

COAST Position with Rationale and Academic References on the Report titled 'A Social Review on Rohingya Crisis Long-term: Action Plan is needed based on joint risk assessment: Participation of Locals is a Must in Rohingya Response'

COAST has recently published a Social Review Report titled, 'A Social Review on Rohingya Crisis: Long-term Action Plan is needed based on joint risk assessment: Participation of Locals is a Must.' COAST conducted that Social Review to get practical knowledge on the situation of the host and Rohingya communities, to identify the sufferings and challenges of both communities, and to place some specific recommendations. To conduct the social review, COAST formed four Social Cohesion Committees in four unions hosting refugee camps. The Social Cohesion Committees visited both camps and host communities, they visited eight camps and four unions of Ukhiya and Teknaf Upazila. The report is the reflection of the observations, findings, and recommendations of the cohesions committees on the Rohingya issues. The report is available in this link: http://coastbd.net/wp-content/uploads/2020/01/Social-Review-on-Rohingya-Crisis_Update.pdf.

This report contains the rationale and academic references of the COAST position to some issues related to that Social Review report.

SUMMARY OF THE POSITION

1. The main aim of the aforesaid review report is to promote social cohesion. To ensure social cohesion, we need to ensure solidarity among groups and individuals in a society, since social cohesion refers to the extent of connectedness and solidarity among groups in society (*Manca A.R. 2014*). Thus to promote social cohesion among groups we need to provide an avenue to all to express their opinions, perceptions, and observations. Based on that, we can design our work plan.
2. Research findings obtained by one author may differ from the result of others for the same research topic. This is also very common in the field of research. (*Dr. Dickson Adom, 2017*).
3. ISCG is playing a vital role in Rohingya response, but we should not consider ISCG as the ultimate panacea. The Rohingya situation is not a static situation, rather every day we are experiencing new situations; we are getting newer decisions; we are observing newer perceptions among the host communities. To address these situations, our plan should also be flexible and live. We should keep our eye open, therefore there should be a frequent assessment of the situation.
4. COAST organized the 'Beneficiaries Assessment' of the projects and services of different organizations. Beneficiaries Assessment is designed specifically to undertake systematic listening of the poor and other stakeholders by giving voice to their priorities and concerns (*World Bank*). Considering this definition, we collected community people's experiences and opinions on the impact and effectiveness of the different services provided by different organizations. The assessments were done with the participation of the local leaders like Union Chairmen and members, beneficiaries of different projects and programs of GOs, NGOs, INGOs, and UN agencies.
5. One research finds that over 80% of all themes can be discoverable within only two to three focus groups! And 90% are discoverable within three to six focus groups! (*Greg Guest, Emily Namey Kevin McKenna, 2016*). Considering this, it is thus evident that, 8-16 FGDs, done by the review

team, were well enough to get the findings.

6. The main aim of forming the Social Cohesion Committee was to sensitize them towards the Rohingya issue. We also believe that such committees, sensitized towards the Rohingya, will act as change agents, and these agents can promote social cohesion by sensitizing their community members. Considering this, we selected members only from the host community. Thus, members were 'not impartial' in terms of many usual definition. But they are very much pro-human rights, pro-refugee rights and they were directly involved in providing shelters to the Rohingya people. *(We have also formed Cohesion Committee at the camp level where all the members are from the Rohingya community. This is a planned, organized and systematic activity.)*
7. FGD reveals not only people's perceptions. FGD is a form of qualitative research in

which a group of people is asked about their perceptions, opinions, beliefs, and attitudes towards a product, service, concept, advertisement, idea, or packaging *(Richard A Powell, 1996.)*

8. Perception is a very important tool for social research. Perception is a mode of apprehending reality and experience through the senses, thus enabling discernment of figure, form, language, behavior, and action. Individual perception influences opinion, judgment, understanding of a situation or person, the meaning of an experience *(Lisa M. Given, 2008)*. So, if there are perceptions in the report, we should welcome it.
9. Findings recommendations of the report are the true reflection of the host community and Rohingya people. Thus these are very much effective for future advocacy points.

DETAILS OF THE POSITION

I. Efforts of Social Cohesion Demand Grievance Management.

The main aim of this above-mentioned social review is to promote social cohesion. Social cohesion refers to the extent of connectedness and solidarity among groups in society. Social cohesion is a social process which aims to consolidate plurality of citizenship by reducing inequality and socioeconomic disparities and fractures in the society *(Manca A.R. Social Cohesion. In: Michalos A.C. (eds) Encyclopedia of Quality of Life and Well-Being Research. Springer, Dordrecht, 2014)*. If we want to ensure cooperation and solidarity, we need to minimize the gaps among groups, if any. Gaps can be minimized if there are open dialogues and open scopes for the groups to identify the gaps from their own. We can understand that, due to the Rohingya influx, there are sufferings of the host community people, there are grievances. Without addressing these grievances, social cohesion can't be possible. Our duty is to facilitate them to determine whether there

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are any gaps or not. The social review is the very first step in this regard.

