

Evidencing the experience of violence and loss of dignity among the forcibly displaced Rohingya refugees in Bangladesh

Kate Williams, Palash Kamruzzaman, Ali Wardak, Mohammad Ehsanul Kabir, Emma Chivers, Bulbul Siddiqi, Yaseen Ayobi

February 2022

Centre for Social Policy
University of South Wales

**University
of South
Wales**

Table of Contents

	Page no.
Acknowledgements	7
List of Figures	8
Acronyms	9
Executive summary	11
Chapter 1: Introduction: Research context, objectives, and methods	
1.1 Introduction	22
1.2 Research Objectives	24
1.3 Methods	27
1.3.1 Data Collection from Rohingya participants	28
1.3.2 Data analysis	31
1.4 Research Ethics	32
1.5 Outline of the report	32
Chapter 2: Literature Review: A brief history of the Rohingya, a conceptualisation of dignity and the nexus between the dignity of Rohingya refugees and sustainable development goals	
2.1 A Crisis Deeply Rooted in History	34
2.2 Rohingya in Bangladesh: A Historical Perspective	38
2.3 Conceptualisation of 'Dignity'	39
2.4 'Dignity' among the Rohingya in Bangladesh	44
2.5 Nexus between displaced population's dignity and sustainable development	46
Chapter 3: Patterns of oppression and discrimination: the Rohingya experiences of living in Myanmar prior to 2017	
3.1 Chapter overview	49
3.2. Oppression: refusal of human rights and a loss of dignity	49

3.2.1 Loss of freedom of movement	50
3.2.2 Discrimination and oppression: preventing access to education	51
3.2.3 Financial oppression, imposition of penalties and bribery	52
3.2.4 Restrictions on religious practices and ban on Marriage	56
3.2.5 Women and young girls: victims of rape and sexual assaults	58
3.2.6 Institutional racism, violence and abuses of human rights	59
3.3 Chapter summary	59
3.4 Key findings	60
Chapter 4: The forced mass displacement and the journey of Rohingyas from Myanmar to Bangladesh	
4.1 Chapter overview	61
4.2 Persecution and clearance operations	61
4.2.1 Destruction of Villages and Targeted Attacks	66
4.2.2 Serious Human Rights Violations: Murder, Rape, Sexual and Physical Abuse	70
4.2.3 Rakhine ethnic Buddhists 'Moghs' and their participation in mass killings	74
4.2.4 The Mutilation of Body Parts and other Crimes Against Humanity	75
4.2.5 Arrest, detention and physical tortures in custody	77
4.3 The experiences and journey of the forcibly displaced Rohingyas	80
4.3.1 Experiences of violence, mass exodus and chaotic evacuation of the Rohingyas	80
4.4 Chapter summary	86
4.5 Key findings	87
Chapter 5: Rohingya perceptions of dignity and loss of dignity	
5.1 Chapter overview	87
5.2 Perceptions and conceptualisations of dignity amongst the forcibly displaced Rohingya refugees	89
5.3 The Six Categories of Dignity	91
5.3.1 Safety	91
5.3.2 Identity	96

5.3.3 Religion	98
5.3.4. Freedom of Movement	101
5.3.5 Ilm - Education, Knowledge and Wisdom	102
5.3.6 Wealth and self-reliance	103
5.3.7 Solidarity and mutual respect	105
5.4 Chapter Summary	107
5.5 Key Findings	108
Chapter 6: The impact of humanitarian assistance on dignity amongst the forcibly displaced Rohingya refugees	
6.1 Chapter Overview	109
6.2 Impact of humanitarian assistance on the dignity of the Rohingya refugees	110
6.2.1 Background	110
6.2.2 Aid and humanitarian assistance	111
6.3 Dignity in camps: participants' perspective – qualitative data	112
6.3.1 Basic needs	113
6.3.2 Respect in the Distribution of Aid	116
6.3.3. Safety	118
6.3.4. Religion	121
6.3.5. Ilm – Education, Knowledge and Wisdom	123
6.3.6. Wealth and Self-reliance	125
6.3.7. Freedom of Movement	128
6.4. Raising Issues and Complaints: Limited Voice for Rohingya	128
6.5. Chapter Summary	131
6.6 Key Findings	134
Chapter 7: Humanitarian actors' experiences of working with Rohingya refugees in Bangladesh	
7.1 Chapter Overview	135
7.2 Perceptions of dignity in the provision of aid	136
7.3 Dignity in the provision of aid	137

7.3.1 Dignity and dignified services in the camps	140
7.3.2 Choice in the provision of Aid	142
7.4 Retaining the dignity of 'at-risk' groups	144
7.5 Initiatives to improve dignity in the provision of aid	148
7.6 Consultation and participation to determine aid requirements - Humanitarian Actors and Camp in Charge	152
7.7 Coping skills	155
7.8 Chapter Summary	156
7.9 Key Findings	158
Chapter 8: Sustainable Solutions to the Rohingya Crisis	
8.1 Chapter overview	158
8.2 Major Problems Arising from the Present Situation	159
8.2.1 Self-sufficiency	159
8.2.2 Tensions with the host community	160
8.2.3 Tensions with Environment and Wildlife	163
8.2.4 Funding to support on-going aid and improve services	164
8.3 Potential Solutions – Rohingyas' views	165
8.3.1 Repatriation to the Rakhine area of Myanmar	165
8.3.2 Continued stay in Bangladesh?	169
8.3.3. Possible relocation to third Country	171
8.4 Potential solutions: Humanitarian Actors' and Government Officials' views	172
8.4.1 Long-term solutions	172
8.4.1.1 Repatriation to the Rohingya Homeland in Rakhine state, Myanmar	172
8.4.1.2 Staying in Bangladesh?	175
8.4.1.3 Settlement in a third country	177
8.4.1.4 Creation of a New Independent State of Rakhine	177
8.5 Medium-Term Solution - Temporary Relocation within Bangladesh or Elsewhere	178
8.6 Chapter Summary	179
8.7 Key findings	180

Chapter 9: Conclusions and Recommendations	
9.1 Chapter overview	181
9.2 Research objectives	181
9.3 Summary of the research findings	182
9.3.1 Patterns of Oppression and Discrimination: the Rohingya experiences of living in Myanmar prior to 2017	182
9.3.2 The forced mass displacement and the journey of the Rohingya from Myanmar to Bangladesh	183
9.3.3 Rohingya perceptions of dignity and loss of dignity	184
9.3.4 The impact of humanitarian assistance on dignity amongst the forcibly displaced Rohingya refugees	185
9.3.5 Humanitarian actor' experiences of working with Rohingya refugees in Bangladesh	186
9.3.6 Sustainable solutions to the Rohingya crisis	188
9.4 Recommendations for policy and practice	190
List of References	192

Acknowledgements

First and foremost, we express our sincere gratitude to the Rohingya participants currently sheltered in Cox's Bazar Camps for their voluntarily participation in this study, for willingly sharing not only their distressing stories but also sharing their ideas and insights. We are deeply appreciative of the Office of the Refugee Relief and Repatriation Commissioner (RRRC) in Cox's Bazar for allowing us to conduct fieldwork across the Rohingya camps in 2019. We also appreciate the Camp in Charge Offices and the Local Government Offices in Cox's Bazar for supporting this research. We extend our gratitude to many Government representatives including a state minister; an Adviser to the Prime Minister and other senior and mid-level officials in several ministries involved in dealing with the Rohingya crisis in Bangladesh. Their time, cooperation and contributions have made this study real. We are also very grateful to the staff from the humanitarian organisations including local non-governmental organisations (NGOs), international non-governmental organisations (INGOs) and civil society organisations (CSOs) for their support, time, and contribution to this study. Though many others were involved we are particularly grateful to Partners in Health and Development (PHD), Christian Aid and World Food Program working in Cox's Bazar. We are indebted to the research facilitators including Dr Bulbul Siddiqi for their guidance, assistance, and support to convene this research.

We would like to acknowledge multiple camp *majhi* (Rohingya camp representatives) and other Rohingya key community representatives who helped us to build up rapport with the displaced Rohingyas and for facilitating access to Rohingya families, community leaders and informal groups. Some Rohingya individuals across the camps were particularly knowledgeable in relation to Rohingya history and this has added important contextual clarity for this study. We appreciate how the host community in Cox's Bazar helped us to travel to different places within and around the camps. We would like to sincerely thank Shahid Uddin (for local interpretation and transcription) and Md. Touhidul Alam for helping with survey data. We thank Abdur Rahaman, Khadija Kabir, Bibi Jaheda, Julie and Dipannita Borua for data collection involving Rohingya dialects. We also acknowledge the translators and those involved in transcription of interviews. Finally, we are thankful to the British Academy for funding this important research that, we hope, will contribute to a dignified and sustainable solution to the Rohingya crisis.

List of Figures

	Page no
Figure 1.1: Map of Cox's Bazar Rohingya population as of July 2020	22
Figure 1.2: Types of methods used for data collection	27
Figure 1.3: Map showing study location with different data sources	27
Figure 3.1 Initiatives used to cope with oppression and discrimination in Myanmar	54
Figure 3.2 Effectiveness of initiatives used to prevent further military attacks and violence	56
Figure 4.1 Types of violence witnessed by the forcibly displaced Rohingyas during the 2017 persecution.	63
Figure 4.2: Survey participants direct experiences of violence (self and family members)	69
Figure 4.3: Rohingyas who directly experienced violence	81
Figure 5.1. Overview of violent experiences that contributed to the Rohingyas loss of dignity during the 2017 forced migration.	88
Figure 5.2: Three most important components of dignity reported by the participants	90
Figure 6.1 Problems faced in the camps by Rohingya households	110
Figure 6.2 Aid and humanitarian assistance received by Rohingya households in camps	111
Figure 6.3 Rohingyas' dignity in Bangladeshi camps	112
Figure 7.1 identifies the different types of aid provided and the rankings given by the humanitarian actors on its importance to the forcibly displaced Rohingya refugees	137
Figure 7.2. Role of different actors in treating Rohingyas with dignity	138
Figure 7.3 Organizations considering dignity of the Rohingya prior to planning programs and interventions	138
Figure 7.4 Humanitarian actors' views on whether the Rohingyas were treated with dignity by humanitarian organisations.	139
Figure 7.5 Humanitarian actors that have evidenced the mistreatment of the Rohingyas during the provision of aid within Cox's Bazar.	139
Figure 7.6 Perceived initiatives to increase the Rohingyas' dignity within the camps	149
Figure 7.7 Participatory methods used to consult with Rohingyas and gather feedback within the camps.	153
Figure 8.1 Rohingyas concerns about returning to Myanmar	166
Figure 8.2 Key factors for Rohingyas' return to Myanmar	167

Acronyms

ARSA	Arakan Rohingya Salvation Army
BBC	British Broadcasting Corporation
BIA	Burmese Independence Army
BSA	British Sociological Association
BSC	British Society of Criminology
CEO	Chief Executive Officer
CIC	Camp in Charge (authority overseeing the Rohingya ‘refugee’ camps in Bangladesh)
CNG	Compressed Natural Gas
FFM	UN Human Rights Council’s Fact-Finding Mission
FGD	Focus Group Discussion
GDPR	General Data Protection Regulation
GBV	Gender-based violence
HDI	Human Development Index
HRW	Human Rights Watch
ICG	International Crisis Group
ID cards	Identification Cards
INGO	international non-governmental organisation
IOM	International Organisation for Migration
ISCG	Inter Sector Coordination Group
JISC	Joint Information Systems Committee
NATO	The North Atlantic Treaty Organization
NGO	non-governmental organisation
OHCHR	Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights
PSS	Dept. of Political Science and Sociology, North South University, Dhaka.
RRRC	Refugee Relief and Repatriation Commissioner

SDGs	sustainable development goals
SIPG	South Asian Institute of Policy and Governance, North South University, Dhaka.
SPSS	Statistical Package for the Social Sciences
Tk	Taka (Bangladesh currency)
UN	United Nations
UNDP	United Nations Development Programme
UNFPA	United Nations Population Fund
UNHCR	United Nations High Commission for Refugees
UNHRC	UN Human Rights Council
UN OHCHR	United Nations Human Rights Office of the High Commissioner
USD	United States Dollar
USW	University of South Wales
WFP	World Food Programme

Executive summary

Introduction

This research offers a detailed account of the Rohingya peoples' experience of exclusion, discrimination and violence in Myanmar and their journey to Bangladesh to escape that violence and how/whether this has contributed to the loss of their dignity. It also documents their experiences of living as a forcibly displaced group in Bangladesh (since they are not officially recognised by Bangladesh as refugees) and the extent to which their dignity has been restored before going on to consider medium- and long-term solutions for the crisis they find themselves in. It is important to note that the Government of Bangladesh does not officially recognise the Rohingyas as refugees. However, the international community, certainly the UN has extended them refugee status. The Rohingyas themselves often refer to themselves as refugees. This report will generally identify them as refugees though may also use the term displaced Rohingya.

The field research highlights what realistic changes would make a positive difference to leading safe and peaceful lives for the Rohingya. In essence they need a permanent home where they will be awarded full citizenship and treated with dignity, justice and equality and be supported out of poverty and to re-build their lives and positive communities. In doing so, it is necessary to recognise and address issues that are important to the dignity and well-being of those being helped. It is thus imperative to understand what the Rohingya refugees perceive as dignity (or its loss) and how it underpins their calls for supporting their future. The main objectives of this research focused on understanding:

- the pattern of oppressions the Rohingya experienced in Myanmar before 2017;
- the nature of violence experienced by the Rohingya in 2017 in Myanmar: the causes of their displacement and their displacement journey;
- how the Rohingya conceptualise their sense of dignity, and loss of dignity;
- the socioeconomic conditions the Rohingya are living in and the impact of displacement and delivery of assistance on the physical and psychological wellbeing of the Rohingya and on their dignity in the camps;
- the conceptualisations of dignity among those working to deliver aid to the Rohingya refugees and among Bangladesh Government representatives and their experiences of providing assistance;
- ways in which dignity might be improved and how they might find medium-to-long-term solutions to the Rohingya refugee crisis in Cox's Bazar as suggested by respondents from the Rohingya camps, international humanitarian aid organisations and representatives of the Government of Bangladesh; and
- how to begin to deliver durable solutions which are meaningful to the Rohingya - to recommend actionable policy recommendations.

Dignity, as defined by the Rohingya, is central to this study (compare chapter 2 with chapters 5 and 6). This research focuses on the voices of the Rohingya in setting out their past journeys (chapters 2, 3 and 4) and future aspirations (chapter 8) and how best to support them now (chapters 5, 6 and 7) and to improve their long-term well-being (Chapter 8). This research adds to the existing dignity, refugee and displacement scholarship by:

1. providing a deeper, more nuanced approach to the conceptualisation of dignity by taking account of different perspectives both from within the affected community and from those working to support them, such as donors, INGOs, and the receiving government;
2. taking into account the conceptualization of dignity from the perspectives of the Rohingya refugees, including the cultural, linguistic, geographic and religious aspects which may have formed those values and ideals of dignity;
3. offering an in-depth understanding of the situation, context and experiences from different perspectives, from the viewpoint of: refugees (both men and women living in the camp in Cox's Bazar); field staff working directly day-to-day to deliver aid and improve the lives of the refugees in the camps; members of the host community; senior members of international organisations; and both local and national government representatives of the host state who might provide strategic and policy insights.

Background

The Rohingya people have been living on the Mayo Peninsula in northern Arakan, an area now known as the Rakhine state of Myanmar since at least the ninth century (Sahana, Jahangir and Anisuzzaman, 2019; Ahmed, 2019). They have been Muslims since about the twelfth century and they ruled northern Arakan themselves until 1784 when they were conquered by the largely Buddhist kingdom of Burma. Arakan was split from Burma in 1826 when Britain won control of it but was reunited with Burma when Britain colonised the rest of Burma in the 1880s (Ahmed, 2009). In the Second World War the Muslim Rohingya fought with the British whilst the Buddhists fought with the Japanese (Ibrahim, 2016). The British had promised the Rohingya independence, but they reneged on that promise. In 1948 the Rohingya tried to join with what was then East Pakistan, now Bangladesh. This failed and when Burma was given independence in 1948 Rakhine, where the Rohingya lived was made part of Burma, what is now Myanmar. From the outset many of those who lived in central Myanmar, a largely Buddhist community, considered that the Rohingya were loyal to Bangladesh rather than Myanmar. This feeling was reinforced because the Rohingya language is very close to the dialect spoken in the Cox's Bazar region of Bangladesh and because they looked more like Bangladeshi people and different from most of the people who lived in Myanmar. For these reasons they were never made citizens of Myanmar.

Their problems really began following the military coup in Myanmar in 1962. From that time onwards the Myanmar authorities have denied that the Rohingya had any link with Rakhine state until the British arrived in 1826, they claim that they are not native to Rakhine in Myanmar and should return to Bangladesh (historically this is not the case). Since 1962 the military leaders in Myanmar have been circulating this misinformation, denying the right of the Rohingya people to live in Rakhine and depicting them as backward and 'lesser'. Unfortunately, most Buddhists in Myanmar from all political parties now believe all of this to be true (Ibrahim, 2016). Starting in 1962 the Rohingya were forced to carry identity cards identifying them as non-citizens and in 1982 the cards they were required to carry altered and identified them as 'illegal' immigrants. At that point, the law removed all rights from them so that their freedoms of movement, education, employment marriage and birth registration, healthcare, voting and religion were all curtailed or reduced.

As well as denying the Rohingya citizenship rights and basic freedoms they have also been subjected to violence at the hands of the Myanmar military and police, presumably orchestrated by the authorities. Between 1966 and 1988, the military torched, destroyed and appropriated property; raped; tortured; murdered and subjected Rohingya to other forms of violence which forced millions of Rohingya to flee to neighbouring countries including Bangladesh, India, Thailand and Malaysia (Ullah, 2016). Similar violent crackdowns occurred in 1991–2, 1996, 2012, 2016 and, most recently, in August 2017 (Ibrahim, 2016; Wade, 2017; Ullah, 2011). Added to this state orchestrated violence, discrimination and eventually violence towards the Rohingya by Buddhist living groups in Rakhine grew. Before independence Buddhists and Rohingya had lived reasonably peacefully alongside each other in mutual interdependence. This peaceful situation was made uncomfortable following the different loyalties in WWII but still existed and relationships were being repaired. However, starting in 1962 that situation began to deteriorate, some Buddhists were given land and belongings (especially livestock) taken from the Rohingya, Buddhists started to treat them as beneath them, to exclude the Rohingya and from 2012 onwards the local Buddhists living in Rakhine became increasingly violent towards the Rohingya. Throughout the period from 1962 onwards the Rohingya suffered violence, rape, theft, destruction of property, removal of land and other indignities at the hands of the local Buddhists, the Mogh.

However, all of this escalated in 2017. As a result of claimed acts of insurgency by a small number of Rohingya the Myanmar forces cracked down heavily in August 2017. At this time they conducted a clearance operation burning whole villages and killing and raping many people. They forced the Rohingya to flee to Bangladesh, chased them all the way to the border to ensure that they crossed. Many of the local Buddhists living in Rakhine joined the attacks. These events can legitimately be described as a slow-burning genocide (Zarni and Cowley, 2014) or ethnic cleansing (Beyrer and Kamarulzaman, 2017).

Methods

To ensure a full range of experiences and stories, the research sample drew on the insights and experiences of Rohingya refugees (men and women in Cox's Bazar camps), humanitarian field staff, and senior professionals (humanitarian and political). This research adopted a mixed methods approach comprising:

- two surveys (one with the Rohingya refugees and the other with staff members working at the frontline of humanitarian organizations) primarily designed to facilitate quantitative analysis of the issues related to displacement; experiences of violence, loss of dignity and experiences of living as refugees in camps.
- semi-structured interviews (with Rohingya refugees, front-line workers, professionals, policymakers, NGOs, INGOs and with representatives of the Bangladesh Government) which explored the reasons for their displacement and their journey to Bangladesh, the meaning of dignity for the Rohingya people, the ways in which loss of dignity had been experienced, the strategies of change/adaptation and resilience both group and individual and the medium to long-term solutions each group envisaged.
- narrative/storytelling unstructured interviews which provide another, deeper, layer of understanding from the Rohingya perspective.
- focus groups with various constituencies of Rohingya refugees (some all-male and some all-female) which built on what was learned from the interviews and storytelling. Also, one focus group with a large number of representatives from the host community (both men and women) to document their support for the Rohingya when they arrived and capture their experiences of living alongside almost one million Rohingya refugees.

Rohingya refugee participants and field staff members (working at the frontline of humanitarian organizations) were purposefully chosen from specific areas within the camps, ensuring a cross-section of views from across the refugee community. This ensured that data was capturing a wide cross-section of the community and was not affected by what might have been more localised views of those living next to one another. Whilst the Rohingya camp appears to be a single unit there are differences between the various locations, so it was very important to document those differences by drawing data from different parts of the camps. The interviews with senior staff were also purposive, they were deliberately chosen for the insight they could give to the situation and any possible solutions from a policy or strategic perspective. Before agreeing to be involved in either surveys or interviews all participants were provided with a detailed information (verbal in the case of Rohingyas but otherwise written) enabling them to give informed consent (or refuse to be involved). In the case of Rohingya respondents the research was discussed with them and explained to them, they were then given time to consider whether they wanted to be involved so that data was

collected at a later date, usually after further discussion of the research and following consent to participation.

All the data collection with the Rohingya refugees was conducted in their own language (a dialect of Chittagongian Bengali) with the help of interpreters. The main researcher spoke Bengali and had a good grasp of Chittagongian, the local Cox's Bazar dialect on which the Rohingya dialect is based, but we wanted to fully respect the Rohingya so ensured that we used their own language at all times through the use of interpreters. The frontline staff surveys and interviews and those of policy-making humanitarian officials and government representatives were all conducted in English. Surveys included both closed and open questions concerning issues about why Rohingya refugees were displaced, what sort of aid they could access, their assessment of the aid available to them and how it was distributed, their ideas of dignity and whether the dignity of the Rohingya was respected and their hopes for a sustainable future. Semi-structured interviews and focus groups were conducted to facilitate a deeper and more nuanced understanding of violence, their ideas of dignity and whether and how the dignity of the Rohingya people had been respected or lost, coping strategies, recovery, basic services, emergency services and durable solutions. All interviews were carefully transcribed in the original language, those in Rohingya language were then carefully translated first into formal Bengali and then into English. At the translation stage, local professional translators were hired to ensure that both the verbal and non-verbal contexts of discussions - including vocalisation of the language and discourse - were accurately translated to ensure that the translation captured nuances in meaning. Surveys were analysed using SPSS software, qualitative interviews, storytelling, and focus groups were analysed using thematic analysis via Nvivo.

Key findings

Tracking the experiences of the Rohingya refugees from Myanmar to Bangladesh, this research delivers a clearer understanding of how displacements happen and are experienced; create the knowledge necessary to increase and sustain communities' resilience to violence, conflict and to emergencies; explore practical solutions to provide pathways to healthier and safer lives in the medium term; explore long term solutions and what might be necessary to deliver them and to prevent further displacements and migrations. This research contends that lasting and meaningful sustainable development must embrace a deep understanding from the perspectives of those in need, respect for their ideas of a 'good' life and a future. Through recognition of and investment in both physical needs and self-worth of individuals they have the best chance to prosper and achieve their full potential. In that endeavour, this research draws on the lived experiences of the displaced Rohingya now living in Bangladesh who conceptualise dignity in multiple different ways, specifically in terms of:

- Safety and security;
- Identity, both as Rohingya and as citizens of Myanmar, including all their basic rights;

- Religion, respect for Islamic values and their choice of religion;
- Role of knowledge and education (ilm), including training and re-training;
- Wealth and self-reliance, including access to employment opportunities for men and women;
- Solidarity and mutual respect and compassion;
- access to their basic needs (such as food, water, and shelter);
- Freedom of movement.

The research found that all the Rohingya refugees had been displaced because of a systematic attack aimed to make them leave and to ensure that they went to Bangladesh. The extremely violent attack which the international community and academics have called an attempt at ethnic cleansing was the culmination of at least 50 years of exclusion, discrimination, and violence. The Rohingya - men, women, and children - experienced severe violence and traumatic events before and/or during displacement, they are unable to return to Rakhine, Myanmar for fear of being attacked again and/or imprisoned or placed in camps in Myanmar for Internally Displaced Persons. They have already been living as refugees, although not officially recognised by the Government of Bangladesh as such, for four years and fear that they may have to live that way for many years to come. Indeed, some Rohingya who fled in 1991/2 never returned and are still living as refugees in Bangladesh. Interestingly, while many Rohingya suffered loss of dignity before the final attack others managed to preserve their fundamental dignity in spite of the exclusion, discrimination, violence and poverty that they had suffered. Often the element of dignity preserved was the communal or social dignity (Kateb, 2011). In their final exodus, almost all felt a loss of all dignity, the only sustaining feature seemed to be again this communal, social respect which they showed for each other (ijjot - respecting other).

Findings of this study also demonstrate that the Rohingya refugees rely entirely on humanitarian aid for all their most basic daily needs and are in dire need of improved shelter and sustainable housing for protection of their lives as well as for their dignity. In addition, it is clear that the Rohingya refugees struggle to access basic services such as education due to its being withheld over the last 4 years and a varied diet which allows them to choose how to feed themselves. Women face additional indignities due to the lack of privacy in their homes and in the joint use of latrines and washing facilities with men. Income-generating opportunities are scarce and in 2019 the Bangladesh Government blocked small payments for work done by Rohingya refugees. Sustainable employment opportunities are non-existent. It is particularly hard for women, some of whom had just managed to find professional work outside the home, working for NGOs and felt that their dignity and self-worth were enhanced through this employment. It is important that their need for work in order to meet that dignity is not forgotten in any medium to long term solution to the crisis.

While the Rohingya are largely safe from attacks by the Myanmar forces and feel much safer in the camps some, particularly women and children are still falling prey to sexual violence and to abduction and being forced into labour or sexual abuse. The Rohingya refugees living in the camp are also very concerned about the lack of education for their children (girls and boys) and the lack of job opportunities as they want to become self-sufficient. The Bangladesh Government and humanitarian aid agencies are doing a lot to provide for the Rohingya refugees, however, there remain various challenges in the provision of humanitarian assistance, including:

- working with limited budgets and the fear that those budgets may reduce if the crisis continues for too long;
- identifying those most in need and assessing exactly what they need for a dignified life;
- ensuring aid takes account of cultural expectations;
- lack of educational provision;
- lack of employment opportunities;
- a focus on short-term provision with little or no longer-term strategic planning (little focus on finding medium term solutions such as more permanent dwellings or planning new employment opportunities so the Rohingya can sustain themselves), this leaves the Rohingya in abject poverty and need and risks their becoming dependant; and
- too little focus on the negotiation of a long-term solution to the crisis, little work seems to be being done to negotiate their return to Rakhine as full citizens of Myanmar.

This study seeks to make positive changes to people's lives allowing them to lead safe and peaceful lives where they are treated with dignity, justice and equality, and therefore, recommend ways in which governments and humanitarian staff can protect the dignity of the Rohingya even in short-term planning and provision of assistance:

- ensure that aid is provided to those who need it;
- always consider the Rohingyas' dignity, culture, and religion when providing aid;
- ensure children are educated and that the education is certified and recognised guaranteeing they reach their potential and are ready to prosper from future opportunities;
- ensure that adults (men and women) are trained/re-trained for employment and that employment opportunities are made available to them so that they can build a sustainable and self-sufficient future; and
- ensure that the Rohingya are fully involved in decisions about them and about what they need to maintain and/or improve their dignity – aid should be provided with their input not something done to them.

However, possibly the most important aspects of the findings are those concerning medium to long-term solutions (see chapter 8). For the Rohingya their dignity is real and in need of protection, it is multi-dimensional and is shaped by their religion, culture and lived experiences. In discussing dignity, the Rohingya agreed with humanitarian staff and government representatives that dignity had to encompass respect and rights in the distribution of basic needs such as shelter, food, and water. However, the Rohingya had a more nuanced and complex idea of dignity (see Table 1 below) and frequently pointed to other issues, especially their continued exclusion from their homes in Rakhine and their desire for citizenship in Myanmar which continued to undermine their dignity and prevented its reinstatement. Alongside this they spoke about the dependency on emergency aid as being undignified and saw the lack of long-term sustainable development as an aspect that impacted negatively on their physical and psychological well-being but also on their dignity (especially feelings of self-dignity or self-worth).

Table 1: Comparing conceptualisations of dignity

Rohingya perceptions of dignity	Humanitarian staff and government representatives' perceptions of dignity for the Rohingya
Safety and security	Organisational rules
Identity, both as Rohingya and as citizens of Myanmar, including freedom and rights	Respect and human rights
Religion, respect for Islamic values and their choice of religion	Provision of emergency aid for necessities
Role of knowledge and education (ilm), including training and re-training	
Prosperity and wealth, including self-reliance and self-sufficiency – employment for men and women.	
Solidarity and mutual respect and compassion	
Access to their basic needs	
Freedom of movement	

It is around these longer-term goals that the Rohingya refugees, aid agencies and government respondents differed most powerfully. Humanitarian workers and government representatives tended to focus on providing what was necessary now – there was little

future planning although the Bangladesh Government had started to build more permanent homes on an island off their coast (one the Rohingya considered unsuitable for their needs). For the Rohingya longer-term more sustainable goals were essential to restore their dignity, they saw the focus on short-term solutions as problematic. Overall, this research found that the focus on short-term solutions was damaging to the future of the Rohingya:

- Short-termism diverts attention from the long-term resettlement and re-integration of the Rohingya back into the Rakhine area of Myanmar.
- Short-termism sustains a dependency culture and diminishes the Rohingya dignity.
- Short-termism prevents Bangladesh advancing their sustainable development goals, it is damaging to Bangladesh not to have medium- and long-term solutions.
- Short-termism prevents the Rohingya from advancing towards a sustainable future, one which supports the sustainable development goals of the Rakhine area of Myanmar where they eventually hope to live.

Sustainable development in the form of long-term peace, job opportunities, proper housing and new supportive communities with education and health care is essential for the dignity of the Rohingya people. In order to enjoy a long-term solution, they all recognized that peace and security were essential, but they also called for development support in ten other areas:

1	provision of land and sustainable shelter in Rakhine
2	construction of clinics (or access to already existing clinics), schools, capacity building centres in Rakhine
3	construction of destroyed infrastructure and that necessary to building sustainable lives in Rakhine, Myanmar, such as roads, factories and power stations
4	restoration of houses, roads (where necessary and/or where destroyed) and land in Rakhine
5	agricultural assistance
6	education for all children (girls and boys)
7	the provision of employment opportunities
8	capital for business investment (in farms, shops and other traditional businesses as well as in new business ventures)
9	skills development and training (for traditional and new employment)
10	Peacebuilding and provision of safe and secure environment in Rakhine

Clearly the Rohingya refugees were making the following powerful points:

- Sustainable development must enable the Rohingya a dignified and self-sufficient future.
- Continued displacement is a consequence of violations of human rights on the part of Myanmar and this must stop, all parties need to work towards a sustainable solution to the crisis caused by Myanmar.
- Short-term solutions do not resolve the situation, nor do they properly restore the dignity of the Rohingya people.

The overarching message is that:

Sustainable development is necessary for both dignity and for a lasting peace.

[Outline of this report](#)

Chapter 1 – Introduction: research context, objectives, and methods

This chapter firstly describes the research context, including the historical and political context of the Rohingya living in Myanmar. Next, this chapter provides a brief overview of the background of displacement of the Rohingya people from Myanmar to Bangladesh. Finally, we provide an overview of the current study, including the objectives, the research methods employed, and the demographics and characteristics of the participants.

Chapter 2 – Literature review: a brief history of the Rohingya, a conceptualisation of dignity and the nexus between the dignity of Rohingya refugees and sustainable development goals

In this chapter we present a literature review of conceptualisations of dignity and the nexus between the dignity of Rohingya and sustainable development goals, including an overview of the SDGs that underpin this research.

Chapter 3 - Patterns of oppression and discrimination: the Rohingya experiences of living in Myanmar prior to 2017

Chapter 3 describes the pattern of oppression faced by the Rohingya in Myanmar prior to the start of 2017 clearance operation detailing experiences of extreme violence.

Chapter 4 - The forced mass displacement and the journey of Rohingyas from Myanmar to Bangladesh

Chapter 4 provides an overview of the causes of forced mass displacement and the displacement journey of Rohingya to Bangladesh. It contains vivid details on extreme violence and atrocities reported by survivors and/or witnesses during the 2017 persecution in Myanmar.

Chapter 5 - Rohingya perceptions of dignity and loss of dignity

Chapter 5 first explores how the forcibly displaced Rohingya conceptualise their dignity. It moves on to illustrate how their experiences of violence affected the Rohingyas' dignity, and their feelings about its loss.

Chapter 6 - The impact of humanitarian assistance on dignity amongst the Rohingya Refugees

Chapter 6 considers how the Rohingyas view dignity now they are in the camps in Bangladesh, it explores dignity against the backdrop of their present living conditions.

Chapter 7 – Humanitarian actors' experiences of working with the Rohingya Refugees in Bangladesh

Chapter 7 looks at dignity from the perspectives of the humanitarian actors and government representatives and considers how well they believe they are providing dignity to the Rohingya living in the camps.

Chapter 8 - Sustainable solutions to the Rohingya crisis

Chapter 8 opens with an analysis of some of the major issues (mostly not yet considered) posed by the presence of a 'refugee camp' in Bangladesh. It then notes the urgent need for medium- and long-term solutions and moves on to consider first permanent solutions to the crisis and then some medium-term solutions suggested by respondents, humanitarian aid organisations and from the Government of Bangladesh.

Chapter 9 Outline conclusions and recommendations.

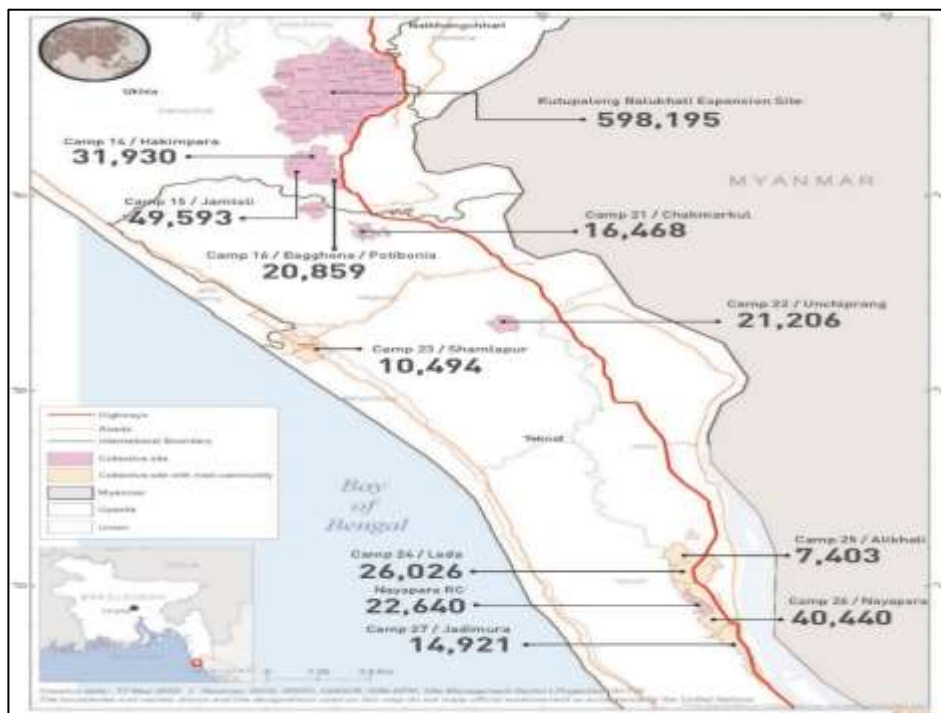
This chapter reiterates the objectives of this research, summarises the key research findings, briefly discusses the findings in relation to the existing literature, and provides recommendations for policy and practice.

Chapter 1: Introduction: Research context, objectives, and methods

1.1 Introduction

Forcibly displaced Rohingya constitute one of the most vulnerable and victimised groups of people at the current time. As of 31 July 2020, there are 860,494 Rohingyas now living in Bangladeshi camps in Cox's Bazar (UNHCR, 2020). The total number includes 35,060 Rohingyas from pre-2016 and who reside in the registered camps in Cox's Bazar but excludes some of the Rohingyas living in host communities and in certain locations beyond the camp boundaries who may not have been included in the family counting exercise by the Government of Bangladesh and the UNCHR. Nevertheless, the official estimate suggests that almost 90% of Rohingyas registered in the Asia-Pacific region is now being hosted in Bangladesh.

Figure 1.1: Map of Cox's Bazar Rohingya population as of July 2020 (Source: ISCG, 2020)



This report examines the experience of violence and loss of dignity among the forcibly displaced Rohingya who are currently sheltered as 'refugees' in Bangladesh. It is important to note that the Government of Bangladesh does not officially recognise the Rohingyas as refugees. However, the international community, certainly the UN has extended them refugee status. The Rohingyas themselves often refer to themselves as refugees. This report will generally identify them as refugees though may also use the term displaced Rohingya. Based on extensive fieldwork conducted over a seven-month period in 2019 across the Rohingya camps in Bangladesh, this report provides an empirically grounded and contextually rich understanding about the experience of Rohingya refugees. The report examines their

experiences of forced displacement from Myanmar, the loss of their dignity and its effects on their lives.

For at least the past five decades, the Rohingya in Myanmar had become victims of state crime, ethnic discrimination and suppression (Alam, 2019). By amending citizenship laws in 1982, Myanmar's military junta barred access to citizenship rights from its Rohingya population and imposed restrictions on their travel, educational and employment opportunities within Myanmar (Jones, 2017). Rohingya people in Myanmar were also frequently exposed to forced labour, eviction, detention amongst other abuses. In August 2017, a deadly crackdown by Myanmar's military and security forces pushed about a million to flee from Myanmar and seek temporary shelter in Cox's Bazar, a bordering district of Bangladesh (Human Rights Council, 2019). The Rohingya described this campaign as organized violence jointly committed by Myanmar military, border guard, police, and rival ethnic communities (mainly local Buddhist clergy and their followers) in the Rakhine region of the country (Haar et al., 2019). This organised violence included mass shooting, burning of their houses and humans, sexual violence, executions and dumping of bodies in mass graves in Maungdaw, Buthidaung, and Rathedaung Townships in the Northern Rakhine (Haar et al., 2019; Fortify Rights, 2018; International Crisis Group, 2017). However, the Myanmar Government denied their role in committing mass violence and crimes against Rohingya population (South China Morning Post, 2017). While the United Nation Independent Facts Findings report (2018) accused Myanmar of carrying out a brutal campaign against unarmed Rohingya civilians across Kachin, Rakhine and Shan States, the security campaign was also described as "a textbook example of ethnic cleansing" by the UN High Commissioner for Human Rights (Zeid Ra'ad Al Hussein, UN High Commissioner for Human Rights, addressing the UN Human Rights Council in Geneva). Apart from different types of physical violence and persecution, the loss of dignity was one of the key elements of the Rohingya experiences which arose because the Myanmar state authorities repeatedly denied them citizen (see Chapters 2 and 3 for more details). While legal accountability for these crimes is crucial, it is equally important to find dignified solutions to the effects of this ongoing violence, displacement, and their consequences.

Academic literature and policy discourse both exhibit a growing interest in human dignity and how it should be understood (Neal, 2014). This discourse is directly relevant to an understanding of the displaced Rohingya but a real insight into understanding their plight requires a conception of dignity as the Rohingya themselves interpret it. Dignity is recognized as a basic human right in all documents concerning fundamental human rights. The concept 'dignity' is also widely recognized in the discussion of justice (Misztal, 2012), medical care (Bennett, 2016; Brundtland, 2003), occupational safety (Thomas and Lucas, 2018) and in humanitarian actions (WFP, 2017) amongst other areas. However, there is a dearth of research exploring how human dignity is affected during experiences of violence and displacement. Indeed, a clear absence of literature is noticed in holistic understanding of

‘what dignity means’ or ‘how dignity is degraded’ among forcibly displaced populations or refugees, amongst those who became subject to violence, conflicts, abuse or social injustice (Misztal, 2012). While some refugee populations are more frequently researched, others are under-researched, their voices are less heard in the global academic literature (Omata, 2019). One such group is the Rohingya people – arguably, one of the most persecuted populations in the world today.

Against this backdrop, this report explores the Rohingya understandings of the notion of dignity and what have been the various ways that their dignity has been taken away from them or respected throughout their experiences of violence and persecution in Myanmar and after their displacement. To understand the pattern of violence and atrocities, survivors and witnesses of atrocities were interviewed in Rohingya camps in Cox’s Bazar district (Figure 1.1 shows estimated numbers of people in each of the main Rohingya camps in Cox’s Bazar). This study provides first-hand insights into the various dimensions of day-to-day living of this large refugee population in Cox’s Bazar. It also provides actionable policy recommendations for enabling these refugees to lead safe and peaceful lives and for creating conditions in which they are treated with dignity, justice, and equality. As discussed in more detail below (section 1.3), data for this research report was collected through storytelling interviews, FGD and quantitative survey with Rohingya refugees across seven different camps in Ukhiya sub-district in Cox’s Bazar. Data was also collected from relevant representatives of humanitarian actors and the Government of Bangladesh through both qualitative interviews and an online survey.

Consideration of the research objectives of this study will be discussed next before moving on to look at the methodology in detail.

1.2 Research Objectives

The broader objective of this study is to understand the experience of violence and loss of dignity among the forcibly displaced Rohingya who fled Myanmar in 2017 and who are currently sheltering in Bangladesh. The research focuses on understanding: the impetus for the displacement of the Rohingya to Bangladesh; their experience of discrimination, persecution and violence leading up to their displacement; the effects of all of that on their lives, their dignity, their feelings of belonging and independence; its effects on their culture and heritage which might have given their lives shape and meaning; how they now live; how they see their futures and what they would like to be in their futures; and what is being and might be done (in practice and strategically) to address their situation. Through careful analysis of the data the study highlights what realistic changes could make a positive difference to the Rohingya now living in Bangladesh. Whilst recognising that their present position is an improvement in their dignity, justice and equality the study considers how this could and should be improved. In particular, it focuses on how they can be supported to move out of poverty and re-build (or build new) healthy self-sufficient and sustainable lives and

communities. Clearly, this will have the potential to impact on a durable yet dignified resolution for the Rohingya crisis in Bangladesh.

A focus on dignity was chosen because it embraces many of the SDGs such as just institutions, alleviating poverty, education etc. Therefore, to support meaningful sustainable development it is imperative to understand what the Rohingya perceive as dignity (and loss of it) and how it underpins their calls for supporting their future. Tracking the experiences of the Rohingya provided: a clearer understanding of how displacements happen and are experienced; an awareness of the knowledge necessary to increase and sustain communities' resilience to violence, conflict and other emergencies; the knowledge necessary to explore practical solutions to provide pathways to healthier and safer lives and to prevent further displacements and migrations.

A mixed methods approach was adopted to provide a more in-depth understanding of all aspects of the research objectives (see Table 1.1, below).

Table 1.1: Methods used to address research objectives

To understand the experience of violence and loss of dignity within the forcibly displaced Rohingya who fled Myanmar in 2017 and currently sheltered in Bangladesh.	1. To document and describe the nature of violence experienced by the Rohingya during 2017 persecution in Myanmar.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Storytelling interviews • Quantitative survey 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Thematic analysis • Descriptive statistics
	2. To identify the pattern of oppressions the Rohingya experienced in Myanmar before the start of the 2017 persecution.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Storytelling interviews • Quantitative survey 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Thematic analysis • Descriptive statistics
	3. To understand how the Rohingya conceptualise their dignity.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Storytelling interviews • Quantitative survey 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Thematic analysis • Descriptive statistics
	4. To understand how their experiences of violence affected Rohingyas' dignity.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Storytelling interviews • Quantitative survey 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Thematic analysis • Descriptive statistics
	5. To understand the present status of Rohingyas' dignity across the camps in Cox's Bazar.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Storytelling interviews • Quantitative survey • Qualitative interviews with humanitarian actors • Online survey 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Thematic analysis • Descriptive statistics

	6. To explore any coping mechanisms that the Rohingya adopt to ease their adversities.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Storytelling interviews • Quantitative survey • Qualitative interviews with humanitarian actors 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Thematic analysis • Descriptive statistics
	7. To analyse medium-to-long-term solutions to this crisis discussed by the Rohingya and humanitarian actors including the representatives of the Government of Bangladesh.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Storytelling interviews • Quantitative survey • Qualitative interviews with humanitarian actors • Focus Group Discussions 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Thematic analysis • Descriptive statistics

To ensure that each aspect of the project was achieved it was sub-divided into following specific objectives:

1. To identify the pattern of oppressions the Rohingya experienced in Myanmar before 2017 (see Chapter 3).
2. To document and describe the nature of violence experienced by the Rohingya in 2017 in Myanmar (see Chapter 4).
3. To understand how the displaced Rohingya conceptualise their sense of dignity, and loss of dignity (see Chapters 5)
4. To understand how the Rohingya describe dignity and its loss in the context of living in the Cox's Bazar camps and what coping mechanisms they are using while living in the camps (see Chapter 6).
5. To examine medium-to-long-term solutions to the Rohingya crisis in Cox's Bazar as suggested by respondents from the Rohingya camps, international humanitarian aid organisations and representatives of the Government of Bangladesh (see Chapter 8).
6. To recommend actionable policy recommendations (see Chapters 8 and 9)

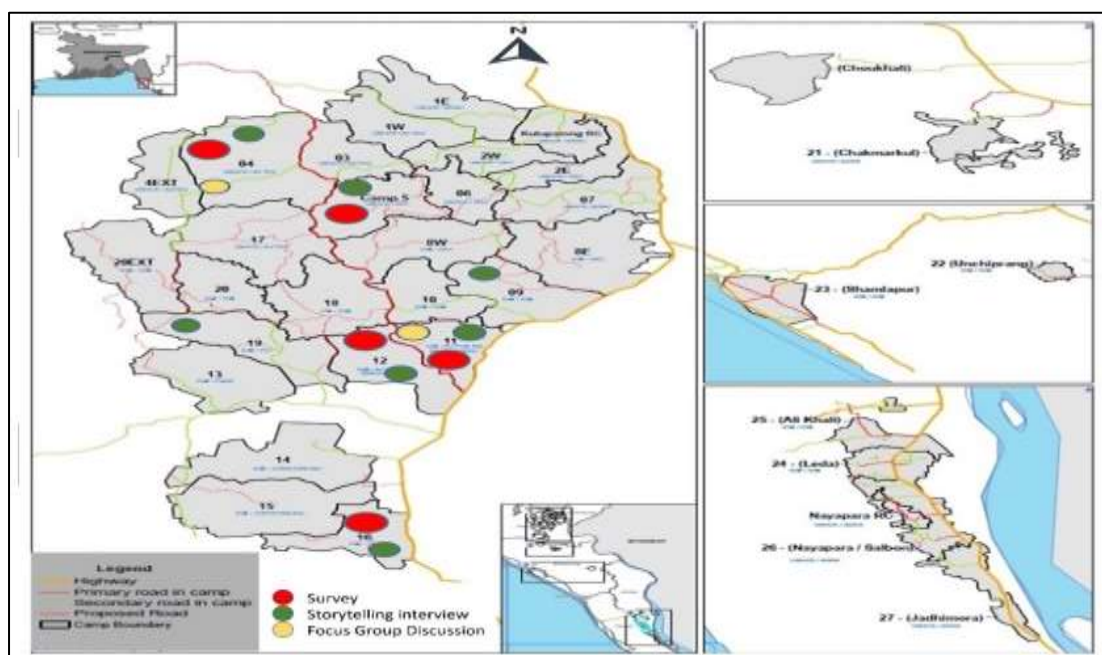
1.3 METHODS

Figure 1.2: Types of methods used for data collection



This study involved a mixed-method approach so providing both factual information and an understanding and interpretation of that from the perspective of participants. Primary data were collected by using: storytelling interviews, focus group discussions (FGD), semi structured interviews, quantitative surveys, and an online survey. Above, figure 1.2 summarizes types of primary data collected for this study.

Figure 1.3: Map showing study location with different data sources



Care was taken to ensure that participants were truly representative so the Rohingya participants and the humanitarian workers in the camps were drawn from different locations within the camps (see Figure 1.3) and included both men and women and people who might be seen as having influence and ordinary people in the community.

Table 1.1 gives an overview of how many people were included in the research, who they were and which groups they were drawn from.

Table 1.2: Summary of study participants

Type of inquiry	Male	Female	Sub-total	Camps covered
Storytelling interviews Rohingya	30	10	40	4, 5, 11, 12 and 16
Focus group discussion with Rohingya x 7	21	24	45	4, 5,11 and 16
Focus group discussion with host community x1	20	5	25	Host community
Quantitative survey with Rohingya	173	246	419	4, 5, 9, 11, 12, 16 and 19
Qualitative interviews with humanitarian actors and government officials	31	15	36	Not limited to those working in the camps
Online Survey with humanitarian actors	Not detected	Not detected	91	Not limited to those working in the camps
Total 656				

A summary of data collection techniques and how empirical data were analysed is detailed below.

1.3.1 Data Collection from Rohingya participants

In any research involving the Rohingya people great care was taken to be respectful and to give them time and space to consider whether they wanted to be involved.

The researcher started with a general conversation to be polite and build trust. This might often happen for the first one or two meetings. Once the participant felt comfortable talking to the researcher he embarked on a detailed explanation about: the aims, objectives, scope and limitations of this study; the purpose of the storytelling interviews; the extent of

involvement of the individual and what it might mean for them, the fact that they could stop, refuse to answer a question and withdraw their data (until it was transcribed and anonymised); and the way in which the data would be used and how their identity would be protected. This was generally a long conversation with the Rohingya refugee asking many questions. This was often, though not always followed by a time when the potential participant went away to think about being involved. Following this, oral consent was obtained before any formal data was collected. Throughout the whole process the researcher took care to ensure that the participant felt in control of everything and was talked to as an equal and with respect.

The researcher was from Bangladesh but to ensure there was no misunderstanding and to be respectful of the dignity of the Rohingya participants a translator qualified to understand Rohingya dialects assisted during the interviews. Privacy protocols ensured that only adults were interviewed and that participants could request the presence of other adults. For example, to respect their cultural norms female respondents were almost always accompanied by other females or by family members.

1.3.1.1 Storytelling Interviews

A largely purposive sampling technique was used to recruit participants from the Rohingya community who were living in the Cox's Bazar camps. This ensured a balance of men and women and of those in positions of importance in the community and other people as well as ensuring that views were drawn from people living in different locations within the camps (see Figure 1.3)

With the purposive sampling as a model to ensure a representative sample snowballing was used in order to meet prospective participants and to embed the researcher within the community.

Interviews were conducted in seven different camps in Ukhiya sub-district in Cox's bazar. A total of 40 Rohingya were interviewed (30 male and 10 female). They were aged between 19 and 78.

Once consent was obtained (see above) the participant was asked to tell their story which immediately put them in control, they decided what was important. Prompts were used to ensure that they covered all aspects of interest to the research and to gain more detail or clarify particular points.

All storytelling interviews were conducted during the fieldwork, from June to December 2019.

1.3.1.2 Focus group discussion (FGD)

Prior to all FGD, most of the participants were identified and informed through the personal contacts of the interviewer and local NGO representatives in the camps. Each potential participant went through the consent process outlined above and prior to collecting data in

the focus group the information about the study and their involvement was again discussed and they were again asked for oral consent.

Six FGD's were conducted in the Rohingya camps: two separate FGDs with Rohingya refugees in camp 11 (one with men and another with women); one FGD with men in camp 4; one FGD with men in a Madrassa in camp 5 (there were at least 40 men present though only 11 participated); one FGD with a group of women in the home of one of the women in camp 11; one FGD with a family in camp 11 (only the adults participated though there were children present); one FGD with a group of young Rohingya women who were volunteering (with some payment) with an NGO, in camp 16. In total, 24 females and 21 males participated in these FGDs. Finally, there was one FGD conducted in the host community. That group involved 20 women and five men (there were also 7 children present but they did not participate) A translator assisted effective communication between interviewers and participants. With participants' consent, all FGDs were audiotaped. The FDGs were conducted between June and December 2019.

1.3.1.3 Quantitative survey with Rohingya refugees

A quantitative survey was conducted involving 419 Rohingya participants (173 males and 246 females) from five different camps in Cox's Bazar. One adult member from each selected household were recruited for this survey. Almost equal number of participants from each of the camps were selected (i.e. 83 participants in camp 4, 83 participants in camp 5, 85 participants in camp 11, 80 participants in camp 12 and 88 participants in camp 16). The Government authority divided each Rohingya camp into many Blocks (or areas) while organising the settlements. Each Block roughly contains about 80 - 200 households. Two Blocks from each of these five camps were randomly chosen. Field workers from a local NGO provided support by introducing data collectors to the residents in each of these 10 Blocks. Such orientations were essential for trust building and to minimize potential mistrust between the Rohingya and data collectors. Equal number of households were chosen from each Block in every camp. Five local data collectors were trained by the research team to assist in this survey. All of them were local residents in Ukhiya sub-district and had a very good grasp of the Rohingya language. Training sessions were conducted in the house of a Rohingya person who further helped the data collectors to understand how to effectively communicate the questionnaire with Rohingya participants in the camps. Figure 1.3 (above) shows location of camps for this survey. Verbal consent was taken before filling out questionnaire in papers.

1.3.1.4 Qualitative interviews with humanitarian actors

In total, 36 humanitarian actors from different organizations were interviewed including representatives from local NGOs, international NGOs, international aid agencies and the UN organizations. Moreover, representatives from the Government of Bangladesh were also interviewed. All these participants were professionally linked with the Rohingya response activities in Bangladesh. High officials from the Government of Bangladesh included several

senior bureaucrats, a minister and one Adviser to the Prime Minister of Bangladesh. The RRRC high officials who administer Rohingya camps in Cox's Bazar were also interviewed. Among non-government organizations, high officials from several United Nation bodies, national and international NGOs were interviewed. Among frontline workers, healthcare professionals (i.e. doctors, nurses and medical assistants, child and women protection workers), community workers and professionals involved in providing basic necessities in the camps were interviewed. There was also one interview with a member of the judiciary and one with a leading academic working in Bangladesh. Prior appointments were secured, and safe/convenient locations were agreed through emails and telephone conversations. All interviews were face-to-face which enabled researchers to ask complex questions and receive essential details. Informed consent was obtained in writing and most of the interviews were audiotaped.

