the camps. A mutual understanding of each other's position and grasp of overall situation may heal the differences. The misinformation and misreporting of Rohingyas involvement in 'anti-social' behaviours in various media reports, which are more often than not based on facts, have compounded the local's trust and generated 'Rohingya biasness' among communities.

Several Key Informants' echoed the same sentiments during their interviews. The Protection Sector Coordinator from UNHCR emphasised the benefits of engaging both the communities in livelihood



Consultation with Rohingya women in Baharchara, Teknaf

programmes. Providing them with relevant skill development training and seed funds to engage in IGAs can shift the discord into positive outcomes, which will progress towards transformative changes of conflict. FGDs with men and community leaders also revealed that building mutual trust is paramount to resolve conflict. They suggested that locals can provide certain

support, e.g. building sheds, latrines, selling consumables and other daily necessities, setting small convenient shops and so on; the Rohingyas can work as seasonal labourers, e.g. during harvesting or fishing, on mutually agreed wages²³. The general opinion from FGDs and KIIs were that opportunities to earn money will keep all concerned busy and less time to engage in harmful activities. Identification of common areas of challenges for designing appropriate strategic intervention, such as, GBV, human trafficking, drug trafficking and more could provide entry points for organisations yet to launch programmes in CXB.

An initiative to bring together members of host and Rohingya communities as a connecting factor can be the common celebration usually observed by both of the communities, such as, Eid or the fasting season uring Ramadan. Issue based cultural events – interactive theatre, film screening, musical event could be the beginning of creating bridge between Bangladeshis and Rohingyas. Witnessing ‘what actually happens’ and ‘how things are’²⁴ could open channels for communication. This will definitely assist in efforts for transformative changes towards social cohesion.

The learning curve will be steep and time consuming; however, two communities living in one not-too-large district for an extended period, perhaps for years, tend to lead to all sorts of challenges. The troubles usually start small and then it moves towards wider spaces causing unsurmountable harm and loss. The repatriation of Rohingyas looks to be a ‘may be’ in farthest future. Meanwhile every step should be taken to make the transition of Rohingyas being ‘guests for few days’ to ‘maybe co-inhabiting for the unforeseeable future’ and ensure the host communities are ready and welcoming to the changes to induce social cohesion and ultimate peace building. It might be good to slowly acknowledge that the return to homeland for the Rohingyas might be a distant reality for the future, so for the present and immediate future – peaceful co-existence is important.

7.3 Conflict with the Law

Rohingya camps are usually policed by armed forces and their movements are restricted. They are allowed to come out of the camps only in cases of health emergencies or if they have to appear in court. Rohingyas, however, are moving outside camps on regular basis – much easily before the barbed wire fences were erected. The resemblance in looks and language often makes it difficult to spot the difference between Bangladeshis and Rohingyas. This provides them with opportunities to mingle with locals, form relationships and engage in income earning activities, including illegal ones. Reports of armed conflict, kidnapping, rape, drug and human trafficking and so on are regularly

²³ FGD participants complained that they are losing job opportunities to Rohingyas, since the Rohingyas charge much less daily wages than the Bangladeshis.

²⁴ GBV is common in both communities – child marriage, domestic violence, sexual exploitation and more; dramas on these issues could depict helplessness and vulnerability of women in both of the communities, initiating a dialogue and understanding between the host and Rohingya communities

publicised on local and national Medias²⁵. This has created a culture of fear for the majority of Rohingyas, dividing them and sometimes bringing them as victims of the conflict and crime, by a handful of Rohingyas.

Scenario: Mr O, a pro-Rohingya local UP member was encountered and died during cross fire. The police allegedly found his link with yaba trafficking. The charges could not be proved even after about two years of his demise. On the other hand, the alleged leader of the Rohingya gang, very active inside the camp creating atrocities and havoc were killed during an interaction with APBN members. The group, however, is still very active in human smuggling – predominantly of Rohingya women smuggled to Malaysia in the pretence of arranged marriages.

The Night Watch Group organised a meeting with members of APBN to address issues of security inside the camp during the nightfall. Their concerns also included the possibility of spreading the armed conflict in the local communities. The group also discussed the absence of their own safety measures because they cannot carry weapons while making their usual rounds inside the camps. The APBN representative assured them that an armed officer would accompany them during their watch. An application has been sent to the CIC for final approval. The ball has started rolling. Everybody concerned is eagerly awaiting to bring peace, harmony and transformative change inside and the peripheries of the camp bases.

