

Bangladesh: Rohingya Crisis : The Picture Of Fund Crisis And Its Impacts

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Years after years pass by. A new year arrives, but does it bring any changes to the distress and vulnerability of the world's most persecuted refugees around the world ? After the last Rohingya refugee influx into Bangladesh on August 25, 2017, an estimated 745,000 Rohingyas fled from Myanmar and took shelter in 34 refugee camps in Cox's Bazar district. Now Bangladesh hosts over 1.1 million registered Rohingya refugees, with many more unregistered. Since the influx of refugees, Bangladesh as well as international humanitarian organizations have been taking care of them.

To provide humanitarian assistance to the Rohingya refugees, huge amounts of funding are needed every year. Basic humanitarian needs are increasing, whereas funding is decreasing gradually, which raises eyebrows in Bangladesh. The required funding is basically met by donor countries and international humanitarian aid agencies through International Donor Conferences, usually participated in by the United States, the United Kingdom, the European Union (EU), and the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR), where the UN refugee agency leads the application and mediation processes.

In the conferences, the UN calls for international humanitarian assistance for the Rohingya on the basis of a plan that is named the "Joint Response Plan" (JRP) for Rohingya. Every year, the plan is formulated by UN agencies and NGOs working in Bangladesh. But Bangladesh's economy is burdened with an estimated US \$1.21 billion annually to maintain these refugees.

The JRP has been raising and managing funds for the Rohingya refugees since 2017. So far, donors have generously contributed over \$2.43 billion.

FUNDS MANAGED UNDER JRP (2017-2022) :

Year	Requirement	Funded	Funding Shortfall
2017 (Sep. - Feb 18)	\$434.1M	\$317M	27.0%
2018 (Mar 18 - Dec.)	\$951M	\$655M	31.0%
2019	\$920M	\$699M	24.0%
2020	\$1058M	\$629M	40.5%
2021	\$943M	\$678.5M	28.1%
2022	\$881.0M	\$433.1M	50.8%

However, from 2020 on, the shortage of funds is increasing year over year, which indicates that the attention of international donors for aid to the Rohingya is decreasing and will ultimately create financial pressure on Bangladesh. International fund collection for Rohingyas decreased from 72.9% of last year to 44.5% this year (as of December 2022), reflecting a worrying trend of diminishing

global concern over the issue.

Like the Rohingya crisis, there are several humanitarian crises going on around the world. As a result, the UN is developing JRPs for Afghanistan, Burkina Faso, and Burundi, as well as many other humanitarian response plans, in order to raise funds for them. The Rohingya crisis persisted due to the delay in repatriation. Bangladesh faces potential financial pressures as international aid to the Rohingyas is gradually declining. It is forecast that international aid to the Rohingya will continue to decline in the coming years. Against such backdrops, it is really pertinent to understand the implications of fund shortages on the host country, Bangladesh.

ECONOMIC COST

With an open eye, the monetary burden of sheltering Rohingyas in light of the growing fund crisis is easily understandable. Along with the direct economic cost, Bangladesh has to spend a lot on the workforce needed to manage the Rohingya refugees. The country has already spent BDT 1 billion (more than US 90 million) for the installation of a simple barbed-wire fence and US \$380.31 million to prepare Bhasan Char (under Ashrayan Project-3) for temporarily relocating one-tenth of the approximately 1 million Rohingyas living in the Cox's Bazar camps.

Donors are now not in a position to donate after the coronavirus pandemic hit the world. On the other hand, due to ongoing international humanitarian crises, funding is being diverted to them. Many humanitarian crises are expected to emerge in the coming years, diverting international attention away from the Rohingya crisis. So, Bangladesh is now under tremendous pressure to bear the economic cost of the Rohingya crisis.

RISING CRIMINALITIES

Due to a lack of proper surveillance and care, the Rohingya people are getting severely involved in human trafficking, extremism, drug trafficking, and violence, creating unrest in the region. According to law enforcement agencies, approximately 80% of Yaba enters Bangladesh through the Bangladesh-Myanmar border. Most shockingly, about 70% of these Yaba tablets are initially kept in the Rohingya camps before being dispersed throughout the nation via different mechanisms.

Crimes like extortion by Rohingya gangs in the camps and conflicts over power between different Rohingya groups are reportedly on the rise in recent days, as can be evidenced by the killing of Mohib Ullah, other Majhis (Rohingya leaders), and common Rohingya people. The Bangladesh Police have started "Operation Root Out" in the Rohingya refugee camps due to the rising criminalities. Since July 2022, more than 20 Rohingyas have been slain, the majority of them community leaders who reside in the camps. According to reports, more than 900 Rohingya insurgents and criminals have been arrested from these camps recently.

Due to the fund shortfall, Rohingyas are coming out of the camps and taking risky sea journeys to Malaysia or Indonesia, which have also increased in recent times. The number of people leaving the camps has significantly increased, according to rights organizations, rising from 500 last year to an estimated 2,400 this year. According to the UN, the potential sinking of a boat with 180 Rohingya Muslims on board in recent weeks could make 2022 one of the most deadly years in almost a decade.

HOST VS. ROHINGYA GRIEVANCES

Resources are limited, and host communities are sharing their resources with the Rohingya refugees. With the passing of time, the sympathetic attitude of the locals is turning towards grievances and raising social unrest that may lead to conflict between the host community and the

refugees. The UN and many other international organizations have taken steps to encourage social cohesion in order to guarantee peaceful coexistence and provide relief assistance to the host communities as well. However, with the rising uncertainties over repatriation and the immense fund shortage, the host vs. Rohingya dichotomy will be one of the prime concerns. No one is certain when the Rohingya will begin to be repatriated, despite numerous attempts. In addition, the most recent military coup has made it harder to resolve the crisis.

For the residents of the host community, the presence of almost a million Rohingya refugees in Ukhiya and Teknaf was a significant demographic “shock.” Displacement is frequently linked to social unrest, conflict, resentment, and social disintegration.

ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACTS

Due to the concentration of Rohingya in Cox’s Bazar, 3,500 acres of the total 2,092,016 acres of forest land have already been lost. It amounts to a loss of 1.67 percent of the total forest area of Cox’s Bazar. Besides, to meet the wood fuel demand for cooking, the FDMNs are consuming a huge amount of firewood from the forests. Ultimately, the deforestation is contributing to the imbalance in biodiversity, frequent landslides, and groundwater depletion and contamination. If the fund shortfall increases, it will surely worsen the environmental impacts, both directly and indirectly.

Bangladesh, as one of the world’s most populous countries, requires robust and sustained international support to address the mounting fund shortage for the distress until a dramatic shift toward repatriation to their homeland occurs.

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