

A Public dialogue in Cox's Bazar, 31 March 2018: Brief Report [not for official quote]  
“Impact of FDMN Influx on the host community: emphasizing monsoon crisis mitigation”  
**Host Community should be heard during humanitarian intervention in FDMN/ Rohingya relief operation**



### **Introduction**

To survive a genocide the Rohingya people of Rakhain State, who are officially called as 'Forcibly Displaced Myanmar Nationals (FDMN)', have fled to Bangladesh after 25 August 2017. More than 655,000 of them have taken shelter in different Refugee camps in Ukhia and Teknaf of Cox's Bazar district in Bangladesh. More than 307,500 of Rohingyas have crossed the borders before Aug 2017 and have taken shelter in the refugee camps. So, the total number of FDMN in Bangladesh is 947,000. [Source: UNHCR, BBC].

The total population of Ukhia is 207,379 and of Teknaf is 264,389 [Cox's Bazar Statistics 2011]. After hosting the FDMN the total population of these two upazila has increased to 1,418,768 and the host community has become the minority, 33% of the total population.

With adverse effects on their livelihood the host community is under tremendous stress for an unlimited time. The effect on the host community in different aspects is described below. COAST Trust has conducted an impact assessment in this regard with an advice from Director General of NGOAB (NGO Affairs Bureau) on the host community in Ukhia and Teknaf during February-March 2018.

### **Methodology of the study**

The literature review includes the regular reports published by ISCG (Inter Sector Coordination Group) and by other actors working here, articles published in the national

and international media and official documents of Bangladesh Government on this topic.

A team of 10 officials of COAST Trust including senior officials and frontline staff have physically visited the impacted areas, conducted FGD (Focus Group Discussion) and in-depth interviews (both structured and non-structured) with different groups of the community including farmers, women, teachers, students, casual labourers, market committee, *Majhis* of refugee camps, journalists, local government bodies and other stakeholders. Random Sampling ensuring all clusters and groups was a tool used in this study.

### **Objective of the study**

Almost all of the development actors including UN agencies and INGOs and local organizations are busy with the refugee with a little attention on what is the result and impact of their interventions on the local host community and environment as well as on the social and cultural sides. The entire economy of Ukhia and Teknaf is shattered and hundred thousands of the local community is paying the price. Even in cases, dissatisfaction, anger and conflicts are manifested in locality.

The basic objectives of the study, therefore, are not only to find out the impacts, but also to bring it to the discussion table having all stakeholders.

- To identify the visible impacts on Agriculture, Environment (forest, water

and pollution), livelihood, education and health.

- To find out the way outs from the point of view of the host community
- To find out Short and long term recommendations to address what already happened.

### **The Event held in Cox's Bazar on 31 March**

A Public Dialogue is jointly organized by COAST Trust and CCNF (Cox's Bazar CSO-NGO Forum) at the conference room of hotel UNI Resort in Cox's Bazar titled "Impact of FDMN Influx on the host community: emphasizing monsoon crisis mitigation". The main objective of this dialogue was to facilitate the people's representatives of those localities, the members and chairmen of the Union Councils, to speak about the effects imposed on their community. Few unheard stories and demands came out through their voice.

On the other hand, there were also a number of distinguished guests from government, donor, UN and INGO have joined to the dialogue to listen to them and share their ideas and experience.

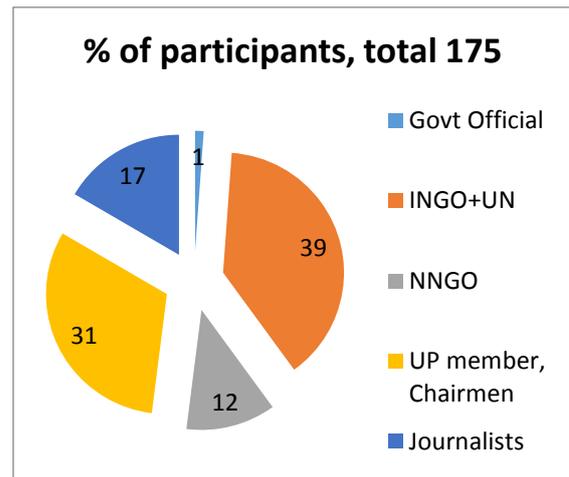
### **Invited guests and participants**

The turnout of other stakeholders also was remarkable. The invited guests and speakers include Mr. KM Abdus Salam, Director General (DG) of NGO Bureau and Additional Secretary along with Mr. Mohammad Abul Kalam NDC, Additional Secretary and Refuge, Relief and Repatriation Commissioner (RRRC) from the Government of Bangladesh.

