

Community Conflict on Environment: A Case of Humanitarian Context in Bangladesh

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Abstract: Community conflict is a serious issue for both refugees and the communities that welcome it. This study explored how host community conflict raised between the host communities and the Rohingya people in Bangladesh and identified the causes of community conflicts over environmental resources and addressed possible initiatives for conflict resolution. The conflict between the Rohingya and their host communities has grown more complex than ever because of the inflow of approximately one million Rohingya into Bangladesh in 2017. Although ensuring conflict resolution is crucial for Bangladesh, it has proven difficult to put into practice given the country's current legal system for managing refugees. A qualitative study was conducted to comprehend the root causes and consequences of intercommunal conflict from the viewpoints of the host and the Rohingya. This study argues that host communities' perceptions of the Rohingya have gotten negative, causing conflicts within the local communities. The local environmental resources have suffered greatly because of the refugee crisis. About 30% of the people who had previously made a living and earned money from the nearby natural resources said that their options for making a living had changed. Until a dignified return of the Rohingya is possible, a practical and sustainable method must be developed to maintain a cohesive and friendly living of the host populations and the Rohingya.

1. Introduction

The most recent Rohingya influx in 2017 broke all prior records. Since then, Cox's Bazar has become the sanctuary for approximately 745,000 Rohingyas (Alam et al., 2022). Two Upazilas in Bangladesh's Cox's Bazar district, Ukhia, and Teknaf have seen an influx of Rohingya refugees. The area affected by the inflow is bordered on the north by Ramu and Naikhongchhari Upazila, on the east by the Arakan state of Myanmar, and on the south and west by the Bay of Bengal (WOMEN, 2018). A population of about 35,000 Rohingya living in camps and an estimated 350,000 unregistered Rohingya have resided among the indigenous people in Cox's Bazar for years (NPM, 2018). Studies on refugees and host communities have received a lot more attention in recent years. Numerous of these studies aim to put a number on the direct expenses of hosting refugees as well as the conflicts they face in terms of employment, resource consumption, health concerns, local prices, the environment, etc. (Dampha, 2022). With almost 33% of the population living in extreme poverty (UNHCR, 2021), Cox's Bazar falls below the national average

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in terms of several social variables, and Teknaf and Ukhia are two of the 50 most socioeconomically depressed districts in the country (IOM & FAO, 2017). Since the beginning of the refugee influx, locals and refugees have been vying for jobs in the same daily unskilled labor market, which has resulted in a sharp drop in employment options for the ultra-poor and marginalized elements of the host population (Khaled, 2021). Local hosts working in the unskilled labor sector are found to be poorer than they were during the pre-influx phase, but certain traders and skilled wage earners profited from the resource movement (Bulbul, 2022; Ahmed & Naeem, 2020). The purpose of this study was to review how community conflict between the Rohingya refugees and the host community of Cox's Bazar, Bangladesh has been arising. The research also attempted to identify the main causes of community conflict over environmental resource uses between refugees and the host community. Additionally, it focused on suggesting possible solutions to reduce community conflict between refugees and host communities by exploring various national and international NGOs as well as UN agencies.

1.1 Aim and Objectives of the Study

The main aim of this research is to review how community conflict between the Rohingya refugees and the host community of Cox's Bazar, Bangladesh has been arising. This aim subdivided into three main objectives that are as follows -

1. To identify the main causes of community conflict between refugees and the host community
2. To assess community conflict over the environmental resources
3. To suggest possible solutions to reduce community conflict between refugees and host communities

1.2 Methodology

For this study, two different categories of data sources were used. Humanitarian experts, government representatives, Rohingya representatives through key informant interviews, and case studies for supplementary data collecting were the primary data sources. To conduct a desk review, secondary data from a variety of journals, newspapers, reports, publications, census data, etc. were analyzed.