The Council of Europe defines social cohesion as "the capacity of a society to ensure the welfare of all its members, minimizing disparities and avoiding polarizations" *(Council of Europe, A new strategy for Social Cohesion, 2004)*. So, to minimize disparities we need to know what types of disparities are there, this is a continuous process, only one research-finding or one assessment is not enough in this regard.

2. Perceptions and Observations are strong tools of Research.

There are some confusion and lack of understanding about the role of perceptions and observations on social research. Few people consider Perceptions or

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observations are not as important as ‘findings.’ In the above-mentioned social review, there are perceptions and observations, these perceptions and observations are of the social cohesion committee members, who are strong representatives of the host community people. Is there any role of perception and observation in social researches? The answer has given by The SAGE Encyclopedia of Qualitative Research Methods edited by Lisa M. Given. It says: Perception is a mode of apprehending reality and experience through the senses, thus enabling discernment of figure, form, language, behavior, and action. Individual perception influences opinion, judgment, understanding of a situation or person, the meaning of an experience, and. So, if there are perceptions in the report, we should welcome it.

Is there any role of observation in social research? Of course yes. Let’s go to the University of Calicut, India. In their book titled, Social Research Method, the Indian university says, in observational research, a researcher is expected to be involved in the daily life of all the participants to understand their routine, their decision-making skills, their capability to handle pressure and their overall likes and dislikes.

The above-mentioned book has also kept Observation as the first step of social research, ‘...the scientific method is a systematic step-by-step procedure (three steps-observation, hypothesis, and verification) following the logical process of reasoning. Observation is a fundamental way of finding out about the world around us. As human beings, we are very well equipped to pick up detailed information about our environment through our senses. However, as a method of data collection for research purposes, observation is more than just looking or listening (Syed

Muhammad Sajjad Kabir. *Methods of Data Collection*, 2018).

The main aim of this review was to promote social cohesion, especially in the host community. And to do that, we need to know the perceptions of the host community people. We should welcome their opinions, perceptions even some are negative. These opinions and perceptions will help us design effective social cohesion programs/projects/activities.

3. ISCG is not the Panacea!

We should not consider ISCG as the ultimate panacea. This is very right that ISCG is now playing a vital role, but ISCG was not there at the very beginning when local community people gave them shelter and food, local leaders and local organization came to provide supports. If there is no fund, there will be no ISCG, but the host community and Rohingya refugees will be there, local leaders and local organizations will also be there. One way or another, locals have to manage the situation. That is why we need to enhance the capacities of the local people, local leaders, local institutions so that they can take the responsibilities, even if there is any zero fund situation. Considering this, COAST is advocating for the capacity/ technologies transfer to the local actors. The participation of local actors is a must for a sustainable solution to the Rohingya crisis.

COAST was one of the fast and first responders to the Rohingya crisis spent about 2 million takas from its fund. Participation of such local organization is also needed. For effective Rohingya response, coordination among different organizations and efforts must be there, only ISCG is not enough.

ISCG has prepared a Joint Response Plan, it will be suicidal if we consider this plan as the ultimate one, since the Rohingya situation is not a static situation. Rather every day we are experiencing new

situations; we are getting newer decisions, we are observing newer perceptions among the host communities. To address these situations, our plan should also be flexible and live. We should keep our eye open, we need to assess the situation continuously. 'One assessment is already, and that is enough' - such a position is insane.

4. Inconsistency to the facts and finding from different research and assessments is usual and is the beauty of research!

Research findings obtained by one author may differ from the result of others for the same research topic. This is also very common in the field of research. Research findings are predicted by many factors. 'The research package (questions, methodology, analytical procedures) may be the same but factors such as the time of the research, the depth of the research proings, and the level of dedication to unearthing the truth regarding the research questions may vary the findings in most cases. However, that is the richness associated with research-finding different perspectives of the same problem while finding different pragmatic solutions that can improve the quality of life. That is the beauty of research' said Dr. Dickson Adom, Department of Educational Innovations in Science and Technology Kwame Nkrumah University of Science and Technology, Ghana. (https://www.researchgate.net/post/Why_do_research_findings_obtained_by_one_author_is_differ_from_the_result_of_other_for_the_same_research_topic)

5. Assessing GOs, NGOs, INGOs and UN projects: Assessment by the service recipients.

There were 4 union level review meetings, where the beneficiaries of different projects and programs of GOs, NGOs, INGOs, and UN agencies took part. With the participation of UP chairmen and members, Social Cohesion Committee

Research findings obtained by one author may differ from the result of others. This is the beauty of research

members discuss the quality and effectiveness of the services provided by different service providers. Participants also provided their feedback on the effectiveness and quality of the project activities. From those discussions, some good cases were identified along with some negative cases too. For example, the dialogue revealed that many organizations had not even consulted with respective Union Chairmen during selecting beneficiaries from respective unions. They had not even discussed while selecting the activities they would provide in that Union.