The dialogue is also participated by Dr. Ainun Nishat, Professor Emeritus, BRAC University and Centre for Climate Change and Environmental Research (C3ER) and Dr. Atiq Rahman, Executive Director of Bangladesh Center for Advance Studies (BCAS), both of them occasionally advise government of Bangladesh on different issues. The other important speakers are Mr. Nayeem G Wahra, Dhaka University and Disaster Forum; Ms. Sumbul Rizvi, Senior Coordinator of ISCG; Ms Elisabeth Pelster of UNHCR, Mr. Arash Irantalib Tehrani of Canadian High Commission and Mr. Manuel Moniz Pereira of IoM, who were present and spoke as the Panel speakers.

Mr. Rezaul Karim Chowdhury, Co-Chair-Cox's Bazar CSO-NGO Forum and Executive Director, COAST Trust; and Mr Abu Morshed Chowdhury Co-Chair - Cox's Bazar CSO-NGO Forum and

Chairman- PHALS jointly moderated the dialogue.



A total of **55 UP chairmen and members** participated in the dialogue where there were **68 participants from different INGO and UN agencies**. These two categories are the major participants of the dialogue while there were 21 from NNGO and 29 local and national journalists.

### **People's Representatives**

Chairmen of different Union Councils under Ukhia and Teknaf, who participated in the dialogue are:

- Principal Nur Ahmad Anwary, Hwaikkyong
- A M Gafuruddin Chowdhury, Paling Khali;
- Moulana Aziz Uddin, Baharchara;
- Abul Hossain, Panel Chairman of Hnila.

UP member Ms Khurshida Begum, Md Shajahan, from Rajapalong; Mr. Nurul Absar Chowdhury, Mozaffor Ahmad, Mr. Nurul Amin from Palong Khali; Mr Jalal Ahmad of Hwaikkhong; Mr. Hossain Ahmad, Mr Abul Hossain and Ms Marzina Akhtar Siddiquee from Hnila; Mr Sona Ali from Baharchara spoke in the meeting and placed the degenerated situations of Ukhia and Teknaf upazila after influx of Myanmar citizen. They expressed their grievances in the meeting.

Arguments, demands and stories raised by the people's representatives are:

- Social Safety Net programs for the vulnerable groups of the local community has been stopped for the last 3-4 months. It should have special features for the host community of Ukhia and Teknaf for they are affected by the FDMN.
- Local people used to dig holes beside their homesteads to get water. It is stopped due to human waste.

- Underground water should be preserved and that's why no deep tube-well should be established. Streams and canals should be immediately dredged and prepared for the monsoon.
- Embankments are badly damaged and it should be repaired before the monsoon, otherwise it will be disastrous.
- School buildings and its furniture is damaged. Plans need to be taken to build school building designed to be cyclone shelter when needed.
- Refugee camps are almost treeless. NGOs could help them to plantation beside every households in the camps. It can help survive the cyclones and protect from landslides.
- Biscuits and toys are given to the FDMN children and our kids just watched it. They also could have been given.
- Long term remedies and compensation should be allocated for the affected farmers.
- A number of teachers should immediately be employed in the primary and secondary schools in this locality as many teachers left the schools for better salary.
- Students who joined different humanitarian projects should be allowed to sit for the public exams otherwise they will be dropped out of education. It will be a loss for the community.
- Security should be increased in the camps during the night time. Many Rohingya people are engaging in crimes. Police raid should be taken to search for the arms if there is any.



### Speeches and Comments

**Mr KM Abdus Salam, DG of NGO Bureau** said as the chief guest of the dialogue, the local people sacrificed and showed their patience a lot. We need to continue a little more as we kept trust on our Prime Minister who is dealing with it. He added, in this digital era everyone knows everything and you can't hide information. NGO interventions should satisfy the people's need of

information as it impacts their lives. We have to change the hiding attitude that we used to have in 80s.

**Mohammad Abul Kalam NDC, the Additional Secretary of Government** and Refugee Relief and Repatriation Commissioner (RRRC) said in his speech, "The FDMN people are clearing forestland equal to four football fields every day through collecting fuel wood for their cooking and this is highly alarming".

He also mentioned that, all the agencies working here with FDMN should consider that there is a government in Bangladesh as the sole authority and no one should overtake the government. He informed that the JRP (Joint Response Plan) will allocate the 25% of its fund for the development of the host community.

**Ms Sumbul Rizvi of ISCG** said in her speech that, the responsible for this disastrous situation is Myanmar Government and the host community is the one who are paying the price. The host community should be included in the humanitarian interventions as they are the sufferer and it is not possible to solve anything without them.

**Ms Elisabeth Pelster of UNHCR** said in her speech, we are procuring from locally, not even from nationally. We explicitly want to work with the local partners where possible. Our intention is to capacitate the local partners.