1.3.1.5 Online survey of people working in humanitarian organisations

An online survey was conducted with staff working in various humanitarian organisations actively involved with the response to the Rohingya crisis in Cox's Bazar. The survey was created and conducted with help from the JISC Online Survey, an online tool designed for academic research. Invitations were sent to many humanitarian organisations by email and mobile text messages. Moreover, the survey link was shared in humanitarian actors' authentic online forum for increased visibility (ISGC). A total of 91 participants participated in online survey. The identity of these participants was not detected by the system, however, since the email link was made available only to professionals working with humanitarian organisations working on the Rohingya crisis it is understood that only professionals from non-government humanitarian organizations participated in this online survey.

1.3.2 Data analysis

Several steps were taken in analysing qualitative data from the field. After the completion of fieldwork, tasks included transcribing audio recorded interviews into Bengali. Multiple local professionals having expertise in Rohingya language were assigned to transcribe interviews into formal Bengali. Following this, all scripts were translated into English with supports from several professional English translators in Dhaka. Interviews were transcribed as verbatim in Bengali and then translated into English. All details from the English transcripts were used for data entry. The qualitative data analysis software Nvivo-12 was employed for data entry and to organize the analysis of the data obtained. Personal research diaries maintained during the fieldwork largely helped to further enrich data analysis. The researcher kept a code book (which was constantly being updated as more analysis occurred). This consisted of separate thematic codes for each type of data, namely: storytelling interviews, FGD and qualitative interviews with humanitarian actors. Codes were revised several times during the data analysis phase to identify patterns and ensure no themes were missed. Finally, results were written under multiple thematic categories for each of the specific research objectives.

Quantitative data analysis software SPSS was employed to analyse quantitative data. Initial code list was also developed to identify new categories of responses from the field. Frequency tables were developed for each of the responses in the original questionnaire. For online survey with humanitarian actors, the JISC system automatically generated frequency tables. Finally, all graphs were developed by using Microsoft Excel software.

1.4 Research Ethics

This research followed the ethical guidelines of the British Sociological Association (BSA), British Society of Criminology (BSC), and University of South Wales (USW) Research Ethics Arrangements in ensuring safety, security and confidentiality of the respondents and researchers and in ensuring the quality of the data collected. Written permission was obtained from the office of the Refugee Relief and Repatriation Commissioner (RRRC) under the Ministry of Disaster Management and Relief, Government of Bangladesh before commencing the fieldwork. Moreover, local Government officials were informed about this study. Particular attention was paid not to negatively impact on the wellbeing of the Rohingya respondents (see above) We took every effort to ensure that we did not add to their trauma, in a number of cases they even explained that the research had helped them to cope with their trauma. Informed consent was obtained in all cases (see above) and no children took part in this research. Written consents were also taken from humanitarian actors, those who agreed to be interviewed. Information collected in this study will only be used for research and scholarly purposes and data management will comply with Data Protection Act (UK) (1998) and the General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR, 2018).

1.5 Outline of the report

Chapter 1 provides an introduction to the report and outlines the methodological strategy employed to address the research objectives of this study. This chapter also describes how the study participants were selected, and the way five different data collection techniques employed during the fieldwork.

Chapter 2 provides literature review and situates the research in the broader discussions around how dignity is conceptualised in the social sciences literature.

Chapter 3 describes the pattern of oppression faced by the Rohingya in Myanmar prior to the start of 2017 clearance operation detailing experiences of extreme violence.

Following that, Chapter 4 provides an overview of the causes of forced mass displacement and the displacement journey of Rohingya to Bangladesh. It contains vivid details on extreme violence and atrocities reported by survivors and/or witnesses during the 2017 persecution in Myanmar.

Chapter 5 explores first, how the forcibly displaced Rohingya perceive their dignity. Then it illustrates how their experiences of violence affected their dignity, and their feelings about its loss.

Chapter 6 considers how the Rohingya view dignity now they are in the camps in Bangladesh, it explores dignity against the backdrop of their present living conditions.

Chapter 7 looks at dignity from the perspectives of the humanitarian actors and government representatives.

Chapter 8 explores medium-to-long-term solutions to the crisis suggested by the Rohingya respondents, humanitarian aid organisations and from the Government of Bangladesh.

Chapter 9 outlines conclusions and recommendations.

Chapter 2: Literature Review: A brief history of the Rohingya, a conceptualisation of dignity and the nexus between the dignity of Rohingya refugees and sustainable development goals

2.1 A Crisis Deeply Rooted in History

The Rohingya are a Muslim population who have a millennial-long history of inhabiting the Mayu Peninsula in the northern Arakan, what is presently the Rakhine State of Myanmar (Sahana, Jahangir, and Anisuzzaman, 2019). Arakan was an independent kingdom for 2000 years and the Rohingya have been living in Arakan for about a thousand years (Ahmed, 2019). Al-Mahmood (2016) places them there in the eighth century and earlier though at that point they were heavily linked to India (Gutman, 2001; Yegar, 1972 and Crouch, 2016). Their conversion to Islam seems to date between the 8th and 14th centuries and occurred due to trading and inter-marriage with their Islamic neighbours (Manikandan, 2020 and Amrith, 2013). Arakan had two parts (South Arakan or Sandoway and north Arakan or Arakan proper) that were united in the 13th century. Due to the large mountain range the Arakan area which was ruled by the Rohingya Muslims but included Hindus and Buddhists remained separate from Burma until 1784 when the mainly Muslim Kingdom of Arakan was conquered and incorporated into the majority Buddhist kingdom of Burma (Ullah, 2011; Karim, 2016:13). These historical analyses strongly suggest that the ancestors of the people we know as the Rohingya had a very long history of living in Arakan, what is now the Rakhine state of Myanmar.

Britain had interests in the area and in 1826 it won control of Arakan which was once again separated from Burma. Britain moved the population between Arakan and East Bengal to meet their labour needs. Burma and Arakan were only reunited when the British colonised the rest of Burma in the 1880s (Ahmed, 2009). Although Britain re-united Burma they allowed internal divisions and administered the centre of Burma separately from outlying areas, one of which was Arakan. The British did not support Buddhist rule of Burma, they placed many non-Buddhist, including a lot of Muslims from Arakan in positions of power and this, along with the administrative separation reinforced difference and underlies some of the problems faced today (Ibrahim, 2016). This difference was built on during the Second World War. When Japan invaded Burma the British promised the Rohingya independence if they fought with them so the Rohingya remained loyal to the British (as did many other non-Burmese, non-Buddhist, ethnic groups). The largely Buddhist Burmese Independence Army (BIA), led by the 'thirty comrades' including General Aung San (father of Aung San Suu Kyi), were fighting for the Japanese. Britain won but reneged on the promise and did not grant the Rohingya independence. However, they placed many Rohingya in prestigious posts in the Burmese Government (Abdelkader, 2017). During the war Japan carried out multiple massacres (mostly in Arakan) to punish the Rohingya for their pro-British Stance (Ibrahim, 2016: 27) and this resulted in what had been an integrated Arakan becoming segregated into an Islamic

(largely Rohingya) north and a Buddhist south (Ibrahim, 2016: 27). The actions of the Japanese and the physical segregation of the Rohingya from the rest of Burma meant that in 1947 some Rohingya created their own army and fought to join the newly created East Pakistan, now Bangladesh. This initiative failed and when the whole of Burma became independent in 1948 some Arakanese Muslims filed an unsuccessful petition to annex Buthidaung and Maungdaw districts with East Pakistan. Whilst these actions were small compared to what other ethnic minorities did in Burma (Myanmar) it added to the already considerable tensions between the Muslim Rohingya and the Buddhist majority. Many in Burma saw the Muslims of Arakan as hostile to the new regime so labelled them as outsiders whose loyalty belonged to Bangladesh (Ibrahim, 2016: 27-28). Their different appearance, language and faith also marked them out as different in a country where being Buddhist was increasingly a requirement of citizenship (Ibrahim, 2016). Whilst the first independent regime with Prime Minister U Nu and President Sao Shwe Thaik recognised the Rohingya as Burmese and expressed a willingness to give them citizenship this never occurred though they were treated as citizens and both permitted to serve in Parliament and to vote in 1960 (Green, MacManus and de la Cour Venning, 2015: 2). Despite this apparently positive treatment, that same government dismissed many Rohingya Muslims from their government posts (given to them by the British, see Manikandan, 2020) and sent Buddhist Burmese to live in northern Arakan to decrease the Muslim majority (Manikandan, 2020).

Following the military coup in 1962 the situation for the Rohingya deteriorated and Pittaway (2008: 86-87) insists that the Burmese government increasingly treated the Rohingya who remained in Burma and those who returned from East Pakistan as illegal Pakistani immigrants. From 1962 on the military government denied any history of Rohingya living in Myanmar, they claim they are not 'taingyintha' – not 'natives of the soil' - and only arrived after 1824 (British colonialism). From this brief history and the academic proof it documents it is clear that Myanmar's claims that the Rohingya are not native to the Rakhine state, not native to Burma are untrue.

Since the 1960s the Rohingya have suffered from waves of persecution and forced migration under successive regimes in Myanmar and become pawns in the game of colonial and post-colonial politics. They are presently stateless because of a history over which they had little control (Pittaway, 2008: 86). Since the 1960s the Rohingya have been excluded from the mainstream in Myanmar and suffered from extreme persecution, persistently denied citizenship, their properties and land were frequently confiscated and they have experienced gradual marginalisation along with prohibition from military service and exclusion from the civil service (Haacke, 2016; Holliday, 2014; Alam, 2019). To illustrate, the earlier regimes in 1958 and 1960 denied the Rohingya full citizenship by declaring them as one of its many indigenous groups with little autonomy in the areas covering Maungdaw, Buthidaung and Rathedaung townships in the northern Arakan. In 1962, the military-backed Ne Win regime started to crack down on Rohingya freedom and in 1974 the military declared them to be 'foreigners' and required them to carry ID cards (Jones, 2017; Alam 2019). Partly because of

their faith and rejection of Buddhism the military has continuously used propaganda to say that the Rohingya are not and never have been Burmese and to deny their right to live in Rakhine; it depicted them as backward and 'lesser' than real citizens of Myanmar. This propaganda has been largely believed and many people from all political backgrounds support their removal from Myanmar (Ibrahim, 2016: 8-9), the propaganda dehumanised them and allowed the Myanmar citizens to accept that they should be denied human rights and could be treated with violence. This acceptance meant that the Citizenship Act 1982 was supported when it declared the Rohingya were foreigners and denied them basic rights such as freedom of movement, access to healthcare and education, marriage registration and voting rights. The Rohingya then became the largest stateless people in the world and had problems accessing education and health care and faced extortion if they want to travel, marry, register their children, build homes and eventually their mosques were destroyed and their rights to communal worship were denied.

Denial of Rohingya as citizens, denial of rights and the citizen's acceptance of this opened the door to other acts against them such as removal of their goods and actions to completely remove them from Myanmar if they did not have permission to remain or if they stepped outside that permission. There have been brief periods of relative acceptance such as in 2010 when they were permitted to vote and serve in Parliament. However, overall, since the 1960s the military regime conducted repeated crackdowns. Between 1966 and 1988, they torched, destroyed and appropriated property; raped; tortured; murdered and subjected Rohingya to other forms of violence which forced millions of Rohingya to flee to neighbouring countries including Bangladesh, India, Thailand and Malaysia (Ullah, 2016). Similar violent crackdowns occurred in 1991–2, 1996, 2012, 2016 and, most recently, in August 2017 (Ibrahim, 2016; Wade, 2017; Ullah, 2011; Ragland, 1994; Pittaway, 2008; Kipgen 2013 and Dussich, 2018). Added to this, particularly since 2012, violence towards the Rohingya by Buddhist groups who had previously lived peacefully alongside them in mutual interdependence grew.

In 2016, as a result of the Rohingya being denied rights and being treated with such hostility and degradation a small insurgent group of Rohingya attacked Border Police bases and led to a very violent backlash targeting all Rohingya and including killings, disappearances, torture, inhuman treatment, rape and arbitrary detention (Amnesty, 2016 and UN OHCHR, 2017a). In August 2017 the persecution of the Rohingya escalated when the Myanmar army started a *clearance operation* as a response to alleged attack on police outposts in Rakhine state supposedly perpetrated by Arakan Rohingya Salvation Army (ARSA). The clearance operation in August 2017 involved the systematic burning of Rohingya homes and villages and the killing and raping of thousands of their people (UN OHCHR, 2017b). It was clear that the attacks on the Rohingyas were executed in a well-organised, coordinated, and systematic manner.

'prior to the incidents and crackdown of 25 August, a strategy was pursued to: 1) Arrest and arbitrarily detain male Rohingyas between the ages of 15-40 years; 2) Arrest and arbitrarily detain Rohingya opinion-makers, leaders and cultural and religious personalities; 3) Initiate

acts to deprive Rohingya villagers of access to food, livelihoods and other means of conducting daily activities and life; 4) Commit repeated acts of humiliation and violence prior to, during and after 25 August, to drive out Rohingya villagers en masse through incitement to hatred, violence and killings, including by declaring the Rohingyas as Bengalis and illegal settlers in Myanmar; 5) Instil deep and widespread fear and trauma – physical, emotional and psychological, in the Rohingya victims via acts of brutality, namely killings, disappearances, torture, and rape and other forms of sexual violence.’ (UN OHCHR, 2017b: 1).

Similar observations were made by the UN Human Rights Council’s Fact-Finding Mission (FFM) suggesting the attacks were ‘widespread or systematic’ (UNHRC, 2018: 3) and conducted “with intent to destroy, in whole or in part, a national, ethnical, racial or religious group” (UN Human Rights Council, 2018: 16) as specified in the definition of genocide in International Human Rights Law. While the true number is unknown, there are conservative estimates highlighting that the Myanmar army executed between 9,425 and 13,759 Rohingyas from 25 August to 24 September (Mahony, 2018; Medicines Sana Frontiers, 2018). These events can legitimately be described as a slow-burning genocide (Zarni and Cowley, 2014) or ethnic cleansing (Beyrer and Kamarulzaman, 2017). The UN OHCHR (2017b:3) reports that Myanmar security forces surrounded or entered villages or settlements, sometimes accompanied by Rakhine Buddhist individuals, firing indiscriminately at innocent Rohingya villagers, injuring some and killing others, setting houses on fire, and announcing in other villages that the same would befall them if they did not comply with the order to immediately abandon their homes. The report further insists that in some cases, before and during the attacks, megaphones were used to announce: “You do not belong here – go to Bangladesh. If you do not leave, we will torch your houses and kill you” (UN OHCHR, 2017b: 7). It is thus unsurprising that the UN High Commissioner for Human Rights in his opening statement to the 36th session of the Human Rights Council stated that the situation seems to be a ‘textbook example of ethnic cleansing’.¹

The international community has been fully aware of the systematic denial of rights and commission of brutality (exclusion, discrimination, stigmatisation, deprivation, and humiliation) but their calls to the military governments in post-independent Myanmar to uphold human rights fell and continue to fall on deaf ears. Thus, appalling human rights violations continued (Ullah, 2011).

The clearance operation by the Myanmar security forces resulted in hundreds and thousands of Rohingyas fleeing Myanmar to save their lives and arriving in Bangladesh by foot and by boat. Many Rohingyas arrived exhausted and famished, often after walking for days and experiencing gender-based violence, and other human rights violations. Many have lost family members, in their villages or along the way, and are deeply traumatised (Inter Sector Coordination Group (ISCG), 2018). This was further documented by Haar and colleagues who

¹ <https://www.ohchr.org/EN/NewsEvents/Pages/DisplayNews.aspx?NewsID=22044&LangID=E>. (last accessed on 25 August 2020)

conducted a study that looked beyond the survivor narratives to identify physical evidence of violence and abuse to corroborate possible human rights violations. The overall patterns, consistency, and multiple independent confirmations of the individual testimonies of the Haar *et. al.* (2019) study provided a consistent picture of intentional, brutal violence suffered at the hands of Myanmar soldiers, often in concert with non-Rohingya civilians. The findings of that study confirm that injuries of the Rohingya survivors in Bangladeshi camps included those from gunshots, beatings, knives, and other sharp instruments, explosions, fire, sexual and gender-based violence, blunt trauma, and other types of trauma-related to the violence. Haar *et.al.* (2019) also found gunshot wounds of 63 out of 114 respondents could only have been caused by weapons used by state actors such as the military or police who therefore were most likely to have perpetrated these attacks. The consistency between the Rohingya narratives and the injuries, scars, symptoms, and disabilities documented in Haar *et. al* (2019) study represent unique physical evidence of human rights abuses among the Rohingya refugees who came from Myanmar. The systematic nature of this violence is confirmed by our field research, and our Rohingya participants were consistent in reporting their experiences of violence and persecution across the Northern Rakhine region of Myanmar.

2.2 Rohingya in Bangladesh: A Historical Perspective

There is a fairly long history of the displaced Rohingya taking refuge in Bangladesh. Whilst there have been multiple occasions when the Rohingya have been forced to move from Myanmar to Bangladesh the most notable occurred in 1978, 1991-92 and 2016. However, the recent influx in 2017 is the most significant.

The first large influx that Bangladesh witnessed was in 1978 when the Myanmar Army undertook operation 'King Dragon' or 'Nagamin' and forced more than 300,000 Rohingyas to flee their homes and take shelter in Bangladesh (Karim, 2016). Over time, and due to a strong stance on the part of the UN about 200,000 Rohingya finally returned to their homes. In 1991-92 about 300,000 again fled from Myanmar into Bangladesh though again many returned.

Despite many returning in 2017 there were still 27,150 officially documented Rohingya refugees in two camps in Cox's Bazar (Kutupalong and Nayapara). However, there were also believed to be approximately 200,000 Rohingya living in the general population, mostly around Cox's Bazar though some had moved to different parts of Bangladesh (Ahmed, 2019).

In 2017, the most recent movement of the Rohingya, over 800,000 Rohingya arrived in Cox's Bazar (UNHCR, 2019). Since then these Rohingya refugees have been living in makeshift camps in Ukhia and Tekhnaf areas of Cox's Bazar. They are supported by aid agencies and the Government of Bangladesh. This crisis has put enormous pressure on the economy of Bangladesh and also on the physical environment of the region. Building the camps destroyed 4,300 acres of hills and forests in the green zone in Tekhnaf and Ukhia in Cox's Bazar (UNDP, 2018). The influx of so many 'refugees' has also transformed the demographic of these two

sub-districts (PSS and SIPG, 2019). Clearly, if these Rohingya just return to Myanmar history will repeat and in 10 or 20 years they will be attacked again and forced to leave, it is necessary to find a permanent and sustainable solution to the issue posed by the rejection of the Rohingya by the Myanmar authorities.

2.3 Conceptualisation of 'Dignity'

Dignity is a complex concept whose meaning will differ depending on whether it is viewed through the prism of philosophical, legal, medical, bio-ethical, psychological, behavioural or cultural perspectives (Mattson and Clark, 2011; Pritchard, 1972). However, as a fundamental aspect of a democratic society, dignity is frequently referenced in modern public forums and debates, particularly when violations of rights, freedoms and social justice are being discussed (Misztal, 2012).

In very general terms dignity is an assertion of shared humanity (Glasius and Pleyers, 2013) and deemed to be 'a strong predictor of life satisfaction' (Hojman and Miranda, 2018: 2). In modern societies, the notion is related to social inclusion, participating in community life (Sen, 1999) or shaping one's 'own' life (Nussbaum, 2000: 73). Its exact meaning is affected by the culture and historical events of a society meaning it is a socially constructed term and context is a crucial component to any application and consideration of dignity to a specific case or group (Reaume, 2003). From this it is clear that dignity cannot be encapsulated in one ubiquitous framework because it is innately a political, philosophical, theological, and subjective issue (McCrudden, 2013) which this report views through broadly social science literature.

Unfortunately, in many traditional models or theories of dignity the lived experience is absent, ignored or presumed by the theorist. In these understandings of dignity a discipline, state or large organisation sets out its definition and then examines whether that is being respected in particular contexts. This is a top-down conceptualisation (Patrick and Simpson, 2019) which is often invoked in modern humanitarian aid programmes or state-led assessments of their record on respecting the dignity of a group. These conceptualisations are dated, they seldom gather or report affected communities' views on dignity (Grandi, Mansour and Holloway, 2018) so are blind to its real nature (Kriegel, 2017). The argument is that the common and traditional approach which ignores the importance, experience and perception of dignity (and of its loss) from the perspective of the 'victim' group is, in effect, an act of denial; it imposes the view and perspective of the powerful on the experience of the vulnerable, denying their voice.

As noted above, dignity is a versatile concept, used differently by each individual or entity. For this reason, Batniji (2012) asserts that dignity is a nebulous idea in theory and definition. Bagaric and Allan (2006: 269) go further by stating 'dignity is a vacuous concept' and Kamir

(2006:194) sees it as 'unspecified and amorphous' so open to be misused in arbitrary decision-making.

These arguments have worth but overlook the fact that dignity is a term which needs to be studied and understood. In particular, it is used: to decide where control lies; by the powerful to assert their interests; and by the vulnerable to ask that their humanity be respected. It is used in social justice, for example, in discussions about violence, poverty, homelessness, war, the displacement of peoples and distribution of humanitarian aid (Bostrom, 2009; Anidjar, 2018). This diverse use of the concept arises partly because it plays a key role in international human rights movements, and it figures prominently in many documents that ground political principles for many nations. As a source of political goods (Bennett, 2016), dignity potentially serves as common ground to identify and secure shared interests such as justice and human entitlement in local through to global spaces; it is vital in our increasingly interconnected world (Mattson and Clark, 2011; Nussbaum, 2009). Dignity is also a moral mandate and places an absolute obligation on conscience and is thereby capable of enhancing political actions (Bennett, 2016: 142). It posits all humans as part of the human family (ibid), and is claimed to be 'inalienable' (Kolani, 1976). This claim for 'dignity' first appears in the work of Immanuel Kant (1785), one of the earliest and still one of the leading thinkers to consider dignity.

For Kant (1785), all humans command dignity due to autonomy and their moral/ethical capacity. His thesis was that no individual should be treated as a means to an end because to do so would be to undermine their dignity. Each person is an end in themselves meaning that each individual's autonomy or choice should be equally respected. This means that everyone is worthy of respect and, as a rational being, each person possesses an unconditional and incomparable worth: namely dignity. From a Kantian perspective, dignity refers to an absolute inner value that is characterised in terms of autonomy (Bayefsky, 2013; Misztal, 2012). Human beings are rational or have the capacity for rationality and decision-making which forms the basis of this dignity (Kant, 1785). For Kant, dignity is intrinsic, extended to all humans even those who are vicious or bad or whose mental capacity is not yet formed or is reduced or destroyed. The crucial point is that Kant's idea of dignity is both inalienable (Leung and Cohen, 2011; Reaume, 2003) and normatively inviolable (meaning secure from attack, assault or trespass).

According to Hill (1991), to treat people with [Kantian] dignity is to treat them as autonomous individuals able to choose their destiny. It is more than merely unconditional human worth which demands a right to respect from others. Kant emphasises that people have a duty to act in ways which maintain their dignity so they have self-respect and deserve to be respected by others. Kant recognises multiple interpretive possibilities and ways of viewing honour, worth and dignity (Bayefsky, 2013). Building on Kant's ideas, some theorists have split dignity into two aspects: inner or human dignity and social dignity (Kateb, 2011). These two probably encapsulate the most important aspects for modern debates. Inner/human dignity relates to oneself, one's values and how one sees oneself, it is largely inward looking. Social dignity relates to relations with others and how others perceive and treat an individual but also how

an individual views others. Clearly inner dignity can be affected by social dignity (the way one is treated) and *vice versa*. In this analysis each person is necessarily valuable but is also valued by others (Kateb, 2011). The expectation is that everyone should respect each individual and ensure that each person enjoys agency and independence; mutual respect and dignity. This contains aspects of what is accepted as necessary to dignity, namely, respect for the individual and allowing each person to choose and empower her/himself to ensure that their choice shapes their lives such that they can be self-reliant (Mosel and Holloway, 2019). The discussion on dignity in this sense can then be extended to social status, self-worth and honour, in a broad sense, including moral autonomy (Bayefsky, 2013).

The splitting of dignity into inner and social acknowledges some of its complexity so inviting different facets to be considered. For example, one can both accept that dignity is (or should be) enjoyed by every human and recognise that dignity is not equally applied to each person. Most theorists recognise that dignity, respect and honour are linked (Herrman, 2019: 11 and Getz, 2018) though some view dignity and honour as different (Leung and Cohen, 2011). The difference may arise by accepting that in most societies some people are honoured more highly (treated with more dignity and respect) than others, they enjoy greater social standing (Schroeder and Bani-Sadr, 2017; Waldron, 2012: 201). This is clearly true and might lead one to question whether dignity is inalienable until one accepts that basic levels of respect and dignity are clearly essential both to a person's self-worth and to their ability to live a good life, it is one of the foundations of their well-being. However, just as some enjoy more than basic rights, so some enjoy higher levels of respect and dignity

This illustrates that the understanding of dignity has evolved but offers little of practical understanding. More recently, the concept of dignity, both in theory and in practice, has become intimately connected with the idea of human rights (Waldron, 2009; Bayefsky, 2013). In the 18th and 19th Centuries European constitutions and political declarations did not feature human dignity (Bostrom, 2009). It is only in the aftermath of the Second World War that human dignity finds its way into the centre of political standards and is found in numerous national and international declarations and in the constitutions of nation states. Indeed, human dignity appears in most protections of individual rights and almost all international instruments dealing with rights or humanitarian issues contain reference to dignity (Sensen, 2011; Schroeder and Bani-Sadr, 2017; Waldron, 2012; Bayefsky, 2013; Grant, 2007; and Bennett, 2016). For example:

"We the peoples of the United Nations determine ... to reaffirm faith in fundamental human rights, in the dignity and worth of the human person....". (preamble of the United Nations Charter 1945)

"All human beings are born free and equal in dignity and rights" (Article 1 of the Universal Declaration on Human Rights, 1948).

It even underlies those which embrace group rights, even these recognise and reference dignity:

“... freedom, equality, justice and dignity are essential objectives for the achievement of the legitimate aspirations of the African peoples...” (Preamble to the Charter of the Organization of African Unity, 1963; reiterated in the preamble to the African (Banjul) Charter on Human and People’s rights, 1981)

Dignity also appears in the constitutions of many states and in the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development which states (in a section marked ‘People’ which follows the Preamble) that the agenda aims to ‘...ensure that all human beings can fulfil their potential in dignity and equality ...’. These international documents help to show that human dignity appears to be of prime importance for contemporary discussions of human rights. However, the extent to which this is real is questionable as in these documents ‘dignity’ is not defined nor is there any indication of how it should be interpreted or how it underpins human rights; dignity is left as a vague notion, to be interpreted differently by each reader (Sensen, 2011: 75; Bostrom, 2009). Therefore, whilst the inclusion of dignity in international and political instruments is interesting and suggests that it has a powerful social, political, and human importance its underlying meaning is very unclear. The notion has been taken for granted as if the term comes with innate clarity.

As seen above, there is no ‘innate clarity’ about the concept of dignity. It is a very broad term which can resonate with almost any cause (Regilme, 2019: 287). It appeals to the Western, liberal ideas of rights as providing socio-legal protection against state power when it threatens to undermine individual rights and freedoms. It also appeals to the more communal rights ideals of the South and of peoples from developing countries where rights need to deliver entitlements and commodities to some of the poorest and most marginalised people as well as providing justice for peoples or groups as opposed to individuals (Fortman, 2011 and Regilme, 2019). By recognising dignity as a human right, actors from both the global North and South are able to celebrate the differences of various identities and shift the conversation toward actual policies and governance structures to support and promote justice relevant to their different contexts (Regilme , 2019; Benhabib, 2011; and Perez, 2018). This recognises that context alters the meaning of rights and dignity and that powerful states and the international community should be prevented from imposing their ideas of rights and dignity onto less powerful states, communities, and groups. Therefore, individuals and communities should be central to the discussion as to what dignity means to them and how it should be delivered, or made ‘real’ (Fortman, 2011 and Regilme, 2019). It is only by embracing the broader language permitted through dignity and moving away from a Western liberal insistence on a narrow group of civil and political rights to embrace economic, social and group rights that justice can be brought back to people. This wider purview will include areas of real importance to people in different situations in all parts of the world, only then can states be prevented from over-extending their powers, only then is the full concept of well-being and dignity embraced so that people can live well (Sen, 2009).

2.3.1 Islamic conceptualisations of dignity

Other than the contemporary secular understandings of dignity that have been discussed, it is important to point out that the notion also has solid bases in the world's major religions - Judaism, Christianity, Islam, Confucianism, and Hinduism (Iglesias, 2001; Simion, 2016; Schroeder, 2012; Schroeder and Bani-Sadr, 2017; Lee, 2008). For Example, a human being is an avatar of a deity in Hinduism; is created in God's image in Judaism; and is a moral agent in Confucianism (Lee 2008), and even coexists with the divine through hypostatic union in Jesus Christ (Simion, 2016: 70; Lee, 2008).

For its more particular relevance to this report, we briefly expand on dignity in Islam. Although 'dignity' may not have an exact equivalent in the Arabic language in which the primary sources of Islam - the Qura'an and Sunnah – are revealed, the concept of *karāma* (كرامة) is the closest to convey this meaning. *Karāma* in Arabic means dignity, honour, respect/prestige and high status (<http://www.ectaco.co.uk/English-Arabic-Dictionary/>). And with regard to inherent human dignity the Quran says:

".. ولقد كرّمنا بني آدم" (Quran 17/70) that translates as 'And We have indeed bestowed the children of Adam with dignity/honour...' (Quran 17/70).

While dignity/honour and its various dimensions in this context are interpreted by Islamic scholars in different ways, what is important is its generality to 'the children of Adam' – all human beings irrespective of their race, gender/sex, socio-economic class, or any other individual and social attributes. While Islam emphasizes the inherent fundamental dignity of all human beings, its core is enhanced by the righteousness of a human individual as the Quran says:

"O mankind! We created you from a single (pair) of a male and female, and made you into nations and tribes, that ye may know each other. Verily the most honoured of you in the sight of God is (he/she who is) the most righteous of you." (Quran 49:13).

The criterion for 'righteousness' is complex and highly context-bound in Islam, according to Schroeder and Bani-Sadr (2017) the elevation of an individual's human dignity is directly related to the ways he/she treats other humans. Thus, violation of other people's dignity leads to the lowering of one's own dignity. Schroeder and Bani-Sadr (2017) stress that dignified treatment of each other is closely inter-connected with freedom (from oppression and humiliation), peace and human development. And, because humans become and remain noble/dignified through virtuous acts (Quran 49:13 cited in Schroeder and Bani-Sadr 2017), virtue is realised in the expansion of freedom through development (Quran 72:14 cited in Schroeder and Bani-Sadr 2017). This understanding of dignity in Islam has similarities with Kant's philosophical ideas emphasising one's obligations to uphold his/her own dignity and the obligation to others for respecting theirs. It is also similar to Sen's ideas about the strong connections between individual dignity and human development. As is clear later, it is the Islamic meaning of dignity that is central to the perceptions of the Muslim Rohingya in Bangladesh.

As a Muslim society the concept of dignity for the Rohingya is strongly influenced by Islamic teachings. In Islam, dignity is inherent to all humans and is referred to in the Quran as *karāma* (dignity, honour, respect and high status) with which all human beings are endowed. In Rohingya culture dignity includes collective dignity and mutual respect, freedom to worship and practicing faith, and the ability to meet the family's basic needs. Holloway and Fan's (2018) research on dignity among the Rohingya refugees in Bangladesh suggests that for the Rohingya dignity mainly focuses on the notions of *maan-shomman* (honour and status) and *ijjot* (respecting other). This conceptualisation of dignity, mixed with Rohingya patriarchal cultural values over the centuries and with the idea of 'purdah' (privacy) as being important to dignity means that preserving women need to be protected. Indeed, the dignity and honour of women has become a central part of their religious and cultural identity and is a core part of their dignity, this is common in other Islamic societies as well (see Kandiwal, 2019). Therefore, protection of *karāma* (dignity), protection of *maan-shomman* (honour and status), protection of *ijjot* (respecting other) and protection of *purdah* (privacy) are all core to Rohingya concepts of dignity. The special protection of women includes protecting both their *ijjot* and ensuring they enjoy *purdah* (privacy). This includes the everyday protection of women from being seen by males outside the family (wearing a hijab or veil and ensuring no-one can view inside ones' home) and also covers their protection from sexual assault and rape, indeed if a Rohingya women is raped she loses her *ijjot* completely (Uddin, 2017) and this also lowers the dignity of her family for not protecting her.

As will be discussed later in this report translating these general concepts of dignity involve many dimensions including compassion and respect; protection from sexual abuse and harassment; meeting basic needs; religious and cultural values; and peace and security. For the Rohingya their dignity, or their *maan-shomman* (honour and status) is closely linked to their safety, to their identity and to their return home as Rohingya who live in Rakhine and are full citizens of Myanmar. A Rohingya living in a refugee camp can never experience full *maan-shomman* (honour and status) or *ijjot* (respecting other), they can never fully protect the women so never fully deliver *purdah* (privacy) because their homes have no walled protections and men and women are in the same queue for using latrines, so their dignity is not protected (Oxfam, 2018). Importantly, living as a refugee feels like they may not achieve their safe and voluntary repatriation (Bradley, 2009), they may not even be able to protect themselves or others from future violence which might include abuse, torture, and rape (Ahmed, 2019) because living in the camps they feel they are dependent on others whereas they really want self-sufficiency. Living in camps is therefore problematic for their dignity even if they are respectfully provided for.

2.4 'Dignity' among the Rohingya in Bangladesh

Prior to our study there had been some analysis of dignity from the perspective of the Rohingya. The way the Rohingya understand and interpret dignity seem similar to how the notion is perceived by many Bangladeshis. This could be because the Rohingya speak a

language that has significant overlap with Chittagongian dialect (language spoken by Southern part of Bangladesh) and both the Rohingya and Bangladeshis share many Muslim traditions and cultural customs and practices. Uddin (2017), in one of the influential books written in Bengali, based on many case studies with the displaced Rohingya in Bangladeshi camps also insist that they generally referred to *ijjot* in the context of experience of rape and sexual assault, which was associated with their perception of dignity. For them, being raped or sexually assaulted (which means 'losing *ijjot*') are extreme violations that completely break down their idea of dignity. Uddin insists that many Rohingya women mentioned that they were 'fortunate' as they were not a victim of rape or sexual assault; thus, they managed to arrive in Bangladesh with *ijjot* (dignity). This was also evident in Holloway and Fan's (2018) research on dignity among the Rohingya refugees in Bangladesh. They suggest that Rohingya meaning of dignity mainly focus on the notions of *maan-shomman* [honour and status] and *ijjot* [respecting other]. Chittagongian meaning of dignity is *ijjot-shomman*. If we look at the roots of these words, we can see that *maan-shomman* is derived from Sanskrit and *ijjot* has an Arabic root. Thus, the Rohingya prefer to use the word *ijjot* than *maan-shomman* (Holloway and Fan, 2018).

Holloway and Fan (2018) also show that dignity among the Rohingya has three dimensions: the social, religious, and economic. Collective dignity and mutual respect, freedom to worship and practicing faith, and ability to meet the family's basic or daily need are seen to be associated with their perceived notion of dignity. For Ahmed (2019), oppression and different types of torture (such seeing their loved ones tortured, raped, and forcibly displaced from their ancestral land) can develop traumatized memories among the Rohingya and thus violate their dignity. As can be seen from the above, the Rohingya have experienced widespread and severe forms of human rights violations. Two types of violation of dignity can be identified: a) when Rohingya women were being subject to violence and rape, losing *ijjot*; and b) when the Rohingya were tortured, abused, faced violence and forced to move from their ancestral land and seek refuge to other countries (losing *maan-shomman*).

Furthermore, dignity for the Rohingya also includes their safety and voluntary repatriation (Bradley, 2009). Current living condition in various camps is seen as less dignified compared to their perception of dignity since Rohingya notion of privacy (*purdah*) or cultural values (e.g. men and women are in the same queue for using latrines) are not well maintained in the camps (Oxfam, 2018). Privacy, particularly for women, is a very important aspect of the Rohingya understanding of 'dignity' and is linked to physical mobility and public visibility of women and children. Even in the makeshift camps, Rohingya women maintain a strict *purdah* or veil to ensure and protect their honour (dignity) and so ensure they live a dignified life. Feeling ashamed is another important element of dignity as Rohingya women who have experienced sexual violence often fear to talk about their past (Farzana, 2017). Shame can be seen associated with their idea of dignity as they consider being a victim of rape or sexual violence as a shameful part of their lives and they do not want their husband or anyone else to know

about it. Women and children also feel ashamed if men see them wash their menstrual clothing in camps (Farzana, 2017). Thus, the feeling of 'shame' is also a component that shapes the idea of dignity, especially among Rohingya women. Considering their current living arrangement, fear of various types of violence including abuse, torture, and rape (Ahmed, 2019) also undermine their notion of dignity. Potentially this paves their expectation of a dignified and safe repatriation where they hope to be able to practice their faith and live as citizens of their country without any discrimination.

2.5 Nexus between displaced population's dignity and sustainable development

The ongoing plights of the Rohingya refugees currently living in Bangladesh pose a significant challenge to the delivery of the 2030 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) especially for Bangladesh. Therefore, sustainable governance and sustainable human development are at the core of this project since it focuses on the forcibly displaced Rohingya who are victims of violence and conflict. Few people in the world live in more abject poverty or are treated with less dignity than refugees generally and Rohingya refugees in particular. Our study aims to suggest ways forward to establish these vulnerable people's dignity, social justice and social as well as cultural wellbeing.

Our research focuses on understanding the Rohingya refugees: the impetus for their movement; its effects on their lives; its effect on their dignity; and how their dignity and their lives might be improved. We seek to discover what realistic changes would make a positive difference to their leading safe and peaceful lives where they are treated with dignity, and equality and at the same time allow and support them to move out of poverty and re-build (or build new) healthy and sustainable lives and communities.

Dignity is central to the research. Sustainable development requires just institutions, alleviation of poverty, provision of education etc., all of which are essential for dignity. Violence is also a central theme as turmoil and military conflicts are at the centre of the reason for the suffering for the displacement of the Rohingya to Bangladesh. Such violence strips people of everything they have and much of what they identify with and leaves them with few possessions, often nothing. Frequently it separates them from family, community, and culture, and makes them dependent on others to survive which in itself lacks dignity. Endemic violence leads to the fragility of societies and of its institutions and undermines the basic requirements for sustainable development.

One of the main aims of this study is to draw out both the similarities and differences around the causes, cultures, experiences and effects of displacement and explore how problems in this case might be tackled by suggesting practical pathways to redemption and prevention and enhancing dignity and social justice for these people. This study is predominantly linked with Goal-16 of the SDGs that 'aims to promote peaceful and inclusive societies for sustainable development, provide access to justice for all and build effective, accountable and

inclusive institutions at all levels'. Below, we specify how this study covers specific targets of the Goal-16 of the SDGs, such as:

- Significantly reduce all forms of violence and related death rates everywhere (Target – 16.1)
- End abuse, exploitation, trafficking, and all forms of violence against and torture of children (Target – 16.2)
- Promote the rule of law at the national and international levels and ensure equal access to justice for all (Target - 16.3)
- Ensure responsive, inclusive, participatory, and representative decision-making at all levels (Target – 16.7)
- Broaden and strengthen the participation of developing countries in the institutions of global governance (Target – 16.8)

In addition to promoting peaceful and inclusive societies for sustainable development, the findings of the study are also interconnected with other goals and targets of the SDGs. Such as:

- Ensure healthy lives and promote well-being for all at all ages (Goal-3).
- Achieve gender equality and empower all women and girls (Goal – 5). More specifically: eliminate all forms of violence against all women and girls in the public and private spheres, including trafficking and sexual and other types of exploitation (Target 5.2)
- Ensure availability and sustainable management of water and sanitation for all (Goal – 6). More specifically by 2030 achieve universal and equitable access to safe and affordable drinking water for all (Target 6.1)
- By 2030, ensure that all learners acquire the knowledge and skills needed to promote sustainable development, including, among others, through education for sustainable development and sustainable lifestyles, human rights, gender equality, promotion of a culture of peace and non-violence, global citizenship and appreciation of cultural diversity and of culture's contribution to sustainable development (Target 4.7)
- By 2030, ensure access for all to adequate, safe and affordable housing and basic services and upgrade slums (Target 11.1)

No culture can thrive without security so having a fair, effective and efficient justice system able to tackle violent and other criminal activities is essential. It is important to note that failure to tackle violence was one factor which prevented some countries from achieving their millennium development targets by 2015 (World Bank, 2011; OECD, 2015). It is clear that sustainable economic growth goes hand in hand with sustainable governance and sustainable human development. Endemic violence and violent discrimination undermine stable institutions and access to justice, rights, jobs, education and other aspects of normal life which in turn allows violence to take hold. These problems often create a vicious circle which needs to be broken before sustainable development can flourish. Institutional stability to

provide justice and protect citizens are key, they are as important as ensuring the security of citizens.

Documenting the experiences of the Rohingya in Bangladesh and noting their notions of dignity will: deliver a clearer understanding of how displacements happen and are experienced; create the knowledge necessary to increase and sustain communities' resilience to violence, conflict and other emergencies; explore practical solutions to provide pathways to healthier and safer lives; and help to prevent further displacements and migrations. The study, therefore, seeks to make positive changes to people's lives allowing them to lead safe and peaceful lives where they are treated with dignity, justice and equality and allowed and supported to move out of poverty and re-build (or build new) healthy lives and communities.

Chapter 3: Patterns of oppression and discrimination: the Rohingya experiences of living in Myanmar prior to 2017

3.1 Chapter overview

This chapter presents accounts of historic oppressive, degrading, violent and discriminatory behaviours committed by the Myanmar military, the police and of the civilian population in Rakhine (particularly Buddhists) against the Rohingyas. The accounts come from the Rohingya victims and are drawn from the start of Myanmar independence in 1948 up until 2017. Most of the oppressive, degrading, violent and discriminatory behaviours arose after the military coup in 1962. At certain times over this 50 year period the behaviour resulted in extreme violence and human rights abuses which included killing and maiming and the rape and sexual assault of women and girls. The chapter also documents strategies adopted by the Rohingya in an attempt to protect themselves from these behaviours, limit the damage from the behaviours or help them to cope with the situation. The chapter documents oppressive treatment and institutional racism which tried to undermine their faith and attack their very essence - their identity as Rohingya who belonged in the Myanmar state of Rakhine and had lived there for centuries. It reduced their dignity and tried to remove their most important coping mechanism: communal worship.

3.2. Oppression: refusal of human rights and a loss of dignity

The Rohingyas are a Muslim population who have a millennial-long history of inhabiting the Mayu Peninsula in the northern Arakan, what is presently the Rakhine State of Myanmar (Sahana et al., 2019). When Burma (now Myanmar) was formed the Rohingya people were not listed as one of the indigenous groups and in 1962 their right to citizenship was withdrawn, removing their legal status to live in Myanmar and rendering them illegal foreigners (Jones, 2019). Identity cards were available from 1951. However, after 1962 the Rohingyas were required to obtain and carry an identification card popularly known as Rohingya National Registration Card (green for men and pink for women). This card acted as proof of their valid ethnic identity but not their citizenship. In 1982 the Rohingya National Registration Card was invalidated and should have been surrendered to the authorities. However, some adults retained their Rohingya National Registration Cards, or those of their parents/grandparents as proof of their right to residence in Myanmar; their ethnic identity; and (arguably) the citizenship that they thought they should enjoy. When the National Registration Cards were taken away the Rohingyas were given receipts which many retain as proof that they once had (or their parents/grandparents once held) a National Registration Card. They use their receipts to cement their claim to live in Myanmar. The old cards were replaced by another identification card, popularly known as the White Card. The white card reduced their rights and left the Rohingya people in a form of legal limbo, basically it rendered them stateless and without any right to residency. In 2015 even these very flimsy identification cards were invalidated. These cards all rendered Rohingya as foreign nationals

in Myanmar, denying them their rights to citizenship, with many respondents claiming that the changes to the white cards were just another form of abuse. Possession of the cards prevented the Rohingya people having their citizenship rights recognised, which caused many subsequent problems that included limited physical mobility within Myanmar, limited rights to education, limits on where they could be employed, bans on marriage or at least refusal to register marriages, no access to justice, and meant that they were frequently subjected to various types of abuse.

Since the first clamp-down in 1962 the Rohingyas in Myanmar have suffered repeated military crackdowns, the most violent in 1978-79, 1991-92 and 2016-18 (Alam Khan, 2017) resulting in their displacement. In the latest crackdown (2016-18) almost a million Rohingyas fled from Myanmar to Bangladesh (see UNHCR, June, 2019), these were the people included in our study. Prior to the forced displacement in August 2017, the Rohingyas in Myanmar were indiscriminately abused, attacked and even tortured in a range of ways. The participants reported that individuals or families were given no basic human rights to survive. Their reports on various forms of violence have been recognized as severe human rights issues torture, bribery, restriction on physical mobility, violence and rape against women and young girls, including religious and cultural restrictions associated with their religion. Almost all participants stated that they experienced these difficulties for as long as they can remember; their sufferings were not new. The sufferings were associated with the three dimensions of Rohingya dignity, that consisted of social, religious and economic factors (Holloway and Fan 2018) and a perception of dignity generally referred to as *ijjot* or within the context of being raped or sexually assaulted, '*losing ijjot*' (Uddin, 2017).

The following sections provide an overview of oppression, discrimination and abuse that contributed to the reduction of the Rohingyas' collective dignity and respect whilst residing in Myanmar prior to their forced displacement into Bangladesh.

3.2.1 Loss of freedom of movement

Participants reported that in Myanmar, Rohingyas were only allowed to travel a short distance from their home. They were required to obtain written permission from the Myanmar authorities to travel longer distances. Due to this travel restriction, transporting commodities or running economic activities within Rakhine state were heavily constrained. It was also nearly impossible to transport sick patients to hospitals. Hospitals, also refused to provide transport to carry emergency patients from Rohingya households. The qualitative data revealed the extent of the restrictions on physical mobility and the impact upon the lives of Rohingya communities as illustrated by the following quotes and the case story presented in Box 3.1.

While asked how his new-born child died, a male linked the tragic incident with travel restrictions in Myanmar, even during medical emergency:

“Ten days after he was born, my son began to have seizures. The military did not permit us to take him to a doctor. Hence, he died without medical treatment.” (B03, a 45 year old male)

Box 3.1. Case story illustrating the restrictions on physical mobility and the actions taken by a husband to finally take his pregnant wife to hospital for childbirth:

“It was just before her delivery time. I was taking my wife to the hospital. There were 3 check-posts on the way to hospital. On the first check-post, the police stopped our car, so I got off the vehicle and walked towards him. He harshly asked me where were we going. I replied that my wife was in labour pain and I needed to take her to the hospital. To cross a check-post, it was customary to bribe 500 [Myanmar currency] per stoppage. As I didn't have any change, I offered him 1000 [Myanmar currency]. The police began swearing at me. Luckily we managed to cross all three check-posts and took my wife to the hospital that day.” (B05, a 55 year old male)

As the Rohingyas had their freedom of movement withdrawn, they had to resort to bribery to obtain permission to travel to distant locations. As identified above, this restriction had life changing consequences for some participants, but they caused problems for all the Rohingyas that we interviewed.

3.2.2 Discrimination and oppression: preventing access to education

The Rohingyas suffered from discrimination and oppression as access to education was withheld. Participants claimed that the authorities banned darker skinned Rohingyas from continuing their education at school. Though some families managed to send their children to primary schools, the majority of the participants reported that the school graduation rate for Rohingya children was nearly zero. The qualitative data revealed the discrimination and oppression experienced by the Rohingya community and the measures taken to prevent them accessing education.

“Previously, we had Muslim teachers in our schools, madrassas and colleges. They used to provide us with quality education. From 1995, more and more Rakhine Buddhists got hired as teachers. That's why, they didn't give chance to the Muslim students to study further in those institutions.” (B05, a 55 year old male)

The authorities also banned Muslim Rohingyas from the teaching profession, including those that had been qualified teachers in Rakhine and teaching at schools for many years. During school exams, all students having Muslim names were disqualified without considering their academic performance:

“While assessing papers, they don't allow anybody to pass in exams if they see a Muslim name on top of exam papers.” (B10, a 19 year old male)

Children were discriminated and physically tortured for no reasons at schools. While every other child in the catchment areas were allowed to come to school by bicycle or by other modes of transportation, Rohingya children were forced to walk.

“They even tortured us at schools. They used to search our bodies for security surveillance when entering the school premises. Some of us used to ride cycles, motorcycles or Chaikka, also known as rickshaws here. When they checked our vehicles at the entrance, we had to get down from them and walk the rest of our way. It used to make us late for school everyday.” (B22, a 40 year old male)

Other experiences of oppression and discrimination include financial oppression, the imposition of penalties and seizure of land, which are detailed below.

3.2.3 Financial oppression, imposition of penalties and bribery

The qualitative data evidenced the Rohingyas deprivation of basic human rights in Myanmar, which included the denial of their ethnic identity, loss of citizenship status, restricted movements, and a lack of access to education. Further evidence included financial oppression, imposition of penalties and seizure of land as they were frequently forced to pay bribes for almost every activity they might choose to participate in. The amount of bribe depended upon on the types of activities they participated in. In many cases, the bribes were forcefully collected by imposing financial penalties, capturing livestock, and forcing Rohingya shop keepers to buy their supplies from *the Rakhine Buddhists*. It is unclear from the data whether these restrictions were arbitrarily imposed by the local government or directly from the military. Most of the Rohingyas reported that they had to pay bribes on regular basis to Myanmar military, *NaSaKa* and police forces. Below, a Rohingya female describes how bribes were imposed for raising livestock at home or when a guest visited their home in Myanmar:

“We had to pay fines if our cows horns had grown. They alleged that we must have stolen it because they saw smaller horns in the previous visit [security check, months ago]. If any relatives came to visit us, we had to inform them [police and military]. If an extra person is added to a house, one of the household members had to go to somewhere else to keep the residence number the same. Because they had the list of the number of residents in each house of our village. Moreover, as the guests came, we had to pay 500 [Myanmar kyat] as fee [bribe] for every single visitor.” (B01, a 26 year old female)

Without following any consistent pattern, financial penalties or fines were imposed by Myanmar military, *NaSaKa* force and police separately depending on how they intended to inflict financial penalties upon the Rohingya individuals and/or families. The following statement illustrates how financial penalties were imposed on Rohingya individuals for pursuing income generation activities such as farming, cattle raising and fishing in Myanmar:

“If we raised cattle in Myanmar, we had to pay them 5,000 [Myanmar kyat] for raising each cow. We had to pay for goats as well. When the cattle gave birth, we had to report them to

the Thana [police station]. They used to record the new calves in a register book. Sometimes when our cattle went to graze, they used to steal them.” (B02, a 30 year old female)

It is unclear from the data whether these amounts were determined by law or the local state authorities. Local Rakhine civilians also took part in financial oppression by taking forceful custody of Rohingyas’ cattle with the help of police:

“Mogh Para was next to our village. They called the police when our cattle went to that direction. Not only they called police but also they ate our cattle after slaughtering. To save it, we had to compensate them by 50,000 [Myanmar kyat]. They commonly blamed us that the cattle had ruined or ate up their crops.” (B32, a 55 year old male)

Local Rakhine people troubled Rohingyas in their business and shop keeping due to their higher citizenship status and rights in Myanmar, in comparison to the participants. The following quote is by a Rohingya male who describes how he was forced to rely on Rakhines (mostly Buddhists) if they wanted to run a small business:

“If we opened up a shop, all our supplies used to be delivered by the Rakhine Buddhists. This means, we were forced to buy supplies only from them because we were not allowed to go outside of Akyab city. If we had to go to some other cities, we needed to take permission from the NaSaKa force.” (B05, a 55 year old male)

Nonetheless, Rohingyas continuously became subjected to security surveillance by Myanmar forces including military, NaSaKa and police. The main actions which resulted from the surveillance involved alleging (or interrogating) Rohingyas for supporting some insurgent groups in western Rakhine. The forces usually released detained Rohingyas if they (or their families) paid a bribe, generally a fairly high sum. When the entire village was raided, the poor villagers even collectively paid a bribe to save their lives and properties (see Box 3.2).

Box 3.2: Case story illustrating how the Rohingyas paid bribes to save their lives in Myanmar

“Whenever the military, police and the NaSaKa forces raided our villages, we would collect around 5-10 lac taka (Myanmar Kyats) from everyone in the Para and pay that money to the police station with help from our Para Chairman and the village representatives. Sometimes we had to give away our cattle as a bribe. Like this, we became victims of many of their extortions. They once put our Chairman and the village representatives in gaol. Later, the inhabitants of the Para had to pay 2 lacs in Burmese currency (Myanmar Kyats) to bail them out.” (B31, a 34 year old male)

After suffering financial oppression that restricted their rights to a livelihood, the Rohingya also suffered from the seizure and loss of ownership of their land. This happened as a result

of them being rendered undocumented foreign nationals during the military regime in 1982. Though many Rohingyas preserved their old papers which proved their land ownership, those documents were invalidated by the Myanmar dictatorship in 1982. According to the participants the Rohingyas' land rights were later redistributed to other ethnic communities residing in Rakhine. After losing legal rights to their ancestral farmlands, Rohingyas used to cultivate Myanmar lands by contract leasing, mostly within the same areas, even on the same land. The present owners of land often allowed Rohingyas to cultivate the land they previously owned if they agreed to share the harvested crops with the new landowners.

Clearly, financial oppression, imposition of penalties and bribery were imposed from outside (demanded by the military or others) but some were also experienced as ways in which the Rohingya coped and tried to minimise other suffering. In addition to the above, the Rohingyas adopted and used other strategies to cope with the severe oppression and discrimination they suffered whilst living in Myanmar. The findings below confirm that they were very limited in the actions they could take to try and reduce the violence they were subjected to. Qualitative and quantitative data details the actions and strategies used which included bribing Myanmar forces, practicing their religious faith, and supporting each other via their social networks.