Rohingyas are no strangers to violence. Many small gangs have been formed under different political flags inside the camps, similar to the names used in Myanmar by some of the armed groups active there. They are all armed and usually engaged in ‘gang wars’ along with other crimes to ascertain power and authority over camp dwellers, mostly since 2020. Horrific incidents of abducting girls, as young as 10 years old, by cutting the tarpaulin shed covers and gang rape them is not uncommon²⁶. Recently (September 29, 2021) renowned Rohingya leader Mohibullah, 46, chair of the Arakan Rohingya Society for Peace and Human Rights (ARSPH), was shot and killed by unidentified gunmen in Kutupalong²⁷. Allegedly an underground Myanmar political faction is very active inside the camps and they are recruiting members regularly. During the FGDs with adolescent boys of registered camp this allegation was confirmed. They divulged that they fear to sleep in their ‘houses’ because they can be kidnapped by the vested groups and forcibly initiated into the group.

The Bangladesh Army attempts to provide all sorts of help to the CICs, including erecting the barbed wire fences around the campsites; BGB members have established checking points on the roads to-

²⁵ According to Al-Jazeera report on October 9, 2020 several people were killed and thousands fled in an turf war between criminal gangs. Police apprehended 12 suspects and stricter curfew was issued (<https://www.aljazeera.com/news/2020/10/9/several-killed-in-gang-war-at-rohingya-camps-in-bangladesh>)

²⁶ The CXB Sadar hospital One Stop Crisis Centre housed a number of young adolescents for physical and psychosocial counselling in 2018 when the team visited them for another assignment. Last heard, almost all of them are still awaiting justice.

²⁷ <https://www.hrw.org/news/2021/09/29/rohingya-leader-mohibullah-killed-bangladesh#>

and-from the camps; the CXB police station only intervene when serious crimes, such as, murder or rape ensue. Recently, APBN has been authorised for overall supervision of camp security issues. They have erected watch towers in specific spaces and are engaged in 24-7 monitoring, confirmed by the CXB APBN Senior Officer. Even with all the safety measures undertaken by the government, rampant violence, armed conflicts, killings and such are regular occurrences. There is also allegation that the law enforcing agencies are colluding with criminal groups and abetting the atrocities. Specific and stricter strategies to counter these criminal activities should be dealt with zero tolerance.

Majhis and Head Majhis are quintessentially the liaison between the Rohingyas living in the camps and the CIC or equivalent. They can positively play a role in influencing the connectors. Previously they were appointed by the Army, currently, however the CICs are responsible for appointing the majhis. They are all males and responsible to maintain semblance of peace inside the camps. They mediate, advice and look into matters leading to conflict. In other words, they have immense sense of power and authority over the camp dwellers. Majhis' involvement in any armed conflict between Rohingyas have not been reported – abetting or resisting. This could be a potential area for future interventions to consider in controlling at least the leadership of the armed groups; with majhis all-encompassing authority could be utilised to promoting peaceful and cohesive existence and positively influence connectors for peace.



The international and national NGOs providing different services should undertake awareness raising and information dissemination on perils of illegal activities as a priority. Forming block-wise groups – of women, men, adolescents, majhis, imams – to act as ‘watch dogs’ over the camps could be one such strategy. Strength in numbers – a motto will be most appropriate in this case. Alongside each group can be provided with leadership and communication capacity building trainings, so that they are equipped to deal with trickiest situations. The organisations responsible for these groups should form a common platform to monitor progress. This platform can later communicate their findings as well as strategies to counter camp violence with the ISCG; periodic reports can be shared with CICs and law enforcement agencies (Army, BGB and APBN). It is imperative to contain turf wars to bring in transformative changes and continuing social cohesion that can minimise the dividing factors within the communities.

Bullet that was found near the slain Rohingya leader Mr. Mahibullah [Source: community contacts of lead researcher]

There has been a number of attempts to ensure safe living environment inside the camps in the past. As the humanitarian workers are not allowed inside the camp after 4 in the evening, the on-goings during night time is shrouded with mystery. Watch groups with representatives from local administration, majhis and prominent host community leader, whose primary responsibilities were to patrol camps during night time to prevent conflict or pertinent atrocities. Forming such groups randomly, community consultation with all possible representations could provide new ideas as well as insights into priority security concerns. The CICs and all relevant law enforcing agencies (APBN, Army, BGB and local police) should be abreast with and support this initiative for it to be successful. To harmonise and accentuate security strategies for host communities, Ansar members can be vital in providing monitoring and supervising roles. Community watchdog groups with necessary protection can also play an important role in connecting the community members towards peace building.

7.4 Roles of Humanitarian Actors in Conflict Dynamics

Various UN agencies, national and local NGOs as well as various CSOs have been engaged in providing all sorts of humanitarian aids to nearly 1 million Rohingyas in CXB. More than one hundred national, international and local organisations provide shelter, food, health, psychosocial support, legal aid, livelihood, WASH and other relevant services. Recently the humanitarian aid agencies are providing 30% of their total budget to host communities through their local administration for various development projects after strong movements from the host communities against the unfairness regarding imbalance of benefits between Rohingyas and host communities dwellers. In recent years, the services for basic needs has added programmes envisioning Rohingya living in Bangladesh for an unforeseeable future, e.g. livelihood, skill and capacity building as well as leadership training programmes. But much of these efforts are not well known to the local communities, contributing as divider for peace building.