**Dr. Artiq Rahman of BCAS** said in his speech, the entire world condemned Myanmar for this situation and the FDMN have to go back to their land, there is no doubt on that. Nobody knows how long will it take. But what we all know and what is inevitable in the next three months is the rain is coming and that will cost us a lot.

**Mr. Manuel Moniz Pereira of IoM** said, every crisis has a certain impact on the host community all over the world. In this case the number of refugee is really huge. We are committed to support the affected host community. Already we have started dialogue with the Union Parishad and the local community.

**Dr. Ainun Nishat, professor emeritus of Brac University** said, the government should address some emergency problem within the next 15 days including clearing the drainage system so that the rainwater can move. The amount of rainfall in this area last year was higher than 400 mm. We should consider that every formula can't be applied everywhere. Teknaf has special

problems and needed special interventions to address it. The damaged embankment should be immediately repaired before the monsoon comes.

Dr. Ainun Nishat also said, there are many interventions of NGOs both local and foreign, but there are hardly any coordination and communication among them. Many of them are overlapping but many problems are yet to address.

**Mr. Nayeem G Wahra of Dhaka University and Disaster Forum** said in his speech, in a crisis like this sometimes we can't help but still there are few things we can do and we need to efficiently identify them. Those could include rainwater harvest. Last year we missed the opportunity. We need to be able to do this time. Every household should be capacitated to harvest the rainwater and more importantly the streams and canals should be prepared to hold the rainwater for long time. The newly constructed roads should immediately taken care about the culverts under it so the water can move from one side to another.

### **The Research findings**

Barkat Ullah Maruf, Assistant Director of COAST presented the research findings. He illustrates the following findings in his presentation.

From the field study, interviews and FGD there are many points of findings and are clustered into Environment (Forest, Water and Pollution), Agriculture, Livelihood and Employment, Education and Health. There are few other social and cultural impacts though some of them are not measurable.



*Modhur Chora canal in Balukhali camp, totally polluted*

## **1. Impacts on Environment**

The impact on environment has three aspects i.e. Forest, water and pollution.

### **a. Forest**

The main concern is the forest. The impacts are below:

- Daily minimum 2,250 Tons of firewood is burnt (150,000 families x min 15 kg firewood daily) only for cooking purpose.
- Total 5,800 acres of forestland in Ukhia and Teknaf is occupied for establishing the refugee camps [Cox's Bazar Forest Office].
- All the hills are already become treeless to make space for the shacks. This is a huge threat of landslide of hills causing death during the upcoming rainy season
- Entire Forestland (especially of Ukhia) is at a great risk to be plundered. 1485 Hectares of forestland is already encroached [Daily Star, 20 January 2018].

### **b. Water**

Ground water is a great resource for life and reckless consumption of it might cause a great loss for centuries. The impacts found so far are:

- 70% shallow tube-wells are running out of water already. We have visited a total of 169 tube-wells in 8 blocks in 4 camps.
- 10 deep tube-wells (680 feet) established by COAST had to extend 30 feet deeper as the water level was finished. [COAST]
- 2 deep tube-wells established by Ganasasthya in Unchiprang camp failed to pull water even having 1000 feet deep.
- We suspect 1st layer of Water level is already finished up. Experts says that the ground water of Teknaf is in danger already.

### **c. Pollution**

There are more than one million people in a very small place and this is producing a huge quantity of daily waste without having any proper disposal system. Toilets are set anywhere and everywhere and many of them are overflowing for not having enough depth of the tank under it. The findings are as follows:

- 11 Canals and streams are found by the team are fully polluted by the human waste. Though in the FGDs and interviews, the community members says all of them are completely polluted.
- In Ukhia, 100 tons of monthly disposable wastes are being collected by the waste dealers (*Bhangari*) and they said previously their collection was 60 tons per month. There are [20 waste dealers, *Bhangari* business].

- There are huge quantities of non-disposable wastes like Plastic packets, polythene waste and it is not measured.

## **2. Impacts on Agriculture**

Agriculture in Ukhia and Teknaf has the most severe impact which in turn will affect the entire livelihood and income of the peasant community who are the majority of the population in the locality. The major findings are as follows:

- Agriculture will be hardly possible on 130 Hectares of land in Ukhia and 250 Hectares in Teknaf in this season due to water crisis and pollution. (Agri. Officer, Ukhia and Teknaf)
- There is crop damage. Crops of 100 Hectares land in Ukhia is ruined due to the influx (60H Rice, 20H Vegetables, 10H Betel leaf and 10 others).
- 76 acres arable land in Teknaf is occupied and 25 acres are privately owned.
- 35 Hectares of arable land in Ukhia and 58 Hectares in Teknaf are polluted with human waste for those land are adjacent to the refugee camps.
- There are complaints that crops are being stolen by the refugees. Specially the vegetables are taken away as there is a crisis of vegetables in the local market.
- There is at least 12-15% price fall of rice in the local market due to the relief rice are being sold in the market and which might impact on production in near future.
- The source of Irrigation, the surface water is completely polluted.
- Donor/ NGO occupancy on East side of the road is another concern for the host community.

