

# Chapter 8

## Rohingya Refugee Crisis in Cox's Bazar: A Great Humanitarian Challenge

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### ABSTRACT

*About one million Rohingya Muslim minority people fled from their home on 25 August 2017 due to the recent violence in the Rakhine State of Myanmar and entered Bangladesh, a neighboring country. Many of them were the vulnerable people with 58% refugees under 18 children, 67% female, and 9% infants below one year. This was a great humanitarian challenge for the Government of Bangladesh and the local community. The mass influx of refugees caused a major humanitarian emergency, and the majority were reliant on humanitarian assistance including shelter, food, healthcare, clean water, sanitation, education, nutrition, safety, and security. They were given accommodation, food, emergency aids, etc. upon arrival, and finally, 890,276 Rohingya refugees settled in 34 refugee camps in Cox's Bazar and Teknaf area. Many houses, schools, shops, hospitals, and other service centers were built day by day in the camp area. Children are getting vaccines for different diseases and are going to learning centers for education. Still, there are several challenges for better management.*

### INTRODUCTION

Bangladesh, situated between 20°34 North to 26°38 North latitude and from 88°01 East to 92°41 East longitude, is a densely populated country with a population of 170 million in 147,570 square kilometers. It is mainly an agricultural country. Although the economy primarily depends on agriculture, small industries, for example garments, shrimp industry, leather are developing and contributing to the Gross Domestic Product (GDP) of the country. Bangladesh is fighting with natural disasters such as cyclones,

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tornados, floods, monsoons and heavy rain, and is also vulnerable to climate change. The cultivable land is decreasing day by day due to these natural disasters and urbanization. In order to meet the excess requirements of food supply for a huge population, a large amount of pesticides and fertilizers are being used in crop cultivation. Because of the climatic condition of Bangladesh, there is no other alternative than the use of pesticides. Rice, pulses, lentils, grains and vegetables grow naturally and meet the supply of local needs. Fish and chicken are the main protein supply of the country. But a large number of chemicals including antibiotics are also used in fish culture, chicken and beef farming. Pesticides and fertilizers are usually discharged in the water body from the agricultural fields. Discharge of industrial effluents, tannery waste, fuels and surfactants in the river, lakes and canals also contaminate water bodies. Heavy metals, toxic chemicals, and their ions (phosphate, nitrate) reduce the water quality and, hence freshwater fishes and aquatic organisms are in danger.

Principal Administrative units in Bangladesh are known as divisions and there are eight divisions namely Barishal, Chattogram, Dhaka, Khulna, Rajshahi, Rangpur, Mymensingh and Sylhet and 64 districts (known as Zilas) are under these divisions. Cox's Bazar is one of the largest districts belonging to Chittagong and is situated between 21.43° North latitude and 92.00° East longitude with an area of about 2,492 square kilometers (Figure 1). There are eight Upazila in Cox's Bazar district and their names are Chakaria, Cox's Bazar Sadar, Kutubdia, Maheshkhali, Pekua, Ramu, Teknaf and Ukhiya (Banglapedia, 2021). Cox's Bazar is famous for its natural beauty with the World's largest sea beach, Himchari Water Fall, Inani Sea Beach etc. and attracted tourists from home and abroad. However, the recent Rohingya Refugee influx has posed a threat to the biodiversity of the Cox's Bazar district as it hosts the world's largest number of refugees in a crowded area.

## **ROHINGYA INFLUX**

Rohingya people are an ethnic Muslim minority group who used to live in the Rakhine state formerly known as Arakan. The word "Rohingya" is derived from the *Rohang* which is one of the old names of the Rakhine state. The Rakhine State is a state in Myanmar with an area of 36,762 square kilometres (Rakhine State, 2021). Bangladesh is a neighboring country of the state along the Naf river which is around 64 km long. About 135 ethnic groups were officially recognized by the Myanmar Government except Rohingya Muslims who have been treated stateless and stripped of their citizenship in 1982 (Monwaza, 2020; Parmar et al., 2019). This led to failing their right to education and other basic rights which are usually a citizen can possess (Nare, 2021). Historically, the Rohingya Muslim minority have been deprived of basic rights for many years and fled to many neighboring countries for shelter and better lives.

The migration of the Rohingya ethnic minority to the neighboring countries started a long ago. Bangladesh has been giving shelter to Rohingya refugees from Rakhine State of Myanmar since 1978 by giving shelters to 250,000 Rohingya people in Cox's Bazar. Another large wave of Rohingya refugees arrived in Bangladesh in 1991–1992 when around 250,000 people crossed the border and entered Bangladesh (Mahmood et al., 2016; Parmar et al., 2019). They were recognized by the Government of Bangladesh (GoB) as refugees and about 300,000 to 500,000 Rohingya refugees were given shelter in camps in the Cox's Bazar district in Bangladesh (Khatun, 2017). The latest influx of Rohingya has restarted on 25 August 2017 due to recent violence in the Rakhine State of Myanmar. It was reported that around 379,000 people have taken shelter in Bangladesh within one week since the attacks (Babu, 2020). The Inter-Sector Coordination Group (ISCG) reported after one month on 27 September 2017 that

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