

Landslide threat looms over Rohingya camps

Thursday 5 April 2018, by [The Financial Express](#) (Date first published: 3 April 2018).

\$882m needed to deal with the situation from Sept to June: CPD

Experts and NGO activists on April 1st expressed apprehension that worst humanitarian disaster might hit the Rohingya refugee camps in the form of landslide in the upcoming monsoon.

At an international conference held at Nabab Nawab Ali Chowdhury Senate Bhaban of Dhaka University, they called upon the government, UN (United Nations), development partners and other stakeholders to immediately relocate the refugees to a habitable place before the rainy season.

They expressed the fear at a two-day long conference on “The Rohingya Refugee Crisis: Towards Sustainable Solutions”, because the camps were urgently built on the hills in Ukhia upazila of Cox’s Bazar by cutting down trees and other plants, making them vulnerable to mudslide.

Bangladeshi think-tank Centre for Policy Dialogue (CPD) made a guesstimate on the economic cost of the crisis and said a fund of \$882 million will be required from September, 2017 to June, 2018 to deal with the situation.

But the country has so far received \$322 million, which is 36.50 per cent of the required fund.

Moderating the second session on “Humanitarian Response and Economic Costs, Ambassador Farooq Sobhan said over 5,000 acres of land are currently occupied by over 1.0 million Rohingya people who have fled into Bangladesh to avert brutal military crackdown since August, 2017.” And they took shelter in hills of Teknaf through deforestation, which is a reason for possible landslide during monsoon. We need to relocate them to secure and safe place," he said.

Giving a presentation on economic costs of the problem, Dr. Fahmida Khatun of the CPD said global aid groups pledged \$434 million of fund urgently needed in response to Rohingya humanitarian crisis for six months since September, 2017.

But only 74.4 per cent (\$322m) of the fund was received till March, 25, 2018.

To meet the future requirement to deal with the challenges, she said the United Nations and the Bangladesh government under a Joint Response Plan (JRP) prepared a plan to provide an assistance of \$950 million to the Rohingya refugees and the vulnerable locals in Cox’s Bazar for 10 months until coming December.

“In November last, we made a calculation of \$882 million that would be needed for them from September last to June, 2018,” she said.

On environmental aspects, she said land degradation, deforestation, loss of drinking water and waste management were the most critical environmental impacts because natural calamities often hit the area.

About environmental loss, she said around 6,000 acres of land was deforested, which is worth Tk

7.42 billion or \$86.7 million.

Country Director of ActionAid Bangladesh Farah Kabir said Bangladesh became a place of hosting the largest number of refugees of the world, making it very difficult for the densely populated small country to handle.

She said there was a shift of mindset recently observed among the Rohingya people because they want to work, earn and get education instead of going back to their homeland in fear of security.

“We need to ensure greater investment in response to humanitarian crisis. We’re looking at long term support. We need to uphold all the commitments and we need to create a platform for engagement and participation of the refugees at various levels to help them recover from the trauma,” she said.

They, at the same time, also urged the government not to relocate the hopeless community to a place which is vulnerable to natural disaster.

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