Scenario: Jago Nari Unnayan Shangstha (JNUS) is working in CXB since 2010. They work both in the host communities and inside the Rohingya camps. Their primary focus is to address gender inequality to promote women's empowerment through skill development, capacity building and leadership trainings. They were a part of the emergency health service provision for Rohingyas and partnered BLAST to raise and create legal awareness in both communities. Established a local NGO, JNUS has access to both communities and experience to contribute in attempted transformative changes by addressing conflict dynamics. They are also willing to work in partnership in enhancing chances of peace building and social cohesion.

The roles of humanitarian agencies in ensuring Rohingyas with basic and other needs are indisputable. Since the influx, various organisations are working inside the camps under the UN. They carry services directly to the beneficiaries and are maintaining regular liaison with Rohingyas through their front line workers, such as, paralegals, paramedics, WASH volunteers, teachers, health workers and so on. For example, BLAST a prominent legal aid and human rights organisation were one of the pioneers in introducing legal aid to Rohingya – who were completely ignorant of their legal rights in Bangladesh and how to access them. BLAST provided mobile clinics with lawyers to roam inside the camp as well as in host communities on prefixed dates so that the communities can share their legal problems for immediate if not adequate solutions.

Many organisations also formed groups of women and men to provide leadership as well capacity building trainings, disseminate information on issues on polygamy, dowry, reproductive and sexual health, GBV and many more. NGOs engaged in awareness raising produced communication materials, i.e. posters, leaflets, training manuals and so on. PROTTAYSHI established in 1983 recently spearheaded the project of involving women, men and youths in Ukhiya in IGA programmes like producing eco-friendly products such as, sandals, toothbrushes, combs, mats and more using

bamboo as the main material. Their aim is to create new market inside the camps to sell these products directly by the producers to ensure getting the right price. This could also improve communication between the two communities in the long run.

SHED is a CXB based organisation established in 1989 to improve lives, livelihoods and skills of poor people. They have WASH programmes in both of the communities alongside livelihood, health and food security programmes. Currently they are engaged in providing WASH facilities in host communities without sanitary latrines. MUKTI another CXB based NGOs has long working experience in the camps as well as in host communities. MUKTI provides agriculture based training – technical training in farming a specific crop or vegetable in host areas adjacent to campsites. Alongside technical training, they also provide grants for small business focusing on the skills and equipment essential for the endeavour. Since livelihood programmes are discouraged inside the camps²⁸, MUKTI has provided technical training to their Rohingya groups on how to grow vegetables on the roof of their sheds as well as provided necessary seeds, equipment and pesticides for the roof gardens. The Rohingyas sometimes sell their produce to fellow camp dwellers. In 2019, six projects of MUKTI in Teknaf were suspended due to the allegation that they have supplied Rohingyas with weapons. The ED of MUKTI later clarified that the ‘sharp objects’ found were meant for agricultural activities rather than be used as weapons²⁹.

The humanitarian and development efforts of for both communities by these NGOs are not well



understood in terms of their scale and importance across Ukhiya and Teknaf. Small efforts for creating better livelihood for local communities go unnoticed and unacknowledged. Many of the interviewees have reiterated that ensuring long-lasting livelihood opportunities are definitely the way forward to maintain peaceful coexistence between both of the

communities and positively influence the connectors.

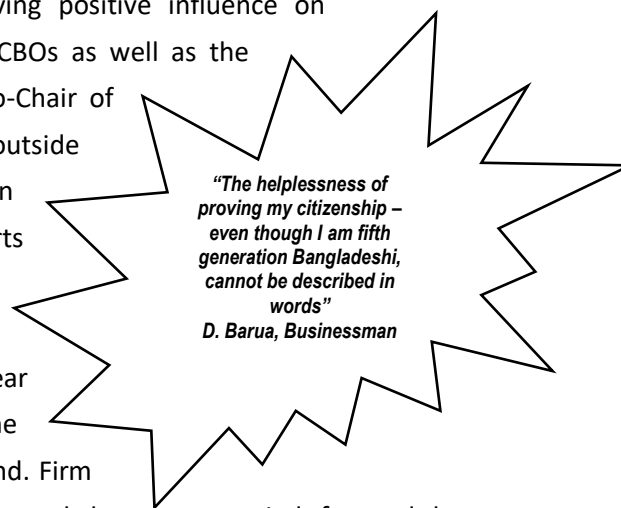
However, if the government is reluctant, initiating livelihood programmes inside the camps may pose problems. Many of these NGOs have taken various action to address the conflict dynamic in and outside of the camps. Informal dialogues with community leaders (individually), local administration

²⁸ RRRC also confirmed this that livelihood programmes are not encouraged as a way for Rohingyas to earn money. He further elaborated that it is difficult for Rohingyas to keep money safely inside their sheds because mostly live in shared accommodation and anybody owning money can be targeted and violence can ensue.