The data were coded and cleaned before the study itself occurred. This study's analysis was primarily based on a desk review method. Desk review procedures comprised literature screening (WHO, 2017), analysis of secondary data, and list of references creation (Sandison, 2003) to arrange all the materials and make them simple to integrate for whole data analysis. After examining the information available, the next stage is to start analyzing the data that is widely accessible (WHO, 2017), such as sociodemographic data, data related to local conflicts, and other related data. Examining the patterns, information gaps, and situations (Sandison, 2003) where the community conflict can help to resolve it. On a computer, data was gathered and examined using several kinds of software. Data was collected through handwritten notes or recorded files of observations, interviews (KII), and case studies and that would be transcribed or converted into a computer-readable form for analysis. The data were computed and evaluated using MS Excel. Descriptive statistics and analytical methods like to mean, frequencies, and percentages were used to obtain information on causal relationships between refugees and host communities, social phenomena, existing situations of environmental resources, and their use from the collected data. Various types of descriptive research tools were

used to represent the analyzed data such as charts, histograms, plots, tables, etc. As the study was conducted in a qualitative interview method, the narrative analysis was used to provide insight into the complexity of Rohingya and host community relationships, behaviors and challenges, and its causes of conflict and resolutions. The process of desk review involved using data that was available online on the internet and already published by organizations to organize the gathered data in a way that is both effective and useable.

1.3 Literature Review

The Cox's Bazar district's host community has experienced enormous hardship because of the Rohingyas' entry, but this distress has not been adequately acknowledged. Their presence causes conflict in three key areas: the provision of public services, the allocation of economic resources, and the management of environmental resources by looking at the connections between the locals and the refugees through practical interactions (Habib, 2022). There were many intricate obstacles that refugees and the host communities must overcome to receive excellent services and pursue livelihoods in Cox's Bazar. The Rohingya refugees are still largely dependent on food handouts, and there are few options for them to become self-sufficient through official employment and approved education. Some Rohingya refugees have little choice but to resort to destructive coping mechanisms like child marriage, child labor, and drug and human trafficking due to their high levels of vulnerability and lack of opportunity (Post et al., 2019). The camps may be viewed as potent spatial political technologies that create new forms of marginalization with long-lasting effects on the communities of Bangladeshis who were forcibly "incorporated" but whose presence appears to have been overlooked the statistics, guidelines, and daily operations of the institutions in charge of camp monitoring (Minca & Khan, 2022). Comprehensive and interactive resource management frameworks may allow communities to organize resource use conflicts in ways that aid in preventing unproductive conflict. Such forms of governance may be introduced in areas where the government is unable to resolve conflicts. (Martin, 2005). The Rohingyas' historical marginalization is the root of the problem, and little is known about their post-migration struggles (Parveen and Sahana, 2022). The inhumane treatment of the Rohingya Muslims and their consequent expulsion from their own country should be examined.

1.4 Study Area

Teknaf and Ukhia are the Upazilas of Cox's Bazar District in Bangladesh. These areas are where Bangladesh's landmass ends in the south. The Naf River serves as the eastern border of the Upazilas and lends the region its identity (UNHCR, 2021). Its borders are shared with Myanmar. As a sample population, the immediate community residing in the FDMN camps in Teknaf and Ukhia Upazilas in Cox's Bazar are the main focus of this study.

2. Result and Discussion

Bangladesh is a resource-poor nation with a high population density. As was previously said, the Rohingya crisis in Bangladesh was an unexpected event that initially rocked the political establishment. Due to the Myanmar conflict, Bangladesh is now home to over 901,703 refugees, of which 189,747 are families (UNHCR, 2021). A significant portion of the population living in the Teknaf camps (17.7%) and Ukhia camps (82.3%) - totaling

around 158,266 and 743,437 of them, respectively - is classified as severely vulnerable. The Rohingya refugees were predicted to cause serious conflict to environmental resources and community (Bashar, 2021).

2.1 Community Conflict and its Causes

Despite being vastly outnumbered by the refugees, host communities strongly felt that life was much simpler before the camp was established (Braithwaite et al, 2019). They attributed the current shortage of resources, such as land, woods, and wildlife, to the refugees. Additionally, they bemoaned how the refugees were wrecking their irrigation systems, stealing their crops and water, fishing illegally, and ruining their traditional grazing pastures (Madzimure, 2018).