Figure 3.1 Initiatives used to cope with oppression and discrimination in Myanmar

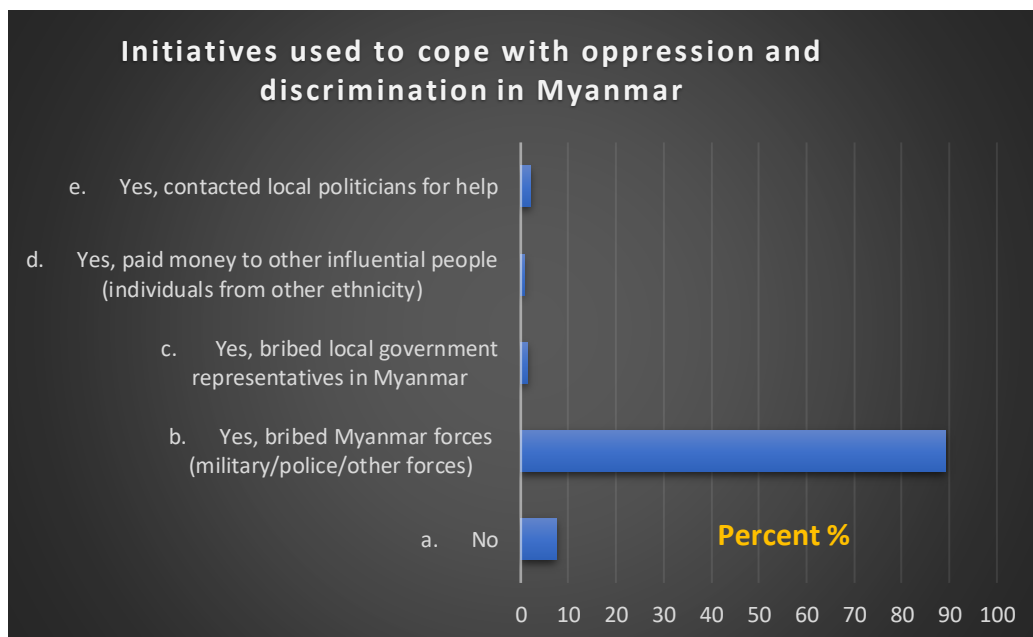


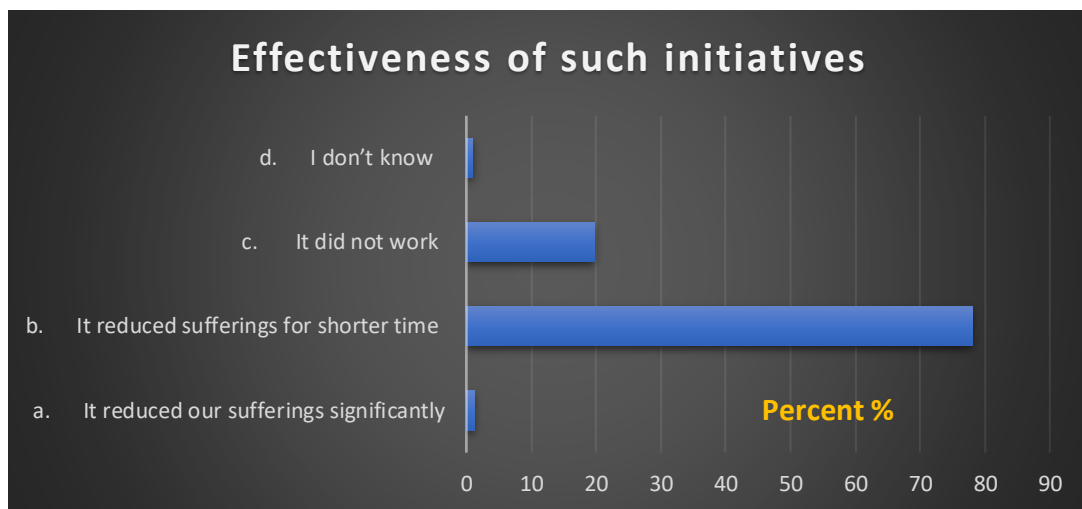
Figure 3.1 above evidences the depth of bribery used to try and ease their suffering. Most of the Rohingyas (89%) reported that there were no strategies available apart from paying the expected bribes to the security forces and other authorities, temporarily preventing violence or further military raids in their villages. Participants collected significant amounts of money, a little from each family, some of them gave belongings (including cows and goats) but in

many instances, this was insufficient, and higher amounts were demanded by the military in order to avoid further invasion or harassment.

This bribery suggests that Myanmar's military was not only involved in genocide and other violations of human rights, but it was also involved in corruption and extortion. The oppression and violence is still being perpetrated so that State Counsellor and Foreign Minister **Aung San Suu Kyi** seemed to be just a different phase of continued military dictatorship in Myanmar but that is not surprising as many people from all political backgrounds support their removal from Myanmar (Ibrahim, 2016: 8-9), indeed no political party in Myanmar is willing to support their cause. The military coup in February 2021 which was achieved with minimal intervention proves their hold on power, it suggests that they probably always held, and now clearly hold, the real power. A smaller percentage of participants (2%) answered that they contacted local politicians for help. Only 1% reported that they bribed local government officials and another 1% reported that they bribed individuals from other ethnic groups to avoid violence against them on temporary basis. 7% reported that they were unable to take any actions to prevent further raids and violence.

Other strategies included receiving financial support from Rohingya family members living in other countries including Malaysia and in some Middle-Eastern countries. Families living in these other countries were able to send financial remittance to their relatives staying 'home' in Myanmar. Family members abroad were considered a financial strength, able to provide essential financial resources to the Rohingyas that enabled them to pay the bribes. Figure 3.2 below shows how the Rohingyas perceived the effectiveness of the initiatives used to help them reduce the violence and aggression they faced on a daily basis: 78% confirmed that bribery only managed to prevent their suffering for a short amount of time; 20% acknowledged that paying the bribes was not successful and had little or no impact upon the discrimination and oppression they faced. Only 1% participants reported that it reduced their stressful situation to a significant level, whilst an additional 1% of participants reported that they could not provide any specific answers.

Figure 3.2 Effectiveness of initiatives used to prevent further military attacks and violence



Not only did the Rohingyas suffer from financial oppression and imposition of penalties, but they also experienced restrictions on religious practices and a marriage ban which had a detrimental effect upon their community, diminishing their collective dignity.

3.2.4 Restrictions on religious practices and ban on Marriage

The Rohingyas experienced further infringements upon their collective dignity due to strict restrictions upon their participation within religious practices which included a marriage ban. For Muslims, praying in congregation at mosque is understood to have higher spiritual and social benefits than praying at home, and whilst praying at mosques were banned by the Myanmar authority from 2012, participants explained that this helped them to live and cope in these times of adversity. The Rohingyas confirmed that religious practices helped them to heal emotionally, as praying five times a day in a congregation was an effective way to find spiritual healing and socialise with other members of the community that were also affected. Participation in Talim in Tablighi Jamaat² was reported as an effective way to find comfort and peace during challenging times. These sessions included providing training on the reading of the Quran, praying and performing other Islamic rituals, which helped the Rohingyas to utilise their faith to find peace and comfort and preserve hope for the life after death, as per Islamic beliefs. The following statements explains how practicing their faith helped them to cope with the discrimination and oppression they faced:

“What can we do except praying to Allah! Every week we arrange Talims and Tabligh. Sometimes the discussions about Allah and his Prophet give me some respite from the traumas of my past. Women too organize Talims each week or every month.” (B06, a 60 year old female)

“Yes, we do organize Tablighi Jamaat’s activities. The women learn about Islamic teachings from home as Tablighi activities which are organized at home for them. Besides, these

² A form of shared learning in an informal religious setting

Tablighi activities are organized each week in different blocks from one mosque to another. This makes us feel better.” (B07, a 42 year old male) -

Due to the severity of the persecution, the Rohingyas were significantly distressed and suffering from the painful experiences of living in Myanmar. The participant statement above affirmed that practicing their faith and utilising their social networks provided them with comfort and support to overcome the discrimination and oppression they faced on a daily basis.

For Muslims, Friday is a dedicated day for worship where prayer in congregation is a major act of worship. Rohingyas’ secret attempts to pray at mosques on Friday also risked their lives:

“As they closed down the mosques, someone had to be set on guard outside if we wanted to read the Friday prayers (Juma’a). If he notified that the army was approaching, everybody would leave their prayers mid-way and run for their lives.” (B06, a 60 year old female)

Other religious practices were also forbidden:

“They didn’t permit us to give azan using loudspeakers. We had to put the loudspeakers down. They started doing these years before the genocide began...” (B03, a 45 year old male)

Religious restrictions also affected other religious customs. When community members die, traditionally Muslims perform Salat al-Janazah (Islamic prayer in congregation as part of funeral rituals). In Myanmar, Rohingyas were not allowed to attend such rituals and, in cases where they were violently killed, they were not even given any opportunity to see the dead person. In case of violent death, the dead bodies were buried or left abandoned in the rivers by the military and the other oppressors, in the final period of atrocities many bodies were burned.

Rohingyas even needed to obtain permission to get married in Myanmar. Failure to obtain permission before getting married resulted in long imprisonment. In some instances, the authorities physically tortured those who married without permission. To obtain a written marriage permit Rohingyas had to pay a bribe. The bribe necessary to obtain a marriage permit was not fixed and people had to negotiate in order to obtain one. A respondent mentioned that sometimes they needed to pay between 1-1.5 lakhs Burmese money (Myanmar kyats), for these poor families that was a lot of money. Those who could not obtain a marriage permit used to get married secretly. If they were lucky enough to escape imprisonment or torture there were other ways in which they could be punished. For example, their children would not be permitted to be officially registered, they would have no status or documentation. Many marriages happened without a permit and therefore many Rohingya children were undocumented in Myanmar and the authorities proclaimed these children as ‘foreign’, without approved identity in Myanmar. The community would often try to help young couples escape this fate:

There are many helpless women who couldn't get married due to financial crisis. In many cases we used to collect money together to get the permission from the government, so that the bride and groom could start their new life with less difficulties.” (B09, a 60 year old male)

Whilst living under the persistent oppressions of the Myanmar forces including military, NaSaKa and police, the Rohingyas suffered from other atrocities, which included the sexual assault and rape of women and young girls.

3.2.5 Women and young girls: victims of rape and sexual assaults.

During these times of oppression and persecution, an unknown number of Rohingya women and girls became victims of sexual assaults and rape. These rapes occurred in Rakhine villages during security surveillance and raids by armed forces. The police and military preserved records of family members (i.e. demographic information) of every Rohingya household, to help the authorities access information and this detailed every girl and young women in every village. Participants alleged that the security forces raped many Rohingya women and girls in villages and took them into custody to rape them. Family members were unable to protest and simply had to wait for the victims to return home. Case story 3.3 illustrates the trauma experienced when security forces identified attractive women to capture and rape.

Box 3.3 Case story illustrating the multiple incidents where attractive village women were identified and taken by security forces.

“The military came to find out whose wife or whose daughter was attractive. They searched and were roaming around every end of our Para. They inquired how many girls stay in each house, or who were most attractive. While checking, if they found any pretty woman, they told the others to go away leaving the woman alone. Many times, they capture the entire family for security checking. Soldiers told families that their “Sir” had asked to meet them. After calling them to military office, they captured women’s photos. During the photo shoots, if someone looked pretty or attractive, they imprisoned her for some days [...] These beautiful girls were their primary target. They kept them in their custody in military camps and raped them.” (B26, a 44 year old male)

On their return, these women and young girls were not just suffering from the onslaught of being raped and sexually assaulted but were also deemed to be suffering from a loss of dignity, they had ‘lost their ijgot’ (Udin, 2017).

Many women used to smear their faces, shave their heads, and wear filthy clothes to look ‘ugly’ and dirty, to protect their dignity. Clearly, this could only be properly seen if

the hijab was not worn so there was a conflict between protecting security and respecting religious norms, two core elements of their dignity.

'... [young women] used to mask their faces by smearing them with charcoal ...because the military did not like to take filthy girls [during surprise raids]'. (B06, a 60 year old female)

3.2.6 Institutional racism, violence and abuses of human rights

Rohingyas in Myanmar suffered from frequent periods of indiscriminate violence, oppression and abuse as local Rakhines used insulting language and racist comments against them. Rohingya were called '*Bengali*' Muslims to emphasise that they were illegal residents with no citizenship rights and to convey that they lacked access to basic human rights in Myanmar. The Myanmar authority most frequently used term was 'Kolai' representing individuals with darker skin in Myanmar, those they consider to be there illegally from Bangladesh (also called Bangali Kolai).

"Kolar", they called us "Bangali Kolai". Calling us "Bangali Kolai" means that we went there illegally from Bangladesh." (B26, a 44 year old male)

Rohingyas were also bullied in security check posts by both security forces and local civilians which shows the severity of the negative attitudes towards them. This institutional racism freed state officials and other groups to feel that they could, maybe even should, denigrate the Rohingya and, in the end, led to them being subjected to both human rights abuses and indiscriminate violence and oppression. Furthermore, despite experiencing such horrific terror in everyday life, the Rohingya victims were not allowed to access the services of law enforcement agencies to seek justice or protection in Myanmar. For instance, participants reported that in 2012, the local Rakhine folks ('Moghs', largely Buddhist Rakhine) allegedly killed 11 Rohingya followed by a street conflict. Even for acts such as this unlawful killing the Rohingya stated that they were not allowed to seek justice for any atrocity in Myanmar:

"No matter how desperately we would look for justice, as we were Muslims, they would rather allege that we had done something wrong. After that, they began their oppression and violence against us, burnt down our houses. Moreover, they accused us by saying that we had brought ARSA in the state. Thus, they continue oppressing us" (B33, a 45 year old male)

The Rohingya clearly understood that due to their lack of citizenship and the fact that their ethnic identity is not recognised as belonging in Myanmar, all other rights or ways in which they might seek justice have been denied them by the authorities in Myanmar. This was a particularly difficult time for the Rohingya, and during this period they incorporated a range of strategies to enable them to cope with the discrimination and oppression they faced prior to the forced exodus.

3.3 Chapter summary

This chapter has focused upon describing the oppressive and discriminatory experiences of the Rohingyas who took part in this study, prior to the start of the 2017 persecution. It also included an overview of the strategies they adopted to help them manage and cope with the degrading treatment prior to their forced migration. The findings indicate that they suffered from oppressive treatment and institutional racism that had contributed to their loss of dignity. Prior to the 2017 persecution, the Rohingyas were regularly subjected to a range of oppressive, discriminatory and institutional racist offences that led to extreme violence and human rights abuses which included the rape and sexual assault of women and girls.

3.4 Key findings

- Discrimination against the Rohingyas is longstanding and goes back to at least 1962 when they were denied citizenship in Myanmar.
- Since 1962, the Rohingyas have had to carry identity cards identifying them as non-citizens.
- Since 1982 the cards identified them as 'illegal' immigrants and the law removed all rights from them. From that time their freedom of movement, education, employment marriage, religion and other freedoms were curtailed or reduced.
- Since 1962, Rohingyas have experienced a series of state-led violent crackdowns. The most violence occurred in 1978-79, 1991-92 and 2016-18. During the latest episode of such violence almost one million Rohingyas fled from Myanmar to Bangladesh to avoid being raped and murdered.
- Participants of this study reported that in Myanmar they were deprived of a dignified life because (1) their mobility was severely restrained even in cases of emergency; (2) access to education was severely restricted they were not awarded qualifications; (3) Rohingyas were expected to pay large bribes on an almost daily basis so they experienced severe financial oppression; and (4) their rights to practice their faith, especially in communal worship was forbidden and many Rohingya marriages were banned.
- Over many years the Rohingya people faced institutional 'racism' and discrimination which often surfaced as violence. Women and girls were

Chapter 4: The forced mass displacement and the journey of Rohingyas from Myanmar to Bangladesh

4.1 Chapter overview

Whilst the previous chapter detailed the oppressive and discriminatory experiences of the Rohingyas prior to the 2017 persecution, this chapter provides an overview of their sufferings and experiences during the forced mass displacement. This took on a new dimension from the 24 August 2017 and details the experiences of the Rohingya people who participated in this study during the clearance operation, and their forced displacement journeys from Myanmar to Bangladesh. According to the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR), the previous episodes of violence described as horrific but the clearance operation of August 2017 was deemed to be significantly worse and included evidence of what at best could be described as serious human rights violations committed in the aftermath of the attacks (OHCHR 2017, 1).

The findings demonstrate that the Rohingyas were forced to flee Myanmar during the clearance operation, which consisted of continued and systematic violence and violent attacks meaning they had to leave in order to save their lives. The clearance operation consisted of the destruction of Rohingya villages, sustained periods of extreme violence, which included human rights violations, and involved the capture and executions of men, gender-based violence, atrocities committed against women and children, including rape, sexual and physical abuse and the executions of vulnerable older people who were unable to leave. These atrocities were led by the Myanmar security forces, who warned the Rohingya villagers that if they did not leave, their houses would be torched, and they would be killed (OHCHR 2017; 7). The findings also determine that the extreme violence and violent attacks were ongoing and continued during the Rohingyas forced displacement journey from Myanmar to Bangladesh. These violent episodes were specified by the UN Human Rights Council's Fact-Finding Mission in the definition of crimes against humanity and conducted **"with intent to destroy, in whole or in part, a national, ethnical, racial or group"** (UNHRC 2018: 3). Indeed, the OHCHR refers to the activities as a systematic oppression and persecution of the Rohingya (UNHRC 2018: 6). In the sections which follow both qualitative and quantitative data are used to evidence and portray the experiences and suffering of the Rohingya people during the 2017 clearance operation, which contributed to the reduction of individual and collective dignity prior to the 2017 persecution and clearance operation which is discussed in the following section.

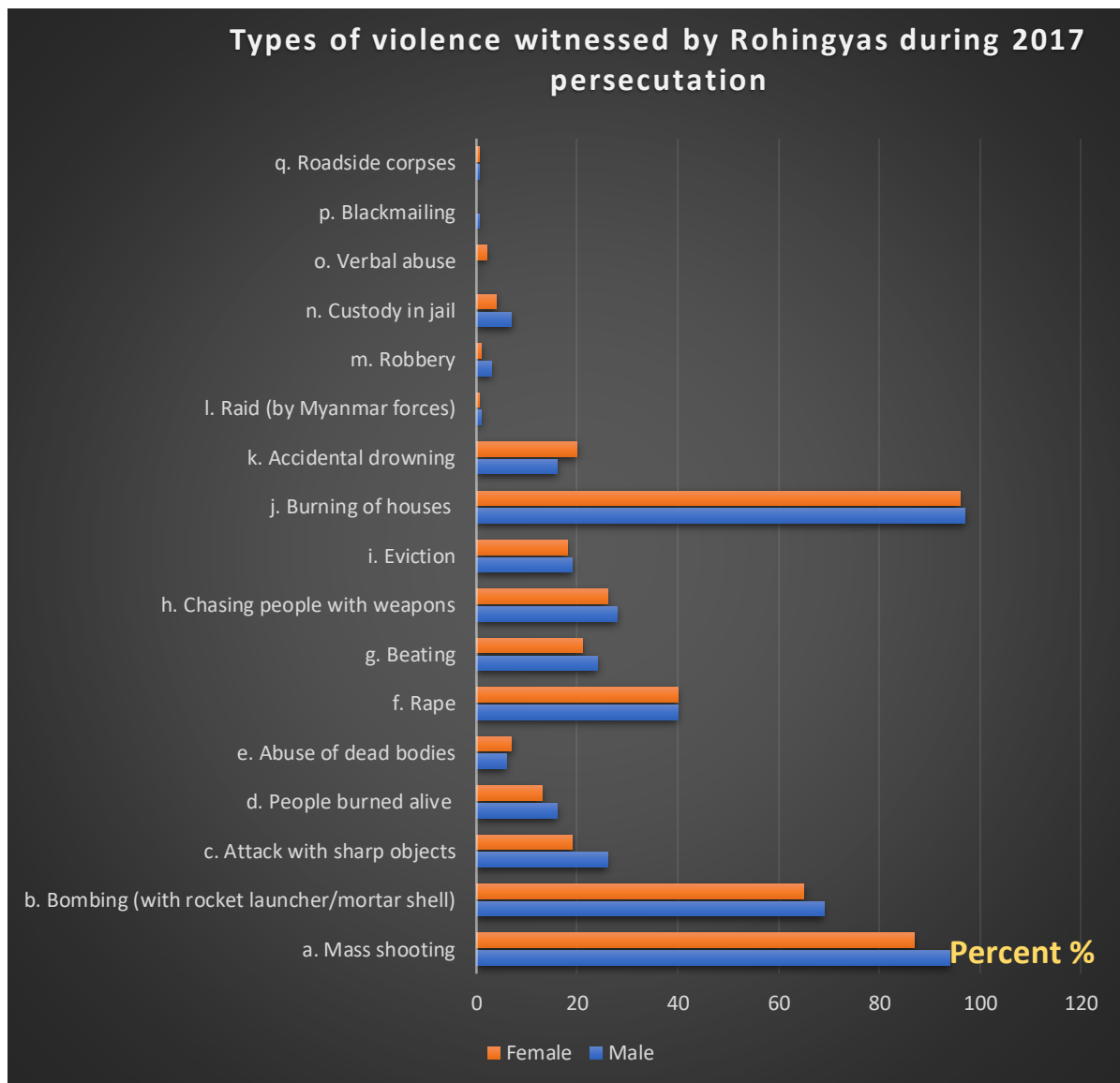
4.2 Persecution and clearance operations

Of the 419 (173 males and 246 females) forcibly displaced Rohingya that participated in a survey, the majority (100% of men and 98% of women) claimed that they had witnessed

extreme violence (Figure 4.2) in Myanmar during the 2017 clearance operation. The types of violence witnessed by the forcibly displaced Rohingyas are shown in figure 4.1 below.

Figure 4.1 illustrates the different types of violence the Rohingyas witnessed during the 2017 persecution in Myanmar. Most of the Rohingyas, both male and female have witnessed mass shooting and burning of houses by the assailants, with approximately 94% male and 87% female witnessed mass shooting, during attempts to kill the Rohingya people in Myanmar. 97% male and 96% female also witnessed houses and villages burnt down by attackers, which included members of the military, NaSaKa police and other ethnic people in Myanmar. Rape was the third most frequently witnessed violence with 40% males and 40% female confirming that they had evidenced this directly or indirectly. The majority of participants had seen women raped directly in front of them, or indirectly via accounts from victims of rape during their escape to Bangladesh or seeing corpse's that displayed clear marks of rape. In addition to witnessing women and girls forcefully taken into custody by the security forces for rape. Figure 4.1 also contains evidence of other forms of violence witnessed by the participants, which includes attacks with sharp objects such as machete and other handmade weapons. 24% male and 21% female witnessed physical beating and evictions, with 19% male and 18% female witnessed forceful eviction from houses. Only 2% of the female participants (four women) managed to cross the Myanmar border without seeing or experiencing any atrocities.

Figure 4.1 Types of violence witnessed by the forcibly displaced Rohingyas during the 2017 persecution.



This quantitative data is endorsed by the story telling interviews with a further 40 refugees which reveal the full extent of the atrocities and extreme violence witnessed during the 2017 clearance operation in Myanmar, with all participants providing explicit descriptions of mass murder and other types of violence:

“My uncle and grandfather were killed during this time. They couldn’t manage to run while there was shooting going on.” (B10, a 19 year old male)

The majority of these participants witnessed multiple acts of murder or mass murder in Rohingya villages; thousands were brutally killed by the assailants (see also Mahoney, 2018; MSF, 2018; UNHRC, 2018). Commencing from the 24th August 2017, and as a response to alleged attacks on police outposts in Rakhine state supposedly perpetrated by Arakan Rohingya Salvation Army (ARSA) many Rohingya people who were located in the western

region of Rakhine were brutally tortured (OHCHR 2017). The majority of the participants were residing in Maungdaw township, Buthidaung township and Rathedaung township and surrounding rural areas. Evidence confirmed that the attacks on Rohingyas were executed in a well-organised, coordinated, and systematic manner and the OHCHR (2017) report claims that these events were due to a strategy that was pursued to:

‘1) Arrest and arbitrarily detain male Rohingyas between the ages of 15-40 years; 2) Arrest and arbitrarily detain Rohingya opinion-makers, leaders and cultural and religious personalities; 3) Initiate acts to deprive Rohingya villagers of access to food, livelihoods and other means of conducting daily activities and life; 4) Commit repeated acts of humiliation and violence prior to, during and after 25 August, to drive out Rohingya villagers *en masse* through incitement to hatred, violence and killings, including by declaring the Rohingyas as Bengalis and illegal settlers in Myanmar; 5) Instil deep and widespread fear and trauma – physical, emotional and psychological, in the Rohingya victims via acts of brutality, namely killings, disappearances, torture, and rape and other forms of sexual violence’ (OHCHR, 2017: 1).

The following sections contain significant evidence from participants who witnessed the implementation of the strategy. It resulted in the attacking forces assaulting the participants not only in their habitual residence (villages) but also targeting fleeing Rohingyas on their way to Bangladesh as hundreds of thousands of Rohingyas were trying to access and then cross the Myanmar-Bangladesh border in order to save their lives. Participants described multiple attacking forces as - Myanmar military, police, NaSaKa and other religious groups who live in the region (commonly identified as local Rakhine Buddhists and Rakhine ‘Mogh’).

The most vulnerable Rohingyas, elderly people, children and women suffered the most. Many of them were brutally killed by the Myanmar military. In one village, the Rohingyas’ wrongly assumed that the military would not kill women and children, as in usual military raids in Rakhine, the forces targeted men for interrogation, arrest, extortion or killing. In August 2017, the Rohingyas presumed that the military were coming for a routine interrogation and or raid, which led to some men disappearing over night to escape the extreme violence and atrocities. However, many were proven wrong as the military used gunfire to attack them irrespective of whether they were women, children or young men that had decided they were safe and did not feel the need to leave. The majority of the participants provided details of unspeakable memories of how they witnessed the killing of their family, relatives and neighbours being killed in barbaric ways. Box 4.1 contains the case story of a 68-year-old male who wept whilst recalling his extremely painful memories of losing his loved ones:

Box 4.1. provides an overview of the military entering the neighbourhood and ruthlessly killing a man's family including a three-month-old baby.

"In the morning they entered into the neighbourhood and were shooting continuously. At first everyone thought that they will not do any harm to women and children. Everyone thought that only the men would be arrested, that is why all the men escaped at night. But when the military came in the morning and started shooting then all the women and children also started to escape from there. While escaping, those who accidentally went in front of the military were shot; many people died there. While we were escaping through the hill behind the neighbourhood, we met our son. My son embraced me tight [crying]. My daughter-in-law [son's wife] was shot to death. They had a baby who was only three months old. He was also shot to death. His liver came out of his body. We went there and saw my daughter-in-law's head was twisted from her body. I had two more grandchildren. In the mean time we buried my daughter-in-law and my three months old grandchild in the hill. My two grandchildren were not discovered by them. There the Rakhine Moghs [group accepted by Myanmar, given citizenship, many of them are Buddhists] were busy looting. While searching they went to another house and found the children there. They beheaded both of the two. Then they set fire to the house. One was five years old and the other was three years old. Muhammad Raees was five years old and Muhammad Faiz was three years old [he continued crying]." (B11, a 68 year old male)

The majority of the participants recalled the military attacks starting a few days before the Eid-ul-Azha in 2017, the large Muslim festival that took place during the last week of August 2017. Some participants reported that the armed attacks took place in their villages a few days after the Eid, the timing seems to have been related to the location of the village within Rakhine. Many participants reported that in the distance they could see the military convoy approaching their villages. Military forces were frequently firing at the villagers with weapons, and a strong determination to kill. The following section provides an overview of the destruction of villages and targeted attacks that forced the Rohingyas to flee for their lives. The participants acknowledged the victims of these mass killings as their family members, relatives, friends, neighbours and others who were massacred due to their Rohingya ethnicity:

"Actually, there was no end to our misfortunes. When we were coming here, we knew a very old man in our village who could not walk due to his old age. When they burned down his house, he was burned alive with it [...] We have seen these in front of our own eyes. My

brother was killed. When the army was shooting fires at us as we were fleeing, he stayed inside the house being unable to run. When the army had torched down the house, he was burned alive within it [...] we took shelter on a hill and remained there for almost 12 days.”
(B06, a 60 year old female)

In the previous sections quantitative and brief qualitative data was employed to evidence the severity of the extreme violence that the Rohingyas’ were subjected to as the clearance operation commenced. Below, storytelling data is used to provide a more detailed and nuanced account of the horrific experiences they endured as the clearance operation progressed. The following paragraphs provide details of the escalation that forced the Rohingyas to flee for their lives.

4.2.1 Destruction of Villages and Targeted Attacks

The qualitative storytelling data also revealed that one of the biggest causes of the forced displacement was the targeted attacks of many villages, which was a common phenomenon during the mass murder and destruction in Rakhine State in Myanmar forcing the Rohingyas to flee for their lives. Storytelling data detailed participants’ experiences as the violence committed by Myanmar forces spread through the region. The military might start by committing mass killing in one village, but the violence then spread to other villages and involved attacking a larger group of people. This excessive violence might be witnessed by other villages and in this way both the violence and the terror spread to surrounding settlements. This also drove the inhabitants both of villages that were attacked and of those who were aware of attacks on other villages to flee instantly to try and protect their lives. During their flight from their homes they were horrified by what they saw: people being attacked, raped and killed. People immediately fled from the area, with hardly any of their belongings as illustrated by the following quote and the case story presented in Box 4.1 (above).

“Our Aang Dang Para constitutes 3 Paras. Boro Para, Middle Para and West Para. First, they burned down the Middle Para, then started shooting towards Boro Para. People already got scared and started running towards the hill. Together we stayed there [hill] for about 2 days. My cousin, who was shot by a bullet stayed in the hill for 2 days and died in there because of lack of treatment. We somehow managed to bury him at dawn.” (B09, a 60 year old male)

Mass torture and destruction forced the Rohingya to leave villages in order to avoid the violence and stay alive. While the Rohingyas were fleeing for their lives, the Myanmar forces continued to violently target them. Gunshots aimed at running unarmed Rohingyas killed many (number not known) while many others managed to escape. Many of those alive are currently carrying wounds from gunshots sustained in these violent attacks or when they were fleeing for their lives.

“There was a total of 9000 people in our Para. We let our cows loose [released cattle to escape] and took whatever rice, lentils and other important materials with us in order to leave the Para. Just as we were about to leave the Para, the army opened fire on us and started to torch our houses from one side of the Para. We were at the middle of the Para at that time. When we were running away from the Para, they shot one of my brothers and he fell down on the ground. When I went to pick him up, another bullet just went through my body..” (B15, a 40 year old male)

Many of them also talked about various types of bullets that the military used while they were fleeing. For instance, a Rohingya woman describes how she was shot by a bullet which left numerous pellets in her body:

“These [‘bullets’] are like granules, if it enters into the skin from one side then skin swells on the other side. And the rubber bullet is different than it... ten to twelve bullet particles are still remaining in my body, you know, those are like granules.” (B25, a 30 year old female)

In the raided villages, the types of violence had no limits, which created unspeakable horrors. The assailants used multiple means to kill Rohingya civilians. The majority were killed from gunshots while many others were burnt alive in their houses or slaughtered with sharp weapons.

Participants described that many people managed to escape instant death by running and hiding in nearby bushes. The Myanmar forces cordoned these bush areas for about two days, leaving severely wounded people to die in the bushes. After two days they searched for those who were still alive, dragged out their wounded bodies into the streets or in a common place within the village and set fire to burn many people alive. Box 4.2 provides an overview of a female participant’s experience of the village clearances and how individuals sought refuge in nearby canals and swamps to save their lives. It also evidences how individuals were burned alive if they were unable to leave.

Box 4.2. Case story detailing the burning of houses and of people during the clearance operation of 2017

“At exactly 12 pm the Para was cordoned off by the police and the Rakhine tribes. At first, they started shooting at the houses and then they torched them down. We witnessed everything from our Rasidong Para. Few people were wounded by gunshots; they took shelter in the nearby canals, swamps [Beel] and hills for at least two days. After that, the military and Moghs dragged these wounded out of their hideouts [bushes], assembled everyone in bales of hay and burnt them alive. Those who were wounded but could not escape from their homes were also burnt inside their homes.” (B02, a 30 year old female)

Another Rohingya male describes how their village was burnt down immediately after his neighbouring villages (Paras) were burnt. People were initially seeking shelter in his village, however, they all fled to save their lives when the security forces reached their village and started torching houses. Their children saw the abuse and, despite being safe in Bangladesh, they still suffer from the trauma. Furthermore, the participants recalled that the military used heavy weapons including rocket launchers (whilst the witnesses talk about rocket launchers, they may often be referring to flame throwers) to burn down their villages. Such heavy weapons destroyed and burnt village infrastructures:

“Not just the houses. They burned down the entire Para using rocket launchers [possibly a flame thrower]. First, they lit up our Shilkhali Para, then Dhumchhora, after that Ang Dhang, Kullong and etc. They burned down all the Paras together”. (B06, a 60 year old female)

Whilst these accounts and statements provide a summary of the extreme violence used to force the Rohingya’s to leave, survey data detailed the different types of violence directly experienced by Rohingya participants and their families during the 2017 clearance operation. These experiences are displayed in Figure 4.2 below.

Figure 4.2 : Survey participants direct experiences of violence (self and family members)

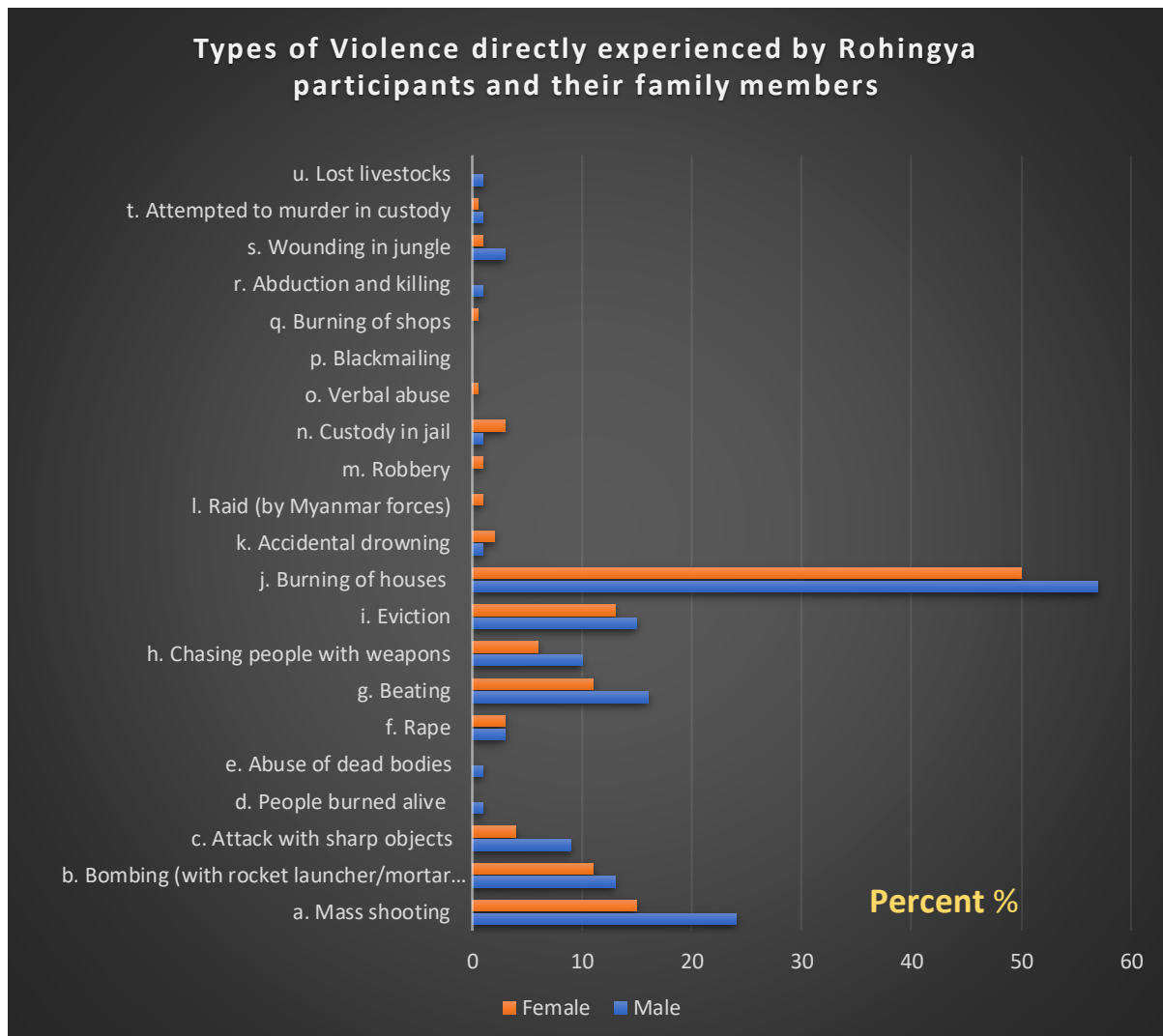


Figure 4.2, confirms that approximately 57% males and 50% females reported that they (or their family members) experienced their houses being burnt down by the attackers during the 2017 clearance operation. Seeing their own houses and villages burnt down by the Myanmar forces was part of what forced them to flee for their lives. 24% males and 15% females reported that they (or their family members) experienced mass shooting and gunshots, whilst the security forces seized and attacked their villages, forcing them to flee. Beatings by the security forces and other rival ethnic communities in Myanmar was another form of physical assault the participants experienced, with 15% male and 11% female suffering from beatings, with 15% male and 13% female being forcefully evicted from their houses. Participants (13% males and 11% females) also witnessed security forces using heavy weapons such as mortar shells and flame throwers to destroy their villages. With 3% male and 3% female disclosing that that they or their family members were also raped during this time. Real figures of those having family members who were raped is likely to be much higher.

Rape is seen as loss of their dignity and shameful for the family so they are very reticent to admit it to anyone.

A small percentage of males (1%) reported that the dead bodies of their family members were abused by attackers. Another 1% males reported they or one of their family members were burnt alive or set on fire by the attackers. Again, 1% males and 3% females also reported that their family members (including husband, son, father and brother) were arrested during the 2017 persecution and were currently held in jails in Myanmar. Figure 4.2 illustrates the types of violence participants experienced, which included rape, robbery, blackmailing, verbal abuse and being wounded while hiding. Overall, the burning down of houses, mass shootings to kill Rohingya villagers and beatings were the most reported attacks of violence experienced by participants in the survey. Other aspects of violence included serious human rights violations that consisted of murder of children, rape, sexual and physical abuse suffered by women and young girls, some of these are detailed in the following section.

4.2.2 Serious Human Rights Violations: Murder, Rape, Sexual and Physical Abuse

Rape was a commonly reported type of sexual violence witnessed by the participants during 2017 in Rakhine villages. Though the armed operation was pursued in the name of arresting so-called insurgent males, during the search-and-raids the forces separated young women from their houses. Multiple women were gathered in one house in the village where the military and Moghs would sexually assault and rape them, often in front of their families. The following quotes and case story presented in Box 4.3 evidence the extent of the human rights violations which includes the murder, rape, and sexual and physical abuse of women and children. Similar statements were made by many male and female eyewitnesses:

“When the military attacked our Para, I saw that our women were forcefully taken away by them [...] We were helpless. Because death was certain for the ones who would protest; they would be shot dead by the military. They took the girls inside the houses in front of their own fathers and brothers and raped them. The police and the military snatched the young children away from their mothers and murdered them.” (B18, a 19 year old male)

During the raid, they raped many women and children. Many young children were forcefully taken away and slaughtered before they raped the mothers. Other examples include the capture and rape of multiple women. One, which involved eight women and during which their family members were threatened with death if they protested is evidenced in Box 4.3.

Box 4.3. Case story of a male participant describing how eight women from his Para were taken by the military in 2017, in front of the family members:

“The young women were mostly tortured and raped right in front of their parents and siblings. We saw our mothers and sisters were gang raped and murdered. Eight women from our Para were raped in a village house. If any of their parents or brothers protested, they were shot down by the Nataka Bahini [forces from a ministry in the Government of Myanmar which is responsible for the border protection] who further ensured their torturing death by using sharp knives and daggers into their hearts after gunshots.” (B04, a 35 year old male)

The military also kept many village women and girls in their custody for weeks or even for months. Women became subject to gang rape for long periods of time. Helpless families of captured women and girls often waited for about a week for their return. Family members often used to hide in bush and nearby hills, hoping that the military would release their women if they were alive. However, many of these unlucky women and girls were not released and therefore could not make their way back to join the family. After fruitless waits, families started walking towards the Bangladesh border assuming the brutal fate of their loved ones.

An old man, who was a rich businessperson in Myanmar, recalled how his beautiful daughter-in-law was taken, raped and killed in military custody during the 2017 persecution. Initially being hesitant to use the word ‘rape’, he narrates the fate of the unfortunate mother of two and her child in military custody:

“My eldest son’s wife was very beautiful. They took her away and later shot her dead. They had been ‘torturing’ [raping] her for two, four, five and ten days. [...] She died, grandson died too [...] After waiting for their return, we started walking and crossed the ‘Ghat’ [quay]. The people of Bangladesh received us after we crossed the Ghat.” (B26, a 44 year old male)

This old man received the confirmed news of the death of his loved ones a few days after he had reached the Bangladesh border. An 18 year old Rohingya female describes how she witnessed her friends being taken away to be raped by the military. After assaults, some of those who managed to walk back to villages also died later due to blood loss and other injuries:

“They raped a lot of women. They even raped girls of twelve, thirteen or fourteen years old. Many died after being raped. We had a girl called Ameena in our village. Forces came to her house to search for a man. They could not find him and they took her mother along with Ameena. All the military personnel who were present there tortured her and then released

her. Then she walked back home with many injuries. She had a daughter too. On the next day Aameena was found dead due to blood loss.” (B34, an 18 year old female)

Study findings suggest that many women were killed in custody during or after sexual assaults. After rape followed by murders, dead bodies were abandoned in very undignified ways, without clothes. Nonetheless, the participants deemed to be very uncomfortable to disclose who within the family were sexually assaulted in 2017. Rape is seen as loss of their dignity and generally associated with the idea of shame. Therefore, the victim’s family tend to hide this, they do not report it to anybody. Some were comfortable to use the term ‘beating’ or torture to admit that their women have been through violence but often they avoided reference to rape though some admitted it was rape if they were asked directly. Some openly talked about the rape of their women. Many talked about rape of women they had known or about witnessing rape though would not say it was a family member.

Groups of women were often more forthcoming about the extent of rape and sexual assaults suffered by women and girls at the hands of the Myanmar military and/or local groups in Rakhine who were helping to torture and ethnically cleanse the area. In the group of women depicted below every one of them reported witnessing rapes and/or knew women and girls who had been raped or sexually assaulted. However, they did not admit being raped themselves nor did they admit that family members had been raped though the elderly woman showed us severe wounds from having been cut by machete type weapons. They also described how women and girls would make themselves look dirty (e.g. covering themselves in mud or animal excreta) or ugly (e.g. shaving their heads) in order to avoid being raped.



Picture of a focus group of Rohingya women

Whilst most witnesses were unwilling to admit the extent of the rapes this is captured by the case story presented in Box 4.4.

Box 4.4. Participant sharing his experiences of witnessing the capture, rape and atrocities committed against women.

“I’ve witnessed many girls falling victim to rape. I even saw them cutting off women’s private body parts. They tortured them in whichever ways possible. They forcefully took girls and young women from the Para. There had been one hundred and fifty families in our Para. Out of those hundred and fifty families, they took girls from at least eighty families. They took our women to their offices, to the police stations, and to the hills.” (B10, a 19year old male)

Once targeted by the military and their allies, it was nearly impossible for any woman to escape rape and other assaults, as reported by most of the participants. However, a few exceptions were heard, where women were helped to escape without being raped. The heroic story of Zohur Hossain is one among a few. Zohur Hossain, a Rohingya male fought bravely to save a Rohingya woman while a Rakhine Mogh attempted to rape her during the 2017 violence. Hossain killed the attacker but was immediately shot to death by the Myanmar military. Zohur Hossain is a glorious name in the Cox’s Bazar camps; he saved the dignity of a Rohingya female:

“They killed Zohur Hossain. When they cordoned our area in a military seizure of our land, many people were trying to escape. There were two ways of escape—one was through the hills and the other was through a small [sandbar island or] ‘Char’. When we were trying to escape, a ‘Mogh’ (indigenous Rakhine) man was raping a girl by force. A person named Zohur Hossain saw this and fought the Mogh. That time the military was destroying everything they could find. Zohur Hossain cut the Mogh man’s neck (beheaded him) with his machete. But the army saw this and they instantly shot Zohur Hossain and killed him. Amid the chaos, the girl successfully ran away towards the jungle nearby.” (B08, a 30 year old female)

Each of these accounts evidence participant experiences of the use of rape as a weapon of warfare, rather than just a conventional criminal offense.

Other violations used to humiliate the Rohingyas and force them to leave, included making both men and women forcefully strip in front of people, which was also categorised as a sexual assault that contributed to their loss of dignity. Though women frequently became victim of such violence, men including old Rohingyas were also unable to escape such assaults by the Myanmar forces. Such acts were often committed before vulnerable individuals were about to be slaughtered. A respondent mentioned that he managed to flee naked after the forces started shooting at him while assaulting him.

“First, they didn’t shoot me but clasped my lungi [a garment covering the lower part of a male body]. Then, when my lungi slackened me, they began to shoot. I started running again. There were some gardens at our place with large leaves in which you could hide without being found.” (B30, a 40 year old male)

This section has outlined the serious and human rights violations that included murder, rape and sexual and physical abuse conducted by the Myanmar forces. During this time, additional mass killings were conducted by the Rakhine ethnic Buddhists ‘Moghs’ and the following section provides an overview of participant experiences of this non-military participation during this period of extreme violence.

4.2.3 Rakhine ethnic Buddhists ‘Moghs’ and their participation in mass killings

Most of the participants claimed that people from other ethnic communities in the Western Rakhine actively joined in the mass killing of Rohingyas during the 2017 persecution. The participants recognized these attackers as ‘Mogh’ or Rakhine ethnic groups who had been given citizenship and were accepted by the Myanmar authorities, many of them were Buddhists who were committing violence along with military and other official forces in Myanmar. They took part in stabbing Rohingyas, burning their houses and raping girls and women with handmade weapons such as machete. They looted household valuables and livestock left by fleeing Rohingyas. They also assisted the military to identify various locations in the Rohingya neighbourhoods.

“Suddenly the Rakhine Buddhists arrived and started to attack people with ‘Daa’ and ‘Kirich’ [like machetes]. I saw everything. As I was hurt, I was unable to walk or run but I somehow managed to go into the hills to find shelter.” (B07, a 42 year old male)

Participants reported that the ‘Mogh’s’ had a ‘desire’ to capture Rohingyas’ properties and belongings. Indeed, as noted in the previous chapters, the conflicts between Rohingyas and some other ethnic communities in Myanmar was long-standing and had a number of causes. For the most part, it related to the lower citizenship status given to Rohingyas but in many cases it was also related to religious differences. These ethnic and religious rivalries also had a basis in economic well-being as the Moghs believed they could take the lands vacated by the Rohingyas:

“When the police came with guns, Moghs came with ‘Daa’ and ‘Boti’. [They attacked us because] If we left the country, they would be able to capture our lands, homes and cattle. They used to tell us that we were ‘Bengalis’ and that we did not belong to Myanmar lands. (B02, a 30 year old female)

Study findings suggest that members of other local ethnic groups living in Rakhine participated in burning Rohingya villages along with Myanmar security forces.

“When we ran away around the 20th of August, the Mogh people started burning our villages. They kept firing inside the homes for about half an hour. Then the Military, Moghs and police burnt all the houses. They burned about 250 houses. We stayed at Khyaripara during Eid-ul-Aha. The Moghs took away all our cows and hens.” (B40, a 60 year old male)

Many of the respondents witnessed that the local Rakhines were killing the unfortunate Rohingyas, the ones who failed to flee immediately after the attacks:

“They first imposed a curfew from around 4-6 in the morning. They started the massacre from then. They used to torch everything whenever they could, be it day or night. We could see the flames even after we reached Fatanjapara. There were Moghs too with the military and police. They had ‘Daa’, knives, rocket launchers [possibly flame throwers] and other weapons in their hands.” (B22, a 40 year old male)

The following photographs provide visual evidence of the violence committed by the Myanmar army during the 2017 clearance operation. These injuries were inflicted as the victims attempted to flee from a Rakhine. The photo on the left is a Rohingya male who survived being shot in his chest during the extreme violence; and (right) a young Rohingya boy that survived a machete attack conducted by a local Rakhine.



Picture of some injuries suffered during the 2017 clearance operation

Whilst the study findings have detailed evidence of the murder of men, women and children and included an overview of human rights violations that include the rape and torture of women and children committed by the military and by civilians, other atrocities were conducted and witnessed, which included the mutilation of body parts, these are discussed in section 4.2.4 below.

4.2.4 The Mutilation of Body Parts and other Crimes Against Humanity

According to participants, additional crimes, atrocities, and other crimes against humanity were committed by military and their collaborators after the rape and sexual attacks upon women. Participants reported seeing women with organ mutilation and injuries, children with mutilated genitals as well as corpses being dumped without being buried. Their experiences were documented and are illustrated using the following first hand accounts.

Many Rohingya participant witnessed mutilated women's body parts after the military (and others) attacked and raped them whilst they were in custody. Even children could not escape such violence. While female children had been subject to rape, the Myanmar forces also mutilated the genitals of male children.

"They cut off genitals of male children in our village. They kept them alive but without their male organs" (B34, a 18 year old female)

Women were raped and physically tortured before they were killed, the participants claimed as they noticed signs of wounds all over women's corpses. Physical torture included breast mutilation, cutting arms and legs, wounding female genitals with an iron rod or with a sharp object. A male describes how he covered woman's bared dead body with his own cloth on his way to the Bangladesh border, before crossing the river:

"From atop the hill, we could clearly see the sand bed filled with corpses. Most of the corpses belonged to women who were raped before being murdered. Women's bodies were tortured, they mutilated their body parts. There were also some dead bodies of young men on the bank of the river [...] After going a bit closer, I saw a dead body of a young girl who was raped possibly one day earlier. Her body was naked, wounded and chained with cables. I was wearing a t-shirt and a lungi and a short pant beneath. I took off my lungi and covered the girl's body with that." (B07, a 42 year old male)

This level of violence, torture, rape, dismemberment and disrespect for the Rohingyas (dead or alive) is a warfare tactic designed to instil terror; to make it clear that the Rohingyas needed to leave Myanmar or face similar levels of violence; it is ethnic cleansing.

The participants claimed that the military dumped corpses without proper burial. Those who were alive had already fled. At night, the military with local Moghs collected dead bodies and dumped those together by digging ditches in nearby places. They did not afford the dead a proper burial. A male describes that one night after the military attack in one Rohingya village during August 2017, he along with some friends were hiding in bushes to secretly watch night-time activities by Myanmar forces. Since their village had burnt down and many folks were killed, the fellow Rohingyas mourned their failure to offer dignified funerals to the dead. With grief, he described how they witnessed the corpses of their fellow villagers being dumped in a ditch dug by assailants, and disrespectfully thrown from military vehicles:

“After they burnt down everything, we were hiding there for some time to watch from afar. Those who managed to flee [to Bangladesh] had seen these as well. At 9 pm, two trucks had entered our area. The dead bodies were loaded onto the trucks and were taken to the camps. Some dead bodies were dragging on road by their feet. When there was no space left on the trucks, they threw the remaining dead bodies into big holes in the ground, then filled the holes up and covered them with plastic.”
(B03, a 45 year old male)

In some places foxes and other scavengers were seen eating dead bodies which had not been buried properly by the Myanmar forces. The following statement contains evidence of the horrific treatment and disrespect shown to those who were killed and murdered:

“Later, some 10 or 12 of us got out of the hills and furtively went down to the Para during night. On the way we found a couple of foxes pulling around the corpse of the father of that boy that had been slaughtered. A little further we found another corpse, almost one third of which was eaten by a skulk of about eight foxes. When we entered the Para, we found burning corpses dispersed here and there. Everything was burnt down to ashes there, nothing to retrieve. We also found some children’s burnt bodies without any heads.” (B16, a 50 year old male)

Those individuals who managed to escape the extreme violence with their lives but who failed to reach the safety of Myanmar-Bangladesh border faced being arrested, detained and physically tortured whilst in custody. Section 4.2.4 contains details of individual and family experiences of capture, detention and physical torture suffered whilst being detained and being held in custody.