Theoritically, these were Beneficeries Assessments. Beneficiary Assessment (BA) is a qualitative research tool used to improve the impact of development operations by gaining the views of intended beneficiaries regarding a planned or ongoing intervention. The objective of BA is to assess the value of an activity as perceived by project beneficiaries and to integrate findings into project activities. It is designed specifically to undertake systematic listening of the poor and other stakeholders by giving voice to their priorities and concerns. This method of systematic consultation is used by project management as a design, monitoring, and evaluation tool (*The World Bank, http://siteresources.worldbank.org/INTPSIA/Resources/490023-1121114603600/beneficiary_assessment.pdf*). So, technically it is obvious that this type of assessment will include mainly the beneficiaries,

6. The Social Cohesion Committee Members were 'not Impartial', they are Por-human rights! No question about the Capacity.

The Social Cohesion Committee Members were 'Not Impartial' in terms of some

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definition. But they were very much pro-human rights, pro-refugee rights and they were directly involved in providing shelters to the Rohingya people. Inclusion of Rohingya people in the committees are not wise as the main aim of the committees were to get practical experiences on the sufferings of the Rohingya people, so that they can be sensitized towards Rohingya communities. These sensitized committee members would help us to promote social cohesion by removing the wrong perceptions and by promoting the actual situation. Social committees are also providing opportunity to the community representatives to express their grievances on the Rohingya issue, which has opened a window of positive dialogue. From the report, one can easily find that these 'not impartial' committees are recommending for education and prefabricated houses, camp-based IGA activities, camp-based IGA / skill development activities for youth, special measures for the protection of the adolescent girls and women! This has happened because these 'not impartial' committees went to the camp with some negative perceptions, but they returned with a mind sensitized towards the sufferings of the Rohingya People.

COAST oriented/trained the committees on social review, so they had enough skills. It is to be mentioned that, Social Cohesion Committees have been recently formed also in the camps.

7. Does the low number of FGDs really matter? Sometimes 2-3 FGDs are enough.

This "review" has drawn a conclusion based on 8-16 FGDs and few consultation meetings at a different level. How many FGDs are enough? There are few empirical studies exist to guide researchers in determining the number of focus groups necessary for a research study. Greg Guest, Emily Namey Kevin McKenna of FH360 conducted a thematic analysis of 40

focus groups on health-seeking behaviors of African American men in Durham, North Carolina. Their analyses revealed that more than 80% of all themes were discoverable within only two to three focus groups! 90% were discoverable within three to six focus groups! Three to six focus groups were enough to identify all of the most prevalent themes within the data set. It is thus evident that these 8-16 FGDs can be more effective than 80-100 FGDs. (Greg Guest, Emily Namey Kevin McKenna, *How Many Focus Groups Are Enough? Building an Evidence Base for Non-probability Sample Sizes*, SAGE Journals, 2016).

We have detailed information about the FGDs we conducted, we can provide if needed. The full report we shared also gave brief about two FGDs. In a box there is a description of one FGD with the Rohingya Imams (religious leaders) and in another box presents information about another FGD. If anyone reads carefully, hope he/she can get a clear idea about the FGDs.

We can understand that, there are questions about the proper representations. Whether the perception of some people can be presented as a general situation? This is the liberty and beauty of statistics. The population and housing census of the Bangladesh government says about whole the population of Bangladesh, but the sample size was only 6720! Information collected form only very few representing the millions!

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8. FGDs do not only present perceptions: It can effectively contribute to research.

FGD reveals not only people's perceptions. Richard A Powell defines a focus group as "A group of individuals selected and assembled by researchers to discuss and comment on, from personal experience, the topic that is the subject of the research. (Richard A Powell, *Focus Groups, International Journal For Quality ion healthcare, 1996*)". According to the University of Calicut, A focus group is a form of qualitative research in which a group of people is asked about their perceptions, opinions, beliefs, and attitudes towards a product, service, concept, advertisement, idea, or packaging. Questions are asked in an interactive group setting where participants are free to talk with other group members.

It also says, "A group of individuals selected and assembled by researchers to discuss and comment on, from personal experience, the topic that is the subject of the research.' That is what the social cohesion committee has done! So, it is evident that, FGDs reveals not only people's perceptions.

9. Please share this as much as you can.

We don't consider ourselves perfect with knowledge; we are learning by doing; we are in a continuous learning process. We appreciate strong rational feedback and criticism, these will help in making us rich with knowledge. We will appreciate it if readers kindly share these reports with others.

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A Social Review on Rohingya Crisis

Long-term Action Plan is needed based on joint risk assessment: Participation of Locals is a Must in Rohingya Response

COAST is organizing a package of researches and documentations. COAST and Cox's Bazar CSOs asnd NGOs Forum (CCNF) conducted systematic and scientific research to identify the impact of the Rohingya influx on the host community. The research titles Crisis within the Crisis (<http://coastbd.net/?s=crisis+within+the+crisis>) was launched by the then RRRC where the ISCG senior coordinator was also present.

The report we are talking about is not a research, rather it is a Social Review.



Principal Office:

House13, (1st flr.), Metro Melody, Road 2, Shyamoli, Dhaka-1207, Bangladesh

T:+88 02 58150082/9120358/9126131, F:+88 02 58152555

E-mail: info@coastbd.net, Web: www.coastbd.net