## **3. Impacts on Employment and Livelihood**

There is a severe impact on local employment and livelihood due to the influx.

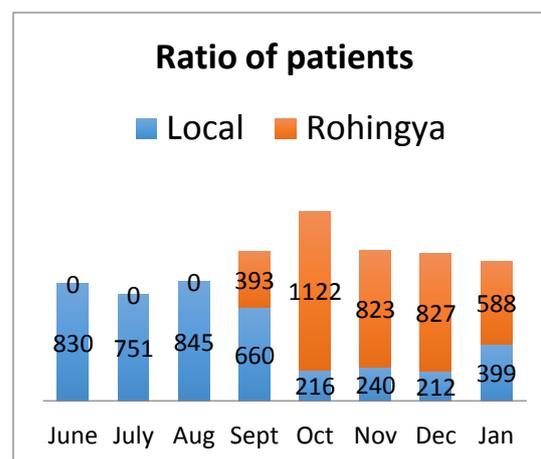
The major findings are as follows:

- Directly affected 34 village in Ukhia where the population is 58,000 and that is 28% of total population of the Upazila. (source: Ukhia Union Parishad).
- 40% of them (23,000+) are day-labor [estimated in FGD] who depends on their daily-earned wages.
- Wage decreased from 400-500 to 200-250 (50% decreased).

- There are 600 fisher folk families in Ukhia, 76% of their total income is on fishing in Naf river (stopped for Myanmar military shooting)
- Livestock grazing + firewood collection stopped in forest for the host community, causing increased household expenditure.
- Cows and goats lost/ stolen
- Price of firewood increased from 250 to 400 Tk/Maund
- Transport cost increased 20% [compared to Aug 2017]
- House rent increased 30-40%
- As a result, poverty is increasing among the host communities.

## **4. Impacts on Health**

- 6,200 Diphtheria patients (suspected) in Rohingya, 38 death, 62 local patients identified [Ukhia Sadar Hospital]
- Water for household works polluted (60% people depend on surface water) [FGD]
- Community Clinics are crowded by FDMN (65%) [Register]
- 15% villagers near camps yet to vaccinated [FGD]
- Patients in Ukhia Health Complex:



## **5. Impacts on Education: A generation loss**



*Kerontali Govt. Primary School, Teknaf*

- 5 Govt. Primary school occupied. 3,000 students affected.
- 15% students are absent since the FDMN influx [monthly attendance report]
- 25% girls are absent. due to crowded transport. [Teacher FGD]
- 7 teachers out of 10 from 2 high schools left for relief job. 1,200 students are affected.
- In Ukhia College, 60% students are absent [Student FGD]

#### **6. Other Impacts**

- Local roads are damaged for heavy vehicles
- All relief trucks coming to DC Office: Town roads are affected
- Temporary roads built in unplanned way block canals and sewerage system [Kutupalong].
- Not enough security (after 6.00 pm Rohingya mobility is hardly monitored) [FGD]
- Women Trafficking increased/ Prostitution [BBC]

#### **Recommendations**

- Alternative fuel supply to all FDMN families immediately to protect the environment/ forest.
- HH Assessment of the loss (Agriculture, Forest, Water, Irrigation) is needed.
- Identify affected families in the host community and compensate.
- IGA, Cow/Goat rearing, High Value crops could be the way of compensation, NO relief!
- Input and Agri-Technology should be supplied as compensation.
- Special Social Safety Net program for this case, instead of common/traditional practices.
- Pollution in canals to remove immediately, before monsoon.
- Irrigation from Reju Khal to canals, steps to increase surface water preservation and rainwater harvesting could be solutions.
- Security should be increased, police camps in each camps.
- School building should be rebuilt designed for being cyclone shelter in need.
- Damaged embankments should be immediately repaired.

#### **Media Links**

##### **The Daily Star:**

<https://www.thedailystar.net/frontpage/ukhia-bursting-the-seams-1556272>

##### **The risky refuge**

*Seminar on Rohingyas finds alarm bell ringing in Ukhia*



Trees on the rolling Hills of Ukhia have been razed to make way for an extension of a Balukhali Rohingya refugee camp in Cox's Bazar. The photo was taken in early March. Photo: Mohammed Shuvo

##### **Cox's Bazar News.com:**

<http://www.coxsbazarnews.com/archives/127777.html>

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