4.2.5 Arrest, detention and physical tortures in custody

During the 2017 persecution, the Myanmar security forces arrested a large number of Rohingyas while killing many others. The majority of those in security custody are adult males, who have been imprisoned in various jails in Myanmar. Some participants reported that they overheard screams of tortured victims in jails at night, they even heard these cries from a long way away, while they were fleeing from Rakhine villages. They also heard sounds of gun shots which in their opinion, indicates that many victims were killed and/or tortured whilst in custody. Most of the participants describe the horrific terror that their men faced during custody:

“One month before the Qurbani³, they cordoned our and the neighbouring Paras. After cordoning, they began to abduct people. People were taken to the Moghs’

³ Eid-ul-Adha is one of the most important periods in the Muslim calendar. It is the Muslim festival coinciding the pilgrimage of Makka

police station. They began to beat our men brutally. The main Thana (police station) was in Rasidong where they [the military] set up a camp. We always used to hear the loud sound of bullet shots, especially at night.” (B24, a 50 year old male)

Another woman besides this male participant added that her 70-year-old father is still in a Myanmar jail. She is certain of this news because she has spoken to people in the jail. There are a few small shops inside the jails in Myanmar which have phone call facilities and sometimes the prisoners can call their loved ones from these shops and share their experiences in jail with family members. Other participants find out about the incarceration of their loved ones from the Myanmar police who demand bribes from Rohingyas to guarantee that their loved ones will not be killed whilst they are in custody. The worried family members from Cox’s Bazar camps continue sending money and other valuables (bribes) to keep their males alive in jails. One old male describes how he paid bribe money so that the police keep his son alive instead of killing him in jail. In exchange of bribe money, he still collects updates of his son:

“They (military police) severely tortured my elder son. Then he told them again and again that, his brother did not have any contact with these ARSA [Arakan Rohingya Salvation Army] people, he donated money just to help the poor in Myanmar. After many requests, they (police) allowed him to leave. They told him that whenever they ordered him to he would have to report to the police immediately, and if he didn’t then they would shoot him. They called him after just one day. After he reached there, they released the boy. And the other boy they took was taken to some other place by the military police. After that everyone started to search for him all over the area. Then we came to know that he was taken to a jail in Mongru City. We manage to visit there by paying one and a half lac [Myanmar currency]. In Mungdu we arranged for some people to bring news about my son in exchange for money. They brought the news that my son had recently been moved to Buthidaung.” (B11, a 68 year old male)

The Myanmar forces arrested and interrogated many Rohingyas and forced them to admit a connection with insurgent groups in Myanmar (even if this was not true). Interrogation involves various acts to create physical discomfort but commonly beating. Moreover, the security forces killed an unknown number of people without finding their verified connection with any insurgent group. An old Rohingya male who fortunately escaped an encounter with death after the military shot him, describes his nightmare in box 4.5 below:

Box 4.5. Case story detailing an elderly man’s experiences of being shot at by Myanmar forces:

“At first, they tortured me and forced me to admit that I had been a Maulvi [Islamic qualified person]. When I said I was not, they wanted to see my identification documents. As I told them that I used to announce Azan in the mosque, they accused me of being ARSA [insurgent] custodian in that area. They said that nobody would come to rescue me if they beat me, and then began to beat me. Later, they left me on the road and began shooting gunfire at me. At some point, they thought I was dead. So they left. But then a girl came and helped me get on my feet. She grieved saying that I had been an old man, and that how cruel of them to torture me like that!” (B12, a 82 year old male)

As stated above, the Myanmar forces arrested many Rohingyas during this mass killing. One of the common allegations the forces used was the Rohingyas’ alleged involvement with the insurgent group called Arakan Rohingya Salvation Army (ARSA). ARSA is active in northern Rakhine states and is charged with committing violence to destabilize law and order in Myanmar. While killing or chasing Rohingya civilians in 2017, the security forces alleged many of them were members of or part of ARSA and were perpetrating acts designed to destabilise Myanmar security.

During the fieldwork, some Rohingya individuals especially women have shown their sons’ or brothers’ (family members’) pictures that they received from jails in Myanmar in 2017. They were mostly arrested by Myanmar military and police during the armed operation starting in August 2017. The picture below is of a Rohingya mother holding her son’s picture who was arrested during the 2017 persecution in Myanmar. Despite paying money to the Myanmar jail, her son was still in custody in 2019.



Picture of mother holding a picture of her son that was captured and placed in jail during the 2017 clearance operation

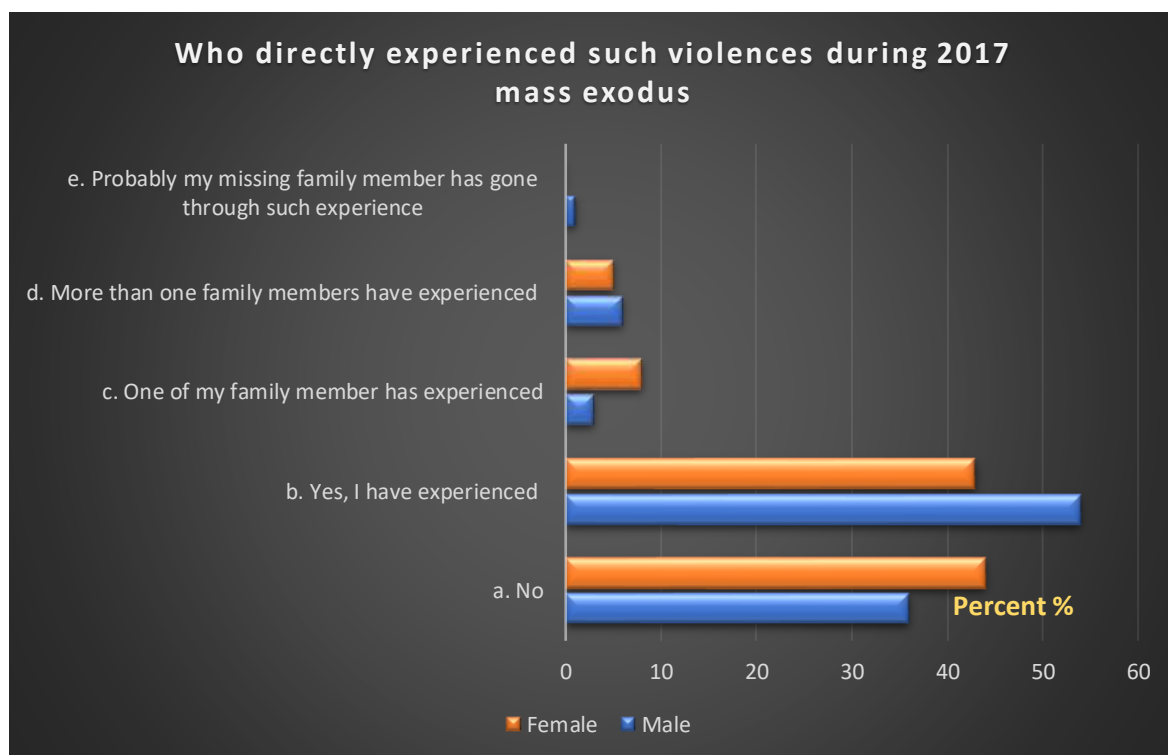
The aforementioned sections emphasised the impact of the clearance operation upon the forcibly displaced Rohingya refugees, and for those that managed to escape with their lives prior to fleeing, many of them were arrested, placed in detention and suffered from physical torture. The following contains a combination of quantitative and qualitative data that details those who directly experienced extreme violence during the 2017 mass exodus and the journeys and experiences of those who were forcibly displaced as a result of their persecution.

4.3 The experiences and journey of the forcibly displaced Rohingyas

4.3.1 Experiences of violence, mass exodus and chaotic evacuation of the Rohingyas

The mass exodus of the Rohingya people resulted in them experiencing extreme violence and witnessing murder and human rights atrocities. Figure 4.3 presents the percentage(s) of individuals, including their family members who directly experienced violence (i.e. were physically harmed) during this time. The majority of the participants i.e. 54% male and 43% female reported that they directly experienced violence during the 2017 persecution.

Figure 4.3: Rohingyas who directly experienced violence



36% male and 44% female reported that they have not directly experienced any violence during 2017 persecution. About 6% male and 5% female reported that while they managed to remain safe more than one member of their family had experienced violence in the 2017 persecution. Another 3% male and 8% female reported that one member of their family experienced violence in the 2017 persecution. Only 1% of the participants believed that their missing family members might have gone through violence in 2017 (however, even thinking that this might be the case could have been too painful an idea to contemplate). Overall, more male than females have reported that they have physically experienced violence during the 2017 persecution. In order to escape the extreme violence, the Rohingyas had to flee for their lives and made their way to the Myanmar-Bangladesh border, a journey which was fraught with significant risks and dangers of death, capture, rape and murder.

The Rohingya's ran towards the hills located in the Myanmar-Bangladesh bordering side to save their lives and attempt to reach safety. The following narrative demonstrates how the Rohingyas eventually found their way towards the Bangladesh border:

“One morning in 2017, at around 10 am, the army and police forces (‘Lunthon Bahini’) had cordoned our Para and started shooting at us. [...] I, along with four other people started to run towards the hills. Suddenly a bullet hit me from behind and I fell into the pond. Then another bullet came and hit the person in front of me. I managed to get out of the pond and start running again when they threw a bomb into the pond and the blast made the water in the pond come out into the bank.

When I somehow managed to reach the hills nearby, one of my uncles came running towards me to help me, as I was unable to run anymore. I told him to keep running and also promised to join him later on the way to the Bangladesh border. (B07, a 42 year old male)

In order to reach their destination, the terrified Rohingyas hid in the hills and waited for the military to return to their barracks. This expectation was based on previous experiences, of witnessing many military raids and violent attacks, as in most cases, the forces had gone back after committing various types of violence and looting Rohingya villages. However, with increased horror, the Rohingyas realized that in late 2017, they were being chased by the Myanmar forces up to the Bangladesh border. A male, who is currently a Rohingya camp Majhi describes this horror:

“We waited in the hills. We did not have anything to eat, except drinking water [...] Because they would drop bombs on the hills from helicopters we started thinking about our next plan of action. Because we assumed, since they burned down all our homes in the Para, maybe they won’t come back again.” (B09, a 60 year old male)

Hiding in the hills was very difficult, especially without food, water, shelter and security. Most of the participants were overwhelmed with fear after hearing that the military would chase them and attack them in hills. Then they started walking again towards the Bangladesh border, which was deemed to be the only possible ‘exit’ at this time:

“We stayed in the hills for seven days, eating the wild fruits. Some of our neighbours could manage to bring rice, dal or some vegetables from their home. They cooked food with those and gave us a little to feed our children. It was the rainy season. After seven days, we heard that they would come by helicopters to attack us in the hills. We panicked on hearing that and started walking along the riverside. We somehow reached a place named Naccondia which was a river ghat, (quay) in order to reach Bangladesh.” (B17, a 30 year old female)

From their homelands in the Rakhine the Rohingyas were forced to run West, towards Bangladesh. The following statement below demonstrates how the Myanmar forces chased Rohingyas towards the Myanmar-Bangladesh border:

“When the military started shooting at us, we quickly hid in the bushes and hills. People started to run for their lives. Especially towards the hills in the west which were open for us to hide in.” (B14, a 52 year old male)

During their journey, they witnessed a military convoy that consisted of police and ‘Mogh’ militants following the Rohingyas’ blood-spattered trails. This second phase of the attack involved both ground force and air force. Helicopters were supporting land forces by searching for crowds and dropping bombs or shooting moving humans. A 19-year-old male described how he was shot by bullet from a chasing military helicopter. Seemingly, one of the purposes of this attack was to further frighten Rohingyas by chasing them towards the Bangladesh border and to force them to cross the bordering river in order to stay alive:

“After climbing down the hills, we took refuge in a Char (Sandbar Island) because we had to cross a river in order to reach Bangladesh. The military was shooting at us from their helicopters while we were on our way to the Char. There were four of us together. But there were other people nearby, running. One of us was shot and died on the spot. I was also shot by a bullet and fell onto the ground. Some people carried me to the bank of the river.” (B18, a 19 year old male)

In the constant fear of attacks, especially from helicopters, thousands of Rohingyas rushed towards the Naff River. On the riverbank, thousands of people crowded together because there were not sufficient boats to get them all across the river. Myanmar ground forces were also chasing the fleeing Rohingyas from the mainland. The Rohingyas were scared and were stopped multiple times during their journey, where they were searched for potential ‘weapons’ or were accused of being ‘terrorists’ and were tortured and/or harassed. Moreover, a significant number of Rohingyas were killed during their journey, these killings happened in public to deliberately increase the fear of those that were trying to flee. While young men were killed with firearms and sharp weapons such as machete, young women were raped prior to being killed on their way:

“They raped many women and killed them. Here most of the corpses belonged to women who were raped and murdered. There were also some dead bodies of young men on the bank of the river.” (B07, a 42 year old male)

Indeed, a major intention of the Myanmar forces was to ensure that the Rohingyas, who were alive, and escaping, would never return. Even if they did not kill, rape or mutilate they attacked in other ways as evidenced in Box 4.6. below:

Box 4.6. Case story by a female Rohingya detailing how her grandson and other men were arrested by the security forces on their way to Bangladesh border:

“We arrived at the river bank by walking. There were around two hundred people with us. It took us a day to reach a place called Nakkundiya as we came down the mountain. We reached there after the Asar prayer (early evening). There we found many empty houses where people had left behind their rice and lentils. We ate and spent the night there. The next day, the security forces came to the village and arrested some men who were hiding there. In fact, there were many people hiding in those empty houses. They took almost 20 people into police custody. Among them was my grandson. Everyone was crouching down in fear when they saw the military. The military then assured us, “Don’t be afraid, we won’t do anything, keep praying to God.” Ironically, they kept saying this while arresting our sons and men. They tied them up with ropes and took them away.” (B08, a 30 year old female)

During the fieldwork, a Rohingya girl describes her journey towards the Bangladesh border accompanied with family and neighbours. On their way, they stopped multiple times. In one village, they witnessed that most of the people had been killed and the dead bodies had been left abandoned. A male describes his stopover in a village, while fleeing to the Bangladesh border, which evidences how a number of dead bodies had been left to decompose and heighten the Rohingyas’ fear of escaping with their lives:

“At that time, we ran from our Para and went up the hills to take shelter. We had been in the hills for four days. From there we got down to the seashore where we stayed for one day. That’s where we found a number of dead bodies.” (B33, a 45 year old male)

Rohingya crowds fleeing towards the Bangladesh border also witnessed dead bodies floating in the river, and the smell of dead bodies hovered the air. This stench may have been deliberate and intended to instil terror to ensure that the Rohingyas crossed the river, despite it being very dangerous. All of these accounts confirm that the Rohingyas were forced to leave their homeland if they wanted to escape with their lives. The only option available to them was to flee to Bangladesh and cross the border (cross the river). One woman relived the horrific experience of being shot whilst she was eight months pregnant, and the bullet injury caused her to miscarry whilst she was trying to flee.

Other atrocities were witnessed, including the Rohingya people being burnt alive (16% male and 13% female); accidental drowning due to people trying to cross the river to reach the Bangladesh border whilst being chased by Myanmar forces (16% male and 20% female); and human corpses abused or tortured (6% male and 7% female). Mortar shells were also used from a hill-top position, to chase fleeing Rohingyas towards the Bangladesh border. They also

used helicopters to drop bombs to kill those who were in the process of escaping and or heighten the fear of being killed as they desperately tried to escape with their lives.

The Naff River geographically separates Myanmar lands from Bangladesh, and by crossing the river, people could reach the safety of Bangladesh. Nonetheless, the participants recalled the security forces shooting fires (from flame throwers) at boatmen who were helping the Rohingyas to cross the river. The boatmen consisted of both Bangladeshi and Rohingya civilians who ferried people across the river. The crossing was not easy and the boatmen usually charged for this 'service', demanding money or goods in return. Often very large amounts of money had to be paid in order to ferry people across. While trying to cross the Naff River to reach Bangladesh during the 2017 persecution, many Rohingyas were unable to pay the boat fare. The participants explained that they had to use their valuables or contact their family members who lived abroad and ask for the money to be transferred electronically to Bangladesh, to enable them to pay their fare:

"I was a rich man in Myanmar, I had a two-story building and my own businesses and other property. When I had to leave I had just two children, my female relatives and my old father. I could not take many of my belongings because our houses were bombed, and we had to run for our lives. We hid in the mountains for 7 days without food but it was not safe to go back so we started walking. I had to carry my father on my back because the loss of all our relatives, neighbours and of the wealth we had developed made him very ill. The military chased us and forced us to go towards the border with Bangladesh, to the river. It was the only diction they would allow us to go. When we got to the river we had no money to pay for a crossing so we had to give all our jewellery and our ornaments to the boatmen so we could cross the river. They took everything and it was worth a lot of money. We arrived in Bangladesh empty handed but the host community in Bangladesh helped us, they provided clothes, food and shelter until the camps were set up." (Man 6, Male focus group 2)

"A man came from Burma around 20-25 years ago. We became more like a family. He even had connection with my brother in Malaysia. My brother sent the money to him. We stayed in his house for 6-7 days. Later when the camps were built, he sent us here." (B08, a 30 year old female)

The Rohingyas have been going to Bangladesh informally (without visa) for decades, with large numbers leaving Myanmar in 1978-79 and 1990-91 during the previous episodes of mass exodus. Those older migrants were already integrated into Bangladeshi society and were often contacted by their relatives in Myanmar and those who arrived during the 2017 persecution. The Rohingyas had maintained positive social networks with Bangladeshi citizens in Cox's Bazar over a significant period of time, some of them went fishing together in the bordering river, and some maintained contact via mobile phone. Some of them also preserved Bangladeshi mobile sim card to communicate during emergencies:

“We contacted those who came before us and took shelter in Ghumdhum. Before I came here, I had a mobile phone and a Bangladeshi SIM card. I used to catch fish in the river and had good relations with Bangladeshi boatmen. One of them gave me a SIM card. Around 20 years ago, three of my uncles migrated to Bangladesh and never came back. They used to live in Teknaf, Sonapur. I contacted them before coming to Ghumdhum.” (B04, a 35 year old male)

4.4 Chapter summary

This chapter documented the violence used in 2017 to evict the Rohingya from the Rakhine district of Myanmar. The first-hand accounts demonstrate that the Rohingyas were forced to flee Myanmar and that the clearance operation was deliberate and systematic. It makes it clear that the Rohingya had to leave to save their lives. The Rohingya explained that the clearance operation included the destruction of Rohingya villages, sustained periods of extreme violence, which included human rights violations, and involved the capture and executions of men, gender-based violence, atrocities committed against women and children, including rape, sexual and physical abuse and mutilation, the executions of vulnerable older people who were unable to leave and the burning alive of men, women and children as well as the desecration and abuse of dead bodies. These atrocities were led by the Myanmar security forces but they were supported by the local police and other local ethnic minorities, particularly the Buddhist Mogh. The accounts also demonstrate extreme violence and violence and abuse was used to chase the fleeing Rohingya all the way to the border with Bangladesh, to ensure that they left Myanmar and that their journey took them to Bangladesh, the Myanmar authorities have always claimed that they are really Bangladeshi. The descriptions and account clearly document a case of ethnic cleansing.

4.5 Key findings

- Rohingyas’ experience of discrimination and oppression in Myanmar took a new dimension in August 2017. While previous episodes of violence were ‘horrific’, the 2017 attacks were ‘significantly worse’ and forced the Rohingya to flee, most were forced to go to Bangladesh.
- The 2017 ‘clearance operation’ was systematic and orchestrated by the Myanmar military but local Buddhists (‘Mogh’) were also involved.
- The operation included mass murder and torture, targeted raids/attacks to Rohingya villages, burning whole villages, violence against women (including sexual violence and mutilation).
- Respondents, most of whom had suffered and or witnessed slaughter, violence, rape or other violations, documented first-hand accounts of the atrocities committed.
- The journeys of the Rohingya towards Bangladesh were perilous because they were chased down and attacked by the military and local Moghs all the way to the Bangladesh border.

Chapter 5: Rohingya perceptions of dignity and loss of dignity

5.1 Chapter overview

This chapter illustrates how the Rohingyas perception of dignity has been conceptualised and affected by their experiences of extreme violence. It focuses upon the periods prior to and during the 2017 forced displacement. Whilst the literature has shown that there is no 'innate clarity' about the concept of dignity, it is a very broad term which can resonate with almost any cause (Regilme, 2019:287). According to the literature, many traditional models or theories of dignity use a top-down conceptualisation which either fails to consider or only superficially considers the lived experiences of people whose dignity is under threat or being violated. (Patrick and Simpson, 2019). This study adopts a different approach. Its key purpose is to develop a bottom-up approach utilising participants' views and feelings to capture the Rohingyas perception of dignity and determine whether it has been preserved or crushed by their experiences. From this we have found that for Rohingya refugees, dignity has three dimensions: the social, religious and economic. Furthermore, for them, the notion of dignity involves collective dignity and mutual respect, enjoying Rohingya identity, peaceful citizenship, freedom to worship and practicing their faith, education, self-reliance including the ability to meet their family's basic or daily needs.

Whilst the main aim of this is to gain an insight into participant experiences prior to and during the 2017 forced migration and consider how these experiences contributed to their loss of dignity. It is important to note that the significance of the dignity issues discussed above are not just drawn from the qualitative study, but were also supported by the wider quantitative materials, and were agreed on by many in the Rohingya community. Survey data is presented below, capturing the Rohingyas views and perspectives concerning their loss of dignity whilst in Myanmar (presented in Figure 5.1).

Figure 5.1. Overview of violent experiences that contributed to the Rohingyas loss of dignity during the 2017 forced migration.

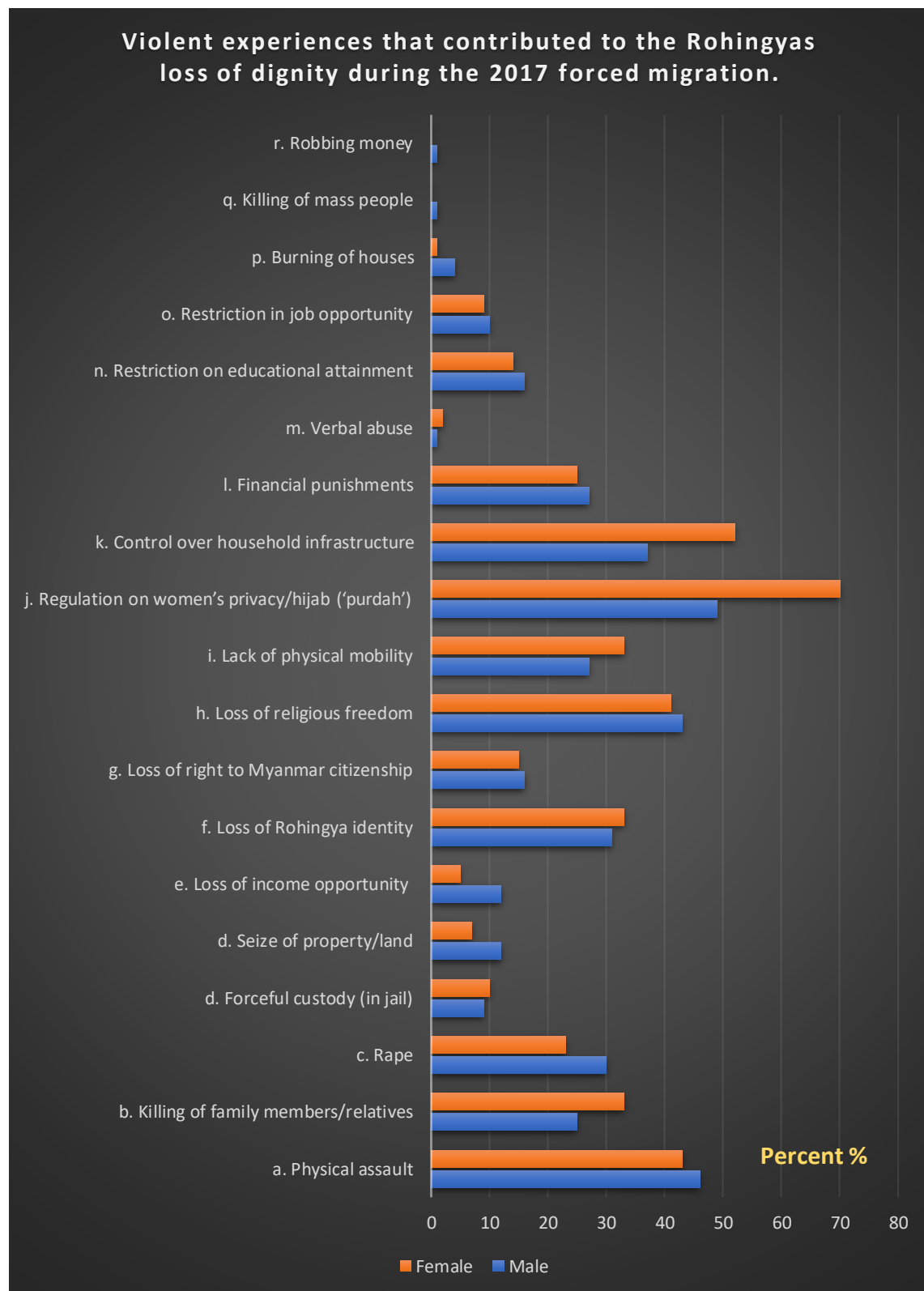


Figure 5.2 above illustrates the violent experiences the Rohingyas were subjected to during the forced migration from Myanmar in 2017, which contributed to their loss of dignity. Participants were asked to select three multiple responses to identify those most significant

in the reduction of their individual and collective dignity. Of the 419 participants that participated in the survey, 418 reported that their dignity was harmed due to the impact of the extreme violence and persecution experienced in 2017. Only one of the participants was unsure, whether his dignity had been reduced as a result of his experiences.

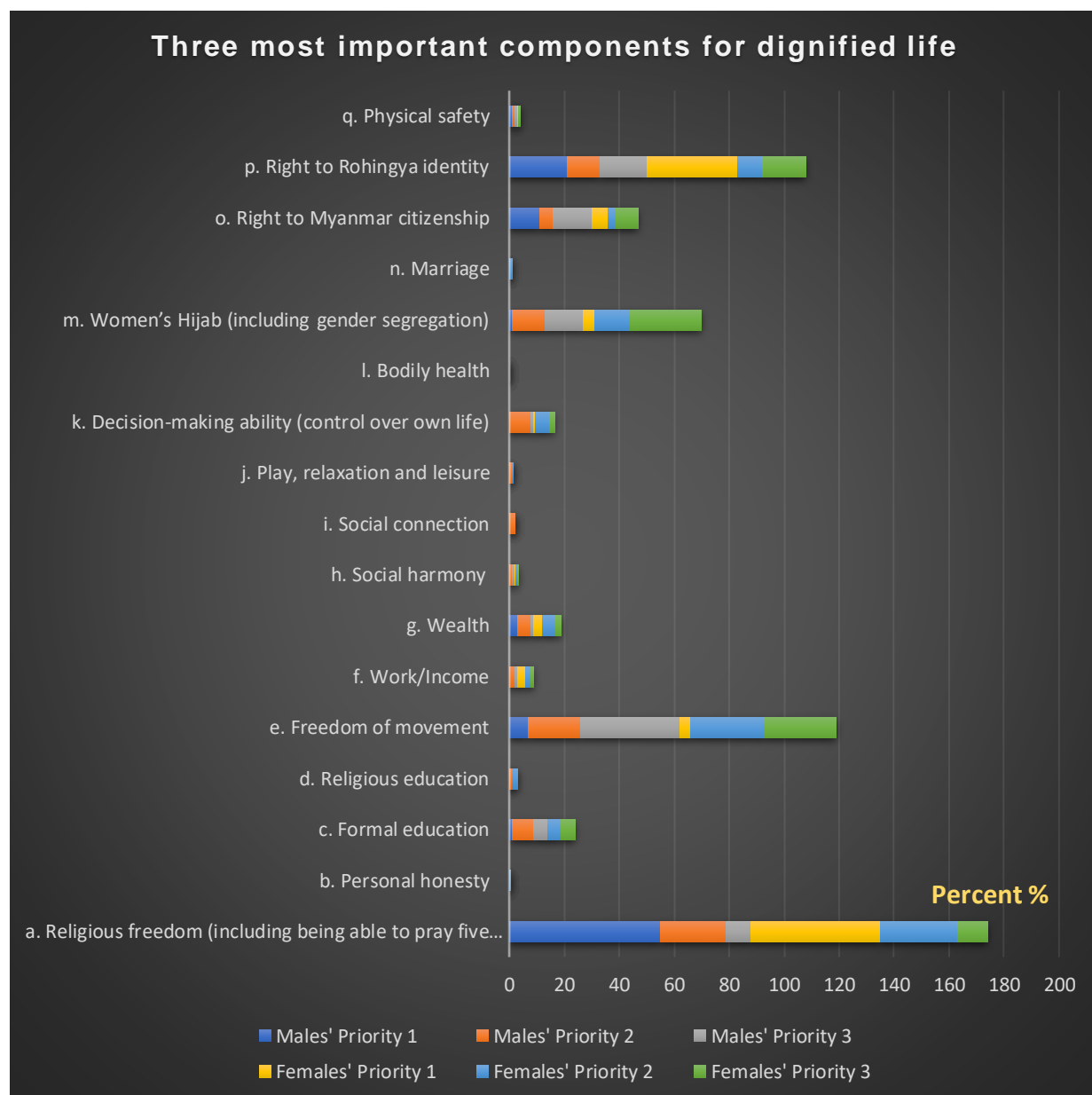
Our study used questionnaires and qualitative interviews with the Rohingyas to collect the information necessary to build the aspects that they believed central to their dignity. As they spoke of dignity, they revealed that they had experienced and seen many forms of violence in 2017, which had significantly contributed to a loss of their individual and collective dignity, and which provides the backdrop to understanding why they draw out certain aspects of their lives as essential to their dignity. Therefore, whilst this chapter is about dignity it needs to revisit some elements which were considered in Chapters 3 and 4 because this gives context to the narrative around dignity.

5.2 Perceptions and conceptualisations of dignity amongst the forcibly displaced Rohingya refugees

To determine the perception and conceptualisations of dignity, 419 (173 males and 246 females) Rohingyas provided survey data. Part of the survey asked them to rank three of the most important factors that would enable them to have a dignified life. Figure 5.2 below details both male and female perspectives:

Within the survey data, 51% males, and 47% females felt that religious freedom was a key requirement that would enable them to live a dignified life, whilst 21% males and 33% females felt that rights to a Rohingya identity was one of the most important components. 11% males and 3% females, selected citizenship of Myanmar as their first priority, with approximately 7% of males and 4% females identifying freedom of movement (freedom to visit any places within a country in which they reside) as their first priority to help them to lead a dignified life. Other first priorities identified as enabling the Rohingyas to lead a dignified life included rights to Myanmar citizenship 5% males and 3% females, women's hijab 4%, and freedom of movement 4%.

Figure 5.2: Three most important components of dignity reported by the participants



Participants were also asked to identify a second priority that would enable them to lead a dignified life. The categories ranked as the second most important, consisted of religious freedom for 24% of males and 28% females. Freedom of movement was also identified by 19% of males and 27% of females as a second priority, which would enable them to lead a dignified life. For the third priority, 36% males and 26% females identified freedom of movement, whilst 17% males and 16% females identified rights to Rohingya identity, 14% males reported rights to Myanmar citizenship and 14% males, and 26% females reported women's Hijab. The quantitative data identified the different perspectives of both the male and female participants and detailed the different priorities each set of participants identified as key factors that would enable them to lead a dignified life. The survey data presented

above revealed the three most important components that participants believed would enable them to live a dignified life: freedom of religion; freedom of movement; and the right to the Rohingya identity. Interestingly, Myanmar citizenship did not rank high on this list, however, almost all of the items chosen would be achieved if they were awarded citizenship in Myanmar, or in another state. In addition to the analysis of survey data, the following section contains storytelling data that provides a further and significant insight into the multiple and different meanings of dignity to the forcibly displaced Rohingya refugees. It details how the participants collectively and individually conceptualise the social, economic and religious concepts of dignity, that include the following six categories:

- Safety
- Identity
- Religion
- Role of knowledge (Ilm)
- Wealth and self-reliance
- Solidarity and mutual respect

5.3 The Six Categories of Dignity

5.3.1 Safety

Experiences of extreme violence and not feeling or being safe was a key element associated with the concept of dignity, with many of the Rohingyas who were forcibly displaced explaining that dignity cannot be protected or maintained without physical safety. Storytelling data has provided an overview of participants' views on their experiences of violence, not feeling safe and how these have contributed to their loss of dignity.

5.3.1.1 Extreme Violence

Most of the participants confirmed that living without violence was an essential element of their survival, which included being safe from various forms of violence, fear and intimidation. Other aspects of physical safety included women's safety both inside and outside the home, men's safety and being free from the probability of being killed, harassed, physically captured, tortured and or hurt in any form. The following section details participants' experiences of extreme violence and how this has had an impact upon their individual and collective dignity. As evidenced in the survey data, 25% males and 33% females reported that killing of their family members or close relatives by Myanmar security forces and rival ethnic groups most strongly affected their dignity. In addition, some Rohingya were forced into custody and experienced significant periods of time in jail, with 9% males and 10% females acknowledging the impact of being forcibly taken into custody.

The case story presented in Box 5.1. captures the devastation felt by the Rohingyas as a female refugee tries to portray the gravitas of her experiences whilst fleeing for her life, and the impact upon her own and others dignity. The female refugee talks about her feelings of despair as she witnessed houses being burned down and Rohingya people having their lands and properties confiscated whilst being driven from their homeland. The case story encapsulates her feelings of distress and new status as a 'refugee', as all traces of the Rohingyas within Myanmar had been removed, which had a significant impact upon their loss of dignity.

Box 5.1 Case story from a female Rohingya forced to leave her home during the 2017 persecution, detailing just one of the perspectives associated with the concept of dignity.

"You're talking about losing dignity? We could barely manage to flee with our lives. How could we have respect when they had burned down our homes, confiscated our lands and properties, and driven us away from our homeland? We are now living in Bangladesh as Refugees. I've heard that they have left no traces of our homes behind. They have destroyed them and then rolled the land smooth to remove all our traces. What could be less dignified than a life like this?." (B06, a 60 year old female)

While living in Myanmar, Rohingyas' lives were consumed by the fear of violence and being physically safe, which caused significant psychological distress and affected them during every waking hour:

"We were even frightened by the barking of foxes at night. My son [child] felt sick one day when he saw the Military. Even if they found us chatting together, they used to shoot at us....how could we have any dignity in such circumstances?" (B01, a 26 year old female).

Other concepts of dignity involved not being harmed by the security forces or by other rival ethnic groups if and when the Rohingyas returned to Myanmar:

"For dignity, we must be given security to our lives in our birth place. We did not harm anyone...why do they want to continue killing us?" (B05, a 55 year old male)

A Rohingya women explains that their loss is so significant that they are unable to express it in words:

"We have lost our dignity. We have suffered a great loss which cannot be expressed in words. Take for example, if an unknown male grabs the hand of an unknown woman, we consider that to be disrespectful and a huge blow to our dignity. Our dignity has suffered much worse than that owing to the current situation." (B02, a 30 year old female)

A Rohingya male reiterates the impact of extreme violence upon their dignity and their well-being and compares a photograph of himself to the researcher (who was of a similar age) to reiterate the negative impact upon his dignity and appearance:

"I am unable to express the loss in words. However, we are of similar age and if you compare a photograph of you and I, you will see the difference in our appearance. Perhaps this comparison will help you to see and understand the damage that has been done to our dignity." (B04, a 35 year old male)

The above quotes are indicative of the unthinkable and horrific nature of cruelty that strategically degraded, humiliated and destroyed the Rohingyas' dignity. Every participant elicited similar sorrows recalling deplorable acts of violence by the perpetrators in Myanmar. The Rohingyas' respect and social aspect of dignity were destroyed via the physical assaults and beatings that they were subjected to within Myanmar, many of them forced to flee in order to save their own lives, with 46% males and 43% females acknowledged the significant impact these assaults had upon their dignity. According to the participants, such cruel experiences have significantly contributed to their loss of individual and collective dignity, and participants provide further evidence in the form of rape and sexual violence below.

5.3.1.2 Rape and Sexual Violence

Chapters 3 and 4 provided an overview of the rape, sexual offences and some of the worst human rights violations that women were subjected to, prior to and during the 2017 forced migration. This section details participants' experiences of their loss of dignity as a result of rape and sexual assault, which is generally referred to by the Rohingya refugees as 'losing ijot'. The violations were so profound and affected so many women that even those who were not actually raped or sexually assaulted felt that they lost 'ijot'. Despite this mainly affecting the Rohingya women, some men were also raped and sexually assaulted.

Attacks on the women, were often witnessed by their close family and friends, which added to their feeling that their 'ijot' was reduced or destroyed. During the fieldwork, many participants, particularly though not exclusively female participants, stated that incidents and fear of rape along with mass killings in Myanmar were the two most violent and horrific experiences that were directly linked with their loss of dignity. 30% males and 23% females confirmed that that rape (sexual violence against women) had a significant impact upon their dignity.

In order to keep themselves safe, to protect themselves, some women tried took fairly desperate measures to try to make themselves less attractive.

"In Myanmar, my daughters-in-law used to mask their face by smearing it with charcoal to look dirty, as the military [during raids] would not select or take girls or women with dirty faces into their custody to rape." (B06, a 60 year old female)

“Girls would cut their long hair short, to try and change their appearance and make themselves look ugly.” (B34, a 18 year old female).

A male respondent declared his distress and confirmed the depth of the Rohingyas’ feelings in relation to their collective loss of *ijjot*,

“They’ve disgraced our mothers and sisters which ruined our dignity the most.” (B23, a 50 year old male).

Another respondent reiterated their despair at the rape and sexual assaults upon the Rohingya women:

“When they abused our women, it was quite unbearable to see. They raped not only the pretty girls, they grabbed all the young ones.” (B01, a 26 year old female)

Rape during the 2017 persecution was designed to inflict more harm to human dignity in comparison to previous incidents of rape and sexual assault (that is why it was committed so publicly). It was a key element of the strategy deployed to instil deep and widespread fear and trauma – physical, emotional and psychological, in the Rohingya victims via acts of brutality, namely killings, disappearances, torture, and rape and other forms of sexual violence (OHCHR, 2017: 1). It was designed as one means of forcibly removing them from their homes, one means of ethnically cleansing the area. One participant explained the severity of the attacks, as women saw babies being killed before the military raped and disfigured their mothers:

“They raped a girl in my neighbourhood and cut off her breasts. They took the babies away from the arms of their mothers and cut them into pieces. Seeing these, I cried but couldn’t protest.” (B06, a 60 year old female)

Rape in front of family members or villagers was a critical factor as it added to the humiliation of women, and the loss of their *‘ijjot’* (dignity) in front of family and neighbours (see Box 5.2 below).

Box 5.2 A Rohingya woman describes the impact of seeing their mothers and sister raped and its impact upon their dignity.

“Is there anything left of our dignity? They raped our mothers and sisters in front of other people. Snatching the baby from mothers before they raped the mothers, [thus] they committed serious hostility. Little kids were thrown into the fire.” (B24, a 50 year old male)

A male participant portrays the horror of women and young girls being raped and sexually assaulted in front of their family and community members, and the actions they had to take to survive:

“What became most disgraceful to us was when they had raped the girls in front of their fathers. That is too shameful to describe, you know. Our hearts shatter with grief inside our chests. We didn’t come to Bangladesh from starvation, but to save our lives.” (B16, a 50 year old male)

These acts significantly reduced the Rohingyas’ dignity as illustrated below:

“We just left that place because they damaged the dignity of our daughters and sisters. They took fifty girls with them from our area. The militaries caught them and took them to the Moghs’ place. They used to rape them there and then kill them.” (B25, a 30 year old female)

The rape of women was perceived as one of the highest types of crimes and human right violations that significantly reduced the Rohingyas’ dignity, even for those who were not the direct victims of rape. In addition, rape victims such as pregnant mothers who had conceived as a result of rape became subject to further humiliation. A male described that many women committed suicide due to being raped during the 2017 persecution, as below:

“They burnt down our homesteads, destroyed our houses, and raped our girls. They oppressed our mothers and sisters. People came down from the hills, starved. Some girls had committed suicide after being raped.” (B28, a 70 year old male)

As illustrated above, a number of women suffered post-traumatic stress disorder and committed suicide due to the trauma and loss of dignity as a result of being raped. In addition, an unknown number of children were conceived due to the women being raped. The Imams and Majhi [community leaders] instructed all Rohingyas to accept the women and any children born as a result of the rape. They instructed everyone that these women should be treated as if their dignity was intact; the rape was not their fault. They instructed husbands and families to accept the women back, not reject them as might normally happen in their culture. This has helped but the people still know about the rape and sexual violence, and it has had lifelong consequences for both the women and children. Even if they were not totally rejected it was difficult for them to be wholly accepted within society due to the traditional stigma associated with rape, which has resulted in their loss of dignity. This remained with many of the victims in the Cox’s Bazar camps. This section has focused upon rape and sexual offences, and its impact upon the individual and collective dignity of the Rohingya community. The forthcoming section examines identity within the concept of dignity and the importance of maintaining the Rohingya identity to protect their dignity.

5.3.2 Identity

For many of the Rohingya, the concept of dignity was related to their ethnic and religious identity. Hence, their understanding of dignity has arisen from losing their ethnic identity and rights to citizenship in Myanmar, as evidenced by the case story presented in Box 5.3.

Box 5.3 Case story from a male Rohingya who was forcibly displaced from Myanmar due to his lack of citizenship status and is currently seeking shelter and safety as a ‘refugee’ in Bangladesh

“We must have Rohingya [identification] cards, not the card that currently label us as ‘Kolai’ [people of darker skin] or ‘Bengali’ [illegal immigrants]. Rohingya cards will stop our humiliation. Arakan is our birthplace. Being recognized as Rohingya means getting access to all our rights to citizenship. We don’t want other Rakhine ethnic communities attacking us again and again. We want to have our freedom of movement.” (B04, a 35 year old male)

Many of the participants felt that if official recognition was addressed, a number of the identified issues would be resolved. Most of the Rohingyas believed that the removal of their citizenship status was a key factor that prevented them living a dignified life. Maintaining their status as a citizen, articulated in terms of equality and equal rights in comparison to other ethnic groups in Myanmar, was seen as a key concept in preserving their ethnic identity and obtaining equal rights to citizenship in Myanmar.

For decades, Rohingyas living in Myanmar experienced the suspension of their fundamental human rights, their dignity was deliberately reduced, and the overall wellbeing of their lives was severely restricted. The Rohingyas were largely identified as illegal residents (Bengalis) in Myanmar, preventing them from being able to seek justice and access legal protection. The strategy to reduce the citizenship and remove the Rohingyas ethnic identity consisted of the following:

- Loss of land and property
- Reduced rights to education
- Lack of religious freedom
- Loss of freedom of movement
- Loss of the right to serve in the military, the police or work in the civil service as well as loss of other employment opportunities

The targeted attacks and changes to their ethnic identity was a prolonged and deliberate strategy to reduce the Rohingyas ethnic identity, resulting in a loss of dignity, which was perceived as one of the highest and most challenging losses by many of the participants. The removal of their ethnic identity left the Rohingya community subject to regular and systematic persecution by others, and for many, their identity was an integral element of their dignity, as stated by the male participant below:

“Yes, we call ourselves Rohingya. It means the people of Burma. This was our dignity, our pride.” (B04, a 35 year old male)

All of the participants, confirmed their belonging to the Rohingya ethnicity in Myanmar, acknowledging that the term not only denoted their ethnic identity but also their citizenship rights in Myanmar. The participants lived in persistent fear prior to the 2017 forced migration (forced displacement, what some see as an ethnic cleansing) and were unable to acknowledge their Rohingya identity and citizenship status (see discussion in chapter 3). Due to their lack of rights, participants were unable to declare to the state authorities that a new baby had been born, which prevented their children from having Rohingya status and citizenship rights; new Rohingya children could only be registered as Bengali. This child registration reinforced the oppression and discrimination of the Rohingyas and ensured that their children would only be able to access illegal immigrant status, and not have access to their rights or retain their dignity.

“If we revealed that we were Rohingya, we’d have been killed. In front of security forces, we had to introduce ourselves as Bengali. We had to take a card for a new born baby girl. If the card is not taken, we can’t let our girls get married in future [the girl becomes undocumented and in future, will be claimed as an illegal immigrant].” (B01, a 26 year old female)

The findings of the study suggests that the lack of recognition of the citizenship rights of the Rohingyas was dehumanizing and alienated them further from wider society, whilst enhancing their loss of dignity. Box 5.4. provides a case story of a male participant that has lost his identity and feels trapped in ‘limbo’.

Box 5.4. Case study detailing a male’s sense of loss and lack of belonging due to the removal of his ethnic identity.

“If we go there, they call us ‘Bengali’. By ‘Bengali’ they mean Bangladeshi. When we are here [Bangladesh], we are called Burmese. Can you tell us where we actually belong? We must have a place to call home. Or else, where will we go? We were born and brought up in Burma, not here. Now they humiliate us, saying “you’re Bangladeshi”. (B03, a 45 year old male)

This was reiterated within the survey data, with 31% males and 33% females reporting that the loss of their Rohingya (ethnic) identity contributed to their loss of dignity and 16% males

and 15% females added that (their long and persistent) loss of their rights to Myanmar citizenship had a significant impact upon their dignity. This section has focused upon the ethno-religious identity of the Rohingyas and its perceived role in the removal of their citizenship status and their collective and individual loss of dignity. The loss is absolute and was intended to remove them from the Arakan area through a refusal to recognise that they belonged, refusal to recognise their historical links with Arakan and their religious and social ethnicity.

5.3.3 Religion

Many Rohingyas believe that they were persecuted because of their Muslim religion which led to many years of suffering, reducing the religious and cultural concept of dignity. As stated by the respondent below:

“The only reason we were tortured was because we were Muslims. If we had the same ethnicity, they wouldn’t be able to torture us like this.” (B21, a 40 year old male)

One of the strategies used to reduce the religious concept of dignity, was the closure of several traditional Islamic schools in 2012, locally known as *Madrasa*⁴, which participants recognised as one of the first steps in the reduction of their religious dignity. This continued when the period of extreme violence commenced during the Qurbanir-Eid, portraying it as a ‘nightmare’ during the holy days of festival, which should have been a period of religious celebrations. A Rohingya male describes his experiences as he prepared to celebrate the Eid festival in 2017:

“The day when Qurbani Eid’s⁵ moon was sighted, we never thought that something like this might ever happen during this holy festival!! Everyone bought cow [in this Eid, Muslims sacrifice animals to purify their souls] for Qurbani. The time we were forced to come out of our houses, we already sighted the moon [in Islam, Eid day is confirmed based on moon sighting]. That day I did [Eid] shopping by spending almost seven lac sixty thousand [Myanmar currency].” (B25, a 30 year old female)

Participants felt that commencing the forced migration during the largest Muslim festival was clearly intended to maximise the distress for the Rohingya community. Confirming the total disregard and lack of respect for the Rohingyas’ religious rights and spiritual well-being. For the Rohingya Muslims, maintaining faith in Allah (God) and following Islamic principles plays a crucial role in upholding dignity. Participants confirmed that the regular practice of Islamic

⁴ Madrasa literally means school. It is an Islamic school or college, literally a ‘place of instruction’, especially instruction in religious law. The Cambridge Dictionary gives its meaning as a ‘a school where people go to learn about the religion of Islam.’

⁵ Qurbani Eid begins on the 10th of Dhul Hijjah month of Arabic calendar. The Rohingyas closely follow the Lunar calendar and the respondent referred to the fact that they started shopping and preparing for Qurbani Eid after the new moon was sighted for Dhul Hijjah month. In Islam, Eid day is confirmed based on moon sighting.

rituals helped them retain respect, this confirmed the importance of religious freedom and rights found in the survey data.

For the Rohingyas religious freedom and dignity included both collective and individual aspects. Daily individual practices include things such as wearing Islamic dress (such as the Hijab for women outside the home). Within the survey data (see figure 5.1, above), 70% of females and 49% Males identified the regulations affecting women's privacy (including the ban on wearing Hijab in public places), as one of the most significant factors that affected their dignity in Myanmar. Secondly, 52% females and 37% males reiterated the importance of protecting women's privacy and dignity as they identified that control over household infrastructure was the second most important factor that had a significant impact upon their dignity. This was due to the restrictions placed upon the Rohingyas by the Myanmar authorities that prevented them from constructing screens within their courtyards.

The prevention of other religious practices included requiring men to get rid of their beards. The maintenance of a beard, reciting the Quran, learning *Hadith* (sayings of Prophet Muhammad) and maintaining personal honesty are all essential aspects of their religion. Collective religious practices include: praying five times a day at a mosque and in congregation with others, this was banned in Myanmar from 2012; attending *Talim* in Tablighi Jamaat (religious education) and acquiring religious education in Madrasas (religious schools), many of which were closed in 2012.

Other cultural practices included gender segregation and maintaining physical distance between stranger (non-family member) men and women in public places. When attending religious gatherings in mosques and *Talim* men and women must use separate entrances. Furthermore, to maintain dignity, women must wear Hijab outside the home, this ensures that they maintain respect. If women are unable to wear Hijab outside or spend too much time with unrelated men in public, it can have an impact upon her dignity, and put her at risk of becoming 'be-ljjot' (undignified).

"Dignity means to stick with namaz (Islamic prayer) and for female, not to go outside home unaccompanied by a male relative. when she goes out. If they need to see the doctors, they have to find ways other than bicycles or, scooters where they'd be seated next to the driver. For a girl to be seated next to stranger man is prohibited in our Sharia, she can't do it." (B29, a 40 year old male)

Maintaining women's privacy has different religious and cultural connotations in different Muslim communities. As noted above when reporting the survey data and below when noting the interview data, in the Rohingya community the strict protection of women's privacy is a key factor in collectively maintaining the Rohingyas' dignity (it is core for both men and women, for the whole community). The Hijab is considered a necessity as it helps to maintain the women's privacy and modesty whilst also protecting them from the gaze of strangers. According to Rohingya tradition the Hijab is not about a piece of cloth but about a woman's worth, her dignity and modesty, so when, in 2012 Myanmar banned women from wearing

the Hijab it undermined their dignity. Participants also reported that Rohingya Islamic values on safeguarding women's privacy also require windows to be covered with curtains, and houses have fences and walls. The Rohingya traditionally maintained the prohibition of exposure of women to male strangers. However, from 2012, the country's authority-imposed a ban on covering houses with any type of fence. They claimed this ban was necessary in order to reduce alleged security threats. Additional restrictions in 2012 prevented Rohingya girls from wearing headscarves at school.

"Our girls were not allowed to wear the Hijab while going outside. They didn't allow us to set any partition or shade around our houses, which damaged our dignity in Myanmar." (B16, a 50 year old male)

When curtains or fences covering family privacy were used, the security forces harassed the Rohingyas with various allegations, including hiding members of insurgent groups and or weapons at home. Toilets and bathrooms were also prevented from being covered with fences, and when a male constructed a toilet inside his house to protect women's privacy, he was tortured by police.

"We have nothing left of our dignity. We used curtains around our houses, which weren't allowed to be used. We made separate latrine inside the house to protect women, which resulted in the police coming and kicking me with his boots and pounded me with the gun barrel". (B10, a 19 year old male)

A similar experience was shared by a female.

"When they came and didn't find anyone in the houses, they said that there had been firearms and smashed everything inside of house, which still makes us burst into tears. We were so careful, that even a Rohingya man couldn't see us [silence]..." (B17, a 30 year old female)

Participants also confirmed the importance of maintaining dignity for the elderly community, who are also committed to their religious and cultural practices, as they are also expected to:

"study and perform prayers 5 times a day" (B08, a 30 year old female)

Another female participant expresses her fears about being sent back to Myanmar where religious and cultural practices will not be followed, which will have a significant impact upon her dignity.

"That's why I plead to your government for not to send us back without ensuring security. We are ready to die here, for we'll at least get a Kafon [cloth used to wrap the body in Muslim funeral] to cover our dead bodies after death." (B06, a 60 year old female)

Participants often referred to the funeral as the last thing a human being could expect for the sake of their dignity. For the Rohingyas, the funeral not only shows respect to the dead but

also ensures that people have a smooth transition into their religious afterlife. Many Rohingyas linked undignified burial as the greatest loss of dignity. The following statement illustrate the significance of this upon the Rohingya community:

“How do we get back to that land! A least people will pray our Janazah (Islamic funeral prayer) if we die here. Who’s going to pray our Janazah there?” (B28, a 70 year old male)

The religious dimension of dignity was also impacted by the events within Myanmar, where the Rohingyas were prevented from having the freedom to worship and practice their faith which included having to obtain permission to get married, and Rohingya children being proclaimed as foreigners due to a lack of documentation. Maintaining and following Islamic principles played a crucial role in upholding dignity and 43% males and 41% females confirmed that the loss of religious freedom they experienced, harmed their dignity (see Figure 5.1).

Qualitative and quantitative data have reiterated the importance of following and maintaining religious and cultural practices to maintain their dignity. These cultural and religious practices were key elements of their daily lives, and key to who they were. The lack of opportunities to do this in Myanmar, prevented them from having the freedom to practise their faith and meet the needs of their families basic and daily needs thus reducing their perceived notion of dignity; stripping of their religious freedoms often brought out real passion and strong emotions, it was part of who they are.

5.3.4. Freedom of Movement

Reducing the Rohingyas freedom of movement was a key element in the strategy to reduce their citizenship in 2012 and has been identified within the top three issues for the Rohingyas prior to and post the forced migration. During the fieldwork, participants have provided clear examples of how a reduction in their freedom of movement, has contributed to a reduction in their dignity, with both male and female participants reiterating its importance. Chapter 3 provided an overview of the challenges they faced with restricted mobility, providing examples of life-or-death situations, because of these restrictions. The case story in Box 5.5 provides an overview of the participants frustrations at losing their freedom of movement and the challenges they faced in trying to find a solution and gain permission to move freely.

Box 5.5. Case study of a participant’s frustration at trying to address the loss of freedom.

“Whom will we go to with our complaints? There was no court where we could go to seek justice. We did not have any Chairman or member whom we could go to with our complaints. Above all, we needed permission to go from one place to another. We had to go to them who tortured us in the first place! The Chairman of our village was a Mogh. When the military used to come to our village, we had to go to the Chairman and needed to give him money to stop the torture. Even if they stopped for a while, they would come back again after a couple of days. Even after paying lots of bribes, we could not manage any permanent solution to our problems. The tortures continued indefinitely.” (B21, a 40 year old male)

The loss of the freedom of movement was a frustrating issue for participants as despite paying bribes to have the restrictions temporarily lifted, it would only last for a few days before the restrictions would be back in place and freedom of movement prevented.

Other concepts that enable the Rohingyas to utilise their individual and collective dignity is knowledge or 'ilm'⁶, education, knowledge and wisdom which is an Arabic term and is discussed further utilising participants' comments below.