²⁹ <https://www.dhakatribune.com/bangladesh/nation/2019/08/30/ngo-mukti-activities-suspended-in-cox-s-bazar>

as well as raising awareness on pitfalls of living in conflicts with both of the communities members have taken place. The UN Women, in collaboration with Ain o Shalish Kendra (ASK) and JNUS have initiated a project to contributing to transforming social, economic, cultural and gender norms through training young women to bring in transformative change and social cohesion³⁰. ED of MUKTI mentioned in his interview that for a more futuristic effort, youths in both communities should be involved in addressing conflict dynamic. He shared that a significant number of youths (nearly 40% of the host and Rohingya communities) are sitting idle without any purpose or prospect of a successful future. To divert their frustration into positivity, providing leadership and capacity building training on specific vocational aspiration can make them useful and more confident of a productive future. This will also create local entrepreneurship which will contribute in modifying local economic environment for the camp dwellers.

Another way forward in reducing ‘tension level’ by having positive influence on connectors for peace should involve capacity building of CBOs as well as the members of local administration was suggested by the Co-Chair of CCNF. The CBOs and UPs are the closest links between the outside humanitarian efforts and the target beneficiaries. Rather than funding temporary projects for specific periods of time, efforts should be given to develop skills of community based institutions, such as CBOs and UP; they will always be within the communities (host and Rohingya) and will not disappear after the project is completed. The efforts, particularly in the areas of conflict dynamic and its resolution is not time-bound. Firm commitment and inclination to continue as long as it takes can only be carried forward by community based organisations or local authorities. This will also make periodic monitoring and adequate adjustments in strategic priorities possible.



“The helplessness of proving my citizenship – even though I am fifth generation Bangladeshi, cannot be described in words”
D. Barua, Businessman

Conflict analysis including and analysis of connectors and dividers to identify possibilities for transformative changes is a continuous process; the trends change and priorities shifted constantly. Conflict dynamics in CXB in 2018 is not the same as in 2021. To keep the programmes and strategies relevant, regular research or studies need to be undertaken. Equipped to deal with any unforeseeable situations, initiatives to establish peace and social cohesion will keep the momentum for better days. Theoretical analysis of good practices in other parts of the world will always enrich strategies for conflict analysis.

7.5 Roles the Organisations’ Groups play in Conflict Resolutions

³⁰ <https://reliefweb.int/report/bangladesh/impact-story-young-women-lead-peacebuilding-efforts-rohingya-community-cox-s-bazar>

The modus operandi for various organisations working inside the camps and in host areas are preliminary dependent of forming groups – women, men, adolescents and community leaders. Forming groups, providing them with capacity building and skill developing opportunities, in some cases small grants for income generating activities assist in organisations reaching their goals – eradicating poverty and people’s empowerment. The chosen areas of interventions may vary from organisation to organisation, the ultimate goal is to transfer power to marginal people for long lasting impact and people to be responsible to continue with the programmes’ success for their own development. Community groups and particularly their leaders and role models can influence the forces of peace for strengthening the connectors.

Scenario: BLAST, Naripokkho and JNUS implemented a project titled SHEBA to provide legal aid as well as raising awareness on rights related issues for both host communities and Rohingya camps. The two-year project formed women’s groups inside the camp and in host communities. The Self Help Groups (SHG) in host communities were supervised by JNUS, while the Survivors’ Groups (SG) inside the camps were looked after by members of Durbar Network – an activists network under Naripokkho’s umbrella. BLAST provided legal support through mobile clinics, lawyers, communication materials, mediation, court cases (if needed), staff trainings and information dissemination activities. SHEBA’s primary focus was on GBV related complaints and available legal services to address them.

United in groups often provides that extra strength women need to address violence, abuse, exploitation, their rights and other pertinent issues relevant for establishing women’s empowerment and control over their lives. CXB is religiously conservative area and women’s roles and responsibilities are perceived through religion based customary lenses. Polygamy, dowry related violence, domestic violence, child marriages are prevalent along with rigid social behaviour is expected from women. Adding Rohingyas’ conservative outlooks and patriarchal attitudes to the equation, complicated and worsen women’s on-going struggles.