Although a neighboring refugee camp is undoubtedly advantageous economically in some ways, these advantages were not thought to make up for the worsening resource shortage.

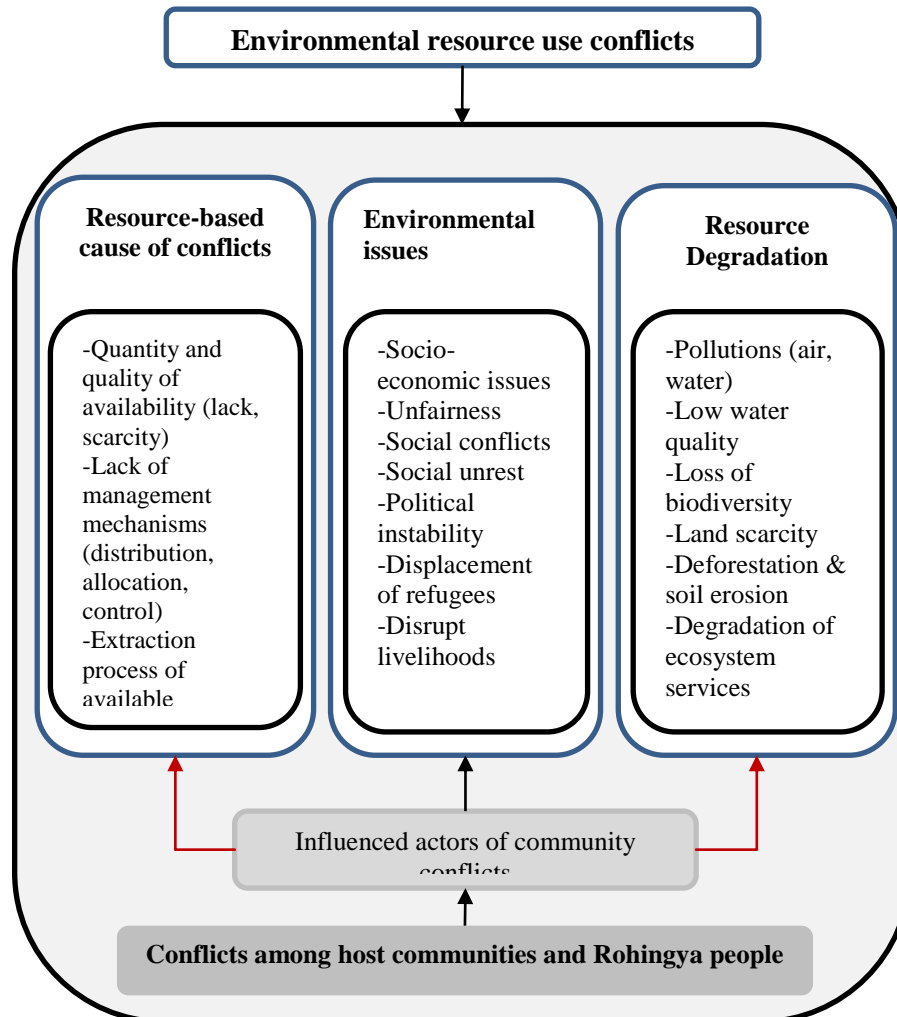
In reality, one particular reason for displeasure with the refugee camp was the absence of benefits (Dampha et al., 2022). Bangladesh welcomes a million Rohingya refugees on a humanitarian basis and provides them with protection and shelter despite having limited resources.

Habib (2022) examined the rivalry and conflict for a few resources. The Cox's Bazar district's host community has experienced enormous hardship as a result of the Rohingyas' entry, but this distress has not been adequately acknowledged. The presence causes conflict in three key areas: the provision of public services, the allocation of economic resources, and the management of environmental resources by looking at the connections between the locals and the refugees through practical interactions (Habib, 2022).