5.3.5 Ilm - Education, Knowledge and Wisdom

'Ilm', the Arabic term for knowledge is explicitly linked with Rohingyas' dignity. Although the term widely refers to education obtained in religious schools or Madrasas. For many Rohingyas 'ilm' is an all-embracing term covering wisdom, insights, religious education and broader formal education at schools. Both the religious and the secular education were key to their dignity. As detailed by the survey and storytelling data in Chapter 3, the Rohingyas were deprived of almost all formal education in Myanmar for approximately eight years prior to the forced evacuation and deprived of further and higher education for much longer, often there was no education after the age of about 10. Even if they were educated the education was not recognised, they were not permitted to gain educational certificates. The lack of educational opportunities reduced the Rohingyas ability to secure employment within professional roles such as teaching or private tutorship, leaving them susceptible to manual roles and less salaried careers. If a Rohingya acquires education, s/he is respected by society and often known as 'Ilemdar' (wise). Ilemdar commonly refers to religious scholars, but also to those who have attended formal (secular) education provision in Myanmar. Ilemdars' are deemed qualified to offer solutions to problems and often occupy leadership positions in the community. As evidenced in the following quote:

"In our society, the Islamic scholars (Ilemdar) are deemed to be the most respected such as the Imams, and Muazzem.⁷ Teachers, and Chairmen are also respected within our community. As a Rohingya, we were unable to access Higher Education, which meant the scope of moving up in society, to earn more respect, was very limited".
(B19, a 50 year old male)

One participant reaffirmed the role of "ilm" and its potential to increase their dignity and respect:

'... if I had some *ilm* and connection with the [Myanmar] government, my society would respect me'. (B30, a 40 year old male)

⁶ 'Ilm' is an Arabic term which means knowledge. The Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him) said: "the seeking of knowledge is obligatory for every Musim." (Islamic-dictionary.tumblr.com)

⁷ Muazzem is a religious scholar who makes the ritualistic call for congregational prayers.

There are gender inequalities in securing 'ilm' and dignity, due to males having increased opportunities to participate in higher education. Within Rohingya society, females do not traditionally enjoy secular educational opportunities to acquire high social status. Females are expected to attend religious schools after reaching puberty, in order to maintain hijab (women's privacy). Traditionally therefore females were excluded from directly experiencing this dignity, they gained dignity if their fathers, husbands, sons, brothers attained ilm.

Male individuals that remained in Myanmar educational provision up to tenth grade were identified as 'master' (meaning teacher or educated person) within the Rohingya community. These educated people enjoyed the opportunities to become a private tutor for the children of wealthy households. The lack of opportunity for education, often in withholding educational certificates or preventing them attending education prevented Rohingya men integrating into wider life in Myanmar, they could not easily work outside their communities. Knowledge and education are vital components to Rohingya dignity.

"One who used to go to Akyab⁸ after studying up to tenth grade might get a job. But Muslim boys were not allowed to study there. When they studied up to tenth grade, they were given a card. After attaining the card, they were introduced as "Bhui"⁹ holders. They were called 'Master'¹⁰." (B01, a 26 year old female)

Survey data confirmed that 16% of males and 14% of females recognised the reduction of opportunities that prevented them from achieving and or maintaining educational outcomes. This section has identified the importance of 'ilm' (knowledge, education and/or wisdom) and how it relates to the concept of dignity for the Rohingyas. Participants' comments have confirmed that education provides respect and makes them 'ilemdar' (wise) and enables them to occupy leadership positions within the community. However, the opportunities for females to achieve 'ilm' have traditionally always been reduced due to their post puberty exclusion from secular education (their religious education to maintain hijab or women's privacy).

Other factors participants associated with the concept of dignity are wealth and self-reliance, these are linked to employment opportunities and are considered below.

5.3.6 Wealth and self-reliance

During the mass killings in 2017, most of the participants fled rapidly to save their lives, whilst completely losing all of their wealth and belongings and the ability to look after themselves and their families, which impacted upon their economic dignity. Both men and women

⁸ Akyab is a major seaport and the capital of Rakhine state in Myanmar.

⁹ 'Bhui' is a Rohingya colloquial word which suggests that someone has finished a certain level of education or received a degree

¹⁰ Master is a local word used for someone who can offer 'tuition' to young people

associated their loss of wealth and self-reliance with the loss of dignity. Reflecting upon their experiences, many participants described details of their wealth and belongings that they had been forced to leave in Myanmar. The following statements provide a critical insight into participants' thoughts and feelings:

"The minimum dignity a person needs to live with in this world had been denied to us. I had 7 cows and 12 goats. They burned down homes and took our lands and properties. How can our dignity stay intact?" (B13, a 55 year old female)

Due to the extreme circumstances, many fled from their villages without taking their belongings and wealth. To the Rohingyas, wealth symbolized dignity and pride and the loss of and/or confiscation of their households, property and assets was undignified and painful:

'There is nothing left of our dignity. I had a fishing boat, which they burnt down. I also owned a grocery shop which I stocked with a lot of hard work. We were forced to abandon all of our properties and assets. I don't know what happened to my shop.' (B14, a 52 years old male)

Self-reliance (in economic terms) refers to being able to care and provide a sufficient livelihood for their family, secured via a range of occupations within business, agriculture and other formal roles. Storytelling data portrayed participants' feelings of being 'proud' as they described higher amounts of wealth that glorified their individual and family worth. Participants' quotes provide an overview of their sense of worth, and dignity:

"People respected me for my wealth [in Myanmar]. I used to run a wholesale shop, which included mobile phones and a range of other electrical products. We had three boats for fishing, and a large bus, that my son drove, which was bigger than your S-Alam-Paribahan [a Bangladeshi bus service], you know" (B11, a 68 year old male)

In the past, Rohingyas were entitled to work in salaried jobs in Myanmar, which are often mentioned as family glory in their discussion of dignity.

"My maternal grandfather was a dignified man. He had two brothers – one worked in police, and another one was a customs officer. All of them brought dignity for their family. My grandfather was serving in the Burma [Myanmar] government." (B37, a 66 year old male))

These salaried positions were rendered impossible when their citizenship rights (1982) and their ability to be awarded educational certificates were removed. The loss of these rights/freedoms therefore had further consequences which reduced their dignity in other areas, such as their ability to work in respected and salaried positions in Myanmar.

Higher levels of wealth positioned individuals in leadership positions within society as stated below:

"My eldest son who used to drive a big red boat was respected in the society. [In due course] all the people of this village nominated him to be the 'member' [village leader]." (B11, a 68 year old male)

The reduction and loss of economic dignity was as a result of continuing and ongoing restrictions placed upon the Rohingya. This was exacerbated by the reduction of income with 10% males and 9% (see Figure 5.1) females acknowledging a restriction in job opportunities, which also impacted upon income opportunities with 12% males and 5% females confirming the loss of income opportunities. The seizing of property also contributed to the Rohingyas loss of economic dignity, which was affirmed by 12% males and 7% females. Rohingya women were traditionally excluded from employment or economic activities outside the home. For Rohingya women dignity and respect was attained through association: through their husband's, son's or father's wealth. Women's work included sewing, cleaning and washing, low paid activities they could easily manage within the household.

In addition to wealth and self-reliance, solidarity and mutual respect emerged from the data, as key factors in increasing and maintaining dignity. Participants described them as essential components that contributed to individual and collective dignity within Rohingya society. The following section contains participants quotes which enhances our understanding of dignity within the context of solidarity and mutual respect.

5.3.7 Solidarity and mutual respect

Social unity and mutual respect are regarded as key components for individual and groups to obtain dignity within Rohingya society. Individuals or groups within their society are known for good manners or bad manners, indicating levels of their social acceptance. Examples of good manners involve spending quality time with family, welcoming guests with food, respecting both elders and younger in the society, being polite in conversation and exchanging greetings (Salam, Assalamualaikum, Assalamo Alaikom). In contrast, becoming arrogant in public or quarrelling on silly issues are known as acts that harm dignity. The following quote provides a brief overview of how the Rohingyas use solidarity and mutual respect to maintain dignity.

"Dignity and respect come from the way we carry ourselves so that our juniors respect us. That's pride for us. If we have a visitor in our house, we enquire about their health and ask whether they've had their meals." (B04, a-35 year old male)

Participants were asked to provide other examples that enabled them to maintain dignity whilst living in Myanmar, one participant answered

"when somebody talks cordially, he is loved in the society" (B24, a 50 year old male).

Thus, for Rohingyas, dignity means living peacefully and respectfully in the community and being respected by others. Helping people in their difficult tasks is also acknowledged as dignified work, as illustrated below:

"Good deeds such as helping those who are in trouble, offering rice to someone who is in need and making others happy uphold our dignity." (B26, a 44 year old male)

Rohingyas commonly appreciate the Bangladeshi host community for showing them respect and support during the 2017 crisis. It was widely reported that when the Rohingyas arrived in Bangladesh in 2017, the local host community in Cox’s Bazar welcomed them. Despite being poor, the Bangladeshi host community provided food, shelter and other basic necessities before the camps were built or expanded. Such actions made the Rohingyas feel dignified and helped them to heal as shown in Box 5.6 below.

Box 5.5. Case Story detailing the Rohingyas feelings of gratitude as the Bangladeshi people helped them as they arrived in Cox’s bazar after their forced migration.

“After landing in Teknaf, Cox’s bazar, the locals helped us a lot. They helped us by offering us rice, lentils, oil, sugar, puffed rice, biscuits, bread and many other things. Their help sustained us for next 5 days until the government forces started helping us. Some of the Bangladeshi people also offered us money. Thousands of Rohingya people watched them being kind to us. We will never forget the help of these Bangladeshi people.” (B14, a 52 years old male)

In brief, solidarity and mutual respect are considered as important by Rohingyas, they are also believed to improve peace and cohesion in society. Expressing support to others at any time is also regarded as important for each other’s dignity. Thinking of the needs of others is also important so the provision of a park within Cox’s Bazar for their children to play in was really appreciated and experienced as enhancing dignity.



Children playing in a park within a camp in Cox’s Bazar. This is one of few leisure opportunities they find in the camp areas.

5.4 Chapter Summary

For many of the Rohingyas dignity meant having religious freedom to enable them to participate and engage safely within their religious and cultural practices, which would enable them to lead a dignified life. Others explained the importance of maintaining their Rohingya identity and citizenship and being and feeling safe to do that. For them, living without fear was a key concept of dignity. For many, protecting women's privacy was also described as a key factor in maintaining their dignity, which affected both male and female participants. A number of participants reiterated the importance of having 'ilm' (education, knowledge and wisdom), together with wealth and self-reliance that would enable them to meet their families basic needs. Solidarity and mutual respect were also portrayed as a key concept in maintaining their dignity.

The survey data identified the top three responses provided by the participants that harmed and reduced their dignity prior to and during their forced migration. Both male and female participants identified the newly imposed regulations that affected women's privacy (including the ban on wearing Hijab in public places) as one of the aspects that most affected their dignity. This was reiterated by the high numbers of participants that confirmed the protection of women's' privacy and dignity as the second highest response, and the third highest response was the physical assaults and beatings that the Rohingyas were subjected to within Myanmar. Other responses were distributed across the categories that represented participant views and feelings.

This section has presented both survey and storytelling data of the Rohingyas different perceptions of religious dignity. It has detailed participant views, and feelings associated with the concept of dignity and identified the priorities they felt would enable them to live a dignified life.

5.5 Key Findings

- This chapter details how the Rohingyas perceive and conceptualise dignity following their experiences of exclusion and extreme violence.
- The Rohingya notion of dignity contains three broad dimensions: social; religious; and economic
- Overall, the data drew out six key aspects to Rohingya dignity (1) Safety, this was important because they had been subjected to extreme violence and sexual abuse whilst in Myanmar; (2) Identity, both as Rohingya and as citizens of Myanmar was core because their identity as rightfully living in Myanmar had been denied for so long; (3) Religion, Islam is of central importance to the Rohingya, it is part of who they are and it led to their oppression and persecution, many of the restrictions applied to them directly challenged their beliefs (e.g. they could not pray together and mosques were banned); (4) Role of knowledge (ilm), the Rohingya people respect those who have knowledge, removing or curtailing opportunities to gain knowledge or have their learning recognised limited their employment opportunities and reduced their dignity as individuals and as a collective; (5) Wealth and self-reliance, levels of wealth, like education brought standing in the community their loss through having them stolen or removed or leaving them behind and becoming dependent on aid seriously reduced their dignity both as individuals and as a group; and (6) Solidarity and mutual respect, in Rohingya society treating others with respect and offering them support are important outward displays of a dignified person, these behaviours are important to them as a community, enhance their overall dignity
- The Rohingya conception of dignity was clearly shaped by the oppression and persecution they suffered over an extended period living in Myanmar. All areas of dignity discussed in this chapter were reduced by the way in which they were treated by the Myanmar authorities.

Chapter 6: The impact of humanitarian assistance on dignity amongst the forcibly displaced Rohingya refugees.

6.1 Chapter Overview

This chapter illustrates how dignity is constructed in Bangladesh. It looks at how dignity is conceptualised among the participating Rohingyas and humanitarian actors and describes the impact that humanitarian assistance has had on the dignity of the Rohingyas in Bangladesh. In chapter 5 it was found that dignity was conceptualised and understood by the Rohingyas under six major areas. For the Rohingyas in Bangladesh these are added to and the conception of dignity became more complex and fractured. For some Rohingyas, dignity was conceptualised in terms of access to necessities such as food, clothes, and shelter. While many Rohingyas continued to link dignity to education, prosperity, and wealth. To many Rohingya, dignity continued to mean mutual respect and compassion, peace, safety and security, and, importantly, self-reliance and self-sufficiency. Others discussed dignity in terms of protection of their lives, homes, and families; protection from sexual abuse and harassment; freedom; and human rights. For many Rohingyas, the concept of dignity was linked to their religious beliefs and practices, and a large majority of Rohingyas conceptualised dignity in terms of access to high quality education for their children. While humanitarian actors and senior government staff also ascribed different meanings to the concept of dignity for the Rohingya in displacement their ideas were much simpler, more unidimensional. Respect and human rights were the main themes discussed in the qualitative interviews, and actors and staff gave less emphasis than Rohingyas to the roles of education, independence, self-reliance, and self-sufficiency in restoring their dignity.

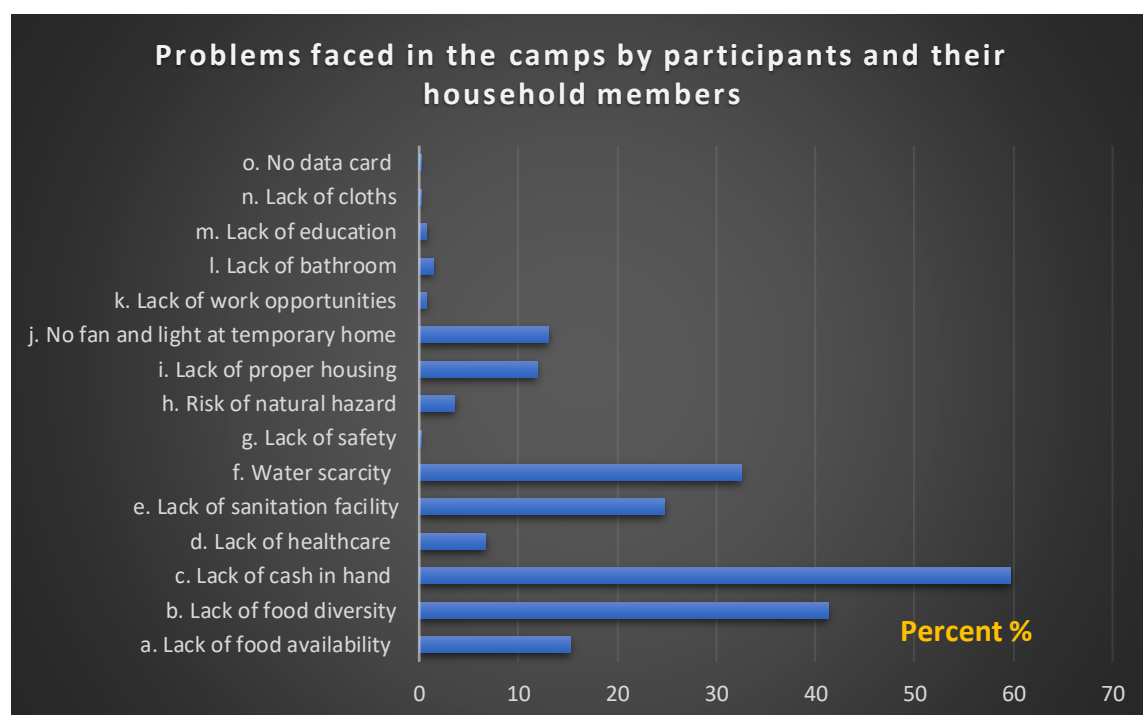
While some Rohingyas were satisfied with the humanitarian assistance they received and felt that their dignity had been upheld during the assistance process, many others felt that while the aid workers' behaviour was appropriate, the assistance provided was not always sufficient or satisfactory. Many Rohingya explained that although the aid given met many of their needs it would not enable them to become self-sufficient. It did not provide their children with the education they needed, did not provide employment or training for new skills, it was short-term and might prolong their plight rather than providing sustainable solutions. Still others felt that the humanitarian response was positively undignified. They reported that some humanitarian actors did not consider their culture, religion, or values when providing assistance, and a few even described instances of abuse and mistreatment by humanitarian staff, and corruption in the distribution of aid. Although some refugees reported that their dignity was harmed during assistance, there were few complaints made to the authorities.

6.2 Impact of humanitarian assistance on the dignity of the Rohingya refugees.

6.2.1 Background

To determine the impact of humanitarian assistance upon the dignity of the forcibly displaced Rohingya refugees, participants were asked to discuss key elements of their lives since their arrival in Cox's Bazaar, and whether or not they felt that their dignity was protected during the assistance process. The Rohingyas were asked to identify issues or problems they or their household members had experienced, see Figure 6.1 below:

Figure 6.1 Problems faced in the camps by Rohingya households



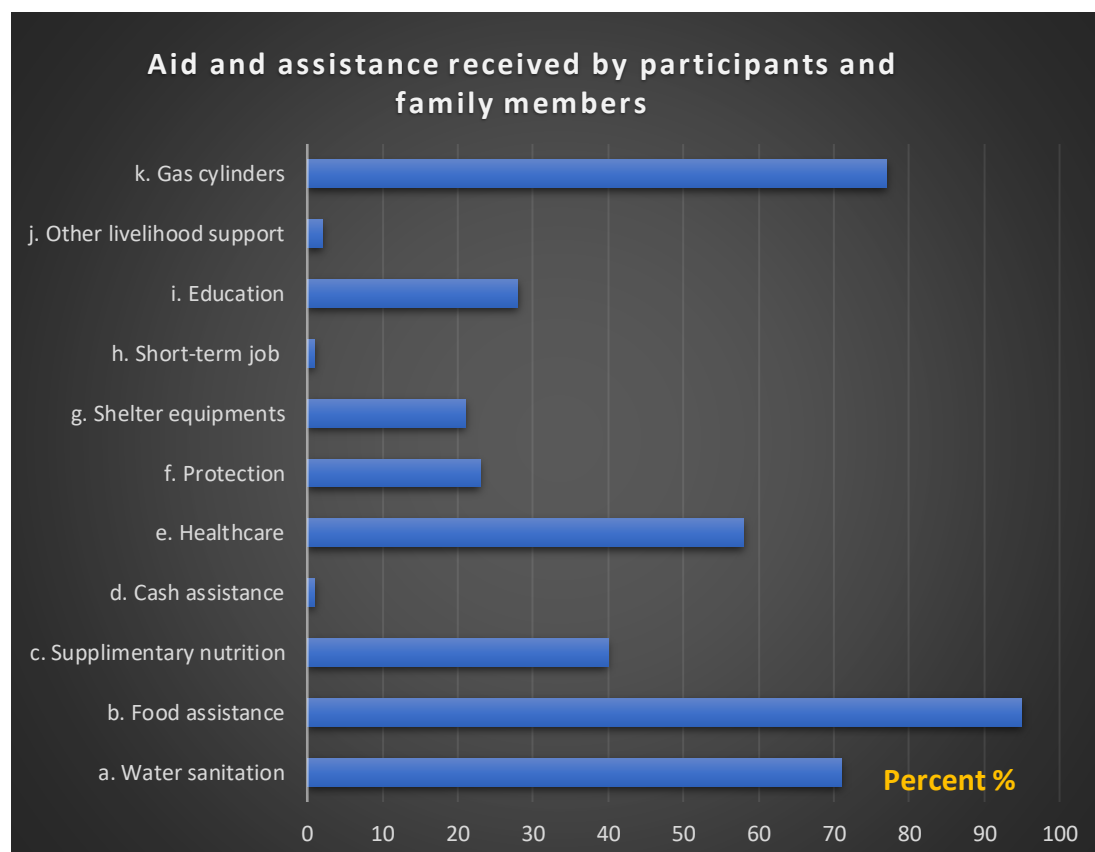
Of the 419 male and female participants, 60% identified that lack of cash was a significant issue, which prevented them being able to economically provide the basic necessities for themselves and their families. 41% of participants reported a lack of food variation as a major problem, due to humanitarian aid providing the same provision, which lasted for months and led to participants eating the same type of food for a long period of time. 33% of the participants identified a lack of drinking water as an issue, whilst 25% claimed a lack of sanitation facilities was a major issue. Other identified problems included a lack of food (15%), fragile dwelling place or lack of a proper household infrastructure (12%). 13% identified the lack of a fan or light in house. The lack of a fan caused significant issues, especially for children and vulnerable adults, as the respondents were unable to escape the unbearable heat outside because inside was just as hot, often hotter, inside because of the materials used to build the huts. Only 7% of the participants reported a lack of healthcare facilities within the camp as a major problem for their household members. Other questions focused upon

the different types of aid and humanitarian assistance the Rohingyas received whilst in Cox’s Bazaar and the findings are presented in Figure 6.2 below.

6.2.2 Aid and humanitarian assistance

The survey was designed to capture multiple answers and provide an overview of participants views and experiences on the humanitarian aid and assistance received on their arrival in Cox’s Bazaar. Figure 6.2 (below) shows that 95% of the participants reported that they received regular food assistance (aided food package) for household members, followed by 77% who confirmed that they were receiving gas cylinders for household cooking. 71% of the participants reported that humanitarian support provided and built a sanitation facility at home, whilst 58% of the participants confirmed that their family members benefitted from healthcare support within the local health centres. Interestingly, 40% of the participants reported that they or their children were receiving supplementary nutrition (such as energy biscuits etc). In relation to education, knowledge and learning, 28% of the participants reported that their children were receiving education at learning centres within the camps, which provided education at community classrooms, which was not accredited by the Government of Bangladesh. 23% of the participants confirmed that they received additional support at the camp, which included access to centres to support victims of gender-based violence and other issues.

Figure 6.2 Aid and humanitarian assistance received by Rohingya households in camps

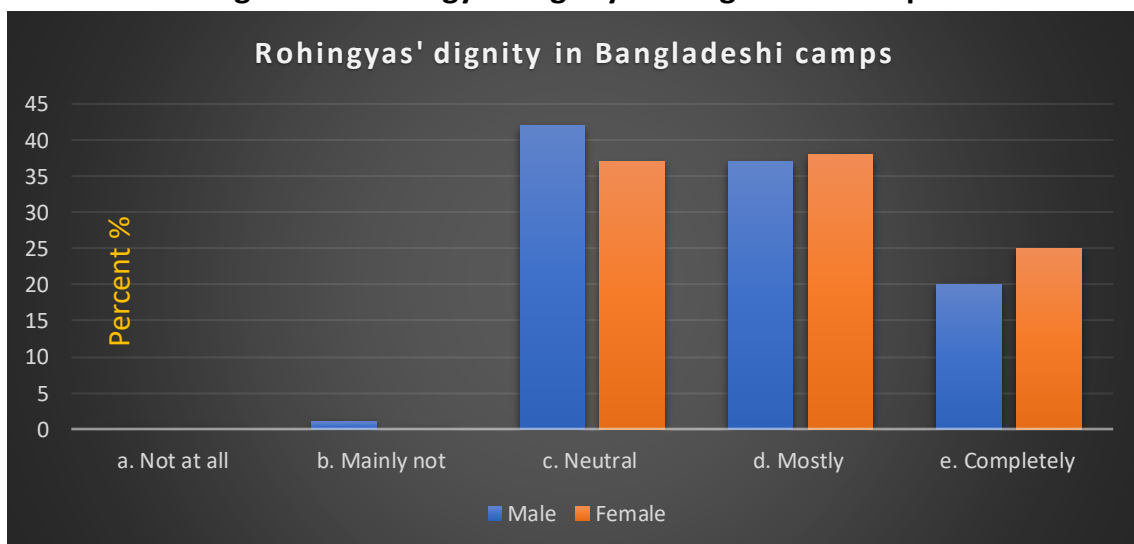


6.2.3 Impact of humanitarian assistance upon the Rohingyas' dignity whilst at the Cox's Bazar camps

Whilst the above survey data provided an overview of the aid participants received at Cox's Bazar, the Rohingyas were also asked to determine the impact that humanitarian assistance has had upon their dignity. As shown in chapter 5, when they arrived in Bangladesh dignity was conceptualised and understood by the Rohingyas in a number of different ways and one of the key aims of the survey data was to capture their perception of dignity whilst residing at the camps.

Participants were asked to confirm whether their dignity was upheld and protected during the humanitarian process (see figure 6.3). Whilst 42% males and 37% females provided a neutral response in relation to the concept of dignity, 37% males and 38% of females reported that their dignity was mostly protected, and 20% males and 25% females confirmed that their dignity was completely protected in the camps. Analysis of the survey data overall, confirms that approximately 60% of participants said that they felt that their dignity was generally protected within the Cox's Bazar camps. The data also provided an overview of the types of humanitarian aid received and considered the Rohingya's different perceptions of dignity within Cox's Bazar. The following section utilises storytelling data to provide a critical insight into the Rohingyas' experiences of life as 'refugees' and their perceptions of dignity after their forced migration.

Figure 6.3 Rohingyas' dignity in Bangladeshi camps



6.3 Dignity in camps: participants' perspective – qualitative data

The quantitative analysis looks positive and the Rohingyas acknowledge that their lives and their dignity have been improved by being in the camps compared to their experiences in Myanmar. However, there are issues and in some respects there has been no improvement. This section provides an overview of the Rohingyas' perception of dignity whilst living within

the various camps in Cox's Bazar. Again, it adopts a bottom-up approach and considers the positive and negative aspects of the aid provided utilising participants' views and feelings to determine the impact of aid upon their individual and collective dignity. It considers the living conditions within the camps, focusing upon the basic concepts of food, income, respect, safety, education, and participation via the effectiveness of the Majhi system¹¹ and provision of aid.

The photograph below displays a very small part of the Ukhiya mega camp, it captures the size of the camp (this is only a small part) and shows how the homes are squashed together, often touching one another. Each of these small huts generally houses many people, usually at least six, often 15 or more.



Part of the Ukhiya mega camp

6.3.1 Basic needs

When asked about the aid received, the Rohingyas explained that they received a monthly food package that consisted of essential provisions that included rice, lentils, cooking oil and onions. Described as very repetitive during the initial round of fieldwork, due to having similar food for over a year (for many it was well over two years), which left some of the Rohingyas feeling unsatisfied and unhappy with the food aid. The restricted diet was due to the significant influx of the Rohingya fleeing from Myanmar during the 2017 forced migration, joining more than 200,000 Rohingyas who had previously fled Myanmar. The World Food Programme (WFP) had to launch an emergency operation to ensure they could meet the basic

¹¹ The Majhi system was established by the Bangladeshi authorities as an emergency response arrangement upon the sudden influx of a large number of Rohingya in August 2017, primarily for: estimating the population; identifying immediate survival needs; and linking the Rohingya with emergency assistance from various providers. The 'majhi system' was not established with the participation of the Rohingya communities and consequently lacks any real representation and accountability to the Rohingya refugees (www.humanitarianresponse.info/sites).

requirements of the refugees, which meant they were providing food to approximately 880,000 refugees¹², which initially limited their diet.

The restricted diet contributed to malnutrition and for the Rohingyas, food without freedom of choice was ‘food without dignity’. A female participant explains the frustration at only having limited food supplies and not being able to purchase food items from the market:

“The NGOs give us only rice, lentils and oil. It’s really hard to live on these bare minimums. We cannot buy some vegetables. How long can a person endure only on rice and lentils?” (B02, a 30 year old female)

A male participant provided a similar statement :

“I feel restless all the time thinking about food problem. We get rice and lentils here, but we can’t afford fish. It saddens us. There [in Myanmar] we could catch fish in the swamps and the canals. But now, we’re not getting any of those. Food and income are very scarce here.” (B03, a 45 year old male)



The monthly provision of rice, lentils and oil.

¹² The World Food Programme had to meet the food and nutritional needs of the population, together with the treatment and prevention of malnutrition, school feeding, engineering and disaster risk reduction work, logistics, and emergency telecommunications. Additional information is available here: <https://www.wfp.org/countries/bangladesh>



One food distribution centre in Ukhiya camp

In 2019, during an additional period of the fieldwork, it was noted that the WFP extended the distribution of food via an e-voucher scheme within some of the camps (something it was rolling out to all camps as the infrastructure was set up to allow the scheme to run). In this scheme, each of the families receive an allocation of 770 Bangladeshi taka (approx. 9 USD) per person per month to purchase food from e-voucher outlets in camps. Each family obtained one WFP Assistance prepaid card onto which money is loaded to purchase food. In the areas where this system operated the Rohingyas had a far wider choice of food products.

ক্র. নং	পণ্যের নাম Item Name	পণ্যের ছবি Item Picture	পণ্যের ওজন Weight	মূল্য Price
1.	রাইস Rice		১ কেজি 1 KG	
2.	লেন্টো ডাল Lentils Dal		১ কেজি 1 KG	
3.	ছাত্তোড়িত সবজি Chopped Veg		১ কেজি 1 KG	
4.	সবজি Vegetable Oil		১ লিটার 1 Liter	
5.	সুগার Sugar		১ কেজি 1 KG	
6.	ছোট মাছ Small Fish		১ কেজি 1 KG	
7.	ফ্রেশ স্প্রাচ Fresh Spinach		১ বাউন্ড 1 Bunch	
8.	পটভেড়া Potato		১ কেজি 1 KG	
9.	ডিম Egg		১ ডোজ 1 Doz	
10.	চুরমা পাউডার Turmeric Powder		১ কেজি 1 KG	
11.	চিকেন পাউডার Chicken Powder		১ কেজি 1 KG	
12.	সবুজ মরিচ Green Chili		১ কেজি 1 KG	
13.	মুগ Mung		১ কেজি 1 KG	
14.	সবুজ ডাল Green Dal		১ কেজি 1 KG	
15.	সবুজ ডাল Green Dal		১ কেজি 1 KG	
16.	ডিম Egg		১ পিস 1 Pcs	
17.	ফ্রেশ সবুজ Fresh Veg		১ কেজি 1 KG	
18.	লেন্টো Lentils		১ পিস 1 Pcs	
19.	সবুজ মরিচ Green Chili		১ কেজি 1 KG	
20.	সবুজ মরিচ Green Chili		১ কেজি 1 KG	

ক্র. নং	পণ্যের নাম Item Name	পণ্যের ছবি Item Picture	পণ্যের ওজন Weight	মূল্য (টাকা) Price (BDT)
1.	সবুজ ডাল Green Dal		১ কেজি 1 KG	
2.	সবুজ ডাল Green Dal		১ কেজি 1 KG	
3.	সবুজ ডাল Green Dal		১ কেজি 1 KG	
4.	সবুজ ডাল Green Dal		১ কেজি 1 KG	
5.	সবুজ ডাল Green Dal		১ কেজি 1 KG	
6.	সবুজ ডাল Green Dal		১ কেজি 1 KG	
7.	সবুজ ডাল Green Dal		১ কেজি 1 KG	
8.	সবুজ ডাল Green Dal		১ কেজি 1 KG	
9.	সবুজ ডাল Green Dal		১ কেজি 1 KG	
10.	সবুজ ডাল Green Dal		১ কেজি 1 KG	
11.	সবুজ ডাল Green Dal		১ কেজি 1 KG	
12.	সবুজ ডাল Green Dal		১ কেজি 1 KG	

The broader choice of food available under e-voucher system.

The local traders also run e-voucher outlets in some of the camps where the Rohingyas can purchase items such as fish, chicken, egg, spice, vegetables, fruits and other groceries.



The choice of food in the local market within one of the camps in Cox's Bazar.

While the e-voucher scheme improved provision of food and increased the freedom of choice for some of the Rohingyas, which increased their dignity, there were gaps within the provision and not all the camps were able to access and utilise the vouchers though the scheme was being expanded with the intention that all refugees would benefit from it (by mid 2021 it should be available to everyone).

A male participant provides an overview of participant experiences:

"It would serve our purpose if the given amount is 770 taka in the SIM cards. Though this facility is being provided in other camps, not here. There are different groceries allocated here like rice, pulses and oil which one can take as their necessities." (B37, a 66 year old male)

This section focused upon the provision of food within the camps and whether the restricted provisions had an impact upon the Rohingyas' dignity. Whilst the initial fieldwork identified participants' frustrations at being unable to purchase additional food, the second phase of fieldwork identified an improvement in the Rohingyas' diet and its variation in parts of the camps. Where the new system operated the participants were more content with the provision provided and the increased opportunities to purchase a more varied range of food which increased their freedom of choice and improved their dignity. The following section builds upon the notion of dignity within the camps and examines the concept of respect and whether the Rohingyas feel that they were treated in a way that maintains their dignity.

6.3.2 Respect in the Distribution of Aid

Findings suggest that the humanitarian professionals who were distributing food in Cox's Bazar camps were treating the Rohingyas with respect. Many participants confirmed that the

humanitarian professionals treated people with care and helped them to maintain choice and dignity while distributing aid. For instance, during food distribution, the participants are treated well; the elderly and people with additional needs were supported by the volunteers to carry heavy bags up to their homes.



Individuals being assisted by volunteers to carry food bags

Overall, the Rohingyas were very receptive and appreciative of aid provided by the Bangladesh Government and humanitarian professionals, as they have treated them with respect.

“Honestly, the NGO people are really nice to us. Sometimes, when an elderly person goes to collect relief, they send their volunteers to deliver the reliefs at that elderly person’s doorstep. Sometimes, they come to our homes to know about how we are doing and whether we need something or not.” (B15, a 40 year old male)

However, there were also people who were unable to access some of the services provided, particularly some of the portering services, and one example is where young women unaccompanied by males often:

“When they distribute the monthly rations like rice, lentils and oils, the women need to carry the rations all by themselves if they go there without being accompanied by a man. Women, alternatively, have to pay Taka 20 and request some male in the community to carry the ration to homes.” (B02, a 30 year old female)

Whilst the qualitative data has provided an overview of the respect shown to the Rohingyas whilst living within the camps, some participants raised concerns in relation

to accessing healthcare services and its impact upon their dignity. With the Rohingyas forced to migrate and settle at the Cox's Bazar camps, more than two hundred health facilities have been established in the camps to provide medical care to approximately 1 million Rohingya. While many participants reported that they were happy with the medical care in the camp healthcare centres, many others claimed that they were unhappy with the quality of the health care provided. Some of the participants complained about waiting a long time to access provision and some said that the attitude of health care staff was unprofessional and disrespectful. The following Case Story in Box 6.1 details one participant's negative experiences.

Box 6.1 A participant's experiences of accessing medical provision which left him feeling disrespected.

"Whenever we go to the hospital, they don't treat us with respect. They keep us waiting for a long time and, if there's an emergency, we have to collect the medicine from outside the hospital. If we try to explain our health conditions to them, they hardly listen to us and tell us to stop talking too much. They advise us to leave with the prescribed medicine instead. Whenever we go to the hospitals asking for medicine, they say that their stock is out and that there's no medicine available." (B05, a 55 year old male)

Whilst this section has provided an overview of participants experiences in Cox's Bazar camps, focusing upon respect, and whether being treated with respect or a lack of it has impacted upon their individual and collective dignity. One of the other major factors that has impacted upon the Rohingyas dignity since their forced migration, was feelings of safe. They were forced to flee Myanmar in order to save their lives and many are traumatised as a result of their experiences so that safety remain important. This notion of safety and feeling safe has emerged from the data as important to participants. Below is an overview of their feelings of being and feeling safe whilst being at Cox's Bazar camps and whether this has had any impact upon their dignity.

6.3.3. Safety

Due to the forced migration, the Rohingyas' experienced significant violence and feared for their safety as they fled Myanmar. One of the key elements of this study was to determine whether the Rohingyas felt safer and less threatened whilst they resided at the camps within Cox's Bazar. Despite their refugee status, the Rohingyas felt the conditions within the camps were much safer than their lives in Myanmar (even before the 2017 violence). There was a

strong solidarity among camp residents, which supported participants and ensured that the level of social order was very high so reducing the risks and incidents of crime and misbehaviour. This was also supported by the presence of Bangladeshi security.

“We are not scared of anything here. We’re living in peace here. So many thanks to the Bangladesh Government.” (B20, a 38 year old female)

Whilst some of the participants expressed their appreciation for feeling safe, some raised concerns about criminal incidents within the camp, which included stealing, robbery and sexual violence. Although it emerged from the data, that the outlying camp areas appeared and felt less safe in comparison to those closer to the Ukhiya town. A few participants claimed that the Rohingyas were becoming victims of violent activities, particularly in remote parts of the camps. In the more isolated camp areas, incidents of conflict between Rohingya criminal gangs, rape and murders were reported by the participants. Rohingya women appeared to be particularly vulnerable to sexual violence and rape, although, based on reported incidents of rape this seemed to be concentrated in particular locations across the camps. Of course, it may just be that women in other locations did not feel that they could report being raped.

“One rape occurred in the H block [camp 16]. Another one was done by a Hujur¹³, one girl went to Madrasa in order to take lessons. Then she was raped there by the Hujur. And two more girls were raped at Chamarkul [outside of camp].” (B34, an 18 year old female)

It is interesting to note that these attacks are continuing, indeed the dangers may have become more severe since we conducted our research. In the BBC Radio 4 programme ‘Desert Island Discs’ in June 2021 Amanda Khosi Mukwashi (CEO of Christian Aid) said that she recently met a Rohingya woman in Cox’s Bazar and the woman said that she had two young girls and she sleeps across the door because every night she worries that her daughters will be sexually molested, she said that they will have to kill her first before they get to her girls.

Some of the other issues and concerns raised by anxious parents consisted of the abduction of children within Cox’s Bazar. Some parents claimed that key areas of the camps were targeted and felt that due to the sheer volume of participants residing within the camps, children were vulnerable and easily abducted.

“A couple of youths came here by CNG auto-rickshaw and hijacked my daughter. They took her near the bazaar and snatched her [gold] earrings. My daughter was crying loudly so they released her. This is how people are being kidnapped here and then killed.” (B01, a 26 year old female)

Despite most participants confirming that they felt safe within the camps, in comparison to their life-threatening situation within Myanmar, there were some incidents that appeared to reduce their feelings of being safe and secure. This was due to some areas of camps being less secure, and the Rohingyas being targeted by criminal individuals and gangs that increased

¹³ Hujur is either a religious preacher (e.g. the Imam of prayers are often called as Hujur) or a madrasa teacher. In this context it probably refers to a madrasa teacher

their feelings of insecurity and made them feel less safe and secure within Cox's Bazar, which intermittently impacted upon their individual and collective dignity.

Some participants felt that safety in the camps was also being challenged due to the presence of two extremist groups – Harakah Al-Yaqeen¹⁴ and ARSA¹⁵. These are insurgent groups active in the Northern Rakhine. According to the participants, a small number of members of these groups are residing in some neighbourhoods, posing as ordinary Rohingyas. Participants were worried that this poses a threat to the physical security of other people. It is important to note that not many criminal activities are seen within the camps during the daytime but dangerous activity increases at night when the aid workers are absent. Also, a group of people continued to threaten women, especially those who are working with NGOs or humanitarian organizations, these activities happened in the daytime but escalated at night.

“Al-Yaqeen and ARSA are the same. This question was frequently asked in Burma. I was also being inquired about this during interrogations by Myanmar forces. However, I haven't seen any of those ever. Even here I've heard rumours that ARSA patrol the area at night and threaten the women who work outside. Actually, I've heard the name, but don't know where they have come from.” (B38, a 62 year old male)

“Bangladesh Government has recently arrested someone from the camp. Someone had complained that the arrestee had connection with the ARSA. He was later released after 3 months of jail. This is exactly what I'm afraid of.” (B04, a 35 year old male)

The section has reiterated the importance of feeling and being safe within the camps, for the Rohingyas, and the data has shown that for the majority of the time, they felt safe and less threatened which has contributed to an increase in their dignity. High levels of solidarity between the Rohingya refugees have contributed to social order and a reduction in criminal activities. However, this was not evident in all areas of the camp. The findings identified areas that were more prone to incidents of criminal activity, where some women have still felt at risk of being raped and sexually assaulted and the need to take action to protect their daughters.

In addition to feeling and being safe, participants also expressed the importance of religion and being able to practice and maintain their faith whilst in the camp. The following section discusses how the Rohingyas are able to do this and identifies outstanding issues that prevent them practicing and implementing their faith, which has a detrimental impact upon their individual and collective dignity.

¹⁴ Harakah al-Yaqeen now identify as the Arakan Rohingya Salvation Army (ARSA). They are a guerrilla group fighting the subjugation of and genocide against the Rohingyas. They have some supporters in the Rohingya refugee camps in Bangladesh.

¹⁵ Arakan Rohingya Salvation Army (ARSA) is the new name for Harakah al-Yaqeen

6.3.4. Religion

During the research, participants articulated the importance of their religion and having the freedom to practice their faith as an essential element of a dignified life. Participants explained that even during times of oppression and discrimination, prior to the forced migration, their religious faith enabled them to cope with the harshness of their life within Myanmar. Currently, within the camps at Cox's Bazaar, the Rohingyas are allowed to pursue religious activities, which has brought them spiritual comfort, they are now free to practice their faith and openly attend mosques and have religious schools (madrassa) for both boys and girls.



A male going to mosque in a camp in Cox's Bazar

However, there were still some issues within the camps that are impacting upon the religious aspect of living a dignified life. Within the camps, participants have expressed concerns over the lack of toilet and sanitation facilities, which has resulted in male and female participants having to share toilets. As discussed in Chapter 5, the lack of appropriate toilet and washing facilities posed a significant threat to a woman's dignity due to their cultural and segregation practices that are key elements of their faith. Participants struggle with the lack of access to adequate bathing and sanitation facilities, in particular, having sufficient toilets and facilities that are in close proximity to their home and that are designated male or female. It is also necessary for the area around the female toilets to be covered so that no-one can see them waiting to use the facilities. There were also issues with the first toilets because some men made holes in the makeshift walls of the toilets and washing facilities so that they could peep at the women within. During the immediate crisis response in 2017, the emergency toilets and bathing facilities were made in common places, and unfortunately, were constructed of makeshift materials and were unisex facilities. The picture below provides an insight into the washing facilities adjoining the toilet facilities within the camps (out of respect we did not photograph the toilet facilities):



Outdoors bathing and washing facility in Ukhiya camp area

Participants all stated that using toilets and bathing facilities within the camps was an undignified experience for Rohingya women, due to not being able to go to the toilet or wash their bodies safely and privately and having insufficient privacy to wash their hands after using the toilets. Participants have reiterated the importance of protecting women’s privacy (see chapters 3 and 5), which was a key factor for both men and women. Box 6.2 provides an overview of how the NGO’s have tried to address the identified concerns and protect and maintain women’s’ dignity within the camps whilst utilising the toilets and washing facilities.

Box 6.2 detailing how the NGO’s have tried to improve toilet and washing facilities at the camps.

“Bathrooms in the camps are makeshift, surrounded by boards and the floor is only soil. Some people complain that bad guys create holes to peep through the boards to watch women bathing. We try to prevent these issues. Also, in this (hot and humid) weather a person cannot be healthy by bathing just once a week. We have placed our bathing facilities near the tube-wells. So they can bath anytime they want. They can now go for shopping or go to a relative’s home easily due to the street lights. Earlier, there were instances of breaking hand or leg in the dark without light; a son of a woman had broken his neck. We are trying our best to solve these everyday problems.” (Anonymous, an interviewee working for a humanitarian organisation)

Despite some of the issues relating to the religious and cultural practices being addressed within the camps, the protection of women’s privacy remains a significant problem. As stated in Chapter 3 and Chapter 5, from 2012 onwards the Rohingyas were prevented from constructing fences around their homes. The authorities claimed this was necessary for security reasons, the Rohingyas claimed the walls were necessary to protect the privacy of their women. Participants confirmed that this was one of their top priorities in relation to the protection of their religious dignity. Unfortunately, this continued to be a significant challenge within the camps. Housing is crowded, each temporary dwelling is right next door to the next, they touch. In this environment there is no space for any

yards that could be used to protect and keep women safe from the male gaze. To try to counter this, women remain inside the shelters much of the time (where it is often much hotter) and/or they wear a full bourka or a hijab all the time (again this is very hot and inconvenient).

The importance of being able to practice religion and maintain their faith was a key priority for the Rohingyas and certain aspects had improved, there were still major problems with the protection of their dignity in relation to religious and social customs, especially those to protect women.

Participants also expressed the importance of educating their children within the camps. As previously mentioned, possessing a good education, having knowledge and wisdom (ilm) would enable their children and themselves to lead a dignified life. The following section provides an analysis of whether this is delivered and maintained within the camps.

6.3.5. Ilm – Education, Knowledge and Wisdom

As discussed in Chapters 3 and 5 the Rohingyas were previously deprived of all formal education and for those who were educated their achievements were not formally recognised, no certificates were awarded. In addition, educational opportunities were significantly reduced which prevented the possibilities of securing employment within a range of professional roles. Since the Rohingyas arrived within the camps at Bangladesh, they have only been able to receive a very rudimentary education, just basic English, Burmese, maths and ‘life skills’. This has been provided by inexperienced and often untrained ‘teachers’. Unfortunately, even this minimal provision was not formally recognised via qualifications. This basic, informal, education is being provided by UNICEF, with the help from other humanitarian agencies. In these learning centres, both Bangladeshi and educated Rohingyas are running classes (though they tend not to be trained teachers), assigned by NGOs.



Children in a learning centre in Ukhiya camp area

Within the learning centre and schools, the medium of instruction includes both Burmese and English, with the expectation that those languages will become useful if they return to Myanmar. The Rohingya parents expressed concern because such education does not cover or provide a mainstream curriculum, nor will it give rise to a certificate which will be recognised in either Bangladesh Myanmar. Hence, after their potential return to Myanmar, their education will not be recognized by Myanmar authorities. Furthermore, if unable to return to Myanmar, two years informal education will not add any value, will not help them gain employment in Bangladesh or elsewhere. Despite this, some participants noted certain advantages to education:

“Education is the same for all of us. Here, kids and grownups, all study in the same class. But one good thing is that the children have got an environment to mix with each other. They have got an opportunity to play altogether.” (B17, a 30 year old female)

“If we can’t go back to Burma or the process gets delayed then, it would be better if class and grade-based schools are introduced here for our children.” (B31, a 34 year old male)

When the research took place, the Bangladesh Government said they were trying resolve both these issues by trying to arrange some education. However, in order to prevent any integration of displaced Rohingya with Bangladeshi society the Bangladesh Government were refusing to permit Rohingya children to enrol in local schools and would not allow them to be taught Bangla (the local language of Bangladesh). To make things worse, the Myanmar Government refused to approve their national curriculum for the children studying in the Bangladeshi camps and, if it was used, they would not agree to allow children to be awarded a Bangladesh school certificate. UN humanitarian agencies and other NGOs tried to get around this impasse by arranging a curriculum and certification from other countries (including the United Kingdom) but the Bangladesh Government refused to allow them to provide Rohingya children with formal internationally accredited education. In this situation the humanitarian agencies have had to build a curriculum from scratch, but it is a slow process and is not accredited by anyone (see also Human Rights Watch, 2019). This situation was devastating for Rohingya children. Their parents were very upset that a whole generation would lose their education and therefore be less able to be self-sufficient when they manage to get out of the camps and start a new life.

While there is no clear easy choice or answer for Rohingyas about their future, they want to obtain Bangladeshi education to have their children developing basic skills. The current informal education program is undeniably an improvement in the absence of structured learning at schools, however, there is no follow-on or further curriculum once groups of children complete their two-year course. Most recently (2020), the Bangladesh Government declared that Rohingya children can access local education by permitting the Bangladesh curriculum and Bangla to be taught in camps. However, the process of implementing this is slow and, four years after they fled to Bangladesh, many children are still missing out on an education. The dignity of the Rohingyas continues to be compromised.

Despite these problems in accessing a general education, the Rohingya children were learning the Quran at a religious school in Cox's Bazar camp. This was an improvement on the situation in Myanmar where such schools had been banned.



Children learning the Quran at a religious school in Cox's Bazar camp

Whilst this section has provided an overview of the state of education within the camps, wealth and self-reliance were also raised as issues and the next section details some of these.

6.3.6. Wealth and Self-reliance

Traditionally, in Myanmar, the men were obligated to provide for their family and thereby collectively increase the dignity of the whole family. However, these opportunities were not available within the camps as the Government of Bangladesh had reduced the options for the Rohingyas to secure employment within the formal and informal labour markets (there were a few exceptions). During the fieldwork, some of the Rohingyas were seen working in an occasional shop and grocery markets within the camps, or in low paid jobs in the fishing industry road construction and other similar activities. However, the participants claimed that whilst the majority of them were keen to work, circumstances within the camps prevented them from doing so. This was increasingly frustrating for them, as not being able to secure suitable employment, meant they were unable to provide food for their families, which had a detrimental impact upon their dignity.

"We need one thing: to allow our men to go outside for work. Because it's really hard to sustain a family with just rice, lentils, oil, sugar and other relief materials. So, if both our men and women can find some work here, we can live happily with our family." (B06, a 60-year-old female)

If participants were able to earn cash in exchange for work, it enabled them to buy food in the local market or to buy fans (and solar generators) to keep their homes cool. During the early periods of fieldwork, cash was the only available tender, later e-vouchers were introduced. The provision of e-vouchers allowed more people a wider choice of foods (see above). However, it still did not allow the patriarch to enjoy dignity, this could only be restored if he could be self-sufficient through working or running a business.

On top of the problem of employment for patriarchs the research identified some gender specific cultural changes associated with the notions of wealth and self-reliance. In Myanmar, women's activities outside the home had been culturally and religiously restricted (in both cases though the lens of patriarchy) to protect their dignity. Apart from activities like sewing in their own homes, Rohingya women in Myanmar did not generally participate in economic activities. Traditionally, providing for the family was part of male dignity, the patriarch in the family. However, in the camps some limited employment opportunities arose for women. These provided new opportunities for women (especially younger women) and, to a lesser extent, younger males. These employment opportunities presented significant challenges to the employment protocols which all Rohingyas expected when they lived in Myanmar.

“When I got the job at this healthcare centre, my husband did not want me to accept the offer. My neighbours went further and took the issue to the CIC [Camp in Charge] office complaining that a Rohingya woman should not be allowed to work outside the home. Luckily, the interference of CIC, our Moulavi (religiously educated) and Majhi [community leader] convinced my neighbours to calm down” (B35, a 33 year old female)

Provision of employment to young men over patriarchs and particularly to women over patriarchs restricted and reduced opportunities for the 'patriarch', forcing them to accept financial provision from younger males in the family or even from their wives or daughters which significantly reduced their dignity.

The change in employment opportunities has led to some change in roles and responsibilities and has contributed to a reduction in male dignity whilst simultaneously increasing that of women, particularly of those who are employed outside the home. Even though only a small number of women were employed outside of their home, this small but significant change has contributed to a slight increase in standing for women within the community.

Despite this, it has not altered the fact that, at its core, the Rohingya society is patriarchal not egalitarian. This is due to the traditional Rohingya cultural and religious expectations that are placed upon women, which are extremely powerful. Although the patriarch's dignity has been reduced, due to the lack of available employment opportunities, the change in roles and responsibilities has effectively increased the feelings of self-respect, dignity and self-worth of the young women who have been successful in gaining employment within the camps. Some of them were able to articulate their increased feelings of self-worth and dignity although this was not always shared or experienced by the other women within the camps.

“By seeing me working, some other Rohingya girls in our community also wanted to be employed. But they could not overcome the social constraints.” (B34, a 18 year old female)

This was mainly due to the respect shown by others in the camps, particularly other women who often want to emulate them but whose fathers or husbands (or neighbours) may not permit them this freedom.

Whilst the presence of many households without a patriarch was evident within the camps, many households were reliant on women for claiming aid or for waged income. Whilst in other households, regardless of the presence of the patriarch, the only wages earned were by younger males or women, which questioned the reality of the patriarchy. In the camps it is still not clear whether this employment situation will give rise to changes in the patriarchal system in Rohingya culture. The socio-religious expectations for women to protect their privacy are still very strong and so change seems unlikely. Despite female employment outside the home slightly altering the cultural connotations of the Rohingyas, if change was going to occur, it would require a significant cultural shift within the Rohingya community and this is not presently evident. Only a small number of Rohingya women are working with local NGOs within the camp, often as community workers and these are seen as exceptions rather than as examples. One participant claimed that women working with NGOs are threatened by some insurgent groups. Moreover, some of the participants claimed that Rohingya working women may lose their dignity among Rohingya society due to their frequent exposure to the outside environment, this is particularly likely if they work alongside men. For example, one female staff of the United Nations working in camps stated:

"I have seen young woman being employed by NGOs they told me they like working and being independent because they were being paid 3000 taka each. However, they were being threaten by the community and by groups but they were still able to ignore that and manage to continue their work. But it may be difficult for them to marry within the society." (a female humanitarian worker of UNWOMEN)

Currently, it is unclear whether traditional and religious values will be willing and able to accommodate female employment and its impact upon the Rohingyas' individual and collective dignity. All that is certain is that the women who are employed feel more respected and dignified, their self-worth is far higher, and they are respected by many in the community. Based upon the findings, it is evident that having self-worth and a dignified life is relative, which enforces learning from those who have been placed at the receiving end of any situation. Clearly, dignity is an inter-changeable concept, which can fluctuate and be influenced by the context, culture, religion and individual experiences. However, for all Rohingyas being self-reliant was essential to their dignity.

Another important aspect of dignity was freedom of movement, in the next section we consider how this has been affected by life as a refugee in Cox's Bazar.

6.3.7. Freedom of Movement

Despite some of the limitations that impacted upon the dignity of the Rohingyas being resolved within the camps, many participants recognised that freedom of movement within the camps was still significantly limited. The Rohingyas are not generally permitted to travel outside the camps though a few are permitted to travel short distances for work or to seek extra medical support. This means that for all Rohingyas their dignity is still severely compromised in this regard. Despite these severe restrictions on movement in Bangladesh the situation is still a slight improvement on what they experienced in Myanmar.