Consultation with Rohingya women's group in Ukhiya

It took time and effort by various organisations to highlight women’s plights in both of the communities and bring them out in the open. Forming groups to create a sense of togetherness (like the overused euphemism, “we are in this together”) provided the women with the security blanket that there are people to get their back. Learning new skills and opportunities to utilise those skills for betterment of their

familial lives are welcomed easily in poverty stricken communities. Women acquiring leadership,

communication and leadership skills to watch over those who are too weak or deprived to access their rights and justice. Often such groups play the roles of watchdog to safeguard fellow survivors.

The SHG and SG groups have plethora of success stories; combating child marriages, eve teasing, stopping polygamous marriages are not uncommon anymore. SHEBA project provided capacity building training alongside pertinent information to raise awareness on women's rights – physical, emotional, economic, social as well as cultural.

A renowned human rights activist stated that women's collective power could be very useful in addressing conflicts. Identifying common issues³¹ can be the very beginning. The very nature of the interactive performance will give them opportunities to understand each other's plights. Common places to share 'stories', jointly participated events – cultural and/or social – will pave the way towards if not completely resolving, but initiating efforts towards social cohesion. Women play significant roles in peace building. There are obvious reasons why women are important to the peace building process. For example, they constitute half of every community and are also the central caretakers of families and everyone is affected when they are excluded from peace building³². During the influx in 2017, more women took refuge in Bangladesh, many of whom were widows, parentless or detached from husbands who could not come.

It would also be possible to identify people who are in enablers of connector to influence forces for peace and social cohesion and counter efforts against peace. This will help organisations working on conflict resolution for transformative changes to promote social cohesion to avoid armed conflicts



and violence to strategize how to bring people from all opposing ideologies under one roof. Appropriate action plans can be developed, activities to influence and advocate positive changes and liaison with the government for their support can be rolled out.

CBOs along with community leaders in host communities can play a vital role in supporting women's groups in undertaking programmes to induce social

Adolescent boys in host community consultation, Ratnapalong, Ukhiya

³¹ GBV, trafficking for sexual exploitation, dowry related as well as domestic violence and many more take place in both the communities in dangerous frequency. The trials, terrors and stigma attached to the survivors are similar. Their shared grievances will encourage them to step towards building peace.

³² The Role of Women in Conflict Resolution and Peace Building, Damilola Agbajobi, 2010 (<https://gsdrc.org/document-library/the-role-of-women-in-conflict-resolution-and-peacebuilding/>)

cohesion. Supporting and enabling programmes to address issues of conflict for resolution will be the value added factors to strengthen the groups. Joint initiatives by the women's groups and community leaders in advocacy, monitoring, mediation in case of disputes and more would be important for building peace.

Initiatives should be taken to appoint women majhis and even some head majhis in the camps. They will provide assurance for women survivors of violence to confide in them to seek justice. The community leaders, such as, majhis, imams, teachers can work alongside women groups to safeguard the camps and its dwellers. Leadership, networking, communication and negotiation skills development training for members of the women's groups in both of the communities are strongly recommended. These will provide the women with necessary skill in resolving conflict and bring in transformative changes as drivers and forces for peace building.

8. RECOMMENDATIONS: POTENTIAL ENTRY POINTS

Following are the practical, pragmatic and doable recommendations based on the background review and field findings as well as an analysis of the connectors and dividers towards peace building:

For development partners, international and national NGOs

- Undertake regular, coordinated and gender responsive conflict analysis in CXB and constantly keep relevant protection entities both within ISCG and the government informed with recommendations based on the analysis
- Greater comparative analysis of conflict dynamics within the Rohingya camps and outside in CXB to identify common grounds for solidarity and common approach for transformative change towards social cohesion over a period of time³³. For instance, manifestation of GBV is sometimes similar for Rohingya communities and local communities.
- Prioritise consensus building in taking a differentiated but harmonised approach to transformative changes of the conflict dynamics between host and Rohingya communities and also within the Rohingya communities

³³ For instance, *Dynamics of Micro Conflict and the Prospects of Conflict Transformation in Rural Bangladesh*, Zahid Ul Arefin Chowdhury, NETZ partnership for Development and justice – is a good starting reference point

- All projects should include gender and conflict sensitive analysis and interventions. If necessary, build capacities of implementing agencies on gender and conflict sensitivity
- Ensure to include voices of local and Rohingya community inclusive of voices from youth and women in efforts for social cohesion. Promote and develop the capacity of women and youth leadership for conflict transformation