2.2 Community Conflict over Environmental Resources

Martin (2005) discovered theoretical and empirical support for the idea that comprehensive and interactive resource management frameworks may allow communities to organize resource use conflicts in ways that aid in preventing unproductive conflict. Such forms of governance may be introduced in areas where the government is unable to resolve conflicts via its institutional procedures. As a result, there might be a chance to address the insight barrier, which has been recognized as a crucial relationship between deprivation and conflict (Martin, 2005).

One of the biggest issues facing the country now is the refugee crisis. Economic, social, political, and environmental effects are brought about when refugees are hosted in neighboring countries (Barman, 2020). As soon as they arrive, migrants may face competition from locals for limited resources including food, water, accommodation, and medical care. Their presence raises the need for infrastructures such as transportation, water supply, sanitation, and health services, as well as in some situations for natural resources such as farmland land and fuel (Barman, 2020).

Figure: Causal relationship of conflict between refugees and host communities

Source: Authors' Compilation based on Literature and Field Survey, 2022

2.3 Process of the Community Conflict and Possible Solutions

Increasing dissatisfaction and an absence of compassion among the host community are visible because of the Rohingya refugee conflict that lacks a viable solution (Siddique, 2021). Additionally, following the last Rohingya migration in 2017, there has been a spike in recognized illegal activities such as growing crime, prostitution, theft, and drug and people trafficking (Siddiqi, 2022). There is a perception that refugees are not subject to the law. Participants reported that when locals encounter a Rohingya, they are frequently reluctant to call the police. They believe the bureaucratic procedure is onerous and futile because there is no likelihood that the offending Rohingya will be found (Siddiqi, 2022). Participants also discussed how higher-class Bangladeshis who are financially benefiting from the crisis are given preferential treatment by law enforcement agencies. Officers advise the poor to simply keep their distance from the refugees in

order to avoid conflict, but the poor are terrified to even try to obtain justice (Olney et al., 2019).

Due to increased demand, the influx has driven up the price of all goods on the market as a whole. Contrarily, the host communities' revenue did not rise. Instead, the price of the local produce has been reduced as a result of greater supply from other areas to meet the local demand. In order to satisfy their immediate needs, farmers from the host communities frequently sell their produce at a lesser price during times of financial crisis (Sarwar & Aurin, 2022). Another effect of the price increase is that people with limited income or savings are compelled to cut back on their meal consumption. Khaled (2021) discovered similar viewpoints that influence how the host community views the Rohingya. Over the past four years, the host community's tendency to be sympathetic (Shujat et al., 2022) toward the Rohingya has considerably decreased. Findings asserted that the host populations' rising hostility toward the Rohingya is a factor in the rise in social unrest. Up till dignified repatriation of the Rohingya is feasible, a practical and sustainable method must be developed to maintain a cohesive and peaceful coexistence of the host populations and the Rohingya. Families in the area, including those with workers and service providers, saw a more than 30% fall in their yearly income (Ullah et al., 2021). The cost of transportation has gone up, the demand for food has grown, and local prices have gone up. The refugees reduce local store sales and annoy store owners by selling large quantities of emergency food supplies close to the camps at low costs.

The majority of the large makeshift camps were built in Cox's Bazar's forest regions, particularly in Kutupalong and Balukhali. The Rohingya refugees' massive influx and prolonged stay have drained water supplies and caused deforestation, land degradation, and environmental waste. In order to make space for the refugees, more than 3,000 hectares of forest - roughly 1.7 percent of the forest area in Cox's Bazar and 0.5 percent of the entire national forest area were cleared of vegetation (Khatun and Kamruzzaman, 2018). Since the trees are now being cut down for firewood and other uses, tensions over access to the forest's resources are rising.