“Currently we can go up to Teknaf [district] from our camps [in Bangladesh]. From where we can also come back home. In Myanmar, we were not even allowed to move around a couple of blocks from home.” (B03, a 45 year old male)



A male in front of an UN infrastructure in Ukhiya camp area

Due to the social norms and cultural influences the situation is even worse for women. Rohingya women and adolescent girls are expected to remain in or close to their homes whereas men and children can be seen everywhere in the camps. Women’s physical mobility is restricted to certain defined purposes so that it was mainly male members who went to collect food and other aid provisions, women only went if they were in women only households. This meant that most women enjoy a significantly reduced level of movement within the camps and were often not permitted to participate in outdoor activities and travel (to ensure that they remain out of the gaze of men). This restricted their dignity even more than was the case for men. In addition, participation in the decision-making process, was also very limited among women within the camps, whereas men were able to and had the capacity to make most of the decisions.

6.4. Raising Issues and Complaints: Limited Voice for Rohingya

As will become clear in chapter 7 (7.5) the Rohingyas have several options to communicate with the camp authorities (aid/humanitarian organisations/actors and the Camp in Charge, CIC). The agencies working in the camps frequently conducted pieces of research with

individuals and/or focus groups or consulted in other ways to discover whether any needs were not being met and/or whether there was a problem with the ways in which aid was being distributed. Whilst these systems generally worked well some participants complained about the NGO's and humanitarian actors lack of engagement with the Rohingyas in the collation of their feedback on the provision of aid and the fact that they did not listen to the feedback that was given. Although the Rohingya participants recognised that these agencies collected information and admitted that this was prioritised when the Rohingyas first arrived at the camps, they claimed that the agencies did not always listen to what the refugees said, and that consultation had significantly reduced as time had progressed.

“At the beginning NGOs used to ask us about our needs on a regular basis. We will get a water bucket this year after two or three months of request. How much more can they continue doing for us!” (B33, a 45 year old male).

So, systems to collate the views of the Rohingya exist but do not always work (for more information see 7.5). Here we will concentrate on the internal systems the Rohingya people use to ensure their voices are heard by CIC and aid agencies and point out the lack of proper systems and mechanisms for some issues.

The most important ‘representatives’ of the Rohingya people are probably the Majhi. The Majhi were not chosen by the Rohingya. The system of ‘Majhi’ was set up as an emergency measure to support the large influx of Rohingyas as they fled from Myanmar. This was initially a temporary measure set up by the Bangladesh authorities and designed to increase communication between the Rohingyas and camp officials when they first arrived at the camps (at the start much of the communication was with the Bangladesh military). However, the system has become semi-permanent and is one of the most important ways in which aid agencies and CIC communicate with the Rohingya. Each Block (a designated area) in a camp has a designated ‘Majhi’, whose role is to support the Rohingya population. Thus, the Majhi are key focal points that support the governance of the camps and liaise between the Rohingyas, the Bangladesh Government and other humanitarian actors. The Rohingyas recognise the Majhi as the quickest way to report an issue and or access the CIC or relevant NGO. As the Majhi of the block, their role and responsibilities include:

Supporting organisations to address issues and concerns raised. If there is an issue or problem, we go to the CIC office and report it, which could include a new latrine in one of the blocks, or if there is an issue with sewage or a lack of lights, we sort it out. (B24, a 50-year-old male)

The Majhi are also able to help in individual cases such as cases of serious illness or complications from pregnancy, as they can obtain permission from the CIC to take the patients to hospital, located outside of camps,

“The Majhi goes to the CIC to resolve that. Delivery (childbirth) or problem like this is solved on going to the hospitals.” (B30, a 40-year-old male)

Therefore, the potential of the Majhi to intervene to help the Rohingyas was quite all-encompassing, and they could act as both a voice for the people as a whole and intervene in individual cases. However, there are problems with this system. It does not always work.

Firstly, we discovered that the Majhi were mostly male, there were only a very limited number of female Majhi across the camps. This disadvantaged women within the camps, their voices were rarely heard as they were not allowed to participate in community meetings:

“The women shouldn’t talk in the meeting; it doesn’t look good. It would be better if only the men go into the meeting.” (B20, a 38 year old female)

Their needs were therefore often not considered although we did discover that some women were talking directly to female aid workers about their needs/problems.

Secondly, as seen above, the right to choose to attend a medical centre or attend hospital was not usually given to women living within the camps and although Majhi could help to resolve this they did not always do so, some would not intervene as they considered that women should rely on more traditional interventions. Similarly, some women were given the opportunity to work and sometimes were prevented from doing so by family or neighbours. The Majhi could, and in some cases did, intervene to ensure they could work but that was not always the case, some would not intervene as they did not consider that women should work.

Other criticisms of the Majhi system included their stature, as they were not identified as traditional leaders or elders, were not appointed by the Rohingya themselves and were not able to fully represent the views of their community, they were not necessarily fully respected by all of those in the community; this was particularly the case where they were female.

The final issue, and possibly the most problematic, is that they often act as a mouthpiece for CIC and aid agencies. When these organisations want to introduce new systems, they use the Majhi to ‘sell’ it to the Rohingyas. For example, when we were collecting our data there was a new e-card introduced by UNHCR. This card was designed to collect information about each individual 10 years old or over in the camp (some were angry that younger children were not included). The Majhi helped to introduce it to the other Rohingya, persuading them that it was designed to support them. In some ways this was true, the card gives them an identity as a ‘Forcefully Displaced Myanmar National’, it both recognises them as nationals of Myanmar, something denied them by Myanmar, and as refugees, something denied them by the Bangladesh Government. However, the Rohingya do not always appreciate this and whilst to begin with they thought the cards would be beneficial they have lost faith in them as the cards do not help them or change their real status. Furthermore, the card permits the Rohingya to be controlled. For example, in order to obtain their card (something they all have to do) they have to complete some forms, line up to be photographed (this was respectful as there were separate lines for men and women) and provide details such as mobile phone numbers. As soon as they included the phone numbers on the forms the UN shared the information with the CIC who came along and confiscated the phones ostensibly to prevent criminal activity,

but the phones were often the only means the Rohingya had to communicate with relatives still in Myanmar. By backing the introduction of the cards, the Majhi were therefore seen as not supporting the Rohingyas and some of our participants complained about the role played by the Majhi in introducing the cards.

What we did not find was a system for justice, restorative, or criminal, within the camps. We were told that whilst most people felt safe in the camps there were instances of violence, rape, child abduction and of other unacceptable behaviour (usually by Rohingyas on Rohingyas). Many felt they could not report these incidents to anyone, others told their Majhi or their Imams (religious leaders) but we were not told about any process used to deal with these complaints. These instances only came out once we earned the trust of the individual talking about them and they usually talked in the third person, about this happening to someone else. This was a way of protecting the community, of showing unity. Most of the worst acts we were told about were focused on women, children and the vulnerable. We were made aware of a 'community' group who used violence and rape to control women, for example, they would threaten women who were working outside the home (threaten them with rape and/or abduction) in order to try to prevent them from working for aid agencies, in order to try to enforce traditional norms. There seem to be no systems to deal with this behaviour which tended to happen at night when the camp was locked up and aid workers and CIC were not present. This was a problem in the camps, and one not dealt with by the communication systems in place. It might well be dealt with by hidden systems within the Rohingya community, that is how they dealt with problems when they lived in Myanmar. Hidden systems may well be what are being used to control and protect the Rohingya community, though it was not possible to discover exactly how the system operated, it was kept secret. Most worrying was the possibility that the night-time threats were part of the system used to protect the community though it might well threaten individuals within that community who were seen to step outside the traditional norms. We have no proof that is what is happening but clearly something needs to be done in order to protect the vulnerable from whatever forces are threatening them.

Even though the above section has largely detailed the Rohingyas issues and concerns over the lack of consultation and communication with the CIC and humanitarian actors, our research found that there are real attempts to open lines of communication and to listen to the refugees and most of the Rohingya were very appreciative of what the humanitarian agencies and CIC (the Bangladesh Government) were doing to support them.

6.5. Chapter Summary

This chapter has discussed and reviewed how the Rohingyas perceive the current state of their individual and collective dignity within the camps, and whether it has improved since their forced migration. Participants confirmed that their basic needs were met,

usually with dignity. Despite some initial concerns with the variety of food that was provided, steps have been taken to improve this and things have improved since their arrival at the camps. Findings showed that the initial concern lasted only between a year and 18 months as during a second period of fieldwork, a number of participants confirmed that they had access to a voucher scheme to purchase a variety of food (and that this system was being rolled out across all camps). This provided some freedom of choice and control over their diet, which increased their dignity. Regarding the distribution of aid, participants have confirmed that the humanitarian actors have generally treated them with respect and provided additional care and support for elderly people and those with additional requirements.

Due to the trauma they previously experienced, safety within the camps was a major concern for the Rohingyas. However, despite some concerns being raised within some areas of the camps, most participants confirmed that they felt safer than when they lived in Myanmar. Some of the concerns raised within this chapter centred around violent activities that were associated with extremist groups and the potential sexual attacks on Rohingya women, especially in certain areas of the camps. Other issues identified included the potential abduction of children. Despite these concerns being raised, the majority of participants said that they felt safe within the camps.

Prior to arrival at the camps, the Rohingyas were unable to practice their religion and faith. Since arriving at the camps, participants confirmed that they were able to participate in religious activities such as attending the mosque to pray and their children could attend religious schools (madrassa), which provided them with healing and dignity, it significantly enhanced their wellbeing. From a religious perspective, there were still some issues that were not resolved within the camps such as the lack of appropriate toilet and washing facilities to protect dignity of women. In addition, this chapter has evidenced that housing within the camp was insufficient to protect and maintain the women's privacy, which had a detrimental impact upon their individual and collective dignity.

This chapter has also illustrated the ongoing challenges associated with ilm – education, knowledge and wisdom - as despite participants confirming that since their arrival at the camps, children have been able to access education, it is still very basic and not formally recognised. This is due to the Myanmar Government refusing to approve their national curriculum for children studying in the camps, which is a key issue for the Rohingyas, and the Bangladesh Government refusing to allow them to use their curriculum. Since our research, the Bangladesh Government has permitted their curriculum to be used but it is taking time to roll this out for all children.

One of the most significant challenges identified within this chapter is associated with the notion of wealth and self-reliance, as originally in Myanmar, men held the

responsibility for the collective dignity of the family. However, since the participants arrival within the camps, they have experienced some changes to employment opportunities, which has provided a few more opportunities for women and younger men. This has proved to be a significant challenge for the Rohingyas largely patriarchal society and has contributed to a change in the role of the patriarch. Findings within this chapter have identified the need for significant cultural changes if this is not going to be to the detriment of the Rohingya Women.

This chapter has also confirmed that there have been very few changes to participants freedom of movement since their arrival within the camps, particularly for women as they experienced limited opportunities due to socio and cultural norms. Male participants did see a slight improvement in their ability to move around the camps more freely, which was less available for women.

Within the chapter, it has raised key issues and concerns over the lack of communication with the CIC and humanitarian actors. The research has recognised the real attempts made to open and increase lines of communication between the Rohingya and camp officials and to listen to the 'refugees'. The majority of the Rohingyas really appreciated the work of the humanitarian agencies and CIC (Bangladesh Government), how they took them in and provided aid and support when they urgently needed it.

Overall, this chapter has identified several outstanding issues and challenges because of circumstances within the camps. Findings have shown that if some of the outstanding issues are unable to be resolved or addressed, they would continue to have a detrimental impact upon the collective dignity of participants, particularly women within the camps.

6.6 Key Findings

- *This chapter reviewed the conceptualisation of dignity by the Rohingya people living in the camps in Bangladesh and documents how well those expectations are delivered in the camps.*
- *The Rohingyas' drew out a large number of factors which underpinned their dignity in the camps in Bangladesh, it was a complex and fractured concept. Overall, many felt that their basic needs were being met in a dignified way, for example, in regard to access to most necessities and improved levels of security.*
- *However, some aspects were more complex, required detailed consideration and dignity was not being respected. For example, (1) Food diversity - early on the food being provided was insufficiently nutritionally diverse, this has since been largely resolved; (2) Safety – most participants felt safer though there was some concern over the behaviour of extremist groups and the safety of women from sexual attacks and women and children from being abducted though these dangers generally only arose in more isolated parts of the camps; (3) Religion – religious activities (prayers in Mosques and education in Madrassa) are now fully respected, however, women's privacy (e.g. when using sanitary areas and in protecting them from external gaze when at home) are still not being properly respected; (4) IIm (education) - is still an area where the Rohingya feel disrespected, even after four years their children are not receiving a full curriculum of education which is properly certificated; (5) Wealth and self-reliance – this is another area where the dignity of the Rohingya is not being respected, there are insufficient employment and/or training opportunities, indeed paid employment is still discouraged by the Bangladesh government; (6) Freedom of Movement – this is another area where the dignity of the Rohingya is not respected, they are confined to the camps.*
- *Clearly there are still major challenges to delivering or facilitating a dignified life for the Rohingya.*

Chapter 7 Humanitarian actors' experiences of working with Rohingya refugees in Bangladesh

7.1 Chapter Overview

The previous chapter illustrates the Rohingyas perception of dignity within the camps in Cox's Bazar, Bangladesh. It provided an overview of the respondents' experiences within the camps and identified key elements of their lives that had a detrimental impact upon their individual and collective dignity. This chapter focuses upon the concept of dignity from the perspective of the humanitarian actors providing aid to the Rohingyas within the camps at Cox's Bazar. Quantitative and qualitative data is used to categorise the different views and perspectives of the participants in comparison to the Rohingyas. The participants consisted of humanitarian actors from local and international NGO's, aid agencies, members of the United Nations and Government Officials of Bangladesh. Some of participants were categorised as front-line workers (those who worked face to face with the Rohingyas), whilst others consisted of senior managers and policy makers from both government and non-government organisations or worked for the Government of Bangladesh.

In addition, it also provides an overview of the most important type of humanitarian assistance based upon the experiences of the humanitarian actors and considers whether the aid was provided with dignity and respect. It includes key aspects of the planning process and how the Rohingyas participated in the consultation process and provided feedback on the different programmes and interests when they initially arrived at the camps in Bangladesh. Whilst having some elements of choice in the provision of aid was important, the Rohingyas claimed that this was not a consistent approach, their views were canvassed less frequently as they spent longer in the camps (see Chapter 6). An important factor for consideration within this chapter, was whether there was any evidence of the Rohingyas mistreatment during the dissemination of aid.

It also includes evidence from the humanitarian actors and provides detail on how they tried to retain the dignity of those positioned as 'vulnerable' within the camps. These were identified as women, children, and adolescents who had lost contact with their husbands and fathers during the forced evacuation and had no male within the family to protect them.

Within the chapter, there is also consideration of the Rohingyas belief in supernatural powers ('jinny') and spiritual healing, and how this impacted upon their dignity, particularly when the women were pregnant. Belief in spiritual healing suggested insufficient trust and belief in the health care professionals who were trying to support them through medical issues and ensure they maintained a dignified position. Trust was a key concept within this chapter, as the humanitarian actors illustrated a range of methods used to encourage the Rohingyas to trust the humanitarian actors. This was particularly important for health care professionals as it ensured that the Rohingyas received appropriate health care, again especially pregnant

women. Models of participatory approaches, the collation of feedback and the importance of having choice in the provision of aid are all discussed here.

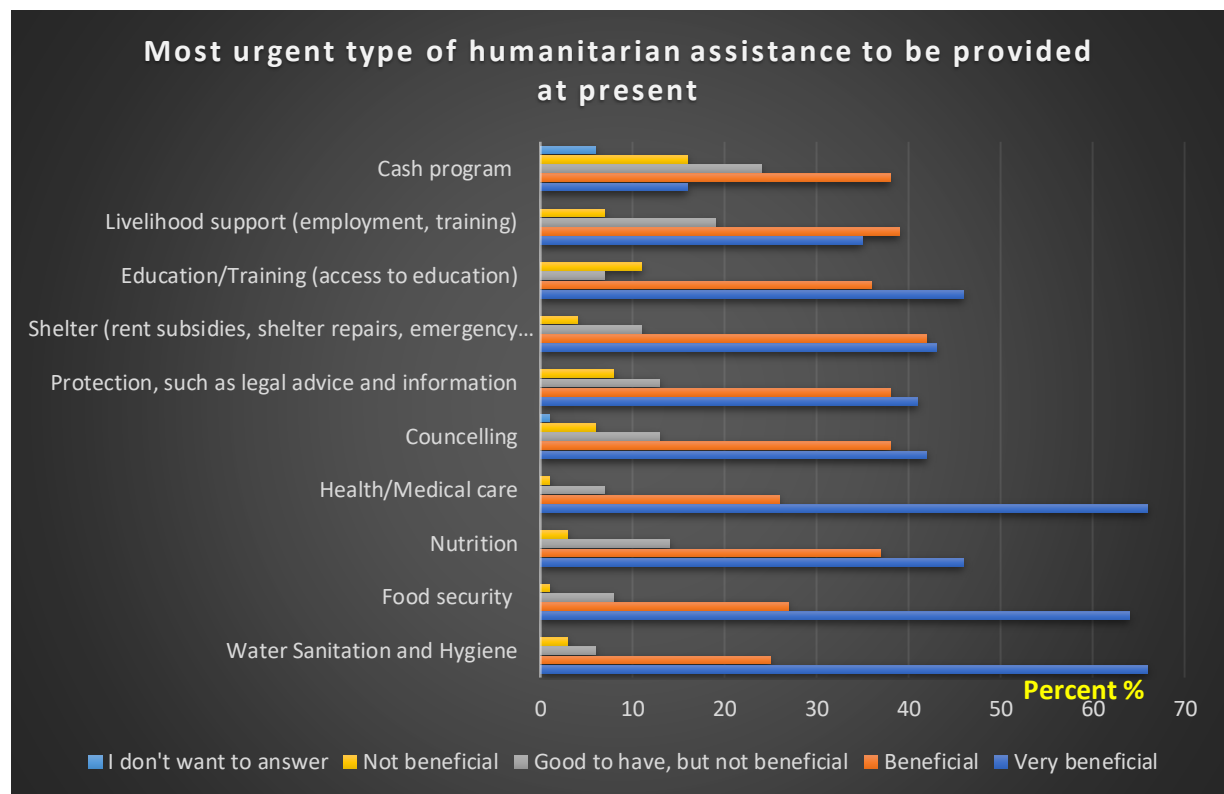
To conclude the chapter, the humanitarian actors reiterated the importance of the coping skills that they evidenced within the Rohingya community, explaining how the men used a range of occupational skills to help them cope not only with living within the camps, but also to increase solidarity and mutual respect by helping each other to build homes and increase their feelings of safety and collective dignity. The Rohingya women also displayed a range of skills and crafts such as tailoring and sewing skills that enabled them to cope with their situation within the camps and to overcome the challenges of maintaining dignity for women and supported them in accessing necessities.

7.2 Perceptions of dignity in the provision of aid

To determine the humanitarian actors' perception of dignity, they were asked to identify the most important type of humanitarian assistance that they provided within the camps. The respondents were asked to rank the different types of aid in terms of its benefits to the Rohingyas using the following rankings: very beneficial, beneficial, good to have but not beneficial, not beneficial and I don't want to answer. Figure 7.1 details the humanitarian actors' responses.

66% ranked water sanitation and hygiene, and health care as very beneficial to the Rohingyas, together with 64% for food security. 46% of respondents also ranked nutrition and education aid as very beneficial for the Rohingyas within the camps, with 43% ranking shelter, and 42% counselling. 41% of respondents claimed protection as a key aspect of aid, alongside 35% that identified livelihoods and support as a very beneficial element of aid. Only 16% of respondents ranked the cash programme that operated within the camps as very beneficial for the Rohingyas.

Figure 7.1 identifies the different types of aid provided and the rankings given by the humanitarian actors on its importance to the forcibly displaced Rohingya refugees

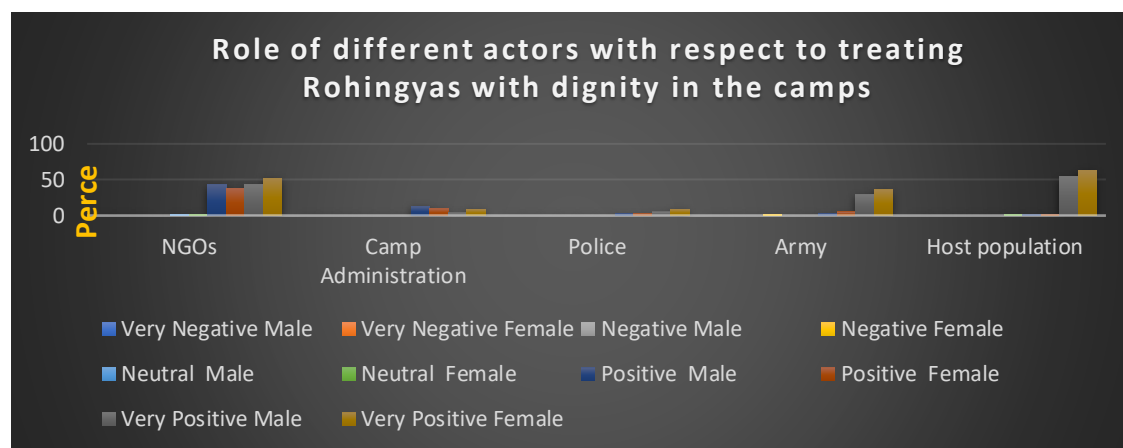


The following section provides an overview of how the humanitarian actors treated the Rohingyas, and whether the provision of aid was delivered with dignity.

7.3 Dignity in the provision of aid

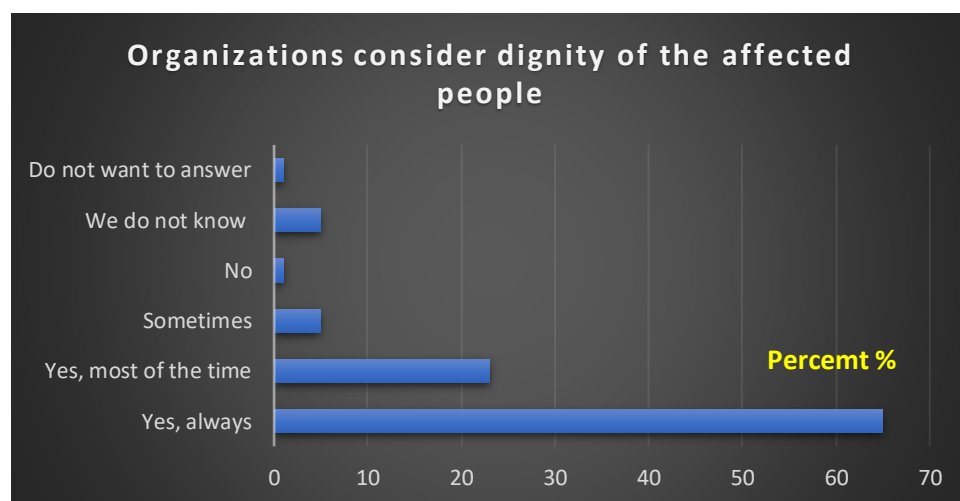
Humanitarian actors were asked to provide an overview of the roles and different responsibilities of the those delivering aid within the camps, and to confirm whether this was provided with respect and dignity for the Rohingyas. Answers centred upon the provision of aid and whether it was delivered by the aid community positively or negatively using a range of multiple-choice answers (see Figure 7.2). Of the humanitarian actors that completed the quantitative survey, 54% males and 63% female confirmed that the host population had exhibited very positive behaviour since the Rohingyas arrived in Bangladesh. 43% males and 52% females acknowledged that the NGO’s had treated the Rohingyas with dignity. 29% males and 36% females also confirmed that the Bangladeshi army had also treated the Rohingyas with dignity on their arrival, together with 13% males and 10% females who also acknowledged that the camp administration treated them with dignity and respect. Figure 7.2 below has evidenced that most humanitarian actors have treated the Rohingyas with dignity and respect within the camps, despite some of the participants rating some of the humanitarian actors significantly lower than others.

Figure 7.2. Role of different actors in treating Rohingyas with dignity



Participants were also asked whether their organisations formally considered the dignity of the Rohingyas when planning any type of intervention or programme (see Figure 7.3).

Figure 7.3 Organizations considering dignity of the Rohingya prior to planning programs and interventions



Most participants (63%) confirmed that the dignity of the Rohingyas was always considered by the organisations they worked for before they planned any interventions or programmes. 23% reported that their organisation tried to consider the Rohingyas views and feelings most of the time. Only 5% of humanitarian actors acknowledged that they only considered their views occasionally or some of the time, whilst 1% admitted to not considering them at all. 5% of respondents confirmed that they did not know or were not informed about this matter.

In addition to considering the dignity of the Rohingyas within the delivery of aid and the planning and delivery of programmes, the humanitarian actors were also asked whether they felt the Rohingyas were treated with dignity and respect by the staff working for humanitarian organisations in Cox’s Bazar camps. Figure 7.4 confirms that 51% of participants reported that the humanitarian actors did treat the Rohingyas with dignity for most of the time, and 32% of participants claimed that the Rohingyas were always treated with dignity and respect.

In total 83% of participants confirmed that the Rohingyas were treated with dignity and respect for most of the time, whilst 8% confirmed that they were not. An additional 5% of the humanitarian actors reported that they received very little dignity and respect from the humanitarian actors within the camps and approximately 4% claimed that treating the Rohingyas with dignity it was not relevant to their role or did not want to answer, 13% reported that the Rohingyas were not treated appropriately (either little or no respect).

Figure 7.4 Humanitarian actors’ views on whether the Rohingyas were treated with dignity by humanitarian organisations.

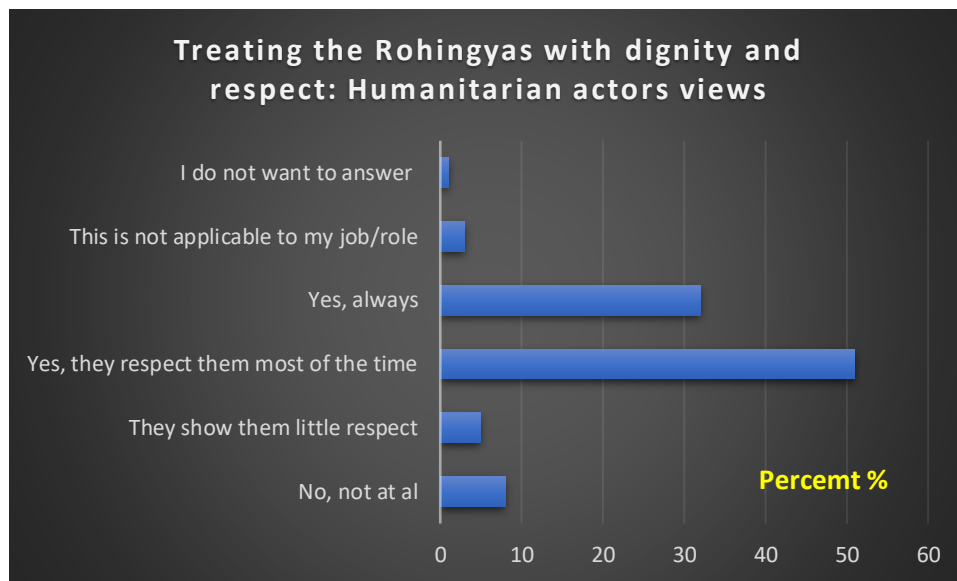


Figure 7.5 below illustrates the further significance of the above findings and the delivery of aid to the Rohingyas, to restore and maintain their dignity whilst residing at the camps.

Figure 7.5 Humanitarian actors that have evidenced the mistreatment of the Rohingyas during the provision of aid within Cox’s Bazar.



Despite 60% of the respondents confirming that they had not witnessed any mistreatment, 23% of participants confirmed that they had evidenced the Rohingyas being treated without respect. An additional 17% of respondents did not know or want to answer the question. In total, approximately 40% of the humanitarian actors confirmed evidence of mistreatment or felt unable to answer the question.

This information arose out of a survey completed by over 90 humanitarian actors. To supplement this and provide greater depth and nuance qualitative interviews were conducted with humanitarian actors and with Bangladesh Government officials.

7.3.1 Dignity and dignified services in the camps

The above section confirmed that the majority of the Rohingyas were treated with dignity and respect, whilst other humanitarian actors confirmed evidence of mistreatment and a lack of respect. To explore these concepts further the notion of dignity was considered from the perspective of high officials of the Government of Bangladesh and humanitarian actors, who were interviewed to discuss the provision of aid within Cox's Bazar and to explore the place of dignity within that work and what they saw as the importance and meaning of dignity for the Rohingyas more generally.

During the qualitative interviews, government participants described the government actions taken to ensure the Rohingyas received shelter and had their basic needs met.

“The government is providing them with education, the medical support, fire power, food, shelter, water and sanitation, everything.” (A Senior Assistant Secretary of the Government of Bangladesh)

“My ministry is doing its best in ensuring that basic needs such as food, clothing and health are met for the Rohingyas. We are working hard to ensure that no Rohingya is suffering from malnutrition. The field hospitals are modern and offer better services than many local hospitals.” (A senior government official, Ministry of Disaster Management and Relief)

In addition to meeting their basic needs, the humanitarian actors recognised the importance of respect for the Rohingyas' dignity. They recognised that respect arose in both what aid was provided and in the way in which it was provided. They recognised the need to treat the Rohingyas with respect, to greet them, talk to them and provide aid in ways that were in keeping with what the Rohingyas would consider respectful. Even small acts of respect were appreciated such as exchanging greetings, taking time to talk to them, speaking in a language they would understand or other small acts. So, for example the Rohingyas appreciated it when humanitarian actors were polite, especially by exchanging Salaam (greeting) and using polite language. Frontline humanitarian actors, especially healthcare workers used Rohingya language to support effective communication which contributed to development of their dignity. Interpreters were commonly used in doctor's surgeries/desks to communicate with

patients, and Doctors aimed to be personable, good listeners, and empathetic to the concerns of the Rohingyas:

“Every doctor uses a translator while seeing Rohingya patients I can speak clearly in their language as I know the local dialect here. If you speak to them in their own language, then they are very happy. Everyone loves a little more affection. Due to a large number of patients, it’s not always possible give everyone the same importance or time. However, if I pay a little more attention to a child, then the mother is impressed and tells other patients to come to my desk.” (A medical doctor working for an INGO, interview 14)

Many humanitarian actors used appropriate language to respect the Rohingyas position and hierarchy. Where possible they used either Rohingya or Chittagongian (the local dialect spoken by people in Cox’s Bazar) as the two languages are similar. Many Rohingyas also spoke Burmese though this was rarely used in communicating with them. Like Bangla, the Rohingya dialect does not use separate pronouns to differentiate genders i.e. male and females. However, both Bengali (including Chittagongian) and Rohingya dialect use three different third-person pronouns – ‘apni’, ‘tumi’ and ‘tui’ to indicate proximity. ‘Apni’ is used for someone older or having higher position in society, ‘tumi’ is used while talking to someone close. ‘Tui’ is largely used when speaking to somebody very close, younger relatives or someone who belongs to lower social class. The frontline humanitarian actors noticed that elderly and adult Rohingyas feel respected while being addressed as ‘apni’ instead of ‘tumi’. Thus, many humanitarian actors try to maintain respect in terms of language, which also draws a line that prevents over familiarity and disrespect.

“Tui kyan acho means how are you (tumi) and one kyan achon means how are you (apni). ‘One’ means apni and ‘tui’ means tumi. They have three variations of ‘you’ just like us. For example, tui no zaiyu means you (tumi) won’t go and one no zaiyun means you (apni) won’t go. They want themselves to be referred as apni. This is what they understand as being respected.” (A medical doctor working for a national an INGO, interview 14)

Whilst the findings have evidenced the importance of using appropriate dialect and language to retain respect and dignity for the Rohingyas, humanitarian actors also recognised the importance of implementing appropriate religious and cultural behaviours. Healthcare workers confirmed that Rohingya women declined to be alone in the medical examination room with male doctors or health workers and preferred to see female doctors and healthcare workers within the camps. As identified in Chapter 6, most humanitarian workers respected the Rohingyas religious and cultural practices by maintaining and offering gender segregation (a separate place for men and women) within the healthcare centres:

“Women want them to be checked by a female doctor. I mainly check kids below the age of 5. A male colleague of mine takes care of the rest of the patients. Here, we see that women feel shy even if he needs to check their blood pressure. This is why we ask them before sending them to a doctor. Whether they would like to be treated by a male doctor. If they want then

we send them to a female doctor.” (A medical doctor working for a national an INGO, interview 14)

The importance of incorporating the Rohingyas religious and cultural practices via the delivery of aid has been identified and, as noted above, many try to respect those in delivering aid.

Despite the fact that only just over 50% of the humanitarian workers considered that cash aid was beneficial many of those who were interviewed recognised that the provision of cash was an effective and efficient form of aid which could help many struggling Rohingyas to restore some control over their necessities, thereby, their dignity, this is further discussed below.

7.3.2 Choice in the provision of Aid

7.3.2.1 Varied Diet

The initial provision of food aid was a supply of rice, lentils and oil for each person each month. However, WFP recognised the limitation of their food provision especially as people were living on these three staples for an extended period of time (over 18 months for almost all of them and over 2 years for many). They therefore initiated an E-voucher card (as discussed in Chapter 6) to ensure that people could use their freedom of choice to purchase food and other items in the camps. The cards are finger-print protected and can be used in the WFP ‘shops/outlets’ located around the camps (in 2019 there were 11 but they were building more). The idea is that each family can access a number of the ‘shops/outlets’ any time they want and choose from the produce available using the e-card as payment. Prices in these outlets is agreed between WFP and local traders so that it is competitive on service and quality of food but not on price. The extended e-card WFP program provides a more varied diet including some vegetables and fish but it is still a limited diet, limited to food 19 products (see Chapter 6). However, the e-vouchers also cover purchase of LPG gas in order to provide a clean cooking fuel and to prevent further deforestation. Furthermore, the outlets also include some farm ‘shops’ so local producers can sell their wares through the e-voucher system. From this it is clear that with the e-voucher system, Rohingyas are able to enjoy more choice in purchasing food shopping and groceries and can go whenever they like (most choose to go twice or three times a month). WFP have limited the amount of rice purchased, largely to prevent its re-sale.

“We are increasing number of E-voucher Shops and people can access these E-voucher shops easily. ... They can get 770 tk per month per person and use the e-vouchers when they want to go to purchase their shopping.” (A male humanitarian worker of World Food Program)

Despite the reassurances from the high official, the findings within Chapter 6, confirm that it took considerable time for the e-voucher scheme to be fully implemented consistently across all areas of the camp.

7.3.2.2 Cash Assistance

Soon after the formation of the camps the aid agencies started to find 'jobs' where the Rohingyas could offer their services and be remunerated with a little cash. The volunteer positions tended to be for acting as a porter (e.g. carrying food for the elderly and vulnerable), cleaning the latrines and other communal areas (medical centres etc), making books and soap for sale in the camps (mostly women). The agencies were permitted to pay small amounts for this volunteering. The government have also used some 'volunteers' to help with the construction (and repair) of more permanent roads, paths and structures within the camps. The government uses the local work-force for most paid positions but supplements that with some work from Rohingya men. Aid agencies also have some paid positions to which they generally appoint local people (often women) though they have also given some of the young Rohingya women jobs. Some Rohingya women also work in the local community as, for example, cleaners for local families.

These 'paid' positions were seen as very important to the Rohingyas as they provided them with cash and so opened up choice of things to purchase. They also allowed people to feel useful and gave them the opportunity to fill some of their time so helped to alleviate some of the trauma they experienced as they left Myanmar. In some cases, particularly the real jobs, they learnt new skills and provided the workers with real self-esteem.

The Government of Bangladesh banned cash aid ('payment' for volunteer work) in the camps late in 2019, which concerned many humanitarian actors. The provision of cash was a key element of aid, as the possession of cash enabled the Rohingyas to buy essential goods in local stores. Both the government and NGO staff confirmed that the lack of cash had a detrimental impact upon families within the camps. A government official stated:

"Actually, people need money for so many things. They came here empty handed. So it's not only food and other material relief you need money. I think the amount that was paid for volunteer work was a token amount of money in consideration of their services. But more importantly it provided the ability for families to purchase key necessities." (A former senior official of the Office of the Refugee Relief and Repatriation Commissioner)

The humanitarian actors felt that the restricted use of cash had a significant impact upon the Rohingyas dignity. They felt that cash support should be restored as a key element of the aid provided. Removal of cash prevented the Rohingyas having freedom of choice in prioritizing their needs and restricted them in making individual and collective choices, it forced families to sell surplus rice to local vendors or to eat less than they should in order to collect a surplus which they could use in this way.

"Some local vendors buy and sell rice from Rohingya. These are very clever people. They buy rice at maybe 20 taka and sell it at 30 taka, which is still lower than market price and they also make 10 taka profit per kg. They even sell rice to WFP store houses." (A senior official of the Office of the Refugee Relief and Repatriation Commissioner)

The humanitarian actors recognised the importance of the Rohingyas being able to have the freedom to choose what provisions they bought, which was also reflected in the previous chapter. Many used this freedom to buy a more varied diet than the rice, lentils and oil that was originally provided under the WFP program. Once the diets provided by WFP became more varied (see the e-voucher system above) the cash was used for other things – clothes, fans for the summer, heaters for the winter, mobile phones, mini solar generators and other products. It was the availability of mobile phones that proved to be particularly problematic for the Bangladesh Government as they might be being used for criminal purposes, not just to keep in contact with relatives. It seems likely that that risk and the fact that some of the host community Cox’s Bazar felt that they were being undercut for employment led to the removal of small payments for the ‘volunteer’ work.

7.3.2.3 Challenges to the provision of aid with dignity

The humanitarian actors identified other challenges in providing aid to the Rohingyas within the camps which included a shortage of funding and having sufficient food to meet their basic needs and requirements. According to the participants, the longer the crisis went on, the more likely it was that sources of foreign funding would be significantly reduced, clearly this was a threat to the future of Rohingyas in the Cox’s Bazar camps:

*“We are doing our best to maintain their dignity. Although at first we tried to give them the services they needed to meet their basic needs. We are providing them with food, minimum health service, enough water, in response to their urgent needs. It’s not an easy task especially when funding is becoming exhausted. We are doing our best to help them.
(A female humanitarian worker of IOM)*

7.4 Retaining the dignity of ‘at-risk’ groups

In addition to the challenges of meeting the Rohingyas’ urgent needs, the humanitarian actors were faced with maintaining the dignity of those individuals who were identified as in need or categorised as vulnerable, living within the camps.

7.4.1 Vulnerable women

The humanitarian actors identified ‘women’ as one of the ‘at risk’ groups within the camps. This was due to the numbers of domestic violence incidents all over the camps, which were often not reported officially to the camp authorities. According to the participants, and in despite of the evidence of women being beaten up by their husbands, they were too afraid to act, which resulted in them keeping quiet and protecting their men. From the humanitarian actor’s perspective, the Rohingya men were:

“strict with the purdah of their women so that their dignity is intact, while on the other hand, they don’t consider beating up one’s wife as a criminal activity and how it affects their overall dignity.” (A medical doctor working for a national NGO)

According to the humanitarian actors, some women within the camps were also vulnerable due to levels of polygamy within the camps, with some males apparently changing their wives regularly. Within the data a number of participants (both Rohingya women and aid workers) reported that this was happening though it was not verified from other data. The participants who talked about polygamy claimed that it caused significant harm to a women’s dignity, as women were abandoned by their husbands who went off to marry other women often within a different camp. This meant that the woman would be left isolated as a single mother to struggle at home alone, often their ‘husband’ retained the right to claim aid and then also claimed for the new family which gave them extra provisions for a period of time, until the issues could be sorted out. It also meant that the original wife and children might have no food for a period of time. The humanitarian actors explained that it was difficult for the camp authorities (CIC) to effectively monitor and track men who married multiple times within a range of different camps, deserting their existing wives and families. Being abandoned, increased the women’s vulnerability and exposed their children to further insecurities which made them live an undignified life.

“Rohingya men are polygamous, and they stay in different places. If a Rohingya man has four wives, he will go to collect relief again and again, and give all the stuff to the wife he likes and not give anything to the others. Others have to spend days on shortages.” (A female humanitarian worker of a national NGO)

Despite the allegations of polygamy within the camps, high levels of social order were maintained due to two key factors which consisted of the following: the strong social solidarity and informal social control exercised by religious and other leaders/elders at individual camp level (as mentioned in Chapter 6); and the total aid dependency of the Rohingya and the availability of the refugees’ biometric information to Aid organisations (which might be used for surveillance). Despite these factors, the absence of male family members, not only increased the women’s vulnerabilities, but also subjected the children and adolescent girls to increased risks of abduction or sexual exploitation within the camps.



Notice in Women’s Healthcare Clinic which ‘employed’ young Rohingya and host community girls to support women who were having difficulties

7.4.2 Children and adolescents at risk within the camps

The humanitarian actors explained that children were at risk within the camps, particularly those that were orphaned or had become separated from their parents during the forced migration.

“On the other day, we found a kid of 2 years who couldn’t tell anything, which camp he lived in or who his parents were. On that day, all the kids went to see the World Bank’s helicopters as they landed. All went back home, but he didn’t manage to return. Later a man found him there and embraced him.” (A female humanitarian worker of Save the Children)



A Rohingya male watching over some young children within the camps.

A female child protection worker provided an overview of issues affecting young adolescent girls without any male family members within the camps. The young women were very vulnerable and were targeted by criminals and susceptible to rape and sexual assault.

“There are several groups in the camp that are very vulnerable. There was an orphan girl who was frequently targeted for sexual harassment. I saw another girl who has the mother but not the father. They stay at home along with several other girls. Many people also tried to sexually harass them. Since this is a sensitive issue, we referred the incidents to the GBV [Gender Based Violence] through a female member.” (Director of a national NGO)

Other associated risks reported included levels of physical assaults within families. A female working in the Child Protection sector of an NGO reported that even the NGO staff and Rohingya volunteers working with her organization also assaulted children:

“The physical abuse is another big challenge here. It is our duty is to protect children for for 24-hours a day, and we have to be aware of this policy. If you do not follow this, then humanitarian actors are terminated, as there is a zero-tolerance policy. (A female humanitarian worker of Save the Children)

In the absence of state laws, a fifteen-year-old who has reached puberty, may be viewed as an adult according to Rohingya cultural practices. Clearly, this conflicted with the views of the humanitarian actors. This meant that the different cultural values identified around child marriage as a key issue within the camps. Parents often married their children, when they reached adolescence (14 or 15 years old).

“Premature marriage and physical abuse are two other challenges for Rohingyas’ dignity.” (A female humanitarian worker of Save the Children)

Other incidents identified included the numbers of sexual assaults that were not reported to protect dignity and maintain individuals and family social reputation. Doctors within the camps reported cases of sexual assaults that were not confirmed by the individual, as they often tried to hide the shame of their experiences.

“We found a case of a 17/18-year-old girl who used to live with her sister. She went to visit her grandfather’s home in Kutupalong camp. After returning she came to us for some medicines. At that time, we found out that she was pregnant but she did not admit it. Then we informed her sister and conducted a pregnancy test. At first, we thought that maybe her brother-in-law got her pregnant. But later we found that she became a victim of abuse whilst she stayed at her grandfather’s house. The girl didn’t have any of her parents alive.” (A medical doctor working for a national NGO)

Although not generally reported by the Rohingya participants the humanitarian actors also expressed concerns about the potential numbers of adolescent Rohingya girls being trafficked into prostitution. While many are trafficked or sold abroad, many others are forced to accept being a part of the sex trade within the camp:

“The CIC expressed concerns in the meeting, stating that there was evidence that the camps become brothels during the nights, and that sex enhancement pills were sold, and women were engaged in prostitution. They had information on this issue.” (A female humanitarian worker of UNFPA)

7.4.3 At risk: Transgender children and adolescents

Other categories of children and adolescents at risk within the camps, consisted of individuals who identified or whose parents identified them as transgender. Participants confirmed that parents all parties struggled with this issue. No Rohingya participant spoke about it but one doctor shared her account, a case where the parents were asking for gender realignment.

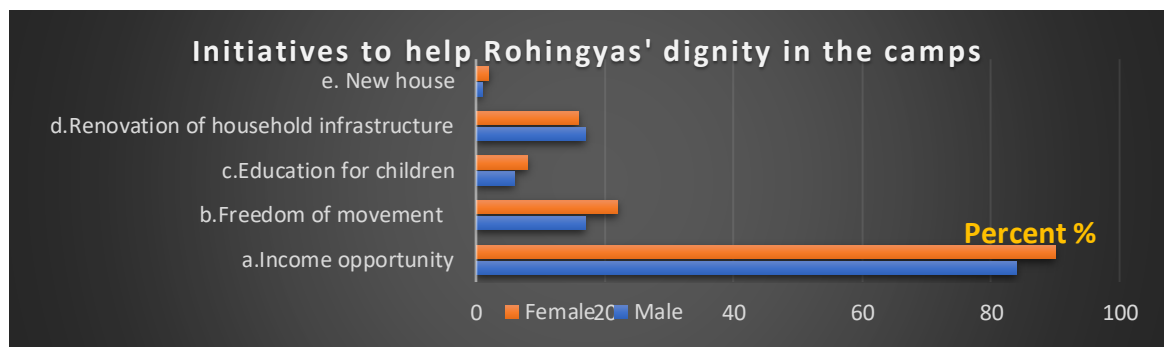
“One such case I found about some transgender or third gender kid. Among them 3 or 4 were toddlers and 1 or 2 were about 6 years old. With a heavy heart the parents came to us with these kids. They say, “What are we supposed to do with these kids, ma’am? We won’t be even able to marry them off.” Some of the parents literally begged us to do something. They even offered us money. They were ready to spend significant amounts of money (10 and 20 thousands Bangladeshi taka) and were even prepared to go to Chattogram for treatment but all they wanted was to change the gender of their very young children.” (A female doctor working for a national NGO, doctor 6)

The humanitarian actors have identified the issues affecting vulnerable groups and individuals within the camps, that prevented this group of Rohingyas from living a dignified life. The following section utilises survey and storytelling data to identify and discuss a range of initiatives to address the key issues identified.

7.5 Initiatives to improve dignity in the provision of aid

The participants were asked to identify initiatives that would increase the Rohingyas dignity whilst they were residing within the camps and were able to provide multiple answers (see figure 7.6).

Figure 7.6 Perceived initiatives to increase the Rohingyas' dignity within the camps



Most participants (84% males and 90% females) suggested that increasing employment opportunities would be a key factor in increasing the Rohingyas dignity within the camps. This aligned with key findings within Chapter 6, as the Rohingyas also identified the significance of securing employment and being able to look after their family. Others suggested initiatives aligned with the issues identified by the Rohingyas (see Chapter 6) and included freedom of movement (17% males and 22% female), which was particularly restricted in the case of women living in the camps. Other initiatives included an improved household infrastructure (17% males and 16% females) to provide greater privacy to protect women from being seen and so increase the dignity of both men and women (see chapter 6). Even though the humanitarian actors suggested that these key initiatives could potentially increase the Rohingyas dignity, there were very limited actions they could take to address them. Education for children (6% males and 8% females) was also identified by the humanitarian actors as a key initiative that could increase the Rohingyas dignity within the camps. Access to education is now just starting to be addressed by the Bangladesh Government. Other initiatives used to improve dignity within the camps included the building of trust between the Rohingyas and the humanitarian actors that provided aid within the camps (particularly those working within the health care setting).

7.5.1 Gradually Gaining Trust: Experience of healthcare professionals

When the Rohingyas arrived in Cox's Bazar, the humanitarian actors recognised how nervous and afraid they were. This was due to the horrific experiences and trauma suffered as they were forced to flee Myanmar (See Chapter 4). The participants explained that the Rohingyas not only struggled with the local language (Bangla), but also questioned and doubted the intentions of the humanitarian actors. They were particularly nervous of accessing medical care, they did not trust it and did not recognise its benefits preferring to rely on traditional remedies. In many cases this jeopardised their health. In particular, the reproductive health of women was placed significantly at risk as the Rohingyas refused to listen and take the medication provided by doctors. There were several reasons for this, all due to misconceptions associated with the medical profession. Initially, the Rohingyas did not follow

medical advice and took more medication than was prescribed by doctors and demanded anti-biotics and injections for all illnesses.

“First thing I want to talk about is that they are completely ignorant about diseases and medicines. They take even more medicine than what we prescribe to them. For example, if I prescribe 1 spoon of medicine, they will take more in the hope of faster recovery. These ideas still persist in them. They still believe that a patient will not recover until an injection is given to them. According to them, good treatment equals giving injections. They also have this notion that the larger the quantity of medicine, the better the treatment is.” (A male doctor working for a national NGO, doctor 4)

The participants revealed that in Myanmar, the Rohingyas used to access informal health service providers (sometimes not qualified, ‘quacks’) for their health issues. This was because they were previously prevented from accessing true medical provision in Myanmar (see Chapter 4). These ‘paraprofessionals’ (informal health service providers) frequently prescribed them antibiotics and other strong drugs to cure them faster, which was possibly reflected within their current behaviour.

“[...] they take antibiotics as primary medicine. There are Rohingya doctors who have no knowledge of medicine; they did not become doctors through education and training; they are more like village doctors who prefer injecting antibiotic directly as primary medicine.” (A male humanitarian worker of a national NGO)

However, some health workers also claimed that Rohingya patients were selling medicines (unused prescription drugs, provided free of cost by healthcare centres) to nearby pharmacies for money. This was to secure sufficient cash to fulfil other basic needs.

“For her baby, a mother insisted that I prescribed antibiotics. As a doctor, I could not prescribe antibiotics to her unnecessarily. When I explained to her that no antibiotics were required, she became upset. She tore apart the prescription on the way out of the hospital” (A medical doctor working for a national NGO)

7.5.2 Trust: Rohingya women, pregnancy, and healthcare professionals

Lack of trust in the healthcare professionals also had a significant impact upon the Rohingya women, particularly when they were pregnant. The Rohingyas’ cultural traditions influenced the care and humanitarian services they accessed during pregnancy, and many of them would not access (or their head of household would not permit them to access) health care provision within the camps. Opportunities for home births supported by healthcare professionals were very limited within the camps, despite this, pregnant women would remain at home (often in a critical condition) for several days without accessing appropriate ante-natal care and attention. Women would suffer with severe bleeding, long labours, and failed delivery of their baby at home prior to accessing medical provision.

“They would only agree to go to hospital if the condition of the mother or the child became critical. Only then they would take them out of the house. Even if a woman wished to go out, there would be someone in the house whose permission was essential.” (A female medical assistant of a national NGO)

This unwillingness to access medical attention often arose because pregnant women had to obtain permission from the patriarchy within their homes if they wanted to access health care provision, even during pregnancy. Other factors that prevented the Rohingya women from accessing and trusting the health care professionals within the camps, was their belief in supernatural powers, described as ‘Jinn’¹⁶ which they believed would ‘cure’ healthcare problems. A female humanitarian actor describes how the Rohingyas’ belief contributed to the death of Rohingya women and their babies within the camps:

“However, they strongly believe in the power of spiritual healing. We encountered two such cases. One woman was in her seventh month of pregnancy and the other was in her eighth. They had been bleeding for a week. They bought miraculous water from a cleric. The in-laws did not allow them to be taken to hospital. Neighbours were worse. Both the unborn children died in the wombs due to bleeding. Still, they were not allowed to come to hospital. Then our health workers went to ask them why they had not allowed them to go to hospital. They responded that the problems were due to Jinn’s influence and the miraculous water was the cure. I told them that the women survived, but had the situation deteriorated even further, what would they have done? They replied that even in that scenario, they would not have let them go out of their houses. (A medical assistant of a national NGO)



Rohingya women waiting to see doctor in a healthcare centre in camp

However, during our research, the humanitarian actors confirmed that they were starting to see some evidence of change in the Rohingyas’ behaviour, resulting in increased levels of trust in the health care professionals. The humanitarian actors explained that this is because of their persistent interventions and door to door counselling to ensure the Rohingyas accessed

¹⁶ Jinni , plural jinn, also called genie, Arabic jinnī, in Arabic mythology, a supernatural spirit below the level of angels and devils. Ghūl (treacherous spirits of changing shape), ‘ifrīt (diabolic, evil spirits), and si’lā (treacherous spirits of invariable form) constitute classes of **jinn**. <https://www.britannica.com/topic/jinni>

the medical aid provided. The Rohingyas have an increased awareness of healthcare schemes that benefit women, children and others who need it, which has increased their access to hospital and enabled them to live a dignified life whilst residing at the camps.

“Their attitudes is gradually changing. Now their attitudes towards giving childbirth at home has also changed, and more people are taking healthcare services from hospital.” (A male humanitarian worker of UNFPA)

Despite the humanitarian actors’ confirmation that the Rohingya women within the camps had started to trust healthcare professionals, and access the aid provided, other issues arose that required addressing. When the Rohingya women first arrived at the camps, enabling them to manage their personal hygiene during menstruation was a significant challenge. This was also, in part, due to lack of trust. This time it was lack of trust in the humanitarian actors and a reluctance to accept aid unless it was necessary. In addition, the lack of privacy and appropriate toilet facilities for women (see Chapter 6) added to the problem. The lack of trust had a significant impact upon their collective dignity and meant that women and teenagers refused to use the women’s sanitary kits, this refusal prevented them from leading a dignified life during menstruation. To counter these problems the camp officials ran an awareness raising campaign.