- Undertake long term process to bring together and/or connect (including with technology) women from host and Rohingya communities on common issues of concern including on GBV
- Awareness and capacity building with the local government representatives around conflict dynamics between Rohingya and host communities in order to be able to initiate and facilitate dialogue between the two communities and move towards transformative change
- Review and update existing coordination mechanism that is more gender sensitive and conflict responsive. This should also include strengthening coordination of social cohesion actors, the protection, GBV and child protection sectors and the gender sector
- Consolidate a referral guide and SOP for all relevant stakeholders to have common understanding, trust and appreciation on complementary roles and capacities in Rohingya response
- Build women-only community safety groups in both host and local communities
- In line with Grand Bargain commitments, ensure greater role of national and local NGOs to access funds and implement programmes including interventions for transformative changes of conflict
- Develop and promote a shared localisation strategy and a whole of society approach in Rohingya response
- Increase self-reliance of Rohingyas with a particular focus on youth and women by providing them with skills and market linkages for livelihood options. This can be both within the camps as well as connected to local markets outside the camps through local Bangladeshi contacts. There should also be further research into economic analysis to understand and utilise the camp economy on the lives of different demography both within and outside the camps
- Use of interactive approaches like theatre and music, digital media, printed visual tools on the commonalities of host and Rohingya communities and ways as well as advantages of conflict

Adolescent consultation in host community, Palingkhali union, Ukhiya

transformation. Such approaches and tools should be open to use by CBOs, local NGOs, Union Parishads and community groups including women and children's groups.

- Include psychosocial support and trauma healing within existing humanitarian and development response in CXB for survivors of conflict and violence including GBV

For advocacy with the government

- Improve camp security with both technology and human surveillance, engage to disarm the armed groups, apprehend human and drug trafficking, search and rescue victims of violence including GBV. They should also assist community resilience and undertake consultations periodically on the protection of the camp and nearby host communities
- Complement security and justice measures with gender sensitive social cohesion programmes for both local and Rohingya communities
- National policy framework on Rohingyas should include transformative conflict management, social cohesion, peace building and the role of youth and women, both intra and inter communities of Rohingya and host communities. This should apply for both mainland camps in CXB and also in remote Bhashanchar Island
- Shift the narrow focus from temporary measures for immediate or near-future repatriation to longer term interventions and resource mobilisation for a prolonged crisis
- Allow to expand education and livelihood opportunities for the camps, even if these are within the camps. Coordinate with humanitarian actors, development partners, NGOs and the private sector to scale up education and livelihood opportunities for the Rohingyas
- Ensure a whole of government approach in transformative conflict management, in particular with a greater coordination of National Task Force led by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, National Committee on Coordination, Management and Law and Order led by the Ministry of Home Affairs, Ministry of Disaster Management and Relief including with the office of the RRRC, the office of the Deputy Commissioner, UNOs of Ukhiya and Teknaf and the relevant Union Parishad representatives
- Supplement the camp fencing with multiple entry and exit points with identity verification checkpoints. This can be supplemented by notification of closing times of these exit-entry points.
- Greater coordination with humanitarian actors and development community in responding to protection and conflict issues with sustainable interventions

9. CONCLUSION

Rohingyas are stark realities in Bangladesh. There is no assurance how or when they can be repatriated in a safe and secured Myanmar. Bangladesh government and humanitarian agencies have been generously sheltering and providing essential services for these stateless people. Residents of the host communities have also shown their goodness by sharing the meagre resources with the Rohingyas. The harmony is gradually being destroyed as the refugee crisis become protracted. Accommodating such a huge number of people in an already crowded space has snapped the tethered balance. Some are being relocated to Bhashan Char, a remote island in a different district (Noakhali), but that will not necessarily pave the way for easing the tensions within the Rohingyas and with them and the local communities.

Will Rohingyas go back or will they stay here forever? With the uncertainty looming ahead, time has come to address the conflict dynamics and find ways not only to address them, but to identify solutions for long-term and positive transformative changes – for the greater good of the host communities' members and the Rohingyas. Challenges in Bangladesh are not a unique phenomenon – there are lessons from other parts of the world that can show a useful path for conflict transformation, together with the commitment and experience of all the stakeholders. The connectors for peace can be very realistic and bring even if partial success. Strengthening the connectors can be useful for transformative peace building. The voice of the host and Rohingya community will of course need to be heard in the process.