For the inhabitants of the host community, the presence of around a million Rohingya refugees in Ukhia and Teknaf was a substantial population as a shock (Ansar, 2021). Social unrest, hostility, resentment, social disintegration, and economic instability are frequently linked to displacement (Braithwaite et al., 2019). Both communities believe that the Rohingya influx is causing an increase in criminal activity (Bashar, 2021), which is perceived as a danger to mutual relations. The Rohingya have frequently been stigmatized because of this unfavorable attitude, both locally and nationally (Braithwaite et al., 2019). There is still a chance of conflict growing with the Rohingya minority, according to some newspapers (Parveen & Sahana, 2022). The conflict between the Host and the Rohingya would increase because of their protracted presence in Bangladesh. After the 2017 inflow, there have been no indications of the Rohingya returning home (Siddiqi, 2022). In addition, there is already rising conflict and a progressive loss of sympathy. Now the question is, can conflict resolution be ensured without social interconnection? The first step in interaction is frequently viewed as conflict resolution (Habib, 2022). Let's examine the government of Bangladesh's perspective. For fear of extending its repatriation, GoB avoids encouraging the Rohingya to feel any sort of community connection (Jerin & Mozumder, 2019). But the question of whether it is possible to guarantee conflict resolution without these two communities' interactions arises.

Whether it can be extended to perspectives from the Rohingya host community in Bangladesh is a critical matter. Therefore, it appears that various agencies are implementing a project-based, transient, and unsustainable model of social cohesiveness

among the Rohingya communities in the camps using a donor-driven strategy (Jerin & Mozumder, 2019; Krehm & Shahan, 2019). In addition, it appeared that managing refugees were severely hampered by the absence of a medium- to long-term strategy. Because Bangladesh has not acknowledged these Rohingya as refugees and instead refers to them as Forcibly Displaced Myanmar Nationals, it is necessary to create a local model of conflict resolution (Habib, 2022). Conflict resolution has not been prioritized as a result. The failure to create a comprehensive refugee policy has not previously received any attention (Siddiqi, 2022).

The study's findings supported this pattern, but more engagement is required for better conflict resolution. Otherwise, the interpersonal difference between these two communities is likely to widen, which is unhealthy for their ability to live in harmony with one another. Additionally, the plan of the government of Bangladesh is to move some Rohingya to a distant island, Bhasanchar in the hopes of providing them with greater chances for employment will raise their level of living. Finally, policymakers and implementers must consider the need to prioritize conflict resolution while providing a dignified return. If not, it would further unpredictably threaten repatriation's future.

3. Conclusion

Although community conflict is a crucial component of the host population and Rohingya refugees in Bangladesh, it is difficult to put this into practice given the country's current legal system for managing refugees. Because there is no room for resolving community conflict in Bangladesh's current system for managing refugees. This is still difficult because the GoB is adamant about avoiding encouraging social connection or increasing social interactions among the Rohingya in Bangladesh. As a result, Bangladesh is already facing difficulties in implementing and promoting conflict resolution. For improved conflict resolution, the following actions should be taken. First, when considering and carrying out social coordinative interventions, there needs to be a careful balancing of western and local perspectives. Second, in creating any conflict resolution intervention, be aware of the local sociocultural context. Third, effective interventions for conflict resolution can be quite complicated; as a result, a thorough and coordinated approach must be used, where interactions between these two communities must be expanded for a healthier and much more integrated interaction. Fourth, the "One-size-fits-all" approach needs to be avoided, and a holistic approach that combines an evidence-based strategy with diplomacy, humanitarian aid, and development actors' collaboration is needed to establish an intervention that will assure conflict resolution.

In the absence of any concrete indicators of the Rohingya being repatriated with dignity, a realistic and long-term strategy must be employed to promote a sustainable and pleasant relationship between the host and the Rohingya. The opinions of the local stakeholders are frequently ignored when planning an intervention. An illustration of this is the predicament of the Rohingya refugees and their host communities in Bangladesh. Before creating any complete conflict resolution intervention, their views and viewpoints must be heard. Priority should be given to respectful and voluntary returns while assuring conflict resolution by policymakers and implementers. Bangladesh must create a comprehensive response to the relations between the host community and the Rohingya people and keep all lines of communication open to maintain pressure on Myanmar and the international community.

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