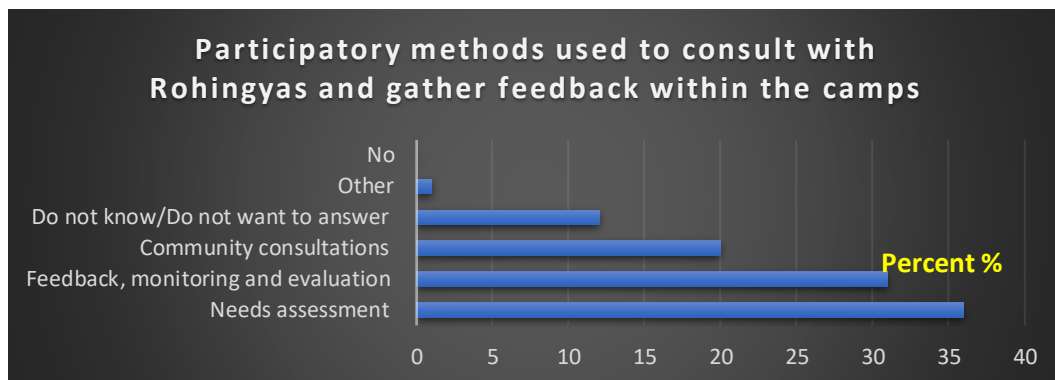
“A big challenge was to improve menstrual hygiene for teenager and adult women. To protect their dignity, we created volunteer groups consisting of Rohingya people themselves along with members from local and international NGOs. They were intensively trained to protect the dignity of young girls and women.” (A former senior official of the Office of the Refugee Relief and Repatriation Commissioner)

Despite some of the issues raised by the Rohingya and the Humanitarian actors, our research has shown that levels of trust have developed between the Rohingya and those trying to support them. The following section illustrates some of the mechanisms used to develop the concept of trust within the camps, and the strategies used to identify need and actions that can be implemented to improve and increase the Rohingyas’ dignity via the provision and delivery of aid.

7.6 Consultation and participation to determine aid requirements - Humanitarian Actors and Camp in Charge

To ensure the Rohingyas’ needs were met within the camps, participants developed and utilised several participatory strategies to consult with the Rohingyas’ and receive feedback on the aid provided. Quantitative data provides an overview of the participatory approaches used and are presented in Figure 7.7 below.

Figure 7.7 Participatory methods used to consult with Rohingyas and gather feedback within the camps.



Approximately 36% participants reported that they conducted needs assessments to identify the aid required for the forcibly evacuated Rohingyas. 31% of participants confirmed that they utilised monitoring and evaluation activities to review and amend aid delivered within the camps. 20% utilised community consultation methods to receive feedback, with 13% participants admitting that they weren't aware of the processes used to consult and provide feedback on the aid provided.

Qualitative data provided a critical insight into the consultation and feedback processes that the humanitarian actors used to obtain regular feedback from the Rohingyas. Some of the Non-Governmental Organisations (NGO's) claimed that the Rohingyas trusted them and were able to raise issues and discuss concerns, which enabled them to lead dignified lives within the camps. From the Rohingya participants this ability to raise some general concerns was backed up (see Chapter 6), however, there were some issues they did not feel they could complain about. Other NGO's organised and utilised community meetings to exchange views with the Rohingyas and feed these issues into the Camp in Charge (CIC) office to share relevant information and knowledge. Some of the NGOs provided an overview of their participatory processes, which included safe and effective mechanisms to deal with complaints and allegations of misconduct during the provision of aid and services across the camps. A Senior INGO official provides a critical insight:

“We invite representative members from the community in each block. We also invite CIC and site management. We inform them what we want to do here. They tell us there if any of them has any problem with that. We ask them about the number of disabled and aged people. We can get the information from there. We have rules about community participation. We have a hotline for making complaints and a monthly report is produced. We also register in the report the actions that are taken regarding the complaints.” (A female humanitarian worker of Christian Aid)

The Bangladesh Government, through the Camp in Charge (CIC), is also careful to keep abreast of the needs to the Rohingyas. The data and reports collated by aid organisations are

generally shared with CIC. When an agency wants to provide or alter aid they have to gain permission from CIC and, as observed by the researchers, the CIC is careful to scrutinise whether the suggested aid is necessary and wanted and whether the way in which it will be delivered is respectful to the Rohingya people. At a meeting between senior members of an aid agency and a senior member of the Refugee Repatriation and Resources Commission the following exchange took place:

“Q: If there has been a needs analysis or needs mapping the I want to see it and discover where the real need lies before agreeing the service. We need to make sure that we are fair and ensure that alleviation of need is fair. Before you pilot the service I also want to see the survey and be told who did it and what their methodology was.

Ans: OK we conducted 30 focus groups but I will get you the detail”

This section has shown a range of methods that the humanitarian actors used to identify the Rohingyas’ needs and address them via the provision of aid within the camps. It included an overview of the monitoring and evaluation activities utilised to review aid and described the consultation methods that collated the Rohingyas feedback on the effectiveness of aid and how it enabled them to lead a dignified life. Even though approximately 87% of the humanitarian actors utilised a range of participatory approaches to monitor and evaluate the delivery of aid within the camps, 13% of participants, were unable to confirm this, which aligned with the views of Rohingyas, see Chapter 6. The following section explores this further and explores the limits of the participatory processes used and the limited communication and feedback provided to the Rohingyas within the camps.

7.6.1 Limits to participation: feedback and communication mechanisms

As identified above, the Rohingyas had several options to communicate with the camp authorities, including humanitarian actors and in chapter 6 (6.4) we discussed in detail some of the weaknesses in these communication systems. Whilst the Rohingya participants agreed that the aid agencies did canvass feedback they felt that it was not always listened to. They also had some issues with the system of Majhi, appointed community representatives (appointed by CIC not by the Rohingya themselves) used by aid agencies and CIC to communicate with the Rohingyas.

Most telling was the apparent lack of a mechanism to deal with serious violations (violence, rape and abduction) when it occurred. This activity was most perpetrated by Rohingya men on Rohingya women and children but there appeared to be no proper system to deal with it. Therefore, whilst the Rohingyas appreciated much of the work done to ensure their needs were met in a dignified way they were still not always happy with the responses to serious violations of their dignity and the fact that consultation often did not bring results.

Below we provide an overview of the skills and abilities of the Rohingyas and how these have been used to help them cope with the frustrations of living within the camps.

7.7 Coping skills

The humanitarian actors' experiences of working with the Rohingyas were varied due to the different types of consultation and feedback processes used within the camps. As the Rohingyas settled into life in the camps relationships were developed, the humanitarian actors confirmed that both male and females utilised their skills and abilities to help them cope with life whilst residing at Cox's Bazar. A key concept of Rohingya dignity evolved around them feeling safe and being able to provide for themselves and their family and the men were able to use a range of occupational skills such as carpentry, farming, fishing, and running small businesses that enabled them to do this, often under the wire. Despite women having restricted movement and not being able to utilise their voice, they were able to craft, tailor and sew clothes to restore their dignity, even if only for themselves and neighbours. The humanitarian actors recognised the amount of laborious work that the Rohingyas had had to undertake since arriving at the camps and acknowledged the challenges of working together to build houses, provide food for their families and cope with a new country and environment. Men worked together in groups of seven or eight to build and repair houses for neighbours for free, which collectively increased their dignity.

"The one thing I like about them the most is their ability to work hard. There are some skilful craftsman among them. Often we see people making very beautiful homes using only bamboo and Tripol. They can also make furniture for their home. These are the skills that I like in them." (A medical doctor working for a national NGO)

"About 75% women know handicrafts. These skills make it easier for them to cope in different environment." (A female humanitarian worker of UNFPA)

In addition to the occupational and craft skills used to help the Rohingya cope with life within Cox's Bazar, the humanitarian actors observed high levels of unity within the camps, which contributed to their dignity. All the individuals and families residing within a block, were united, which helped them protect each other and increased their feelings of safety and security. Due to their horrific experiences as they fled Myanmar, unity was seen as a key factor in helping the Rohingyas to cope with the difficulties and challenges of both their exodus from Myanmar and their living as refugees within Cox's Bazar.

The humanitarian actors confirmed that the Rohingyas did not usually disclose personal information to outsiders unless a significant level of trust had been developed. Moreover, each area had their own Imams or religious persons who also played a strong role in trying to unite people. If the Imams agreed on a new matter, it would significantly inform the entire community decision making process.

"They have a strong bonding and unity between their communities. They don't let any of

their internal information leak to outsiders [Such a practice helped them to cope with security surveillance in Myanmar]. This is one of the major advantages of unity.” (A medical doctor working for a national NGO)

“A positive thing is that they have unity. You can motivate them through religion. If we can motivate them through imams (religious leaders), they can contribute in development works. Their social bonding is also good. They have good respect for the majhi system.” (A consultant of ADB)

7.8 Chapter Summary

This chapter focuses upon the concept of dignity from the perspective of the humanitarian actors from local and international NGO's and aid agencies which provide aid to the Rohingyas within the camps at Cox's Bazar, members of the United Nations and Government Officials of Bangladesh. It used quantitative and qualitative data to categorise the different views and perspectives of the participants, and, in places, these were compared against those of Rohingya participants.

It considered which aid and services were considered most important to the humanitarian effort, which did most to restore dignity to the Rohingya. Like the Rohingya themselves most humanitarian aid workers could see the value of cash in allowing the people choice and giving them a sense of self-sufficiency. Despite that, the provision of case for volunteer services rendered were stopped by the Bangladeshi authorities as they did not want to risk cash being used for illegal purposes and were nervous that the provision of cash might cause issues in relationships between the refugees, the government, and the host community.

It also considered whether services were delivered with dignity and how dignified delivery could be enhanced and the aid agencies could win the trust of the Rohingya people they were trying to support, through respect, use of their language, taking time to build relationships etc. These mechanisms were seen to be most important in persuading the Rohingya to accept and follow medical advice and in working with the most vulnerable. In building trust in medical procedures aid workers had to overcome belief in supernatural powers ('jinny') and spiritual healing and the building of trust was essential in that work though they recognised that trust took time to build and, as noted in chapter 6 some doctors did not take the time (or did not have the time) to listen to and work with their patients.

It includes information about key aspects of the planning process and how the Rohingya participation is encouraged. It also recognised the very real limits of those consultations and the fact that many Rohingya no longer trust consultation as it often failed to deliver suggested aid.

The concluding section noted the important coping skills, mutual respect, and reciprocal support mechanisms they found in the Rohingya community. They noticed how men used a range of occupational skills to help themselves and their neighbours build and repair homes

and other infrastructure in the camps. The Rohingya women also displayed a range of skills and crafts such as tailoring and sewing, cooking and other skills that enabled them to support each other to cope with their situation living in the camps. All of this increased their solidarity and collective dignity.

7.9 Key Findings

- The dimensions of dignity from the perspective of the humanitarian actors and governmental officials were simpler than for the Rohingya; they tended to revolve around the dignified delivery of sufficient necessities.
- Aid workers considered that the most basic needs (food, water, shelter, sanitation and hygiene) were largely provided for though could see that dignity in the delivery could sometimes be improved.
- In particular, they recognised choice needed to be enhanced. Therefore, they tended to see the dignity value in providing cash to the Rohingya (in payment for jobs) so as to increase their choice and self-sufficiency. Indeed, aid agencies recognised that more needed to be done in terms of employment and education opportunities within the camps to reduce dependency and enhance future potential sustainable living.
- Dignity and respect in delivery of aid and services was recognised. Most aid workers accepted the importance of small marks of respect such as the use of the Rohingya language, exchanging respectful greetings and listening to individuals in order to show that they valued the Rohingya people.
- Aid workers saw healthcare and other services as very important though they noted that the Rohingya often did not trust medical treatment. The use of respect and taking time to earn the trust of patients was recognised as important and seemed to encourage the Rohingya to use modern medical services and so increased their dignity and overall wellbeing.
- Building trust with the most vulnerable in the Rohingya community was recognised as being vitally important to protect them from being victimised or supporting them when that occurred.
- Funding was a significant challenge for the humanitarian actors, any drop in funding risked a reduction in the services delivered and they were aware of aid/funding fatigue on the part of funders.
- Aid agencies had some feedback measures, but these needed to be enhanced to ensure they listened to the voices of the Rohingya so as to work with the Rohingya in delivering what they consider necessary rather than merely delivering what aid agencies or government consider is important.

Chapter 8 Sustainable Solutions to the Rohingya Crisis

8.1 Chapter overview

The Rohingya cannot remain indefinitely in the camps in Cox's Bazar, this is detrimental to their health and offers no future, no sustainable solution. The Rohingya camp has been an excellent temporary measure and permitted them a safe haven, food and other necessities, religious freedom and respect. It has allowed them to heal a little. However, it has stifled any self-sufficiency and risks embedding a dependency culture. The Rohingya need to avoid this and aspire to build their own future. They want and need employment or training opportunities, help to start new businesses and for their children to receive a proper education, one which permits them to reach their full potentials; their aim is to be self-sufficient, not dependent. This is not possible in Cox's Bazar.

The international community needs to act quickly to solve the Rohingya crisis. Bangladesh has shouldered a large burden in giving the refugees a temporary home but eventually Bangladesh may try to force repatriation (Ahsan, 2018). Also, in time, Myanmar may try to force more Rohingya to flee to Bangladesh (Ahsan, 2018). A sustainable solution is necessary. Resolving the crisis is a considerable task, one which needs to be resolved whilst preserving the sustainable development of the participating states and of the region as a whole. The international community cannot and should impose a solution, resolution needs to positively engage and unite the local and regional powers.

In searching for that long-term sustainable solution this chapter will consider all the options available to resolve the Rohingya crises in Bangladesh. Attaining a durable solution may take time so the chapter also considers some medium-term solutions. It begins with an overview of the views and thoughts of the Rohingya, the host population, the aid agencies and the Bangladesh Government concerning the major problems with the present, temporary situation. It then moves on to note and reflect on the perspectives of the Rohingya, various humanitarian actors' and government officials' views on an appropriate way forward, one that would enable the Rohingyas to live a dignified life in the future. Resolving the Rohingyas crisis is an international issue that requires a sustainable solution. An Adviser to the Bangladesh Prime Minister reiterates the importance of finding solutions to prevent further violence and destabilisation:

"We are trying to present an argument to the international community [to think of a solution] before the crisis destabilises the region, before it becomes another centre of drug business, before it becomes another centre for the arms trade where ammunition will start flowing easily. Let us not take our views of a long-term perspective. These people will not remain long here. We are holding them back. We are doing our best so that human traffickers are not taking them to other parts of the world". (An Adviser to the Prime Minister:)

Almost everyone (except Myanmar) agreed that the best outcome, the one which best serves the Rohingya, is their voluntarily repatriation with full citizenship rights. To be a sustainable

and permanent solution, repatriation needs to be safe, voluntary (so include citizenship) and dignified. However, that is unlikely to happen soon and as almost everyone agrees that the Rohingyas should not be forcibly repatriated nor forcibly moved to live elsewhere it is also necessary to look at medium-term options.

“We had a very clear view of their safety, their dignity and their life as important. ... We will not involuntarily push them out and return them.” (An Adviser to the Prime Minister)

This chapter will begin with a discussion of problems caused within the camps, then move on to consider long-term, permanent, resolutions to the current situation from the perspectives of different participants and finally will present medium-term solutions which could temporarily reduce or resolve the issues within the camps.

8.2 Major Problems Arising from the Present Situation

The Rohingya camps in Cox’s Bazar which house approximately one million Rohingya refugees are far from ideal and can never be more than a short-term, temporary, solution, a sticking plaster. In this section we will very briefly mention a few of the problems with the present situation before moving on to consider possible long-term and then medium-term solutions.

8.2.1 Self-sufficiency

Chapter 3 illustrated how the Rohingyas had their wealth and self-sufficiency slowly eradicated over the decades prior to their forced migration, due to the confiscation of their lands, businesses, and possessions. The forced migration further reduced this, as any possessions they had, were abandoned in Myanmar as they fled for their lives. Chapters 5 and 6 reiterated the importance of the Rohingya being able to provide for themselves and their family, which was a key concept of their individual and collective dignity. Being self-sufficient within the camps was difficult as little paid work was available. There were a few opportunities working for short-term projects such as to clean or repair sewage, prevent landslides and to build roads in the camps. There were also some opportunities for working with aid agencies, many of these were for young women. However, during late 2019, the Bangladesh Government banned cash aid within the Rohingya camps which prevented the involvement of paying Rohingyas in healthcare and other programs though they could still volunteer. Restrictions on cash aid for work schemes reduced opportunities for Rohingya women to participate in work-based activities within the camps and in female headed households this was very restrictive. According to many humanitarian actors, cash restriction must be removed to ensure the Rohingyas are able to live more dignified lives.

“Cash restriction should be removed. People in urgent need for cash are selling rice and medicine to informal buyers” (A male humanitarian worker of IOM)

This section has illustrated the importance of incorporating opportunities within the camps for the Rohingyas to become self-sufficient and increase their dignity. However, the opportunities within camps could only ever be for a small minority and in the medium to long-term it is necessary to increase or develop work and entrepreneurial opportunities for the Rohingya more generally. This would be difficult to achieve in Cox's Bazar as it would further disadvantage the host community.

8.2.2 Tensions with the host community

Both the Government of Bangladesh and NGO representatives emphasized that tension was rising between the host and refugee Rohingya community. Initially, the host community in Cox's Bazar were very sympathetic towards and supportive of the Rohingya. Indeed, they supported them when they first arrived, they fed, watered, and sheltered them before the humanitarian agencies managed to get official aid in place. However, their sympathy and support have been reduced and there are now real tensions as they feel they are less well off than the refugees.

“There is a growing tension in the host community as members of the host community feel that with the support from the donors the Rohingyas are significantly better off than the host community. This has caused massive discontent and can cause further damage to the co-habitation. This can also deteriorate the security issues”. (A State Minister, the Government of Bangladesh)

The host community whose feelings were gathered in a large focus group felt very pressurised by the presence of the Rohingya camps which they felt had a negative impact on their lives. The host community was about half a million and the area was a fairly poor area of Bangladesh. When the Rohingya first arrived and despite their own poverty, the host community welcomed the almost a million Rohingya refugees because they were fleeing violence and were traumatised; they needed help. However, the presence of the Rohingya has decimated the local environment. The deforestation which occurred in order to make room for and to build the shelters for the Rohingya (4,300 acres of hills and forests in the green zone) has led to increased temperatures in the region and means that there is less wood for furniture building, one of the local industries. Therefore, the building of the camps had had a vast and probably long-term impact on the lives and livelihoods of the host community.

The host community also noted that there was a vast impact on the environment from the amount of garbage being created and not being properly disposed of. Indeed, the rubbish was evident on the sides of the roads. The locals missed the way their community used to look.

“This area has lost its natural beauty. Now the only thing we see is barren land, shelters and heat. The beauty has gone. (lady 8, Host Community Focus Group)

The presence of the camp and the need to feed, shelter and clothe the Rohingyas and the international aid workers has changed the nature of the local market. It has meant competition for and therefore often increased prices of many items, especially food. The demand for food has increased and large amounts are being brought in from outside which increases prices and the host community, who were poor before, find it difficult to afford the increased prices. Price increases were also seen on other everyday items they needed to purchase. The refugee camps have drawn in a large number of foreign aid workers so altering the demographic of the area. This has led to increased house rents. These changes were exacerbated as the locals claimed that the Rohingya had reduced employment opportunities for locals, they claimed that day work was being given to Rohingya instead of locals. They also claimed that the employment of Rohingya refugees was undercutting them, the refugees were cheaper to employ so forcing day wages to reduce. This was not entirely true as the Rohingya were only really being employed (if at all) in the camps but it was what the host community believed. Some did admit that a few of the local community had benefitted and would continue to benefit from additional income generation activities in, for example, transporting people to and from the camps or infrastructure building such as for roads. However, they were cross that some of those jobs were given to Rohingyas because they were paid less, and they felt that this threatened jobs for the host community.

The host community argued that the presence of such a large refugee camp had impacted on their infrastructure such as roads, water and sanitation were put under strain. They worried that their schools and hospitals would face problems in the future. They noted that the heavy traffic on the local roads had caused a lot of damage and that the traffic jams meant that if they needed to go anywhere quickly, such as to hospital, they were delayed. The journey to the largest town in the area used to take 45 minutes but now it took 3 hours. Daily delays were inconvenient but in an emergency it might be life-threatening.

There were also social impacts, they now find travelling within Cox's Bazar to be degrading as they had to produce their ID cards at every checkpoint (checkpoints are very frequent on the roads around the camps). They were required to prove they were Bangladeshi and not Rohingya. They stated that sometimes even producing an ID card was insufficient, they were also asked personal questions about their family and their lives to ensure they were locals. The congestion on the roads meant that sometimes women were expected to share transport with, maybe even sit next to men they did not know and that this was culturally unacceptable.

Some in the host community also suggested that the Rohingya were committing crimes against them though no-one we spoke to had been victimised. They claimed that drug markets were being run out of the camps and that their youths were being targeted to buy the drugs. These 'stories' seemed to come from reports in the local press rather than from their own experiences, but any negative occurrence was now assumed to come from the camp.

The host community were worried for their young people. Local teenagers and young adults were dropping out of college and university because, in the short term, they could earn good

money working for NGOs in the camps. The locals worried that in the longer term, once the camps closed, the lack of education would reduce their employment opportunities.

“Our young people are dropping out of college and university to get well paid salaries working for the NGOs in the camps but in the future they will not have employment or an education. It is also a problem because the young are earning a lot working for NGOs in the camps but many of the older men can only work in low paid labouring jobs, this alters traditional family patterns and is causing problems, especially when the young women are employed.” (man 5, Host Community Focus Group)

Some in the host community, particularly a number of women, were worried about the future. They were concerned that international aid would not continue indefinitely and that if it dries up they are concerned that the Rohingya may attack.

“If they stop feeding them they will invade us and take our food, they may even kill us” (Lady 16, Host Community Focus Group)

“We do not want them escaping from the camp because they will over-run the village” (lady 5, Host Community Focus Group)

“This has happened before. In the past in Kutupalong the old Rohingya refugees took over the host community land” (man 4, Host Community Focus Group)

The majority of the local population in Ukhiya sub-district (the host community) are very poor, they struggle to survive. They see the Rohingya being given everything they need and feel angry that they are not receiving similar help. In particular, they noted that the Rohingyas often had more food than they did and are given LPG gas for cooking whereas the host community still has to make do with collecting firewood from the local forest, they cannot afford gas. Whilst they recognised that the Rohingya needed to be supported they did not feel they should be in a better position than the local community. They felt strongly that much more should be done to support the host community and to improve their lives.

Humanitarian actors felt that the local media had caused some of the strain by running stories claiming offending behaviour with little or no proof. They suggested that the local media could play a key role in disseminating positive information and constructive messages about the Rohingya crises such as the extra jobs it had brought.

However, both the government and humanitarian actors recognised they needed to do more to directly support the host community whilst the Rohingya refugees were still in the camps.

“If you give more facility, more resources to the host community, community mobilization to the host community, people will see that yeah I am benefited because of Rohingya people here. I request international community to initiate sustainable intervention among host community sector by sector.” (A senior official of the Office of the Refugee Relief and Repatriation Commissioner)

8.2.3 Tensions with Environment and Wildlife

The camps have been built in the forest which had previously been preserved as an elephant sanctuary. To build the camps they cleared the forest, using the wood to build homes and for fires to cook. Part of the Rohingya camp had been constructed on an elephant 'thoroughfare', a track previously used by the elephants to access places they commonly used for collecting water or for accessing the sea. Elephants are creatures of habit so continued to try to use this pathway and, in doing so, they frequently 'attacked' and damaged parts of the camp. In 2018 The International Union for the Conservation of Nature created a system to prevent these problems. They trained some Rohingya to run a 24-hour security centre to protect the camp. They also protected the elephants by re-training them to not attack and to use a different route to access the areas they needed visit. However, there are still tensions between the elephants and the camps.

The deforestation to make way for the camps and to provide building materials and firewood for cooking was vast and sudden so it also impacted on many other species of wildlife. The Rohingya refugee crisis was pressing and there was no time to consider the impact it would have or to assess where the construction would have least impact on the environment or on wildlife, it just took place. Whilst deforestation caused a lot of damage to the environment locally it also added to the problem of global warming.

From the outset these environmental problems were recognised, however, they could not be avoided it as the Rohingya needed homes. The authorities and aid workers did try to minimise the environmental impact in a number of ways. Firstly, the camps were kept as small as possible, placing homes close together and minimising communal spaces. This had a detrimental effect for some of the refugees as it meant: that the homes did not have fences surrounding them as is culturally expected in order to protect women's modesty; that sanitation and toilet facilities were shared between men and women, again causing women problems; and, apart from Mosques there were not many communal spaces so that the children did not have many places to play. There was a balance between the environmental damage on the one hand and the protection of cultural mores and the welfare of the women and children on the other. Secondly, at the outset wood was also being taken to burn for cooking and, because of the number of Rohingya, this was leading to further deforestation. To protect the forest, the international community now provide each family with LPG gas for cooking. Even though they kept the deforestation to a minimum the impact on the environment and on wildlife is substantial and will be long-lasting.

There are other environmental impacts, for example, the influx of almost one million people has increased the amounts of sewerage and rubbish produced and this waste is not presently being dealt with in an environmentally friendly way.

The impact on the environment and ecology has been vast and although the authorities are trying to minimise that damage the pressure between the displaced Rohingyas and wildlife

and ecology is another constant which means that more lasting and less damaging solutions need to be found.

8.2.4 Funding to support on-going aid and improve services

Both the Government of Bangladesh and NGO representatives suggested that funding for non-stop aid is required to support Rohingyas during their stay in Bangladesh. External funding is an essential and key priority for the Bangladesh Government, particularly if they are to meet the Rohingyas aid needs whilst they remain within the Cox's Bazar camps. This is described as an urgent and current need, as well as a necessary part of any short to medium term solution.

“The Rohingya population needs to be supported economically and financially as long as they stay in Bangladesh. It is not possible for Bangladesh to maintain this or support their needs. Until they go back Rakhine they need to be strongly supported with relief support and also education, health, hygiene, dignity, protection etc.” (A former senior official of the Office of the Refugee Relief and Repatriation Commissioner)

As evidenced in Chapters 6 and 7 and reiterated by humanitarian actors, increasing access to aid and basic necessities whilst the Rohingyas remained within in the camps is essential. Aid should cover everything necessary for a dignified life - basic necessities (food, water, shelter, clothes, bedding etc.) and services (sanitation, healthcare, education protection and counselling etc.). Chapter 5 portrays how the displaced Rohingya refugees conceptualise dignity within three dimensions: the social, religious, and economic. Chapter 5 also notes that, for the Rohingya, the notion of dignity involves collective dignity and mutual respect that include: the Rohingya identity; peaceful citizenship; freedom to worship and practice their faith; mutual support; education; and self-reliance. The Rohingya noted that some of the necessities and services they presently received were either insufficient (education was only very basic and not certificated) or non-existent (opportunities which might enable them to become self-sufficient). Other services might be lacking in dignity such as inter-gender use of sanitation facilities.

“Another thing that can be done is to improve sanitation system in here. If pure water is ensured here, then we can drastically reduce the spread of water borne diseases and they will be able to lead a healthier life.” (A medical doctor working for a national NGO)

Aid workers also reported issues relating to the drainage systems within the camps. Drainage did not work effectively on a daily basis but during the monsoons led to pools of sewerage in the camps. Clearly, the drainage system needed to be improved to ensure safe drainage of sewerage even during heavy rains. Without this the risk of disease would remain high.

“Water and sanitation are there, but their proper use needs to be ensured. The drainage system became useless every week. Works need to be done to keep them active. We have to work hard

to engage the community so that it remains operational. Huge numbers of people are living here in a small space” (A female humanitarian worker of IOM)

Whilst we were conducting our research work was being conducted to improve the sewerage system so this may not now be an issue.

8.3 Potential Solutions – Rohingyas’ views

During our research, the Rohingyas were asked what would help them to meet their medium- and long-term needs. The following section provides an overview of the issues raised and the Rohingyas thoughts and feelings about returning to Myanmar and determining what would be required to ensure a dignified and safe return. Other medium to long term solutions include integrating into the host community within Bangladesh and relocating to a third country. Survey and storytelling data is used to illustrate their views and perspectives.

8.3.1 Repatriation to the Rakhine area of Myanmar

Survey data confirmed that 99% of participants wanted a safe return to Myanmar, with 1% stating that they did not want to return. The 1% suggested relocation to a third country or integration into the host community. It is safe to say that the overwhelming desire of the Rohingya is their safe return to the Rakhine state in Myanmar.

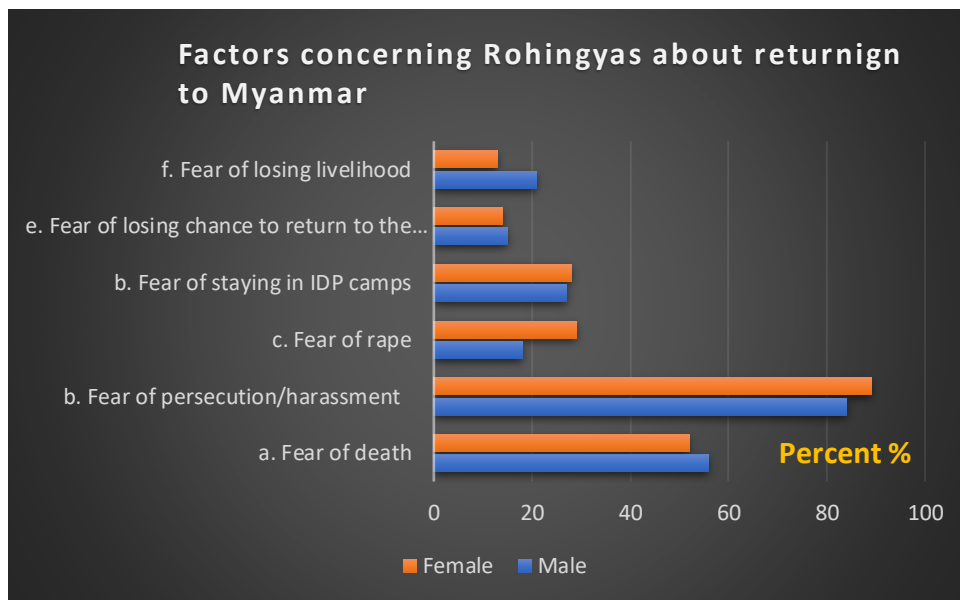
The option of returning to Myanmar has also been suggested by the Myanmar authorities, although what is on offer from the Myanmar authorities would mean that the Rohingya would lose their land, ownership, and social networks. They would not be homed together, would not be returned to Rakhine and might well be placed in detention camps or camps for internally displaced persons.

What Myanmar is offering is no improvement on the historical suffering of the Rohingya, indeed it might even be worse than the way in which they had to live in the past. What has been offered includes many of the Rohingyas’ worst fears or concerns about returning. Figure 8.1 illustrates the Rohingyas concerns in what would happen to them if they returned to Myanmar. 84% males and 89% females confirmed that fear of being persecuted on their return to Myanmar was their main concern. The Rohingyas used the term ‘Julum-Nirjaton’¹⁷ to describe the persecution or torture by Myanmar forces. This term incorporates two of the most problematic aspects for them – oppression and physical or mental torture – they consider both as violent crimes committed against them as a people. 56% males and 52% females claimed that fear of death was their main concern on their return to Myanmar without confirmation of their safety. 27% males and 28% females stated that they feared being confined in internally displaced camps within Myanmar. 15% males and 14% females

¹⁷ ‘Julum’ means oppression, and ‘Nirjaton’ means torture, the combination is often used by the Rohingya to describe their experience and treatment in Myanmar. We might call the same actions persecution or even ethnic cleansing.

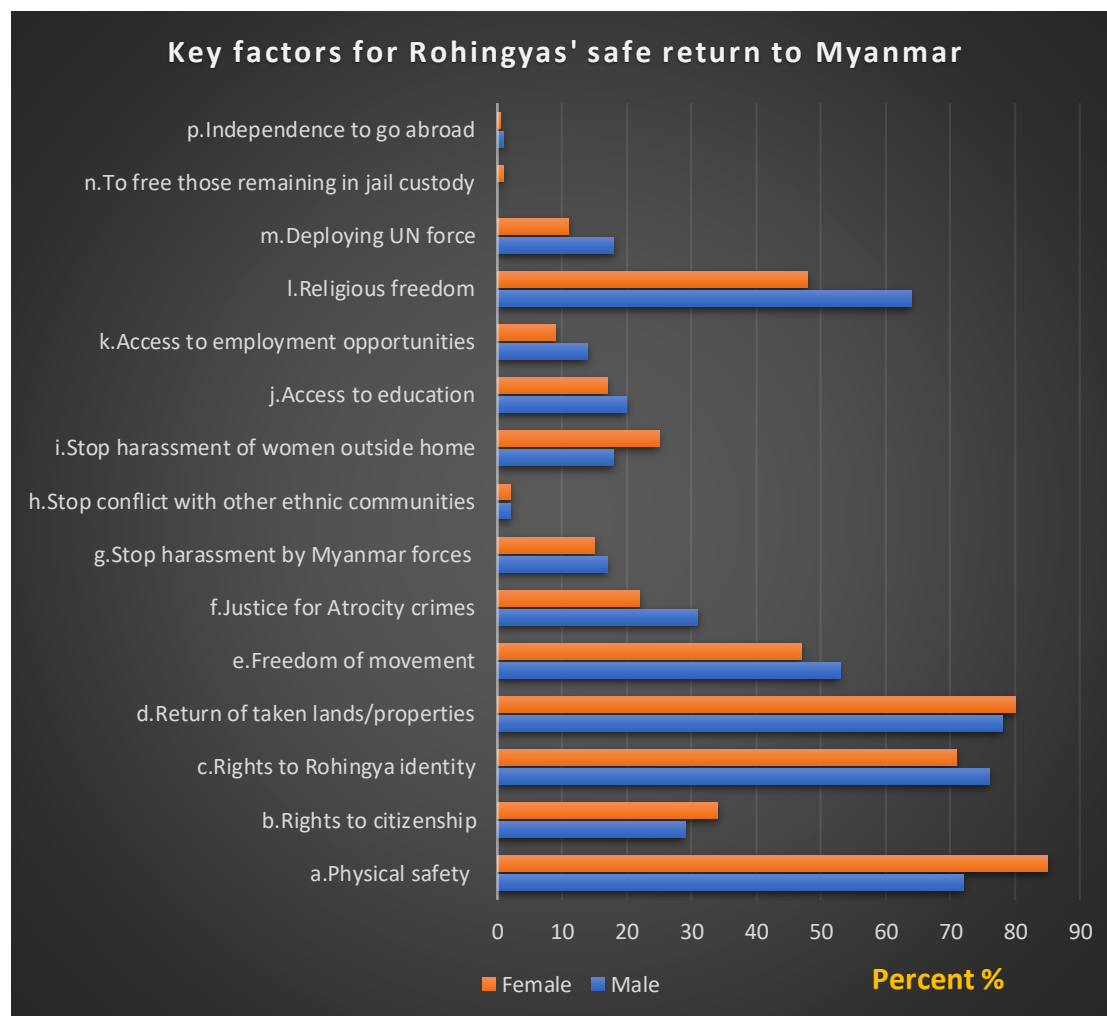
reported that they were worried about not being able to return to their place of origin (i.e. not being able to get back to their ancestral lands in Rakhine state in Myanmar). With 18% males and 29% females reporting fear of rape (either of themselves or of family members) if they returned to Myanmar without their safety being guaranteed.

Figure 8.1 Rohingyas concerns about returning to Myanmar



In addition to the above, the Rohingyas were also asked to clarify what other factors should be considered prior to a dignified repatriation to Myanmar. Multiple answers were provided (see Figure 8.2 below). All the Rohingya assumed it was obvious that rights to citizenship was a necessary requirement of return to Rakhine state in Myanmar, so it is surprising that only 29% male and 34% females identified it. There are two reasons for this. Firstly, many considered the right to a Rohingya identity in Myanmar (76% male and 71% female) and the right to citizenship as synonymous so most only chose one. Secondly, they noted that citizenship was obvious and they wanted to highlight other factors necessary for their safe and dignified repatriation to Myanmar (see figure 8.2 for the most commonly chosen answers): physical safety (72% male and 85% female), return of taken lands and properties in Myanmar (78% male and 80% female), religious freedom (64% male and 48% female) and freedom of movement in Myanmar (53% male and 47% female); demands for justice for atrocities and crimes against Rohingyas (31% male and 22% females); a cessation of harassment by Myanmar forces (17% males and 25% females); a cessation of harassment of women outside the home (18% males and 25% females); access to education in Myanmar (20% males and 17% females); and access to employment opportunities (14% males and 9% females) after their return to Myanmar.

Figure 8.2 Key factors for Rohingyas' return to Myanmar



Interestingly, about 18% males and 11% females also considered the deployment of UN security forces as necessary to ensure a ‘safe zone’ in the Rakhine state in Myanmar to protect their dignified return. These participants believe that the UN monitored ‘safe-zone’ in Rakhine will protect all civilians irrespective of ethnicity or religion following the return of the Rohingya. A smaller percentage of respondents also desired the following factors: stop conflict with other ethnic communities in Myanmar (2% males and 2% females); independence to go abroad (1% males); and to free those in jails in Myanmar (1% females). The survey data is supported by qualitative storytelling interviews of the Rohingyas, illustrating the conditions they felt must be met to ensure they had a safe and dignified return.

“They have to give us citizenship. We must have Rohingya cards, not the card that mark us as ‘Kolai’ or ‘Bengali’. We must be provided the security of life” (B04, a 35-year-old male)

“We will happily swim to cross the river [even without a boat] on our way back to Burma if they grant us the Rohingya Muslim identity” (B05, a 55-year-old male)

Despite the risks involved in their repatriation to Myanmar, the above comments reiterate the desperation for the return and acknowledgement of their Rohingya identity and citizenship. The Rohingyas also recognised that acknowledgment of the Rohingya identity/citizenship would include additional human rights that were removed prior to and during the 2017 forced migration (Chapters 3 and 4 evidenced the discriminatory and oppressive treatment of the Rohingyas). The participants were keen to return to the Rakhine state in Myanmar but emphasised the importance of being physically safe and securing justice for the atrocities they faced when they were forced to flee for their lives (Chapter 4 details the horrific nature of their persecution and the crimes against humanity committed to try and eradicate the Rohingya population). Due to the severity of the crimes committed, some Rohingyas felt that their return should be accompanied by security forces from the United Nations, which would ensure their safety on return (see also survey findings in Figure 8.2 above).

“First, Burmese [Myanmar] citizenship, second, our recognition as Rohingyas, third, justice for the rape of our mother and sisters, fourth, justice for the Rohingya mass killing and fifth, need for the UN protection security force” (B31, a 34-year-old male)

In July 2019 a Myanmar delegation led by high officials met Rohingya representatives in the Cox’s Bazar camps to discuss and identify a way forward. In the meetings the Rohingya representatives specified their requirements for a return to Myanmar. They emphasised the importance of the right to citizenship and freedom of movement in Myanmar. Despite multiple meetings taking place, no assurance was received from the Myanmar delegates. Instead, they offered the Rohingyas a potential digitized NVC (National Verification Card) identification process, which would only register the Rohingya as foreigners living in Myanmar. This jeopardised any potential returns. Furthermore, the Myanmar delegation indicated that the Rohingya would not be permitted to return to their own villages in Rakhine state and might be placed within camps for Internally Displaced Persons (IDPs) within Myanmar. The fear that they would be placed in camps for IDPs in areas away from Rakhine is very real as many Rohingyas who remained in Myanmar are confined in jails without being tried for any crime or are confined in IDP camps in Myanmar with no realistic resolution of their situation as IDPs

Other preconditions which the Rohingya set out for their repatriation included a demand for justice and release of their people:

“..They must also release all of our brothers, sisters and neighbours who are spending their lives as prisoners in the Akyab, Maungdaw, jails. Their properties must be given back to them. We will only go back when we have confirmation that they got all their properties back.” (B31, a 34-year-old male)

Preconditions set by the Rohingya also included justice not only for the atrocities they faced, but also for their loss of land, property, and livestock which if returned would enable them to lead a dignified life in Myanmar:

“We want justice for all the honour they took away from us. Secondly, our lands, cows and goats are to be returned. Thirdly, we are to be given the right of education as same as the Mogs” (B25, a 30-year-old female)

“They have to give us compensation. And we must return to the same place where our homesteads had been, not anywhere else” (B17, a 30-year-old female)

The Rohingyas felt it was important that they wanted justice not only for the atrocities committed against them, but also for their family members and relatives. As stated in Chapters 3 and 4, atrocities were committed under the auspices of the Myanmar Government but also by the local ethnic communities. It was recognised that unless the tension between ethnic communities were resolved prior to their return the violence would continue to escalate. Chapters 5 and 6 noted the importance of the Rohingyas being able to provide for themselves and look after their family. If they received compensation, it would enable them to build new self-sufficient lives. It would also restore key elements of their individual and collective dignity. All the Rohingya we interviewed were emphatic that they had to be given received full citizenship status prior to repatriation. They stated that this citizenship should bring with it other basic rights they needed to enjoy in order to have fulfilling lives in Myanmar: freedom of movement; rights to education for children; rights to get jobs; and rights to pursue a livelihood or run a business without harassment. Most importantly, full citizenship status and recognition of their Rohingya (Muslim) identity had to give them religious freedom within Myanmar. They saw religious freedom in Myanmar as essential as it would signal the end of their religious persecution in Myanmar. Chapter 6 evidenced the importance of the Rohingyas being able to practice their religious and cultural faith, which was a key mechanism that enabled them to cope with life within Cox’s Bazar camps. The Rohingya considered religious freedom an essential part of their return to live in the Rakhine state in Myanmar.

What is important to the Rohingya is the repatriation must be: to the Rakhine area of Myanmar, to their homeland, not to Myanmar more generally; that it must involve full citizenship rights and all the freedoms and benefits that brings with it; and that it must include religious freedom and respect for them as Muslims. This was the passionate desire of every Rohingya we spoke to, but some also recognised that it might not be possible and were willing to consider other options.

8.3.2 Continued stay in Bangladesh?

As a safe repatriation to Myanmar may not be possible, one of the medium-to-long-term options considered by the Rohingya people we interviewed was a continued stay in Bangladesh. Before opening up this discussion it is important to note that this was not something they wanted, they wanted to return to their homes in Rakhine (Myanmar). However, it was something some of them were willing to consider.

“Actually, we don’t have any wish to stay in Bangladesh, as we don’t have any rights here. In spite of this, as long as we are here, we want our children to have good education. We want good schools which provide good education. We want work opportunities so that we live freely. We are not able to tolerate the life of refugees anymore” (B15, a 40-year-old male)

Chapters 6 and 7 illustrated the challenges the Rohingyas faced within the camps. If remaining in Bangladesh was to be a viable option, then a significant economic and cultural shift would have to take place. The Rohingyas would need to be awarded rights to income opportunities, freedom of movement within the country, rights to mainstream (or formal) education for their children, improved accommodation, and increased access to healthcare. Indeed, they said that if they were to remain then they would require full citizenship rights.

“If we fail to go back, we want freedom of movement, job opportunity and good education (IIm) for our children. We want healthy and happy environment to live in. The space where we live now is really small. It’s hard to live there. We need to have a bigger space to build a house.” (B04, a 35-year-old male)

Our research has shown that the Rohingyas had to develop different strategies to survive within the camps, including selling food rations to buy key necessities. Opportunities to earn an income were scarce within the camps for both males and females, thus preventing them from accessing opportunities that would assist them in overcoming some of the challenges. This was particularly the case once the Bangladesh Government stopped NGOs paying wages for work done. Chapter 7 reiterated the range of skills and abilities that many of the Rohingyas (male and female) possessed. Clearly, they could use those skills if they were given citizenship rights in Bangladesh.

“We want both our men and women to be engaged in their respective professions. As a woman, if I had a sewing machine, I would’ve been able to earn livelihoods with it. And we wish the men could go out of the camp and start some small businesses or maybe could work as porter in someone else’s field. We used to do these types of work when we were in Burma.” (B02, a 30-year-old female)

Based upon the findings from Chapter 6 and 7, regardless of whether the Rohingyas are repatriated, remain in Bangladesh, or are relocated to a third country, they need the opportunity to use their skills and abilities to work hard and develop homes for themselves and their family. They need to be supported to get to a point where they can become self-sufficient. As previously stated within Chapter 6, humanitarian actors admired their skills and how these were utilised within the camps at Cox’s Bazar and that, with support, they could become self-sufficient. They could add to the wealth of Bangladesh.

However, it is clear from the discussions with the Rohingya people that they do not want to stay in Bangladesh, they want to return to their homes in Rakhine, Myanmar. However, if they were to be permanently homed in Bangladesh, they wanted to be given a large area where all the Rohingya could live in community and could continue to sustain and support each other.

A place where they could continue to enjoy their Rohingya identity and pass it on to future generations. If they had to be split up then they insisted that they should be accommodated in large groups, again permitting them to sustain their Rohingya identity. This identity is very important to them, and they saw it as essential to who they are.

A third potential solution was also identified by the Bangladesh Government: resettling the Rohingyas within a third country. This is discussed below.

8.3.3. Possible relocation to third Country

The Rohingya are aware that some Rohingya men (usually from families who migrated a long time ago) work as low-skilled labourers abroad whilst the rest of the family remain within Bangladesh. Due to the significant lack of employment opportunities within the camps, some male participants expressed an interest in going abroad to work, particularly those with the skills, knowledge, and abilities to gain employment as skilled or semi-skilled labourers. However, they cannot afford to travel and have no passport so that, for most, working abroad is not a realistic option.

“We want to go abroad, due to the numbers of people looking to get jobs here it will be really difficult to get jobs here, so we want to go abroad. There’s no such place where all of us could work to earn a livelihood here. However, many of them could not afford to go abroad, and question how they would eat if the World Food Programme was not able to provide them with rice and pulses” (B30, a 40-year-old male)

Permanent settlement of the Rohingya in a third country as a solution to the crisis had not been presented to the Rohingyas as a viable option. Despite that, a few participants, particularly females, reported that they were willing to settle in other countries. They wanted to do that only with a large group of Rohingya people so that they can preserve their identity. During a FGD, the Rohingya participants stated that they would be willing to look at alternative places to resettle.

“If they shift this neighbourhood to some other country, we will accept that.” (A 30-year-old female, FGD 1).

“Rohingya citizenship will solve our problem. If separate lands are allocated for our citizenship, we will gladly accept that. If we are sent to some other country, as part of total population, we will also accept that. Because, Myanmar did not give us citizenship, again here, Bangladesh did not give us Refugee status. We have no identity” (50-year-old female, FGD 1)

However, there was some clear opposition to settling in other countries, especially from some of the male participants. Many were worried about what their status would be if they resettled in a third country. They did not want to move somewhere else as refugees, they wanted to live somewhere as citizens. However, many were very reluctant to accept citizenship in a third

country as they did not want to relinquish the right to a safe return as citizens in their 'homelands' in Rakhine in Myanmar. Most did not want anything to jeopardise their return to Rakhine state as full citizens of Myanmar.

"If we go abroad, we will still become refugees. We are already refugees here in Cox's Bazar. We don't want to go to any other country. We just want to return to our homeland." (A 42-year-old Male, FGD 2)

This section has considered some solutions to the Rohingya crisis from the perspective of the Rohingya refugees. It used their views and feelings about ideas that would have life changing consequences on their lives. We now turn to a consideration of the views of both humanitarian actors and government officials.

8.4 Potential solutions: Humanitarian Actors' and Government Officials' views

The humanitarian actors and officials of the Bangladesh Government were asked about their views on the potential medium to long term solutions to the Rohingya crises in Bangladesh. The following section contains their perspectives on finding an appropriate permanent solution.

8.4.1 Long-term solutions

8.4.1.1 Repatriation to the Rohingya Homeland in Rakhine state, Myanmar

Most of the humanitarian actors interviewed agreed with the Rohingya respondents that voluntary repatriation to the Rakhine area of Myanmar is the most desirable solution to resolve the Rohingya crisis in the long-term. Agreeing with the Rohingya, they also considered that any repatriation must be voluntary and ensure Rohingyas' safety, religious freedom, and other basic human rights in Myanmar. However, there were some differences of opinion between the government and non-government actors. The government actors strongly emphasised the importance of voluntary repatriation but only considered the guaranteed physical safety of the Rohingyas as necessary to that return. They argued that if safety and employment opportunities were guaranteed by the Myanmar Government then repatriation should occur. Representatives from the Government of Bangladesh saw repatriation as the only realistic solution and some considered this would be possible if they negotiated with the Myanmar government.

The crisis has not happened due to Bangladesh's action. We have taken human rights approach from the beginning to offer the Rohingyas safety and some comfort within our resource ability. We have a very clear view about their safety and dignity as we say their lives are very important. We want voluntary repatriation of the Rohingyas, and we are not in favour of pushing them to Myanmar. We think Rohingyas have to go voluntarily, and they will go voluntarily if Myanmar provide them safe place, opportunity of livelihood, health care and land. Unfortunately, Myanmar is showing no responsibility for the Rohingyas. Some of the

international organisations even have a longer list that includes citizenship. Bangladesh cannot provide citizenship to the Rohingyas. (An Adviser to the Prime Minister)

Several government officials therefore argued that when the preconditions for safe return are met (land, employment opportunities, healthcare, and education) the Rohingya need to return to their homeland in Rakhine without delay. They argued that adding demands for Myanmar citizenship would further delay or freeze any future repatriation process.

“There are few differences between what we consider voluntary repatriation and that of some human rights agencies. We are saying that Rohingyas must go back voluntarily if Myanmar provides them safe place, opportunity of livelihood, health care and land. Unfortunately, despite taking any responsibilities of Rohingyas, some of the international organisations had made a longer list including rights to citizenship in Myanmar. Bangladesh cannot bring Myanmar’s citizenship for them. It is between them and Myanmar” (An Adviser to the Prime Minister)

The Bangladesh Government argues for repatriation following a guarantee of peace alone and they believe that the Rohingyas will agree to that. For example, a senior official who works at the Office of the Refugee, Relief and Repatriation Commission (RRRC) in Cox’s Bazar affirmed that the Rohingyas will agree on returning to Myanmar once their physical safety is guaranteed. This person argued that if safety is granted, the Rohingya might agree to pursue their demands for rights to citizenship after returning to Myanmar.

Government officials felt that the creation of UN-monitored 'safe zones' in Rakhine, Myanmar would encourage the Rohingya to voluntarily return. A UN force would also allay the fears of others who reside in Rakhine that they may be attacked for having supported the military in killing and raping the Rohingya.

“Now they are restricted to 3 points. If those three points are fulfilled, they will go. One is security, another one is return to the place of origin and land ownership. Now they are more flexible. Myanmar say that they will provide security, but Rohingya do not believe them. They demand for the third-party guarantee. There should be third party for the guarantee and this third party must be the UN, even not China. The main problem is the lack of trust between two parties. They do not believe each other.” (A senior official of the Office of the Refugee Relief and Repatriation Commissioner)

However, despite accepting this government stance other key policy makers from within the Bangladesh Government recognised that for the Rohingya citizenship was a necessary element of safe repatriation, one that Myanmar should honour. So, they called on Myanmar to bestow citizenship on the Rohingya, that this would resolve the problem and the Rohingya would return to Rakhine.

We hope for a solution that ensures safe and dignified return of the Rohingyas to Myanmar. Bangladesh has gone a great distance and cannot do more. Rohingyas want to return to Myanmar with their citizenship. If Myanmar give citizenship to the Rohingyas, they will return by themselves. (A State Minister, the Government of Bangladesh)

Whilst many humanitarian actors agreed that the Rohingyas should return to the Rakhine state in Myanmar they thought that it was not as simple as agreeing to the repatriation. They saw it as a complex process, due to disputes that focused upon the importance of citizenship, rights to the Rohingya identity, together with their physical safety, justice and opportunities for future development and self-sufficiency. There is a clear difference between the views and perspectives of the Bangladesh Government on the one hand and the Humanitarian Actors and the Rohingyas on the other. Like the Rohingya themselves, humanitarian actors recognised that rights, including Rohingya citizenship, was the only way to ensure that the Rohingya could return and live peacefully in the Rakhine area of Myanmar. Return to Rakhine with citizenship would provide the optimum long-term solution to the present crises. They argued that whilst repatriation without citizenship might resolve the current crises for a brief period it would merely place the Rohingya at risk of further persecution in the future, they might find themselves in another humanitarian crisis 10 or 20 years in the future.

“The International Community needs to keep the pressure up on the Government of Myanmar. They need to keep pushing the Rohingya agenda and they need to recognise Rohingya citizenship and their right to live as citizens in Rakhine, Myanmar. They are a community and a social group and they all need to be properly recognised and accepted as citizens” (A Senior Humanitarian Worker for the World Food Programme)

Therefore, whilst the majority of local and International NGOs and other humanitarian actors emphasised the importance of repatriation (to Rakhine, Myanmar) they recognised that it had to include access to basic rights in Myanmar which they understood could only be guaranteed through citizenship. They saw it as essential that these protections were agreed and in place prior to the repatriation. They agreed with the government that long-term monitoring (‘safe-zone’) by the global community was necessary to ensure safety and dignity after repatriation to Rakhine in Myanmar:

“I think repatriation with dignity is needed. If it does not happen, then we are ignoring human rights. It is a matter of the state, a matter of civilisation. The UN is the body that can contribute the most. They can play many roles. There should be a long-term monitoring mechanism in place to watch if it [rehabilitation] can be maintained or they are racially protected” (Director of a national NGO)

There are international pressures exerted on the Myanmar Government to facilitate a dignified return of Rohingya refugees to their original towns and villages with guarantees that they will enjoy their full citizenship and human rights. These pressures include various international activities such as visits by delegations of the ICC’s and United Nations Security Council to Rohingya refugee camps. However, these visits and pressures need to produce actionable results. It is important that the USA and EU closely coordinate their efforts with international justice organizations to hold perpetrators of crime and violence against the Rohingya to account.

'Myanmar state authorities have resisted international sanctions and pressures for over three decades with the support of powerful regional players – China and India – that pretend to see the Rohingya issue as an internal matter of Myanmar.' (A Senior official, UNHCR Office, Dhaka).

This observation is very important as it recognises the obligations on various regional and international bodies to work together to resolve this crisis.

If the international community is serious about the return of the Rohingyas to their homelands in Rakhine state, Myanmar as full citizens they may need to allocate several billions of dollars to the development of the Rakhine to set up homes, livelihoods, and services to ensure a sustainable and permanent solution and to kickstart sustainable development in what has hitherto been a very poor region of Myanmar. This would benefit other communities in that region so support acceptance of the Rohingya back into the region. Unfortunately, such aid is unlikely to materialise until Myanmar reinstates democracy and improves its record of human rights.