Annex-I

LIST OF FGD PARTICIPANTS

Host Community, Palongkhali	
S/No.	Community Leaders
1.	Shafiullah Miah, Imam
2.	Abul Hossain, Businessman
3.	Abdul Hakim, Moulvi
4.	Abul Kalam, Businessman
5.	Nur Jafar, Employee
6.	Kala Miah, Farmer
7.	Abdul Mabud, Community Leader
8.	Tofail Islam, Teacher
9.	Abdul Halim, Teacher

Host Community, Palongkhali	
S/No.	Adolescents (Students)
1.	Afnal Hassan
2.	Mohammad Mobarak
3.	Alauddin Majid
4.	Yasmin Akhter
5.	Hosne Ara Akhter
6.	Sadia Akhter
7.	Rajuma Akhter
8.	Maimuna Akhter
9.	Jamila Begum
10.	Anisul Islam

Host Community, Palongkhali	
S/No.	Women
1.	Kohinoor Akhter
2.	Khadija Begum
3.	Rafia Akhter
4.	Nurmohol Begum
5.	Monowara Begum
6.	Arefa Begum
7.	Mosammat Rekha

Host Community, Palongkhali	
S/No.	Adolescents (Students)
1.	Afnal Hassan
2.	Mohammad Mobarak
3.	Alauddin Majid
4.	Yasmin Akhter
5.	Hosne Ara Akhter
6.	Sadia Akhter
7.	Rajuma Akhter
8.	Maimuna Akhter
9.	Jamila Begum
10.	Anisul Islam

Host Community, Palongkhali	
S/No.	Men
1.	Mohammad Alam
2.	Nizam Uddin

Rohingya Camp 2W, Ukhiya	
S/No.	Women
1.	Rohima Khatun
2.	Fatema Khatun

3.	Mohammad Mamun
4.	Jamshed
5.	Sonu Alam
6.	Enayetur Rahman
7.	Nurul Alam

3.	Rokiya
4.	Anwara
5.	Rasheda Begum
6.	Roshida Begum
7.	Zahida Begum
8.	Rokaiya

Rohingya Camp 2W, Ukhiya	
S/No.	Men
1.	Rafiqul Kader
2.	Mohammad Suleman
3.	Mohammad Faisal
4.	Abul Kalam Azad
5.	Md. Younes
6.	Syed Nur

Rohingya Camp 2W, Ukhiya	
S/No.	Imams
1.	Mohammad Aiyub
2.	Nurul Absar
3.	Mohammad Siddik
4.	Sayad Amin
5.	Idris

Rohingya Camp 2W, Ukhiya	
S/No.	Adolescent Girls
1.	Rehena
2.	Shabnur Moni
3.	Bibijan
4.	Tahmina Akhter
5.	Saika

Rohingya Camp 23, Teknaf	
S/No.	Women
1.	Sakhina 1
2.	Sakhina 2
3.	Monowara
4.	Morjina
5.	Setara

Rohingya Camp 23, Teknaf	
S/No.	Men
1.	Mohammad Harun
2.	Amanullah
3.	Imam Hossain
4.	Mohammad Faisal
5.	Nezamuddin
6.	Jan-E-Alam
7.	Nurul Amin

Rohingya Camp 2W, Ukhiya	
S/No.	Adolescent Girls
1.	Senowara
2.	Shohida
3.	Somina
4.	Hazera
5.	Shamina
6.	Khaleda
7.	Hosne Ara

Host Community, Teknaf	
S/No.	Men
1.	Kulsuma
2.	Monowara
3.	Tayeba
4.	Razia
5.	Hazera Akhter
6.	Anwara
7.	Yasmin

Rohingya Camp 2, Ukhiya	
S/No.	Majhis (Registered Camp)
1.	Shirajul Mostofa
2.	Mohammad Nur
3.	Nur Hossain
4.	Mohammad Tayeb

Host Community, Rotnapalong	
S/No.	Community Leaders
1.	Mozammel Hoque
2.	Md. Anwarul Islam
3.	Mohammad Younus
4.	Mostaq Ahmed
5.	Hazera Akhter
6.	Akkas Miah
7.	Jalal Uddin
Host Community, Rotnapalong	
S/No.	Adolescent (mixed group)
1.	Hosne Ara
2.	Sabina Akhter
3.	Khairul Haque
4.	Anwar Islam
5.	Munna Barua
6.	Moon Barua
7.	Jishu Panna Barua

Rohingya Camp 2, Ukhiya	
S/No.	Adolescent Boys (Registered Camp)
1.	Mohammad Alam
2.	Riyazul Alam
3.	Nurul Amin
4.	Mohammad Hamid
5.	Mohammad Shakil
6.	Sattar Islam

Host Community, Rotnapalong	
S/No.	Men
1.	Danu Barua, Businessman
2.	Nurul Alam, Farmer
3.	Dipon Barua, Businessman
4.	Raquib Uddin, Disabled
5.	Nurul Alam, Farmer
6.	Sunil Barua, Farmer
7.	Sushil Barua, Farmer
Host Community, Rotnapalong	
S/No.	Women
1.	Zino Akhter
2.	Sadiya
3.	Pelo Ara
4.	Rojina Akhter
5.	Nishi Bala Barua
6.	Nilima Barua
7.	Delowara Begum

Annex-II

LIST OF KEY INFORMANTS

S/No.	Names	Positions	Contact Details	Category
1.	Shah Rezwan Hayat	RRRC	034163513 contact@rrrc.gov.bd	GOB
2.	Md. Shamsud Douza	Additional RRRC	01847-466821 addlrrrc1@rrrc.gov.bd	GOB
3.	Meghna Guha Thakurta	ED, RIB	meghna.guhathakurta@gmail.com	Researcher, Activist
4.	Md. Nur Khan	General Secretary, ASK	01714-025179 liton61@yahoo.co.uk	Human Rights Investigator
5.	Subrata K. Chakrabarty	Livelihood and Economic Inclusion Officer	chakraba@unhcr.org	UNHCR
6.	Haruno Nakashiba (UNCHR)	Sector Coordinator, Protection	01700-705746 nakashib@unhcr.org	UNHCR
7.	Abu Morshed Chowdhury (PHALS)	Co-chair, CCNF	01811-624610 pressclubukhiya@gmail.com	National NGO platform
8.	Bimol Chandra Dey Sarker	Executive Director, Mukti	01711-825068 mukticox@yahoo.com	CXB based NGOs
9.	Sheuly Sharma	ED, JNUS	01823-929075 info@jagonariunnayon.com	CXB based NGOs
10.		APBN Senior Officer, Ukhiya		Law Enforcement Authority

Note: Representative of ISCG were contacted several times, but were not available to speak.

KII QUESTIONNAIRE

1. Key dynamics of conflict in CXB currently – between Rohingya communities and with host communities?
2. Key challenges of Rohingya community in conflict with the law and law enforcing agencies?
3. Could you provide any example of successful efforts to peacefully transform Rohingya-Rohingya and Rohingya-host community conflicts?
4. What has worked and can be replicated to promote peace among and between communities?
5. What has not worked and can be done differently to change the conflicting situations?
6. Who helped in efforts to non-violent conflict transformation? Who thwarted the efforts?
7. What is the role of local/national women's groups/networks in conflict dynamics and resolution?
8. What has been or could be the role of humanitarian agencies in conflict transformation in CXB?
Any challenges that you see?
9. What should be the entry point to focus on, which target group and what kind of partnership for a new programme intervention that will add value to existing efforts?

Annex IV

BRIEF PROFILE OF CHAKRAYAN

CHAKRAYAN is an emerging consultancy service registered in Bangladesh in 2019. It has three core team members who are dedicated to support processes in the human development and communication sector. Other experts are taken on board according to the nature of the assignment. CHAKRAYAN is led by Asif Munier, an expert on migration, displacement and development communication in Bangladesh. The other core members are Deena Nargis and Sarwar Mohsin, bringing in expertise on programme development, documentation, gender-mainstreaming and development communication.

CHAKRAYAN and its team is about setting things in motion to complete a process. It is almost like a cycle of life in motion that is ultimately completed when there is a convergence of ideas, needs, action and change. The core members combine their thoughts and expertise, including the inclusion of relevant experts and field teams for short term and whenever needed.

CHAKRAYAN aims to deliver the followings;

- Conceptualization, strategizing and evaluation of projects;
- Understand the needs of an organisation to analyse its efforts and approach of delivery of services;
- Guide projects and programmes to design its future direction;
- Develop ideas for communication campaigns and products for delivering communication strategies and tools; and
- Hands on experience in understanding community and people's perceptions and facilitating participatory consultations.

CHAKRAYAN also provides interpretation and translation services – both in English and Bengali as well as organising workshops – from the beginning with designing the workshop till the end with writing the process and output reports. CHAKRAYAN has trained facilitators.

Profile of the lead researcher and team leader Asif Munier

Development professional, theatre activist and a human rights activist. Expertise in Migration, Displacement and Development Communication. MA from University of Dhaka (1992) and Institute of Development Studies, University of Sussex, UK (2012).

More than 28 years of experience in the development sector in Bangladesh, starting with national NGOs, through international NGOs and development partners, finally landing with UN agencies. Areas of professional experience and interest are therefore in Migration, displaced population, Rights Based Approaches, facilitation of events and processes, community assessments, Strategic guidance and conceptualization of tools for development communication. For over 20 years Asif also has been promoting, practicing and teaching drama students on Theatre for Development.

Between 2014 and 2016 Asif had been the National Programme Officer, Coordination for International Organization for Migration in Cox's Bazar. Since, going freelance from the last quarter of 2016, he continues to be an analyst on the Rohingya issues for the national media, seminars and as guest speaker at the National Defence College in Mirpur. He has also been involved with assessments related to the

Rohingya related interventions, including the preparatory assessments for the UNDP programme in Cox's Bazar³⁴.

³⁴ <https://www.bd.undp.org/content/bangladesh/en/home/projects/community-recovery-and-resilience-project0.html>