In addition, in recognition of the serious violence committed by some Buddhist and other groups in Rakhine against the Rohingya there would also need to be a peace and reconciliation process. Without some process it seems unlikely that all parties will ever live peacefully together. This should not be a judicial process which attributes responsibility and blame; it needs to be a process which repairs communities, a restorative process.

8.4.1.2 Staying in Bangladesh?

Representatives from the Government of Bangladesh believe that integration into the host community within Bangladesh is not a viable option because the country is not rich and is already burdened with overpopulation and many other issues. The Government argues that Bangladesh does not have the land and resources to offer a million people permanent residence. Moreover, such integration would be a highly expensive and an ambitious project for Bangladesh. Given that foreign humanitarian aid and support are already declining, integration into Bangladesh would pose serious financial risks for the nation.

"...the idea that Bangladesh would grant citizenship to all the Rohingya refugees and settle them in a specific region of the country; and the international community would allocate several BILLIONS of DOLLARS to the development of that region and turn it into an industrial and business hub may sound good. But this also sounds an 'academic' solution, it is not real. Will the international community actually allocate such a large amount of money? Who would guarantee that this actually happens?" (A Senior Justice, the Supreme Court of Bangladesh)

The above quote indicates that most in the Government in Bangladesh see the possibility of the permanent settlement of the Rohingya in Bangladesh as both unrealistic and unacceptable.

Furthermore, government representatives expressed concerns over how long the Rohingya crises has already lasted. They were nervous about the length of time that the Rohingya population has stayed in Bangladesh. They argued that this had contributed to overcrowding in the area and that it was fuelling inter-community tensions between the host community and the Rohingya refugees. The government argued that many in the host community now felt that they were being used and forgotten. They said that giving the Rohingyas a temporary place to stay in Bangladesh had placed additional pressure on the country's resources and caused political pressures. They pointed out that Bangladesh as a country has already sacrificed huge natural resources including land, forest, and hills in order to host a million Rohingya in the Cox's Bazar district. They said that the Rohingyas outnumber the local host population and that the burden of hosting the largest refugee settlement has increased pressure on the infrastructure and other resources.

"For Bangladesh it will be very difficult to continue this situation on a long-term basis because it is not our own problem. Already there are so many demographic issues, there are structural issues, infrastructure issues, social issue and environmental issue, livelihood issue the people in Cox's Bazar are facing. I think it may create bigger problem for the entire region if we can't find a clear hope of repatriation" (A former senior official of the Office of the Refugee Relief and Repatriation Commissioner)

Government officials noted a lack of international support for the Bangladesh Government in resolving the Rohingya crises; the international community was supporting humanitarian aid but not a permanent resolution

"Every foreign minister, every minister, every prime minister who came to Bangladesh have given lip service, congratulated Bangladesh for behaving so well, and for being such a good international citizen. But none of them have translated those compliments into action that would ensure the safe repatriation of the Rohingyas". (An Adviser to the Prime Minister of Bangladesh)

"We appreciate the role of international community very much, but their roles are only limited to humanitarian support. It seems that the international community is not interested in the repatriation of the Rohingyas. The level of enthusiasm the IOM, UNFPA, and UNHCR show for humanitarian support it would have made a difference to the lives of Rohingyas if they showed similar interest towards the repatriation of the Rohingyas." (A State Minister, the Government of Bangladesh)

Clearly Bangladesh does not want to, and it would argue is not in a position to give the Rohingya a permanent home. To be fair, very few humanitarian aid workers even considered that as an option.

8.4.1.3 Settlement in a third country

Both the Government of Bangladesh and humanitarian actors agreed that third country resettlement could be a viable option to resolve the current crises. There are already some Rohingyas living in the Middle East, Malaysia, Saudi Arabia, Pakistan, Indonesia, Thailand and in other parts of the world. Those connections could be helpful in building social networks and could therefore support the future relocation of the Rohingya in those countries.

“Now a good number of Rohingya people live in Malaysia, Saudi Arabia, Pakistan, India (in a small group) and Bangladesh. Again, some people in USA, UK, Canada, Australia not much but some people live there. So, I am not sure what will be the way, but it should be definitely considered.” (A senior official of the Office of the Refugee Relief and Repatriation Commissioner)

8.4.1.4 Creation of a New Independent State of Rakhine

If Myanmar is unwilling to give the Rohingyas citizenship rights but are willing to permit their return to their lands in Rakhine a more radical solution might be sensible: the creation of a new state of Rakhine or part of the Rakhine or at least the creation of a devolved power within Rakhine.

Creation of a separate state would:

1. permit Myanmar to retain its Buddhist state intact;
2. prevent their need to recognise the Muslim Rohingya;
3. allow the Rohingya to return as full citizens of Rakhine;
4. give all groups in Rakhine (Rohingya, Buddhist and others) equal citizenship, freedom of religion and other rights.

However, this solution could only become a reality if the international community invests several billions of dollars to the development of the Rakhine to set up a functioning democratic government with constitutional protections for all sections of the society and to pay for homes, livelihoods, and services to ensure a sustainable and permanent solution. They would need to kickstart sustainable development in what has hitherto been a very poor region. This would benefit all communities living in Rakhine so ensure acceptance of the Rohingya back into the region.

In addition, in recognition of the serious violence committed by some Buddhist and other groups in Rakhine against the Rohingyas there would also need to be a peace and reconciliation process. Without such a process it is unlikely that all parties will ever live peacefully together. This must not be a judicial process which attributes blame; it needs to be a process which repairs communities, a restorative process.

The sensitivity of this solution is clear:

- other regional powers may worry that similar solutions would be suggested to resolve their own issues (e.g. China and the Muslim Uighur community);
- Myanmar may worry about the loss of mineral or other rights in the Rakhine area.

However, it would provide a solution to the impasse and its suggestion certainly might help to increase the pressure on the Myanmar Government to accept the Rohingyas with full citizenship, to prevent losing control of Rakhine state (or part of it). A half-way position might be making Rakhine a heavily devolved region of Myanmar with a separate government for almost all functions.

Any of these permanent solutions will take time to put into place. In the interim the present situation is not really sustainable and there needs to be a medium-term solution.

8.5 Medium-Term Solution - Temporary Relocation within Bangladesh or Elsewhere

All Rohingya respondents and international stakeholders argue for a voluntary and dignified return to Myanmar as citizens. However, our analysis indicates that effective mobilization of local, regional, and international efforts to achieve this will take time. The other solutions suggested above would also take time to negotiate. Whilst these negotiations proceed the present situation with its negative impact on both the Rohingya refugees and the host population needs to be addressed (International Crisis Group, 2018; Bepler, 2018). A medium-term, temporary, solution is necessary, one which resolves some of the problems discussed in 8.1 above but it is important to keep in mind that the ideal long-term solution remains the dignified return of the Rohingya people to Rakhine, Myanmar as full citizens.

A short-to-mid-term solution might be the temporary relocation of the Rohingyas to less vulnerable locations within Bangladesh. This should provide the Rohingya with more security and permit a more dignified self-reliant, sustainable life as well relieving pressure on the locals in Cox's Bazar. Indeed, the Government of Bangladesh has already relocated around 17,000 Rohingyas to Bhasan Char – an island about a three-hour boat ride from the mainland. The plan is to relocate at least 100,000 to this island. However, the Rohingyas are deeply concerned about this relocation plan because the island is isolated, is in danger from tidal waves and cyclones and because separating 100,000 from the whole may undermine their social bonds and weaken their social identity. The social solidarity is a major coping mechanism of the Rohingya people, it was their resilience through ethnic cleansing and the pandemic. Instead of being moved yet again, the overwhelming majority of our respondents said that they would prefer to remain in Cox's Bazar while they wait for a peaceful return to Rakhine, Myanmar. Nevertheless, a significant number of participants were willing to seriously consider being relocated to places other than Bhasan Char (they generally rejected relocation to this Island) in Bangladesh as long as they moved as a very large group.

'First we have to know where they want to take us. After visiting the place, on discussion we will consider whether to move. There are the Majhis, the head Majhis. We have to discuss altogether.' (B12, a 82 year old male)

While the Rohingyas' concerns are legitimate, a temporary relocation of some to other safer and less vulnerable sites provides a pragmatic solution to overcrowding and vulnerability to disaster in the Cox's Bazar camps. However, any decision to relocate parts of this group needs to be fully discussed with all parties. With the themselves; the Government of Bangladesh; the national and international aid providers in the camps which will have to support the move;

and the broader international community. Most importantly, the solution needs to be one arrived at with the Rohingyas not something done to them.

Both the Government of Bangladesh and NGO representatives recognised that continued aid and funding are required to support Rohingyas as long they stay in Bangladesh, even if they are relocated. Humanitarian actors further emphasised strengthening access to aid and basic necessities, healthcare, sanitation, nutritional needs, formal education, protection and counselling supports especially as the stay in Bangladesh is likely to be long. Any medium-term/temporary relocation must include opportunities for the Rohingya to become self-sufficient, education with certificates of achievement, access to full medical care and more freedom of movement.

This medium-term/temporary relocation could include moving a large group of Rohingya to another state. Many government officials and some humanitarian actors recognised this as an option. As noted above, there are already Rohingya communities already in the Middle East and in other parts of the world and some of the Rohingya refugees could temporarily join them. Clearly, again there would need to be better facilities than those presently provided and be opportunities for employment and education.

While most Rohingyas wanted to remain all together in one location a significant number were willing to seriously consider temporary relocation within Bangladesh or to other countries. However, they all continued to emphasize their safe and dignified return to their villages and towns in Rakhine as Myanmar citizens was their real goal: they want to go home.

8.6 Chapter Summary

Based on the field research and findings of the research, this section contains recommendations for the sustainable and dignified solutions of the Rohingya crisis in Bangladesh. Although, it is important to note that this crisis has not only affected Bangladesh, but has had a significant impact upon the region, and if a dignified solution is not found, it will have long term implications for the international community. Therefore, sustainable, and dignified solutions to resolve the problem is an urgent requirement:

“We have the crisis like the egg being scrambled and we cannot unscramble the egg. the problem is minority groups exist in every country. If we start taking the view that we can force out the minority groups, where does it end. This is not only Myanmar it will affect the whole world. In terms of global stability, one needs to take that into account”. (An Adviser to the Prime Minister)

Findings from the study have confirmed that the Rohingya refugees living in Bangladesh, the Government of Bangladesh and the international and local aid agencies are keen for the Rohingyas to return to their homeland in the Rakhine state within Myanmar. They also identified the need for strong interim measures to be taken to ensure improved living conditions for the displaced Rohingya refugees within the camps, to enable them to live a dignified life. The present situation and services in the camps only meet their basic needs and requirements, they fail to support them to become self-sufficient so tend to nurture a dependency culture. This dependency is being engrained into their futures. Added to this the education provided is still not formally recognised (though this is being remedied). Without

formal, certificated education Rohingya children will not be able to live a dignified self-sufficient life. Since there are no signs of the Rohingya crises being resolved, urgent and realistic measures must be taken to address the inadequacies of the present system and move towards a long-term resolution of the crisis.

8.7 Key findings

- For four major reasons the present situation is unsustainable in the medium to long-term: (1) it is encouraging a dependency culture which the Rohingya feel undermines their dignity, they want to be self-sufficient; (2) the host community feel unjustly treated; (3) the pressure on the local environment, and wildlife are vast and could have far-reaching consequences; (4) funding to support on-going aid and improve services is dwindling. All of these mean that a more permanent and long-term solution is necessary.
- All parties except the Myanmar government – the Rohingya, the Bangladesh government, the aid agencies and the international community – agree that the permanent resolution of the problem would be the voluntary return of the Rohingya to their homelands in Rakhine, Myanmar.
- The Rohingya, aid agencies and the international community all insist that this has to involve full Myanmar citizenship for the Rohingya. The Bangladesh Government argue all that is necessary is safe return.
- All parties the UN needs to police a ‘safe-zone’ to ensure a peaceful return.
- Many also believe restorative justice is required on their return.
- Whilst largely rejected by the Rohingya, some of them and other actors were willing to consider permanent re-location in Bangladesh (rejected by the Bangladesh government) and/or third countries as long as that could happen as large groups to retain the Rohingya identity and bestowed citizenship rights on the Rohingyas who moved.
- A final solution which most were very supportive of was a new state of Rakhine or devolved power to that region.
- To provide a sustainable future any permanent solution needs funding for housing, infrastructure, employment opportunities etc.
- While awaiting a permanent resolution the Rohingya need a more dignified life - a medium-term solution - possibly temporary relocation (in groups) within Bangladesh or in third states.

Chapter 9: Conclusions and Recommendations

9.1 Chapter overview

This chapter reiterates the objectives of this research, summarises the key research findings, discusses the findings in relation to the existing literature, and provides recommendations for policy and practice.

9.2 Research objectives

As described in Chapter 1, this research focused on understanding:

- 2 the pattern of oppressions the Rohingya experienced in Myanmar before 2017;
- 3 the nature of violence experienced by the Rohingya in 2017 in Myanmar: the causes of their displacement and their displacement journey;
- 4 how the Rohingya refugees conceptualise their sense of dignity, and loss of dignity;
- 5 the socioeconomic conditions the Rohingya are living in and the impact of displacement and delivery of assistance on the physical and psychological wellbeing of the Rohingya and on their dignity in the camps;
- 6 the conceptualisations of dignity among those working to deliver aid to Rohingya refugees and among Bangladesh Government representatives and their experiences of providing assistance;
- 7 ways in which dignity might be improved and how they might find medium-to-long-term solutions to the Rohingya refugee crisis in Cox's Bazar as suggested by respondents from the Rohingya camps, international humanitarian aid organisations and representatives of the Government of Bangladesh (see Chapter 8).
- 8 how to begin to deliver durable solutions which are meaningful to the Rohingya - to recommend actionable policy recommendations.

The findings highlight what realistic changes will make a positive difference to leading safe and peaceful lives for the Rohingya refugees in Bangladesh where they are treated with dignity, justice and equality and allowed and supported to move out of poverty and re-build (or build new) healthy lives and communities. Clearly, this will have the potential to impact on and shape the way in which sustainable governance and sustainable human development are delivered in both Myanmar and Bangladesh. Depending on the long-term solution chosen it may also impact on sustainable human development in the region more widely. A focus on dignity was chosen because sustainable development requires just institutions, alleviating poverty, education etc. all of which are central to dignity, and because it captures, from the perspective of those in need, how they view a 'good' life or a positive and sustainable future, one in which their well-being is protected. Therefore, to support meaningful sustainable development it is imperative to understand what the Rohingya themselves perceive as dignity (and loss of it) and how it underpins their calls for supporting their future. Tracking the

experiences of the Rohingyas from their homes in Rakhine, Myanmar to the camps in Bangladesh: delivered a clearer understanding of how displacements happen and are experienced; created the knowledge necessary to improve the just and dignified delivery of support necessary to sustain refugees and their Rohingya communities and potentially other displaced and refugee communities in the world; explored practical solutions to provide pathways to healthier and safer lives (both short-term and more durable); and highlighted the multidimensional support necessary to help the Rohingya refugees return to their places of origin, resettle elsewhere, or integrate into their host communities.

9.3 Summary of the research findings

9.3.1 Patterns of Oppression and Discrimination: the Rohingya experiences of living in Myanmar prior to 2017

Chapter 3 described the long-standing discrimination suffered by the Rohingya since Myanmar became an independent nation in 1948 and the ways in which their lives deteriorated once the military took control in 1962. The stories of the Rohingya laid out the ways in which they had lived without dignity for over seventy years and the ways in which the indignities they suffered worsened over time. Despite there having been historical records of a Rohingya presence in the state of Rakhine since at least the ninth century (Gutman, 2001; Yegar, 1972 and Crouch, 2016) the Rohingya were never fully recognised as having citizenship rights in Myanmar. Starting in 1962 they had to carry identity cards identifying them as non-citizens and in 1982 the cards they were required to carry altered and identified them as 'illegal' immigrants. At that point, the law removed all rights from them so that their freedoms of movement, education, employment marriage and religion were all curtailed or reduced.

Participants of this study reported that in Myanmar they were almost completely deprived of a dignified life in many different ways. Firstly, their mobility was severely restrained and even in cases of emergency, if they needed to access medical care they might not be permitted to travel, or they would have to pay fines/bribes of varying amounts (not officially set) in order to pass through border controls. Secondly, their children were not permitted to undergo proper education, their access to schooling was severely restricted and even if their children managed to complete the correct education and/or examinations they were not awarded qualifications, were not awarded certificates. Thirdly, the Rohingya were expected to pay large bribes on an almost daily basis (if they wanted to travel, to sell anything they made or grew, to marry, to register a child etc.) so they experienced severe financial oppression. Fourthly, their rights to practice their faith, especially in communal worship was forbidden and many Rohingya marriages were banned, and their children could not be registered as having been born in Myanmar.

The restrictions on them became more severe at various times and/or were more fully implemented. In the lead-up to their latest episode of displacement in 2017 their mosques

were destroyed, they were not permitted any form of communal worship, the walls surrounding their homes had to be destroyed despite their importance in protecting the women from external gaze. Furthermore, over many years the Rohingya people faced institutional 'racism' and discrimination which often surfaced as violence. Women and girls were frequently raped or otherwise sexually abused, often being arrested so they could be raped. Men, women, and children were also victims of other violence. The property of the Rohingya was frequently taken from them. Land was taken from them and given to Buddhists who then often permitted the Rohingya to remain on the land in return for half of the food grown. Due to their status as 'illegal' immigrants and their lack of education (or of its certification) they were excluded from any professions which meant they were amongst the poorest people in Myanmar and that their poverty was structurally sustained rather than being alleviated. Despite this severe restriction on their life chances, they were all very proud that they were self-sufficient, sustaining independent living was something they saw as vital to their dignity. These restrictions and activities, the whole way in which they were treated, severely traumatised all Rohingya people.

Despite this treatment at the hands of the Myanmar authorities and their Buddhist (Mogh) neighbours many managed to retain some feelings of dignity. They focused on their inner dignity, and it gave them resilience (Kateb, 2011). However, apart from when they were paying fines or being attacked, they felt that their social dignity was also protected because they gained strength from the support and respect of their immediate neighbours and of their community, of the Rohingya they lived with (Kateb, 2011). This communal support allowed them to retain their identity as a Rohingya people and as belonging to the Rakhine which is presently part of Myanmar. This identity and belonging is very strong amongst all the Rohingyas and has clearly helped to sustain them through very difficult times. However, the continued and increasing degradations and discrimination did take their toll, they reported that they lacked confidence and are deeply sorry that their identity was so degraded within Myanmar, this was experienced as a real blow to their individual and collective dignity and as traumatic as were the restrictions and aspects of violence they had to endure.

9.3.2 The forced mass displacement and the journey of the Rohingya from Myanmar to Bangladesh

Chapter 4 described the causes of the mass displacement and the displacement journeys of the Rohingya people who participated in this study. While previous episodes of violence were 'horrific', the 2017 attacks were 'significantly worse' and forced the Rohingya to flee, most were forced to go to Bangladesh. The research found that all the Rohingyas who moved in 2017 were forcibly removed and that most of them are only alive today because they fled their homes in Rakhine and moved to Bangladesh. All the Rohingyas experienced severe violence and traumatic events during migration. The 2017 'clearance operation' was

systematic and orchestrated by the Myanmar military but local Buddhists ('Mogh') were also involved. The operation included mass murder and torture, targeted raids/attacks to Rohingya villages, burning whole villages, violence against women (including sexual violence and mutilation). The journeys of the Rohingyas towards Bangladesh were perilous because they were chased down and attacked by the military and local Moghs all the way to the Bangladesh border. Many report that their children are still traumatised by the experiences.

Many Rohingya reported feelings of total loss of dignity along with loss of everything else – life, liberty, control over sexual acts, property, land. However, despite that they knew that they had continued to act in honourable ways even when they were running for their lives. This meant that they were proud of themselves and their people, their inner dignity, and their social dignity as Rohingya were both preserved, however, their broader social dignity as human beings or as people who could reside in Rakhine, Myanmar was shattered. Whilst this shows a split in dignity between inner and social dignity as suggested by Kateb (2011) it also suggests a more complex web of inner and social dignity, one having at least three aspects: inner, social dignity of the immediate group and broader social dignity, as a member of an even broader group or as being respected as being human.

9.3.3 Rohingya perceptions of dignity and loss of dignity

Chapter 5 explored how dignity is conceptualised among the Rohingya refugees who participated in this study and described the impact of humanitarian assistance on the dignity of the Rohingya refugees in Bangladesh. As suggested in some literature, the Rohingya notion of dignity contains three broad dimensions: social; religious; and economic (Holloway and Fan, 2018; Sen 2009). However, drawing on their lived experiences in having been discriminated against, ethnically cleansed and displaced, the Rohingya conceptualised dignity in multiple different ways. Their conceptualisation displayed aspects from the three-dimensional model suggested by Holloway and Fan (2018) but was more complex and nuanced and drew on real areas of their lives where they believed their dignity to be most important. Their conceptualisation drew out six key aspects to Rohingya dignity:

- Safety - this was important because they had been subjected to extreme violence and sexual abuse whilst in Myanmar. It was also important as it protected what was most dear to them, their lives, homes and families;
- Identity - both as Rohingya who belonged in Rakhine and as citizens of Myanmar was core because their identity as rightfully living in the Rakhine area of Myanmar had been denied for so long;
- Religion - Islam is of central importance to the Rohingya, it is part of who they are and yet it led to their oppression and persecution. They have been Muslim since about the tenth century (Manikandan, 2020 and Amrith, 2013) and it is a core aspect of who they are. Furthermore, many of the restrictions applied to them

directly challenged their beliefs (e.g. they could not pray together and mosques were banned). Others challenged parts of their cultural heritage which they linked to their religion such as the protection of women from being 'seen' by males outside the family, their purdah (privacy);

- Knowledge, education (ilm) - the Rohingya people respect those who have knowledge, removing or curtailing opportunities to gain knowledge or have their learning recognised limited their employment opportunities and reduced their dignity as individuals and as a collective;
- Wealth, self-reliance, and self-sufficiency - levels of wealth, like education brought standing in the community their loss through having them stolen or removed or leaving them behind and becoming dependent on aid seriously reduced their dignity both as individuals and as a group; and
- Solidarity and mutual respect – for the Rohingya as a people and a society or community treating other with respect and offering them support are important outward displays of a dignified person, these behaviours are important to them as a community, enhance their overall dignity.

The Rohingya conception of dignity was clearly shaped by the oppression and persecution they suffered over an extended period living in the Rakhine state of Myanmar. All areas of dignity discussed in this chapter were reduced by the way in which they were treated by the Myanmar authorities.

9.3.4 The impact of humanitarian assistance on dignity amongst the forcibly displaced Rohingya refugees

Chapter 6 reviewed the conceptualisation of dignity by the Rohingya people living in the camps in Bangladesh and documents how well those expectations are delivered in the camps through humanitarian assistance. As with their more abstract conceptualisation of dignity outlined in the last chapter, that which they applied to their lives in the camps was complex. Overall, many felt that their basic needs were being met in a dignified way, for example, in regard to access to most necessities and improved levels of security. However, some aspects were more complex, required detailed consideration and dignity was not being respected:

- Safety - most participants felt safer though there was some concern over the behaviour of extremist groups and the safety of women from sexual attacks and women and children from being abducted though these dangers generally only arose in more isolated parts of the camps;
- Identity – they were comfortable with the fact that their identity as Rohingya and as belonging to the Rakhine region of Myanmar was entirely respected;
- Religion - religious activities (prayers in Mosques and education in Madrassa) are now fully respected, however, women's privacy, purdah (e.g. when using sanitary areas

and in protecting them from external gaze when at home) are still not being fully respected;

- Knowledge, education (ilm) - is still an area where the Rohingya feel disrespected, even after four years their children are not receiving a full curriculum of education which is properly certificated;
- Wealth, self-reliance and self-sufficiency - this is another area where the dignity of the Rohingya is not being respected, there are insufficient employment and/or training opportunities, indeed paid employment is still discouraged by the Bangladesh Government;
- Solidarity and mutual respect - in Rohingya society treating other with respect and offering them support are important outward displays of a dignified person, these behaviours are important to them as a community, enhance their overall dignity.
- Food diversity - early on the food being provided was insufficiently nutritionally diverse. At the time of our research many people were still only eating rice, lentils, and oil and this had formed their diet for over two years. During our research a more diverse diet was being introduced and this should now be available to everyone. However, even this improved diet was limited to 19 items, and this is still a limit which many felt impacted their dignity and their ability to choose how to eat.
- Freedom of Movement – this is another area where the dignity of the Rohingya is not respected, they are confined to the camps.

Clearly there are still major challenges to delivering or facilitating a dignified life for the Rohingya.

9.3.5 Humanitarian actor' experiences of working with Rohingya refugees in Bangladesh

Chapter 7 shows that in contrast to the complex conceptualisation of dignity expressed by the Rohingyas, humanitarian actors and senior government staff mainly conceptualised dignity in terms of respect and human rights and gave less emphasis to the roles of religion, education, independence, self-reliance, and self-sufficiency in protecting and restoring Rohingyas' dignity. These differences may be explained by the reliance of humanitarian workers on a top-down conceptualisation of dignity (Patrick and Simpson, 2019). As noted in Chapter 2, humanitarian organisations often set out their own definition of dignity and examine whether that is being respected in certain contexts, rather than gathering or reporting on the affected communities' lived experiences or their views and perspectives on dignity (Grandi, Mansour and Holloway, 2018). This was found to be largely true of the workers in the camps in Bangladesh. Clearly, refugees draw on their lived experiences, and community and cultural perspectives of dignity, and this difference in perspective gives rise to clear differences in conceptualisations of dignity between the Rohingyas and humanitarian actors.

The humanitarian actors focused on the provision of necessities such as food, water, shelter, sanitation, and hygiene and argued that as these were largely provided and as the workers were largely polite and respectful in their dealings with the refugees so Rohingya dignity whilst living in the camps was largely respected. However, they recognised that there was room for improvement and strove to deliver it, for example, the WFP increased the food options from 3 to 19 but they also thought that overall, they were covering what needed to be provided.

Having said that they did talk to the Rohingya and recognise when certain aspects of their lives were causing difficulties for them. For example, some international and local NGOs recognised that education was important to the Rohingyas, they also recognised its importance to sustainable development and so some have worked hard to find ways to improve the education provided to Rohingya children and to draw the issue to the attention of the Bangladeshi authorities in order to try to find a solution (Human Rights Watch, 2019). As second example is the recognition by many aid workers that choice is important to a dignified life. For that reason, they understood the dignity value in providing cash to the Rohingya (in payment for jobs) so as to increase their choice and self-sufficiency. Indeed, aid agencies recognised that more needed to be done in terms of employment and education opportunities within the camps to reduce dependency and enhance future potential sustainable living.

Aid workers recognised that there should also be dignity and respect in delivery of aid and services. They therefore tried whenever possible to use the Rohingya language, exchanging respectful greetings and listen to individuals in order to show that they valued the Rohingya people. These ways of working were particularly important if aid workers wanted to persuade the Rohingyas that something like modern medical treatment or using proper hygiene for menstrual cloths in the camps was of value to their well-being (Farzana, 2017). It was also very important if trying to persuade particularly vulnerable individuals that they should seek support (Akhter and Kusakabe, 2014).

There was another dimension to the danger they felt the Rohingya might face, something that might cause a diminution in the way in which they were treated. All participants feared that in time there would be aid fatigue on the part of international funders and recognised that any drop in funding risked a reduction in the services delivered. They therefore recognised the increasingly precarious situation the Rohingyas were in, particularly if their ability to earn money continued to be curtailed.

Finally, although aid agencies had some feedback measures, they recognised that these needed to be enhanced. The Rohingya were even more negative about the extent to which they felt they were listened to in the provision of aid. Clearly, there is a need for more effective ways in which the voices of all the Rohingyas, including women and even children, can be heard and greater assurances that they would be listened to and where no change was

possible the reasons for that were explained to the Rohingya. Without an effective process of this type the dignity of the Rohingyas would be further reduced as aid would continue to be something done to them rather than something delivered with them, delivering what they consider important.

9.3.6 Sustainable solutions to the Rohingya crisis

Chapter 8 opens by looking at why the present situation is not sustainable and then moves on to look at solutions, both medium-term solutions and a final solution.

For four major reasons the present situation is unsustainable in the medium to long-term:

- it is encouraging a dependency culture which the Rohingya feel undermines their dignity, they want to be self-sufficient;
- the host community feel unjustly treated;
- the pressures on the local environment, and wildlife are vast and could have far-reaching consequences;
- funding to support on-going aid and improve services is dwindling.

All of these mean that a more permanent and long-term solution is necessary. All parties – the Rohingya, the Bangladesh Government, the aid agencies, and the international community – agree that the permanent resolution of the problem would be the voluntary return of the Rohingya to their homelands in Rakhine, Myanmar. The only real opposition to this comes from within Myanmar though some others in the region (especially China and India) could do more to support it.

The Rohingya, the aid workers and aid agencies and the international community all insist that this has to involve: full Myanmar citizenship for the Rohingya; and return to their homelands in Rakhine not to any other areas of Myanmar. However, the Bangladesh Government argue all that is necessary is safe return and that citizenship can be negotiated once the Rohingya are back in Myanmar.

All parties argue that the UN needs to police a ‘safe-zone’ to ensure a peaceful return. Such a peace-keeping force would protect both the Rohingyas and the other ethnic groups who live in Rakhine. On top of this peace-keeping force and to deliver justice it would be sensible to start a justice process, not one to attribute blame and responsibility but one to mend rifts and re-build positive communities; a restorative process.

There was a little support for other final solutions. Whilst largely rejected by the Rohingya, some of them and other actors were willing to consider permanent re-location in Bangladesh (rejected by the Bangladesh Government) and/or third countries as long as that could happen as large groups to retain the Rohingya identity and bestowed citizenship rights on the

Rohingyas who moved. A more radical final solution which most Rohingya were very supportive of, but which might not be realistic was a new state of Rakhine or extended devolved power to that region so permitting the Rohingya to return whilst allowing Myanmar to declare that they are a Buddhist nation.

All parties recognised that to provide a truly sustainable future any permanent solution needs funding for housing, infrastructure, employment opportunities etc. To this end humanitarian organisation, regional powers and the international community need to start planning for what sustainable development activities and income-generating opportunities will need to be put in place to render any sustainable solution viable. In Chapter 8 we merely noted that such funding would be necessary. Here it is important to recognise what might be necessary to deliver sustainable development to the Rohingya. The research found that there had been no real sustainable development activities provided for the Rohingya. Whilst this is partly understandable as, until it is clear where they will be living in the future it is not possible to build homes, roads, hospitals, and schools. However, in the interim much more can be done especially in terms of: educating the children so they can live self-sufficient and sustainable lives in the future; training or re-training adults so they can work in different sectors; building governance structures within the Rohingya communities, ones that are truly representative of men and women and can help to govern what happens to them in the camp and prepare them for a more sustainable future. However, in time there will be a need to develop durable and sustainable solutions for all the problems and challenges experienced by the Rohingyas now and those they will face when they can return to their homes. The Rohingya have called for development support in the following ten areas:

1. the provision of land in Rakhine and of sustainable shelter, including access to water, sanitation and energy so they can re-build their communities (SDG Goals 1.4, 6.1, 6.2, 7.1, 11.1, 11.3);
2. construction of clinics (or access to already existing clinics), schools, and capacity building centres (SDG Goals 1.4, 3.8, 4.a, 7.1, 9.1, 11);
3. construction of destroyed infrastructure and that necessary to building sustainable lives in Rakhine, Myanmar, such as roads, factories, and power stations (SDG Goals 7.1, 9);
4. restoration of houses, roads (where necessary and/or where destroyed), land, drinking water and sanitation (SDG Goals 6.1, 6.2, 7.1, 9.1, 11.2);
5. agricultural assistance (SDG Goals 1.4, 2.3, 2.4, 2.a, 9.3);
6. education for children (SDG Goals 4.1, 4.2, 4.4, 4.5, 4.7);
7. the provision of employment opportunities (SDG Goals 2.3, 8.1, 8.2, 8.3, 8.5);
8. capital for business investment (in farms, shops and other traditional businesses as well as possibly in new business ventures) (SDG Goals 8, 9.2, 9.3);
9. skills development and training (for traditional and new employment) so they are able to take up the employment opportunities (SDG Goals 4.3, 4.4, 4.5, 4.6, 4.7, 5.5); and

10. peacebuilding and provision of safe and secure environments in Rakhine (SDG Goals 5.5, 11.1, the whole of goal 16 but in particular 16.1, 16.2, 16.3)

While awaiting a permanent resolution the Rohingyas need a more dignified life - a medium-term solution - possibly temporary relocation (in groups) within Bangladesh or in third states.

9.4 Recommendations for policy and practice

In addition to the recommendations in the chapters to this report, based on this study we provide the following further recommendations for policy and practice:

- Rather than relying on top-down conceptualisations of dignity, humanitarian actors should seek to understand what dignity means to the affected communities and how to uphold the Dignity of the Rohingya people based on the views and perspectives of the Rohingya themselves.
- There is an immediate need to improve the provision of education and of educational certificates. Education should be provided equally to boys and girls.
- Employment opportunities need to be increased now, even whilst the Rohingya are living in the camps. It is only in this way that they will be able to become self-sufficient, something which is core to their *maan-shomman* [honour and status].
- Within the camps, women and girls should also be supported to work outside the home if that is what they choose and if it will increase their feelings of self-worth and dignity. Not only should opportunities be designed in prestigious industries for women (some, though not all, might be in women only work environments) but also cultural education should take place to show why this is important and why Rohingya women should be free to work outside the home. This is particularly necessary at the moment as so many of the Rohingya live in women headed households.
- There needs to be greater access to employment now to provide greater access to cash so the lives of the Rohingya will be enriched as they will be able to choose which food and other products they buy.
- Particular attention should be paid to providing a greater level of psychosocial support for Rohingya refugees all of whom have been affected by violence and degradation. There needs to be specialist provision for children and greater specialist provision for women, particularly those whose *ijiot* has been attacked by being raped or sexually attacked.
- Humanitarian workers and the government representatives working in the Cox's Bazar area should ensure that vulnerable groups such as women and children do not fall prey to offenders who sexually abuse and/or traffic them.

- Sanitation needs to be improved in the camps to ensure that even during the monsoon there is not open sewage in the camps.
- In the longer term the Rohingya need to be awarded citizenship and full rights, preferably in the Rakhine region of Myanmar though if that does not prove possible then in other states.
- Wherever they find a permanent home they need:
 - their peace and security need guaranteed by means of a peace-keeping force if necessary;
 - A peace and reconciliation type restorative process;
 - Everything necessary to a sustainable future.

Finally, and in appreciation of what the Bangladesh Government and people have done in hosting the Rohingya there needs to be aid for sustainable development of the host community in Cox's Bazar to ensure that they do not suffer long-term and to ensure that the sustainable development of Bangladesh is not negatively impacted in the long-term.

List of References

- Abdelkader, E. (2017) 'The history of the Persecution of Myanmar's Rohingya.' *The Conversation*. September
- Ahmed, I. (2019) *The Plight of the Stateless Rohingyas: Responses of the State, Society and the International Community*, Dhaka: UPL, Third Impression.
- Ahmed, I. (2009). *The Rohingyas: From stateless to refugee*. Dhaka, Bangladesh: University of Dhaka
- Ahsan, S.B. (2018). The Rohingya crisis: Why the world must act decisively. *Asian Affairs*, 49(4), 571–581. <https://doi.org/10.1080/03068374.2018.1528791>
- Akhter, S. and Kusakabe, K. (2014). Gender-based Violence among Documented Rohingya Refugees in Bangladesh. *Indian Journal of Gender Studies*, 21(2), 225–246. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0971521514525088>
- Alam, J. (2019) The Current Rohingya Crisis in Myanmar in Historical Perspective. *Journal of Muslim Minority Affairs*. Vol. 39, Issue 1. <https://doi.org/10.1080/13602004.2019.1575560>
- Alam Khan, M.I. (2017) 'Myanmar's Rohingya Crisis: An Analysis of Security Threats for South Asia' *International Journal of Multidisciplinary Educational Research* 3(6): 160 – 171.
- Al-Mahmood (2016) 'Timeline: A Short History of Myanmar's Rohingya Minority'. *The Wall Street Journal* December 23
- Amnesty (2016) "We are at breaking point" *Rohingya: Persecuted in Myanmar, Neglected in Bangladesh*. London: Amnesty International. <https://www.amnesty.org/en/documents/asa16/5362/2016/en/> (last accessed July 2021).
- Amrith, S.S. (2013) *Crossing the Bay of Bengal: The Furies of Nature and the Fortunes of Migrants* Cambridge MA: Harvard University Press.
- Anidjar, G. (2018), 'The Dignity of Weapons', *Law, Culture and the Humanities*, Vol. 14, No. 3, pp. 380–390
- Bagaric, M. and Allan, J. (2006), 'The Vacuous Concept of Dignity', *Journal of Human Rights*, Vol. 5, Issue 2, pp. 257–270
- Batniji, R. (2012), 'Searching for dignity', *Lancet*, Vol. 380, Issue 9840, pp. 466-467
- Bayefsky, R. (2013), 'Dignity, Honour, and Human Rights: Kant's Perspective', *Political Theory*, Vol. 41, No. 6, pp. 809-837
- Benhabib, S. (2011), *Dignity in Adversity: Human Rights in Troubled Times*, London: Polity Press

- Bennett, G. (2016) *Technicians of human dignity: bodies, souls, and the making of intrinsic worth*. New York: Fordham University Press
- Bepler, S. (2018). The Rohingya conflict: Genesis, current situation and geopolitical aspects. *Pacific Geographies*, 28(50), 4–10. <https://doi.org/10.23791/500410>
- Beyrer, C. and Kamarulzaman, A. (2017), 'Ethnic cleansing in Myanmar: the Rohingya crisis and human rights', *The Lancet*, Vol. 390 (10102): 1570-1573
- Bostrom, N. (2009), 'Dignity and Enhancement', *Contemporary Readings in Law and Social Justice*, Vol. 1, No. 2, pp. 84-115
- Bradley, M. (2009) 'Return in dignity: a neglected refugee protection challenge', *Canadian Journal of Development Studies/Revue Canadienne d'études du développement* 28(3–4): 371–382
- Brundtland, G.H. (2003) 'Health, dignity and human rights. 7th Conference of European Health Ministers – Keynote address'. Oslo: WHO
- Crouch, M. (2016), "Myanmar's Muslim Mosaic and the Politics of Belonging", in M. Crouch (eds). *Islam and the State in Myanmar: Muslim-Buddhist Relations and the Politics of Belonging*, pp. 9-38, Oxford: Oxford University Press
- Dussich, J.P.J. (2018) 'The Ongoing Genocide Crisis of the Rohingya Minority in Myanmar' *Journal of Victimology and Victim Justice* 1(1): 4-24
- Farzana, K. (2017) *Memories of Burmese Rohingya refugees*. New York: Palgrave Macmillan
- Fortify Rights (2018). They gave them long swords. Switzerland: Fortify Rights; 2018. p. 162. Available from: https://www.fortifyrights.org/downloads/Fortify_Rights_Long_Swords_July_2018.pdf
- Fortman, B.D-G. (2011), Religion and Human Rights: A dialectical relationship. *E-International Relations* [online], Available at: <https://www.e-ir.info/2011/12/05/religion-and-human-rights-a-dialectical-relationship/>
- Getz, G. (2018), 'Honour and Dignity: Trauma Recovery and International Law in the Issue of the Comfort Women of South Korea', *Journal of International Women's Studies*, Vol. 19, No. 1, pp. 63-77
- Glasius, M. and Pleyers, G. (2013), 'The Global Moment of 2011: Democracy, Social Justice and Dignity', *Development and Change*, Vol. 44, No. 3, pp. 547–567
- Grandi, F., Mansour, K., and Holloway, K. (2018), *Dignity and displaced Syrians in Lebanon: 'There is no karama here'*, Humanitarian Policy Group (HPG), London: Overseas Development Institute (ODI)
- Grant, E. (2007), 'Dignity and Equality', *Human Rights Law Review*, Vol. 7, No. 2, pp. 299-329

Green, P., MacManus, T. and de la Cour Venning, A. (2015) *Countdown to Annihilation: Genocide in Myanmar* London: International State Crime Initiative.

Gutman, P. (2001) *Burma's Lost Kingdoms: Splendours of Arakan*. Bangkok: Orchid Press Publishing.

Haacke, J. (2016). Myanmar. In A. Bellamy, and T. Dunne (eds), *The Oxford handbook of the responsibility to protect*, pp. 801-824, Oxford: Oxford University Press

Haar, R.J., Wang, K., Venters, H., Salonen, S., Patel, R., Nelson, T., Mishori, R. and Parmar, P.K. (2019) Documentation of human rights abuses among Rohingya refugees from Myanmar. *Conflict and Health*, 13(42): 2-14. <https://doi.org/10.1186/s13031-019-0226-9>

Herrman, C. (2019), 'What is Dignity?', *Eidos*, Vol 3, No. 3, pp. 103-126

Hill, T.E. (1991), *Autonomy and Self-Respect*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press

Hojman, D.A. and Miranda, A. (2018), 'Agency, Human Dignity, and Subjective Well-being', *World Development*, Vol. 101, pp. 1–15

Holliday, I. (2014). Addressing Myanmar's citizenship crisis. *Journal of Contemporary Asia*, 44(3), 404–421.

Holloway, K. and Fan, L. (2018) *Dignity and the displaced Rohingya: ijgot is a huge thing in this world*, HPG Working Paper, London: Overseas Development Institute

Human Rights Watch (2018) *Burma: Scores of Rohingya Villages Bulldozed: New Satellite Images Show Destruction Indicating Obstruction of Justice*, retrieved from <https://www.hrw.org/news/2018/02/23/burma-scores-rohingya-villages-bulldozed> accessed on 9th November, 2019

Human Rights Watch (2019) "Are we not Human?" *Denial of Education for Rohingya Refugee Children in Bangladesh* New York, USA: Human Rights Watch. https://www.hrw.org/sites/default/files/report_pdf/bangladesh1219_web_1.pdf (last visited July 2021)

Human Rights Council (2019) Detailed findings of the Independent International Fact-Finding Mission on Myanmar. Retrieved on May 20 2020 from https://www.ohchr.org/Documents/HRBodies/HR_Council/FFM-Myanmar/20190916/A_HRC_42_CRP.5.pdf

Human Rights Council (2018) Report of the detailed findings of the Independent International Fact-Finding Mission on Myanmar. Retrieved on May 2020 from <https://www.ohchr.org/EN/HRBodies/HRC/Pages/NewsDetail.aspx?NewsID=23575&LangID=E>

Ibrahim, A. (2016), *The Rohingyas – Inside Myanmar's Genocide*, London: Hurst & co.

Iglesias, T. (2001), 'Bedrock truths and the dignity of the individual', *Logos: A Journal of Catholic Thought and Culture*, Vol. 4, No. 1, pp. 111–134

International Crisis Group. (2018). *The Long Haul Ahead for Myanmar's Rohingya Refugee Crisis*. Asia Report No 296. Retrieved from <https://search.proquest.com/docview/2052556700?accountid=17242%0Ahttps://www.crisisgroup.org/asia/south-east-asia/myanmar/296-long-haul-ahead-myanmars-rohingya-refugee-crisis>

International Crisis Group (2017). Myanmar Tips into New Crisis after Rakhine State Attacks. Yangon/Brussels: Crisis Group; 2017. Available from: <https://www.crisisgroup.org/asia/south>

Inter Sector Coordination Group (ISCG) Strategic Executive Group (2018), *2018 JRP for Rohingya Humanitarian Crisis March-December*, Cox's Bazar: ISCG Bangladesh

Jones, W.J. (2019) Myanmar's Rohingya: Human Rights Abuses and Systemic Violence. *Journal of Urban Culture Research*, Volume 14

Jones, W.J. (2017), Myanmar's Rohingya: Human Rights Abuses and Systemic Violence. *Journal of Urban Culture Research*. 14: 16-33.

Kamir, O. (2006), 'Honor and Dignity in the Film *Unforgiven*: Implications for Sociolegal Theory', *Law & Society Review*, Vol. 40, No. 1, pp. 193-233

Kandiwal, W.M. (2019), 'Dignity among the displaced in Jalalabad, Afghanistan' in K. Holloway (ed) *Dignity in displacement - Case studies from Afghanistan, Colombia, the Philippines and South Sudan*. Humanitarian Policy Group (HPG) Working Paper, London: ODI

Kant, I. (1785), *Groundwork for the Metaphysics of Morals*. Republished (2011) Editor and Translator M. Gregor and J. Timmermann Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Karim, A. (2016) *The Rohingyas: A Short Account of their History and Culture*, Dhaka: Jaitya Sahitya Prakash

Kateb, G. (2011), *Human Dignity*, Cambridge M.A.: Harvard University Press.

Kipgen, N. (2013), 'Addressing the Rohingya Problem', *Journal of Asian and African Studies*, 49 (2): 234 – 247

Kolnai, A. (1976), 'Dignity', *Philosophy*, Vol. 51, No. 197, pp. 251-271

Kriegel, U. (2017), 'Dignity and the Phenomenology of Recognition-Respect' in J.J. Drummond and S. Rinofner-Kreidl (eds.), *Emotional Experience: Ethical and Social Significance*, pp. 121-136, Lanham, Maryland: Rowman & Littlefield

Lee, M.Y.K. (2008), 'Universal Human Dignity: Some Reflections in the Asian Context', *Asian Journal of Comparative Law*, Vol. 3, Issue 1, pp. 1-33

Leung, A.K.Y. and Cohen, D. (2011), 'Within- and Between-Culture Variation: Individual Differences and the Cultural Logics of Honor, Face, and Dignity Cultures', *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, Vol. 100, No. 3, pp. 507–526

- McCrudden, C. (2013), 'In pursuit of human dignity: An introduction to current debates' in C. McCrudden (Ed.), *Understanding human dignity*, Oxford: Oxford University Press
- Mahony, L. (2018) *Time to break old habits: shifting from complicity to protection of the Rohingya in Myanmar*. Brewster, MA: Fieldview Solutions
- Manikandan, S. (2020) 'Rohingyas in Myanmar and Bangladesh: An Examination of Collective and Secondary Victimization'. Found in K. Jaishankar (ed) *Routledge Handbook of South Asian Criminology*. Abingdon: Routledge
- Mattson, D.J. and Clark, S.G. (2011), 'Human dignity in concept and practice', *Policy Sciences*, Vol. 44, No. 4, pp. 303 – 319
- Medicines Sans Frontiers (2018) "*No one was left*": *death and violence against the Rohingya in Rakhine State, Myanmar*. Geneva: MSF
- Misztal, B. (2012) Trust: Acceptance of, Precaution Against and Cause of Vulnerability. *Comparative Sociology*, 10(3): 358-379. DOI: 10.1163/156913311X578190
- Mosel, I. and Holloway, K. (2019) *Dignity and Humanitarian Action in Displacement* London: Humanitarian Policy Group, Overseas Development Institute.
- Neal, M. (2014) Respect for human dignity as 'substantive basic norm'. *International Journal of Law in Context*, 10(1): 26-46. DOI: <https://doi.org/10.1017/S1744552313000359>
- Nussbaum, M. (2009), 'Human dignity and political entitlements' in B T. Lanigan (eds), *Human Dignity and Bioethics*, pp. 245 – 264, New York: Nova Science Publishers
- Nussbaum, M.C. (2000), *Women and human development: the capabilities approach*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press
- OECD, (2015). *States of Fragility 2015: Meeting Post-2015 Ambitions*. Paris: OECD. <http://dx.doi.org/10.1787/9789264227699-4-en>
- Omata, N. (2019) 'Over-researched' and 'under-researched' refugees. *Forced Migration Review*, 61: 15-18.
- Oxfam (2018) *One Year On: Time to Put Women and Girls at the Heart of the Rohingya Response*, Oxford: Oxfam GB
- Patrick, R. and Simpson, M. (2019), 'Conceptualising dignity in the context of social security: Bottom-up and top-down perspectives', *Social Policy and Administration*, pp. 1–16, Early online: <https://doi.org/10.1111/spol.12528>.
- Perez, M. (2018), 'Toward a life with dignity: Housing struggles and new political horizons in urban Chile', *American Ethnologist*, Vol. 45, No. 4, pp. 508–520
- Pritchard, M.S. (1972), 'Human Dignity and Justice', *Ethics*, Vol. 82, No. 4, pp. 299-313

- Pittaway, E. (2008). The Rohingya refugees in Bangladesh: A failure of the international protection regime. In H. Adelman (Ed.), *Protracted displacement in Asia: No place to call home*, pp. 83–106. Surrey, England: Ashgate
- Pritchard, M.S. (1972), 'Human Dignity and Justice', *Ethics*, Vol. 82, No. 4, pp. 299-313
- PSS and SIPG (2019) *Policy Briefs: A Roadmap for Sustainable Solutions to the Rohingya Crisis*, Dhaka: North South University
- Ragland, T.K. (1994), 'Burma's Rohingyas in Crisis: Protection of "Humanitarian" Refugees under International Law'. *Boston College Third World Law Journal*, 14(2): 301-336.
- Reaume, D.G. (2003), 'Discrimination and dignity', *Louisiana Law Review*, Vol. 63, No. 3, pp. 645-696
- Regilme Jr, S.S.F. (2019), 'The global politics of human rights: From human rights to human dignity?', *International Political Science Review*, Vol. 40, No. 2, pp. 279–290
- Sahana, M., Janangir, S. and Anisuzzaman, M.D. (2019) Forced Migration and the Expatriation of the Rohingya: A Demographic Assessment of Their Historical Exclusions and Statelessness. *Journal of Muslim Minority Affairs*. 39(1): 44-60. DOI: <https://doi.org/10.1080/13602004.2019.1587952>
- Schroeder, D. (2012), 'Human Rights and Human Dignity An Appeal to Separate the Conjoined Twins', *Ethical Theory and Moral Practice*, Vol. 15, No. 3, pp. 323–335
- Schroeder, D. and Bani-Sadr, A.H. (2017), *Dignity in the 21st Century Middle East and West*, Cham: Springer Open
- Sen, A. (2009), *The Idea of Justice*, London: Allen Lane
- Sen, A. (1999), *Development as freedom*, Oxford: Oxford University Press
- Sensen, O. (2011), 'Human dignity in historical perspective: The contemporary and traditional paradigms', *European Journal of Political Theory*, Vol. 10, No. 1, pp. 71–91
- Simion, M.G. (2016), 'Human Dignity: A Religious Appraisal', *International Journal of Multidisciplinary Research*, Vol. 1, No. 1, pp. 68 – 81
- South China Morning Post (2017) Myanmar police claim Rohingya torched their own homes. Retried on May 2020 from <http://www.scmp.com/news/asia/southasia/article/2110155/they-burned-their-own-houses-and-ran-away-myanmarpolice-tell>.
- Thomas, B. and Lucas, K. (2018) Development and Validation of the Workplace Dignity Scale. *Group and Organization Management*. 44(1): 72-111. DOI: <https://doi.org/10.1177/1059601118807784>

Uddin, N. (2017) *Rohingya noy Royangya: Ostitter Sonkote Rastrohin Manush*, Dhaka: Mordhunno (In Bengali) [Not Rohingya, but Royangya: Stateless People in the Crisis of Existence]

Ullah, A.K.M.A. (2016), Rohingya Crisis in Myanmar: Seeking Justice for the ‘Stateless’’. *Journal of Contemporary Criminal Justice*. 32(3):285-301.

Ullah, A.K.M.A. (2011), ‘Rohingya Refugees to Bangladesh: Historical Exclusions and Contemporary Marginalization’ *Journal of Immigrant and Refugee Studies*, 9(2): 139 - 161

United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) (2020), Refugee Responses in Bangladesh, [online], https://data2.unhcr.org/en/situations/myanmar_refugees [last accessed on 24 August 2020]

UN High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) (2019), *Operational Portal Refugee situations: Refugee Responses in Bangladesh*, retrieved from https://data2.unhcr.org/en/situations/myanmar_refugees accessed on 9th June, 2019

UN Human Rights Council (UNHRC) (2018), *Report of the independent international factfinding mission on Myanmar*. A/HRC/39/64 Available from: https://www.ohchr.org/Documents/HRBodies/HRCouncil/FFM-Myanmar/A_HRC_39_64.pdf (last accessed on 19 August 2020)

UNDP (2018). *Environmental impacts of Rohingya influx: A multifaceted problem requires multifaceted responses*. Retrieved 9 July 2019, from http://www.bd.undp.org/content/bangladesh/en/home/presscenter/pressreleases/2018/09/18/Environmental_impacts_of_Rohingya_influx.html

UNDP and UN Women (2018), *Environmental Impact of Rohingya Influx*, Dhaka: UNDP and UN Women

UN OHCHR (2017a) *Report of Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights mission to Bangladesh: Interviews with Rohingyas fleeing from Myanmar since 9 October 2016*. United Nations Human Rights Office of the High Commissioner. <http://www.refworld.org/docid/5899cc374.html> (last accessed on 27 July 2021)

UN OHCHR (2017b) *Mission report of OHCHR rapid response mission to Cox’s Bazar, Bangladesh*. United Nations Human Rights Office of the High Commissioner. <https://www.ohchr.org/Documents/Countries/MM/CXBMissionSummaryFindingsOctober2017.pdf> (last accessed on 27 July 2021)

Wade, F. (2017) *Myanmar’s Enemy Within: Buddhist Violence and the Making of a Muslim ‘Other’*. London: Zed Books.

Waldron, J. (2012), ‘How law protects dignity’, *Cambridge Law Journal*, Vol. 71, No. 1, pp. 200-222

Waldron, J. (2009), *Dignity, Rank, and Rights*, The Tanner Lectures on Human Values, Delivered at the University of California, Berkeley

WFP Myanmar (2017) *Protection and Accountability to Affected Populations*. Rome: WFP

World Bank (2011). *World Development Report 2011: Conflict, Security and Development*. World Bank. <https://openknowledge.worldbank.org/handle/10986/4389>

Yegar, M. (1972), *The Muslims of Burma: A Study of a Minority Group*, Wiesbaden: Otto Harrassowitz

Zarni, M. and Cowley, A. (2014), The Slow-Burning Genocide of Myanmar's Rohingya, *Pacific Rim Law & Policy Journal*, 23 (3): 681 – 752.

